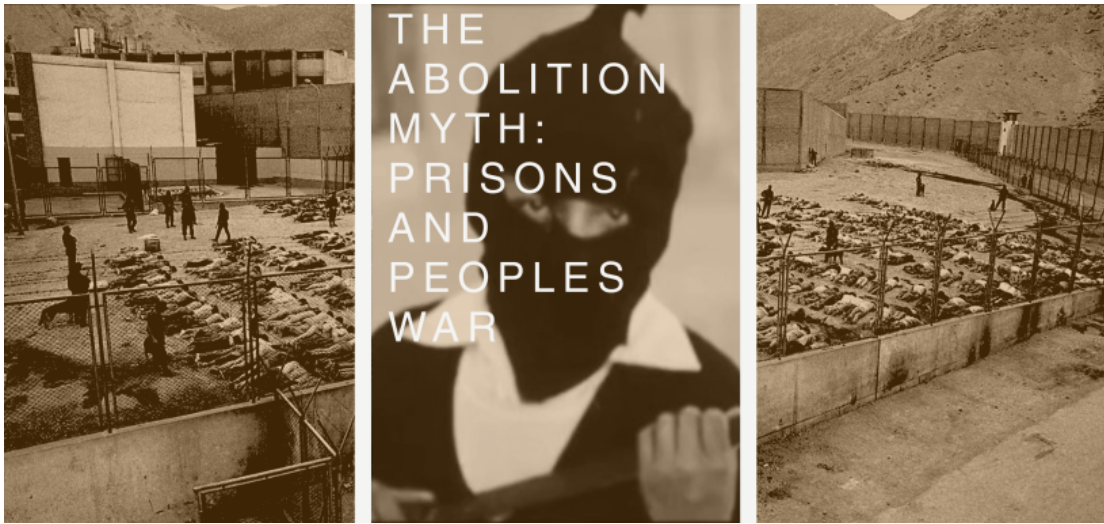


The Abolition Myth: Prisons and Peoples War

JULY 26, 2018

STRUGGLESSESSIONS



On one side, there is revolution. On the other side, there's everything else.

With the rise of the anti-Communist trends within the New Communist Movement, there came a desperate search for substitutes for the revolutionary subject of the proletariat and the motor of history, the masses. The NCM's anti-Communism came in the form of extreme rightist and "leftist" deviations – both self-justifying their absence in the proletariat." Either orientated to the lumpenproletariat or the petite-bourgeoisie. Groups like the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense or the Young Lords Party called on the lumpenproletariat as the "vanguard of the revolution.[1]" While waves of university students, who were unable to form mass links and organize the clamor of the masses into revolution, capitulated to adventurism, such as the left in form right in essence proto-Third-Worldist Weathermen.

This must be understood for what it was: a counter-attack by the bourgeoisie and petite-bourgeoisie in response to an attack by genuine Communists accumulating forces for revolution. Even if sections of the above groups came from the proletariat, their ideologies thoroughly were their opposite.

The NCM's revisionist New "Left"-ism and postmodernism has lingered on stubbornly into today. It is evident now in the discourse on abolishing prisons, or the prison industrial complex as it is often referred to, and abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement. But abolishment has turned nearly

completely into its opposite at the hands of these supposed revolutionaries. Abolishment is used as a buzzword in popular counter-culture where practice is often divorced from theory. It's on shirts now. It's on BuzzFeed[2]. Even most progressive class-traitors of the imperialist Democrats are popularizing the hashtag-turned-struggle[3].

As an earlier article published on struggle-sessions[4] pushes the correct line on prisons that they should not be seen as primarily profit-building factories. Surely, there is an aspect of exploiting cheap prison labor. But prisons are fundamentally Zones of Annihilation for revolutionaries and members of the lower sectors and classes of society, the latter of which are de-classed from the proletariat and semi-proletariat.

The confusion of abolishing ICE

In the abolish prison and ICE movements, there is a false dichotomy built that insularly justifies and proves “correct” the abolishment arguments.

“Abolish ICE” became a movement earlier this year created primarily by immigrant youth, of whom it can be assumed most are undocumented. It was a response to the conjecture of the bourgeois state's reformist concession due to President Trump's unleashing and overall support of reactionary ICE roundups and the separation of undocumented immigrant children from their parents recently crossing the border. Fascism may be fast approaching with the rise of populist fascist vigilante terrorist groups and a supportive government but ICE already embodies the most extreme and armed reactionary elements in the U.S. prison house of nations.

Therefore, in the U.S. in particular, the antifascist movement must preemptively also integrate an analysis and strategy toward proletarian undocumented immigrants. We see the seeds of this in Austin with its anti-ICE popular project and in Los Angeles with Serve the People – Los Angeles and their *Unidades de*

Defensa Revolucionarias Populares project (People's Revolutionary Defense Units) that currently does outreach in proletarian undocumented immigrant communities. Whereas both of these organizations, slowly but surely, are moving in the direction of accumulating forces to prevent, confront and eliminate reactionary apparatuses while building the Maoist Communist Party, other groups who uphold abolishing ICE posture as revolutionary but are actually reformist. They call for the disbanding of ICE, citing its inception in 2003 as an argument that if it was created it can be undone (while ignorantly forgetting the pre-existing Immigration and Naturalization Service until 2003). Capitalism relies on cheap surplus labor. In the U.S., and most other capitalist and imperialist countries, this manifests itself as reliance and regular scapegoating of proletarian immigrant labor and other oppressed sectors and classes of immigrants.

Perhaps the saddest example is California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance's recent anti-Communist manifesto^[5] that literally calls on the substitution of ICE with a more compassionate countrywide system to mediate undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. – while only calling for a more tolerable existence under capitalism. But undocumented immigrants, like all exploited people, are incompatible with capitalism. It is an irreconcilable contradiction. Not as it currently is, but in general. War, specifically People's War, is the only method of handling this antagonistic contradiction.

Capitalism cannot be reformed; it must be destroyed through armed struggle led by a militarized Maoist Communist Party with full participation of the militarized masses.

The alliance's anti-Communist politics are laid bare in their cowardly attacks at the leftist civil wars in Central America and Southeast Asia where refugees fled to the U.S. They say this was Communism's fault – even though most of these civil wars were not actually led by anti-revisionist Communists – but offer no analysis or coherent argument. In their shifting blame, they expose their thoroughly bourgeois ideology. Revolution is the antidote to the oppression of all people. All attempts must be made to carry out revolution to destroy the

bourgeoisie state and build up a new proletarian state on the road of building Communism:

Whenever the people of these lands would resist, the United States facilitated the political disruption necessary for far-right political puppets to take hold of the people—such was the case in Central America as it was in Southeast Asian countries. At the same time, communist powers supported militias to cease control over the people utilizing Leftist ideologies. Though it provided the framework for various people to rise up against an established order, both communism and capitalism were used to lay ruin of our homelands. Many of our parents are refugees from the Cold War fought outside of the white world...

I'm sorry if violence makes you squeamish. Or that you cry at the thought of armed struggle. You'd say, the masses of Central America, South America or Southeast India shudder at the trauma they have endured – why subject them to that yet again, either here or back in their home countries? They'll ask this without asking if the masses can continue surviving today, now, under capitalism, both the imperialist capitalism of the U.S., or the bureaucratic or mutated capitalism of their home countries!

Are not millions being deported, many of which directly get deported into their own grave on the streets of El Salvador or Honduras? Are not proletarian undocumented immigrants rotting away in detention centers, or dying at the border at the hands of fascist Border Patrol agents, or being cooked alive in the sweltering temperatures of the covered trucks and trailers of coyote's crossing over? Are they not being incarcerated en mass, or extorted by the lumpenproletariat in our communities? Are they not shot dead in the streets by reactionary pigs? Or destroyed by alcohol and drugs, pushed by the very same system?

Where is there no violence? Where is this mythical place you so arrogantly think exists where proletarian undocumented immigrants are safe or safer?

Yes, we want violence. Are they scared? Perhaps, but they are not spineless or politically uninitiated children. They are strong, brave, and courageous. They deserve everything. We want our proletarian undocumented immigrant comrades to reclaim revolutionary violence against the exploiters and oppressors! The masses want revindication. Show me where this is not true.

Returning to the gut-churning manifesto, it was necessary for the authors to cite specific examples of “Communism” ruining their homelands. If they are referencing the revisionist Sandinistas in Nicaragua or the red-capitalist FMLN of El Salvador or the revisionist imperialist-supporting Vietnamese, then call them what they are: capitalists. But Marxism aside – we cannot hold the alliance to the same heights we do Marxist organizations – even the revisionist armed struggle wars were justified in rising up against the horrors of capitalism and semi-colonialism and semi-feudalism. Those countries were colonized by U.S., French and British imperialism and therefore principally destroyed by capitalism, and not Communism. Communism has offered the world a way of conquering capitalism and imperialism. We must continue with the attempts in creating socialism and building Communism. All attempts are justified. It is right to rebel!

Abolishing ICE doesn't really plan on abolishing ICE. It is a confusing, underdeveloped position at its best and a treachery to the masses at its worst.

Communists should have been at the forefront of the anti-ICE movement to have prevented this countrywide deviation. While some are catching up, more formations – especially in areas where immigration repression is sharp (this happens outside of the oppressed nations regularly) – must take on the battle against fascist ICE but not to abolish ICE but to go to war with capitalism and abolish *all* of its apparatuses.

We should substitute the countrywide movement's slogan from “Abolish ICE” to “Fight ICE through revolution!” or as Red Guards – Los Angeles call, “Fight ICE with Fire!”

Prison abolition is an empty slogan

Inside the prisons in the U.S. radicals and some “Communists” have been organizing prisoners – ranging from the revisionist Revolutionary Communist Party USA and its circulation of Party and Party-supporting literature like its “Revolution” Newspaper[6] to the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons and its facilitation of study groups, the New Afrikan Black Panther Party (Prison Chapter) and its genesis behind bars and focusing on theoretical line struggle but little else as of now, and of course anarchists like the Anarchist Black Cross Federation and its prison solidarity writing campaigns[7].

Anarchists and revisionists both see prisons as the arenas of struggle that they are. But they both fall short on revolutionary strategy with an orientation and participation of the masses. The anarchists come closest to this by attempting to hold “public events” where attendees write letters to political prisoners but the prison solidarity project is not integrated into revolutionary mass work – which can only mean preparation for Protracted People’s War, and when the war is initiated, watering the revolution with the blood of martyrs and the enemy.

MIMP, a self-denying Third-Worldist organization, capitulates to the prideful decentralization of anarchism, when it comes to the question of strategy for the revolutionary organizing of prisoners. Long story short, they call for spontaneous prison protests and outright economism[8]:

A number of articles in this issue include calls from prisoners to take actions against the prison industries that are making money off prisoners, and to boycott jobs to demand higher wages. All of these actions are aimed at hitting the prisons, and private industries profiting off relationships with prisons, in their pocketbook. This is a good way for our comrades behind bars to think about peaceful protests they can take up to make demands for improved conditions while we organize to fundamentally change the criminal injustice system.

At the very least, let's give credit to MIMP for being honest; they're not a Party or pre-Party, as they gave up revolution, if they ever really wanted it. Their task is to organize the cast-away sectors of the masses and the lumpenproletariat away from revolutionary violence into goddamn study groups. Here they dangle revolution in front of prisoners but at the last instance take it away – out of fear or embarrassment.

The revisionists, like the RCP-USA, MIMP and even many of the positions of radical Kevin “Rashid” Johnson of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party (Prison Chapter), confuse their audience, including prisoners, by saying they want revolution but don't put forward a total strategy.

But Rashid and his Party, at the very least, connect the proletarian struggle outside the prisons with the prisoners struggles inside^[9] – however, again, we are not privy to any summations or public reports on just exactly how that has materialized.

Rashid and his Party capitulate to revisionism in their merging of Huey P. Newton's revisionist “revolutionary intercommunalism” with their interpretation of Maoism. They refer to this synthesis as “Pantherism.” Pantherism, like the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, makes the grave error of elevating the lumpenproletariat to the heights of the revolutionary subject, knocking off the proletariat from its rightful and historical position as the most revolutionary and last class. They, too, are self-denying Third-Worldists:

“Pantherism” is illuminated by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the theoretical and practical contributions of the original Black Panther Party and its allied formations. Central to Huey's “Theory of Revolutionary Intercommunalism” is the understanding that the U.S. is no longer a nation but the headquarters of a globe-reaching, capitalist empire, Hell-bent on consolidating its global hegemony, and because of this, no nations can exist anywhere. The world, as it now exists, consists of a network of interconnected communities, each of which is composed of sub-communities down to the level of neighborhoods.

Furthermore, this world is rapidly urbanizing and “ghettoizing” as the percentage of people the monopoly capitalist ruling class can profitably exploit as workers is rapidly shrinking and the fastest-growing section of the masses are the “lumpenized” urban poor, forced to survive by “any means necessary,” including hustling, dealing and stealing. Comrade Huey summed up that because of automation, the capitalist-imperialists would increasingly be unable to profitably exploit a growing percentage of the proletariat as wage workers, and this growing mass of “unemployables” would eventually become the majority of the population. He further theorized that **the lumpen (broken) proletariat would provide the basis for a new revolutionary vanguard that would act as a catalyst upon the whole proletariat and masses of people to inspire them to rise up against and overturn the capitalist-imperialist system** (bolded by author).

We see this same moralism-masked-as-Marxism in the Third-Worldist camp on university campuses and online self-congratulatory niche circles.

The conclusion made by Rashid and his Party, and the revisionists and anarchists, is therefore to abolish prisons. Their rallying cry is named the “Prison Abolitionist” movement. The parallels to the slave economy of early U.S. capitalism reinforces the abolitionist rhetoric with that of the 1800s anti-slavery Abolitionist Movement, which was mostly moralistic – in the absence of a dialectical materialist advanced proletarian organization, a Communist Party.

But how do we abolish prisons? Can we? Capitalism continues, even if one of its repressive state apparatuses is reformed or ultimately eliminated. The revisionists and anarchists have turned the movement for prison solidarity into a single-issue struggle, the deep grave of centuries-long struggles. What advancements have been won with the decontextualizing of the immigrant rights movement away from the revolutionary movement – which means Party building and the accumulation of forces for PPW? We have taken more than two steps back and we are now only starting to take one forward.

Prisons after capitalism

After the victory of the proletariat and the establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the inhabitants of prisons will fundamentally change – but the structure itself will provide a necessary use: reforming all antagonistic elements to the revolution that can be reformed and transformed. People are social creations. We are made by social conditions, especially in our relation to a particular mode of production. What we are conditioned in thinking and believing can change when the economic base and its corresponding superstructure are altered, of which the former is primary. The capitalist-minded shop keeper who may work with enemy forces during the revolution has only known capitalist domination and hyper-individualism since they had their first thought outside of the womb. Of course they would be antagonistic to a society that would liquidate their private property and redistribute wealth and land. But should they get the wall? The point of annihilation is to dominate the enemy and win the war. Once the war is won, we must shift from annihilation to social transformation. Prisons would be transformed into treatment centers with the goal of reforming those most poisoned by bourgeois ideology. Like the capture and thought reform of U.S. spies Allyn and Adele Rickett in Revolutionary China in 1951. The Ricketts spent four years inside a Chinese Communist re-education prison where, after rigorous self-criticism, labor and struggle sessions under the guidance of Marxism, the U.S. spies finally understood their counter-revolutionary roles. Upon their return to the U.S. they authored the book “Prisoners of Liberation.” An interview with Allyn Rickett is available for listening on MIMP’s website.^[10]

Everything has a class characteristic. Why shouldn’t this include prisons? Contrary to what the idealists say, you cannot circumvent this by abolishing the state, let alone prisons or ICE. The state will remain as an instrument of class repression until there are no more classes. We are not utopian socialists. We are Maoists; we are Communists.

Anti-Communists would criticize this emotionally or moralistically, accusing us of continuing oppression or exploitation by another name. But it’s a good thing these people talk and do little of anything else. Nonetheless, as it has been historically proven as a necessary method of resolving contradictions between

antagonistic elements of society and the revolution, thought reform is a crucial revolutionary component of the Party's conquest of power, as well as the subsequent Cultural Revolutions.

No, despite radical posturing, we cannot abolish prisons. We cannot abolish ICE. As Marxists, we are not militant trade unionists and economists. We can only secure reforms in the protracted struggle for revolution. Not in rhetoric, but in deeds. Specifically revolutionary armed deeds. As Chairman Gonzalo says, "He tells us that first comes the military deed and later political change. Thus he reaffirms that war is the continuation of politics by other means[11]."

Our comrades on the outside will wage the invincible struggle to topple the bourgeois world and they will create the new proletarian state, not in our absence, but with our lessons and errors in mind. We are not individuals; we are vital components in the same revolutionary machine of revolutionary violence and destruction. We must cast away individualism and reactionary pessimism. What if we serve long prison sentences or are martyred, you ask? Are you not a revolutionary, a Maoist? What do you fear, your own end, or the continuation of the reactionary violence of capitalism that has robbed the lives, for centuries, that has torn away our loved ones of generations, the graves we have dug, the lives cut down by colonization and imperialism?

I fear nothing. I am convinced Maoism, as we in the U.S. are building principally from the lessons of the PPW in Peru led by Chairman Gonzalo, is invincible. If I am not around to see its initiation or its victory is of little importance because I am not alone. My countrywide comrades, who have been in prison and will surely return, won't falter or dispense with revolutionary Maoism. We are not cowardly, autonomous individuals; we are an army becoming.

Article by – Cajemé Iniciador

Appendix from the Editor

Hope can be a tool for revolution, provided it is deeply connected to revolutionary ideology. Divorced of such ideology hope erodes agency, organizing prisoners on the basis of hopeful reform is nothing but a clever way to rob them of their agency and what is more, it robs them of what they need the most, a revolutionary Party which attacks the enemy inside and outside of the prisons. There are many examples of prison economism, The Industrial Workers of the World prison strikes—devoid of politics become just another example of spontaneity, the energy dissipates and diffuses. Like with all organic struggles the Party must organize itself alongside the masses channeling them politically. The biggest testimony to the failure of all of the above-mentioned organizations is the severe lack of mass work among the lowest and deepest, most profound sections of the people—the disconnect. The Prison reformers hence view the prisoners not as possible agents of revolution but as a captive audience (mirroring the state view). Communists, unlike reformists, do not base their work on what feels good or on any moral consideration but on a long-view of building for revolution and this struggle is what produces proletarian morality that detests the annihilation zone. We do not organize for the sake of organizing we must organize to win—the conquest of power and exerting said power over our class enemies is everything. – Editor, Struggle Sessions

[1] <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1/prrwo-1/history.htm>

[2] <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lissandravilla/abolish-ice-democrats-congress-plan>

[3] Ibid.

[4] <https://struggle-sessions.com/2018/07/19/annihilation-zone/>

[5] <https://ciyja.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/AbolishICE.pdf>

[6] <https://www.humanrightsdefensecenter.org/action/news/2010/pln-editor-quoted-in-article-over-censorship-in-california-prisons/>

[7] <http://www.abcf.net/prisoner-info/>

[8] <https://www.prisoncensorship.info/article/mimprisons-on-us-prison-economy/>

[9] <http://rashidmod.com/?p=2560>

[10] <https://www.prisoncensorship.info/archive/etext/ma/radio/rickett.html>

[11] <https://gplpcp.wordpress.com/military-line-of-the-communist-party-of-peru/>

PREVIOUS POST

To My Unborn Child

NEXT POST

On Maoist Education

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

Search ...

ARCHIVES

December 2021

November 2021

October 2021

September 2021

August 2021

July 2021

June 2021

May 2021

April 2021

March 2021

February 2021

January 2021

November 2020

October 2020

July 2020

June 2020

May 2020

April 2020

March 2020

February 2020

January 2020

December 2019

November 2019

October 2019

August 2019

July 2019

June 2019

May 2019

April 2019

February 2019

January 2019

December 2018

November 2018

October 2018

September 2018

August 2018

July 2018

June 2018

BLOG AT WORDPRESS.COM.