American capitalism demands the infection of China

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On Tuesday, a day that the United States recorded 2,997 COVID-19 deaths, the *New York Times* published an op-ed by two former Biden administration advisers calling China's decision to prioritize saving lives a "mistake" and extolling the benefits of "natural immunity through infection."

Every day for the past seven days, an average of 2,500 people have died from COVID-19 in the US. Nearly 880,000 Americans, more than the number of US soldiers who have died in combat in every war the US has ever fought, have succumbed to this preventable disease. By contrast, in China, the country where COVID-19 first emerged, only 4,636 people have lost their lives, and there were just 103,000 cases.

However, in the eyes of the American media and political establishment, it is not the United States that must follow the example of China, but China that must follow the United States down the path of mass infection.

In their op-ed, entitled "China's Zero-Covid Policy Is a Pandemic Waiting to Happen," Ezekiel J. Emanuel and Michael T. Osterholm argue that the goal of eradicating COVID-19 (Zero COVID) "is unattainable with the highly transmissible Omicron variant and has set [China] up for disaster. The coronavirus is not going to disappear—the world will have to live with it. Making matters worse, China's vaccines are much less effective against Omicron."

Their admonition of China is, in fact, a devastating self-exposure of America's response to the pandemic. The coronavirus has not "disappeared"—that is, it has not been eliminated—because of deliberate decisions by the US and European powers to allow the virus to spread without restraint, guaranteeing not only mass death but the evolution of more infectious and vaccine-resistant variants.

The emergence of the Omicron variant is precisely what scientists—and the *World Socialist Web Site*—warned would happen as a result of the policy of mass infection. Emanuel and Osterholm are effectively telling China: "Due to our actions, which prioritized financial and economic interests over lives, the virus has not been eliminated. Your efforts to prevent mass infection will therefore fail, and you must learn to 'live with it.'"

Instead of arguing for the highly effective mRNA vaccines developed in the US to be urgently provided to China to prevent mass death, they simply demand that China's leaders "let it rip." As horrifying as this is, the authors make no mention of the billions around the globe who will "inevitably" be exposed to COVID-19 but have no access to any vaccine.

Revealing the real concerns motivating the demand that China abandon its efforts to eradicate COVID-19, Emanuel and Osterholm write that a Zero COVID strategy "will have serious economic impacts on China—and for all of us, given the country's position in the world economy. While China remains the production capital of the world, this is unlikely to be sustainable should lockdowns ensue."

That is, mass infection is "inevitable" not due to the nature of the virus, but due to the imperatives of the "economy," by which is meant the interests of the financial oligarchy.

Emanuel and Osterholm make clear that the policy of mass infection—far from being the outcome of blunders and mistakes—is deliberate. In fact, they present it as a positive good, which supposedly offers protection against the ravages of the pandemic, while leaving China vulnerable:

> Other countries can provide a road map that China can put into action. Denmark, Germany and some other European countries, as well as Australia, have achieved strong immunity without suffering the U.S. death rate…. Community spread resulted, but it would have been inevitable, even with longer or more severe lockdowns, and it allowed those countries to build up immunity.

This is an argument for the mass infection, and mass murder, of the Chinese population. All the countries held up as models for China are experiencing a massive surge in cases and deaths. If China had the same death rate from COVID-19 as the United States, 3.6 million people would be dead. If it had the same death rate as Germany, the figure would stand at two million.

Even the authors themselves do not believe their own statements about "build[ing] up immunity" through mass infection. "Neither COVID-19 vaccination nor infection appear to confer lifelong immunity," they wrote on January 6, making it clear that allowing COVID-19 to spread unchecked would

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lead to recurrent waves of infection.

The policy adopted by China beginning in early 2020 has proved that a country with four times the population of the United States, and the same geographic extent, could successfully contain this highly transmissible disease, even without the availability of vaccines.

Since early 2020, by aggressively tracking every case, isolating those who were infected, quarantining those exposed, and selectively closing schools and businesses to break community transmission, China has suppressed the spread of COVID-19. As a result, most people in China have been able to go to school, work and socialize without constantly worrying about being infected with a potentially deadly and debilitating disease and spreading it to their loved ones.

The ruling elite in the US, despite having been provided by China in early 2020 with a full description of the disease's mechanism, its mode of transmission, and how to contain it, made the decision to allow it to spread unchecked. This response was directed by the single-minded pursuit of inflating the stock market, with the Treasury and Federal Reserve funneling some six trillion dollars into Wall Street. As a result, while nearly one million people have died in the US, the 10 richest men in the world, nine of whom reside in the United States, havee doubled their wealth over the past two years.

Despite earlier denials by US public health officials, the policy of "herd immunity," that is, the deliberate mass infection of the population, was always the operative policy in the United States.

But the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, which spreads as rapidly as the measles and has led to a surge in cases, has created the pretext for the open, public embrace of mass infection. The "herd immunity" doctrine articulated in the Great Barrington Declaration has been adopted by the entire political establishment.

Osterholm and Emanuel do not examine any of the social, political or economic motives that led the United States to allow the mass infection of its own population. They simply treat these policies as given and tell China that it must accept the mass infection of its population or pay an ever-greater economic price as the circulation of the disease creates increasingly infectious variants.

The policy of the US in relation to China is now essentially what the "Wuhan Lab" conspiracy theorists have accused China of doing. The US is demanding that China allow the mass infection of its population and the hundreds of thousands of deaths that would inevitably follow. The American ruling class is engaged, in other words, in a form of biological warfare.

It would be easy to describe the *Times* essay as the result of the sociopathic ravings of Ezekiel Emanuel. Emanuel is America's foremost advocate of cutting health care costs by reducing the social and economic resources spent by society on treating the elderly and disabled, in what medical ethics experts have called a form of modern-day eugenics. For years, Emanuel had advocated reducing life expectancy, perhaps little imagining that a deadly pandemic would emerge that would achieve precisely these goals.

The op-ed in the *Times*, is, however, state policy. Emanuel, whose brother was chief of staff under former President Barack Obama, was an adviser to both the Biden and Obama administrations. His call on January 6 to make COVID-19 the "new normal" led NBC News' nightly segment on the pandemic, received front-page treatment in the *New York Times* and was greeted with a *Washington Post* editorial, as well as the lead interview on Meet the Press.

American capitalism, to use the phrase of Telford Taylor, the prosecutor at the Nuremberg tribunals, is "dying of its own poison." The idea that completely disregarding the well-being of American workers, allowing them to die *en masse*, and forcing them to work while sick to generate short-term profits will lead to the rejuvenation of American capitalism is laying the foundation not only for a social and economic catastrophe, but for a massive political rebellion of the working class.

In opposition to the policy of global mass infection promoted by the American ruling class, the response of the working class to the emergence of the Omicron variant—and the variants that will inevitably follow—must be the fight for global elimination and eradication. The experience of China shows that a policy of Zero COVID is possible, but it also demonstrates that this policy can only be realized on a global scale.

The defense of the lives of the Chinese working class from mass infection rests on the international working class, who, in taking up the fight to eliminate COVID-19, must at the same time wage a political struggle against the ruling class and the entire capitalist system.

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