

Avant! is a communist journal focused on the ability of the proletariat to abolish its own condition. Drawing from a various pool of ideological influences, we seek to ruthlessly critique all forms of mediation.



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Foreword

On the eve of our Empire's 250th anniversary we offer up our latest collection of works. Rather than use this forward to discuss the nature of the empire we live under, we dedicate this space to all the prisoners of war of the class struggle.

It has been one year since the demonstration at the Prairieland Detention Facility and since then we have seen the full barbarity of the state in its draconian sentencing of our comrades. Each non-collaborating defendant of the Prairieland 19 has been given numerous decades of time to spend in federal prison. One saw 30 years of their life siphoned away simply for the "crime" of owning a box of zines, or terroristic material if you're the state attorney. The particularities of the class struggle in this country have fundamentally been transformed.

In the coming years we are certain that we will see an uptick in both state repression and class violence. Communists worldwide must stress one definitive principle: The self-abolition of the international proletariat

Chasing The Specter of Mass Politics

SCENE:

*The United States. Amerikkka. The Evil Empire.
You know where we are.*

TIME:

*When else but now? 2026 since the Year of Our
Lord. ((1447 if you happen to be a heretic) 14.4
Billion Years if you're an Atheist)*

SETTING:

*A dreary sight to behold. Sat in the middle of the
room is a table. Around the table are several
chairs. In each chair sits an [ORGANIZER]. This
room could be anywhere: the living room of a
friend's apartment, the basement of a "progressive
church", the secluded back office of a book store.
The air is tense. The mood is sour.*

AT RISE:

*Four [ORGANIZERS] sit huddled together. Tones
are hushed. [ORGANIZER 3]'s head is stuck in his*

notebook as he scribbles down random musings. [ORGANIZER 2] gets up and paces around the table. [ORGANIZER 1] sits calmly with a cup of (something). [ORGANIZER 4] wields the communal laptop. The previous conversation resumes.

[ACT 1]

[ORGANIZER 4]

So what do we do?

(SHE PULLS OUT HER PHONE AND GLANCES AT IT QUICKLY BEFORE PUTTING IT AWAY)

We've been at this for how many months now?

[ORGANIZER 2]

A few at least.

(HE BEGINS SCRATCHING HIS HEAD AND A SLIGHT FROWN IS NOW NOTICEABLE)

I'm not sure why we don't have more people. How are our socials doing?

[ORGANIZER 3]

Our impressions are fine. Everything's better than last month. And the month before that. People just don't seem to be interested I guess.

[ORGANIZER 1]

(INTEJECTING)

We need to meet the people where they are at. We need to INTEGRATE ourselves into the masses. Join community orgs, go to neighborhoods. Ask people what they need. Join our Unions. Attend local -

[stop]

You get the point...

Introduction

Mass Politics is the central theme of the current moment. Both the Left and Right of Capital are rushing, en masse, to recruit and proselytize the nascent masses into their cults (of progress and reaction, respectfully). Even on the fringes of the *ultra-left* (which we would consider ourselves a part

of) the same conversations are still held as the one played out above. One central question is seared into everyone's mind:

How can we create, or influence, the mass movement?

This is, of course, no small question. It's a question that has divided *the movement* for the past century, if not more. The role of the mass movement, and where we fit in, is critical to the understanding each sect has in regards to its most basic ideological and practical principles. However, what if everyone was thinking of mass politics wrong?

Mass politics implies, at a core level, a distinction between *the masses* and *the revolutionaries*. There exists a space for the “authentic and genuine” revolutionaries to coalesce their forces and power (usually organized along the lines of the party form), at which they will use said power upon the masses to steer its political “development”. You can see the problem here, right? The current understanding of mass politics not only separates the masses and the revolutionaries, but it actively sets them up as antagonistic and contradictory

forces. Instead of being one with the class, the faux-revolutionary seeks to gain dominion over it. Mass politics can hardly be said to be “mass” orientated in its current state. Decisions are made in backrooms and among “leadership”, not on the streets. **To this end, mass politics doesn’t exist.** All those fighting for this ideal are caught in the trap of *chasing the specter of mass politics*.

A False Dichotomy

In the very genesis of political pseudoscience lies the quest of mass distinction. The idea that there is the individual, or the elite individual, and the hordes of beastly vermin whose loyalty must be bought, sold, and wagered. These germs are all of the remnants of society which cannot be trusted with economic decision making, and thus must be isolated from this process through political mediation. Unidentifiable as a single class and of *mass interests*, the “*masses*” cannot be codified or bribed to one specific principle, language or ideology. They sell their labor and goods side by side, warring and cannibalizing their rival mass. Most critical to understand is that they lack a unified social function: The remnants of the indecisive entails the inclusion of the many. And

this is a fundamental contradiction inherent to the mass politic. The rugged individuals, being the mass politicians, are clear about this every moment they think and act as an atomized campaign. What is sacred is “the people”, “the nation”, or any containment jar which can fit all the robust categories and social remnants. We emphasize that the position of the mass politician is a pseudoscientific-albeit politically pragmatic-grab for power.

Meanwhile, the frantic masses-especially the working masses, the *class*-are *clear* about their incompatibility. Through the social function of the petit-bourgeois small landlord who leaves their properties in routine neglect, they declare war against the service sector proletarian everyday. Through the immense accumulation of time theft, city workers offer their management apparatus a translucent middle finger. These and many other contradictions are obvious, and thus only the most ambitious of politicians can sift through the accumulation of all these characters. Therefore, the contradiction of the mass politic is the contradiction of the mass: This utopian idea of the mass is not only lazy, it does not *really* exist in class

society, and it can hardly act in unison without immense bloodshed and violence to temporarily grease the chain.

The false dichotomy we discuss above is relevant to the communist especially. As communists, we understand that our movement can only be championed by the proletariat. We believe that while *history is not linear*, to seek a qualitative change in terms of *class rule*, the international proletariat is the only class which can possibly dethrone the bourgeoisie. Thus when weaponized by the communist, the “mass politic” posits an irreconcilable hypothesis that rather than the proletariat, abstract masses of hostile social groups can come together for a communist revolution.

There is a further dichotomy which we as communists must address as well: The idea of severance from the masses. We often posit that we are activists, or revolutionaries, but *in the very essence of our activity we reflect what is already within the class*. To isolate ourselves from class activity is to commit an act of grave pseudoscience, where we are atomized individuals unfettered by any historical social relation. That we simply came into being and presented our wishes. No, we are the

materialization of our class backgrounds, and our activity contains that kernel of contradictory rebelliousness within the greater society. That contradiction represented by our activity is most resemblant of that of the proletariat, and therefore we must *re-emphasize* this class basis in our activity. To turn to the mass politic at this point would highlight one thing larger than an abstract betrayal, then. It points to the petit-bourgeois, mass-democratic limitations of our real class background. What we are is what is in the class.

The Anti-Mass Nature of Mass Politics

If the mass politic is anything when wielded by the communist, *it is remarkably anti-mass*. By this, we consider that in meeting society where it is most infectious and reactionary, the communist actually loses sight of the mass itself and falls behind it. The greater the scope of their rhetoric, the more classes it includes, the more the communist alienates itself from the real movement to abolish classes.

Likewise, the less it distinguishes itself from the political liberals, whose pole is both more radical, all-encompassing, and convincing. Therefore, the communist will draw in but few murmurs of support. Let us elaborate.

It can be argued that our era is the era of the counterrevolution, that in the wave of the defeats of the 20th century we have never been more atomized and sorely broken down by capital.

Whether or not this is tenable, we must understand that in this age, communism is an ugly delinquent on the political field. In the United States especially, it has no ideological proponents. Its name continues to be tossed around and avoided like a political Black Death; Those with the strongest stature feign ignorance and recirculate it the most frequently. Thus even if it is in the tendency of the proletariat to struggle against the total supremacy of capital, it is also the tendency to deride the undesirables as communists. On another plane, many of the great American communists have never recovered from the deindustrialization of American society, leaving those precious few with little to theorize *about*. In the place of the domestic project they now make leaps in support of “anti-imperialism” and the national projects of other nations! Yes, Communism is a dead man’s comfort.

Thus, when communists search out for the masses, it is because of a chasm at their current vantage point. They are as isolated as ever, with few ties to

the remaining great trade unions or the like. Their cries in the night ring out to no ears, and at the long last of so many a political project, our dear communist realizes they will *never* be embraced as such. Just as the bourgeoisie continuously morphs into something more demonic, the communist must become ever more gracious and holy. Impending salvation for all believers.

When they make their inscription on society, it is typically a moral-political-economic tone that can collect all of the classes in its pocket. The movement toward communism becomes cloaked in what is just, as the communist now theorizes not a movement of classes *but a movement of ideas, towards a movement of classes*. In this, we consider that rather than take to the project of immediate class struggle, communists indulge themselves in lengthy diatribes over the ideals and moral judgements they believe will move the most people. They infer, incorrectly, that *we can begin a period of class/mass struggle with the imposition of an ideal*. If only the petit-bourgeoisie would be so kind as to join our struggle, once they have heard our ideas! But fear not. These tidings will nurture a new wave of great reformers, hawkish priests, and

desensitized youths, and when our numbers finally swell, we will carve up the dominion of the bourgeoisie, storm their palaces, and maybe even consolidate political power. It would all be so beautiful, if only the masses recognized our original mass politic as a means of placation.

The sheer inability of the communist mass politic to turn contradiction to momentum is astounding. It so turns out that no matter which bent of ideology, communism cannot be cloaked in Enlightenment without becoming disfigured under the shroud.

From Crimethinc to PSL to DSA to the ultra milieu itself, our most obvious criticism is that the mass politic is so outwardly reformist that it offers no such pole to *really* congregate from. This criticism was of course inspired by variants of the aforementioned organizations, yet surprisingly birthed via a conversation with ultra-leftists around pole-setting. The overwhelming dream within the anti-ICE movement was to set a line along “Feds Out of Chicago”, due to the mass reach of such a position. An ultimate play in mass politics. What these comrades dismissed, however, is the overwhelming anti-mass nature of this very tendency. By seeking to go for all the marbles, these

mass politicians have only done a favor to the *real* mass politicians, who are currently gathering around the slogans of “Reform” and “Abolish” as we speak. Wholly more advanced than the ultras, and wholly more attractive to the activists and migrants alike. What this means is that we are actively allowing the bourgeoisie to cause a shift in our ultimate ambitions, in defence of the status quo and a return to the sacred. We are politically out maneuvered.

Furthermore, the anti-mass nature of a communist mass politic is intertwined with the tendency of capital to accumulate. As it congeals toward the monopolization of society, the bourgeois representatives have become tighter knit in capital’s defense. Political language itself monopolizes, in the form of a handful of Parties which offer markedly similar visions of mass society. In America there are only 2, and they share agreement on every critical deficit in society. Their resources accumulate at a grand scale, and on the back of the State this monopoly will surely propagate its pole better than a few communists: The Spectacle guarantees it. What made the communist subversive was its anti-formist, revolutionary

position, and when that is whittled away, they are nothing more than a liberal coalition member. If there is truly nothing the communist offers that the bourgeoisie cannot, then of course, the latter will always appear as great liberators. Hence the intensity at which we must struggle against opaque moralism and ceaseless calls for reform. In the following section, we analyze what is *really* anti-mass: The mass line itself.

An Equation Against the Mass Line

1. *If we are serious about instituting a mass line, this necessitates we meet the masses where they are most ideologically mangled by capital, to assure them that in some form the bourgeoisie bears inherent truth about their situation.* This betrayal will only stoke flames later in which the proletarian-or abstract mass we politic-must sincerely revolt against the mass line.
2. *We are not in favor of meeting the masses where they are.* We are not in favor of sympathetic humanists amongst the bourgeoisie, we deny the rights of the petit-

bourgeoisie, and we are not to cast a blind eye toward a proletarian's racialism, nationalism, allocationism, xenophobia, or any other product of capitalist society. If this places us as an outward minority amongst the social scape, we can mourn that, but nonetheless have no interest in political games. In times of crisis, we must drag the proletariat to us.

3. *When we set our pole for the proletariat to see, we have to be incredibly decisive about our rhetoric and intent; We cannot straddle on the edge of reality all alone nor can we falter in political debris.* Thus we must do the work of imagining what communism looks like. If this image contains, even reifies critical functions of capital (such as the State or Value form), then we have only ourselves to blame when the revolt against the mass line attacks the Communist movement itself. As it stands many of the most radical communists are tacitly in favor of this societal retention. Furthermore as the bourgeoisie finds the communist cheerleaders the most repulsive, regardless

of their opportunism these comrades will be readily hung by the masses. In times where great illusions break, they cannot hide from their own truths or lies. They are communists masquerading as a liberal, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

4. *Communism is not a line nor a compromise.*

It is a scope beyond our comprehension as capitalist subjects, we cannot pretend to know what is assuredly next. But we can fashion ourselves in a manner that is revolutionary, that breaks with the prevailing logic of how we understand the world at once, to sever ties with interpretations and wholly change it. Communism is the realization of this and the willingness to imagine new possibilities.

5. *If we believe our movement to be real, then we must practice against enticing mediatory forms.* In the streets with proletarians, we cannot pretend to be their urban heroes. We must decisively break with all those forms of coercive language, not only to encourage the proletariat to move beyond us, but to ensure that we do not betray them

in our conservatism. This means that we are the movement against borders and nations and the bourgeoisie, until the proletariat is the movement against the proletarian condition, upending all that is sacred.

6. *Even heaven cannot bear the monsters it has created.* We are not instituting a political equation that can rein in the proletariat or catch their interest, as we are not interested in retaining their condition. We seek their violent expression, and to ascribe a language against popular languages.

Fetishism of the Quantitative Form

We are fairly certain the masses move history, so one can be forgiven for what is assuredly a ludicrous proposition: *The Communist fetish is one of numbers.* Rather than take any introspection in our condition today, we have sanctified the concept of the many. The proletariat en masse are our nightriders who will awaken on our behalf, sword and shield in tow. In this view, every foul idea is a thousand proletarians away from the next uprising.

As communists typically take up the herculean task of *building infrastructure*, we stumble toward this grand assessment of the quantitative form. Its essence is part and parcel of what we believe: Not of the Great Men, but of those Great Many who will decide their own destiny. The issue arises when we view *our respective activity* as a numbers game in its entirety. This always implies not that the dejected project is a meek representation of our strength, nor that the performative nature of parliamentarism is flagrantly reactionary, or even that our own community defense projects are conservative in scope. No, the issue is that there are not enough people following through these mechanical motions, not enough people protesting, voting, or defending their “community”. The fetish of the quantitative form forgoes thought for boldness, introspection for raw energy, both projected at nothing at all.

When building a pole, the fetishistic nature of the *mass politic* becomes so obvious. We are enticed not to think and act, but to act then reflect on the quantitative production of our actions. If something is not working, it is because it is *not accessible enough* to the dejected worker, and it must be more

accessible through a myriad of tropes and concessions. If something *is* working, it is because thousands of people have responded to it positively, taking up their own roles in the process. Yet it remains to be said that none of this will resolve the initial contradictions, which are internal to the birth of such an effort. A case study can be found in a community defense/infrastructure project of our own, where in light of consistent local support we toyed with a neighborhood canvas. This canvas idea undoubtedly promises more mass energy towards the project, more outreach and more eyes, but unless it threatens to change the *content* of the project, we are simply a petit-capitalist scrounging around for more inputs. What we must realize is that all the same, the rate of profit will decline, no matter how much cheaper we can procure our bulk for. The content of the project itself must no longer seek the defense of localized, block-by-block capitalism, and begin taking stabs at it. *The content of each and every action a communist takes must be reckoned with and turned on its head.* Let us consider another example.

When uprisings broke out in 2020, what was not elusive was the mass of numbers; The greatest

demonstrations of the epoch were rather triumphant. They managed to paper over cracks in class society, bringing together revolutionary black youths and white petit-bourgeois and treacherous nonprofits and even some of the bourgeoisie themselves. The quantitative form was on full display in every city and suburb, streets lined with protestors week in, week out. Out of this bubble, some Socialists profited immensely, such as those with PSL, FRSO, and DSA. They managed to swing from the mass energy a new wave of quantitative inputs, and plug those into their next campaigns of reform. The usage of new recruits in this way only solidifies the initial contradictions, forcing them to buckle once labor dries up. This can be seen in FRSO's nationwide hand in the "National Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression" (NAARPR), and the recent backslide in creative or communist capacity within the organization. Regarding their pole, we are sure we would love whatever community control of the police is supposed to mean. Sincerely. But more than that, to break with the urban military itself, we cannot sit idly by for public show trials in which the State brings no fist down on the State itself. Hence the Alliance, taking the side of the police in every street ordeal, now has

to reckon with the fact that the banner it hoists is no more than an extension of Democratic initiative. Our masters have handed us the reins to conduct community control of police through accountability sessions, and we are no more living creatures than devilish monstrosities. The fetish of the masses gave birth to this renewed push from NAARPR, as much as it has deliberately tightened the rest of our leases.

We break with ideas, not the people we seek to revolt alongside. But to do this, we must struggle against our love of labor, of mass inputs and energy, of political projects and mass politics as movers of history alone. Labor as an input is not enough to seal the fate of action.

Socialism as the Avant-Garde of the Counter Revolution

Counter revolution is counter revolution, that much is certain. However, amongst the various sections of counter revolution present in our society, there does exist a qualitative difference amongst each. Broadly, we identify three different sections that add up to form the body of the counter revolution. They are:

the “Conservatives”, the “Liberals”, and the “Socialists”. Let us investigate each of these further.

Conservatism is the most visible and often the most openly violent form of counter revolution. What is commonly understood as “the right wing” is encapsulated by this conservative title. Their actions and rhetoric are openly reactionary. Their hopes are of an imagined and non-existent past. A great rebirth, a paleogenesis of the nation and state. They are brutal, animalistic, and violent. Look no further than the current acts of ICE, DHS, and CBP (Immigration Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, and Border Patrol). Roving gangs of federalized mercenaries roam the streets lashing out with impunity. Be it man, woman, or child, no one is safe from their wrath. Their terror is passionate, instinctive, and most importantly open. Not only are their murders recorded and uploaded by helpless bystanders, but they broadcast it themselves! The murderer of Renee Good, Jonathon Ross, held in one hand his pistol and in his other a phone. These are the “Conservatives”, who ironically seem to have zero interest in “conserving” much of anything. Their form of counter revolution is often seen as the most

dangerous. After all they are the ones pulling the trigger, are they not? However, we would disagree. They may present the most *immediate* threat, but they are certainly not the most dangerous to our movement.

In contrast to the Conservative stands the Liberal.¹ Calm and complacent, the Liberal upholds the status quo and has little much else to say. When Conservative mercenaries lash out at society, the Liberal's only response is to highlight their illegality and novelty. Their solution lies in the very institutions that propped up and allowed for the most open forms of reaction. Looking back at the ICE murders, the Democrats clamor to "de-mask" the killers, so that when pistols and rifles are thrust in our faces we may at the very least see the eyes of

¹ It should be noted that all 3 of the groups listed as members of the counter revolution are liberals, in that they defend and uphold Capital and all of its sins (the State, the Market, Wages, Value, etc.). We use the term "Liberal", "Conservative", and "Socialist" as they are understood in the vernacular of the American political system. We recognize that these may not be the most "scientific" terms to use, but for the sake of a concise, coherent argument we choose to use these terms as they exist in the wild.

our murderer for hire. Their other grandiose solution is to force ICE to wear body cameras, so that we may see their depravity from yet another angle. Liberals seek to redirect the anguish and discontent of the proletariat. In terms of electoral progress, the Liberals have shown themselves to be the only group in society to have any “success” against the Conservatives. Although, this “success” has yet to lead to any meaningful victory for the workers in ours, or any, country.

All of this leads to our late arrival in the counter revolution party, the Socialist. At first the Socialist seems to stand in complete defiance to the Liberal and Conservative. The Socialist proclaims “class struggle” and revolution. They fight for the rights of workers, the dispossessed, and the needy. Their cause is seen to be noble and just, and it might as well be. However, the Socialist does little to agitate beyond economic measures. For all their rhetoric of revolution, their plans are hardly different from the Liberals. The State is not a means to an end, unfortunately a belief many of our fellow Communists hold, it is the end. The wage system is not to be abolished, it is made to be more equitable. Private property is not smashed and broken up, it is

made “less predatory”. In our world, the wrath of the proletariat is like that of a raging typhoon. As the water level of our discontent surges, each one of these groups acts as a stopgap. The Conservatives are like that of a wall. A hard barrier that directly stops and hinders the movement of our class.

Liberals act like a levee, gradually levelling off the movement. Finally, the Socialist is the floodgate. A series of levers that allow for the redirection of our consciousness. Right when our movement is on the precipice of overcoming the great dam that is class society, the masses' efforts are redirected and their flows are shifted. Through their complicity and action in all the sins our class society has to offer (unionism, statism, workerism), the Socialists have become the *avant-garde of the counter revolution*. But what do we mean by this?

Socialism (the Left Wing of Capital) ends up as the “Avant-Garde” of the Counter Revolution in that it is the most developed and dangerous form of mediation. Often Socialists stand at the “forefront” of social movements, that is at least in first glances. Socialist organizations, such as the PSL and FRISO, have often lauded their own efforts in both historical and contemporary events. In the

aftermath of the George Floyd Rebellion, these groups have spread their revisionist history and often outright lies of the moment. In both the past and now, the various socialist movements have stood in contradiction to the organic movement of the proletariat. At many a historical impasse, the first actors to jump in front of the proletariat and stall their attack on class have often been the Socialists.

The first great betrayal is the one that is the most often known. Few names are as synonymous with betrayal as Judas, Benedict Arnold, and of course Friedrich Ebert. The German Social Democratic Party was at one point the North Star for the global Communist movement. Successful in nearly every metric, the SPD dominated the political landscape. That was until the 20th Century. On the eve of the Great War, the SPD decided to vote in favor of war credits, i.e. they voted to fund Germany's war effort. Internationalism was cast aside in favor of national chauvinism. Had they stopped there perhaps we might not even bring them up in this article, but their degeneration went even further.

In the aftermath of Germany's loss in the first World War and the harsh transition to democracy,

the SPD had swept up much of the political power centered in Weimar. Anxious to lose their strategic positioning in the fledgling republic, the SPD aligned with the *Friekorps* (Free Corps). The Friekorps were a wide and various militia movement soldiered by veterans of the Kaiser's army. Holding nationalistic, xenophobic, and patriarchal views the Friekorps engaged in numerous acts of state sanctioned terror. The Federal Troops, commanded by the SPD government, alongside the Friekorps smothered the infant Bavarian Council Republic in its crib.² In the Ruhr Valley the situation was no different: SPD government soldiers stood side by side with the Friekorps. Brothers in arms in the slaughter of revolution.³ Of course we all know of the ultimate tragedy, the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and the crushing of the Spartacist Revolt. Carried out by the Friekorps, directed by the SPD. Rather than fight alongside their Communist comrades, they aligned with reaction. So goes the

² Kuhn, Gabriel (2012) All Power to the Councils! A Documentary History of the German Revolution of 1918-1919.

³ Ibid.

first, and most notorious, example of Socialist counter revolution.

There may be no greater example of Socialist distortion than in France of May '68, when a social revolution was on the horizon.⁴ Sparked initially by a genuine student uprising on May 6th, brief occupation swept into seizure as barricades sprang up around Paris. Brutal days of street fighting followed, where tens of thousands of students ripped Paris' brick roads apart for street ammunition. With these riots came apprehension from the Socialist to respond, who opted for condemnation of the communist movement.

By mid-May, two-thirds of the French labor force went on strike. Yet through public attacks against student riots and the process of confining-in some cases, quite literally locking inside-workers to their shop floor, leading Socialists were able to take control of the crisis. The French Communist Party even took the road of intermittently calling off the revolution. They worked fervently with the police-State to break strikes, crush the student movement,

⁴ Singer, D. (2013). *Prelude to Revolution: France in May 1968*. Haymarket Books.st

and leave a river of blood through Paris' Latin Quarter. In the face of such immense violence, they then turned to the young insurgents and accused them of the social inflammation. This was so aptly concluded by the PCF mouthpiece newspaper *L'Humanite*, which-successfully-argued that "Leftist groups intervene violently to oppose the will of the workers to resume work", not sounding altogether different to the peace police we face in the street today.⁵ After dislocating the class struggle and bending it to their will, Socialists continued to meet with factory owners and politicians behind closed doors, eking away at concessions before ultimately settling for modest raises. Most infamous of all, these foolhardy Socialist mass politicians used the *class* momentum to foment *political* momentum, calling for a General Election which they would lose the very next month. For a deeper understanding of the gravedigging role the Socialists played in this epoch, we recommend Daniel Singer's '*Prelude to Revolution*', and especially engaging with the

⁵ Ibid.

sections ‘*How to Not Seize Power*’, and ‘*From General Strike to General Election*’.

Just as the PCF “wrapped up the red flag in the national tricolor”, our contemporaries are boastful mass politicians chasing shadows and ghosts.⁶ Of insurgencies today, we have discussed the avoidant tendencies the Socialists showed for police abolition in 2020. Now they have performatively risen to the *halls of power*, welcomed by the bourgeoisie and granted their own time to speak and debate, yet just like the PCF our Socialist cheerleaders are no more bolstered to the illustrious *seat of power*. The *historical moment* they tied themselves to- revolutionary situations in 1918, 1968, or 2020- carried them far along, but they all missed a clinical lynchpin-the communist pole itself-to seal their fate. At that, we must renounce Socialism as our predecessors did Social-Democracy.

Interested in nostalgia and apologetics for the various movements of the 20th century, the Socialist is either unwilling or unable to set the rhetorical pole amidst their supposed class. In lieu of a revolutionary message, it is becoming

⁶ Ibid.

increasingly obvious that ultras cannot throw their weight and support behind these organizations, and must divorce themselves from the politics of these left wing capitalists.

Mass Political Heritage

The avant-garde of the counter revolution is here, and as we have discussed, these communist mass politicians draw from the work of their bourgeois counterparts. Just as this occurs, the Spectacular bourgeois theater will ring out for all to hear on a deafening scale. They will win, again and again until the end of mass political time. We now immerse ourselves in the world of the bourgeois counterparts, to better understand the Socialist avant-garde.

While moments in history come and go, the everpresent call to *the people* so thoroughly permeates our epoch. In an apocalyptic wasteland of Recession, Obama rolled out the corpse of “Yes We Can”. Political savvy and mass zeal led to the buy-in of millions of households nationwide. Yet Obama's only fault as a mass politician was his dedication to lack of principle. Obama sought the approval of every class of every political and

cultural persuasion, in order to keep the gears turning as such. Or rather, in being everyone's politician, he could not cook up an economic program to pair with his mass politic.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 was intended to serve as that mass program, uniting all peoples and especially the most numerous class in the proletariat. Yet, as famed bourgeois economist Paul Krugman (yes, the Keynesian who wrote your high school textbook) describes, this was not further from the case.

“For while Mr. Obama got more or less what he asked for, he almost certainly didn’t ask for enough. We’re probably facing the worst slump since the Great Depression. The Congressional Budget Office, not usually given to hyperbole, predicts that over the next three years there will be a \$2.9 trillion gap between what the economy could produce and what it will actually produce. And \$800 billion, while it sounds like a lot of money, isn’t nearly enough to bridge that chasm.

Officially, the administration insists that the plan is adequate to the economy’s need. But few economists agree. And it’s widely believed that

political considerations led to a plan that was weaker and contains more tax cuts than it should have, that Mr. Obama compromised in advance in the hope of gaining broad bipartisan support. We've just seen how well that worked.

Now, the chances that the fiscal stimulus will prove adequate would be higher if it were accompanied by an effective financial rescue, one that would unfreeze the credit markets and get money moving again. But the long-awaited announcement of the Obama administration's plans on that front, which also came this week, landed with a dull thud.

*The plan sketched out by Tim Geithner, the Treasury secretary, wasn't bad, exactly. What it was, instead, was vague. It left everyone trying to figure out where the administration was really going. Will those public-private partnerships end up being a covert way to bail out bankers at taxpayers' expense? Or will the required "stress test" act as a back-door route to temporary bank nationalization (the solution favored by a growing number of economists, myself included)?."*⁷

⁷ Krugman, P. (2009, February 12). *Opinion | Failure to Rise*. The New York Times.

By teetering between a neoliberal world and Keynesian mass cries, Obama's mass politic set a watery pole between the two. The implications of this are hard to understate: His efforts only intensified a vague spiral toward disaster, characterized by his Party's inability to characterize *anything*. As the Republican Party has grown emboldened and subsequently dropped the facade of respect, Democrats have continued to camp out on that bastion of neoliberal-Keynesian madness. If we were their bourgeois political scientists, we would diagnose this a voluntary suicide.

In the 9 years since Obama left the White House, we feel the bourgeoisie may have finally found its answer. While it has not been easy for them, a new type of Democrat has finally entered office. That is, if their Party will let them. Enter the *Democratic-Socialist*. The child of the Liberal and the Socialist mass zealots.

Everyone loves Zohran Mamdani. The small business owners, the taxi drivers, the Gen Z politigram reels fueled by water-indulgent AI, influencers, blue collar laborers, sections of New

York City's MAGA base, you name it.⁸ In the masquerade of Spectacular material-spiritualism, we have not felt the cultural zeitgeist entrench itself so thoroughly in a politician since Obama. You simply cannot help but lavish the attention of the Boss who smiles graciously at you, offers you a raise, before opening the door for you to get on your way. This new era of gracious Bosses rings to the tune of 327 DSA-sponsored candidates nationwide in the last decade, as well as the social-democratization of some of the existing political apparatus over the same time period.⁹ The fact that this new crop of mass politicians claim Socialism is both indicative in the re-emergence of Keynesian hysteria as much as the communist movement itself.

For the first time in our lifetime, there now exists a current which threatens to upend the Democratic ordeal of nothing politics. The latter, which appealed to the masses due to its scope, seems rather dated at this time. Nothing can be acceptable when there is an emphasis on national unity and

⁸ More Perfect Union. (2026, January 16). *60,000 Trump Voters Just Elected a Socialist. We Asked Them Why.*

⁹ Past Endorsements – DSA National Electoral Commission.

faith in institutions-*or people*-to turn around the crisis. But when there is a backslide and rift lasting generations, an opaque dinosaur can only do so much. Obama's handshakes across the aisle can hardly be repeated by Democrats now, as not only is their opposition more incessant on their demise: The masses themselves demand a generational, qualitative change regardless of civility. About a third of Americans even believe in the justification of political violence to these ends.¹⁰ Likewise, the Spectacular is simple: The old guard of political monotony lacks Spectacular savvy compared to this generation of social media magicians. Just as Hilary couldn't hold a candle to Obama's zeal in 2008, Mamdani and AOC are head and shoulders above the personability of Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries. Politics are not only more treacherous: They have gone fully parasocial.

Zohran's time in the spotlight was made possible not only by worsening conditions, but also by the actions of mass-political "nothing" politicians like Obama. From them Mamdani took spirited

¹⁰ Montanaro, D. (2025, October 1). *Poll: More Americans Now Agree Political Violence May Be Necessary to Right the Country*. NPR.

language, charisma and *actually* capitalized on an explicit political program with a label. While still remaining a mass politician himself, he offers a different project of national unity: Dependent entirely on smiles and welfare, with a defined ideological bent. This project may be untenable without institutional backing *now*, but the true threat of this rise is in what is to *come*. A single mass politician is one thing, but the multiplication of language across the country is another. The electoral space is analogous to one large stew, where the introduction of one or two strong ingredients can carry the flavor of the rest of the pot. The multiplication of flavor in this instance, or language the next, is a rapid frenzy that will surely outpace any opposition to its imposition.

So as DSA continues to spearhead dozens of campaigns a year to take on the “nothing” politicians, they employ the strongest defense of the national project. Soon they will be joined hand in hand by a purposeless political establishment, at this time rivalling the Republicans as the People’s Party. The next climactic battle between austerity and welfare is set.

Can the Socialists acquire the affection of the petit-bourgeoisie? How far of an inroads can they make with blue collar laborers? How long will they have to feign indifference on foreign conquests and colonial holdings? We can't precisely say. Yet with this new development, it is as clear as can be that the bourgeoisie's chosen mouthpieces are finally on a path to action. They drift through the wreckage of the misery they are responsible for, salvaging whatever remains and repurposing it in the new mass political movement. If we dare say to mimic them, that is to avoid the mistake of mass politics and project communism itself.

Anarchist-Populists & American Monarchs

Introduction

On Saturday, March 28th, millions of Americans marched to the beat of anti-monarchism. An obvious but nonetheless curious dilemma is immediately raised here: There is no American Monarch. Although we have tried our best over the centuries, God has never cast His hand to our great rulers, choosing them as our anointed national saints. No, in the name of God, our great nation has only emancipated itself further from Him in all social aspects. As such, we only have ourselves-what little is left of humanity in America-to blame for any so-called abuses of authority. In a Democratic Republic, it is not monarchy which has shown its true character.

With the rallying cries of the democratic-bourgeois camp ringing hollow and nonreal, it is the those branded as the “Far-Right” which demonstrate the most convincing grasp on reality. The gears of Democracy thus turn for them slowly, and they wait idly by, doing nothing, watching the liberal machine

hallucinate and sputter for life. The liberals do not look right, they must consider, because they can no longer recognize the fronts they attack and defend. Democracy provided the foot-soldiers, the AI bubble and the sky-high rents, but these liberals have seemingly now accosted Democracy as Monarchy, or even Fascism! Now as these liberals seek to overturn Fascism, our Rightist truly becomes the last defense of Democracy.

Should a real “Fascism” emerge from these conditions, we can’t say much that hasn’t been said. As Gilles Dauvé put it almost 50 years ago, it is not a question of “Fascism Or Democracy”, but “Fascism And Democracy”.¹¹ There at the march against nonreal Monarchy, we are little more than Democrats and Fascists ourselves, marching spectacularly on Rome and the halls of power, for the preservation of both. Regardless of ideological bent, it is mass-political *technique* which produces the same motions through all of those at this march. Lines continue to blur, and a duo of Democratic and Fascistic camps emerge. Yet in the interim, either camp represents both movements.

¹¹ Dauvé, G. (1979). *When Insurrections Die*. Endnotes.

The avant-garde of the counter-revolution are those most cunning savants of capital, who have not only managed to demolish the Communist movement, but grab hold of it so as to *define* the Communist movement. Those that define it have unanimously encouraged their organizations to attend and radicalize these Blackshirt dry-runs. It is ironic that as they flock in droves to provide the petit-bourgeois spectacle a political alternative, these organizations will damn the Left itself with no choice at all. To participate in the mass politic, to enmesh ourselves in the development of American *fasci*, or to die trying.

We will meet the workers, or rather at these marches the upper semi-proletarians and small business owners where they are at, and strengthen a new, more Democratic and more Fascist Republic.

To a Fascist Republic

What is this *Fascism*, the presumed “real” enemy this past weekend sought to mobilize against? Does it represent anything new in the production and reproduction of society? Is it much different from Democracy? We draw from one of the more

compelling definitions below, while still offering several criticisms of this “Fascistology”.

“What is the real thrust of fascism, if not the economic and political unification of capital, a tendency which has become general since 1914? Fascism was a particular way of bringing about that unity in countries — Italy and Germany — where, even though the revolution had been snuffed out, the state was unable to impose order, including order in the ranks of the bourgeoisie. Mussolini was no Thiers, with a solid base in power, ordering regular forces to massacre the Communards. An essential aspect of fascism is its birth in the streets, its use of disorder to impose order, its mobilisation of the old middle classes crazed by their own decline, and its regeneration, from without, of a state unable to deal with the crisis of capitalism. Fascism was an effort of the bourgeoisie to forcibly tame its own contradictions, to turn working class methods of mobilisation to its own advantage, and to deploy all the resources of the modern state, first against an internal enemy, then against an external one”¹²

¹² Ibid.

We find Dauvé's analysis historically accurate on 20th century Fascist movements, yet one must remember his inscriptions as related to the Fascist movements and not on capitalist development itself. "Fascism" is *not* a point in historical development nor of capitalist development. It is not unique in its "economic and political" unification of capital", the primary consideration from Dauvé: Economics and politics are unified in every capitalist State. Fascist movements may give rise to qualitatively different ideologists, rhetoric and even means of organization-birth in the streets, for one-but Fascism is yet to inscribe itself as a unique historical stage. Likewise, Democracy is as much of an effort to "forcibly tame bourgeois contradictions", depending on the definition of force and the specific actions of each State. The notion of pivoting State resources toward internal, then external enemies as well is also a nonstarter! Even enlightened Fidel and his *compañeros* couldn't help but open up a few concentration camps, before pivoting their State-military resources elsewhere. *The sheer inability of anyone to truly isolate Fascism as a phenomenon points to the critical understanding that Fascism is not an isolated phenomenon.* Thus even our attempting to

describe Fascism serves a moot point. So why are we organizing around and against it?

When “Fascism” arises in a society, it is dealt with by the liberal bourgeoisie and the Communist Parties as an external threat to pre-existing conditions (Democracy). On the contrary, Fascism is a push to *save* Democracy from itself, from its own fallacious attempts to tame the contradiction of class. When Democracy is truly wrecked, such as in Italy or Germany, Capital is unified in its political decision-making. Politics, or the language of distribution and allocation, and therefore Capital, becomes altogether more synonymous with this sole form of representation. Whatever existed previously is integrated into this form of representation, and whatever cannot be integrated is disposed of in violent speed.

We are communists, so naturally we wish to survive the next great wave of counterrevolution, and maybe even see through the abolition of the capitalist relation. We understand the feelings of trepidation regarding the State, and the human desire to see it out, to survive. That being said we cannot help but see the rallying cries toward anti-monarchist, even anti-fascist mass-spectacular

events as the enmeshing of working class organizations, of *communist and anarchist* organizations, within the reproduction of capital. We do ourselves no favors here, only further identifying as Democratic forces in a world providing no alternative. “All out to the march of millions” is the rational and efficient choice, but it is not the effective one. We consider the actions of Crimethinc, for example, to essentially be the offering up of Anarchists to these Democratic forces.

The next section will cover this in greater detail, after developing an understanding of the “technical” and “rational”, essentially how these calls to act within mass politics reproduce structures of Democratic legitimacy. We refer to Jacques Ellul’s framing of atomization within production and social reproduction here: Technique “has become the dominant factor in the Western world, so that the best name for our society is the “technicist society.” It is on technique that all other factors depend. Technique is no longer some uncertain and incomplete intermediary between humanity and the natural milieu. The latter is totally dominated and utilized (in Western society).

Technique now constitutes a fabric of its own, replacing nature. *Technique is the complex and complete milieu in which human beings must live and in relation to which they must define themselves. It is a universal mediator, producing a generalized mediation, totalizing and aspiring to totality.*” Furthermore, Ellul argues that “technique constitutes a system in the strict sense of the term, that is to say, an ensemble in which factors are so closely linked together that:

- Each element has a meaning or significance only within the ensemble;
- Any modification of an element has repercussions on the ensemble and modifies it. Any modification of the ensemble likewise modifies the elements of their relationships;
- Privileged, almost exclusive relationships exist among the elements of the system, regardless of what is situated outside the system.”¹³

¹³ Ellul, J. (1983). *Technology is Not the Same as Technique!*. International Jacques Ellul Society.

While we find ourselves much in disagreement with Ellul's idealist historical method, he provides a rough outline of atomization in productive and reproductive capacities. In a capitalist society where all human interaction revolves around efficiency and mediation, it is in the name of "rationality" that we meet the masses where they are. But as we do so, the significance of any given ideological banner is slighted by the reproduction of motion. Consider the following.

It means nothing to be an anarchist/communist/liberal/fascist/monarchist on an individual level, but in an ensemble we find our isolated traits becoming fruitful. Or rather, *we believe that our respective ideological traditions can intervene in struggles once they brush the ground*. Thus the tendency to mass-meet and make mass, to congeal and burrow into the proletarians and semi-proletariants, the lumpen and the petit-bourgeoisie. Yet ideology cannot make history, and it cannot alter the motion of capitalist technique toward the fulfillment of any ensemble.

Ideology only has significance when it has mass support, but any construction of mass support directly alters the function of a given ideology.

Anarchism, for example, may very well be the most revolutionary and anti-formist of all ideology: We aren't the proper ideologists to judge these proceedings... But in the mass movement, and specifically at this moment in the 'No Kings' episodic series, an Anarchist ideological endeavor has a real tendency to be pick-pocketed. In order to relate to the protest and its adherents, Anarchism must now be an individual habit of consumption, or a tendency to make sandwiches for the poor, or to become allocative, even patriotic. It doesn't matter how an Anarchist presents oneself here, because *the function of the ensemble has already modified it and done away with the rest*. The protest itself is a pageant, and in its many sins cannot help but reproduce activists doing activism for the Republic. Furthermore, an event like 'No Kings' is deliberately designed to congeal mass dissent and provide the dexterity to renew support for the national project. We will listen to the statesmen and loudspeakers, we will all stand around doing nothing, and we will walk through the streets ever so peacefully, with a gracious escort of police vehicles. Anarchist, "Communist", it does not matter. The ensemble has shown it can successfully neutralize any perceived threat with venom. Thus

what once rested as a historical critique is washed away to realize itself as a plaything, one of the 20-odd playthings at a legalistic, bourgeois carnival.

We talk not in vague terms here. In the following section, we deal with the specific pitch some Anarchists have predetermined their calls to: A remarkable reduction from class struggle and communism itself, to that of an “anti-authoritarian” popular front.

On Authority, the Cousin of Capital: An Anarchist-Populist Fallacy

We posit the theses of communisation theory leave very little institutional or legal juncture: How easy it is to proclaim communism itself... To get there we are but fools, and the series of trial and error our comrades embark on is welcome.

In these experiments, we have noted that “radicalizing” a protest is a reactionary process. One can take the reins of technique and technology, but it cannot make them neutral, or even positive forces in the process of revolution and counterrevolution. The protest is still the lightning in the bottle, the codification of constraint and contradiction, into a

weary puddle of unrealized exhaustion.

Insurrection plucked from the womb in infancy, this time around with snarky t-shirts and inflatable suits.

Countering this, a poignant and prevailing faith seems to reside in the process of taking a protest to escalation. As it comprises a most dutiful allegiance to the mass political form, we specifically reference Crimethinc's call to form "anti-authoritarian blocs". On October 9th 2025, the "rebel alliance" initially called for a bourgeois alliance with "everyone, of all walks of life, to proclaim that opposition to fascism".¹⁴ On March 16th, they doubled down, encouraging their readership to "Be someone's radical moment": "Some participants at No Kings are not going to be open to hearing radical critiques of capitalism and the state, but make it your mission to find the ones who are ready to join the struggle, who just need a framework and an idea of where to begin. Talk to them about their views and how those might fit within a larger global history of resistance. It's not about convincing them, but

¹⁴ Collective, CrimethInc. E.-W. (2025, October 9). *No Kings, No Masters*. CrimethInc.

sharing tools to give a name to their longing for liberation”.¹⁵ What has resulted from these calls encapsulates the dead weight of these platitudes to “resist”. Thus, we will critique the “anti-authoritarian bloc” in its performance and rhetorical content.

Across the country, as millions of upper semi-proletarians and petit-bourgeois take to the streets, a much smaller sub-sect are actively moving among them, attempting to counter hegemonic ideas. Whereas the Leninists sell ideology and book club invitations, the insurrectionist and Anarchist extend the most convincing of suggestions: To seize the protest and actually *do something*. To act outside of the confines of the bourgeoisie, to turn the capitalist donors on their head, and spit in the face of their elected faces in doing so. This is something that has been tried to varying degrees in several No Kings marches around the country. In those circumstances which have remotely succeeded, Anarchists have led splinter marches or even the entire thing. Crimethinc themselves advertise one of these moments as to “rubber-

¹⁵ Ibid.

stamp” the most dreamlike efficacy of forming the bloc.¹⁶

Again, the critique is that of a twofold account. Foremost, we have to question the nature of authority and subversion, both terms already ready to fit right into the liberal ensemble. Abstractly, we can say we are against “authority”. It at least sounds rather dulling. But when seeking to *overturn* said authority, we cannot pretend as if it is the contradiction which squeaks and grinds away. Rather, any harsh notion of “authority” is the sour taste of capitalist alienation, refracted light from which we now arrive at a thesis accommodating capital. To proclaim war on authority alone, therefore, is to retain the capitalist and salvage a “more capitalist capitalism”¹⁷

What Crimethinc proclaims on the basis of being against authority is precisely to make inroads with those who marched on the Capitol. They too, were and are against fractures of authority. To be against authority, we may even extend our hands to

¹⁶ Collective, CrimethInc. E.-W. (2025b, October 20). *Anarchists At the No Kings Rallies*. CrimethInc.

¹⁷ Dauvé, G. (1979). *When Insurrections Die*. Endnotes.

Netanyahu or those Israeli settlers of the West Bank. They, perhaps more than any other, truly spit in the face of authority, bring about the nullification of the international bourgeois courts, and with it the entire moral-liberal framework. Should we offer critical support to such a cause, if it is against some authority? Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, all of the statesmen of history were first and foremost: “Against authority”. The Republican Party, domineering in all capacities, has long used the same language against overreaching government hands. Thus the protest is no different than a mock-putsch if it does not fundamentally alter the bond between classes (and therefore the classes themselves). Having a run-in with the police is welcome, but at what point is the expense of proletarian blood greater than the brief rush of energy against “authority”? On the secondary point of real tactical performance: If we launch an anti-authoritarian bloc ourselves, herd ‘No Kings’ protestors away from the monotony and toward the police line, none of it will matter if we all show up for work the next day. What bleeds from this tactic is lifestylism. Yet for building a bloc and a popular front, we have let our enemies trickle in behind us!

They will continue to subject us to misery in the name of “anti-authoritarianism”.

The concept of an anti-authoritarian bloc, and the ceaseless calls to mass-politicize on the basis of authority itself, is an affront to the communist movement precisely because it undermines what makes us *radical*. Authority is but a tangent to the war on classes itself, and in emphasizing unity around the former, these Anarchist-Populists show they have forgotten the lessons of the Spanish Civil War. The Popular Front lives on. Capital lives on. And therefore, in our minds at least, “authority” survives as well.

So, whatever is Fascism and Authority? Fascism is nothing, and Authority is a Class (out of respect for these mobilizations, we won't say which one). Yet if the Democratic Forces today-Liberals and Stalinists, Anarchists and Maoists-continue to mobilize under the mass politic, we are sure to taste both.

Communist Methods of Organization: Notes on the Cell, the Mass Party, Autonomy, & Political Suicide

Introduction

“The reigning paradigm of organization among the autonomous revolutionary current today is the “milieu,” or radical scene: a mode of organization premised upon small groups of friends who stand apart from society and attempt to intervene within social struggles...By refusing to stake out a place within the ideological pantheon of existing political forms, by asserting its position in the mode of a non-position, the milieu functions as an axiomatic default that has excused itself from the realm of critique on the grounds that it proffers no ‘models’ of its own: ‘autonomy’ becomes a stand-in for the milieu itself. Yet the organizational form of the milieu stands in the way of its revolutionary potential in a variety of ways. While it imagines itself as standing outside society as a space of purity and safety from the bad ways of society, the milieu continually recreates a tyranny of

structurelessness, as its informal organization reproduces existing social hierarchies. While its naive politics of friendship has certain advantages in terms of fostering political intensities, it tends toward a form of cultural and racial closure that prevents political relations from being fostered across social differences. Finally, with the milieu we lack the means to foster the capacities of our comrades. On one hand, we tell ourselves that we are all equal, while at the same time vast differences in experience and inequalities in our relations speak the truth of our situation.”

– Kevin Suemnicht

If we have inherited anything from our milieu’s tradition, it is nothing. Or rather, the absence of any codified idea or tactic, frozen in time for our repeated use. We do not fear organic manifestation as much as rigid ideological premise. We represent the movement of whatever works, at any time, to advance the most radical pole in the movement of communism; This amounts to nothing more but the call for immediate communism itself. This lack of marriage to any born concept rests on the premise of fluidity in struggle, that we must behave like water. At various points in struggle it is necessary to

expand, contract, as what matters is not form but the motion of radical content.

From this vantage point, we are disturbed by a lack of obvious formation to come, and question how to tackle organization as a social, rather than political, question. We write this piece to share recent discussions within the movement of our day, as well as to open up a dialogue amongst comrades.

This piece deals with the most popular and fetishized methods of organization of our day: the Cell, the Mass Party, and the varying Autonomous infrastructure projects tucked neatly within the confines of every city. What characterizes our conception of each is their collective gasps for survival after shaky births, nestling within the bourgeois world from different ends of a *conservative spectrum*, attempting to carve out social, rhetorical, or physical niches to stay alive. Thus, we will recount the current position of each, their appeals and developments, and offer our own thesis on the matter: That we must embark on a political suicide, i.e. an overt renunciation of politics and economics, and break with remnants of half-baked Blanquism and Leninism in the building of a visible communist pole.

Social Conservatism: The Cell in Retrospect

There is nothing more mystified than the modern communist Cell, born in such an epoch of fear and anxiety. An eternally young form, its tracings are minimal, relations typically insular projects of affinity, and its site is implanted at the heart of the mass movement. We strictly refer to the Cell as the construction of a clandestine, self-limiting affinity-based organization with the intent to influence wider ranging social movements. Cells seek the outward imposition of revolutionary ideals and tactics, correcting their own growths for this very reason. While the popularization of insurrectionary Anarchist groups has led to a narrow image of Celldom, such a structure may even swallow the wandering liberal, and not all follow the same guidelines for they make up wide-ranging groups of ideologues. A Cell today can be hierarchical or horizontal, formal or informal, Anarchist or Leninist, and may operate under any medium under the sun; The Cell is not ideological but social-survivalist in nature. They also tend to cast aside any exception of mediation for struggle in

immediacy, an enticing proposition for the ultra left.

What further unites our conception of the Cell is an emphasis on directly influencing, or “revolutionizing”, the broader social movements, and at least a sole point of immediate unity on which this rests. In the anti-ICE movement, this may mean concentrating proletarian creative expression on the entire State apparatus, rather than just one federal department. It could also be a tactical point of unity, such as the building of street militancy and physical confrontation with the State. In either example, the Cell is also an attractive option for those in our movement who seek to avoid State repression, Far-Right reprisals, or a far more likely outcome at this time: A betrayal on part of the liberal bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie. This practice also allows for a wider range of tactics and rhetoric to be used, as the public-facing mass organizations typically cannot make calls for revolution without their bloody dismemberment. As the communists’ social world in embryonic form, these layers of protection and mobility provide a quaint picture of the Cell. Truthfully, it has just as many glaring weaknesses.

Cells in Chicago's variational anti-ICE movement have performed to mixed success. Autonomous groups were able to direct movement traffic and build small links with one another, in tandem causing a mass effect where they outpaced liberal representatives of the movement and forced their hand. At forbidden sites of circulation where the sacred was intact-migrant processing centers, courthouses, and federal buildings-liberals dragged their feet in the face of new possibilities, ultimately giving way to Cell-led moments of struggle. *The bourgeois* had to catch up to the work of the meager Cell, in a game of cat and mouse which temporarily decentralized the former's monopoly of power.

As it often is, many of these efforts ran dry. Cells set a physical pole and defended it on their own, hoping for a wave of mass energy to crash behind them. At various locations, this never happened. Here, the site of Cell activity became something of an *infrastructure project*, which we will elaborate on in the 4th section. But for essential context, the Cells were forced to stake out on their lonesome at these sites, recreate autonomous infrastructure reliant on tedious labor, with their own turnout relying on what essentially became shift schedules.

This recreated social divisions and a division of labor that saw a propulsion of young activists or student types who had little work, thereby influencing a drain of any *class* element in the struggle.

At sites where mass energy would follow, like the Broadview Immigration Processing Center, the Cells' own tendency toward embedding and social survival limited the function of its rhetorical devices. Cells pushed the movement forward by holding a tactical pole at this chokepoint, and this time the mass did come to them, yet the Cell could not find a means to propagate revolutionary consciousness. Their rhetorical pole here was relegated to insular debate, almost invisible to any proletarian. A wave of nationalists thus proceeded to launch an offensive, and the scene of this crime is still being tampered with today. Local "community leaders", including politicians and Church hierarchy, were able to identity-politic their way into center stage. While radicals attempted to divert course in large movement assemblies, they found themselves undermined by a star-studded cast and quickly drowned out in these pop-up shops of democracy. Furthermore, Cells and their frequency

to lose an immediate point of tactical unity meant they were consistently at odds with their own existence. As the movement was further declassified, some grouplets formed with overt liberal elements confused by the communist position. Or rather, the lack of social understanding amongst Cells and their emphasis on minimal points of immediate practical unity (i.e. taking X tactic to the streets) instead of a long-term revolutionary consciousness proved fatal.

What the experiences of Broadview point to is that radical communists must decisively, *collectively* act before the mobilizations occur, before makeshift democratic organs are injected, before tactics are debated frivolously, to propagate their pole as widely as possible. We point to a September piece on Crimethinc, where a severe gap between frontliners and the critical mass helped shatter what could have otherwise been a swelling surge, instead resulting in a spectacle of unanswered State violence. This documented lack of mass understanding is a relatively frequent occurrence, compounded by the liberals' contradictory framing and information. In situations of crisis, the chasm between independent, radical Cells and the masses

cannot always be crossed by the immediate experiences of struggle and repression like many insurrectionists have theorized. More likely, it is that the radical grouplets need to expand and provide an alternative to the *day-to-day* of the liberal bourgeois representatives. The Cell, in at least this conception, fails to provide a tangible functioning outside of its milieu. Its members stick their heads out of the herd to offer saliency, before digging deep inside the Earth to withstand the impact.

Reality is ironic. This phenomenon of conservation which safeguards the social life of the Cell just as likely carves up the willing radicals to atomization. With little coordination or visible signs of life, communists cannot even build a clear pole amongst *themselves*. This remarkable state of confusion can be found in another Crimethinc piece released in November. It documents another Cell of radicals who entered the fray more recently and miscalculated the trajectory of the Broadview and Rapid Response networks. Despite waves of unsuccessful Rapid Response struggles (led by controlled opposition) and mass kidnappings (see our recent submission, '*White Collaborators*', for

the full context), despite all evidence pointing that Broadview had been lost to the Illinois State Police and the controlled opposition, these radicals called for a return to recycled tactics, their thesis on recent events boiling down to the reintegration of radicals into these bourgeois neighborhood watch groups. This is not so much to critique their own findings in isolation, struggle against pluralism, or to reemphasize the failings of the anti-ICE movement, as much as to emphasize a stark lack of coordination that can occur between different Cells *within the same milieu*.

What appears to be missing is interaction with the real movement on a mass level (the communication of communist opposition), coordinating amongst both the ultra left and the proletariat. In this climate it seems the Cell is either unable or unwilling to build a radical pole and challenge the bourgeois world outside of the immediate tactical struggle.

Courage is needed to break with lone Cells, but courage for what?

Rhetorical Conservatism: The Mass Party & Its Discontents

The modern mass Party is simply the inverse of the Cell. In staking out its own pole for all to see, it gestures to the public fervently, shouting to the world to recognize itself for what it is. An immediate justification of its life. Unfortunately, in the public sphere of politics and economics, the fledgling Party subsequently trips over and embarrasses itself. Its decision to adhere to liberalism is conformist, our milieu offers, but we must likewise recognize it is a tactful decision of survival; *The nature of the mass Party must conform to live another day.*

Much of our work already contends with this dynamic, and our readership at large is so overwhelmingly critical of the traditional Party that we feel no such need to launch into lengthy diatribes. Of what must be said: We hold no such gripes with the mass Party as an eternal truth, either positive in the lens of the Leninists or negative in that of the Anarchists. We do hold gripes with politics and economics, which the mass Party must adopt in order to seem sensible to the

masses it must meet. As such, we are concerned with the question of its relevance in setting a pole beyond what is possible within capitalism.

In analyzing the role of the mass Party form within our midst, it is of course apparent they have not been able to accomplish the former. No, there is a decisive social penetration on part of the bourgeoisie which distracts the Party and detracts from its revolutionary potential. The Party is forced to act within the real world as it really exists, forced to chalk up real demands and find real bones for the proletariat to sustain its social reproduction as slave. Slavery is comfortable, it sells, it lives on.

The Cell is comfortable from this purview: To act inside the mass movement from an insular outside is a rather warm proposal. But likewise, neither are on profound footing. Whereas the Party barges in with brute force, guiding the mass movement from a formal context, including a formal division of labor and needless hierarchies, the lone Cell attempts to sneak by unaccounted for, recreating social divisions of labor and a tyranny of structurelessness which itself results in the very chain of command it claims to despise. Both are dishonest for both assume the role of the

communist to be in opaqueness, which only leads to the implicit or explicit recreation of bourgeois society.

In summation: The Party insists on meeting the masses where they are, and in doing so establishes a political-economic line. The proletariat can then become accustomed to this Party. Yet in extreme crisis the Party is now a conservative element which the proletariat is forced to leapfrog for their abolition. At that, we are not convinced a mass Party is to save us from our troubles.

Physical Conservatism:

Infrastructure Projects & Autonomous Zones

Lastly, we point our criticism toward the physical conservation of spaces in which many a communist has engaged in. This spawns from a dilemma amongst communists on how to approach the masses, and the question of flexing our own muscle in relation to the proletariat. A relatively potent view can be found in *'Hinterland: America's New Landscape of Class and Conflict'*, where author Phil A. Neel surmises that it is strength and

infrastructure, not ideas or political programs, which will win the poor masses. He discussed this through the lens of Far-Right activity in the rural West:

“By providing material incentives that guarantee stability, combined with threats of coercion for those who oppose them, such groups become capable of making the population complicit in their rise, regardless of ideological positions. In fact, Kilcullen points out that in such situations (epitomized by all-out civil war), support for one faction or another simply does not follow ideology. People don’t throw their weight behind those they agree with, and often many in a population can’t be said to have any deep-seated ideological commitment in the first place. Instead, support follows strength, and ideology follows support. Political or religious attachment is often an after-the-fact development, preceded by the capable intervention of a pragmatic, functional partisan group that begins as a small minority of the population.” (p. 32)

Neel embellishes further here:

“There are a few simple lessons that might be drawn from all of this. The first overarching observation is simply that the future of class war in the United States is beginning to enter a period of severe polarization and extreme contingency. More and more people are becoming aware that liberalism is a failed political project. The ability of partisans to succeed in the environment of competitive control opened up by this failure will correlate to their ability to offer strength and stability to populations in the midst of crisis.” (p. 86)

This view is attractive, as it falls in line with Marxist developmental theory at large, rejects the conception that ideas move history, and so on. We meet the workers, we feed them, house them, provide them dignity, and in return we hope for some signal of social validation. This is a process that requires communists to build strength and exert it as such, with an emphasis on meeting the workers’ material conditions in immediacy, as an input to revolution, and expanding on the revolution later as we build capacity. There are concerns we have with this methodology, both practical and historical.

This incremental strength built on purchasing loyalty requires a reinforcement of preexisting social relationships in the insular. We have seen this time and time again through a variety of mutual aid programs. In a community center on Chicago's Southwest Side, for example, an autonomous group delivers food, drink, clothing, masks, whistles, handwarmers, and a slew of resources and information at all times. Next, there were large bursts of activity and it gradually became more and more extensive in scope. Establishing links between immigrant day laborers, a local encampment, local workers, and even small businesses who provided aid, it served as sorely needed community defense infrastructure. Yet even this project, which has existed for almost 4 months, has employed fewer and fewer committed activists as winter onset and time pushed on. Even as masked federal agents frequently attacked the site and kidnapped immigrants, the activist presence simply could not sustain itself. For them, they still have to face the music and return to work eventually; All of this labor is just energy expended that could be bringing themselves sustenance. Naturally, then, the project lends itself to fewer and fewer people, typically slanting young/student-

based, white collar professionals, and/or remote/part-time workers who can clearly make an excuse to maintain the infrastructure. In the grand scheme of things, this is neither a large nor reliable group to build the machines to feed the masses. The movement naturally becomes further declassed, as described with the autonomous zones in '*The Cell in Retrospect*'. It is no surprise then that after some time, these projects often go stillborn; The litany of autonomous zones in the Occupy Movement, 2020, and various other historical moments reflect the insulation of capitalist relations. If they carve out a niche longer, they are repurposed within capitalist life as to be so thoroughly void of radical content.

We are generally skeptical of the *occupation* of spaces as a real means to achieve revolt. When the Palestine Solidarity Movement tested its strength in the epoch of 2024, its primary method of expression was the Encampment. These Encampments of course differed around the country, but almost all existed as a physical space and social hub where literature and information was exchanged, with various developments in regards to mutual aid, community programming, and so on. The remarkability of these

Encampments to spring up so quickly papered over how quickly many ruptured over the question of physical conservation. After dozens of parks and campus lawns were taken across the country, what was next? The student uprising had to feed itself, but it did not know how. We had declared that the university was ours, but what this meant for the reproduction of our identities within society, we had no answer. We remained as social inputs, as workers-to-be, just with a communal twist.

And while we do not pretend that this was the only reason the Encampments collapsed-let alone the primary or secondary cause-there is something to be said about the role of physical conservation in this mess. Many Encampments quickly became wrought with fear and suspicion due to the political circumstances of the time, causing a ripple effect in which they fiercely guarded their zonal borders. Instead of attempting to swing the revolt throughout or even off-campus, the primary antagonism *became what waited off-campus*. The proletariat, the bourgeoisie, all of it. As the dust settled, it meant so much more time and energy would be relegated to patrolling a patch of grass; The revolt would be dead. A product of dreams, the

cushy insulation of the autonomous zone was exposed as a wretched child of capitalist alienation. This is not specific to the encampment: The autonomous zone itself is a rejection of the world, yet the world turned inward. This is not satisfactory to do away with any class relations.

The last great hope truly is in a revolutionary explosion, where the need to return to work can visibly be annihilated through the expropriation of both commodities and the means of production. The possibilities are endless as rents start to slowly go missing, the revolt targets mass infrastructure, and shops are raided in the interim. This allows autonomous centers and various grouplets dedicated to providing services to form with less structural pressure. But within a capitalist relation, we fear these heroic structures typically bend, deform into radicals hunting and gathering for scraps, and the limit of their lifespans make them undependable for the working class.

Due to these factors, we are skeptical of the ability of infrastructure projects and acts of physical conservation, especially those that exist outside of a violent setting of mass expropriation. Which of course, would bleed revolution itself rather than the

task of an “infrastructure project”. We understand the immense work that these projects are when undertaken correctly, and criticize with the intent to generate other outcomes.

This places us in a uniquely horrid position where we not only recognize the apocalypse of raw tactical immediacy or rhetorical slyness, but also in the long term fate of grassroots activism.

We must look beyond the immediacy of day to day life to seek social revolution, but in day to day life find the spark to reproduce a social revolution, so it goes.

A Test of Political Suicide: The Formal & Informal

In much of our writing we refer to the “real movement” for communism, which is simply the sum of the contradictions of class society and their continuous struggle against one another, regardless of any mediatory attachments. Thus we have spoken against activism and spectacular protesting. We have wrung our hands on the topic of democratic centralism. In this piece, we have criticized the reproductive nature of infrastructure

projects, Cells, Parties, at which point we have seemingly left no place for communists to do anything. We are not making a caricature of our position as much as illuminating a partial truth: Capitalist spectacle infiltrates and reproduces absolutely, with every protest or infrastructure project bearing its resemblance. So, is it that communists actually do anything, or are we awaiting a mass death before allowing ourselves to poke around in the wreckage for a communist utopia?

What is imperative is not to glorify action for its own sake, but to both think and act in the understanding of the movement in which we reside. This includes the heightened contradictions of Capital's overbearing police State, and the corrective measures on the labor supply. As such there are several methods we suggest moving forward. *The priority is first political suicide*, i.e., a rejection of all political and economic mediations and mediatory mechanisms. Neel is right in his assessment that the masses do not prioritize ideological clarity as much as material sustenance; We would be chauvinists to assume anything else. Likewise, we do our own understanding of capitalist

society a terrible ill when we confine our observations to the laws of the time. Whether it is a strategic alliance with the petit-bourgeoisie, the quest to reallocate capitalist society for the benefit of exploited cogs in the machine, or the popularization of bourgeois regimes: Communist internationalism supersedes these laws, is incompatible with them, and therefore should not be confined to them.

What must be done is to establish a communist pole *on the brink of reality*, which marks a clear, distinct change in social life while remaining completely impossible under a capitalist mode. This is a stark rejection of mass politics, and meeting masses where they are entrenched by bourgeois ideology. Practically, it may look like the following process, in which we use the anti-ICE movement as a real example:

1. The advent of increasingly militaristic raids bring to light contradictions of State violence and the conceptual border itself. ->
 1. Splits within bourgeois representatives and an overbearing military industrial complex imbue

further chaos into daily capitalist life,
and its ability to reproduce itself. ->

2. The real movement naturally expresses itself
in opposition to these raids. ->

1. The response from the proletariat is
mixed, infused with courage and
widespread hysteria. They set the
initial pole of what is possible through
their own action and self-
organization. ->

3. The bourgeoisie is split over support for this
opposition. Tentative factions make abstract
appeals for reform, or simply make
complaints. The banners of anti-Trumpism
and civic nationalism are raised. Civilians are
told to stand down, and are made aware of
the reprisals if they do not. Various poles of
obedience and faith are set by warring
factions of controlled opposition, pulling
back the initial pole of the proletariat. ->

1. Faith fails to resolve any quantifiable
amount of violence nor contradiction,
and appears only as the bourgeoisie
closing its ranks. ->

4. *Communists set a rhetorical and physical pole that is both quantifiable, imaginable, yet impossible: To abolish, say, the police-State apparatus itself. ->*
 1. They will hold out on this front for as long as possible. If it succeeds, the proletariat has the potential to push the pole beyond the communists and disintegrate the social fabric. If it fails, it will resemble similarly the nature of the autonomous infrastructure project.

Now, how do we *organize* during the setting of this pole? In the setting of an impossible objective, communists immediately break the conservative rules of both the Cell and the Party. That is, in order to agitate around communism, the Communist Cell cannot parse through a piecemeal survival tactic: It must learn to trust both other Cells, and to offer some level of coordination with them in defense of the pole. Likewise, the docile Party conserves public energy on a political-economic basis as its lifeforce. The sheer possibility of the Party to do so makes it all the more conservative, and historically, it must

act outside of conservation for communism to survive.

In order to defend the pole, communists have to defend themselves. Through affinity groups and the act of struggling alongside new comrades, a semblance of this defense exists. In order to not only cling for survival but tilt toward the erosion of capitalist society, we recommend the following various steps. These are not to be taken as prescriptions for any terrain, but as a loose guide.

1. Genesis. The primary work is to be done within a communist's closest affinity and social family with the task of building a critique of the mass movement. Thus, it is easiest to begin at the lone Cell, or small group of shared vision and milieu which may be formed. It must contain a mutual delineation of both revolutionary sentiment and genuine ambition to revolutionize daily life. This is not a sweeping mass Party, and as such members should agree upon realistic expectations prior to beginning work within the Cell. If contradiction of interests extends (simple apathy amongst communists is a common one), members should always stay

fluid and be open to the formation of new Cells.

2. Through the study and formation of this Cell, the members should leverage their social contacts in the creation of a network. The transcription of sentiment and ambition amidst the network allow the original Cell to visualize an informal organizational structure. This is such that it is noncompulsory, non-public, and individuals are free to enter and exit one or two Cells at any given time, provided that they share some degree of affinity with the network.
3. Intermission. The informality of this communist network is guaranteed to be immiserating. It takes extensive patience to transcribe social expectations even just one degree outward from the original Cell. This period is not about recruiting promising individuals to uplift the lone Cell, but to bring communists both within and outside of the milieu together to theorize the practical setting of a visible, rhetorical pole. We encourage the rhetorical pole to fall under

one impossible banner, i.e., “Abolish the Police-State”, “Abolish Work”, and so on.

4. As this public practicality is born, it necessitates the formation of further Cell-groupings of people and resources. Independent but related tasks may give rise, such as prominent single issues that we seek to unite under a sole rhetorical pole (anti-ICE, anti-cop, and anti-surveillance sentiments, for example). The responsibility here is to stave off impatient desires to federalize all practical work amongst the founding Cell(s), which risks the multiplicity of the movement (due to risk of repression, and likelihood of Cell growth). In this, we mean that as ideas take shape, we communists tend to conserve them at all costs, often in the shape of the Party form and program. We must understand we are not to *conserve the pole* and its implications, but to seek its obliteration by the proletariat on the edge of possibility. In summation, as practical steps are taken, this must coincide with new growths or reformations of Cells.

5. Multiplicity. With the patient formation of new Cells and movement amidst the network, this allows a formation to take shape that adheres to neither the informal nor formal, central nor decentral. Rather, *it is the centralization of isolated sentiments amongst decentralized groupings, and the formal protocol of revolutionary content within informal, or non-programmatic, anti-political settings.* Assemblies, to a degree of formality that relies on judgement of the purveyor, can then proceed in which the Cells discuss the defense of the pole and tinkering with its magnetism. *Specific tasks or actions of individual Cells are not to be discussed in large assemblies,* as much as the general success of the pole and its position. This process can be continuous as long as it is productive and to some degree of social security, i.e., does not openly compromise the immediate tasks of the Cells and the pole at large.
6. In the Streets. We favor operating in *clandestinity on a mass level*, sharing ideas and tactical information which take the

language of our pole, while acting together in a way that pushes physical boundaries. The banner is thus public for all to see, while the network behind its genesis remains fluid and opaque. Workshops can be held, anti-political campaigns federated under the pole and pushed, independent actions taken, all with this in mind. It is important that we do not fall victim to mass politics in this attempt, but rather *encourage the masses to leap beyond us*.

Consider another approach to the “*vital cells*” phenomenon:

“Vital cells are formed with a small number of comrades: we suggest 5-10 individuals within a cell. Each person should participate in two cells simultaneously. The first cell is the ‘primary’ cell and is composed of members already within the milieu or is the cell that you initially join. Having found a home cell, each member of the vital cells should strive to create a second cell composed of participants outside the milieu (or who are not currently organized). The home cell should communicate with its members to promote the organization of the second cell. Having organized

two cells, the individual should cease to expand quantitatively and should instead grow qualitatively. This prevents a “growth-at-all-costs” mentality, while still allowing particular cells to expand. Once a cell reaches its maximum capacity it should split into two or more cells. Through this process, the cells can expand in each direction. Over time, connections between groups of cells will change, and we can imagine several ‘sections’ of cells emerging over time. Finally, cells should incorporate expiration dates at which the cell disbands, and a new cell is formed out of its pieces. This serves to prevent stagnation, promote opacity, thereby making them illegible to the police, and to form a greater number of intensive bonds among other comrades” (Suemnicht).

Conclusion

We have no choice but to wave the banner of communism. What this looks like, how, and where, is specific to the conditions to each grouplet of radicals. Yet as with recent developments, conservatism will get us nowhere. We have to break with social, rhetorical, and physical paralysis, actively seek our comrades out, and build a *visible pole* through clandestine means. This pole must be

impossible and only accompanied by revolution in its content. Of course, if this task was easy the revolution would have already subsumed us.

Long live the movement to communise.

Internationalism and Sympathy Politics

The Cuban Matter

If 2026 has been anything, it has at least been an interesting year for geopolitics. The United States started the year strong with the capture of Nicolas Maduro and his wife (which itself has resulted in no meaningful changes in Venezuela or the U.S., and everyone, even those of the “left”, have seemed to simply forget it even happened).¹⁸ Followed by a coordinated Israeli-American strike on Iran and of course an ever hungry appetite for the small island of Cuba. Before we get to the main course of this article, the war with Iran, we’d like to devote a few words to the Cuban State and its future, or lack thereof.

Cuba has largely been forgotten and abandoned by the world following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of Marxism-Leninism. In reality the

¹⁸ Note: At time of editing, there have been some new deals with American oil companies in Venezuela, but their impact has yet to be seen.

only people that seem to even care about Cuba are Miami gusanos and American leftists, the latter of whom treat the island as a sort of Socialist Mecca. Cuba lies at the crossroads of the great contradiction in our current movement and its existence, and our “comrades” insistence to not move on from it, offers up many questions that begin to break down the psyche of many an American leftist. Yet since COVID-19, the Cuban economy has seen negative economic growth.¹⁹ Nearly half of the Cuban population already believes that socialism (more aptly referred to as social democracy) should be abandoned as the national economic system.²⁰ Economic growth, or decline, is of no concern to us in the abolition of capitalism, however many of our contemporaries place an undue importance on these factors. If we pair this with the ongoing trade embargo imposed

¹⁹ “GDP Growth (Annual %) – Cuba,” World Bank Group.
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>.

²⁰ Raudiel Peña Barrios, “Half of Cubans Believe the Socialist Model Should Be Abandoned – Latinoamérica 21,”
 Latinoamérica21, September 18, 2024,
<https://latinoamerica21.com/en/half-of-cubans-believe-the-socialist-model-should-be-abandoned/>.

by the United States, the future for Cuba is certain: collapse.

Among the American left, Cuba operates as a sort of mythological homeland for revolutionary politics. However, when we examine the reality of Cuba, most of the allure falls apart. Cuba's "Socialist" economy is really no more different than that of any of the Scandinavian countries with an involved government and the right to own private property enshrined in the Cuban Constitution.²¹ Cuban officials consistently act as "first among equals" when compared to the general populace and enjoy several privileges, such as the outright exemption from having to pay tariffs (if they request).²² Yet we must defend Cuba to our dying breath. Cuba is upheld as our North Star and its "struggle against U.S. Imperialism" is lauded, yet its economy is collapsing and it must rely on the goodwill of Western leftists to come as tourists and bring "aid".

²¹ "Cuba 2019 Constitution," Constitute Project, February 24, 2019, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Cuba_2019.

²² "Privileges and Immunities of the Accredited Diplomatic Corps," Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba, accessed July 4, 2026, <https://cubaminrex.cu/en/privilegios-e-inmunidades>.

Without the backing of Venezuela and since the ousting of Maduro, Cuba cannot even power its electric grid. This humanitarian crisis has seen an outpouring of support from the international community and international communist movement to rally to the defense of the Cuban state, but this support is not internationalism. Far from it, these recent activities represent a strand of praxis we call “Sympathy Politics”, residing in an alliance with the Cuban State, rather than a genuine call for internationalism which would no doubt include the turning of the State apparatus on its head.

Sympathy politics can broadly be defined as the tendency of Socialists, Communists, and those on the left to engage in the class struggle through the lens of support for states, use of geopolitical analyses, and the employment of humanitarianism. When we look to Cuba and the recent flotillas sent to alleviate the burden of the Cuban working class we see these efforts as little more than sympathy politics. Of course, when discussing the plight of the working people of Cuba, calls for “internationalism” are laundered through support for a nebulous “Cuban People” or direct support for the Cuban State (as seen with groups like PSL). This allows for

faux-leftists, such as the millionaire Hasan Piker and nationalist band Kneecap, to flock to the island and “show their support” by staying in government run 5-star hotels, perform solidarity shows (for the Western leftists only), and interview the “noble Cuban worker” and highlight how their struggle and condition is actually honorable instead of demeaning and dehumanizing.

Cuba itself is a more defensible project to hold sympathy politics for however. Its economy, as previously said, is indeed in shambles. Its people are dying. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Cuban state there is sure to be the proliferation of widespread suffering. As much as we disagree with the praxis, there is a humanitarian crisis just 90 miles away from us. We cannot, however, extend our sympathies to Iran and the current inter-imperialist war escalating in the Middle East, nor can we turn a blind eye to those among us that engage in the pseudo-internationalism that is sympathy politics.

War in Iran or War with Iran, and the Changing Logic of Imperialism

First, we'd like to devote some time to discussing Iran's role in the war and whether Iran is a country being aggressed against or if it's an equal power in relation to the United States. To sum up, before we can discuss sympathy politics with Iran we need to answer the question: Is this a "War in Iran" or a "War with Iran". We side with the latter interpretation that Iran and the U.S. are imperialist powers and that this conflict is fundamentally an inter-imperialist war, that as we believe the international proletariat has no benefit is picking a side.

It would be simple, yet monotonous, to list all of the qualities of Iran that prescribe it as an "Imperialist State". We could bring up Iran's recent admission into the international economic alliance of BRICS,²³

²³ Sumayya Ismail, "Saudi Arabia, Iran among Six Nations Invited to Join BRICS | Business and Economy News," Al Jazeera, August 24, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/8/24/saudi-arabia-iran-to-join-brics-as-grouping-admits-six-new-members>.

or its military alliance with Russia²⁴ (both in terms of providing aid to the on-going Russian-Ukrainian War and Russia's involvement in the Syrian Civil War), or the regional military alliance, the "Axis of Resistance", of which is headed by Iran, or anyone of Iran's relationships with their neighbors (be it Syrian intervention in the Afghan refugee situation). Yet all of these are infinitely less interesting than examining the economics of the Iranian state.²⁵ Imperialism, as we understand it, is not a simple action that a state takes, such as the assertion that Iran can be characterized as "Imperialist" because it sent in IRGC commanders to oversee the many massacres in Syria,²⁶ or because it has deported over one million Afghans

²⁴Aamer Madhani, "Russia Aims to Obtain More Attack Drones from Iran after Depleting Stockpile, White House Says," AP News, May 15, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-iran-military-cooperation-d982dd3faf78fbb17dfc8b9c1cb9dae7>.

²⁵ Yet if one does want to read a synopsis of Iran's history and role in "Anti-Imperialism" we recommend Arya Zahedi's works "Class Struggle, Autonomy, and the State in Iran" and "The Anti-Imperialist Imperialism Club".

²⁶ "A Decade after Daraya: Documenting a Massacre," Syrian British Consortium, 2022, https://cja.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Daraya-Report_ENGLISH_Final.pdf.

since the beginning of 2025.²⁷ A state is not “Imperialist” because it commits a certain number of actions deemed morally reprehensible, but because of the economic trajectory associated with the existence of a national bourgeoisie and the prevalence of capitalistic social relations. To put it simply, it’s not the action that defines Imperialism, but the relation behind it.

Claiming that a State is Capitalist is much like saying “chai tea”, both technically mean the same thing. The State being the manifestation of the interests of the bourgeois class is enough to characterize it. Iran in this function is no different than the rest of the world’s states, it is fundamentally a form of governance set up to provide economic and social benefits to the national bourgeoisie. Much has been said from our “comrades” about the social nature of the Iranian Revolution. After following the fall of the Shah many of the private holdings in land and business were swiftly nationalized. What is often left out is the multiple waves of neoliberal privatization

²⁷ “Iran Drives out 1.5 Million Afghans, with Some Branded Spies for Israel,” BBC, July 31, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckg1p8epg11o>.

reforms following the end of the Iran-Iraq War. In the aftermath of perhaps Iran's most disastrous war to date, they sought further aid from the international business community for the redevelopment of their economy and integration into the wider global market (such is the only way for a state to "win" under current relations). Iran itself was happy to accept restructuring demands from the IMF, although the IMF and its associated firms never accompanied the restructuring with loans.²⁸ The State of Iran has been stuck for decades in economic limbo. Despite being overwhelmingly willing to adopt neoliberal reforms, the presence of American and Western sanctions as well as Iran's geopolitical positions have largely kept them isolated from the markets they so desperately want to break into (rather *need* than want, as any current state simply cannot survive without access to the international system). When we examine the relationship of the Iranian state to the wider global community through this lens, rather than a crude geopolitical analysis, then we

²⁸ Kayhan Valadbaygi, "Hybrid Neoliberalism: Capitalist Development in Contemporary Iran," *New Political Economy* 26, no. 3 (February 20, 2020): 313–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2020.1729715>.

start to uncover the true rationale of the recent spat between the United States and Iran.

Everyone is sure to be aware of the so-called “Iranian War”. We have all felt the repercussions of this war. Gas is more expensive, as well as regular commodities (such as food and clothes, due to shipping from East Asia). As this war begins to constrict supply lines and bring tangible harm to the consumers in the United States, our leaders have been gracious enough to draft up a peace plan with the Iranian State. While this peace is precarious at best, the released 14 point “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU) lets us really understand the Iranian vision for this war. Among the 14 Points only two are of any interest in relation to what we have previously been discussing. From the MOU:

6. The United States of America undertakes with regional partners to develop a definitive, mutually agreed plan with at least USD 300 Billion for the reconstruction and economic development of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The mechanism for the implementation of this plan will be finalized as part of the final Deal within 60 days. All required licenses, waivers, and permissions needed for the

relevant financial transactions will be granted by the United States of America.

7. The United States of America undertakes to terminate all types of sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the United Nations Security Council resolutions, i.e. IAEA Board of Governors resolutions, and all unilateral U.S. sanctions, primary and secondary, in an agreed upon schedule as part of the final Deal. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America acknowledge the critical importance of the sanctions termination issue above mentioned and express their intentions to immediately address these issues in the negotiations in order to achieve mutual agreement on them. ²⁹

While it's important to reiterate that this is not the definitive, official peace plan for the end of the war it does represent the interests of the Iranian and American states and was produced by both of them in mutual discussion. Among much of the online discussion is the 6th point, or what many are calling

²⁹ "The 14-Point US-Iran Pact White House Sent to Congress," Reuters, June 17, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/14-point-draft-us-iran-deal-2026-06-17/>

“war reparations”. While it is not entirely incorrect to call this a form of reparation, it is not a blank check or debt like many are making it out to be. The most important distinction is not that the Iranian state wants \$300 Billion in cash from the United States, but that they’re asking for America’s help in procuring investment. This \$300 Billion in investments would come from American, European, and allied Gulf states. If we are to believe our “comrades”, then we’ve been told that Iran is a stalwart defender of Palestine and the oppressed (which coincidentally is not mentioned *once* in this MOU), as well as that Iran is staunchly opposed to any normalization with the “West”, especially its boogeyman Israel. Why then is the future headquarters of the Joint Dictatorship of the Proletariat of Oppressed Nations seeking one year’s worth of GDP in foreign investment from the Great Satan and its allies? Before we answer this let us return back to Cuba.

Cuba is at a crossroads and it seems to have made its pick. At the beginning of the summer, the Cuban state announced the beginning of sweeping economic reforms, all under the guise of obtaining

western investment.³⁰ This effectively marks the end of the Cuban experiment in socialism (and we are the better for it). Among the reforms are plans for the decentralization of the Cuban state, its involvement in overseeing economic affairs, allowing for foreign investment, and the semi-privatization of state operated enterprises.³¹ This path for the Cuban abandonment of its previously held social democratic values is not unique. Cuba is just the next domino to fall in a very predictable trajectory for anyone the United States deems an enemy. Overwhelm the State with sanctions, and in Cuba's case an embargo, cut them off from the global market, and watch as they slowly suffocate and succumb to the final interests of international Capital (as opposed to the native Cuban bourgeoisie: the Communist Party). Following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the total

³⁰ Andrea Rodriguez, "Cuba Pushes through Sweeping Free-Market Reforms in Biggest Economic Shift since the Revolution," AP News, June 19, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/cuba-economic-reforms-us-embargo-diaz-canel-trump-rubio-b6b8d4319d4291dde47084baa624c795>

³¹ Andrea Rodriguez, "Cuba's Communist Party Unveils Emergency Economic Package with Free-Market Measures," AP News, June 18, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/cuba-economic-reforms-diaz-canel-758f2199c867472e05e585ccc54a269f>.

hegemonic takeover of the United States we have seen this play out again and again. It would take serious effort on our part to list every state that fell to the orbit of international capital this way, but none of them would be unique. How does Iran fare regarding this formula?

Through sanctions, blockades, and physical war, the United States has attempted to do to Iran what it has done to everyone before them. The only difference is that Iran resisted and turned the logic of Imperialism on its head. Before the release of the MOU and our current understanding, we would still classify the American-Iranian War a battle of mutual partners and to be labeled as such “inter-imperialist”. This would be because of all the qualities of the Iranian state that we listed earlier: their presence in multinational economic alliances, foreign military alliances, involvement in the affairs of surrounding countries, and of course the existence of capitalistic social relations. However, there is now a novel way of examining this conflict, that is that Iran is engaging in a sort of “Reverse Imperialism”. With the usage of the term “Reverse Imperialism” we are not positing or affirming Iran as an “Anti-Imperialist State” (we do not engage

with such an idea), but rather we are saying that the current logic of Imperialism has been turned on its head. In traditional understandings there exists multiple strata, or levels, to a state's "imperial qualities". Often phrased in the Star Wars-esque terminology of "Core, Semi-Periphery, and Periphery", the relationship is often one of unequal exchange amongst the different levels, such that the Core oppresses both the Semi-Periphery and Periphery States while the Semi-Periphery engages in some sort of unequal exchange with the haute Periphery.³² Iran has broken this cycle it seems through the act of war. Through the right of might Iran has shifted the protagonization of the Imperial relationship towards itself and has thrown itself into a global conflict for the express purpose of global economic integration. Economic stimulus in the form of a \$300 Billion investment from foreign MNC's while allow for the financial, industrial, and service sector of the Iranian economy to be bolstered and brought up to international levels while the suspension of sanctions will finally allow

³² Again, this is not a model we subscribe to (we deny the notion that there exists various levels of Imperial states, but affirm that all states are imperial) but only brought up to discuss the current changing of usual understandings.

for Iran to engage in the ever lucrative banking systems of Western Europe and engage in global trade with its so-called mortal enemies. It seems even the Great Satan and His allies may have some use for Iranian oil after all, and Iran seems desperate to sell to Him. From this we can definitively say that this is a war *with* Iran, rather than a simple war of aggression against lesser peoples. We affirm our support strictly for the international proletariat and its members across the world. The Iranian State is no ally or defender of the Iranian proletariat, as shown by its willingness to sacrifice thousands, if not millions, of its citizens in barbaric bloodshed all for the sake of market integration. Our condolences lie with the schoolgirls who were murdered, so that Iranian oil can power French, German, and Belgian cars. The Ayatollah was lucky that his "martyrdom" came so prematurely that his citizens could not live long enough to tear him limb from limb for his avarice. It is a shame that Hell does not exist.

Who Gets To Have National Sovereignty?

If you follow the mainstream left and its publications, you'll have noticed a curious phrase employed in defense of the Iranian State, that being "national sovereignty". PSL,³³ DSA,³⁴ FRSO,³⁵ and CPUSA³⁶ have all published articles and statements commenting on the matter. DSA even goes as far to claim that national sovereignty is "precondition" for working class liberation! Before our refutation, let's take a moment to examine national sovereignty and its history.

³³ Reza Azadkhan, "47 Years of Hybrid War against Iran ," Liberation News, March 24, 2026, <https://liberationnews.org/47-years-of-hybrid-war-against-iran/>.

³⁴ "DSA Stands against Imperialist War and with the Iranian People," Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), February 28, 2026, <https://www.dsausa.org/statements/dsa-stands-against-imperialist-war-and-with-the-iranian-people/>.

³⁵ "Stand with Iran, Stand with Palestine. No to u.s.-Israeli War in the Middle East ," FRSO, February 28, 2026, <https://frso.org/statements/stand-with-iran-stand-with-palestine-no-to-u-s-israeli-war-in-the-middle-east/>.

³⁶ "Tudeh Calls for Immediate Action to Save Iran ," Communist Party USA, January 28, 2026, <https://cpusa.org/article/tudeh-calls-for-immediate-action-to-save-iran/>.

Like most things rotten with the International Communist Movement, the concept of “national sovereignty” finds its origins and height with the Second International and the illustrious V. I. Lenin. Central to the struggle against capital in the Russian Empire was the collaborative struggle against Russian Imperial policies, alongside the fight against domestic and foreign Capital interests. Touted as the “prison-house of nations”, Lenin and the Bolsheviks took special care to analyze the conditions present in oppressed nationalities within the Russian borders, such that that Lenin wrote numerous works on the topic and employed Bolshevik writers to research further (Stalin). In his work *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Lenin defined self-determination as:

Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speak a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated.

Therein is the economic foundation of national movements. Language is the most important means of human intercourse. Unity and unimpeded development of language are the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commerce on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its various classes and, lastly, for the establishment of a close connection between the market and each and every proprietor, big or little, and between seller and buyer.

Therefore, the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of national states, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied. The most profound economic factors drive towards this goal, and, therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilised world, the national state is typical and normal for the capitalist period.

Consequently, if we want to grasp the meaning of self-determination of nations, not by juggling with legal definitions, or “inventing” abstract definitions, but by examining the historico-economic conditions of the national movements,

we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state.

While we are not here to debate the validity of Lenin's historical position on the right of nations to self-determine, we are here to debate its contemporary repercussions which in this case manifested in the question of national sovereignty. If we are to be charitable to Lenin, in reading his works it is widely said that self-determination, national sovereignty, and national liberation are tools by which Communist forces can progress history and give their country the specific tools needed for future Communist Revolution, i.e. the development of the productive forces. Lenin furthers this claim in the 1916 article *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*:

In this respect, countries must be divided into three main types:

First, the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States of America. In these

countries the bourgeois, progressive, national movements came to an end long ago. Every one of these "great" nations oppresses other nations in the colonies and within its own country. The tasks of the proletariat of these ruling nations are the same as those of the proletariat in England in the nineteenth century in relation to Ireland.

Secondly, Eastern Europe: Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia. Here it was the twentieth century that particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movements and intensified the national struggle. The tasks of the proletariat in these countries—in regard to the consummation of their bourgeois-democratic reformation, as well as in regard to assisting the socialist revolution in other countries—cannot be achieved unless it champions the right of nations to self-determination. In this connection the most difficult but most important task is to merge the class struggle of the workers in the oppressing nations with the class struggle of the workers in the oppressed nations.

Thirdly, the semi-colonial countries, like China, Persia, Turkey, and all the colonies, which have a combined population amounting to a billion. In

these countries the bourgeois-democratic movements have either hardly begun, or are far from having been completed. Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation—and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing more nor less than the recognition of the right to self-determination—but must render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their rebellion—and if need be, their revolutionary war—against the imperialist powers that oppress them.

If we are to build off the works of Lenin, as the groups listed above claim to be, then what meaning does “national sovereignty” really have? Has Iran not gone through its bourgeois democratic revolution? Does Iran not have present capitalist social relations? What about Iranian society is fundamentally different from America, besides some cultural quirks? National sovereignty in this manner is fundamentally a reactionary idea. Even if we are to assume that national sovereignty is valid as an idea, then who do extend it out to? If we

extend this sovereignty to Iran, does it then apply to every Iranian? The answer would obviously be “no”, as there are numerous oppressed nations inside the borders of Iran! Let us look at the Kurds. Among the many nationalities present in Iran, the Kurds are disenfranchised and actively fighting for their own national autonomy and self determination from the Iranian state, which is widely ethnically Persian. Is the same courtesy extended to the Kurds? As we have seen, the answer again is no. So then national sovereignty is now not about self determination for an oppressed nation (or even Leninist stageist developmentalism), but is an allowance for the Iranian state to proceed as it pleases, even though it itself is a horribly oppressive state no less bourgeois than the United States or Israel.

Furthermore, if we are able to continue the logic of national sovereignty then how does it not apply to the enemies of Iran! Does Israel not have the right, under international law, to defend itself from its aggressive neighbors in Lebanon and Iran? Does the United States not have the right to determine for itself what its demographic makeup should be? Those who so fiercely combat the American state

and its immigration policies tacitly support the Iranian state deporting over 1 million Afghans! All for the sake of “counter-hegemony” which we will discuss later. This is not to say that we are in support of the actions of the Israeli and American state, quite the contrary, but it is to say that questions of the moralization of what actions a state can or cannot do have no bearing on the Communist, for the aim of the state is not of our own!

Defencism, Defeatism, and the Myth of Counter Hegemony

While our contemporaries have been discussing the supremacy of national sovereignty, they have marked their praxis as the unwavering support of the Iranian state. Among our discussions of what American Communists, Ultras, and our associates are supposed to do during the war they have chosen defencism while we advocate for defeatism. Although usually used for defence of one's own state, the same principle still applies when defending a foreign state. Our issue with this “revolutionary”, anti-American defencism lies just as much in its practical application, not just our

expressed ideological opposition. If we are to examine the previous language used by our counterparts it is all focused on supporting the Iranian state in its almost religious struggle against America and its allies. Phrases such as “No War on Iran”, “Support Iranian Sovereignty”, “Glory to Iran”, etc. all protagonize the Iranian state and its military as the active combatants in this global struggle, such that no feasible action from Americans can happen unless it is laundered through support of the Iranian state. In the same way, this mindset shirks off responsibility away from our domestic proletariat to engage in meaningful struggle against International Capital because Iran has it handled, or in many cases the American proletariat simply isn’t worthy of engaging in a struggle. Obviously, there is much to be said about the current condition of the proletariat of our country, but our role as Communists in this movement is to galvanize and foment struggle in our communities against Empire.

Tactics and strategies employed by our “comrades” all rely on the assumption of the existence of “counter hegemony”, or that there will exist some

non-proletarian movement that will come to struggle against Western Capital. The issue of course is that the ones challenging Western Capital will just simply be Eastern Capital. Whether our Capitalists live in Washington, Tehran, or Beijing is of no concern to us. Our primary concern is that they exist in the first place and the relations that they have impressed upon us reign supreme. Counter Hegemony itself is just an iteration of “Multipolarity” that we have discussed before and it begs the question of with whom do we trust this counter hegemonic action to? Do we allow the Chinese to reign supreme? At the very least they have the word “Communist” in their ruling party, which is sure to be attractive to many. If we are to support the Iranian state then why do many not lend the same support to Russia, itself being engaged in a prolonged conflict with Ukraine, a proxy for Western and NATO power? Of course many amongst us do in fact lend the same support to Russia as they do Iran, such as those in the PSL, but this multipolarity is not internationalism. At best it is crude geopolitics, at worst it is chauvinism.

If we are to engage in authentic and productive conflict with Capital we must not allow ourselves to

become narrow minded and must necessarily extend our hostility with Capital to the very concept of the State itself. For as long as either remains our battle is still ongoing.

Red Banlieues in America: Notes on Proletarian Suburbanization

As communists, we naturally concern ourselves with the movement, settlement, and overall conditions of the working classes. Problematically as much of our theory stems from late 19th and early 20th century literature, the way we conceive of both the proletariat and of revolution recalls the formation of the proletariat in those times. Thus, many of our comrades, including ourselves at various points, have often posited-or subconsciously maintained-the inner city as the ultimate contradiction, the home of the proletariat which will bubble over and produce those first gasps of communisation. Yet it has long been understood that American cities have hollowed themselves out over the last 50 years, proletarians being pushed out to settle elsewhere.³⁷ Over a

³⁷ Crawford, K., Diamond, R., & Moretti, E. (2021, December 8). *Expensive “Superstar” Cities Are Squeezing Out Many Americans*. Stanford Graduate School of Business.

decade ago, beloved Jacobin was able to characterize this mass shift, stating the following:

“The class geography of US cities has traditionally been the inverse of European ones. In the US, the rich took to the suburbs, leaving workers to occupy urban centers”. “In the last three decades, however, the bourgeoisie has returned to claim the city as its home”.³⁸

While the Jacobin/soft Marxist foray is a welcome introduction to the geography of class and herald what at that point was a 30+ year trend, it does little to break away from those most seditious tropes of our Marxists today: To reach communism, we have to organize better, and to organize better, we have to join an organization. This formula as described in the article arrives at the clawing back of the inner city, where bourgeois speculation has reached medieval stupor on the East and West coasts while quickly moving in on the Midwest and Rust Belt. Yes, the inner city must be defended, despite the utter failure of varying “anti-gentrification” and “affordability” movements

³⁸ Narefsky, B. (2014, March 10). *The Suburbanization of the US Working Class*. Jacobin.

which address too little, too late. We are not interested in social questions, demographics or class composition, we are interested in always being everywhere, organizing everything to produce organization which further organizes itself. These folks are allowed to hedge their bets on the Mamdani-esque Botox treatments cities across the nation are expected to undergo; We acknowledge the total prestige of the inner city as a battle that has long been lost.

Instead of an emphasis on social-democratic piecemeal strategies to sustain dwindling proletarian communities, we are interested in the social antagonisms that form in the proletarian city outskirts and suburbs, what *anti-political* character they take, how they relate to wage labor, and therefore illuminate what difficulties obstruct potentials for communisation and the abolition of capitalism.

This article, divided between sections on the earlier inner city, municipal outskirts, and existential dread of the modern suburban proletariat, seeks to contextualize this half century demographic shift in the context of Chicago's nascent "Red Banlieues", or housing projects and proletarian vestiges on the

outer rings of the city, as well as the first ring of suburbs. A supplementary analysis is conducted on the social life of the proletariat, social formations which pose threats to the project of communisation, and how proletarian self-abolition may be conceived in these regions.

A Brief History of Chicago's Tenements, Projects, & Urban Poor

To understand the site, condition, and attitudes of the proletariat today, we have to take a brief historical impasse, where concentrated industrial production dictated the settlement of proletarians. In the late 19th century, Chicago's industrial production was relatively decentralized. This sprawl, characterized by employment centers such as the *"Stockyards [Southwest] and the steel mills [Far Southeast] meant that low-income housing districts [in Chicago] were scattered, not concentrated as in lower Manhattan."*³⁹ Unlike the 6, 7, or 8 story high rises of New York City, *"Growing numbers of immigrant wage laborers*

³⁹ Binford, H. C. (2004). *Tenements*. Encyclopedia of Chicago.

*crowded into the 2- and 3-story wood frame or brick buildings that lined dusty, unpaved streets within walking distance of the factories west of the Chicago River and surrounding the slaughterhouses just south of the city limits.”*⁴⁰ Many proletarian and immigrant families lived in shanty “rear houses” on the same property, in order to maximize rent.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Garb, M. (2003, September). *Health, Morality, and Housing: The “Tenement Problem” in Chicago*. American Journal of Public Health.

⁴¹ Hunter, Robert. (1901). *Tenement Conditions in Chicago*. City Homes Association.

The shanty houses of early inner-city Chicago.



These dispersed tenements, of course, would not last forever. The city went through a wave of bourgeois reforms in the early 20th century to address sanitation, access to water, eventually culminating in the destruction of tenement housing and the advent of privately subsidized housing. The first projects, the Marshall Field Garden Apartments, came to the inner-city Near North Side and featured 628 units across 10 5-story

buildings.⁴² Although these projects marked a turning point in early urban renewal and the lives of thousands, they ultimately failed to produce low-income housing. Rising costs to both the demolition of pre-existing tenements and the construction of the Garden Apartments saw prices spike, ultimately incentivizing sponsors Julius Rosenwald and the Marshall Field Family to raise rents and target upper semi-proletarians with surplus income. As years passed by and capitalists proved unreliable in solving the tenement crisis, the federal Housing Act of 1937 gave birth to our very own Chicago Housing Authority.

With it came a slate of subsidized public housing agglomerations, thought roughly as decentralized from each other: *“Three projects were opened in 1938: Jane Addams Houses on the Near West Side, comprising 32 buildings for 1,027 families; Julia C. Lathrop Homes on the North Side for 925 families; and Trumbull Park Homes on the far South Side for 426 families.”* *“A fourth project, Ida B. Wells Homes, in the ghetto, was for blacks. Far*

⁴² *Ryerson & Burnham Library Exhibitions*. Resource Details | The Art Institute of Chicago. (2010, September).

larger than the other projects, it housed 1,662 families".⁴³

As more rails, mills, and factories advanced production towards the middle of the 20th century, the sprawl of Chicago's public housing continued, just with new targets in its vision. While in the 1930s each project was segregated for the race of its site neighborhood in efforts to protect "local culture", dubbed the "Neighborhood Composition Rule", CHA embarked on a post-war policy of building public housing almost exclusively in more inner-city, Black neighborhoods. This essentially maintained the Neighborhood Composition Rule well into the 50s and 60s. What resulted was the construction of several infamous and white-supremacist abominations, including the "State Street Corridor". Stretching from roughly 39th to 54th Street or 2 miles proper, Robert Taylor Homes, Harold L. Ickes, and Stateway Gardens comprised over 7,000 units of housing on the Black South Side.⁴⁴ It was these massive housing

⁴³ Choldin, H. M. (2004). *Chicago Housing Authority*. Chicago Encyclopedia.

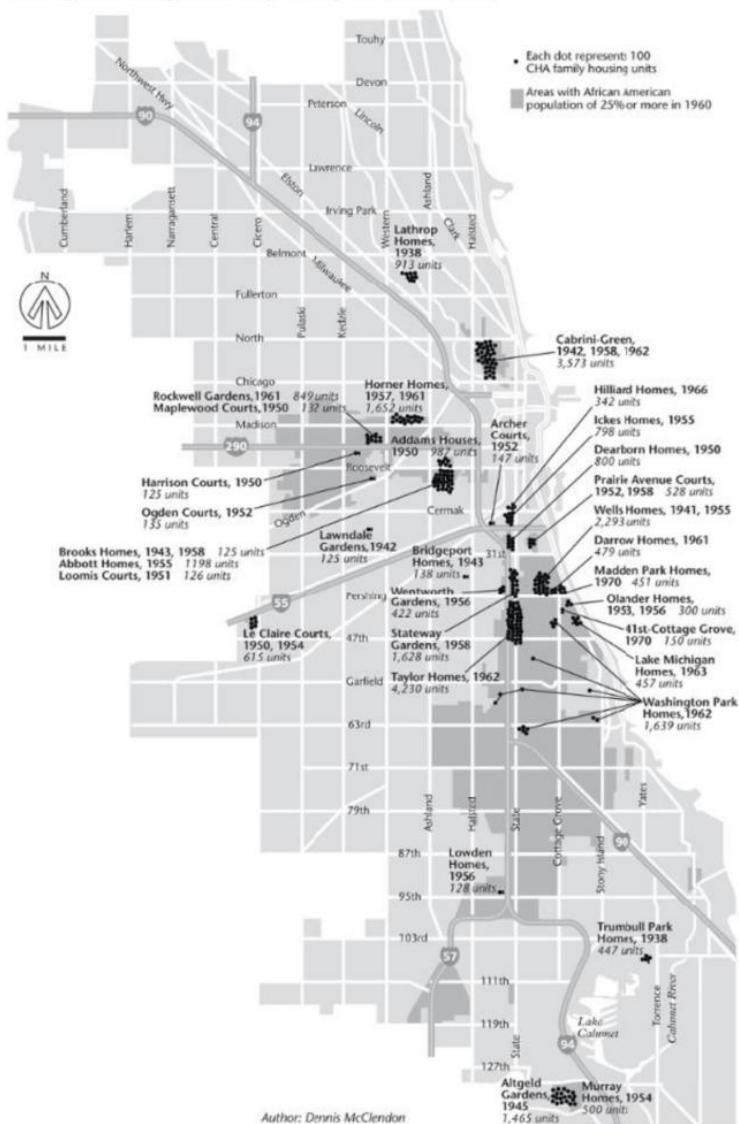
⁴⁴ Vecchio, G. D. (2022, February 25). *The Chicago Housing Authority Explained*. South Side Weekly.

complexes which subjected the proletariat to the most dour conditions, and as we will discuss later, it was only the lumpenproletariat which came out victorious(ish) in the interim. In a South Side battleground between changing lines of what could be considered Whiteness, redlined neighborhoods and intra-city flight created social vacuums in most neighborhoods, intensifying in Black neighborhoods where capital stood at an arm's reach: In projects such as the State Street Corridor, then, it was a cyclical production of lumpenproletariat. What many of their foot soldiers didn't accumulate in capital that was transitive, they supplemented for in local rule, frequent interclass shootouts between rivals, and battles for hegemony resulting in the sniper assassinations of police.⁴⁵ A dead cop somewhere is a dead cop anywhere, but these headlines mostly tell the tale of competition between competing bourgeois and petit-bourgeois forces. The police? They were to protect the decaying housing infrastructure of which cost the State a pretty penny, to enforce

⁴⁵ Chicago Tribune. (1991, December 19). *CHA Guard Shot in Robert Taylor Homes Dispute*.

behemoths of segregation and neglect. The gangs? To protect their own form of illicit social reproduction, colluding with the State to maintain this very same segregation. Due to such intense policing and enforced barriers, the State Street Corridor may as well have been an open-air prison amidst urban blight.

Chicago Housing Authority Family Projects, 1985



1985 Map of CHA's Family Projects, including the State Street Corridor.

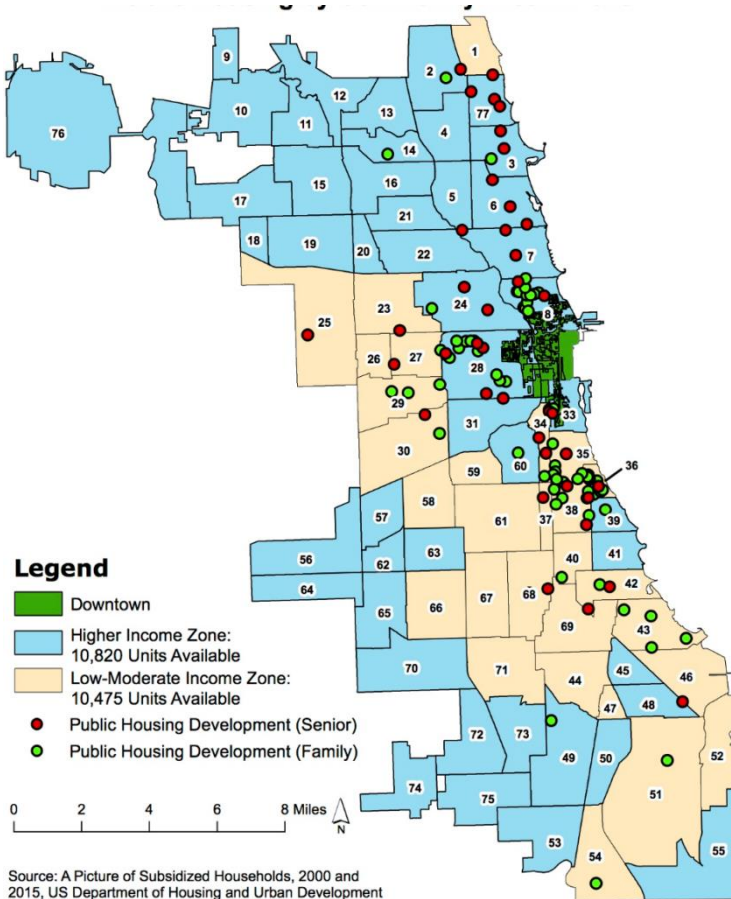
After decades of bourgeois dictatorship enforced by CHA, cemented by the lumpenproletariat's inability to abolish itself, and the continued racialization of public housing, CHA's authority was snapped up by the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1995 on charges of corruption.⁴⁶ Just four years later, and Chicago's own Mayor Richard M. Daley was able to seize it back, after agreeing to clean-up CHA's gambit and Chicago as a whole. Between CHA and HUD, what this meant essentially was the trepidation over privileges and which agency would be the one to pull the rug under thousands of inner-city proletarians. Their relationship has long been purposefully opaque as to remain unaccountable to the public it houses, and we will cut through some of the mystery and fat to ease into what can be considered the largest domino of demographic shifts in Chicago's inner city.

⁴⁶ Kapur, S., Bittle, J., & Mithani, J. (2021, November 17). *Redeveloping the State Street Corridor*. South Side Weekly.

To keep it concise: In the early 2000s, the city's largest landlord, CHA, demolished roughly 25,000 units of inner-city public housing, and sought to integrate these tenants into "mixed-income developments" where proletarians blended in with petit-bourgeois and upper semi-proletarians (Vecchio, 2022). This was not much more than lip service to undergo demolition in valuable land grabs and speculation hikes. Even as late as 2017, only 8% of former residents had landed in the mythically described "mixed-income developments", whereas over 33% of those tenants were left without any assistance at all, another 12% were evicted, and yet another 10% had died; When all was said and done, far more residents died than were housed in the CHA-HUD scheme. The remaining residents were carved up between still-standing housing complexes-typically on the South Side and the outskirts of the city-as well as the private market.⁴⁷ Not only were thousands immediately cleared from critical locations in the urban core, but in the span of several decades since, new high-income developments have driven most

⁴⁷ Moore, N. (2017, March 24). *Taking Stock of Chicago's Longstanding Plan to Transform Public Housing*. WBEZ.

remaining residents without a voucher (Crawford et al., 2021).



Updated map of Chicago's public housing developments and income zones. Whereas most new developments are being constrained in low-poverty urban core neighborhoods, pushing

residents further outward between 2000-2015 as housing is demolished, new and remaining public housing programs continue to provide service predominantly in low-income Black neighborhoods. This further confines them to some of the same conditions of the 60s-early 90s, just further decentralizing them along any one street or tract of property.⁴⁸

Outside of points of production and sprawling public housing, the character of the urban proletariat's settlement has also been defined by its tendency toward White supremacist violence. Much has been said about this topic and especially in Chicago, but it is important to portray this history as one that extends beyond the construction of public housing. Since the Great Migration of the early 20th century, the most considerable proletarian experience in Chicago has been defined by its Black population: It attracted 500,000 migrants during this period, resulting in a Black population that peaked at 33% of the city's census

⁴⁸ Voorhees Center. (2016, February 17). *Transformed? Public Housing in Chicago 2000-2015*. The Voorhees Center for Neighborhood & Community Improvement.

by 1970.⁴⁹ Through capitalist domination, Cold War scares and the like, many a neighborhood had been completely turned over and disheveled before it ceded entry to Black workers. Unlike what its name may suggest, Red Summer of 1919 was not a great proletarian assault on capital, but rather a drowning of a Black man, followed by a week of bloodshed initiated by White-especially Irish-gangs.⁵⁰ While having left a poignant mark in local history, it was by no means unique. The entirety of the city's 20th century had been defined by White sectarian violence under the guise of "neighborhood defense", where middle class Whites-and oftentimes allied Latinos, as in the case of the historic Back of the Yards neighborhood-fought low-level wars to keep Black proletarians out of their urban oasis. Once it was clear they could no longer hold their petit-bourgeois fort, the White coalitions fled with their capital, leaving a dilapidated, redlined mess in their wake: Notable "inner-city" examples include Fuller Park, Back of

⁴⁹ Grossman, J. (2005). *Great Migration*. Encyclopedia of Chicago.

⁵⁰ Jones, J. L. (2019, July 6). *The Red Summer of 1919*. Chicago History Museum.

the Yards (south of 51st Street), Englewood, West Englewood, and the previous national headquarters of National Socialist Party of America, Marquette Park. All experienced population exodus and subsequent crises in the quality of housing. Generally as the century progressed and the 20th turned 21st, most of these relatively affluent White populations fought and fled-with the exception of inner-city White outposts such as Bridgeport, northern tracts of Back of the Yards, and Canaryville. For these precious few, sectarian violence on Blacks have carried their legacies through the 1990s (See the 97' beating of 13 year-old child Lenard Clark by 3 White men, putting Clark in a coma) leaving lasting segregation and informal bans on Black homeownership in these areas up to the early 2010s.⁵¹ As seen in the map above then, most proletarian communities in the city have been characterized both by Blackness and an arm's distance from the exceedingly luxurious inner-city core.

⁵¹ Cable News Network. (1998, October 19). *Men avoid prison with guilty pleas in Chicago racial beating*. CNN.

As for the rest of the urban core's working class during this time? Most genuine inner-city neighborhoods have steadily shifted in the last 50 years, highlighting a decline in low and middle-income residencies, as well as increases in housing costs displacing proletarians further from the urban core. A comprehensive study between 2000-2017 demonstrated a collective 42% of neighborhoods-almost exclusively settled in the urban core-saw a rapid increase in housing costs, defined as being several degrees above the regional median increase and in relation to wages. The same study revealed 59% of middle-to-high income neighborhoods posed an existential threat of displacement to its remaining low-income households, where 33% (or 400,000) of Chicago's proletarian and semi-proletarian households lived. Furthermore, regarding neighborhoods which were most hemorrhaging their low-income households to the south/western suburbs during the same period, 62% happened to be middle-to-high income areas.⁵² This trend can also be illustrated in the

⁵² Chapple, K., & Thomas, T., and Zuk, M. (2021). *Chicago – Gentrification and Displacement*. Urban Displacement Project website. Berkeley, CA: Urban Displacement Project.

rapid turnover of 2024, where 40% of all SROs—single room, low-income dormitory housing which primarily accumulated in wealthier neighborhoods—were found to have transformed into market rate or luxury residences over the last decade.⁵³

All across the urban core, displacement has for the most part tilted counterclockwise: Skyrocketing rents in Northern neighborhoods along the Lake, spreading west to the complete gentrification of the Polish immigrant corridor along Milwaukee Avenue, now pushing out further to Puerto Rican workers in West Humboldt Park and the city limits as well. While there is much less development overall, rotating southwest we see similar patterns in Pilsen pushing toward Little Village, Chinatown through McKinley Park and Bridgeport, with university hubs in Little Italy and Hyde Park which have specialized in the removal of Black workers in the Near West Side and Southern Lakefront, respectively.

⁵³ Fulgham, R., & Hoereth, J. K. (2024b, November 30). *Where Have They Gone? Examining the Success of Chicago's SRO Preservation Ordinance*.

Earlier this year a study concluded that to magically accommodate *some* of these displaced proletarians, almost 290,000 units of affordable housing would be needed in Chicagoland.⁵⁴ Unless we were to embark on some level of social housing program which was able to best even FDR's racist spree, this is a historic gap which will not be broached.

With a historical city succumbing to its own contradictions and no longer to sustain its own feed, it is clear the proletarians will settle elsewhere.

Exposition on the Municipal Outskirts

It is here, no longer the inner-city, where the proletariat is choked under the most wretched of conditions, where there is little hope but to claw back up to the Earth. When we refer to the "Municipal Outskirts", we refer to Chicago's Far South Side, stretching from nascent, post-steel Eastern neighborhoods on the border of Lake Michigan and Indiana to the demographic container that is the 57th Expressway, intersecting

⁵⁴ *Report Finds Deficit of Rental Units for Extremely Low-Income Renters in Illinois*. Housing Action Illinois. (2026).

with 119th street. Encompassing much of what is considered “the Hundreds”-as in streets after 100th and on-many of the neighborhoods on these municipal outskirts, from West Pullman to Riverdale, are depleted of the wide arrays of work that made them once more habitable. Of the many devastating blows to local proletarians, we can especially mourn the steady scaling back of Pullman-Standard Car Works, a massive plant which once employed 20,000 workers, before shuttering completely in 1982. U.S. Steel likewise employed 20,000 laborers before scaling back, and plants finally closed in 1992.^{55 56} After over 50 special years of post-industrial decay most synonymous with the Rust Belt, new generations of lower semi-proletarians-proletarians without totally consistent wage labor/employment-and lumpenproletariat are being cast into the fire. As of 2024, youth jobless rates (16-19 year olds) rest between 78.7% – 85%, whereas young adult (20-24

⁵⁵Wilson, M. R. (2004). *Pullman Inc.* Dictionary of Leading Chicago Businesses (1820-2000).

⁵⁶ Hoekstra, D. (2025, April 30). *Though the steel mills are long gone, the southeast side of Chicago still manifests a relentless spirit.* Newcity.

year old) jobless rates remain high at 46% – 56% in predominantly Black Far South outskirts; Segregated Riverdale is also one of the bastions for total unemployment, posting rates between 41.5% in 2009-2013 and 29.1% in 2019-2023.^{57 58} All aforementioned ranges are some of the highest in a city economy which is already remarkably difficult to maintain steady employment in, leading to growing reliance on haphazard social safety nets facilitated by a city that has chosen to forget its children. It's not that the Far South Side is all doom in its entirety: These municipal outskirts simply amplify the existing class and racial supremacy seen in the rest of the city and nation. The wealth and privatized spoils of Chicago can still be encapsulated in old Pullman rowhouses, East Side bungalows, and Beverly golf course-adjacent mansions: Yet redlining and hard physical borders, such as the construction of the Expressway, have done with the rest, locking much of the proletariat

⁵⁷ Wilson, M. D. (2026, February). *A Normalized Crisis: Youth/Young Adult Joblessness Data Brief 2026*. A Normalized Crisis: Youth/Young Adult Joblessness Data Brief 2026 | Great Cities Institute | University of Illinois Chicago.

⁵⁸ State of Illinois. (2025, July). *Riverdale Community Data Snapshot Municipality Series August 2025 Release 1*. CMAP.

in a containment zone and exacerbating unemployment. Of course, much of these conditions are specifically and purposefully isolated to Black proletarian strongholds, until over the years they slide into dour states of semi-proletarian relations.

Exploring Proletarian Death in the Outskirts

The old contradiction between wage labor and Capital is not dead: It has merely decayed on its own accord in the banlieues of the municipal outskirts, surfacing as a contradiction between complete liquidation and Capital. As lower semi-proletarians, many of these residents-and especially young families, where unemployment and fragile employment is often highest-there is less so a struggle between bad labor and big bosses. It can be said that the dominant struggles in the proletarian settlements are both *the terror and broad support* of Capital in its aims, and a general indifference towards its State forces who act methodically. Let us elaborate.

In his office, Alderman Anthony Beale of Chicago's 9th Ward (About 45,000 residents in segregated

Black neighborhoods Chatham, Roseland, Pullman, Washington Heights, West Pullman, and Riverdale) has a wall-no, mosaic-full of pictures with himself and various developers, ear tagging whatever abstract amount of profit each business makes as direct sums of “community investment”. His office is full of evidence of various community projects, including vain attempts at presiding over gun violence protests and the like. While he is supportive of terroristic measures of the Chicago Police Department as well as ICE raids, the primary function of his office is as an employment center: Stacks and stacks of pamphlets are piled on several tables, and lines of fliers are posted everywhere, largely consisting of mutual aid programs and job fairs in the Ward. Despite such a seemingly watchful eye for the community, he is never at work, and his office is hostile to most residents who intend to pay him a visit. When pressed for comment in support of local working class professional organizations, he is even more elusive, only appearing at pageant-like monthly town halls which are stacked with his own invited support groups, as well as local Church hierarchy, business owners, and elderly community watch groups. We ourselves attempted to make a visit several times

and get his thoughts on local sociology, but he subsequently called the police on us and cancelled public appearances for the rest of the year. The mystery and curiosity are resemblant both in the local public's apathetic and even derisive attitudes toward him, including absurdly low political turnout which has fueled his 26 year reign in power as 9th Ward Alderman, and his choice of mass-political language.

Beale is a textbook neoliberal, who has generally supported gutting any and every safety net and public service in favor of providing tax incentives to multinational capitalist enterprises. In charge of "opening up" Black proletarian/semi-proletarian strongholds such as Riverdale, West Pullman, and Roseland, the Alderman hasn't done a terrible job: He's worked on a tax-increment financing program (TIF), which directs public slush funds toward attracting businesses along the barren commercial districts of Roseland, land development with the local Walmart, as well as various manufacturing sites costing both capitalist and working class taxpayer tens of millions to open. He is also notoriously close with real estate developers, who have been putting their ducks in a row, buying up

cheap, barren plots and dilapidated buildings along what is expected to be a 5.5 mile Red Line Extension gutting through the 9th Ward.⁵⁹ Under the wing of the ultimate modernizer and local serviceman, these are the alignments the capitalists are making in the near-hinterland of Chicago. It's a patient game compared to some of the more stylish pursuits in the rest of the city, but it is still poised to be exceptionally profitable. And for the working classes here that do not commute tens of miles, this game of land speculation is naturally welcome. Any bit of modernization and social production is deemed better than the urban decay that is currently reproduced. On the horizon, this Old World awaits promises binded by fluff community agreements and ear tagged median salaries over \$60,000.⁶⁰

What then, is the relationship to proletarian death in a neighborhood like West Pullman, which between 1960 and 1980 was gutted of all key

⁵⁹ CTA. (n.d.). *CTA Red Line Extension Project* – CTA. Transit Chicago.

⁶⁰ *9th Ward Alderman Anthony A. Beale: Key Issues*. 9th Ward Alderman. (n.d.).

infrastructure, then shifted from almost 99% White to 94% Black? It seems natural, fated, that after an inter-generational wait the workers will first and foremost seek their work back. And for \$60,000 a year, who can blame such a proposal from Beale? In considering the prospects of communisation in a deproletarianized community, communists have to evaluate first and foremost the contradiction of developmentalism in its entirety. The tendency toward total technical domination, in establishing a technique in a destabilized society, in restoring the dominion of Capital in its very own wastelands. So again: *What is a movement against work in a community decidedly without it, and how can communists circumvent this and push against bondage?* Should not our movements first resemble the demand for jobs, for progress? And if so, who better than a leader like Alderman Beale to champion our cause?

The settler-colonial Leninist in us resides to these factors, the need to “develop productive forces”, to dictate the flow of capital and resources toward public works and benefit until there is a sizable proletariat to produce a Marxist party and establish a Socialist State, or something like that. But this

strain of thought, as historically emphasized through Bolshevik reign, is yet to produce anything resembling a communist society. We do not believe one can re-emphasize capital and produce communism, nor that tools of capitalism-wage labor, Statehood and value-can be utilized to liberate ourselves from these very bonds. Answers to these questions lay sandwiched between the hard modernization processes of Beale, of real estate forces and of large corporations, and the namesake of this article, Chicago's nascent "Red Banlieues". Social life in housing projects, which hug the touchline of Indiana and Chicago's South suburbs, represent the clash between capital and communisation, and the question of developmentalism as a whole.

Situated next to a Metra train line and the apparition of Chicago's Red Line Extension, the 3 building, 180 unit Indian Trails Apartments' namesake may be the least troubling of its characteristics. For years degraded by local, then Californian developers, it has recently changed hands between ownership firms which reside on the West Coast. In spite of its convenient location, it's still an incredibly neglected commodity. Its lawns

are strewn with trash and debris. The front doors are always unlocked and ajar, occasionally riddled with bullet holes or completely shattered. Urine and feces regularly coat the complex's steps and elevators. The apartments routinely lack hot water and are infested with rodents and roaches, while appliances are as dated as they are defective. 2 of the 3 building's central heating system capitulates every winter, leaving tenants and elderly to the elements. In the last years, several apartments had set on fire or exploded, with several more dangerous units resulting in tenant-led lawsuits and payouts of thousands. It has always been vulnerable to crime on residents and non-residents alike, with an offline security system leading to high profile murders on an annual basis, including a double homicide last February.⁶¹ Drug dealers frequent its outside corners as well as its hallways, and vicious cycles of neglect have left many residents' calls to the police unfounded. It is only when management attempts to settle its disputes with the tenants' union that CPD cruisers pile up outside the front lawn. While theoretically faced with choices of

⁶¹ *2 Killed in West Pullman Shooting, Chicago Police Say*. ABC7 Chicago. (2025, February 12).

communisation, modernization or dilapidation, its residents have only ever been able to opt for the latter choices. Regarding the first of the two, in the last half year the tenant union won a memorandum of understanding with the city of Chicago, which would see the city supply new slumlord owners with roughly \$50 million to finance Indian Trails' rehabilitation. Likewise, from ownership tenants won tens of thousands of dollars in back rent voided, which management had falsely calculated to threaten eviction. Where mice once festered under broken cabinets, new stainless steel appliances now take their place amidst landmark conditions upgrades, a remarkable feat for a building on the literal margins of Chicago's municipality. On the dilapidation front, those that refused to stick it out were placed in other similarly dour conditions across the city, or moved altogether to nearby Northwest Indiana.

What Indian Trails reinforces to us is not that everyday, working class people aren't capable of great reforms, but rather that great reforms are both the organ and product by which working class people continue a slavish existence. Beale himself was revealed to be a secret proponent of the

rehabilitation project, because it promised to “clean up” the area by making Indian Trails a more desirable place to live. The rehab project would seek to put Indian Trails at a status requiring several years of waiting for a family to hope to land a spot in, filtering out lumpenproletariat and the like. Amidst shiny new things, devilish management teams, the foot soldiers of contential capital in this case, brand leaders as criminals and physically and psychologically torture those tenants who most spoke out for the movement; Families are generationally sandwiched between homelessness or eternal angst and the future dilapidation at these buildings. Property rights are manifested not just in city code but in continuous tenant demands which only emphasize their tie to the land. Likewise, workers in these municipal outskirts demand more work, and so on and so forth until they too are priced out of the near-hinterland city outskirts. Sometimes a movement is not a movement at all, but a regressive pattern organized along the same lines as previous strife.

The functional difference between these reactions and others around the city, remains that Indian Trails and its wider West Pullman community is

precisely at the point where developmental speculation and the suburbanization of the proletariat meet. While plans to reignite local economies rely on the aforementioned billion dollar transit bill and empty lots are slowly but surely bought up, waves of Latinos, struggling artists and gays will continue embark on the first waves of proletarian displacement throughout the neighborhood and Beale's 9th Ward: A look into the historical community of nearby Black laboring stronghold Pullman, which has skyrocketed to 13.4% White and 7.7% Latino as of 2023, is all you need to know about what the city envisions for the Ward: The replacement of workers by racial caste, until only petit-bourgeois and upper semi-proletarian couples can scrap together enough for a 1-bedroom apartment.⁶² While artisan coffee shops continue to sprout along Pullman's cleaned-up 111th Street, the charm of West Pullman's bungalow belt is sure to suffer a similar fate. *Once the organized lumpenproletariat is cleared out, of course, which we will consider in greater detail in the following section.* Yet in spite of everything just

⁶² Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. (2025, July). CMAP Community Data Snapshot | Pullman.

mentioned, geographically there is little elsewhere for the local proletariat to go in the State of Illinois. Furthermore, they had already been displaced and settled in the Ward through the middle-late 20th century. All of this pressure makes West Pullman historically unique, in that its path to communisation could represent the undoing of entire regional service, logistical and remaining light manufacturing sectors.

Communisation can be viewed through the organizing campaign at Indian Trails, where waves of short bursts of energy slowly pressed the ownership and city's hand. Exasperated tenants began grouping together for the most bread and butter of demands, reporting their issues and fighting to patch the most temporary of holes. Initial blows at management came not from the complex's most impoverished or isolated tenants, but from those with social and familial structures within the residence and nearby schools; Those who wielded the most communal resources at their fingertips rose to the fore, before being struck and another connected leader took their place. This almost formulaic example has repeated itself dozens and dozens of times by different cells of

activity, until total activity within the union was largely not from tenants with temporary, ongoing issues at all but people who identified abolition as a real target. They had evolved both in methodology and in seeking the damaging of managerial power structure.

So, in abolishing the family, we can proclaim communisation is... family? Blood-soil relations? Not exactly, but these ties are a critical component of the pre-existing social companionships in the municipal outskirts. Much of wage labor here is atomized to the individual, and that which is collective i.e. homecare corporations, Amazon warehouses, and retail/maintenance positions are divided up by SEIU and the industrial giants to grovel for eternity. Where the rest of the city management has left social categories to rot, these pressures have only solidified notions of solidarity into something that is effervescent and volatile, ready to burst at a moment's glance. Due to the nature of this resistance, the familial grouplets can only achieve as much if they can consider the bonds within their own cell: How do those with communal relationships, leases and infrastructure interact with those who are entirely dispossessed? How is

the individual eliminated, and how is the tenant/community member/worker's identity abolished as class? Though almost none have reached this breaking point, the sheer concentration of cells and their ability to reimagine power structures make for a promising outlook. Tactically and for survival, they already show the natural tendency of struggle outside of work and outside of capital, using their mutual and local relationships to provide "life house" style safety nets which typically circulate outside of capital. These relations are naturally defensive, but they emphasize the possibility of an entire community, city, and world's ability to circulate the provision of needs without capital.

On the other side of the developmental coin, however, is the existence of the organized lumpenproletariat. In the remaining sections, we discuss the existence of such and their dwindling claims on proletarian strongholds, before residing briefly with what's left of proletarian suburbanism on Chicago's South Side.

Dilemma of the Lumpenproletariat

In or outside of Indian Trails, the lumpenproletariat is not a revolutionary class. Despite celebrated attempts at prison organizing by those like the Black Panthers, the organized lumpenproletariat in these communities represent a symptomatic and harmful social strain, a controlled opposition through which police and Feds build entrenched hegemony. As its basis specifically tends toward accumulation-of capital, in the forms of money, land, and territory-we can consider the organized lumpenproletariat, specifically gangs, as rudimentary *lumpencapitalist* endeavors. The primary contradiction is of course capital, and these organizations, in lieu of proletarianization, have sought to generally maintain the transfer of money and land not dissimilar to those private equity speculators working with Beale. *What cements the fate of the working class here is the squeeze between developmentalism and neoliberal prosperity, and the pre-existing alternatives to a form of accumulation which no doubt excludes them.*

The Black lumpencapitalist endeavors, which are the strongest on the South Side, *sometimes* receive special treatment from communists, as well as wealthier social democrats. We would identify this as a flavor of multipolarism, where hopeful wishes placed on the Black masses abstractly group competing class interests together in the name of anti-hegemonic attitudes, such as the State, white supremacy, and so on. With such a terroristic regime in CPD, it is hard not to show some sympathy. Supporters of this thought process will point to brief struggles after the murder of George Floyd, where some Black lumpencapitalist groups displayed some “anti-hegemonic” or anti-formist attitudes, partook in the looting of several businesses across the city, and engaged in conflict with Latino gangs in attempts to rob the petit-bourgeoisie in the latter’s territory.⁶³ Whereas formerly White and now Latino gang territory consisted of land defense and therefore the defense of capitalist classes, Black lumpen-for a moment-showed an intolerance of this divide. But this view is both doomed and void of analysis of the relations

⁶³ Placko, D. (2020, June 4). *Unity March Held in Little Village Following Clash Between Gangs*. FOX 32 Chicago.

which historically fuel lumpen activity and mistake our liberation for simple grabs at power. Or rather, modern lumpenproletariat organization remains committed to the circulation of capital, and contradictions and struggles between capitalist agencies cause these brief ruptures in the order of things. Of course no matter which force claims victory, social relations continue to reproduce capitalist ones.

To look at a specific example, let us consider one of Chicago's most infamous lumpencapitalist exploits, the Gangster Disciples. The GDs, who now are alleged to operate in over half of all US states since their conception in the 1960s, still maintain territory over a large breadth of the South Side of Chicago.⁶⁴ Stretching to the municipal outskirts, this lumpencapitalist organization is a curious one, for it provides several occurrences: For one, it is a significant bulwark against Capital and its modernizers where it establishes territory. Thus its extension into daily life keeps property values and rents low, allows proletarians and lower-semi proletarians to continue to inhabit these

⁶⁴ *2022 Gang Boundaries*. CLEARMAP. (2022).

neighborhoods, if not at the price of more frequent violence and lumpen terror. But just as capitalist organization cannot help but chew off its own hand, the lumpencapitalist organization is also a cannibalist and masochistic affair. In the wake of segregation and redlining, remaining social reproduction has been swallowed up by organizations like the Gangster Disciples. For all of its work in ironic community retention, scaring off gentrifiers and real estate agents, the GDs cannot reverse the wave of depopulation of the South Side of Chicago, where redlined neighborhoods south of 51st Street, and especially the Far South Side, are half-barren or dilapidated. Hundreds of thousands had already left to the suburbs and American South, and after the adventures of former Mayor Rahm Emanuel in the early 2010s, building density in the proletarian communities of the South Side was severely depleted. The City of Chicago managed to bulldoze hundreds of properties a year, helping make inroads for private investment and delivering a blow to organized lumpen.⁶⁵ Through dilapidation

⁶⁵ *Mayor Rahm Emanuel's Program to Fast-Track Demolition of Vacant Buildings in High-Crime Police Districts in full force.* City of Chicago :: Mayor Rahm Emanuel's Program to Fast-Track Demolition of Vacant

and ghost blocks become speculation, and either way the message is clear: Lumpen operations will swallow less of the social life, and their “hold” on blocks will become less relevant to its social reproduction (See: White gangs in Chicago’s Canaryville, McKinley Park, Bridgeport, all neighborhoods which developed beyond White gang activity. Looking at you, Irish Lords!). As such it is a suicidal organization at least in this municipality, doomed to capitulate to Capital eventually, for the population it recruits will never recover, only be replaced by the stereotypical envoys of gentrification and displacement. In the next generation or two, this form of lumpencapitalism in Chicago is doomed.

If only we had so much time to wait. The lumpen operations, especially as speculation and infrastructure projects expand, will likely continue to be less viable long term prospects. The crux of the matter is immediate needs of the local proletariat to overwhelm bourgeois rule before they too are displaced. We can only say it is inconclusive,

Buildings in High-Crime Police Districts in Full Force. (2016, March 25).

hence the dilemma. The State, with such immortal power and police budgets could easily crush the lumpen organizations, and so a symbiotic relationship continues to keep the proletariat sliced open. Social needs are still filled by the lumpen enterprises, and they will continue to exploit this opening until their social pool is completely depleted; Like the capitalist scheme, the lumpen cannot acknowledge its own fleeting existence. Thus the proletariat itself is trampled between the two, and as the city makes efforts to clean up for developers, it would be foolish to assume some middle ground: Development may very well do with the lumpen and proletariat in one swoop.

In immediacy, gaps emerge in suburban municipal outskirts that Capital, law enforcement, and gang affiliation have failed to settle and control. Gangs are less successful in “block by block” categorization in these areas, police are slow to respond to almost any occurrence supplemented by the sheer amount of ground they need to travel, and Capital is still years out from total subsumption. With value-form falling behind to other forms of social currency, the municipal outskirts have vital organs to reproduce structures

against and without value. The limits? Simply the proletarian's imagination. Whatever is possible under communism is possible here, on the margins of Chicago's urban and suburban society.

Suburban & Semi-Proletarian Crisis

Between 2000-2012, poverty rates had grown twice as fast in suburbs than cities across America; In the Chicago metropolitan area, the share of the region's poor categorized as suburban has risen from 34 to 50% between 2000-2016.^{66 67} Whereas the municipal outskirts largely give birth to menial day rates, delivery-gig sector employment, or unemployment altogether, some of the near suburbs tell a different story. If development is the gravedigger in the urban-and even outskirt-proletarian community, then the South suburbs of Chicago are its ghastly reincarnation into even more immiserating life.

⁶⁶ Dews, F. (2014, June 11). *The Rapid Rise of Suburban Poverty*. Brookings.

⁶⁷ The Heartland Alliance. (2018). *The 2018 Illinois Poverty Update*. Social IMPACT Research Center Publications.

Groupings within the diverse “Southland”, or rough grouping or suburban municipalities and agencies south of Chicago’s outskirts, have long been plagued by some of the same issues faced by the Far South Side: Redlining, disinvestment, and so on.⁶⁸ Quaint White and petit-bourgeois outposts situate themselves with hard borders to collapsed Black ones. Yet in contrast to Chicago, Southland’s concoction of economic drought manages to drive the blade further; Some rates of poverty in Southland (40.8% in the Ford Heights municipality) manage to triple Cook County’s average (13.3%) and nearly quadruple the Chicago metropolitan area (11.0%); Other towns such as Dixmoor, (27.9%), Harvey (25.2%), Chicago Heights (24.7%), and South Chicago Heights (23.3%) follow suit with regional highs of poverty.⁶⁹ What unites most of Southland is a sheer lack of tax revenue to fund basic public functions, fostering reliance on a dwindling pool of homeowners to cover the deficit. The decapitation

⁶⁸ Roeder, D. (2019, December 9). Development Agency Tackles Poverty, Factionalism in South Suburbs.

⁶⁹ DePaul University. (2024). *Ford Heights – Housing Market Indicators Data Portal*. Institute for Housing Studies.

of local revenue can best be illustrated by Walmart's property taxes in Southland's Richton Park, the tune of \$2,000,000 per year, compared to its \$450,000 dues in exceedingly hipster Pullman, Chicago (Roeder, 2019). Thus, fewer employers actually look to Southland for economic incentive, even compared to Chicago's near-hinterland. If the question of how to liberate ourselves from work becomes stymied by the desire for work's sustenance in the municipal outskirts, these suburbs present something else entirely, yet equally as existential for the communist.

An intimate relationship between Southland's proletarian communities and the municipal outskirts has and continues to hold special fruits. Many residents of two of the largest public housing complexes in the region, Altgeld Gardens and Indian Trails, are originally from Southland, moving further north into Chicago for work or to make use of their public housing voucher; Almost half of active Indian Trails tenant union membership has at least some sort of familial relation to Southland, seeking the cradle Chicago's Far South Side as an economic refuge. This, of course, places even greater stress on the suburban

proletarian community, where unemployment and semi-unemployment hikes with the labor market, the cost of living, and the cost of remaining a resident in these heavily taxed areas.

We are interested in two questions here, both that of bourgeois policy for Southland and methods in which working people here can liberate themselves. Regarding practical applications of where the suburbs are headed, it remains to be seen if there is any direction at all. A notable case is that of Harvey, Illinois, a sizable city of just under 20,000 and one of the nearest components of the suburban crisis to Chicago's city limits. Harvey has a larger tax base than most of Southland, but still has the 3rd highest property taxes in Cook County at 52%, and as it has done in past decades, its city government has continued to spend more money than it earns into 2026.⁷⁰ Yet as cities in Illinois cannot declare bankruptcy, Harvey's city council petitioned to be declared financially distressed in late 2025, before being shot down, essentially meaning that the State of Illinois will not be recognizing nor providing

⁷⁰ Wall, C. (2026, April 4). *Illinois Denies Request for Harvey to be Declared "Financially Distressed" City*. ABC7 Chicago.

breaks for the tax crisis. Why does this crisis matter at all? Because in lieu of serious neoliberal economic investment, the city will continue to hemorrhage its own, creating economic refugees to Chicago or further south (Wall, 2026). Just last August, for example, Harvey laid off 10% of its entire municipal workforce, most of which will have to relocate to different cities to meet their experience and skill repertoire.⁷¹ The harrowing tax rates further chip away at this base, jobs will not be regained, and new proletarian colonies will emerge elsewhere.

And it is still unclear whether the same “life-house” style organizing will be effective in a region characterized by flight from it, where resources are incredibly scarce. The extent that said methods can be utilized in a revolutionary situation is also debatable, as shown by the limits in West Pullman residents’ ongoing struggles. But due to the sheer weakness of cities within Southland to enforce law and the complete decimation of the petit-bourgeoisie, there is a tremendous power vacuum,

⁷¹ *City of Harvey to Lay Off 10% of Workers Next Month*. ABC7 Chicago. (2025b, July 24).

one that will likely be seized by either the proletariat or the lumpenproletariat within our lifetimes. The task for communists is to identify allies in these areas, and explore the implementation of various approaches while understanding that capital as a relation cannot be avoided or danced around.

Proletarian suburbanization is not just the enrichment of the inner city, but it is also the battleground of the hinterland, where both capital and labor are missing inputs for a positive social reproduction. Severed from production processes and without the levels of concentration of even municipal outskirts, the endless stream of individuals are the last social product. What's left are townships and cities on suicidal notice, and in Illinois, there will be no Federal or State angels to claw out its corpse from an early grave. With infrastructure projects looming on the Far South Side, Southland's proletariat ponders its existence and fate.

Conclusion

We are not mystics, so we cannot predict the site of the next great uprising. Likewise, we cannot say if

Southland's outposts will die, where those proletarian strongholds will go, or what pinch of Lassalle might enrich the nightmare. Our job is merely to monitor and assess these social antagonisms, poking at them as they may, to expose those contradictions in their entirety. In this role, we cannot overemphasize how important it is to chart these demographic shifts. Where the lower classes settle will be decisive in how future struggle plays out, and it is the image of the inner city steel worker we must clear from our head. The near hinterlands in Chicago and across the Rust Belt are aching, bleeding with existential dread that can only be subsumed by an entirely new possibility. As much as development has made gains, it is also exceptionally weak here in enforcing its own ambitions. The existence of organic proletarian organization, and its ability to rethink itself in an entirely social way points to overcoming its own categorization.

In What Ways Does Capitalism Dominate?

Introduction

There is a conversation I seem unable to avoid. It returns at my parents' kitchen table and in the late hours when my partner and I cannot sleep. At some point I say that it does not finally matter which of the parties forms the next government, because the social order that follows the election will be recognizably the order that preceded it. The reply is always quick and a little wounded. My partner, who disagrees with me about most things political, says that if the parties are interchangeable then politics is a fiction, and that I have talked myself into a position from which nothing can be done.

I do not think they are mistaken about what they defend. The differences between governments are real, and they are felt in places where abstraction has no purchase: in a clinic or a deportation order, in the difference between a rent that can be paid and one that cannot. To say that these differences do not matter would be both false and cruel. But this was never my claim. What I have been trying

to say is that beneath the visible contest of programs there is a level of social life that no program reaches, and that this level persists, intact, through every alternation of the parties that manage it.

This article is not, in the first instance, an argument for revolution. Neither is it a critique of electoral politics as such. I have no wish to tell my friend that his evenings of canvassing were wasted, or to confirm my partner's suspicion that I have reasoned my way into paralysis. The question I want to pursue lies between reform and rupture. If a given social order reasserts itself regardless of who administers it, then the interesting question is not whom we should elect but what kind of order possesses this strange capacity to survive its own elections. What are the structures that make such persistence possible? Why is capitalist society so difficult to govern out of existence, even by those who sincerely wish to? These are questions about domination, and they are the questions of this article.

To pose them properly, one has to set aside a familiar picture. In ordinary speech, and in much of the press, capitalism names a set of policies or a

cluster of institutions: private property, the joint-stock company, the firm, and the market understood as a place where things are bought and sold. In this reformist picture, to change capitalism would be to change the policies and reform the institutions, and the reason this proves so hard is simply that powerful people resist it. There is truth in this, but it remains on the surface. It mistakes the symptoms of a relation for the relation itself. Capitalism, in the sense I mean to develop here, is not primarily an institution or a body of law. It is a social relation, and more precisely a relation governed by the self-valorization of value, by the compulsion that money be advanced in order to return as more money. Value that valorizes itself [sich verwertender Wert] is the master of this society in a sense that no minister can be, though this mastery is the form of an inversion [Verkehrung] and not the rule of a subject standing behind the process. Institutions and laws are the forms this relation assumes and the channels through which it moves, but they are not its basis. One can rearrange them considerably and leave the relation untouched, which is precisely what the alternation of governments tends to do.

This is why Marx insisted that what has to be explained about such a society is not only how it produces things but how it reproduces itself. A society does not persist by accident. The worker who sells her labor in order to live, and who in living renews the need to sell it tomorrow, reproduces in the same motion the relation that compels the sale. Capital, for Marx, presupposes the conditions of its own existence and reposit them through its own movement, so that the result of the process is the restoration of its premise. As Søren Mau puts it in *Mute Compulsion* “capital presupposes its own presuppositions”. A social order with this character is not held in place by a single institution that one might capture or destroy. It is held in place by the ordinary continuation of social life, by the fact that to live within it is already to renew it. In this sense the Leninist demand to smash the state names a necessary moment and not the whole of the problem. A relation reproduced through the ordinary continuation of social life is not abolished by the capture or destruction of any single institution, the state included. This is why the language of domination is pertinent.

So I want to ask the question directly: In what ways does capitalism dominate? The phrasing is deliberate. My argument in what follows is that capitalist domination is not the work of a single mechanism. It operates on several interconnected levels at once, each with its own logic and its own mode of compulsion, and to see this clearly, we will have to descend below the level of the visible contest, to the relation that the contest presupposes, and from there trace the forms in which that relation makes itself felt as a power over those who live under it.

Most critiques of capitalism that reach a wide audience are critiques of exploitation, of inequality, or of ownership. Think of the sort of comments such as “the issue is not that the Sweden Democrats and the right keep winning, the issue is that the 1% own basically everything.” They are not wrong, but they leave the question of power untouched. A person can grant that capitalism exploits workers, that it concentrates wealth in few hands, and that the means of production belong to a small class and still have said nothing about how capitalism exercises power over those who live within it. Exploitation names a transfer, the appropriation of

surplus labor by those who do not perform it. But exploitation so understood remains a category of classical political economy. Ricardo too could state the appropriation of surplus labor as a magnitude. What classical political economy cannot state, and what the concept of domination is needed to name, is the command and constraint through which that appropriation is secured. Domination names the capacity to direct, limit, and compel the conduct of others. The two are inseparable in practice, since the capacity to compel is what makes the transfer possible, and the brief I am following throughout treats them as moments of one process.⁷² But they are not identical, and the difference is consequential, because a society could in principle redistribute the proceeds of exploitation while leaving its structures of domination intact. To ask how capitalism dominates is therefore not a roundabout way of asking how it exploits. It is a separate question, and it has a layered answer. This answer is crucial in how to construct a definitive *break* with capital as a whole.

⁷² Bruno Leipold, *Citizen Marx: Republicanism and the Formation of Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024), esp. chaps. 3 and 6.

Here Bruno Leipold's reconstruction of Marx offers a useful point of departure. In Leipold's reading, capitalist domination is not one thing but three. There is the *personal* domination that the capitalist exercises over the worker. There is the *structural* domination secured by the background of property that leaves the worker no master-free option. And there is the *impersonal* domination of the market, to which capitalists and workers are alike subordinated.⁷³ I take these three not as a list of separate *evils* but as moments of a single social relation, each presupposing and reinforcing the others.⁷⁴ Setting them out in sequence is a matter of exposition. In the world they are never apart, as the model set out below is meant to show.

⁷³ Bruno Leipold, *Citizen Marx: Republicanism and the Formation of Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024), esp. chaps. 3 and 6. Leipold reconstructs Marx's critique of capitalist unfreedom around the personal domination the capitalist exercises over the worker, the structural domination secured by property relations, and the impersonal domination of the market to which capitalists and workers alike are subject; he also insists that domination has an explanatory link to exploitation rather than being reducible to it.

⁷⁴ I borrow Leipold's tripartition as a descriptive ordering of capital's modes of compulsion and not as an endorsement of the freedom-concept that underwrites it. Whether the determinate negation of this domination yields a positive freedom, or only the non-identity of the concept, is a question this essay holds in abeyance and pursues elsewhere.

Personal Domination

The first and most visible form is personal domination, and its natural home is the workplace. Capitalism presents itself, at the point where worker and employer meet, as a meeting of equals – which they really are. Two owners of commodities confront one another in the market, one with money to spend and one with labor power to sell, and they conclude a contract that the law treats as freely entered by formally equal persons. Nothing in the transaction looks like subjection. At the threshold of production this equality does not lapse. It is realized. The freedom and equality of the exchange are not a surface that the hierarchy of production then belies. They are the form in which that hierarchy is contracted, and they remain in force precisely as the worker is set to work under command. The worker who has signed the contract walks into a space organized as a hierarchy, in which managers and owners issue instructions and the worker is obliged, by the terms of the very agreement that established his freedom, to obey. Marx marks the passage with some irony. We leave the noisy sphere of exchange, where everything happens in the open and on the surface, and follow

the two parties into the hidden abode of production, where the former money owner now strides ahead as a capitalist and the possessor of labor power follows as his worker.⁷⁵ This is the form of domination that common sense recognizes most readily, because it appears as the direct rule of one person over another. It has a long catalog of concrete expressions: the surveillance that tracks keystrokes, badge swipes, and bathroom breaks; the managerial authority that assigns, reassigns, and reprimands; the disciplinary procedure that formalizes the power to punish and dismiss; and the performance target that converts the open-ended obligation to work into a measurable quota whose failure carries consequences. None of this is incidental to capitalist production. The employer who buys labor power for a stretch of time has bought the right to set it in motion and to determine the manner of its use, and the apparatus of command exists to make that right effective.

It would be a mistake, though, to let the analysis rest here, as if capitalism were essentially a regime

⁷⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Paul Reitter, ed. Paul North (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024), 121–51.

of petty workplace tyranny that could be cured by gentler managers and better human-resources policy. The authority of the manager is real, but it is not the ground of the relation and not what reproduces it. The worker submits to command not because the manager is personally stronger but because the alternative to submission is the loss of access to wages, and the loss of access to wages is, for someone who owns nothing else to sell, tantamount to starvation. Personal domination, in other words, rests on a condition that lies outside the workplace and precedes the contract.

Structural Domination

Why does the worker present himself at the factory gate or the office door at all, ready to accept terms he did not write? The answer returns us to the condition that the labor contract presupposes but does not itself create: dispossession, the separation of the mass of people from independent access to the means of subsistence and the means of production. Marx tells the story of how this separation came about in the chapter on so-called original accumulation, the historical process by which producers were severed from the land and the tools through enclosure, expropriation, and a

body of bloody legislation that criminalized the dispossessed and drove them toward wage labor.⁷⁶

It is tempting to read this as an origin story, a founding act of violence now safely behind us. That reading misses the point. The decisive fact is not the brutality of the founding but the structure it left in place. Once the great majority hold no independent means of life, they can obtain the means of life only by selling the one commodity they reliably possess, their capacity to work. This is the sense in which the worker under capitalism is doubly free. He is free in the legal and welcome sense that he may dispose of his labor power as his own and is bound to no particular master. And he is free in the bleaker sense of being free of property, free of any object through which he might support himself without entering the market at all.⁷⁷ These are not two freedoms, one real and one nominal, but one determination read from two sides. The liberty to dispose of one's own labor power and the compulsion to sell it are given in a single stroke, so that the form in which this society grants the

⁷⁶ Marx, *Capital*, 1:650–91.

⁷⁷ Marx, *Capital*, 1:121–51. On the worker as “free in a double sense.”

worker his freedom is identical with the form in which it delivers him to the market. What presents itself as the liberty to choose an employer is the necessity of choosing one. No individual capitalist holds a whip over the worker and drives him to the labor market.⁷⁸ The worker arrives there on his own feet, under a compulsion that issues from his situation rather than from any person's command and finding the gate already open is precisely what makes the compulsion so easy to mistake for choice.

What gives this structure its durability is that it is reproduced by the very activity it compels. Capitalist production does not merely make commodities. As Marx observed, it produces and reproduces the relation itself, on one side the capitalist, on the other the wage laborer, and it does so continuously, as an ordinary outcome of its ordinary operation.⁷⁹ Mau captures this self-sustaining quality in a compact formula: capital presupposes its own presuppositions.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁸ There are of course cases where this still happens, but they are all the more exceedingly rare.

⁷⁹ Marx, *Capital*, 1:521–33.

⁸⁰ Søren Mau, *Mute Compulsion: A Marxist Theory of the Economic Power of Capital* (London: Verso, 2023). 216–225. Mau distinguishes economic power, the “mute compulsion” of

conditions capital needs in order to function, above all a population that owns no means of subsistence and must therefore sell its labor, are not supplied once at the beginning and then consumed. They are produced again and again by capital's own movement. The wage the worker earns is spent on the means of subsistence (and today, spent on various other things – which is beyond the scope of this here article) and is gone, and the worker returns to the market the following day in the same condition of dependence that sent him there in the first place. People reproduce, through the prudent and unremarkable activity of earning a living, the very separation that obliges them to earn it. Structural domination is not imposed on social reproduction from outside. Instead, it is the form social reproduction takes when the means of life are reached only through the wage.

Impersonal Domination

There is a third level, which might be the most distinctive thing about capitalism as a form of social

economic relations, from the two other modalities of capital's power, violence and ideology, and argues that capital reproduces the conditions of its own existence, such that it "presupposes its own presuppositions."

power. Mau gives it the name mute compulsion, a phrase he draws from Marx's remark that the mute compulsion [Stummer Zwang] of economic relations completes the worker's subjection so that direct extra-economic force becomes the exception rather than the rule.⁸¹ What is striking about this level is that domination here increasingly appears without a visible dominator. No individual capitalist controls the market. The owner of a firm is not a sovereign who legislates prices, sets the rate of profit, or decrees the pace of technical change. He is as much a subject of the market as anyone, and yet everyone within the market becomes subject to its imperatives all the same. One could say that the sovereign head has been struck off. The personal ruler who once stood at the summit has no counterpart here, and capital is in this sense an acephalous monster.⁸²

⁸¹ Søren Mau, *Mute Compulsion: A Marxist Theory of the Economic Power of Capital* (London: Verso, 2023). 226.

⁸² The figure of an acephalous [ἀκέφαλος, headless] power is meant literally: capital commands without a commanding head. I take the adjective and not Bataille's Acéphale and its mythology; the substantive point is Marx's, that competition imposes capital's immanent laws on each capitalist as external coercion.

Those imperatives have familiar names: competition, the pressure to raise productivity, the discipline of cost reduction, the drive to accumulate, and the demand for growth without which a capital ceases to be a capital. The capitalist who declines to cut costs and raise output is undersold and punished by the same market that rewards the capitalist who does not decline. Competition is the mechanism by which capital's immanent laws are imposed on the individual capitalist as external coercive laws, laws he experiences not as his own preference but as a force confronting him from without.⁸³ This is why the capitalist class cannot simply choose to be humane. A firm that pays above the going rate, works its employees more gently, or forgoes a profitable cruelty is, other things equal, competing on worse terms than a firm that does none of these things, and over time the market selects against it. Capitalists are subordinated to the system they personify.⁸⁴ The market consequently appears as an objective force, a fact of nature with which one must

⁸³ Marx, *Capital*, 1:203–72.

⁸⁴ Marx, *Capital*, 1:127.

reckon, rather than a command issued by an identifiable ruler.

The word “market,” though, is the wrong term to rest on, because it names the surface rather than the source. Beneath competition lies the value form, and beneath the value form lies the peculiar dynamism Marx called value that valorizes itself [sich verwertender Wert], value whose whole tendency is to augment itself without limit. Marx goes so far as to describe value in process, value passing through its successive forms of money and commodity and back to more money, as the automatic subject [automatisches Subjekt] of the entire movement, the real agent of a process in which human beings figure as its functionaries.⁸⁵ The formula does not install value as a subject in place of the human one. It registers an inversion [Verkehrung]: value can stand in the place of the subject only because living activity has been reduced to its function. The automatic subject is a subject in the mode of perversion, not an agent standing behind the process. The imperative to accumulate is not, at root, the psychology of greedy

⁸⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 1:125–28.

individuals, though greedy individuals certainly exist.⁸⁶ It is the practical shape taken by self-valorizing value as it works itself out through people who must serve it whether they relish the role or resent it.

This is the level at which my opening disagreement is finally settled. It explains why governments of very different political colors find themselves administering recognizably similar constraints. A government that wishes to remain solvent, to attract and retain investment, and to keep its population employed must maintain conditions favorable to accumulation, and the range of policy compatible with that requirement is narrower than electoral rhetoric ever admits. The constraint is not a conspiracy of bankers, though bankers benefit from it. Where the impersonal compulsion of the value-form is mistaken for the design of an identifiable culprit, the result is not critique but its structural counterfeit. Modern antisemitism, with its figure of the scheming financier who personifies abstract domination, is the most persistent form

⁸⁶ Marx, *Capital*, 1:127-28. Marx, actually says that greed, in the sense of amassing money, is the opposite of what capitalism requires.

this counterfeit takes. It is the impersonal pressure of the value form bearing on whoever holds office, which is why the order that follows the election so reliably resembles the order that preceded it.

Why the Three Forms Cannot Be Separated

The three forms are analytically distinct, and I have presented them as if one could examine each on its own. In the social world they are practically inseparable, locked into a set of feedback relations through which each sustains the others. Personal domination in the workplace depends on structural dispossession, since the manager's authority is effective only because the worker, owning nothing else to sell, has nowhere better to go. Structural dispossession is in turn reproduced through wage labor, since the worker's daily participation renews the separation that delivers him back to the market each morning. Wage labor is itself shaped by impersonal imperatives, since the demands the manager transmits, the speed required and the costs to be cut, are not the manager's invention but the local expression of competitive pressures the firm does not control. And those impersonal

imperatives continually recreate the workplace hierarchy and the dependence on wages on which personal and structural domination rest. The circle closes, and having closed it turns, which is why no single intervention at one point in it leaves the rest undisturbed.

This is the deeper meaning of Marx's insistence "that capital, rather than being a thing, is a social relation between persons that is mediated by things."⁸⁷ Capital is not a stock of machines, a sum of money, or a quantity of goods, although it appears in all of these guises. It is a relation that organizes how people produce, what they must do to live, and how their activity is coordinated behind their backs, and it is a relation that reproduces itself. To call capitalism a social relation rather than an economic arrangement is to say that it is not a static system that could be left running while its parts are swapped out, but a dynamic process whose very operation regenerates the conditions of its own continuation. Domination, on this account, is not something capital has but something capital

⁸⁷ Marx, *Capital*, 1:694.

is: the name for a relation that secures its own continuation through the activity of those it binds.

A Model of the Whole

It helps to hold the three forms together in one picture, the picture that the next section of this article sets out as a diagram. At the surface lie three sites, each with its characteristic form of power. The workplace is governed by personal domination, the direct authority of those who command over those who obey. The society-wide dependence on wage labor is governed by structural domination, the necessity that drives the propertyless to the market. The field of competition and accumulation is governed by impersonal domination, the compulsion of value that masters capitalists and workers alike. These are the visible levels, the ones at which the experience of being dominated actually occurs.

Beneath them lie the foundations. Historically, the relations were established by original accumulation. But the violence of the founding is no longer the principal thing that keeps the relations in place. Domination today is reproduced far less through overt force and far more through what might be

called accumulated subsumption, the sedimented result of centuries of capitalist development, in which a separation that once had to be imposed at the point of a bayonet has settled into the unremarkable background of ordinary life. Most people are delivered to the wage not by soldiers but by the simple absence of any alternative, an absence so total that it no longer registers as coercion at all.

Two further mechanisms hold this structure in place, and because they are easily confused it is worth marking the difference sharply. Neither is in the first instance a matter of what individuals happen to believe. The first is fetishism. Fetishism is generated by the value-form itself, prior to anyone's wish to defend the existing order. It causes the social relations among producers to appear as relations among things, so that the value of a commodity looks like a natural property of the object rather than a crystallization of social labor, and so that the movement of prices and markets confronts people as a quasi-natural process with laws of its own.⁸⁸ Its effect is to make capitalist

⁸⁸ Marx, *Capital*, 1:47–60 (the section on the fetish character of the commodity); Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, trans. Alexander Locascio (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012), chap. 3.

domination appear natural and objective, a feature of the world rather than a historically specific arrangement that human beings produce and could in principle dismantle. In the third volume of *Capital* this appearance reaches its most finished form in what Marx calls the trinity formula, where capital, land, and labor present themselves as three independent sources of profit, rent, and wages, the social relation by now wholly dissolved into the apparently natural fertility of things.⁸⁹ Fetishism is not a mistake that a sufficiently clever person can see through by an effort of will. It is an objective feature of how a society organized by value necessarily appears to those who live in it.

The second mechanism is ideology, and it operates differently. Ideology is produced and reproduced through institutions: through culture, education, the media, and the exercise of political power. Where fetishism is the spontaneous appearance thrown up by the value-form, ideology is the elaborated set of interpretations that justify and

On fetishism as the objective form of appearance of social relations under the value form rather than a subjective error.

⁸⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume III, vol. 37 of Marx/Engels Collected Works (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010). 801-18.

normalize capitalist social relations, the stories a society tells about why things are as they are and why they could not easily be otherwise.⁹⁰ The two are related, since fetishism furnishes the raw material, the seemingly natural surface, on which ideology then builds. But they are not the same. Fetishism arises from the form of value, with no author and no interest behind it. Ideology is the work of institutions that have interests, and it can be contested, exposed, and fought in a way that the fetish character of the commodity, which is not a falsehood but a real appearance, cannot simply be argued away.

Conclusion

So, in what ways does capitalism dominate? It dominates personally, in the relations of command through which the workplace is run and the employer's purchased authority is made to tell. It dominates structurally, through the dispossession

⁹⁰ Marx, *Capital*, 1:650. At the opening of the chapter on so-called original accumulation, Marx remarks that previous accumulation plays the same role in political economy that original sin plays in theology. The bourgeois origin-myth, which refers the worker's present dispossession back to an ancestral diligence, is a clear instance of ideology in the sense meant here: an interpretation that legitimates the existing separation by narrating it as deserved.

that strips people of any independent means of life and the dependence that returns them, day after day, to the market for a wage. And it dominates impersonally, through the compulsions of value and competition that subordinate the capitalist no less than the worker to an accumulation neither of them controls. These are not three rival answers among which we must choose the truest. They are three aspects of one relation, and the relation is powerful because they hold each other up. The final thing to say is the most important. Capitalist domination is formidable above all because it does not, for the most part, confront individuals as an external force standing over against them. It is reproduced through ordinary social activity itself, through the very acts by which people meet their needs and conduct their lives. The worker who takes the job, the manager who enforces the targets, the investor who seeks a return, and the consumer who buys at the lowest price are not breaking the rules of some imposed system. They are following the only rational course their situation offers, and in following it they renew the situation.

It does not follow that to undo this domination would be to arrive at freedom. That the relation is

reproduced through us, rather than imposed upon us, unsettles the very concept by which its overcoming is usually named, and it is not obvious that what lies on the far side of this domination can still be called freedom at all. Capitalism dominates not only over people, but through them. The worker, the manager, the consumer, the investor, and the voter all participate in reproducing relations whose logic exceeds their intentions. The remarkable achievement of capitalist domination is that it persists not despite our daily activity, but through it.

How “we shoot ourselves out of here” is a question which I have contemplated a lot recently.⁹¹ To whomever might find these contemplations of interest can read my paper that I will be presenting at the Society for Marxist Studies in Copenhagen, Denmark, in which I examine whether emancipation can still be understood as freedom at all.

⁹¹ Kommo, “Vi Måste Skjuta Oss Ut Härifrån,” 1982, streaming audio, Spotify.

The Vigil is a Grave Robber

The controlled opposition reveals itself through terroristic means.

As millions of others do around the country and the world, we mourn the loss of Renee Nicole Good. Good was murdered yesterday while responding to an ongoing deportation effort. This violence is part of a larger State terror campaign in Minneapolis, which constitutes over 1,500 Enforcement and Removal Officers (EROs) and a total force of around 2,100 federal agents.⁹² She will forever be a martyr in the ongoing movement against ICE and the State.

This Event represented a radical rupture in the ongoing movement. It was previously unthinkable, or at least unheard of, that an activist would be killed simply for documenting ongoing federal raids. Of course, we had seen brutalizations, violent arrests, and court procedures for activists following ICE in their cars. We had also seen demonstrators

⁹² Kelly, B., & Uren, A. (2026, January 6). *Where Has ICE Been Operating in Twin Cities Since Escalation by Trump Administration?*. Bring Me the News.
<https://bringmethenews.com/minnesota-news/where-has-ice-been-operating-in-twin-cities-since-escalation-against-immigrants-by-trump-administration>

routinely pummeled by tear gas, plastic bullets and batons before being dragged into shadowy detention centers. Yet this represented something altogether new, especially as mediations emerged between the activist core and migrants (the subjects of prior Events) themselves. For the opportune constructors of movement language, the murder of Silverio Villegas González last September could at least be chalked up to DHS's claim he is not a legal resident, an "Other". Further reports justified his murder by alleging he had cocaine in his system.⁹³ Separate from the sensible American citizen, it was levied that his resistance warranted lethal force in which the Americans supposedly did not. In the murders of 32 others in detention, this same language was used to force the public to forget them all as aliens, criminals, and so on.⁹⁴ Faceless humans without causes. These carefully knitted

⁹³ Schuba, T., & Sherry, S. (2025, November 17). *Silverio Villegas González, Killed By ICE Agent in Suburban Chicago, Had Cocaine in System, Autopsy Shows*. Chicago Sun-Times. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/the-watchdogs/2025/11/17/silverio-villegas-gonzalez-ice-dhs-trump-midway-blitz-shooting-homicide-franklin-park-chicago>

⁹⁴ Singh, M., Marcos, M., & Simmonds, C. (2026, January 4). *2025 Was Ice's Deadliest Year in Two Decades. Here Are the 32 People Who Died in Custody*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/usimmigration>

boundaries quickly patched up what otherwise may have been explosive.

The sheer panic that ensued this time was evidenced by the scrambling of the bourgeoisie an hour after Good's State execution, as detractors sprung out of the woodwork to ascribe sensible language to what had transpired. We are sure many reading this have already seen Trump's response, where he declared that Good had attempted to run an agent over with her car.⁹⁵ Many liberals clung to this narrative, wishing, hoping Good had been a bad actor, before several videos sprang up which immediately contradicted Trump's claim. Good then, for the vast majority of people, could not be described as a criminal, migrant, or outside agitator. Thus it made the public further spiral.

In all, the nature of this Event, its accessibility to the public, and context of the recent siege in Minneapolis sent shockwaves around the country in immediacy. This was nothing ordinary, one could feel it in their bones. Thousands of activists and

⁹⁵ Henderson, E. (2026, January 7). *Trump Claims Woman "Ran Over" ICE Agent in Minneapolis Before He Fatally Shot Her; Video Contradicts Claim*. CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/trump-claims-woman-ran-over-ice-agent-minneapolis/>

workers around our city piled on top of each other, snowballing into open-ended questions that had no answer. This was State violence that had no solution in the truth of this world. Here, even compliant, peaceful activism prescribed by liberal NGOs was weaponized by the State.

The decision of the liberal bourgeoisie represented here became that of the *grave robber*. If they let Renee Nicole Good rest in the entire truth of what occurred, of State violence in its entirety, they risked fanning the flames of insurrectionary multitudes. Sensing the parallels between this Event and that of police violence in the past, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey quickly spoke out, emboldening his language enough to sedate the masses. The respectable career Centrist of Capital who typically has nothing to say at all times, Frey suavely demanded in an impassioned response that ICE “Get the fuck” *out of his city*.⁹⁶ Despite his very Minneapolis Police cordoning off an angry crowd to help murderous federal agents break from the scene, he managed to appear as the very difference

⁹⁶ Clifford, A. (2026, January 8). *Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey tears into DHS and ICE after woman is fatally shot by agent*. CNN.
<https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/07/us/video/acfreyymn>

between a strong, righteous locality and the overbearing, burdensome State apparatus. It didn't matter that Frey would do nothing of substance; He simply needed to reinforce this narrative.

Likewise, the controlled opposition of the anti-ICE movement simply had to reinforce its own narrative. Last night, at least 3 large vigils were held around the city of Chicago. As typical with these events, they capitalize on the violence of the Event itself, the murder of Renee Nicole Good, while offering the working class no possible option forward. Good herself was rather an afterthought for the partisans of these events, and one could be mistaken that this was just another movement march, one of dozens that the Leninist-NGO marriage had concocted since Trump took office or even October 7th. Speakers all offered the same solution for the critical mass: "To get organized". What this entails did not matter, as the purpose was the abstraction.

At least 7 or 8 Socialist newspapers were hawked around as Leninists, Dengists, Maoists, Hoxhaists, and Democratic Socialists vied for mass attention. Each special interest organization carried their own personable gimmick to the facade. Cameras flashed,

reporters accosted their camera crews. All of this was supported by a large convoy of the Chicago Police Department, the same representatives of State violence that had killed Renee Nicole Good, the same ones that barricaded the angry crowd from the culprit who pulled the trigger. The emphasis from the Socialists, as ever, was on abstract local “People Power”, “Getting Organized”, and ultimately, just as Jacob Frey implied, giving the masses rhetoric while assuring the absence of anything at all.

We can only do Renee Nicole Good justice if we pinpoint the precise cause of her execution. It was not abstract evil or a merely federal overreach, but a concoction of State violence predicated on Capital’s own contradictions. Currently, that is the emphasis of the national labor supply, surplus labor, and corrective measures to divide the proletariat as the rate of profit continues to fall. We must recognize all of these things, or else Renee, Silverio, and all of the martyrs have been murdered with no Sun on the horizon. In a *literal* sense, the controlled opposition joins with the local State forces to offer us an absence of outcomes. We reject this for our survival and liberation, in life and in death.

The task of communists at this moment is to offer an alternative pole of possibilities, to raise the contradictions which both the federal campaign and the controlled opposition rests on. This has been done in our city in the past year, but ultimately it has not been enough. As we continue to push onward, we reflect on our structures and decision-making in order to parse out new syntheses. Here's to a better world than this one.

Glory to All of the Martyrs

Nicole Renee Good

Silverio Villegas González

Genry Ruiz Guillén

Serawit Gezahegn Dejene

Maksym Chernyak

Juan Alexis Tineo-Martinez

Brayan Garzón-Rayó

Nhon Ngoc Nguyen

Marie Ange Blaise

Abelardo Avellaneda Delgado

Jesus Molina-Veya

Johnny Noviello

Isidro Pérez

Tien Xuan Phan

Chaofeng Ge

Lorenzo Antonio Batrez Vargas

Oscar Rascon Duarte

Santos Banegas Reyes

Ismael Ayala-Uribe

Norlan Guzman-Fuentes

Miguel Ángel García Medina

Huabing Xie

Leo Cruz-Silva

Hasan Ali Moh'D Saleh

Josué Castro Rivera

Gabriel Garcia Aviles

Kai Yin Wong

Francisco Gaspar-Andrés

Pete Sumalo Montejo

Shiraz Fatehali Sachwani

Jean Wilson Brutus

Fouad Saeed Abdulkadir

Delvin Francisco Rodriguez

Nenko Stanev Gantchev

And all those others facing State brutality.

Long Live Revolution.

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