



## **WORLD PERSPECTIVES**

### **Supplement on the Pandemic**

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"This is the most horrific battle we've ever been in in a hundred and thirty years in our history this is Relentless. it's like playing chess with a monster master genius as every move we make it gets overcome by covid-19 and we have to make a new move."

- Reverend Andy Bales is the president and CEO of Union Rescue Mission in downtown LA, BBC World Service 11421

"Our planet is broken. Humanity is waging a suicidal war on the natural world. Nature always strikes back, and is doing so with gathering force and fury."

- Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres.

### *How the pandemic is precipitating the world revolution*

The rise of solidarity and .... reaction

Any man's death diminishes me,  
because I am involved in Mankind;  
And therefore never send to know for whom  
the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

John Donne penned these lines in 1624: he was expressing the elemental human sympathy for others of the kind, cautioning the reader that the fate of others could also be yours. Our species has evolved through sharing and we share in one another's fate. The stanzas are a declaration of solidarity with humankind and also carry an elementary warning that that death also indicates your inevitable fate.

"We are in this together!" This elemental truth about our collective fate with each individual human life faced by a deadly virus was stated and restated. A concern for humanity would have required nothing less. This seemed a restatement of Donne's evocation but there was another impulse.

It was one thing to encourage solidarity within a town or country; quite another to propose solidarity internationally. That was the human response; there were also inhuman responses to repudiate solidarity and assert the brutal national state and antagonistic citizenship.

Global coordination was needed in the face of a global catastrophe: the actual response was narrow and parochial. Worse than that, the fragile shoots of attempted cooperation were burned by the Trumps of the world who insisted the virus be named the "Wuhan virus" or now the "China virus". There were strident attacks on the WHO for colluding with China in a cover-up of the outbreak, even while his agents armed with cheque books raided supplies across the globe.

The impulsive solidarity in family and society was refracted by class, nationality and race. Instinctive human cooperation was reversed by national arrogance and self-concern. To an extent never experienced before internationally, Trump led the autocrats in denying every attempt to coordinate responses separately or through the WHO. Developed and emerging countries had very different fates.

In the conditions of globalization, of international travel, technology, information, trade, financial flows and migration, the nation state emerged as a brutal fist. Aspects of globalization were immediately suspended, air travel was stopped, trade restrictions were enforced and migration was stopped. Members of the borderless EU raised barriers against one another. Returning residents were quarantined. Lockdown regulations were promulgated and enforced.

A pandemic brings panic in its advance. Separately, in each country, everything became focused on displacing responsibility for desperate measures on to other nations. In the national defensiveness and aggression there was a melee of grabbing resources, mutual antagonism replaced cooperation, blame displaced honest admission of fault. At the level of state policy a nationalist outlook came to characterize every response to the pandemic and state interventions to support collapsing economies.

### *Science as the basis for action*

“The biggest science policy failure in a generation” – that’s the judgment of the editor of the medical journal the **Lancet**. The editor identified a delay in responding to the warning issued by the WHO on January 24, rather than hindsight. The British government had intentionally delayed its response as Boris Johnson joked about the virus and insisted on shaking hands. The Lancet itself warned early in February that containment was failing and that “self-sustaining outbreaks in major cities globally could become inevitable . . . Preparedness plans and mitigation interventions should be readied for quick deployment globally.”

Science not barriers should have been the first and final call. Scientific intervention is the only effective response to an unknown virus with unknown but potentially devastating consequences. But under capitalism this was what is sorely lacking; in two ways. Firstly there was woefully short funding of surveillance of disease and medical preparation. Secondly the lack of preparation and medical defences by the national state and its compounding of nationalist arrogance and aggression.

International and national preparation and defences are needed: the virus has to be analyzed, its DNA/RNA understood, a vaccine prepared, comparisons made to other corona viruses, treatment with existing drugs reviewed, etc. Everything had to be prepared for the inevitable engagement.

Instead, on a capitalist basis, there was a confused and delayed reaction. The World Health Organization (WHO), the institution intended to head the coordination of surveillance and

research and preparation, was deliberately underfunded and its work trivialized. National surveillance systems in the US, but also elsewhere, also received less funding, particularly after the 2008 recession.

Although there were a range of reactions, ***each was conducted on a national basis***; often in hostile reaction to other nations. The US cut back on travel from China, then suddenly did the same to the EU. The instinctive reaction of populist leaders was in enforcing no-travel regulations, in stopping the movement of foreigners.

These were forms of national aggression not coordination in the face of the coming catastrophe.

Separately every capitalist country faced the dilemma; how could it suddenly provide an emergency public health intervention to secure the economy? For protection against the virus to succeed, there had to be equal protection of poor and rich; but not only had it to be attempted, it had to succeed. The survival of the whole of society in the face of the invisible enemy is not possible in capitalist society. For a moment a structure of security had to be set up.

The private provision for those that could afford health insurance provided only a modicum of protection to a section of society. The depleted public health system – the nurses, doctors, technicians, buildings and equipment -- had to be supported for a period to provide for the entire society. It had to enable the economy to function; for workers to be engaged in production of food, cars, furniture, paint, pens, computers... of all the commodities which add up to the acronym GDP. Increasingly the intervention against the virus took second place; primacy was given to securing capitalism from tail-spinning decline.

There were deeper reasons for finding that world capitalism was not only unprepared, but was systemically not responsive to resolving such a health crisis. The experience of SARS-1 in 2005 and the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa in 2011 were graphic warnings of what could be coming. Major capitalist countries were woefully unprepared for this novel coronavirus. The lower infection levels and the partial containment of these outbreaks within South-East Asia and West Africa brought a false sense of assurance: the infection of distant populations, as in these two outbreaks, or among the poor, gay or black communities, in the case of AIDS.

It's an extraordinary fact: only one vaccine has been produced for the many international viruses over the past two decades.

The promise by venture capitalists of astonishing medical breakthroughs turned out to be fiction. Dependent on public funds for its basic research, the pharmaceutical industry focuses on buying old patents and relaunching generics as new brands. This sometimes leads to 400% price increases, leading to dividends rising four times since 2000 among the biggest companies.

Despite the perpetual threat of viral and other epidemics, there is extraordinarily little attention devoted to creating vaccines. There has only been just one vaccine produced for such viruses (Sars-CoV-1, H5N1, MERS-CoV, Zika, Ebola) that reached the market and brought into use: that was for Ebola.

### *Climate change deforestation and megafarms*

Climate change results from the use of previous generations of forests concentrated in coal, natural gas and oil, the fossil fuels, containing highly concentrated carbon. The global despoliation of nature, particularly through relentless deforestation, limits nature's ability to remove the megatons of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Instead, immense forests are logged, burned and cleared for agriculture; adding to carbon emissions and shrinking the forests acting as a carbon sink. All the forms of climate change, global warming, rising ocean levels, devastating cyclones and changing weather patterns result. This is what is well known; what is not so widely known is that deforestation and wildfires also accelerate disease.

Deforestation for agricultural purposes is the greatest cause of habitat loss globally. With the growth of global markets in hard woods and in expanding agricultural land for grazing and soya, this is a remorseless process. Currently it is unstoppable. Biodiversity and the species inhabiting intact forests are threatened; wild animals, humans and domesticated animals all come to live in close proximity.

Some 12.4 million acres (5 million hectares) of forests are permanently converted to growing commodity crops such as palm oil each year. And, despite numerous corporate and government promises to the contrary, there is no sign of that figure declining. Ever declining forest habitats increase greenhouse gas emissions and also bring wild animals into contact with domestic animals and humans. The firewalls against transmission of disease from animals of different species and human are broken.

Agriculture itself is being transformed as corporations, not individual farmers, accumulate enormous acreage. Farming is no longer for the locality, but feeds global markets with wheat, maize, pigs and cows.

Climate change is accelerating, bringing animals in cooler areas into contact with one another. This is an opportunity for pathogens to reach new hosts, creating an increased risk of viral infections, not on a local but a global scale.

Large livestock farms are the source itself or the incubators of a wide range of zoonotic diseases. The combination of megafarms, urbanized agriculture, genetic monoculture and low immunity make for breeding grounds for deadly flu's on a world scale. Rob Wallace, author of ***Big Farms, Big Flu***, captures the movement of viruses across species.

*Growing genetic monocultures of domestic animals removes whatever immune firebreaks may be available to slow down transmission. Larger population sizes and densities facilitate greater rates of transmission. Such crowded conditions depress immune response. High throughput, a part of any industrial production, provides a continually renewed supply of susceptibles, the fuel for the evolution of virulence. In other words, agribusiness is so focused on profits that selecting for a virus that might kill a billion people is treated as a worthy risk.*

Virus infections spread rapidly in industrial farms which have livestock of the genetic monocultures, allowing viruses with a short incubation and high mortality to survive.

While many books cover facets of food or outbreaks, Wallace's draws the issues of infectious disease, agriculture, economics and the nature of science together. ***Big Farms Make Big Flu*** integrates the political economies of disease and science to derive a new understanding of the evolution of infections. Highly capitalized agriculture may be farming pathogens as much as chickens or corn.

The recent history of viral infections is of a succession of outbreaks spreading from megafarms through regions and across continents at speed. The epidemics rise and fall but the viral diseases are not eliminated and form a kind of residual bank of disease.

Climate change is accelerated by constant deforestation, releasing emissions, megafarms, monoculture, urbanized ...all natural process which can be summed up as deforestation, habitat loss, urbanized farming; as environmental destruction and climate change.

***Where did this come from? The dimensions of the environmental crisis; disrupted firebreaks international markets concentrated industrial farming***

"Where on the surface accident holds sway, there actually it is always governed by inner, hidden laws and it is only a matter of discovering these laws," remarked Engels in Ludwig Feuerbach.

Seeking to blame others rather than themselves, Trump and other populist leaders have asked where the virus has come from. The question is designed to turn attention away from disastrous mismanagement and incredulous inactive defences to turn an invisible virus into a concrete enemy.

Unfortunately, in the atmosphere of national hostility this question has taken flight and the mood turned against the first country of the outbreak, China. America first, China last.

The politics of naming is a delicate matter as the origin of a virus is difficult to establish and the matter of a lot of conjecture. Origin should not apportion blame, but it does. The 1918 flu was called Spanish as it was a nation not fighting in WWI. For the Trumps, Johnsons, Bolsonaros and

Dutertes of the world, an origin outside the country, a foreign origin, is fuel to the flame of xenophobia and hatred which displaces culpability for neglect and mismanagement. It can even win over those who don't trust these despots one inch.

In their exogamous fury and contempt for loss of life, they refuse to acknowledge that common global action is the only way to erase COVID19 from the world. Indeed, they do the opposite and inflame hatred for the WHO, scientists and philanthropists who dare to say anything different from The Man – not trillions of dollars, ventilators and masks.

While outbreaks are inevitable, pandemics are not. When containment failed, everything possible was needed. Combined coordinated international action, incapacitated by the language of xenophobia and hatred, is the only way in which the pandemic can be brought under control and eliminated.

Travel restrictions and border walls will not stop the virus coming. "We're fools; we have to surrender our arrogance to stop the pandemic as we always have. Even if the severe measures it will still be in some country." (BBC interview).

When the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres declared "None of us is safe until all of us are safe", he was spelling out an epidemiological truth, but in the inter-capitalist antagonism, international cooperation on any scale and depth is impossible.

Instead of apportioning blame, a careful response would have advanced science.

The outbreak virus came from nowhere else but humanity itself. "There is a single species responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic: us," they said. "Recent pandemics are a direct consequence of human activity, particularly our global financial and economic systems that prize economic growth at any cost. We have a small window of opportunity, in overcoming the challenges of the current crisis, to avoid sowing the seeds of future ones."

There is evidence but not conclusive evidence tracking the COVID-19 through the supply chain of wild animals from Africa to the Wuhan wet market.

Politics, not health science, has dominated reactions from the beginning of the pandemic. In China, the bureaucracy has sought to absolve itself of responsibility. Later, it undertook drastic measures to slow the COVID-19 advance. Leaders in the US and elsewhere poured anger for the outbreak and contempt for the frantic measures of containment. Few thought ahead of the advancing wave; instead it is clear that most felt the disease could be contained by stopping all personal contact with China.

A lockdown was the bluntest, the crudest, of measures; to achieve the necessary defence of the population, governments had to bring the economy to a complete halt. Stop everything, maintain a distance and stay at home. It was not necessary... except for the grievous lack of

preparedness, lack of international surveillance of potential viral epidemics, degraded public health systems, unavailable stocks of equipment.

What was the alternative? The alternative would have been developed international surveillance resting on the most advanced science, a trusted and comprehensive warning system with the free flow of information, monitoring and reporting on health threats. But it did not exist.

The WHO was intended to fill this function, but it did not. This was not accidental. In the world of trade wars and national aggression, international cooperation has a very low priority. Its activities were not seen as particularly relevant to the developed countries; smallpox, polio and others, the classical health threats of the past, had been eradicated. The continuing pandemics of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis had been reduced to chronic diseases of the poor and poor countries. These and malaria were largely the health problems of Africa, and implicitly assigned to "tropical medicine" a low priority. With the exception of the US flagship PEPFAR which built the infrastructure of defence against HIV/AIDS in Africa, these could be left to modest support and philanthropy.

Despite occasional hysteria about bioterrorism and war through disease, bio-warfare, the leading capitalist nations have given little attention to threats to public health and civil defence. Instead, spending has been on massive nuclear armaments, expensive aircraft and aircraft carriers, military intervention in the Middle East and on confrontation with China. The WHO itself has been underfunded and made dependent on US handouts during emergency interventions, such as in response to the Ebola epidemic in Africa.

Effective preparation and warning systems have to be global, as international transmission of disease is a daily occurrence. Scientists had anticipated virus pandemics; they had been foreseen. Africa endures between 50 to 70 events a year which could become outbreaks (WHO). There had been the experience of SARS, MERS (flu respiratory diseases) and Ebola which made a constant threat of viral epidemics. The missing elements were the full funding of scientific research, participation and trust in the WHO and continuous surveillance.

The fatal inadequacy and then the breakup of the elementary warning systems has been a world failure. The outbreak of a novel coronavirus in Wuhan did not have to become a pandemic, but for the failure of preparation, the absence of the masks, cleaning materials, the regime of survival. The varying regimes of response to the pandemic showed that with the use of scientific knowledge, acute modeling and other measures, it would have been possible to have contained infection and fatalities without the suffering, isolation and catastrophic economic losses. But without such preparation, containment was weakened and mitigation implausible and a matter for the future.

In country after country, reluctantly and deliberately, lockdowns were announced. In urban China, Europe and the Americas, this was fairly readily enforced without troops on the streets.

In richer countries, people were compliant; in poorer countries, families were packed into shacks and the military pressed the people off the streets.

There has been a range of responses from countries across the spectrum: of wild men such as Bolsonaro to the cautious Janice of New Zealand. There have, however, been common factors: an inward looking nationalist protectionism and an extraordinary lack of empathy for the suffering of those in other countries.

There were exceptions. Some countries relied on self-isolation and voluntary compliance, while other political leaders such as Bolsonaro defied the international trend.

The lockdown, the closing down of production to reduce the possibility of infection, was the principal measure to avoid a catastrophic loss of life. The public health threat required this most extreme measure to protect society against the prospect of mounds of dead in the streets.

Irrespective of the regime, production stalled and the air cleared. Although enforced by government, here was the working class not at work and the saying revealed as never before: "All the wheels stand still if your mighty arms so will!"

The world was enthralled to see the empty cities, the smokestacks clear, the mountains visible from the plains. This was a vision of how the environment could be if we were to move beyond the fossil fuel industry, rethink our productive activities and plan for human need. Rising emissions abated for the moment, marking a break in its inexorable rise.

**Who could ever have imagined how devastating disease could be to the economy? Or the close linkage between public health and economic health? Or how the GDP could be brought low through unanticipated disease? Or how economic depression caused disease?**

Who could have imagined the link between health systems and a healthy economy; internationally and in each nation?

The world economy was stalled with activity only in the barest of essentials: the food supply chain, groceries and distribution.

Nature could throw up any number of new viruses. Was it possible to have met the public health challenge without a lockdown? The lockdown separated people physically from one another, but also concentrated those in the family who were in touch with others and those who were not. ***Quite obviously, in a lockdown with family, some 80% of infections were transmitted from person to person within family.*** If there was full knowledge of the threat to humanity, there would have been better understanding.

The coronavirus pandemic could be rapidly halted, the world's leading biodiversity experts warned. "There is a single species responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic – us," they said.

“Recent pandemics are a direct consequence of human activity, particularly our global financial and economic systems that prize economic growth at any cost. We have a small window of opportunity, in overcoming the challenges of the current crisis, to avoid sowing the seeds of future ones.”

Scientists state that the three apparently different issues – rapid species extinction, climate change and renewable energy – are intimately linked.

Apart from driving our co-inhabitants of the planet to extinction, land use change is the most important cause of climate change after the burning of fossil fuels. Human encroachment on nature is also the root cause of the emergence of novel zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19. So if we could stop deforestation, we would help solve three problems at the same time.

Professors Josef Settele, Sandra Díaz and Eduardo Brondizio led the most comprehensive planetary health check ever undertaken, which was published in 2019 by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). It concluded that human society was in jeopardy from the accelerating decline of the Earth’s natural life-support systems. In an article published on Monday, with Dr Peter Daszak, who is preparing the next IPBES assessment, they write:

“Rampant deforestation, uncontrolled expansion of agriculture, intensive farming, mining and infrastructure development, as well as the exploitation of wild species have created a ‘perfect storm’ for the spillover of diseases.”

There is a “large regrowth potential” of temporarily deforested areas.

The market mechanisms driving deforestation drive on relentlessly for one simple reason: there is no price put on the degradation of the environment, the release of greenhouse gases and the many consequences for the land and our future existence. The pressure on forests in the Amazon, the Congo, the forests of Indonesia and elsewhere is unstoppable, as firms can continue, politicians bribed or brought on to boards of forestry companies ... all without any consideration of the costs.

It is estimated that for every \$8 spent on the use of fossil fuels, a \$28 cost arises in “externalities”: the cost imposed on a third party (all of us) who did not agree to incur that cost. A good example is air pollution arising from motor vehicles.

Since those who rule the massive multinationals and their governments will never accept responsibility for externalities which are four times the initial cost it is impossible for “market mechanisms” to operate to save forests and humanity. Human society is in jeopardy from the accelerating decline of the Earth’s natural life-support systems.

COVID-19 is the last of a number of diseases which have passed through the disease barrier between animal and human. How humanity is now straddled with such rise of such zoonotic

diseases reveals the deep divisions emerging between modern capitalist societies and degradation and despoliation of the environment; the release of greenhouse gasses which ensure the warming of the planet, destruction of forests which has led to the breakdown of the barrier between wild life and domestic animals.

The zoonotic diseases are the most evident feature of such degradation.

China has become the focus for a number of epidemics, as it has the wet markets with possible close interaction with domestic animals in factory farm conditions.

### Populism, the state and the resistance

In reaction to the spread of Covid-19 from China and then internationally, the leadership of key capitalist states demonstrated incompetence and struggled to maintain and then entrench their positions of power. It is worth examining the quality of leadership and their elevation above society and state to understand what followed.

The executive of the state, Marx explained, "is nothing but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" and at its centre lies (baldly) the "special bodies of armed men". The capitalist state is, however, not a rationally constructed apparatus to manage such affairs, it carries within itself the character of the history from which it has emerged. Its features are those of patriarchal rule and the use of law and force against working people, women and those excluded from society. It is manned and directed by rich and powerful men.

Capitalism has emerged out of the conquering of nations and the expansion of markets between the initial capitalist countries across the globe. Markets did not simply develop on the basis of commodity exchange across the world, but from the conquest of the non-capitalist world by armies and the forced entry of peoples away from the capitalist centres into dependent markets.

Marx argued that prior to the invention of machinery, the industry of each country largely drew on the raw materials from each nation. Mechanization and the international division of labour led to the growth of the world market through low prices, which tore natural communities and brought them into dependence. The process of "primitive accumulation" undertaken on national soil then took place in the East and Africa with forceful participation in markets followed by colonization.

Slavery was an integral part of the historical development of capitalism as it gave the colonies their value, and accelerated world trade, which was a pre-condition for industry. The degradation of African people in slavery and the domination of Asia (particularly India) through the markets and the sword was integral to modern capitalism.

In its formation and at its base, the brutal institutionalization of racism through the maintenance of the slave trade and the dependence on cotton from the American south. The modern state emerged with a racial character and was manned by white men antagonistic to

the free development of dominated peoples. Built into its foundations are also the discrimination and racism on which a state based on enforcing slavery and racial distinction has been based. Even in Africa.

The modern state is also a state which is patriarchal and maintains patriarchal order. Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property." As Lerner, the author of the book *Patriarchy*, puts it:

"As a system, patriarchy is as outdated as feudalism, but it is a 4,000-year-old system of ideas that won't just go away overnight."

A modern western capitalist state has lost some of its frankly sexist character but only after offering up vigorous resistance to women gaining vote and inheriting property. Built into its foundations are also the discrimination and racism on which a state based on enforcing slavery and racial distinction has been based. Even African states show this character.

Women are largely excluded from the state: from the judiciary or as senior lawyers even in advanced capitalist countries. In the heartland of capitalism, Ruth Bader Ginsburg has been celebrated as the grand exception: only four of 112 Supreme Court Justices have been women. Throughout the world, violence against women is defended or excused by police and judges who are part of the patriarchal capitalist state apparatus.

Internationally women own less than 20% of the world's land and have limited security and ownership of the houses they occupy.

Capitalism has attempted to bring the intellectual and leadership capacity of half the population into the corporate world, but is failing even at this level. In Japan the goal of 30% was not reached, just 15% of directors are women; in Germany the figures of failure are much the same. It seems that patriarchal capitalism cannot make reforms to open the positions of public authority in the state and corporate world to women. The converse is that substantial sections of women are alienated from the structures of power and open to the tide of resistance.

### Aspiring bonapartes

The pandemic has accelerated two political processes in government, firstly the elevation of the state and secondly the rising of the executive above the state with decisive measures in response to the pandemic. This has created opportunities to make regulations look ridiculous in the defence of "freedom" and a powerful accelerant of antidemocratic forces. The emergency economic relief also has given autocrats the facility to reach over the heads of conventional procedures and give a relief to struggling families much in the same way as an emperor might toss coins to the poor. Trump, for instance, insisted that his name appeared on the cheques and encouraged people to regard these as "Trumps' check".

Such tricks and the promise of economic salvation generate a powerful echo among followers feeling the powerlessness in the face of global economic forces and, among their fellows, unemployment and declining economic prospects. They are able to be turned against the marginalized, the foreigner, those of different religions, race or sexuality. The rule of the populists is unstable, as the Leader turns against those closest to him, demanding more and more impossible sacrifices to feed his obsessive desire for power. The violence ultimately threatens the lives of those caught up in it, as it requires denying reality in more and more ways. When the critically minded or when scientists point to that reality, they will be attacked and ridiculed. The show must go on!

Despite its apparent support in the fervor of the crowd, the rule of the populist is a rollercoaster, as the conventional is rejected and he faces a rising tide of opposition from outside his base. Most importantly, the populist leader is not driven to make sustained economic improvement in the lives of his followers, even if that were possible under capitalism. Without that material advance, the feverish fervor of support from the base comes to face-to-face with dilemmas over time.

### The impending world revolution

The pandemic has not been an agency of change in itself, so much as an accelerant of trends already well underway, argues Scott Galloway in his book *Post Covid*. The division between the powerful tech monopolies and more conventional companies, he argues, will deepen: the former will thrive as a result of the disruption and the others lag. Sectors such as higher education, will struggle to redefine themselves after the absence of lecturer-to-student communications and rising prospects for online instruction.

Prof Galloway sees human development forced forwards by the pandemic: “As the ripple of COVID-19 careens around the globe, it’s forcing humankind to innovate and change the way we work and live. The upside of where we find ourselves right now is that individuals and corporations will be more resilient in a post-COVID-19 world.”

In an extraordinary perverse prospect, Galloway feels there are opportunities for corporates post Covid arising from pent-up and contained demand being unleashed. In the United States the economic disaster of the slump has led to an aggregate loss in wages of \$50bn over last 9 months (or put in another way, substantial savings for capital). To these savings he adds over \$1 trillion dollars through stimulus payments, unemployment insurance and PPP bailouts to small business. In addition, he finds consumers have spent \$500 billion less over the last nine months, without use of holiday travel to Disneyland or to foreign destinations.

Once some level of herd immunity is reached, he argues, there will be \$1.5 trillion in pent-up demand available to explode into the consumer-driven boom. The spoils, of course, only deepen the already devastating inequality of society. The profits will go to the top 1% which control 80% of the stock exchange. As the markets rip upwards, this will hide the stark reality that in the tremendous prosperity for the minority, society will be riven apart.

More than this, even with some success at reallocating resources to the poor, the fundamental inequality of society will remain: households with the greatest need have the least resources (money) to solve their problems. The law of inverse equity is uncovered in the health field by new health interventions, which are initially primarily accessed by the rich, and inequalities narrow over time but are never eliminated. Inequality still remains even after time to remedy the initial inequality. A good example is the uptake of free glasses provided by the NHS: it was initially the middle class which took up the service and then much later the poorest in society.

In the midst of the upturn there will be declining wellbeing. Wages will be stagnant and people of colour will have taken a disproportionate amount of death and disability from Covid-19. There will also be new levels of segregation as remote work makes for dispersion; an acceleration of the trends out of the cities to greater physical and social distance among peoples. The interaction between classes and races in urban spaces will decline as contact with other groups becomes more remote.

The burden of the pandemic has fallen hardest on those least resilient to its pressures. Most black and Hispanic people rent homes and are more vulnerable to evictions, to more poverty and more disease. The high levels of infection and death are not intrinsic somehow to ethnicity; they result from poor housing, pollution and dangerous environments. In their places of residence, pollution is a routine problem and working people are more exposed or vulnerable than others to polluted air, not having air filtration in their homes, or those whose health is already compromised. Those who are exposed to more air pollution and who smoke fare worse with respiratory infections than those who are breathing cleaner air and who don't smoke.

In developed capitalist countries, recovery programmes are designed to save collapsing industries such as aircraft and cruise industries, and give support to households with shrinking incomes. The huge flows of funds have been an immediate support to the big corporates, and Stock Exchanges have been buoyed up by purchases of corporate bonds and even the purchase of stocks by treasuries and reserve banks. The support to households has been more limited and aimed at maintaining effective demand rather than resolving problems of family survival.

The crisis of small companies is acute: they have found that access to money came through the banks; those associated with the bank had preference. Others found that the funds for small business had been siphoned off by the well established. They had to go to the back of the queue or die away.

These sharply negative trends of capitalism will however force the maturing of a generation of young leaders that recognize that the superpower of the species is cooperation and carrying the determination to prepare to coordinate for the next threat of a pandemic. An entirely new leadership will have to emerge to enable human survival. Galloway talks of the necessity of empathy; we, of the certainty of solidarity and socialism.

And then there are two other certainties: firstly that of resistance from below of all strata that have suffered so acutely during the lockdowns; and secondly of the working class which has worked during this dangerous period driving trucks, operating ports, manufacturing essential equipment and suffering the intense stresses of uncertain work.

The rising strike statistics in the United States point to a strengthening mood.

### What is the strategy for power?

The question is often asked: How can the myriad movements be taken to success without a well prepared revolutionary leadership and party? The answer is that the generation of youthful resistance is throwing up a fresh layer of leadership which is learning many lessons from the struggle and is eager to learn more. The social movements propel forward school and university students, lower level trade unionists and women in struggle into effective leadership of the resistance.

The fierce internal democracy of these movements ensures a “flat” rather than a hierarchical organizational structure, networks rather than layers of leadership. Any hierarchical leadership structures would not sit well on such horizontal movements. In Belarus the word “vertical” applies to the dictatorial placemen in state, society and corporate bodies. The immediate impulse of youth, women and workers is for forms of direct democracy and high levels of participation in decision making.

The mass movement is pressing on the state and established civil society and reviving civic life in street marches, demonstrations, occupations of market squares and in the ferment of discussion and more discussion. Determined optimism, the mood that much can be achieved, is in the air.

The current movements are more durable than those of the past such as the Occupy movement. Most movements have sprung up unannounced and often made rapid advances, some losing momentum over a period largely through the exhaustion of its militants, others turning to a variety of alternative tactics. Many show extraordinary resilience, with upsurges following ebbs, and a continuing mobilization which is grinding away at the foundations of the state month after month. The Belarusian democratic insurgency has continued from 24 May 2020 onwards, currently almost 8 months of strikes and street demonstrations. In Louisville the demonstrations demanding justice for Breonna Taylor have lasted 220 days, including periods of daily engagement. The movement in Sudan returns again and again into the fray despite facing deadly armed groups and losing many members in struggle.

Radical ideas for the elimination of authoritarian states are in the air, as in Sudan, Belarus and in the streets of the United States. There are few illusions in substantial reform being undertaken, and these movements are open to discussion on new strategies to follow, as well as pursuing the relentless pressure on the street. These movements are not all explicitly

revolutionary in the sense of wanting to completely eliminate the existing state (although many do). They are, however, throwing up transitional demands threatening the existing state. They are not fully developed revolutionary groupings with universal understanding of the nature of the capitalist state and socialism. They are, however, the most determined strugglers for democracy and social transformation, the most durable array of movements and appearing more widely than previously in history.

The explosive energy of such movements is bringing the labour movement again to its feet; reviving an interest in social and political issues and pouring the fresh air of struggle into the stuffy union offices.

The prospects of coming to power in one country depend largely on each movement finding sufficient unity and strength among in one country which would be the weak link in the chain of the international command system of capitalism. This is what has happened in the Sudan and what has been attempted in Algeria, Lebanon and many other countries where the movement is offering an alternative leadership to the ruling party and other oppositional party formations. There are growing numbers of countries feeling they could break the link in the chain. The other accelerator will be the general rising tide of resistance which makes a bid for power more likely and acts in solidarity with reasserted workers' power.

Unlike a previous period, external intervention no longer hangs in the same way over these movements as the prime danger, although it remains a threat. US imperialism, let alone decaying British imperialism, is no longer eager to rush into every country in which there is mass insurgency against capitalism.

The populist or more traditional forms of capitalist rule have little to offer workers as reforms. Remember it took more than ten years to achieve the same employment levels; during that time the permanent jobs lost were replaced by a profusion of short term and gig jobs. There were additional costs added to the budget in terms of student loans, rising taxes and transport costs.

The despots who rule over us have entirely other priorities: keeping power and directing the rivers of funds to their re-election, serving and preserving the capitalist system not protecting the people or their economic prospects.

There is no guarantee of success, but the prospects have definitely improved. Nothing will change unless we will it.

### Special forces: women in insurgent movements

There is a deep upwelling within society as a slowly rising wave, initially imperceptible and then a rising tide of resistance against the iron-cast barriers to women's advance in society. Women are prominent in the movements of resistance around the globe with good reason.

In a number of countries, such as Namibia, for the first time young professional working women are testing their voice against patriarchal order. In response, the gender minister speaks of the right to life rather than the defence of women against rape, in an attempt to deflect a rising tide of anger.

There are striking ways in which new leadership takes to the floor and the street. A child will lead them; a girl child rises to the occasion. As in the turmoil of the French nation divided in the face of the enemy, the peasant girl Jeanette (or Joan) Arc took on men's clothes at 16, inspired volunteers and led the troops in resistance to the English. Captured, she was forced to return to women's dress. In the crisis and ineptitude of the patriarchal capitalist order it is no accident that Greta Thunberg, 17, could stride across Europe and internationally to express the outrage of youth and demand world leaders take immediate action against rising emissions. Shorn of respect for power, her speeches captured the imagination and drove the environmental movement into action.

In a world of half-truths and paralysis in the face of catastrophe, Greta Thunberg carries the authority of science with greater passion than scientists for scientific truths. She spoke with the lucidity of truth unencumbered by considerations of diplomacy or respect for false authority.

Such individual daring has been the cause for great astonishment. It caught the bourgeois off guard. But it was the symbol that youth and half of the population has been almost entirely excluded from political life and from the power to make decisions in the political economy. A generation, a gender, took the leadership in the vacuum of political authority in facing the unstoppable advance of global warming.

In Sudan, the strong participation of women in opposition to the Bashir regime and their growing participation in government and society has brought a campaign against pornography against women and the use of morality police to attack women wearing trousers. Those arrested are asked intimate details: "They kept asking me if I have a boyfriend; when I was kissed last ...they threatened to take naked pictures of me or create a porn film featuring me." The explosive label "pornography" is used against middle class and women from minorities for daring not to cover their head or for wearing trousers. It is a deliberate strategy to roll back women and to hold back the democratic advance of the time. These attacks are only hardening the resolve of such women fighters.

As in the case of black people in the United States and elsewhere, the state or parts of the state are in constant surveillance and in defence of those attacking women who assert their rights. In India there are outbreaks of rape and murder of lower caste girls leading to outrage from women nationally and internationally. As in the case of black lives in the US, there is a moment of quiet before the inevitable explosion of violence yet again. In Latin America, women have been imprisoned with long sentences for having miscarriages, again causing outrage and mobilization. The church provides no comfort to them in their misery and oppression.

It is certain that women cannot further endure the violence at home and society and the lenience of courts to perpetrators of violence. This maintains their subjugation and denies their full participation in society. In advanced countries the language of mobilization is Me-too; in Africa, India and Latin America this is reflected in protests against the violence particularly against working women such as the street vendors in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa.

Resistance is certain on the issues directly affecting women and in women's support and indeed leadership of broad democratic movements as that of resistance to the brutal special police force of SARS in Nigeria.

The former liberation movements in power have become the bastions of patriarchal capitalism; one often of deep dependence on foreign corporates (Angola and Mozambique) and state-owned enterprises. The presidencies of Dos Santos, Mugabe and the ruling Frelimo elite have attempted to turn the state into a family concern, with key sections of the economy distributed among and within ruling families. They are intrinsically hostile to democratic opposition to their personal and patriarchal rule and will not hesitate to physically eliminate opposition. In all of these states young women are entering into the resistance and suffering appalling attacks and vindictive court rulings.

### Gender based violence and women's advance

The issues of domestic violence are class issues; violence against women cuts into the rising tide of resistance and undermines its integrity.

The combination of anti-women campaigns such as the emphasis on women in the family, extreme versions of the Right to Life, and the lampooning of women public figures is all part of the Great Excess; the combination of racism, sexism, anti-socialism in a noxious excrescence of masculine power in and out of the state. Populist currents are leading to the politicization of everything in an unprecedented way; religion, health practices, the subordination of women, the denigration of the handicapped, migrants and weak groups.

Every excess drives the cultural counter-revolution against social reform and acceptance of more enlightened norms in which women have control over their bodies, capital punishment is abolished, LGBTQ people are accepted in society, and black people are able exercise political and social initiatives. Reaction is trying to catch up and reverse decades of social change in society; the deeper participation of women, the acceptance of LGBTQ persons by their families and society, the kneeling of sportsmen and women at public sports events. The feverish response of leaders and base to such identities and solidarity displays a weakness on the right.

The core social base of populism and reaction is among men who lost millions of heavy manual jobs in the 2007-08 recession from which they have never recovered. A transitional programme must talk to this base and offer a class perspective as an alternative to the conspiracies and reactionary messages of reaction. This is an international phenomenon: in South Africa, deadly

anti-black xenophobia is fueled by those claiming to be veterans of the guerilla struggle and petty shop keepers.

The very uneven advance of women in modern society is a political question. There are extraordinary contradictions between the lives of working women and those of elite women in some position of power. The much greater representation of women in legislatures and in government and even the adoption of conventions and improved legislation has brought some change but not fundamentally improved women's lives. Indeed, these are often worsened. Although South Africa scores a high level of women in government these politicians represent the dominant elite and not poor women enduring some of the highest levels of rape in the world.

Women supporters of the ruling ANC regularly attend trials of rapists among the elite to pour scorn and abuse on women bringing charges. Such victims live desperate lives requiring special support.

As in the submerged world of racism, there are extraordinary measures against women in the economy. There are bizarre job reservation with hundreds of jobs for men in countries previously in the Soviet Union and particularly in Russia itself. These exclusions are broadly comparable to the subjugation of women in Saudi Arabia where women have, until recently, been prohibited from driving cars. In Russia, the recent lifting of job reservation for men in driving trucks and trains only exposed the extent to which these prohibitions still exist without consultation with free trade unions, scientific evidence or women themselves. Such extraordinary misogyny arises from the counter-revolution from 1929 onwards in the Soviet Union, which displayed social backwardness even greater than in advanced capitalist societies. As in current right-wing populism, the purpose is to exclude women from leading positions in society (very successfully in Russia) and to stress the unalleviated domestic and reproductive role of women.

The immense explosion of conspiracy theories which powerfully impact on the mood of even the college-educated distracts working people from seeing their class position and taking up class issues on their own behalf. Social media vastly accelerate the views of the unorthodox, as this attracts more comment, driving the algorithms to make linkages across individuals and groups and the return of profit on each posting. People are choking on the exhaust of these platforms and new communication platforms will have to arise on the basis of international cooperation.

An epoch of scientific advance, ready exchange, instinctive internationalism and trusted communication among each other has been born in the resistance to despots, oligarchs and a variety of populists. The increasingly anti-democratic character of all regimes at the moment, such as the implementation of lockdowns without consultation and with immediate effect, is also hardening their consciousness.

## The democratic character of national uprisings

The insurgencies internationally are based on those who have been excluded from history and from society: the working class excluded from power, women allocated to types and sectors of work and substantial powerlessness and black people who suffer indignities of racism and violence at the hands of the police. Exclusion leads to revolution: every struggle for democracy and socialism accentuates the difference between the representative, the citizen, the passive citizen and the modern slave. And between employers deploying capital at will and wage slaves who have no alternative but to sell their labour power to keep families and body and soul together.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, set by France's National Constituent Assembly in 1789, is a human civil rights document from the French Revolution written in consultation with Thomas Jefferson, who enslaved more than 600 people. The first article contains the document's central statement: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights." The "men born free and equal" citizens did not include the following: men under 25, those who had not paid the poll tax, children, domestic servants, rural day-laborers and slaves, Jews, actors and hangmen, "illegitimate" offspring and all women.

Similarly, in declaring independence the Founding Fathers declared: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Similarly, there was a long list of exclusions to the "self-evident truth" which only afforded the rights of "universal" suffrage to landowning men.

The French political activist and playwright Olympe de Gouges wrote a riposte to the Declaration on the rights of women and "others" and condemned slavery. A leading character in a play she wrote was a slave who killed his master in self-defence; he tells his lover: "They use us in these climes as they use animals in theirs. They came here and seized our and our wealth and enslaved in recompense for the riches that they stole from us. The fields they reap are our very own and the harvest is watered with our sweat and our tears." This cry of outrage resounds down the centuries with particular force in former colonial countries which remain as the subordinate suppliers of raw materials.

Each advance for humanity, registered as civil rights, only raises more sharply the contradiction between those with these rights and those without and between legal fictions and the real. The state in human society arose with private property and patriarchy to ensure the lineage of wealth through generations. Indeed, despite reforms the names of nobility still are those of wealthy men centuries after they lost their privileged position. The struggle for democracy has been a long struggle, since all earlier forms of the state were either those of monarchy or some form of dictatorship. The ruling class has resisted the widening of the male franchise, voting rights for women, and has employed every anti-democratic device to maintain the patriarchal order in capitalism. Democracy is an incomplete state in law and practice and under attack by the populists and ruling strata who want to see its prospects diminished. The demands for

democratic rule in society, the economy and the state are transitional to the establishment of a socialist order.

These aspirations explain the basis for the movements on continent after continent trying to establish control over the state, an end to the dictatorship of capital and equal divisions of the wealth they have produced. We socialists in the labour movement adopts the demands of democratic movements among national groups, women, oppressed groups and youth as our own and link these demands to their remedy; the establishment of workers' democracy and socialism.

The cries for action on climate change by scientists and society grow ever louder and more insistent. There is no possibility that fossil fuels can be replaced with renewable energy and global warming reduced without public direction of new investment and a socialist programme to carry society forwards again. That public direction requires ownership.

Nearly all wealth (houses, factories, land... all property and resources) is in the hands of the minority which need it least. 10% of the population of the world own 85% of the wealth, but all the parts of this wealth (Marx spoke of "an immense accumulation of commodities") are produced by working people, not by those who own the wealth. The democratic and socialist revolution will return this wealth to working people and break the system of exploitation and appropriation.

Here are the elements of a transitional program for our times:

- Expropriation of banks and insurance companies with full compensation for pensions and financial resources of working people,
- The cancellation of household debt, of public debt owed by emerging economies
- Redistribution of wealth through radical tax measures which reapportion resources from rich to the poor.
- Implementation of a planned green economy which reviews all sectors and pursues social and environmental goals
- Urgently preserving and extending the forests
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions through construction of public housing and conversion of industries
- Inauguration of improved agriculture by restoring nature through regenerative agriculture.

Our demands are the demands for humanity's survival: to end the curse of class inequalities, to stop global warming, to build an economy of plenty without waste and burning fossil fuel, repair our environment, to achieve longer life expectancy for all with better conditions of health. The list is formidable, but the alternative is terrifying.

Our approach is immediately internationalist and socialist. Every woman and man prepared to struggle should read and understand our human condition, read, criticise and develop the perspectives and organize with comrades who share this understanding. We must participate in the many mass movements arising from working people's struggle for a better life and bring these ideas into the movement. We discuss how to clarify the social demands which can only be achieved in the struggle for and realization of socialism.

We put our minds to assembling all those in struggle in their mass organizations to bring together these national mass movements into international networks. We greet each other in solidarity and commit the organizations arising from workers' struggles to each others' victory. An attack on one is an attack against all; victory for one has to become a victory for us all!

In the Workers International Network we are working through struggle to clarify and agree on our socialist analysis of society and to bring our organizations together internationally. Our political discipline arises from our work to coordinate policies and struggles around the goal of winning the movements to socialism. We work to build our theoretical understanding, to link the ideas for change in propaganda and expose the fraud of capitalism in agitation against work and social conditions. Our struggles will take us to the historical inevitability of destroying the capitalist state and replacing it with a democratic workers' state. From this point the world is in the hands of ordinary working people and the international revolution in progress.

The ideas and practice of socialism aim to bring all the peoples of the world, from all nations and religions, together in common purpose of using this wealth for peaceful development of all people and to restore nature which is being destroyed. We aim to put this wealth which is produced by working people back in their hands, into the hands of the overwhelming majority.

Let's get to work in the organizations of the working class and youth.

Our lives or continued capitalist rule; we chose to live!