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Edited & Introduced by

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The Cultural Apparatus of Monopoly Capital

By John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney

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The past half-century has been dominated by the rise of media to a commanding position in the social life of most people and nations, to the point where it is banal to regard this as the “information age.” The once-dazzling ascension of television in the 1950s and ‘60s now looks like the horse-and-buggy era when one assesses the Internet, smartphones, and the digital revolution. For social theorists of all stripes communication has moved to center stage. And for those on the left, addressing the role of communication in achieving social change and then maintaining popular rule in the face of reactionary backlash is now a primary concern. The Arab Spring and the media battles of the elected left governments in Latin America are exhibits A1 and A2. Any serious left critique or political program must account for and embrace communication or risk being irrelevant and impotent.

To address these emerging concerns, over the past four decades the “political economy of communication” has emerged as a dynamic field of study, and one where considerable radical scholarship has taken place. The field addresses the growing importance of media, advertising, and communication in advanced capitalist societies, examining how the capitalist structure of communication industries shapes their output, as well as the role of media and culture in maintaining the social order. In particular, the field explores the way media “depoliticizes” people, and thereby entrenches the privileges of those at the top. It highlights the importance of government policies in creating the communication system, and the nature of the policymaking process in capitalist societies. In North America the decisive founders of this area of research were Dallas Smythe and Herbert Schiller. In Europe a generation of scholars coming out of the 1960s launched the field, and there the work was more closely attached to a re-reading of Marx. Perhaps the most visible manifestation of the research in the United States has been the stellar critique of journalism produced over the years by Edward S. Herman and

Noam Chomsky. Countless left activists are versed in the material today, a testament to the field's value and importance.

To no small extent, political economists of communication, including one of us, identified themselves as in the tradition of radical political economy, but with a sophisticated appreciation of media that had escaped their predecessors, locked in the past as they were. Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy were occasionally held up by political economists of communication as representing the sort of traditional Marxists who underappreciated the importance of media, communication, and culture.³ Because of the preeminent role of their 1966 book, *Monopoly Capital*, Baran and Sweezy tended to receive more criticism than other radical economists who were likewise seen as negligent in this area. Smythe's seminal 1977 essay, "Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism," while acknowledging *Monopoly Capital's* strengths and importance, devoted more criticism to it than to any other work.⁴ The pattern has persisted in subsequent writings.⁵

We were never especially impressed by this criticism.⁶ To us, *Monopoly Capital*, and the broader political economy of Baran and Sweezy, far from ignoring communication, provided key elements for a serious study of the subject. Its emphasis upon the importance of giant corporations operating in oligopolistic markets provided a very useful way to understand media markets. Specifically, Baran and Sweezy's take on the "sales effort" and the role of advertising in monopoly capitalism was and is the necessary starting point for any treatment of the subject.⁷ Few other economists came close to them in making advertising a central part of their political economy of capitalism. In doing so, they made the media and communication industries central components of modern capitalism.

Along these lines, one of our favorite pieces by Baran and Sweezy was their 1962 written testimony to the British Labour Party's Advertising Commission, headed by Lord John Reith, the iconic former director general of the BBC. The Advertising Commission was established as part of the Labour Party's reconsideration of the use of commercial advertising on British radio and television. Later published in *Science and Society* as "Theses on Advertising," and largely unknown to this day, Baran and Sweezy's testimony took the political-economic arguments concerning the role of advertising in contemporary capitalism, that were later developed in *Monopoly Capital*, and applied them foursquare to understanding media.⁸ The analysis of the deleterious effects of advertising on media operations and content, as well as

society as a whole, is powerful and ages well. The piece also suggests that Baran and Sweezy, far from being determinists who thought any struggle for reform was a waste of time unless or until capitalism was overthrown, had a keen sense of the importance of media policy fights in the here and now. The Advertising Commission Report was finally published in 1966, and reflected the views of Baran and Sweezy with respect to the key roles played by oligopolistic markets, the decline of price competition, and the role of “the monopoly power of established firms” in the rise of modern mass media advertising.⁹

In addition, Baran and Sweezy had sensitivity to the importance of technology and its capacity for changing the nature of capitalism and the nature of society that was mostly unrivalled among economists, left, right, and center. Their work placed emphasis on examining those “revolutionary” technologies, like the steam engine, electricity, and the automobile, which provided the basis for capitalist expansion for generations and turned the world upside down in the process. In 1957 Sweezy characterized the United States as being in the midst of a sweeping “scientific-industrial revolution,” due to the confluence of the corporate expansion into directing research and the rise of permanent militarism in the 1940s. In a careful review of economic history, contemporary scientific and technological developments, and with a look toward the horizon, Sweezy put the invention of the computer and the emerging communication revolution at the center of a technological revolution that would be every bit as profound as that wrought by the steam engine. To those who found this hypothetical, if not preposterous, Sweezy responded: “Come back in another thirty years. The transformation of society implicit in the new technologies will then be in full swing and you will be able to see signs of it on every hand.”

Yet, to read *Monopoly Capital* one was left, somewhat paradoxically, with little sense that communication per se was of much interest to its authors.

This changed in 2011 when we discovered a missing chapter written for *Monopoly Capital* on culture, communications, and mental health, “The Quality of Monopoly Capitalist Society II.”¹¹ This chapter was originally drafted by Baran and was later edited and revised by Sweezy following the death of his coauthor. It had been intended as the penultimate chapter of *Monopoly Capital*.¹² Baran tragically died of a heart attack in March 1964 with a planned redrafting of this chapter undone. Sweezy was therefore left with the task of editing and completing the chapter, to which Baran had meant to add more material related to the mental health section, which was

only loosely related to the culture section. Sweezy worked extensively on the chapter in November 1964 and perhaps later, editing the manuscript, cutting out considerable material from the original draft, and adding some new material related to communications. He gave this later version the title “The Quality of Monopoly Capitalist Society: Culture and Mental Health.” In the end, however, he elected to leave it out of the book, recognizing that there were issues that the two of them had not sufficiently worked out together.¹³

But when we read this missing chapter, we immediately saw that the portion on culture was based on serious research and important theoretical insights. It also demonstrated a commitment to a “political economy of communication” before the field had even crystallized and far beyond what anyone, including ourselves, had imagined possible. It also provided a quite different perspective on Baran and Sweezy’s goals for *Monopoly Capital*. Focusing on monopoly capital’s creation of a mass society culture, it was in some respects intended to be the logical culmination of the book’s argument. Its point was to provide an understanding of the political culture of monopoly capitalist society, and the implications for radical social change. Consequently, we have decided to publish the first two-thirds of this missing chapter for the first time in this issue, excluding the last third on mental health and re-entitling it “The Quality of Monopoly Capitalist Society: Culture and Communications.”

Our motivation in publishing this piece is more than antiquarian. As we reviewed the work of Baran and Sweezy on culture and communication, as well as other pieces that appeared in *Monthly Review* in the late 1950s and ‘60s, it became clear that the missing culture chapter in *Monopoly Capital* was not an isolated occurrence nor an anomaly, but, rather, part of a broader emerging intellectual school. We discovered that some exceptional related work was done during this period by several major radical and Marxist intellectuals—people like C. Wright Mills, Herbert Marcuse, E.P. Thompson, Ralph Miliband, Eric Hobsbawm, and Raymond Williams, who were in regular communication with each other. All of these thinkers contributed to the critique of the cultural apparatus.

Mills, Miliband, and Williams, in particular, were all close to Sweezy and *Monthly Review* in this period. A key section of Mills’s *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) was published first in *Monthly Review*.¹⁴ Upon Mills’s death, it was Miliband who wrote the memorial piece for *Monthly Review*.¹⁵ As for Williams, he confided to Thompson in the 1960s that while he belonged to no faction or section, he “felt closest to the American Monthly

Review.”¹⁶ Williams’s 1960 article for *Monthly Review* was incorporated in his book *The Long Revolution*, while Miliband’s early articles in *Monthly Review* undoubtedly influenced his *Parliamentary Socialism* (published in the United States by Monthly Review Press).¹⁷

On the one hand, the work of this period demonstrates a creative and open-minded Marxism or radical social criticism that embraced the issue of communication and plunged into the problems it posed for social theory. It animated much of what would be most impressive about the New Left that was about to explode into prominence. On the other hand, the examination of communication gravitated from criticism of the deleterious effects of capitalist culture to being concerned with the politics of culture, and how control of communication systems was becoming a necessary political battlefield for the democratic left. As early as 1961, Thompson observed: “The task of creating an *alternative* means of communication has, from the start, been a major preoccupation of the New Left.” In this sense these works anticipated many of the issues that concern the left today and the approach offers a clarity and insight that has considerable value for activists worldwide.

For that reason we decided it best not only to publish the missing chapter on culture from *Monopoly Capital*, but also to reprint a handful of related works on culture and communication from this period, by authors who were working along similar lines. In this introduction we will provide context for the times and the issues, as well as an explanation for the pieces we have elected to include. As we will suggest at the end of this introduction these works can be seen as providing some of the crucial foundations for a political economy of the media, helping us to construct the critical responses we need today in the age of the Internet, social media, and the ongoing attempts in Latin America and elsewhere to repossess the cultural apparatus of society.

Brecht, the Frankfurt School, and the Concept of Cultural Apparatus

In retrospect, the basis of Baran’s, if not Sweezy’s, concern for and awareness of culture and communication issues is obvious. Baran worked as a researcher under Friedrich Pollock, the associate director of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, before fleeing Germany in 1933, following Hitler’s accession to power. His experiences and associations in Frankfurt were to exert a strong influence on his writing; so much so that he is

sometimes characterized as the foremost political economist associated with the Frankfurt School.¹⁹ During the 1950s and early '60s, when he was a professor of economics at Stanford, Baran met with and corresponded with other figures whom he had known at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in pre-Hitlerian Germany, such as his close friends Herbert Marcuse and Leo Lowenthal, and kept up with the writings of Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno.²⁰

Central to the Frankfurt School's concerns was the relationship of mass culture to politics and social change. Baran read widely and carefully in this area, and it was his passion for the subject that likely was the impetus for the prospective chapter in *Monopoly Capital*. He approached culture and communication as encompassing art, literature, entertainment, education, media, and the role of intellectuals. His main concern was the undermining of affirmative culture, as a necessary form of human development, due to the relentless process of commodification promoted by monopoly capital. As he stated in 1950:

We have to understand the ideologically overpowering impact of bourgeois, fetishistic consciousness on the broad masses of the working population.... The heart-breaking emptiness and cynicism of the commercial, competitive, capitalist culture. The systematic cultivation of devastatingly neurotic reactions to most social phenomena (through the movies, the "funnies," etc.). The effective destruction in schools, churches, press, everywhere, of everything that smacks of *solidarity* in the consciousness of the man in the street. And finally, the utterly paralyzing feeling of solitude which must overcome any one who does not want to conform, the feeling that there is no movement, no camp, no group to which one can turn.

In Baran's view, commodified culture comes to play a preeminent role under monopoly capitalism. The overarching critique is of the massive and growing gap between the actual quality of culture in the United States and what the society is capable of producing. This gap is both cause and effect of the absurdity of monopoly capitalism and evidence of its increasing destructiveness. It is a political-economic critique because it assesses the cause of the gap as being the capitalist nature of society and, more specifically, the capitalist nature of the "cultural apparatus." Baran and Sweezy took seriously the close examination of the structures of media and communication industries.

It was the concept of the cultural apparatus, derived from Bertolt Brecht, Fromm, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Mills, that formed the central organizing principle in Baran's drafting of the discussion of culture and communications

in *Monopoly Capital*. The earliest outlines for “The Quality of Monopoly Capitalist Society II” chapter had it covering the realms of the “mass media” and “mental health.” Baran was to transform this, however, into a treatment of specific media, particularly book publishing and broadcasting, as manifestations of what he and Sweezy called the development of “the cultural apparatus of monopoly capitalism.” Indeed, their analysis in the missing chapter printed below begins and ends with the concept of the cultural apparatus.

To understand the significance of this it is important to know something of the history of this crucial Marxian concept. The notion of the cultural apparatus owed its centrality in Marxian theory primarily to the work of Brecht beginning in 1932 (see Eleanor Hakim’s article in this issue).²⁴ Brecht saw what he referred to as the cultural “apparatus” or means of production and of technical control of cultural processes as applying to every realm of cultural production, such as the theatre, opera, radio, book publishing, and film. The crucial problem of the artist, who did not control the cultural apparatus in capitalist society, was then to find ways to gain control or to subvert the apparatus in order to promote critical, dialectical, and revolutionary ends. However, Brecht was under no illusions and in his view the dominant role of the cultural apparatus in bourgeois society was to reinforce existing power relations. As Rowitha Mueller has stated: “Thus the terminology itself points up the connection between culture and politics.” In Brecht’s view, the cultural apparatus functions, among other things, to stabilize the existing social relations both politically and economically. He “saw this in terms of a selection process: ‘Society absorbs via the (cultural) apparatus whatever it needs in order to reproduce itself.’”²⁵

In Brecht’s view artists and intellectuals are not masters of the cultural apparatus, but rather their work is completely subordinated to it and capitalist objectives, and thus placed “out of their control.” “The intellectuals...are completely dependent on the apparatus, both socially and economically; it is the only channel for the realization of their work. The output of writers, composers and critics comes more and more to resemble raw material. The finished article is produced by the apparatus.” The capitalist order got in “the habit of judging works of art by their suitability for the apparatus without ever judging the apparatus by its suitability for the work.” The result naturally was that “[cultural] work amounts to so much merchandise, and is governed by the normal laws of merchandise trade. Art is merchandise, only to be manufactured by the means of production (apparati).”

Brecht concretely explored various forms of the cultural apparatus—theatre, radio, film—with the idea of carrying out a kind of guerrilla war that would end up appropriating them for purposes of revolutionary change. He believed that ultimately “the socialization of these means of [cultural] production” was “vital for art.” The goal then was to develop strategic approaches to asserting control over the various apparatuses, which were currently “wholly capitalist.” This required empirical research and a deep understanding of the various ways in which the artist and intellectual could employ leverage. Brecht’s drama was explicitly designed to subvert the apparatus of the theatre in this way. As he wrote: “When I read Marx’s *Capital* I understood my plays.”

The artist and the intellectual in this perspective had a crucial role to play in the struggle over the cultural apparatus that was so vital to society. In Brecht’s plays this took the form, to use a phrase of Baran’s, of “the confrontation of reality with reason,” through various dialectical devices. Brecht employed the concept of “inplotation” (a kind of reverse or internalized exploitation) to describe the complex, contradictory role of the consumer of the products of the cultural apparatus, who was simultaneously both a victim and a kind of complicit exploiter in the context of the struggle of the cultural producer or artist with the owners. The role of the artist and intellectual as revolutionary was to reestablish the relationship between the consumer and producer of cultural work by undermining the estrangement from human needs and capacities enforced by the bourgeois society.

As Walter Benjamin, who was enormously influenced by Brecht, argued, the question of “the author as producer” was not so much a question of the “position [of the artist’s work] vis à vis” the various forms of the cultural apparatus, as “what is its position *within* them?” The fundamental problem in cultural change then became “adapting the apparatus to the ends of the proletarian revolution.”

Brecht argued that the struggle over the cultural apparatus was not confined to those forms such as film and broadcasting that were new, but extended to the entirety of communication forms, all of which were being increasingly mechanized, commodified, and transformed. This included traditional forms such as printed books and the theatre. “The changes wrought by time leave nothing untouched, but always embrace the whole.” A crucial aspect of this was “the mechanization of literary production,” which could not “be thrown into reverse.” The goal then has to be to refunctionalize or reconstruct the existing cultural apparatus to prevent these increasingly complex media from

being removed further and further from the development of human needs and capacity and “the new possibilities of communication.”

The concept of the cultural apparatus played a formative role in the work of the Frankfurt School. As early as 1932 it occupied a central place in Fromm’s article, “The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology” – published in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* and seen as the foundational work integrating historical materialism and psychoanalysis. As Axel Honneth explained the importance of this piece: “Within the intellectual circle of the Institute for Social Research, Fromm was entrusted with the task of working out a psychology that could be linked with economics without any fissure.”

Fromm wrote that “the creation of the [governing] norms” in society was “not left to chance,” but rather that “one whole basic part of the cultural apparatus serves to form the socially required attitude in a systematic and methodical way.” The “cultural apparatus” was depicted as driving, in the language of psychoanalysis, the “libidinal structure of society” – or what Fromm later called “social character” – channeling it so that it was no longer a threat to the status quo. With respect to the working class, the cultural apparatus played a key role in forming what Fromm termed the social cement meant to counter the effects of alienation.

Writing in a similar vein in 1936 in *Authority and the Family*, Horkheimer discussed how revolutionary periods remove some of these cultural controls depriving them of power, while in periods of restoration and reaction an “outmoded cultural apparatus as well the psychic makeup of men and the body of interconnected institutions acquire new power. Then there is a need to investigate the culture thoroughly.” As a structure of power the cultural apparatus seeks to bond the population to the status quo by means of the promotion of particular ideas and ways of life, which are internalized within the psyche. In Horkheimer’s words:

One function of the entire cultural apparatus at any given period has been to internalize in men of subordinate position the idea of a necessary domination of some men over others, as determined by the course of history down to the present time. As a result and as a continually renewed condition of this cultural apparatus, the belief in authority is one of the driving forces, sometimes, productive, sometimes obstructive, of human history.

But it was in Marcuse’s “33 Theses” (written in 1947 and found in draft form in Horkheimer’s archives, appearing only posthumously in Marcuse’s *Collected Works*) that the issue of “the cultural apparatus of monopoly capitalism” was first raised. There Marcuse wrote, in thesis 15:

The phenomenon of cultural identification demands that the problem of “cultural cement” (*Kitt*) be discussed upon a broader basis. One of the most important factors involved here is the leveling of the former avantgarde-oppositional forces with the cultural apparatus of monopoly capitalism (the transformation and application of psychoanalysis, modern art, sexuality, etc. in the work and entertainment process). First and foremost the effect of “*Kitt*” within the working class should be investigated: “scientific management,” rationalization, the interest of the worker in increased productivity (and with it, in the intensification of exploitation), strengthening of nationalistic sentiments.

The concept of cultural cement, as articulated by Marcuse here, followed Fromm and Horkheimer. For Horkheimer it was this cement that was at all times the crucial object of analysis, since it “artificially held together the parts tending towards independence.” The intent of Marcuse’s fifteenth thesis was to underscore the necessity of empirically researching how this cementing of workers to the dominant order was actually accomplished (in contradictory fashion) by the cultural apparatus of monopoly capitalist society.

This reflected the central problem governing the research program of the Frankfurt School. As Honneth has put it,

A major portion of the theoretical construction and social research of the Institute during the 1930s was an attempt to provide an empirical answer to the problem expressed in this tension [between exploitative socioeconomic conditions and cultural stability]. Its guiding motif is formed by the question “What psychic mechanisms have come about that enable the tension between the social classes to remain latent, even though it borders on conflict as a result of the economic situation?” The program of an interdisciplinary social science, outlined by Horkheimer at the beginning of the 1930s, is tailored to the investigation of this phenomenon.

Fromm was later to describe the “cultural apparatus” as a “filter” conditioning what entered society’s “social unconscious.”³⁶ As he wrote in *The Sane Society* in 1955 (a book that strongly impressed Baran): “Eventually, he [the alienated industrial worker] is under the influence of our whole cultural apparatus, the advertisements, the movies, television, newspapers, just as everybody else, and can hardly escape being driven into conformity, although perhaps more slowly than other sectors of the population.”³⁷

Mills, Thompson, and Williams

Similar considerations led Mills, beginning in the late 1950s, to commence writing what was to be a major but never completed work, left unfinished at his untimely death—entitled *The Cultural Apparatus*. The historically specific context of Mill's entry into this sphere is powerfully described by Stanley Aronowitz:

Mills had come to the conclusion that it was not the economy or even self-interest in general that drove contemporary social agents to action or inaction. Mills concluded that in the epoch of what he termed "overdeveloped" capitalism, the masses were moved more broadly by "culture" than reason. He had become convinced that the cultural apparatus played a central role in reproducing the entire "set-up." But it is not the anthropological conception of culture—a whole way of life—that he believed determined politics or secured the domination by the leading institutional actors. Mill's invocation of the cultural apparatus...signaled that culture was no longer the spontaneous creation of the people but instead was an aspect of the organization and reproduction of social and political domination. If social transformation was at all possible, its protagonists were obliged to understand the process of production and distribution of key cultural forms, especially the mass media. Clearly, the implication of his projected study was to argue for a new counterhegemonic strategy of the Left that matched the force of the culture industry.

Mills delivered three university lectures at the London School of Economics (LSE) in January 1959, utilizing a manuscript entitled *The Cultural Apparatus, or The American Intellectual*. These three lectures were later published as "Culture and Politics: The Fourth Epoch," "The Cultural Apparatus," and "The Decline of the Left." Together they constitute the main extant materials of his projected book on *The Cultural Apparatus*—left behind at the time of his death by heart attack at age forty-five in 1962.

Mills did not get very far in this unfinished work in defining what he actually meant by the cultural apparatus. His approach was broader and more obscure than the way the concept was being used in Marxist theory, where it was essentially equivalent to the cultural means of production including the technical means themselves. In contrast, Mills used the notion of cultural apparatus somewhat ambiguously in terms of "observation posts, interpretation centers, and presentation depots" and went on to say that it was "composed of all the organizations and milieu in which artistic, intellectual, and scientific work goes on." His emphasis was more on

processes than on structures, allowing him to emphasize agency, namely the intellectual—to the point that he could say that “I have been studying, for several years now, the cultural apparatus, the intellectual—as a possible, immediate radical agency for change.” This tended to downplay the power dimension, reducing the question of the cultural apparatus itself to the question of the intellectual, of agency—rather than emphasizing the dialectical relation between cultural producer and the capitalist cultural apparatus as in Brecht and the Frankfurt School. Nevertheless, Mills went on to make the critical point that,

What intellectuals now confront is the expropriation of their cultural apparatus itself. We do not have access to the means of effective communication, but more than that, many of us are losing control of the very means of cultural production itself. The situation of the serious movie-maker—is not this the prototype of all cultural workmen? We are cut off from possible publics and such publics as remain are being turned into masses by those businessmen or commissars who do control and manage the effective means of communication. In their hands, these are often less means of communication than means of mass distraction.... What we ought now to do is repossess our cultural apparatus, and use it for our own purposes.

Mills’s approach had a big impact on the New Left Marxists in Britain. Thompson attended the last of Mills’s three LSE lectures on the cultural apparatus, and called it “absolutely splendid.”⁴¹ But there was friendly criticism from a Marxist standpoint. In a long letter to Mills, Thompson wrote: “You argue that intellectual workers must repossess their cultural apparatus and use it for their own purposes. In what sense have they ever possessed it?”⁴² For Thompson it was not a question of repossession of the cultural apparatus but of the construction of a left cultural apparatus. “The problem presents itself,” he wrote in 1959, “as one of constructing (however painfully slow the process may seem—though steady progress is being made) an *alternative* ‘cultural apparatus’ which bypasses the mass media and the party machinery, and which opens up direct channels between significant socialist groupings inside and outside the labour movement.” Thompson was deeply involved in communications issues in the late 1950s and early ‘60s, and submitted a memorandum (as did Raymond Williams) to the 1960 Committee on Broadcasting (the Pilkington Committee); the Pilkington Report was presented to Parliament in 1962.⁴³

Williams shared with Mills and Thompson a concern to translate the critique of the cultural apparatus into a political strategy and program for the left. The starting point for his analysis was “the subordination of a general

communications process to an increasingly powerful system of advertising and public relations." In 1961 Williams argued that,

Instead of the ritual indignation and despair at the cultural condition of "the masses" (now increasingly uttered even by their supposed friends) it is necessary to break through to the central fact that most of our cultural institutions are in the hands of speculators, interested not in the health and growth of society, but in the quick profits that can be made by exploiting inexperience. True, under attack, these speculators, or some of them, will concede limited policies of a different kind, which they significantly call "prestige" that is to say, enough to preserve a limited public respectability so that they will be allowed to continue to operate. But the real question is whether a society can afford to leave its cultural apparatus in such irresponsible hands.... We should be much clearer about these cultural questions if we saw them as a consequence of a basically capitalist organization, and I at least know no better reason for capitalism to be ended.

Again it was Thompson who asked the hard question, observing in 1961 that Williams had failed to consider "the contrary problems of 'utopia'...and of an intellectual tradition associated with social groups opposed to established interests—which must make its way without the benefit of institutions or cultural apparatus of its own, and which is exposed to the dangers of sectarian aridity or of losing its best men in the institutions of the 'other side.'"⁴⁶ Indeed, it was Thompson's lifetime struggle as a historian (in works such as *The Making of the English Working Class*) to show how the working class in England had sought to construct its own class consciousness and culture, despite its exclusion from the dominant cultural apparatus, i.e., the main means of intellectual production of the society.⁴⁷

Toward a Wider Political Economy of Communication: The 1960s Critique

This was the state of the discussion in 1962 when Baran first set about drafting the analysis of culture and communications for *Monopoly Capital*. Baran and Sweezy's intention in this penultimate chapter of their book was to uncover the way in which the cultural apparatus of monopoly capitalist society was increasingly owned and controlled by the vested interests, undermining the critical and "intellectual side of civilization" and the possibilities for effective social change. Both the publishing and broadcasting industries, they wrote, demonstrated "the striking extent to which culture has

become a commodity, its production subject to the same forces, interests, and motives as govern the production of all other commodities.”

Their analysis focused on “the cultural industries” as distinct forms of production, which as they “moved from handicraft to mass production” increasingly fell “under the sway of corporate business” geared to maximum profits and catering “to all the frailties and weaknesses of human nature.” Under monopoly capitalism “cultural output...turned into its opposite,” embodying a further fracturing of human reason and human action, and impeding rather than enhancing human development and historical change.

Noting that book publishing had already lost out to newspapers and magazines as the “predominant form of reading,” Baran and Sweezy nevertheless insisted on its “unique importance in society’s cultural apparatus.” From their experience, literacy, and access to literature and a broad range of political books were foundational to popular democratic politics. They were aware that progressive U.S. government policies and subsidies in the 1940s aimed at increasing literacy and expanding the publication and distribution of books had proven highly effective. They also were unsurprised that Senator Joseph McCarthy had singled these policies out as pro-Communist and anti-American.⁵⁰ Indeed, Leo Huberman, Sweezy’s coeditor at *Monthly Review*, had been subpoenaed in 1953 by McCarthy’s own Senate Committee due to the inclusion of several of his books in the State Department’s overseas libraries. Huberman defiantly told the McCarthy committee: “A manifesto voted by the American Library Association on June 25, [1953] and concurred in by the American Book Publishers Council, opens with these words: ‘The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is under attack.’ Everyone knows that the main attacker is this committee of Congress and its chairman.”⁵¹

Baran and Sweezy also saw firsthand that the changing nature of the book industry meant that the broad range of critical books that had proliferated in the 1930s and ‘40s were becoming a thing of the past. Without policies pushing in a different direction, the commercial book publishing industry was undergoing enormous expansion, and although still “highly competitive,” characterized by decreasing rather than increasing profit margins, was rapidly becoming more and more concentrated, taking on the character of an “emerging oligopolistic...industry.”

The mass-production and concentrated nature of the industry meant that books were more and more standardized and sold in the same manner as cars or cosmetics. This affected content, leading those who controlled the book-

publishing apparatus to emphasize: (1) conformist views (albeit a sophisticated conformity that could include severe criticisms of the status quo as long as they did not extend to the underlying structures or the possibility of radical actions); (2) selectivity in issues discussed (problems of sex, individual psychology, and even race were more admissible than the questioning of the economic and social order); (3) a focus on celebrities; and (4) imitation of new successful fashions.

From there Baran and Sweezy went on to examine the character and content of the leading best-selling books, from religious books, to cookbooks, to crime and detective novels, to general best-selling novels. They also included a short discussion of comic books. The general conclusion pointed to the “steady and methodical debasement of the book itself over the last few decades. Transferring to the sale of books the methods used in marketing ‘sex apparel’ and cosmetics, of liquor and cigarettes and nostrums of all kinds, undermines all respect for literary work, and annihilates the book as a cultural medium.”

They paid close attention to the best-selling books of Mickey Spillane – six of which belonged to the top fifteen best sellers of the twentieth century – and his vigilante-murderer hero Mike Hammer. Spillane’s anti-communism was used frequently to justify his bloodlust and sadism, leading him to have Hammer declare at one point: “But some day, maybe, someday I’d stand on the steps of the Kremlin with a gun in my fist and I’d yell for them to come out and if they wouldn’t I’d go in and get them and when I had them lined up against the wall I’d start shooting until all I had left was a row of corpses that bled on the cold floors and in whose thick red blood would be the promise of a peace that would stick for more generations than I’d live to see.” Spillane’s best sellers were the perfect counterparts to the McCarthy era.

For Baran and Sweezy, Spillane was only an extreme example of the degradation of the mass distribution novel in which an artist’s concern with “the representation of individual and social conflicts, of human passion, joy, and suffering,” and had been replaced by books providing “a minute account of the hero’s (frequently improbable) overt behavior without any attempt at the discovery, elucidation, and comprehension of the underlying causes and motivations. The purpose is merely to thrill.”

Under monopoly capitalism, Baran and Sweezy argued, the cultural apparatus increasingly controlled the artist, “with the writer becoming more pronouncedly an employee of the publishing corporation and his independence increasingly turned into a sham.” A few individual artists of

course managed to struggle with this cultural apparatus and by various means transcend it. But the general tendency towards conformity and degradation within book publishing was not to be denied.

As Hobsbawm observed in a similar way in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1964:

The economic facts are conclusive. The professional writer of books is in the position of the hand-loom weaver after the intervention of the power loom: two thirds or three quarters of his profession can earn less than a typist's income, and the number of writers who can live entirely by the sales of their books would fit into a single, not excessively large room....In certain branches of literature, such as utilitarian fiction, craft productions can persist, not only because the demand for it is smaller, more lasting and more intermittent, but also because the market can rely on large quantities of casual, part-time labour and the readiness of professional writers to turn themselves into hacks.

Television broadcasting, in contrast, though a far younger cultural apparatus, was not an emerging oligopoly, as in book publishing, but had already been established by government policies as a tight oligopoly. It was here that Sweezy in his work at *Monthly Review* had written two essays on American television with Huberman in 1958 and 1959. The first of these, published in April 1958, was a critique of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and its role in facilitating the concentration of broadcast media: both radio and television. The licensing of television stations, the facilitation of the dominance of oligopoly, the deliberate squelching of competition, and the handing out of the airwaves for free to particular corporations (which Huberman and Sweezy compared to the handing out of western lands to the railroads in the nineteenth century) constituted an enormous "swindle" on the public, and the basis of monopoly capital in this area. The fact that this was often accompanied by outright corruption was not surprising. Profit margins from television they showed had been strong and increasing, reaching 22 percent by 1956. Sweezy and Huberman dug into the financial data of the television industry as few if any other scholars had ever done before, and systematically debunked the notion that regulation of private economic power in the public interest could ever be effective under monopoly capitalism; instead the only logical solution if one desired democratic media in the public interest was social ownership.

However, by the early 1960s it was already clear that the dominance of the three great networks had created a "tightly controlled oligopoly" in television. Baran and Sweezy, who presented their "Theses on Advertising"

to the Labour Party's Advertising Commission in 1962, the same year that Baran first drafted their treatment of culture and communication for *Monopoly Capital*, were under no illusion about what drove television broadcasting. They quoted 20th Century Fox Television President Peter Levathes's statement that "The sponsor buys a show to sell his product. That is the basic purpose of TV. To sell someone's product." The logic of this was clear. Monopoly capital (encompassing corporations as a whole and more specifically the TV networks and stations) was "interested in maximizing sales and profits by reaching the widest possible audience." This created the conditions for what FCC Chairman Newton Minow referred to in 1961 as "a vast wasteland" in the realm of television programming.

This "wasteland" was exposed for all to see in the 1959 quiz show scandal, which demonstrated the corrupt and mendacious way in which television broadcasting was organized with the aim of duping the public, and the moral and intellectual degradation of its content as a result. This was the basis for Huberman and Sweezy's second *Monthly Review* media piece on "The TV Scandals" in December 1959. The problem, they argued, lay not simply in moral decline, as so many commentators argued, but in a system that enforced such moral decline. "Can you imagine," they asked, "a morally responsible campaign to sell a remedy for 'tired blood?' A fantastic example perhaps? Not quite—it just happens to have been the product that Charles Van Doren was selling by his great intellectual feats on 'Twenty-One'" —the quiz show at the center of the "TV scandals." The whole point, they went on to argue,

was put in a nutshell by Professor Seymour E. Harris, Chairman of the Harvard economics department, in an article entitled "Can We Prosper Without Arms?" which appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* of November 8th: "A high rate of investment would increase the nation's productive capacity.... But our private economy is faced with the tough problem of selling what it can produce. This is the reason for Madison Avenue." Quite so, and it is also the reason why neither Madison Avenue nor the [corporate] clients of Madison Avenue can afford the luxury of integrity or moral responsibility.

Adam Smith argued, with some degree of cogency for his day, that if everyone pursued "his" own private interests "he" would be led, "as if by an invisible hand," to serve the public interest. Nothing could be further from the truth today. When the giant corporation pursues its own private interests—as it must by the very law of its being—it is led by a not so invisible hand to degrade and corrupt the moral standards of a public which

is completely dependent upon it not only for jobs and material goods but also for the “food of the mind.” This is the plain lesson of the “TV scandals.”

Huberman and Sweezy went on to argue for:

the creation of a nationwide, government-owned radio-television network under an authority representative of the best elements in the worlds of education, the arts, and entertainment. That this is no revolutionary proposal goes without saying. Both Britain and Canada have long had government-owned networks, and in both cases they were founded by conservative governments. Their performance has been infinitely superior to that of the private American networks. *The creation of an American counterpart should become one of the leading demands of everyone who recognizes the seriousness of the present situation and understands the futility, or worse, of relying on the TV industry or its man Friday, the Federal Communications Commission, to initiate and carry through serious reforms.* [our emphasis]

Huberman and Sweezy (together with Baran) thus followed Brecht, who contended that “the socialization of these means of [cultural] production is vital for art” and the development of communication.

In their later analysis of the quiz show scandal in their chapter on culture, Baran and Sweezy referred to the sordid details exposed in the Congressional investigations, which showed that all elements of the television industry were caught up in the scandal. They responded not by calling for greater regulation, but by turning to the British government’s 1962 *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting* (the Pilkington Report), which engaged in serious critique of the TV fare in the United States, and which characterized it—pointing to westerns—as containing “excessive violence and sadism.” The Pilkington Report recommended an expansion of the BBC’s role in television at the expense of further development of private programming—i.e., of the Independent Television Authority, with its channel Independent Television (ITV) set up in 1955 as a commercial competitor to the BBC.

In Baran and Sweezy’s view there was no effective form of regulation of the content of commercial broadcasting since:

It is not the particular form of swindle and deception that is important but the basic fact that it *is* swindling and deception that incessantly fill the air.

The dominance of the lie is not confined to explicit advertisements. The lie also permeates most of the television day. The world presented on TV is not the real world with its conflicting interests, its irrationalities, its destructive tensions, but also with its unending struggles and tremendous potentialities

for betterment. It is an artifact which conjures up a tendentious, utterly misleading image of reality.

For Baran, who was a devoted reader of Kafka, the lesson to be drawn was clear. As Kafka wrote in *The Trial*: "'No,' said the priest, 'it is not necessary to accept everything as true, one must only accept it as necessary.' 'A melancholy conclusion,' said K. 'It turns lying into a universal principle.'" Quoting Adorno, Baran and Sweezy referred to the dulling of the "capacity for life experience" promoted by most television broadcasting. In this respect "television and other mass media," they wrote, "contributes to a crippling of the individual's mental and emotional capabilities. By helping to instill in him a phantasmagoric image of existence it disarms him on the social and the individual plane." Worse still it gave rise to cynicism, and a sense that public life is a fraud, while undermining any sense that this is open to change.

Unfortunately, "the increasing awareness of the falsehood of what is conveyed by society's cultural apparatus," they noted, "does not result in a heightened search for truth, reason and knowledge, but rather in the spread of disillusionment and cynicism." Turning to Engels's description of ideology as "false consciousness," they interpreted this in a sophisticated fashion as including "a partial, biased view of reality, half-truths, reflecting some important aspects of it without encompassing its totality." What was effectively foreclosed by this ideology was "the existing and expanding possibilities for a different more rational, more human existence." Indeed, they argued that "the cultural apparatus of monopoly capitalism," was aimed at the opposite end of making "people accept what is, to adjust to the tawdry reality and to abandon all hopes, all aspirations for a better society."

The political implications of the missing chapter are therefore decidedly despondent about the prospect of social change in the United States, or any other nation with a similar political and cultural apparatus. The reasons for this were readily apparent. Not only had the Progressive Party disappeared in the United States and with it much of the effective remnants of the New Deal Coalition, but also by the early 1960s the days of meaningful parliamentary socialism in Britain had essentially come to an end, as recounted at the time by Williams and Miliband in the pages of *Monthly Review*.⁶³ As Miliband commented on Mills's frequent despondency at the same time: "Often, particularly in his last years, the 'politics of truth' which he advocated sounded more like the politics of despair. Hopelessness is a

weakness in a social scientist, almost as grave as mindless unconcern or the cultivation of the fixed grin.”⁶⁴

Baran and Sweezy’s position can be compared to that of Marcuse in his well-known work, *One Dimensional Man*, published in 1964. In the introduction, Marcuse stated that the main characteristics of the “one-dimensionality” of monopoly capitalist society were easily ascertainable if one were merely to subject oneself to “looking at television or listening to the AM radio for one consecutive hour for a couple of days, not shutting off the commercials, and now and then switching the station.”

The dilemma was the Brechtian one. In Marcuse’s words (paraphrasing Brecht): “The contemporary world can...be represented only if it is represented as subject to change.” The current formally “rational universe” of monopoly capitalism was such that it “by the mere weight and capabilities of its [cultural] apparatus, blocks all escape.” It invalidated “the cherished images of transcendence by incorporating them into its omnipresent daily reality.” Marcuse ended his book by holding out the thin hope that “the spectre is there again, inside and outside the frontiers of the advanced societies.... The chance is that, in this period, the historical extremes may meet again: the most advanced consciousness of humanity, and its most exploited force.”⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man* was a deeply pessimistic book, centering on the containment and assimilation of the forces of social transformation as a result of the technical and cultural apparatus of late capitalist society.⁶⁷ “The legendary revolutionary,” Marcuse wrote, “still exists who can defy even television and the press—his world is that of the ‘underdeveloped’ countries.”⁶⁸

Baran read Marcuse’s book in manuscript in October 1963, in the midst of working on *Monopoly Capital*. Marcuse’s work had a profound effect on him. But Baran was also uncomfortable with the pessimistic conclusion that Marcuse’s arguments reached. Baran thought the matter so important that rather than allowing this to affect the analysis of *Monopoly Capital* directly, he proposed to Sweezy that they take up this challenge in their next book. In an extraordinary letter to Sweezy on October 10, 1963, Baran went directly at the existential challenge of Marcuse’s analysis to Marxist theory and socialist politics:

After having...shown how monopoly capital creates the muck that surrounds us on all fronts, we will have placed *this* part of the story “on the record” [in *Monopoly Capital*]. What is at the present time at issue and indeed most urgently so is the question whether the Marxian dialectic has broken down,

i.e., whether it is possible for *Scheisse* [shit] to accumulate, to coagulate, to cover all of society (and a goodly part of the related world) *without producing the dialectical counter-force* which would break through it and blow it into the air. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!* If the answer is affirmative then Marxism *in its traditional form* has become superannuated. It has predicted the misery, it has explained full well the causes of its becoming as comprehensive as it is; it was in error, however, in its central thesis that the misery generates itself the forces of its abolition. I have just finished reading Marcuse's new book [*One-Dimensional Man*] (in MS) which in a laborious kind of a way advances this very position which is called the Great Refusal or the Absolute Negation. Everything is *Dreck* (filth): monopoly capital and the Soviet Union, capitalism and socialism as we know it; the negative part of the Marx story has come true – its positive part remained a figment of imagination. We are back at the state of the Utopians pure and simple; a better world there should be but there ain't no social force in sight to bring it about. Not only is Socialism no answer, but there isn't anyone to give that answer anyway. From the Great Refusal and the Absolute Negation to the Great Withdrawal and the Absolute Betrayal is only a very short step. I have a very strong feeling that this is at the moment in the center of the intellectuals' thought (and sentiment) – not only here but also in Latin America and elsewhere, and that it would be very much *our* commitment to deal with it.... What is required is a cool analysis of the entire situation, the restoration of a historical perspective, a reminder of the relevant time dimensions and much more. If we could do a good job on that – perhaps only a shortish booklet of less than 200 pages – we would make a major contribution and perform with regard to many a truly "liberating" act.

Baran thus proposed to put into a restored historical context the apparent crisis of Marxism represented by the decoupling of social consciousness and agency from material contradictions and potentials. The perspective would have remained the critique of monopoly capital, but it would have required as an integral part of this critique a direct confrontation with the notion that the cultural apparatus was a permanent and irremovable roadblock to socialist politics, or even democracy. This was the direction that Mills and Williams were also going with their work. As Williams had put it in January 1960 in *Monthly Review*: "The central problem, as I see it, is cultural. The society of individual consumers which is now being propagandized by all the weight of mass advertising and mass publications, needs a new kind of socialist analysis and alternative."

Baran was moving in a definite direction of extending the cultural critique and merging it with political-economic analysis. However he was unable to work on this project, which he planned to pursue, with or without Sweezy,

following the completion of *Monopoly Capital*. On March 26, 1964, while visiting Lowenthal and looking at a copy of Marcuse's just published *One-Dimensional Man* with a glass of brandy in his hand, he suffered his fatal heart attack.

With the decision by Sweezy to leave the chapter on culture out of the published version of *Monopoly Capital*, these struggles of Baran, together with Sweezy, to confront the cultural contradictions of capitalist society, and the existential as well as strategic questions for the political left, were unfinished.

Monopoly Capital avoided the pessimism implied in the unpublished culture chapter. Its conclusion, "The Irrational System," emphasized the tendency of the economic surplus to rise under monopoly capitalism and the necessity of the wasting of this economic surplus, even as human needs remained unfulfilled—pointing to the increasing irrationality of the entire economic and social order. Key to the whole development was the fact that "a tiny oligarchy resting on vast economic power" was "in full control of society's political and cultural apparatus." Under these conditions "improvements in the means of mass communication merely hasten the degeneration of popular culture." These were hardly conditions, they reasoned, that could prevail over the long run. Such a system was bound to find itself caught in ever more complex forms of irrationality and destruction. Hence, they concluded that it was only a matter of time until the contradictions of the social order generated forces of opposition that would overwhelm them: "We have reached a point where the only true rationality lies in action to overthrow what has become a hopelessly irrational system."

There were "even indications," they wrote, "especially in the Negro freedom movement in the South, in the uprisings of the urban ghettos, and in the academic community's mounting protest against the war in Vietnam, that significant segments of the American people are ready to join an active struggle against what is being cumulatively revealed as an intolerable social order. If this is so, who can set limits to the numbers who may join them in the future?" But it was the world revolt against capitalism based in the periphery that was the real agent of change, to which the United States, as the chief bastion of monopoly capital, was not in the end immune. Despite the enormous power of the system that controlled the means of production—and along with it the state and the cultural apparatus of society—social struggle was breaking out everywhere in the 1960s, creating the hope that monopoly capitalism would be both besieged and challenged from within.

The Critique of Culture and the Media in the 1960s

In deciding what to include (or exclude) in this issue directed at the 1960s political-economic critique of the cultural apparatus, we were guided by four main criteria: (1) whether the piece is original and holds value to people confronting politics in the twenty-first century; (2) the synergy with the political economy of the cultural apparatus of monopoly capitalism, as exemplified by Baran and Sweezy's missing chapter; (3) the extent to which the work was influential and part of current discussions; and (4) whether the work has received much (or any) attention since it was written. For example, William's pamphlet on *The Existing Alternatives in Communications* is practically unknown and is fully reprinted here. In contrast, Mills's work on *the cultural apparatus*, in the form of his three main articles on the subject, is fairly well known and has recently been reprinted, so while discussed in this introduction, it is not reprinted in this issue.

In addition to "On the Quality of Monopoly Capitalist Society: Culture and Communications" (the title given to it here), we are reprinting Baran and Sweezy's aforementioned "Theses on Advertising." Originally given as testimony to the Labour Party's Advertising Commission in 1962, this piece represents a classic exploration of the role of advertising under monopoly capital. Read together with their missing chapter on culture we are left with a coherent, and surprisingly wide-ranging, critique of culture and communication under monopoly capitalism.

During its first two decades *Monthly Review* was not known for its attention to culture and communication, which contributed to the notion that the editors did not care much about such matters. There were exceptions, though, that provide evidence of an important, critical approach. The two aforementioned critiques of commercial television by Huberman and Sweezy stand out as some of the most original work on media by *anyone* in the late 1950s. Other notable works, included F.O. Matthiessen's "Marxism and Literature" (March 1953), and Leo Marx's "Notes on the Culture of the New Capitalism" (July-August 1959).

Monthly Review recognized the deficiency and launched a special supplement in 1965, *Review1*, which was to be a Marxist cultural review. Only a single edition was published. Although *Review1* gathered a lot of interest and was a success in that respect, it soon became clear that that financial and editorial resources did not allow a continuation of the experiment. The third article in this summer issue, following Baran and Sweezy's contributions, draws

from *Review1* and is by Eleanor Hakim, the managing editor of *Studies on the Left* (based at the University of Wisconsin) from 1960 to 1963. Hakim's article, "St. Brecht of the Theatrical Stock Exchange" has been excerpted and adapted for this issue from its original version in *Review1*. She discusses Brecht's use of the notion of "cultural apparatus," which he applied, as we noted above, to such varied forms as radio, theatre, and film—and that was to influence the way in which thinkers such as Fromm, Horkheimer, Benjamin, Marcuse, Mills, Williams, Thompson, and Baran and Sweezy would later use the term. As Hakim emphasized, Brecht asked: "Why shouldn't art try, by its *own* means of course, to further the great social task of mastering life?"

The fourth piece in this summer issue is a reprint of a section of Chapter 8 in Miliband's *The State in Capitalist Society* that addresses media. We find this a brilliant summary of the work on media being done in these circles, and what is striking is how Miliband seamlessly integrates a media critique into his analysis of politics under monopoly capitalism, expanding upon the Mills project. In particular, Miliband integrates a sophisticated critique of the media with a focus on the political constraints imposed by the media system. He concludes on a point implicit in all of the other work in this issue: the important ways that the capitalist media system encourages depoliticization in society. And if not always all-out depoliticization, this media system was shown to foster a "climate of conformity," helping to ensure that whatever occurs politically occurs within limits that are consistent with the preservation of the established order.

The fifth and penultimate piece in the issue is a pamphlet by Williams that was published by the Fabian Society in 1962: *The Existing Alternatives in Communications*. This almost entirely unknown piece drew from his great work, *The Long Revolution* (1961), in which he addressed the question of the cultural apparatus, as well as the first, 1962 edition, of his book *Britain in the Sixties: Communications* (generally called *Communications*).⁷⁷ In 1962, Williams was another important figure, alongside Baran and Sweezy, to give testimony to the Labor Party's Advertising Commission, and their analysis clearly concurred on every point.⁷⁸ That testimony influences the pamphlet as well. As noted above, Williams had submitted a detailed memorandum to the 1960 Committee on Broadcasting (The Pilkington Committee). His memorandum addressed the entire structure of the broadcasting industry, and may have influenced the 1962 Pilkington Report.

Like Baran and Sweezy, Williams was strongly impressed by the final Pilkington Report, released shortly after the first edition of *Communications*,

and discussed it in the second (1966) edition of his book, where he referred to it as “the classical point of reference for all reform in this field.”

In *Communications*, Williams defined communications as “the institutions and forms in which ideas, information, and attitudes are transmitted and received,” while communication (without an “s”) referred to “the process of transmission and reception.” Williams argued that the spectacular growth of communications in modern times “have created social problems which seem to be of a new kind.” Communication, he argued, joined economics and politics as “equally fundamental” to understanding society. “We have been wrong in taking communication as secondary,” Williams wrote. “The struggle to learn, to describe, to understand, to educate, is a central and necessary part of our humanity. This struggle is not begun, at second hand, after reality has occurred. It is, in itself, a major way in which reality is continually formed and changed.” This emphasis, he argued, “is exceptionally important in the long crisis of twentieth-century society.”

Accordingly, Williams argued that control over communication was of paramount importance, and commercial control of media was a disaster for humanity, not to mention democracy. “The only alternative to a control by a few irresponsible men, who treat our cultural means as simple commodities, is a public system.” Williams insisted there was an important place for consumer information and advice in a communication system, “but advertising is a very primitive way of supplying it.” He recognized the “genuine difficulties” of establishing a public cultural system, but that did not alter his belief in its central and immediate importance as a political project. What was required was “no direct control by government” over content, but nonetheless a strong public role, along with public debate and deliberation over the “actual allocation of resources.” He was emphatic that the Old Left model of state monopoly and censorship was no legitimate or attractive alternative. Indeed the bankruptcy of the Soviet-style system was demonstrated most decisively in its hideous communications structure and policies. Until socialists “can show a convincing alternative, which is free of these dangers,” people would have no rational reason to change. “The idea of public service must be detached from the idea of public monopoly, yet remain public service in the true sense. The only way to achieve this is to create new kinds of institution.”

In “*The Existing Alternatives in Communications*” in this issue, Williams sums up these points and argues that the Labour Party needs to make reconstruction of the media and communication system a central part of its

political program going forward. Implicit in his argument is that the very nature of a socialist regime can be gleaned by assessing its communication system, for that is where the rubber hits the road and the commitment to genuine democracy moves from words to practice. In Williams' view, what was essential was a well-funded public system with true independence and legitimate access for ordinary citizens, not just for socialism but also for democracy itself. The point was to create a system where the means of production in this area were held in trust by the public and leased out to individuals without control from the top, in ways that would create a dynamic, popular, decentralized, and democratic media system. Unless the Labour Party—and by extension, the left everywhere—made restructuring communications a high priority, it would increase their likeliness of irrelevance and ultimate failure.

The New Left and Communication: The 1960s and '70s and Today

The New Left, as Thompson had said, was in many ways defined from the beginning by its focus on culture and communication—seen primarily in a political-economic context. The fact that there was in the 1960s a historical moment for reform in broadcasting, after which change would become far more difficult (and British broadcasting would begin to move in the direction of the U.S. system with its commercialism and cultural degradation) was made clear in Williams's comments on the Pilkington Report in the second edition of *Communications*. "It is now more than ever certain," he wrote, "that we shall have to get rid of a commercial television structure, and especially of this one, with its close connexions in ownership with our already concentrated commercial press." Although the BBC had gotten a second channel as a result of the implementation of some of the Pilkington Report recommendations, it was already being forced to mimic the commercial system, competing for audiences "on the basis of profit rather than use" with the ITV channel of the Independent Television Authority. If another commercial channel were established, he predicted, "we shall have lost for a generation any chance of making a genuinely public system." The real goal, he insisted, ought to be "to start dismantling both the present commercial structure of ITV and the present centralization of BBC," replacing them with a system of public control over the technical and transmission apparatus, holding it in trust, coupled with "genuinely independent programme companies" which would lease the technical facilities and take responsibility for policy and content.

Williams in many respects captured the core arguments of all the other writers from this period. He took elements of the critique initiated by Baran and Sweezy, the Frankfurt School, and Mills about the growing importance of the cultural apparatus under monopoly capitalism and developed it into a broader and more coherent intellectual vision. More important, he used this as a gateway not to despair over the duping of the masses, but, to the contrary, as a new crucial political battleground where the political left could rejuvenate itself and create a truly democratic socialism. It was no small accomplishment. At the same time as this work was being done, Jürgen Habermas had just completed his dissertation in Germany. When one reads what became *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* today – it was not available in English until 1989 – one is struck by the manner in which the analysis and arguments are complementary with those of Baran, Sweezy, Miliband, and especially Williams and Mills. Indeed, Habermas closes the book by invoking Mills approvingly.

By the early 1970s, accompanying the global upsurge in political activism, there was considerable attention given to communication issues on the left. In the global South, the newly liberated nations organized for a New World Information and Communication Order in conjunction with a New International Economic Order to redress the global imbalances in control over communication networks and media resulting from centuries of imperialism. It was the first time in global politics that communication was put on the same level as the economy, or better yet, seen as being integral to the political economy.

In Britain, Nicholas Garnham, who would go on to be a central figure in the political economy of communication, wrote a manifesto for media activism in 1972 that drew directly from Marcuse and Williams. “The media of mass communication clearly play a vital role and the control of those media is a matter of central political concern,” he wrote. “The media are not neutral in the struggle for democracy. In the Long Revolution the pen may indeed turn out to be mightier than the sword. The outcome of that battle will therefore depend upon which side gains control of the pen.” In Garnham’s view, a problem with much of the “counterculture” media activism of the times was the belief that “alternative cultures, life styles and the institutional forms to go with them could be constructed within the existing social formation and alongside the more traditional social forms.”⁸⁴ Williams shared this concern, noting in 1975 that the commercial system had succeeded in “incorporating large areas” of alternative popular culture into its own domain.⁸⁵

In his 1975 retrospective look at the preceding fifteen years in British (and, to a certain extent, western) communication, Williams found some hope that the counterculture that had developed in that period might have lasting progressive value. But he was also skeptical.

The idea of an alternative culture is radical but limited. It can very easily become a marginal culture; even, at worst, a tolerated play area. It is certainly always insufficient unless it is linked with effective opposition to the dominant system, under which the majority of people are living.

Williams was especially heartened by the emergence of cooperatives to generate communication and culture, but here, too, direct political confrontation with the powers-that-be was unavoidable: "One of the key developments, that of the workers' or producers' or contributors' cooperative, depends, in the high-capital areas, on active support by a reforming government, and that takes us back to one of the central areas of conflict."

In the United States, there was an explosion in developing such "alternative" media in the form of community theater and, especially, alternative newspapers and periodicals. But policy activism also emerged. In the early 1970s, African-American groups and other community and civil rights organizations participated in hundreds of license challenges to existing commercial radio and TV broadcasters before the FCC in a failed effort to claim their channels for community use. By the mid-1970s this activism contributed to the creation of scores of new community FM radio stations and public-access TV. The activism was a testament to the vision Williams and the others laid out a decade earlier.

By the end of the 1970s and thereafter the political projects associated with the writers in this volume disappeared with the collapse of the left and the rise of neoliberalism. As Garnham acknowledged in 1978, the "need" for radical media reform was growing "more acute" at the same time that the prospects for such reform were much further away.⁸⁷ The new fields of the political economy of communication and cultural studies downsized their immediate political ambitions and crystallized as academic undertakings, finding a toehold in a handful of universities where they provided a muscular critique while maintaining a tenuous institutional existence thereafter. Williams regarded the emergence of academic media studies as "significant," though he added that it was "ironic that this work should have developed in the same period in which the general situation was so sharply deteriorating."⁸⁸ Much of critical communication research subsequently turned away from the structural issues that were central to the work of the

1960s as institutional reform, not to mention socialism, appeared impossible. At its most extreme this devolution ended up in the varieties of post-structuralist, postmodernist, and postcolonial schools. In such an environment it was easy for this 1960s political-economic and structural-reform tradition to be forgotten, even by some of the people associated with it.

In the past decade, with the emergence of global corporate media empires and the Internet, radical media reform has returned as a major political issue in countless nations. At times the reform efforts can be marginal, especially when they are not associated with popular movements and an organized political left that can provide vision and courage. But what is more important—since it represents a precondition of any forward movement—is how the left has now come to embrace the central importance of structural media reform and communication issues as never before, much as the writers in this issue desired. Nowhere is this more apparent than when one looks at Latin America today, where many of the great struggles concern how progressive forces can get elected-left governments to create truly independent media systems free of the traditional domination of a few capitalist clans in every nation, as well as the state. The capitalist forces are determined to use their media power to maintain their class privileges. The fate of these governments and socialist politics writ large may well ride on the outcome. Recently, notions about the creation of a public media system that would be “accountable to the public rather than the state”—or the market—perhaps similar to the general approach adopted by Williams have been informally broached by some individuals in the current period of experimentation and debate in Cuba.

It has been said that Beethoven’s late string quartets were so far ahead of their time that we have not yet caught up to them. So it is with this work by Williams and the other contributors to the struggle over the cultural apparatus under concentrated capitalism that have been all but lost to history until now. Activists today still have much to learn from this visionary work about how to think about communication. All of these contributors, for example, were aware of the radical changes that new communication technologies were going to create in the decades to come, but none of them thought these technologies would magically solve fundamental political problems on their own. If anything the left has been too timid with regard to communication politics; it is time to be realistic, as the 1960s saying goes, and demand the impossible.

The reason that these issues are returning to the fore today is that capitalism is in crisis and facing political challenges in a manner not seen for decades. Evidence suggests that these political-economic contradictions will deepen in what we have termed an “endless crisis.”⁹⁰ Moreover, the larger planetary threat posed by capitalism is coming to the fore as never before. As Baran wrote in the 1960s (with the nuclear threat in mind): “the issue now is not even capitalism or socialism...the issue now is world survival or world catastrophe.”⁹¹

The final piece in this summer issue therefore returns to political economy. The basis of all the pieces in this issue is coming to grips with the nature of monopoly capitalist society. Here Baran and Sweezy’s economic analysis was in many respects the lodestar for all the contributors. But how does their understanding of monopoly capital hold up five decades later?

We conclude therefore with John Bellamy Foster’s new introduction to the second edition of his *The Theory of Monopoly Capitalism*, which was first published in 1986. This piece takes the core elements of *Monopoly Capital’s* political economy and addresses how the theory has developed over the past three decades. It provides a context for appreciating how the political-economic basis of the work in the 1960s can be adapted to the present times. The moral of the story: with regard to the political economy of communication, the present is history.

John Bellamy Foster is editor of *Monthly Review* and professor of sociology at the University of Oregon. His latest book, written with Robert W. McChesney, is *The Endless Crisis: How Monopoly-Finance Capital Creates Stagnation and Upheaval from the USA to China* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012).

Robert W. McChesney is the Gutgsell Endowed Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois. He is the author most recently of *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism Is Turning the Internet Against Democracy* (New York: New Press, 2013).

Notes

1. See Robert W. McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy* (New York: New Press, 2013).
2. For a longer discussion of the origins and development of the political economy of communication, see Robert W. McChesney, *Communication Revolution: Critical Junctures and the Future of Media* (New York: New Press, 2007).
3. The critique tended to be more that *Monthly Review* underplayed the importance of media and communication than that it was wrong about these matters. On the rare occasions that *MR* covered the political economy of communication, it was sympathetic, and characterized the study as a necessary and logical part of monopoly capital. See the assessment of Herbert Schiller's work in Douglas Dowd, "Monopoly Capitalism and Mind Management," *Monthly Review* 26, no. 11 (November 1974): 32–36.
4. Dallas Smythe, "Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1977): 1–27.
5. See Dan Schiller, *How to Think About Information* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), chapter 1.
6. See Robert W. McChesney, "What Ever Happened to Cultural Studies?" in Catherine A. Warren and Mary Douglas Vavrus, eds., *American Cultural Studies* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 76–92.
7. Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966), 112–41. Many of the implications of Baran and Sweezy's analysis of the sales effort with respect to the development of modern marketing were developed in Michael Dawson, *The Consumer Trap* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).
8. See Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, "Theses on Advertising," *Science and Society* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1964): 20–30. Reprinted in this issue.
9. The Labour Party, *Report of a Commission of Enquiry into Advertising* (London: Labour Party, 1966), 33–40, 201, 204; Baran and Sweezy's testimony was solicited through the influence of Nicholas Kaldor, who was a member of the Advertising Commission but was forced to resign in 1964 when he was appointed special advisor to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Kaldor's work on advertising, which was closely related to that of Baran and Sweezy's, was heavily quoted in the final report.
10. Paul M. Sweezy (writing anonymously, no author listed), *The Scientific-Industrial Revolution* (New York: Model, Roland, and Stone, 1957), 7. To support himself on top of his professional salary and to obtain funds for research, Paul Baran occasionally wrote reports for the Wall Street firm of Model, Roland and Stone. He was commissioned to do a report on technology but was pressed for time so he asked Sweezy to do it for him. The

resulting report was issued by the firm with no author indicated, but Sweezy considered it one of his best pieces of writing. The original copy is in the Sweezy archives at Harvard University. Harry Braverman made use of Sweezy's argument on the scientific-industrial revolution in this pamphlet to construct much of his own argument on the scientific-technological revolution. See Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999), 115.

11. See John Bellamy Foster, "A Missing Chapter of Monopoly Capital: Introduction to Baran and Sweezy's 'Some Theoretical Complications,'" *Monthly Review* 64, no. 3 (July–August 2012): 3–17. The original draft of the culture and mental health (or "Quality of Monopoly Capitalist Society II") chapter along with related papers was found in a file in the Sweezy papers at Harvard University. The final draft with Sweezy's edits were located in the Baran Papers (Monthly Review Foundation).
12. Another "missing chapter," on the theoretical issues arising from their model, was located at the same time and published in the July–August 2012 issue of *Monthly Review*. See Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, "Some Theoretical Implications," *Monthly Review* 64, no. 3 (July–August 2012): 24–59.
13. As Sweezy wrote in the preface to *Monopoly Capital*: "Whatever was drafted by one of us [for the book] was criticized at length by the other, and in most cases redrafted and recriticized more than once. Everything now in the book had been through this process before Baran's death. Apart from putting together the entire manuscript into finished form, the only thing I have done has been to leave out material that would have been two additional chapters. This material was in rough draft at the time of his death, but in each case one or the other of us had raised important questions which still remained to be discussed and resolved. Since neither chapter was essential to the theme of the essay as a whole, the best solution seemed to be to omit them altogether. I reached this conclusion the more easily since even without these chapters the book turned out to be longer than I had expected or we had originally intended." Paul M. Sweezy, "Preface," in Baran and Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, ix. From the first Sweezy had been concerned that the "cultural mess," given that it was left to the end of the manuscript, should not be given short shrift as a result (Paul M. Sweezy to Paul A. Baran, July 23, 1957, Baran Papers, Monthly Review Foundation). Baran had indicated that "if anything" he would "tend to accentuate its importance" (Paul A. Baran to Paul M. Sweezy, July 29, 1957, Baran Papers, Monthly Review Foundation).
14. C. Wright Mills, "Psychology and Social Science," *Monthly Review* 10, no. 6 (October 1958): 204–9. Mills later designated himself as a "plain Marxist," working in Marx's own tradition, and thus associated himself with a broad group of independent socialist thinkers including: "Isaac Deutscher... Joan Robinson... William Morris, Antonio Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, G.D.H. Cole, Georg Lukács, Christopher Caudwell, Jean-Paul Sartre, the later John

- Strachey, Georges Sorel, Edward Thompsons, Lezlo Kolokowski, William A. Williams, Paul Sweezy, and Erich Fromm." C. Wright Mills, *The Marxists* (New York: Dell, 1962), 98.
15. On Miliband's relation to Mills see Michael Newman, *Ralph Miliband and the Politics of the New Left* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002), 65–68.
 16. E.P. Thompson, "Last Dispatches from the Border Country: Raymond Williams, 1921–1988," *The Nation*, March 5, 1988, 310.
 17. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), x; Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964; original UK edition 1961). Raymond Williams' famous essay "Culture is Ordinary" appeared in Norman MacKenzie, ed., *Conviction* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1958), 74–92.
 18. E.P. Thompson, "The Segregation of Dissent," in Thompson, *Writing by Candlelight* (London: Merlin Press, 1980), 8.
 19. On Baran as the political economist of the Frankfurt School, see M. C. Howard and J. E. King, *A History of Marxian Economics*, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 114–15. Pollock himself, of course, was the main economist associated with the school, but Baran's work was to far eclipse him. Sweezy was less directly influenced by the Frankfurt School, but he had early on taken on many of the propositions on history and dialectics of Georg Lukács and Karl Korsch.
 20. Peter Marcuse recalls: "I had only met Baran once, during the war, when my father was with the OSS [Office of Strategic Services].... I was maybe 12 at the time. Baran had come over to our house to talk to my father, and they stayed up a long time. I asked my father later why Baran had come, and he told me Baran wanted to talk about whether capitalism was ultimately bad for the capitalists as well as the workers, and I gather they agreed it was. My father was working on *Eros and Civilization* at the time (on the side, not at OSS!), and I assume that was the context. They really respected each other." Peter Marcuse to John Bellamy Foster, July 4, 2012. Baran referred to Adorno's work not only in the missing chapter on culture that he drafted for *Monthly Review*, but also in *The Political Economy of Growth*. His close attention to Adorno and Horkheimer's work was shown in his correspondence with Marcuse, e.g., Paul A. Baran to Herbert Marcuse, July 10, 1962 (Baran Papers, Monthly Review Foundation). Fromm is also discussed in Baran's letters.
 21. In focusing on culture as a general way of viewing literary, artistic, and intellectual work Baran and Sweezy were, in Williams's terms, using the concept in "one of its predominant twentieth-century senses" and the one most related to questions of power. They differentiated this from more capacious anthropological uses of the term to refer to a definite way of life. See Raymond Williams, *What I Came to Say* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), 199.

22. Paul A. Baran (writing under the pseudonym Historicus), "Better Smaller But Better," *Monthly Review* 2, no. 3 (July 1950): 85-86.
23. Early outline of "Monopoly Capital," circa 1957 (Baran Papers, Monthly Review Foundation).
24. The notion of the "apparatus" as representing the material conditions of art can already be seen in Hegel's philosophy of art where he refers to the "apparatus of its [art's] merely material nature." G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Fine Art* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Co., 1886), 72.
25. Rowitha Mueller, *Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of the Media* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 15-16; Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 34. (Note: the word culture in round brackets follows the Mueller quote, despite the fact that current conventions would have required it being placed in square brackets, as it is not to be found in Brecht's statement.) According to Mueller, "the term apparatus" in Brecht is "a broad category" that includes "every aspect of the means of cultural production, from the actual technological equipment to promotion agencies, as well as the class that is in possession of the means of production." Mueller, *Bertolt Brecht*, 15.
26. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 34-35.
27. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 23, 48.
28. Paul A. Baran, *The Longer View* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), 32; Mueller, *Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of the Media*, 24; Astrid Oesmann, *Staging History: Brecht's Social Concepts of Ideology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 107.
29. Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* (London: New Left Books, 1971), 87, 102. It should be noted that Benjamin's key essays on Brecht, including "The Artist as Producer," were not published until 1966 and were not available to Baran when he drafted the chapter on culture for *Monopoly Capital*, though he would have been familiar enough with these ideas through his knowledge of Brecht's work and the Frankfurt School discussions of the early 1930s.
30. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 47-52.
31. Erich Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1970), 158-60; Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 23-26; Eike Gebhardt, "Introduction to a Critique of Methodology," in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), 387-88. The concept of "cultural apparatus" was not specifically defined in Fromm's essay, but he was later to use the category mainly in the Brechtian sense. See Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1955), 163. It is noteworthy that Baran and Sweezy thought Fromm's early work (no doubt including his 1932 essay) was so important that they considered translating it for Monthly Review Press ("Notes on Planned Translations from the

- German," Monthly Review Press, no date, circa 1957, Baran Papers, Monthly Review Foundation).
32. Max Horkheimer, "Authority and the Family," in Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 59–60, 67–68.
 33. Herbert Marcuse, "33 Theses," in Marcuse, *Collected Papers*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 1998), 221. On Marcuse's use of the concept of cultural apparatus, see also Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955). Earlier in his 1941 article on "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," Marcuse had presented what he called "the technical apparatus of industry, transportation, and communication" as the crucial, if partial, mediating factor, of modern mass alienation. He stated that, "the term 'apparatus' denotes the institutions, devices and organizations of industry in their prevailing social setting." There was, he said, "no personal escape from the apparatus." Yet, a social escape was perhaps conceivable, requiring a struggle over the cultural apparatus in particular. Herbert Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," in Arato and Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, 138, 143, 180.
 34. Honneth, *The Critique of Power*, 23–26.
 35. Honneth, *The Critique of Power*, 18.
 36. Erich Fromm, *The Revision of Psychoanalysis* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 56.
 37. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, 163; Paul A. Baran to Paul M. Sweezy, November 28, 1956 (Baran Papers, Monthly Review Foundation).
 38. Stanley Aronowitz, *Taking It Big: C. Wright Mills and the Making of Political Intellectuals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 241–42.
 39. C. Wright Mills, *The Politics of Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 204, 263.
 40. Mills, *The Politics of Truth*, 217–18, 221.
 41. Mills, *The Politics of Truth*, 213.
 42. Thompson quoted in Daniel Geary, *Radical Ambition: C. Wright Mills, the Left, and American Social Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 196.
 43. E.P. Thompson, "The New Left," *The New Reasoner*, no. 9 (Summer 1959), 1–17, <http://marxists.org>. Thompson's submission to the Pilkington Committee was listed in the report as connected to the publication *New University* and as having dealt with "Minority Interests and broadcasting," presumably referring to the issue of political minorities. Such issues were taken up in the Pilkington Report in sections on "Party Political Broadcasting" and "The News." Thompson's 1961 piece "The Segregation of Dissent," written for *New University* and addressing "minority causes" and "minority journals" fits this description. The New Left Review Ltd. also submitted a memorandum to the Pilkington Committee (published in *New Left Review* prior to the release of the Pilkington Report). Thompson apparently saw the New Left Review

- Ltd.'s submission as overly culturalist and reformist, focusing on issues of popular culture more than media control and making too many concessions with respect to the latter. United Kingdom, *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, 1960* (London: HMSO, 1962), 92–101, 320, 327; "Which Frame of Mind? TV and Broadcasting: Evidence to the Pilkington Committee," *New Left Review* no. 7 (1961): 30–48; Thompson, *Writing by Candlelight*, 1–10; Michael Kenny, *The First New Left* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995): 103–8.
44. Raymond Williams, *Communications*, third edition (London: Penguin, 1976), 180–89.
 45. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), 338–39.
 46. E.P. Thompson, "The Long Revolution—II," *New Left Review*, I/10, July–August 1961, 34–39.
 47. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963). For Thompson the English working class of the nineteenth century developed a "resistance movement" to the acquisitive society that was not just backward looking but truly radical in its conception, and though it ultimately lost out in the struggle, partly through its inability to gain control of the means of production, including the means of intellectual production, and thus of the wellsprings of social and cultural existence, it nonetheless remained a "heroic culture." Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 832.
 48. Uncited quotations from Baran and Sweezy in this introduction are to "The Quality of Monopoly Capitalist Society: Culture and Communications" in this issue.
 49. Baran and Sweezy's use of the term "cultural industry" in the introduction to their piece no doubt reflected the influence of Frankfurt School cultural theorist Theodor Adorno. See T.W. Adorno, "Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture," in Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, eds., *Mass Culture* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960), 484. This essay by Adorno is cited in Baran and Sweezy's chapter. Baran, a close reader of Horkheimer and Adorno, as indicated in his correspondence with Marcuse, was also undoubtedly familiar with the chapter in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* on "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1972), 120–67.
 50. We thank John J. Simon, who spent a career in book publishing and knew both Baran, Sweezy, and Huberman well in this period, for making this point to us.
 51. Huberman testimony in Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, "A Challenge to the Book Burners," *Monthly Review* 4, no. 4 (August 1953): 161.

52. On the active struggles over the cultural apparatus in the 1930s, including in the realm of publication, and how this faded in the 1950s and after, see Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997).
53. Sweezy had suggested in his letter to Baran on December 5, 1962 the inclusion of a discussion of books for the elite and elite culture more generally in the chapter. Baran replied on December 7, 1962 that the point of the discussion of culture and communication was to focus on the cultural "state of the people," which is why books marketed to the elite were excluded in the draft. However, he indicated that he intended to add something on this (Baran papers, Monthly Review Foundation).
54. Mickey Spillane, *The Mike Hammer Collection*, vol. 2 (New York: New American Library, 2001), 132; Roland Végső, *The Naked Communist: Cold War Modernism and the Politics of Popular Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 160–69; Christopher La Farge, "Mickey Spillane and His Bloody Hammer," in Rosenberg and White, eds., *Mass Culture*, 176–85; Frances Stoner Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War* (New York: New Press, 1999); and Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 373–74.
55. Eric Hobsbawm, *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century* (London: Little, Brown, 2013), 262–63. Baran and Hobsbawm, who were good friends, had coauthored a critique of Walt Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth*. See Baran, *The Longer View*, 52–67.
56. Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, "Behind the FCC Scandal," *Monthly Review* 9, no. 12 (April 1958): 401–11.
57. Sweezy questioned the emphasis on the three great television networks as representing a "tight oligopoly" that controlled the industry in his early comments on the original draft of this chapter. As Sweezy wrote in a letter to Baran on December 5, 1962: "This whole paragraph stressing the great power of the networks seems out of focus in light of the statement on the next page that they are merely processors and agents. The latter is, in my view, a more accurate assessment of their role" (Baran papers, Monthly Review Foundation). By the time that he prepared the later draft of the chapter in late 1964, however, Sweezy had clearly come around to Baran's view.
58. Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, "The TV Scandals," *Monthly Review* 11, no. 8 (December 1959): 280.
59. Huberman and Sweezy, "The TV Scandals," 281.
60. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 48–49. The influence of Brecht on Baran's thought was particularly evident as he was wont to quote him from memory. Paul A. Baran to Paul M. Sweezy, February 20, 1962 (Baran Papers, Monthly Review Foundation). Nick Baran dimly recalls hearing Brecht's *Dreigroschen Oper* (*Threepenny Opera*) on his father's record player when he was a child. Nicholas Baran to John Bellamy Foster, April 24, 2013. It is not surprising

- then that the entire approach to the cultural apparatus in the Baran and Sweezy chapter on culture can be seen (particularly in the discussion of book publishing) as having a Brechtian emphasis, focusing on the relation of the artist to the apparatus and seeing the latter as an object of struggle.
61. United Kingdom, *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting* (Pilkington Report); Jeffrey Milland, "The Pilkington Report: The Triumph of Paternalism?" in Michael Bailey, ed., *Narrating Media History* (London: Routledge, 2009), 95–107.
 62. Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (New York: Modern Library, 1964), 276. Mention of Kafka appears in Baran's correspondence. See, for example, the excerpt from Paul Baran to Paul M. Sweezy, July 4, 1963 in Paul M. Sweezy and Leo Huberman, eds., *Paul Alexander Baran (1910–1964): A Collective Portrait* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1965), 61. In 1938 Benjamin wrote on Brecht and Kafka: "The decisive thesis of all of these plays [by Brecht] emerges clearly for the reader.... It can be summed up by a sentence from Kafka's prophetic novel *The Trial*: 'The lie is made into a universal system.'" Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 332.
 63. In "If Labour Wins," Miliband explained in *Monthly Review* 15, no. 6 (October 1963): 328 that no "deep structural changes" would result.
 64. Ralph Miliband, "Review of C. Wright Mills, *Power, People and Politics*," *British Journal of Sociology* 15, no. 1 (1964): 79.
 65. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), xvii.
 66. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 66–71, 257.
 67. These pessimistic conclusions were strongly criticized in Fromm's unpublished critique of Marcuse. See Fromm, *The Revision of Psychoanalysis*, 125–29.
 68. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 71. Marcuse drew on Baran and Sweezy's analysis of monopoly capitalism in his later work. See, for example, Herbert Marcuse, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 5.
 69. A year before on October 7, 1962 Baran had written to Marcuse: "Oo, oh! Where did your manuscript get stuck? I am lusting after it like a thirsty man for water and I don't know how I can get hold of it. Send it to me, I beg you, even if it has not yet attained a condition of absolute perfection and even if you are still caught up in the process of 'purification.' It will be sent back to you as quickly as possible and I will be infinitely indebted to you in gratitude." This was followed by a discussion of new work by Horkheimer and Adorno. Baran to Marcuse, October 7, 1962 (Baran Papers, Monthly Review Foundation; original in German, translated by Joseph Fracchia). Marcuse replied a week later referring to "massive difficulties getting it published. At present there are three copies with different presses." Marcuse to Baran, October 27, 1962 (Baran Papers, Monthly Review Foundation,

- original in German, translated by Joseph Fracchia). We would like to thank Joseph Fracchia for his translations from the Baran–Marcuse correspondence.
70. Paul A. Baran to Paul M. Sweezy, October 10, 1963. On Marcuse’s view of Baran see Herbert Marcuse, “Tribute to Baran,” in Sweezy and Huberman, eds., *Paul A. Baran (1910–1964): A Collective Portrait*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964), 114–15.
 71. Raymond Williams, “Class and Voting in Britain,” *Monthly Review* 11, no. 9 (January 1960): 333.
 72. Paul M. Sweezy, “Paul Alexander Baran: A Personal Memoir,” in Sweezy and Huberman, eds., *Paul A. Baran*, 48.
 73. Baran and Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, 339, 363.
 74. Baran and Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, 366.
 75. F.O. Matthiessen, “Marxism and Literature,” *Monthly Review* 4, no. 11 (March 1953): 398–400. Leo Marx, “Notes on the Culture of the New Capitalism,” *Monthly Review* 11, no. 3 (July–August 1959): 111–16; Huberman and Sweezy, “The TV Scandals.” *Monthly Review* seemed particularly lacking in the critique of the news media. It is true that there were occasional forays into this area. In May 1964 the magazine published a piece entitled “Newspapers?” by former journalist Alexander Crosby. Crosby argued that “the press has been going downhill steadily” for decades as it became increasingly monopolistic and profit-obsessed. The result was a dull and reactionary news, all but worthless for a vibrant democratic society. Newspapers “have no heart and no energy.” See Alexander L. Crosby, “Newspapers?” *Monthly Review* 16, no. 1 (May 1964): 43–46.
 76. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 96.
 77. Raymond Williams, *Britain in the Sixties: Communications* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962); Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 366.
 78. The Labour Party, *Report of a Commission of Enquiry into Advertising* (London: Labour Party, 1966), 33–40, 201, 204; Raymond Williams, *Communications* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), 155–56. While Baran and Sweezy provided written testimony to the Labour Party’s Advertising Commission, Williams was listed as a submitter of oral evidence.
 79. Williams, *Communications*, 156. The Pilkington Report indicated that Williams’s memorandum to the Committee on Broadcasting had addressed the following topics: “BBC and ITA: Existing Services: License Fee: Third television programme: Regional broadcasting: Local sound broadcasting: ITA to collect advertising revenue direct: Broadcasting and Television Council: Educational Broadcasting: Consumer Research programs.” *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting* (Pilkington Committee), 329. Since Williams’ memorandum to the Pilkington Committee was completed at the same time that he was working on his “Existing Alternatives to Communications” (reprinted in this issue) and on his book *Communications*, his Pilkington Committee memorandum likely reflected similar concerns (as suggested by

the Committee on Broadcasting's listing of its contents here). Williams also referred to the Labour Party's Advertising Commission Report (to which he and Baran and Sweezy had given testimony) in the second edition of his book; however, it was released while the book was in press, so he was only able to add a footnote indicating that "its majority recommendations amount to a useful short-term programme of action and ought, in my view, to be firmly supported." Williams, *Communications*, 156.

80. Williams, *Communications*, 17-19.
81. Williams, *Communications*, 129-30, 166-73.
82. Williams, *Communications*, 156-58. The long-run response to the Pilkington Report and the decline of the BBC-centered system are described in Nicholas Garnham, *Capitalism and Communication* (London: Sage 1990), 128-32.
83. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 249-50.
84. Nicholas Garnham, *Structures of Television*, revised edition (London: British Film Institute, 1980), 14. First published in 1973.
85. Williams, *Communications*, third edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 184.
86. Williams, *Communications*, third edition, 186-87.
87. Garnham, *Structures of Television*, 9.
88. Williams, *Communications*, third edition, 183.
89. Roger Burbach, "A Cuban Spring?" *Counterpunch*, April 13, 2013, <http://counterpunch.org>.
90. See John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney, *The Endless Crisis: How Monopoly-Finance Capital Produces Stagnation and Upheaval from the USA to China* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012).
91. Baran, *The Longer View*, 436.

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