



Des Moines Mutual Aid Monthly

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The American Years of Lead

BY COMRADE PATRICK

Somewhere in Bologna central train station, the clock on a time bomb counted the seconds. August 2, 1980 was a hot day in northern Italy, and commuters waiting for their train found refuge from the heat in an air-conditioned waiting room until 10:25 am, when the bomb's timer hit zero. The resulting explosion killed 85 people and maimed hundreds more. For weeks, the Italian government and media blamed the Red Brigades, a radical left organization, for the massacre. Months of investigation found that it was actually a fascist terrorist group that set the bomb. Years later, it was revealed that this group was directed by a far-right cabal, "P2", composed of elite Italian politicians, bankers, and police officials.

This bombing was not an isolated event. Between 1969 and 1982, Italy was submerged into an era of political violence, dubbed the "Years of Lead". Activists and civic leaders were shot in the street; bombs exploded in plazas and cafes; the prime minister was kidnapped and left dead in the trunk of a car. These acts were perpetrated by both left and right political organizations acting on their own initiative, but just as often directed, knowingly and unknowingly, by intelligence organizations like P2. Shootings would be blamed on the political right only to be claimed by Maoist guerillas as acts of "revolutionary justice", murders actually committed by the fascist underground would result in the false prosecution of union leaders and communists. Bullet-ridden bodies washed ashore with no attribution at all.

The violence dripped out slowly, with weeks of calm punctuated by spectacular carnage which could not be mapped onto any conventional political compass. The general effect on the Italian public was one of confusion and nihilism. "Was it the Red Brigades or fascists who blew up that coffee shop? Did the communists or the CIA kidnap the prime minister? What new horror will I read in the paper tomorrow? Who can I vote for who will make my life feel normal again?" "Politics" began to mean "inexplicable violence". Aspirations and hope were diluted into a numb desire for stability. These "Years of Lead" resulted in the exhaustion of left politics and a broad acquiescence to the dominance of the parties favored by NATO and US empire.

There are clear echoes of this era of Italian politics in the US today. Mass shootings, whose perpetrators are somehow, always, "previously known to law enforcement", appear almost daily in our social media feeds. Donald Trump's ear was shot off by an apolitical gremlin last August. Or did he slap prosthetic blood on his ear in a staged event? Charlie Kirk was just killed by someone who purportedly etched both "hey fascist, catch" and "if you can read this, ur gay" onto the bullets in his rifle. Was he "antifa"? Was he a "groyper"? Did the CIA put him up to this? Has the endless scroll of social media functionally obliterated the difference between these things?

Kirk's death will draw no tears from us, but his killing, regardless of who his assassin actually is, will be blamed squarely on the left. The government will use this murder to build popular legitimacy for crackdowns on us which they had long planned in advance. We are witnessing the

employment of a "strategy of tension", one used by Italy's elites last century, in which political violence (like Kirk's assassination), often directly sponsored by the government itself, is used to garner support for a fascist security state. The Italian communist movement succumbed to this campaign in the 1970s, and left us with no historical precedent for combatting such a strategy successfully.

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An honest assessment of their actions in this period can give us indications of what not to do in our like predicament. The Red Brigades—even when acting under their own volition and not the aegis of intelligence service provocateurs—did not advance their cause by carrying out bombings and assassinations. They instead alienated the masses from the left, rather than binding them politically.

We similarly gain nothing by publicly celebrating stochastic acts of violence committed by individual people deciding, totally on their own, to tell the world that "liberation" is looking at them through the scope of a rifle. Lone shooters and "leftists" who praise their handiwork on social media do not add strength to the working class movement, they only display the extent of its weakness. We need to do the hard work of organizing a class scale, not reveling in individual, desperate acts. Ours is another way. ■

*This issue was prepared prior to
Dr. Ian Robert's kidnapping. We
demand the immediate release
of all people detained by the
state. We denounce ICE and all
of those who support and justify
their violence. Articles about this
incident will follow in the next
DMMA Monthly issue.*



Rest In Power, Assata Shakur

BY COMRADE BETSY

Assata Shakur died September 25th, 2025 at age 78 in Cuba. She was a member of the Black Liberation Army and dedicated her life to the struggle against systemic racism, state violence, and injustice. She was a victim of COINTELPRO tactics, including selective provocation, false arrests, entrapment, evidence fabrication, and baseless criminal prosecutions. She was convicted for a shootout involving state troopers in which her right arm was severely injured and therefore unable to wield a gun as alleged, and was ultimately sentenced to a life in prison. She escaped from prison in 1979 and was wanted by the FBI. She remained a voice for the oppressed and an icon of liberation from her exile in Cuba, where she was granted political asylum.

Her words, strength, and courage inspired many to resist and reimagine a radically just world. Assata taught us that love is an act of resistance and that silence is betrayal. May her fight live on in all of us. Rest in power, Assata. ■

US Terrorism Abroad Rekindles Old Project

Trump’s Murders Against the Venezuelan People Escalates a Familiar Playbook



BY COMRADE JORDAN

On September 2nd, the US military killed the crew of a small Venezuelan boat. The administration justified the murders by claiming their victims were drug smugglers. Charges of drug smuggling do not carry death sentences in US, Venezuelan, or international law.

The government did not bother to provide evidence, because the appearance of a legal justification no longer matters. While the US has never been obligated to follow the rules it sets for the rest of the world, the Trump administration is completely discarding the shroud of legality that has been slipping from US

state actions since it donned after WW2.

The US government has always discarded its own laws when they become inconvenient to strategic violence. Designating people as terrorists in order to strip them of their rights is a long-standing norm formalized by the PATRIOT act in 2001. Since then, the US has only broadened its use of the terrorist designation—up to and including arming the genocidal settler colony of “Israel”.

Reactions from the bourgeois establishment on the murder of Venezuelans in international waters ranged from enthusiastic endorsement to feeble condemnation of the lack of procedure. This amounted to a green

light to the administration, which celebrated by murdering even more Venezuelans on September 15th. Again, the slaughtered were accused of a non-capital offence without evidence.

Revolutionaries should prepare, not panic, for two consequences. First, the Trump administration is signaling a renewed campaign to overthrow the Venezuelan government—long sought by the US for the advancement of imperial control of massive oil reserves. Second, the administration continues to broaden categories that it does not have to permit rights. Despite its excesses, the state has been relatively restrained by the desire to appear to follow the law. We must be prepared as they discard that restraint. ■

Des Moines Mutual Aid’s Points of Unity

O We believe in working shoulder to shoulder and standing in solidarity with all oppressed communities. We ourselves are oppressed, and our mutual aid work is a fight for our collective liberation. We do not believe in a top-down model of charity. Instead, we contrast our efforts at horizontal mutual aid, the fostering of mutually beneficial relationships and communities, to dehumanizing and colonizing charity.

1 We believe in community autonomy. We believe that the communities we live and organize in have been largely excluded from state social services, but intensely surveilled and policed by the state repressive apparatus. Capitalism is fundamentally unable to meet people’s needs. We want to build self-sustaining communities that are independent of the capitalist state, both materially and ideologically, and can resist its repression.

2 We are police and prison abolitionists. Abolition and the mutual aid that we practice are inextricably linked. We don’t rely on capitalist institutions or the police to do our work. We believe in building strong and resilient communities which make police obsolete, including community systems of accountability and crisis intervention.

3 We work to raise the political consciousness of our communities. Part of political education is connecting people’s lived experiences to a broader political perspective. Another component is working to ensure that people can meet their basic needs. It is difficult to organize for future liberation when someone is entrenched in day-to-day struggle.

4 We have open disagreements with each other about ideas and practices. We believe there is no formula for resolving our ideological differences other than working towards our common aims, engaging with each other in a comradely manner, and respecting one another, whether or not we can hash out disagreements in the process.

5 We are a revolutionary organization. We are united in a basic agreement that the ultimate goal of revolution is the abolition of the state and of social classes, and that the state’s institutions are not a means to achieving that end. We are against participation in electoral politics, because we are for the development of mutual aid as an alternative and widespread institution. ■

A Reasonable Feeling

BY COMRADE JENOTS

On one hand, as revolutionary communists we tend to have a strong sense of class vengeance: our parents, their parents, everyone we’ve ever known—worked all their life, died, left nothing, or very little, to show for their life, and history moved on. Instead, class society dotes on the most evil, decadent, cruel human beings imaginable as though businessmen, politicians, and outright liars were mighty incarnations of the human spirit. Recently, one of these ‘mighty’ cretins had his neck busted open in front of all of America. While we would not encourage such actions ourselves, we are nevertheless mildly delighted, to the astonishment of those who have never dreamt of any kind of broad human freedom beyond spending money and voting.

On the other hand, it’s clear that the immediate *spiritual* consequences of dancing on someone’s grave are not in any obvious way good ones. This degenerate lowlife was, like many people, merely a puppet of a deranged system that endows its most stupid and greedy servants with its own senility and evil. After all, that system, and not individuals,

is our enemy. What person could go down the path of Charlie Kirk who is intelligent enough to see the world with any clarity, to feel for other human beings and to see them all as equals—whatever their nation, gender, or race—and to live a life of dignity and humility? There is no point denying that there is always a sense in which this kind of death is a tragedy: the tragedy is simply the trajectory and terminus of his miserable, hateful life.

The way out of this dilemma, if you consider it one, is not very exciting: a person might rightfully revel in his enemy’s death because either to mourn it, or to wring their hands about it at all, would be to set a very poor moral example for anyone who wants to become free. That is all it boils down to. The world we live in is dominated by a basically religious, dogmatic form of moralistic thinking, which emphasizes individual interpersonal wrongs over the far graver moral catastrophes that surround them, from school shootings to genocides. Mainstream morality is applicable only to small-scale actions and beliefs. It lacks any attitude toward catastrophes like the genocide of Palestinians, besides to call it a misfortune, akin to a natural disaster. It asks nothing of us

to intervene, in fact it *absolves us* of such responsibility. This attitude pervades *all* of society, from the most rabid reaction to the most pearl-clutching progressivism. It is why the average liberal experiences greater shock at an audacious *statement* that Kirk’s soul is being tortured in hell, than he does at *actual, material* harm perpetrated for decades against children in another country, in our name. When a person feels they can’t do anything about anything wrong in the world, all that’s left is to police other people’s hearts for a very weak, facile form of purity and goodness. In the end, it is just an attempt to exert control over others—an ideology.

We, however, believe all people should strive for freedom, and that this striving precludes being hung up on sentimentalities for those who proclaim their desire to exterminate us. We also have the great spiritual and intellectual advantage over liberals that we happen to *believe* in our stated aims, which keeps us safe from this embarrassing ritual of mourning so steeped in hypocrisy and cowardice. Our main considerations are human freedom, dignity, and community—spiritual and practical guideposts to all human beings who choose to pursue them. ■

US Imperialism is the Primary Enemy of Humanity

Those Who Value Equality and Human Dignity Must Understand Their Biggest Enemy

BY COMRADE JORDAN

Imperialism is the domination of one state over others for its own economic benefit, and it occurs in many forms. The west claims its imperialism ended with “the colonial era.” Western students are taught that imperialism was limited to open military conquests overseas and overt political control. This is not the case; imperialism exists in full force today.

While the tone of domination has changed, the extraction and severity have not. Notice that every economy of a “friendly” country is dominated by western-based corporations. Corporations are able to manufacture products with labor stuck in a cheaper standard of living and sell to consumers in the wealthy economies. This extra layer of exploitation results in profits being extended beyond what they could be if products were produced in the same conditions they

are consumed. These are called super profits. The wealth generated in the exploited economies is drained to the imperial capitalists; this prevents the economies from developing and perpetuates the situation.

Nor has 19th-century style imperial violence faded out entirely. The US continues to perform assassinations, support genocidal settler projects, and control trade to choke out any economy that dare not submit. When the US government and media labels a state as “terrorist,” “authoritarian,” or a “regime” it has nothing to do with the morality or popular support of that state. It is **exclusively determined** by the state’s cooperation with western ownership of the economy.

These relationships of domination are maintained under the threat and use of violence. The US openly maintains over 800 military installations internationally, and it permits zero foreign bases in its

own territory. Conquest is unnecessary, because the US has already established military dominance over the world.



Regardless of the conditions, capitalism will always seek to maximize profits, which results in the maximization of exploitation. Capitalists are not content to extract surplus value from their domestic working class, and in fact the stability of class relations in the imperialist core is dependent on the theft of surplus value from the colonized nations. We live off the scraps from super exploitation of the global south as we are exploited ourselves. Our struggles must be in solidarity with the global working class. This world-spanning structure of domination is the primary enemy of all who genuinely value freedom and equality. ■