

Bern Notice

Building a Material Force in the Age of Trumpism

Anonymous

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Blood soaked the sidewalks of Anaheim last weekend, only several miles from Disneyland, after a brawl broke out between protesters and members of the Ku Klux Klan, who attempted to conduct a “White Lives Matter” march. By the end of the altercation, over a dozen people were arrested and several stabbed. Only several hours later however, five Klansmen walked free, as anti-fascist youth who suffered stab wounds, faced criminal charges and expensive medical fees. Later that night, people marched and protested outside of the police station, calling for the release of their friends.

The next day, “respectable community members,” non-profits, and unions took to the streets as well, trying to calm down the anger of young people who had confronted the Klan and seen their friends attacked. Many were worried that the same fires that sparked the riots of 2012, when anger at police for killing Manuel Diaz boiled over in the streets, would return to Anaheim. For the official organizations of “respectable protest,” those that dared to physically fight the Klan were even scarier than the Klan itself; *they couldn’t be controlled*.

While Anaheim has a well documented history of KKK activity, this event didn’t happen in a vacuum. Across the US, the far-right is growing, both in numbers, influence, as well as in militancy. While the Trump campaign is acting as a means for these groups to congeal and also as a space for them to intervene in, their trajectory has been on the rise well before this election cycle. Meanwhile, on the Left, people wring their hands about the ongoing predictable defeat of Bernie Sanders.

This essay will argue that Sanders, who politically resembles a New Deal Democrat that promotes an imperialist foreign policy and possesses a nationalist anti-immigrant streak, never stood a chance at being elected in the first place. But regardless, the role of Sanders runs much deeper, as his candidacy is designed to *bring back* into the Democratic Party youth and low wage workers; both in terms of votes and support. These are the same people, who by and large, have become totally disillusioned after 8 years of Obama’s “hope and change” reign.

If we strive to create a material force within the social landscape; an autonomous anti-capitalist and anti-colonial movement that builds counter-power and new forms of life, then we must take stock of the other emerging forces in the current terrain. We have to think about how we can fight—and win, against the growing rise of the autonomous far-right, especially after Trump’s presidential run ends. For after Trump returns to being a real estate billionaire baron full-time, the cadres that gathered their forces during his campaign will take further shape autonomously, as backlash will surely build against Hilary, assuming that she takes the Presidency. At the same time, as we take a position in this “three-way fight,” we must make sure that our resistance to the far-right is also linked to our struggle against the state and capital; attacking white supremacy as a neo-colonial system and not simply a fight against white nationalist formations on the fringes.

Growth of Autonomous Far-Right Within and Outside of Trump

It’s Going Down was launched in a period of rising white nationalism and far-right activity. In the aftermath of the Charleston, SC massacre in June of 2015, a wave of attacks, vandalism, and raucous protests began against flags, statues, and symbols of the Confederate past. This latest episode in the black liberation struggle, which proceeded the Baltimore uprising by only two months, pushed many within the often fractured white nationalist movement together as they sought to intervene in the largely white push-back against denunciations on the vestiges of the

Confederacy. As we have stated in the past, this struggle against white supremacy in the US has taken on the appearance and feeling of civil war; and it is within this war that people have chosen sides. Some take the side against it, as those who took to the streets and fought with the Klan and members of the National Socialist Movement (NSM), several months after the Charleston Massacre, as the fascists rallied in support of the Confederate flag in South Carolina. Others, fight to uphold the racial caste system that America is founded upon, such as those that burned numerous black churches throughout the American south as these struggles raged.

We refer to these forces as the autonomous far-right, because they operate, organize, and exist outside of and sometimes are even hostile to the state, although just as often they may feed into it, or attempt to organize within these existing institutions. The growth of these formations, as well as their militancy is striking, and points to the fact that those fighting for liberation in communities across the US will have to not only contend with the police, the Leftist bureaucrats and managers, but now also potentially, fascists.

In the past year, we have seen this play out in the streets several times. In Olympia, we watched as Neo-Nazi skinheads took to the streets in support of the police. In Minneapolis, white nationalist members of the Patriot movement (and Trump supporters), fired upon demonstrators during the #JusticeforJamar occupation. In Seattle, members of the Hammerskin Nation attempted to march in a predominantly queer neighborhood. Moreover, in the face of almost a total media blackout, a wave of arson attacks against black churches was carried out throughout the South. In short, the far-right has hit the streets more in the last two years than they have since the 1990s. Its also important to note that in all of these instances, as it was in Anaheim, it took people physically confronting them to drive them out. These actions took organization, they took planning, and they took people working together across racial, geographic, and ideological lines, but more over, they also took people being ready *to physically fight*.

But these events are only part of the larger picture. From the recent #OurThreeBoys murders, Islamophobic and anti-Muslim bombings in the wake of the Paris ISIS attacks, the Bundy Ranch and Mahleir Refuge occupations, and the a rise in KKK activity and recruiting drives, the far-right has become emboldened beyond just an ideological hardcore or one specific group.

From the KKK, to skinheads, Neo-Nazis, Christian fascists, Men's Rights Activists, to the Patriot Movement and anti-abortion militants, what's important is that these groups are learning from their weaknesses and attempting to reach out into larger society. This is a push that has been growing for some time now and thus it is important to remember that it is not *caused* by Trump's candidacy. What Trump has done instead is simply create more of a sea in which these groups can swim in and a pool of potential recruits for the white nationalist cadres of the future.

Make no mistake, this is a force that continues to grow more violent. Only several days after the Anaheim showdown, Neo-nazi skinheads screaming, "Heil Hitler!" attacked Latino youth in an southern California park. In the wake of these attacks, other white nationalists, from both the caviar suit and tie fascists like Jared Taylor of *American Renaissance* to old guard former Klansman and Louisiana State Legislator David Duke, also gained headlines. This time for calling on their supporters to not only vote for Trump, but to take a role in organizing with his supporters and putting in work at campaign offices much as Neo-Nazis and KKK members had done for Duke himself, Pat Buchanan, Barry Goldwater, and George Wallace.

Heading the call, Klansman soon showed up outside of Trump rallies holding signs of support. In return, Trump continued to share on social media fascist and Neo-Nazi imagery, this week, it was a quote from the Italian fascist Mussolini, which he later refused to disavow. Then on CNN,

Trump refused to back down from support he had received from David Duke and the KKK. And, it seems that no turn towards racist demagoguery or fascism seems to hinder support of “The Donald,” as only days later, white basketball students chanted “Trump! Trump! Trump” after defeating a multi-ethnic basketball team. Then on Monday in Georgia, Trump had whole groups of black students removed from one of his rallies *before* they could even protest.

The very next day in Kentucky, a group of black youth that came to protest Trump at a campaign rally had their signs snatched and destroyed by a group of supporters. Captured on camera in the middle of the melee was Matthew Heimbach, a leader within the White nationalist movement and the fascist group, the Traditionalist Worker Party. Part of a group of 5, and all wearing TWP shirts and passing out flyers, Heimbach and others reportedly attacked the black youth, pushing, spitting on, and taunting them. Shaun King wrote of the incident:

“I was called a n— and a c—t and got kicked out,” said Shiya Nwanguma, a respected student at the University of Louisville to a local interviewer in a video posted on Facebook. “They were pushing and shoving at me, cursing at me, yelling at me, called me every name in the book. They were disgusting and dangerous.”

Another demonstrator, Molly Shah, watched as Heimbach tried to recruit other attendees. “I watched him for hours recruit Trump supporters with five of his buddies,” said Shah. “They later attacked the group I was with. The Neo-Nazis threw punches and kicked us. I am still awake now because my body is sore.”

[T]he crowd was taking their cues from Trump — who repeatedly barked, “get them out of here”...So flippant in his directive, it appears that attendees simply began taking it upon themselves to manhandle protesters and force them out of the rally.

In an interview with the *New York Daily News*, Chanelle Helm, a protester and respected activist who attended the rally, said that she and others were not just spat on, but were cursed at and demeaned repeatedly by Trump supporters. She distinctly remembered one disturbing chant, which was lead by the white supremacists, “You’re scum, your time will come. You’re scum, your time will come.” She went on, “We were there alongside them for hours and hours waiting for the rally to begin. They would regularly bump into us on purpose, step on our shoes, accidentally wave signs that smacked us in the face. We actually heard them talking about us for hours. It was eerie.”

Henry Brousseau, another protester, said “I was actually punched by fascists wearing T-shirts from the Traditional Workers Party.” After being removed from the event, Helm actually saw Brousseau vomiting afterward. “Some of us who were taken out of there by police, by black officers I might add, were actually told that they wanted to get us out there for our own safety.”

One thing is clear, white nationalists and fascists have moved from simply supporting the Trump campaign and trying to intervene within it, and are now physically trying to entice others to racialized violence. In doing so, they are preparing for when Trump leaves the stage and the next phase of their struggle will begin.

The question then becomes, what are we going to do about it?

Bern Notice

This Tuesday, many pundits rushed to read a death sentence for Bernie Sanders, as the “super delegates” predictably cast their votes for Hillary Clinton. While months are left in the Presidential race, for many, it’s already over. The millions raised by online donors will all be for not, and many people will go back to feeling as if politics was all completely pointless once more.

Towards that end, it’s important that we fully understand the political role of Sander’s campaign and how by and large it was a step back from constructing anything that could make a real revolution a reality. As Joseph Kishore wrote:

One further statistic points to the essential political role of the Sanders campaign: Forty percent of voters in the Democratic primary identified themselves as “independent/undeclared” (that is, not registered as a Democrat), and these backed Sanders by 72 percent. The Vermont senator has repeatedly said the principal aim of his “political revolution” is to bring voters back into the fold of the Democratic Party.

The growing support for Sanders is an initial political reflection of deep tensions in the United States, which have been artificially suppressed for decades, as social inequality rose to levels not seen since before the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Particularly since the 2008 financial crash, the American ruling class has engaged in a restructuring of class relations that has seen trillions funneled to the banks while the vast majority of the population faced falling wages, attacks on health care and pensions, mass unemployment and rising indebtedness. Young people, who back Sanders by a wide margin, have known nothing but economic crisis, war and attacks on democratic rights. An eighteen-year-old new voter would have been four years old when the “war on terror” began and 11 at the onset of the global financial crisis.

Sanders is not the first to speak of a “revolution” in politics while participating in it. Several years ago, Ron Paul did practically the same thing. But what Sanders proposes is not a revolution; it is a reconfiguration of disaffected millions back into the political apparatus. While many applaud Sanders for his use of “everyday language” which speaks to the “class issues” of low wage workers, students in debt, and the poor, this is by and large riding high on the legacy of the Occupy movement— a movement that was smashed and attacked by the Democratic Party. In Bernie Sanders, these movements did not find their exhalation – they found their demise.

Bernie Sanders has never offered either a tangible threat, or alternative to, the capitalist State. Moreover, throughout its history, the Democratic Party has been used to destroy, strangle, and smother all movements for liberation that it has gotten its hands on. In terms of physical repression, state surveillance, and recuperation. We can’t ‘Occupy the Democrats,’ we can only leave this entire system behind, once and for all. We should also be clear that for Sanders, “socialism” is not a movement, struggle, or set of ideas which seeks to do away with capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, or class society. Instead, for Sanders, socialism is simply a reordering of capitalism which provides more in terms of social programs and welfare than it currently does now. A “Scandinavian” styled social democratic US wouldn’t drastically change—or stop—the current crisis in capital and the ecological crisis of global warming from unfolding.

To do this, we will have to come up against both the full power of the state and its forces and also against the very real ways in which capitalism organizes our lives and bodies. In order to

change the world and create a genuine revolution, we'll have to destroy capitalism and the very governments which manages and protects it.

For those that worked with Sanders' campaign, we state plainly that nothing they have done has gotten us closer to this goal. With Sanders' defeat now official in the eyes of many, the Democrats are now in a position to finally harness all the grassroots mobilization that the Bernie campaign has developed, and push people in the millions to pull the level for Clinton. "Anybody but Trump!" will be the new rallying cry, as millions will choose to either drag their feet or tow the party line.

In this way, Sanders will have served his biggest role: playing revolutionary for the most counter-revolutionary party in history.

Changing Political Terrain

As we speak, economists are predicting an impending global economic crash. *Bloomberg*, the capitalist news group, reported recently that they soon expect another crash on a global scale. After nearly ten years since the economic meltdown of 2007-8, the "recovered economy" has really only recovered for those on the very top. While the system has continued to expand and make more goods, the workers who the system depends on to buy all these goods, from suburban homes to hoverboards, by and large can't afford them anymore. What few dollars we do have left in our piggy banks after paying for rent, food, transportation, or what little money is freed up by things like (for the moment) lower gas prices, by and large only goes to pay off our debts that we have accumulated while simply trying to survive. The endless growth of capitalism hits a wall of its own design.

Within this crisis, the system has responded to declining conditions and increasing class and racial inequality with an ever-broadening campaign of counter-insurgency. The militarization of the police, as seen dramatically in both the crushing of the Occupy Movement as well as in the attempts at pacification of insurrections such as in Ferguson and Baltimore, have only increased in the last year, not shrunk. As in the 1980s under the reign of Reagan, the attacks against reforms made by the civil-rights movement through the rolling back of social benefits and the so-called "War on Drugs," really equated to the re-establishing of a "color-blind" white supremacy and systems of mass incarceration.

Meanwhile, degradation of the environment and the theft of land and resources continues in Native communities and on reservations, deportations against migrant workers grows, and working black families have lost more wealth in the last 8 years since they have since the great depression. Even for white workers, conditions and even life expectancy has started to degrade.

Bourgeois politics will continue to push to the Right; it's the only place left for it to go as civilization unravels.

Pushing Farther to the Right

Trump terrifies the Republican establishment because he has the potential to destabilize it. Recently, Mitt Romney (a figure on the far-right himself) declared Trump to be "a fraud" and claimed he was playing US voters and workers "for suckers," a move which will further break apart the GOP. Trump's antics promote not only vigilante violence but stoke the fires of possible

fight back; from student walkouts to migrant worker wildcats to urban riots. The elites would much rather stick to their version of “social peace,” than risk more fires in the streets.

But Trump also plays another role, as he generates more room for the Democrats (and everyone else) to move even farther to the Right. Under another Clinton administration, the Democratic elites will further attacks on workers, the poor, the oppressed, the environment, and the rest of the world. What are mass ICE raids and growing immigrant detention prisons against the horror that was Trump’s supposed plans?

On the side of the right-wing rank-n-file, many declassed Whites, mostly from the middle-class but also increasingly from the working-class, have responded to the continuing crisis over that last near-decade along with the growing Black Lives Matter movement by also turning sharply to the right. Bolstered by their own insurgent mobilizations, from attacks on abortion clinics, the Malheur wildlife refuge occupation near Burns, Oregon, to the growing racial violence that has accompanied many Trump rallies, the Right has taken on both an expanded array of autonomous groupings and movements while at the same time feeding into Trump’s ‘legitimacy’ in the presidential race. But just as KKK members, Neo-Nazis, and white nationalists of all stripes poured millions of dollars and hours into the campaigns of Duke, Buchanan, Goldwater, and Wallace, when these campaigns failed, they were often left with nothing. They inherited no organizational apparatus, no money to use for the next campaign, and largely lost the spotlight which had given them a microphone. The new generation however, has no plan to repeat this mistake.

The Growing Power of White Power

A new generation of white nationalists will rise out of Trump’s defeat, and proliferate further still after Hilary’s expected victory.

Such a recomposition of far-right forces has happened many times in the past. For instance, during the campaign to support the segregationist George Wallace, Neo-Nazis, KKK members, and white nationalists staffed support and campaign organizations in droves. Out of this support, came the National Youth Alliance for Wallace, which was headed by the likes of the Liberty Lobby (a DC-based racist, pro-nazi, Holocaust denying, and anti-Semitic outfit) and former supporters of the American Nazi Party, namely, William Pierce.

After the Wallace campaign collapsed, the White nationalists fought over the scraps that remained of the organization that had once raised thousands and garnished massive white support. Out of the power struggle rose the National Alliance, with Pierce at its head. Pierce would go on to pen *The Turner Diaries* that inspired various white power revolutionaries such as the murderous group The Order in the Pacific Northwest and the Oklahoma City bombing carried out by white nationalist and militia enthusiast, Timothy McVeigh. The far-right views Trump’s campaign not as the end, *but the start of something*. As in the past, the established organizations will milk these fascist and racist formations for members, money, and support, and drop them as soon as it comes out in the open that there is a direct connection (just as Duke’s, Buchanan’s, and previous campaigns have done).

But at the end of the day, the far-right formations that stand to gain ground in the current terrain are those can pick up supporters, social networks, and money after Trump’s fall and continue on beyond the moment created by his campaign. The Left, who largely places all their hopes in the few cosmetic changes the established system allows ordinary people to make, and

then reverts back into consumer politics or protest ghettos, will by and large return to business as usual, with a few socialist groups picking up new adherents and cadres. The official organizations, such as the AFL-CIO and the Democratic Party, as well as the heads of non-profits (such as the official Black Lives Matter leadership), will retain their stranglehold on social movements, helping to contain them in an effort to prevent the establishment of a genuine autonomous anti-capitalist force that rejects state power and electoral politics all together.

But this is exactly the kind of force that we need.

Building a Revolutionary Material Force

The creation of such a force isn't going to fall out of the sky. We are not going to see a candidate on TV talking about it, nor are we just going to find it on the internet. It will have to be built by people that come together in the areas where they live and then expand out into all avenues of social life. But moreover, we need something that has the ability to transcend just one moment; that lasts beyond individual struggles, campaigns, social movements, and generations. We have to engender something that has the ability to bring together people across different walks of life while at the same time surviving repression and supporting those who are attacked by it.

In creating an *autonomous anti-capitalist force*, we have to break out of the strangle hold of the symbolic, demand based, and spectacular mode of *activism* and push towards *building autonomy*. This means getting organized on our own terms and carrying out our own actions, outside of and against the union bureaucrats, Democratic Party managers, non-profit career activists, and religious leaders. We need to leave not only the two corporate political parties behind, but mainstream electoral politics altogether.

Moreover, we will also have to leave behind the trappings of the “radical milieu” completely, from it's moralistic nihilism to its activist careerism. We cannot wait for the radical scene to catch up or come around, much of it won't; we'll have to push together with those around us we share affinity with, reaching out while in struggle with those outside of politics, radical or mainstream. In doing so, we must work to find commonality with other people while building new forms of life through shared and lived conditions and the struggle to free ourselves from them.

We are in for some wild times ahead.

It's only just started to go down.

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