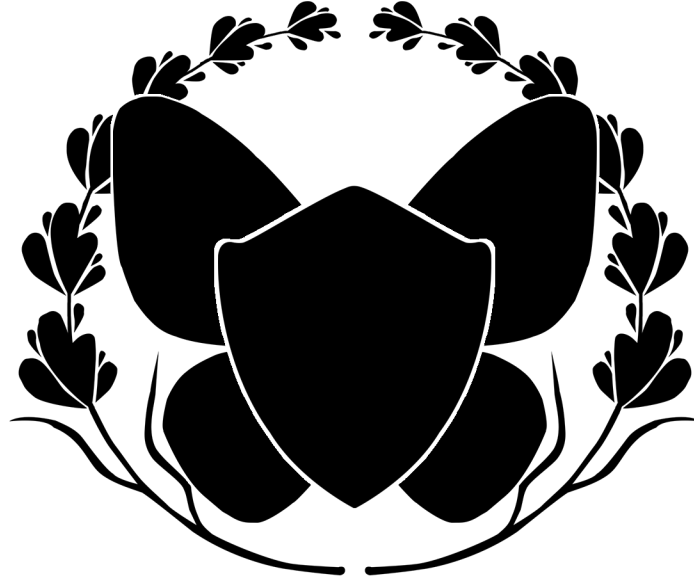


# TEN MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT COMMUNISM



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# PREFACE

*“Only a fool lets somebody else tell him who his enemy is.”*

— Comrade Assata Shakur

We’re taught from an early age that decentralization prevents the few from imposing their interests on the collective, that, without a central ideological organizer, public discourse in an open forum will tend to produce unbiased information on average. But just as the market system operates under anarchic forces to the benefit of the wealthy, so too does the supposed “free market of ideas” tend to organically reproduce the ideology of the ruling class. Until recently, the ruling class has primarily maintained its ideological hegemony by maintaining its monopoly over cultural production. Newspapers, think-tanks, news stations — all of these and more are owned by a singular class of people who share common interests even if they comprise many individuals. It is little surprise, then, that in all but the smallest holdouts of truly independent, non-profit productions, the media we’re exposed to is resoundingly anti-Communist; music, film, and other media that exist only to generate profits for the capitalist owners and to perpetuate their ideology will inevitably serve to demonize their enemies.

Now in the age of mass infotech, the production and distribution of information has reached an unprecedented degree of decentralization, and yet, paradoxically, the public seems no better informed than before — perhaps even less so! How can this be? While the average person has been empowered by social media and other online fora to more-or-less openly express their views, the hegemonic powers have been similarly empowered. Now they are increasingly able to control “truth,” not necessarily through centralized censorship, but by drowning it out with an unstoppable tide of anonymous disinformation, and by influencing what is seen as “legitimate” or as “acceptable.” Lies become unfalsified by repetition in the so-called “free marketplace of ideas,” where they are converted from disinformation into unsourceable *misinformation*, while the truth quite literally fails to compete. The beautiful technological marvel that is the world wide web has become perverted into a tool for disseminating falsehoods, commercial advertisements, scams, and spambots — and sorting through this tangled web of psychic hazards can be an exhausting task. Hence, questioning orthodoxy, searching for truth among a buffet of boutique ideologies, identifying fake news, has become a tremendous ordeal, requiring time and energy few will have the luxury to spend on the pursuit of knowledge. One result is that few people today really understand what the words “socialism” and “Communism” mean, and yet they instinctively fear socialists and Communists all the same.

In spite of these methods of ideological control, the state and the media can never completely forestall the struggle between the dispossessed mass of workers and the capitalists. The workers and the poor instinctively sense that their interests are opposed to those of the rich, and, before long, the most class conscious, in pursuit of a scientific understanding of their oppression, are drawn to socialism; the best learn Marxism — the sole scientific ideology of Communism — and become revolutionaries, dedicated to serving the people. If you are reading this now, then perhaps you are among them, searching for answers to questions which you’ve no doubt been told are naive or heretical.

At this critical historical junction where Communism is still widely vilified, it is my honor to have compiled rebuttals to ten of the most commonly held misconceptions for those readers who will take the time to read them.

# 1. Compared to Capitalism, Socialism is Despotic and Undemocratic

If someone claimed that all countries on earth, even the most democratic of republics, are, at the same time, dictatorships, would that surprise you? In every-day speech, “democracy” and “dictatorship” are understood as antonyms, and a “democratic dictatorship” sounds like an oxymoron. In order to understand the apparent contradiction we need to understand how the varying classes in society relate to the state. As Marxists, we understand the state as a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms, as the means by which the ruling class keeps the working class from revolting and ending their exploitation. Democracy and dictatorship, then, are simply two faces of the same coin. For example, during the Roman republic, the state served the interests of the slaveholding nobility by repressing the struggle of the slaves and free laborers for emancipation. Similarly, in the ancient Greek city-states, the state served the democratic will of slave-owning men by maintaining their right to own other people.

In the American colonies, the democratic dictatorship of the bourgeoisie was made *explicit* by the restriction of suffrage to property-owning men and by the right of those men to own slaves. After the colonies declared independence and formed the United States, the state of the antebellum South continued to serve the interests of the slaveholding planters, and all others who profited from the Atlantic slave trade, by deploying patrolling militias to crush slave revolts. Likewise, the state of the North served the interests of the industrialists and merchants by deploying violence to keep the proletariat, ostensibly as free as any other man, from breaking the bonds of their own subjugation. And all this was done on the democratic mandate of the ruling class. Today we take for granted universal suffrage and the abolition of slavery. We take for granted that because we have the opportunity to vote in elections, that means our will is represented in politics.

But clearly there must be more to “democracy” than a government consisting of elected representatives. Even with the franchise, few people feel represented by either of our majority parties in America — and rightly so! When we say that America is a *bourgeois republic*, we mean that the representatives we elect do not actually represent *our* interests, but rather the narrow interests of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie. We mean that all major policy decisions are made behind closed doors, where votes are bought and sold, like any other commodity, in closed auctions. With few exception, the resulting policies conflict with the interests of the majority. Most people feel this intuitively. We tend to vote not to have our will expressed, but merely out of spite, for a lesser evil that we hope will fuck us just a bit more gently than the other guy. We come to this understanding simply by participating in electoral politics, but it’s worth pointing out that this has been [empirically](#) verified: “Economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence” (Gilens and Page, 2014). America remains today, like those societies that came before us, a democracy for the privileged few, and a dictatorship for the dispossessed masses.

The primary difference between the political systems of socialism and capitalism, then, is not an absence of representative democracy, but rather, *which class* is politically empowered — the “class character” of the state. Under capitalism, workers only have the right to vote for whichever representative of the ruling class is going to oppress them next. The only choice we have is, “Shall we ‘elect’ to be oppressed by the Republicans or the Democrats?” But the development of socialism commences with the overthrow of the capitalist dictatorship and the institution of a new class dictatorship: the dictatorship of the *oppressed* classes, led by the proletariat. In a developing socialist society, the state is an instrument of working class power, where the workers have, for the first time in history, true political representation. And since the working class comprises the vast majority of society, socialism is therefore *far more* democratic than capitalism. Of course, in any representative system, there will be deviations between the interests of the individual and the collective interests of the class, but this “defect” is inherent to *all* democracies, regardless of class character, and the proletarian democracy will carry on until classes disappear, until the hydra of class society has finally been slain. Then and only then will the twin aspects of democracy and dictatorship wither away together.

Some people object that a class can not be accurately represented by a single party, that multiple parties ensure effective representation. That's certainly what we are taught in every liberal political "science" (sic) class. This may well be true for the bourgeoisie, among whom you find factions with competing political programs: high spending or low spending, laissez faire or Keynesianism, isolationism or interventionism, and so on. And these competing interests naturally find representation in competing parties. But even within the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the gap between class fractions is already shrinking. Monopoly capital, which subsumes all competition, finds its interests represented no matter which party is elected. For Lockhead Martin, it makes no difference if Democrats or Republicans occupy the Oval Office; its shareholders will get their pockets lined by ever-increasing defense spending either way. Whether you choose Coke or Pepsi, The Vanguard Group, Inc., is going to collect on the revenue.

Hence why party pluralism will be obsolete to the dictatorship of the proletariat: once the means of production have become collectivized, the basis for intra-class antagonisms will have been abolished. There will no longer be competition between the owners of the means of production, and therefore no need for competing parties to represent the interests of the class. Of course, that is not to say that disagreements will be abolished under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only that truth is not a compromise between two contrasting views, and that factions have no need for independent representation. After all, no political party has ever been completely unified in its beliefs, but a split only becomes inevitable when party democracy is suppressed and debate is silenced. For the working class, political competition in capitalist society is essentially a spectacle, whereas, in socialist society, it can only be a vehicle for counterrevolution, for the representation of non-proletarian class interests. As far as fighting bureaucratization and capitalist restoration is concerned, this is not a matter solved by party pluralism, but rather by continued class struggle, fierce adherence to criticism and self-criticism, and by mass political education and participation.

## 2. Socialists Want to Take Away Your Belongings

When Communists advocate for the abolition of *private property*, this is often a source of confusion. People worry that this means Communists want to take *their* property, to force them to share what they have fairly earned. But in the existing system of bourgeois private property and capitalist production, the "fruit of one's labor" is *already* taken from the vast majority of the population — the workers — by their capitalist employers. In our current society, every commodity is a social product, because every commodity must pass through many different hands, through a worldwide chain of fields, factories, ports, warehouses, and so on, and through a whole series of labor-processes, to finish it — even committed capitalist bourgeois ideologues like Milton Friedman [don't deny this](#). What they *do* continue to deny and quibble about, is that only those who own the means of production, who employ labor, are able to privately appropriate the products of labor. This kind of private property, capital, is already the means by which the many are forced to give up what they have worked to produce, in exchange for a price (a wage) which is, with only some exception in the imperialist metropolises, far less than the value they produce.

So when the imperialists of the World Economic Forum speak of a "great reset" in which "you'll own nothing and be happy," some people mistakenly think this is communism. In fact, for the working people, *this is capitalism!* Under communism, the products of social labor are socially owned, and hence each person is entitled to personally appropriate those articles of consumption they need and desire from the social product. Under capitalism, not only is one's subsistence not guaranteed, but even that which is commonly understood as their property — one's home or car, for example — is constantly under threat of seizure, foreclosure, forfeiture, and so on. It is, in fact, the capitalists who want us bereft of the right to this kind of personal property, so that they can extract ever more profit out of single-use items, debts, leases, and so on. Such a wasteful and inhumane reality can only be avoided through socialist revolution!

### 3. Socialism is When the Government “Does Stuff”

The idea that socialism simply means “bigger government,” “more welfare,” or “state ownership” is commonly advanced both by self-described “democratic socialists” like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who would have us believe that Norway and Finland, for instance, are model socialist countries, and equally by conservatives, who would have us believe that socialism is a metric of state bureaucracy, so that “more socialism” means little more than “more of the DMV.” For the fascists in the John Birch Society, socialism barely means anything more than any increase in centralization. And if this is so, then I suppose we shall have to include Federalists like Alexander Hamilton among the founders of socialism.

The idea that different modes of production can be placed along a one dimensional axis from libertarianism on the one side to communism on the other confuses people by making it seem like the difference between socialists and liberals is merely a matter of quantity, that socialists are just “more liberal” than liberals. While this state intervention or “government size” spectrum might be helpful for comparing bourgeois ideologies like neoliberalism and Keynesianism, socialism is *qualitatively* distinct from capitalism, so they can not be meaningfully compared this way. Imagine trying to explain the difference between capitalism and feudalism by appealing to “the scale of the monarchy” or “the degree of clerical state power” — wouldn’t that be absurd? No, socialists are *not* liberals, and trying to fit socialist positions into the bourgeois political spectrum only results in spurious ideas like the so-called “horseshoe theory,” which claims that “far-right” and “far-left” politics share fundamental similarities with each other but not with the liberal “center.”

So if that’s what socialism *isn’t*, then what actually *is it*? Socialism is the period of revolutionary transformation from class society to communist society. This transformation of society is carried on under the aforementioned “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat,” which, according to a scientific plan, builds the conditions which will enable the abolition of classes and state power: the abolition of private property, exploited labor, and poverty, and their replacement with communist property, equality in production and distribution, and universal abundance.

Crucially, to say that *all* state ownership is socialist is firstly to confuse ownership by the workers as a class and ownership by the bourgeoisie as a class. We are not advocating handing more power to the existing government of today, but rather a completely new government, with completely different institutions — one that truly lives up to the slogan “of, by, and for the people.” But there is another difference too: under capitalist state ownership, wage labor is maintained, the market and profit motive are maintained, the system of commodity production is maintained. A collection of workers might own their own workplace in a local co-op, for example, but as long as they remain wage-laborers producing goods and services for the market, they remain exploited by *the system* even without a specific member of the bourgeoisie employing them. Even in a nationalized industry in a capitalist economy, a worker may no longer be employed by a *particular* member of the bourgeoisie, but the economic relationship between the workers and the owners *as classes* is maintained, the alienation of the worker from the product of their labor is maintained, the division of labor is maintained, and so on.

### 4. Everyone Gets Paid the Same, So There’s No Incentive to Work Hard

This Cold War myth has no connection with reality whatsoever. This myth asks us, “Why would anyone become a doctor if they’d be paid the same as a janitor or a McDonald’s fry cook?” All one has to know to refute this misconception is that the slogan of Communism has always been “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.” Hence, where people have different needs, people will receive different incomes. What Marx *did* advocate, particularly during the early phase of socialist construction, is a meritocratic basis for income, where what you give in terms of labor-time is however much you are owed back from the social product — or, in short, “from each according to their ability, to each according to their *contribution*.” Marx also recognized distinctions between skilled and unskilled labor — labor requiring differing amounts of specialized training and

education — and explained how skilled labor can be counted as “simple labor” multiplied or intensified. So in no sense did Marx ever advocate for a uniform income.

Comrade Stalin once succinctly rebuked this view:

Leveling in the context of necessities and personal life is a reactionary and petty-bourgeois absurdity, worthy of any primitive ascetic sect, but not for a socialist society organized in the Marxist spirit, because one can't demand everyone have the same needs and tastes, that everyone live their personal lives according to a single and universal model [...]. In terms of equality, Marxism no longer understands it as leveling in the context of personal necessities and living standards, but as the elimination of classes ([Losurdo](#) 2020, 45).

## 5. Private Entrepreneurship is Better and Faster at Development Than Socialized Production

While it cannot be denied that capitalism is superior at providing a greater variety of useless garbage — funkopops, pet rocks, unregulated vitamin tinctures, etc — and luxuries that can only be afforded and enjoyed by the extremely rich — private jets, sports cars, \$12,000 watermelons, etc — the idea that capitalism can develop the productive forces of society faster than socialism is a theoretical and historical lie. The pace of industrial development in socialist countries has repeatedly outstripped any precedent set by the capitalist world — and they did so while besieged by the imperialist countries. The USSR, for instance, converted the lands of the former Russian Empire from a backwards, primarily agrarian and peasant country, in which the vast majority of people lived in abject poverty and periodic famines were unavoidable, to an industrial superpower within three decades, despite the immense losses suffered by the Soviet peoples in the First World War, the Russian Civil War, and the Second World War.

Meanwhile, capitalist productivity during the same period was in decline:

Between 1925 and 1932 industrial production in the Soviet Union (on the base of 1925-9 as 100) increased from 59 to 240; the corresponding figure for the United States decreased from 95 to 58, for Britain from 99 to 86, and for Germany from 89 to 66... Between 1929 and 1932 industrial production in the Soviet Union increased by 65 per cent. and in the capitalist world as a whole decreased by 37 percent (Dutt 1974, 10).

The explanation is simple. While the market system provides an incentive to improve the efficiency of production, this can only continue so long as the market is large enough to absorb the increase in commodities. But consumption does not keep pace with the growth of production. Because production expands faster than demand, the market is soon oversaturated in supply, and prices plummet, resulting in a general crisis. This “crisis of overproduction” is a manifestation of the conflict between the productive forces of society and capitalism's relations of production, in which the market sets a cap on the further development of production while simultaneously necessitating it. The result of this crisis — besides mass impoverishment and unemployment — is inevitably the destruction of the means of production or the excess commodities. Today, even during periods of relative stability we see mountains of unsold goods buried in landfills and locks on dumpsters filled with edible produce. This waste, which is apparently necessary to stabilize prices, is a testament to the profound absurdity of capitalist production. But if production were not divided among private, competing enterprises, it could be subject to a social plan, preventing overproduction. Hence, it is the fundamental disorganization and anarchy of capitalist production that sets its own limit — *a limit that is superseded by socialist production*.

## 6. Communism is Utopian

The first people to call themselves “Communists” were indeed utopians. They believed that they could colonize “empty” land and establish self-sufficient, primarily agricultural, primitivist, egalitarian communes. Their experiments inevitably ended in failure; some amounted to cults, and some cults today are similarly utopian. But the starting point of *modern* Communism was exactly the criticism of utopianism by Marx and Engels, which led to their development of *scientific* socialism. Today, “Communism” is synonymous with Marxist scientific socialism. Marx and Engels proved that socialism is not a utopia, nor can it spring from a dream in any great philosopher’s head; they proved that socialism is, instead, an inevitability of human history. They proved that the instability, or “contradictions,” inherent to capitalist society, and the emergence of the modern proletariat, would inevitably lead and yield to socialist revolution. As Marx himself wrote,

Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence (Marx 1845).

It’s certainly true that there are still “leftist” tendencies today that seek to impose their ideal models onto a resistant world rather than investigating how the existing contradictions in society must be resolved — the social democrats, the so-called democratic socialists, the anarchists, the market “socialists” (sic!), etc. But these are not Marxists and are therefore not to be properly understood as *Communists*.

Furthermore, if Marxism is utopian, then what is liberalism? In its modern day incarnation, the trend of liberal “progressivism” is little more than what Marx and Engels derided as “bourgeois socialism,” a failed political ideology which espouses that the fundamental contradictions of capitalism can be peacefully reconciled through gradual reforms but without fundamentally altering the economic structure of society. The effects are to be changed but the causes left in-tact! And all this is to be done ostensibly in the interests of the working class — how generous! And even in its former revolutionary glory, that wonderful political philosophy that toppled monarchies — *well that too was utopian!* In Engel’s Words:

The new order of things, rational enough as compared with earlier conditions, turned out to be by no means absolutely rational. The state based upon reason completely collapsed. Rousseau’s Contrat Social had found its realization in the Reign of Terror... The promised eternal peace was turned into an endless war of conquest... The antagonism between rich and poor, instead of dissolving into general prosperity, had become intensified... In a word, compared with the splendid promises of the philosophers, the social and political institutions born of the “triumph of reason” were bitterly disappointing caricatures (Engels 1880).

The principles on which bourgeois society had constituted itself, those grand revolutionary ideals, turned out in the course of history to be absolutely at odds with capitalist economics and bourgeois society generally — and yet the defenders of this legacy would accuse us of being the utopians! Such hypocrisy, is it not?

## 7. Abolition of the Family

Marx and Engels infamously defended “abolition of the family” in the political program of the *Communist Manifesto*. Nearly 200 years later, this remains one of the most misunderstood and contentious positions of the Communists, even among those who claim to profess Marxism. When speaking of “the” family, we should be clear that we are referring to a particular historical *form* of the family, not the concept of kinship bonds and communities “in the abstract.” In contrast to what the bourgeois ideologues — and in particular the fascists — would have us believe, the modern “nuclear” family is not the only kind of family that has ever existed; in fact, it is a very recent development, appearing only with the development of the modern bourgeoisie in the last few

centuries. Originally, in primeval hunter-gatherer societies, families did not exist, and there was no division of the community into smaller kinship units. The family first developed with the advent of agriculture, the expansion of the community into larger settlements of agriculturalists, and the earliest emergence of private property in discrete household units in the Neolithic. Since that time, the family has transformed in tandem with the transformation of class society in each subsequent epoch: the capitalist family is distinct from that of the feudal family, and the feudal family from that of the ancient family. Moreover, the family takes a different form among the different classes in a society: a family of slaves will not look like a family of slaveholders, nor will a proletarian family look like a bourgeois family.

When Communists speak of “the abolition of the family” they do not mean there will no longer be personal bonds between parents and children, or that people will not be able to find lifelong partners, etc.; what they mean is that the economic basis of the contemporary family will be abolished, and that a new community and kinship structure will *organically arise* from these new economic conditions. Furthermore, the abolition of the family was never an immediate programmatic *demand*; Marx identified capitalism as having already functionally abolished the working class family, and then suggested that *the absence of the working class family would vanish with the vanishing of capital*. The double negative in this construction is confusing: Marx suggested that Communism would promote the re-development of a working class family, a new family form where the bonds of its members are purely sentimental rather than coerced by economic necessity. The exact, concrete form in which this new family will appear is not for us to decide for our progeny; all we can say definitively is what features will disappear. Lineal inheritance, which in its development enabled accumulation of wealth in one family by the accumulation of destitution in many others, is one such economic condition that will be done away with. In our contemporary society, those individual families without the means to raise their children will have them abducted by the state, which then pays for strangers to raise them in their stead; this too is one of the economic conditions which belies the current form of the family. The uncompensated labor of women in social reproduction, her status in capitalist society as a tool of reproduction, is another. With these conditions done away with, partners will no longer be mutually dependent on each other for their subsistence, and families will cease to compete against each other for the subsistence of their children; hence, the antagonism between individual families will wane, and communal child rearing will once again become not only possible, but preferable. It takes a village, after all!

## **8. *Real* Communism Has Never Been Tried Before**

The truth that must be reckoned with, the truth that all tried and true Communists today will readily acknowledge, is that *real communism was tried!* And it was *good!* It is, of course, true that no socialist society has successfully developed into a “mature” or “late stage” communist society — one where classes have been abolished and the state has withered away — but this is not for any lack of doing “real socialism.” The conquering of political and economic power by the proletariat, the conversion of private property into public property, and the development of a system of economic planning, were genuinely revolutionary advances, even if those achievements were eventually destroyed by capitalist restoration. That is to say, if we can speak at all of the “failures” of 20th century Communism, it is by and large to the extent that it was defeated. Defeated, that is, by the combined forces of imperialism and internal counterrevolutionaries.

As Lenin rightly noted, even once the bourgeoisie is overthrown, it remains the economically dominant class, and will desperately seek to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to restore its own class dictatorship.

The first large-scale socialist revolution, the October Revolution of 1917 that led to the formation of the USSR, happened just over a century ago. Yes, indeed, it may have lost the cold war. But we still stand at the very dawn of the transition from capitalism to socialism; people alive today have witnessed, and are witnessing, only the *first of many* socialist revolutions to come.

The first dictatorship of the proletariat, the Paris Commune, was also defeated, but this did not preclude the Bolshevik revolutionaries from carrying the next great revolutionary project forward. And the struggle to give birth to a new society is not unique to the proletariat, either. It's well worth recognizing that it took the ascendant bourgeoisie *several centuries* and numerous revolutions, some successful and some failed, before the final victory of the capitalist revolution over feudalism was achieved. Wherever the young bourgeoisie successfully seized state power, they remained in conflict against the surviving remnants of the old aristocracy and nobility for a long time. Even as recently as 2022 there was even a failed [monarchist putsch](#) in Germany! The class struggle is not a straight line; it advances in fits and starts, with progress as well as regress. So fret not: as long as we learn from the successes and failures of our predecessors, our time will come again!

## 9. Socialism Causes Famine

Far from causing famines, socialism *ended them!* Nearly every country so far that has produced a socialist revolution has had the misfortune of inheriting semi-feudal, underdeveloped economies in which periodic famines have always been unavoidable and catastrophic. It goes without saying that uplifting a country from these conditions is a herculean task that cannot be accomplished with a snap of a finger; to even establish a socialist economy first requires the industrialization of the economy, including agriculture. And while it is certainly true that rapid industrialization came with grave costs and sacrifices, it cannot be denied that by the end of this process, each socialist revolution in history succeeded in eliminating the famines which had plagued their countries for millennia prior.

By contrast, let's look at the track record of capitalist economies in the world today. Every country today faced with acute food insecurity and malnutrition crises are capitalist countries, mostly in the global south. According to the [World Food Programme](#), a capitalist-funded NGO, there are “more than 345 million people facing high levels of food insecurity in 2023.” How can this be? The world's productive forces have the capacity to feed the world's entire population several times over. Food insecurity today is caused by a number of fundamentally *capitalist* problems: economic exploitation of the Global South by the imperial center, wars by and between imperialist nations, the effects of the climate crisis, the devastating effects of profit-first agricultural practices (eg. monocropping), the anarchy of capitalist production, and by the wealth inequality inherent to capitalist economies. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the adoption of a neoliberal market economy in the Russian Federation, food insecurity and malnutrition [increased](#) rather than decreasing (Lunze et al. 2015). A 1993 survey conducted by CARE “classified 70% of households, 77% of women, and 32% of children as hungry” in the former USSR. In part this was because of decreased agricultural and livestock production, increased income inequality and decreased purchasing power, and increased unemployment. Even in the wealthiest parts of the wealthiest empires, starvation, food insecurity, and malnutrition continue to rear their heads in impoverished communities and homeless encampments. Sky rocketing market prices, food deserts, supply chain failures, overlapping economic crises — aren't these endemic to even the most “wealthy” capitalist countries?

## 10. “Everyone will be equally poor”

Basing themselves on the failure of capitalism to end poverty, the bourgeois ideologues have claimed for centuries that poverty can never be overcome. And on this pretense, they have further claimed that ending inequality, rather than eliminating poverty, would actually make it general, universal. The claim comes in two parts: the first is that poverty is a product of humanity's unchanging nature to reproduce at a faster rate than production can keep pace with, and second that the wealthiest few in capitalist society earned their wealth by contributing more to society (and hence, redistribution privileges the laziest, dumbest, or weakest members of society). The pseudoscientific theory of “overpopulation,” first systematically expounded by the English clergyman and economist Thomas Malthus in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, has long been debunked, and anyone without their head buried

in the sand can clearly see that the wealthiest members of society are not producing millions of times more value than your average laborer — in fact, they produce little to no value at all!

What conditions the distribution of resources is neither human nature nor the supposed superiority of the wealthy; what conditions the distribution of resources are the relations of production in our society, in which those who own the means of production hold the means of subsistence hostage in exchange for the propertyless laborer's ability to work. The more the proletarian works, the less he works for himself, and the more his surplus value is exploited, for the magnitude of his wage bears no relationship to the product of his own labor. It is this system of exploitation that polarizes wealth, and anyone who would deny this, as, for instance, the arch-neoliberal propagandist Milton Friedman did, must believe that the wealth in our society has, or could have, an infinite magnitude. But this is an absurdity: our planet has finite material resources and its human population has a finite sum of labor-power to expend on converting those resources into wealth. Opulent wealth at one pole of society must therefore be balanced by destitution at the other pole. Hence, by overthrowing the capitalist class and reforging the economic system, the average and median distribution of wealth will not only rise, but rise substantially! And where some inequality might remain, it ceases to be a social power over others.

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