

A World of Struggle

Selected Essays and Articles from an Anti-
Fascist Organizer in the Belly of the Beast

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Dedicated to the countless people who have been either the direct or indirect inspiration for these essays and articles, to my wife Melody and my kids Crystal, AJ, and Jacob, friends and comrades, and to the unknown masses facing fascism today. A better world is possible.

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Introduction

This book is a collection of essays and articles from years as a communist organizer. It covers the real-world community organizing I've been a part of for a better part of a decade. I have also published work on the history of workers' movements and national liberation struggles.

I hope to preserve some of these works that are now considered 'lost media' due to CPUSA removing Red World Review, and to overall keep a physical account of these reports—most importantly the analysis of the Los Angeles uprising against Donald Trump's fascism. If you are interested in how to organize, examples of community resistance, and historical analysis of our collective struggle, I hope you can gain something from these pages.

We are in desperate need of a critical intervention into the Left movement and the liberation struggle. We have seen genocides and millions of people facing untold oppression. Ask questions, develop a collective revolutionary theory, and act now. That is what I hope everyone gains from this book.

The Missing Revolution of the 21st Century: Horizontalism & Anarchism vs the Communist Party Structure

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“And the revolution itself must not by any means be regarded as a single act..., but a series of more or less powerful outbreaks rapidly alternating with periods of more or less complete calm. For that reason, the principal content of the activity of our Party organization, the focus of this activity, should be work that is both possible and essential in the period of a most powerful outbreak as well as in the period of complete calm, namely, work, of political agitation...” -Vladimir Lenin

There has been a surge of autonomous groups in organizing spaces in recent years. For those who came up in the wake of Occupy and the Indignados—in the wake of the financial crash and Arab Spring—the topic of horizontal

or autonomous groups is nothing new. It was the dominant mode of radical organizing, especially for spontaneous actions, for the better part of a decade. Across the world, Greece, Spain, Brazil, Chile, the U.S., and more, all experienced significant social upheavals, often fueled by these movements throughout the first quarter of the 21st century. Frequently, they were described as spontaneous, leaderless, horizontally structured, and digitally organized.

With a new generation entering the struggle that didn't come up in that environment—and for many engaged in anti-ICE resistance today—the topic of how to organize is and should be back in the discourse cycle. I want to examine the recent history of spontaneous, autonomous, or horizontal uprisings, and detail the theoretical and practical debate between different modes of organizing—utilizing the work *If We Burn* by Vincent Bevins, my own practical experience with these two modes of organizing, and the theoretical work at the foundation of this debate. “Vertical vs horizontal organization” is not a new debate. However, with each new generation that joins the struggle, it seems to come back into vogue.

Since I've been politically aware and active, we have seen waves of mass protests and movements around the world, with limited or backwards results. We have lived in recent decades through the biggest protest movements in world history multiple times, but without any seismic shift in the global system of capitalism. We must get to the root of this question; the answer lies in the type of organizations and movements we are building and sustaining.

21st Century: An Era of Horizontalism & Anti-Politics

Brazil's Anarchist Movement Against Social Democracy & the Return of the Far-Right

For those who were too young or somehow weren't paying attention at the time, in the early 2010s, the world was aflame. Mass protests and movements swept the globe in response to a variety of local and international conditions. The Arab Spring, Indignados, Occupy Wall St., and so many more were global phenomena. From 2011-2014, you could not escape some form of "revolution" happening. It was a massive and much larger echo of similar movements in the late 90s and early 2000s— Seattle and Ukraine, in particular.

With the violent overthrow and dissolution of the USSR and numerous other socialist countries, the Old Left in many places lost its social cache. The communist-style of party organization had seemingly lost the Cold War. This was the 'end of history' as we knew it. In the U.S. and the West generally, this meant a further collapse of the Old Left communist parties, which were already in a state of decline. The few holdouts at the time—China, Cuba, DPRK, Vietnam, and Laos—went through difficult periods of development and change during the direct aftermath of the USSR's fall.

Not that it tells the full picture, but the fact that we as a society went from grunge to nu-metal is a sign of the nihilism that had festered in the superstructure with the complete collapse of the "Old" and "New Left" of the 20th

century. In most places, the longstanding or well-known vehicles for political engagement and change were seen as dead. The resurgence of more anarchist forms of resistance is also a byproduct of that post-Soviet period of neoliberal globalization, hyperindividualism, and the aforementioned social nihilism.

Mass protests and occupations of institutions or public spaces were not new tactics. While the New Left had a significant militant communist element, it also had a nebulous left element, like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) or even the American Indian Movement (AIM), which had anti-communist tendencies. The Civil Rights Movement generally used mass protests and sit-ins as well. The tactics that became synonymous with Occupy or other 21st century movements were not created by them, but merely the utilization of past techniques from previous struggles.

Of course, anarchist structures, or autonomous and horizontal structures, were not new to the Left or social movements in the 2000s. There's a long, storied history of that school of thought. Its theoretical, tactical, and strategic differences with the communist party structure will be in the next section, but it's important to note that when talking about these movements in the last 26 years, it's ultimately, mostly, coming from the anarchist tradition. Though not every example of this era will fit that categorization.

When referring to the Ukrainian or Hong Kong uprisings in the mid-2010s, these were not left-leaning anarchists, but they were in this continuum of the period of horizontal and "leaderless" movements. These spontaneous eruptions in

respective societies can best be described as “societal explosions.” Political vacuums in Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, Yemen, Brazil, Chile, the U.S., and many other places, in large part developed by these mass protest movements, are a crucial element to this story as well. But the reality is that political vacuums don’t truly exist. There are always groups waiting to fill that vacuum immediately.

Brazil is the most intriguing example to detail and discuss. The Old Left in Brazil was not as weakened by the collapse of the USSR or the Sino-Soviet split as so many other parties had been, in large part, because it was a crucial part of the resistance to the long-standing military dictatorship throughout the 20th century.

In 1980, when the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT/ Worker’s Party) was founded as a new mass left party, the Partido Comunista do Brasil (PCdoB) was a key part of that development and anti-dictatorship coalition with the PT. So when the PT rose to executive power with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2002, the PCdoB was an active part of the new center-left, progressive administration. The largely Indigenous-led Movimento Sem Terra (MST/Landless Workers’ Movement) is also a long-standing left-leaning political and social movement. And then there’s the explosive youth punk-scene reading Kropotkin and Bakunin. These factors all poured into this post-dictatorship society, where the society had not fundamentally changed, and was ready to explode.

Neoliberalism was still pushing a hyper-reactionary oligarchy that controlled the media, judiciary, and military. The new left coalition coming to political power was in a

precarious position and had to produce results fast. It should be stated that from 2003 to 2016 (from Lula to successor Dilma Rousseff), 20 million people were lifted from poverty by policies they and the PT largely enacted. Raises in the minimum wage, increased investments in socialized healthcare, and higher education were all positive for the general public. But there were a few moments early in their tenure that indicated the clock was ticking.

In the year Lula was elected, a mass protest movement kicked off in the city of Salvador by the student union "strongly linked" to the PCdoB. It was over the rising public transportation fares in the city, and it initially started with Old Left support. But as it grew bigger than the student union could control, protesters started to declare "no flags" at the demonstrations, and that this was now a movement without any party. In 2004, Lula deployed the Brazilian military along with the U.S. and UN forces to overthrow progressive Haitian leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide in an act of imperialist regime change. And the following year at the World Social Forum, the Movimento Passe Livre (MPL/Free Fare Movement) was formed.

The MPL was initially a very small, leaderless, and horizontal group. Its founding charter stated, "a horizontal movement is a movement in which everyone is a leader, or where leaders do not exist." It declared it would be "autonomous" and fully independent of existing political parties. All decisions would be made by consensus, not majority vote. The MPL itself was directly inspired by the neighborhood assemblies in Argentina that formed in 2001 when the state and economy collapsed, which adopted

horizontalidad as well. Chile had a similar history with *asambleismo*.

Lula would end his two terms with an 83% approval rating and, as previously mentioned, some major reforms and policies helped the masses of Brazil. However, Lula wasn't conducting a socialist transformation of the country. That was never in the plans for him, and especially, but more broadly, the Workers Party as well. Before he was elected, he'd already made a promise to continue the basic economic structure of the previous administration.

His successor, Dilma Rousseff, who is now the head of the New Development Bank within BRICS, was a former communist guerrilla during the era of the military dictatorship. She was imprisoned and tortured in the early 70s for her work. Rousseff won the election in 2010 and became the first, and to this point only, woman president of Brazil.

All of this is part of the "Pink Tide" that rolled through Latin America, where progressive and some outright socialist administrations came to power in Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile, Ecuador, and Paraguay. The Left was the key force resisting U.S. puppets and interventions in the region for a better part of a century, and was slowly gaining real political power.

For MPL, and ultimately the future of the Brazilian people, this didn't matter to them. An age of anti-politics became the norm. In 2011, they targeted the issue of raised bus fares. Less than 50 total members of MPL at the time managed to create a political snowball that led to Jair Bolsonaro and the far-right gaining political power in Brazil.

MPL organized protests, invasions of bus stations, mass fare evasions, and admittedly declared their movement an “a-party” movement. They would tear down any political flags that fellow protesters would bring to their actions.

In 2013, mass police repression, intense and slowly shifting media coverage, the overall global political climate, and many more seen and unseen factors led to the biggest mass protests in Brazilian history. Millions marched. Thousands brutalized by the police and caught all on camera.

But the reality of a leaderless and structureless movement started by 50 people is, who decides who’s in and who’s out? When millions are now joining you, how do you centralize messaging? How do you stay on target for what you are organizing? In a running theme of this era, the political explosion that MPL created against not a fascist military dictatorship, but a progressive, left-leaning democratic administration, gave open ground for the far-right to take control.

When leaders aren’t collectively decided upon, they will develop on their own. That’s what happened to the mass movement in Brazil; Jair Bolsonaro and his cronies co-opted even the name of the MPL (the right-wing formation that formed during that period, being the MBL) and latched onto that anti-politics that had become the norm. He was able to position himself as a political outsider and thus garner populist support. The MPL struggle that originated on the issue of bus fares became a nationwide mass protest movement over state repression. Since the state was at that time run by the Workers’ Party, and since the MPL had no

inclination to develop electoral party politics, the fascists filled that vacuum.

Dilma Rousseff was impeached in 2016, Lula was imprisoned, and the 5th-largest country in the world rapidly declined from the improvements under the PT government. Bolsonaro's various far-right party allegiances and the MBL set the struggle back decades. Lula was eventually freed, and the PT is again in political power, but in a clearly more fragile domestic dynamic compared to their meteoric rise. When Lula first left office, his approval rating was 83%. Now, at 80 years old and planning to run again, is only at 34%. Bolsonaro is in police custody and facing 27 years for a coup attempt. His son most likely will be the far-right candidate for the next election after his father put nearly 10 million people into poverty.

The MPL still exists, but the original 50 or so members have all left. MST was a key coalition partner to get Lula freed and running again. But the future of Brazil is in a mist. Beyond the horizon at this point. The Workers' Party and PCdoB have not recovered from the societal explosions in the mid-2010s, and the anarchist movement has been limited after the MPL's difficulties.

The Echoes of Arab Socialism from Egypt to Yemen

Egypt was a hotbed for Arab Socialism and nationalism throughout a major part of the 20th century. Gamal Nasser was a Third World icon who had retaken the Suez Canal from colonizers, established political sovereignty, and aided other anti-colonial movements—notably Yemen.

Nasserites were never too friendly with communists internally, though there was a major relaxation of internal repression against communists in the 1960s; Egypt would develop close ties to the USSR as well. The national liberation struggle carried out by Egyptians during that period was shaped by the Leninist/Communist party structure. Nasser himself initiated the creation of a Leninist-style group called the Vanguard Organization to defend the revolution.

However, in 1970, Nasser unexpectedly died and was succeeded by Anwar Sadat. He would immediately reposition Egypt towards the US, kick out Soviet military advisors, and implement early neoliberal policies. When Sadat launched a war against Israel in 1973, he would be in constant communication with Henry Kissinger about their battle plans, which were automatically fed to the Israelis. This was indicative of the seismic shift away from Arab Socialism towards an Arab bourgeoisie that was capitulating to the West, which would hit the region in the late 20th century.

Sadat would reverse the land reform under Nasser, handing land back to the feudal class. He restarted the mass repression of the Left. There were bread riots in 1977 over this forced reversal of the gains under Nasser and Arab socialist policies. By 1981, Sadat was assassinated by the Muslim Brotherhood—a reactionary nationalist organization founded in 1928. Hosni Mubarak would replace Sadat and continue neoliberal shock therapy into the global debt crisis of the 80s. IMF and World Bank forced economic liberalization that ravaged Egypt.

Mubarak would accept debt relief from the U.S. in 1991 in exchange for his support of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In the 2000s, he “privatized billions in assets, which landed in the hands of a new, super-wealthy capitalist class,” and unemployment would rise.

Tahrir Square, in the heart of the capital, Cairo, has been a long-standing site of protests and class struggle. Protests over Palestine, U.S. invasions, etc., were seen throughout the decades. In the early 2000s, George W. Bush pushed Egypt to “democratize,” which would lead to the Muslim Brotherhood winning local elections, and the re-emergence of leftist and progressive organizations. Kefaya, or “Enough!”, was founded in 2004 as a non-hierarchical and cross-ideological collective.

They would organize protests and other similar events, but nothing materially changed. Wildcat strikes in the capital in 2008 would lead Kefaya to attempt to rally a general strike, but to no success. However, they would at this time receive training and aid from both U.S. NGOs and Tunisian radicals.

Everything drastically and tragically changed in 2010 when Khaled Said was beaten to death by the notorious Egyptian police force—the country was a de facto police state for decades at this point. Facebook became a key aspect of mobilizing the dramatic response, a common feature of the mass protests of this era, but not too dissimilar to the way Instagram and Signal are used today. A protest was called for just eleven days after the president of Tunisia was forced into abdication due to the Arab Spring protests there. The target was not Mubarak, but the Interior Minister, who was head of the police in effect.

In the planning meetings for Kefaya, someone asked, “What will we do after we reach Tahrir Square?” Everyone laughed it off, assuming they would never reach the square. On January 25, the protest would break through the police line and reach the square, combating the police repression for hours before petering out. Three days later, they were back.

Everyone would come out to protest—Nasserites, socialists, communists, liberals, religious fundamentalists, secularists, the youth, petty bourgeois, and the poor. Anyone who was against the Mubarak regime was together in protest. Calls for “*Bread, Freedom, Social Justice!*” and “*The people want the fall of the regime,*” rang out from the crowd.

As Bevins writes, it was “*relatively spontaneous... leaderless, horizontally structured, and ideologically diverse.*” However, it wasn’t “nonviolent.” The masses went to war with the police that day, and the masses won. Over 90 police stations were burned down, and scenes of police officers ripping off their uniforms out of fear of confrontation and running away were common.

At this point, the masses and various organizations in this popular front could have “*taken anything.*” If they wanted to storm the centers of power and media. And immediately trigger a social revolution, they could have without a doubt. The police force was at this point arguably more powerful than the military; defeating them in the capital was significant and altered the balance of forces. The masses and the organizations involved didn’t take over. They choose to stay in Tahrir Square. But there was no

revolutionary vanguard. There was no clear leadership to direct this energy towards revolution. This was just a “*mass of people*” in the city center.

They would hold the square for weeks, and on February 11, the military refused orders to fire on the crowd. It was the end for Mubarak. The military removed him and then controlled the country under the name Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), promising democratic elections would be held. They would go on to murder dozens of protesters in the following period, particularly Egyptian Coptic Christians. The largest organization that participated in the protests and had a hierarchical structure was the Muslim Brotherhood.

The election in May 2012 featured Mohamed Morsi (Muslim Brotherhood), Ahmed Shafik (Mubarak faction), Hamdeen Sabahi (one of the founders of Kefaya and a Nasserite), and Abdel Fotouh (former/reformed Muslim Brotherhood). Sabahi and Fotouh, who represented the progressive candidates, received 21% and 17% of the vote, splitting their base. The runoff would be between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Mubarak faction.

The various small groups from the protests were split on who to vote for and if they should vote at all. There was no real attempt to coalesce forces into a real united front against reactionary forces regaining power.

It’s important to note that Yemen, which at one time was a key part of the Arab Socialist movement along with Nasser’s Egypt, had a very different experience during this period. As I’ve written about and created a documentary on, Yemen’s history is perhaps the most misunderstood radical history of West Asia.

The PDRY was the only nation in the region governed by a Marxist-Leninist party and saw a radical transformation in the 20th century. However, Western and Saudi intervention and colonialism were always a problem, even before the founding of socialist Yemen. The country being forcibly split apart for nearly a century was also a massive contradiction that led to untold suffering.

The country was eventually unified in the 1990s, but at this point, the socialist nation was no more. Neoliberal reform devastated the country, and from the ashes of the PDRY, a cross-ideological movement emerged that would end the Saleh regime-Ansar Allah Movement. From 2011-2014, they would reform, reorganize with their first politburo, and form a united front with the Yemeni Socialist Party and other progressive forces. They would retake the capital and the parts of the nation with the majority of the population.

And ever since then, they have resisted Saudi, UAE, and US-backed forces and direct bombings, blockades, etc. All leading to a genocide against the Yemeni people by the West and its proxies. Yemen, though, has entered a period of social transformation and revolution, due to a broad united front that was not leaderless or horizontal in its approach.

Ukraine's Maidan Uprising & Fascism

The Maidan Uprising or Euromaidan in Ukraine in 2013 was a centerpiece in the long history of where we are today in the region, with hundreds of thousands of lives lost in a tragic proxy war with Russia. A century of history and

struggle culminated in the rise of reactionary politics in the region.

There's a direct link from the days of the Stepan Bandera fascist groups like the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) to the Azov Battalion, Right Sector, etc. of today that have dominated Ukrainian politics over the last two decades. The former fascist groups were directly responsible for mass murder during the Holocaust and attempted to help wage Nazi Germany's war of settler colonial conquest of the USSR. Azov and Right Sector have elevated Stepan Bandera as a "national hero" of Ukraine and overtly call for fascist policies.

As the USSR was collapsing and being overthrown, in 1990, Ukraine declared sovereignty but not secession. The following year, the referendum to stay in the USSR won with 70% of the vote. After the clash between communist "hardliners" and Yeltsin's pro-Western forces, the next referendum saw 90% of Ukrainians vote for full independence and separation from the USSR.

With the fall of the USSR, nearly 17 million people would die in the former socialist republics in the next decade. Human trafficking, substance abuse, poverty rates, etc., all drastically rose with the semi-forced capitalization of the former socialist economies and workers' societies. It was a massive wave of primitive accumulation in the modern age that devastated everything from local communities to the international struggle against capitalism and imperialism. It was the single worst defeat for the oppressed people of the world since the fall of the Paris Commune.

“Since the collapse of the USSR, wages fell globally, access to food declined, and global labor reserves exploded. The instruments of imperial and neo-colonial domination—from sanctions to dollarization, debt to financialization—subordinated ever-greater parts of the Third World. The story of Eastern Europe’s supposed “liberation” is a story in which the floodgates of neo-colonial subjugation opened far and wide, unleashing a torrent of exploitation with potentially terminal consequences for the planet—the violence and destruction inherent in the process of accumulation now threaten to extinguish the majority of life on earth, whether through climate and environmental breakdown or nuclear war.” writes Pawel Wargen.

In 2004, Viktor Yanukovych and Viktor Yushchenko were running opposite each other for president. Yanukovych was leaning toward sustaining the relationship with the now Russian Federation, while banker Yushchenko was supportive of a pro-Western and U.S. foreign policy. When Yushchenko lost the election by all accounts, his ally, the “gas princess” Yulia Tymoshenko, called for mass protests in the streets, saying the election was rigged. Hundreds of thousands poured into Maidan Square.

US support for the “Orange Revolution” was automatic, plus Yushchenko’s wife was a U.S. citizen with ties to the U.S. State Department. Mass public pressure, combined with a deeply corrupt political system with capitalist oligarchs in effect running the country, and the Supreme Court nullifying the results, all culminated in a new vote where the pro-Western candidate won. This color

revolution was deemed a great example of “people power” throughout Western media.

It was the start of the “Ukrainization” policies, such as making Ukrainian the only language to be used in government, even though 30% of Ukrainians spoke Russian as their first language, controversially listing the “Holodomor” as a genocide, and naming Bandera as a “hero of Ukraine.” Yushchenko ended his term in 2010 with a 4% approval rating.

Yanukovych would win in the 2010 election, and his policies on the culture war around Ukrainization favored pluralistic, but economically, he was inept, and the political “movement” (if one can even call it that) around him was just another bourgeois faction. In 2013, 56% of Ukrainians said they thought the fall of the USSR did more harm than good. Indeed, since 1991, the population of Ukraine has declined by 7 million people.

By 2012, the European Union offered a deal that would force further economic liberalization (stagnated wages and slashing pensions) without offering actual acceptance into the EU. Russia, on the other hand, offered \$15 billion and a “great deal on gas” plus threats of sanctions and trade bans. When Yanukovych announced he would not take the EU deal, it was the signal for another color revolution. NGO’s like the Center for Civil Liberties, with U.S. funding, pushed for a “horizontal” and “self-organized” mass protest movement to retake the Maidan Square. There was a concerted effort to get social media attention in English-speaking countries like the U.S. as well.

Yes, the Maidan movement started because of the EU vs Russia trade deals, but it really wasn’t about that. There

was mass social dissatisfaction for decades. Millions had died, millions more went into poverty, with no answers in sight. A political vacuum had formed, and the trade deal was just the catalyst to set off the struggle to see who would fill that void of political control.

Center-Right Orangists like Vitali Klitschko, liberal academics and professionals with Western-backed NGO's, fascists like the Svoboda Party, and even the Communist Party of Ukraine, all tried in the early days to take hold of the growing unrest. Increased police crackdowns—especially against the youth and students—would escalate the situation drastically.

The far right, which included all the aforementioned fascist groups, but also monarchists, dominated the football clubs and the rank and file of the military. They had the most experience in fighting and street combat. They were well organized and not horizontalist in structure. The fascists and far-right had cohered around the ideology of a “purer” Ukraine and reverence for Bandera. They were completely united, unlike every other faction of the struggle.

During the protests, self-defense groups developed, called “hundreds.” It quickly became completely controlled by the far right. Registration to form one within Maidan was restricted from leftists, anarchists, and communists. C14, a youth fascist gang, would even chase off leftists with bats and knives who tried to register. The Hundreds would go through basic riot school and street combat training and would resemble highly militarized paramilitaries by the end of the Maidan. People's Councils would form after the far-

right and military took over governmental buildings in western Ukraine. The country was collapsing into a full-fledged fascist color revolution. All on the initial basis of horizontalism and mass protests.

Street combat and shootouts between fascists and Yanukovych forces led to dozens being killed, and pro-Maidan forces allegedly used sniper rifles against their own fellow protesters in a false flag operation, murdering over 50 people.

The rest is sadly history; Fascist groups would help usher in a full Western-centric government, and economic liberalization increased. Culture War took an even uglier turn with pogroms against Russian minorities and leftists, and the banning of opposition parties like the Communist Party of Ukraine. Mass murder became common, and over ten thousand lives were lost due to Ukraine's far-right war against Russian minorities living in the country. It led to a separatist movement in the east of Ukraine and now a full-scale war with Russia, with mass destruction and death.

As Vincent Bevins writes, "a pattern had emerged in the evolution of mass street protests. They start over something specific, then they explode to include all kinds of people..." This had the effect of combining a host of "contradictory visions" where eventually one specific vision wins out. "In the middle, infinite possibilities present themselves." However, the finite possibility of reactionary nationalism and fascism is always present when there is weak Labor and Leftist organization. Ukraine, unfortunately, did not have a strong Labor or Communist movement, and as we have said before, political vacuums are temporal events where the strongest and best-organized tend to dominate.

Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter Uprisings

The 2008 financial crash and subsequent Wall St. bailout had global ramifications. Add the consistent fascist policies and racialized violence within the US, and there was bound to be an explosion. From 2011 onwards, there have been rolling mass protests, resistance movements, and uprisings throughout the US.

The Occupy Movement of 2011-2012 was in this continuum from Tunisia, Egypt, Brazil, Hong Kong, and more. It was a “horizontal” and “leaderless” movement in which decisions within the encampments had to be made by consensus, not majority vote. It was absolutely an anarchist-led movement. David Graeber, a famed anarchist, was the de facto spokesperson for the struggle. He is credited with coining the well-known slogan “we are the 99%.” On November 29, 2011, he wrote:

“Almost every time I’m interviewed by a mainstream journalist about Occupy Wall Street, I get some variation of the same lecture: ‘How are you going to get anywhere if you refuse to create a leadership structure or make a practical list of demands?...’ It was only on August 2, when a small group of anarchists and other anti-authoritarians showed up at a meeting called by one such group and effectively wooed everyone away from the planned march and rally to create a genuine democratic assembly, on basically anarchist principles, that the stage was set for a movement that Americans from Portland to Tuscaloosa were willing to embrace.”

In reality, for the thousands that would filter in and out of small Zuccotti Park, they had little material effect—if any—on the U.S. capitalist order. Despite the development of various democratic institutions, such as clinics and libraries, they were not effectively challenging capitalism. There were no shutdowns of the economy, even with its position down the block from the hegemony of finance capital. Occupy “was tiny” when compared to other uprisings in Brazil, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Greece, and Spain during that time.

The people’s assembly was based on consensus, so a small minority could, and did, block key votes throughout its period. When Civil Rights icon John Lewis came to show support, two people were able to block him from entering and giving a speech—one of them a white graduate student. If one person can assert their will over the collective, that doesn’t seem like radical democracy. There was also internal conflict over who controlled the social media accounts for the encampment. All of these things led to it whimpering away as a moment in time.

In 2014 and in 2020, far more consequential uprisings took place over the racialized and fascist violence against black and brown people within the US. The murders of Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor, and countless others by the police, sparked massive social unrest. Street combat with the police became commonplace. While there were clashes with the police during Occupy, this took a far more militant and direct approach. Police vehicles and at least one building were burned down by thousands of people. Centers of political power, such as police stations, were

overrun in certain places. Occupy, despite the energy that seemed to be behind it, never accomplished any of this.

The BLM Uprisings were spontaneous, and by the best account, leaderless and cross-ideological. However, it should be stated that in local struggles, leaders did emerge, often faceless and behind the scenes. Certain organizations carried more weight in areas, such as the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression and BLM chapters. Plus, direct goals were being demanded—defund the police being one.

In a period of intense rejection of neoliberal globalization (Occupy), racialized and fascist state violence (BLM Uprisings), and the rise of Bernie Sanders and the Democratic Socialists, one should be asking—where’s the revolution?

The Party vs Autonomy? A False Debate?

“There are no people - yet there is a mass of people. There is a mass of people because the working class and increasingly varied social strata, year after year, produce from their ranks an increasing number of discontented people who desire to protest, who are ready to render all the assistance they can in the struggle against absolutism, the intolerableness of which, though not yet recognized by all, is more and more acutely sensed by increasing masses of the people. At the same time, we have no people, because we have no leaders, no political leaders, no talented organizers capable of arranging extensive and at the same time uniform and harmonious work that would employ all forces, even the most inconsiderable.” -Vladimir Lenin

We have gone over several examples of mass uprisings of the 21st century, and the varying effects on social and class order they had, but it's vital we separate and compare these conflicting systems of struggle. Communism vs Anarchism, Autonomy vs Democratic Centralism, Horizontalism vs the Party—whatever terms we can interchange, we know this debate. It's a centuries-long one with bruised feelings on both sides of the aisle.

As previously shown, not all horizontal structures are exactly alike, but I would like to separate them into two categories: consensus based vs majority based. In the era of the early 2010s, the former was dominant. It shaped the scale of the struggle in Brazil and the US, especially. Both were significantly hindered due to this structural decision. The MPL became stuck when conditions were rapidly changing and increasing in volatility, which left a vacuum for the far-right to take over as the more organized force. In the US, it froze the Occupy movement from ever doing something impactful. Both movements also became almost a wholesale rejection of the theory of organization.

Noted women's liberation organizer and figure of the New Left, Jo Freeman, wrote in her 1971 essay, *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*:

“Contrary to what we would like to believe, there is no such thing as a structureless group. Any group of people of whatever nature that comes together for any length of time for any purpose will inevitably structure itself in some fashion. The structure may be flexible; it may vary over time; it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power and resources over the members of the group. But it will be formed regardless of the abilities, personalities, or

intentions of the people involved. The very fact that we are individuals, with different talents, predispositions, and backgrounds makes this inevitable...A 'laissez-faire' group is about as realistic as a 'laissez-faire' society..."

Not all anarchist or autonomous groups develop faux structurelessness organizations. Many organize committees concerning mutual aid, study groups, training, OPSEC, etc. but they almost all reject defined leadership structures. However, that very concept creates an illusion because informal leadership structures will emerge. That contradiction, without being negated, will fester into a social wound within the collective. Freeman continues:

"All groups create informal structures as a result of interaction patterns among the members of the group. Such informal structures can do very useful things, but only unstructured groups are totally governed by them. When informal elites are combined with a myth of "structurelessness," there can be no attempt to put limits on the use of power...This has two potentially negative consequences...The first is that the informal structure of decision-making will be much like a sorority -- one in which people listen to others because they like them and not because they say significant things...The second is that informal structures have no obligation to be responsible to the group at large. Their power was not given to them; it cannot be taken away. Their influence is not based on what they do for the group; therefore they cannot be directly influenced by the group. This does not necessarily make informal structures irresponsible."

Now, what's the point of this organizational framework and principle if it has these flaws? As Graeber stated during Occupy:

“The easiest way to explain anarchism is to say that it is a political movement that aims to bring about a genuinely free society – that is, one where humans only enter those kinds of relations with one another that would not have to be enforced by the constant threat of violence. History has shown that vast inequalities of wealth, institutions like slavery, debt peonage or wage labour, can only exist if backed up by armies, prisons, and police...As a result, Zuccotti Park, and all subsequent encampments, became spaces of experiment with creating the institutions of a new society – not only democratic General Assemblies but kitchens, libraries, clinics, media centres and a host of other institutions, all operating on anarchist principles of mutual aid and self-organisation – a genuine attempt to create the institutions of a new society in the shell of the old.”

It's a noble endeavor and a real struggle to create dual power structures. That must be stated and not confused when there are criticisms of these structures. If dual power structures exist in themselves, meaning they don't conflict with the actual existing power structures, does it really meet the definition of that concept?

Another issue, as previously stated, is the consensus-based, leaderless/structureless concept done without a self-critical lens. Graeber stated:

“From the very beginning, too, organisers made the audacious decision to operate not only by direct democracy, without leaders, but by consensus. The first

decision ensured that there would be no formal leadership structure that could be co-opted or coerced; the second, that no majority could bend a minority to its will, but that all crucial decisions had to be made by general consent. American anarchists have long considered consensus process (a tradition that has emerged from a confluence of feminism, anarchism and spiritual traditions like the Quakers) crucial for the reason that it is the only form of decision-making that could operate without coercive enforcement – since if a majority does not have the means to compel a minority to obey its dictates, all decisions will, of necessity, have to be made by general consent.”

However, a consensus vote in effect bends the majority to the minority within the collective. It is anything but democratic if one person can impose their will on the rest through simple obstruction. That seems to, in effect, be a reinforcement of the system, the very system that hierarchy Graeber and other anarchists denounce. Rather than reactionary or capitalist forces putting in the effort to co-opt a whole hierarchical leadership structure, all they need to do is send a couple of individuals who can hold up any decision.

The act of building separate institutions outside of the current repressive capitalist system, “direct action” as Graeber referred to it, in itself is not the revolution. If the political power of capitalists and imperialists is not contended with directly, is it direct action in the material sense? Or is it activism for the sake of activism? Organizing is a word that gets thrown around, but how are we organizing? What are we organizing for? How do we organize?

“Traditional Marxism, of course, aspired to the same ultimate goal but there was a key difference. Most Marxists insisted that it was necessary first to seize state power, and all the mechanisms of bureaucratic violence that come with it, and use them to transform society – to the point where, they argued such mechanisms would, ultimately, become redundant and fade away. Even back in the 19th century, anarchists argued that this was a pipe dream. One cannot, they argued, create peace by training for war, equality by creating top-down chains of command, or, for that matter, human happiness by becoming grim joyless revolutionaries who sacrifice all personal self-realisation or self-fulfillment to the cause.” -David Graeber

Graeber is correct in that the key difference between communists and anarchists is that communists have shown and theorized that, in order for a socialist transition to occur, seizing political power is a necessity for economic and social revolution. Anarchists believe political power is anathema to the goal of a classless society. But Graeber is incorrect on the other key difference-how we organize.

The communist party model developed over nearly a century. The early social democratic parties, the original Communist League, and the First International, all operated on different principles that would define the communist party in the 20th century-notably Democratic Centralism. But they had structures. There were leadership structures, especially. Even the infamous co-founder of modern anarchism, Mikhail Bakunin, in the only International Congress he attended (Basel 1869), proposed for “the construction of the international state of millions

of workers...” This was anything but a rejection of the state, centralization, etc.

“Freedom of debate, Unity of Action” is the defining slogan of Democratic Centralism. The communist party, developed under the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and later the Bolshevik Party, was centered on this concept. During the turn of the century in Tsarist Russia, the Marxist movement was split on many issues, and some of the questions being who counted as a party member and the role of local groups within the larger national collective.

Some argued that anyone showing support was a party member and that local collectives would have complete autonomy from the national leadership structure. In an age of intense repression and looming revolution, these were considered impossible standards for a revolutionary and mainly underground party. The “majority” sided with a tight understanding of who was a member, someone actively involved in party work, and that smaller bodies (i.e., local groups) of the party have to submit to the larger bodies (national committee). And that set the standard for how communist parties would be structured, with variances in between the margins.

Usually, though again not every communist party conducts itself in the same exact measures, parties will have major conventions every few years. These are where the entire collective can make radical changes. It features delegates from every smaller, local body, for debate and policy determinations for the next few years. Every delegate has an equal vote. A standing body, a national committee, is elected from this convention to be

responsible for the party's national and sometimes international policies between conventions.

Local bodies could be separated by regions, provinces, states, and then even lower bodies at the city, factory, and neighborhood level, all feeding from the bottom up, delegates and leaders. City chapter leaders are voted on at the chapter level, then those leaders who are at the state level vote on leadership there, and all the way back up to the national level at conventions. There is constant debate and discussion; constant tests of democracy. But then decisions are made as a collective democratically, and plans of action are drafted, and it's expected for all party members to follow through on those plans, regardless of how they voted.

“In its struggle for power, the proletariat has no other weapon but organization... the proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only when its ideological unification by the principles of Marxism is consolidated by the material unity of an organization welding millions of toilers into an army of the working class.” -Vladimir Lenin

If one thing is clear, it's that “go and organize” is not so simple. Determinations on how to organize can have ramifications. There are differences in strategy and tactics. Unfortunately, too, this has life-or-death consequences for those resisting the state, capitalism, fascism, and imperialism. Lenin saw in his time, political eclecticism leading to revolutionary stagnation. Centralizing the communist movement and developing party discipline was a life-or-death decision. This was not some abstract

intellectual exercise, and to conduct a successful revolution, those systems had to be in place.

Where did the Missing Revolution Go?

“It is often said that the working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism. This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory reveals the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to assimilate it so easily, provided, however, this theory does not itself yield to spontaneity, provided it subordinates spontaneity to itself...The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism; nevertheless, most widespread (and continuously and diversely revived) bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater extent.” -Vladimir Lenin

It is obvious we have seen consecutive ‘biggest protests in human history’ to little global systemic change. Spontaneous uprisings have been a feature of the 21st century. In some places, one political elite was simply replaced with another. In other places, the states and capitalists cracked down on the movement so hard it hasn’t recovered. Other places were broken by the political vacuums created with no real, organized working class movement to fill that gap.

Imagine for a minute, the ICE uprisings keep scaling upwards. Millions and millions are shutting down the country. Rolling General Strikes from state to state. Then mass marches on the capital, and Trump’s goons flee to Epstein’s Island or some other far hideaway. Who, or what

groups, will take over the political power of the country? How will the next decision get made? Did classes disappear? Did the social ills created by U.S. settler colonial society disappear?

Political vacuums are temporal events. They collapse almost as soon as they form. As Bevens wrote:

“In the mass protest decade, street explosions created revolutionary situations, often on accident. But a protest is very poorly equipped to take advantage of a revolutionary situation, and that particular kind of protest is especially bad at it. If you believe that you can forge a better society... then you should enter the political vacuum yourself. But a diffuse group of individuals who come out to the streets for very different reasons cannot simply take power themselves, at least not as an entire diffuse group of individuals. Once someone goes in [the political vacuum] and takes power in the name of the masses, you are talking about a type of vanguard—a particular ideological project... In some of the more utopian strains of anti-authoritarian thought, the riot is supposed to become the new society, but this has not worked out so far.”

Egyptian activist during the Tahrir uprising, Hossam Bahgat, remarked when thinking about the failures of that revolution, “Organize. Create an organized movement. And don’t be afraid of representation...We thought representation was elitism, but actually it is the essence of democracy.”

The Party model is not perfect. It can be slow at times to change and reform. The long periods in between national conventions or plenaries can have a detrimental effect, especially in times of crisis. Leadership can get entrenched.

Dogmas can manifest themselves. But there is a direct mechanism for that change to happen. There are democratic structures enshrined to check the vestiges of bourgeois ideology.

Graeber stated in his famed Charlie Rose interview that “I think structures of hierarchy, if you give people complete impunity and power over others, it creates a psychological dynamic which is almost sadomasochistic.” However, the communist party model doesn’t fit that description. There is no “complete impunity” for party leaders. There are plenty of famous examples of party leaders being purged in the U.S. alone, with Lovestone and Browder. There are bylaws expressly stating how party leaders are held accountable by the greater collective. In a structureless, leaderless, and consensus-based collective, there is “complete impunity” for one individual being able to block the will of the rest of the collective. There’s no structure to remove that person. There is no structure to avoid that contradiction—unless informal and undemocratic structures develop.

So when looking at the vast field of lost revolutions of the 21st century, and the gravestones of all the martyrs we lost along the way, we have to ask ourselves, did we organize correctly? And the answer from the available evidence in most cases says we didn’t. Now we are facing an even worse ecological crisis, rising fascism, a new state of imperialist world order, and mass fascist violence in the streets of the capitalist hegemon—the U.S.. What changes have been made? Are we organizing differently from 2011? Because if we wish to succeed, we must.

The silver lining here is that all those struggles were not truly lost. Momentum may have stalled, the fascists may have won small victories, but that social energy and class rage can only lie dormant. It can never be killed, no matter how many of us are killed. And when the revolutionary situation arises again, we must fill that gap. We have to take over that political vacuum with a purpose. “Socialism or barbarism?” will be the question of this century, and the missing revolution must be discovered.

“Settle your quarrels, come together, understand the reality of our situation, understand that fascism is already here, that people are already dying who could be saved, that generations more will live poor butchered half-lives if you fail to act. Do what must be done, discover your humanity and your love in revolution.” -George Jackson

As with all communist writings, even though we wish it could be achievable, this article can't encompass the totality of these topics and history. This article has been greatly inspired by my differing organizing experiences both in a Marxist-Leninist party and autonomous organizations, and the recent book by Vincent Bevins, *If We Burn*. I highly encourage the reader to go beyond this article and, above all, go out and help organize for the revolution.

A Radical Plan Out of the Climate Crisis?

A Review of Malcolm Harris' "What's Left"

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"We don't plan to lose money."
—Anonymous Shell analyst

Malcolm Harris—author of the *Kids These Days: The Making of Millennials, Shit Is Fucked Up And Bullshit: History Since the End of History*, and *Palo Alto: A History of California, Capitalism, and the World*—has written perhaps his most audacious book yet.

What's Left? Three Paths Through the Planetary Crisis attempts to map a way out of the capitalist ecological disaster we are living through at an exponential and existential rate. It's a potential *What is to Be Done?* for this generation. But does the upcoming book achieve the daunting task it sets out for itself?

Harris's work centers on the existential ecological crisis as the primary factor forcing this type of emergency analysis. "A 2021 estimate published in Nature figures that most— 58 percent— of oil reserves are 'unextractable' if we want even a fifty-fifty shot at keeping the global temperature increase this century to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as was the Paris Agreement plan in 2015." In a terrifying recent report, finance capitalists with Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan, and other international financial institutions confirm they are already [planning](#) for scenarios where that figure is far exceeded.

The energy companies are also ignoring any common-sense climate change measures, "the New York Times, Hiroko Tabuchi reported that in 2021, after Shell and its partners transferred a jointly operated field in Nigeria to a private operator, weekly flaring increased from years of near zero to more than ten million cubic feet of gas." The ongoing capitalist order, as it must do, is increasing the dangers at the present moment.

"If oil is valuable, and if value is the principle by which we organize life on earth, then oil is life, even as its continued extraction and combustion also assuredly means death. This bind helps explain why authorities at all levels, everywhere in the world, have struggled to respond appropriately to climate change and its causes..."

Harris cites Elmar Altvater's concept of "fossil capitalism" as a key aspect of this analysis. Using the Marxist concept of value extraction from labor and nature, Harris refers to it simply as "money plus labor equals more

money.” But he adds, “fossil fuel plus money plus labor are transformed, via the making and selling of some stuff, into more money plus emissions.” Since the capitalist mode of production has to be looked at in a materialist and non-metaphysical fashion, Harris argues that using fossil fuels and their carbon emissions is as integral to capital accumulation as labor exploitation.

The author sets out to show organizers and activists paths out of this contradiction and existential crisis. With three different and sometimes intersecting strategies, Harris attempts to solve the ecological and capitalist riddle of our epoch. The attempt has ideological eclectic aspects and Western Marxist blindspots, but its pragmatic approach offers useful analysis and questions for a wide range of leftist schools of thought that urgently need to be addressed.

Marketcraft

Harris breaks down the three paths in the aforementioned title of the book to Marketcraft, Public Power, and Communism. The first, Marketcraft, attempts to posit the position from the progressive wing of the Democratic Party-Bernie, AOC, etc., “the liberal establishment” which “has shown itself newly enthusiastic about wielding state power over the economy, especially when it comes to the green transition.”

Harris contrasts the Marketcraft advocates with the neoliberal political wing and so-called “market fundamentalists.” Marketcraft supporters view the market not as ethereal and god-like, as the fundamentalists do, but as “functions of public policies.” If the market becomes

“detached from our values...it’s up to democratic society to reassert itself...” How is this achieved? “Via market regulation and incentives, shoving firms into competing to build us such an abundance of efficiency and value—including immaterial and hard-to-measure values such as carbon neutrality— that market competition largely ceases to be worthwhile.”

The cited examples within the US of this type of path are the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, the American Clean Power Association, the Green New Deal, the CHIPS Act, the CARES Act, the Science Act, and the Whole-Homes Repairs Bill. However, Harris points out the obvious criticism of this strategy—especially within a capitalist framework:

“The marketcraft thesis is that the state has the power to shape the systematic compulsions they face without us all having to undergo a protracted guerrilla struggle. Capitalists may be the players for now, but democracy can write the rules...All this money flowing to corporations, some of which had something to do with getting us into this mess in the first place, does feel a lot like a sellout. Marketcraft leaves the Value-Life link intact, and capitalists will only pursue green opportunities if they are sufficiently profitable by their own standards. They don’t plan to lose money any more than Shell does, and that means some rich people will get richer. After decades of austerity politics for the public and pork-barrel politics for bomb makers, it’s hard to think about public money as anything other than a prize for rigged tugs-of-war between good guys and bad guys.”

Without a shift in which class controls the means of production—and thus the social relations of production—there is genuine side-eyeing to be had of the Marketcraft strategy. Even from a purely economic standpoint, we see a failure in this type of bourgeois democratic pressure on green capitalism.

Harris cites the example of how currently, US EV cars and roadways have three different plug systems: “Imagine if gas-powered cars had three different nozzle couplings and you had to remember to always go to the right station. And because motor vehicles have proprietary apps now, any given charging point might not let you pay to use it, even if you have an adapter for the plug.”

Not surprisingly, China is used as a comparative example of marketcraft strategy to the US. In China, there’s a universal EV plug system—even Tesla has to conform to that standard in China and modify their EVs “*and drivers pay by QR code via the ubiquitous WeChat and Alipay apps.*”

A key warning of this strategy is the nationalist, reactionary character it has seemed to develop in the US. While the US has increased its economic aggression against China, in the PRC “after the 2008 global financial crisis, with a left-wing faction within the Chinese Communist Party pushing for greater state involvement in the economy, the CCP adopted an aggressive marketcraft strategy, pumping huge amounts of money into selected sectors, including aluminum, solar panels, and EV batteries.”

As a result, China is now the global leader in green transition industries and has connected to the world’s development on this front through the Belt and Road

Initiative. Harris notes that China's annual direct investment in the US economy has declined from \$46.5 billion to "only" \$5.4 billion due to increased economic tariffs and sanctions from the US started by Trump and continued under Biden—and at the time of writing under Trump's second administration this economic warfare from the US is only increasing exponentially. The threat of this "nationalist marketcraft" from the US is another Cold War.

Another key criticism of the purely marketcraft strategy is the environmental "unequal exchange" as Harris describes. He cites Max Ajl's *A People's Green New Deal*:

"Much of left-liberal climate talk is based on administering rather than eliminating capitalism," [Ajl] writes, accurately, "and as a result is built on a seldom acknowledged foundation of assumptions regarding the global distribution of wealth and consumption, and the institutions with which it is tied, in terms of why emissions are produced and their consequences, which are intimately related to which lives matter and which lives do not."

If the goal of a marketcraft strategy proposed from the liberal political faction is that carbon emissions are "fully mitigated" today, the existential results of "accumulated historical CO2" would still be felt worldwide. However, those consequences "fall hardest" on the Global South due to colonial and "postcolonial exploitation." The vast majority, 75%, of "climate finance" per the Climate Policy Initiative from 2011 to 2020 was "concentrated in North America, Western Europe, and East Asia & Pacific (primarily led by China)." Per that [report](#), "climate finance

committed” in that period was \$4.8 trillion worldwide—coming out to \$480 billion per year; average. The CPI said that “we need at least USD 4.3 trillion in annual finance flows by 2030.”

Public Power

The second path through the planetary crisis, per Harris, is *Public Power*. He defines this path as:

“Public power is a full alternative strategy, designed to resolve the contradictions at the heart of our crisis moment. Rather than break the connections in the Oil-Value-Life chain, public power proposes to loosen both sides, to deform the links so they can no longer hold the gate to the future closed. By reducing the value of fossil fuels and providing a basic standard of living for everyone, we can escape from capital’s impersonal, inhuman dictates. Instead of production for production’s sake, production for our use. Instead of capitalists scurrying within a maze of democratic design, the direct social appropriation of the means of production in the common interest.”

He goes on to cite institutions like the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), unions like the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), and organizations such as the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) as examples of or a key theoretical voice for this path domestically. Examples such as Chile’s nationalization efforts and Indonesia’s ban on unrefined nickel also point to tactics of public power and how it can be used to “loosen both sides” of the Oil-Value-Life chain.

That capitalist value chain is key to breaking for public power to work effectively; as he says, “public power means class conflict,” and quotes Matthew Huber: “It takes actual working-class institutions embedded in everyday life, like unions, political parties, and the concrete processes of struggle in the workplace, to build power...It is this kind of power—the disruptive power of workers whose own labor guarantees the profits flowing to capital—which has the capacity to ‘create a crisis’ for capital and force capitalists into the kind of concessions a Green New Deal represents.” Since Capital has “chased low-paid labor and lax environmental regulations around the world,” public power has to be “a different kind of plan.”

Harris points out some issues with this pathway through the planetary crisis. Using the example of the contradiction between the community-owned co-op utility company Kaua’i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) and Indigenous groups like Nā Kia’i Kai (sea protectors) and the Pō’ai Wai Ola (West Kaua’i Watershed Alliance), he shows how *“there are dangers to building a public power system in the footprint of colonialism.”*

The KIUC had developed a plan to have recycled *“plantation-era water ditches...divert water from the Waimea River.”* This would irrigate 250 new farms and pastures—all entitled to energy and road upgrades paid for by the KIUC. Since fresh water on the Hawaiian islands is in low supply, this was planned to guarantee that all diverted water was used with an ecological mindset.

Kawai Warren—fisherman and leader of the Nā Kia’i Kai—said to the Honolulu Civil Beat, “I thought it was time to let the river heal, but now they want to continue doing

what the plantation did for 100 years.” The fear was that this plan from the KIUC would “entrench” the “poor environmental planning” at the expense of the “traditional farming practices” of Indigenous communities. Most alarmingly, there was a significant risk of dragging “legacy agricultural chemicals” from the colonial “plantation days” into the ecosystem—further polluting Indigenous land.

Harris also gives the example—among many—of the TVA desecrating “*thousands of Native burial sites*” and then “*distributed bones and artifacts to regional settler institutions such as museums and universities.*” It took the TVA almost 14 years to count the 4,871 Indigenous people whose remains they “*claimed to own as property.*” In 2023—90 years after the TVA was established and started this genocidal act in the name of public power—the TVA finally “*invited affected tribes to apply to recover*” their ancestors and relatives.

He also highlights the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, the Pāti Māori Party in New Zealand, the struggle between the Ogoni people of Nigeria against Shell in the 90s, the Sámi people of Norway, and more as examples of Indigenous struggle for self-determination running counter to perceived public power initiatives.

In terms of understanding Indigeneity and the role of the Indigenous struggle, he cites Peruvian writer José Carlos Mariátegui in his work [*The Problem of the Indian*](#): “*The tendency to consider the Indigenous problem as a moral problem embodies a liberal, humanitarian, nineteenth-century Enlightenment conception.*” The central “problem” for the Indigenous struggle for decolonization is the land. The “material land-based conflicts” in settler or

postcolonial societies attempting a “plurinational” shift haven’t succeeded, argues Harris.

In the book, *Savages and Citizens: How Indigeneity Shapes the State*, by Andrew Canessa and Manuela Lavinás Picq, they write that the concept of Indigeneity

“...always refer[s] to a colonial experience in one form or another; there is a “we” and a “they” to the formulation, and one party in this tight relationship arrived uninvited... what really matters is understanding how it is a fluid, relational, and inevitably political identity. Throughout this book we see indigeneity as first and foremost a relational identity, a power dynamic that is highly contingent, informed by a certain historical consciousness and entangled—always—with gendered and racial identities brought through colonization.”

And Harris argues that public power—divorced from incorporating “many, many Indigenous value systems” as a “foundation” would “at worst...end up destroying the world...in the name of saving the world in general.”

Taking it beyond Indigeneity, Harris dives into the “*unequal global division of labor*.” He develops an analysis using World Systems Theory to show a material obstacle to international working class solidarity coming from workers in the Global North. Utilizing the World Bank metric of “labor’s terms of trade,” which shows how workers in the Global North work less for more relative to the Global South:

“...analysts compare how much labor is embodied in \$1 million worth of a country’s imports with how much labor is embodied in \$1 million worth of that country’s exports. A ratio of 1 means a country is exchanging its labor equally with other countries; a ratio greater than 1 means a country is higher in the international pecking order and vice versa. Scholars often talk about this regional composition in terms of capitalism’s “core” or “center,” where wages and consumption are relatively high, and the “periphery,” where wages and consumption are relatively low. As a global winner, the United States maintains an average LToT considerably larger than 1, achieving its peak in the early 2000s at above 5.54 while economic growth isn’t necessarily a zero-sum contest between countries, labor terms of trade is.”

Harris accurately critiques the economism of Western labor movements as movements centered, “on building power to bargain within capitalism than on building the power to abolish capitalism.” On a more individual and psychological level, “Workers share a structural interest in the abolition of a system of production based on their exploitation, but they also share a seemingly more immediate interest in maintaining access to their jobs and increasing their wages. Unions in the capitalist West tend to spend much.” The workers of the Global North are locked in an “affirmation trap” from the contradicting material pulls of unequal global exchange, which they benefit from, and the overall system, which also exploits them.

Then, using economist Minqi Li’s book *China and the 21st Century Crisis*, Harris briefly touches on the rise of China.

Illustrating that their LToT has significantly shifted in regards to other Global South countries. However, in that process, he sets up the narrative that China is, in effect, a beneficiary of the unequal exchange similar to US imperialism. *“Will Chinese workers fill the streets to demand that their government stop trying to increase the national share of global production in the name of protecting a foreign rainforest? Will Americans? The public-power strategy requires it.”*

He also taps into the Uyghur narrative slightly by saying the economic boom of China was built on coal mining and production. Harris argues that when this production shifted to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, it was an *“underdiscussed cause of Indigenous Uyghur uprisings.”* This type of one-sided framing of Xinjiang, while maybe underdiscussed, is now an underdeveloped point that adds to the well-funded Western [campaigns](#) to undermine China’s socialist rise. There’s no analysis of how a retired US military official has publicly [talked](#) about destabilizing efforts in the same region from the CIA. However, Harris says positively about China, *“it’s worth acknowledging that the PRC is likely to be the dominant model for this kind of cooperation [marketcraft and public power fused] in the near future.”*

There’s no analysis of why China focused on industrial development to catch up to the West—an accomplishment itself when looking at how China has caught up after 200 years of imperial aggression in just three decades. Of course, that came with an ecological cost. This is a material reality that is not foreign to China.

According to Carlos Martinez in *The East is Still Red*, coal's share of energy consumption in China has dropped by nearly 30% in 15 years, with China closing its last coal-fired plant in 2017. China is the world leader in wind and solar energy production. Its leadership has been pushing for global and domestic carbon neutrality for well over a decade now. Nearly a third of all global renewable energy investment is in China, and 42% of jobs in the renewables industry are in China. The country's reforestation and afforestation policies are leading to planting forests "the size of Ireland" and doubling forest coverage in China in 40 years to 23%. We can not attribute all of these achievements purely to marketcraft and public power strategies when it's being led by the biggest Communist Party in the world.

Placing the socialist country of China in the same camp as the US is a political dead-end that Harris falls into. Placing China purely in the equation of unequal global exchange without understanding the internal and international class dynamics at play in China could lead the reader to an ultra-left position. Now, as will be spelled out during the analysis of his conclusion, Harris does step back from this theoretical fallacy, but the road to get there is filled with these types of contradictions of analysis.

Communism

This section is the weakest of the book due to ideological eclecticism. For most on the Left, when the topic of communism comes up, the examples would be China, Cuba, Vietnam, DPRK, the USSR, etc. These are rarely, if ever, mentioned in this section. Harris seemingly doesn't

want to be “*weighed down by a lot of history*” and contemporary reality.

As previously seen, he would also equate Socialism with Chinese Characteristics with US capitalism and settler colonialism. Harris says the previous chapter’s public power is “organized workers taking control of the means of production.” But defines communism as “the best term I could find to describe a strategy in which the planet’s exploited people abolish capital’s system of Value and impose a new world social metabolism based on the interconnected free association and well-being of all— and not just humans.”

The book argues that communism—and the world—needs “a value to replace Value.” And Marx’s, “from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs” is pinpointed as the communist value to replace capitalist Value. However, he makes the confusing statement that, “communism cannot tolerate the persistence of top-down politics.” Harris is alluding to the higher stage of communism that Lenin describes in *State and Revolution*, “the withering away of the state.” However, in the age of the climate crisis, a centralized state is a necessity to collectively deal with this crisis on a national and then international level.

If the working and oppressed people of the world hope to abolish capitalism, then top-down politics is a requirement. How will capitalists be pushed out of economic and political power without the workers and oppressed people organizing themselves and taking that power for themselves? How will they deal with the natural and inevitable counter-revolution without a military that is

mainly top-down in structure? How can we organize the massive green energy production needed to hit carbon neutrality without top-down politics where the working and oppressed classes can control economic and social development?

Later in the chapter, he does address some of these issues. *“The biggest threat to communist organizing is that some group of guys associated with capitalists and/or the state will disappear the organizers.”* And tracking from the historical examples of Gracchus Babeuf, Rosa Luxemburg, Amilcar Cabral, Patrice Lumumba, and Thomas Sankara, he shows examples of this counter-revolutionary threat. *“Around the world, regimes responded to decolonial uprisings with brutal, disproportionate force, both targeted and blanket.”*

Unfortunately, in this part—where he also mentions figures like Mao, Fidel Castro, and the Bolshevik revolution—he doesn’t delve into this “communism” in any detailed way. It’s purely to point out that, largely, Marxist-Leninists were violently oppressed or oppressed others. Their economic, political, and ecological reforms and policies are never touched on. The USSR is briefly brought up as *“sacrificing the project’s communist character”* by developing war communism against imperial invasion. For a more detailed look at socialist countries and their ecological practices, Guillaume Suing’s *Communism, the Highest Stage of Ecology* has recently been published by Iskra Books and is a good pairing with Harris’s effort.

The reality is that this section, even though titled “Communism,” is an examination of, at best, anarcho-communist perspectives. The examples of ‘actually existing

communism' used by Harris are the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatistas/EZLN) and Kurdistan. He highlights anarchist theorists like David Graeber or anarcho-communists like Abdullah Öcalan. Harris centers the "rose theory" developed by the latter and his version of democratic confederation. While the EZLN, Kurdish Workers Party, and other examples used are perfectly fine to analyze, centering them as the primary examples to use in the chapter called communism seems like a major missed opportunity at the very least.

This space in the book could have been used to detail how Cuba has survived US imperial aggression for 70 years. China's policies towards rural co-ops, state-owned enterprises, and relationship to the mass reforestation of rural areas. The reality of these countries going through the very class struggle process Harris is calling for is seemingly lost on the writer—or at least was not seen as a worthwhile focus. Instead, the focus is put towards examples like CHAZ.

There's even a nihilist perspective approached in the text when Harris says, "Not only do communists ask almost all people to accept the destruction of their way of life, they also want us to actively participate in every part of that destruction." But also, he cites Enrique Dussel's Twenty Theses on Politics, which denounces "anarchist action" as illegal and illegitimate compared to "liberation praxis," which is illegal but legitimate.

He even goes as far to say that "*The whole road of socialism—so far as revolutionary struggles are concerned—is paved with nothing but thunderous defeats.*" Again, socialist countries like China, Cuba, DPRK, Vietnam, Laos,

Venezuela (which he does cite as an example positively with its Pueblo a Pueblo policy), Nicaragua, and Nepal exist. One could even argue that a country like Bolivia or the Communist Party of India (Marxist) controlled state of Kerala are also examples of the transition from capitalism to socialism. All of these nations are on varying points of this road, but to say socialism—and in effect communism—is “paved with nothing but thunderous defeats,” how can the reader not come away with a negative opinion of actually existing socialism?

“By itself, the communist tactic of picking a fight to the death with a stronger, more vicious enemy is what the basketball analysts on ESPN call a low-percentage shot. But communists are not by themselves: They exist in the context of everything else I’ve examined, the whole left field. And sometimes a fight is what everyone needs.”

Harris points to how Eurocentrism within the communist movement can “find some answers” by “engaging with contemporary Indigenous theory.” This critique or call to action to communists is completely valid—though the reader might find a better analysis on this topic in Robert Biel’s *Eurocentrism in the Communist Movement*. But by combining anarchist and communist movements—and backed by some anti-communist perspectives—this chapter is a mess theoretically. Leaving out a serious analysis of socialist states, and framing the entire movement as one of pure defeat, is both a defeatist approach and in the long line of Western Marxists and Leftists discounting these real examples for lack of purity. These ideological blinders can

not persist if we want to seriously tackle the existential ecological crisis.

The Planetary Crisis

The next chapter—The Planetary Crisis—details in terrifying fashion the ecological and capitalist crisis we are under at the moment. As Harris says, the past neoliberal individualistic fix to climate change has been meaningless: “Global warming was the inconvenient truth that dispelled the idea of environmentalism as a matter of individual responsibility. “Reduce, reuse, recycle” isn’t going to halt emissions, never mind pull sublime amounts of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, and it is impossible to pretend otherwise.”

Citing the 2021 report, *A More Contested World*, Harris notes that as of 2020, we already have 270 million global refugees. He quotes Jeff Goodell’s *The Heat Will Kill You First; Life and Death on a Scorched Planet*, that “*outdoor life*” in “*some regions of the tropics...will become virtually impossible.*” Harris shows with examples of the US-Mexico border and Greece-Turkey that climate refugees under capitalism are facing some of the “*deadliest*” routes of travel for migrants “*worldwide.*”

Food sovereignty has always been an issue for the Global South, but Harris points out that even the imperial core of the US is at risk, with the Corn Belt and California’s ‘Salad Bowl’ both running out of “*good soil*” and “*water.*” And most disturbingly, the entire “*paired land-food system is both vulnerable to and a significant cause of global warming.*”

While it’s not a focus, it’s odd that again, Harris decides in this section to peddle in anti-communist and

anti-China talking points. “Meanwhile, ocean extraction is a great way for powerful countries to take advantage of smaller, poorer nations with good coastlines, whether Chinese ships off North Korea and Madagascar...” To frame the relationship between China and the DPRK as imperialist or exploitative, at the very least, is to ignore the theory and practices of the Korean masses themselves.

Chinese firms, private or SOEs, can be involved in exploitative or ecologically harmful extractive practices. China would be the first to say that the class struggle hasn’t stopped within their country. However, in a time of exponentially increased US imperial aggression against China, this is just a missed opportunity, and coming from a journalist in the West, this just repeats errors that Western Marxists have committed against actually existing socialism for over a hundred years. The recent publication of Domenico Losurdo’s *Western Marxism* covers these historical and contemporary errors from the Western Left or Marxist movements.

Harris does an excellent job of detailing how and why the West has “de-developed” the parts of the Global South where Capital thinks it’s “better to steal and destroy than to grow and build.” Places like Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Iran, Mexico, and others are highlighted for where Capital has sought to “de-develop” them to “steal” resources and labor power for cheap. Another key aspect of the ecological crisis is Capital’s tendency to create its own ‘gravediggers’ even from the environment. As Harris lays out:

“The cost of nature’s counterattack is deeper than fire and flood damage; it goes all the way to capital’s very

ability to reinvest and accumulate. Because all aspects of production are anchored in the physical biosphere and its cycles, the bigger capital gets, the greater its dependence on the same systems it undermines for profit. A recent quantitative analysis published in *Nature* estimates that, because of climate change, “the world economy is committed to an income reduction of 19 percent within the next 26 years independent of future emission choices,” amounting to tens of trillions of dollars a year in annual damages. Creative destruction isn’t necessarily a problem as far as Value is concerned, but destruction that precludes reinvestment is a genuine loss.”

Even though capitalism, through ‘disaster investors,’ performs shock therapy in the wake of natural disasters, this is an unsustainable model of capital centralization and privatization. Eventually, the land from which Capital derives its ‘Value’ won’t be able to produce any, which is fatal to an ever-increasing-profit motive system.

Additionally, the ILO estimates that 10 million people were forced into modern slavery from 2016 to 2021, and since 2021, the UNICEF and ILO have published a joint statement that child labor has increased for the first time in decades. Capitalism is tearing itself apart at the seams through its mass exploitation of the land and people. These are contradictions that can not persist.

Another key aspect of this current “*planetary crisis*” is the “*capital bloc*” represented by the “*fossil fuel companies and the military-industrial complex.*” Harris stresses the importance of an internationalist approach, as a

reactionary “nationalist marketcraft” would be devastating.

“Attempts to frame the situation as a fight between nations or groups of nations, between people or races, between humanity and nature, and even between everyone and the mistakes of the past all misread the current coordinates. Circumstances will force either the exploiting or exploited class to pay a decisive price in the coming decades. To capital, genuine answers (such as globally planned migration, nationalized utilities, a decline in the profit rate, and fossil fuel asset stranding) appear as problems, and disasters (such as lowering our expectations for how much warming we can avoid and intentionally spewing sulfur into the air) suggest themselves as solutions. Capitalists are incapable of implementing the limits to extraction that the workers of the world must then impose on behalf of the species in general. No matter which class declares victory, this conflict resolves in a revolutionary reconstitution of global society at large. Either that or the common ruin of the contending classes and the earth itself...”

Conclusion

Other than the public power chapter, this is Harris's strongest section of the book. After reviewing these three different “*partisan*” strategies, he argues for a reimagined United or Popular Front to emerge. In the face of rising global fascism, as seen in Trump's rise and his implementation of the reactionary “*nationalist marketcraft*”

strategy that Harris warned about, the need for tactical and strategic unity of action is at an all-time high.

It's clear that the wide range of views of the Left—as expressed through working class and oppressed peoples movements—are the only “*viable strategic*” plans of action for “*progressives in the near term.*” He's also right that at a mass scale, “*Partisans of one strategy will not persuade the others to give up and join them, not on a relevant time scale.*” Put simply but concretely, “*Public power needs the radical threat; communists need bail money; marketcraft needs an organized working-class constituency.*”

The idea that we can treat the existential ecological and class crisis as a “friendly contest” between these different strategical schools of thought is out of the question for the author, and he's right. This is where a diversity of tactics is both necessary and a natural outcome of these forces coalescing towards liberation. Harris cites the famous playwright Lorraine Hansberry's memoir “To Be Young, Gifted, and Black,” which was inspired by a question on Martin Luther King Jr.'s strategy of nonviolence and reform:

“At the same time...I have no illusion that it is enough. We believe that the world is political and that political power, in one form or another, will be the ultimate key to the liberation of American Negroes and, indeed, black folk throughout the world. . . . I think, then, that Negroes must concern themselves with every single means of struggle: legal, illegal, passive, active, violent and non-violent. That they must harass, debate, petition, give money to court struggles, sit-in, lie-down, strike, boycott, sing hymns, pray

on steps and shoot from their windows when the racists come cruising through their communities.”

Fascinatingly, he brings up the scientific concept of “quantum walk” where a “particle or impulse of some kind advances down several paths toward its destination at once, only collapsing into a single reality when it finds the fastest route– or if someone tries to take a peek at the process.” This metaphor of how the new United Front should function is that we should simultaneously and collectively work down our respective strategies together until something works. “The Left must walk down three strategic paths at the same time, and we have to do it all together. And we’re already late.”

Next is a brief and general overview of the “characteristic fears” and “points of coherence” among the Left, giving examples such as Inefficiency, fear, complicity, and then police are our enemies, women’s collective self-liberation, international solidarity, building power, voting, and fidelity to principle–respectively. Following this, it’s a Venn diagram of how the three strategies interlink.

At this point in the conclusion, Harris’s analysis wrapping up is pragmatic and thoughtful. It’s a purposeful reimagining of how a Popular Front would function in the era of worldwide existential threats. But here again emerge some of those ideological confusions that appeared earlier in the book. China, the preeminent socialist nation run by workers and the masses through the Communist Party, is only mentioned regarding how marketcraft and public power can intercede.

Now, perhaps the reasoning for excluding China from the section covering communism is due to the working class already gaining political power there and thus only can be in the denominator of “public power.” Unfortunately, the examples used for communism are Brazil, as expressed through the coalition that returned Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the presidency again, and the radical militant history of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU).

While there are communist elements to these respective histories and these are examples of working class struggles, to reduce these movements of how public power and communism can overlap is odd when China, Cuba, Vietnam, and more exist. Why are they so frequently left out of the conversation of communism’s experiences, but examples that are far closer to the public power/marketcraft strategies are pushed into the communist status by Harris—let alone the conflation of anarchism and communism?

The only in-depth part of the conclusion’s focus on communism that relates to communist countries are a slight repeating of the information regarding the Venezuelan commune system and Cuba’s development of advanced urban agroecology through the “*deployment of organopónicos, an urban farming technique featuring long raised cultivation beds filled with soil and natural fertilizers, and legalized land occupations by producers.*” Harris ends the book with a proposal:

“The left should lead the formation of community disaster councils. If there’s one thing we know about the near future, it’s that it will be if not disastrous then at least

disasterful. Every place will see the world's conflicts erupt in particular ways, local crystallizations of the planetary crisis. Heat waves, fires, storms, floods, disease outbreaks, civil conflict, algal blooms, drought, energy shortages: The smooth skeletal sphere of capitalist metabolism is cracking. So far, capital's plan is to spackle those cracks with rubble made from the destroyed lives of the least fortunate— a plentiful and renewable resource— but the authorities accomplish this in large part by refusing to lead society to adequately plan for these disasters, preferring to leave everyone to themselves and the hindmost to the devil. The Value system's solution is clear; the left is obligated to construct and impose an alternative.”

Malcolm Harris has attempted to produce a rallying call for the working class and its allies. There are plenty of issues with this book that any organizer, regardless of their respective political ideology, will find some fault with—I imagine anarchists generally aren't happy being lumped under the communist umbrella or ultra-left folks being told to build coalitions with progressive “marketcraft” proponents.

But, this reimagined United or Popular Front has a pragmatic and grounded foundation that holds its own theoretical mistakes or confusions from tearing apart. The existential ecological crisis—compounded and largely generated by capital accumulation —is an ‘all hands on deck’ situation for working class and oppressed peoples. Add to the balance of forces the exponentially aggressive neo-fascist order coming into effect under the second Donald Trump administration.

The concerns Harris has throughout the book—a reactionary nationalist marketcraft, lack of coordinated global action, and the capitalist bloc becoming increasingly violent—are all coming to fruition. He calls for “disaster councils” to form now to combat these crises, *“On such a council, marketcrafting politicians could meet unionized workers could meet communist miscreants as equals, all of us patching together a new world the best ways we can figure out how and preparing to fight for it, together.”* The need for a united class struggle to wage a collective international class war for the future is—with every second ticking away—becoming the only thing left to survive the planetary crisis.

The Tactics and Strategy of the Modern United Front in the US

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There has been much talk amongst Leftists of various organizations, and even organizations discussing it as a program of action, to establish a *United Front* struggle against the rise of fascism in the west, and the threat of western imperialism throughout the world. It goes beyond saying that the US in particular is facing a succession of economic and political crises; an ever-growing working-class struggle, and a rise of reactionary rhetoric and violence. From the 2008 recession to today, from Iraq to MAGA fascism, clearly, a collective struggle is needed to combat these issues.

What is a United Front, what can we learn from history, and what can we do now to raise revolutionary potential in the working class struggle?

What is the United Front?

The United Front was a strategy fully developed by Communists under the leadership of the *Communist International* (Comintern) in the 1920s-30s to combat the rise of fascism in Europe, but it also has its roots in Lenin's era, and the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) both before and after the failed 1905 Russian Revolution. Comintern General Secretary, future Bulgarian Prime Minister, and pre-imminent theoretician of the United Front, Georgi Dimitrov wrote:

“Comrades, millions of workers and working people of the capitalist countries are asking the question: How can fascism be prevented from coming to power and how can fascism be overthrown after it has attained power? To this the Communist International replies: The first thing that must be done, the thing with which to begin, is to form a united front, to establish unity of action of the workers in every factory, in every district, in every region, in every country, all over the world. Unity of action of the proletariat on a national and international scale is the mighty weapon which renders the working class capable not only of successful defense but also of successful counterattack against fascism, against the class enemy.”

He continued:

“We must strive to establish the widest united front with the aid of joint action by workers' organizations of different trends for the defense of the vital interests of the laboring masses. This means:

- First, joint struggle really to shift the burden of the consequences of the crisis onto the shoulders of the ruling classes, the shoulders of the capitalists and landlords -- in a word, onto the shoulders of the rich.

- Second, joint struggle against all forms of the fascist offensive, in defense of the gains and the rights of the working people, against the abolition of bourgeois-democratic liberties.
- Third, joint struggle against the approaching danger of an imperialist war, a struggle that will make the preparation of such a war more difficult.

We must tirelessly prepare the working class for a rapid change in forms and methods of struggle when there is a change in the situation. As the movement grows and the unity of the working class strengthens, we must go further, and prepare the transition from the defensive to the offensive against capital, steering towards the organization of a mass political strike.”

In his foundational 1902 work *What is to be Done?*, Vladimir Lenin wrote:

“Only those who are not sure of themselves can fear to enter into temporary alliances even with unreliable people; not a single political party could exist without such alliances. The combination with the legal Marxists was in its way the first really political alliance entered into by Russian Social-Democrats. Thanks to this alliance, an astonishingly rapid victory was obtained over Narodism, and Marxist ideas (even though in a vulgarised form) became very widespread. Moreover, the alliance was not concluded altogether without ‘conditions’.”

Today as well, the need to build a united, collective, working-class power to push back against the rise of fascism and to undermine imperial hegemony is the task of the revolutionary working class within the imperial core.

What the United Front Looks Like Today

To quickly summarize the issues of rising fascism and combating imperialist hegemony, it's important to understand the primary class contradictions and struggles revolutionaries are facing, and to work out how a United Front strategy is vital. First, there has been a rapid increase in occurrences of reactionary and chauvinistic violence in the US. While commonly viewed as a progressive and liberal state, California has been home to a surge of hate crimes since 9/11—violence based on sexual orientation has risen by 48%+, violence against African Americans by 12.5%+, against Latinos by 30%+, against Asians by 567%+, and so on.

Fascism, defined by Dimitrov and the Comintern as “*the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital*,” has been on the rise with the MAGA base, Proud Boys, Atomwaffen Division, Three-Percenter, Patriot Front, etc., as well as being reflected in international imperialist military actions, from Western-backed coups in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, to military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Haiti, and more. Untold devastation has been unleashed on the global south since the fall of the Soviet Union at an escalating rate. These issues—fascism, and imperialism—are the primary contradictions of the current era. What must be done now to reverse course, and build a movement for social revolution?

If the United Front has been successful in the past to face those issues as they appeared with the rise of fascism the previous century, then it must be seriously considered for application in the current situation. For the sake of understanding the current landscape of socialist organizations in the US, it is easiest to separate them into two categories, which shall be referred to here as the *Big Four* and *Minor Groups*. The Big Four are: the *Democratic Socialists of America* (DSA), the *Communist Party USA* (CPUSA), the *Party for Socialism and Liberation* (PSL), and the *Freedom Road Socialist Organization* (FRSO). All four are explicitly socialist, with the latter three being explicitly Communist, and CPUSA and FRSO both being explicitly Marxist-Leninist—DSA contains significant Communist factions within it, however.

These organizations represent the most rapidly growing and influential groups in the general American Leftist movement. The Minor Groups include the *Peace and Freedom Party* (PFP), *All-African People's Revolutionary Party* (A-APRP), *Black Alliance for Peace* (BAP), *Socialist Workers Party* (SWP), *Green Party* (GP), *Socialist Party USA* (SPUSA), *Socialist Alternative* (SA), etc. This grouping is not monolithic in any way, and highly eclectic in terms of ideology. However, all represent minor groups of the Left with their own niches of influence. It is also necessary to account for the rise of the labor movement in recent years, sporadic uprisings and working-class unrest, and the massive Bernie Sanders campaigns, all of which have presented as factors in this growth of the general American Left.

What steps can these organizations and parties take to build that broad working-class United Front to defensively stop the rise of fascism and then offensively disrupt and undermine the imperial hegemony of the US? It's important to break down this United Front in two other categories as well: *Formal Alliances* and *Informal Alliances*. The former, being created after a convention or congress, would necessitate many or some of these groups devising and agreeing to a plan of action against fascism and imperialism. The latter consists of those “temporary alliances” made with groups on common-ground issues on a temporary, immediate basis.

Such a Formal Alliance must necessarily be formed through the creation of cooperative mechanisms—forums, joint-committees, conferences, and so on—between these groups in order to pursue a common goal and strategy—a program, or ideological center—around which these organizations may be willingly bound together. Such a draft program may include:

- All organizations agree to be united on anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and working-class policies.
- Uniting against anti-communist propaganda and redbaiting campaigns designed to divide the working class movement.
- Dependence on the balance of forces and the concrete material conditions between fascism and liberalism will determine the “temporary alliances” formed with progressive liberal organizations—where fascism is strong and rising, temporary alliances to broaden the mass base for class struggle are imperative. Where fascism is weak, and neoliberal

imperialism is the primary antagonism, the coalition will push for the offensive and form independent working-class political power (dual power). The battles against fascism and capitalism will happen on an uneven geographical basis, giving rise to uneven development, which will require “evening out” in the future.

- All forms of bigotry, racism, transphobia, xenophobia, etc. will be fought against, as such indignities only serve to divide the working class, sowing oppression, and exploitation on behalf of the ruling class.
- Colonialism and neocolonialism remain massive sources of exploitation and oppression, especially against indigenous nations within the US imperial system. These evils of settler capitalism must be struggled against by any means necessary. Connections must be made between the broad working-class movement and the movement for indigenous sovereignty.
- All organizations must battle for the increase and protection of political rights and liberties for the collective working class. Any steps to erode the political rights of the working class are an expression of class warfare.
- All organizations must materially support the growing spontaneous and organized struggles of the working class: strikes, labor organizing, social and economic reforms to improve the quality of life for workers, uprisings against the most extreme forms of oppression, etc. The more such an alliance of

revolutionaries are involved in these struggles, the faster the rise of working-class consciousness and revolutionary potential.

- Solidarity with oppressed and exploited peoples and nations under US and Western imperialist hegemony and support for the emergence of a more equal, multipolar world through mutually beneficial international cooperation.
- Internal Leftist political disputes within imperially oppressed countries must be left to those respective organizations for their own consideration, and respected as a matter of self-determination. It is not the place of Leftists in the imperial core to negatively judge or issue demands of the Global South.
- All organizations agree to a general policy of camaraderie, recognizing that niche ideological divisions fall secondary to the contradictions and crises presented by fascism and neoliberal imperialism.

I encourage others to add or respond critically since this is merely a theoretical draft. Such a convention would necessarily include the Big Four, as well as many of the Minor Groups—forming a real United Socialist Front to add to the growing and ever-more conscious working class in the US. It must be understood and appreciated that many of these groups have conflicting views, histories, and egos. However, is the threat of fascism and imperialism—of a new Cold War or World War—not enough to unite these organizations beyond those conflicts? The working class movement needs to be broad, tied to labor and the national struggles of oppressed communities, but the main socialist

organizations need to work together in the struggle against fascism, and the struggle against imperialism, which are the most important struggles facing humanity in this era; all other struggles stem from these two. If the working class and socialist parties and organizations can unite to effectively combat these two rising issues, the foundation will be set to go to the next phase of class struggle. We can't fetishize theoretical purity over practical material strategies. Until then, the highest imperative is to destroy fascism and completely disintegrate the imperial system holding humanity back from true progress.

What is the CPUSA Program? Summary and Analysis

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The CPUSA party program is the guiding line for the party nationally and locally. It lays out the multifaceted class struggle in the US—that working class exploitation, and racial, sexual, gender, and national oppressions are interconnected in the class struggle here. The international system of capital exploitation and extraction for the benefit of multinational monopolies and financial oligarchs—imperialism—is connected to the international working class struggle and also our “everyday living.”

“The Communist Party USA is dedicated to the struggle for socialism in this country and peace throughout the world. This is our program...We, the working class and people of the United States, face tremendous problems: exploitation, oppression, racism, sexism, a deteriorating

environment and infrastructure, huge budget deficits to pay for tax cuts for the 1%, and a government dominated by the most vicious elements of big capital and its political operatives. We face the problems of everyday living, making ends meet, and having a voice at work and in our communities.”

In the last decade+, we have seen an increasing amount of the most reactionary section of the capitalist ruling class, and we must build a broad people’s front to combat that reactionary and fascistic rise. We must engage in the struggles not only in the labor movement but the LGBTQ+, racially and nationally oppressed struggles to combat the backward sections of the ruling class,

“The extreme right is led by the most reactionary, militaristic, racist, antidemocratic sectors of the transnationals. They gain support for their extreme right agenda from other backward political trends, most of which are misled as to their real interests, sometimes blinded by the propaganda of fear and scapegoating, by racism, sexism, right-wing nationalism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and xenophobia.”

“In constant battles over issues large and small, the working class learns that more fundamental changes are necessary to have a truly humane society. The struggles for the immediate demands and reforms needed by working people today are essential steps toward our ultimate goal of the revolutionary transformation of society and the economy, toward socialism and then communism—an even higher stage of social and economic development...The appeal of a communist society is a response to the real human needs of the masses of people. Communism will

enable people to set aside worries about health care and education, about losing their livelihood and their dignity. Communism will eliminate the economic insecurity of the masses of working people. Instead, it will offer us the opportunity to reach our full human potential.”

“When workers struggle against the capitalist class or any part of it on any issue with the aim of improving or defending their lives, it is part of the class struggle. In every area of workers’ lives, the fight is to defend themselves and their families from corporate assault.

The class struggle also takes place in the political arena. It plays out in struggles over governmental action or inaction, over social spending and tax policy, over elections, and ultimately over which class or formation of class and social forces becomes dominant in holding and exercising political power. The class struggle also exists in the realm of ideology, between social and political ideas and values that justify the political and economic policies of the contending classes.”

The class struggle will be fought on economic, political, and ideological lines, and the communist party must engage in each of these realms of struggle for the betterment of the working class. It must engage in each link in the chain of class struggle. Building a broad, multiracial, and multinational front to combat US capitalism is a necessity. Struggles for indigenous sovereignty, African Americans, Puerto Rican sovereignty, women’s rights to healthcare, voting rights, etc. are struggles against capitalistic exploitation and the superstructures it has created.

We are ultimately fighting for the protection and increase of democracy.

“The desire of people to actively participate in decision making drives battles for voting rights, expanding the electorate, reforming the electoral system, protecting civil liberties, guaranteeing civil rights, ending all forms of discrimination, eliminating the power of large financial contributions that enables the rich to dominate elections, and ending all forms of exploitation. The constant struggles of the working class to expand its political power and opportunities are struggles to expand democratic rights. The fight to protect and expand union rights is a fight for democracy...Another area where democratic rights are under attack is the public space. Efforts to bar protest on public property, to force organizers to pay for insurance for demonstrating in public places, and to criminalize protest are on the rise. At the same time, decriminalizing violence against demonstrators and demonizing those who object to the steps toward fascism is the order of the day.

Finally, democracy is restricted in the workplace. In reality, workplaces often function as dictatorships. Only where unions have forced limitations on corporations do workers have some voice in the economic and workplace decisions that impact their working lives. Even the limited victories that have been won are constantly under attack. Workers deserve democracy on the job as well as in their communities. Workers deserve a say in the economic decisions that determine the quality of life of their families.

We must sharpen our understanding of the class nature of the ways that democracy functions differently under capitalism and socialism, and of how to fight to expand

people's rights...The class struggle and the democratic struggle are closely linked; they overlap and intertwine. However, they are not identical. The class struggle in an immediate sense pits groups of workers against specific capitalists at the point of production as well as in broader social and economic struggles. The aim of working-class struggle is to subordinate capital to the will of labor. In the long term, this means winning power to construct socialism. The aim of the democratic struggle is to advance equality in all its forms and in all arenas and to widen the democratic space for all working people as much as possible.

The interaction of these two streams objectively advances the struggle for socialism because socialism is necessary for us to permanently eliminate inequality. After a revolution, a qualitative change happens, with democracy progressing in a planned process in harmony with the dominance of working-class power. The victory of socialism will open a new stage in the continual development of democracy.”

We must analyze our concrete material conditions to build that broad popular front and at each successive stage of the struggle,

“Analyzing the objective stages of struggle is essential to developing correct long-term strategy. This is not a mechanical prescription; these are stages of struggle, not stages of social development from one socioeconomic system to another. The social system remains capitalist during all stages up to the conquest of power by the working class. There is no firm, complete barrier between these stages. In the current stage, while identifying the

most reactionary sector of the transnationals as the main opponent and developing an anti-extreme right consciousness, Communists seek to grow anti-monopoly consciousness and class and socialist consciousness.”

We must build alliances with the progressive forces available to us at each stage of the struggle, recognizing the contradictions but not being scared of them.

“There are struggles within both the Democratic Party and within the labor and people’s movements, which are reflective of the overall struggle to gain political independence from corporate dominance. The Left must help build the movement against the extreme right, while strengthening the ability of the working class and its allies to effectively exert their will through massively broadening and deepening their organized reach. Any serious strategy that hopes to win millions of people to a more advanced political program must contend with this reality and relate to these struggles.”

As the fight against fascism is the current stage of struggle we must remember,

“Once the most reactionary extreme right transnationals receive a major defeat, it will be both necessary and possible for the people’s democratic forces to take on the transnationals as a whole. This more advanced, anti-monopoly stage of struggle will be the next key step on the road to socialism in the U.S.” (check 15-point proposal policies for the anti-monopoly coalition that will maintain itself after the defeat of the extreme right and the need to build a ‘People’s Party’)

The achievement of defeating the far right, building an anti-monopoly coalition and “Peoples Party,” gaining major

policy wins and a semblance of political power is “...not enough. So long as the capitalists and transnationals own the means of production and are able to command political and economic power, new social problems will emerge, and old ones will be reintroduced in new forms. A full, lasting solution to modern social, economic, and environmental problems requires socialism, starting with social ownership of the key major sectors of the economy and working people’s democratic power led by the working class.

The wider and deeper the unity of the anti-monopoly coalition, the more the working class and its key allies lead it, the stronger the Left and socialist-oriented sector, the bigger and more influential a mass Communist Party, more the power of the transnationals will be curbed by radical measures. These will make easier the move to the next stage of struggle, the direct struggle for immediate revolutionary change.”

And finally,

“We see revolution as a profoundly democratic process, one that involves the actions and decisions of the vast majority. The more unified the majority, the more likely it is that a transition can be accomplished without the capitalists using violence to block the building of socialism. We reject all approaches that welcome and seek violent action. We fight for and commit ourselves to building enough unity to win socialism peacefully, though we recognize that the ruling class may initiate violence against progressive and radical movements in an attempt to maintain its power. We have no illusions that the capitalists will willingly give up power and control unless they have no

possibility of successfully stopping social transformation by initiating capitalist class-led violence.

A revolutionary majority, based on mass organizations and political parties, must work to make it politically impossible for the former ruling class to use political or military means to return to power. As with all governments, should any forces try to take power by unconstitutional means, by coup or counter-revolutionary insurrection, the full weight of the government and mass people's power would be used to uphold socialist legality and working people's power...The struggle to achieve power and construct socialism will be difficult. The capitalists have great resources and great determination to keep their riches and power.

For an organization to play a leading role and develop strategy and tactics that fit the objective circumstances requires Marxist-Leninist analysis based on the actual material conditions of society. It requires the ability to influence millions, based on long experience of common struggle and mutual respect. It requires a Communist Party steeled in action. A leadership role in the struggle for socialism is not proclaimed; it can be won only through millions of working people gaining direct experience with a Communist Party, with its deeds, and with its application of theory to real struggles. A Communist Party must win this respect anew at every step of the struggle.

We do not propose any detailed plan for exactly how this transition will come about, since it will depend on the specific circumstances at the time. Revolutionary transformations have happened differently in each country that has gone through such a transition. In some cases, it

was under the leadership of a single party, in others it was a multiparty coalition. In some, it came as a result of a direct struggle for socialism; in others, socialist goals only came following an anticolonial or anti-imperialist revolution. We can't predict the exact challenges we will face; we can only focus on building a revolutionary movement strengthened and seasoned by participation in mass struggles.”

This is the summary of the program, its key elements, and its analysis. It's a living program, due to change as the material conditions and stage of struggle change, but this is the guiding line for the party at the moment and it must be thoroughly understood and analyzed by party members and all those who call themselves communist in the US. There is room for improvement and/or clarification within the program. It was originally drafted in 2005 and then updated in 2019, meaning, its skeleton is from the liquidationist Webb years of the party. It's rooted in time and material conditions that may not be accurate anymore. The lack of in-depth analysis of settler colonialism and its contradictions between the multi-class indigenous and settler communities needs to be remedied. With the eyes of the world and the international working class set on the plight of the Palestinians against settler colonial genocide, it's vital that communists in the US, another settler colonial regime like Israel, properly address these contradictions. The concept of self-determination for oppressed and colonized groups within and outside the imperial core of the US is not just important, it's a crucial step to building the Popular Front against fascism and monopoly capital. Can the US become socialist without decolonization? Would it be safe to push towards a stage of development without

dealing with the contradictions of colonial oppression and exploitation still intact? These are important questions for us to answer now, not the future.

We must remember that as the party program states and past communist leaders like Lenin said, “temporary alliances” are essential when facing the class struggle at certain stages of said struggle. And using dialectical materialism, what’s true today, may not be true tomorrow. The party must be flexible and not fall behind the class struggle and the progressive forces being united right now. The dynamics of the struggle are not the same as in 2005 or even 2019. We are no longer at the “end of history” but in the rebirth of the international working class movement, and quite possibly the program is essentially correct in totality. Still, its application can not be uniform and dogmatic. For example, is the working class movement in Los Angeles at the stage of fighting the extreme right or building the anti-monopoly coalition? Are the class contradictions and material conditions uniform in all localities in the US? Perhaps the program should reflect the actuality of the social revolution we may be approaching and the uneven struggle we must wage on uneven geographical lines. Stages of struggle do not have clear demarcations. They are not static stages of progress or regress, but constantly ebb and flow, and consistently transition and morph from one to the other. The hegemony of capital and colonial thought is still a hurdle to climb for communists—having clear and correct material analysis is the fundamental prerequisite to defeating that hegemony.

Addressing Settler Colonialism, Eurocentrism, and Decolonization

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With the global rise of awareness of Israel's settler-colonial policy and history regarding the continual genocide of the indigenous Palestinians, an opportunity has arisen for the Communist Party USA to re-evaluate its line on settler colonialism domestically. Is our Party program properly addressing the Indigenous national question here in America or is there a Eurocentric and chauvinistic point of view?

Friend of the Party and historian, Gerald Horne, has brilliantly laid out the historical materialist analysis of how the United States of America was created through a reactionary bourgeois revolution, propelled by fear of indigenous and African resistance. The creation of the "White identity" or "Whiteness" was a process of forming mass class collaboration between classes of Europeans and their descendants in the face of this existential threat to the colonial dynamic.

Understanding this material reality helps inform us why there has been, and continues to be, white-class collaboration in the face of racial injustice, police brutality, imperialistic policies, etc. According to a recent CBS/YouGov poll, 76% of white evangelicals will be voting for Trump, an outright fascist whose policies have only hurt the working and oppressed classes. In the 2022 midterms, the majority of white people, European descendants, voted for Republicans. This is clear evidence that the settler classes still collaborate at the expense of the settler working class itself and, more so, other oppressed groups and classes.

As a result, the U.S. has developed into a hegemonic imperial power built on and continued to be supported by, the genocide of indigenous nations. Since the federally recognized indigenous nations are still considered “wards” of the “guardian” U.S. settler-colonial power– see *Cherokee v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 1, (1831)– it is undeniable there is still a system of continuous apartheid, genocide, and settler colonialism in the United States.

Vladimir Lenin said,

“The socialists cannot reach their great aim without fighting against **every form** of national oppression. They must...demand that the [socialists] of the oppressing countries (of the so-called ‘great’ nations in particular) should recognize and defend the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination...the right to political separation. **A socialist of a great nation or a nation possessing colonies who does not defend this right is a chauvinist.**”

If we conclude that the settler colonial dynamics and contradictions were at the inception of this country and have been central to the process of labor exploitation and resource extrapolation, then we must deal with these contradictions if we are ever to have real social change. Ignoring these material conditions will lead to distorted strategies and tactics and will only hurt the cause of worker and national liberation.

Since we are dealing with similar settler colonial contradictions as other settler colonies have— Occupied Palestine, apartheid South Africa, French colonial Algeria, etc— we should look at how their respective national liberation movements engaged with native and settler progressive forces. Where can we build alliances between the settler working class and Indigenous nations to build our national liberation movement here? What tactics can be successful, and which might stand in the way of indigenous sovereignty and the abolition of capitalism and colonialism? Work must immediately begin with indigenous organizers, organizations, and nations as we settler Marxists often forget that many have created existing dual power structures and have hundreds of years of collective experience struggling against U.S. capitalism and colonialism. **I propose the National Convention discuss and implement an Indigenous Commission in the Party which is key to this work.**

Marxism is not dogmatic, and its methodology of analysis can not be artificially transposed on another time, location, and material conditions. We cannot repeat the same chauvinistic and dogmatic mistakes of the Second International. We are living on stolen land and working

with stolen resources. This is not Western Europe of the 1800s, these are occupied indigenous lands in 2024. The recent memory of Standing Rock still lingers in the minds of many young socialists today.

The struggle for environmental justice is directly linked to the struggle for decolonization—let alone the struggles against capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism. As the essay “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor” by Professors E. Tuck and K.W. Yang states, “When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future. Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks.” Decolonization—the action—is predicated on the land, resources, means of production, and political power returning to indigenous collective control—the restoration of their complete sovereignty.

It will be a revolutionary process of not only eliminating settler colonial contradictions but ultimately the base that supports the modern capitalist and imperialist system in the US. The same systems that are driving humanity to an existential ecological disaster. The alliance between Indigenous nations and the settler working class can shorten the class and national struggles. When past Marxists extended the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the peasantry and all oppressed people, it should be applied to our material conditions by the alliance

mentioned above of indigenous nations, workers, and oppressed people in the US.

We should be wary of creating a chauvinistic, socialist U.S.A. that continues the national oppression of native people and nations, here and abroad. A review of the Party Program and its sections on national oppression and the national question is required to achieve liberation from capitalism and colonialism. The program incorrectly states Hawaii is no longer a colony but, “was a colony of the U.S. for many decades.” It also states that the “genocide of Native people must be recognized and acknowledged by honoring treaties and tribal sovereignty...” However, as mentioned above, treaties and federal law conflict with indigenous sovereignty. These are contradictions between our program and the material conditions that can be easily remedied.

Re-educating the Party on colonial history, decolonial theory, and black and indigenous radical thought is key to combating chauvinistic tendencies and Eurocentric thought. Abolishing capitalism without addressing colonial contradictions is potentially a dangerous and counterrevolutionary road to lead the working class down. The Communist Party of the United States of America needs to become the first communist organization to adopt the correct analysis and positions toward decolonial liberation. The first revolutionary party to adopt the correct analysis will be the party of the future. We must be willing to stand in solidarity with the indigenous and oppressed nations of the world.

Reject "PatSoc" PsyOp, Chauvinism, and Eurocentrism within the Western Communist Movement

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For years now, the resurgent Communist movement in the US has had a reactionary thorn in its side. A splinter in our eye that we cannot ignore and pretend doesn't matter. Not because it has real power in the movement, not because this specific iteration of it has boots on the ground we have to deal with like open fascists. No, this is because it's a petulant nuisance that should have been swatted away already, but the material and theoretical soil from which it sprouts is a real issue that needs to be addressed.

First, it's important to specify who and what we are discussing and, ultimately, why. For those reading this that may have no contextual understanding of who and what the "Patriotic Socialist (PatSoc)" or "MAGA Communist" movement is, let's recap who the players are. Virtually all of them have direct connections and ties to the cult of Lyndon LaRouche- ex-Trotskyist turned crypto-fascist state asset. Dennis King's book, "Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism" expands greatly upon his life and

legacy. For a shorter version of that history, this Cosmanout Magazine article is also worthwhile for a quick background on this inception point. LaRouche and his cult, the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) turned into a pseudo-private intelligence agency giving information to the CIA, FBI, local police departments, and the KKK. They would develop a reputation for sending fascist street thugs to attack communist meetings as well.

The new adherents to LaRouche's pro-industrial capital and reactionary politics like Jackson Hinkle, Haz Al-Din, Midwestern Marx, etc., may not all have explicit ties to these types of institutions. Still, the most prominent adherent, Hinkle, does. He rapidly went from an environmentalist liberal influencer with brand partnerships with Jaden Smith to surfing with the lieutenant colonel of the US Army's psychological warfare unit, Tulsi Gabbard, turning hard right and very eclectic. Hinkle has also joined former President Donald Trump Jr, Rep. Marjorie Taylor-Greene, Roger Stone, Erik Prince, James O'Keefe, and other fascist reactionary assets and politicians at the Park Avenue Young Republicans Gala. He's promoted transatlantic slavery apologia, transphobic conspiracy theories linking them to Nazi Germany, praise of Benjamin Netanyahu before October 7th before flipping to opportunistically supporting Palestine, has railed against Indigenous sovereignty, promotes anti-Black Lives Matter conspiracies, uplifts private property, and more all while pushing "MAGA Communism." There's a direct connection to the LaRouchite-controlled Schiller Institute, founded by LaRouche and now run by his wife. Hinkle and Haz have been to their events and worked with Center for Political

Innovation's Caleb Maupin-who has been "Me Too'ed" in a sex cult scandal in that organization as well. They have promoted fascists like National Bolshevik co-founder Aleksandr Dugin and Nazi party member and German philosopher Martin Heidegger. The leading figure, Hinkle, is proven to have ties to the US military-and specifically their psyops department-MAGA fascists, quasi-intelligence agents in the LaRouchite cult, while pushing the most reactionary social chauvinistic lines. People like Haz and Midwestern Marx are mere sidekicks to that movement, and Hinkle is potentially a middleman for the LaRouchite cult and the US State Department. Their attempts to have "anti-imperialist" lines are only a trojan horse to get into Left spaces internationally, to develop intelligence contacts, and information to sell to the highest bidder, as the LaRouchites have done historically.

These reactionary bigots and followers of Lyndon LaRouche have tried to reimagine his philosophy and branding, and while they have had some success in infiltrating organizations, the root of why their ideology can find people is key to understanding. Their sloganeering for a united (read, white) working class, and their explicit American exceptionalism, are all not an aberration or alien to the western communist movement. They are just latching onto the chauvinism and eurocentrism that has infected the movement for too long. The idealization and romanticization of American history are rooted in the faulty and archaic theory that the Western communist movement has dogmatically also latched onto. So, it's frankly not surprising that these reactionary types can

weasel their way into some spaces when the major communist organizations also push chauvinistic lines.

Let's quickly dispense of the outdated and chauvinistic line of American history is revolutionary and progressive that these PatSocs peddle. It's built on certain lines from the works of people like Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin which are either misunderstood in the greater context of their work or should be ignored for obvious reasons, respectively. Lenin said of the American Revolution it was, "one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars of which there have been so few." The bulk of Lenin's work wasn't on American history and class relations-while Marx did write profusely about American politics throughout many years. Lenin also wrote far more on national liberation, self-determination, and colonialism-all of which can be analyzed in the North American conditions. It's just not from the American exceptionalist standpoint.

Marxist Historian Gerald Horne, whose bulk of work is on American history, conditions, and writing from the black liberation tradition-in his work "The Counter Revolution of 1776" easily refutes this perception of the American Revolution being historically progressive. He wrote that "slavery permeated" throughout colonial America's economy and society, slave and Indigenous resistance created mass European migration to the mainland from the Caribbean, and that "white identity" was crystallized in the formation of a slave-owning and settler republic to create mass class collaboration in the face of that existential decolonial threat. The American Revolution solidified settler colonial and slave-owning relations and was not in

rejection of that paradigm built by European colonialism. He argues that the new US republic was “supplanting” the British empire in terms of slavery as it was being forced away from it.

When we get to the US Civil War, Horne says the Confederacy was connected ideologically to the American Revolution—both wanted to preserve slavery. If we understand “progressive” in the purely economic way that LaRouchites do, then clearly we cannot label the American Revolution—and the founding of this country—as “progressive.” The “American Revolution” was fundamentally a counter-revolution against the rising resistance from Indigenous Nations and African slaves. It solidified settler-slave class relations for nearly a century. In that process, settler-class collaboration was vital to the survival of the settler-colonial project. Thus the White Identity, or Pan-Europeanism, is born. And it is that class collaboration, that Eurocentric and bourgeois development, that is the bedrock for every nascent fascist movement in the US.

Marx wrote in a letter in 1846 to his friend Pavel Annenkov, “It is slavery which has given value to the colonies, it is the colonies which have created world trade, and world trade is the necessary condition for large-scale industry...” Later Marx in *The International* would warn the settler workers of the U.S. that if they didn’t deal properly with the “stain” of slavery it would hinder the entire movement. One of the founders of the modern Black Liberation movement, W.E.B. Du Bois, wrote in *Black Reconstruction of America*, “The resulting color caste founded and retained by capitalism was adopted,

forwarded, and approved by white labor, and resulted in the subordination of colored labor to white profits the world over.” LaRouchites tend to portray both Marx and Du Bois as overtly sympathetic to the “American Dream.” However, Marx routinely connected the issue of slavery with American capitalism, and called for a revolution from the enslaved Africans and for the Union to arm them. Du Bois correctly points out the reality of settler-class collaboration being central in the US.

Marx, even in his time with all of his own biases and ignorance of a man in the 19th century in the imperial heartland of Europe, saw the difference between progressive and reactionary national liberation movements. Ireland, India, China, and Indonesia specifically were all extensively studied by Marx for their resistance to European colonialism. Over time, moving to a multilinear and non-deterministic view of social development. Funnily enough, Marx was able to correctly critique Irish Americans for their rapid attempt to be accepted as “White” and their egregious racism against Africans in the US. *Marx at the Margins: on Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* by Kevin B. Anderson goes into far more depth on that development and work by Marx that for the sake of time, I hope everyone takes the time to research themselves.

The “Patriotic Socialists” have attempted to co-opt the slave-owning capitalist “Founding Fathers” in a tragically sad revival of a mistake the Communist Party of the United States of America has made before. For decades, the CPUSA would officially idolize figures like Thomas Jefferson, while waffling on the policy of self-determination for the

oppressed Black Nation-to disastrous results. (See Gerald Horne's *Armed Struggle* and Harry Haywood's *Black Bolshevik*) CPUSA routinely has had issues with American exceptionalism in more liquidationist efforts like with the respective Lovestone and Browder factions, but also in more subtle ways like their aforementioned sloganeering to praise "Founding Fathers." There have been historically egregious examples of chauvinism like the practical ignoring of Indigenous Nations outright in its historiography and theory, or with the support of Japanese concentration camps during World War 2.

The Party, suffering from factionalism, state repression, and ineffective underground work, was also unable and at times antagonistic towards the growing Black Power movement in the 60s. Denouncing figures like Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party-after having a friendly relationship with the latter-would further show signs of Eurocentric thinking and chauvinism. The failures and setbacks of the Party led to room for groups like the Nation of Islam and BPP to form-right and left deviations of the liberation and class struggle movements. Likewise, the failures of Western Communism to deal with the Eurocentrism within it led chauvinists like Pat-Socs to co-opt the movement in the modern day.

Hegel, the German philosopher, is foundational to the Marxist development and dialectic. He said of North Africa that it was a "land which does nothing but follow the fate of all which arrives from the great beyond..." giving weight to the "civilizational" aim of European colonialism in Africa. A key bedrock of Eurocentrism is that European history is the determining factor of human progress. Africa, Asia, and

Turtle Island had no “history” - therefore European colonialism was the driving “progressive” factor of human history, especially in these regions. This has been severely disproven by the works of Walter Rodney such as in his magnum opus *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. One of the excuses for colonial and settler colonial genocide is that the native, Indigenous nations are historically obsolete. This completely ignores the dynamic socio-cultural societies of these places and their own path of development that may not have included capitalism and transatlantic slavery. The anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan, whose work was foundational in Fredrick Engels’ *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* would say that the “Aryan family represents the central stream of human progress...” Of course, Engels never critiqued this part of Morgan’s analysis-which should bring into question the whole of his anthropological work. *Eurocentrism and the Communist Movement* by Robert Biel further delves into the racial and chauvinistic biases of Marx and Engels-the former working on them seemingly far more than the latter-and the Bolsheviks advancing closer than them but still having theoretical issues due to Great Russian Chauvinism.

As Marx wrote, capitalism produces its own “grave-diggers.” To think dialectically, the age of continued colonialism and heightened imperialism, produces these “grave diggers” of capitalism not amongst the “white labor” that collaborates with capitalism as Du Bois pointed out, but the most exploited peoples and nations under the colonial and capitalist system. Marx grew to understand the revolution was not happening purely in the core, and to

think that was undialectical. Pressures on the colonized peoples will result in more resistance.

That resistance—these national liberation movements—is where revolutionary momentum develops. When the revolution happens in the imperial core, it will be because those workers linked arms in solidarity with the oppressed nations of the world against colonialism and imperialism. In the direct context of the U.S.—where internal colonies exist due to settler colonialism more specifically (Read [Addressing Settler Colonialism, Eurocentrism, and Decolonization](#))- the revolutionary strength and momentum will come from Indigenous Nations, New Afrika, and the imperialized people forced to immigrate here. White settlers by-and-large have blinders on and the quicker we can dismantle those theoretical blinders, the sooner we can support the much-needed and more efficient National Liberation Movements here.

The US has not undergone the necessary Land Reform that the Reconstruction era could have produced—whites still own 97% of the private agricultural land. The majority of the settler white working class has continued to politically support the most overt fascist forces. Until the Communist Movement here, and more importantly, the major three organizations (CPUSA, PSL, FRSO), develop proper theoretical understandings of settler class collaboration and a program to deal with that threat, we will continue to deal with right-wing deviations of Communism such as the “Patriotic Socialist” movement. The communist struggle in the US is not purely a class struggle, and focusing on that purely has led to stagnation and alienation. . This is a struggle for national liberation

and to decolonize Turtle Island-and it should be remembered that “decolonization is always a violent event.”

CPUSA and the Black Panther Party, An Analysis and Review of “Armed Struggle?”

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The most recent book published by Dr. Gerald Horne, *“Armed Struggle? Panthers and Communists; Black Nationalists and Liberals in Southern California through the Sixties and Seventies”* is perhaps his best and most applicable work to today’s communists and organizers. This isn’t the first work to highlight the history of the Black Panther Party or Communist Party USA, but this may be the first in-depth work to pinpoint that analysis to the southland of California. Why is that important? What details and conclusions in the book are worth highlighting? And most importantly, what lessons and material analysis of that revolutionary period in the mid-20th century can be drawn regarding the question of armed struggle?

California is a land of contradictions. It is without a doubt the location for perhaps the most devastating and extreme case of Indigenous genocide and settler colonialism (read *An American Genocide* by Benjamin Madley). Settler colonial terrorism was a key feature of the US development of California and long into contemporary times. The level of

state or state-supported violence against the Indigenous, Black, and Chicano/Latinx was extreme throughout the 19th and well into the 20th centuries. Contradictory, as Horne puts it, “...*the CP [in California] was building upon a foundation of socialist ideas laid by people such as Jack London, Frank Norris, Burnette Haskell, Thorsten Veblen, Henry George, John Steinbeck–& Sinclair...As early as 1919, Oakland was viewed...as the ‘Heartland of Communism,’...*” Mike Davis also in his work *City of Quartz* details the early socialist communes that were in the Southland in the early 20th century.

There’s a tendency, even within CPUSA historiography, to make the party activities of the West Coast lesser than the East Coast, Midwest, and even the work in the South in the first half of the 20th century. But the Party was able from an extremely early point, to build up a strong presence in California and particularly the southland. It had a sizable progressive and left-leaning base to build on. Plus the material contradictions and rapidly expanding industrial base gave fertile ground for organizing. “*Why the Southland? Dialectically, the wealth generated via the studios, auto plants, rubber plants, aircraft factories, and the like led to resistance to the gross profiteering involved, from which the CP was able to catapult into prominence.*”

It would become the second-highest membership per state behind only New York. Longtime California Party leader Dorothy Healy said that membership in Los Angeles County alone was over 3,000 members in the late 1940s. The proximity to Hollywood was another key part of party funding for the CPUSA and eventually the BPP through

people like Dalton Trumbo, Marlon Brando, Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, and more.

Following the world-historical processes of the inception of US control of California-settler colonial genocide-it's also not shocking that California was one of the first states to jump onto McCarythism, "...a Pauling biographer detected, that 'nowhere did the anti-Communist fever rise faster or higher than in California...where as early as 1947 LA officials ordered all Communist books removed from the county libraries.'..."

It's important to make the connection that, as Horne does, the inception of COINTELPRO in 1956 was designed and created to go after the CPUSA and eventually would tear down the BPP. The Smith Act Trial, also in the 50s, devastated the CPUSA leadership in California. Practically every leader at the state and section level was either convicted, harassed, or in some cases disappeared ominously. *"The Smith Act trial proved to be devastating to the CP. Precious funds expended...mass struggle did not take a holiday, but with the comrades often missing...harm fell on their...reputation."* The judicial template for legal defense created by the likes of William Patterson, Leo Branton, John Abt, and others was crucial for the Party surviving this period. It was also a vital part of its organizing and coalition building in the proceeding decades.

The party locally made a major mistake by supporting or being indifferent towards Japanese internment. Earl Browder's liquidationism and American exceptionalism also hurt the party's reputation. "The CP's calling card was that it had a scientific outlook and wholly understood the machinations of capitalism; but the Browder episode,

combined with the misstep in internment, undermined its image...” CPUSA had risen to high levels of political impact through difficult mass and labor work for decades, but the Browder episode, the Smith Act Trials, and COINTELPRO devastated the Party.

An ideological pitfall of CPUSA that Horne drills home many times throughout the book is the “perceived ideological weakness of the CP in terms of being unable to detect settler colonialism in its nakedness and obviousness,” which, “created a vacuum filled by eclecticism of various sorts.” Along with the massive state-led repression of the Party, this weakness was a crucial part of the New Left’s development.

It’s almost a consensus in leftist spaces that the Black Panther Party (BPP) and the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) represent different generations of the Left and also different ideological perspectives that led to conflict between the two groups. It’s a topic that Horne does highlight. The fracture between the Old and New Left was a real fracture. What is often unknown or less talked about is the working relationship between the BPP and CPUSA. These were two organizations that, at one point, were closer to merging than taking adversarial roles. Huey Newton grew up around Party members. Angela Davis would become a key bridge between the two organizations. CPUSA historian Herbert Aptheker developed a close connection to George Jackson before his murder.

The reality was especially after CPUSA removed the right of self-determination for the Black Belt in the late 50s, the gap for organizing the Black community was wide open again. The Party had gained a giant foothold in that

community through mass work for decades. Key figures like Cyril Briggs, Pettis Perry, Harry Haywood, Otto Huiswoud, Claude McKay, Franklin Alexander, Claudia Jones, and many more were also vital in this work to bridge what was at first a predominantly white and Jewish party to get a connection to the Black community. However, due to all the aforementioned reasons, a giant lane was opened for other organizations to fill that gap.

The Nation of Islam, the NAACP (after purging WEB Du Bois), Deacons for Defense, SNCC, CORE, US Organization, Community Alert Patrol, and ultimately the Black Panther Party all filled, or attempted to fill, that gap left by wounds in the Old Left-to varying ideological degrees. Malcolm X-and his assassination-along with the Watts Uprising was an epochal switch in the southland. *“The Watts Revolt also marked the moment when the ideological baton in Black America was passed westward...”*

Only a year later, the BPP would form and it was also a local switch for Party focus. Key Black CPUSA leaders, like Cyril Briggs, Pettis Perry, Franklin Alexander, and Charlene Mitchell started the Che-Lumumba club, an all-Black club within the Party. It developed connections to the BPP, SNCC, and CORE. Along with historic Party members like William Patterson and Ben Davis, these were a real attempt to bridge the Old and New Left divide in the southland.

Angela Davis, who worked tirelessly to get famous BPP leader George Jackson out of prison, was also extremely close to the Alexander-Mitchell family. “However, this era also witnessed the ascendancy of the then UCLA professor, Angela Davis, a kind of bridge between the BPP and [CPUSA]...just as the BPP itself was a bridge between Black

Nationalism and the struggle for socialism.” Jackson and Herbert Aptheker began their friendship due to these connections.

Aptheker and Jackson were perfect representations of the ideological poles their respective parties operated from. As Horne says, “The understandable tendency to homogenize the interests of the class often has led to ignoring this fundamental matter, which has contributed to seeking to compel enslaved &/or their descendants to endorse an agenda developed by the much more populous wage &/or skilled sector. This has been compounded by the inability to critique or even recognize settler colonialism, reflected in the historical summaries relied upon by radicals, such as those by Herbert Aptheker, who rarely strayed systemically beyond 1750. This truncated timeline led to taking the European presence on this soil for granted and compromised the ability to grasp firmly the Indigenous Question, along with nearly eliding the potent matter of class collaboration which inhered in settler colonialism...” Jackson’s analysis in his work *Blood in My Eye* squarely paints the US as a fascist genocidal regime and takes that concept to its logical conclusion in regards to organizing the masses. Yet, both men were able to become close.

When the BPP was formed, there were many instances of mutual respect by the respective leaders and their newspapers. However, when Huey Newton and Bobby Seale rather quickly were dealing with prison and court trials it left another gap. This time walked in Eldridge Cleaver. Horne spends chapters brutally detailing his abusive behavior, murderous tendencies, and ideological

eclecticism. Cleaver would also end up fleeing the country to Cuba, then Algeria, France, and then eventually back to the US as a Christian conservative-Republican.

He would spearhead the “Maoist” turn in the BPP that would equate the USSR with the US-alienating Cuban and other international allies-especially in Africa which received much aid from the USSR. It would be a significant issue for the BPP and the movement as armed struggle was starting.

“Armed struggle had arrived. On the one hand, this was a delayed reaction to centuries of enslavement and apartheid, backed by the state. The latter had been pursuing armed policies all along, but now the intended victims were ‘shooting back’ in organized form. A problem was the day after: Legal and mass defense that could have been aided substantially by the likes of William Patterson, who created the template in the 1930s...”

The Southland from 1965 onwards became a warzone. *“August 1965 was a hinge moment in the Southland...It was epochal because of the ideological import, leading directly to the formation of the Community Alert Patrol, a precursor of the BPP, and the formation of a Black Nationalist grouping by the man then known as Ron Karenga.”* The BPP was engaged in a multitude of gun battles with the authorities and Ron Karenga’s police-supported US organization. Political assassinations and disappearances were not uncommon. Dozens were known to be killed. And it ultimately led to two massive climaxes. In 1969 the newly formed LAPD SWAT laid brutal siege to the BPP headquarters in Los Angeles. The FBI and police

went after the leadership of the BPP in the southland hoping to destroy it.

CPUSA members were inside the BPP HQ during the siege and were instrumental in getting local leaders in hiding or out of the country. The following year George Jackson's brother, Jonathan P. Jackson attempted to break out other imprisoned BPP members. It led to a gunfight between authorities and multiple people, including the younger Jackson, were killed.

“Perhaps not since 1865 had there been such an organized armed resistance by young Blacks. Unavoidably, this led to something new in US politics: a movement for gun control.”

Angela Davis would be put on trial for that conspiracy. Not long before this, she had joined CPUSA and the Che-Lumumba club with Charlene Mitchell. Something she was quite open about within the trial and media-which was a sign that the Smith Act days were behind them in a certain sense. The Party used the judicial template for Davis, and even though the BPP was fractured at this point between the Newton and Cleaver factions, Bobby Seale and local BPP members co-organized the Free Angela Davis movement with the CPUSA out of the Party's HQ in Los Angeles. This coalition and united front, which involved a massive international campaign getting millions of supporters for her freedom, was a shining example of what the CPUSA-BPP alliance could have been in the long term.

“It was also accurate to suggest the [Black Panther Party] also ‘raised the [CPUSA] into a position of great prominence in the United Front’ ...because of the important

contributions of the CP to the legal defense of arrested Panthers despite their...Maoist literature.”

However, the Jonathan Jackson event also led to internal conflict within the CPUSA. Some such as Henry Winston and James E. Jackson viewed it as a purely adventurist event. Angela Davis, Alexander, and Mitchell pushed back against this attitude and likened the event more to a slave uprising. Eventually, Winston and others backed down in Party papers. This ideological split, also exemplified by Harry Haywood and his removal from the Party, would rear its head again in the 90s when CPUSA had a sizeable split. Davis, Alexander, and Mitchell would leave the party at that point but Horne points to this situation as the genesis for that divide.

The concept of armed struggle, the central question of the book, is not a simple yes or no question. The BPP, and other groups at the time, engaged in armed offense and defense-armed struggle. The CPUSA did not but was a central organization in the background supporting the organizations that were engaged in that struggle. But that's not an indictment, as Horne explains, but perhaps a sign of an ideological weakness. Horne clearly shows the elements at play that are needed for armed struggle: a correct assessment of the balance of forces, international allies willing to give material aid and support, and a correct theoretical understanding of the material conditions.

The CPUSA was lacking in that latter quality per Horne, “*CP comrades had the advantage of being able to consult with advanced forces globally, be they in Cuba or Southern Africa, but were handicapped by their overestimation of the fruits of 1776...the normalization of*

settler colonialism...an underestimation of...class collaboration..."

On the contrary, the BPP was also making crucial mistakes. *"Unfortunately, over time the BPP—not least because of Cleaver's eclectic influence—was not able to strike an appropriate balance between the dual necessities of tactical non-violence and armed self-defense—and offense too, if need be."* And also their, *"enthralment with what had occurred in Cuba & what was going on in Angola, Mozambique... translating into over-determining armaments rather than a close analysis of the balance of forces in a regime...of settler colonialism and...class collaboration."*

As well as the fact that those international forces in Cuba, Angola, and Mozambique were more closely aligned with the USSR. They all received huge amounts of aid and specialized training from the Soviet Bloc. Cleaver and others' vitriolic attacks against the USSR severely hurt the BPP.

The Party during this time was able to regroup. In the late 1960's it had its first National Convention in years. Membership in Los Angeles County declined from the 40s peak but was over 1,000 members. Figures like Dorothy Healy ran quite successful electoral campaigns, amassing tens of thousands of votes. However, the Party, due to its ideological pitfall regarding settler colonialism, would stagnate and decline in subsequent decades. Only as of late has the Party locally regained momentum and is close to that membership total from the 60s and 70s when Angela Davis brought a sizeable boom to the Party. The BPP was violently destroyed by COINTELPRO and the US

government. Federal infiltration mortally wounded the BPP when the CPUSA was able to survive.

The inability to “strike an appropriate balance” within armed struggle by both the CPUSA and BPP led to a crisis within the Left Movement, which we may still not have recovered from. The BPP miscalculated or made worse the balance of forces domestically and internationally. So when they decided to “shoot back” it was from a place of alienation. The CPUSA's lack of armed defense for communities dealing with “fascist tactics” led to alienation. Because the Party was not engaged with that, it also led to stagnation, while the BPP was led to forced destruction.

Most people on the Left want to explain this phenomenon as a failure of the Old Left to recognize the US is already fascist. Horne refutes that slightly, and paints it more nuanced, “...*the White House was prosecuting a relentless campaign against the [BPP] but...the nation had yet to reach fascism...What had befuddled many [including both the CPUSA and BPP] was that...the ruling class was deploying fascist tactics against Black folk and bourgeois democracy for the...settler population.*” The settler colonial project, a reaction to Indigenous and African resistance in the US circumstance, is ideologically connected to fascism, the violent, reactionary, and terroristic reaction to a national crisis and a rising working class. That’s why there have been and continue to be latent fascist movements within the US.

That’s why the KKK, a fascist organization, predates the development of European fascism. The reality of this country, according to Horne, being still a bourgeois country is not to dismiss the analysis of people like George Jackson.

It's adding the analysis of settler colonialism to the question of fascism. The white settler population doesn't face fascism. They aren't dealing with the same America as Indigenous and Black communities and nations. And that material reality according to Horne was misunderstood by both the BPP and CPUSA.

There are many lessons and much historical information relayed by Horne in his new magnum opus. These lessons of armed struggle are even more crucial now with a resurgent Left movement and growing national crises. With the rise of overt fascist movements, with the increasing genocidal policies of the US exemplified in Palestine and against Indigenous nations, this book is a necessity for organizers. For those of us in the California southland, this book is a roadmap to where we have been and where we can go if we correctly understand how to "strike an appropriate balance" in our militant work against fascist LASD gangs and rising fascist militias in the state. It's also a warning to how state repression, alienating theoretical frameworks, and stagnating policies can hurt communist organizations.

LA hotel, hospitality workers prepare for strike with airport sit-in

Originally published on June 30, 2023 for People's World

LOS ANGELES-Next week, thousands of hotel and hospitality workers could go on strike in Los Angeles and Orange County, and the Phoenix metropolitan area. And they prepared for the possibility with a peaceful sit-in of civil disobedience at the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

The forced strike by members of Unite Here Local 11 is nationally important. Not only would it affect air traffic into and out of the nation's second-largest and sixth-largest cities, but it features a potential union demand for affordable housing for the thousands of workers who toil at the airport.

Given the nation's increasing crisis of affordable housing for working-class people from coast to coast, along with rising numbers of homeless, that's a demand that could be taken up elsewhere. Indeed, the Chicago Teachers Union campaigned for that cause, too, in past contract talks.

The LAX sit-in was at the airport's entrance on June 22. The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) arrested more

than 200 workers and community members, including several notable local officeholders, for participating in civil disobedience.

The sit-in was designed to “shut down LAX,” as a sign UNITE HERE Local 11 hotel and hospitality workers can and will “shut down this city,” as Local 11 co-president Kurt Petersen said at the rally in front of thousands of workers and community members.

In early June, some 96% of voting members of UNITE HERE Local 11 authorized the “largest industry-wide strike in U.S. history.” The local represents 32,000 room attendants, cooks, dishwashers, front desk agents, and food service workers in Los Angeles, Orange County, the Inland Empire, and parts of Arizona—most of whom could be on strike as early as July 4. Their contracts expire at midnight, on June 30.

The key demands of the workers are an immediate \$5 hourly wage increase to keep up with inflation, better family healthcare plans, a livable pension, the creation of a hospitality workforce housing fund, and safe and humane workloads.

The demand for more and better housing for working-class people is tied to two big upcoming sports events in L.A.: The 2026 men’s soccer World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympics, the first time ever two of the globe’s largest sporting events will occur in the same city back-to-back. Both competitions require “Olympic villages” to house the visiting athletes—and past such projects have presented two dimensions of the housing problems.

In both soccer and the Olympics, current housing for working-class people was torn down to make way for the

villages, leaving the residents to shift for themselves. And once the games were over, the developments became luxury dwellings. UNITE HERE's workforce housing fund is supposed to help solve at least the first of those two problems.

Past Olympics and World Cup tournaments have "left local governments indebted for years and have permanently displaced millions of poor residents," a UNITE HERE press release says. The issue of livable housing is vital in regard to these events. The 1984 Olympics in L.A. was an exception: Its Olympic Village became public housing.

Also, the capitalist propaganda filtered through these events—and their billions of dollars in advertising—could potentially be challenged by a county-wide strike as the next period of contract negotiations after this current one could be a week before the World Cup.

"I voted yes to strike because I commute two hours from my home in Apple Valley to downtown Los Angeles. I deserve to make enough money to live near where I work," said Brenda Mendoza, a uniform attendant at the JW Marriott LA Live.

Over 100 separate contracts are up with Hyatt, Hilton, Highgate, Accor, IHG, and Marriott. They're cumulatively valued at \$142.29 billion. These same hotels were given \$15 billion in federal bailouts during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic while cutting jobs by up to 95%—and not everyone who was laid off has been re-hired.

Profits surpass pre-pandemic levels

Hotel profits in Los Angeles and Orange County are greater now than they were at pre-pandemic levels,

Marriott's reported net income in the first quarter of 2023 was \$757 million, yet workers' wages are decreasing in value due to inflation and rising costs.

"L.A.'s tourism industry thrives on the hard work of their employees. But right now, minimum wage workers must work 100 hours a week just to afford an apartment in LA.," says City Councilwoman Katy Yaroslavsky. "It's time to raise the wage and make sure that the people who make Los Angeles a world-class destination can actually afford to live here," she added.

Local 11 co-president Kurt Petersen said "Hotel workers who work in the booming Los Angeles tourism industry must be able to live in Los Angeles. The industry shamelessly exploited the pandemic and is now reaping greater profits than ever before. Yet workers cannot afford to pay the rent.

"This 96% vote to authorize a strike sends a clear message to the industry that workers have reached their limit and are prepared to strike to secure a living wage," Petersen stated.

At the LAX sit-in, Petersen praised other recent strike efforts, by the United Teachers of Los Angeles/SEIU combination, the Writers Guild of America, Amazon workers, and Starbucks employees. Most of them were at the sit-in at LAX along with United Farm Workers and Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice.

The build-up to this potential strike has been in the making for months: A small strike at the airport, rallies in April and May, and the major strikes involving the other unions that have taken place in Los Angeles and Orange County over the last year.

Through that coalition and solidarity work between unions, UNITE HERE Local 11 and SEIU are also pushing the L.A. City Council and the California legislature and governor for a \$25 minimum wage.

With the strike imminent, a resolution to these 100 contracts could still be reached. However, if not, thousands of workers will “shut down this city.”

UNITE HERE Local 11 is riding a summer wave of discontent in the working class, and that energy was there at LAX where the community applauded the civil disobedience of hundreds in the face of the police.

Hundreds were arrested including elected City Council members Hugo Soto-Martinez and Nithya Raman and Assemblywoman Wendy Carrillo—though the latter was seen taking selfies with the police at the event and Soto-Martinez recently voted to increase police funding and recruitment.

However, this type of working-class strength and momentum can never be stopped or co-opted. UNITE HERE Local 11 is ready to go on strike, and the community is ready to support them.

Los Angeles Tenants Union: Stop gentrifying Los Angeles!

Originally published on October 4, 2023 for People's World, Co-written with Danny Estrada

LOS ANGELES—On Sunday, Oct. 1, the Los Angeles Tenants Union (LATU) and its eastside local, the Union de Vecinos (UDV), held a rally at Hollenbeck Park in Boyle Heights in the name of tenants and the right to housing for all.

The neighborhood is notably one of the last strong-standing enclaves of Latin and Chicano culture in Los Angeles and has battled with a sharp rise in gentrification over recent years as community members have been slowly pushed out by ever-increasing rents and costs of living.

Tensions between community members and real estate developers have been on open display in Boyle Heights and East L.A. for years, but they've heightened again over the summer since the Tiao Corporation announced plans to develop an unaffordable market-rate housing complex on the corner of Cesar Chavez and Chicago, in a historic area of Boyle Heights.

At the time of Tiao's announcement in June, community members made their objections known in droves at the Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council (BHNC) meeting, where they cited concerns that the development, which would only set aside five "affordable" units out of the 50 units it proposes, would simply invite further gentrification of the predominantly working-class neighborhood and push tenants out.

Opponents found the number especially egregious because residents in Boyle Heights have historically suffered some of the worst housing discrimination in Los Angeles.

The organizers first rallied at Hollenbeck Park and then marched up to Councilmember Kevin de Leon's office and the Boyle Heights City Hall, planning to rally there before marching further to Cesar Chavez Avenue.

Thousands of renters, community members, and activists, [according to local media](#), gathered for a peaceful demonstration of community solidarity in the face of the worsening economic dynamics of the city, particularly the untenable rise of rents that have forced so many in and around the neighborhood to leave their homes, and the gentrification that often prevents them from returning.

The demands of the community, LATU, and UDV were simple:

- Stop all evictions.
- Stop all rent increases.
- Stop all demolitions.
- Stop all reductions of services and new charges.
- Safe and sanitary housing.
- We want to live in peace.

- We want to live in good conditions.
- Enforcement of our rights.
- Accommodations for disabled and elderly people.
- Respect.

The tenants and community members planned to officially deliver these demands in front of de Leon's office. Unfortunately, officers from the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) Hollenbeck Division were unable to deal with the assembly of tenants peacefully.

At just after 11, as the march reached Boyle Heights City Hall, the office of Kevin de Leon, and speeches were given to the crowd of tenants out front, around a dozen LAPD officers suddenly attacked the peaceful rally and attempted to arrest attendees mid-speech. After a swift and resilient community response to the brutality on display, the police retreated back into LAPD's Hollenbeck Station.

The organizers then led the march up to Cesar Chavez Ave., where they held another portion of the rally, still chanting the demands of the tenants and community, before marching down the historic strip of the neighborhood, where they passed the site of the six-story development proposed by the Tiao Corporation, which is currently occupied by community-owned businesses, and which residents have started a [petition](#) against.

As the march made its way through, many members of the community came out to support the march, some sounding noisemakers off their balconies to the marchers below in solidarity. Members of UNITE HERE Local 11 are currently on strike in the Los Angeles area, with housing issues part of their demands, showing affordability is an issue for the whole working class in the area.

The lack of city and county protections for residents being priced out and communities being gentrified is creating a larger problem. Now, several organizations—from labor unions to tenants unions—are taking up the struggle for good living conditions, an end to evictions, and respect.

CPUSA participates in effort to win sanctuary city law in Los Angeles

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World**

LOS ANGELES—On the campaign trail, Donald Trump vowed to launch the “largest deportation program in American history” on day one of his presidency. With less than two months to go before he takes office, the immigrant rights movement is not waiting around to mobilize the resistance effort.

On Nov. 19, the Los Angeles City Council voted unanimously to pass a city ordinance that would make L.A. a sanctuary city. The ordinance passed with amendments

and will need a finalizing vote in the first week of December.

Members of the Communist Party USA from around Los Angeles County, led by CPUSA National Co-Chair Rossana Cambron, joined the coalition pushing for the measure in downtown street demonstrations earlier this month.

The coalition advocating L.A.'s designation as a sanctuary city includes a broad range of groups and organizations. | Matthew Hunter / People's World

The broad alliance advocating L.A.'s designation as a sanctuary city includes SEIU 721, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights L.A. (CHIRLA), DSA, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, ACLU SoCal, United Teachers of Los Angeles, and others.

The rapid increase in public and mass pressure after Trump's election win pushed city officials to expedite the measure's preliminary passing.

Former Mayor Eric Garcetti in 2019 signed an [executive action](#) to protect immigrants and migrants but refused to push a city law on the matter. In 2023, the city council voted for a sanctuary city law to be written and voted on within 60 days, but there was little to no movement since then until the mass pressure from broad coalitions.

Mayor Karen Bass [said](#) that she didn't know the city had no laws protecting immigrants; it will now. The semi-passed law will deny federal authorities like ICE access to city databases and resources.

However, the new district attorney and LAPD chief, Nathan Hochman and Jim McDonnell respectively, are far-

right figures who have promised to go after imaginary crime increases and immigrant community members.

McDonnell was selected by Bass, who [remarked](#) at the time she nominated him that he was a “leader, innovator, and change maker.” His appointment was approved by city council 11-2. Bruno Huizar of the California Immigrant Policy Center gave a conflicting report, “We strongly oppose McDonnell’s appointment due to his prior history of colluding with ICE.”

Members of the Communist Party pose for a group photo at the Nov. 9 demonstration in downtown L.A. | Matthew Hunter / People’s World

Trump is proposing massive deportations of immigrants and U.S. citizens, urged along ideologically by the Heritage Foundation. Project 2025, written by Heritage, has laid out detailed plans for deporting tens of millions of people. The person who wrote those plans, [Tom Homan](#), is Trump’s pick for border czar.

Los Angeles, home to many immigrants, is thus set to occupy a central role in the fight that’s about to unfold. Angelica Salas of CHIRLA reported that [80% of families](#) in the region have an immigrant in the family; Trump’s proposals to go after that community thus affect millions.

Marxist Theory on Elections, Fascism, and Why It Matters After Donald Trump's Win

Originally published in Red Star Tribune on November 22, 2024

Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 election-and the Democratic Party's significant underperformance-has created a storm of 'hot takes' and analysis from all sectors of politics. Is there a 'Red Wave', has the working class become more reactionary, is an overt fascist dictatorship inevitable, what could communists and the working class have done differently, and what should the working class do now?

There are two fundamental questions-that deeply interconnect-that communists must start asking themselves (and do the necessary theoretical and historical research).

Is the US on the road to fascism or is it already here—and ultimately how to combat it? How should communists adjust electoral strategies after the last few cycles?

Let's Look at Reality...the Numbers of the 2024 Election

Before diving into Marxist theories on elections within bourgeois societies—or the long-standing internal debate about the nature of fascism in the US—let's materially analyze the election results. The GOP—and an increasingly MAGA-controlled GOP—will be in control of all branches of the federal government. Kamala Harris received -8 million less votes than Biden in 2020.

Even though it's universally regarded in the Left and especially communist spaces that Harris ran a horrible campaign, it's surprising the degree of alienation and apathy we see from that drop-off. There was much talk about the collapse of the Liberal-Left alliance of 2020, and that number perhaps shows it more than anything.

When combined with the Green Party getting hundreds of thousands of more votes than in 2020 and PSL getting a historic turnout for a communist presidential ticket—150,503 votes at the time of writing—it's clear a shift from that alliance is a reality.

While it is hard to get an accurate gauge of the working class vote—exit polls don't often differentiate by class, and bourgeois understanding of class differs from Marxism—we do see that 50% of voters with an income under \$50,000 voted for Trump. Union households were almost evenly split, with 45% voting in favor of Trump.

Now, it's impossible to say Trump has a majority working class support, however, it's clear about half of the people who are poor in terms of income and union members supported a fascist candidate for President. That should alarm any communist organizer.

Some other data/facts that seem alarming:

- Voters 18-29 dropped off support for Democrats by 11 points-meaning Trump gained ground amongst young people drastically and across the board.
- 71% of voters are white regardless of class and 57% of them voted for Trump.
- 32% of voters said the “Economy” was the number 1 issue and 80% of them voted for Trump
- 68% of voters said the condition of the economy was “not so good/poor” and 70% of them voted for Trump
- Trump won the majority of votes in the suburbs, small cities, and rural areas which account for 70% of the electorate.

In terms of positive news, Independent voters are a larger voting bloc than Democratic registered voters and they lean liberal instead of reactionary MAGA-49% to 46%. There were quite a few electoral wins down the ballot that People's World covered quite well, such as abortion rights, minimum wage increases, ‘Worker’s Bill of Rights,’ strengthening labor rights, etc.

No matter how one slices it, though, the MAGA fascist movement has now developed over nearly a decade of organizing directly a strong base that is angry about the economy that has never recovered from neoliberal shock therapy and recession after recession. That base is a largely white-settler-population mainly and increasingly recruiting

young people who are most alienated by the decline and crisis of US capitalism. We see communities such as Latino men increasingly try to be accepted by the White Identity as well.

Furthermore, as it will be theoretically fleshed out later on in this article, the rise of Trump again and the growing acceptance of reactionary and demagogical politics is due to the Democratic establishment utterly capitulating to their own stated concern of the fascist threat MAGA represents. If the Democrats in power shifted policy and rhetoric to 1. Ruthlessly attack fascism, and 2. Relentlessly push left economic policies-the fascist danger wouldn't be a concern.

The onus was on the DNC and liberal bourgeois class to recognize the shift in the air-they didn't.

In seven battleground states (Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina, Nevada, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Michigan) Trump's margin of victory was larger than the combined third-party vote. They can't blame the Green Party or communists.

The tragic reality for many liberal working class people is that their party would rather continue to support the Palestinian genocide and increase profits for their donors than address the material needs of the people. The Democratic Party fundamentally isn't a worker's party but a party for the neoliberal capitalist wing of the ruling class. As we see, born out in the election, a capitulating bourgeois party lays the fertile ground for a fascist movement to smash the seemingly old order.

Marxist Theory on Elections

There was much debate and discussion in US communist circles concerning the right electoral strategy in this last election. And while most of that debate is now moot, there were and by default still are key distortions seen in those debates. Many offered plans of abstention, voting third-party, and voting for and organizing with the Harris campaign out of fear of Trump. Which of these methods have a Marxist theoretical foundation from which to argue? What did Marx, Engels, and Lenin say about bourgeois elections?

After the wave of revolutions rocked Europe in 1848-and most were defeated in counter-revolutionary waves-Marx and Engels had to assess what went wrong and where to improve. One key aspect was electoral strategies. A tendency of the 1848 revolutions was the capitulation of the bourgeois class towards the landed aristocracy to ‘reform’ absolutist Europe instead of propelling for any radical change-a clear difference from the days of the French and Haitian revolutions. Marx and Engels in 1850 reported to the First International:

“[T]hat workers’ candidates are nominated everywhere in opposition to bourgeois-democratic candidates. As far as possible they should be League members and their election should be pursued by all possible means. Even where there is no prospect of achieving their election the workers must put up their own candidates to preserve their independence, to gauge their own strength and to bring their revolutionary position and party standpoint to public

attention. They must not be led astray by the empty phrases of the democrats, who will maintain that the workers' candidates will split the democratic party and offer the forces of reaction the chance of victory. All such talk means, in the final analysis, that the proletariat is to be swindled. The progress which the proletarian party will make by operating independently in this way is infinitely more important than the disadvantages resulting from the presence of a few reactionaries in the representative body. If the forces of democracy take decisive, terroristic action against the reaction from the very beginning, the reactionary influence in the election will already have been destroyed."

Marx and Engels clearly develop the theory of working class independence here and how that would necessarily function through an independent workers' party. They need to run their own candidates "even when there's no prospect" of winning. Because for Marx and Engels elections within a bourgeois democracy were not fundamentally about changing the social fabric that way, but as a "gauge" of the revolutionary strength of the communist organizations and working class. What about the threat of a reactionary takeover of bourgeois democracy? Again, Marx and Engels center class independence and reject that "swindle" because, as they see it, "*If the forces of democracy take decisive, terroristic action against the reaction from the very beginning, the reactionary influence in the election will already have been destroyed.*"

Engels's speech to the First International after the Paris Commune reiterated this theory, *“For us abstention is impossible. The workers' party already exist as a political party in most countries. The experience of real life and the political oppression imposed on them by existing governments...force the workers to concern themselves with politics, whether they wish or not. To preach abstention would be to push them into the arms of bourgeois politics.”* So abstaining from engaging in electoral politics was also out of the question for the original heads of Marxism. The masses are deeply affected by bourgeois politics-political repression and economic exploitation exist. So, to ignore that area of struggle outright would in reality push the working class and oppressed people to bourgeois politics. Engels went further to explain the importance of electoral work for communists:

“We seek the abolition of Classes. What is the means of achieving it? The political domination of the proletariat . . . revolution is the supreme act of politics; whoever wants it must also want the means, political action, which prepares for it, which gives the workers the education for revolution and without which the workers will always be duped ... But the politics which are needed are working class politics; the workers' party must be constituted not as the tail of some bourgeois party, but as an independent party with its own objective, its own politics. The political freedoms, the right of assembly and association and the freedom of the press, these are our weapons- should we fold our arms and abstain if they seek to take them away from us? It is said that every political act implies recognition of the status quo. But when this status quo gives us the means of

protesting against it, then to make use of these means is not to recognize the status quo.”

We see clearly from Engels that engaging in the electoral struggle is not accepting the “status quo” of bourgeois politics. Still, it is a vehicle for training and organizing the working class. That’s if it’s conducted not as a tailist endeavor behind the bourgeoisie. Even within this polemic, Engels echoes the concept of capitalism producing its own gravediggers—the bourgeois rights won by the masses are tools to undermine that very authority.

In a letter to Paul Lafargue, Engels went further to connect the concepts of armed struggle with electoral work as a means of pushing the bourgeois to undermine its own authority and propel workers to revolution.

“Do you realize now what a splendid weapon you in France have had in

your hands for forty years in universal suffrage; if only people knew how to use it! It's slower and more boring than the call to revolution, but it's ten times more sure, and what is even better, it indicates with the most perfect accuracy the day when a call to armed revolution has to be made; it's even ten to one that universal suffrage, intelligently used by the workers, will drive the rulers to overthrow legality, that is, to put us in the most favorable position to make the revolution.”

Russian revolutionary icon Vladimir Lenin also had much to say about electoral strategies leading up to, during, and after the Revolution. This was a topic of much concern for Bolsheviks and Marxists in that era even with the absolutism of the Tsarism regime and the de-facto police

state. Marxists in the Russian empire didn't resort purely to armed struggle even when democratic means of struggle were unavailable. Lenin, in 1897 while in exile wrote to fellow Marxists struggling against Tsarist Russia.

“The attitude of the working class, as a fighter against the autocracy, towards all the other social classes and groups in the political opposition is very precisely determined by the basic principles of Social-Democracy expounded in the famous Communist Manifesto. The Social-Democrats support the progressive social classes against the reactionary classes, the bourgeoisie against the representatives of privileged landowning estate and the bureaucracy, the big bourgeoisie against the reactionary strivings of the petty bourgeoisie. This support does not presuppose, nor does it call for, any compromise with non-Social-Democratic programmes and principles—it is support given to an ally against a particular enemy. Moreover, the Social-Democrats render this support in order to expedite the fall of the common enemy, but expect nothing for themselves from these temporary allies, and concede nothing to them.

The Social-Democrats support every revolutionary movement against the present social system, they support all oppressed nationalities, persecuted religions, downtrodden social estates, etc., in their fight for equal rights...”

“The proletariat alone can be—and because of its class position must be—a consistently democratic, determined enemy of absolutism, incapable of making any concessions or compromises. The proletariat alone can be the vanguard fighter for political liberty and for democratic institutions...”

That is why the merging of the democratic activities of the working class with the democratic aspirations of other classes and groups would weaken the democratic movement, would weaken the political struggle, would make it less determined, less consistent, more likely to compromise. On the other hand, if the working class stands out as the vanguard fighter for democratic institutions, this will strength the democratic movement, will strengthen the struggle for political liberty, because the working class will spur on all the other democratic and political opposition elements, will push the liberals towards the political radicals, will push the radicals towards an irrevocable rupture with the whole of the political and social structure of present society...”

“Even in England we see that powerful social groups support the privileged position of the bureaucracy and hinder the complete democratisation of that institution. Why? Because it is in the interests of the proletariat alone to democratise it completely ; the most progressive strata of the bourgeoisie defend certain prerogatives of the bureaucracy and are opposed to the election of all officials, opposed to the complete abolition of electoral qualifications, opposed to making officials directly responsible to the people, etc., because these strata realise that the proletariat will take advantage of such complete democratisation in order to use it against the bourgeoisie. This is the case in Russia, too. Many and most diverse strata of the Russian people are opposed to the omnipotent, irresponsible, corrupt, savage, ignorant and parasitic Russian bureaucracy. But except for the proletariat, not one of these strata would agree to the complete

democratisation of the bureaucracy, because all these strata (bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, the “intelligentsia” in general) have some ties with the bureaucracy, because all these strata are kith and kin of the Russian bureaucracy.”

Lenin quite clearly is not pushing a sectarian or alienating policy from the masses. The fight for democratic and political liberty was a means of organizing the struggle in the short and long term, and it was one the working class-and particularly an independent working class party-to push for that struggle because other classes had capitulating tendencies.

Now of course, this is not the totality of theoretical works by these respective revolutionaries or the entirety of the Marxist tradition. However, this does lay out the principle theories within the methodology of Marxism. One must be careful to always consider their local and national material conditions when trying to apply to theory as well.

Marxist Theory on Fascism and Is the US Fascist?

Now, like the topic of electoral strategy and theory, this won't be an exhaustive examination of the topic of fascism in the US. That discussion would need to be centered fully and be collective in nature to truly arrive at any materialist truth. But, with the electoral win of Donald Trump who most consider a fascist, it's imperative to at least have a cursory discussion of the matter of fascism is relevant to a discussion of elections.

Marxists have been at the forefront of combating fascism since its development in the 20th century. But it's important to also include Indigenous and decolonial perspectives on the topic of fascism-not least because the US is a settler colonial project but also to connect (settler) colonialism to imperialism and then to fascism globally. As Georgi Dimitrov echoed from the Comintern, *“in a more or less developed form, fascist tendencies and the germs of a fascist movement are to be found almost everywhere.”*

Comintern General Secretary Dimitrov laid out what fascism in power is:

“Comrades, fascism in power was correctly described by the Thirteenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International as the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital...it is fiendish chauvinism. It is a government system of political gangsterism, a system of provocation and torture practised upon the working class and the revolutionary elements of the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. It is medieval barbarity and bestiality, it is unbridled aggression in relation to other nations...acting as the spearhead of international counter-revolution, as the chief instigator of imperialist war...Fascism is the power of finance capital itself. It is the organization of terrorist vengeance against the working class and the revolutionary section of the peasantry and intelligentsia. In foreign policy, fascism is jingoism in its most brutal form, fomenting bestial hatred of other nations.”

As I wrote about in the context of fascist movements and policies in California- Guyanese revolutionary, theorist, and

historian Walter Rodney identified fascism as “*a deformity of capitalism*” that “*heightens the imperialist tendency towards domination which is inherent in capitalism,*” and “*safeguards the principle of private property.*” Likewise, he asserted that “*at the same time, fascism immeasurably strengthens the institutional racism already bred by capitalism...*”

Indian Marxist economist Prabhat Patnaik in his work *Neoliberalism and Fascism* assessed that “[fascists] invariably invoke acute hatred against some hapless minority groups, treating them as the ‘enemy within’ in a narrative of aggressive hyper-nationalism, and attribute all the existing social ills of the ‘nation’ to the presence of such groups; second, they are based not only on prejudice but also on complete unreason, in the sense that no amount of evidence can possibly shake off such prejudice; third, they set themselves up as movements, trying to acquire social hegemony, as distinct from mere secret societies or murderous gangs (though the latter may also be inspired by fascist ideology and may find room within these movements); and fourth, they are not averse to the use of street violence for achieving their political ends...”

A key aspect here-or tendency-of fascism is to close democratic avenues of struggle. That the working class is forced out of the political struggle is a common move by fascism. There has been much debate on that concept in relation to the US. George Jackson said, “The fascists have deliberately manufactured a false sense of security...They will never permit conditions to go out of their control...” He went further and added, “Conditions will never be altogether right for a broadly based revolutionary war

unless the fascists are stricken by an uncharacteristic fit of total madness. Should we wait for something that is not likely to occur at least for decades? The conditions that are not present must be manufactured.” In response to Lenin and other Marxist theorists in regards to electoral work, Jackson said:

“Lenin, Guevara and Fanon, all in their particular fashion, postulate that before revolution can take place, all other forms of redress must be exhausted, clearly exhausted. Electoral processes must have broken down, the confidence of the electorate in any of the old forms completely shattered, confidence in the ability of the old system to honestly organize any aspect of public life must be shaken to the core. Years and years ago it may have been an acceptable tactic to organize a people’s ticket of solid worker and revolutionary credentials and arm it with an ideal platform—only to be defeated by a mud-slinging opportunist-warlord, demonstrably inferior, scum-swilling pig. Then pass out a pamphlet to explain to the people how the system has failed them, or speak it in Pershing Square—or, years ago, in the Campus Hall. Today it is not a tactic—it’s counterrevolution.”

According to Jackson—and reflective of the New Left and its theoretical descendants—the US was already fascist and electoral work was “counterrevolution.” Marxist historian Gerald Horne has critiqued this analysis from Jackson and broadly the New Left movement, “...the White House was prosecuting a relentless campaign against the [BPP] but... the nation had yet to reach fascism...What had befuddled many [including both the CPUSA and BPP] was that...the

ruling class was deploying fascist tactics against Black folk and bourgeois democracy for the...settler population.”

And this is where we get into the murky waters of theory meeting specific material conditions. The US being a settler colonial project-and in the last ~100 years becoming the imperial hegemony-has created unique dynamics. Dimitrov wrote about this phenomenon:

“The development of fascism, and the fascist dictatorship itself, assume different forms in different countries, according to historical, social and economic conditions and to the national peculiarities, and the international position of the given country. In certain countries, principally those in which fascism has no broad mass basis and in which the struggle of the various groups within the camp of the fascist bourgeoisie itself is rather acute, fascism does not immediately venture to abolish parliament, but allows the other bourgeois parties, as well as the Social-Democratic Parties, to retain a modicum of legality.”

Sai Englert in their book “Settler Colonialism: an Introduction” makes a point that settler colonialism is not, “a discrete, self-contained structure of domination, but one that interacts with—and is co-constituent of—key processes of domination...Capitalism, racism, and dispossession, as well as different forms of state violence and gender oppression, emerged within, through, and/or in relation to settler colonial expansion...”

Patrick Wolfe refers to settler colonial “invasion” as not an “event” but a “structure”, and Englert comments that, “as long as the colonial structures (states, property, regimes, etc.) that give settlers access to Indigenous land, labor, and resources,” settler colonialism “persists.” It

should be quoted at length here but Aimé Césaire also makes a theoretical connection between (settler) colonialism and fascism:

“People are surprised, they become indignant. They say: "How strange! But never mind-it's Nazism, it will pass!" And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack. Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler inhabits him, that Hitler is his demon...At the end of capitalism, which is eager to outlive its day, there is Hitler. At the end of formal humanism and philosophic renunciation, there is Hitler... Between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses.”

The debate about the application of anti-fascist theory and anti-colonial theory is not a separate conversation—especially in the US. The question of “Is the US fascist already” is perhaps lacking dialectical materialist framing. The US is the imperial hegemony—and in perpetual crisis—so the “power of finance” capital is there to a certain degree because Imperialism is the monopoly stage of finance capital as Lenin said. And it would be preposterous to say the US hasn’t reached that stage of capital and is in crisis. However, due to the settler colonial contradictions and influence on the imperial and capitalist processes of the US, we perhaps have fascist movements that will not outright ban parties, etc.—as Dimitrov said was a possibility.

We also have to see the clear voting bloc of white voters—and especially workers in the above section on the 2024 election—as a byproduct of settler colonial class collaborationism; and if class collaborationism is a key aspect of fascism developing, then the US settler colonial project is fertile ground for fascism to sprout and grow. It’s not an equating of colonialism and fascism, but looking at how they intertwine and affect each other. It is imperative to ultimately know how to undermine the structures of all these oppressive and exploitative systems.

Again, this is not, and can not be, an exhaustive list of theoretical polemics on fascism and electoral strategies. That needs to be done in your collective. No matter where you fall on some of these debates/questions, the struggle against capitalism, imperialism, fascism, and (settler) colonialism is still here. These are deeply interconnected structures. Now I might personally disagree with George Jackson’s assessments of the worth of electoral work—for

the aforementioned reasons stated and quoted—but he was absolutely right, and perhaps more so now than ever when he stated:

“Settler your quarrels, come together, understand the reality of our situation, understand that fascism is already here, that people are already dying who could be saved, that generations more will die or live poor butchered half-lives if you fail to act. Do what must be done, discover your humanity and your love in revolution. Pass on the torch. Join us, give up your life for the people.”

Community Self-Defense Coalition in Los Angeles Forms Against Fascism

Originally published on April 3, 2025 for Red Star
Tribune

LOS ANGELES—Over a thousand people and representatives from over 60 organizations marched through the streets of downtown on February 17—Presidents’ Day—from Olvera Street to Los Angeles City Hall and back in response to President Trump’s fascist campaign against immigrants and migrants across America.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have already announced they have arrested nearly 200 people in the L.A. County area, and the rumored threat of more “large-scale” operations coming soon looms over the immigrant community in the region.

In response to these events and the history of others, community members first gathered at the Plaza Olvera, the historic center of the old Pueblo, starting the morning off with a rally with several speakers from the endorsing organizations. Soon, the large, diverse crowd of around 1,000 with a myriad of different national flags prepared themselves to march down Alameda Street before holding another brief speaking segment in front of the Metropolitan Detention Center, a federal holding facility that flanks the Roybal Federal Building.

The march then took a turn and marched through Little Tokyo, while referencing the treatment of the Japanese-American community during the 1940s, proclaiming that they “will never let [ethnic cleansing] happen again to our neighbors,” and landed at the steps of City Hall to protest directly at the doorstep of the institution which they say has failed to do its job of protecting the vulnerable immigrant community.

Many organizers and speakers of the march spoke of feeling that the city and county political establishment are capitulating to Trump’s Project 2025 and not using the recent Sanctuary City ordinance to halt these ICE raids.

Due to the perceived lack of protection offered by the municipal government, a new coalition has formed among several community organizations to protect their communities from local and federal law enforcement agencies’ efforts to rip apart families. The Community Self-Defense Coalition of Los Angeles (CSDC) formed in the last two weeks with over 60 organizations having signed on and endorsed its mission.

Including Centro C.S.O., chapters of Jewish Voices for Peace and Students for Justice in Palestine, Union de Barrio, the National Lawyers Guild, the L.A. Hands Off Cuba Committee, Black Alliance for Peace, the Rosemead Tenants Union, the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice, and dozens more. The coalition is also seeking to extend to other communities in Southern California with large immigrant populations.

The “Points of Unity” for the coalition are as follows, as listed on the coalition’s Instagram page:

- End police & ICE terrorism in our communities! NO to Raids, Deportations & family separation!
- Money for Public Education and Social Services! Not Fascism or Genocide!
- End US intervention in Nuestra America, Africa, Asia, Middle East
- Close ALL Concentration Camps (Immigration Detention facilities, Prisons)
- We will NOT collaborate with ICE, police, sheriffs.
- This Land belongs to Indigenous people; (Tongva, Kizh, Chumash, all original protectors of the land)
- We will struggle for Self-Determination for ALL oppressed people and our future generations!

Community organizer Gabriel Quiroz Jr. of Centro C.S.O. out of Boyle Heights, when interviewed about the coalition his organization helped found, remarked that it was “formed to protect our Raza from these racist right-wing attacks on our people, the constant executive orders and talks about mass deportations are a direct attack on our

Raza,” and was confident that the Chicano/Latin community would, “stand up and fight back.”

The coalition has organized community patrols “in Boyle Heights and East Los investigating reports of ICE Activity and talking with and informing our Raza of their rights,” and seeks to establish branches of the coalition in other communities in Southern California where immigrant communities are at risk, currently seeking to build coalitions in San Diego and the Inland Empire in addition to Los Angeles. Several community patrols have publicized encounters with ICE and law enforcement warding community members away from them and generally peacefully harassing the ICE agents until they leave the respective neighborhoods. So far, it has not escalated into armed self-defense like in a similar situation in Lincoln Heights.

As the far-right continues to escalate and neoliberal politicians continue to capitulate in LA, the clash between immigrant and migrant-based communities and law enforcement will only increase. The rise of coalitions such as the Community Self-Defense Coalition in Los Angeles proves the organizing potential of the immigrant and migrant communities, as well as the wider progressive movements’ ability to unify in the face of fascist repression.

Hundreds March in Solidarity with Palestine and Immigrant Community in South East Los Angeles

Originally published on April 4, 2025 for People's World. Co-written with Danny Estrada

The recently renamed Richard Castro Jr. Club of Southeast Los Angeles, CPUSA, joined over a dozen organizations to rally for “Grand March”, including Mexico’s Morena (Movimiento de Regeneracion Nacional) party, UTLA, Teamsters Mobilize, Youth for Environmental Justice Southeast Los Angeles, the Harriet Tubman Center, Communities for a Better Environment, Mobilize for Immigrants, Labor for Palestine, the Peace and Freedom Party, Midnight Books, the East Los Angeles Brown Bears, People’s Struggle San Fernando Valley, the Educators Defense Network, the Stop LASD Spying coalition, and Long Beach Banner Drop for Palestine.

Despite a lack of more substantial labor support, the march was co-organized and endorsed by supporters of Mexico's ruling Morena Party, currently led by popular Mexican president Claudia Sheinbaum. Establishing organizational ties and practices across the US/Mexico border is a clear escalation of the international struggle in response to Trump's fascist immigration policy.

It will have to be seen how activists in support of immigrants in America engaging in dialogue with progressive forces in the home countries of many immigrants will impact the struggle here, as the potential for such connections appears to be massive.

The rally took on more internationalist tones by connecting the struggle against immigrants to the genocide against Palestine. The slogans promoting the event featured "Stop deportations" and "Liberate Palestine." Organizers called for an end to ICE presence in Huntington Park and the greater southeast Los Angeles area alongside calls for peace and an end to the genocide in Palestine.

With the Peace and Freedom Party and co-organizer for the rally, Danny Lopez commented, "We would like to see more" labor participation in the southeast part of the county. When asked why Huntington Park was selected for the march instead of more traditional activist hubs like Boyle Heights or downtown Los Angeles, he responded that activists and organizers have "historically ignored" this area. However, he notes that "Trump's moves at the national level are having [local] collaboration efforts [with] the Huntington Park Police Department."

As the Trump Administration continues to escalate its war on immigrants, documented and undocumented,

activists in the communities that will be hit hardest are already organizing the working class to combat the offensive. At the march, as at many actions recently, organizers handed out red “know-your-rights” cards to bystanders, which reminded individuals of their rights when dealing with federal and local officers.

The community received the march in kind, with many patrons, employees, and small business owners coming out to ring bells and wave flags in support of the march and of their fellow community members as they marched down Pacific, some even joining the march.

Local educator and community organizer Aaron Reveles also spoke at the event, saying the “political corruption” of the smaller Los Angeles county cities can’t be ignored. He continued that the “political struggle” must be had in these smaller localities as well as in the Los Angeles metro or Long Beach areas. Organizers continued to stress the importance of the southeast region of Los Angeles County, as a large swath of working class and immigrant-descended neighborhoods typically forgotten by government and capital.

Historic Hands Off Protest in Infamous Los Angeles Suburb

Originally published on April 7, 2025 for People's World

LAKESWOOD, Calif— The national Hands Off event on April 5 led to mass rallies and protests across the country. With the fascist onslaught against social services and working class rights, organizers in the infamous suburb of Lakewood pulled off a historic protest. In perhaps the largest protest in Lakewood city history, over 4,000 people crowded both sides of the street outside the city hall and Los Angeles Sheriff Department station.

Lakewood Indivisible organized the rally, and when interviewed by People's World, the lead organizer, Heather Rodriguez, said, "It's a lot more people than we expected, but we know that people are passionate, and everybody cares about something that's being threatened by this administration. So there's a lot of people that have a grievance and a lot of people that want to be here and help protest."

The city of Lakewood is best known for the “Lakewood Plan,” which was a suburban development plan that pioneered our current non-walkable cities built around shopping malls. Most importantly, as detailed in Mike Davis's *City of Quartz*, Lakewood was one of the key sites of “white flight” from downtown and west Los Angeles. The city made a deal with the county supervisors to “contract its vital services...at cut-rate prices.”

The genius of this idea is that it would be financed by a regressive sales tax instead of progressive property taxes. So with zoning out “service-demanding low-income residents and renting population,” the Lakewood Plan safeguarded petty-bourgeois, mainly white, property from Black and Brown people. Gary Miller in *Cities By Contract* referred to the Lakewood Plan as a “revolt of the rich against the poor.”

However, the dynamics of Lakewood have shifted since its inception. For example, in 1970, the population was 98.5% white—today, it's down to 31%. The majority of the city is now multi-racial and multi-national. Also, about one out of ten people are over the age of 65 and are eligible for social security, and one out of five were born outside the US.

Heather Rodriguez, when asked about the importance of a suburb like Lakewood now experiencing class struggle, said, “I think that there's been a lot of groups of people that have been historically ignored. I think we see a lot of people here that are older, that are senior citizens, who are at risk for having their medical [benefits] cut, their social security cut, a lot of these things that we rely on. And I think it's easy to think that being in a suburb, people are

very settled and not very many activists. But these people are so passionate about it as well. Sometimes they just need a rallying cry to get everybody active.”

One of the critiques from the Left of the Hands Off event messaging was the focus on “Hands Off NATO” and the lack of focus on the US and Israeli genocide against Palestine. When asked about this criticism, she responded, “I think that is one of the problems that I've seen from especially younger Democrats. A lot of them chose not to vote for Kamala [Harris] because they felt like she was too soft on Israel's genocide of Palestine. And I think that's a missed opportunity [by the Democratic Party]...You don't have to mire yourself in debates over different people's techniques. You can just say that there is people suffering in Palestine, and they need to be protected, and genocide is wrong no matter who's perpetrating it..I think that's a massive misstep for a lot of these more center-left groups... Indivisible's national stance is to support Palestine.”

Thousands of people mobilized in a historically suburban and petty-bourgeois community because Trump is attacking the working class and oppressed people. New mass organizations like Lakewood Indivisible have formed and are starting to bridge this geographical gap in Los Angeles organizing.

As Rodriguez said, “If you are interested in doing something like this in your hometown, start it. Join another [organization] if you can. Make one of your own...” The city of Lakewood has never seen class struggle to this degree, showing there's rising consciousness among people and communities that wasn't there before—is a new qualitative stage of the struggle approaching?

Emergency Southwest Summit Against Deportations in Los Angeles Calls for United Resistance to Donald Trump and Fascism

Originally published on April 15, 2025 for People's World

BOYLE HEIGHTS, Calif—Dozens of organizations and hundreds of activists gathered in historic East Los Angeles to convene the Emergency Southwest Summit Against Deportations. The mass coalition Legalization For All initiated the two-day Summit in the wake of Donald Trump's fascist attacks on immigrants. The Department of Homeland Security told Newsweek that over 100,000 deportations have taken place already this year under Trump's second term. For comparison, in Biden's last year, he deported 271,000 people—the highest in about a decade. Trump's on his way—if these numbers are correct—to beating that decade-record number from last year. There

have also been over 600 students who've had their visas revoked—mainly targeting Palestinian solidarity organizers.

Locally, it was reported on April 10 that two ICE agents had attempted to gain access to elementary school students under the pretense of conducting a wellness check. The school's staff and educators denied them access and were taught Know-Your-Right procedures by Summit co-organizers Union del Barrio.

Other organizations featured were: co-organizer Centro CSO, United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), Teamsters, Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, Oakland Alliance Against Police Repression, La Meza Nacional de Brown Berets, Silicon Valley Immigration Committee, Students for a Democratic Society, Committee for Solidarity with People of El Salvador, Portland Contra la Deportaciones, Pierce County Immigration Community, Migrante, Proyecto Pastoral, Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee, FRSO, Community Self-Defense Coalition Los Angeles, Eagle Pass Border Coalition, and more.

The Summit featured guest speakers such as famed immigration rights activist Elvira Arellano, labor and immigrant rights organizer Angelica Reyes, historic Brown Beret co-founder and current Centro CSO member Carlos Montes, and Luna Baez, the daughter of currently imprisoned Jennette Vizguerra. Reyes remarked that “there’s 6,000 ICE [field] agents. There’s many more us,” to roaring cheers. Baez emotionally called for collective action for her mom and others like her, saying, “These families keep being separated unjustly...let’s get my mom home. She shouldn’t be there.”

It also had panel discussions on coalition building, grassroots organizing, building solidarity, and organizing the fight against Trump. There were multiple workshops on community defense tactics, developing rapid response networks, fighting deportations, working towards sanctuary status, and organizing for May Day. There were also cultural performances in poetry readings by Viva Padilla, East Los Soul, and a Know-Your-Right skit performance by Teatro de Centro CSO. The delegates from the organizations voted on two major resolutions. The first condemned the “anti-immigrant attacks and mass deportations” under Trump while calling for “united resistance” to “defend each other from all forms of state repression.” Ultimately, it calls for a commitment to “organizing, educating, and mobilizing in our communities” to develop “networks of resistance—community defense, rapid response, and grassroots organizing to confront these attacks...” The second resolution called for a “powerful, united presence in the streets on May Day as we march for immigrant rights and workers’ dignity.” Finishing with “No human being is illegal! No more deportations! No more raids! Legalization for All!”

The Emergency Southwest Summit Against Deportations is one of many signs of a shift in the class struggle as Trump’s MAGA fascist policies are hurting more people. The growing calls for organized community defense and the increasing signs of broad coalitions forming—with rising militancy—show that the working class is preparing for the necessary struggle against fascism.

Los Angeles Rebellion of 2025: What Does it Mean?

Originally published on June 10, 2025 for Red Star
Tribune

"Insurrection is an art quite as much as war... The first rule is never to play with insurrection unless you are fully prepared to face the consequences."

– **Friedrich Engels**, *The Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany* (1852)

There is much discussion about what exactly the anti-ICE protests are becoming—isolated protests, local uprising, or the start of something far more eventful. This recent episode of resistance to fascism started on June 4 when ICE and Border Patrol arrested 200 immigrants, mostly at regularly scheduled court appearances or interviews. It has now spiraled into organized and spontaneous community defense and direct action throughout Southern California.

The community of Paramount was able to isolate and block a Border Patrol and ICE raid for a whole day. Clashes in Compton, San Diego, Little Tokyo, and other places have become more common. There's also been Homeland Security, FBI, California National Guard, and Marines sent in to help local police and ICE continue the raids and try to quell the now constant mass protests and community defense actions.

We have seen instances of people erecting barricades, throwing Molotov cocktails, and getting into skirmishes with the violent police who have been indiscriminately shooting “less lethals” rounds at peaceful protesters, women, children, and the elderly.

The fascist violence, terrorism, kidnappings, and now attempted military occupation of Los Angeles and Southern California are the foundation of this uprising. The mainstream media and politicians like Karen Bass will want to continue to demonize the “violent” protests and act like the pigs are just reacting to the rightfully angry community while supporting the LAPD shooting people.

"To delay the uprising now would be fatal. History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could win today (and will certainly win today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything." – **Lenin**, Letter to the Central Committee (October 24, 1917)

All solidarity and support must be given to the organizations on the ground leading the struggle—Community Self-Defense Coalition, Union del Barrio, Centro CSO, and so many others (most of them in the

coalition). Now is not the time to give ground to fascist violence and rhetoric. This is the start of a long struggle for liberation, justice, and freedom. All power to the people!

Lessons from the Los Angeles Uprising of 2025: Diversity of Tactics and Strategy

Originally published on June 23, 2025 for Red Star
Tribune

“The struggle is my life. I will continue fighting for freedom until the end of my days. But we must recognize that tactics must be adapted to conditions—sometimes negotiations, sometimes mass mobilization, and, when necessary, armed resistance.”

– Nelson Mandela, *Conversations with Myself* (2010)

LOS ANGELES—President Donald Trump’s assault on the migrant and immigrant communities of Los Angeles has passed the 100-day mark, syncopated by relentless

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol raids on workplaces and homes. Since June 6, the Trump administration has kidnapped 4,163 people across the L.A. area, according to public data released on Aug. 6.

With the military takeover of the city, via federalized National Guardsmen and Marines, L.A. has become Ground Zero for the current anti-fascist struggle that expanded into Washington D.C., and which is now encroaching on Chicago and other cities.

Dozens have now been murdered and wounded by ICE this year, with that number most likely to rise by the time this is released. And at the point of production for this documentary, a reported 1,800 people are missing from the ICE concentration camp in Florida alone. Thousands of people have been kidnapped and disappeared.

Jaime Alanís Garcia was killed in a raid in Ventura County farmland, falling nearly 30 feet to his death. Day laborer Roberto Carlos Montoya Valdez was killed in an ICE raid at a Monrovia Home Depot location.

In an act of collaboration with the federal government, L.A. District Attorney Nathan Hochman charged 71 people with crimes at anti-ICE protests, with one, Adrienne Villa, a resident of the city's long-standing "Skid Row" homeless neighborhood, receiving 14 charges and an unaffordable \$1.33 million bail.

Villa was soon found hanged in her cell in June, only several hours after her arrest, but the details of her death were only disclosed by the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in August. She is the first anti-ICE protester to die in police custody.

The FBI also raided and harassed organizers with the Centro Community Service Organization (CSO) in connection with charges filed against Alejandro Orellana, an East L.A. activist who handed out face shields to demonstrators.

It has become clear that a diversity of tactics is necessary for the struggle against capitalism, imperialism, and fascism. Regardless of the legality or perceived “illegality” of these respective tactics and strategies, police and fascist repression have been a through-line across the board.

“We must be flexible; we must be able to employ the most varied methods of struggle, adapting them to changing conditions. At one moment, we must emphasize legal work, at another, illegal work—but always with the aim of strengthening the revolution.”

– Vladimir Lenin, “Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder (1920)

What’s the right response? How do other areas prepare? Which tactics should you and the organization you’re in pick up? How can we organize this resistance to push back and launch a successful offensive against Capital? These are all prescient questions for organizers and revolutionaries in the belly of the beast.

“Peaceful” Protests and Mass Mobilizations

“The revolutionary must master all forms of struggle—from legal parliamentary activity to clandestine work, from

economic strikes to armed uprising—and be ready to shift swiftly from one to another as conditions demand.” – Joseph Stalin, “Concerning Questions of Leninism” (1926)

From the No Kings protests to the ANSWER Coalition, we’ve seen massive “peaceful” protests throughout the county. Mass mobilizations from SEIU after their union president was arrested by federal Gestapo, to IBEW, UTLA, and other local unions have also been a semi-consistent trend over this current period of struggle.

There has been much discussion and debate, as there always is with this particular tactic, over its efficacy. There’s the obvious concern about political movements being co-opted into political theatrics with these events—the idea that political momentum gets sapped by less-than-dubious figures, especially in the case of the No Kings “organizers,” is not entirely out of the question. In the same way, we must be concerned by state or non-state agent provocateurs at these protests; we should be concerned about the ruling class co-opting our movement.

These types of NGO- or bourgeois-funded events largely involve mobilizing those who are not organized, liberal/progressive in their ideology, and overall not perceived as “revolutionary.” However, it usually involves mass mobilization of the general community. As we will get to, the organized or spontaneous, more radical actions usually draw a far smaller crowd. The Mayor’s office said only 30,000 people showed up to the No Kings rally in LA, but on the ground, it seemed significantly bigger. If I had to estimate, it was over 50,000. And across the country, it was 4-6 million people.

The idea that these crowds that don't materialize from thin air—they must come from our communities—can not be organized and are stuck in liberal politics is a defeatist attitude. It's not so much a “meet the people where they are” as it is; these are people clearly wanting political resistance. It's up to us as communists and organizers to create the infrastructure for that energy to shift from tailist tendencies. The reality of Democratic and capital co-opting of the Black Lives Matter movement, Occupy, etc., is not proof these millions of people are hopelessly stuck—it's proof we have still failed to meet the moment of struggle we are facing collectively.

Ironically, the bourgeois backing of the No Kings rally did not protect the “peaceful” protesters from LAPD and LASD shooting them with “less lethal” rounds four hours before the curfew. Peacefully protesting ICE kidnappings and fascist military occupation still leads to mass state repression. Mayor Karen Bass, who repeatedly has denounced the ICE raids and called for peaceful protests, still called in police gangs to shoot those peaceful protesters. It's clear that with the fascist assault on this city and county that Democratic political leadership will collaborate while lying about that reality.

Could that repression and collaboration drive those liberal-minded working class people who attend the next No Kings rally more prepared to get organized? And what are we doing to create the space for those people to get radicalized and trained for the struggle?

Labor's mass mobilizations for this have been underwhelming outside of the SEIU rally after David Huerta, the president of the California division of the

Service Employees International Union, was arrested and charged with conspiracy. But there are unions like the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) that have strong connections to the Community Self-Defense Coalition, and massive overlap in union rank and file with community and radical organizations in the city. Let alone unions like UFW, UNITE HERE, and others being largely filled with Latino/a workers and immigrants.

This attack on the immigrant and Latino/a community is going to hit the labor movement hard, regardless of where these unions' national leadership lands ideologically. So there is massive potential for radical action from the labor movement in this struggle that is a natural carryover from years of labor struggles in Los Angeles.

There have also been mass mobilizations from traditional and more liberal immigrant rights groups like The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA). They spearheaded the Sanctuary City ordinance being passed in preparation for this current period and have mobilized for protests sporadically throughout the last couple of weeks in direct response to the ICE raids. However, it must be stated that the Sanctuary City ordinance has completely failed to protect our communities. The law was supposed to stop LAPD and city infrastructure from helping ICE and Border Patrol; however, all the experience on the ground has shown they collaborate to terrorize the city, and new reporting shows they are sharing resources to assist directly in ICE kidnappings.

But it's not just these traditional organizations leading mass mobilizations and protests in response to this fascist assault. The aforementioned Community Self-Defense

Coalition (CSDC), Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL)/ANSWER Coalition, and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) have all led mass protests in response to and in preparation for this struggle. There's been a resurgence of the Chicano movement as well, and that can't be ignored. Union del Barrio and Centro CSO, both Chicano community organizations with socialist and communist leanings and connections, have been instrumental in mass mobilizations in South Central, downtown, and East LA barrios. Also, as we will see later in the article, they have been key in other tactical approaches.

Mutual Aid

"The goal of socialism is not only to abolish the present division of [humanity]...but to replace competition with solidarity."

-Vladimir Lenin, *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1916)

Another tactic that has been deployed and expanded is mutual aid networks and efforts. This attack on the immigrant community in Los Angeles has caused mass amounts of people to stay home, not go to work, avoid doctors' appointments, and hide from this fascist terror. There has been a concerted effort from organizers to make sure people stay fed and secure materially throughout this, which has to be replicated in other places when the state infrastructure completely fails the community.

Groups like Mutual Aid LA, Midnight Books, All Power, and others have been dedicated to the distribution of

supplies to protesters and community members. Centro CSO member Alejandro Orellana was raided by the FBI, arrested, and charged with “conspiracy to commit criminal disorders” after giving out masks during a protest to protect community members and peaceful protesters from police shooting rubber bullets.

There have already been many cases over the last few weeks of protesters and media being hurt by rubber bullets and going to the hospital. We are now seeing mutual aid be criminally persecuted along with protesters. This threat against Centro CSO should be a rallying cry for other organizations to mobilize when necessary in solidarity, lend legal aid, and provide more forms of mutual aid support.

Rapid Response Networks & Community Patrols

"The weapon of theory is as decisive as the theory of weapons. But while we must be ready to fight with arms, we must also fight with culture, education, and political mobilization. The enemy uses many forms of domination; we must respond with many forms of resistance."

– Amilcar Cabral, "The Weapon of Theory" (1966)

One of the most essential and expanding tactics is the rapid response networks that have developed as a result of the increasing ICE raids. The Community Self-Defense Coalition has over 80 member organizations including Union del Barrio (UdB), Centro CSO, AUSAIME Collective, Association of Educators-LA, Black Alliance for Peace Social, Black Men Build, Educator Defense Network, Jewish Voice

for Peace, Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice, Anakbayan, National Lawyers Guild, UAW 4811, If Not Now, LA Street Care, Raza Unida Party, People's Struggle SFV, CPUSA Southeast LA, MECha's throughout the area, and dozens of other organizations and locals.

Groups like Union del Barrio, People's Struggle, and Centro were instrumental in setting up the rapid response network infrastructure that the rest of the coalition partners are trained in and then become an active part of the regional networks. There are hundreds of organizers and activists responding to calls of ICE deployments, educating the community on their rights when approached by federal and police authorities, and setting up routine patrols to search for ICE and Border Patrol groups. Centralized communication and hotlines across almost the entire Los Angeles organizing spaces have become essential to quickly respond to these ICE kidnappings.

The rapid response network and connected community patrols are the backbone of the entire resistance to this fascist occupation and violation of our neighborhoods. There's a reason why fascist Senator Josh Hawley is trying to launch investigations into Union del Barrio and CHIRLA—another organization with a rapid response network. UdB responded to the letter from the senator:

“Mr. Hawley’s June 11th letter claims that Unión del Barrio provided “logistical and financial resources... aiding and abetting criminal conduct...” To be clear, Unión del Barrio has not organized, aided, abetted, financed, or engaged in any illegal activity, and we reject Mr. Hawley’s notion that we are somehow responsible for “lawless mob actions.”

Clearly, the objective of Mr. Hawley's letter was to intimidate us and compel Unión del Barrio to stop organizing the self-defense of our communities, to silence our communities into submission, and to rewrite history as to who are the actual violent criminals behind these events...Anyone who cares to pay attention has witnessed how these protests were rooted in a rapidly growing number of intentionally cruel, increasingly violent, militarized immigration operations across the United States.

These Los Angeles protests took place as a direct response to the ongoing 159-day colonial reign of terror unleashed by the federal government of the United States against La Raza...Unión del Barrio is a disciplined organization with a politically united membership that acts collectively, not as individuals. Our members participated and continue to participate in protests throughout the LA area and Southern California. Furthermore, we intend to play a leading role in a national movement against ICE/migra attacks.

Unión del Barrio has already provided an effective model for community self-defense, and we are putting our theories into practice. We have informed our members and supporters of the situation, and we have instructed them to remain on high alert in response to ongoing ICE/migra repression.

However, we will remain steadfast. Unión del Barrio will continue to expand, strengthen, and increase our community-centered barrio-facing work, such as our Community Patrols and our youth, prisoner, worker, and

mujer-centered projects to build dual and contending power.”

Other groups like the Harbor Area Peace Patrols and the aforementioned Long Beach Rapid Response Network have been a natural outgrowth of both the Coalition and the effectiveness of community patrols. The former being the key watch for all ICE vehicles leaving Terminal Island—a common staging ground—and the Long Beach collective being the frontline of all ICE movement from Terminal Island. It is unknown how many lives have been in effect saved by these patrollers, but the number is in the thousands after 100 days.

In any struggle, it's imperative to know where the enemy is, what the balance of forces is, and where to concentrate your forces. The rapid response networks and community patrols are the first line of defense and information gathering, which is vital to this resistance movement. We have to know where the fascists are and where they are gathering strength so we can do the same to counter that invasion in our communities.

Community Defense and Blocking ICE Raids

"The guerrilla fighter is like a fish in water, and the water is the people. Without the people's support, the armed struggle is doomed. But without the armed struggle, the people's resistance remains fragmented and easily crushed."

—Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle* (1974, posthumous compilation)

A natural outgrowth of the Know-Your-Rights neighborhood and workplace education, community patrols, and the rapid response network's rising social media reach is the spontaneous clashes with the police and federal authorities. There have now been numerous occasions, such as in Paramount, Compton, Bell, and other places, where the community has spontaneously reacted to ICE raids. Some resulted in ICE and federal agents being blocked in by the community trying to defend their friends and family from being kidnapped and disappeared. Others resulted in quick clashes where the ICE was able to get away.

Community defense actions in Paramount and Compton in particular lasted well over 12 hours with wave after wave of people trying to get closer to ICE's battle formations while being shot at, tear-gassed, and clubbed. Barricades were set up and items burned—classic revolutionary guerrilla tactics that were again, spontaneously developed in these instances.

"The Moscow uprising thrust the barricades into the forefront. But the barricades were of little use... The barricade is not a fortress; it is only a hindrance to the troops. The insurgents must not remain passive behind the barricades, but attack relentlessly."

– Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 11, p. 174

As Lenin clearly stated lessons learned from the failed 1905 Russian Revolution is that this type of street combat between police and the community is defensive. It's not an

offensive tactic to set up barricades and try to block ICE raids. These are attempts at community defense, revolutionary, yes, but not organized offensive insurrection. That's just not what's happening on the ground. The Los Angeles uprising is one centered on community self-defense. What continues to develop could change that reality, though.

Armed Struggle?

"It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle... I do not deny that I planned sabotage. I did not plan it in a spirit of recklessness, nor because I have any love of violence. I planned it as a result of a calm and sober assessment of the political situation that had arisen after many years of tyranny, exploitation, and oppression of my people by the whites."

– Nelson Mandela Statement from the Dock at the Rivonia Trial (1964)

Los Angeles and Southern California have historically been a key center of armed struggle and community defense in the class struggle in the US.

Los Angeles is also a site of settler colonial genocide and resistance. In 1827, for example, there was a massive revolt of the Chumash nation against the settlers of the area. Throughout Spanish, Mexican, and American colonial occupation, Indigenous resistance has been a constant. California was also a brutal site of “triple slavery” of

Indigenous, African, and Chinese people being enslaved in the region at a concurrent time. California governors has explicitly called for Indigenous genocide and “wars of extermination.” Capitalists in LA shipped gold to the South during the Civil War as the “Los Angeles Mounted Rifles,” a proto-fascist militia similar to the KKK, would rally in the streets. Mass lynchings and massacres by white settlers against oppressed groups were a key feature of California throughout the 19th century.

But California also would be an early and vibrant place for socialist thought and activity from the late 19th century onward. Utopian socialist colonies like the Kaweah and Llano del Rio Colonies were dotting the southland from the 1880s.

In 1932, in response to rising fascist gangs both locally and internationally, Communist Party USA leader Ben Dobbs recommended that the Young Communist League in Los Angeles should become a “semi-military organization,” in direct response. Party members were trained in Moscow for revolutionary guerrilla action, such as how to build barricades and Molotovs. 20 years later, the entire leadership of CPUSA in California was on trial for the Smith Act.

There were mass popular uprisings like in Watts in 1965 which historian Gerald Horne said “marked the moment when the ideological baton in Black America moved westward...” And after the Watts Rebellion, the Community Alert Patrols formed in LA. Similar to the anti-ICE patrols of today, community members would patrol and “protect and observe” in the community against police brutality. It was born out of and from community members organizing in

the Communist Party associated Hugh Gordon Bookstore. And the organization of the Community Alert Patrols was a direct harbinger to the Black Panther Party and the Black Power movement to follow.

Between groups like the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army, Weather Underground, and more, there were 2500 bombings in the US from 1971-1972 alone. Police shootouts with revolutionaries from the Bay area to San Diego were not uncommon, as at least two dozen Panthers were killed by cops during its brief history. During the first half of 1969, there were at least ten armed police and FBI raids on the Black Panthers, most notably the assault on the headquarters in Los Angeles.

There was international military aid given to Black Revolutionaries in that period from the anti-imperialist and socialist blocs: Algiers, Palestine, Cuba, Vietnam, and Czechoslovakia.

Jonathan Jackson's armed assault on the courtroom in Marin County became a societal lightning rod. Likewise, the murder of his imprisoned brother George Jackson in San Quentin prison sparked revolts across the country. This led to the infamous trial of former Black Panther and at that time, current Communist Party member and UCLA professor, Angela Davis.

A recent study said, "No Panther branch or chapter experienced more harassment and suffered more casualties than the L.A. Panthers...being a Panther in Los Angeles meant putting one's [life] in peril on a daily basis." Panther co-founder Bobby Seale said the LAPD would "shoot up our free clinic...they shot it up so much that the doctors and nurses...some 7 or 8 of them that were donating their time

down there, decided to leave, because they just got scared.” Chicano leader Corky Gonzalez said California and Los Angeles were “the number one police state and city in United States history.”

And in recent decades labor unions and tenants associations have been growing in militancy. The famous 2006 Day without an Immigrant protest that gathered a historic 500,000 people in protest in Los Angeles. As historian Gerald Horne wrote in his book *Armed Struggle*: “By mid-2023 one analyst adjudged accurately that ‘Southern California unions and the working people they represent have become the vanguard of the American labor movement. About half of the big strikes in the U.S. this year,’ said historian Nelson Lichtenstein, ‘have taken place in California with the most consequential centered in Los Angeles.’ This city was portrayed accurately as a “cockpit of labor militancy” as the “City of Angels is setting the pace for millions of working people across the nation.”

And then in late 2023 and through 2024, we had a militant movement in solidarity with Palestine primarily organized through the Palestinian Youth Movement as the vanguard in coalitions that culminated in the Student Intifada. Police and Zionist gang assaults on student encampments were widespread but most concentrated at UCLA.

There are lessons to be learned from all of this history. The lack of international material support in the later years of the Black Panther Party, due to Eldridge Cleaver’s eclecticism, shows that international aid and support are imperative if this shift from spontaneous community self-defense to organized armed struggle is to occur. One thing

Los Angeles has demonstrated is that there is already mass community support for the current tactics on display.

There isn't any real outrage here over ICE raids being blocked or some AI cars being burned. The rage is pointed at the fascist police and federal agents. Is the community enraged enough to support organized armed struggle? It's impossible to tell, but the reality is that the current diversity of tactics is testing Los Angeles's organizational logistical capacity.

“An insurrection must not be viewed as a spontaneous outburst, but as a carefully prepared and organized action. The art of insurrection demands the concentration of superior forces at the decisive moment and place.”

– Joseph Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism* (1924)

We are clearly in a period of mass unrest and resistance to fascist aggression. Organizers are deploying all available tactics, and some organizations are employing multiple. From mass protests and mobilizations, mutual aid, community patrols, rapid response networks, know-your-rights education, and more, all are building up community capacity for spontaneous direct action. Organizers in other areas need to develop similar Community Self-Defense Coalitions with radical and revolutionary collective leadership, and prepare infrastructure for the oncoming fascist repression.

Organizers must rapidly expand mutual aid networks, rapid response networks, and coalitions into permanent structures of dual power—community kitchens, medical collectives, and defense committees that outlast this wave

of repression. The rapid response model must evolve into neighborhood assemblies capable of coordinating strikes, boycotts, and armed resistance when necessary.

The 1985 MOVE bombing, the 1965 and 1992 L.A. Rebellions, and the police assault on the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles prove the state's willingness to escalate to massacres. If armed struggle emerges, it must be disciplined, clandestine, and rooted in mass support—unlike the isolated actions that doomed the Weather Underground.

The last time we saw this level of armed struggle here, the US used Smith Act trials to arrest all state and local communist leaders, used COINTELPRO tactics to assassinate, disappear, and lay siege to communist organizers in the Black Panther Party, Chicano Movement, and CPUSA. Solidarity and material support are vital for community defense.

Historian Gerald Horne advised organizers who may be going down the path of armed struggle that they:

“Should have an analysis...An analysis of the correlation of forces domestically—who will be our allies—who will be our antagonists? Above all, an international analysis. I hope they have been in touch with our comrades in Cuba...that they try to rally international support. That would be my only cautionary note...with regard to a replay of the 1960s and 1970s...The uniqueness of the Southland—proximity to Mexico; proliferation of colleges; serpentine freeways; brutal cops; an empowered ultra-right—also served to propel both the [communist movement]...the problem in the U.S. was an assessment of the correlation of forces domestically and globally in light of the perniciousness of

class collaboration that inhered in settler colonialism at home.”

Los Angeles: Blueprint for Resistance Against Trump's Fascism?

Originally published on September 15, 2025 for
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LOS ANGELES – President Donald Trump's assault on the migrant and immigrant communities of Los Angeles is now nearing 100 days, syncopated by relentless Immigrations & Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol raids on workplaces and homes. Since June 6, the Trump administration has kidnapped 4,163 people across the L.A. area, according to public [data](#) released on August 6.

With the military takeover of the city, via federalized National Guardsmen and Marines, L.A. has become Ground Zero for the current antifascist struggle that has expanded into Washington D.C., and which will soon enough encroach on Chicago.

Tragically, three people have already lost their lives due to ICE raids and protests in the LA area. [Jaime Alanís](#)

Garcia was killed in a raid in Ventura County farmland, falling nearly 30 feet to his death. Day laborer Roberto Carlos Montoya Valdez was killed in an ICE raid at a Monrovia Home Depot location.

In an act of collaboration with the federal government, Los Angeles District Attorney Nathan Hochman is now charging 71 people with crimes at anti-ICE protests, with one Adrienne Villa, a resident of Los Angeles' long-standing "Skid Row" homeless neighborhood, receiving 14 charges and an unaffordable \$1.33 million bail.

Villa was soon found hanged in her cell in June, only several hours after her arrest, but the details of her death were only disclosed by the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in August. She is the first anti-ICE protester to die in police custody.

The FBI also raided and harassed organizers with the Centro Community Service Organization (CSO) before those charges were dropped. State repression is increasing at a violent rate, and strategies and tactics to defend against fascist actions of the state developed on the ground here need to be shared through the movement and with community members.

One of the key decisions organizers in L.A. made was not to wait for the worst of the immigration raids to start organizing. The start of the ICE raids in California began on January 7, when 65 Border Patrol agents arrested 80 farmworkers in Bakersfield, Calif. Immediately, groups including Union del Barrio (UdB), United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), Centro CSO, Immigrant Defenders Law Center, and dozens of other organizations formed the

Community Self-Defense Coalition (CSDC), announcing themselves in a press conference in February of this year.

The same groups organized the Emergency Southwest Summit Against Deportations in April, which gathered organizers from across the country in L.A.'s historically Chicano-dominated East side to discuss how to defend communities from the current federal raids and terror. Various community organizations and activists formed stronger connections and plans for community defense and education in the face of President Trump's open ambitions for mass deportations and other normalizations of fascism in America.

There was widespread preparation in the wake of the first raids in California, which laid strong foundations that would be activated after June 6. "Know-Your-Rights" trainings for community members, educators, local small businesses, and more were, and still are, a regular occurrence. Community outreach was vital to building proper communication networks between activist-organizers and community members—flyering, tabling, rallies, protests, and more were also organized before June 6.

Federal agencies raided hundreds of locations across the Southland, taking an adversarial role against the city around them. Events such as the brief occupation of MacArthur Park one weekday afternoon in July largely seem oriented towards sowing fear in the community and demonstrating the power of the federal government against even the city and state governments of Los Angeles and California.

Since then, as the raids and kidnappings of community members became a daily constant, more groups have developed rapid response networks, community patrols, and legal defense measures. Groups like the Los Angeles branch of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), the Harbor Peace Patrols, and the Long Beach Rapid Response Networks have also developed tactics of community patrols, legal aid, and rapid response to raids with overlap with the activities of the CSDC.

The tactics of daily community patrols, hotline rapid responses, community outreach, and know-your-rights training have saved countless lives from being kidnapped by ICE and Border Patrol. Many of those detained by Trump's administration have not been allowed contact with lawyers or family. Many have been denied their basic rights, and sometimes, in effect, disappeared by the state. That's why organizers in LA are often using the term "kidnappings" instead of arrested or detained. With the recent Supreme Court decision to lift restrictions on ICE and Border Patrol in Los Angeles, we are expecting a return to mass kidnappings.

However, thousands of people in LA have been mobilized by this attack on our neighbors and loved ones, and the tactics and organizing happening here can be a blueprint for the struggles now happening in the country's capital and soon-to-be Chicago. Indeed, if the community in Los Angeles organizes itself consistently and strongly enough, it may make the Trump Administration hesitate from further encroaching on our cities.

Especially if they know they'll get the same pushback no matter where they go. The Republican Party and fascist

MAGA movement have set their sights on the immigrant and migrant communities as they laid out in Project 2025. The time for the popular front to resist these assaults is now.

How to Resist ICE & Border Patrol? Rapid Response Networks & Community Defense

Originally published on January 7, 2026 for Red Star Tribune

With the increase of fascistic violence from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its subsidiaries, Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol, and the growing federal occupation of U.S. cities, it is imperative for organizers to compile “How-To” guides to help others resist this oppression.

Comrades from Minneapolis have put out an excellent breakdown of their resistance model, and I wrote previously about the model in Los Angeles. However, my article did not go into the exact structures, how they formed, best practices, or policies.

I hope to expand on the details provided from Minneapolis—which is quite close to the various models in LA—in the hopes it can benefit organizers in other places not yet targeted by Trump’s fascist domestic military force. The purpose of this guide is not necessarily to be copied 1-for-1, but for members and comrades of other communities

outside L.A. and Minneapolis to see what can be applicable in their respective areas of struggle.

All rapid response networks (RRNs) use group chats (mostly via encrypted applications, but unsecured apps like WhatsApp are often used by community members), video chats, in-person meetings, know-your-rights trainings, etc. to various degrees. There are the main, vetted chats for seasoned members, which run long-term strategy and are used as a main hub for sharing info that needs to be distributed to the entire collective. Then, there are groups separated by region and by type of action. There can be patrol chats that are set up for deletion after that day or week's work, while whole regional chats act as mini-hubs for larger collectives and coalitions.

In larger coalitions, it is common to have standing committees for things like community outreach, education, media, security, etc., that will cover particular necessary tasks for organizing and mobilizing. For example, who creates the flyers and social media posts? Who will run the KYR trainings? Who will talk to the media? In larger and more organized collectives, these tasks are often delegated to committees that meet regularly and give report-backs to the larger collective.

Community patrols and community hubs are key tactics being used to defend our communities. The available logistics, area of coverage, and people power will shape how patrols and hubs are managed.

Community patrols, which are performed by teams of people in cars, actively look for ICE activity and respond to alerts. Community hubs are key sites where people often

visit or congregate and where ICE is targeting people regularly.

If you don't have many people to fill shifts of daily patrols and hubs, or are covering too large an area, it could be beneficial to identify key sites to set up hubs as a priority. Identify locations in your community like Home Depots, car washes, known hotspots for street food vendors/taquerias, etc., and plan for at least two people at the major sites. Establish a presence and build ties and relationships with the people impacted by, and scared of, the fascist violence.

It's essential to build these connections and obtain community "buy-in" because they will amplify your popular power and bolster community defense operations. Hubs can act as great spots to outreach as a result of their often well-trafficked nature.

It is also essential to establish hotlines that allow the public to easily call and contact the RRNs. When you are communicating with day laborers, vendors, etc., make sure you have physical material to give them. Flyers, information sheets, KYR cards, and a way to reach the RRNs for help when they need it.

Not everyone in the community needs to actively be part of patrols or other such activities, but if the majority are aware of you, aware of how to reach you, or know to alert other centralized systems like StopICE.net, then you multiply your RRNs' organizational and mobilization ability to keep your neighbors safe, by building trust with the community and giving them the ability to participate in their own defense.

If you have more than enough people power to cover major sites with daily Community Hubs, then roving community patrols along main streets and common access routes for ICE is the next step up. If the area's street layout permits, do it in a gridlike pattern. This is another opportunity to do community outreach and inform the community about the rapid response network and their rights.

It's also common for alerts to go up on social media, be sent to the hotlines, or be posted on websites that aren't at a hub, so patrollers must actively respond to those alerts as quickly as possible. Depending on the kidnapping attempt, it's a matter of seconds to minutes before the victim is in federal custody; we have to at least document the event and get the victim's identifying information.

Tailing ICE and CBP convoys is another common tactic that is not always encouraged, depending on the collective. However, it would be foolish to act like people aren't engaging in this tactic often, so we will discuss it.

Following from a safe distance, and not doing it alone, is preferable. Constant communication with other organizers on the ground about the location of fascists is necessary to make community defense effective. Knowledge of the area and the people living in it is important too, so you can better expect where they will be heading.

Legal and aftercare for those directly affected by this fascist violence is a necessity. The National Lawyers Guild, Immigrant Defense Network, and other organizations must be involved in coalitions. Though many RRNs and other groups have started to increase mutual aid efforts to take care of the families of those kidnapped and brutalized, the

need for care should to be highlighted and examined so organizers in community groups can figure out how we can scale these projects up to entire neighborhoods and cities. In the event that ICE/CBP agents are cornered by the community or organizers, in effect leading to a standoff, it's important to be aware of the balance of forces. Are you outnumbered? Are they outnumbered? How many federal agents and policemen are there? Are media or legal observers present? Are there medics available if things get tough? Do you know where specifically you can escape if you need to?

Direct action must be tactically and strategically approached. We don't want people needlessly arrested or brutalized by fascists. A comrade in a jail cell or a hospital bed is a comrade demobilized from the fight. It's important to remember this will be a long struggle. The outcome won't be decided by one street clash, so remember to be like water, and keep yourself and each other as safe as possible. Street barricades, counter-fireworks, umbrellas, personal protective gear, and other such tools need to be considered when street clashes become commonplace, as they did in Los Angeles in the summer of 2025 and in Minneapolis in early 2026.

Rapid response networks are not always set up the same way. Some are autonomous or "affinity" groups that spontaneously formed and mostly lack concrete internal structures. These tend to be very fluid in terms of allowing new members, and will rarely "use peace police" tactics, and lack definitive leaders. However, this fluidity often leads to political eclecticism, which can create internal conflict and contradictions.

For example, in these autonomous RRNs, it is common to have communists, anarchists, progressives, liberals, and somewhat apolitical people all be involved. Notions among members about structure and internal democracy, let alone about tactics and strategies, can vary dramatically. And, without defined leadership, rules or guidelines, or a political vision, there's a major concern about these groups having long-term viability. There's also concern about whether these groups can adequately adapt to rapidly changing material conditions without these organizational institutions in place.

Some RRNs are initiated and run by NGOs like the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights L.A. (CHIRLA) here in Los Angeles. There are obvious pros and cons to these formations. They usually have dedicated, paid staff to oversee the administration of the network. There tends to be more funds for materials and other actions as well. But there isn't a radical political vision within the NGOs. They work within the bourgeois framework, so the question arises: if fascist political violence increases, can they adapt to the moment that would require more militant resistance?

Other RRNs, like the ones affiliated with the Community Self Defense Coalition (CSDC) in Los Angeles County, feature more "communist party"-esque principles combined with some characteristics of a big tent "affinity"/autonomous group. There is a base set of political principles and points of unity, such as: "End police & ICE terrorism in our communities!" "NO to Raids, Deportations & family separation!" "Money for Public Education and Social Services!" "Not Fascism or Genocide!" "End US

intervention in Nuestra America, Africa, Asia, Middle East. Close ALL Concentration Camps (Immigration Detention facilities, Prisons)!” “We will NOT collaborate with ICE, police, sheriffs!” “This Land belongs to Indigenous people; (Tongva, Kizh, Chumash, all original protectors of the land)!” and “We will struggle for Self-Determination for ALL oppressed people and our future generations!”

All of these points of unity have to be accepted by individuals and organizations that join the CSDC, which coheres a set political vision that autonomous groups don’t tend to have. But there’s also not a detailed, long-term political economic system being proposed, thus allowing many different political ideologies to work together within the coalition. The CSDC also has a set steering committee with members of various coalition member organizations that have authority and responsibility over the coalition.

Rapid response networks are developed with a variety of structures and political currents and must be built with knowledge of the conditions on the ground of the community in which they were set up. The tactics and strategy being used by anti-fascist forces are not uniform. However, there are commonalities to be seen across the different battlefields-whether it’s Los Angeles or Minneapolis.

We must continue to learn and educate each other about what’s happening on the ground, as the resistance to fascism and capitalism constantly morphs and develops into something new.

Join, or help to start, your local community defense groups and rapid response networks. Starting can be as simple as knocking on your neighbors’ doors and asking

their names. There is a long fight ahead, and we will have to know each other well if we want to win.

Hasan Piker's FBI Subpoena is the Tip of the Iceberg for a New COINTELPRO

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On May 23, famous socialist streamer and influencer Hasan Piker, along with 40 other American nationals, were [alleged by Fox News](#) to be subpoenaed by the Department of the Treasury under the pretense of 'aiding the enemy' in their recent trips to Cuba. Other highly noted figures within the non-profit CodePink, Medea Benjamin, and Jodi Evans, were also listed. Reporter Eric Hovagim confirmed with CodePink and Hasan that neither party was actually subpoenaed at this time.

Hasan, due to being among the biggest online figures of the Left, will get the most attention during this potential case if the subpoenas are delivered. However, the reality is that, regardless of whether Hasan and CodePink are legally repressed, we have seen a dramatic rise in state repression over the years.

Piker, along with the others under potential investigation, is being probed over allegedly supporting the Cuban government by staying at state-run hotels—something

far-right provocateur Nick Shirley also did earlier this year without facing legal consequences. Unlike Nick Shirley, however, those who may be facing subpoenas are *not* fans of Trump. They did not go to Cuba to record sensationalist political propaganda. They are facing legal harassment by the Trump administration for the crime of delivering food, medicine, and solar panels to a country under siege. But this isn't anything new; the Cuba Flotilla is only the latest to face state repression in a list that has been growing for years.

Since the ongoing Nakba reached a peak over Israel's ground invasion of [Gaza](#), the genocide of Palestinians by Israel and the US has become a massive rallying point for the left. Mass demonstrations, student encampments, and clashes with far-right zionist mobs and state forces became a norm throughout late 2023 and 2024. Anti-zionist activists Mahmoud Khalil, Rumeysa Ozturk, and over 3,100 others were arrested by police during Palestine solidarity protests. Many are still facing charges and threats of deportation.

Additionally, over the last year and a half, Donald Trump unleashed the Department of Homeland Security against cities throughout the United States to kidnap and terrorize immigrants and migrants. As of April 4, there are over 60,000 people currently detained in ICE "detention centers" better described as modern concentration camps. The Trump regime boasts that a shocking 500,000 people at the minimum have been deported since the start of his administration. ProPublica [reported](#) in April that over 300 people were arrested simply for protesting or being a bystander to ICE.

And we cannot forget the murders of Alex Pretti and Renee Good. The regime has shown that it is okay with murder. On record, 49 people have died in ICE camps since the start of 2025. Even this is likely an extremely conservative estimate: a terrifying number of people placed in ICE camps are *completely unaccounted for*-in effect, completely disappeared by the regime. In the infamous “Alligator Alcatraz” camp in Florida alone, at least 1,200 detainees are unaccounted for.

Neither is this limited to ICE and the protest movement. Federal authorities have also arrested and continue to repress the Chicano-rights group Centro CSO in Los Angeles. In addition to arresting organization member Alejandro Orellana for supporting anti-ICE protests, federal agents also ambushed and seized the phone of activist Verita Topete while the latter was walking her dog. Just recently, another Centro CSO member, Nadia Topete, was subpoenaed. Organizations such as Union del Barrio, CHIRLA, and PSL have been threatened with congressional investigations. ICE watchdog site, StopICE.net, was subpoenaed for all financial records at the height of the anti-ICE movement. VC Defensa, a community-based anti-ICE group based in the San Fernando Valley in California, has faced physical attacks and numerous raids on its homes.

There are also more controversial examples. 9 members of an “antifa cell” in Prairieland were convicted for allegedly attempting to raid an ICE facility on the 4th of July. Four members of a group called the Turtle Island Liberation Front (TILF) were arrested for an alleged “terrorist” plot in Southern California in late 2025-

potentially set up by a federal informant. While these cases may be dismissed as adventurist activity by many organizations and activists, this misses the point. The point of commonality between these types of actions and other legal means of resistance, such as legal aid, is not that one is adventurist and the other is not, but that both challenge the politics of the right.

What Hasan Piker and CodePink are facing is not a new stage of development for the class struggle, but is only the tip of the iceberg of the mass repression we are seeing from MAGA fascism. But MAGA fascism is only an escalation of a type of political repression that has been minted decades prior and practiced by both parties. Indeed, it should be remembered that many of the arrests of Palestine solidarity protesters occurred under the Biden administration. Further back, the COINTELPRO tactics being deployed against these groups were first resurrected under the Obama administration to go after activists belonging to Black Lives Matter and the Occupy movement. What we see today under Trump is only the traditional mode of bourgeois politics weaponized to its full possibilities-and which will only grow in its repression and scope with each passing month.

This is a dire moment for the left. The last time we saw this amount of state repression, an untold number of communists, progressives, and Indigenous people were assassinated, imprisoned, exiled, and disappeared. It destroyed the Old Left, Communist movements, the New Left, and burgeoning national liberation movements in the United States in the 20th century. Today, the left is defined by this historic repression and loss. As our movement has

grown once more, the desire for repression on the part of the bourgeois class has returned. What we are facing will only escalate until we lose this latest period of class struggle-and, with the impending existential ecological crisis looming over us, we cannot afford to lose again.

But this apex of oppression has also, unwittingly, revealed to the world the energy held in reserve by the working class. The struggles just described that have been attacked by the Trump administration are being attacked because they are successful: they have helped organize, educate, and radicalize our class. They have revealed in miniature the class forces and tactical shape of the future. The military occupations of Los Angeles and Minneapolis developed the sharpest resistance in the face of the most devastating repression.

Mass community defense became organized and an aspect of daily life for thousands of people throughout the last 18 months. Patrols, barricades, street and highway closures, physical clashes with police and federal agents, and private property burned-all classic guerrilla acts when facing a better-equipped enemy. The working class proved it had the appetite and the capability to hold its own. Not only in militant direct action, but also in its increased capability to provide mutual aid and legal defense. With Hasan Piker and others allegedly facing state repression, it's a time to bring together the lessons from these often legal struggles to protect all parts of our movement. At this juncture, it has become clear that we must consolidate legally in order to consolidate *politically*.

What's Happening in West Africa? Imperial Disintegration

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World

News of a military coup in the African country of Niger has sparked condemnation from the Western world. This is now at least the 17th coup or coup attempt in the Sahel region of Africa since 2008: Mauritania (2008), Guinea (2008, 2021), Niger (2010, 2021, 2023), Mali (March 2012, April 2012, 2020, 2021), Chad (2013), Burkina Faso (2014, 2015, 2016, January 2022, September 2022), and The Gambia (2014)—and many have had some connection to U.S. military training via United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). However, most of these coups have taken place in the Francophone African countries and have led to an intense backlash against that old colonial empire.

So is this a case of U.S. neo-colonial aggression blowing back in the face of Western imperialism or a long-game

maneuver between imperialist powers? and is happening in Africa, it's important to understand imperialism and neo-colonialism. Imperialism was briefly defined by Lenin as the "monopoly stage of capitalism." Kwame Nkrumah stated, "The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside." After hundreds of years of slavery, oppression, and exploitation of the peoples of Africa by European colonialism, the European imperialist powers split the continent amongst themselves at the 1885 Berlin Conference.

They took political and economic sovereignty away from the people, who had no say in the matter. Given the exploitative nature of the relationship between the colonial empire and colonized society, the export of surplus value is deeply intertwined with the underdevelopment of the colonial subject for the development of the imperial core. And after the independence movements of the mid-20th century in Africa, industries and mineral rights have stayed in the hands of multinational monopolies and oligopolies to sustain that system.

For example, the iron ore produced in Swaziland after it gained political independence was owned by one company, the Swaziland Iron Ore Development Company. That company was jointly owned by U.S. and British capitalists. In contemporary times, the Swiss commodity trading and mining company Glencore is the largest extractor of cobalt, copper, and other commodities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The plundering of the African peoples and

their continent by Western imperialism is an ongoing colonial and genocidal project.

One of the worst neo-colonial empires in the region is France. The repression of the Algerian Revolution was genocidal, echoing the genocidal actions committed by France over a hundred years prior in Haiti. Another revolution and leader that France had to destroy was that led by Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso. The revolutionary leader was appointed Prime Minister of the Republic of Upper Volta in 1983 but disputes with the sitting government led to his arrest. The masses rose up in a popular revolution the same year. The people released Sankara and he became president of the country, which was renamed Burkina Faso—Land of the Upright People, and its people are now called Burkinabè—the upright people.

Led by Sankara, the Marxist country pushed back on reliance on French capital and called for African unity against Western neo-colonialism. Sankara called for Burkina Faso and Africa to be self-sufficient regarding food, energy, clothing, etc. He also rejected the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He was overthrown and murdered in a coup in 1987 that forced Burkina Faso back under French neo-colonial control. Sankara's killer, Blaise Compaoré, led the country under a comprador dictatorship until 2014. But Sankara has remained a highly influential figure in African radical politics and the international socialist movement.

A key component of the neo-colonial control France has exercised over the Francophone countries of West and Central Africa is the CFA franc—the currency model forced on many African nations that gained political

independence. It has a fixed rate tied to the metropolitan currency of the imperial core of France—thus ensuring the low domestic and export competitiveness of the African nations that use it. In July 1960, French premier Michel Debré told Gabonese leader Léon M’ba, “We give independence on the condition that the State once independent commits itself to respect the cooperation agreements signed previously. ... The one does not go without the other.”

The two banks that have an official monopoly over the CFA franc are the Bank of Central African States (BEAC) and the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO). They were controlled by France, and used as a tool of exploitation. French capitalists sit on their boards and hold implicit veto power, and the banks must deposit their exchange reserves in the French treasury—100% at first before this was reduced to 65% in 1973 and then 50% in 2005. The economic sovereignty of West and Central Africa was explicitly still under French control.

Burkina Faso wasn’t the only one to reject the CFA franc and thus neo-colonial oppression—nor was it the first. Guinea under the leadership of pan-Africanist and trade unionist Sékou Touré rejected the CFA franc in 1960. Sylvanus Olympio, the leader of Togo, tried to exit the franc zone and create a national central bank in 1962. Mali under Modibo Keïta, the Democratic Republic of Madagascar (in 1973), Mauritania (also in 1973), Senegal, and Cameroon all attempted to leave or left the franc zone. This was the era of the Non-Aligned Movement as well—with some of these African states not explicitly going down a socialist or communist road but attempting to gain full sovereignty.

Many of these movements were ultimately undermined by France and many of their leaders were assassinated or overthrown in violent coups.

Up until recently, the legacy of that age of revolutionary Africa was suppressed, but the geopolitical and class dynamics have dramatically shifted over the last couple of decades. The U.S.' rise as the world's hegemonic empire has sometimes led the imperialist powers to work at cross-purposes. The U.S.' AFRICOM has 29 known military bases on the continent in 15 countries, while France has military bases in only 10 countries in Africa.

Many of the aforementioned West and Central African states have seen a decades-long Western military presence along with economic exploitation and underdevelopment. After NATO's criminal war on Libya, and the U.S.' imperialist wars in West Asia, Islamic extremist groups "such as al-Qaeda (in the Islamic Maghreb) as well as al-Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine, and Katibat Macina - which merged into Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin ('Group for the Support of Islam and [the] Muslims') in 2017 - swept from southern Algeria to Côte d'Ivoire, from western Mali to eastern Niger," per the Tricontinental Institute.

This gave an excuse to the West to launch military interventions like Operation Barkhane in Mali in 2014. French forces built new bases in the country and failed to handle the rising Islamic extremist insurgency. The importance of the Sahel region cannot be overstated. Burkina Faso and Mali are the fourth- and third-largest gold producers in Africa and are also endowed with huge deposits of copper and other rare earth minerals. The gold industry alone in Burkina Faso makes a minimum of \$2

billion annually—the majority of the profit going to Canadian and Australian mining firms nowadays. Yet 40% of Burkina Faso live below the poverty line. In Niger, the vast uranium ore deposits are used to power one third of the lightbulbs in France. More than 80% of Nigeriens don't even have electricity and about the same number are in poverty.

Also in 2014, the regime that had overthrown socialism in Burkina Faso—the Compaoré regime—was finally toppled in a popular revolution that gave way to a coup. This was in the middle of a wave of coups in the region as previously mentioned—and many had deep ties to the AFRICOM training apparatus that was created for U.S. neo-colonial control in Africa. From 2008-2021, these coups seemed to reinstall to leadership positions bourgeois compradors who capitulated to the West.

But the recent coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and now Niger have taken on a different class and international nature. Each was seemingly led by elements from the same general group of African military officers trained by AFRICOM. Assimi Goïta (Mali), Ibrahim Traoré (Burkina Faso), and Abdourahamane Tchiani (Niger) all received some degree of military training from AFRICOM. So conventional wisdom would assume these military leaders were put in place in unstable countries because the West thinks they can keep the neo-colonial order intact and continue the “global war on terror” that also created the Islamic extremist issue in the Sahel region in the first place. However, the actions and rhetoric that have followed these coups suggest the exact opposite is happening.

Burkina Faso and Mali have kicked out the French military and diplomats and made significant diplomatic overtures to the perceived enemies of Western imperialism. In a direct nod to Sankara's ties to the revolutionary Sandinistas in Nicaragua, Burkina Faso's current Marxist and Pan-Africanist Prime Minister Apollinaire Kyélem de Tambèla visited the country to commemorate the 44th anniversary of its revolution, saying, "when I came here, many people told me, 'If you meet Daniel Ortega, greet him on my behalf.' So I greet you in the name of all the Burkinabè." At the Russia-Africa Summit—his mere attendance is seen as an affront to Western imperialism—Traoré echoed Sankara and the legacy of the Cuban Revolution, saying:

"The questions that my generation asks itself are the following, if I can sum them up. They are not understanding how Africa, with so much wealth on our soil, with a generous nature, water, sun in abundance, Africa is today the poorest continent. ... As far as Burkina Faso is concerned, today we have been confronted for more than eight years with the most barbaric, the most violent form of manifestation of neo-colonialism, of imperialism, the slavery that they still aim to impose on us. ... We, African heads of state, we must therefore stop behaving as marionettes that dance every time the imperialists pull on the strings. ... But also it is a message passed to our African heads of state because at the next forum we must not come here without having assured the food self-sufficiency of our peoples for those who do not know war. ... Glory to our peoples! Dignity to our peoples!

Victory to our peoples! Fatherland or death, we shall overcome! Thank you, comrades.”

The coup in Niger has been threatened outright by the Macron regime in France. Per Reuters, “‘The President will not tolerate any attack against France and its interests,’ President Emmanuel Macron’s office said in a statement, specifying that it would respond to attacks against French diplomats, armed forces or businesses.” France and the U.S. have cut aid to the country in an effort to starve out any potential change similar to Burkina Faso and Mali. At the Russia-Africa summit, Russia declared it would forgive 90% of the debt African countries owe it, \$23 billion, and promised infrastructure development plans and access to food and technology. Also, six African nations were given 50,000 tons of free grain—Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Mali, Somalia, and the Central African Republic. All of these measures seem to be directed against Western imperialism, not done on behalf of one faction of the West (the U.S.) against another (France).

Mao Zedong wrote, “any revolution in a colony or semi-colony that is directed against imperialism ... is no longer part of the old bourgeois, or capitalist, world revolution, but is part of the new world revolution, the proletarian-socialist world revolution. ... No matter what classes, parties or individuals in an oppressed nation join the revolution, and no matter whether they themselves are conscious of the point or understand it, so long as they oppose imperialism, their revolution becomes part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution and they become its allies.” The Sahel region saw intense revolutionary potential

in the 20th century—and tragically was repressed for decades.

The accumulation of oppression seems to have hit a class boiling point along with the geopolitical dynamics creating a volatile situation across the region. The people have clearly had enough and have been perpetually looking for the right way out of these crises. Are these coups directed against imperialism finally and thus taking up the mantle of revolution? The masses have been seen in the streets supporting this new generation of revolutionaries. The class antagonisms under French and Western neo-colonial control didn't get better and, if anything, they got worse over the decades. The military training provided by the U.S. seems to have created another case of foreign policy blowback.

There were many coups before these three, but none of them kicked out the French and refused U.S. aid. That's now started and seems to be ramping up with each new revolution in Africa. Western imperialism needs a subjugated Africa—of course, only time will tell though if imperial repression strikes again or if the people of Sahel will finally retake their full sovereignty.

For onlookers and Comrades living outside of Africa, it is clear that, however the situation develops, it is more imperative than ever that the spirit of international solidarity is placed first and foremost. Any attempt by imperialist forces—either the US or France—to reassert themselves into the developing movements in Africa must be organized against, and the working and oppressed people of the world must stand united in pursuit of peace and justice for all mankind.

The Alliance of Sahel States: A Breakthrough in Pan-Africanism and Decolonization

Originally published on July 10, 2024 for People's World

The first inaugural summit of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) took place July 6 and 7, confirming the new anti-imperialist confederation in Africa. Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger—the biggest states in the Sahel/West African region have now officially broken away from the French and Western-controlled Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Last summer I reported on the recent coup that shook the region in Niger, at least the 10th coup in the area in the previous 15 years, and how the policy choices of the respective new leaders were a significant departure from

French neocolonial control. But with this summit, it's now officially a new power bloc in the region and the world.

Mali and Burkina Faso represent Africa's third and fourth-largest gold producers and maintain sizable deposits of copper and other rare earth minerals. Niger's uranium deposits were powering $\frac{1}{3}$ of all lightbulbs in France. Yet, 40% of Burkinabès live below the poverty level and 80% of Nigerians don't have electricity. Niger has the highest-grade uranium ores in Africa and is the world's seventh-largest uranium producer.

In 2022, the UN reported that nearly 18 million people in the Sahel were at risk of starvation. Including the hundreds of years of colonial and imperialist exploitation and oppression in the region, it was bound to explode in a backlash against the AFRICOM and French control of the area. The explosion of far-right violence in the Sahel region after the NATO-backed overthrow of Libya led to years of conflict and unrest. French and US military interventions in the Sahel region only exacerbated the issues.

The three respective leaders of the Confederation-Assimi Goita (Mali), Ibrahim Traoré (Burkina Faso), and Abdourahamane Tchiani (Niger) while all receiving some degree of US military training have gone against the Western control of the region. They have all denounced France and the US specifically while crafting ties to the growing anti-western bloc of the world with Russia, Nicaragua, and China. Niger cut all uranium and gold exports to France last year. Russia has forgiven 90% of Africa's debt-\$23 billion exactly-and gave 50,000 tons of free grain to the Sahel region.

The three leaders all come from the military, so Western media decried this movement as purely military juntas. However, they've all engaged with and brought in the civilian sector. Burkina Faso's current Prime Minister, Apollinaire Kyélem de Tambèla, is a renowned Marxist and Pan-Africanist who served with the famous revolutionary leader Thomas Sankara before his assassination, presumably supported by France. They are linking this new revolutionary surge with the Sankara legacy.

In a speech at the summit, Traoré gave an electrifying speech, "...the imperialists see Africa as an empire of slaves" and they falsely and chauvinistically believe "Africans belong to them, our land belongs to them, our subsoils belong to them...this is deplorable...this is why we have decided to revolt and to take the fate of our countries in our own hands...we came to break the chains."

During the summit of the AES, agreements were made to work towards financial sovereignty. Developing an investment bank that can be used rather than the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is the key point. With finance capital being the heart of imperialism, and the French financial system of the CFA Franc being notorious, this is a monumental step to dismantle neocolonial systems of control.

Also, the "free movement of peoples and goods" between the Confederation's states was agreed to foster economic and social development. Niger has kicked out all US and French military personnel-Niger had a large US military base within its borders unlike Mali and Burkina Faso. They had already kicked out the French military last year. The nationalization of financial and industrial

companies has already begun as well. These are the first steps in the long road of decolonizing Africa. The Pan-Africanist AES has chosen self-determination and sovereignty in the face of imperialism and colonialism.

Afghanistan Conflict Explained: How the US Overthrew Afghan Socialism

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Afghanistan was and still is the “graveyard of empires.” Most of the modern history of Afghanistan was it being a proxy war between the British and Tsarist Russia empires. The Anglo-Afghan wars ended with the full breakaway of Afghanistan by Emir and then King Amanullah Khan, “sometimes referred to as Afghanistan’s Kemal Ataturk.” As part of its move away from the British empire especially, in 1921, he signed a friendship treaty with the revolutionary new communist government of the Soviet Union.

In the 8 years of Khan’s reign the USSR helped launch economic infrastructure programs such as transportation, communications, power plants, water treatment facilities,

and allowed Afghans to attend to Soviet universities. Khan also abolished slavery in 1923 and his wife Queen Soraya Tarzi pushed for education of women to be mandatory along with the men. These rapid shifts however led to reactionary elements funded by the British in 1929 forced Khan to abdicate through a civil war. After several assassinations and coups, Mohammed Zahir Shah, who was related to Khan, became king until 1973. He didn't follow the reforms of Amanullah Khan and would even ally with Nazi Germany and the Axis Powers in World War 2. The Soviet Union though after the war would continue to invest and support Afghanistan economically.

Marxist academic Michael Parenti wrote in 2008:

“Since feudal times the landholding system in Afghanistan had remained unchanged, with more than 75 percent of the land owned by big landlords who comprised only 3 percent of the rural population. In the mid-1960s, democratic revolutionary elements coalesced to form the People's Democratic Party (PDP). In 1973, the king was deposed, but the government that replaced him proved to be autocratic, corrupt, and unpopular. It in turn was forced out in 1978 after a massive demonstration in front of the presidential palace, and after the army intervened on the side of the demonstrators...The military officers who took charge invited the PDP to form a new government under the leadership of Noor Mohammad Taraki, a poet and novelist. This is how a Marxist-led coalition of national democratic forces came into office. "It was a totally indigenous happening. Not even the CIA blamed the USSR for it," writes John Ryan, a retired professor at the University of Winnipeg, who was conducting an

agricultural research project in Afghanistan at about that time.”

The Taraki government legalized labor unions, set up a minimum wage, a progressive income tax, a literacy campaign, programs that gave ordinary people greater access to health care, housing, public sanitation. Peasant cooperatives were started and price reductions on some key foods were imposed. Campaign to emancipate women from tribal bondage. It provided public education for girls and for the children of various tribes. Women studied agriculture, engineering and business at the Kabul’s university. Afghan women held government jobs. Women drove cars, traveled and fifty percent of university students were women. The government also abolished all debts owed by farmers, and began developing a major land reform program.

The feudal landlords opposed the land reform program that infringed on their holdings. And tribesmen and fundamentalist mullahs vehemently opposed the government’s dedication to gender equality and the education of women and children. The government moved to eradicate opium production. Until then—Afghanistan had been producing more than 70 percent of the opium needed for the world’s heroin supply because the CIA launched Operation Cyclone, which would eventually be the downfall of this progressive Afghan government.

Because of its egalitarian and collectivist economic policies—the Taraki government also incurred the opposition of the US government. Almost immediately after the PDP coalition came to power, the CIA, assisted by Saudi and Pakistani military, launched a large scale intervention

into Afghanistan on the side of the ousted feudal lords, reactionary tribal chieftains, mullahs, and opium traffickers.

Rumored CIA asset, Hafizulla Amin, committed a coup against the Taraki government, “He executed Taraki, halted the reforms, and murdered, jailed, or exiled thousands of Taraki supporters as he moved toward establishing a fundamentalist Islamic state. But within two months, he was overthrown by PDP remnants including elements within the military...[US] National security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski publicly admitted--months before Soviet troops entered the country--that the Carter administration was providing huge sums to Muslim extremists to subvert the reformist government.”

Brzezinski, “ Yes. According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the Mujahadeen began during 1980, that is to say, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan, 24 Dec 1979. But the reality, secretly guarded until now, is completely otherwise: Indeed, it was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention...It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam war...What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire?”

It was only after this, that the Afghan PDP requested Soviet military aid to stop the counter-revolution first lead by Amin and then the reactionary fundamentalist tribal leaders supported by the West and Pakistan.

“After a long and unsuccessful war, the Soviets evacuated the country in February 1989. It is generally thought that the PDP Marxist government collapsed immediately after the Soviet departure. Actually, it retained enough popular support to fight on for another three years, outlasting the Soviet Union itself by a year.”

Mujahideen turned the country into a fundamentalist warlord torn nation. They fell to infighting, terrorizing the civilian population, committing mass murder, rape, and executions. Tribes ordered farmers to plant opium poppy again after it was outlawed under the PDP. The Pakistani ISI, a close partner to the CIA, set up hundreds of heroin laboratories in Afghanistan-Pakistan border and within 2 years, was the biggest producer of heroin in the world.

In 1995 an extremist sect of Sunni Islam, the Taliban with US and Pakistan funding, gained power in the country through fear and bribery.

“The Taliban condemned forms of "immorality" that included premarital sex, adultery, and homosexuality. They also outlawed all music, theater, libraries, literature, secular education, and much scientific research...Women were outlawed from social life, deprived of most forms of medical care, barred from all levels of education, and any opportunity to work outside the home. Women who were deemed "immoral" were stoned to death or buried alive.”

Still with all of this going on in 1999, the US government was paying the salary of every single Taliban government official.

It wasn't until 2000, when the Taliban decided to eradicate opium production, did the US government policy on the Taliban and Afghanistan shifted.

Another key aspect to US policy towards Afghanistan, and the larger middle east region, is oil. After the overthrow of the USSR, Central Asian countries that were rich with oil reserves were now open to western capital accumulation. The US acquired the rights to nearly 75% of the these new reserves. The issue was transporting the oil from countries like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. US based oil company, UNOCAL, favored a route crossing Afghanistan and Pakistan. Negotiations were ongoing between UNOCAL and the Taliban government but slowing down due to competing bids from Argentina. The 9/11 attacks and Bush's policy shift on Afghanistan gave UNOCAL a fast track and monopoly on the oil transportation through the region from Central Asia.

Former professor John Ryan said, "[if Washington had left the Marxist Taraki government alone back in 1979,] there would have been no army of mujahideen, no Soviet intervention, no war that destroyed Afghanistan, no Osama bin Laden, and no September 11 tragedy."

Last 20 Years a Success for Western Imperialism?

From the invasion in October 7, 2001 to the fall of Kabul by the Taliban resurgence in August 15, 2021—the US and Western goals were clear and could not be stopped. Restart the opium production of the region, guarantee the control and security of oil transportation from Central Asia, and

have geopolitical stronghold next to the Pakistan, China, and Iran. The Taliban offering to hand over Osama Bin-Laden to a third-party to deliver him to the US after the 9/11 terrorist attacks were not enough to stop these goals. The West, lead by the US empire, decided to invade.

The shared neoliberal policy of the US-Middle East conflict of the last 20 years was clearly stated on September 19, 2003 by head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, Paul Bremer, “ the full privatization of public enterprises, full ownership rights for foreign firms of Iraqi [and Afghan] US businesses, full repatriation of foreign profits...the opening of banks to foreign control, national treatment for foreign companies and...the elimination of nearly all trade barriers.” (Harvey, 2007a, pp. 22-44)

Organizations such as The World Bank and USAID, a front of the CIA, determined the foreign capital investment and economic restructuring of Afghanistan. As Julian Assange said, “The goal is to use Afghanistan to wash money out of the tax bases of the US and Europe through Afghanistan and back into the hands of a transnational security elite. The goal is an endless war, not a successful war.” The US government spent \$300 million each day on the war in Afghanistan. In totality, \$2 trillion over 20 years. Yet, the number of Afghans living in poverty rose from 9.1 million in 2007 to 19.3 million in 2016. In stark contrast to the people and their suffering, BBC reported, “Afghan ambassador in Tajikistan says Ashraf Ghani escaped with bags full of 169 million US dollars when Kabul was falling.”

Afghanistan is currently the source of 90% of the world’s illicit opium, and the natural connection to the opioid crises with Big Pharma. It’s the largest narco-state in the

world. Over 50% of its national GDP in 2008 was from opium. Colombia at the height of the cocaine industry, only totaled 3% of the national GDP. It was so widespread and accepted that the brother of US puppet president Hamid Karzai–Ahmed Wali–was the largest opium drug kingpin in the south of the country, and he was paid by the CIA. The US military paid “local strongman Gul Agha Sherzai” \$10 million to push out his competition in a neighboring province. USAID, public front of the CIA, invested in the irrigation system in the Helmand province which was used to directly mass produce opium. “Between 2005 and 2015, the number of adult drug users jumped from 900,000 to 2.4 million, according to the United Nations, which estimates that almost one in three households are directly affected by addiction.”

In the past decade, worldwide deaths related to opioids has risen by 71%. In the US alone 841,000 Americans have died from opioid overdose since the war began. These connections can not be ignored.

Decades ago, the US and CIA helped fund its war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua through crack cocaine sales in black neighborhoods across the US–linking far-right death squads (Contras), US government, and drug kingpins in Latin America. The same playbook can be seen here. The opium trade is directly funding the US dirty wars of today. Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson said to the Ron Paul Institute, “We are in Afghanistan...it has nothing to do with Kabul and state building. Nothing to do with fighting the Taliban...nothing to do with fighting any terrorist group. It has everything to do with three primary objectives...first objective is to be in the place...proximate to the central

base road initiative of China that runs along central Asia. If we had to impact that with military power we are in position in Afghanistan. Second reason we are there is because we are [very close] with potentially the most unstable nuclear stockpile on the face of the earth, in Pakistan. We want to be able to leap on that...and the third reason we are there—is because there’s 20 million Uighurs, and they don’t like Han Chinese in Xinjiang province in western China...and if the CIA have to mount an operation using those Uighurs as [Turkish president] Erdoğan done in Turkey...the CIA will destabilize China and that would be the best way to do it. Foment unrest...” The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China in March 2019 reported that from 1990 to 2016 “thousands” of terrorist attacks were carried out in Xinjiang province from radical islamic extremists getting training in neighboring countries like Afghanistan. Abudulrekep Tumniaz, President of Xinjiang Islamic Institute believes the attacks were a “...conspiracy, a planned affair...” The US dirty wars of today in China, Haiti, Colombia, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico and Venezuela are funded by the opium production of Afghanistan and drug trafficking to major cartels.

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan is also largely overstated. As Jacobin writer Branko Marcetic wrote, “Maybe more ominously, Biden also cited something else to justify ending the war: the need to take on China. Along with the fact that China hawk Tony Blinken was reportedly the driving force behind the decision to get out of Afghanistan...” But as Colonel Wilkerson admitted, the primary goals of US occupation of Afghanistan is to wage

covert war against China and potentially hit China's economic infrastructure plans in Central Asia. In May 12, 2021—it was reported by NY Magazine, “Contractors are a force both the U.S. and Afghan governments have become reliant on, and contracts in the country are big business for the U.S. Since 2002, the Pentagon has spent \$107.9 billion on contracted services in Afghanistan, according to a Bloomberg Government analysis. The Department of Defense currently employs more than 16,000 contractors in Afghanistan, of whom 6,147 are U.S. citizens – more than double the remaining U.S. troops.” In July it was reported by US News, “New documents prepared for Congress by the Defense Department show the total number of all kinds of contractors in Afghanistan has dropped by more than half in the last three months from almost 17,000 as of April to only 7,800 this month, with fewer than 2,700 Americans among them.” And August 14, in the midst of the fall of Kabul to Taliban, President Biden ordered 1,000 more troops—not private contractors—to aid in the evacuation of Americans.

The reality is, the US is not planning on leaving Afghanistan, a country with too much resources and too much geopolitical importance. While the type or intensity of US intervention in Afghanistan may shift, the US is already manufacturing consent for continued occupation. CNN reported August 18th, that “the Taliban are sitting on \$1 trillion worth of minerals the world desperately needs... It's also causing security experts to wonder: What's going to happen to the country's vast untapped mineral wealth?” That resource is largely lithium—the main resource for electric vehicles. Afghanistan's reserve of

lithium may be the largest deposits of lithium in the world. The US government and capitalist class admittedly committed a coup against socialist lead Bolivia in 2019 for the purpose of gaining access to their lithium deposits. What makes people think the US would leave \$1 trillion in natural resources behind in a country it can undermine and control still?

The Taliban outlasted the height of the US war effort and regained Afghanistan from a faction of the Northern Alliance—which is now waging a resistance to the Taliban, lead by the son of anti-communist Mujahideen leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. Both sides of this conflict have deep connections to the US and Pakistan governments through the CIA and ISI—with the Taliban stating they are working with the US on the withdrawal process—so what’s next for Afghanistan? Most likely more factional infighting between fundamentalist groups with the US attempting to play puppet master still to steal more valuable resources and sap the labor power of the working people from the “graveyard of empires.”

Yemen's Anti-Colonial Past and Future

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Most people in the West have only basic information about what's happening between the West, Yemen, Israel, Palestine, and the Gulf States. In mainstream news, it's dismissed as a matter of "Iran-backed rebels" upsetting the sacred tradition of "international shipping." There's a severe lack of understanding of Yemen's geopolitical importance, its relation to the Palestinian resistance, and its rich history in the anti-imperialist and socialist struggle. The "Houthis," or Ansar Allah movement, are not some backward extremist terrorist group, but a continuation of nearly a century of struggle for national liberation.

Early on Friday, Jan. 13, the U.S. and U.K. launched dozens of air and missile strikes against Yemen, and a small naval coalition now patrols the waters nearby. The Bab al-Mandab Strait is a highly significant maritime trade route. Over 6 million barrels of oil—4% of the world's total oil flow—passes through daily, the vast majority going to the West. On top of that, 30% of the world's natural gas supply is transported through that strait. Yemen has been waging a

weeks-long campaign of drone and missile strikes predominantly against commercial and military vessels in the region to disrupt Israeli and Western trade. This campaign has provided the U.S. and U.K. with a rationale for their ongoing military intervention against Yemen.

Instead of addressing the root of the issue—Western colonialism and imperialism—escalatory moves by the West do nothing but exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in West Asia. The Biden administration is quite clear that its intervention is purely for the purpose of “defending international shipping...” The U.S. views the actions by Yemen as “endanger[ing] freedom of navigation in one of the world’s most vital waterways” and “jeopardiz[ing] trade.” To the U.S. and U.K., this conflict is about maintaining global capitalist trade, which is built on resource extraction from the global South to the global North. Yemeni Brigadier General Abdullah bin Amer told Al Jazeera in response to the American and British air strikes that Washington and London bear full responsibility for creating the military conflict in the Red Sea and must be prepared to pay a heavy price for their aggression. It’s vital to look at the historical roots of this potential regional conflict.

Yemen’s history is inspiring and tragic. Its people have been divided by imperialism and colonialism. The British Empire—through the British East India Company—began colonizing southern Yemen in 1839, separating it from the Egyptian- and later Ottoman-controlled north. It would take until 1918 for northern Yemen to gain sovereignty. Under the leadership of Imam Yahya Hamideddin, anti-Ottoman insurgency began in 1904. After World War I, Imam Yahya

denounced the British division of Yemen into two separate states—with one lacking sovereignty still. He and North Yemen funded guerrilla fighters and feudal lords against British colonial control in the south.

In the 1920s-30s, both Imam Yahya and Ibn Saud—the autocrat of a nascent Saudi Arabia—were seen as anti-imperialist leaders by the USSR because both posed a threat to British interests on the peninsula. Eager to divert Imam Yahya from his focus on the decolonization of British-occupied South Yemen and to forestall Saudi expansion, the British instigated a conflict between North Yemen and neighboring Saudi Arabia, selling arms to both sides as tensions grew over their shared border. In February 1934, Imam Yahya capitulated to British pressure and signed an agreement recognizing British control over South Yemen. The next month, hostilities broke out between North Yemen and the Saudi kingdom, culminating in a swift and victorious Saudi invasion. At the time, communist opinion on the conflict was not monolithic, with the *Daily Worker* framing Ibn Saud as a British proxy while other sources assert that both Arab states were manipulated by the British. At the same time, Imam Yahya was openly allied with Benito Mussolini, the founder of fascism. In the final analysis, although the exploiting class at the head of the moribund feudal order represented the popular anti-imperialist movement on the Arabian Peninsula, it could only do so inconsistently. In due time, it would be eclipsed.

Imam Yahya was assassinated in 1948. His son and successor, Imam Ahmad bin Yahya Hamideddin, was the first to forge ties with Arab nationalist states like Gamal

Abdel Nasser's Egypt. These ties to nationalist and socialist movements would eventually undermine the monarchy in North Yemen. Also during the 1950s, Yemenis in British-controlled South Yemen went to the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. They joined the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN), founded by George Habash, which would be the ideological and organizational breeding ground for most of the left-wing Arab movements in West Asia like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Both of these are currently in the united front of the Palestinian resistance with groups like Hamas leading the armed struggle against Israeli occupation and settler colonialism.

North and South Yemen in the 1960s went through revolutions and civil wars due to rising ideological and class antagonisms. Vietnam, Cuba, Algeria, Korea, and China all went through significant socialist revolutionary periods that also inspired many parts of the global South. The British and French started their transition from colonial to neocolonial control over Africa, which led to many countries gaining independence in some form. In 1962, Imam Ahmad of North Yemen passed away, and his son was overthrown in a coup. The new régime was called the Yemen Arab Republic and went through a vicious civil war until 1970. Egypt funneled tens of thousands of troops, tanks, and equipment to the new nationalist state, as well as aid from socialist countries. The monarchist rebels, led by tribal lords, were supported by Saudi Arabia, the U.S., the U.K., and Israel. In effect, this civil war created a new front in the Cold War.

On Oct. 14, 1963, anti-colonial figure Rajih bin Ghalib Labuzah was assassinated in British-controlled southern Yemen. It was the spark of an anti-colonial revolution. Two different movements formed—the left-wing National Liberation Front (NLF) and the Arab nationalist Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY). They would fight the British, and each other, until 1967 when news of the British involvement in the Israeli Six-Day War broke. Mass mutinies spread in the colonial army in Yemen, the mutineers siding with the NLF. The last British colonizer left South Yemen on Nov. 30, 1967. By that time, the NLF had held three congresses, the first of which had produced its National Charter, which stated its opposition to colonialism and imperialism.

Marxist-Leninists took full control of the NLF and South Yemen in 1969, renaming it the People's Republic of South Yemen (later, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen [PDRY])—the only socialist state in West Asian history. Eventually, the NLF would evolve into the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP). The socialist state would last until 1990. In its time it enacted sweeping and deep reforms in the society, economy, and politics of Yemen. It immediately nationalized the majority of corporations and enterprises.

The PDRY enacted the Agrarian Reform Law of 1970, which encouraged tenant farmers and sharecroppers to take the feudal lords' land themselves and gave them the right to redistribution. In 1971, it developed a new constitution, which gave “all political power” to the “working people.” It called for the “abolition of all forms of colonialism, Zionism, and racial discrimination.” The constitution supported “scientific and artistic innovation”

and the “protection and improvement of the environment.” It smashed Yemen’s old caste and class structures by codifying “equality between men and women,” stating that “all citizens are equal in their rights and duties irrespective of their sex, origin, religion, language, education, or social status.” It gave medical care and education as a right to all. Collective property, worker co-ops, and mass organizations such as trade unions were considered the “basis of the national economy.”

Not only did it give basic rights—rights that are lacking even in some Western democracies—but it codified “scientific socialism” and “democratic centralism” as the foundation of the state and society. The PDRY also enacted the 1972 Housing Law and the 1974 Family Law in efforts to revolutionize Yemeni society and class structures.

The PDRY during this time had been funding and supporting the National Democratic Front (NDF) in North Yemen, but by 1974 had ceased the militant, armed approach in favor of a diplomatic unification of the two Yemeni states. The North Yemeni president, Ibrahim al-Hamdi, was tragically assassinated just two days before a much anticipated meeting with the South. His assassin, Ahmad al-Ghashmi, took control of the government of North Yemen, the Yemen Arab Republic, and became a de facto Saudi puppet. A year later he too would be assassinated, launching the socialist-led South against the Saudi-controlled North in a civil war. The Saudis supported a fundamentalist group called the Islamic Front. After the civil war, it would go to Afghanistan to fight the USSR on behalf of the Saudis and the West. The PDRY would go through internal factionalism after the war with the North

and eventually fall into civil war itself, weakening it past a point of no return. The fall of the Eastern European socialist bloc and the USSR led to a massive economic crisis, like in many other socialist countries.

In 1990, Yemen was unified peacefully into a single country and state. Ali Abdullah Saleh was named president of the new state, and the first parliamentary elections were in 1993. However, perceived irregularities in the results favored a revitalized Islamic Front, reconstituted as the Islah Party, over the Yemeni Socialist Party. The socialists returned to the south to start a new revolution against the Yemeni state, but ultimately failed. Another opposition party was the Party of Truth, and a key figure in that party was Hussein al-Houthi.

He led the peaceful Believing Youth movement, which promoted Zaydi Islam. Al-Houthi preached the peaceful co-existence of all Islamic sects. The September 11 attacks and subsequent U.S. invasions of Arab and Central Asian countries led to the Believing Youth movement going from an Islamic social movement to a political movement. Internal discussions on colonialism and U.S. imperialism started to change the movement. In 2002, the “Houthi Slogan” was created: “God is the Greatest, death to America, death to Israel, a curse upon the Jews, victory to Islam.” It has of course drawn criticism, but the Ansar Allah movement would continue to evolve through massive struggles.

Ansar Allah became the voice of Yemeni dissent against the Saleh government. Saleh put a \$55,000 bounty on al-Houthi, arrested thousands of people, and launched a military operation in the highlands of Yemen to stamp out

this opposition movement. Like a vicious cycle, the Ansar Allah movement would fight the Saleh-led and Saudi-backed forces from 2004-2010. The rebels offered a truce to prevent further civilian casualties and the Yemeni government offered a five-point ceasefire which was agreed by all parties.

Unfortunately, peace would not be in the cards for the Yemeni people. The next year, in 2011, the Arab Spring shattered West Asia and North Africa. IMF-enforced neoliberal austerity had destroyed the internal economy of Yemen. Massive debt and unemployment led to significant unrest in Yemen. Saleh resigned and escaped to Saudi Arabia, so Vice President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi became president. The next year, a presidential election where Hadi was the only candidate took place—Ansar Allah and the Yemeni Socialist Party boycotted the election.

From 2013-2014, the Hadi government started the National Dialogue Conference. It was an attempt to get every political faction and party together to discuss the future of Yemen and its development. Through this process, and its natural alliance with the Yemeni Socialist Party, Ansar Allah reformed and opened up its movement and organization. This is the event that created the first Politburo for Ansar Allah and spokespersons like Dr. Ahmad Sharafeddin and Abdul Karim Jadban became the new democratic face of Ansar Allah. Sadly, both would be assassinated before the National Dialogue Conference ended.

The Hadi government cut oil and gas subsidies, which caused prices for the average Yemeni to skyrocket. Huge protests formed, but the state responded with massacres.

By Sept. 21, 2014, the situation became too much for the opposition parties. Ansar Allah launched a full-scale revolution to stop the killing of innocent civilians. Armed units called the “People’s Committees,” with members of the Yemeni Socialist Party, stormed the capital Sanaa and captured it within hours. It did not overthrow Hadi, but compelled him to drop all IMF-induced policies and sign the UN-sponsored Peace and National Partnership Agreement, which stipulates a government inclusive of all factions and parties.

“The glorious September 21 revolution emerged as a natural extension of the Yemeni people’s struggles for liberation and progress. Today, the Ansarallah stand as the vanguard heirs to the Yemeni National Movement, embracing national issues against imperialism and Zionism, and seeking justice for historical struggles,” said Anas al-Qadhi of the Yemeni Socialist Party, describing the revolution. The YSP did split over the revolution; many of the old leadership went to Saudi Arabia and have been expelled while many of the rank and file support the Ansar Allah movement.

This action wasn’t a sectarian decision, but one agreed upon by all progressive forces and parties in Yemen. Thirteen opposition parties came out instantly to support this “revolution”: the Ummah Party, the Justice and Development Youth Party, the Yemeni Dignity Party, the al-Ahrar Organization, the Yemeni Labor Party, the National Accord Party, the Yemeni Progressive Organization, the Peace Party, the Future Party, the Arab Spring Party, the Liberation Front Party, Freedom and Justice, and the National Democratic Front Party. They said

the revolution “represents all the Yemeni people.” A Revolutionary Committee was formed from all the revolutionary parties, creating the foundation for a new united front for a national liberation struggle for Yemen. Hadi resigned and fled to the southern port city of Aden to foment another Yemeni Civil War. The Revolutionary Committee announced a Constitutional Declaration and formed a new government for Yemen in response to Hadi’s counter-revolution.

From 2015-2022, the new Yemeni state, led by a coalition with Ansar Allah at its head, fought off the Hadi-led rebels in the south and a Saudi invasion in the north, which were completely backed by the Western imperialist powers. At least 233,000 people would be killed in a conflict some scholars called a genocide. Nearly 10 million Yemenis faced famine during this period of Western and Saudi intervention, and Human Rights Watch documented at least 90 unlawful air strikes against civilian targets.

In this conflict, the Saudis started to paint Ansar Allah as a tribal group and proxy of Iran. The nomenclature of “Houthis” is used to paint them as a tribe and not a big tent organization. The reality is the Ansar Allah movement developed into and continues to develop a united front with all the progressive parties and now a majority of the population of Yemen are in Ansar Allah controlled-territory. This isn’t some minor terrorist group or a tribal rebellion that is secretly Iran meddling in the region. Even the Washington Post admitted, “Tehran’s support for the Houthis is limited, and its influence in Yemen is marginal. It is simply inaccurate to claim that the Houthis are Iranian proxies.” As Yemen aims to take control of the majority of

the country from the Saudi-backed rebels, it has begun to launch offensive operations. In 2019, Yemen's missile attack on facilities owned by Aramco, Saudi's largest oil-producer, cut the kingdom's oil production by 50%.

The development of the united front in Yemen propelled Saudi Arabia to pursue a peaceful resolution with the new de facto state of Yemen. The U.S. would even delist Ansar Allah as a terrorist group after years of pressure by progressive forces within Yemen and internationally. The main mediator, Oman, was able to broker a ceasefire between all Yemeni factions in December 2023. Peace talks between Yemen and Saudi Arabia are continuing and both sides still are posturing towards peace regardless of the escalation in the Red Sea.

As previously stated, the birth of Yemeni socialism has the same roots as the resurgence of Palestinian socialism. The PDRY was always in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and even non-socialist factions in Yemen still are mainly nationalistic and Pan-Arab in orientation. Zionism as well is rightly viewed in the region as a form of European settler colonialism, and the Zionist project of Israel has always been a de facto client state of Western imperialism—first the British and then the Americans.

Yemen has reached a point of internal peace and stability it has not seen in decades, while its spiritual and cultural brothers and sisters in Palestine are facing the worst escalation of genocidal attack by Israel since the Nakba. Since Oct. 7, over 20,000 Palestinians have been killed, nearly 60,000 wounded, 1.9 million displaced, and 90% facing starvation. The numbers are truly horrific. South Africa is taking Israel to the International Court of Justice

for genocide, and Yemen has decided it must use its revolutionary military in solidarity with Palestine.

Whether it's Zionism or U.S. interventions in West Asia, the result is clear: perpetual blowback and the rise of national liberation movements. We have seen in real and dual time, a broad united front in Palestine and Yemen form in recent years, for the express purpose of pushing imperialist forces out of their native lands. Perhaps the most significant development is a return to Arab socialism. The PFLP, the DFLP, and the Palestinian People's Party have been working together and with other factions in a more organized manner for Palestinian liberation. The Yemeni Socialist Party and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen have risen from the ashes within the Ansar Allah movement. The U.S. and Western imperialism have spent the last century trying to diminish Arab development, unity, and sovereignty. It's time to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and colonized peoples of the world, demand a ceasefire, end the occupations, and get the U.S. and the West's hands off Yemen.

The US Kidnaps Nicolás Maduro, Attempts Regime Change for Oil, & Venezuela Prepares for Imperial Invasion

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Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores were kidnapped by US forces last night and transported to New York City to await charges for “Narco-Terrorism Conspiracy, Cocaine Importation Conspiracy, Possession of Machineguns and Destructive Devices, and Conspiracy to Possess Machineguns and Destructive Devices against the United States,” according to US Attorney General Pam Bondi.

This was after a prolonged bombing campaign that murdered at least 40 people last night and over 100 people in the previous six months. As the fascist US president Donald Trump said weeks ago, “[Venezuela] has a lot of oil there...and we want it back.” Today, after the kidnapping of Maduro, Trump declared, “We are going to have a presence in Venezuela as it pertains to oil. We are going to be taking out a tremendous amount of wealth out of the ground...”

This is clearly an illegal act under international law and an infringement on the sovereignty of the Venezuelan people and nation. The UN stated:

“The Secretary-General is deeply alarmed by the recent escalation in Venezuela, culminating with today’s United States military action in the country, which has potential worrying implications for the region. Independently of the situation in Venezuela, these developments constitute a dangerous precedent. The Secretary-General continues to emphasize the importance of full respect - by all - of international law, including the UN Charter. He’s deeply concerned that the rules of international law have not been respected. The Secretary-General calls on all actors in Venezuela to engage in inclusive dialogue, in full respect of human rights and the rule of law.”

The world has erupted in protests and condemnations from international leaders and labor unions. Cuban President and First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, Miguel Diaz-Canel denounced this invasion:

“The Revolutionary Government condemns in the strongest terms the United States’ military aggression against Venezuela, while categorically reiterating Cuba’s absolute support and solidarity with the sister Bolivarian Republic and its government. It supports the address by Executive Vice President Delcy Rodríguez and endorses her demand that the United States government provide proof of life for Constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros and Vice President Cilia Flores, as well as the determination of the Bolivarian and Chavista government and its people to reject the aggression and defend their independence and sovereignty.”

The cowardly US aggression is a criminal act, violating international law and the UN Charter. It constitutes a dangerous escalation of the war campaign waged for years by the United States against that sister nation, which intensified in September 2025 with the aggressive naval deployment in the Caribbean Sea, under false pretenses and unfounded accusations devoid of any evidence.

Cuba emphatically demands the immediate release by US authorities of President Nicolás Maduro Moros and his wife Cilia Flores.

This is a blatant imperialist and fascist aggression aimed at domination, seeking to revive US hegemonic ambitions over Our America, rooted in the Monroe Doctrine, and the goal of gaining unrestricted access to and control over the natural resources of Venezuela and the region. It also seeks to intimidate and subjugate the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The consequences of this irresponsible act remain to be seen. The United States government, President Donald Trump, and his Secretary of State, along with the aggressive and hostile elements in Latin America and the Caribbean who have acquired so much political influence in that country, bear full responsibility for the deaths and the human and material damage already caused, as well as any that may result from this aggression.

The governments of the region, representing their people, unanimously signed the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace in Havana in January 2014, an aspiration that is now under attack from the United States.

The international community cannot allow an act of aggression of this nature and gravity against a UN Member

State to go unpunished, nor can it allow the kidnapping of the legitimate and sitting president of a sovereign country in a military operation without facing consequences. Venezuela is a peaceful country that has not attacked the United States or any other nation.

For that sister nation and its people, we are prepared to give, as we would for Cuba, even our own blood.

The Revolutionary Government calls on all governments, parliaments, social movements and peoples of the world to condemn the United States' military aggression against Venezuela, and to confront this act of state terrorism that threatens international peace and security, and seeks to impose a new doctrine of domination by US imperialism in the world and in Latin America and the Caribbean in particular.

All nations in the region must be on alert, for the threat hangs over them all. In Cuba, our determination to fight is firm and unwavering. The decision is singular: Homeland or Death.

We will win!

Havana, January 3, 2026"

Colombian President Gustavo Petro commented, "The Government of Colombia rejects the aggression against the sovereignty of Venezuela and of Latin America. Internal conflicts between peoples are resolved by those same peoples in peace. That is the principle of the self-determination of peoples, which forms the foundation of the United Nations system."

Honduran President Xiomara Castro stated, "The military aggression of the United States against the people of Venezuela and the kidnapping of President Nicolás

Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores constitutes an affront to the sovereignty and independence of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as an absolute disregard and a moral defeat of the United Nations Charter and international law. We condemn this barbarity and stand in solidarity with the brave people of Venezuela, and with President Nicolás Maduro and his wife. We cannot allow the return of imperialist colonialism. Honduras has also been a victim of interference and direct intervention by the President of the United States, Donald Trump, who threatened the Honduran people during the electoral process for their intention to vote for Rixi Moncada, and accompanied a colossal electoral fraud that gravely wounds and endangers our already fragile democracy.”

Condemnations have been pouring in from the masses on the streets to more leaders like Lula da Silva, “The bombings on Venezuelan territory and the capture of its president cross an unacceptable line. These acts represent a most serious affront to Venezuela’s sovereignty and yet another extremely dangerous precedent for the entire international community.”

AFL-CIO stated, “We join the international labor community in condemning President Trump’s unconstitutional actions in Venezuela.” However, labor strikes within the US in response to this seem unlikely with the AFL-CIO’s history.

At this point, it seems that the Venezuelan state and the political party of Maduro, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), have centralized and stabilized control. Interim President Delcy Rodríguez, Minister of Defense Vladimir Padrino López, and Minister of Interior and

Justice Diosdado Cabello have all come out and declared their united resistance to US invasion and demanded the release of Maduro.

The military and revolutionary people's militias (colectivos), under the leadership of Lopez and Cabello respectively, equal the total armed resistance of Venezuela. The fact that they have not capitulated is a sign that the US did not set up a puppet regime to be installed instantly. And Rodriguez' father was tortured to death by the previous CIA-backed narco-trafficking Venezuelan regime. She has no love for the US war machine.

If the US wants to control the oil and resources of Venezuela for Western capital extraction, it looks like the US empire will have to further escalate this war. Last night already saw US soldiers and FBI boots on the ground and Trump promising further boots to invade and assert control of the oil for a "reimbursement" of imperial expenditures. Delta Force, out of notorious—and ironic—drug trafficking Fort Bragg, was the key force that kidnapped Maduro and his wife. As previously reported, there are thousands of US troops mobilized in the region and at least 20 military bases and airfields around the country to launch more imperial fascist violence on the people of Venezuela and Latin America.

International solidarity is a must at this point. More mass protests, labor strikes, and economic shutdowns, and like the ELN in Colombia promised today, military aid to Venezuela is imperative. If the US can quickly commit to regime change in Venezuela and install a client state, it will be a signal that they can target other sovereign nations in the region. Trump and his administration have already

been threatening Mexico, Cuba, and Colombia, and just last week, bombed Nigeria while supporting genocide against Palestinians and Yemenis.

Marco Rubio warned socialist Cuba, “If I lived in Havana...I’d be concerned...” Trump said, “Something is gonna have to be done” about Mexico and continuing, “this incredible thing last night...we have to do it again [in other countries]. We can do it again, too. Nobody can stop us.”

It’s also been reported that the Washington Post and the NY Times got leaks of this imperial invasion beforehand and chose to protect US capitalist interests over the lives and sovereignty of Venezuelans

The US is a rogue fascist state with a nuclear arsenal and a still powerful military. As Antonio Gramsci said, “*The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born; now is the time of monsters.*”

The United States War on the Cuban Revolution is Genocide

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“The primary danger we face in [the Cuban Revolution]...is in the impact the very existence of [this] regime has upon the leftist movements in many Latin America countries...The simple fact is that [Cuba] represents a successful defiance of the United States, a negation of our hemispheric policy of almost a century and a half.” -U.S. State Department Policy Planning Council, 1964

The hybrid imperialist war against Cuba from the U.S. is reaching a rupture point. With the kidnapping of President Nicolas Maduro and the blockade of Venezuela’s oil to Cuba, the revolutionary nation is in a new “Special Period.” Warhawk Marco Rubio is reportedly looking to block any and all negotiations with Cuba and is searching for a military and final solution to end the 67-year-long socialist

and internationalist-oriented revolution on the island nation. Mexico has also stopped oil shipments to Cuba due to U.S. pressure.

Without the much-needed oil supply that has been commonplace since the Bolivarian Revolution, Cuba is back to a stage of deep crisis and rationing. International flights have quickly ceased due to refueling issues, and public transportation has either slowed or stopped in certain areas. The Cuban government has said that there will still be a guarantee of fuel supply to key sectors such as healthcare, defense, water supply, education, and agricultural production. However, it has already been reported that school buses are having a difficult time due to the rationing, leaving some kids at home.

Cuban President and first secretary of the Partido Comunista de Cuba (Communist Party of Cuba, PCC) Miguel Díaz-Canel has called for “creative resistance” in this difficult time, which he calls an “economic strangulation.” Cuba needs an estimated 100,000 barrels of oil (over 13,000 tons) imported daily for energy consumption. As it stands, China and Russia have both stated they will continue to provide aid and oil to Cuba, while Mexico delivered 814 tons of food supplies to Cuba, but has not resumed its normal oil exports to Cuba. Currently, there is no public plan to be able to supply Cuba with the amount of oil it requires.

In 2023, 58% of Cuba’s oil imports were from Venezuela. That was already in decline before the U.S.’ quasi-regime change in Venezuela, with Mexico then becoming the dominant supplier of oil, accounting for 44% of oil imports to Cuba. Mexico and Venezuela, in effect, were the only real

suppliers of oil to the Cuban nation, which has now declined to near 0% of imports as both have stopped due to U.S. pressure.

Over the last two years, there has been a dramatic rise in renewable energy as a resource compared to fossil fuels for the island nation. Cuba previously used renewable energy sources for around 5% of their daily consumption. That number is now at 38%, largely due to solar panel investments supported by China.

In a recent Lancet study, since 1970, western sanctions have murdered 38 million people—a capitalist holocaust. By 2020, sanctions, mainly enacted by the U.S., had killed over 100,000 people in Venezuela. While we do not have a detailed study on the Cuban death toll specifically due to recent U.S. sanctions, we have seen a tragic and forced rise in infant mortality in recent years from historic lows reached in 2014.

The international legal definition of genocide states that there must be special intent, and one of these requirements must be met: Killing members of the group. Causing serious bodily or mental harm. Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction (e.g., starvation, denying medical care). Imposing measures intended to prevent births. Forcibly transferring children to another group. The US has done every one of these to the Cuban people. Even today, Republican Congressman Carlos Gimenez said, *“Any and all pressure that can be exerted to make this cancer go away is what the United States needs to do.”*

From Haiti, to Russia, to Cuba—the Revolution Continues

The Cuban Revolution is not only directly connected to the Russian Revolution and the formation of the Communist International movement, but it is also a successor to the Haitian Revolution. All were clear islands of defiance in a sea of colonial and imperial violence. The revolutionaries dared to say the economic and political sovereignty of their people was worth dying for— *“patria o muerte.”* “Homeland or death.”

Haitian slaves fought back against French, Spanish, English, and American forces during their long revolutionary struggle for independence. However, tragically, there wasn’t a state or system of states with parity with European colonial powers that could offer aid. Simon Bolivar and the successors to Spanish colonial rule throughout the Americas were still caught in the wave of bourgeois revolutions.

Haitians were thus forced to pay back “debt,” incurred for having freed themselves from being private property. For over 150 years, they were forced to pay, on average, 80% of their national revenue on that debt, which was bought from France by Citibank (now Chase Bank)

In 1904, U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt, who had militarily intervened in the Cuban Independence War against Spanish colonialism in 1898, declared that any country that “pays its obligation” to US imperial authority will “need fear no interference.” However, if they did not

pay those obligations, then they would “ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation.”

Since that speech to Congress, the US has militarily invaded or conducted regime change operations in nations across Latin America; in Cuba (1906-1909, 1961), Honduras (1907, 1911, 2009), Nicaragua (1907, 1912-1933, 1981-1990), Panama (1908, 1912, 1989), Mexico (1913), Dominican Republic (1914, 1965), Puerto Rico (1950), Guatemala (1954), Chile (1973), El Salvador (1981-1992), Grenada (1983-1984), Haiti (1914-1934, 2004), Brazil (1963), Uruguay (1973), Bolivia (1971, 2019), Peru (1975, 2021), Argentina (1976), and Venezuela (1920, 2002, 2026).

Through Operation Condor, Mongoose, and its precursors and successors, the U.S. military and intelligence agencies are conducting a genocidal war against the people of the Americas to retain its hegemonic control. Every resistance movement that strove for sovereignty and dignity for its people has been brutally and murderously repressed by the United States.

The U.S. continues to operate a 67-year-long terror campaign against Cuba, using the mafia and the CIA to conduct regime change operations against the socialist nation. Fidel Castro alone survived over 600 assassination attempts, let alone bombings, mass shootings, sabotage, blockade, and embargoes, all with the explicit purpose of strangling the Cuban people into subservience. There are also more nefarious acts, such as Operation Peter Pan, which kidnapped over 14,000 Cuban children. All one needs to see to understand what “freedoms” the U.S. wants to bring is to look at what the US has done to Haiti and Puerto Rico.

Cuba is characterized as a dictatorship and an oppressive regime. However, since the revolution and the first 17 years of independence, they kept and followed the constitution from 1940. Clearly, the U.S. had no issue with the Cuban constitution from 1940 to 1959. It was only when a movement of the people came to power, which utilized the existing legal framework towards sovereignty, that it became an issue.

The 1940 Cuban constitution restricted large landholdings and gave power to supply all people with employment. That's exactly what the Cuban revolution did. Fidel Castro stated that the "six problems" of the Cuban society were: land, housing, industrialization, unemployment, education, and health.

In 1959, Cuba democratically passed the Agrarian Reform Law, which restricted land holdings to a maximum of 3,333 acres and automatically expropriated 40% of the land controlled by foreign corporations. This mainly affected the sugar supply, which was previously western owned. U.S. oil companies still owned the refineries but refused to refine newly imported Soviet oil, and US sugar companies, in conjunction, cut all existing deals for purchases in Cuba. Castro had offered compensation for the expropriated land, but this was refused by the U.S. which chose hybrid war instead.

After only 4 days of American rejection, Cuba voted in favor of Law 980 that nationalized all U.S. businesses in Cuba. The reality is, Cuba could have offered any sort of monetary compensation, but it would have fallen on deaf ears. By May 1959, the U.S. was already arming counter-revolutionaries on the island and in Florida. Eisenhower, in

1960, authorized the CIA to work to overthrow Cuban independence. At least 3,000 Cubans from 1959 to 2010 were directly murdered by U.S. terrorists and regime change operations in pursuit of this goal.

In spite of this, the Cuban revolution drastically increased life expectancy, literacy rates, and lowered infant mortality, unemployment, homelessness, and hunger. During the Special Period (1991-2001) Cuba also drastically altered its agricultural and ecological policies, while facing extreme hardships and losing 80% of all its imports, which included food, oil, machinery, consumer goods, etc. By 2006, Cuba was the only country in the world to achieve sustainable development—meaning a “commitment to improving the quality of human life while living within the limits of the ecosystems that sustain us.”

Cuba, a country that is deeply Catholic and affected by European colonial ideologies, suffered from extreme homophobia even after the revolution. This is one of the revolution’s great mistakes, as said so by Fidel Castro himself. However, Cuba has, since then, democratically voted in the new Family Code after decades of progress, which is now widely considered the most progressive set of laws concerning the LGBTQ+ community in the world.

Cuba’s internationalism has resulted in not only military aid to national liberation movements from the Congo, Bolivia, Angola, South Africa, and more, but also in its immense medical aid to oppressed nations. Millions of people have been vaccinated and treated by Cuban doctors around the world. Indeed, the Cubans even offered to send some of these doctor volunteers to New Orleans after the devastating Hurricane Katrina, only to be rejected by

President Bush. The Cuban healthcare industry has developed vaccines to cancers, COVID-19, and more, and has eradicated measles, cholera, and other malignant diseases in Cuba.

All of these advances are not only for the Cuban people, but for all of humanity, because the people organized for and won their liberation. Setting one's country on a path of self-sufficiency and sovereignty-this will always be seen as an existential threat to U.S. imperialism.

What Can We Do?

Venezuela, for the foreseeable future, cannot or will not aid Cuba. Mexico is politically pressured but not economically so, which calls into question the political principles of the ruling Morena Party. China and Russia have offered an unspecified amount of aid-they do have the resources to drastically help, but with the Ukraine War and China's non-interventionist policies, it calls into question how much aid will actually be delivered. The rapid expansion of renewable energy production in Cuba, supported by China in recent years, needs to be expanded. Smaller initiatives like those from the Communist Party of France show a positive sign of life and international solidarity in Western communist parties. But whatever the current aid and international support are, they're not enough.

Now, more than ever, we in revolutionary movements must bring the imperial war machine to a halt. We must organize in solidarity with the Cuban people and their revolution because they have always stood in solidarity with us. Labor unions must consider shutting down

transportation and manufacturing that isn't for direct aid to Cuba. The people must rally in the streets and pressure elected officials to capitulate to and serve the masses, not corporations. We have to fight hard for Cuba's survival. The U.S. is overtly waging an increasing war of genocide and colonial expansion; the international resistance must grow to meet the challenge.

Fascism's History and Rise in California: Settler Colonial Genocide to LASD Gangs

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California is widely seen as one of the more progressive states in the US. It's considered forward and liberal on matters of LGBTQ+ rights and other social issues. The reality of California's history as a state within the US and its contemporary class antagonisms is one that's far more disturbing and reactionary than the image the ruling class likes to present. California has a deeply intertwined homegrown fascist movement that it has never defeated, and in actuality is rising in prevalence – from mass lynchings, KKK terrorism, police gangs, and a foundation built on settler colonial genocide.

First, we must define fascism and specifically fascist movements. In 1933, the Communist International (ComIntern) guided by the expertise of Cdes. Georgi Dimitrov and Palmiro Togliatti defined fascism as, "Fascism

is the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital. Fascism tries to secure a mass basis for monopolistic capital among the petty bourgeoisie, appealing to the peasantry, artisans, office employees, and civil servants who have been thrown out of their normal course of life, and particularly to the declassed elements in the big cities, also trying to penetrate into the working class.” While this definition is enough to extrapolate an analysis from, it’s important to draw on others in how to look at the fascist movements in California and how they’ve grown over the years.

Guyanese revolutionary, theorist, and historian Walter Rodney identified fascism as “a deformity of capitalism” that “heightens the imperialist tendency towards domination which is inherent in capitalism,” and “safeguards the principle of private property.” Likewise, he asserted that “at the same time, fascism immeasurably strengthens the institutional racism already bred by capitalism...”

Indian Marxist economist Prabhat Patnaik in his work *Neoliberalism and Fascism* assessed that “[fascists] invariably invoke acute hatred against some hapless minority groups, treating them as the ‘enemy within’ in a narrative of aggressive hyper-nationalism, and attribute all the existing social ills of the ‘nation’ to the presence of such groups; second, they are based not only on prejudice but also on complete unreason, in the sense that no amount of evidence can possibly shake off such prejudice; third, they set themselves up as movements, trying to acquire social hegemony, as distinct from mere secret societies or

murderous gangs (though the latter may also be inspired by fascist ideology and may find room within these movements); and fourth, they are not averse to the use of street violence for achieving their political ends...”

Finally, Communist Party USA Chairman Gus Hall assessed that “*possibly the most important lesson of history for us in the United States is to develop an awareness of the factors that are present in our midst today that can become the base for a fascist development.*” From these formative teachers in the international working class movements, we can draw that fascism is a terroristic stage of monopoly capital expressed through a disaffected “middle class” from economic and social pressures. Fascist policies and aims as an ideology are as Togliatti said “*eclectic,*” but its general base is that of the deepest and most violent forms of chauvinism, racism, and reactionary politics.

Origins of Fascism in California

California has been shaped by settler colonialism through three colonialist projects – Spain, Mexico, and, most disturbingly, the United States of America. As Walter Rodney expressed, fascism is a natural development from the barbarism and racism of colonialism. Hitler and the fascists of Europe took direct inspiration from the US’ white supremacist myth of *Manifest Destiny* – the belief that white settlers were entitled to the entirety of North America. From 1769 to 1847, before US control, the population remained majority indigenous – 320,000 indigenous people compared to 12,000 mainly Spanish colonizers. California was a backwater economically and was never a main focus of development and primitive accumulation for

the Spanish empire and subsequently Mexico. As such, acts of genocide against the indigenous population were kept to the missionary system set up by the Catholic Church until California came under US jurisdiction. Before the official annexation of California in 1848, “American” settlers were already invading the territory. After the discovery of mass gold reserves in the region, the rate of primitive accumulation and all the horrors that come with it descended on the region.

The indigenous population fell ultimately to 16,000 in 1900, from 320,000 during the start of Spanish colonial rule. Additionally, 10,000-27,000 indigenous people were forced into slavery during the gold rush to supply a labor force. At least 4,500 are documented to have been murdered during this expansionist period. The overall California Genocide against the indigenous population was by way of murder, theft, slavery, and disease. This stain of colonialism is embedded into the societal structure, and not at all an exception to it.

Part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican-American War was the US agreeing to protect the property and civil rights of Mexican nationals that stayed in the newly annexed regions. As a result, the now majority of white colonizers flooding California – 70,000 immigrated in 1849 alone – needed to resort to extrajudicial violence in order to seize the property of the people living there. Mass mob violence against Mexicans became the norm. Ken Gonzales-Day in his research determined there were 350 documented cases of lynching in California from 1850-1935. Most of the victims of the racist mobs that were now colonizing California were Latino as well. In a similar time

frame in another study, California is close to southern states like Louisiana (391) and Alabama (347) in terms of lynchings.

In the era of Reconstruction in the US, a proto-fascist movement and terrorist organization were formed in response to the social and economic changes brought on by the Civil War and subsequent constitutional amendments – the Ku Klux Klan. While predominantly seen as more active in the South, the KKK was also active in California during this era. The Democrat-led California government sided with the Union instead of the Confederacy in the Civil War, and it was able to avoid federal oversight that Southern states incurred following the war, such as military occupation. The KKK and other racist vigilante mobs were able to thrive in California, which refused to ratify the 14th and 15th Amendments until 1959 and 1962 respectively. A major target of the KKK was also the new wave of Chinese immigrants seeking a better life in America as a result of repeated foreign invasions – a period known as the *century of humiliation* in which the US took full advantage.

There were a dozen KKK attacks in the state just from 1868-1870, mostly against Chinese workers whose population represented now 10% of the state but 25% of the labor force. That was seen as a threat to the now-white ruling class and disgruntled petty-bourgeois whites. This racism wasn't just relegated to paramilitary mobs; the Governor of California Henry Haight in his inaugural speech in 1867 said that Chinese immigration must cease and that it would "*inflict a curse upon posterity.*" The horrible tragedy of the 1871 Los Angeles Massacre, one of the largest mass lynchings in US history, murdered 10% of

the Chinese population in Los Angeles. The days prior to the massacre were headlined by the first daily newspaper of the city, Los Angeles News, describing the Chinese as an “*inferior and idolatrous race.*” While no KKK member can officially be linked to the event, the previous two decades of racist violence perpetrated by the Klan, violent colonizing mobs, and sponsored by the highest political authority of the state clearly led to the massacre.

The growing capital industry and class antagonisms of California are deeply connected. The expansion of the railroad monopolies under capitalists like Cornelius Vanderbilt, James Hill, Jay, and George Gould, etc. was financed by banking capitalists like JP Morgan and supported by industrial capitalists like Andrew Carnegie and John Rockefeller. The railroad expansion laid the commercial and manufacturing foundation for the westward expansion that led to the continuation and increase of the indigenous genocide.

It also was the industry that exploited much of that immigrant labor force newly arriving on the west coast. Nearly two-thirds of the railroad labor force were Chinese workers. There’s a reason the major working-class strikes during this period were connected to the railroad monopolies. Also, San Francisco’s industrial output doubled in the 1870s-until the recession of 1875-and its working-class base doubled too.

After the economic crash of the 1870s, California surged to prominence over the next few decades and into the early 20th century. The central basin of the state became a major agriculture producer that predominantly exploited Latin migrant farmers and Asian immigrants. Los Angeles and

San Francisco became massive industrial zones with key harbors used to extend US imperialist influence across the Pacific Ocean. The **Chinese Exclusion Act**, a stain against the claimed values of both the US and California, was enacted in 1882 and wasn't lifted until World War Two. As capitalism matured into its imperialist, monopolist stage of development in the late 19th and early 20 centuries, so too did proto-fascist settler colonialism develop into modern fascist movements.

In 1917, the split in the fabric of the capitalist order finally reached its climax due to the Bolshevik Revolution. The working class and oppressed peoples gained momentum worldwide, with Communist Parties forming everywhere in their wake. On 01 September 1919, the Communist Party USA would develop from this seismic shift in the class struggle, directly inspired by the great Bolshevik revolutionaries. Capitalism also had to develop to fight back against this rise of the working class in order to maintain its power – Fascism. As Italy and Germany were the embryos for the modern authoritarian fascist state, it was quickly mirrored in the rest of the Western world to combat the international working class. In the 1920's the KKK saw a second resurgence and perhaps its peak with 2-4 million members in that decade.

In California, the Klan gained monumental influence and political power. The city of Brea's first eight mayors were members of the KKK, 6/10 of the city councilmen from 1924-1936 were Klansmen, 50% of the city treasurers, 50% of the marshals, 67% of the fire chiefs, and more. In Anaheim, 20,000 Klansmen gathered to induct 1,000 new members. The anti-labor sentiments of the ruling class,

especially in places like Orange County, led to many working-class whites being radicalized into the fascist terror group – 23% of the Klan’s membership in California were oil workers for example after the demise of the Oil Workers Union. R.W. Ernest was the editor of the *Orange County Plain Dealer*, one of the main newspapers in Anaheim. Ernest used the pages of his newspaper to promote Klan ideas and activities. In 1917, Anaheim School District voted to segregate Latinos in schools and only maintain two grades for them. This act of racist segregation wasn’t appealed until a 1947 decision that ended all official school segregation in California. 1917 did see a legal win for Indigenous people gaining the right to vote in the state.

One of the more infamous cases of Klan violence was in the city of Inglewood, a city where KKK posters were put up all over the city reading “*Caucasian Only*”, on 22 April 1922. That night, 100 Klansmen attacked the house of a Spanish immigrant family, torturing, and sexually assaulting, and ultimately the police came and a firefight ensued where one Klansman died. LA county district attorney Thomas Woolwine launched an investigation into the Klan in LA county and uncovered the Sheriff and LA police chief had both been members. It became a nationwide scandal, and it exposed over 150 Klansmen to testify about the organization. It was a major blow to the KKK.

As the KKK were ending their peak, the Nazi movement touched down in California. In 1933, the Nazis held their first public rally in the state. The onset of the Great Depression saw radical politics explode nationwide. The same economic issues that led to major working-class

mobilization through the work of the Communist Party USA and other organizations saw the continued rise of the US fascist movement. Both communist and fascist movements gain a potential base of supporters as normal liberal, or eventually neoliberal, politics fails to solve the capitalist crisis for the working and petty-bourgeois classes – however, the former seeks it through rational scientific socialism and the latter seeks it through irrational reaction and the worst kinds of barbarism and chauvinism. Nazis were planning clandestine and terroristic operations at the same time Harry Bridges, an alleged Communist, led the San Francisco General Strike.

The plans by Nazi agents were to consolidate the fascist collaborators and organizations and unleash a wave of racist terrorist violence. Multiple times throughout the 1930s attempts to unify the fascist movement were held – the second attempt in Los Angeles of all places. The plots were still active even without the fascist movement united.

Plans to assassinate elected officials, raid National Guard armories, murder Hollywood actors, and so on. Plans to even use a fumigation company to kill Jewish families with poison gas or mass shooting sprees in Boyle Heights materialized. The predominant targets were Jewish, Catholics, African Americans – who were quickly becoming a larger population in the state – and still Latino migrants and Asian immigrants.

However, the person the Nazis deemed “*the most dangerous Jew in Los Angeles,*” Leon Lewis, would lead a citizen's resistance to the Nazi movement in California and would undermine their entire operation. Lewis was a veteran of the First World War and the first national

secretary of the Anti-Defamation League. He received funding from Hollywood executives who were afraid of the growing Nazi threats against them personally and their industry. Lewis would establish a spy ring that uncovered the aforementioned fascist plots and led to the arrest of many of them and the overall dismantling of the fifth-column threat on the west coast. This effort, along with the mass mobilization and organization of the working class through the New Deal united front, stopped the rise of the fascist movement and plots to violently overthrow the societal structure of the country and state.

The Modern Fascist Movement in California

The defeat of the Nazi fifth column in the 1930s-1940s did not defeat the stains of proto-fascism, by way of settler colonialism, in the US and California. While there was a lull in full-blown fascist movements compared to the 1920s KKK renaissance or the 1930s Nazi threat, the Civil Rights Movement that took center stage from the 1940s-1970s was met with the fascistic state violence of a settler colonial state.

During this period of intense state repression of working-class movements and organizations, we see the Black Panther Party, Brown Berets, and other Marxist and leftist groups form in California and spread throughout the country. Key alliances with Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers Union led to significant battles and wins in labor struggles between mainly Latin migrant farmers. As a result, the police forces in California took a more paramilitary and fascistic approach to combat this rise in

black and brown solidarity and Communist-led coalitions of workers.

In 1970, the Chicano Moratorium led 20,000-30,000 Latinos in protest against the Vietnam War and US imperialism. This working-class movement was met with the first documented LA county sheriff's department gang. The LASD gangs have become a national story and a constant news item for the county in recent decades, but the origins of their notorious reign of terror began in 1970. The *Red Devils* were the first documented LASD gang and started in East LA at the sheriff's station called Fort Apache. The mostly white police officers at the time felt as if they were in a starring role in a xenophobic John Wayne film; they had to tame the West against those whom they viewed as "*savages*." This period was full of civil unrest and police brutality. As Sean Kennedy of the Civilian Oversight Committee said, "[*East LA station has an*] *us-against-them narrative*."

As the 1970s-1980s brought on neoliberal shock therapy, destroying the New Deal policies that uplifted the working and petty-bourgeois classes, the rise of fascist groups began once again. In the 1980s, under reactionary former California governor Ronald Reagan's presidency, the KKK rose from the ashes of irrelevance to once again terrorize the innocent. Tom Metzger, Grand Dragon of the KKK and the so-called *White Aryan Resistance*, formed fascist militias on the California-Mexico border for the purpose of torturing, assaulting, and brutalizing innocent immigrants and migrants. The heinous and cold-blooded murder of Ethiopian immigrant Mulugeta Seraw by Metzger's White Aryan Resistance group led to his downfall in relevance.

In the same period, police gangs in Los Angeles were despotic in the city of Lynwood, killing Asian immigrants and terrorizing the growing black community. The murder of Hong Pyo Lee by the *Lynwood Vikings* police gang became notorious. In the 1990s, police gangs *Posse* and *The Wayside Whites* organized correctional officers in the prison system to commit fascist violence. Their alleged targets were the mentally ill and black prisoners respectively – especially those who fought against the white fascist prison gangs, such as the Skinheads and KKK. On 01 August 1998, the Posse police gang targeted a black prisoner diagnosed with a mental illness, Danny Smith, beating him to death.

The brutal beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles set off a massive uprising that wasn't organized but fueled the masses all over the country to look at police violence more. The Prison Industrial Complex during this era exploded as well. Angela Davis and Cassandra Shaylor in their report, *Race, Gender, and the Prison Industrial Complex: California and Beyond*, showed the drastic increase in prison populations—predominantly black, Latino, and Asian. On top of that, California's prison population made up of women had increased over the point of the total US prison population in 1970. The private prison industry increased to a multi-billion dollar industry with growing monopoly capitalism. Unfortunately, this would be a recurring story of police and fascist violence from then to now. These anecdotes are indicative of a wider scope of fascist violence through this period.

Following the 2008 financial crisis, which spawned the Occupy Movement and a resurgence of the communist and anarchist left in the US, we also saw a rise in fascist forces

once again. The cyclical nature of capitalism's *boom-bust cycle* mirrors the ebbs and flows of the radical left and right movements. The National Socialist Movement, KKK, Traditionalist Workers Party, Golden State Skinheads, Proud Boys, Atomwaffen Division, Oath Keepers, Three Percenters, etc., all spring up over the next decade to take the conservative right of the US to a more overt fascist position. The alt-right, MAGA movement, is the umbrella eclectic coalition of fascist and crypto-fascist groups. Donald Trump, a fascistic populist, took this coalition to the highest office of the country and committed awful atrocities – both at home and abroad.

From 2008 to the rise of Trump we saw the fascist movement come to prominence. In 2010, Jeff Hall was a member of the neo-Nazi National Socialist Movement (NSM) and was running for Riverside County office before being murdered by his son. Likewise, that year KKK flyers were spread in northern California. In 2016, just one year before the infamous and tragic Charlottesville fascist attack that left Heather Heyer murdered by a fascist protester, two fascist marches in California took place. A Neo-Nazi march in Sacramento was supposed to be canceled, but a coalition of the aforementioned California fascist groups attempted to hold the rally – several members of the community who came out in protest of the fascists were stabbed. The same year, in Anaheim, the KKK tried to hold a rally but was routed by the community.

In 2018, an alleged member of Atomwaffen Division, Samuel Woodward, murdered Blaze Bernstein, a Jewish and openly gay person. Atomwaffen Division, which has been designated as a terrorist group in multiple countries,

was charged with five other murders and possession of explosives with plans to bomb a nuclear facility in a matter of months after Woodward's arrest.

2020 saw a spike in KKK propaganda being spread in northern California, a black man found lynched in Palmdale, and the highest surge in hate crimes since 9/11.

Sexual Orientation: 48%+

African Americans: 12.5%+

Latinos: 30%+

Asian: 567%+

Atomwaffen was under threat of being declared a terrorist organization in the US, so it officially dissolved and re-formed into the “National Socialist Order.” They would take US homegrown fascism international as journalist Mariana van Zeller reported, “*We interviewed members of a white supremacy group called the Atomwaffen Division who has sent members to train in Ukraine...where neo-Nazi militias have recruited white supremacists from around the world to join their fight against Russia and advance racist ideology.*” Atomwaffen/NSO sent members to receive military experience with the notorious Azov Battalion and other Ukrainian fascists a year before fascist groups like Proud Boys, Three Percenters, and Oath Keepers under the MAGA umbrella led the 06 January Capitol Coup Attempt.

We know California Proud Boys, Three Percenters, and Oath Keepers were present at the 2021 coup attempt with at least coordination between the latter two groups – some being dual members in both Oath Keepers and Three Percenters. Both groups target petty-bourgeois ex-military members to protect the so-called “traditional values” of colonial America. Oath Keepers leaked their membership

accidentally, revealing 3,077 members in California, four elected officials, 24 in law enforcement, 12 in the military, and nine first responders. It showed active fascist infiltration.

The Proud Boys came out of January 6th facing many individual indictments, but the local membership in California maintained activity. In the central valley, they protested against calls for police accountability to the community, participated in a "Straight Pride" rally in Modesto, protested against an LGBTQ+ friendly theater in Fresno, provided armed security for *recall Gavin Newsom* events in Bakersfield, and protested against Los Alamitos USD school board for "*social justice standards.*" Proud Boys attacked a *Draw Queen* Reading event in San Francisco the same day 31 Patriot Front members in Idaho were arrested for planning to riot at a local Pride event.

The Proud Boys and Turning Point USA started a brawl on the campus of UC Davis. Jeffrey Perrine of the Proud Boys is running for school board in Sacramento. They claimed at least one police officer, Rick Fitzgerald of Fresno, has been captured on video brutalizing anti-fascist protesters, in Proud Boys merchandise. They've also claimed to have deep ties with the highway patrol. Chad Bianco, a former member of the Oath Keepers, has been re-elected Sheriff of Riverside County, as well.

All of these fascist groups and paramilitaries are extremely active, and making connections with law enforcement, as the whistle is being blown about police gangs in LASD. There are at least 18 police gangs that have a documented history of targeting racial groups and sexually assaulting women, even within their own police

departments. But it's not just fascist paramilitaries and the police – it's the fact California has one of the most segregated school systems, with a higher percentage of our people in prisons than any country on earth, worsening environmental system from insurmountable car culture and poor air quality, alienated suburbanism, worsening infrastructure, a homelessness crisis, and highest poverty rate in the country.

The neoliberal shock therapy of the last 40+ years, mixed with the baked-in settler colonial and white supremacist institutions, makes the struggle of the working class a difficult battle to overcome. We are living in a period where both new and old monsters are presenting themselves. A United Front of the democratic forces of the working and oppressed classes is the only answer to the rising tide of fascism in California and the country.

As fascist forces are actively participating in the electoral battlefield-so too should the democratic United Front to mitigate the political harm we are seeing in Florida or the quasi-coup attempt by state Republicans in Tennessee as examples. Protecting the democratic rights the working class has now and expanding them is vital to the class struggle. As labor issues are taking more national attention due to Amazon, Starbucks, and many others-this must be a key battleground for the working class. We've seen the UTLA/SEIU strike in Los Angeles County galvanize 60,000+ workers and our communities to stand against exploitation and to protect our most vulnerable students.

The aforementioned national labor struggles are also happening in California along with struggles against Elon Musk's Tesla and Alphabet Inc. which could shake up the

tech industry. The political, economical, social, and ideological struggles for the working class will be found in their most heightened state at the electoral and labor level. The working class of the US and California struggled and united before-it can and must be done again to change the system and block the advance of the fascist movement.

Vladimir Lenin: Tsarism & the Birth of a Revolutionary

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It's been 100 years since the world lost the revolutionary titan Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, more commonly known as Vladimir Lenin. There have been mountains of books, articles, documentaries, and discourse surrounding his legacy, but what's the real story of his life? What did Lenin think, feel, and do in his life that cemented him as a cornerstone of socialist and communist thought? Lenin is a unifying figure among most of the communist schools—Marxist-Leninists, Trotskyists, Maoists, and more all uphold Lenin. Over a billion people worldwide, especially in the global south, uplift his legacy, and millions of capitalists in the imperial core still treat his specter as a boogeyman.

Lenin was born on April 22, 1870 in Simbirsk, now named Ulyanovsk in his honor in the Russian Empire. Tsarist Russia remained a semi-feudalist society despite the

liberation of Russian serfs in 1861. The economic collapse after the defeat in the Crimean War in 1853-6 led to some liberalization of the colonial empire or “prison of nations” as Joseph Stalin called it. “*The numerous non-Russian nationalities were entirely devoid of rights and were subjected to constant insult and humiliation of every kind. The tsarist government taught the Russian population to look down upon the native peoples of the national regions as an inferior race, officially referred to them as **inorodtsi** (aliens)...The tsarist government deliberately fanned national discord, instigated one nation against another, engineered Jewish pogroms, and, in Transcaucasia, incited Tatars and Armenians to massacre each other,*” continued Stalin. The backward economy was seen as a barrier to success in modern wars. Russia’s lack of industrialization and capital was a significant issue for the ruling aristocratic class as the age of modern capitalist imperialism was approaching. The overwhelming majority of the population were peasants and the tradition under the feudal system was that peasants—serfs—were “not very different from slaves,” writes Walter Rodney. They are tied to small plots of land while paying rent to the local lord. So while a lord couldn’t sell and buy serfs directly, they could buy or sell the land that the serfs were tied to.

Under the Corvée System as Lenin said, “the entire land of a given unit of agrarian economy, i.e., of a given estate, was divided into the lord’s and the peasants’ land; the latter was distributed in allotments among the peasants, who (receiving other means of production in addition, as for example, timber, sometimes cattle, etc.) cultivated it with their own labor and their own implements, and obtained their livelihood from it...The feudal estate had to constitute

a self-sufficing, self-contained entity, in very slight contact with the outside world. The production of grain by the landlords for sale, which developed particularly in the latter period of the existence of serfdom, was already a harbinger of the collapse of the old regime. Secondly, such an economy required that the direct producer be allotted the means of production in general, and land in particular; moreover, that he be tied to the land, since otherwise the landlord was not assured of hands. Hence, the methods of obtaining the surplus product under *Corvée* and under a capitalist economy are diametrically opposite: the former is based on the producer being provided with land, the latter on the producer being dispossessed of the land.”⁴ After the abolition of serfdom, the aristocratic and slowly growing bourgeois classes now owned half of all the land in Russia. The peasants in effect owned less land after the abolition of serfdom, and between 1861 and 1905 the average size of the peasants holding diminished by one-third.

During this period of primitive accumulation, a growing number of peasants became landless and subject to proletarianization—even in agrarian circumstances. For their respective allotments of land, peasants had to pay a “redemption” charge to the government that was, offensively, named the same as the commutation fee for them under serfdom. As Lenin wrote in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, “Thus one cannot conceive of capitalism without an increase in the commercial and industrial population at the expense of the agricultural population, and everybody knows that this phenomenon is revealed in the most clear-cut fashion in all capitalist

countries.” The stain of feudalism and serfdom were thus not erased in this liberalizing period.

Because of the ruling classes' seizure of land, overpopulation in the rural areas became an issue. It was estimated by the time of the 1917 revolution that the rural areas were overpopulated by 20 million inhabitants. This atmosphere, similar to other cases of primitive rural accumulation, leads to greater urbanization. Also, starting in 1886 landlords and employers could fire workers without notice for any cause including “rudeness.” Lenin commented on this urbanization and proletarianization of the rural peasants; “*It was seen that the peasantry have been splitting up at enormous speed into a numerically small but economically strong rural bourgeoisie and a rural proletariat.*” From 1865-1890 the number of workers in large factories, mills, and railways increased from 706,000 to 1,433,000—the working class more than doubled.⁵

Even though there was a growing capitalist class in Tsarist Russia during the late 19th century, the increase in capital was almost entirely financed and owned by foreign capital. British, French, German, and US capitalists—whom Walter Rodney said had a “colonial relationship” with Russia—were the primary investors and owners of the emerging industrial sectors. The big power stations, railways, oil, and 90% of the mining industries were owned by the foreign bourgeoisie.⁶ The Tsarist Empire could also be called the first “genuine” police state in history.⁷ It was a volatile and changing class dynamic that the young Lenin grew up within.

He was born to two educated and enlightened parents. His father was a former teacher and Inspector of

Elementary Schools, and it was common for the Ulyanov family to have “French Days” for example where every member of the family had to speak that language. There was a certain level of status the family had for a period of time. But even in those days, the work his father did with native ethnic groups in regard to education was revolutionary and counterintuitive to a family of that status. As Maria Prilezhayeva wrote in her biography of Lenin, he would have several early encounters with class struggle, and the insightful and inquisitive minds of his father and older brother Alexandr Ulyanov, or “Sasha” as he was affectionately called, pushed the young child Lenin to be critical of the oppressive and exploitive world around him.

In early January 1886, Lenin’s father suddenly passed away in their home with Lenin present. This was devastating enough, but tragically, horrible events kept happening in his young life. The following year in 1887, Lenin was told at school to go home immediately to his mother for urgent news. When he arrived home, his mother was waiting for him, pale as snow. The letter in her hand was from St. Petersburg. It detailed the news that his older brother whom he had looked up to his whole life, Sasha, had attempted to assassinate Tsar Alexander III. His sister, who also was in the capitol for the university, was arrested under suspicion. A few months later as Lenin was heading to school for his final exams, notices were posted around the city spreading news that Sasha and the other conspirators were executed. His sister was eventually released with no evidence of her involvement. He was greeted in the exam room with silence but was the first to finish. The headmaster of his school was the father of

Alexander Kerensky, whose bourgeois government was overthrown by the October Revolution decades later.⁹ Lenin's family was completely ostracized from the community and after graduating from grammar school they left for the city of Kazan so Lenin could attend university there.

Later in life, Lenin told his wife that he had disdain for those "liberal" family friends that abandoned his mother who was a widow, and the entire family due to Sasha. At Kazan University, he told fellow students he wanted to become a professional revolutionary, started to read Sasha's copy of *Capital* by Karl Marx, and joined an underground Marxist discussion group in Kazan. At the age of eighteen, he would spend time around Kazan with the workers and peasants, learning about their struggles. Lenin would be one of the leaders of a student protest. News had reached the students in Kazan about a student riot in Moscow and they decided to act in solidarity. As a result of this act of resistance, Lenin was arrested and banished to the remote village of Kokushino. From that point on he would be under constant police threat and surveillance. In his term of exile during the harsh winter, he spent his time reading the likes of revolutionaries Chernyshevsky and other Russian writers. This time of reflection steeled him to the revolutionary struggle, especially for the peasantry as he saw them as the most exploited class in the Tsarist Empire.

After his return from exile, Lenin was refused admission into Law school, and so learned the entire curriculum on his own—completing the four-year course in just a year and a half. He would pass the bar exam with honors as well.

Unfortunately, the Ulyanov family continued to suffer tragedy—his sister Olga passed away from typhoid fever in 1891, four years to the day from the execution of Sasha. Lenin would spend some time in the city of Samara as a trial lawyer for local peasants and poor working-class people. In 1893, Lenin would set off to St. Petersburg by himself—with a plan to build a revolutionary mass movement.

Vladimir Lenin: How the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party Formed

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The Marxist movement was still young and had a small influence in Tsarist Russia during Lenin's early years—even when Lenin was on his way to St. Petersburg to organize the decentralized Marxist groups. By 1893—when Lenin had arrived in St. Petersburg—Germany already had a strong Marxist party in the Social Democrat Party. Russia didn't have an analog to that strong, organized party. But as previously mentioned, there was a strong history of revolts, terrorist actions against the regime, and an intelligentsia that was becoming more radical and materialist in their

philosophical orientation. Intellectuals such as Vissarion Belinsky and Nikolay Chernyshevsky with the Narodniks—along with the growing proletarianization of the Russian peasantry—made fertile ground for Marxist theory to accelerate the growing class struggle.

Three months before Lenin was born in 1870, Karl Marx began his first serious study of Russia. *Capital* Vol. 1 was first translated from the original German to Russian in 1872 with immediate success and circulation. The first official and documented Marxist circle was in 1883—the Emancipation of Labor Group. Its most prominent figure was Georgi Plekhanov—who still is a revered theorist in Russian Marxism even though he would have serious conflicts with Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Maxim Gorky referred to the conflict between Lenin and Plekhanov: *“I have rarely met two people with less in common than G. V. Plekhanov and V. I. Lenin...The one was finishing his work of destroying the old world, the other was beginning the construction of a new.”*

The Emancipation of Labor Group correctly challenged the inaccuracies of the Narodniks' theory and Blanquist's terrorist actions like the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. But the Emancipation of Labor Group largely were in exile and the majority of their work was on translating and writing Marxist theory. As Lenin was traveling to the capital of the Russian empire, the working class movement was boiling over waiting for a spark, but clearly there was a lack of organization.

From 1864 to 1900, St. Petersburg's population went from half a million to over 1.5 million people. It was a rapidly growing city and metropole of the Tsarist empire—

with growing class contradictions. Lenin worked tirelessly to centralize and organize the Marxist groups in the city—and in others—to create a single Marxist revolutionary party. He knew that as strikes and working-class unrest were growing around him, an organized communist party was essential. The group would be called the *League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class*.

This group was born out of the ideological and material struggle that Lenin was quickly coming to lead. He would work with different Marxist leaders like Leonid Krasin, Stepan Radchenko, and Gleb Krzhizhanovsky—along with labor leaders like Ivan Babushkin—to organize this new collective and precursor to the first Russian Marxist party. Lenin would travel abroad in 1895 to visit Plekhanov, forming direct ties to the first Russian Marxist group. The previous year, Lenin published his first major work, *What the “Friends of the People” Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats* which put utopian Narodism permanently out of the theoretical competition with Marxism.

It denounced their false theory that Russia’s development was unique and wouldn’t face the worst of capitalism—which was materially wrong even by that time—and that the working class in Russia would not be central to the revolution to socialism. Lenin was the first to clearly state the working class—along with the peasant class—would be the key to a revolution away from capitalism and towards socialism. His next work, *The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of it in Mr Struve’s Book* was another refutation of the Narodniks but also, and more importantly, against the “legal Marxists” or “economists” within the Marxist intelligentsia.

During this time Lenin would also meet his future wife and fellow revolutionary Nadezhda Krupskaya, or Nadya. She had come from an aristocratic family that had fallen down the class structure of Russia—a radicalizing experience in a similar way to Lenin’s family being ostracized due to Sasha. Many times they would walk together—discussing life and politics—only to have to evade the secret police that began to tail Lenin at every turn. He would often travel at night to avoid suspicion.

For example, there was a talk in the city about issues at the Semyannikovsky factory; workers had their pay delayed right before Christmas and a riot broke out. Police had arrested some of the supposed leaders of the riot during the night. Labor leader and worker of that factory Babushkin heard a knock on his door—he answered assuming it was his turn to be arrested—it was Lenin covered in snow. He wanted to know everything that had happened and the workers’ demands. They worked through the night devising and writing pamphlets to distribute to the workers—only four were made. But Lenin enthusiastically told Babushkin in the morning, “This is our first fighting leaflet.” This type of non-stop work and dedication to the workers’ cause is what allowed Lenin to lead to the centralization of the communist movement for the first time in Russian history.

December of 1895—only months away from the official formation of the *League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class*—the collective’s newspaper was in preparation for publication. Lenin had written most of the initial articles that were set to be published. And it was named *The Workers Cause*. However, over 160 leading

members were arrested seemingly overnight, Lenin included. At 2 am, he was woken up by the police with a warrant for his arrest. Maria Prilezhayeva—a Soviet writer who was awarded the Nadezda Krupskaya RSFSR State Prize and Order of Lenin for her biography of Lenin—said he thought instantly about his comrades, about Nadya Krupskaya; would this be it? Lenin said to himself, “No, you can’t silence us any longer. Hundreds of thousands of workers have joined our ranks. The entire working class of Russia will soon rise up.”

Vladimir Lenin was now in the Tsarist Gulag system and would spend 14 months in solitary confinement. Always the hard-working revolutionary, he would smuggle letters and pamphlets to the outside. Books were not prohibited so Nadya and Lenin’s sisters would bring him books. This was the clandestine vehicle for Lenin to get his work out—through invisible ink from milk and bread written into the pages. The League carried on the work even with a large section of the leadership behind bars or in exile—and the strikes and working-class struggles against the Tsarist empire and capitalism continued.

In early 1897, Lenin would be sent into exile in Shushenskoye, Siberia. The next year Krupskaye would also be sent into exile with him. They still tirelessly worked toward the revolution. He liked to write standing up at his lectern—he would simultaneously be working on one of his masterpieces: *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* as well as articles and translations of works from Russian to English and vice versa. They liked to collaborate on works together since she was also a proficient writer and theorist—their free time was spent walking in the forests and on the

banks of the Shusha River. Even in exile under a brutal police state—they were young and in love.

During this time in prison and exile, the formation of the Russian Social Democratic Party was taking place; a party along the lines of the Marxist parties that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels helped to organize. Already there were fierce disagreements and an ideological and organizational struggle. In 1895-1896 Lenin drafted a proposed party program detailing the exploitative class structure of Tsarist Russia, the “*party’s aims*” and “*relation to other political trends,*” and the party’s “*practical demands.*” It called to build class consciousness, and work towards “*political liberty*” as this was a political, and not purely economic, struggle.

It had an embryo of the United Front strategy later popularized by the Communist International in the 1930s as Lenin wrote, “That is why the Russian Social-Democratic Party will, without separating itself from the working-class movement, support every social movement against the absolute power of the autocratic government, against the class of privileged landed nobility and against all the vestiges of serfdom and the social-estate system which hinder free competition.” It called for an end to all exploitation that could only happen with the “passage of political power into the hands of the working class, the transfer of all the land, instruments, factories, machines, and mines to the whole of society for the organization of socialist production, under which all that is produced by the workers and all improvements in production must benefit the working people themselves.”

The program called for universal and direct suffrage, equality of all nationalities, freedom of assembly and religion, massive labor reform, and more. In 1898 however –while Lenin was still in exile–the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party was held in Minsk. Most of the organizers and attendees were arrested by the police. The party would have to be reformed–again–and Lenin thought a party newspaper was essential to unite the party. It was another setback, but in time it would prove to be a minor one as that spark that would kindle the flame of revolution was already struck.

Vladimir Lenin: Iskra & What is to Be Done?

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In February 1900, Lenin was finally released from exile in Siberia. He immediately set about creating a clandestine system of distribution for what would become the ideological sword of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) for the next five months. The police state apparatus of Tsarist Russia meant the party newspaper would have to be produced abroad and then smuggled into Russia, so Lenin obtained permission to travel abroad supposedly for his health. Nadya still had several months left in exile but would eventually reunite with him abroad.

The name of the newspaper would be *Iskra—the Spark*—from a line in the poem by a Decembrist, “The spark will kindle the flame.” Lenin thought it was befitting of this new revolutionary party. He eventually found his way to Leipzig, Germany. Where a small print shop owner by the name of Hermann Rau—and member of the German Social

Democratic Party—was told by friends that Russian Marxists were in the city and looking for a print shop to make a revolutionary paper. In this small one-press printing shop, the first issue of *Iskra* was printed. The system of distribution to get *Iskra* from Germany to “every major city” of Tsarist Russia was vast, secretive, and ultimately truly impressive. Secret meetings and suitcase drop-offs at bars, seaports, etc. were common. Cadres from Germany, Sweden, and Finland—all the way to the Caucasus region where Stalin was the first to smuggle *Iskra* into the region—were highly effective. This was an illegal paper in the Tsarist Empire—anyone caught with it would be sent to the gulags, in exile, or worse. The operation had to be at a high organizational level in order to fulfill its mission of spreading revolutionary consciousness to the working class.

By 1901, Vladimir Ulyanov began writing under the name “Lenin” for *Iskra*’s articles and it would be the name the entire world would come to know. In 1902, due to mounting police pressure in Germany, the *Iskra* editorial board and production moved to England and then Geneva, Switzerland. Lenin became the “guiding spirit” and a significant contributor to *Iskra*, but it was one of many “circles” as Lenin called them during this time of disunity of the RSDLP. The party’s forming congress was prematurely stopped by the police, so while a Social Democratic Party did exist, there was no unified program, central committee, party organ/newspaper, or party rules. There were many different factions or “circles” in the RSDLP:

-The Iskra (which would eventually be split as well) at the beginning featured the staff of Lenin, Plekhanov, Dimitri Ulyanov (Lenin's younger brother), Vera Zasulich, Aleksandr Petresov, Pavel Axelrod, Julius Martov, and eventually Leon Trotsky. The latter three would especially lead to the split of the Iskra faction.

-Rabocheye Dyelo was the newspaper of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad and was the far-right of the RSDLP.

-Yuzhny Rabochy was the name of an illegal newspaper and a group of Russian social democrats. Represented the center of the party along with the Bund.

-The General Jewish Labour Bund was a Jewish socialist party primarily in western Russia, Poland, and Lithuania.

These were most of the main groups that would be struggling for control of the RSDLP. From 1900-1903 Lenin actively struggled for the ideological spirit of the Russian revolutionary party which he knew was going to hit a climatic moment at the next party congress. He published several key works that led up to that fateful congress of 1903. Several articles, pamphlets, and books on the Agrarian Question such as *The Agrarian Question and the "Critics of Marx"*, *The Workers' Party and the Peasantry*, and *To the Rural Poor* deal with the material and theoretical breakthrough of the alliance of the working class with the peasantry. "And the peasants, too, will then rise all over Russia and go to the aid of the urban workers, will fight to the end for the freedom of the workers and peasants. The tsar's hordes will be unable to withstand that onslaught. Victory will go to the working people, and the working class will march along the wide, spacious road to

the liberation of all working people from any kind of oppression. The working class will use its freedom to fight for socialism!” Groups like the Rabocheye Dyelo-ists were against unity between these two oppressed classes. These works were also vehicles for Lenin to promote and explain his proposed party program, which would be one of the key dividing conflicts.

Lenin’s other two, and most important works before the Party Congress, were *Where to Begin?* and *What is to Be Done?* The former is a “skeleton plan” for the latter as Lenin said. *Where to Begin?* was published in *Iskra* in 1901; it was a “question of a system and plan of practical work” for the RSDLP which Lenin admits they had “not yet solved.” There was internal party debate about the organizational structure and foundation of the party, and it was an issue Lenin thought clearly was one of the priorities of the party due to it risking “ideological instability” within the RSDLP. Lenin also attacked the adventurists within the Party who wanted to lead the party on a military path they were not ready for:

“In principle we have never rejected...terror. Terror is one of the forms of military action that may be perfectly suitable and even essential at a definite juncture in the battle, given a definite state of the troops and the existence of definite conditions...Without a central body and with the weakness of local revolutionary organisations, this, in fact, is all that terror can be. We, therefore, declare emphatically that under the present conditions such a means of struggle is inopportune and unsuitable; that it diverts the most active fighters from their real task, the task which is most important from the standpoint of the interests of the

movement as a whole; and that it disorganises the forces, not of the government, but of the revolution...But can we issue the call for such a decisive assault at the present moment? Rabocheye Dyelo apparently thinks we can. At any rate, it exclaims: “Form assault columns!” But this, again, is more zeal than reason...”

Due to the fractured ideological trends having their respective newspapers and press outlets, Lenin also called for a single recognized party newspaper because he saw it as a “collective propagandist...collective agitator...[and] collective organizer.” In his next work, and considered one of his best, *What is to Be Done?* Vladimir saw the growing crises of the Party with the “two trends” that ran opposed to each other in the Social Democratic movement—revolutionary or reformism. It wasn’t just a Russian issue as Lenin correctly observed the trend largely originated from German Social Democrat Eduard Bernstein, *“The essence of the “new” trend, which adopts a “critical” attitude towards “obsolete dogmatic” Marxism, has been clearly enough presented by Bernstein and demonstrated by Millerand. Social-Democracy must change from a party of social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms.”*

Lenin said Bernstein, and the reformist and opportunist line he started “denied” scientific socialism, dialectical and historical materialism, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. This growing denial of basic tenets of Marxism was infecting the more ideologically unstable “circles” within the RSDLP. But this was an inevitable material outcome of the alliance between the “legal Marxists” and the revolutionary Social Democratic group during the previous decades which Lenin attributed this alliance with

the win of the Social Democrats over Narodism. This “temporary alliance” was vital to that early era, but was rapidly becoming obsolete as the class struggle was progressing to a new phase of development.

Vladimir Lenin mapped out the history and fallout of this alliance, the importance of organization over “*worship of spontaneity*,” and added; “*Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity.*” At this point, we wish to state only that the role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory.” He showed the reality of the peasant revolts and terroristic acts were “spontaneous” and simply the “resistance of the oppressed.” However, he also believed the systemic strikes within Russia only represented the “class struggle in embryo.” The working class of Tsarist Russia needed “Social-Democratic consciousness,” that had to come “from without” via a revolutionary Social-Democratic party built on the alliance of the proletarian and peasant classes—and that party had to be built on democratic centralism around professional revolutionaries. He called for not just political “education” but also “agitation” against every “concrete example” of “oppression.” Ultimately not to limit the political, economic, and ideological struggle of the oppressed classes, which was different from the view of other “circles” of the RSDLP.

Lenin prophetically said, “The national tasks of Russian Social-Democracy are such as have never confronted any

other socialist party in the world. We shall have occasion further on to deal with the political and organisational duties which the task of emancipating the whole people from the yoke of autocracy imposes upon us. The Russian proletariat will have to undergo trials immeasurably graver; it will have to fight a monster compared with which an antisocialist law in a constitutional country seems but a dwarf. History has now confronted us with an immediate task which is the most revolutionary of all the immediate tasks confronting the proletariat of any country. The fulfillment of this task...would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat.”

Vladimir Lenin: Bolshevik vs. Menshevik Split & One Step Forward, Two Steps Back for Revolution

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The Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was a pivotal moment in the Russian Marxist movement and cemented Lenin as one of the key leaders. Lenin and Nadya by 1903 were living in the town of Secheron, near Geneva Switzerland. There he, along with a never-ending stream of fellow Marxists visiting him, drafting the Rules of the Party and the Party Programme to be voted on at the Congress. The year prior the party organized a conference by the “Bund, the Petersburg

Committee, the Yekaterinoslav Committee, Iskra, the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, the Nizhny-Novgorod Committee, and the Association of Southern Committees and Organisations.” That conference was almost a Party Congress but ultimately formed the Organizing Committee for the Party Congress. However, most of the Organizing Committee were subsequently arrested by the Russian police state. A second Organizing Committee was formed after contact with the original was lost—this new one did not have any members of the Bund featured on it. In effect, the first split of the party was foreshadowing itself.

As Plekhanov said in the opening of the Party Congress, “The reasons for this absence were not known to the [Organizing Committee], but it hoped that the Bund would not refuse subsequently to take part in its activity...” The new Committee organized the party Congress for Brussels where eventual police pressure would have it moved mid-session to London. Lenin wrote in-depth on the Party Congress that would create the Bolshevik-Menshevik split.

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back draws heavily from the minutes of the Congress to make sure it wasn’t inaccurate. As he stated, “The first question is that of the political significance of the division of our Party into “majority” and “minority” which took shape at the Second Party Congress and pushed all previous divisions among Russian Social-Democrats far into the background. The second question is that of the significance in principle of the new Iskra’s position on organisational questions, insofar as this position is really based on principle.” Lenin added that the “‘majority’ is the revolutionary, and the ‘minority’ the opportunist wing of our Party...” For Lenin,

this Congress was a clear demarcation between two wings of the party that was at significant odds with each other—a “crisis” in the party.

It’s tragic, as by all accounts he was “deeply content” as the Congress started and Plekhanov gave the opening speech. This was the real first Congress of the RSDLP—an organization he had spent over a decade trying to form, went to prison, and exile to achieve. This was supposed to be a moment of triumph for Lenin and the entire Russian working and peasant classes. This was the dream of countless people who sacrificed everything. But unfortunately, and clearly, several eclectic groups with “ideological instability” came to opportunist, party-wrecking, and individualist lines.

Per historian Christopher Read, 43 delegates with 51 votes and 14 “consultive delegates” were allowed to speak but not vote at the Congress. Iskrists, as they were called at the time, had 27 delegates with 33 votes. The rest were seven Economists, five Bundists, and four undecided. Lenin separated it into “24 Iskra-ists of the majority, nine Iskra-ists of the minority, ten in the centre, and eight anti-Iskra-ists.” That delicate alliance between the majority and minority within Iskra would eventually fall apart. Julius Martov, Leon Trotsky, and others in that minority stayed with the Iskra voting bloc on the vote on the Party Programme, condemning the federation of the party, and endorsing Iskra as the “Party’s Central Organ.” They were also united against the rest of the “anti-Iskra-ists and the entire ‘Centre’” for other resolutions regarding Iskra, and the position of the Bund—who wanted to be an independent group within the Party and not adhere to the

Party program in total, but only in part and when it suited them. This was the same with the Yuzhny Rabochy group and the Rabocheye Dyelo/Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad which the former was voted to be dissolved.

The Iskra-ist minority, however, did break and form a coalition with the anti-Iskra-ists and “centre” when it came to other votes—equality of languages and paragraph 1 of the Party Rules. The Iskra majority was defeated in these votes, but slowly and then quickly, groups began to leave in protest. The Bund left the Congress after not getting the independence to break Party rules. Lenin said only “Comrade Brouckère remained at the Congress” out of the eight anti-Iskra-ists. So the opportunist coalition that had formed had a small majority and then gave it away—purely out of pettiness and a sense of “anarchist individualism.” Elections at the Congress for the Central Organ, Committee, and Party Council were the “final division” between the Bolshevik and Menshevik camps. It was the “complete fusion” of the minority of Iskra with the opportunist and reactionary circles of the Party. Martov would later call this division of the party, with Lenin’s programs and policy proposals receiving the majority of the support at the Congress, “accidental.” Lenin refuted that by asking if it was an “accident” that the “most extreme” and “opportunist” wings of the Party withdrew from a struggle with the most “consistent revolutionary Social-Democrats.”

Lenin summarized exactly what this divide at the Congress was about, “...struggle between the opportunist and the revolutionary wing of the Party on the question of

organisation, the same conflict between autonomism and centralism, between democracy and “bureaucracy”, between the tendency to relax and the tendency to tighten organisation and discipline, between the mentality of the unstable intellectual and that of the staunch proletarian, between intellectualist individualism and proletarian solidarity.” The reactionary wings of the party wanted a loose organization, not a revolutionary party that had strict membership to avoid infiltration. Democratic Centralism was vital to avoid anarchistic and individualist actions that would hurt the collective party—in order for the Party to have authority it can’t be divided into many different groups that don’t coherently and collectively work together.

The dictatorship of the proletariat—the basic Marxist concept of the working class needs to have political and state power in order to start a socialist transition—was key to any communist revolutionary party. These were the key struggles that Lenin and the majority—the Bolsheviks—struggled for during the Party Congress. There were 37 sessions of the Congress, and Lenin took the floor to speak 120 times. After the Party Congress was concluded, on August 24, many of the delegates and Lenin visited Karl Marx’s grave at Highgate Cemetery. It was a solemn pilgrimage that Lenin would often take when he and Nadya lived in London as well. Lenin softly said in front of Marx’s grave, “[he] is our teacher. Let us pledge to be faithful to his teaching. We shall never give up the struggle. Onwards, comrades, only onwards.”

Unfortunately, even with Plekhanov and Lenin himself offering concession after concession to the Mensheviks and Martov especially, the infighting would become too much

following the Congress. Lenin would resign from the Iskra board. Many Social Democrats would come to favor Martov's interpretation of the Party Congress—Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg—two giants of the German Social Democratic Party. Plekhanov the old ally and mentor of the entire Russian Marxist movement also abandoned Lenin and the Bolsheviks. However, it wasn't purely due to a perceived "Robespierrean" view of Lenin that was prevalent at the time. Lenin foreshadowed this development of a divide of the Social Democratic Movement—the Second International—with critiques of Bernstein. But in just about a decade the fractures of the reformist and vulgar distortions of Marxism would rupture the international socialist movement. It just happened to rupture and divide in Russia first in 1903.

As Lenin stated, "One step forward, two steps back.... It happens in the lives of individuals, and it happens in the history of nations and in the development of parties. It would be the most criminal cowardice to doubt even for a moment the inevitable and complete triumph of the principles of revolutionary Social-Democracy, of proletarian organisation and Party discipline."

Vladimir Lenin: The 1905 Revolution, Bloody Sunday, & the Birth of the Soviets

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In the early years of the turn of the century, it wasn't just internal party struggle that was stirring the revolutionary movement in Tsarist Russia, massive class unrest was exponentially growing. St. Petersburg was the epicenter of working class unrest from the mid-1890s, and it rapidly expanded across the empire. Data from the period for how many times the army was deployed to put down strikes and unrest is clear: 19 in 1893, 33 in 1900, 271 in 1901, and 522 in 1902. Between 1800-1854 there were 35 years of famine, and in 1891-1910, there were 13 years of famine. As aforementioned, the growing working class was met with ever-growing class antagonisms and worsening material conditions. Lenin and the split Russian Social Democrats were also not the only group to form in these pivotal years. The Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR) would form and launch a terroristic and Blanquist campaign by assassinating government officials and bombing municipal

buildings. Then the imperial regime decided a war with the rising imperial threat of Japan was vital to secure eastern Russia and Manchuria despite the internal issues bubbling to the surface.

Disputes over Korea and a buffer zone of influence between the two empires led to full hostilities with the Japanese attack on Port Arthur, modern-day Lüshunkou, China. The infamous battle started on August 1, 1904, and lasted until January 2, 1905—with many other major Russian defeats in that time as well. The war was going disastrously for the Tsarist regime, and Tsar Nicholas II stubbornly decided to keep it going even after Japan offered numerous times for a mediated armistice. This had a compounding effect on the class struggle in the empire that was present for decades.

The autocratic corruption of the Tsarist regime was being demonized by practically every class besides the aristocracy. Its inefficiency and lack of reforms were creating a tornado of unrest and radicalization. In December 1904, a mass strike in Baku, the oil production hub of the empire, was successful with a particular Bolshevik being a key organizer, Ioseb Besarionis dze Jughashvili, more commonly known as Joseph Stalin. This quickly spread to St. Petersburg in January 1905 as a general strike. After three workers were fired at the Putilov Plant, protests spread throughout the city. Within a day 360 factories had shut down due to strikes. On that fateful January 22, a mass protest was organized by a “half welfare worker and half police spy,” Father Gapon. Its goal was to march on the Winter Palace and demand a constitution and redress for grievances. The masses were then fired on by

the military and police. Cossack cavalry charged into the crowd. Over 1,000 people are believed to have been killed in the onslaught for what would be called, “Bloody Sunday.” It was the same day that news would reach St. Petersburg of Port Arthur falling to the Japanese. Lenin prophetically wrote in the week prior that it was a *“blow struck at the whole of reactionary Europe...It was the Russian autocracy and not the Russian people that started this colonial war, which has turned into a war between the old and the new bourgeois worlds. It is the autocratic regime and not the Russian people that has suffered ignoble defeat. The Russian people has gained from the defeat of the autocracy. The capitulation of Port Arthur is the prologue to the capitulation of tsarism.”*

The masses in rallies, and even economic strikes, before Bloody Sunday were commonly led by religious figures, liberals, etc. It was always the people believing if they just showed the Tsar they were suffering, the Tsar would, in all his grandeur, help them. The Bolsheviks ahead of Bloody Sunday in St. Petersburg had warned the workers not to go –that it was dangerous and the Tsar would not listen to peaceful demonstrations. After Bloody Sunday, the masses were radicalized and revolutionary. They had lost hope in the Tsar being their savior. The blood-soaked snow in St. Petersburg could not be forgotten, and the many men, women, and children who were murdered by the regime were now martyrs. Barricades were set up all over the city by the people in response to ready for war. A revolution had begun.

Lenin and the exiled Bolsheviks in Geneva all gathered at the community dining hall run by the Lepeshinsky family.

It was a common meeting place for the radical Russian diaspora. The Geneva papers were rushed into the hall. The weight of the movement hung in the air. There wasn't much discussion at first. Most sat in silence as they started to understand how everything now changed. Someone started to sing the workers' funeral march, "A Victim of Dire Bondage" with everyone quickly joining in. Lenin proclaimed, "A Revolution has begun in Russia," and thought to himself, "We must get back home as soon as possible."

Internal party issues had still gripped the Social Democrats to the point of them being largely caught off guard by the news. The Mensheviks had taken control of Iskra so the Bolsheviks started Vperyod (Forward). Lenin's words in that first article after the news:

"The working class, which would seem to have stood aside for a long time from the bourgeois opposition movement, has raised its voice. With incredible speed the broad masses of the workers have caught up with their advanced comrades, the class-conscious Social-Democrats. The workers' movement in St. Petersburg these days has made gigantic strides. Economic demands are giving way to political demands. The strike is turning into a general strike and it has led to an unheard-of colossal demonstration; the prestige of the tsarist name has been ruined for good. The uprising has begun. Force against force. Street fighting is raging, barricades are being thrown up, rifles are crackling, guns are roaring. Rivers of blood are flowing, the civil war for freedom is blazing up. Moscow and the South, the Caucasus and Poland are ready to join the proletariat of St. Petersburg. The slogan of the workers has become: Death

or freedom! Today and tomorrow a great deal will be decided. The situation changes with every hour. The telegraph brings breath-taking news, and all words now seem feeble in comparison with the events we are living through. Everyone must be ready to do his duty as a revolutionary and as a Social-Democrat.

Long live the revolution!

Long live the insurgent proletariat!”

The Bloody Sunday protest and many of the early actions taken by the growing uprising grew out of the “Zubatov movement.” These were unions started by Sergei Zubatov, a police administrator, and were entirely controlled by the police. Father Gapon himself was a part of the Zubatov movement and was later assassinated by the Social Revolutionaries. Lenin even went as far as to claim the Zubatov movement was orchestrated by the Tsarist regime to give an excuse to bring in the military to crack down on the rising St. Petersburg working class. *“The proletariat has risen against tsarism. The proletariat was driven to revolt by the government. There can hardly be any doubt now that the government deliberately allowed the strike movement to develop and a wide demonstration to be started more or less without hindrance in order to bring matters to a point where military force could be used. Its manoeuvre was successful. Thousands of killed and wounded—such is the toll of Bloody Sunday...”* Regardless of the Tsarist’s alleged ulterior motives or designs, the situation rapidly grew out of hand. Uprisings spread within days all throughout the empire. Military arsenals were taken, and the workers and peasants were spontaneously organized and rising up. Within just 4 days strikes and unrest were as far as Baku, Keiv,

Sevastopol, and every major city in the western parts of the empire.

“The revolution is spreading. The government is beginning to lose its head...Only an armed people can be the real bulwark of popular liberty. The sooner the proletariat succeeds in arming, and the longer it holds its fighting positions as striker and revolutionary, the sooner will the army begin to waver; more and more soldiers will at last begin to realise what they are doing and they will join sides with the people against the fiends, against the tyrant, against the murderers of defenceless workers and of their wives and children. No matter what the outcome of the present uprising in St. Petersburg may be, it will, in any case, be the first step to a wider, more conscious, better organised uprising...The immediate arming of the workers and of all citizens in general, the preparation and organisation of the revolutionary forces for overthrowing the government authorities and institutions—this is the practical basis on which revolutionaries of every variety can and must unite to strike the common blow.”

Along with the strikes in the big cities, throughout the year there were peasant revolts sporadically everywhere, and in June the prize battleship *Potemkin* mutinied for the revolution. The autocracy was petrified, so they signed a humiliating peace deal with Japan hoping to move the military forces tied up with the war inward on their own people. The younger generation of revolutionary exiles was desperate to return to the revolution. Lenin was a part of this group being only around 35 years old. After February, the Menshevik at the time Leon Trotsky would return to St. Peterburg and be an influential figure in building the St.

Petersburg Soviet in October. Rising Bolshevik leader Joseph Stalin would be a central organizer in the Caucuses. However, until October, Lenin would stay in Geneva mainly and work on building the Social Democratic movement and his journalistic work.

The Third Party Congress was held in April during the first year of the revolution. Lenin was sincere in trying to bridge these divides between party circles, between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The “rank and file” party members were overwhelmingly on the Bolshevik’s side due to the perceived good-will attempts to eliminate inter-party discourse, and the Menshevik’s refusal to participate in the Third Party Congress. Lenin was clear about the recent party split, its causes and effects:

“To achieve this great aim we must unite all class-conscious proletarians in a single Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Our Party began to constitute itself quite some time ago, immediately following the broad working-class movement of 1895 and 1896. The year 1898 saw the convocation of its First Congress, which founded the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and outlined its aims. The Second Congress was held in 1903. It gave the Party a programme, adopted a series of resolutions on tactics, and endeavoured, for the first time, to build an integral Party organisation. True, the Party did not at once succeed in this effort. The minority at the Second Congress refused to submit to the majority and started a split that has caused great harm to the Social-Democratic working-class movement. The first step towards this split was the refusal to carry out the decisions of the Second Congress and to accept the leadership of the central bodies it had set

up. The last step was the refusal to participate in the Third Congress. The Third Congress was convened by a Bureau elected by the majority of the committees working in Russia, and by the Central Committee of the Party. All the committees, breakaway groups, and the periphery organisations dissatisfied with the committees were invited to the Congress. The vast majority of these organisations, including nearly all the committees and organisations of the Minority, elected delegates and sent them abroad to attend the Congress. Thus everything possible under our police regime was done to convene an all-Party congress; it was only the refusal of three members of the former Party Council resident abroad that resulted in the boycott of the Congress by the entire Party Minority.

Nevertheless, despite the absence of the Minority, the Third Congress took every measure to enable the Minority to work with the Majority in one party. The Congress held the reversion to the antiquated and superseded views of Economism discernible in our Party to be incorrect; at the same time, it provided precise and definite guarantees of the rights of every minority, guarantees embodied in the Rules of the Party and binding on all its members. The Minority now has the unconditional right, guaranteed by the Party Rules, to advocate its views and to carry on an ideological struggle. so long as the disputes and differences do not lead to disorganisation, so long as they do not impede constructive work, split our forces, or hinder the concerted struggle against the autocracy and the capitalists. The right to publish Party literature is now granted by the Rules to every qualified Party organisation. It has now been made incumbent on the C.C. of the Party to

transport all kinds of Party literature upon the demand of five qualified committees, or one-sixth of all such committees in the Party. The autonomy of the committees has been defined more precisely and their membership declared inviolable, which means that the C.C. no longer has the right to remove members from local committees or to appoint new members without the consent of the committees themselves. This rule admits of only one exception, namely, in cases where two-thirds of the organised workers demand the removal of a committee; under the Rules adopted by the Third Congress such removal is incumbent on the C.C. if two-thirds of its members agree with the decision of the workers. Every local committee has been accorded the right to confirm periphery organisations as Party organisations. The periphery organisations have been accorded the right to nominate candidates for committee membership. The boundaries of the Party have been defined more precisely, in accordance with the wishes of the Party majority. A single centre has been set up instead of two or three. The comrades working in Russia have been guaranteed a decided preponderance over the Party's section abroad. In a word, the Third Congress has done everything to remove all possibility of charging the Majority with abuse of numerical superiority, with mechanical suppression, with despotism of the central bodies of the Party, and so on and so forth."

Lenin wrote before the Congress in an article *Time to Call a Halt* and an *Open Letter to Comrade Plekhanov*, that Plekhanov had capitulated to "revisionist" and "anarchists-individualists" within the party, and that the Mensheviks

had disrupted local party work within Russia ahead of the revolution and the party congress. The “party crisis” had “grown to such dimensions” that the RSDLP was brought to a “standstill.” And even though there was dissension based on tactics and organization—“more often than [not],” the disputes were because one side was Menshevik versus the other side being Bolshevik. Out of the 75 votes that would be representative at the Party Congress, 52 voted in favor, yet Plekhanov and the Mensheviks controlling the Party Council refused to participate. Thus, the Third Party Congress elected a new central committee, all Bolsheviks—Lenin, Bogdanov, Krasin, Postalovsky, and Rykov. They officially closed *Iskra* and *Vperyod* (Forward) as the dual disputing party papers for the Proletary (Proletariat). Lenin would again call for “unity” with the Mensheviks, “We are in agreement with you over nine-tenths of the questions of theory and tactics, and to quarrel over one-tenth is not worthwhile.”

The reality is though, regardless of Lenin’s seemingly good-will intentions to unite the RSDLP, that “one-tenth” of disagreement between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was a wide and deep chasm between the two. Lenin’s clarity on the actuality of revolution and the concrete analysis based on the concrete material conditions of his time set him apart, and that would be for the first time materially clear in this historical record of the 1905-1907 revolution. It would develop into a world-altering movement in 1917. Lenin and the Bolsheviks faced the questions of the revolution of 1905 with crystal clear analysis—the need for a militant party of the proletariat to mobilize and organize the mass class struggle beyond purely economic struggles

and strikes. The actuality of the revolution was here, and the Mensheviks fell behind due to their criticism of the armed struggle especially after the enacting of the State Duma. During a revolution, to not side with the masses of people uprising is to be counter-revolutionary, and that is the issue with the Mensheviks during this time.

Fundamentally the Mensheviks, along with the rest of the international socialist movement could not perceive a revolution where the proletariat wasn't the only revolutionary class. Lenin and the Bolsheviks saw clearly that the majority of the population were semi-serfs, and they had amassed revolutionary potential due to the generational oppression they had been facing. Even Karl Kautsky, the pseudo-heir to Marx and Engels and the 'recognized' principled Marxist compared to Eduard Bernstein thought the urban proletariat should be neutral in the revolution. This dogmatic interpretation of Marxism would plague the Western communist movement. It was taking historical documents written by Marx and Engels and attempting to overlay that to a different time and material conditions, and for such seasoned theorists, a grave error against dialectical materialism. Nadya in her biography of her husband, *Reminiscences of Lenin* wrote how Lenin took this critique from Kautsky and others seriously. He dived back into Marx and Engel's work on the agrarian issue and in Lenin's article *"Marx on the American Redistribution"* stated, *"There is hardly another country in the world where the peasantry is experiencing such suffering, such oppression and degradation as in Russia. The more dismal this oppression of the peasantry has been, the more powerful will now be its awakening, the more invincible its*

revolutionary onslaught. It is the business of the class-conscious revolutionary proletariat to support this onslaught with all its might...” The Mensheviks themselves became split when Leon Trotsky and Alexander Parvus formed a separate faction, who were for an armed revolution, but purely of the workers—the urban proletariat. There was still a complete disregard for the vast majority of the people—the peasantry.

During the spring, summer, and early fall of 1905 the revolution was sporadic, unorganized, but continuous. The first form of dual power in Russia was created during this time with the worker’s councils, or Soviets. First in May in the city of Ivanovo, then Kostroma, and Moscow in September. It would set the stage for the autumn and winter revolutionary explosion. Lenin was still in Geneva, Switzerland until the autumn but diligently stayed up to date. He would even make efforts to meet with Father Gapon—who led the initial St. Petersburg strike during Bloody Sunday—and revolutionaries from the battleship Potemkin and throughout the Tsarist empire. The battleship Potemkin famously led a mutiny and sided with the revolution before surrendering, but it inspired the masses and foreshadowed to events of 1917. In September, the Tsarist Empire was forced to sign an embarrassing peace treaty with rising imperial power Japan—hoping this would de-escalate the unrest throughout the empire.

October, everything escalated. A strike wave broke out in Moscow, and by October 7th had spread to St. Petersburg for a full-on General Strike. Workers called for civil liberties, eight eight-hour work days, amnesty for revolutionary activities, and a Constituent Assembly.

Initially, the telegraph workers didn't want to participate so other workers cut the wires, uprooted poles, tore up railroad tracks, and blockaded key nodes of transportation. By October 12, the entire city was at a standstill and then unrest spread throughout the country when 750,000 railroad workers went on strike too. Some forty cities were affected or had their own general strikes such as Moscow, Kharkov, and Reval—and barricades were set up in Kharkov, Odessa, and other cities with open street fighting between workers and Tsarist forces. The entire economic and social life of the empire was halted by the rising tide of the masses. Lenin wrote in October, *“One thing is certain: before our very eyes, the insurrection is spreading, the struggle is becoming ever more widespread, and its forms ever more acute. All over Russia the proletariat is pressing onward with heroic efforts, indicating now here, now there, in what direction the armed uprising can and, undoubtedly, will develop...The civil war has assumed the form of desperately stubborn and universal guerilla warfare.”* The forces of reaction and autocracy had to yield from the pressure—in a way.

Eventually Tsar Nicholas II, with the help of soon-to-be prime minister Sergei Witte, made certain concessions. Under the October Manifesto from the Tsar, a semi-constitution and pseudo-representational body called the State Duma were promises made by the autocracy. The Duma would have two houses—the upper house appointed directly by the Tsar—lower house elected by the bourgeois and aristocratic classes. It had no real material power and was controlled by the ruling classes. It was only to meet for 1-2 months out of the year as well. These concessions had a

blowback effect—instead of the people seeing this as the ultimate win—they say it was a sign of the ruling classes on the retreat. Around this time, on October 26, the first Soviet Workers’ Deputies of St. Petersburg meet at the Institute of Technology. At first, it was only 30-40 delegates representing unions and workers were present. It only existed for fifty days but it eventually grew to nearly 600 delegates representing 147 factories, 34 workshops, and 16 unions. It was a direct example of a dual power structure being created in a revolutionary period. It organized the masses for strikes, demonstrations, armed struggle, and for community defense against Black Hundred programs and Tsarist aggression. It was the embryo, born organically by the direct mass struggle of the people, of a revolutionary government—echoing the history of the Paris Commune of 1871. The Soviets allowed three delegates from the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and the Social Revolutionaries with a voice in the discussions and votes in decision-making for the Soviets. It had no paid bureaucracy and because it wasn’t concerned with contending classes, was not a dual chamber parliamentary institution to try to appease a ruling capitalist class. Lenin and the Bolsheviks viewed the Soviet not just as a parliamentary body for workers, but as a true revolutionary dual-power structure created to replace bourgeois parliamentism by the direct seizure of power. After two months of agitation and ultimately leadership by Trotsky, most of the Soviet leadership in St. Petersburg was arrested. However, other Soviet Worker’s Deputies would spring up across the empire in a winter revolutionary bloom.

October, November, and December of 1905 saw the greatest increase in revolutionary activity and state violence of the uprising. Over 4,000 people were murdered by the state in 100 cities, with more than 10,000 more injured. Black Hundreds, a proto-fascist and pro-monarchist group organized pogroms against Jewish people, workers, and students. The Soviets and workers parties organized militias to combat them and the state. The uprising spread to Poland, which was under the control of the Tsar at the time, and it intensified in the countryside with the peasantry and colonized nations. Massive spontaneous strikes, boycotts, refusal to pay taxes, seizing and redistribution of property and basic necessities, and even destruction of landlord property—about 2,000 lordly manors and estates were destroyed (which would be \$3.3 trillion dollars in damages in today's US dollar worth). While Marxist propaganda and agitation certainly influenced the urban proletariat radicalization and organization—Trotsky himself along with several other Mensheviks and Bolsheviks were active members of the St. Petersburg Soviet—the peasantry and colonized people of the imperial periphery were acting out of generational trauma—unguided and unorganized. There was an attempt to organize the peasants more with the creation of the Peasants Union, but the leadership in Moscow was arrested. The Ministry of the Interior declared the peasant revolts had to be put down. It was in this rapid shift in the struggle from general strikes to armed struggles in urban, as well as rural areas, Lenin would finally return to Russia.

Lenin and Nadya returned to St. Petersburg as many of the young revolutionaries did around the time of the

October Manifesto which in theory opened up some forms of legal class struggle. He waited in Stockholm, Sweden, for a contact to give him fake documentation and alias to enter Russia—the contact never came and eventually Lenin smuggled his way into St. Petersburg—Nadya joining a couple weeks later. At first, they lived separately and were undocumented. Nadya writes that the “*moment*” they did get proper documentation their residence was perpetually spied on by the Tsarist police. Eventually, they would move to Finland in hiding as the Tsarist regime’s reach in that area was limited due to the revolution in other areas. Lenin would travel to Moscow and other areas to clandestinely organize the Bolsheviks as well. His participation in revolutionary activities in the 1905 revolution, and eventually the October Revolution of 1917, has been scrutinized. This narrative is even carried by fellow Marxists. British Marxist historian Christopher Hill describes Lenin as, “*taking little public part in revolutionary activities, but extremely active as a publicist and behind the scenes. With the defeat of the revolution Lenin withdrew to Finland, and finally left Russia...*” But this tells really half the story. As previously mentioned and confirmed by Nadya, Lenin was under secrecy traveling quite some distance in the middle of a heightened period to direct revolutionary activity. He was in Moscow in December before a massive general strike rocked the city and the Moscow Soviet Workers’ Deputy was established—this time with a Bolshevik majority. Bourgeois historian Christopher Read said Lenin was, “*actively involved in the struggle in Russia... minor but active role in organizing street action and supporting armed uprising.*” Lenin would speak at the Soviet

in St. Petersburg before it was dissolved as well. Even before coming back to Russia, Lenin organized shipments of weapons to revolutionary forces. So, the perception that Lenin was just writing about revolutionary activities, and not actively participating in them is just unfounded.

The party was growing rapidly enough that the Bolsheviks started a daily paper to accompany the Proletary, the *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life). Lenin would use these platforms to analyze the revolution and balance of forces in the class struggle. The Bolsheviks and Mensheviks vehemently disagreed on the role of a socialist party regarding electoral participation and armed struggle—before and after the enacting of the State Duma and the formation of the Soviets. There aren't many surviving works from Menshevik leaders like those from Lenin and other notable Bolsheviks—a victim of losing the factional war. However, Julius Martov, one of the leading Menshevik figures of the era wrote in 1907 in *The Lessons of the Events in Russia* with a hyper-focus on the “legal” side of the struggle. In a time when the revolution was all but over, perfect for reflection on why the *armed* revolution failed, Martov spends little or no time writing on the need to increase the military capacity of the working class and social democrats. No effort from Martov to explain how to train and equip working-class militias to not only hold cities for weeks but to gain political and economic power.

It must also be noted that before the October Manifesto and the creation of the State Duma, certain liberal and bourgeois factions were on the side of the revolution—such as the Cadets. Once October happens, the bourgeoisie returns to the side of the Tsar and against the working and

peasant classes. In a dogmatic view of Marxism and class struggle—where society goes through distinct stages of ancient slave-owning, feudal, bourgeois, and then socialist societies—the revolution is over after October. The effort, in a dogmatic Marxist view which the Mensheviks were a victim of, to get the semi-feudal Tsarist society to socialist and a dictatorship of the proletariat was impossible. It had to go through those distinct and universal stages. Lenin and the Bolsheviks rejected that and adapted to their material conditions. Marx and Engels rejected any attempts to dogmatically take their works and transpose them incorrectly to a different time with a different set of material conditions. A more modern and renowned Marxist theorist, Walter Rodney, summed up this phenomena, “Marxism can only be of value if whatever it takes to be the universal is applied to the particular; and it is in the very particularity of the exercise that one will demonstrate that the universal is actually universal and that it is applicable.” Lenin clearly saw—due to the semi-feudal stage of development of Russia—that the “revolutionary people” were the working class and peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat that Marx and Engels wrote about when concerning capitalist-developed western Europe, was expanded upon when looking outside those material conditions with the “revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.”

Lenin in *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* explained the differences in strategy and tactics between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. He dismissed their “tactics-as-a-process” that was rigid and non-dialectical. While the Mensheviks sought only

parliamentary and bourgeoisie tailist policies because of the stagism they prescribed, Lenin stated, “The difference between us in this respect is that we march side by side with the revolutionary and republican bourgeoisie, without merging with it, whereas you march side by side with the liberal and the monarchist bourgeoisie...” He continued, “They failed to take into consideration that in a period in which a revolution has begun, when there is no parliament, when there is civil war, when insurrectionary outbreaks occur, the concepts and terms of parliamentary struggle are changed and transformed into their opposites...our admirers of Martynov repeat the lessons of peaceful parliamentarism just at a time when, as they themselves state, actual hostilities have commenced...A Social-Democrat must never for a moment forget that the proletariat will inevitably have to wage the class struggle for Socialism even against the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.”

At the end of December, the Bolsheviks decided to hold their own party congress in Finland and Sweden called the Tammerfors Conference—though there was a Menshevik representative named E.L. Gurevich. Its congress minutes have unfortunately been lost to time but certain details are well known. Nadya describes the atmosphere of the Conference as “enthusiasm...reigned there,” because the “revolution was in full swing.” It was the first time Lenin and Stalin met in person as well. They had been writing to each other privately since 1903 and Stalin idolized him since the 1890s. It’s quite comical when Stalin gives a speech decades later on this meeting stating,

“I had pictured Lenin as a giant, stately and imposing. What, then, was my disappointment to see a most ordinary-looking man, below average height, in no way, literally in no way, distinguishable from ordinary mortals...It is accepted as the usual thing for a “great man” to come late to meetings so that the assembly may await, his appearance with bated breath; and then, just before the “great man” enters, the warning whisper goes up: “Hush! . . . Silence! . . . he’s coming.” This ritual did not seem to me superfluous, because it creates an impression, inspires respect. What, then, was my disappointment to learn that Lenin had arrived at the conference before the delegates, had settled himself somewhere in a corner, and was unassumingly carrying on a conversation, a most ordinary conversation with the most ordinary delegates at the conference. I will not conceal from you that at that time this seemed to me to be something of a violation of certain essential rules. Only later did I realise that this simplicity and modesty, this striving to remain unobserved, or, at least, not to make himself conspicuous and not to emphasise his high position, this feature was one of Lenin’s strongest points as the new leader of the new masses, of the simple and ordinary masses of the “rank and file” of humanity.”

The Bolsheviks approved of the merging and unity of the two factions of the RSDLP, a call for a unity congress, furthered the agrarian question and called for the confiscation of all landed estates and church property, a boycott of the first Duma (which Lenin objected to but was outvoted), further democratic centralism, and “preparation and organization of an armed uprising.” As the conference

was going on, a new wave of the revolution started in Moscow and the conference had to be ended early.

The Moscow uprising, the Bolshevik-majority Soviet, and the de facto control of the entire city for almost two weeks shook not only the empire, but the revolution as well. The events of the Moscow uprising were quite similar to the events of October—a strike wave hit the city, and the Tsar sent in detachments of troops to put down the strikes to not have a repeat of October. Armed worker militias were quickly organized, set up barricades throughout the city, and held the city for ten days. The Tsar sent in infantry, heavy artillery, and Cossack calvary and laid siege to Moscow, particularly the Presyna district where many of the factories were and where the Bolshevik-led Soviet was located. However, there was a limited amount of organization for the fighting and a severe manpower issue for the revolutionary fighting force. Out of the nearly 150,000 workers who started the strike wave in Moscow, only 1,500 were actively fighting on the barricades when the Tsarist reaction arrived. The leadership was ill-prepared for the immediacy of the strike-to-revolution transition which exploded with a bombing of a police station. After the Tsarist regime stamped out this revolutionary fire, at least 1059 people were killed—137 women and 86 children—and 510 people were arrested and sent to the gulags.

In *Lessons of the Moscow Uprising*, Lenin saw that the “mass proletarian struggle developed from a strike to an uprising.” The struggle had reached again a new “higher stage” through the “enormous sacrifices” of the working class of Moscow. He saw that even though the Moscow

uprising was put down, it wasn't a mistake of the people to take arms. The mistakes and lessons were in "tactics and organization...military tactics...tactics of guerrilla warfare..." The idea of "small" and "mobile" units striking the enemy and regrouping for continual harassment. The "new barricade tactics" to turn a city into a guerrilla fortress. All of these were advancements in Lenin's view of the working class struggle in Russia from the age of labor strikes for purely economic gains. The failures were not to "develop" these tactics *"far enough...to a really mass extent. There were too few volunteer fighting squads, the slogan of bold attack was not issued to the masses of the workers and they did not apply it; the guerrilla detachments were too uniform in character, their arms and methods were inadequate, their ability to lead the crowd was almost undeveloped."* Lenin also tied in the spontaneous "mass terror" from the peasantry and working class throughout the month and how that with more organized guerrilla warfare will teach the masses, through the struggle, the correct tactics and strategy. That Marxists can't ignore "mass terror" and *"incorporate it into its tactics, organizing and controlling it of course, subordinating it to the interests and conditions of the working class movement."*

Conversely, Plekhanov denounced the Moscow Uprising, "They should not have taken to arms." Lenin, according to Nadya, "felt the Moscow defeat very keenly." Plekhanov due to his health and age was not in Russia. He was alienated not only from the revolution but from the very masses of people who were sacrificing their lives for the struggle. That distance and alienation from the struggle leads to deviations and revisionism. Lenin, the Bolsheviks,

and even Mensheviks like Trotsky were actively engaging in the struggle with the masses. It would set the road for some conciliatory efforts from certain Mensheviks with the Bolsheviks by 1917.

From 1906-1907, the revolution ebbed and flowed. The Bolsheviks organized underground partisan groups for guerrilla warfare throughout the countryside where the revolutionary fervor was not as exhausted as the urban hubs of the empire. Unlike other revolutions—France and England in particular—the peasantry in Tsarist Russia didn't side with the reactionary forces. Also, unlike the Paris Commune, the Revolution had spread like wildfire throughout many urban centers and the countryside. In this timeframe, there would be three different Duma's created. The Tsar would open up semi-compromises for the masses, the masses would continue the revolution, and the Tsar would restrict or shut down the Duma completely, and this was the pattern for the next two years. It was a tumultuous, protracted, and ever-fluid struggle. The Mensheviks kept a static, dogmatic, approach to work purely through the parliamentary struggle and within a bloc with the liberal bourgeois Cadets. The Bolsheviks through this period did have a program that ebbed and flowed with the material conditions and the stage of the struggle at present.

In late April and early May, there was an attempt at a Unity Congress of the RSDLP with both Bolshevik and Menshevik factions present along with every major national organization such as the Jewish Bund again. They fought on issues of democratic centralism, armed struggle, underground partisans, attitude towards the State Duma,

the agrarian question, and more. However, it was the formal unification of the party again, with the Bolsheviks ignoring the resolution in the congress about the liquidation of the underground guerrilla units. Those were kept active by the Bolsheviks. This party unity wouldn't stop Lenin's sharp criticism of Menshevik's proposals and theory, and there wasn't consistent unity between the two factions. During the Second Duma, Bolsheviks were able to form Left Blocs in Moscow and St. Petersburg to win elections, but the Mensheviks only worked in the Left Bloc in Moscow and not St. Petersburg—which went against their programs and showed a pettiness and factional thinking instead of keeping the class struggle as the priority. Nadya calls the atmosphere of the Unity Congress as “factional” but that Lenin “still hoped” the wave of revolutionary activity would unify the factions. He would write to St. Petersburg workers about the congress afterward stating, “Freedom of discussion, unity of action is what we must strive for...All Social-Democrats agree among themselves in Supporting the revolutionary action of the peasantry and criticizing petty-bourgeois utopias...In the elections complete *unity* of action is imperative. The congress has decided that we should *all* vote wherever there are any elections. No criticism for taking part in the elections is to be made during the elections. The *action* of the proletariat must be united.”

In June of 1906 the historic revolutionary contemporary, Rosa Luxemburg, would travel to Russia and worked with Lenin and the Bolsheviks. She was recently released from prison in Tsarist-controlled Warsaw. She would meet and work with Lenin—building a respectful relationship. It will

come again when in 1917, Luxemburg would critique the Bolsheviks. It's often used by left communists and social democrats today as ammunition against the 'purity' of the Russian Revolution—even though Rosa Luxemburg would have her own break with Social Democracy in Germany like Lenin in Russia, led a communist revolution that started soviets, but tragically be murdered by an alliance of social democrats and reactionary elements. The irony of today is when the ideological descendants of dogmatic Marxism and social democracy of the Second International denounce Lenin but uplift Rosa Luxemburg.

The First Duma was “legally” dissolved in the summer of 1906 and the Second Duma would be created in early 1907 before also being dissolved and a massive wave of state repression against all political parties that did not align with the autocracy like the Black Hundreds. Which were able to gain—with a right-wing bloc with the Octobrists—a majority within the Third State Duma by the time it was created in early November. At this point, Lenin was clear on the “utter uselessness” of using the Duma to achieve the demands of the workers and peasants. There was an “impossibility of achieving political freedom by parliamentary means as long as the real power remains in the hands of the tsarist government.” The struggle had to be waged in “open struggle” against the forces of “absolutism.” In August 1907, the Second International, the collective body of all the socialist parties in the world—had another congress in Stuttgart. Lenin, Stalin, and other Bolsheviks were delegates from the RSDLP. Issues on war, colonialism, trade unionism, etc. were discussed. It was also another time of meeting Rosa Luxemburg, Karl

Kautsky, etc., and pushing for a more dialectical approach compared to the revisionist trend by Eduard Bernstein and others.

Due to the continued and increased state repression and the revolutionary movement being exhausted by the end of 1907, a mass exodus of revolutionaries happened again. The parties became illegal again and the forces of reaction had temporarily triumphed. Eventually, even Lenin would have to leave Russia again, thinking he may never see it again, and he almost didn't. He was supposed to get smuggled from Finland to Sweden and had to cross a massive lake. His contact never showed so he sent out on the frozen lake at night.

Lenin according to all sources almost died in that journey to Sweden across a frozen lake. He would later tell Nadya that when he felt the ice give way underneath him he thought to himself, "Ah, what a stupid way to die." Lenin and Nadya would travel from Stockholm, Sweden to Berlin, Germany. They had to escape police in Berlin who were arresting Russian revolutionaries fleeing Tsarist repression just to face Kaiser oppression. Their saving grace was again, Rosa Luxemburg who hid them before getting them safely back to Geneva Switzerland. The Ulyanovs had returned to a life of diaspora and secret police evasion, but the revolutionary drive was not extinguished.

About the Author

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