

A Draft Examination Between Climate Collapse and Imperialist Collapse

by Hard Working Netizen

I am anxious, as usual – and materially it's to do with the current state of affairs. There is talk of a 3rd World War within the context of this century, and yet we can already acknowledge that historians looking upon this period – in their own century – will have plenty of options to mark as the start of the conflict. They could point to events within the past decade (2016-2026), but I question this framing of periodization. How were the events after the conflict labeled as WWII, itself labeled as the "Cold War" and dotted with numerous violent conflicts across the globe, not worthy of enumeration? If we widen the scope a few centuries back, we could include the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the later British colonial uprising (1775-1783) as part of a first "World War"¹. But I digress – the point of this article is not to get lost in the weeds of labels.

Definitions, on the otherwise, will be needed here, as the intent of this article is to be an examination. In the spirit of this being a draft, though, I would like to invoke Marx's Grundrisse² and request that the following be given the academic allowance a rohentwurf should. The terms 'Climate Collapse' and 'Imperialist Collapse' carry their own assumable definitions just by the combination of the respective former words and their shared 'Collapse' in their latters. We can get carried away with anxieties within our current, contemporary conditions – but we can briefly define and examine these terms within the context of countering that anxiety with forward-thinking planning.

Climate Collapse

"Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us." Engels, The Dialectics of Nature, 1883³

The accelerating breakdown of Earth's ecology and biosphere due to disruptions caused by relentless exploitation of natural resources.

***Note: labor counts as a natural resource!*

Many may view this term as being 'overly anxious' in scope, and I'm sure they would share either a direct or liberal worldview with those that react to the term of 'Climate Change' with suspicion. There is already reports⁴ and immediate observations to the changing climate before us, but 'Collapse' frames the dangers on a massive scale – rising seas, scorched earth, the end of civilization and all life – which is not occurring in our immediacy (hopefully?). But it is a collapse which needs to be addressed, and Capitalism chooses to address it by embracing its potential. As a mode of production, it already thrives on crisis – what is the boom-bust cycle if not already a well-financed industrial line of apocalypses? *Apokalypsis*, from Greek, means "unveiling" or "revelation", and historically signified transition – not total destruction, but conditions from which a new order emerges. So, sure – if not all life is wiped from the face of the planet, there'll probably be somebody left to sell to.

Lacking a fundamental, systematic change on how this collapse could be addressed, we've instead endured numerous profit-focused investment opportunities presented as solutions; carbon trading, green bonds, and infrastructure to support interplanetary ambitions which encourage us to deny the material reality of what's occurring here on Planet A(ki). We have a history of technological developments which shows that with global implementation we could, at best, mitigate the total damage. The 'math' involved with such implementation doesn't shake out for those concerned about their finances, though. They would rather invest their capital not on far-reaching mitigation, but on "apartheid fantasies of bunkered

safety" [5] that ensures they retain their class positions - they're banking on doing the selling post-apocalypse.

Imperialist Collapse

"Laugh hard, it's a long way to the bank" - John Linnell, Rythmn Section Want Ad, 1985⁶

With this article serving as an examination, I want to posit the question of "which one sounds better?", so that we can apply the same level of optimism that our would-be overlords wish to frame their apocalypse into the definition I wish to propose:

The systemic disintegration of imperialist structures – feudal or capitalist – due to internal contradictions, external pressures, and resistance from oppressed resources.

Rome is no longer in existence, yet its impact and consequences remain in these United States. The British Empire no longer exists in the 'superpower' form it carried following the conflict the Soviets called the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), yet its colonial exploits carried through into conflicts we're contending with today; American Nationalist Assimilation within the occupation of Turtle Island, Zionist genocide within the occupation of Palestine. To tie it all together, we now have Operation Epic Fury for these United States to continue leaving its lasting impact and consequences on the region. What ties these three empires together is the pattern of exploitation and overreach which breeds its own resistance. If we want to resist Climate Collapse, such as by implementing infrastructure that helps sustain life on this planet and aid in survival programs on an international scale, my own answer to the question I posed is "Imperialist Collapse sounds better".

Why? Because just as the fall of the imperialist feudal order paved the way for the current global capitalist version, its collapse opens the possibility for socialism – which these United States could surely use right about now. The old phrase of "seize the means of production" needs to be paired with viewing an oncoming apocalypse as something we, labor (a natural resource!), can seize for our own benefit. This isn't something that can be done hastily, lest we be adventurist – but it also can't be a tailist case⁷ in which we wait for the absolute worst to happen before we organize. Our tasks should be organizing in the here and now, with an understanding that the spirit we are acting upon is that an even worse collapse than Imperialist is not only a possibility, but a down-right certainty if we maintain our current status quo. I'd rather bank on the future in which we're helping each other survive, collectively and without class.

Conclusion

"But the whole process of accumulation in the first place resolves itself into production on an expanding scale, which on the one hand corresponds to the natural growth of the population, and on the other hand, forms an inherent basis for the phenomena which appear during crises. The criterion of this expansion of production is capital itself, the existing level of the conditions of production and the unlimited desire of the capitalists to enrich themselves and to enlarge their capital, but by no means consumption, which from the outset is inhibited, since the majority of the population, the working people, can only expand their consumption within very narrow limits, whereas the demand for labour, although it grows absolutely, decreases relatively, to the same extent as capitalism develops. Moreover, all equalizations are accidental and although the proportion of capital employed in individual spheres is equalized by a continuous process, the

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Eating Empire

by ozhaawashko animikii

"One of the functions of struggle is to convert the economy of hatred and the desire for vengeance into a political economy. The aim of the liberation struggle is not to eradicate the drive to murder, the desire to kill, or the thirst for revenge, but to bend this drive, this desire, and this thirst to the commandments of a superego of a political nature, namely the advent of a nation."

- Achille Mbembe, Necropolitics

Death. Fucking Death is what Empire brings. Imperialism. Colonialism. Settler-Colonialism. All fucking Death. Even so-called "soft" imperialism and neo-colonialism bring Death to people far more than they provide anything else. And not just spectacular and violent Death: another hundred dead Palestinian or Iranian children in your news feed today. But also deaths of despair, and of chronic stress. The little Death of every second of your life that gets wasted valorizing a system that's fucking killing us all. Of satisfying the whims of petty little fucking tyrants whose offices range from your shift manager to the president of the united states. This system breathes, eats, and shits DEATH. Worst of all (for you at least, dear reader), is that Empire brings Death so omnipresent and omnipotent that it's even capable of slithering into your chest cavity, making a nest there, of breaking bread with your friends and family, of thinking with your thoughts and speaking with your voice. But let's not get ahead of ourselves, there are other topics at hand that we must cover first.

This article will (again) pull heavily from Achille Mbembe's 2019 book Necropolitics, especially what he calls the Politics of Viscerality. But we will also cover colonialism, imperialism, and Empire from a few other perspectives - the goal being to give you a clearer picture how fucked we currently are, and hopefully some ideas of what to do about it. To better understand Mbembe and the Politics of Viscerality, we're going to combine some older anticolonial theorists with a hefty dollop of Marx. So what do Marxists have to say about Capital and imperialism? In both his Grundrisse and das Kapital, Marx describes the system of Capital as one which by its very definition must continuously expand to function.

In order for the accumulation of Capital to be possible, workers must produce more (often MUCH more) than can be consumed by the proletariat and the bourgeoisie combined. In order for the surplus value of the remaining goods produced to be realized, new markets must be found (or created). "The tendency to create the world market is directly given in the concept of capital itself. Every limit appears as a barrier to be overcome." (Marx, Grundrisse). As Lenin describes at length there is more to imperialism than just spectacular violence, behind every imperial aggression is the banal but ever-present compulsion for Capital to expand: specifically for the Capital of the invading nation to be exported into the victims of imperialism, whether to access raw materials there, to "re-develop" war torn infrastructure, or both. As theorists Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt describe in their work, Empire, "the fundamental contradiction of capitalist expansion" is precisely this reliance on its "outside" non-capitalist environment. There must always be new markets to export goods to for surplus value to be realized. But in order for this surplus value to be turned back into new capital, what was previously external to be capital must be internalized. Capital is therefore in a constant process of eating itself to death, of internalizing all that has not yet been made Capital.

Part of what made Negri and Hardt's book Empire novel and interesting (other than foreseeing the US's global war on terror barely a year before the events of 9/11) was their attempt to diagnose the shift from imperialism to

Empire. This is not to say that imperialism is going away any time soon, but that Empire will bring new problems. Some of these changes have to do with the increasing strength of multinational corporations and the ever depleting relevance of sovereign nation states, but the most insidious part of the problem is one I think they honestly do a piss-poor job of explaining, and something that anti-colonial theorists have been screaming at us for probably exactly as long as colonialism has existed. In Negri and Hardt's defense, their fumble comes from a place of optimism, from trying to center theories of Capital around not just Capital and its functioning but around the working class as well. Capital, imperialism, and Empire may well have been developing into a global monster, but this was specifically because of its dependence on us, "the real efficient motor that drives capitalist development from its deepest core: the movements and struggle of the proletariat." But what sounds like a rallying cry to Negri and Hardt also sounds like a death knell to others. Faced with the ever-expanding, all-encompassing and all-intersecting maelstrom of Capital, we are more threatened than ever by [the Figure or Subject of Empire: by Capital in human form.](#)

"Not every exasperated petty bourgeois could have become Hitler, but a particle of Hitler is lodged in every exasperated petty bourgeois."

- Trotsky, What Is National Socialism

The Figure of Empire and the Politics of Viscerality

Marx's undead comparison of choice for Capital was the vampire: "Capital is dead labour, which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks." But if there is an undead metaphor for the Figure of Empire I would argue that none fit better than the ghoulish*. While some of its better known associations seem to be inhabiting graveyards (and other places of Death) and eating human flesh: the ghoulish, like the vampire, has also been known for having powers of seduction. Part of what I think sets apart the ghoulish as a good candidate for the face of Empire is the bipolar nature of its attempts to pass as human. One man's temptress may be viscerally and instantly recognizable to another (most often women) as a monster. It bears repeating that anticolonial theorists have much more to tell us of the Subject of Empire than any analysis of Capital alone can. For who else but those who experienced the maelstrom of Capital from its "Outside" could describe it best?

In his book The Invention of Africa, Valentin-Yves Mudimbe describes three components and actions of "what might be called the colonizing structure, which completely embraces the physical, human, and spiritual aspects of the colonizing experience."

These three components/actions are:
1. the domination of physical space
2. the reformation of natives' minds
3. the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective

No longer just an "Outside" or "non-capitalist environment," we know that what Capital has constantly been expanding into and ceaselessly being reproduced within is other peoples' lands, minds, and entire histories and ways of life. "Every limit appears as a barrier to be overcome," and every limit that a people and their culture can place that could prevent the reproduction of Capital will be destroyed to make way for more accumulation (until we get better at killing it). The Subject of Empire was formed through centuries of Europe and its inbred children killing, raping, and enslaving the world. It is no coincidence that the centuries in which

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continuity of this process itself equally presupposes the constant disproportion which it has continuously, often violently, to even out."⁸

What is difficult for me to reconcile between my concern for this overtly apparent potential for the end of all life, in the immediate and the long term, could come about by a lack of action. At the same time the most apparent solution (to me), based on previous successes in history that have refined theory, is itself a hardship that should be acknowledged as such. Avoiding unprogressive conflict can lean into liberal passivity, while an unabashed display of hatred of the bourgeoisie for causing this impending doom is undeserved vanguardism – without a mass conscious movement that's clued in, at least. Mass action can only be undertaken by educating the working class, but what angle do we place our agitations of that need upon? In an examination of these 2 forms of collapse, socialist optimism can steel us with the sense that the education provided has a purpose, and the lessons will be carried on by future generations not as lessons to repeat, but as foundations upon which lasting solutions were established. So is the immediate task to teach our current generation how to invoke the collapse of an empire?

Despite my own erratic position on what is to be done, the answer is no. What we have to teach in regards to imperialist collapse is that it is not only possible, but necessary, to establish alternative governance that operates with local collective leadership, which then expands to cooperation amongst various collectives. If we give a generation an early curriculum on rights and responsibilities in relation to their environment and community, and tie that into engagement with both, we are giving them the keys to govern.⁹ This then gives us the best possible chance to have a generation what will be able to administer a government that's able to respond to events like wide-reaching natural disasters, because what should cooperative aid be driven by if not an empathetic collective concern? But this solution is so far an idealist notion, trapped in a liberal promise until we begin to make moves to materially invoke a mode of production that has a foundation set in inherent human rights that are applied universally, multilaterally in international socialism.

This gives me a chance to reframe my position that Imperialist Collapse sounds better than Climate Collapse, because the question of 'which one sounds better?' becomes an idealist thought – the formation of the question is only suggestive. If I want action, perhaps the more appropriate question to pose in regards to acknowledging both collapses examined is: are you willing to work towards the kind of apocalypse you want? If so, you're going to need to define what that transition looks like, and with what spirit of intention you're acting upon to invoke it. I want a vanguard, which means the working class needs to be educated so that they, as a natural resource, have the means to define their own governance.

Have fun out there.

¹ Ned Blackhawk, *Rediscovery of America, IV – The Native Inland Sea: The Struggle For The Heart Of The Continent 1701-55, 2023*

² Karl Marx, *Foundations/Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft), 1857-1858*

³ Frederick Engels, *The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man, 1876*

⁴ IPCC, *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, 2018*

⁵ Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor, *The Rise of End Times Fascism, 2025*.

⁶ *They Might Be Giants, They Might Be Giants [a], 1986, [a] they might be rain, they might be heat, they might be frying up a stalk of wheat - 1989-1990*

⁷ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?, II – The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats, 1901-1902*

⁸ Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value, XVII – Ricardo's Theory of Accumulation and a Critique of it. (The Very Nature of Capital Leads to Crises), 1861-1863*

⁹ *The Advocators, Education to Govern, 1971*

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Capital widened its grip to envelop the entire planet were (and are) concomitant with the worst patriarchal eliminationist fantasies. Absolutely everything that can or could be used as a tool to continue to reproduce Capital, has been and will be. Capital doesn't give a fuck who dies, and neither does the Subject of Empire. Just like the fucking plastic building up in our lungs, our brain, in every tissue: the Subject of Empire was built up in colonizers as the residue of their domination an subjugation of others. CENTURIES of

Trotsky's Hitler Particles being produced and spread down through the generations.

The hope in producing this concept of the Figure of Empire is twofold. First as a way of relating to and understanding Mbembe's Politics of Viscerality, but also out of a much deeper hope that it can be scraped off, to expose the life beneath. For if you the reader are not yourself a Figure of Empire — someone you know is. Very likely it is multiple people in your life, possibly even someone close to you. Hence the metaphor of the ghoul: pleasant or even lovely to some, yet carrying the unmistakable stench of Death to others.

To understand the significance of the Politics of Viscerality, you must know that the Figure of Empire (much like the colonialism and imperialism which created it) is absolutely fucking insufferable. A brick wall. A settler with an opinion. A US military or police bootlicker. But also a “well-intentioned” but still out-of-their-fucking-element liberal. The Figure of Empire may not be the leading edge of any kind of imperialism (only the highest ranking ghouls receive that honor). He is not a gun, a bomb, or a battleship, and more than likely not actively commanding the use of any of these. One of the greatest services the Subject of Empire can offer to his Fatherland is to make you want to kill yourself. He is most often NOT a tool for grasping new power but for holding on to it, and crushing the spirits of colonized peoples is a task he can accomplish as easily as breathing.

In the beginning of a talk at Duke University, Achille Mbembe refers to colonialism as a factory that produces madness. At the time he was working on material that would later be published in the book (*Necropolitics*, 2019) version of his earlier article by the same name. Drawing relations between colonialism and madness was nothing new to Mbembe, in fact it is something he has built on heavily from the works of Frantz Fanon. Madness is still very much present within *Necropolitics*, but a greater focus for Mbembe at this point in his career was to rip open the chest cavity of colonialism and begin to describe the organs and their function, to put his finger on how or why they produce madness and really demonstrate to us how the sausage is made.

The Politics of Viscerality "draws its energy and powers from the Visceral: the internal organs of the body, especially those to be found within the large cavity of the trunk." The people with which Mbembe is most concerned here, the Subject of the Politics of Viscerality, are those who have been "rendered physically ill with rage, grief, and fear, none of which seems to have an outlet." The politics of Viscerality must be given special attention because it concerns not only an emotional response but a bodily response - **to stimuli and conditions we feel we cannot survive**. The Visceral Subject inhabits "a frustrated body which one cannot call home," a body which has been stolen, raped, poisoned, marked by choking/suffocation.

Long before its recognition in the Black Lives Matter movement, **"I can't breathe"** was also the rallying cry par excellence of Frantz Fanon and colonized peoples across the world. As Mbembe himself asserts, this cry for help appears everywhere throughout the works of Fanon. The Visceral Subject must be attended to. Without intervention this is a person who will surely die before their time, a person whose very existence is a "petition for an entirely different kind of community."

Conclusion

Capital and Empire categorize and discard as “waste” anything that does not serve the continued reproduction of Capital. It will eat, and eat, and eat until there is nothing left to sustain it. Nothing left to sustain us. Wherever Capital and life “co-exist” there will always be life in peril: the Visceral Subject.

What new community does the Subject of Viscerality cry out for? One which will bring about the destruction of both Empire and Capital, of course. But how? For the Figure of Empire, any memory of non-commodified life has long since been wiped out. So maybe Negri and Hardt are right about something. Capital absolutely is dependent on the movement of the Proletariat for its development, and Empire is in fact more dependent on human subjectivity than ever before.

Dependent most of all on us doing nothing.

We need a new humanity. A new humanity that isn't afraid to rip into the belly of a dying Empire, to cut out the cancerous growths of capitalism, of fascism, racism, Whiteness and white supremacy, and to bury them so deep that not even the dogs can reach them.

The humanity of today has still not learned enough from the Black Panther Party. The free breakfast programs were only one of a much larger list (called Survival Programs) of necessities of life that the Black Panthers fought to provide for their communities. And those Survival Programs built the party. Find what people need the most and fight like hell to make sure they get it.

Food
Housing
Medicine and Medical Care
Clothing and Hygiene Products
Education, Schools and Libraries
Energy
Internet

Does Life Take Energy, Or Is Life Energy?

by mudd e. Waters, reprinted from the 5th issue of *Old Northwest*, Winter 2026

When you drive across the UP, you'll inevitably pass a Line 5 pumping station. Each of these largely unmonitored valve stations has a big sign where Enbridge touts that “Life Takes Energy.” It's a catchy tagline from a Calgary-based company that has made its living on the extraction of other life. And, yet, it's hard not to question the root premise. Does life “take energy? Or is life energy?

As I write this, another turbulent year has come to a close. The Palestinian genocide continues, ICE is openly killing, and “antifa” (i.e. anti-fascism) is now a “domestic terrorism organization.” Our supreme leader provides less bread and more circuses while dismantling environmental protections, rewriting His-story, and bullying the world. At the same time, Minneapolis is throwing down (yet again), scare tactics are failing (see the recent dismissal of the RICO charges against #STOPCOPCITY activists), and new tactics are emerging (see #TeslaTakeDown). While the outrage might not be as visible as back in 2017, it's clear a tense pent-up energy is starting to surface. In this age of the “Extractocene” (thanks, Dr. Praba Pilar), it's hard not to be overwhelmed by the current Blitzkrieg. Palestine. Venezuela. Greenland. Numerous uprisings and proxy wars at the edges of a contracting empire. ICE raids. Green Scares. Climate disasters. And on and on and on. Where do we put our energies when most of us who care enough to do something are struggling to survive in an imploding empire?

In my decade plus of anti-extractivism scholarly-activism-organizing, a few small-t truths rise to the surface.

First, our movements must be intersectional. Anti-extractivism is #ShutDownLine5, #ProtectThePorkies, and #MniWiconi. And it is also #BlackLivesMatter, #LandBack, #MMIW, #MeToo, #SayHerName, #FreePalestine, #MeltICE. There is no binary between the social and the ecological. There is only the socioecological. We humans are bodies on the earth body, and therefore our care for the earth body is care for our bodies and care for our individual and collective bodies is care for the earth body. Each of these movements is resisting a small piece of the Mega-Machine.

Second, no one can do it all, so pick a lane (or two or three) and commit to it. Listen to your body. Listen to the land. Follow your passion. Make use of your skillsets. Think globally, act locally. Take direct action in your communities. Ask yourself which local campaigns directly affect you, your kin, your home, your watershed, your bioregion. For many of us in the Old Northwest, this means the exploitation of being an “internal colony” (see UP Colony, Bellfy, 2021). This means #NoBack40, #SaveTheHuronMountains, and #StopTheRocket. And #ProtectThePorkies, #WaterOverNickel, and #ShutDownLine5. And the endless local organizing efforts towards climate resilience, food sovereignty, and social equity.

Third, we need to be honest. The truth is that we are currently getting our asses kicked. We are too few, too overwhelmed, too disorganized, too unskilled, too sick, too under-resourced. Our few “wins” are temporary, and our

A new humanity will need to be able to access all of these and more, without Capital. And at some point we're going to need to be willing and able to bash in the brains of Empire when it gets in the way of this. We do not have time to listen to the tired, ghoulish bullshit of the white moderate, who “paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom.” A new humanity will have to eat its way out of a ghoul-ridden corpse to survive. **Help us build infrastructures of life or get the fuck out of the way.** Help us figure out how to turn this dying Empire into something edible enough to sustain life or it might be your ghoulish ass we're eating next.

**The characterization of ghouls as “undead” is unfortunately an entirely Western creation. Readers will have to forgive me on account of the metaphor simply goes too hard to not use it.*

numerous losses are permanent on timescales that matter. Moments such as Occupy, Ferguson, Standing Rock, George Floyd, Disrupt J20 need to be celebrated as important blips in the longer arc towards justice. And, also, the Dakota Access Pipeline is fully operational. As is Line 3. Black (and brown and native) Lives still don't matter. The proto-fascist goons get bolder. All while more species go extinct, and the planet burns. Resistance isn't enough. We need a Rebellion.

Fourth, #ShutDownLine5 is a central campaign, both strategically and symbolically. Strategically, there is currently no greater threat to the bioregion than a pipeline rupture. Symbolically, what we are attempting is unprecedented. Few campaigns have successfully stopped the construction of a new pipeline. None have successfully decommissioned an active pipeline. And, yet, here we are. With the State of Michigan, the Bad River Reservation, and numerous allies actively battling Enbridge and the Feds.

Fifth, we need to actively help push the #ShutDown and #NoTunnel narratives. While the energy generation and distribution are far removed from our bioregion, the transmission corridors run right through our backwoods. The pipeline route is long (645 miles across Michigan alone), often very remote, and largely unmonitored. The Bolt Weevils, Valve Turners, Unist'ot'en, and countless others have demonstrated the ROI of focusing our limited energies on taking direct action at these strategic bottlenecks.

As much as Enbridge, Trump, Fossil Fascism, the Extractocene forces the hegemonic narrative “Life Takes Energy,” the reality is that extractivism takes life's energy. From the Latin extrahere, extraction is the process of “drawing out” the life force of another being, whether that be through disturbing the bones of our ancient ancestors, domesticating our more-than-human kin, enslaving countless “Othered” bodies, or non-consensually taking pleasure from women and children.

Life is energy. This is what the Rebellion is fighting for. When we Shut Down Line 5, we are taking a stand for life, for energy, for a new (/old) way of being in relationship to life and energy. We are re-attuning to the mysteries of energy and re-embodying ourselves in the web of life. We are life and energy defending itself.

~ in wildness ~

Old Northwest is a zine based in the Keweenaw Peninsula that aims to foster a sense of bioregional identity among the people of the Lake Superior watershed, a necessary foundation for finding ways of sustainably living here both ecologically and socially.

We Can't Turn Back Now

by K.G. Jack Muzzy

***Preface, Remembrance, and Brief History* leading up to the 1975 Menominee Warriors Society armed occupation of the former Alexian Bros. novitiate.**

Preface: In 1975 I was a college student studying at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and an AIM —American Indian Movement— caravan from Chicago of warriors en-route to the Menominee Indian Reservation to support the takeover of Alexian Bros. religious order property by the Menominee Warriors Society stopped at Rhubarb Bookstore on the west side of Milwaukee. Neil Hawpetos —Spokesman of the Menominee Warriors Society— spoke. I asked Neil Hawpetos that evening if I could “join” and he said “yes” and introduced me into a caravan vehicle that dropped us at The Drop-In Ctr. in Keshena on the reservation. That was the end of my formal secondary or college education and the beginning of understanding the vital importance of Indigenous history and thought within the new-left and decolonization movement. Add today the existential threat of climate change —capitalism worldwide ravaging war of exploitation for greed, profits, and expansion— and one has a 21st century picture of planet earth in dire peril. The earth does not need human life to be a mass of iron in the universe; human life needs biodiversity — uncontaminated freshwater capable of maintaining plant and animal life— to avoid extinction. “For the earth to live, capitalism and colonialism must die.” -The Red Nation.

Remembrance: To have lived in the time of Mike Sturdevant, John Waubanasum, Neil Hawpetos and other American Indian Movement tribal leaders and warriors. Specifically, Menominee Warriors Society warriors, who were willing to suffer personal injury, death, and incarceration for Indigenous tribal treaty rights and self-determination.

Brief History: In 1954, the middle years of the Cold War between the U.S. and the USSR, many in Washington D.C. saw Indians' tribal governments as fostering communal ownership and values that were just one step removed from communism. Following the 1954 U.S. Congress act that officially called for “Termination” and “Assimilation” of American Indians into white society and culture the Menominee, as a federally recognized Indian tribe or sovereign nation, was terminated. After years of internal Menominee strife to restore Menominee Indian tribal status and its reservation the Indian “Restoration” act was passed and signed into law by U.S. President Richard M. Nixon on December 22, 1973. But not before Menominee Indian Reservation tribal land had been sold to real estate developers, and the creation of “Legend Lake” recreational and non-Indian community. Under treaty rights the former Alexian Bros. novitiate was legally mandated to be returned to Menominee Indian tribal and reservation sovereignty. The crimes of the U.S. government — European settler-colonialism of Native American lands, violation of signed treaties, the physical and cultural genocide of Indigenous nations, Indian boarding schools, the forced sterilization of Menominee Indian women— all constitute crimes against humanity. New Year’s Day, 1975, 44 armed Menominee warriors stormed the former Alexian Bros. novitiate, located adjacent to the Menominee Indian Reservation, taking the caretaker and his family hostage before allowing them to leave unharmed. The National Guard formed a perimeter around the novitiate with state and local police, supported by federal law enforcement agencies, and armed local vigilantes funded through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. LEAA was a product of the U.S. Department of Justice, created by President Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration “War On Crime” crusade with J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI in 1968 and followed its Counter Intelligence Program: COINTELPO. A crusade that originally targeted the Communist Party USA, the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement and Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, American Indian Movement, an African-American U.S. insurrection, and middle-class white college student opposition to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War spearheaded by the Students for a Democratic Society and its offspring the Weather Underground Organization. The Menominee Warriors Society occupation of the Alexian Bros. novitiate followed the American Indian Movement armed standoff at Wounded Knee, South Dakota in 1973.

We Can't Turn Back Now.

A group of six stood, a tight circle,
shadows, inside barren woods, a border,
a flat frozen field, directly ahead,
each investigated.

A demon, piercing wind, howled, plagued, dared, the desperate ones,
filling the waxing moon sky with penetrating ice shards, from the field’s surface.
Whipping them violently then suddenly dissipating them, before the tornadoes of ice
crystals flying off the field would loft again.

In the black night,
brilliant white light-beams shown,
star-light, through the broken layer of clouds,
reflected off the swirling ice crystals shapes.

“We have to cross that field.”
“Can't see across.”
“We could stay to the woods, walk around.”
“No, take too long.”

“National Guard, sheriff, police, will be everywhere, soon sunup.”
“Storm passing, wind dying.”
“They'll fly helicopters.”
“No choice.”

“Vigilantes find us out there, we'll be dead meat, nowhere to hide.”
Each woman carried a heavy burlap bag with a rope tied across each corner.
The three men large backpacks, a side arm, a rifle, walking towards the former
Alexian Bros. novitiate.

At the break of dawn, near the west edge of the field, another thirty feet
they would climb a low ridge back into the woods. Each member of the group
was exhausted, then their feet broke through the surface crust into
ankle-deep water.

The water had collected after the
ground froze, protected from frost
under a layer of thin ice, snow,
at the ridge line.

We can't turn back now.

Gresham, Wisconsin, 1975

Ten Commandments Revised Worker’s Edition

by Comrade Townsend of Grand Rapids,
reprinted from the May 1, 1908 issue of
The Wage Slave, Hancock, MI

I. And my master spake all these words, saying, “Thou shalt have no other boss but me.” This is the first and greatest commandment.

II. “Thou shalt bow down thyself before me, and me only; and in the sweat of thy brow will I eat bread all the days of my life, for I, thy lord and Master, am exceeding jealous of my privileges, even to the visiting of the servitude of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation.”

III. “Thou shalt not curse thy master behind his back, nor secretly conspire against his prosperity; for the ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master’s crib.”

IV. “Remember the first day of the week; on that day though shalt neither work nor take thy pleasure but shalt rest thy arms, thy legs, thy back, thy hair and thy toe-nails, that though mayest be strong to work for me the remaining six days of the week, all the days of thy life.

Though shalt not hunt nor fish on the first day of the week nor go to theaters or places of amusement, lest though weary thyself, and prove an unprofitable servant unto me, lest also thou give of thy shekels and thou be tempted to demand more wages of me.

Six days shalt though labor and do all my work. Thou shalt give of the strength that is in thee; thy back, thy legs, thy arms, thy hair and thy toe-nails, though and thy seed after thee, to make profits for me, that I may possess the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that in them is.”

V. “Honor thy master that he may make the days of thy service long and the amount of thy wages exceedingly small in the land which he possesseth.”

VI. “Thou shalt not kill with thy ballot, at the polls, the system that maketh a lord of thy master and a slave of thee.”

VII. “And when thy master waxeth eloquent in speech and prophesieth of returning prosperity and confidence, thou shalt take it as the gospel truth, unadulterated.”

VIII. “When thy master taketh away thy wages and leaveth thee to beg or starve, thou shalt do both rather than steal.”

IX. “Though shalt not stir up discontent among thy fellow workers by bearing witness that thy master is robbing thee and them of their earnings.”

X. “Thou shalt not covet things to eat or drink or wear; neither shalt thou covet thy master’s house, nor envy him his chauffer, or his mistress’ dog; nor anything that is thy master’s ; for the earth is his and the fullnes thereof, the silver and the fold and the chattels and a thousand mills. But upon thy belly shalt thou crawl and dirt shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”

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Keweenaw Socialists Quarterly is published and distributed by Bazhiba'igan Publishing, an official organ of the Keweenaw Socialists. If you're interested in contributing to a future issue or have any questions please reach out to submissions@keweenawspear.com

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