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2]Challenging Cap should come first because challenging it is necessary for all other oppressive structures – anything else ignores intersections between those oppressions, Ollman^[1]

So why should people involved in the social movements be interested in Marxism? Well—because most of them/us are also workers (white collar as well as blue collar), and, **Marxism is invaluable in helping to develop a strategy that serv[ing] es their/our interests as workers** Because the **other forms of domination from which they/we suffer all have a capitalist component**, and Marxism best explains it. Because **even those parts of these oppressions that are older than capitalism have acquired a capitalist form and function**, so that a Marxist analysis of capitalism is required to distinguish what is historically specific in their operation from what is not. And, lastly, because **overturning capitalism is the necessary** (though not sufficient) **condition for doing away with all forms of domination**, including domination over nature, **and only a class conscious working class has the numbers (still), the power** (potentially), **and the interests (always) to bring about a change of this magnitude**. Hence, the priority Marxists give to class analysis and class based politics (which does not rule out organizing around other oppressions at specific times for specific purposes). **The priority** given to class here (not to "the workers" but to "us as workers") **has nothing to do with who is hurting more**, or which form of oppression is more immoral or which dominated group happens to be in motion, **and everything to do with what is the adequate** framework and **vantage point for grasping the specific manner in which all these oppressions are interacting now and how best to get rid of them all**. (And this is what Albert caricatures as a "master discourse"). I do not expect that simply making these claims has convinced anyone that they are right, but I hope they help clarify where the real disagreements between Marxist and social movement theorists lie, and, hence, what is worth discussing if we are ever to construct the united movement that is needed to achieve

Our greatest ethical obligation is to resist capitalism – it's relevant under any moral theory. MORGARIDGE:

Morgaridge, Clayton, Prof of Philosophy at Lewis & Clark College,
1998, Why Capitalism is Evil 08/22

<http://www.lclark.edu/~clayton/commentaries/evil.html> SLS

Now none of these philosophers are naive: none of them thinks that sympathy, love, or caring determines all, or even most, human behavior. The 20th century proves otherwise. What they do offer, though, is the hope that human beings have the capacity to want the best for each other. So now we must ask, What forces are at work in our world to block or cripple the ethical response? This question, of course, brings me back to capitalism. But before I go there, I want to acknowledge that capitalism is not the only thing that blocks our ability to care. Exploitation and cruelty were around long before the economic system of capitalism came to be, and the temptation to use and abuse others will probably survive in any future society that might supersede capitalism. Nevertheless, I want to claim, the **putting the world at the disposal of** those with **[with] capital has done more damage to the ethical life than anything else**. To put it in religious terms, capital is the devil. To show why this is the case, let me turn to capital's greatest critic, Karl Marx. **Under capitalism**, Marx writes, **everything** in nature and everything that human beings are and can do **becomes an object: a resource for, or an obstacle, to** the expansion of production, the development of technology, the growth of **markets and** the circulation of **money**. For those who manage and live from capital, nothing has value of its own. **Mountain streams, clean air, human lives- all mean nothing in themselves, but are valuable only** if they can be used **to turn a profit**.^[1] If capital looks at (not into) the human face, it sees there only eyes through which brand names and advertising can enter and mouths that can demand and consume food, drink, and tobacco products. If human faces express needs, then either products can be manufactured to meet, or seem to meet, those needs, or else, if the needs are incompatible with the growth of capital, then the faces expressing them must be unrepresented or silenced. Obviously what capitalist enterprises do have consequences for the well being of human beings and the planet we live on. **Capital profits from** the **production of** food, shelter, and all the **necessities** of life. The production of all these things uses human lives in the shape of labor, as well as the resources of the earth.

If we care about life, if we see our obligations in each others faces, then we have to want all the things capital does to be governed by that care, to be directed by the ethical concern for life. But feeding people is not the aim of the food industry, or shelter the purpose of the housing industry. In medicine, making profits is becoming a more important goal than caring for sick people. As capitalist enterprises these activities aim single-mindedly at the accumulation of capital, and such purposes as caring for the sick or feeding the hungry becomes a mere means to an end, an instrument of corporate growth. **Therefore ethics**, the overriding commitment to meeting human need, **is left out of deliberations about what** the heavyweight **institutions of** our **society are going to do**. Moral convictions are expressed in churches, in living rooms, in letters to the editor, sometimes even by politicians and widely read commentators, but almost always with an attitude of resignation to the inevitable. People no longer say, "You can't stop progress," but only because they have learned not to call economic growth progress. They still think they can't stop it. And they are right -- as long as the production of all our needs and the organization of our labor is carried out under private ownership. Only a minority ("idealists") can take seriously a way of thinking that counts for nothing in real world decision making. **Only when the end of capitalism is on the table will ethics have a seat at the table.**

Recognizing strikes re-entrenches capitalist notions of labor. The aff doesn't solve because strikes perpetuate the system where workers feel tied to the government. The attempt of striking in order to work for the state is capitalist itself

Eidlin 20

Eidlin, Barry (assistant professor of sociology at McGill University and author of Labor and the Class Idea in the United States and Canada) "Why Unions are good-but not good enough" Jacobin, 6 Jan 2020. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/01/marxism-trade-unions-socialism-revolutionary-organizing>

At the same time, unions are an imperfect and incomplete vehicle for the working class to achieve one of Marxist theory's central goals: overthrowing capitalism. Unions by their very existence affirm and reinforce capitalist class society. As organizations which primarily negotiate wages, benefits, and working conditions with employers, unions only exist in relation to capitalists. This makes them almost by definition reformist institutions, designed to mitigate and manage the employment relationship, not transform it.

Recognizing a right to strike reduces revolutionary potential and fractures class organizing

Crépon 19 Mark Crépon (French philosopher), translated by Micol Bez "The Right to Strike and Legal War in Walter Benjamin's 'Toward the Critique of Violence,'" Critical Times, 2:2, August 2019, DOI 10.1215/26410478-7708331

If we wish to understand how the question of the right to strike arises for Walter Benjamin in the seventh paragraph of his essay "Zur Kritik der Gewalt," it is important to first analyze the previous paragraph, which concerns the state's monopoly on violence. It is here that Benjamin questions the argument that such a monopoly derives from the impossibility of a system of legal ends to preserve itself as long as the pursuit of natural ends through violent means remains. Benjamin responds to this dogmatic thesis with the following hypothesis, arguably one of his most important reflections: "To counter it, one would perhaps have to consider the surprising possibility that law's interest in monopolizing violence vis-à-vis the individual is explained by the intention not of preserving legal ends, but rather of preserving law itself. **[This is the possibility] that violence, when it does not lie in the hands of law, poses a danger to law, not by virtue of the ends that it may pursue but by virtue of its mere existence outside of law.**"¹ In other words, **nothing would**

endanger the law more than the possibility of its authority being contested by a violence over which it has no control. The function of the law would therefore be, first and foremost, to contain violence within its own boundaries. It is in this context that, to demonstrate this surprising hypothesis, Benjamin invokes two examples: the right to strike guaranteed by the state and the law of war. **Let us return to the place that the right to strike occupies within class struggle. To begin with, the very idea of such a struggle implies certain forms of violence. The strike could then be understood as one of the recognizable forms that this violence can take. However, this analytical framework is undermined as soon as this form of violence becomes regulated by a "right to strike," such as the one recognized by law in France in 1864. What this recognition engages is, in fact, the will of the state to control the possible "violence" of the strike. Thus, the "right" of the right to strike appears as the best, if not the only, way for the state to circumscribe within (and via) the law the relative violence of class struggles.** We might consider this to be the perfect illustration of the aforementioned hypothesis. Yet, there are two lines of questioning that destabilize this hypothesis that we would do well to consider. First, is it legitimate to present the strike as a form of violence? Who has a vested interest in such a representation? In other words, how can we trace a clear and unequivocal demarcation between violence and nonviolence? Are we not always bound to find residues of violence, even in those actions that we would be tempted to consider nonviolent? The second line of questioning is just as important and is rooted in the distinction established by Georges Sorel, in his *Reflections on Violence*, between the "political strike" and the "proletarian general strike," to which Benjamin dedicates a set of complementary analyses in §13 of his essay. Here, again, we are faced with a question of limits. What is at stake is the possibility for a certain type of strike (the proletarian general strike) to exceed the limits of the right to strike—turning, in other words, the right to strike against the law itself. The phenomenon is that of an autoimmune process, in which the right to strike that is meant to protect the law against the possible violence of class struggles is transformed into a means for the destruction of the law. The difference between the two types of strikes is nevertheless introduced with a condition: "The validity of this statement, however, is not unrestricted because it is not unconditional," notes Benjamin in §7. We would be mistaken in believing that the right to strike is granted and guaranteed unconditionally. Rather, it is structurally subjected to a conflict of interpretations, those of the workers, on the one hand, and of the state on the other. From the point of view of the state, the partial strike cannot under any circumstance be understood as a right to exercise violence, but rather as the right to extract oneself from a preexisting (and verifiable) violence: that of the employer. In this sense, the partial strike should be considered a nonviolent action, what Benjamin named a "pure means." The interpretations diverge on two main points. The first clearly depends on the alleged "violence of the employer," a predicate that begs the question: Who might have the authority to recognize such violence? Evidently it is not the employer. The danger is that the state would similarly lack the incentive to make such a judgment call. It is nearly impossible, in fact, to find a single instance of a strike in which this recognition of violence was not subject to considerable controversy. **The political game is thus the following: the state legislated the right to strike in order to contain class struggles, with the condition that workers must have "good reason" to strike. However, it is unlikely that a state systematically allied with (and accomplice to) employers will ever recognize reasons as good, and, as a consequence, it will deem any invocation of the right to strike as illegitimate. Workers will therefore be seen as abusing a right granted by the state, and in so doing transforming it into a violent means.** On this point, Benjamin's analyses remain extremely pertinent and profoundly contemporary. They unveil the enduring strategy of governments confronted with a strike (in education, transportation, or healthcare, for example) who, after claiming to understand the reasons for the protest and the grievances of the workers, deny that the arguments constitute sufficient reason for a strike that will likely paralyze this or that sector of the economy. **They deny, in other words, that the conditions denounced by the workers display an intrinsic violence that justifies the strike.** Let us note here a point that Benjamin does not mention, but that is part of Sorel's reflections: this denial inevitably contaminates the (socialist) left once it gains power. What might previously have seemed a good reason to strike when it was the opposition is deemed an insufficient one once it is the ruling party. In the face of popular protest, it always invokes a lack of sufficient rationale, allowing it to avoid recognizing the intrinsic violence of a given social or economic situation, or of a new policy. **And it is because it refuses to see this violence and to take responsibility for it that the left regularly loses workers' support.**

Capitalism's successes necessitate human extinction and destroy the value to life – it's try or die for alternative organizing

Duzgun 20 Eren Duzgun (teaches Historical Sociology and International Relations at Leiden University, Netherlands), 4-5-2020, "Capitalism, Coronavirus and the Road to Extinction," Socialist Project, <https://socialistproject.ca/2020/04/capitalism-coronavirus-and-road-to-extinction/>

Covid-19, by contrast, has begun its journey and taken its biggest toll thus far in the most advanced and affluent parts of the world. This is to say, the contagion is no longer limited to the persistently undernourished, underdeveloped, and war-torn parts of the world; its impact is no longer restricted to a distant wet market or a third world country alone. **Instead, it has emerged and expanded in the very heart of the capitalist world order at a time when capitalism has not only been already firmly established across the globe but has been testing the eco-biological limits of the entire planet. Should things remain the same, Covid-19 and its**

future cousins are likely to claim the lives of not just ‘some’ people as they did in the past, but of humanity as a whole. In this sense, perhaps for the first time in modern history, the biological blitzkrieg activated by the coronavirus has thrown into sharp relief the immediately existential and undeniably global contradictions and consequences generated by capitalism.

Contradictions on a Global Scale Critical biologists and epidemiologists have put the blame on industrial agriculture as the root cause of the emergence of new pathogens since the 1990s. According to Rob Wallace, giant agribusiness and resource extraction firms have now reached the last virgin forests and smallholder-held farmlands in the world, subordinating them to the logic of capitalist markets. **The loss of the ecological diversity and complexity of these huge tracts of land has increasingly forced wild food operators to hunt in previously untouched parts of the jungle, which, in turn, has increased “the interaction with, and spillover of, previously boxed-in pathogens, including Covid-19.”**

Likewise, global warming has forced or allowed pathogens to escape their natural habitat. As a result, new viruses against which we have no immunity “are being sprung free, threatening the whole world.” In short, as John Vidal writes, “we disrupt ecosystems, and we shake viruses loose from their natural hosts. When that happens, they need a new host. Often, we are it.” **That some agribusiness firms have been blatantly risking lives for profit would not come as a surprise to the critical reader.** Even Bill Gates has

been sounding the alarm about the potentially deadly consequences of irresponsible business practices and new viruses. **Yet, what tends to remain underemphasized in these debates is that the blame belongs neither solely to ‘greedy’ firms that have driven viruses out of their natural habitat, nor to ‘short-sighted’ politicians who have not invested enough in vaccine technology or national health systems. Instead, the problem is rooted in the very structure and rationality of the system as a whole. That is, we may go extinct as a result of the ‘successes’ of the very system ‘we’ created in the first place, i.e., capitalism. How did we end up losing control of an ‘economic’ system of our own making?**

This is indeed an anomaly in human history. The conception of the ‘economy’ as an autonomous sphere dictating its own rules over society did not exist in non-capitalist societies. As the economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi put it, “neither under tribal, nor feudal, nor mercantile conditions was there... a separate economic system in society.” The economy either “remained nameless” or had “no obvious meaning,” for the economic process and prices were instituted through non-market means, such as kinship, marriage, age-groups, status, political patronage, etc. Even “where markets were most highly developed, as under the mercantile system,” the economic system, as a rule, “was absorbed in the social system” and showed “no tendency to expand at the expense of the rest.” In this sense, the market with a distinctive logic, autonomy, and dynamic of its own was completely unknown to our ancestors, and indeed, the emergence of the idea of ‘self-regulating’ markets represented a complete reversal of the way in which past economies functioned. **In order for ‘self-regulating’ markets to ‘self-regulate’, a variety of political and**

institutional arrangements had to be initiated to progressively eliminate the non-market survival strategies that humans previously relied upon. Most notably, the age-old communal systems of social and moral regulation needed to be eradicated, a process that systematically subordinated the ‘natural and human substance of society’; i.e., land and labour, to market relations for the first time in history. Rise of Capitalism **At the heart of the rise of capitalism, therefore, rested a ‘political’, legal, and violent process that led to the historically unprecedented characterization of land and labour as commodities. Without commodifying land and labour,**

i.e., without treating the planet’s living substance as commodities, it would have been impossible to view the ‘economy’ as an institutionally and motivationally self-regulating sphere of life, an almost robotic creature functioning at the expense of human lives and livelihoods. Capitalism presupposed from the very beginning a radical transformation in the human use of nature as well as in the provision of life’s essential requirements. In this sense, the danger of global extinction which we have been going through is not a temporary hiccup in an otherwise smoothly operating capitalist ecosystem but has always been a possibility built into the very structure of market society. On the one hand, by treating land and labour as commodities, by subjecting people’s

utilization of land and enjoyment of life to their ability to continuously increase market competitiveness and productivity, capitalism has enabled massive technological advancements in all spheres of life. This, in turn, has generated, above all, an unprecedented potential to feed, clothe, and accommodate an ever-increasing world population. **On the other hand, however, as Ellen Wood argues, by subordinating all other considerations to the imperatives of market competition, capitalism has also created poverty, homelessness, environmental destruction and pandemics.** Billions of people who could be fed and housed are subjected to immense doses of insecurity, living their lives under the constant threat of joblessness, homelessness, loss of status and starvation. **In a similar fashion, the environment that could be protected is**

systematically destroyed for profit, and killer viruses that could be contained are unleashed. Undoubtedly, Covid-19 has become the archetypal example that lays bare “the destructive impulses of a system in which the very fundamentals of existence are subjected to the requirements of profit.” **Can the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ outcomes of capitalism be somewhat reconciled? Indeed, for a brief period in the Global North, it seemed they could be**

During the so-called Golden Age of Capitalism (1945-70), massive productivity increases (alongside working-class struggles) allowed for steady increases in wages, job security, expansion of welfare state, improvements in the living conditions of the majority of the labouring masses as well as the expansion of civil and political liberties. **Yet, this brief period of generalized prosperity and stability also facilitated the incorporation of the western working classes into the dominant capitalist ideology, causing them to turn a blind eye to the economically destabilizing, environmentally destructive, and socially degrading impact of global capitalism in the Global South.** The main 'problem' with the Global South has been, by and large, a question of 'timing'. **Once capitalism was established and consolidated in the Global North, it has not only led to the birth of new and more effective forms of imperialist control and neocolonial expansion but has also irrevocably undermined the potentially positive outcomes of capitalist development elsewhere.** For example, the MIT political economist Alice Amsden, a large chunk of whose work in the 1970s and 1980s sought to explain the success of the 'Asian Tigers', more recently concluded that the massive technological and infrastructural gap between the North and the South has literally made impossible capitalist 'development' of any sort in the vast majority of southern economies since the 1990s. The economic situation in the Global North has gotten progressively worse too. Under the conditions of increased global economic competition wages have been stagnating or declining since the 1970s, while decades of fiscal austerity wiping out most of the economic and social gains of the earlier period. The new reality of high unemployment, stagnant wages, long work hours and precarious jobs has been masked for a while by a debt-driven growth, the unsustainability of which has been bitterly testified by millions of people since the 2008 financial crisis. All in all, market imperatives have been regulating social reproduction almost worldwide for a long time but with no prospect of capitalist 'development' for an overwhelming majority of the world's population in the South and the North alike. **Furthermore, the ecologically disastrous and socially inhumane consequences of capitalism have long outweighed the prospects of material gain in the Global South.** In this respect, what is being painfully realized in the current conjuncture is that the North is no longer able to externalize the worst consequences of such an unsustainable mode of life. The North isn't and won't be spared the existential threats posed by global capitalism. **The implication is that any meaningful attempt at solving the present, and future crises needs to take the bull by the horn.** There is literally no choice to be made between 'capitalism' and 'capitalism with a human face'. **As long as the underlying dynamics of our lives remain the same, as long as we keep treating nature and human beings as commodities, no cosmetic surgery will do.** To the contrary, historical experience suggests that such minimal interventions will sooner or later backfire, re-legitimizing capitalism pure and simple. **The only way to 're-embed' our economies and save our lives from ecological collapse is by intervening in the very heart of the beast: land and human beings need to be taken out of the market. The beast is not tameable; it needs to be killed.**

The alternative is the politics of the comrade – one that is oriented toward a shared communist horizon – only our methodology can fight capitalism, anything else allows it to take over co-opting any movement – Dean 19: Dean, Jodi. Comrade: An essay on political belonging. Verso, 2019. // LHP BT + LHP PS

The term **comrade indexes a political relation, a set of expectations for action toward a common goal** It highlights the sameness of those on the same side—no matter their differences, **comrades stand together**. As Obama's joke implies, when you share a politics, you don't generally distance yourself from your comrades. **Comradeship binds action and in this binding, this solidarity, it collectivizes and directs action in light of a shared vision for the future For communists, this is the egalitarian future of a society emancipated from the determinations of private property and capitalism and reorganized according to the free association, common benefit, and collective decisions of the producers.** But the term comrade predates its use by communists and socialists. In romance languages, comrade first appears in the sixteenth century to designate one who shares a room with another. Juan A. Herrero Brasas cites a Spanish historical-linguistic dictionary's definition of the term: "Comarada is someone who is so close to another man that he eats and sleeps in the same house with him."² In French, the term was originally feminine, *comarade*, and referred to a barracks or room shared by soldiers.³ Etymologically, comrade derives from *camero*, the Latin word for room, chamber, and vault. The technical connotation of vault indexes a generic function, the structure that produces a particular space and holds it open.⁴ A chamber or room is a repeatable structure that takes its form by producing an inside separate from an outside and providing a supported cover for those underneath it. Sharing a room, sharing a space, generates a closeness, an intensity of feeling and expectation of solidarity that differentiates those on one side from those on the other. Comradeship is a political relation of supported cover. Interested in comrade as a mode of address, carrier of expectations, and figure of belonging in the communist and socialist traditions, I emphasize **the comrade as a generic figure for the political relation between those on the same side of a political struggle. Comrades are those who tie themselves together instrumentally, for a common purpose: If we want to win—and we have to win—we must act together.** As Angela Davis describes her decision to join the Communist Party: "I wanted an anchor, a base, a mooring. I needed comrades with whom I could share a common ideology. I was tired of ephemeral ad-hoc groups that fell apart when faced with the slightest difficulty; tired of men who measured their sexual height by women's intellectual genuflection. It wasn't that I was fearless, but I knew that to win, we had to fight and the fight that would win was the one collectively waged by the masses of our people and working people in general. I knew that this fight had to be led by a group, a party with more permanence in its membership and structure and substance in its ideology."⁵ **Comrades are those you can count on. You share enough of a common ideology, enough of a commitment to common principles and goals, to do more than one-off actions. Together you can fight the long fight. As comrades,**

our actions are voluntary, but they are not always of our own choosing **Comrades have to be able to count on each other even when we don't like each other** and even when we disagree.

We do what needs to be done because we owe it to our comrades.

in *The Romance of American Communism*, Vivian Gornick reports the words of a former member of the Communist Party USA, or CPUSA, who hated the daily grind of selling papers and canvassing expected of party cadre, but nevertheless, according to her, "I did it. I did it because if I didn't do it, I couldn't face my comrades the next day. And we all did it for the same reason: we were accountable to each other."⁶ Put in psychoanalytic terms, the comrade functions as an ego ideal: the point from which party members assess themselves as doing important, meaningful work.⁷ Being accountable to another

entails seeing your actions through their eyes. Are you letting them down or are you doing work that they respect and admire? In *Crowds and Party*, I present the good comrade as an ideal ego, that is to say, as how party members imagine themselves.⁸ They may

imagine themselves as thrilling orators, brilliant polemicists, skilled organizers, or courageous militants. In contrast with my discussion there, in the current book, I draw out how **the comrade also functions as an ego ideal, the perspective that party members—and often fellow travelers—take toward themselves** This perspective is the effect of belonging on the same side as it works back on those who have committed themselves to common struggle. The comrade is a symbolic as well as an imaginary figure and it is the symbolic dimension of

ego ideal I focus on here. My thinking about the comrade as a generic figure for those on the same side flows out of my work on communism as the horizon of left politics and my work on the party as the political form necessary for this politics.⁹ **To see**

our political horizon as communist is to highlight the emancipatory egalitarian struggle of the proletarianized against capitalist exploitation—that is, against the determination of life by market forces; by value; by the division of labor (on the basis of sex and race); by imperialism (theorized by Lenin in terms of the dominance of monopoly and finance capital); and by neocolonialism (theorized by Nkrumah as the last stage of imperialism). Today we see this horizon in struggles such as those led by women of color against police violence, white supremacy, and the murder and incarceration of black, brown, and working-class people. We see it in the infrastructure battles around pipelines, climate justice, and barely habitable cities with undrinkable water and contaminated soil. We see it in the array of social reproduction struggles against debt, foreclosure, and privatization, and for free, quality public housing, childcare, education, transportation, healthcare, and other basic services. We see it in the ongoing fight of LGBTQ people against harassment, discrimination, and oppression. It is readily apparent today that

the communist horizon is the horizon of political struggle not for the nation but **for the world** it is an international horizon. This is evident in the antagonism between the rights of immigrants and refugees and intensified nationalisms; in the necessity of a global response to planetary warming; and in anti-imperialist, decolonization, and peace movements. In these examples, **communism is a force of negativity, the negation of the global capitalist present. Communism is also the name for the positive alternative to capitalism's permanent and expanding exploitation, crisis, and immiseration, the name of a system of production based on meeting social needs** —from each according to ability to each according to need, to paraphrase Marx's famous slogan—in a way that is collectively determined and carried out by the producers. This positive dimension of communism attends to social

relations, to how people treat each other, animals, things, and the world around them. **Building communism entails more than resistance and riot. It requires the emancipated egalitarian organization of collective life.** With respect to the party, intellectuals on the contemporary left tend to

extract the party from the aspirations and accomplishments it enabled. Communist philosophers who disagree on a slew of theoretical questions, such as Antonio Negri and Alain Badiou, converge on the organizational question—no party! **The party has been rejected as authoritarian** as outmoded, as ill-fitting a society of networks. **Every other mode of political association may be revised, renewed, rethought, or reimagined except for the party of communists This rejection of the party** as a form for left politics is a mistake. It **ignores the effects of association on those engaged in common struggle. It fails to learn from the everyday experiences of generations of activists** organizers, and revolutionaries.

It relies on a narrow, fantasied notion of the party as a totalitarian machine. It neglects the courage, enthusiasm, and achievements of millions of party members for over a century. **Rejection of the party form has been left dogmatism** for the last thirty years **and**

has gotten us nowhere Fortunately, the movements of the squares in Greece and Spain, as well as lessons from the successes and limits of the Occupy movement, have pushed against this left dogmatism. They have reenergized interest in the party as a political form that can scale; a form that is flexible, adaptive, and expansive enough to endure beyond the joyous and disruptive moments of crowds in the streets. A theory of the comrade contributes to this renewal by drawing out the ways that shared commitment to a common struggle generates new strengths and new capacities. Over and against the reduction of party relations to the relations between the leaders and the led, comrade attends to the effects of political belonging on those on the same side of a political struggle.

As we fight together for a world free of exploitation, oppression, and bigotry, we have to be able to trust and count on each other. Comrade names this relation. The comrade relation remakes the place from which one sees, what it is possible to see, and what possibilities can appear It enables the revaluation of work and time, what one does, and for whom one does it. Is one's work done for the people or for the bosses? Is it voluntary or done because one has to work? Does one

work for personal provisions or for a collective good? We should recall Marx's lyrical description of communism in which work becomes "life's prime want." We get a glimpse of that in comradeship. **one wants to do political work You don't want to let down your comrades.** you see the value of your work through their eyes, your new collective eyes. **Work, determined not by markets but by shared commitments, becomes fulfilling** French communist philosopher and militant Bernard

Aspe discusses the problem of contemporary capitalism as a loss of "common time"; that is, the loss of an experience of time generated and enjoyed through our collective being-together.¹⁰ From holidays, to meals, to breaks, whatever common time we have is synchronized and enclosed in forms for capitalist appropriation. Communicative capitalism's apps and trackers amplify this process such that the time of consumption can be measured in much the same way that Taylorism measured the time of production: How long did a viewer spend on a particular web page? Did a person watch a whole ad or click off of it after five seconds? In contrast, the common action that is the actuality of communist movement induces a collective change in capacities. Breaking from capitalism's 24-7 injunctions to produce and consume for the bosses and owners, the discipline of common struggle expands possibilities for action and intensifies the sense of its necessity. The comrade is a figure for the relation through which this transformation of work and time

occurs. **How do we imagine political work? Under conditions where political change seems completely out of reach, we might imagine political work as self-transformation** At the very least, we can work on ourselves. In the intensely mediated networks of communicative capitalism, we might see our social media engagements as a kind of activism where Twitter and Facebook function as important sites of struggle. Perhaps we understand writing as important political

work and hammer out opinion pieces, letters to the editors, and manifestoes. When we imagine political work, we often take electoral politics as our frame of reference, focusing on voting, lawn signs, bumper stickers, and campaign buttons. Or we think of activists as those who arrange phone banks, canvass door-to-door, and set up rallies. In yet another political imaginary, we might envision political work as study, whether done alone or with others. We might imagine political work as cultural production, the building of new communities, spaces, and ways of seeing. Our imaginary might have a militant, or even militarist, infection: political work is carried out through marches, occupations, strikes, and blockades; through civil disobedience, direct action, and covert operations. Even with

the recognition of the wide array of political activities, the ways people use them to respond to specific situations and capacities, and how they combine to enhance each other, we might still imagine radical political work as punching a Nazi in the face. Throughout these various actions and activities, how are the relations among those fighting on the same side imagined? How do the activists and organizers, militants and revolutionaries relate to one another? During the weeks and months when the Occupy movement was at its peak, relations with others were often infused with a joyous sense of being together, with an enthusiasm for the collective co-creation of new patterns of action and ways of living.¹¹ But the feeling didn't last. **The pressures of**

organizing diverse people and politics under conditions of police repression and real material need wore down even the most committed activists. relations among the politically engaged have again become tense and conflicted, often along lines of race and gender. Dispersed and disorganized, we're uncertain of whom to trust and what to expect. We encounter contradictory injunctions to self-care and call out. Suspicion undermines support. Exhaustion displaces enthusiasm. Attention to comradeship, to the ways that shared expectations make political work not just possible but also gratifying, may help redirect our energies back to our common struggle. As former CPUSA member David Ross explained to Gornick: "I knew that I could never feel passionately about the new movements as I had about the old, I

realized that the CP has provided me with a sense of comradeship I would never have again, and that without that comradeship I could never be political."¹² For Ross, the Communist Party is what made Marxism. The party gave Marxism life, political purpose. This life-giving capacity came from comradeship. Ross continues: "The idea of politics as simply a diffused consciousness linked only to personal integrity was—is—anathema to me." His description of politics as "a diffused consciousness linked only to personal integrity" fits today's left milieu. Perhaps, then, his remedy—comradeship—will as well. Various people have told me their stories of feeling a rush of warmth when they were first welcomed into their party as a comrade. I've had this feeling myself. In his memoir *Inconspicuous: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid*, the theorist Frank Wilderson, a former member of uMkhonto weSizwe, or MK, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), describes his first meeting with Chris Hani, the leader of the South African Communist Party and the chief of staff of MK. Wilderson writes, "I beamed like a schoolboy when he called me 'comrade.'"¹³ Wilderson chides himself for what he calls a "childish need for recognition."¹⁴ Perhaps because he still puts Hani on a pedestal, he feels exposed in his enjoyment of

the egalitarian disruption of comradeship. Wilderson hasn't yet internalized the idea that he and Hani are political equals. **Comrade" holds out an equalizing promise, and when that promise is fulfilled, we confront our own continuing yet unwanted attachments to hierarchy, prestige, inadequacy. Accepting equality takes courage.** Wilderson's joy in hearing Hani call him "comrade" contrasts sharply with

another instance Wilderson recounts where comrade was the term of address. **In 1994, shortly before Wilderson was forced to leave South Africa, he encountered Nelson Mandela** at an event hosted by *Tributemagazine*. **After Mandela's public remarks, Wilderson asked a question in which he addressed Mandela as "comrade."** "Not Mr. Mandela. Not sir, like the fawning advertising

mogul who asked the first question. **Comrade Mandela. It stitched him back into the militant garb he'd shed since the day he left prison."**¹⁵ Wilderson's recollection shows how comrade's equalizing insistence can be aggressive, an imposition of discipline. This is part of its power. Addressing another as "comrade" reminds them that something is expected of them. Discipline and joy are two sides of the same coin. **comrade disrupts capitalist society's hierarchical identifications of sex, race, and class. It insists on the equalizing sameness of those on the same side of a political struggle and renders that equalizing sameness productive of new modes of work and belonging.** In this respect, **comrade is a carrier of utopian longings** in

the sense theorized by Kathi Weeks. Weeks presents **the utopian form as carrying out two functions.** "One function is to alter our connection to the present, while the other is to shift our relationship to the future; one is productive of estrangement, the other of hope."¹⁶ **The first function mobilizes the negativity of disidentification and disinvestment. Present relations become** strange, **less binding on our sense of possibility. The second function redirects "our attention and energies toward an open future** ... providing a vision or glimmer of a better world."¹⁷ **The power of comrade is in how it negates old relations and promises new ones—the promise itself ushers them in,** welcoming the new comrade into relations irreducible to their broader setting.

The role of the ballot is fidelity to the truth – dedication to a shared horizon is liberatory, Dean 19:

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The idea that comrades are those who belong to the same side of a political struggle leads to the fourth thesis: **The relation between comrades is mediated by fidelity to a truth; practices of comradeship materialize this fidelity. The "same side" points to the truth comrades are faithful to—the political truth that unites them and the fidelity with which they work to realize this truth in the world.** "Belonging" invites attention to the expectations, practices, and affects that being on the same side generates. The notions of truth and fidelity

at work here come from Alain Badiou. In brief, **Badiou rejects the idea of truth as a proposition or judgment, arguing instead that truth is a process. The process begins with the eruption of something new, an event. Because an event changes the situation, breaks the confines of the given, it is undecidable in terms of the given; it is something entirely new.** Badiou argues that this undecidability "induces the appearance of a subject of the event."⁶⁰ **This subject isn't the cause of the event. It's an effect of or response to the event,** "the decision to say that the event has taken place." Grammar might

seduce us into rendering this subject as "I." **We should** avoid this temptation and **recognize the subject as** designating an inflection point, **a response that extends the event.** The decision that a truth has appeared, that an event has occurred, **incites a process of verification** the "infinite procedure of verification of the true," **in what Badiou calls an "exercise of fidelity."**⁶¹ Fidelity is a working out and **working through** of the truth, an **engagement** with truth **that extends out into and changes the world.** We should recognize here the unavoidably collective dimension of **fidelity: in the political field, verification is a struggle of the many.** ⁶² Peter Hallward draws out some implications of Badiou's conception of truth.

First, it is subjective. Those faithful to an eventual truth involve themselves in working it out, exploring its consequences.⁶² Second, fidelity is not blind faith; it is rigorous engagement unconcerned with individual personality and incorporated into the body of truth that it generates. Hallward writes: "Fidelity is, by definition, ex-centric, directed outward, beyond the limits of a merely personal integrity. To be faithful to an eventual implication always means to abandon oneself, rigorously, to the unfolding of its consequences."

Fidelity implies that, if there is truth, it can be only cruelly indifferent to the private as such. Every truth involves a kind of anti-privatization, a subjective collectivization. In truth, "I" matter only insofar as I am subsumed by the impersonal vector of truth—say, the political organization, or the scientific research program.⁶³ **The truth process builds a new body.** ⁶⁴ This body of truth is a collective formed to "work for the consequences of the new" and this work, this collective, disciplines and subsumes the faithful.⁶⁴ Third, collectivity does not imply uniformity. The infinite procedure of verification incorporates multiple experiments, enactments, and effects.⁶⁵ Badiou writes, "An organization lies at the intersection between an Idea and an event. However, this intersection only exists as process, whose immediate subject is the political militant."⁶⁵ We should amend this statement by replacing *militant* with *comrade*. Comrade highlights the "discipline of the event," the way that political fidelity cannot be exercised by a solitary individual—hence, the Marxist-Leninist emphasis on the unity of theory and practice, the barren incapacity of each alone. Comrade also affirms the self-abandonment accompanying fidelity to a truth: its vector, its unfolding, is indifferent to my personal experiences and inclinations. For communists, the process of truth has a body and that body is the party, in both its historical and formal sense. Already in *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou recognizes the necessity of a political body, the party as the "subject-support of all politics."⁶⁶ He writes: "The party is the body of politics, in the strict sense. The fact that there is a body by no means guarantees that there is a subject ... But for there to be a subject, for a subject to be found, there must be the support of a body."⁶⁷

As a figure of political belonging, the comrade is a faithful response to the eventual rupture of crowds and movements, to the egalitarian discharge that erupts from the force of the many where they don't belong, to the movement of the people as the subject of politics.⁶⁸ **Comrades demonstrate fidelity through political work; through concerted, disciplined engagement. Their practical political work extends the truth of the emancipatory egalitarian struggle of the oppressed into the world.** ⁶⁹ Amending Badiou (by drawing from his earlier work), we can say that the comrade is not a faithful subject but a political relation faithful to the divided people as the subject of emancipatory egalitarian politics.⁶⁹

For us to see the revolutionary people as the subject in the struggles of the oppressed, for their subject to be found, we must be comrades. ⁷⁰ In *Ninotchka*, Nina Ivanova Yakushova can't tell who her comrades are by looking at them. The party has told her who to look for, but she has to ask. After Iranoff identifies himself, Yakushova tells him her name and the name and position of the party comrade who authorized her visit. Iranoff introduces Buljanoff and Kopalski. Yakushova addresses each as comrade. But it's not the address that makes them all comrades. They are comrades because they are members of the same party. **The party is the organized body of truth that mediates their relationship. This mediation makes clear what is expected of comrades—disciplined, faithful work.** ⁷¹ Iranoff, Buljanoff, and Kopalski have not been doing the work expected of comrades, which is why Moscow sent Yakushova to oversee them in Paris. That Kopalski says they would have greeted her with flowers demonstrates their *embourgeoisement*, the degeneration of their sense of comradeship. But they are all there for work. Gendered identity and hierarchy don't mediate relations between comrades. The practices of fidelity to a political truth, the work done toward building that truth in the world, do. The solidarity of comrades in political struggle arises out of the intertwining of truth, practice, and party. It's not reducible to any of these alone.

Comrades are not simply those who believe in the same truth—as in, for example, the idea of communism. Their fidelity to a certain truth is manifested in practical work. ⁷² Work for the realization of a political truth brings people into comradeship relation.

But carrying out similar tasks in fidelity to the same truth isn't sufficient for comradeship. The work must be in common; no one is a comrade on their own. Practices of comradeship are coordinated, organized. The party is the organization out of which comradeship emerges and that comrade relations produce. It concentrates comradeship even as comradeship exceeds it.