

# On Dead Greatskins and Civil War

*A historical treatise on the emergence of communism on Maltazar, between 164 and 171 OW*

The great social turmoil on Maltazar began not with the fervent speeches of the Commies, nor with the revolts of the savages, but with a very banal affair: the greatskins, the lumbering and dull lizards unique to Maltazar's hilly jungle. They were of great value to the people, exemplified by the more well-off wearing fancy vestons and corsets of shining black leather. Greatskin leather, beyond its good looks, was easy to cure and work, and watertight. What's more, a single greatskin carried up to a dozen elbows of the material on its back. Additionally, their great physique and straightforward diet made them excellent draft and pack animals. For the less distinguished, or the extremely distinguished when served with a sprinkling of herbs, greatskin meat was a source of food. Especially the savage tribes relied on this. Finally, from a druid or nature-sage's eyes, greatskins were an essential part of the ecosystem, diligently mowing down the lush shrubbery and allowing trees to sprout and prosper.

The greatskin population, however, gradually declined after the arrival of Denise on the isle. The fall augmented sharply in 163, to leave only a few hundred greatskins alive. Causes for this were varied. A bourgeois would accuse the peasants, denouncing that they overused the lizards as pack animals, notably to drag logs in the lumber yards, and that this made it impossible for them to procreate; a peasant, meanwhile, would point out the immoral prestige hunts of the nobles', and their overexploitation of the wild stock to export their skin. The key to both these issues, however, was that the difficult greatskins could not be bred in captivity, and nature was not able to produce them fast enough. In fact, the humans were making nature's task even harder, by cutting vast swathes of jungle and building their fields or settlements on them. Especially the near-complete use of the coasts, the greatskins' preferred breeding ground, severely limited the great lizards' birth rate.

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While the humans dealt with the shortage of greatskins by going into the woods and capturing more, the native orcish and ogre tribes - of which there were quite a

few, left over after the human invasion and ignored as long as they didn't get in the way - had a problem: traditionally, they relied on the lizards for most everything, including fabric for tents and clothing, and food. Faced by famine, they allied, painted patterns of clay on their heads and chests, and went to war. Many followed the call of the Kools, the strongest tribe. There were further motivations for insurgence: for a long time, many savages had seen their hunting grounds grow smaller and smaller as humans cut roads through the jungle and built villages, clearing the woods. Human hunting parties destroyed whole tribes for small skirmishes or misunderstandings. Beyond this unfairness, humans were openly racist, rarely tolerating an orc in their midst and seeing ogres worthy only of replacing greatskins when necessary. Something had to be done, lest the tribes be completely eradicated, and the Kool war cry was the answer. Some orcish leaders also had nationalist ideas, seeking to expel the humans from their isles altogether and reestablish their kingdoms.

The politics of the humans, meanwhile, were not united. Since the Meffio overthrow on Colupan and the establishment of Maltazar as a member of the Free Phoenix federation, various alternative movements had emerged, criticizing Feathered doctrine. Prominent among the trouble-makers were the liberals, often called "red" because they did not shrink from spilling the blood of what they described as "*bourgeois elements, resting on the work of their lessers*". Pre-164, they were only a minor grouping of troublemakers active in rural areas and often on the run. They also suffered from factionalism; the two main groups advocated full communism in the Sun Imperial style or socialist-democracy like Holderhold.

Their arch-enemies were the Feathered clergy, which ran all the Free Phoenix states, and the upper class. There was significant overlap, as clergymen were often rich and held important offices. There were also some private entrepreneurs, however: merchants, whose small fleets sailed among Maltazar's islands and to other states, and the much wealthier oil barons, who exploited Maltazar's supposedly rich fields to power the Phoenix navy and machinery. This upper class, however, was running into difficulties: Maltazar's oil fields were very easy to exploit, meaning huge funds had been invested into them, but they proved to be deceptively small. Production was falling and, compounded with the reduction in greatskin leather exports, Maltazar was facing an extremely serious economic crisis.

The peasants, finally, were hardy folk, who wrested their land the hard way from the thick jungle, its dangerous beasts, and the savages. Though there were both fervent believers and political idealists among them, they overall cared little for who ruled them, and sought only safety and to be left in peace. Needless to say, with

the orcs rising up, their running out of draft animals, and facing a shortage of supplies, they were unhappy.

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Among the economic problems and enraged savages, the liberals found new life. They united beneath a single party which could stand at eye level with the establishment. Their main source of power was the Sun Empire, which sent them funding and political thinkers. But, despite their perfect economic philosophy, they were rebutted by the bourgeois elite. In response, the party called for their followers to *"rise up under the banner of greatskin argent on field crimson, and end the yoke of the bourgeois oppressors with the call of the masses"*.

The elite did not take them seriously, which was a gross underestimation of their opponents. The new communists did not solely appeal to the educated middle class, but the peasant masses as well. They managed to get their message across quite well. *Agitators* clad in modest factory workers' clothing marched to villages, flying a flag representing a silver greatskin on a crimson background - the lizard was both the companion and symbol of the peasantry, and the target of wasteful bourgeois hunts. The creature also lived only on the Maltazar islands, serving as a national emblem. An agitator's visit usually played out in this manner: peasants would see the red-and-silver flag approach, calling to one another in joy and generously hosting the traveler in their humble abodes; the agitator would then hold moving speeches, and hang up colorful propaganda posters; and they would encourage the peasants to join the communists. This propaganda campaign was quite effective, with people rallying *en masse* behind the symbol of the silver greatskin. In winter 165, the communist party appealed once again to the Feathered government, declaring that *"the people are suffering from savage attacks, and yet you cannot provide even for yourselves; leave Maltazar to the Community, or we will do away with you ourselves"*.

In response, the Feathered clergy attempted to regain the support of the peasants, launching their own campaign. Feathered Ones walked around with raven staffs, calling upon the people to remember the paradise the Phoenix brought them and to continue believing, or they would jinx their own liberation. Throughout 166, the communist agitators and Feathered priests waged a war of words and posters. By the end of the year, however, it grew clear that the communists had the upper hand, and in thaw 167, anticipating a final victorious campaign of agitator propaganda, the Feathereds decided to move. With the help of Phoenix and Cuprien troops, they marched against known communist

headquarters, trying and executing their leaders for treason. Anyone who professed themselves communist was arrested. This campaign was not exhaustive, however, and the many surviving communists responded in kind. Much of the peasantry took up arms, and the Maltazar civil war started.

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The war lasted 5 years and was of an unprecedented scale. The rigorous propaganda campaigns had reached the most remote villages, and nearly everyone picked a side. At first, the scale seemed tipped on the government's side: it had a strong hold on the administration, controlled the cities and the armed forces, and had the support abroad from the Free Phoenix and Cuprien. 2'000 foreign troops joined Maltazar's army already in 167. Against this, the communists only had around half the population, most of them scattered peasants. But each Feathered victory seemed to have no impact at all on the general situation, disobedience in bourgeois-held land was widespread, and the armies had difficulties making progress without the help of draft animals.

Three years later, the balance had changed. The communist silver lizard, which in the meantime had received its own foreign support, controlled most of the countryside and half the cities, while the Feathered army was in a pitiful state. Public opinion of the government had crumbled, especially due to the behavior of the troops. Both Phoenix and Cuprien soldiers were exempted from war regulations, and they often abused this by lodging in hovels, looting, killing and raping wherever they went. In contrast, the communists - many of whom were peasants - were always respectful of the ladies of the house and kindly asked for supplies, rather than requisitioning them. Just as in the communist dream, Maltazar's people turned against their bourgeois oppressors.

In 170, the non-Feathered upper class realized they were on a sinking ship. The Phoenix was starting to withdraw soldiers. So they jumped ship, deciding to join the communist cause. They officially donated all their belongings to the party, though in compensation they remained the managers of their fortunes, received high positions among the party leadership, and were guaranteed immunity. With its own nobles turning it them, there was little the Feathered clergy could do, and it officially conceded to the communists in 171 OW.

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Though the Maltazar civil war was, at its core, a nationalist movement, it featured extensive international involvement. The conflict represented a clash of ideologies on a world scale, that between private-market autocratic Cuprien and the socialist Holderhold and Sun Empires.

The Feathered regimes of the Free Phoenix obviously supported their own government. Hoping for a miraculous recovery of Maltazar's already depleted oil stocks, they assisted the struggling elite with worked goods to appease the masses, and soldiers to fight Kool and, afterwards, the communists. However, as time went on, the costs soared and they recognized there was no chance of the war ending anytime soon. They started silently withdrawing troops and soon after ended the civil war. In order to stay somewhat in control of Maltazar and save face, they even allowed the communist regime to remain in the Free Phoenix.

The Cuprien Empire was the world leader of private-market ideology, and was in a way the Free Phoenix's patron. It also saw the Sun Empire's communism as a threat, an ideology that could infect its own working class, and therefore took significant measures to stop Maltazar from falling into the communist grasp. When the war broke out, it sent 6'200 troops to help the Feathereds, and its navy secured all the coast cities. This gave the bourgeois a great strategical advantage. Cuprien troops were told to act ruthlessly and destroy any "*germs of corruption*". Communists were summarily executed, propaganda was diligently torn down, and anyone reported an agitator was publicly humiliated and tortured before being impaled. Despite the costs, the troops remained until the very end, and Cuprien only conceded to peace on the condition that the new "coalition government" have no political connections to the Sun Empire and that it close no military alliances with it.

Meffio Colupan saw in the revolution a way to weaken the Phoenix and bring Maltazar back into the Denisite fold. Thus, it gave material support to communists and other dissidents before the revolution, and sent a few hundred Colupanian mercenaries to fight under the lizard-on-red. More significantly, its vessels - which were allowed to sail in Phoenix waters, in contrast to Ochebana's - carried Ochebanian shipments of weapons and fighters to the front.

The Sun Empire was the leader of the World Community, and it aimed to live up to that task. The Maltazar revolution would be the foothold communism needed to spread in the private-market world and overthrow the autocrats. Thus, it immediately recognized the communists as the legitimate rulers of Maltazar, and sent them large shipments of mass-produced guns and rifles. Soon afterwards, it started dispatching regiments of "special regulars", also known as *specialists*. These were infantry trained in survival and guerilla tactics, partly equipped with

higher-quality weapons, and fully devoted to the communist cause. By 170, there were 13'000 of them on Maltazar, and they were able to conquer and hold some port cities despite Cuprien-Phoenix naval supremacy.

Even the Dwarven Empire had an interest, though not ideological, in Maltazar. It held land just south of the isles, was currently waging a war in the northern Colupan Archipelago, and had no interest in the geostrategically key Maltazar falling to chaos and, ultimately, the savage races. It also saw Ochebana as a competitor or even enemy. Thus, it at first supplied the bourgeois with top-of-the-line weaponry, including submachine guns. But, when it grew clear that the people were on the communist side and turmoil was worse than communism, it switched sides. Dwarven cannons were instrumental in defending specialist-held cities from Cuprien-Phoenix warships.

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As it was clear the civil war would not end if the bourgeois did not concede, the Free Phoenix agreed to peace in 171. It accepted a communist regime in power, and offered it a place in the federation, on the condition that the Feathered church be allowed to continue preaching on Maltazar and that Ochebana's influence be limited. Some described the new administration a "coalition government" between the two, but the communists were fully in power, and they soon made clear they had no intention of ceding to the Feathereds on political grounds (though they did leave Feathered Ones alone, at first).

The communists, now calling themselves the People's Republic of Maltazar, introduced several radical policies. All land was collectivized, i.e. owned by the state, and managed by Community councils which were often inefficient and biased to their "own" land rather than that of non-councilman farmers. In order to focus on communist goals and for the sake of purity of mind, the regime also declared that all the old social structures had to be destroyed. Traditional families were seen as immoral, and marriage conventions were abolished: anyone could divorce or reproduce whenever they wanted. This caused serious social problems and notably to much female poverty. Religion was denounced as a distraction, though many people were still Feathered believers, leading to unpopularity and antagonizing the Phoenix. Finally, the regime declared that education was useless and members of the Community should focus only on work, which was the driving force of society. The economy suffered severely in the long run.

The communist regime's numerous failures eventually led to its fall. Choosing between communist misery or the hated foreigners of the Phoenix and Cuprien,

Maltazar instead placed itself in the hands of the Dwarves. In 178, Maltazar became a Sovereign State of the Dwarven Empire. The Dwarven stewardship turned out quite successful; the economy was restored within five years and popular welfare increased. Notably, they imposed greatskin protection measures already in 181, and in 219 started a costly campaign to actively repopulate the jungle.