

## MAGA Communism: Form and Substance

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### Introduction

The Communist Party of the United States of America has a storied history of partisan squabbles and factionalism. It was this party that gave birth directly, or indirectly, to all major communist political parties in the United States. For example, the Party of Communists USA, a significant communist party in the United States, originated directly from a factional split from the CPUSA.<sup>1</sup> The Party for Socialism and Liberation, perhaps second in membership count only to the CPUSA, was a splinter of the Workers World Party, which itself was a split from the Socialist Workers Party, an expelled Trotskyite faction of the CPUSA.<sup>2</sup>

Having never occupied any state or national public office, the CPUSA has remained no more or less relevant since its seismic decline after the Smith Act trials. Its progeny thenceforth remained irrelevant factional theatrics and dramatism – also holding no public office, without even the rich history of labor struggle permitting the vestiges of the CPUSA life in the minds of humble academics and radicals. This was the case until recently, wherein yet another split in the CPUSA occurred, birthing the American Communist Party.

Since its inception in August of 2024, after the alleged fissure and merger of thirty-two CPUSA and PCUSA chapters and clubs,<sup>3</sup> the ACP has experienced a meteoric rise in popularity, political capital, and administrative capability. Less than six months after the ACP's declaration, its chapter reach has grown to include thirty American states and three Canadian provinces;<sup>4</sup> it has held nearly a hundred food, disaster, and homeless relief drives among other local organizational efforts;<sup>5</sup> it has been publicly recognized by dozens of international communist parties;<sup>6</sup> and it has become the second communist party in history to hold public office in the United States.<sup>7</sup> This is all while following the framework of Haz Al-Din's "MAGA Communism."

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<sup>1</sup> "The Voice of American Communists: PCUSA on Trump, Cuba-US Relations and Opportunism." *In Defense of Communism*, 7 Feb. 2017, [www.idcommunism.com/2017/02/the-voice-of-american-communists-pcusa.html](http://www.idcommunism.com/2017/02/the-voice-of-american-communists-pcusa.html).

<sup>2</sup> Cornish, Megan. "A Political Critique of the Party for Socialism and Liberation." *Freedom Socialist Party*, Feb. 2013, [socialism.com/fs-article/a-political-critique-of-the-party-for-socialism-and-liberation/](http://socialism.com/fs-article/a-political-critique-of-the-party-for-socialism-and-liberation/).

<sup>3</sup> Al-Din, Haz, et al. Declaration of the American Communist Party. 2024.

<sup>4</sup> "American Communist Party: Chapters." *American Communist Party*, [acp.us/chapters](http://acp.us/chapters).

<sup>5</sup> "American Communist Party: Activity." *American Communist Party*, [acp.us/activity](http://acp.us/activity).

<sup>6</sup> "International Greetings to the 1st National Convention of ACP." *Red America: Journal of the American Communist Party*, no. 2, Dec. 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Dreher, Isabel. "Helali Wins High Bailiff as Write-In." *The White River Valley Herald*, 26 Dec. 2024, [www.ourherald.com/articles/helali-wins-high-bailiff-as-write-in/](http://www.ourherald.com/articles/helali-wins-high-bailiff-as-write-in/).

What was once a fringe ideological construct, MAGA Communism has risen to be the guiding force of the most successful American communist party in modern day, and is no longer avoidable in the broader political conversation of American Marxism as such. Communist organizers and academics interested in American Marxism ought to contend with this supposedly contradictory guiding principle if they are to understand the vision and rise of the ACP. However, to many, the actual essence of MAGA Communism remains mystified and incoherent. This paper aims to analyze the form of the philosophy, its substance in practice, and the criticism from contemporary interlocuters.

What we have found is that MAGA Communism – that is, the progenitor ideology held and reified in the ACP – is a novel contribution to American Marxism, and that in its substance – the ACP – is working to achieve counter-hegemonic, left-wing goals. Below, we introduce the seminal piece of the ideology, Haz Al-Din’s *THE RISE OF MAGA COMMUNISM*, written by the founder of the concept, who would later go on to become the Chairman of the ACP. This work will be analyzed from a Marxist perspective; its philosophical coherence – rather than its adherence to orthodoxy – will be assessed. Further, we analyze the actual reality and function of the ACP, itself, and discuss its organizational effect in relation to other contemporary communist parties. Finally, we discuss the overall discourse on the matter that exists in the main, which essentially amounts to criticism.

### **Form: *THE RISE OF MAGA COMMUNISM***

Al-Din’s piece is split into four sections, which ultimately amounts to his theory of the so-called “political spectrum,” a synthesis between Carl Schmitt’s “partisan” and the broader realm of Marxism-Leninism, and a kind of political analysis of the Make America Great Again movement and its implications for Communist revolutionary strategy; therein lies the essence of MAGA Communism. To arrive at such a point, Al-Din’s discussion of the political spectrum and the partisan is arguably necessary; the former addresses certain potential misgivings about a supposedly “left” politics of Communism and a supposedly “right” politics of MAGA being brought together, and the latter addresses the role of vanguardism of Communist leaders within that political project.

It must be stated that on the outset, Al-Din’s retains the traditional understanding of what constitutes Right-wing, Left-wing, rightist, leftist, and partisan movements (Al-Din 2022, 27-28). Much of *THE RISE OF MAGA COMMUNISM* concerns subverting the contemporarily understood political language about this political spectrum. For Al-Din, the transcendental essence of Right and Left, the kernels of which are used to design the way politics are understood today, are born in the French Revolution. The French National Assembly during this period was differentiated by the political aspirations of those physically sitting on the left or right side of the president; the left composed by revolutionaries who supported the abolition of the monarchy and to bring about a then radical form of liberalism – the right, composed by reformists and preservers of the existing monarchy and its system.

To Al-Din, this represents the beginning of the politics of modernity. Out of the rupture of the feudal mode into our capitalist one, birthed two opposing forces, that may represent different aspirations in substance at different times: the Left, which seeks the immediate overthrow of the

way of things, and the Right, which aims to preserve the existing order. By this understanding, Al-Din asserts that the Left-wing is political misalignment itself, a kind of “chaos” attempting to actualize itself from the “order” of the Right (9). What arises from this, in Al-Din’s view, is a gradual homogenization in political forms as modernity begins to establish itself substantially. Because modernity was born from the Left, its forms begin to resemble a revolutionary politics, or a politics of change as a default. Since the premises of liberalism was a direct rupture of the established order with its own “chaos,” the “order” of liberalism is sought through the reproduction of change, or the reproduction of the chaos internal to it (7).

This can be seen as an applied view of orthodox Marxism; one must inquire further into the mechanics of capital to meet the substance of this difference. In the aggregate – for all intents and purposes – a kind of communal universalism had been preserved under feudalism. Marx recognizes this in *Capital*, prior to the feudal mode. Engels writes on it in *The Origins of Family, Private Property, and the State*, remarking that the first form of atomic “chaos” occurs within the differentiation – in substance of a private manner – between the so-called “town” and the so-called “country.” The thitherto relationship between town and country acted as a mutual relationship, wherein the more fundamental forms of agriculture and extraction satiated the needs of the town, and in return the town’s sophisticated productive abilities, due to the mass consolidation of peoples, i.e. labor, were able to augment and accelerate the forces of production in the country. As the divisions of labor between the town and country are made more acute through their natural development, the merchants arise as an object of exchange between the town and country.<sup>8</sup> The first form of privacy is developed when the towns and countries of the world are made discrete from one another – the first form of chaos, or atomization.

The form of chaos or atomization that liberalism holds within it is the total atomization of every individual. In form, this allows for capital, itself, to exist, and the relationship between the bourgeois state and its subjects thereafter to remain. Marx discusses in *Capital Vol. I*. the transition of exchange between the commodified and non-commodified form, and declares outright that the non-commodified form, in the relationship of feudalism between family units and their lords, died with feudalism.<sup>9</sup> Marx views commodities to only really arise as society transitions between the General Form of Value and the Universal Form of Value. What existed before in the General Form was an arrangement where one’s labor was articulated in the value of a given object. Subsequently, all forms of exchange value were constituted by the actual substance of the object being exchanged. All possible exchanges were defined in reference to the object-bearer’s labor by that understanding.<sup>10</sup> The Universal Form of Value necessitates a transition towards reference to one object of exchange – money – and thus the object-bearers no longer bring the products of their labor to the market, but become value-bearers, bringing their objects of value to the market. The value, in form, is no longer attached to the substance within the object, but its relation to the broader Universal Form; commodities have been thus created.<sup>11</sup> Necessarily, the authentic relationship of exchange between peoples has been subverted by an inauthentic relationship of exchange between values. Economic intercourse has been made mystified, with the individuals involved in its execution completely atomized; the economic middle-man of merchants, this time

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<sup>8</sup> Engels, Friedrich. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Penguin Classics, 1972. p. 203.

<sup>9</sup> Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume I*. Penguin Classics, 1990. p. 170-171.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. pp. 178-180.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp. 168-169.

articulated through the form of money itself, has been reborn to bring about the system of its very essence. From this, capital and its contradictory essence to expand infinitely at the cost of itself was born. Unlike the feudal mode, the antique mode, or any form of social development prior, total social chaos is preserved in the most fundamental economic intercourse of the system.

We need not reapproach the entirety of Lenin's *State and Revolution* to explore how the political form of capitalism perfectly exemplifies this internal chaos. The state necessarily becomes, in form, a battleground of modern atoms – in substance, a battleground between classes. Al-Din therefore argues that the universal state acts as a people in the abstract, the universal form of people, wherein the actual substance of difference between individuals, rather than the imposed atomization, brings about its unity and manifestation. Therein, the bourgeois state exemplifies this for the bourgeois context, and – precisely like the transition of the General Form of Value, as cited by Al-Din – the state becomes detached from the proletariat, its actual material premises. Al-Din writes:

Thus it does not simply imply a lack of sensitivity to the differences among the people, it implies a fundamental difference, or discontinuity between the people as a substantive, particular unity – and the people as an abstracted, formal one. The universal or bourgeois state knows no distinctions among the people. But it also knows no distinction between itself and its own, actual reality. And here lies the basic germ which eventually culminates in modern class distinction, between the purport of the universal form of the people, and the reality of its universal content... [The proletariat] is not something excluded from the universal state, it is the universal state in its own actual, rather than conceited reality – i.e. the meat-grinder of universal exchange value – the confrontation between universal form of exchange and its own antecedent premises in labor. (Al-Din 2022, 6)

The political reality that results is one entirely detached from its real, material premises. This leads Al-Din to argue that the politics of modernity are not sustainably defined by difference any longer. Instead, Al-Din argues that the forms of modernity, expressed in the political, are in reference to capital itself. He uses Deleuze to describe this arrangement, wherein the supposed forms of Left and Right that exist in the fore are not defined by difference from one another, but a kind of pure difference – insofar as they exist in reference to capital, itself (5). Capital, itself – and the system it proliferates – has within it contradictions not defined and given expression by capital's distinction from some other entity. Rather, the forms of modernity – and thus, the forms of capitalism including the political – are rooted in the internal contradictions of capital being a generator of contradictions. After liberalism establishes itself, the politics of change are made inevitable and compatible with the pure disruption of the liberal system – what is transcendently known as Left and Right morphs and becomes estranged from its real meaning. Instead, the political existence of Left and Right becomes the purport of its alignment based on abstract principles (8). The “left” is no longer Left-wing, the destruction of the way of things, but leftism, a substantial embrace of politics of change, which are already made inevitable. It becomes conservative as it aims to preserve the process of modernity (9). However, for Al-Din, this does not mean the counterpart to leftism, rightism, has ceased to be Right-wing. This will be discussed shortly. Ultimately, for Al-Din, the political substance must therefore not have to do with any form

of difference between leftist and rightist alignments, but between the political substance and the configuration of the alignment, i.e. the state, itself (8).

Al-Din introduces the theory of the partisan to outline the praxeological political theory within this political circumstance. In his perception, the “partisan” is a political vessel, neither Left nor Right, that bases itself in the masses and has a living relationship with the eternal – civilizational – character of a people; Islam in Iran and “Justice & Dignity” of Che Guevara are cited examples of this. It therefore synthesizes the rational kernels necessary to resolve modernity to its conclusion (11). Because the partisan is expressed only by their relationship with the masses, they inherit both the civilizational essence of the masses, and the masses’ revolutionary character. On one hand, the partisan is Right-wing as it inherits the civilizational essence of the masses, on the other, it is entirely Left-wing, as it is revolutionary; both are entirely accidental, for they are predicated only on the relationship the partisan has with the masses. This results in a political alignment of the partisan that is entirely counter-hegemonic (10). For Al-Din, the partisan is a Communist one in substance, as only Marxism-Leninism is able to reconcile the contradictions modernity generates, and only the partisan can resolve modernity to its conclusion (7).

In his view, rightism is formally Right-wing, but generally indistinguishable from leftism (22). To Al-Din, rightism is the formalization of putting the essential objects of the rupture of modernity back together (25). It is an attempt to remedy the need for partisanship, but fails horribly; only able to function by neutralizing all opposition to give the appearance of zeitgeist (21-22). Both leftism and rightism, to Al-Din, function as police of the zeitgeist in civil society, as part of the so-called “Open Society,” the non-state apparatus that preserves and reproduces the forms of modernity. It is this Open Society, including NGOs, think tanks, universities, and lobbyists, that articulates American financial capital (11). Al-Din describes MAGA, however, as something altogether different than leftism, rightism, or an arm of the Open Society. MAGA, to Al-Din, is the American form of partisanship – a decentralized mass politics that holds every possible counter-hegemonic tendency (15).

Let us first discuss what MAGA is before we approach Al-Din’s final political stratagem. The Make America Great Again movement, or MAGA, is a decentralized mass political movement. This movement began during the 2016 Presidential Election cycle, after candidate Donald Trump took on the slogan “make America great again” during his campaign. The slogan is not unique and has been used by prior presidents, from Reagan to Clinton, during their respective tenures and candidacies. Unlike prior candidates, Trump’s political platform in 2016, at least in form, was counter-hegemonic, and resulted in the near-entirety of the political establishment and its civil society apparatus reorienting to destroy the campaign and, later, the presidency. Regardless, it was this platform that the MAGA movement arose from – a movement that ultimately supported Trump, but was not contingent on Trump’s political existence. This was potentially best seen during the January 6<sup>th</sup> Insurrection, wherein thousands of MAGA supporters proceeded to break into the US Capitol Building in an effort to overturn the election. Granted, the tactical breaches and maneuvers, as well as altercations with the police were executed by particular rightist paramilitary groups, rather than the MAGA masses – however, the insurrection was launched against Trump’s wishes, and ended long after he expressed his dismay publicly. The aspirations to deliver a “people’s justice” to Nancy Pelosi, Mike Pence, and others, were derived from the sentiments of the participants, rather than Trump, himself. It is thus important to

distinguish Trump from his political base, which acts sometimes alongside and sometimes against his political project. MAGA, for all intents and purposes, is an autonomous movement that supports Trump as a contingency.

Regardless, the platform that Trump expressed in 2016 to date, that gave life to and reproduces the platform of the MAGA movement, can effectively amount to four slogans; “build the wall,” “drain the swamp,” “bring the jobs back,” and “end endless wars.” Each of these slogans, aside from the one referencing the border wall, do not denote a real or explicit policy position, but rather, an ambiguous political consciousness and sentiment. Regardless of the political strategy of Trump employing these slogans and rhetorical methods, they resonated with the consciousness of the MAGA movement. “Build the wall” demands the construction of the border wall – one which, in theory, would end “mass immigration” and the supposed undercutting of domestic labor value. “Drain the swamp” references a process of removing corruption in the political bureaucracy, and removing stagnant institutional architecture supposedly robbing the American masses of their sovereignty. “Bring the jobs back” simply references resisting and overturning the process of deindustrialization; a demand for manufacturing and other productive jobs to be rebuilt. Finally, “end endless wars,” made even more prevalent in recent years under the Biden administration, references ceasing all military and financial aid – derived from national tax-dollars – to American client states.

What makes these positions counter-hegemonic is the reality that they cannot be completed, in essence, under the yoke of American financial capital. Ending mass immigration – or its general counterpart, raising wages, depending on the decade – cannot be seen through while the political sovereignty is beholden to the financiers and speculators directly benefitting from the process. The demand to stop deindustrialization, similarly, cannot be fulfilled as long as the American financial elite hold political sovereignty and benefit from the process of outsourcing and fattening the service sector. Stopping military aid to countries like Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan – as the MAGA base demands – would mean directly severing the base of power to the US Empire and the military-industrial complex within. Finally, and obviously, “draining the swamp” can never be fulfilled as long as the masses do not hold their government sovereign. What these slogans and sentiments mean in form is a more dignified and sovereign political and economic life for the masses; in substance, it means the upholding of the American working class and the destruction of the US Empire.

Why these sentiments resonate with the MAGA base is not surprising after inquiring after their class character. Most studies on MAGA’s class character consider class as reducible to income and education level. From a Marxist perspective, this is an absurdity. Under capitalism, there exist only two classes for Marx: proletarian and bourgeoisie.<sup>12</sup> As with all previous dominant over and underclasses, the substance of the relations of production is not defined by the simple understanding of ownership. The bourgeoisie is not so because they merely own the means of production – nothing, then, would separate their specificity from feudal lords, or slave-owners. The actual content of class for the proletariat and bourgeoisie exists in the character of their transactions.

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<sup>12</sup> Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. International Publishers, 1958. pp. 9-10.

A proletarian sells their labor-power for a wage, and proceeds to spend the wage on subsistence commodities, which are consumed in totality. This is the C – M – C circuit: commodity as labor-power for money, then money for commodity as subsistence.<sup>13</sup> A bourgeois purchases labor-power and component commodities, and sells the newly formed commodity for money and an additional amount of surplus-value. This is the M – C – M' circuit: money for component parts and labor-power, then the finished commodity for money and surplus-value.<sup>14</sup> This process continues indefinitely for the bourgeois,<sup>15</sup> and is referred to as “capital” or the process of capital thereof. These two circuits occur temporally, rather than spontaneously.

Put simply, a proletariat is one whose dominant intercourse in society is characterized by exchanging labor for a wage, then exchanging that wage for commodities of subsistence. A bourgeois, however, is one whose dominant intercourse in society is characterized by indefinitely purchasing labor and component parts, and reselling the final commodity, extracting surplus value in the process.

Be it mentioned on the outset that the concept of so-called “class-consciousness” has been misattributed to Marx from time immemorial.<sup>16</sup> Instead, Marx outlines the process of alienation, and the ways in which it comes to be. In truth, the working class is stratified between three forms of social intercourse: productive laborers, who constitute the most proletarian element of the class; unproductive laborers; and creative types who do not perform concrete labor at all. The way in which alienation, or the lack thereof, occurs between these three sections of the working class necessarily varies based on the substance of their labor. Therein, the form of their alienation – the political, for example – varies. Regardless, it is this process of alienation that gives rise to the uniquely proletarian element of the species-being – or, the particularization of the universal of man, predicating the really revolutionary form.<sup>17</sup>

What makes a proletarian, in contradistinction to the other two parts of the working class, is the simple and active process of productive labor. Productive labor, or labor in general, is a sensuous process involving the transformation of nature.<sup>18</sup> What results, whether it be a society of privacy or not, are use-values.<sup>19</sup> Under the capitalist mode, labor not only produces commodities – labor crystallized into physical products that embody the physical attribute of use-value and the social attribute of value<sup>20</sup> – but these commodities also approach the market as values, not use-values.<sup>21</sup> The actual essence of the labor is therefore obscured. This is one part of the basis of labor estrangement or labor alienation – which, in turn, is the predicate of forming the revolutionary subject.

Aforementioned, labor is the sensuous process that results in use-values – physical products; labor is evidence of the product just as the product is evidence of congealed labor within

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<sup>13</sup> Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume I*. Penguin Classics, 1976. p. 249.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 251.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 256.

<sup>16</sup> Such is the work of Gyorgy Lukács.

<sup>17</sup> Marx, Karl. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Prometheus Books, 1988. pp. 75-76.

<sup>18</sup> Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume I*. Penguin Classics, 1976. p. 133.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 128.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 125.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 178-179.

it. Because labor generates use-values, it, itself, is substance; only when it solely exists to create values does it become objectified. In either form, the labor, and the commodity it births, is referential to the laborer and humanity at-large. The commodity is part of the laborer. When labor-power is purchased by a discrete individual, wherein the labor itself becomes purchased in advance, the commodity that results is alien to its creator. The objectification of labor – labor-power as a commodity – begets commodities that exist outside the laborer, and thus are alien to him.<sup>22</sup> The material basis of the proletariat is constituted by its execution of the C – M – C circuit,<sup>23</sup> its revolutionary basis on the natural material dialectic of history,<sup>24</sup> and its unique form of revolutionary consciousness on the basis of estrangement. Such, taken together, is what predicates the social formations of the proletariat on the basis of its class essence – the proletarian consciousness.<sup>25</sup>

Why is it the case that professional-managerials and creative types cannot be considered proletarian? Why is it the case that time and again they outright oppose the real revolutionary movement in form and in substance? For the professional-managerials, their opposition to the proletariat is related to their form of labor, which is made entirely different than the proletarian form. The professional-managerials, the middle-class, service workers, or whatever you like, engage in unproductive labor.<sup>26</sup> This is “labor” that does not generate a product or a commodity – in fact, it generates no use-values or value at all. Its purpose is to expedite, or accelerate, the turnover of capital.<sup>27</sup> Such exist only insofar as the turnover of capital is desirable or necessary.

The wicked implication of this is that such laborers do not experience alienation in any form. Labor becomes objectified, but the process necessarily ends at once. There exists no commodity after the fact to be alienated from; no extent of the species-being divorced from itself. In truth, for services subservient to capital turnover – those not directly related to the propagation of the enterprise<sup>28</sup> – the form of labor begins to resemble more the process of capital itself, rather than the authentic form of transformation of nature. Not only does the labor approach the market as a commodity, the exercise is in service to value itself, generating no use-values, nor creating new value. Because unproductive labor generates neither surplus-value nor value, the wages paid to unproductive laborers comes from the surplus-value of the proletariat itself!

Not too dissimilar is that of creative labor, labor that generates abstraction. This labor does not expedite the turnover of capital, nor does it generate a commodity of any form. The entertainment and knowledge industry remains commodified insofar as intellectual property law exists, inauthentically preserving abstraction and contemplation as some form of vulgar privacy. Creative labor does not generate a product, for the supposed use-value it may have is in its contemplation, rather than any physical attribute of the object. Creative labor exists only in form, brought into being by the laws of men, rather than the real substance of economy. Alienation in no form can happen for creative laborers, and objectification is brought about only from the laws of man.

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<sup>22</sup> Marx, Karl. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Prometheus Books, 1988. p. 71.

<sup>23</sup> Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume I*. Penguin Classics, 1976. p. 249.

<sup>24</sup> Marx, Karl. *The Communist Manifesto*. International Publishers, 1948. p. 21.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> Marx, of course, cites book-keepers and clerks as forms of unproductive labor.

<sup>27</sup> Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume II*. Progress Publishers, 1956. pp. 77-79.

<sup>28</sup> Unlike transportation and maintenance, for example.

There is a second, equally important framework that ought to be discussed for the political phenomenology of the working class to be fully understood. We have already demonstrated the substance that propagates the distinct political forms of the working class in a given nation. What can be said of the distinction of the working classes between different nations? Indeed, Marx lived before the widespread proliferation of investment firms, fiat currency, supranational institutions, and all other appendages of globalist capitalism we see today, those of which create a dialectic between the working classes of the Global North and South. However, his nascent theory – with the assistance of Engels – on the matter completely exonerated its transcendental nature.

For Marx and Engels, the division of labor is also distinguished in terms of how close it is to pure transformation of nature against the pure generation of abstraction. They evaluate the development of the forces of production in a dialectical manner, in terms of anthropological development itself. Human history has demonstrated this relationship time and again. The “town and country” distinction in *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* is really this relationship imbued in one universal. Labor itself begins in the base transformation of nature; all labor begins as productive, purely propagating the means of subsistence. The first division of labor appears between agriculture and extraction, and manufacturing. Agriculture and extraction exist as themselves, but are really made distinct by manufacturing, the former involving doing labor unto the earth itself, the latter involving doing labor unto the products of the former. In turn, products of manufacturing augment agriculture and extraction, which, in turn, augment manufacturing and so on. Abstraction in forms of literature, art, and high language also appear as a nascent growth in this stage. The dialectical relationship between the country, wherein the most fundamental forms of production occur, and the town, wherein the more “sophisticated” and abstract forms of production occur, has been created.<sup>29</sup>

Merchants, of course, sever the social relationship between town and country, making them discrete. Under capitalism, these merchants subjugate the country to the town. Forms of base labor become secondary to the sophisticated or abstract labor.<sup>30</sup> This is a macroscopic view of the division of occupation on a societal or national scale, and exists in any gradient form. In the United States of America, for example, exists a “town” and “country”; what was once the “town” of the manufacturing hubs of Baltimore, Detroit, and Cleveland, distinguished by the agricultural and extractive “country” of Mississippi, Utah, and others, now becomes the financial and high service “town” of New York City and San Francisco, distinguished by the base production vestiges of those very Rust Belt cities, now made “country.” The same can be said between nations on the advent of globalist capitalism, wherein the United States itself is the “town,” and Latin America or Africa the “country,” for example.

What results in the working classes of both spheres is a working class, overwhelmingly proletarian, existing in the Global South – and a working class, overwhelmingly unproductive but with proletarian elements, couched in the Global North. The former is the dominant generator of economic value, the latter the dominant servant to capital turnover. Such is the basis of what would later be theorized as the labor-aristocracy. So, indeed, there exists this stratification of the working class within a given society; however, there is also this stratification in relation to other societies-

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<sup>29</sup> Engels, Friedrich. *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Penguin Classics, 1972. pp. 55-56.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 202-203.

at-large. The town and county distinction, both literal and referential to intersocietal interactions, is the very basis that gives rise to merchants, themselves.<sup>31</sup>

This analysis is of extreme import when analyzing the revolutionary subject of a given society or a given revolutionary moment. The recognition of the proletariat in contradistinction to the bourgeoisie is a necessary and obvious milestone to analyzing the mechanics of revolution in modernity. Recognizing thereafter the effects of entrenched labor aristocracy is doubly important. The rise of Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy, and the Second KKK in the United States was a direct result of an imperiled labor aristocracy. Only after the colonies of the German Empire were severed and the reparations' financial scheme was executed, only after the colonial and diplomatic aspirations of Italy were severely outclassed by the French and English, only after the United States faced the reverberations of the Great Depression, did the labor aristocracies of each respective nation come crumbling down. Only when the skilled laborers, artisans, businessmen, and so on faced the grim reality that they might have to return to productive labor was their class consciousness able to be articulated – most effectively – by fascists, and they turned not into a revolutionary subject, but an arm of finance capital to subdue the real revolutionary movement: the Communist Party of Germany, the Italian Communist Party, and the Industrial Workers of the World in the United States. In the United States, history demonstrates the coincidence of the development of labor aristocracy and international imperialism with the dissolution of domestic revolutionary forms. As the American labor aristocracy develops proportionally to the US Empire abroad, the Communist Party of the USA and the Black Panther Party follow the IWW to their place as revolutionary moments “solved” by financial capital.

In all of these instances, particularly with the IWW, every revolutionary movement had in its base the most proletarian substance. This is due to the explicit recognition of professional-managers and unproductive laborers to oppose the more proletarian elements of the working class at every turn, hence the need for the IWW to come about in the first place, to oppose the craft unionism of the American Federation of Labor in the 1920s. Hence also the antagonism faced between the Black Panther Party and the NAACP in the midcentury.

When analyzing MAGA as a potential political phenomenon, with implications for it being possibly fascist as with the traditional liberal view, or potentially revolutionary, as with Al-Din's view, the actual class base must be fully understood. The way in which Marx distinguishes between discrete entities in the proletariat is by occupation, or form of labor. Marx considers the form of labor to be the actual realization of abstract human labor – this is the basis of which all exchange value can exist. If all abstract human labor is honed in the same process, the outcome would result in identical commodities, and no exchange could therefore rationally occur. The character or form of labor is the basis in which abstract human labor is realized into different commodities, and thus, commodities become differentiated from one another and therein able to be exchanged. This differentiation – as with tailors and weavers as Marx posits – is the essence of occupation, the basis of the real stratification of the proletariat.<sup>32</sup> Few hitherto studies on MAGA's class basis have been analyzed in terms of occupation, only the liberal reduction of income and education.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 203.

<sup>32</sup> Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume I*. Penguin Classics, 1976. p. 150.

To date, there exist only five pieces of academic literature concerning the class composition of the MAGA movement, varying in quality, contributions, and conclusions. The most important of which to discuss is the seminal work on the matter, “The White Working Class and the 2016 Election” by Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu. This ought to be considered the seminal work, as it has seen immense influence among news media, an outlet which has been inquiring into the class character of the MAGA movement since 2016. Such news media either reuses Carnes and Lupu’s work, conducts their own research on the basis of Carnes and Lupu, or reuses their work tangentially by proxy of another news-media outlet (Fulwood 2024, Hawley 2020, Knigge 2017, Sasson 2021, Sattler 2020, Shihpar 2017, Street 2017). What Carnes and Lupu contribute to the discourse is their previous news media surveys (Carnes and Lupu 2016, 2017) in an academic package. In short, Carnes and Lupu have been influencing the discourse on the topic since 2016, in their news-media inquiries; this work is the culmination of their inquiries and influence.

Their methodology is simple, and is roughly the same as their contributions to news media. They aim to debunk four allegedly spurious claims, all pertaining to Trump voters at-large, whether Trump voters by-and-large are working class, whether most white working-class people supported Trump, and so on.<sup>33</sup> To do this, they consult – as other academics do – the American National Election Studies (ANES) database. Unlike others, Carnes and Lupu also consult the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), and the Views of the Electorate Research (VOTER) database. They define “working class” as education and income level together, conceptually operationalized necessarily as degree level and household income. Their justification for this is the following:

Income alone is a problematic measure of membership in the working class because incomes fluctuate over the course of careers and in response to short-term shocks. A factory worker and a PhD student at Princeton might both earn household incomes below the median, but it would not make sense to say that both are members of the working class. As for education, as we highlight in more detail in Section II of the online appendix, educational attainment on its own – although widely used by journalists (and sometimes academics) to define the working class – is also problematic. Many Americans without college degrees achieve a level of affluence that would be difficult to square with any definition of working class.<sup>34</sup>

Ironically, they affirm that the difference in class between a factory worker and a PhD student earning the same income is contingent on the education level; however, these are both occupations. With regards to using occupation as the metric for class, Carnes and Lupu do not dispute this may be a superior metric, stating

Recent research on the working class has often defined workers as people employed in manual labor, service industry, and clerical jobs... But since most of the other surveys in our analysis do not include data on respondents’ occupations, we rely on income and education.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Carnes, Nicholas, and Noam Lupu. “The White Working Class and the 2016 Election.” *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 19, no. 1, 21 May 2020, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592720001267>. p. 55.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

Essentially, there are limits within the ANES, CCES, and VOTER data – occupation is not taken into account.

When they set the bounds of “Trump’s fan base” as anybody that voted for Trump in the 2016 General Election,<sup>36</sup> the population they are actually researching is the Republican Party constituency, not the subset of the Republican Party constituency that supported Trump over other right-wing candidates. In short, because of this population error, Carnes and Lupu end up drawing conclusions about Republican Voters, rather than the MAGA movement, a mistake which they did not intend by their own warrant.

Their conclusions on the matter – namely that Trump voters are not working-class<sup>37</sup> – are therefore true insofar as they consider those that vote for Trump because of Trump, and those that vote for Trump because he is a Republican, are identical. As mentioned prior, Carnes and Lupu do not believe this, hence the source of the accidental conflation. What we have here is effectively a study identifying Republican voters, rather than the MAGA movement, as not working-class.

However, studies have since been published on the class base of the MAGA movement, with occupation as the metric of which to analyze class. Stephen Morgan and Jiwon Lee are the only academics to consider occupation as a metric for class. Their primary aim is to define Trump’s base in terms of class by analyzing the class character of the voters that voted for Obama in 2012 before voting for Trump in 2016, and those that did not vote at all in 2012 but proceeded to vote for Trump in 2016. They use ANES, also, to collect voter data, and they use American Community Surveys to garner information on the occupational character of a geographic region.<sup>38</sup> They consider working class to be lower-grade service workers and unskilled manual workers – i.e., the most proletarian element of the working class.<sup>39</sup> Morgan and Lee discover a clear correlation between being working-class and switching to voting for Trump in the 2016 General Election. They claim that those that switched are a very good indicator of Trump’s broader base.<sup>40</sup> This identification was deliberately chosen due to the litany of issues of deriving the MAGA base from general Republican Party voter data – as the Republican Party, like the Democratic Party, has an immense class diversity to its constituency. Morgan and Lee’s study necessarily gestures towards the MAGA base being not only working-class, but proletarian.

Let us now address MAGA as a potential fascist incipience. If we diverge into the Marxist tradition, the works separate into two clear perceptions on fascism – the Gramscian line and the Marxist-Leninist line. The former concerns fascism as a bottom-up expression of volatile underclasses, while the latter concerns fascism as a top-down expression of volatile finance capital. Dimitrov, in *The Fascist Offensive*, defines fascism as an “open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital.”<sup>41</sup> He explains

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

<sup>38</sup> Morgan, Stephen, and Jiwon Lee. “Trump Voters and the White Working Class.” *Sociological Science*, vol. 5, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.15195/v5.a10>. p. 235.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 237.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 242.

<sup>41</sup> Dimitrov, Georgi. *Selected Works*. Vol. 2, Sofia Press, 1972.

particularly that fascism is not a state above and suzerain of all classes, as the liberals and fascists claim; nor is it a dictatorship of the petite-bourgeoisie, as Gramsci claims. Dimitrov writes:

Fascism is not a form of state power ‘standing above both classes – the proletariat and the bourgeoisie,’ as Otto Bauer, for instance, has asserted. It is not ‘the revolt of the petty bourgeoisie which has captured the machinery of the state,’ as the British Socialist Brailsford declares. No, fascism is not a power standing above class, nor government of the petty bourgeoisie or the lumpen-proletariat over finance capital. Fascism is the power of finance capital itself.<sup>42</sup>

Dimitrov states that the finance capitalists interested in bringing about such an arrangement rouse the masses into support by appealing to their most immediate needs, brought about by crisis; this can appear as revolution in form, socialism in form, or nationalism in form. The reality, in Dimitrov’s view, is this is a strategy to secure total political monopoly for the finance capitalists. For Dimitrov, the supporters may be of any sector of the working class, viewing their support for fascism over socialism as a failure of the socialists, rather than predicated on a class stratification of some sort.

This view exonerates the MAGA movement altogether – for, if fascism is brought about solely by the finance capitalists, the MAGA movement does not fit that class character on its face. However, the finance capitalists must consolidate their political monopoly using the masses in some manner, and therein certain sectors of the masses may play a role in bringing fascism about, despite not being fascist in essence. This is why we ought to consult Gramsci as well – who, in our view, does not contradict Dimitrov, but merely explains the phenomenon of certain masses’ support for fascism.

Gramsci views fascism in Italy essentially similar to Brailsford – whom Dimitrov cites. Contrary to Brailsford, Gramsci considers fascism to be the “white guard of capitalism,” seeing an alliance between the classes most reactionary to proletarian organizing – these are the petite-bourgeois, or “middle classes,” and the rural landowners:

The Fasci di combattimento were born in the aftermath of the war. They were imbued with the petit-bourgeois character of the various veterans associations which arose at that time.

Due to their trenchant opposition to the socialist movement they obtained the support of the capitalists and the authorities. This aspect of the Fasci was inherited in part from the conflict between the Socialist Party and the ‘interventionist’ associations during the war years.

They emerged during the same period when the rural landowners were feeling the need to create a White Guard to tackle the growing workers’ organisations. The gangs that were already organised and armed by the big landowners soon adopted the label Fasci for themselves too. With their subsequent

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

development, these gangs would acquire their own distinct character – as a White Guard of capitalism against the class organs of the proletariat.<sup>43</sup>

However, Gramsci recognizes, as Dimitrov does, that these interests are potentiated by the finance capitalists:

In the agricultural regions (Emilia, Toscana, Veneto and Umbria) fascism has achieved its greatest development. There, with the financial support of the capitalists and the protection of the civil and military authorities, it has attained a power without limits.<sup>44</sup>

The class character of MAGA becomes a matter of extreme import when discerning it to be fascist. If the MAGA movement is characterized as middle-class, or unproductive labor, the fascist prescription will become increasingly compelling. It is already known, especially in the 2024 election, that Donald Trump was backed by finance capitalists like J.P. Morgan.

We ought to consider Linda Gordon's *magnum opus*, a historical analysis of fascism in America's political tradition, *The Second Coming of the KKK*. This work outlines, similar to Gramsci's work on the rise of fascism, the character and manner in which the Second Ku Klux Klan arose in the United States. By all accounts, this was a fascist or proto-fascist movement, and can garner additional assistance in discerning the American process of fascism in particular. Most importantly, Gordon speaks to the class background of the constituency of the Second KKK – the skilled workers and "Lower-middle class" formed the base.<sup>45</sup> Unlike modern day, the proletarian organization of society in the 1920s was evident, present, and fierce; the KKK was perpetually at war with communists, socialists, unions, and the I.W.W.<sup>46</sup> This is to say, we are confronted – with the Second KKK – with the most distilled class composition of American fascism; that is, a core characterized by service work and unproductive labor.

Today, there is no visible Left-wing movement in the United States; fascism often comes in contradistinction to the revolutionary subject, attempting to crush it at every turn. This has been the case in both the Global North in the interwar period, and the Global South during the Cold War when the US Empire funded and backed fascist armies against people's movements. If MAGA was a fascist movement, it would be the most bizarre fascist movement in substance ever seen in history. Unlike the fascisms of yore, MAGA is constituted by the most proletarian elements of the American working class, rather than the "middle-class" professional-managerials of the Second KKK or Nazi Germany. Unlike the fascisms of yore, MAGA does not and can not oppose any Left-wing movements because there are none at present; it only opposes the Democrats, the anti-MAGA Republicans, and the so-called "elite," none of which can be considered Left-wing in any respect. So, by that metric, what is MAGA as a political phenomenon? A Marxist class analysis gestures towards the MAGA base being a proletarian element, likely an incipient revolutionary subject attempting to articulate itself.

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<sup>43</sup> Gramsci, Antonio. "The Two Fascisms." *Ordine Nuovo*, 1921.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Gordon, Linda. *The Second Coming of the KKK*. Liveright Publishing, 2017. p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

Al-Din, with his use of the theory of the partisan, does not arrive too far off from the class analysis above. He writes:

The MAGA movement has taken form as the movement of a people deposed of their hitherto sovereign representation, and therefore a people now struggling to receive the calling of their true polarity. It spawns, like an unstable vacuum deprived of its element, a whole multitude of contradictory superstitions projecting into the sky, being the soil out of which sovereigns, states and polarities make themselves born. For the architects of the global system, the American working class was the most overlooked and underestimated element, but in the end, it, alongside the public works and infrastructure of the New Deal, was the true basis and engine of the American economy. The extravagant designs of the ‘progressive globalists,’ like the Rockefellers, simply took them for granted. As in the case of the metabolic rift created in industrial capitalism described by Marx, where capital accumulation leads to the depletion of its own premises in the soil, the MAGA movement is the product of a political metabolic rift between the state and its own popular premises. (Al-Din 2022, 17)

And further,

It thrusts to the fore the basic question: Did America have to culminate in what it is today? Or, beginning from the very same premises, would an entirely different outcome have been possible? Make America Great Again, really means roll the dice again, repeat (with all the Deleuzian connotations) the origin of America, Reset American history, Return America to the mercy of its progenitor... America was great. It was great when it was other than what it only seems now, when it was latent with culminating into something else, a time that has been forgotten because it is impossible to remember. A time passed over, echoing forever into the annals of a lost past, lost but still felt like *deja vu* – like a trace memory from the future. MAGA is there in real America and not here in the empire of lies: whose most principal and founding lie consists in the notion that the highest necessity of Spirit culminates in the now of putrescent modernity. (17-18)

MAGA Communism therefore, to Al-Din, is the understanding that only Marxism-Leninism can articulate the political aspirations of MAGA (18). It is, effectively, the recognition that MAGA is an incipient partisan movement, the real Left-wing movement. Al-Din furthers this perspective by citing the “land empires,” known to Marxists as the Asiatic or tributary societies with their respective modes. To both Al-Din, and Marxists in general, these societies – i.e.; China, India, Russia, the Mongol Empire, the Caliphates, and so on – are a kind of protocommunism with extremely sophisticated forces of production. Al-Din articulates them as “partisan states,” where due to their basis in rurality – the “country,” in the “town and country” distinction – the base of the states’ political sovereignty is in their substantial premises (13-14). Despite occurring as a phenomenon in the town of all towns, the US Empire, MAGA takes root and has its material independence in rurality (16), hence Al-Din’s inclusion of MAGA as an incipient partisanship and a so-called “lost chronology of the West” (18); for the West’s inability to attain the Asiatic or tributary mode was purely accidental or contingent.

We are now able to understand the theory of MAGA Communism, and what that theory is in form. MAGA Communism is a political theory that understands MAGA to be a form of partisanship; a Left-wing, inherently communist movement in substance. MAGA Communism is also a political strategy prepared and packaged for Marxist-Leninists, holding the understanding that the American revolutionary subject in present day is MAGA, itself, and it is the work of communists to articulate its needs and conduct mass politics. This philosophy is certainly a heterodox rendition of Marxism-Leninism, but appears to be a consistent and coherent political theory as such. Al-Din finishes the discussion by affirming the hitherto inability of American communists to interface with the current American revolutionary subject is the fault of those very communists. Because, in Al-Din's view, American communism as with the CPUSA has transitioned from being a Left-wing movement to a leftist organization, staffed by professional-managers, it has all but justified the McCarthyist propaganda of the past century (19-20).

### **Substance: The American Communist Party**

So then what, in substance, does Al-Din practice to fulfill the aspirations of MAGA Communism? How, in reality, does this political theory play out? For all intents and purposes, Al-Din's political party, the ACP, is the bridge between the form of MAGA Communism and its real substance in practice. We need not analyze the party platform in too much detail, for it contains much of the same political aspirations expressed in the previous work: ending all debts, conducting land, housing, and agricultural reform, ending mass immigration, etc.<sup>47</sup> In general, the party platform follows suit to regular Marxist-Leninist aspirations adopted to the general domestic needs of the American worker. Every part of this party platform is necessarily counter-hegemonic, and would require a sovereign premises of the government in the working class to be executed; we need not go through them all. In this section, we are primarily concerned with how MAGA Communism functions in reality, of which, it appears to be an effective organizational strategy.

We will be analyzing the ACP, as a party, on three metrics in comparison to its contemporaries, the CPUSA and the PSL – the two largest communist parties in the United States. These three metrics include organizational capacity, size and scope, and official political capacity. These metrics denote the scope and execution in which parties are able to mobilize their members to conduct some public action, the mere reach of the parties in terms of geography and personnel, and the parties' ability to engage in regular politics, respectively. What we find is that the ACP surpasses the CPUSA and the PSL in organizational capacity and official political capacity, but falls short on size and scope.

Let –us first discuss the size and scope of each party. The CPUSA is organized into thirty-one clubs, spread out across thirty-two US states including DC, with some incongruence. California contains two clubs, one for the San Francisco Bay Area, the other for the So-Cal region. Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota share one club. Missouri and Kansas, also, share one club. Pennsylvania is split into two clubs, a Western branch and an Eastern branch, the latter including Delaware.<sup>48</sup> The PSL is organized into fifty-two “groups” across thirty-six US states

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<sup>47</sup> “Program of the American Communist Party.” *American Communist Party*, 12 Oct. 2024, [acp.us/program](http://acp.us/program). Points 1, 4, and 15, for example.

<sup>48</sup> “Contact.” *Communist Party USA*, 6 Feb. 2025, [cpusa.org/contact/](http://cpusa.org/contact/).

including DC. Many of these groups are organized around particular urban areas, rather than states – for example, California has six groups for its largest cities, Texas has four, New York has five, and so on.<sup>49</sup> There is no rough regularity in PSL scope as there is for the CPUSA due to this. The ACP contains thirty “chapters,” spread out across thirty US states and Canadian provinces, one per political ordinance; it is thus the smallest in terms of scope. Concerning just US states, it has only twenty-seven chapters.<sup>50</sup>

What this actually means in terms of size may be misleading, for getting public membership counts from the PSL or the CPUSA is difficult. The ACP, likely the smallest of the three, publicly discloses its members, and currently sits at a membership count of three-hundred.<sup>51</sup> The CPUSA leader, Joe Sims, claims that the CPUSA has upwards of fifteen-thousand members, but acknowledges most of those members may be inactive.<sup>52</sup> The PSL, unlike the ACP and CPUSA, does not disclose any kind of membership count. In 2022, the PSL claimed to have groups in “over 100 cities” across the US,<sup>53</sup> in 2024, their claim dropped to “over 50 cities.”<sup>54</sup> A lesser contemporary to the PSL, the Socialist Alternative, claimed to have one-thousand members in their ranks. Raina Lipsitz of *Socialist Forum*, in remarking on membership counts of her organization, the Democratic Socialists of America, gestures towards the membership counts of PSL and Socialist Alternative to be roughly similar in size.<sup>55</sup> It is likely that membership in the PSL has dwindled after their closure of nearly half of their clubs. With this sparse information, we may still estimate CPUSA being the largest of the three, and the PSL and ACP being roughly comparable at this point, with the ACP likely remaining the smallest of the three.

It is important to contextualize these numbers within the broader context of history. The CPUSA has attained a membership count likely half of the previously claimed fifteen thousand, and has been operational for one hundred and six years. The PSL may have roughly a thousand members, and has been operational for eleven years. The ACP has three hundred members and has been active for six months. The ACP’s steady rate of growth is significantly higher than both other organizations. If the ACP started in 2004, with its current rate of growth it would have roughly 3300 members, likely larger than the PSL. If it started in 1919, like the CPUSA, it would grow to roughly 31,800 members assuming a similar rate of growth, double the size of Joe Sims’ claim, which includes inactive members. It is important to note that the ACP is also a new organization, and may see a steady decline in growth rate as time goes on, if it becomes stagnant like the other parties. At present, the ACP remains the smallest of the two other major parties, but has the highest growth rate by a significant amount, despite having an application process to join, rather than open sign-ons like the PSL and CPUSA.

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<sup>49</sup> “Contact US – PSL.” *Party for Socialism and Liberation*, [www2.pslweb.org/contact/](http://www2.pslweb.org/contact/).

<sup>50</sup> “American Communist Party: Chapters.” *American Communist Party*, [acp.us/chapters](http://acp.us/chapters).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Santana, Rebecca, and Ali Swenson. “Trump Wants to Keep ‘communists’ and ‘Marxists’ out of the US. Here’s What the Law Says.” *AP News*, AP News, 16 Oct. 2023, [apnews.com/article/donald-trump-immigration-marxists-communists-ban-2024-d9a377149926457d1b8b182293d9c86e](https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-immigration-marxists-communists-ban-2024-d9a377149926457d1b8b182293d9c86e).

<sup>53</sup> Liberation Staff. “We Need Your Help to Build the Movement for Socialism.” *Liberation News*, 15 Aug. 2022, [liberationnews.org/we-need-your-help-to-build-the-movement-for-socialism-2/](https://liberationnews.org/we-need-your-help-to-build-the-movement-for-socialism-2/).

<sup>54</sup> “End Capitalism Before It Ends Us.” *Claudia & Karina 2024: For President and Vice President*, 2024, [votesocialist2024.com/](https://votesocialist2024.com/).

<sup>55</sup> Lipsitz, Raina. “Where We Are and Where We’re Going.” *Socialist Forum*, 6 Dec. 2022, [socialistforum.dsausa.org/issues/fall-2022/where-we-are-and-where-were-going/](https://socialistforum.dsausa.org/issues/fall-2022/where-we-are-and-where-were-going/).

What can be said of what the parties choose to do with their members? In what ways are these members mobilized to conduct public action? Most operations of all three parties can be seen publicly on their official websites, social media accounts, and journals. We will be considering the public actions of these organizations on their size and frequency. The CPUSA, despite boasting the largest membership count and the longest history of organizing, seems to do far less than the ACP and PSL in terms of public action. Roughly once a month between chapters – sometimes more or less often – CPUSA clubs demonstrate their ability to serve in protests. Much of this consists of appearing at protests and lending their resources and manpower to already existing organizations. In recent months, the CPUSA has routinely assisted protestors concerning the genocide in Palestine, as well as striking Amazon workers involved in the respective Teamsters Union.

The PSL surpasses the demonstrated organizational capacity of the CPUSA in terms of frequency and scale. Taken together, PSL groups demonstrate on a weekly basis, sometimes more or less frequently, their ability to aid protestors. This includes mass-grassroots protests unlinked to a given organization, likely contributing to their frequency. In addition, some PSL clubs spend time raising money or donation material for charity; the typical target population for PSL charity drives is the homeless.

The ACP's demonstrated organizational capacity is very similar to the PSL, with one significant deviation. Like the PSL, the ACP is found lending their assistance to protestors on a weekly basis, sometimes more or less frequently. Unlike the PSL, ACP charity drives often occur weekly, with target populations including the homeless, local community organizations like churches and food pantries, and victims of natural disasters. The significant deviation from the PSL, let alone the CPUSA, is the "build and rebuild" doctrine for community building the ACP employs. Many of the chapters, as demonstrated on the ACP's official communications media, are frequently engaged in building public spaces – gardens, gathering places, etc. – and rebuilding the public spaces that have decayed due to lack of maintenance – typically sidewalks, memorials, gathering places, and so on. This has become the ACP's distinctive feature during the recent floods in North Carolina and the fires devastating California. The ACP boasts raising thousands of dollars for donation and mustering hundreds of man-hours in clearing debris, passing out provisions, and rebuilding public architecture.<sup>56</sup> The frequency and scale of ACP's organizational capacity, compared to its relatively small membership size, necessarily surpasses the PSL and CPUSA as the superior public action force.

The political application of these parties is not storied and quite short; seldom have communist parties won public office in the United States. Since 1949, there have been only three members of communist parties, running on a communist party ticket, elected into office. In 1983 Kenny Jones, on the CPUSA ticket, was elected to the Board of Aldermen, a local legislative council in the city of St. Louis.<sup>57</sup> In 2019, Wahsayah Whitebird was elected to the City Council of

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<sup>56</sup> "American Communist Party: Activity." *American Communist Party*, [acp.us/activity](http://acp.us/activity).

<sup>57</sup> Pecinovsky, Tony. "100 Years of CPUSA: A Critical Reply to 'Jacobin.'" *Communist Party USA*, 8 May 2020, [www.cpusa.org/article/100-years-of-cpusa-a-critical-reply-to-jacobin/](http://www.cpusa.org/article/100-years-of-cpusa-a-critical-reply-to-jacobin/).

Ashland, Wisconsin, on the CPUSA ticket.<sup>58</sup> Christopher Helali was elected to high bailiff of Orange County Vermont in 2023,<sup>59</sup> an oversight position for sheriffs to regulate police corruption.<sup>60</sup> Helali ran on the American Communist Party ticket.<sup>61</sup> In the entire history of all three parties, the CPUSA boasts the most storied electoral history. The party had run dozens of times and held office a total of six times. Its highest position of power was mayor of Crosby, Minnesota, in 1933. The PSL, also, has run dozens of times for various offices, but has never won. The ACP has run once and won once.

Taken together, each of these three parties – the two established majors and the ACP – have their own strengths and discrepancies. It is certainly unclear as to whether the ACP will retain its momentum as time continues – after all, the party has existed for less than a year. If it does retain its organizational and political capacity, as well as its overwhelming recruitment rate, it will surpass the other two parties within the decade by those metrics. The party of so-called MAGA Communism has been able to mobilize members to conduct public and community action more often and to a greater degree than the CPUSA and PSL. Similarly, its political capacity – if it maintains a similar trajectory – will soon outpace the CPUSA’s performance in recent years. Whatever the form is, for Al-Din’s MAGA Communism, the substantial effect of organizing around the MAGA movement in a Marxist-Leninist framework has been overwhelmingly successful, in the broader context of communist organizing in the United States. If we are to believe the claims of the DSA and the admission of Joe Sims, the ACP may have already surpassed those parties in most regards, including membership populations. In short, MAGA Communism seems to be a very effective framework for organizing and building Left-wing politics in the United States.

### Critiques of MAGA Communism

So far, we have closely examined the philosophy of MAGA Communism, and found it to be a theoretically coherent form of Marxism-Leninism – albeit heterodox. The substance of MAGA Communism, in the form of the American Communist Party, appears to be effective in its aims of organizing and practicing communist partisanship in the US. However, there are a few critiques of MAGA Communism thenceforth unconsidered, and we must lay them bare here to understand why Al-Din and his political project have not been received well by certain interlocutors. Many of these critiques aim primarily at the characters of Al-Din and his colleague, Jackson Hinkle. Very little of the MAGA Communist philosophy is critiqued as philosophy by the two articles on the project in the main – one released by *Vice*, the other by *The Guardian*. Both of these were released before the founding of the ACP, and focus primarily on the ambiguous “MAGA Communist” movement

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<sup>58</sup> Johnson, Earchiel. “Native American Communist Topples Incumbent Council President in Wisconsin Town.” *People’s World*, 7 May 2019, [www.peoplesworld.org/article/native-american-communist-topples-incumbent-council-president-in-wisconsin-town/](http://www.peoplesworld.org/article/native-american-communist-topples-incumbent-council-president-in-wisconsin-town/).

<sup>59</sup> Dreher, Isabel. “Helali Wins High Bailiff as Write-In.” *The White River Valley Herald*, 26 Dec. 2024, [www.ourherald.com/articles/helali-wins-high-bailiff-as-write-in/](http://www.ourherald.com/articles/helali-wins-high-bailiff-as-write-in/).

<sup>60</sup> Helali, Chris. “Write-in Helali for High Bailiff.” *The White River Valley Herald*, 29 Oct. 2024, [www.ourherald.com/articles/write-in-helali-for-high-bailiff/](http://www.ourherald.com/articles/write-in-helali-for-high-bailiff/).

<sup>61</sup> Evans, Jordan Willow. “Unofficial Results Show American Communist Party’s Chris Helali Leading Vermont High Bailiff Write-In Race.” *Independent Political Report*, 11 Nov. 2024, [independentpoliticalreport.com/2024/11/unofficial-results-show-american-communist-party-member-chris-helali-leading-high-bailiff-write-in-campaign-in-vermont](http://independentpoliticalreport.com/2024/11/unofficial-results-show-american-communist-party-member-chris-helali-leading-high-bailiff-write-in-campaign-in-vermont).

as such. There are other articles remarking on the topic, as well as the ACP particularly; however, these are few and from obscure or amateur media outlets.

The first article, written by Eddie Kim and published by *Vice* in 2022, aims to ask, as we have asked, the question as to what MAGA Communism actually is. Primarily, Kim consults various YouTubers, one professor, and one man-on-the-street interview done by Al-Din on the matter, and comes to the following conclusion:

...the MAGA movement grew out of online virality, preening politicians, and bad-faith misinformation, all rigged to churn the full-blown grift around the Culture Wars. Nonetheless, it seems like “MAGA Communism” can and will stick around, especially on YouTube – a venue that, despite all its ills, remains a crucial hub for instigating political brawls and generating a fandom for fringe ideas.<sup>62</sup>

In consulting the aforementioned sources, Kim concludes that “MAGA Communism” appears to be sequestered to internet virality, with little ideological consistency. Many of the “critiques” levied at MAGA Communism, acting as the warrant for the journal article – including allegations of promoting authoritarianism, spreading fascism, and so on – are from a single YouTube video produced by an individual named “NonCompete.” All citations regarding critiques of the philosophy originate from this one video. Kim likely references these critiques to merely stage the article, as he does not necessarily find them compelling in his final analysis.

Similarly, he stages the article with an interview with Daniel HoSang, a Yale professor, who contributed the following insight:

Obviously, this view doesn’t account for the very real material reasons why people identify with [right-wing] ideas... But what’s interesting about the ‘MAGA Communism’ phrase is that it doesn’t necessarily mean communism in the literal sense of, say, demanding collective ownership. I think it’s meant to be a kind of cultural invocation – a defense from that which the elites want you to believe. It suggests something about how people’s political moorings are unsettled, and the search to find new bearings.<sup>63</sup>

Al-Din’s work, *THE RISE OF MAGA COMMUNISM*, was released a month before this *Vice* article was published. It is unsure if the article was written before Al-Din’s work was published. It is fair to assume that neither HoSang nor Kim had read the seminal work on the philosophy before the composition of the *Vice* article. Regardless, HoSang appears to be engaging with the central contradiction Al-Din rectified in the piece. Kim, however, does not find HoSang’s contribution compelling, and does not include his analysis in his conclusion.

Ultimately, Kim answers the fact-finding question simply: MAGA Communism is a kind of “grift.” In synthesizing the analyses available to him, Kim discerns that the ideological inconsistency, the apparent contradiction between MAGA and Communism, and the virality – at

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<sup>62</sup> Kim, Eddie. “What the Hell Is MAGACommunism?” *VICE*, 17 Oct. 2024, [www.vice.com/en/article/what-the-hell-is-magacommunism/](http://www.vice.com/en/article/what-the-hell-is-magacommunism/).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

the time, MAGA Communism began widely circulating online – is evidence only of a kind of popular success of Hinkle and Al-Din. To Kim, Al-Din and Hinkle are constructing a Frankenstein’s monster of political ideology, often co-opting left and right-wing elements where best suited, to the ends of no real political project, but ultimately towards making wealth for themselves.

At the time, this article may have generated valid criticisms with the information given. At that point, Al-Din’s work on the philosophy of MAGA Communism had only been published for a month – and likely had not seen any relevant circulation yet. The American Communist Party, similarly, would not have been founded for two years. It is difficult to say Kim’s criticisms are inaccurate or dishonest with the information available, as the critiques levied had yet to be enumerated or practiced in the substance of history. For all intents and purposes, Kim’s article was appropriate for the time, but the philosophical argument of Al-Din’s piece and the practice of the ACP in substance necessarily subvert the criticisms. The same cannot be said for *The Guardian* article.

This article was written by Tess Owen, only a few months before the launch of the ACP. Owen remarks on what MAGA Communism is in form and in substance, but ultimately, there are few arguments being made in the article. She mostly remarks on events in which Al-Din or Hinkle demonstrated dishonesty or social conservatism on their Twitter or other social media accounts, while her interview with Portland State University lecturer Alexander Reid Ross indicts Al-Din and Hinkle as fascistic agents. As for the form of MAGA Communism, Owen surmises,

Maga communism comprises a grab bag of ideas that can seem lacking in coherence – ranging from a belief in the power of Donald Trump’s followers to wrest power from ‘global elites’ to an emphasis on masculine ‘honor’, admiration for Vladimir Putin and support for Palestinian liberation.<sup>64</sup>

This is the central critique Owen posits: that MAGA Communism is, in form, ideologically incoherent. However, she platforms Ross in stating,

“If you look at their policies, like what they actually propose, it’s clear that this is a deranged fringe movement that doesn’t really have a great deal of articulation. It seems ludicrous, but I would say it’s really a symptom of the erosion of rational political life.”<sup>65</sup>

Ross, who forms the central perspective of the piece – in addition to Professor Richard Wolff of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst – proceeds to muse on the strategy of Al-Din and Hinkle towards constructing the philosophy, in that it is an effort to co-opt fascist ideas and iconography. For Owen, the end that this serves lies in the substance. She does not find Ross’ implication – that Al-Din and Hinkle are fascist operators – compelling. Instead, like Kim, she asserts that MAGA Communism is an ideology created by grifters, who aim only to enrich themselves. She composes

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<sup>64</sup> Owen, Tess. “‘A Deranged Fringe Movement’: What Is Maga Communism, the Online Ideology Platformed by Tucker Carlson?” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 24 May 2024, [www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/may/24/what-is-maga-communism](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/may/24/what-is-maga-communism).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

the strategy, in synthesis, similar to Kim in that left- and right-wing elements are wed to draw as many followers as possible, but also adds the analysis of toxic masculinity. Al-Din's support of "honor" and "strength" – as in Ross' perspective – is seen by Owen as an effort to draw in "vulnerable" young men, seemingly having difficulty with gender and exhibiting antisociality. In Owen's view, the other indictments of Al-Din and Hinkle – their support for the Russian Federation, Palestine, MAGA, Marxism-Leninism, and other counter-hegemonic positions – are indicative of attempting to draw from both supposedly left and right-wing elements. These positions, to Owen, Ross, and Wolff, are indicative of antisociality on the part of the followers, and a skilled grift on the part of Hinkle and Al-Din. This, in truth, merely reveals the political alignment of the contributors – in holding the perspective that these positions simply bely some sort of psychological malformation, rather than a real political substance.

Unlike Kim, Al-Din's seminal work had been in circulation for two years prior, and the allegation of ideological inconsistency would no longer be excusable. All that remains is the allegation of grift. Unlike Kim, Owen provides some evidence for this claim – in the form of Hinkle selling political hats and coffee mugs in support of Palestine, and Al-Din earning revenue from his online political show. This evidence may not appear like much on its outset, but provides a compelling argument as to the intentions of Al-Din and Hinkle. Before the ACP, the only substantial impact of Al-Din and Hinkle existed in their media enterprises and, thus, their acquiescence of revenue and donations. The argument Kim attempted to make has been made coherently by Owen. The apparently flagrant and provocative nature of MAGA Communism has been an effort to build a support base to funnel money to Al-Din and Hinkle through merchandise.

Owen can certainly be excused for this critique, as it was levied before the founding of the ACP. The party that practices political action and Left-wing organizing is – in all regards – a "money-pit." It generates no revenue whatsoever, neither through dues or real-estate like the other parties. In the past few months, it has begun selling a journal called *Red America*, but the bulk of its funds – due to the novelty and low circulation of said journal – likely still come entirely from the revenue Hinkle, Al-Din, and the scholars at the Midwestern Marx Institute garner from their media presences. Intentions and dishonesty can be difficult to prove. In substance, whether the media presence of Al-Din and Hinkle was cultivated in a fashion to get as much money as possible, it is clear that it was not for personal enrichment. Community organization, food and clothing drives for the homeless, party conferences, and so on, have all been a result of the money Al-Din and Hinkle have made through their ventures. Whether there is a plan for the ACP to become a money-making opportunity has yet to be seen. Until then, the ACP's financing seems to exonerate those political personalities as opportunists, for the party exists solely for them to dump money into with no returns – a poor practice for a grifter.

## Conclusions

This paper has served to demystify what MAGA Communism is in substance and form, something attempted by news media and online figures, but never in the academic forum. We have provided our Marxist analysis of the framework of MAGA Communism, seen in Al-Din's work *THE RISE OF MAGA COMMUNISM*, which seems to be an ideologically consistent synthesis between Marxism-Leninism and the Schmittian theory of the partisan, albeit a heterodox one. In substance, we have analyzed the practices and ability of the American Communist Party, which

has demonstrated an organizational capacity, political capacity, and recruitment rate surpassing its contemporaries. All criticisms levied at MAGA Communism in the main had really been levied against its “leaders” – Al-Din and Hinkle – which, in reality, had been addressed by time.

Let us return to the significance of this “fringe” philosophy, and why this paper should have been written to begin with. The domestic political environment of the United States has been ruptured since 2016, and the subsequent rise of the MAGA movement has brought about a fundamentally new form of populist politics in the country. The aftershocks of 2016, 2020, and the current election cycle we are now experiencing have been and continue to be of great interest to academics and all manners of political organization – Communist or otherwise. MAGA Communism, enshrined in the political strategy of the ACP, has propelled itself to the fore, and is aiming to outpace all other communist parties in the US – at a moment when crisis in the US Empire is at a crux, basing itself in a political premises that is responding to the crisis.

Academics wishing to understand how this meteoric rise could occur, why it has succeeded in such a way, and what the broader implications are for politically heterodox organizing in the United States may use this work as a footing to do further research. Because of the success of the ACP against its contemporaries, MAGA Communism is no longer avoidable, and should be engaged with lucidly and in earnest to understand and navigate the environment of communist organizing in the US today. Simply put, MAGA Communism is now made relevant, and a mystified understanding, *or* one that reduces it to opportunism, is insufficient to assess its unprecedented rise. What was once a “fringe” online ideology has become a rising force out in the open, and must be contended with by scholars of American Marxism and communist organizers alike.

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