

I've seen two statues of Vladimir I. Lenin in my life, one in the (then) Donetsk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine, which in 2015 was an brutal little gangster state which had broken away from Ukraine with the help of Russian troops. The other has place of pride in a hipster neighborhood of Seattle, Washington called Fremont. The Ukrainian one, which stands in Donetsk, a city that Russia has now formally absorbed, is taken very seriously by the residents, who recognize that it represents the iron fist of Communism. The American one, on the other hand, is defended by its admirers as a display of whimsy, an ironic wink at the past. The problem is that the past hasn't gone anywhere; it's ever-present in those parts of the world where Russian aggression and revanchism is strong – Ukraine of course, but also Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, etc.

2024 marks a hundred years since Lenin went the way of all flesh. It's long past time for the bronze representations of his cruel ideology to be smelted down into something more useful. Maybe some ornate lampposts or fountains for those Ukrainian cities still to be liberated?

