

# To Make the Long March Short: A Short Commentary on the Two Long Marches that Have Failed Their Emancipatory Promises

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**Abstract:** The present work is a discussion of two different marches. It begins with a discussion of the German students uprising, especially with the figure of Rudi Dutschke, the leader of German student movement in the 60s, and the comparison of his movement with the Chinese movement and slogan from the thirties: “the long march through the institutions.” It goes on discussing the opposite position of the German liberal sociologist, Dahrendorf. This paper then discusses Gramsci and other thinkers and situations in the world and ends with deliberating on the possibilities of taking a ‘long march’ without return, that is, without cutting it off.

**Keywords:** Dutschke, long march, Gramsci, Mao, students

Once I was a student with books and a sword;  
(...)  
Now I am getting on in years: will what's left of  
My life be useful and worth mentioning?  
Darko Suvin, *The Long March*<sup>1</sup>

## **Red Rudi at the gates of institutions**

There was no disagreement about the general direction back then. It should have led to the revolution with capital R, expected to bring about the change of the human condition as it has been shaped by all hitherto history. It is still unclear what precisely had allowed for the universal translatability of this idea but the fact is that it was somehow understood all over the world: in the classrooms of French or German Universities, as well as among the workers in FIAT or Peugeot factories; by a simple peasant in a remote Asian village who would abandon his home and family to follow its path, or in the jungles of Africa where it provided the insurgents with a cause that was even bigger than their anti-colonial one. Most curiously, it was also shared by those who mercilessly fought each other in its name. As it seems, no human language since the Tower of Babel was so commonly understood as the language of the Revolution.

It is in this sense no wonder that Rudi Dutschke, the cult leader of the German '68 movement, chose the name of a Chinese revolutionary event from the thirties as a metaphor for the strategy of a western protest movement in the late sixties: “The long march through the institutions”. However geographically, historically, culturally and economically far and different, the concrete revolutionary experience of Chinese communists

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<sup>1</sup> Suvin 1987

appeared to “Red Rudi” as something common, an experience he and the movement can directly translate into their own historical condition and the language of their struggle. Yet, there is no such thing as a perfect translation. Not only every translation, even the best one, more or less significantly differs from the original, it also always gives birth to what is untranslatable. In other words, it discloses the intrinsic incommensurability of languages and human experiences that have found their expression in these languages. In short, what Rudi Dutschke meant with the notion of the “long march” was not quite the same as what the leaders of the Chinese Red Army intended and achieved by this strategic move and what was subsequently mythologized into the narrative of their victory. These differences matter, not because they might prove someone or something wrong, but because they alone provide the epistemic and political ground on which we can address what is common in our historical experience. It is only through openly dealing with these differences that we can live up to the famous Fredric Jameson’s dictum from the early eighties: “Always historicize!”

The first suspicion of such a difference arises with the notion of “long” in the phrase “The Long March”. What does it actually refer to: space or time? In fact, the original Long March, the one of the Chinese Red Army lasted no longer than a year – from October 1934 to October 1935. However, it was an intense time densely packed with events of utmost importance, a time of fateful decisions, heroic deeds, tragic failures and unexpected turns that sealed the fate of China until nowadays. In fact, it was a forced march of history itself. And, as it is often the case when history is marching, it was literally a march over dead bodies. Of those original 100,000 soldiers of the First Front Army who had started the March, less than 7,000 made it to the final destination, which is less than one tenth. And still, the question whether the cause has justified such human losses is out of place, for we know the answer: History doesn’t care. Curiously, in the case of Rudi Dutschke’s “Long March” the same question does not make any sense either. Not because he could have also delegated responsibility to history, but rather because he didn’t have to reckon with any losses. He expected only gains instead. And he also expected that it will take a long time, a very, very long time. This is first what he said in one of his speeches in which he explicitly defined the idea of “The long march through the institutions”:

Revolution is not a short act when something happens once and then everything is different. Revolution is a long, complicated process, where one [*der Mensch*] must become different.<sup>2</sup>

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 2 See “The Long March through the Established Institutions”, (English subtitles), Rudi Dutschke, You tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJsu4kFHS3s>. The English translation in the subtitles is slightly changed so as to more accurately follow the original speeches in German.

He speaks of “small esoteric circles” in which this process of change has already started but has so far affected only a minority. Nevertheless, Dutschke is sure that:

[T]he process goes along this way, which I have once named ‘The Long March through the Established Institutions’, in which [institutions], through clarification [*Aufklärung*], systematic clarification and direct actions, awareness is brought [*Bewusstwerdung*] to further minorities in and outside the university, in schools, in trade schools, in engineer schools, also technical universities and finally in factories, where workers are currently worrying about their jobs. The process has begun, and that is a long story, which right now has been set on its course by us.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, during this same discussion, Dutschke’s concept of “The Long March through the Institutions” was directly challenged by the German liberal sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf—precisely in the point of its temporal meaning: “When you say that it is a long, long way, and when you suggest that it can last decades, than you make your opinions irrefutable. What can anyone say against them? That is, then, simply a theory that one can put out into the world, but which can no longer be discussed.”<sup>4</sup>

In fact, Dahrendorf explicitly refuted Dutschke’s claim to revolution and he did so in the name of reform. Revolutionaries in a non-revolutionary situation are for him comical figures and he argues that the current state of affairs in the Federal Republic cannot be described in terms of a revolutionary situation. Rather, it offers, as he believes, conditions for possible reforms.

Dutschke, on the contrary, clearly understands “The Long March through the Institutions” as a revolution—a process of radical change that can truly take place only if it affects the whole society, or as he explicitly states, only when the majority of the population becomes “conscious through a long process of clarification and action” so as to no longer accept the current situation. He, contrary to Dahrendorf, believes that the student movement in Germany of that time stands “at the end of a pre-revolutionary phase”. This, however, does not mean for him that the students can start the revolution. They can not, although such a revolution can succeed only if it does not fail at the university in the first place. Moreover, it can succeed only if it doesn’t stay confined within national borders: “There will be no German revolution. There will, however, in a further sense, be a world-wide process of emancipation.” In other words, “The Long March through the Institutions” is for Rudi Dutschke

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 3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

the concept of an international revolution whose ultimate goal is to change the whole world. With this he remains firmly within the historical mainstream of the twentieth century's revolutionary movements.

### A matter of lord or death

Looking back from today's perspective, the differences between a student revolutionary and a liberal reformist expressed then in an open dispute over the idea of "The Long March through the Institutions" had very concrete consequences on their personal lives. While the revolutionary had never managed to enter the gates of the institutions of his country he intended to march through, the liberal reformist successfully climbed them up to their highest heights. Even an institution-of-institutions, the British state, in which Dutschke sought refuge, expelled him as an "undesirable alien". On the other hand, Dahrendorf walked smoothly through universities, parliaments, government departments, making it in the United Kingdom as far as the House of Lords.

Curiously, many revolutionary followers of Dutschke's strategy of "The Long March through the Institutions"—except those few who tragically ended in the deadlock of left terrorism—seem to have had, in contrast to their charismatic leader, a fate similar to his liberal reformist opponent. They too walked successfully through the institutions, occupied corridors and sometimes the very top of the political power, key positions in economy, universities or media. And, beyond doubt, they also brought about a certain change, one that cannot be thought of or judged in political and social categories typical for the epoch of industrial modernity and the mode of life organized around the major site of its material reproduction, the fordist factory. So, the generation of 68—to the extent that it can be historically subjectified as such—has not toppled the world's capitalist system and freed the working classes from the chains of exploitation. It has not put in question the already established political order, including the centuries old system of more or less sovereign nation states, nor has it challenged its ideal form of government, parliamentary democracy, party politics, and the rule of law. In fact, it has never taken the lead of any of the radical historical transformations that have changed the world in the decades following the student protest in 1968. But it was somewhere around when the neoliberals crashed the trade unions, privatized economy and dismantled the welfare state, when labour turned post-industrial and capital went global, when communism collapsed or when the rulers of the world started to wage wars again—the generation of 1968 was always there, marching steadily through the institutions as a quietly spoken and modestly critical companion to history. If this does not look like what Rudi Dutschke once dreamed of, it still suffices for a perfect CV.

But nevertheless, it would be wrong to consider "The Long March through the Institutions" as being a historical failure. Its protagonists

might even claim a sort of victory, at least in what Antonio Gramsci once called the war of position. It is therefore not surprising that many still attribute Rudi Dutschke's famous phrase to Gramsci. Yet, although it does not originate with him, it is still closely connected with the strategy of revolutionary struggle he developed while imprisoned by Mussolini's fascist regime.

Having witnessed as a young communist the tragic failure of all the attempts to repeat in the West the Bolshevik's successful seizure of power, as well as facing personally firm and steady force of the bourgeois class rule in Italy, Gramsci drew the conclusion that the strength of the latter does not rely solely on the state and its apparatuses of coercion, but is rather broadly based in what he called cultural hegemony. Revolution, therefore, cannot win without challenging the world of ideas, beliefs and values deeply entrenched in civil society. So the general strategy of the proletarian struggle had to be changed, from the "war of manoeuvre", focused on a direct conflict with the state and prompt seizure of its power apparatuses, to the "war of position", a slow and long struggle for, as we would say today, "hearts and minds" of people with the goal to counter and suppress the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. On winning the war of position and so gaining overall influence and popular support the revolutionary proletariat would then establish the conditions for the real revolutionary change.

In fact, Gramsci's strategic concept is not essentially different from Dutschke's "The long march through the institutions". In both cases the general direction as well as the ultimate goal are same—the revolutionary transformation of the world. The paths to be taken in order to achieve this goal are also remarkably similar. German student leader's "becoming conscious through a long process of clarification/enlightenment" might be easily subsumed under the strategy of a slow and long struggle for cultural hegemony developed by Italian Marxist some thirty years before. There is, however, one more affinity between the two strategic concepts, which is, although less explicitly symmetric, even more striking. Gramsci actually drew the strategic distinction between "the war of manoeuvre" and the "war of position" on the ground of a fundamental—ultimately cultural—difference between the East and the West, or more concretely, between at that time historically belated Russia, where, due to an underdeveloped civil society, the state dominated the entire social life, so that a direct assault on it and seizure of its institutions could bring the working class to the final victory over its bourgeois enemy. In the West where the bourgeois hegemony was already deeply anchored in civil society, the victory over state alone would not suffice to topple down the capitalist class rule, which is why the revolutionary forces had first to entrench themselves for a long war of positions on the front of consciousness and culture.

When it comes to Rudi Dutschke's strategy of "The long march,"

it is clear that it does not follow in any explicit way a similar logic of a cultural difference between the West and the East, or to put it in the terminology of that time, between the first world on one side and the second and third world on the other side. Moreover, the student protest movement from the sixties accumulated a significant amount of its emancipatory energy from the solidarity with the anti-colonial struggle and the third world liberation movements. Nevertheless, “The long march through the institutions”, as far as it may claim any historical success, has been an entirely western political phenomenon. The student protests of 1968, however, did not take place only in the most developed countries of the capitalist West. There were politically significant and sometimes more dramatic protests in the communist East and former Yugoslavia as well as in other parts of the world like Mexico, Pakistan or Japan. Yet only in the West, as it seems, the student radicals of 1968 really realized the strategic vision of their iconic German leader. They entered the institutions, marched persistently through their endless labyrinths and finally arrived at their destination winning, to a non-negligible extent, the struggle for hegemony—in the West, to repeat it again. A plethora of new values that clearly originate from the ideological arsenal of the so-called New Social Movements and thus belong to the legacy of the 1968 movement have in the meantime become an intrinsic part of the hegemony in the western societies: women’s as well as minority rights in general, especially those of LGBT communities, multicultural tolerance, environmental awareness, relaxed sexual moral, right to criticism in schools and universities, social and cultural inclusivism—just to mention a few.

These values are important, no doubt. They have significantly improved the quality of life in the developed liberal democratic countries of the West. But what, in fact, is their historical meaning— having in mind that both Gramsci and Dutschke understood the winning of the struggle for hegemony as a precondition for a true revolutionary change of the world?

They have changed the world nevertheless. In the ideological guise of the so-called “western values”, they have become efficient instruments—not to say weapons—of the West’s hegemony over the world. While they essentially inform the normative content of the West as an identity block today, their proper place is not somewhere within, in the kernel of its alleged essence. Rather, the so-called “western values” reside on its borders, there where a painful, and often violent cut between “The West” and “The Rest” has to be taken, time and again. It is in this ideological role that they cast a dark shadow on the otherwise splendid success of “The long march through the institutions”. At the arrival on their destination, the revolutionaries of 1968, who bravely carried the emancipatory values of the student revolts from the streets and occupied classrooms to the very top of the institutional edifice of their western

societies, have become a sort of split personalities. In the daytime they live their western values, enjoying the fruits of their “long march”. As night falls, however, they turn into the gatekeepers of the “western culture” deploying their “western values” as ideological instruments of a ceaseless border performing. It is in this twilight of cultural—and in this sense also social, political and geopolitical—bordering, which, of course, takes place today in a perfect harmony with the interests of the global capitalism, that the emancipatory ideals of the movements of 1968 suddenly get appropriated by the very forces against which they were once proclaimed and in the long march through the institutions enforced, the forces of the conservative, right-wing and today increasingly fascist counter-revolution. It is in this ever darkening night that an emancipatory ideal of, for instance, women’s rights and sexual freedoms becomes a “western value” to be implemented by bombs and cruise missiles or, which is nowadays the main topic of the western democratic party politics, protected against migrant rapists.

One cannot escape the impression that Gramsci’s “war of position”, the long struggle for cultural hegemony and its 1968 newly updated edition “The long march through the institutions” have opportunistically ended in the very problem of which they had been once offered as a solution—in the cultural difference between the West and the Rest as the everlasting traumatic kernel of our historical experience. Is it really true that there is nothing to be learned from the modern history except the trivial racist lesson that the emancipation in “The Rest” wages — and loses! — bloody senseless wars, while in the West it creates a superior culture? If that is the case, then we have no other option than to look back again to that original historical event that later gave name to “The long march through the institutions” as the strategy of the 1968 protest movement.

### **Vernacular escape**

Was the long march of the Chinese Red Army in the thirties a move that strategically belongs to a “war of position” or rather to a “war of manoeuvre”? An answer to this question does not have to follow any military logic, for what has made this forced and rather desperate move to escape an imminent military defeat a historical event was not its martial excellence but rather its political meaning. If war is a continuation of politics with other means, then politics is a cause/effect of every warfare, even if the military professionals had not anticipated that before. In fact, already 1935, immediately after arriving at the destination, Mao himself explicitly defined the Long march as “a manifesto, a propaganda force, a seeding machine”. Concretely:

“The Long March is a manifesto. It has proclaimed to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes, while the imperialists and

their running dogs, Chiang Kai-shek and his like, are impotent. It has proclaimed their utter failure to encircle, pursue, obstruct and intercept us. The Long March is also a propaganda force. It has announced to some 200 million people in eleven provinces that the road of the Red Army is their only road to liberation. Without the Long March, how could the broad masses have learned so quickly about the existence of the great truth which the Red Army embodies? The Long March is also a seeding-machine. In the eleven provinces it has sown many seeds which will sprout, leaf, blossom, and bear fruit, and will yield a harvest in the future.”<sup>5</sup>

What looks militarily like a shift from the war of position to the war of manoeuvre—the breakout of the Chinese Red Army from encirclement on a territory which its units, entrenched, defended for a long time—was politically a shift into the opposite direction. The Chinese Long March resembles rather Gramsci’s war of position, a displacement of force from a direct confrontation with the organized state power, in this case the regular Army of Kuomintang, to another theatre of war. But which exactly?

This is where the two marches part their ways. Both, Dutschke’s and Gramsci’s strategy—let us call them “western”—target a space, which we can think of as “intrasocial”. While marching through the institutions, Dutschke’s revolutionary followers never leave the enclosed space of what has been until nowadays conceived of, and, even more importantly, in political, cultural, economical, normative and epistemological sense explicitly addressed as society—the name for what all these institutions, governmental, non governmental or para-governmental, brings together into one and the same historical conjunction, or better, encloses them within one and the same historically contingent form of common existence. However diffusive and divergent are the institutional paths the revolutionaries of 1968 have taken, they all finally lead to society as their common teleological end, like myriad arms of a river, which, however wide-stretched in the meanders of estuary all issue into one and the same sea. Society is thus the final destination of Dutschke’s Long March at which all the emancipatory energy, carried individually through the institutional labyrinth is finally discharged so as to bring about its revolutionary change. In other words, the revolutionary emancipation takes place as a cumulative effect of all these countless struggles fought individually on all the levels and stages of “The long march through the institutions”, in political parties, state bureaucracy, education, art and culture, sport, etc. Its projected result is creation of a historically new form of social existence that is free from oppression, exploitation and all sorts of alienation.

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<sup>5</sup>Tse-Tung 1965, p. 160

By and large, this also applies to Gramsci’s war of position. While it takes place primarily in the theatre of civil society, its collateral target is the state. In fact, its emancipatory claim addresses a meta-unity of both. For what actually moves forward in the long war of position is, again, a cumulative translation of hegemony into the state power that, however slow and extensive, finally brings about revolutionary social change. It is from the perspective of revolution as the strategic goal of the entire emancipatory struggle that a differentiation between state and civil society is of a secondary, tactical nature. Since the ultimate—teleological—object of a truly revolutionary politics is society in its totality, any difference between state and civil society remains intra-social.

This, however, is not the case with the Long March of the Chinese Red Army. By breaking out of the encirclement and so liberating itself from the fatal clinch with the Kuomintang forces in a futile wrestling for the state power, it also leaves the theatre of an intra-social struggle. Or, to put it more precisely, it breaks out of society into a sort of its outside, a space that descriptively resembles a wild nature with its impassable mountains and unbridgeable rivers, an unfriendly territory populated by agricultural “tribes” governed by feudal warlords and their private armies.

From a western perspective, which always already implies both the colonial legacy and the logic of state sovereignty, such an extra-social space would be essentially perceived as *terra nullius*, a territory to be occupied and colonized, populated by savages and barbarians that are “yet-to-be-civilized”—a space of an anthropological otherness and a different, ahistorical temporality, but at the same time also a space of natural resources and human labour that is at free disposal for extraction and exploitation, in short, a political, social and cultural exteriority that has yet to be enclosed in order to launch the primitive accumulation of capital.

For Mao and his comrades the territories of western China into which they escape in October 1934 is an entirely different space. Before all, it is a refuge that secures survival; a resource of renewal and multiplication that makes possible the primitive accumulation of political and military force and provides sustainability for the revolutionary movement. For Chinese communists the people who populate this space are primarily an audience to be addressed through the medium of their Long March. However, these masses don’t understand the language of universal emancipation, the *lingua franca* of the revolution. They, in fact, speak their vernacular languages, which is why a translation is needed to address them. This is precisely the task of the Long March. It might be understood as a sort of translational device that works in the mode of vernacular address.

To understand what is “vernacular address” and how translation

actually works in that mode we must, for a while, return to the late medieval England, concretely, in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century when John Wycliffe, scholastic philosopher, theologian, Biblical translator, reformer and one of the first modern “dissidents” of the Roman Catholic Church, wrote “A Petition to King and Parliament”, his complaint about corrupt clergy, their life in luxury and pomp in striking contrast to the poverty of the peasants.<sup>6</sup> The tract, however, has two versions, one written in Latin and another in the vernacular, i.e., in what was then English.

So why was it translated into the vernacular? Not as both the common sense and the ordinary theory of translation want us to believe in order to simply make it understandable for an audience that does not understand Latin. The purpose of this translation was far more specific—to reach those who could do something practically about the corruption in Church, namely those who could revolt against it. Translation in this case was not simply an auxiliary form of linguistic practice that helps people to understand each other. Rather it was about changing the mode of address and, in this way, about creating a social relation such that it would have emancipatory effects.

### The march of no return

For Sylvain Lazarus, the year 1968 marks the end of an era in which the forces of emancipation were resorting to the idea of revolution. In his words, “revolution has become too allegoric”.<sup>7</sup> This seems to fully apply to Dutschke’s concept of “The long march through the institutions”. It is too allegorical a revolution. Like Gramsci’s “war of position” it does not confront directly the state, but focuses its emancipatory effort on the institutions, stretching its impact endlessly in time. This absence of any strict temporal limit of Dutschke’s concept of revolution made Ralf Dahrendorf already then call it “irrefutable”, which is obviously another word for “too allegoric”. Yet still, just like in the case of Gramsci’s struggle for hegemony, the revolutionary politics of “The long march through the institutions” had its clear object, the society in its totality.

For Lazarus, however, the category of society has no consistence, nor does it have its own space. There is no such thing as a social order that can be targeted and changed through revolutionary action. Lazarus speaks of society and social formation as a fiction that is supported in the interest of the rulers. It is created by the state itself as a sort of its interlocutor, a *Doppelgänger* with which the state stands in a virtual object-subject relation. For Lazarus, the state is the only organ of regulation, control and order. To say that there is no social order means that there is nothing else except the state order. This, however, does not

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<sup>6</sup> See Somerset 1998, p. 3-5.

<sup>7</sup> Lazarus 2018, p. 25.

mean that everything can be reduced to state. There is a life outside of the state, there are people, activities, cities. Or, we might add, there is a vernacular outside of the state qua society.

Having this in mind, we can think of the “wild side” into which Mao and comrades take a march in 1934 in terms of such a vernacular space. Contrary to Dutschke’s Long march, which is long (endlessly) in time but short in space (the institutions of the state/society), the Long March of the Chinese communists is rather short in time (a year, 1934/35) but long (limitless) in space—a space that did not exist a priori. Such a space emerges only insofar as it is addressed as a vernacular space. In fact, it is nothing but an effect of vernacular address. In this sense it is also limitless, for it cannot be objectified, or, in other words, it can be limited only insofar as it becomes an object of politics in its own right. What turns a limitless vernacular space into a clearly confined object of politics is the act of its political enclosure, which is precisely the opposite of the vernacular address.

Speaking now in terms of Sylvain Lazarus’s distinction between “politics in exteriority”, meaning all sort of political activities and organizations that articulate themselves in relation to a particular object, regardless of which sort, real or imagined, and “politics in interiority” that develops itself at distance of an object, i.e., starts from itself and not, for instance, from the antagonistic relation to an object, we might say that what is called here the vernacular address is in fact an act of a genuine politics of interiority—in the sense that it performatively creates a political space outside of the state qua society, which means beyond any intra-social antagonisms.

The idea of such a space is not far from what Ivan Illich calls “vernacular domain”. He opposed it to the concept of “shadow economy”, the space of the “black market”, or the so-called informal sector, which mirrors, like the hidden side of the moon, the realm of formal economy.<sup>8</sup> According to Illich, the two fields are in synergy, i.e., they together constitute one and the same whole.

This whole, however, is complementary to the vernacular reality as the realm of everyday life, which is shaped by people themselves as a space in which they create their own sense of things and negotiate, for instance, how they should educate themselves or how they should use the local commons. It is a space of survival and subsistence. While for the mainstream economists the shadow economy is something new—a discovery of new land, much like the industrial market which emerged for the first time in history only during the last two centuries—the vernacular domain, on the other hand, has always been there: “It is the way in which local life has been conducted throughout most of history and even today in a significant proportion of subsistence- and communitarian-oriented

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<sup>8</sup> See Illich 1981, p. 29-31.

communities.”<sup>9</sup> In the vernacular domain of their communities people struggle to achieve regeneration and social restoration.

The territories into which the Chinese Red Army escaped in 1934, if only for a short time, was precisely this sort of space we call here vernacular domain, a space in which it sought survival and regeneration and where it could socially restore itself, rebuild its military strength and massively increase its ideological and political influence. Yet at the same time, this space was by no means complementary to that of the state and its institutions. It was not a sort of shadow society that is yet to be enlightened in the long and hard struggle for hegemony, so as to be finally reincorporated into the one and the same whole of the state qua society, nor was it another theatre of war in which, like in Gramsci’s war of position, the revolution takes detour in order to finally reach its goal, i.e., to radically change this same whole. Rather, this space was the vernacular outside of the state/society, where, among people who organize their life, manage their activities and govern their communities by themselves, a revolutionary movement could not only find a refuge but also secure its political subsistence.

Seen from this perspective, the Long March of the Chinese communists was in fact short, far too short. It ended in their return to the open confrontation with and later successful seizure of the state power, reducing its entire meaning to a short heroic interval on a long way to the final triumph of the revolution. Having in mind how this triumph looks today, namely like one of the most brutal forms of neoliberal capitalism on earth, we might say that a truly long march of the Chinese communists, so long that it lasts until nowadays, had actually started immediately after the short historical one and is still ongoing, prolonging endlessly the failure of its emancipatory promise.

On the other side, Rudi Dutschke’s “The long march through the institutions” seems to have been, as said before, successful. Or, shall we rather say, too successful, since it was best followed by the liberals who finally proved to be the true beneficiaries of its strategy. It has installed them as the ideological guardians and political custodians of the so-called western values in which the emancipatory ideals of the 1968 have found the historical form of their decadent, racist realization. Moreover, the strategy of “The long march through the institutions” has proven even so successful that it is today opportunistically followed by the right-wing populists who are nowadays climbing up the institutional hierarchies of the so-called democratic West faster and more effective than the liberals ever did.

This is the reason why, today, we should remember the short march of the Chinese Red Army into the vernacular outside of the then revolutionary politics. There is still something to learn from them—not

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9 Schroyer 2009, p. 69.

only how to articulate the politics of vernacular address as a form in which the revolution can find the mode of its survival and regeneration today, but also, how not to repeat their mistake of cutting the long march short. The time has come again to escape from the encirclement into a Long March of no return.

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