### 1AC – capitalism isn’t good … transition?

#### Capitalist press is a failed system – commercial media is incapable of sustaining the infrastructures for democratic governance, but ensures that inequalities are an afterthought, and news becomes a stand-in for corporate interests.

Pickard ‘20

[Victor, associate professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. 01/27/2020. ”We Need a Media System That Serves People’s Needs, Not Corporations’,” <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/01/corporate-media-system-democracy>] pat

The past decade has witnessed the rapid decline of the newspaper industry in the United States. Revenue and readership have dropped precipitously, halving the nation’s newspaper employees. Actual journalism is vanishing, misinformation is proliferating, and our public media system — ideally a safety net for when the market fails to support the press — remains utterly impoverished compared to its global counterparts. From the collapse of its advertising-dependent business model to the dominance of platform monopolies like Facebook and Google, the commercial news media system faces a structural crisis.

Commercial journalism never fulfilled all of society’s democratic needs, but now it’s abundantly clear that the market can’t support the bare minimum levels of news media — especially local, international, and investigative reporting — that democracy requires. Any path toward reinventing journalism must acknowledge that the market is its destructor, not savior. Commercialism lies at the heart of this crisis; removing it could be transformative.

If we acknowledge that no entrepreneurial solution lies just around the bend — if we stop grasping for a technological fix or a market panacea — we can look more aggressively for non-market alternatives. In doing so, we can dare to imagine a new public media system for the digital age, one that privileges democracy over profits. A journalism that seeks out silences in society and ruthlessly confronts those in power. An information system that maintains laser-like focus on climate change, hyper-inequality, mass incarceration, and other social emergencies. A media system that treats workers as more than an afterthought.

US history offers fleeting glimpses of an alternative system — experiments such as labor outlets, community-owned newspapers, media cooperatives, and, once upon a time, a thriving radical press. Even mainstream commercial news occasionally has provided investigative reporting that exposes corruption, changes policy, and benefits all of society. But these moments have been the exception. The history of US media is largely a history of misrepresentation, exclusion, excessive commercialism, and systemic market failure.

However, it didn’t — and doesn’t — have to be this way. Another media system is possible — one that’s democratically governed and accessible to all.

Infrastructures of Democracy

We learn in school that self-governance requires an informed society sustained by a free press. Yet we rarely reflect on the infrastructures and policies necessary to maintain such a system.

The loss of effective journalism and rampant misinformation are structural problems that require structural solutions. More to the point, they’re collective action problems that require policy interventions.

Salvaging a nonprofit model from the ashes of market-driven jour­nalism goes far beyond resuscitating a golden age that never existed or preserving a status quo steeped in inequality and discrimi­nation. Guided by an ethical commitment to ensuring that all members of society can access information and create their own media, a public system can provide a strong base for further democratization. De-commercialization is an essential first step.

The late sociologist Erik Olin Wright gave us a useful schematic to help think through the possibilities for de-commercializing journalism and creating a truly public system. Wright proposed four general models for building alternatives to capitalism, each based on a different logic of resist­ance: smashing, taming, escaping, or eroding. After assessing these four approaches, Wright suggested that simultaneously eroding and taming capitalist relationships over time offered the best strategy for change — pushing to reform the existing system in ways that improve people’s everyday lives (taming), while also erecting alternative structures that gradually replace commercial models (eroding).

We can apply this strategic vision to our media system, with five general approaches:

Establishing “public options” (i.e., noncommercial/nonprofit, supported by public subsidies), such as well-funded public media institutions and municipal broadband networks.

Breaking up/preventing media monopolies and oligopolies to encourage diversity and to curtail profit-maximizing behavior.

Regulating news outlets through public interest protections and public service obligations such as ascertainment of society’s information needs.

Enabling worker control by unionizing newsrooms and facilitating media cooperatives.

Fostering community ownership, oversight, and governance of newsrooms, and mandating accountability to diverse constituencies.

While we should pursue these approaches simultaneously, the most surefire way to tame and erode commercial media is to create a truly publicly owned system.

Creating a New Public Media System

In the US, proposing massive public investments in news media usually elicits two immediate objections. One is the concern that a publicly subsidized system would create a mouthpiece for the state. The other is cost.

Regarding the first, real-world examples suggest that media subsidies aren’t a slippery slope toward authoritarianism. Democratic nations around the globe heavily subsidize media while enjoying democratic benefits that put the US to shame. Public media and stronger democracies often go together.

Nonetheless, any public media system must erect a firewall to separate it from government and other powerful influences. Although government would play a key administrative role in establishing and protecting this system, it should be publicly operated, independent, and democratic in determining what specific kinds of media content and news outlets are supported. Political autonomy must be tethered to economic independence with adequate funding and resources — otherwise we’d simply reenact past errors and recreate another weak public system susceptible to political and economic capture.

On the question of cost, we must first remind ourselves that a viable press system isn’t a luxury — it’s a necessity. Similar to a classic “merit good,” journalism isn’t a “want,” but a “need.” To support this social necessity, rough estimates suggest we need an annual budget of around $30 billion.

That may seem large, but relative to the problem — and compared to the outlays for recent tax cuts and military expenditures — it’s actually a modest proposal. This is especially true considering the enormous costs to society if we continue without a functioning press system.

Ideally, we would have a guaranteed annual budget that would come directly from the US Treasury, but a second op­tion would be a large trust fund supported by multiple rev­enue streams. Since this funding shouldn’t become a political football subject to the congressional appropriations pro­cess, it could be sustained by already-existing subsidies and mandated levies on communication oligopolies.

While individuals could contribute, a trust of this scope would require large funders. Possible sources might include levees on electronics and devices, tax vouchers, repurposing international broadcasting subsidies, proceeds from spectrum sales, and taxing platform monopolies such as Facebook and Google.

Permanent support for a well-funded national public media ser­vice could help guarantee universal access to quality news. This “public op­tion” for journalism can address commercial media’s endemic problems, which render our information systems vulnerable to structural crisis and elite capture.

What Would a Truly Public Media System Look Like?

The fight for an independent public media system doesn’t end with funding. Once we’ve created the material conditions for this new system, we must ensure it remains truly democratic, owned and controlled by journalists and representative members of the public and operated in a bottom-up, transparent fashion in constant dia­logue with community members. In short, these newsrooms must reflect the diverse audiences they serve.

We might envision this project in layers: the funding layer (how will this public media system be financially sustained?); the govern­ance layer (how will resource allocations and other key decisions be made democratically?); the ascertainment layer (how will information needs be determined?); the infrastructure layer (how can we ensure distribution of and access to information, including universal broadband service and algorithms that privilege public media in search and in news feeds?); and the engagement layer (how can we ensure that local communities are involved in making their own news and contributing their stories?).

While administrators could distribute resources via centralized hubs at the federal, state, and regional levels, local media bureaus that represent the communities where they reside should make key governance decisions. Federal and state-level commissions could calculate how resources should be deployed to target news deserts, meet spe­cial communication needs, and focus on addressing gaps in news coverage, especially around inequality, global warming, elections, and other specific social needs and problems. This system would require a public media consortium comprised of policy experts, scholars, technologists, journalists, and public advocates that specialize in work relevant to each of these layers, while always reporting to and engaging local communities.

Free from the economic imperative of appealing to wealthy owners, investors, advertisers, and high-income audiences, media outlets could abandon various forms of redlining to include entire classes and communities previously neglected. They might focus less on clickbait and fluffy news and more on coverage devoted to the poor and to working-class issues. Instead of folding labor news into the business sections of newspapers, we might see permanent beats with teams of dedicated labor journalists covering everything from workers’ everyday lives to picket lines and the plight of unions.

This kind of journalism could lay bare the social costs of policy failure and the structural roots of inequality. Taking a page from what is now called “solutions journalism,” it could devote unwavering attention to combatting social injustice.

Liberating journalists from commercial constraints would allow them to practice the craft that led them to the profession in the first place. It would let journalists be journalists. And it would give them a stake in the ownership and governance of media institutions. Journalists also need strong unions to protect labor conditions and democratize newsrooms. A truly public media system should include worker-run cooperatives and other forms of collective own­ership. Ultimately, public media means public ownership of media institutions.

The US media system is riven with stark inequalities. It reflects class and racial divides, just as it perpetuates them. But given the right structural conditions, journalism can instead be a force for social jus­tice and radical change.

Building viable noncommercial alternatives will be a long, hard slog. Many flowers will bloom and wither. But starting with the premise that commercial models are a dead end can reinvigorate tired conversations about the future of journalism — and free us to think more boldly and creatively.

#### Capitalism is terminally unsustainable and at a turning point – reinforcing structures causes extinction and turns their impacts.

* TCC = Transnational Capitalist Class, TNS = Transnational State

Robinson 20 [William I. Robinson, American professor of sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, “The Global Police State,” 2020, Pluto Press, EA]

But the globalization boom of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries was short-lived. The global financial meltdown of 2008 marked the onset of a new structural crisis of global capitalism, one that opens the possibility for systemic change. Karl Marx was the first to identify crisis as immanent to capitalism and there is a vast literature on capitalist crisis.11 Here I identify three types of crisis. Cyclical crises, or recessions, occur about every ten years in the capitalist system and typically last some 18 months. These comprise the so-called “business cycle.” There were recessions in the early 1980s, the early 1990s, and the early 2000s. “Structural crises,” so called because the only way out of crisis is to restructure the system, occur approximately every 40–50 years. A new wave of colonialism and imperialism resolved (that is, displaced) the first recorded structural crisis of the 1870s and 1880s. The next structural crisis, the Great Depression of the 1930s, was resolved through a new type of redistributive capitalism, referred to as the “class compromise” of Fordism-Keynesianism, social democracy, New Deal capitalism, and so on (more on this below). As we have seen, capital responded to the next structural crisis, that of the 1970s, by going global. Each of these major episodes of structural crisis have presented this potential for systemic change. Historically, each has involved the breakdown of state legitimacy, escalating class and social struggles, and military conflicts. In the past, structural crises have led to a restructuring that includes new institutional arrangements, class relations, and accumulation activities that eventually resulted in a restabilization of the system and renewed capitalist expansion. Yet a new period of far-reaching restructuring through digitalization appears to be under way at this time. Before we return to this new wave of restructuring, let us focus on the nature of the current crisis, which shares aspects of earlier system-wide structural crises of the 1880s, the 1930s, and the 1970s. Yet there are several interrelated dimensions to the current crisis that I believe sets it apart from these earlier ones and suggest that a simple restructuring of the system will not lead to its restabilization—that is, our very survival requires now a revolution against global capitalism. Above all is the existential crisis posed by the ecological limits to the reproduction of the system. We have already passed tipping points in climate change, the nitrogen cycle, and diversity loss. For the first time ever, human conduct is intersecting with and fundamentally altering the earth system in such a way that threatens to bring about a sixth mass extinction.12 While capitalism cannot be held solely responsible for the ecological crisis, it is difficult to image that the environmental catastrophe can be resolved within the capitalist system given capital’s implacable impulse to accumulate and its accelerated commodification of nature. The ecological dimensions of global crisis have been brought to the forefront of the global agenda by the worldwide environmental justice movement. Communities around the world have come under the escalating repression of a global police state as they face off against transnational corporate plunder of their environment and demand environmental justice and action by governments to avert the climate catastrophe. And climate change refugees, who are likely to run into the hundreds of millions in the years ahead, are vilified by racist and neo-fascist forces and repressed by a global police state. This accelerated commodification of nature points to another underlying dimension of the current crisis. We are reaching limits to the extensive expansion of capitalism, in the sense that there are no longer any new territories of significance to integrate into world capitalism and new spaces to commodify are drying up. The capitalist system is by its nature expansionary. In each earlier structural crisis, the system went through a new round of extensive expansion—that is, incorporating new territories and populations into it—from waves of colonial conquest in earlier centuries, to the integration in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries of the former socialist bloc countries, China, India and other areas that had been marginally outside the system. There are no longer any new territories to integrate into world capitalism. At the same time, the privatization of education, health, utilities, basic services, and public lands are turning those spaces in global society that were outside of capital’s direct control into “spaces of capital,” so that intensive expansion—that is, the commodification of what were non-commodified resources and activities—is reaching depths never before seen. Commodification refers to the process of turning people, the things that people produce, and nature into things that are privately owned, have a monetary value, and that can be bought and sold. Capitalism by its nature must constantly expand intensively by commodifying more and more of the world. What is there left to commodify? Where can the system now expand? New spaces have to be violently cracked open and the peoples in these spaces must be repressed by a global police state. But what does exhaustion of spaces for extensive and intensive expansion imply for the reproduction of the system? The sheer magnitude of the means of violence and social control is unprecedented, as well as the magnitude and concentrated—and increasingly privatized—control over these means of violence along with the means of global communication and the production and circulation of symbols, images, and knowledge. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3, computerized wars, drone warfare, robot soldiers, bunkerbuster bombs, satellite surveillance, cyberwar, spatial control technology, and so forth, have changed the face of warfare, and more generally, of systems of social control and repression. We have arrived at the panoptical surveillance society, a point brought home by revelations of the defector from the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA), Edward Snowden, that the NSA monitored virtually every communication on the planet. It is no exaggeration to say that we are now in the age of thought control by those who control global flows of communication, information, and symbolic production. But most frightening is the production and deployment of a new generation of nuclear weapons and the threat of “limited” nuclear war.13 If global crisis leads to a new world war, the destruction would simply be unprecedented. Combined with ecological meltdown, it is difficult to see how humanity could survive such a conflagration. Global capitalism lends itself to escalating inter-national tensions with the potential to spill over into major interstate conflict. But we should not explain these tensions through the outdated nation-state/interstate mode of analysis that attributes such tensions to national rivalry and competition among national capitalist classes for international economic control. Rather, these tensions derive, above all, from an acute political contradiction in global capitalism that I already alluded to above: economic globalization takes places within a nation-state-based system of political authority. Nation-states face a contradiction between the need to promote transnational capital accumulation in their territories and their need to achieve political legitimacy. In the age of capitalist globalization, governments must attract to the national territory transnational corporate and financial investment, which requires providing capital with all the incentives associated with neo-liberalism—downward pressure on wages, deregulation, low or no taxes, privatization, fiscal austerity, and on so— that aggravate inequality, impoverishment, and insecurity for working and popular classes. As a result, states around the world have been experiencing spiraling crises of legitimacy. To put it in more technical terms, there is a contradiction between the accumulation function and the legitimacy function of nation-states. This situation generates bewildering, unstable, and seemingly contradictory politics. It helps explain the rise of far-right and neo-fascist forces that espouse rhetoric of nationalism and protectionism even as they promote neo-liberalism, such as the Trump government in the United States, and has confused some into believing that “deglobalization” is under way as we move backward to an earlier era of national protectionism. In fact, the “old protectionism” of the twentieth century aimed to protect national products and the national capitalist groups that produced them with tariffs and subsidies. The new protectionism—if we could call it that, as the term is extremely misleading and leads to much confusion—aims to create the conditions to attract transnational capital to national territories. Despite its protectionist rhetoric, for instance, the Trump White House called not for locking out foreign investors but for transnational investors from around the world to invest in the United States, enticed by a regressive tax reform, unprecedented deregulation, and some limited tariff walls that would benefit groups from anywhere in the world that establish operations behind them. “America is open for business,” Trump declared at the 2018 meeting of the global elite gathered for the annual conclave of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland: “Now is the perfect time to bring your business, your jobs and your investments to the United States.”14 And the biggest single beneficiary of steel tariffs that Trump imposed in 2018 on imported steel was ArcelorMittal, the Indian-based company that owns majority shares in U.S. Steel.15 Moreover, as we will see later, TCC contingents from countries around the world that appear to be in geopolitical competition are not just heavily invested in global police state but they are cross- and mutually invested in it. More to the point here, economic globalization as it has unfolded within the interstate system generates mounting international and geo-political tensions to the extent that the crisis exacerbates the problem of legitimacy and destabilizes national political systems and elite control. Inter-national tensions must be seen as derivative of the contradiction between the expansion of transnational capital within the framework of the nationstate/inter-state system, in which global capitalism pits nationally constrained workers against one another and sets up the conditions for the TCC to manipulate the crises of state legitimacy and the international tensions generated by this contradiction. The political tensions generated by this contradiction can and do take on the appearance of geo-political competition.16 Will the centrifugal pressures produced by this contradiction undercut the centripetal pressures brought about by economic globalization? Will these centrifugal pressures break out into open, largescale inter-state warfare?17 Will geo-political tensions “overdetermine” the corporate interests of the TCC? We need here to extend the analysis of transnational politics and the TNS in order to understand this dimension of global crisis, especially so considering that it is central to the story of global police state. Transnational elites have been clamoring for more effective TNS institutions, in part, in order to resolve this disjuncture between economic globalization and the nation-state system of political authority. However, the fragmentary and highly emergent nature of TNS apparatuses makes the effort problematic given both the dispersal of formal political authority across many nation-states and the loose nature of TNS apparatuses with no center or formal constitution. The more “enlightened” elite representatives of the TCC are now searching for ways to develop a more powerful TNS, one that could impose regulation on the global market and certain controls on unbridled global accumulation. They are seeking transnational mechanisms of “governance” that would allow the global ruling class to rein in the anarchy of the system in the interests of saving global capitalism from itself and from radical challenges from below—from both an insurgent Left and extreme Right. More than in any other forum, the politicized strata of the transnational elite comes together in the activities of the WEF, a “network of networks” for the TCC and the transnational elite that holds its famed annual meeting in Davos. Indeed, it is not for nothing that “Davos Man” has been used to describe the new global ruling class. WEF founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab called in 2008 for renovated forms of “global leadership” by the TCC: Whether it is poverty in Africa or the Haze over Southeast Asia, an increasing number of problems require bilateral, regional or global solutions and, in many cases, the mobilization of more resources than any single government can marshal … The limits of political power are increasingly evident. The lack of global leadership is glaring, not least because the existing global governance institutions are hampered by archaic conventions and procedures devised, in some instances, at the end of World War II. Sovereign power still rests with national governments, but authentic and effective global leadership has yet to emerge. Meanwhile, public governance at the local, national, regional, and international levels has weakened. Even the best leaders cannot operate successfully in a failed system.18 But if the transnational elite wants a stronger TNS in order to cement the TCC’s rule and stabilize the system, it has not been able to resolve the contradictory mandate it has accorded to the TNS. On the one hand, the TNS sets out to promote the conditions for capitalist globalization; on the other, it tries to resolve the myriad problems globalization creates: economic crisis, poverty, environmental degradation, chronic political instability, and military conflict. The TNS has had great difficulty addressing these issues because of the dispersal of formal political authority across many nation-states. To reiterate, TNS apparatuses are fragmentary; there is no center or formal constitution, and there is certainly no transnational enforcement capacity. These TNS apparatuses have not been able to substitute for a leading nation-state—what the international relations literature refers to as a “hegemon”—with enough power and authority to organize and stabilize the system, much less to impose regulations on transnational capital. The politicized strata of the TCC and transnationally oriented elites and organic intellectuals, including those who staff TNS institutions, attempt to define the long-term interests of the system and to develop policies, projects, and ideologies to secure these interests. Since the specific interests of the various components of the global power bloc are divergent, it is the TNSs’ role to unify and organize the various classes and fractions to uphold their long-term political interests against the threat of the exploited and oppressed classes around the world. But the inability of the TNS to impose coherence and regulation on transnational accumulation and to stabilize the system is also due to the vulnerability of the TCC as a class group in terms of its own internal disunity and fractionation, and its ~~blind~~ pursuit of immediate accumulation—that is, of its immediate and particular profit-seeking interests over the long-term or general interests of the class. There is of course a profound social dimension of global crisis. In these times of unprecedented worldwide inequalities, capitalist crisis breaks apart the social fabric and devastates communities everywhere. Billions of people around the world face struggles to survive from one day to the next, with no guarantee that they will succeed in this struggle (indeed, many are not and many more won’t). In academic terms we could call this a crisis of social reproduction, but this phrase does nothing to capture the depths of misery that poverty, disease, un- and underemployment, food insecurity, social exclusion, racist, xenophobic, and other forms of social violence into which billions are thrust on a daily basis, or to the persecution that they face as migrants, refugees, surplus labor, and so on. The next two chapters will take up these matters. However, let us point out that the social crisis is decidedly not a crisis for capital, and may even help it to reproduce its rule, until or unless it leads to mass rebellion that threatens the ruling groups’ control.

#### In the Peoples Democratic Dictatorship, the red guard ought to prioritize objectivity over advocacy

#### Our affirmation of the resolution isn’t a neutral defense of its truth, rather it’s a defense of a transition to communist governance through a protracted people’s war – In our New Democracy the red guard should deplatform bourgeoisie advocacy in favor of objectivity in service of the cultural revolution

Volland 21 [Nicolai Volland is Associate Professor of Asian Studies and Comparative Literature at the penn state university. His research focuses on modern Chinese literature and culture in its transnational dimensions, including cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, translation and transculturation, as well as reception and cultural consumption, 6-17-2021, The China Quarterly, Volume 246, “Revisiting the Public Sphere in 20th- and 21st-century China”, “[“Liberating the Small Devils”: Red Guard Newspapers and Radical Publics, 1966–1968](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/china-quarterly/article/liberating-the-small-devils-red-guard-newspapers-and-radical-publics-19661968/1B64D41ADF7DC64E7E99543EE55975DC)”, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/china-quarterly/article/liberating-the-small-devils-red-guard-newspapers-and-radical-publics-19661968/1B64D41ADF7DC64E7E99543EE55975DC]//sripad

**The rise of the Red Guard press was a radical break with the institutional conventions of journalism** established after the founding of the People’s Republic.18 Ever since 1949, the socialist Chinese press had been closely intertwined with the political-ideological regulatory structures embodied in the propaganda system. Party papers (dangbao) occupied the apex of this system at the national and provincial levels, and the integration of the press – Party papers and others alike – into the propaganda system had been ensured through Party committees within these work units. The assault on the Central Propaganda Department, declared a “demon’s den” (yanwang dian 阎王殿) by Mao, had rendered this central node of the propaganda system dysfunctional by late 1966. Following Lu Dingyi’s 陆定一 overthrow, the Propaganda Department ceased to function and was not rebuilt until 1977. Without support of the centre, local propaganda bureaus also came under assault and the surviving newspapers were left to figure out by themselves how to engage in journalism amid a disruptive political campaign. The Red Guard papers faced an analogous situation. There was no precedent, no institutional chain of command and no obvious model to follow. They had to reinvent journalism. **Mao had called for “smashing the demon’s den” and “liberating the small devils” ( jiefang xiao gui 解放小鬼).19 Having achieved their freedom, the papers had to figure out what to do next.**

Red Guard newspapers did what they could. In search of legitimacy, they turned to two sources: Chairman Mao and the big papers. From their onset, Red Guard publications generally tried to emulate the big papers and especially the esteemed Renmin ribao 人民日报. This presented a conundrum, as the big papers were the targets of attack and an “old” mode to be overcome. In many respects, however, they were the only model available. Red Guard newspapers adopted standard journalistic practices, publishing founding notices ( fakanci 发刊词), editorials (shelun 社论) and commentator articles (ben bao pinglunyuan 本报评论员). The Red Guard press frequently reprinted articles from People’s Daily, Liberation Army Daily (Jiefangjun bao 解放军报) and Red Flag (Hongqi 红旗), which was a practice common for provincial-level papers. They also peppered their articles with quotations from Chairman Mao, copying the practice, established by People’s Daily at the start of the Cultural Revolution, of setting these quotations in bold print. Most notably, Red Guard papers imitated the visual appearance and layout of the big papers. They ran quotations from Chairman Mao on the top of the frontpage and invariably chose Mao’s calligraphy for their masthead. All of these practices were designed to bolster their legitimacy and limit their vulnerability in a volatile political environment.

The fortunes of the Red Guard press waxed and waned over the ensuing months, closely tracking the shifts in the Cultural Revolution’s political direction. They thrived with the Red Guard movement in the autumn of 1966 and received a further boost in January 1967 as the Cultural Revolution entered its most radical phase. During another radical phase, in May 1967, the Central Committee issued the first ever circular that officially acknowledged the Red Guard press. **The promulgation of the “Opinions on improving the press and propaganda of revolutionary mass organizations” was an attempt to establish rules for the rapidly proliferating Red Guard press.20 The “Opinions” endorsed the existence and function of the Red Guard press: “In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the papers and leaflets comp iled and printed by revolutionary mass organizations play an important role on the propaganda front.”**21 The document also encouraged these mass organizations to “consult important editorials and commentaries of People’s Daily, Red Flag and Liberation Army Daily for their own propaganda.”22 **The effort to more closely integrate the mainstream press with the Red Guard papers and to establish a rule-based system demonstrates an attempt to envision a new structure for the public sphere, a structure with a permanent place for the Red Guard press**.

At other times, attempts to rein in the revolutionary mass organizations, such as in February, June and September 1967, also hurt these organizations’ propaganda organs. A document issued by the Beijing Municipal Revolutionary Committee on 30 June, for instance, called for out-of-town Red Guards to leave the city and ordered local mass organizations to confine their activities to their home units, a measure that affected the burgeoning Red Guard press in the capital.23 The Beijing authorities reiterated these demands in the wake of the Wuhan Incident. A decree issued on 8 September bluntly declared, “Out-of-town people are forbidden to set up liaison stations in universities, schools, organs or work units in Beijing, and they are not allowed to publish newspapers in Beijing.”24 After September 1967, the vast majority of Red Guard papers across the nation were forced to close down. By early 1968, only the most prestigious papers remained – i.e. those published by large umbrella organizations and thus with the strongest claims to legitimacy.

Journalistic Metadiscourses

The proliferation of Red Guard publications at the very moment when the regulatory structures of the propaganda system were disintegrating did not result in the growth of a public sphere in the Habermasian sense. **Neither the numerical explosion of press outlets nor the shrill denunciations dominating their pages make a case for an intermediate sphere of public reasoning**. But how, then, did the Red Guard papers envision their own role and the future of journalistic practice in China? While it is impossible to generalize about such a large and heterogenous body of material, some answers may be gleaned from the more self-consciously reflexive among the Red Guard press. I therefore turn to a special segment within the vast landscape of Red Guard newspapers: publications of mass organizations within the news media themselves. **Just like in other work units, “revolutionary rebels” seized power in newspaper offices across the nation and soon set out to publish their own papers. And, just as elsewhere, these papers provided a platform to denounce the old leadership, detailing its mistakes and misdeeds. They hence offer important insights into the functioning of the press before 1966**. At the same time, these papers contain deliberations about the efforts to move beyond the mistakes of the past and create a genuinely new journalism. In the course of these debates, these papers inevitably reflect on themselves and about the Red Guard press as an institution.

Such metadiscursive publications constitute a small but significant subset of the Red Guard press. A rebel organization of Xinhua News Agency employees, for instance, published the short-lived Xinhua zhanbao 新华战报 (Xinhua Battle Bulletin, four issues, 12 May–15 September 1967).25 Another group, also from Xinhua News Agency, allied with the journalism branch of a larger coalition of rebels to issue Xinwen zhanxian 新闻战线 (News Front).26 Journalists at the prestigious Guangming ribao 光明日报 (Guangming Daily) founded Guangming zhanbao 光明战报 (Guangming Battle Bulletin).27 Likewise, rebels at local newspapers in Guangzhou, Guangxi, Fuzhou and Hunan all produced their own papers.28 Perhaps the most interesting of these self-reflexive publications is Xinwen zhanbao 新闻战报 (News Battle Bulletin).29 Founded by a coalition of rebel groups calling itself the “Capital news criticism liaison station,” Xinwen zhanbao published a total of 19 issues, making it one of the longest lasting publications in the news sector. It boasted extensive ties with other papers and with the leading journalism research institutions, lending it considerable theoretical firepower.30 Through its umbrella organization, Hongdaihui 红代会 (Red Guard Congress), Xinwen zhanbao maintained close relations with the Cultural Revolution Small Group, the radical hardcore clique surrounding Jiang Qing 江青 and Zhang Chunqiao 张春桥. 31 In the six months of its existence, Xinwen zhanbao produced a significant amount of theoretical reflections about the Chinese press. Writing from the apex of the Chinese news sector, **the paper’s authors offered its readers extensive insights into past and current developments of journalism in socialist China, making the paper an essential source for the Cultural Revolution in the news sector.**

The inaugural issue of Xinwen zhanbao, dated 28 April 1967, offers a good overview of the main issues occupying the paper, its general tone and its discursive structure. The front page, apart from an oversized portrait of the Chairman, consists of a collection of Mao quotations related to the press. Page two contains an editorial, a report on the Liaison Station’s founding, and brief news items from the news sector itself. On page three, a lengthy article denounces Liu Shaoqi’s 刘少奇 policies on news and propaganda. Page four, finally, must be read as an inversion of page one: under the title “Liu Shaoqi’s black words in journalistic circles,” readers find extensive quotations on the press from Liu. With Mao’s instructions on the one hand, and Liu’s utterances on the other, the discursive field for the assessment of the Chinese press and the theoretical tenets guiding this field have been staked out. The Cultural Revolution in the news sector, as elsewhere, is presented as the culmination of an extended struggle between two lines represented by Mao and Liu.

The logic of two-line struggle is formulated in one of the quotations gracing Xinwen zhanbao’s front page, which in fact is taken from the 8 August 1966 Central Committee decision: “**To overthrow a political power, it is always necessary, first of all, to create public opinion, to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary class as well as for the counter-revolutionary class. This thesis of** comrade Mao Zedong’s has been proved entirely correct in practice.”32 **The press, in other words, is a site of acute class struggle and both sides use it for their own political purposes**. Xinwen zhanbao hence sets out to dig up evidence of Liu Shaoqi’s attempts to manipulate the press in order to undermine Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line. An article in issue eight, for example, denounces the “**three black flags**” (san mian heiqi 三面黑旗) of Liu Shaoqi’s press theory: **(1) the allegedly bourgeois concepts of “truthfulness”** (zhenshi 真实), **“impartiality”** (gongzheng 公正) **and “objectivity”** (keguan 客观); (**2) the idea of “press freedom”** (xinwen ziyou 新闻自由); **and (3) the notion of “entertainment”** (quweixing 趣味性).33 **In a** **society where class struggle still exists, so the authors write, there can be no such notions as impartiality and objectivity; any compromise with bourgeois ideas advantages the class enemy and works against the revolutionary proletariat. “The proletarian press is a tool of the dictatorship of the proletariat,” the article declares. “Therefore, it must resolutely stand on the proletariat’s side and make propagating and defending the invincible Mao Zedong Thought its most basic task.”**34 The Chinese press under Liu Shaoqi’s command had erred on this account. The article offers ample “evidence” of perceived mistakes that often went back to the 1950s, and the authors do not hesitate to twist Liu’s words by quoting them out of context.35 **They are unapologetic about these partisan distortions – they are not bound to impartiality and objectivity,** and the article itself is a demonstration of the new journalistic practices proposed by Xinwen zhanbao

Xinwen zhanbao and other papers of the metadiscursive variety thus embarked on a dual mission: to criticize pre-Cultural Revolutionary journalistic practices and to propose new modes of journalism. While both of these tasks were intertwined, the papers tended to dwell on the criticism of the “Liu line,” which apparently was the easier part of their mission. The demand for partiality, in theory as well as practice, was not in fact a new one. Partiinost (dangxing 党性), or partymindedness, had been a crucial requirement of the Communist press in both the Soviet Union and China before and after 1949. Papers such as People’s Daily can hardly be called objective or impartial, nor were they ever supposed to be. What the Red Guard press accuses Liu Shaoqi and the PRC’s propaganda system of, then, is having not lived up to the demands of a proper Communist press. They denounce the Propaganda Department and the papers under its control for having followed the (essentially correct) guidelines of a true Communist press in a half-hearted manner. **What was wrong with the Chinese press before 1966, in other words, was not so much its premises, but rather its failure to reflect these premises in actual journalistic practice**. Far from regarding the public sphere as an autonomous space, then, the journalism promoted by Xinwen zhanbao makes a case for **a battlefield, a site of acute struggle between antagonistic parties. Its position is decidedly praetorian – in a setting without effective hierarchical controls and valid rules of engagement, extreme partisanship prevails.**

There was, however, one problem the paper and its peers had to grapple with: how to ensure the proper direction of the press in such a praetorian public sphere? The Party organization and its surrogates in the editorial rooms of the nation’s press had proven themselves unreliable guardians of the partisan position in the two-line struggle. But if the Party and its official press could not be entrusted with the stewardship of public communication, who else could guarantee that the nation’s press would uphold the correct line? Who would be the stewards and the guardians of the radical public of the future? Deliberations on this most crucial problem, on the central conundrum of the Cultural Revolutionary public sphere, would lead the metadiscursive papers to some surprising conclusions.

The Power of the Masses

Chairman Mao has taught us: “The people, and only the people, are the moving force creating world history.” The mass line is the fundamental line of a proletarian political party. How they treat the masses is the benchmark for revolution, non-revolution and counterrevolution, and it has always been the focus for the proletariat’s revolutionary line and the bourgeoisie’s reactionary line. In the same manner, there exists a fierce two-line struggle on the question of how to run newspapers.

An article signed Lu Qun 路群 (an apparent allusion to qunzhong luxian 群众路线, or mass line, a crucial Maoist concept) in the 30 July issue of Xinwen zhanbao addresses the issue of two-line struggle but shifts the emphasis in a new direction: the role of the masses.37 The problem of a mass line in journalism – how to write for the masses and also give them a voice – had haunted Chinese socialist journalism since the 1940s, a tension that troubled other industries as well and was captured in the formula “both red and expert.”38 Articles in Xinwen zhanbao and other metadiscursive papers routinely accuse Liu Shaoqi of ignoring or circumventing the demands of the mass line. **For a bottom-up revolutionary movement, the question of mass involvement was naturally of crucial importance and the Red Guard papers seemed to propose a solution to the red/expert conundrum.** They themselves represented a genuinely popular form of journalism. Could the emerging Red Guard press effectively do away with the pretentions of a politically suspect, exclusive journalistic professionalism?

The Lu Qun article promises a frontal attack on professionalism in the press. Entitled “Open ferocious fire on Liu Shaoqi’s ‘professional’ journalistic line” (Xiang Liu Shaoqi de “zhuanjia” ban bao luxian menglie kaihuo 向刘少奇的“专 家”办报路线猛烈开火), it presents a sustained argument for **new forms of grassroots journalism**. Sporadic efforts to give the proletariat a voice in the Chinese newspaper system date back to the 1940s. Both in Yan’an and in the early 1950s, the CCP had encouraged the cultivation of “worker-peasant correspondents” (gong-nong tongxunyuan 工农通讯员), an institution originating in the Soviet Union.39 These attempts to involve the proletariat in Chinese socialist journalism, however, had failed to change the basic conventions of CCP newspaper practice. **Journalism, so the article maintains, remained an essentially top down practice controlled by the Party’s propaganda system, which had utterly failed the test of the Cultural Revolution**. “Lu Qun” **demands a new approach to implementing the mass line in journalism: “Without this line, it is impossible to guarantee the correct political direction of the Party papers, impossible to realize the Party’s leadership of the press, impossible to accomplish the political task of the Party papers; without this line, the newspapers cannot become the eyes and ears, the tongue and throat of the Party, cannot become the bridge and the bond between the Party and the masses**.”40 Mass involvement in the entire journalistic process, from news collecting to the writing of articles and editorials, would be essential for both the papers’ success and the proper functioning of the Party itself

But what is the benchmark of mass involvement in journalism? It is in their answer to this crucial question that the article’s author(s) venture onto new terrain:

Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought has always held that **a proletarian party paper must not only rely on the masses of workers, peasants, and soldiers for its making, but the judgement and criticism of the papers’ correctness and quality should also be made by the worker-peasant-soldier masses.** Only if a paper is endorsed and approved by the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers can it count as a truly revolutionary newspaper.41

**This proposition, offered in the article’s final sentence, effectively cuts out the Party altogether. It turns a top-down system into a bottom-up system – a radical inversion of existing practices. The ultimate source of a newspaper’s legitimacy is no longer its endorsement by the hierarchical administrative system of the party-state, but rather “approval” from the masses, from the grassroots itself. It is up to them to convey (or withhold) authority to the press**. In a sign of how far the article pushes its argument, “Lu Qun” attributes what is presented as a commonly agreed principle (“has always held”) to “Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought,” but fails to provide a more specific source. In a rhetorical environment ever eager to invoke Chairman Mao’s utterances as a source of support, the article’s failure on this occasion to come up with a suitable quotation indicates that the call for popular legitimacy, and the denial of the Party’s authority, was pushing the boundaries of the discursive terrain. **The article advocates a journalistic landscape without the monitoring framework of the propaganda apparatus, a self-regulatory system of news production originating from the masses and addressed to the masses. How would such a radically new system look in practice?**

The closest equivalent of the media landscape envisioned in the article could be found, in fact, in the wallposters that had provided the model and the source of legitimacy for the earliest xiaobao. The Red Guard papers were clearly aware of this kinship, and the metadiscursive publications contain many reflections on dazibao and their function within the Cultural Revolutionary information ecosystem. Issue 17 (15 September) of Xinwen zhanbao portrays the ideal of mass involvement in this new ecosystem with a set of five illustrations that depict the discursive practice of wallposters (see Figure 1). The illustrations, which take up the top half of the issue’s last page, render with much liveliness all the stages of wallposter production. In the top most picture, workers, a peasant (identified by his straw hat) and soldiers read a denunciation of Liu Shaoqi – his name is crossed out, a common practice in wallposters. The second picture shows what are presumably Red Guards in PLA uniforms pasting new posters to a wall. The central image depicts two Red Guards studying the latest instructions from Chairman Mao and copying them into notebooks, possibly to reprint them in the Red Guard papers. The image to the right shows the masses writing new posters. The grand panorama at the bottom presents the masses, who have acted as writers and producers of wallposters in the pictures above, now in their role of readers. Along a grand avenue that suggests Chang’an Boulevard 长安街 in Beijing, they read and avidly discuss the latest wallposters, whose layout, incidentally, resembles those of the Red Guard papers (note the Mao posters to the left of the “mastheads”). The medium of wallposters, then, signals a route to bridge the gap between writers and readers, between the producers and consumers of journalism. What is notably absent in the collage is any sign of institutional authority, a system of controls or approval, of powers intervening in the masses’ journalistic project.42 The flat hierarchy presented in the idealized depiction of the wallposters levels the field not just by erasing the difference between writers and readers but also by imagining an organic flow of information that is horizontal rather than vertical, as the wide-angled panorama of the final image drives home visually. Yet while wallposters had become an important segment of the Cultural Revolutionary media landscape, they were not mass media. Their mode of dissemination entailed a necessarily limited scope. This is where the crucial difference between wallposters and xiaobao lies.

The quasi-autonomous nature of wallposters, their obvious strength in the Red Guards’ eyes, was checked by their limited reach, a weakness the Red Guard papers compensated for. To justify similarly flat hierarchies and, accordingly, **the journalistic autonomy inherent in a true grassroots press, however, required a more robust legitimation. In spite of the Cultural Revolution’s antiestablishmentarian character, including Mao’s call to “bombard the headquarters,” both Mao and the remnants of the Party apparatus had hesitated to hand over power completely to the radical mass organizations at critical junctions such as the insurrections of the “January storm” that toppled provincial Party committees nationwide. This hesitance had also left the boundaries of the Red Guard papers’ autonomy in a state of flux**

It is in an effort to define the proper scope and the basis of the Red Guard press’s legitimacy that Xinwen zhanbao published, in issue 19 (28 September), an unusually eloquent and boldly argued article with the title “In praise of the Red Guard newspapers” (Zan hongweibing bao 赞红卫兵报).43 Making a case for the Red Guard papers and their permanent place in a post-Cultural Revolutionary PRC, the article is among the most radical proposals emerging from the metadiscursive papers. It begins with a brief history of the Red Guard papers that invests them with the utmost amount of symbolic legitimacy but then quickly turns to the question of mass involvement in journalistic practice by invoking Mao Zedong: “With our newspapers, too, we must rely on everybody, on the masses of the people, on the whole Party to run them, not merely on a few persons behind closed doors.”44 Mao’s call for popular involvement in newspaper making, taken from his widely transmitted 1948 conversations with journalists at Jin-Sui ribao 晋绥日报 (Jin-Sui Daily), is rhetorically juxtaposed to the idea of news professionalism, attributed to Liu Shaoqi. Surveying the history of Party journalism since 1949, the author(s) conclude that the Chinese press has consistently repressed Mao’s demands and favours Liu’s line. Until the appearance of the Red Guard papers, that is:

**The little generals of the Red Guards have never studied the “science” of journalism, they know nothing about the “five Ws” and the “eight factors.”45 But they are warriors in the revolutionary struggle, storm troopers of the Cultural Revolution, each of their pens is a sword directed at the enemy, every single one of their papers is a battleground. The little generals of the Red Guards live among the masses, they have the broadest mass base, their newspapers carry out the mass line in the most thorough way. The major problem that remains unresolved after more than a decade – the detachment of those doing the reporting from those doing practical work – has been finally overcome in the Red Guard newspapers.**

The article effectively links mass involvement in the process of newspaper making – the mass line in journalism – with the specific needs of class struggle. **The Cultural Revolution itself had been defined from the outset as an instance of acute class struggle. Rather than withering away in a socialist nation, the bourgeoisie had regained momentum through “those in authority taking the capitalist road”** (zou zibenzhuyi daolu de dangquan pai 走资本主义道路的当权派).46 The accordingly intensified class struggle was now concentrated in the cultural realm, hence the need for a cultural revolution. In the PRC’s political imaginary, **the press is of course a crucial subsector of the cultural realm, the nation’s newspapers becoming the very battleground on which the struggle between the two lines is waged**. The article highlights this reasoning, noting that the Red Guard papers are not just the “warriors” and “storm troopers” of the Cultural Revolution, but “a battleground.” **The newspapers, journals and pamphlets published by mass organizations all over the country, all hundreds and thousands of them, play a most crucial role at the very centre of the political maelstrom engulfing the nation.**

The big question, then, is: are the Red Guard papers more than a transitional phenomenon, a convenient but momentary tool? In other words, would the Red Guard press have a permanent role to play in the post-Cultural Revolutionary nation? The authors’ answer, in the article’s final paragraph, expands on the line of reasoning outlined above and is clearly in the affirmative. **The Party press had comprehensively failed as a bulwark against attacks from the class enemy, and only the Red Guard papers were able to defeat the enemy**. The Red Guard papers, consequently, would be needed in the future, **for the same reason and purpose: to guard against future threats to the socialist system**. The article concludes with the paean:

With their resolute and courageous action, the Red Guard newspapers have criticized the bourgeois, revisionist news line in a most thorough way. This is a great revolution with mass involvement on a scale unprecedented in the history of the proletarian press; it is a new victory for Chairman Mao’s news line. The Red Guard newspapers have made a tremendously useful and valuable contribution to the experience of the proletarian press, a contribution that deserves to be seriously studied and explored by every revolutionary news worker. Let us loudly and with revolutionary enthusiasm praise this great new thing of historical significance, let us loudly and with revolutionary enthusiasm praise this great innovation in the history of the proletarian press!

#### Its try or die for transition

#### Innovation

Nieto & Mateo 20 [Maxi Nieto is a PhD is sociology from the University of Elche and writer for Ciber Comunismo and Juan Pablo Mateo is a visiting scholar in the department of Economics at The New School, New York and economics professor at the University of Valladolid (Spain). January 2020, “Dynamic Efficiency in a Planned Economy: Innovation and Entrepreneurship Without Markets”, Science & Society, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338327276\_Dynamic\_Efficiency\_in\_a\_Planned\_Economy\_Innovation\_and\_Entrepreneurship\_Without\_Markets //](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338327276_Dynamic_Efficiency_in_a_Planned_Economy_Innovation_and_Entrepreneurship_Without_Markets%20//)gbs jacobs & majeed]

4.1. Innovation and social property. Innovation occurs as a result of a long and complex accumulation process of knowledge and creativity, where very rarely is a single individual solely responsible. This is an essentially social process in which a plurality of actors and institutions contribute in very different spheres and circumstances. The Austrian School presents an idealized image of innovation in capitalist economies, attributing it exclusively to the figure of the enterprising entrepreneur — whether in a disruptive sense (Schumpeter), or in a strictly coordinating sense (Kirzner). In fact, the entrepreneurial function develops within specific institutional frameworks and organized structures, both at the micro and macro levels. In this sense, a socialist economy has significant advantages for developing technological and business innovation, as opposed to a capitalist economy: i) socialism allows for greater and more efficient allocation of resources to R&D&I activities, thanks to centralized control of the surplus and the absence of sumptuous consumption and a rentier population; ii) there are no obstacles (property rights) to the free dissemination of new products and techniques; iii) the equal distribution of resources (which guarantees that no basic needs go unmet) allows for discovery and fuller development of talent, which likewise occurs when work is undertaken through tasks that are more balanced for the majority and less routine; iv) in allocating investment, more information is available and the criteria are more varied than mere expectation of profit; v) social ownership is more inclusive and participatory than capitalist enterprise in terms of generating and mobilizing knowledge (tacit or not) and encouraging innovation; vi) socialism does not impose short-term innovation cycles looking to generate products that can be commercialized in, say, four to six months, as is typical in capitalist economies. Under these favorable general conditions, the development of innovation in a socialist economy would unfold in three fundamental areas: i) Strategic planning: this traces the main lines of scientific, technological, and innovation research. Here would enter programs for the development of new technologies and infrastructures, as well as visionary projects that explore eventualities and future scenarios. This sort of research is carried out in universities, scientific academies, technological institutes, and other specialized centers in coordination with the business world. The process would consist in testing different alternative productive projects or techniques in order to verify results, in connection with the companies and sectors being served. ii) Companies: research, design, and innovation departments. iii) Business entrepreneurship: individuals and teams put forward proposals in hopes of securing financing. For any of these three areas, material incentives would exist that reward the degree to which the freely programmed objectives are achieved, in addition to purely social or moral incentives such as social recognition or professional and personal fulfilment. In the next section, we focus on how socialist entrepreneurship — something that the Austrian School considers impossible — would ostensibly work. 4.2. Ecosystems for innovation and entrepreneurship. In today’s most dynamic capitalist economies, entrepreneurship and business innovation are developed mainly in the so-called innovation ecosystems, which are institutional environments dedicated to promoting symbiotic interaction among the different actors involved in the process of creating and transforming companies and industries. This sort of institutional framework represents the antithesis of the liberal mythology where the individual capitalist–entrepreneur operates in a purely commercial environment, since these ecosystems are based on public institutions and resources as well as procedures that are not strictly mercantile.9 An efficient and dynamic socialist economy needs institutional environments capable of fostering and channeling the initiative of individuals with special talents to translate innovative ideas into business projects. It must be clear that an ecosystem of socialist innovation does not substitute for, but instead complements, the innovations developed by particular state institutions and programs (such as the transition to a new source of energy, new materials, etc.) as well 9 In the case of Spain, think tanks and capitalist consultants openly admit that “there is not enough private capital to invest in new companies, either through individual investment or through venture capital funds” (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2015, 32). as innovations taking place in the industrial design departments of businesses. The actors involved in such an ecosystem are essentially the same as those participating in the equivalent ecosystems of the current capitalist economies. Principal differences would lie in the form of interaction among them (in the absence of mercantile links), their decision-making capacity (since no private property rights adhere), and the types of rules in force (including the incentive system). Among the main actors would be the following:

#### b. Emissions

Malm 20 [Andreas Malm is associate senior lecturer in human ecology at Lund University. He is author of Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming and Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency: War Communism in the Twenty-First Century. September 2020, “Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency: War Communism in the Twenty-First Century”, Verso Books //GBS Majeed & Jacobs]

The impending catastrophe and how to combat it In the second week of September 1917, Lenin penned a long text called The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It. ‘Unavoidable catastrophe is threatening Russia’, it begins; the breath of death is over the land and ‘everybody says this. Everybody admits it. Everybody has decided it is so. Yet nothing is being done.’ World War I, the Urcatastrophe of the century, had haemorrhaged Russia and the other belligerent countries and, so it seemed, put civilisation itself on the deathbed. ‘The war has created such an immense crisis, has so strained the material and moral forces of the people, has dealt such blows at the entire modern social organisation, that humanity must now choose between perishing’ or transitioning to ‘a superior mode of production’. Russia stood before the spectre of famine. The war had so torn apart the country that all production apparatuses and logistical structures that would normally ensure basic provisioning were out of commission and, for as long as the war went on, beyond repair. As if that were not enough, heavy floods in the spring of 1917 washed away roads and railway lines. The crisis took a new plunge in August, when grain prices suddenly doubled and Petrograd faced the challenge of surviving without flour. ‘Famine, genuine famine’, one government official complained, ‘has seized a series of towns and provinces – famines vividly expressed by an absolute insufficiency of objects of nutrition already leading to death’. It was in this situation that Lenin wrote his text. In the run-up to October, he and the Bolsheviks were suspended in a moment of abysmal emergency: war behind them, war to the side of them, famine advancing. Lenin obsessed over the breakdown. ‘We are nearing ruin with increasing speed’, he would write; ‘no progress is being made, chaos is spreading irresistibly’; ‘famine, accompanied by unprecedented catastrophe, is becoming a greater menace to the whole country week by week’. What could be done about it? Part of the answer had already been provided by the states fighting the war. To prevent their food systems from collapsing utterly, they had interfered in markets in a manner that pre-war liberal doctrines would never have licensed. Governments from Paris to Petrograd had ‘outlined, determined, applied and tested a whole series of control measures, which consist almost invariably in uniting the population and in setting up or encouraging unions’ and rationing and regulating consumption. The situation had itself ‘suggested the way out’ by calling forth ‘the most extreme practical measures; for without extreme measures, death – immediate and certain death from starvation – awaits millions of people’. But those measures had an obvious limitation: they dealt with symptoms. The drivers of catastrophe were left untouched. The inter-imperialist war and its primum mobile – simple ordinary capital accumulation – were kept going, leaving procurement systems on the edge or, as in Russia, over it. Here, then, was Lenin’s wager: to take measures of the kind already instituted by the warring states, step them up a notch and deploy them against the drivers of catastrophe. First was to end the war. Second was to get the grain supplies under control, seize stocks from rich landowners, nationalise banks and cartels, end private property in the key means of production – a revolution, as Lenin constantly agitated in these months, to stave off the worst catastrophe, which was why it must not be deferred. Against the Kerensky government’s feeble attempts to restore order, he railed that ‘it is unable to avoid collapse, because it is impossible to escape from the claws of the terrible monster of imperialist war and famine nurtured by world capitalism unless one renounces bourgeois relationships’ and ‘passes to revolutionary measures’. At the same time, his rhetorical gambit was to profess that the means for achieving this were at hand, almost uncontroversial. ‘All the state would have to do would be to draw freely on the rich store of control measures which are already known and have been used in the past.’ Indeed, he alleged that any government that wished to combat the impending catastrophe, whatever its affiliation, would have to take those radicalised measures. The objective logic of the situation left no other choice. Now, if we, for a moment, put aside the very considerable historical complications known to everyone, we can see that the logic of the present situation, mutatis mutandis, is not all that dissimilar. So what kind of control measures could be envisioned? Here we must again stay at the level of a rough sketch. Yes, this enemy can be deadly, but it is also beatable States in advanced capitalist countries could claim to have acted on the dangers of pandemics the moment they made the following announcement: today, we are launching a comprehensive audit of all supply chains and import flows running into our country. With our amazing capacity for surveillance and data collection, we’ll shift from citizens to companies, open their books, conduct thorough inputoutput analyses (of the kind scientists already excel at) and ascertain just how much land from the tropics they appropriate. We shall then terminate such appropriation, by cutting off chains that run into tropical forests and, insofar as any can be classified as ‘essential’, redirect them to other locations. Every Noranda, every Skanska and Engie will be withdrawn. The time has come to pull in the claws of unequal exchange, now a menace to all. We shall pay for tropical areas previously devoted to northern consumption to be reforested and rewilded. This will compensate for lost export revenues – not as charity or even a drain on our budgets, but as a running investment in the habitability of this planet, an establishment and maintenance of sanctuaries on which our health depends. We are here simply adhering to the categorical recommendations from scientists (whom we’ll put on the stage for regular briefings on national television): There is an urgent need to stop deforestation and invest in afforestation and reforestation globally. In response to the viral outbreaks, billions of dollars are spent on eradicating the infection, providing services to humans, and developing diagnostic, treatment and vaccination strategies. However, no or less attention is given to the primary level of prevention such as forestation and respecting wildlife habitats. The world should realize the importance of forests and the biodiversity carrying deadly viruses – this from four China-based scientists, venting some despair amid Covid-19. Similar advice has been given for years. ‘The most effective way to prevent viral zoonosis is to maintain the barriers between natural reservoirs and human society.’ Barriers? There is a force at work in human society that by its very nature cannot countenance such a thing. But again, the scientists: ‘The most effective place to address such zoonotic threats is at the wildlife-human interface. A key challenge in doing this is to simultaneously protect wildlife and their habitats’ – the most effective, and the most costefficient. ‘Allocation of global resources from high-income countries to pandemic mitigation programs in the most high-risk EID [emerging infectious disease] hotspot countries should be an urgent priority for global health security’, says the Pike paper. It estimates a tenfold return on such investment. Written six years before Covid-19, it speculates on the damage a zoonotic pandemic could wreak on the world economy and finds that mitigation at the source – reining in trade-driven plantations, livestock, timber, mining – would be a fantastically optimal way of saving money. This is evidently not a guarantee that it will happen. But the northern states of our fantasy have now committed themselves to reason and proclaim: this is the right and necessary thing to do, for us and everyone else on this planet. The immediate beneficiaries will be people living in or next to tropical forests, always first in line for spillover. But our control measures will also spare ourselves from living under this Damocles sword to the end of our days. So the war on wild nature starts to wind down. This begins with a ban on importing meat from countries in or bordering on the tropics. Can there be anything more nonessential? And yet beef is, as we have seen, the one commodity most destructive to these wonderlands of biodiversity. Meat consumption in general is the surest way to waste land, and any extensive reforestation – combined with a protein-needy human population of ten billion or more – presupposes its reduction. Mandatory global veganism would probably be the endpoint most salutary for all. It would give some room back to wild nature and disengage the human economy from the pathogen pools; increased meat consumption is the fastest way to dive deeper. But as economies are currently operating, neither vegans nor vegetarians in the North go (as we often like to think) free of guilt: soybean, palm oil, coffee, chocolate flow as much, or even more, into our stomachs. Control measures for addressing spillover should not follow dietary guidelines, but latitudinal gradients and ecological knowledge. Given what we know about bats, their habitats must have priority, be it steak or flapjacks that stream out of them. Clearly it would be the state that would have to do this. No mutual aid group in Bristol could even hypothetically initiate a programme of this kind. ‘We need (for a certain transitional period) a state. This is what distinguishes us from the anarchists’, with Lenin – or with Wallace: ‘In the face of the potential catastrophe, it would indeed seem most prudent to begin placing draconian restraints on existing plantation and animal monocultures, the driving forces behind present pandemic emergence.’ Note the word ‘draconian’. Progressives of all stripes might shudder at it, but they should return to the chapter on the working day in the first volume of Capital – the ten hours’ day being the original victory of the proletariat, realised when enforcement finally became a little harsh, after all the laxities and prevarication of the early factory legislation. One doesn’t curb capitalist exploitation by carrots. Tropical forests have a recent counterpart to the ten hours’ day: the tenure of Lula. Between 2004 and 2012, deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon underwent its most rapid reduction in modern times, all the more remarkable for running against the trends in the rest of Latin America and Southeast Asia. By what means did the Lula governments accomplish this? By turning some degree of hard power on land-hungry capital: expanding protected areas, registering land properties, monitoring rainforests via satellites, enforcing the forest code and actually punishing those responsible for illegal logging. In 2012, the rate of deforestation stood 84 per cent below its peak of eight years prior. The country that holds two million species, or one tenth of the earth’s total, gave its forests a reprieve, slashing CO 2 emissions by some 40 per cent – perhaps the most impressive mitigation of zoonotic and climatic disaster on record. It didn’t last, of course. ‘Rosa Luxemburg has a great line about revolution being like a locomotive going uphill: if it’s not kept moving, it slides back, and reaction wins. The same can be said of reform. Lula’s two terms could have been a good first act in a transition toward something else; but there was no plan for a second act’, as one scholar of Brazil has noted. Instead came the far right and the abolition of every traffic light ever installed in the Amazon. What should really make one shudder is to think of the zoonotic and climatic legacy of Bolsonaro. Then what of China? After SARS, the state took some perfunctory measures to stem the wildlife trade, promulgating laws with loopholes big enough for rhinoceroses to walk through. It allowed for wild animals to be bred on farms (the Huanong Brothers). The protected species list was last updated in 1990 and omitted at least one thousand native species – including bats – the consumption of which was thereby unregulated, regardless of the public health consequences. Penalties were paltry, enforcement lax, ‘high profits and mild punishment driving the dealers’ to continue accumulating capital – until SARSCoV-2 prodded the state to ban the consumption of any wildlife, from freedom or captivity. Scientists and others worried that the legislation would fray this time too. One team from China writing in Science urged a permanent ban on consumption as well as possession, backed up by stiff penalties; Jingjing Yuan and colleagues went a step further and called for ‘sentence to life prison’ for anyone eating wild. Processing, transporting, marketing wild animals should be similarly sanctioned, the state maintaining a list of species authorised for trade – a list that could be periodically shortened – and sending inspectors into the markets on the fly (recalling the factory inspectors). What could be said against such a tough line? It has been argued that the moral norms of consumers should instead be coaxed into sobriety. The argument ignores three factors. First, if SARS was not enough to scare the clientele away from wet markets – research indicates that awareness of the risks did little to put it off – and if SARS-CoV-2 could not be relied on to do the job either, as some signs suggested – online sellers touted medicines containing rhino horn and other rare animal parts as cures for corona – then apparently one cannot entrust this question to individual enlightenment. Second, enforced laws change norms. The prohibition of child labour in factories and slave labour on plantations clinched their status as unacceptable practices; without those laws, some callous exploiters might have continued to this day. The edification may outlast the laws themselves. One of the few success stories Felbab-Brown can relate in The Extinction Market concerns the use of rhino horn for the making of the Yemeni daggers known as jambiyas. When demand soared in the 1970s, this market became a prime culprit in dragging rhino populations to extinction. But then someone intervened. Interestingly enough, the communist government of South Yemen was far more effective in eliminating demand for rhino-horn jambiyas by eliminating the demand for all jambiyas. It banned the possession of all weapons and aggressively collected them. In 1972, the jambiya ban was thus accompanied by a massive campaign to rid the country of them, with even rich and influential families targeted and forced to sell their daggers. When Yemen was reunited under the capitalist north, the communist principle survived. The ban ‘was not only effectively enforced by the [southern] government but ultimately internalized by the country’s population’. Rhinohorn jambiya went out of fashion. This deep into the sixth mass extinction, some similar courage to wage ecological class war would not seem inappropriate. Third, if there is something the corona crisis has taught, it should be that nudging consumers to voluntarily mend their ways is a strategy of the past. The German state didn’t beg its citizens to please consider living differently: it ordered the malls of Steglitz closed and locked the playgrounds in Kreuzberg. When there is a threat to the health or even physical existence of a population, one doesn’t leave it to the least conscientious individuals to play with the fire as they want. One snatches the matches out of their hands. Some have argued that a blanket abolition of the wildlife trade in China would cause financial losses and make people unemployed – figures between 1 million and an improbable 14 million have been floated – which is, of course, the excuse for every facet of business-as-usual. It could carry us all the way to Venus. But ending the wildlife trade is a responsibility for very many more nations than China. Even Germany has been identified as a central transit point for the global trade in pangolins. States have to figure out a way to extirpate this department of capital accumulation in toto; they have repressive powers to reallocate. Barack Obama purported to make crackdowns on wildlife trafficking a priority. Yet at the end of his second term, there were no more than 130 federal wildlife inspectors in the nation; only 38 of 328 ports of entry had such staff on site; their total number of detector dogs amounted to three. Compare this – from benevolent times – to the apparatus for stopping migrants. Here’s another overdue conversion: open borders to people and close them to commodities from the wild; turn ICE and Frontex and other fortress guards into agencies for shutting down the extinction vortexes. But law enforcement would require more than seizures on the border, which can incite suppliers to compensatory killing sprees. It is the middlemen that need to be netted en bloc. The main alternative to such an approach is to legalise the wildlife trade and encourage the ordered establishment of farms (the Huanong Brothers), but the curtain should now be down on this idea. Wild animals shouldn’t sit in cages. Breeding them in captivity and selling them on markets only whets the appetite for their meat, and experience shows that it’s all but impossible to tell the wild from the farmed; the former leaks into the latter, as long as the suck is there. Demand itself will have to be neutralised. Insofar as ostentation – the open display of status before peers and subalterns – is the purpose of wildlife consumption, criminalisation and actual law enforcement should hit where it hurts. Under the ground, public swagger is harder. This doesn’t mean, as Felbab-Brown is keen to stress, that hard state power is a silver bullet. But it is needed, and fast, she points out. ‘Unlike in the case of drugs’ – and most other illicit activities, one may add – ‘time matters acutely, especially when animals are being poached at extinction rates.’ Some reprioritisation is needed for repressive state apparatuses around the world. And then there is the question of bushmeat, an especially difficult nut to crack, which deserves its own separate investigations. One would wish that lifting areas and countries out of poverty would of itself make bushmeat obsolete, but alas, it might have the opposite effect: affluence can set the extinction vortex spinning. It has, on the other hand, been vociferously argued that one shouldn’t even consider taking the wild food out of the mouth of poor people. Unfortunately, that argument is self-defeating, for in the same moment bushmeat starts to endanger animal populations, it ceases to be a prop of food security and turns into its opposite: an exceedingly undependable protein source. Extinction exhausts it forever. The most viable palette of measures probably includes laws and their enforcement, a rollback of deforestation and ‘incentives for communities to switch to traditionally grown protein-rich plant foods’, such as ‘soy, pulses, cereals and tubers’ – breaking, in other words, the association of meat with the good life. That break begins in the richest countries. If anyone has a duty to lead and assist a global turn to plantbased protein, it is them. Needless to say, such measures would just be starters – local drivers of deforestation, for instance, would still have to be dealt with – and if they were all rolled out next week, infectious diseases wouldn’t thereby vanish at the snap of a finger. The treatment of symptoms will never stop being essential. And so one could look to Cuba, which seems to have spare capacity for every eventuality and continues to serve the world as a subaltern ambulance crew, including in this pandemic: in March 2020, fifty-three professionals in a Cuban medical brigade landed in Lombardy. They came to assist the swamped hospitals of one of the richest provinces in Europe. Of the dozen brigades dispatched over that month, others went to Jamaica, Grenada, Suriname, Nicaragua, Andorra, while Cuba itself agreed to receive a corona-stricken cruise ship turned away from other Caribbean islands – all in line with a tradition of ‘medical internationalism’ that never ceases to confound foes and experts alike. In the 2010s, this poor little nation had more health care workers stationed on foreign soil than the G8; more than the Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières and UNICEF combined. When Ebola lacerated West Africa in 2014, hundreds of doctors and nurses dashed off to the miasmic front lines; when Hurricane Mitch tore through Central America and Haiti in 1999, not only did Cuban staff pour in, but Havana initiated a scholarship programme for medical students from the disaster zones; when an earthquake crushed Pakistan in 2005, Cuba sent 1,285 health workers for a year. Canada sent six. In a time of chronic emergency, the world should thank its lucky star there’s at least one state with a tenuous link to the communist ideal still around.‘If anything real is to be done, bureaucracy must be abandoned for democracy, and in a truly revolutionary way, i.e. war must be declared on the oil barons and shareholders’: Lenin. His casus belli was their refusal to produce enough oil and coal. He wanted a war on the barons and shareholders to force the pace of extraction – Russia ‘is one of the richest countries in the world in deposits of liquid fuel’ – having no inkling of any adverse effects. Fuel scarcity was part of his breakdown. Our breakdown has the opposite profile, and so, if anything real is to be done, there will have to be a war with another aim: putting this industry out of business for good. This begins with a nationalisation of all private companies extracting and processing and distributing fossil fuels. Corporations on the loose like ExxonMobil, BP, Shell, RWE, Lundin Energy and the rest of the pack will have to be reined in, and the safest way to do that is to put them under public ownership, either through acquisition or – more defensibly – confiscation without recompense. Then their endlessly burning furnaces can finally be switched off. But they should not simply be liquidated, as in dismantling every platform, sealing the holes, closing the offices, sacking the employees and throwing the lot of the technology on the scrap heap. To the contrary, these units have a constructive task ahead of them. It’s already too hot on earth, and it’s getting hotter by the year, and there’s no end in sight to the heating unless emissions are cut to zero – but even then, it will still be too hot plus residual, potentially self-reinforcing heating in the atmospheric pipeline (the more of it, the longer mitigation waits), and so a worldwide cessation of fossil fuel combustion would not be enough. CO 2 would also have to be drawn out of the air. This has been apparent for at least a decade: everybody says this. Everybody admits it. Everybody has decided it is so. Yet nothing is being done. Nothing at all? There are a bunch of start-ups developing machines for negative emissions. One of them, the Swiss-based Climeworks, might be the most valuable capitalist company on earth these days – valuable as in doing humanity what could eventually be a life-saving service. With machines that look like large fans in boxes, Climeworks sucks air – it could be any air, anywhere. The air is led into a filter that captures CO 2 . Once the filter is saturated, it is heated to 100 degrees Celsius, and the result is pure, concentrated carbon dioxide. The trick as such is no magic, as it has long been applied in airtight rooms – submarines, space stations – where CO 2 has to be scrubbed and flushed out for people to breathe. What Climeworks has just demonstrated, however, is that this is the most promising technology for taking CO 2 out of the earth’s atmosphere – far more so than ‘bioenergy carbon capture and storage’, or BECCS, the speculative solution most in vogue in the days of the Paris agreement. There the idea was to establish gargantuan plantations to cultivate fast-growing trees, harvest them, burn them as fuel, filter away the CO 2 and store it under the ground. But more plantations are not what we need. BECCS would devour such monstrous amounts of land – somewhere like the equivalent of all current cropland to stay below 2°C – that tropical forests might well have to be wiped out. Direct air capture needs no land to grow anything. The contraptions can be placed on roofs. The main inputs they crave are electricity and heat, and because they are small and easily switched on and off, they can be affixed to the grid and turned on when there is an excess of wind and sun (weather-determined moments of overproduction often regarded as a drawback of renewables) and use waste heat from any other process (no shortage of that in urban environs). The CO 2 can be mineralised. It can be buried under the ground in solid form; indeed, since 2017, Climeworks is doing just this in Iceland. As with other novel technologies – solar panels spring to mind – prices will nosedive with mass production. A capitalist solution to a problem made by capitalism? If only. A capitalist company has to have a commodity to sell. With the exception of the pilot plant in Iceland, Climeworks and the other start-ups are turning their concentrated CO 2 into goods with exchange-value. It can be gas sold to greenhouses or soft drink producers (Coca-Cola in the case of Climeworks in Zürich); it could go into microalgae or liquid fuel, possibly even for airplanes. Such commodities bury no CO 2 . They capture it and pass it on for release elsewhere, so that a profit can be made – or, as Nature reported regarding another start-up, Carbon Engineering, run by the famed scientist-cum-entrepreneur David Keith: ‘That CO 2 could then be pressurized, put into a pipeline and disposed of underground, but the company is planning instead to use it to make synthetic, low carbon fuels.’ And how could it plan otherwise? Just throwing the CO 2 away, locking it up in cellars where it must never again be touched, is no way to accumulate capital. It negates the logic of the commodity, because non-consumption would here be the innermost essence of the operation. As Holly Jean Buck shows in After Geoengineering: Climate Tragedy, Repair, and Restoration, a primer and clarion call that should be obligatory reading for anyone minimally concerned with planetary futures, this is the contradiction every direct air capture must run into: if it stays inside the commodity form, it cannot make good on its promise of negative emissions. It will recycle CO 2 , not tuck it away. To scale up these machines to the level where they would make their designated difference – supplementing zero emissions with drawdown – they would have to function as vacuum cleaners, sucking up carbon and putting it out of circulation, as a non- or even anti-commodity. How could such a decontamination of the biosphere run on profit? Where would the increment in exchange-value come from, in amounts sufficient to keep the clean-up going like any other department of accumulation? No one has yet come up with a plausible answer. Buck works through the logic and finds only one way out: the state. Other students of direct air capture have reached the same conclusion. It seems to inhere in it – if the Climeworks model turns out to have some unknown disadvantage, if something else comes to the fore as the superior tech, if there will ever be any negative emissions not growing from land, the same conundrum will reappear: resell the waste and forfeit the purpose, or respect the negative use-value. It’s the productive force or the property relations. And to scale up, one would need a lot of money. That money should come from those who carry historical responsibility for releasing the CO 2 in the first place. There would also need to be massive complexes of technical expertise, drilling and seismic skills, infrastructures for transporting concentrated CO 2 , empty holes in the ground for burial vaults, organisations of supranational size … Who has all these things in ample possession? The oil barons and shareholders, of course. Nationalise them, Buck proposes – not just for ‘getting rid of these corporations, as we might like to, but transforming them into companies that deliver a carbon removal service’. Make them public utilities for restabilising climate. In something of an understatement, Buck adds: ‘There will be a lot of struggles to engage in here.’ But now imagine that states were in fact determined not only to stop the drivers of catastrophe but to put them into reverse gear, and so they expropriated every single fossil fuel company and restructured them into waste disposers, while those already state-owned received the same directives – then we would really be on the way to zero emissions and further: towards 400 parts per million, 380, 350 … It would be some repair to match the tropical rewilding. The demand for nationalising fossil fuel companies and turning them into direct air capture utilities should be the central transitional demand for the coming years. But, needless to say, it would make no sense if CO 2 were still belching out into the atmosphere: emitting and capturing would be a bizarre dissipation of resources to no avail. Everything begins with draconian restraints and cuts. They alone could pave the way for actual drawdown; the sooner they start, the less need for a secondary mega-infrastructure of clean-up. The problem could also be attacked from another angle: not supply but demand, rather like in the first phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. Then it was demand, above all in the transport sector, that went off a cliff and pulled emissions along. In late April 2020, Scientific American publicised the forecast that total global emissions would fall by no more than 5 per cent during the year – in spite of the spring drop by one fourth in China and roughly one fifth in the US – as economies were expected to rebound in the summer and autumn. The journal noted that as record-breaking as a 5 per cent reduction would be, it would still fall short of ‘the 7.6 per cent decline that scientists say is needed every year over the next decade to stop global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius’. Nearly 8 per cent every year – a far cry indeed from the expected 2020 hiatus (if not from the initial months-long collapses). What would that require? Comprehensive, airtight planning. Everybody knows this. Few say it. One can obviously not rely on spontaneous cessation of demand, or on people just quitting travel; there would have to be a continuous substitution of one kind of energy for another over the transitional period – or, ‘a single economic plan covering the whole country and all branches of productive activity. This plan must be drawn up for a number of years, for the whole epoch that lies before us’, to cite Leon Trotsky. One can of course find this idea so repugnant that one would rather give up on the climate of the earth. And that is indeed the choice the dominant classes and their governments wake up to make every morning. Regardless of whether the problem is attacked from the supply or the demand side, the race to zero would have to be coordinated through control measures – rationing, reallocating, requisitioning, sanctioning, ordering … – so as to fill the gap after fossil fuels. The substitutes themselves are in no need of elaboration. The literature on the Green New Deal and renewable energy roll-out and climate wartime mobilisation is extensive enough to guide a transition several times over. Here we truly are in the situation of Lenin’s September text: everybody knows what measures need to be taken; everybody knows, on some level of their consciousness, that flights inside continents should stay grounded, private jets banned, cruise ships safely dismantled, turbines and panels mass produced – there’s a whole auto industry waiting for the order – subways and bus lines expanded, high-speed rail lines built, old houses refurbished and all the magnificent rest. ‘The ways of combating catastrophe and famine are available’, approaching common knowledge. ‘If our state really wanted to exercise control in a business-like and earnest fashion, if its institutions had not condemned themselves to “complete inactivity” by their servility to the capitalists, all the state would have to do’ would be to roll up the sleeves. Another part of Lenin’s logic applies too: any government that would ‘wish to save Russia from war and famine’ would have to get down to this kind of work. be the central transitional demand for the coming years. But, needless to say, it would make no sense if CO 2 were still belching out into the atmosphere: emitting and capturing would be a bizarre dissipation of resources to no avail. But the lingering conclusion from our initial comparison between corona and climate is that no capitalist state is likely ever to do anything like this of its own accord. It would have to be forced into doing it, through application of the whole spectrum of popular leverage, from electoral campaigns to mass sabotage. Left to its own devices, the capitalist state will continue to attend to symptoms, which, however, must eventually reach a boiling point. One can imagine that in the next years and decades, storms will bite into property, droughts tear apart supply chains, crop yields halve, heat waves enervate labour productivity to the extent that the timeline of victimhood catches up with the dominant classes. The second contradiction will then be upon them. States might no longer be able to just parry the impacts, but feel compelled to safeguard the background condition before it crashes irretrievably. Judging from the reaction to Covid-19, they will grasp for a control measure that can flatten the curve at once, and there is one such known in the libraries of science: solar geoengineering. Spraying sulphate aerosols into the atmosphere is the single kind of injection with a potential to instantly reduce planetary fever. However large in scale, direct air capture would need decades to bring temperatures down; sulphate aerosol injection can cut insolation from one month to the next. Year after year of business-as-usual, this is the pseudo-solution that sneaks up on us like a thief in the night.Indeed, under the cover of the pandemic, in mid-April 2020, one of the largest experiments in geoengineering so far was carried out on the Great Barrier Reef, then subject to the third outbreak of mass bleaching in five years (did anyone notice?). Scientists were authorised by the state to spray trillions of nano-sized ocean salt crystals into the air from the back of a barge. The hope was that these particles would make clouds brighter, so they would reflect more sunlight away from the ocean and shield the reef from the heat. The team told the Guardian they could see corals ‘bleaching around us’ as they bobbed over them. This is a technology distinct from sulphate aerosol injection, namely marine cloud brightening, potentially deployed on a local or regional scale by a state such as Australia, which, numerous monumental disasters notwithstanding, cannot bring itself to impose any control measures on coal extraction. The logic is robust. As one of the sharpest scholars in the field, Kevin Surprise, has argued, solar geoengineering might well be launched on a planetary scale as a fix against the second contradiction, because capitalist states appear constitutionally incapable of going after the drivers. It is fairly widely known that such intervention in the climate system could switch the planet onto another track towards catastrophe. Meanwhile, the corals keep bleaching, the swarms forming, the ice melting, the animals moving. A pestilential breath devastating humanity There has been a lot of talk about ecological Marxism in recent years, and with the chronic emergency over us, the time has come to also experiment with ecological Leninism. Three principles of that project seem decisive. First, and above all, ecological Leninism means turning the crises of symptoms into crises of the causes. From August 1914, this was, of course, the thrust of Leninist politics: converting the outbreak of war into a blow against the system that engendered it. Our Great War is not an actual war between armies, nor a singular event that can be concluded or paused after half a decade: this emergency is chronic, which means that crises of symptoms will ignite again and again, and every time they do, the strategic imperative must be to switch energies of the highest voltage against the drivers. It is difficult to see how else the conditions can ever be ameliorated. Has anybody got another idea? Oh yes: make clouds and invent vaccines; block solar radiation and track the movements of people. At their best, such proposals amount – to borrow from Greta Thunberg’s favourite metaphor – to surviving inside a burning house by drinking lots of cold water. Virtually by definition, the most classical Leninist gesture is the only one that can point to an emergency exit. It is worth re-emphasising just how central the category of catastrophe was to the evolution of revolutionary Marxism. In her polemics with Bernstein, Luxemburg never tired of stressing it. She has become most renowned for the sound bite ‘socialism or barbarism’ but, as Norman Geras has shown in a superb exegesis, that deep dichotomy structured her theory and praxis all the way from the battle with Bernstein to her death at the hands of the Freikorps. One year into the war, she warned that humanity faced a choice between ‘the destruction of all culture, and, as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a vast cemetery’ – or victory for ‘the conscious struggle’ against the imperialism that drove the war. ‘Wading in blood and dripping in filth’, capitalist society has become ‘a pestilential breath, devastating culture and humanity’. That peculiar type of society now ‘endangers the very existence of society itself, by assembling a chain of devastating economic and political catastrophes’; in its present phase, the expansion inherent in capital ‘has adopted such an unbridled character that it puts the whole civilisation of mankind in question’. Luxemburg expected world war to become a ‘permanent’ state of affairs. It didn’t, and here the differentia specifica of the chronic emergency must again be underscored: it works itself out through biophysical processes that cannot be fought or negotiated to an end. One does not bomb out or bargain with the radiative forcing of CO 2 . That forcing is an immutable function of the quantity of the gas in the atmosphere, which means that this pestilential breath has another order of permanency and aggravation – until the moment of deliberate intercession, still only hypothetical. Following Geras’s reading of Luxemburg, we can then say that ‘barbarism’, depopulation, a vast cemetery really are the inevitable ends of a capitalism left to itself (here precluding the long-term effectiveness of solar geoengineering as a stand-alone measure). But writing in 1975, he recoiled from this conclusion as excessively apocalyptic. ‘Ecological catastrophe may, today, be invoked to lend that vision plausibility’, he noted in passing; half a century later, there is scant need for the caveat. This, then, is the syntax of revolutionary Marxism, present already in the first section of The Communist Manifesto: the fight ends ‘either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes’. There can be little doubt about which of the two outcomes is currently the more likely. Hence the accentuated ‘conditional mood of the probability of a catastrophe that there is still time to forestall. Things will end up badly, if … But they can (still) be sorted out …’, as another thinker from the same tradition, Daniel Bensaïd, distils the predicament. It was because Luxemburg threw herself into efforts to forestall further catastrophe that she, for all their disagreements, ended up on the same side as Lenin. A second principle for ecological Leninism can be extracted from their position: speed as paramount virtue. ‘Whether the probable disaster can be avoided depends on an acute sense of conjuncture’, writes Bensaïd, who reconstructs the crisis of September and observes that ‘waiting was becoming a crime’. Or, with Lenin himself: ‘delay is fatal’. It is necessary to act ‘this very evening, this very night’. The truth of these assertions has never been more patent. As anyone with the barest insight into the state of the planet knows, speed, very regrettably, because of the criminal waiting and delaying and dithering and denying of the dominant classes, has become a metric of meaning in politics. ‘Nothing can now be saved by halfmeasures.’ Third, ecological Leninism leaps at any opportunity to wrest the state in this direction, break with business-asusual as sharply as required and subject the regions of the economy working towards catastrophe to direct public control. It would mean that ‘one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part’, to speak with Engels. Nothing from the past decades of stalled transitions indicates that ExxonMobil would like to metamorphose into a cleaner and storekeeper of unsalable carbon, or that meat and palm oil companies would gladly let their pastures and plantations be rewilded. It appears tautologically true that an actual transition would require some coercive authority. If anarchists would ever wield influence in such a process, they would quickly discover this circumstance and, just like anybody else, have to avail themselves of the state. But what state? We have just argued that the capitalist state is constitutionally incapable of taking these steps. And yet there is no other form of state on offer. No workers’ state based on soviets will be miraculously born in the night. No dual power of the democratic organs of the proletariat seems likely to materialise anytime soon, if ever. Waiting for it would be both delusional and criminal, and so all we have to work with is the dreary bourgeois state, tethered to the circuits of capital as always. There would have to be popular pressure brought to bear on it, shifting the balance of forces condensed in it, forcing apparatuses to cut the tethers and begin to move, using the plurality of methods already hinted at (some further outlined by the present author in How to Blow Up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire). But this would clearly be a departure from the classical programme of demolishing the state and building another – one of several elements of Leninism that seem ripe (or overripe) for their own obituaries. On the other hand, the chronic emergency can be expected to usher in pronounced political volatility. ‘The deeper the crisis, the more strata of society it involves, the more varied are the instinctive movements which crisscross in it, and the more confused and changeable will be the relationship of forces’, to quote Georg Lukács. The rather startling measures used to combat the spread of Covid-19 might have been a foretaste. Who knows what openings other moments of impact might bring. In some, popular initiatives may rise to prominence. The 2013 edition of the ‘worldwide threat assessment’ compiled by the US intelligence community warned that climate disasters risk ‘triggering riots, civil disobedience, and vandalism’; similar predictions are legion. If or when they are fulfilled, the mission of ecological Leninists is to raise consciousness in such spontaneous movements and reroute them towards the drivers of catastrophe. Hence the heightened relevance of the slogan that for Bensaïd ‘sums up Leninist politics: “Be ready!” Be ready for the improbable, for the unexpected, for what happens.’ It includes a readiness to, with Lenin’s own words, ‘set to work to stir up all and sundry, even the oldest, mustiest and seemingly hopeless spheres, for otherwise we shall not be able to cope with our tasks’. If the matter is exigent, the material at hand must be used. On this view, ecological Leninism is a lodestar of principles, not a party affiliation. It does not imply that there are any actual Leninist formations capable of seizing power and implementing the correct measures – the world has never been shorter on them, and most of the few that remain show overt signs of infirmity. The old Trotskyist formula ‘the crisis of humanity is the crisis of the revolutionary leadership’ must be updated. The crisis is the absence – the complete, gaping absence – of any leadership. The seed bank exists in an arid space approaching empty desert; anything brought out from it would have to be genetically modified to grow under the present sun and watered by subjects inventing themselves anew. Two elements do, however, as we have argued, appear essential. The basic make-up must harbour a predisposition for emergency action and an openness to some degree of hard power from the state. Anarchism detests the state; social democracy shrivels in catastrophe. But there is no reason not to experiment with ecological Luxemburgism, or ecological Blanquism, or Guevarism, or indeed Trotskyism … nor is there reason to give up on the sheer deductive force of revolutionary Marxism: ‘The inherent tendencies of capitalist development, at a certain point of their maturity, necessitate the transition to a planful mode of production, consciously organised by the entire working force of society – in order that all of society and human civilisation might not perish’, again with Luxemburg. But ‘necessitate’ does not mean ‘preordain’. Something can be necessary and yet never come about.

#### “The road to the abolition of classes, to the abolition of state power and to the abolition of parties is the road all mankind must take; it is only a question of time and conditions. Communists the world over are wiser than the bourgeoisie, they understand the laws governing the existence and development of things, they understand dialectics and they can see farther. The bourgeoisie does not welcome this truth because it does not want to be overthrown. To be overthrown is painful and is unbearable to contemplate for those overthrown, for example, for the Kuomintang reactionaries whom we are now overthrowing and for Japanese imperialism which we together with other peoples overthrew some time ago. But for the working class, the labouring people and the Communist Party the question is not one of being overthrown, but of working hard to create the conditions in which classes, state power and political parties will die out very naturally and mankind will enter the realm of Great Harmony.” 1

Mao 1949 [Mao Zedong was the chairman of the Communist Party of China , “On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship: In Commemoration of the Twenty-eighth Anniversary of the Communist Party of China”, June 30, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Translation from Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. 4 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1961), 411-423., https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119300]//sripad

#### The impossibility of objectivity and a free press means only a defense of the future is predictable. The role of the negative is to disprove the desirability of the aff future only this iterative testing ensures a model of historical synthesis

#### This space is pedagogically valuable when theory informs praxis – prefer our framework that allows us to study and apply historical failures to secure survival and liberation

Williams 18 [Carine Williams is a lawyer and writer for the Hampton institute think tank studying the protocols of Fred Hampton the BPP and black radicalism across the globe writ large, “WHY BLACK PEOPLE NEED MAOISM IN 2018”, July 30, 108, https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/why-black-people-need-maoism-in-2018]//sripad

When they hear Maoism, many people think of China, Peru, and the Philippines. They picture peasants "surrounding the cities from the countryside." This is, of course, understandable, but a mistake. Maoism is not simply "everything that Mao did," or "everything that happened in China between 1949 and now." I have spent a great deal of my time writing working to dispel these sorts of myths, some peddled in an unprincipled fashion by anti-Maoists. **Maoism is a living, breathing science**. By science we mean something with universal principles that can be taken and applied by all who have a material interest in making revolution. In the United States, this is Black people, or the New Afrikan nation.

It was not by accident that the original Black Panther Party (BPP) developed close relations with the revolutionary leadership of the People's Republic of China. **Huey didn't go to China to play; he went to study and learn things that could be applied back home**. Of course, he eventually degenerated in political line and practice, taking a right opportunist course along with Bobby Seale (always a centrist) and Elaine Brown (who guided the party, in his absence, into a mainstream political force that led into the arms of the Democratic Party). This opportunism in the highest expression of revolutionary sentiment, practice, and force in this country to date needs to be studied and ruthlessly criticized, yet we should be careful. **We must place things in their historical context and ensure that we are able to divide one into two, meaning see the beneficial as well as the negative aspects of a thing but also realize that one aspect must be primary.**

The BPP was destroyed by a combination of factors: lack of a really scientific method of analysis and cohesive program of political education, failure to promote and apply the Marxist-Leninist principle of Democratic Centralism (debate inside the party, formation of a political line through this debate, and the upholding of this decision by all party members and organs), and a culture of liberalism that ended with comrades fighting comrades, thus opening the door for external factors (the FBI and other LE agencies) to play havoc and get cadre railroaded into prison and killed. **We must study and learn all of these lessons, because when we develop another organization with the prestige, mass base, and power that the Panthers had, and we will, they will come for us all again.**

So, why do we need Maoism? Because **we are against the most brutal, bloody, and vicious empire known to humankind. This country is looting and enslaving our class siblings all over the world**. To overturn this order of things, to smash it and rebuild it in the interests of the revolutionary proletariat of the entire world, **we must apply the synthesis of 200 years of systematic, organized class struggle, which is Marxism-Leninism-Maoism**: the continuity of the revolutionary project that was Marxism-Leninism, with a rupture from the dogmatism and revisionism. Maoists do not uphold "Actually Existing Socialism" because a scientific analysis rooted in the principles laid down by the revolutionary movements and projects that gave us Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao would demonstrate that stealing food from Filipino fisherfolk, like the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been doing, is 100% non-Marxist. **This is in disagreement with many Marxist-Leninist organizations today, which uphold these things and other imperialist depredations carried out under the faded red banner of China.**

The Maoist argument is that Marxist-Leninist terrain has been spent, and the 21st century must learn from Maoism. "You haven't seized state power yet!" others cry. Indeed, and **there has never been a truly Maoist party that has initiated armed struggle in the imperialist metro poles. This doesn't mean that Maoist principles cannot be applied to these countries**, this means that we must be ever more creative in our application and ever more disciplined in our party-building efforts. Party building in the USA requires the careful and thorough cultivation of a mass base. Tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of people must depend on and follow this party and participate in mass organizations before it can even begin to call itself a vanguard. This is what many who came out of the New Communist Movement of the mid-late 1970s failed to realize. The days of endless squabbling sects that fight over "mass bases" of a handful of other activists must be put to an end, and we must have a truly mass perspective.

There is optimism in the spread of For the People (FTP) organizations and the development of the [Organizing Committee for a Maoist Communist Party](https://mcpoc.wordpress.com/)(MCP-OC) which has a more mass orientation and places primacy on the development of a class analysis and political line in the USA that is based in painstaking investigation and rooted in the aspirations and struggles of the most oppressed, along with a record of seeking to develop international solidarity and prison work. This, I believe, is the best hope for New Afrikan Maoists in the United States and I wholeheartedly encourage Black comrades to develop FTP-type organizations in their own communities under [OC guidance](https://mcpoc.wordpress.com/political-education/). Even if this isn't done, **at the very least studies in Maoism, studies in Maoist revolutions, and studies in Maoist theory are beneficial. After and during these studies, think about how it can be applied on your block and in your community.**

#### To tether affirmation to manageable liberal discourse engenders the cultivation of reactionary imperialist subjects. Neal Katyal defends Child Slavery for Nestle, Ryan Beiermeister defends the production of counterrevolutionary predictive policing technology, and the hundreds of conservative politicians coming out of debate all prove that their protocols in limiting discourse are never in service of preserving debate but rather to secure the inoculation of the manager class.

#### Thus the Role of the Judge is to be a propagandist.

#### Studies prove debate is inevitably implicated in the context of propaganda – voting aff aligns with a model predicated on communist base-building.

Greene and Hicks ‘6

[Ronald Greene, former Chair of the Critical and Cultural Studies Division of the National Communication Association, and Darrin Hicks, communication studies at the University of Denver. 2006. “Lost convictions: Debating both sides and the ethical self-fashioning of liberal citizens,” <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09502380500040928>] pat

Concurrently, the Army Information and Education Group, which would become the core of the Hovland-Yale Communication and Persuasion Group, led by Carl Hovland, was conducting experiments testing the relationship between inducement and internalized attitude change. In 1953, Hovland, Janis, and Kelley published their highly influential book Communication and Persuasion, which established a positive relation between verbalization and the intensification of belief and predicted that being forced to overtly defend a position discrepant from one’s own private beliefs would result in the internalization of the overtly defended position. This prediction was further supported by the forced-compliance and cognitive dissonance studies of Festinger (1957) and his colleagues at Stanford. For decades, the ability to understand the merits of opposing arguments had been championed as one of the prime pedagogical benefits of intercollegiate debate training. However, in the fall of 1954, Hovland’s and Festinger’s studies coupled with the anti- Communist rhetoric of Schlesinger, which would, much to Schlesinger’s dismay, come to underwrite McCarthy’s witch hunts, would be articulated in such a way that debate’s ability to train students to take the other’s perspective might be framed as a threat to national security. The fear that defending the diplomatic recognition of ‘Red China’ would turn American youth into Communist sympathizers saturated the debating both sides controversy with an anxiety over the virility of ‘democratic faith’. Those choosing to defend the virtues of intercollegiate debate and the practice of debating both sides were careful not to question the basic tenets of the anti-Communism that constituted the ideological core of Cold War liberalism. Democracy, if it were to survive the seductive appeal of totalitarianism, had to become a fighting faith, a faith born out of and tested in social and political conflict. Debate, in particular the format of debating both sides of controversial issues embodied the sort of political conflict that could engender sound conviction, rational decisions, and a committed youth impervious to Communist propaganda.