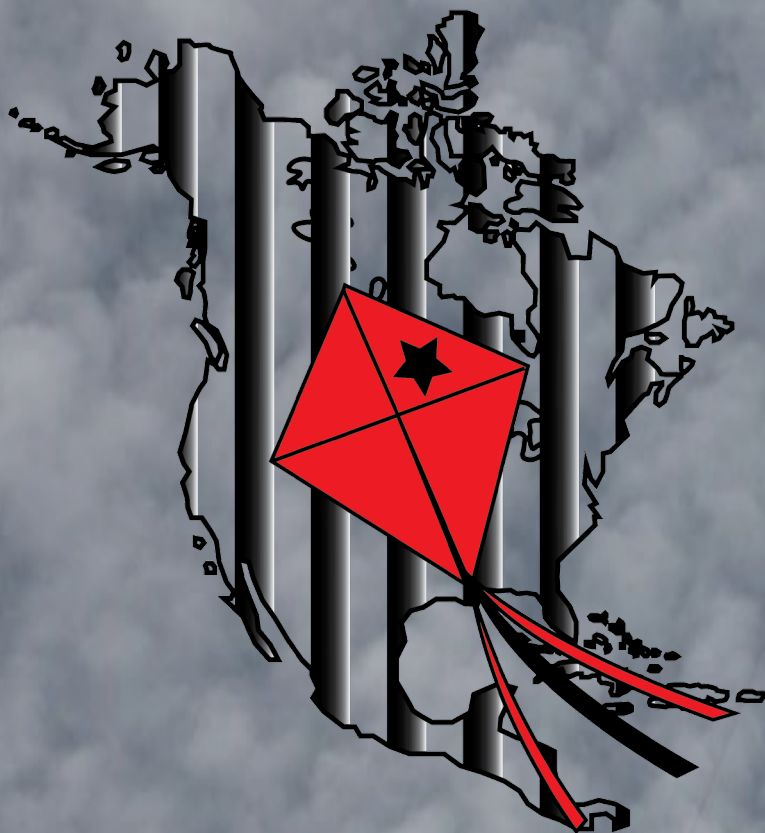


THE CONTRABAND OF
REVOLUTIONARY THEORY:
INTRODUCING KITES,
A JOURNAL OF COMMUNIST
THEORY AND STRATEGY FOR
REVOLUTION IN NORTH AMERICA

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In the American and Canadian prison systems, *kites* are “contra-band” correspondence shared among inmates, and between inmates and those on the outside. Tiny, folded-up pieces of paper, kites are slipped past the watchful eyes of our tormentors, passed through commissary or along with items moving in and out of prison. Their contents range from everyday survival shit to the fragments of plans to strike an enemy. In all cases, the kite is a clandestine form of exchange and dialogue invented by our class in the most brutal conditions known to the North American proletariat.

As a symbol of proletarian resilience and a cultural form from which we have much to learn, we can find no better name for a journal whose mandate is the exchange of a very different kind of contraband created by our class and even more necessary to survive present and future conditions: *revolutionary theory*.

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The journal *kites* comes into existence at a time when growing numbers of people in North America are coming into motion against the horrors of the present and the bleakness of the future. Resurgent fascism, artificial intelligence in the hands of our oppressors, escalating inter-imperialist rivalries, and climate catastrophe all pose existential threats to much of humanity and certainly to the proletariat.

The extent of the crisis of capitalism-imperialism can be gleaned from the extent to which social decay and misery has spread from the periphery to the very heart of the imperialist countries. Stable jobs and the prospect of home ownership are impossibilities for a swelling majority. Bourgeois politicians in every jurisdiction from “left” to right enact one neoliberal policy after another that transfers wealth from the popular classes to capital. Personal debt is crushing most people. More children in the US die to gun violence than do US soldiers in imperialist wars. The US and Canada are in the midst of an opioid overdose crisis manufactured by pharmaceutical capital carving out profitable new markets by any means necessary. The children of Mexican and Central American migrants are living in cages by the thousands. The state-sanctioned and extrajudicial killing and mass incarceration

of proletarians, especially of the US's and Canada's oppressed nations and nationalities, continue unabated -- however with the cover and legitimacy provided by state-sanctioned celebrations of diversity, anti-oppression optics, and the inclusion of a significant proportion of petty bourgeois segments of oppressed nationalities and nations into media, culture, academia and bourgeois politics. And against the backdrop of all the violence perpetrated by the bourgeois state apparatus, we can add a generation of downwardly mobile white men steeped in fascist ideas and culture who are deputizing themselves in greater numbers to further terrorize oppressed nationalities and nations, Muslims, women, and LGBTQ people.

We are entering (if not already finding ourselves well within) a period of protracted crisis from which the bourgeoisie has no exit strategy that the popular classes will find bearable. Against the backdrop of the social decay and fascist resurgence gripping the imperialist countries, popular rebellion is punctuating business-as-usual both inside and outside the imperialist countries: the mass rebellions against police terror in Ferguson (2014) and Baltimore (2015); anti-fascist mobilization dogging fascists wherever they mobilize since 2016; and popular disruptions to the ICE body snatchers across the US throughout 2019. More recently, we have seen mass rebellions in Puerto Rico that toppled a governor, in Ecuador that halted brutal IMF austerity, and in Haiti that persists against the corrupt lackeys of North American imperialism who destroyed and stole from the PetroCaribe program

As if to symbolize the overall dynamic between the Israeli military and occupied Palestine, a Palestinian kite flies defiantly above an Israeli military drone (June 2018).



with Venezuela, and which reflects two centuries of unabated revolutionary struggle by the Haitian masses. And yet, despite these courageous and sometimes successful acts of resistance, in most places – especially in North America – there has yet to emerge a consolidated subjective force that can lead this rising rebelliousness in an escalating and successful direction.

The reason for this is simple: the lack of consolidated revolutionary organization, leadership, and strategy to effectively confront the imperialist ruling classes that make up the North American imperialist powers of the United States and Canada. In recent years, a growing mass of young people have become thoroughly disillusioned with capitalism. This disillusionment has resulted in growing attraction to “socialism” (though, unfortunately, a socialism thoroughly imbued with a bourgeois anti-communist sentiment that denies the need for revolution, proletarian dictatorship, and the complete dismantling of capitalism-imperialism). The spontaneous tendency for resistance and discontent to be brought under the wing of one section of the ruling class or another is no surprise considering that the bourgeoisie has constructed what the (new) Communist Party of Italy calls a *regime of preventive counterrevolution* over the last century adept at deflating opposition to its rule. A revolutionary movement will not spontaneously emerge out of the growing mass discontent. A communist organization with a scientific strategy capable of diverting resistance and discontent towards revolution does not arise simply from

This is America: As of Nov. 2019, the US had a record 70,000+ children held in detention.



economic, political, and social crises, but must be consciously forged through the hard work of theory and practice.

Were a revolutionary force to emerge, an oppressive system that now seems unassailable and existential crises that appear inevitable could anchor our convictions that a socialist world that serves the people and rehabilitates a dying biosphere is not only necessary but also possible. Without a revolutionary force, we are left pleading at the feet of the perpetrators of history's greatest mass murders to find it in their hearts to change their ways.

As we see it, the *subjective situation* – the dispersal of revolutionary forces and their lack of strategic unity, and the insufficiently contested dominance of postmodernism, social democracy, identity politics activism, and liberalism – is what can and must be transformed to open the door to seizing on future opportunities for revolutionary advances.

To that end, *kites* aims to constitute a theoretical exchange among revolutionary-minded people looking for a way forward across the territories held by the decaying imperialist powers of the US and Canada. To all revolutionaries who understand that we need to find a common strategy to defeat capitalism-imperialism and establish an ecological and socialist society moving towards communism, we appeal to your support and assistance in this project. Please share, comment on, and engage with our materials. Write us. Propose contributions. And if you are part of a revolutionary organization, consider establishing a relationship with our Editorial Committee.

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The Editorial Committee of *kites* is composed of a handful of communist revolutionaries from across North America, and at its founding emerges from the initiative of two organizations: Revolutionary Initiative (RI) in Canada and the Organization of Communist Revolutionaries (OCR) in the US. Although we three entities constitute independent collectives, we are firmly united on the need for com-

munist revolutionaries across North America to struggle and work towards the constitution of a new communist party.

RI is a party-building formation formed out of mass work in proletarian neighbourhoods in Toronto tracing back to the mid-2000s. OCR was formed in 2017 as a handful of revolutionaries with experience in previous communist organizations came together to sum up past experiences, initiate mass work among the proletariat, and revitalize revolutionary strategy. And the Editorial Committee of *kites* brings together a handful of communist revolutionaries into a distinct collective that is in conversation with RI, OCR, and other communist forces across the continent who we hope will become future contributors to this particular project as well as the broader work of proletarian revolution against this dying capitalist-imperialist order.

What binds us is a common *love, hate, and humility*: love for the people, hate for the present order and those who preside over it, and the humility to subject ourselves to the long process of figuring out how to make revolution. Spiritual bonds aside, we share the perspective that revolutionary civil war is necessary to overthrow the rule of capitalism-imperialism; a dictatorship of the proletariat must be established thereafter to prevent the restoration of capitalism; socialist society must be a transition, driven by class struggle, towards the ultimate goal of communism on a world scale; and a vanguard party is necessary to lead the revolution and the socialist transition period and unite all who can be united at each step of the process.

We would be remiss if we were not clear that we ground and guide ourselves with the revolutionary theory that the history of proletarian revolution has to offer. Principally, this means assimilating the major advances in communist theory developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao, but also studying the contributions (as well as shortcomings or errors!) of many other proletarian revolutionary leaders over the past century and a half, such as Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci, Che Guevara, Amilcar Cabral, Huey P. Newton, Thomas Sankara, George Jackson, and yes, Stalin too. Beyond these leaders

and the theories they developed, we are grounded in studying the historical experiences and roles of the masses in revolutionary struggle and transformation. We do not, however, treat these experiences dogmatically, but rather as vital experiments from which we can and must learn.

That said, these cannot be our only sources of guidance. We would know nothing of contemporary developments in global politics and economics, scientific discovery, technological developments, philosophical debates, ideological trends, and popular culture if we restricted our reading and theoretical engagement to thinkers whose times are many, many decades behind us. Sound revolutionary strategy can only arise from measuring our guiding theories up against the ongoing study of and engagement with the changing realities around us, and we wholeheartedly plan for *kites* to be a space for the study, debate, and reporting on the ground that continues to shift under our feet.

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There is no red textbook we can turn to for clear cut answers to the crises we face today. We uphold and study revolutionary theory and experience so years and decades are not wasted leading our organizations and movements into dead-ends that past revolutionary experiences have long ago exposed to be bankrupt. But the dogmatic drivel and politics of proclamation that flood the internet should not be confused with the painstaking, critical intellectual work of living, breathing revolutionary theory. And revolutionary theory needs to be grounded in the practical work of communists leading mass struggle, undertaking empirical research, and engaging deeply with many different schools of thought. Instead of circling around within closed and

“THE DOGMATIC DRIVEL AND POLITICS OF PROCLAMATION THAT FLOOD THE INTERNET SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH THE PAINSTAKING, CRITICAL INTELLECTUAL WORK OF LIVING, BREATHING REVOLUTIONARY THEORY.”

insular ideological systems, *kites* aims to be in dialogue with revolutionary political currents immersed in the people and with comrades, thinkers, artists, and organizers undertaking the hard work of analyzing and confronting the challenges before us.

Though *kites* will be focused on questions facing revolutionaries from within the North American imperialist powers, we are internationalists, and we are obliged to play our part in contributing to advancing the entire international proletarian revolution and supporting revolutionary struggles worldwide. From our standpoint as proletarian internationalists, we welcome and will enter all necessary exchanges and debates with the international communist movement (ICM) as a whole, and *kites* will in time also become a place for exchanging views and analyses with comrades internationally.

IN THIS ISSUE

The opening issue of *kites* takes on some crucial questions facing revolutionary-minded people today: what exactly is the proletariat today, what are some mass struggles in recent history that we can learn something from, and just what the fuck is up with this debate among Maoists in 2019 on the question of protracted people's war (PPW)?

We open *kites* #1 with an essay that's been studied within RI and OCR for a few years now and the importance of which has only grown with time. Part I of Kenny Lake's *The Specter That Still Haunts: Locating a Revolutionary Class within Contemporary Capitalism-Imperialism* provides a conception of the proletariat and its potential to lead the revolutionary transformation of society that is in sharp contrast to outdated interpretations that emphasize factory work and exploitation in the labor process and fetishize struggles between the exploited and their immediate exploiters. Expect to find the remaining parts of the *Specter* series in the back pages of *kites* alongside contemporary pieces on the urgent questions before us.

The second piece, Kilmore and John Albert's *From the Masses, To the Masses: A Summation of the October 22 Coalition's Resistance to Police*

Brutality in the Late 1990s, offers a people's history of a significant resistance movement to the epidemic of police murders of Black men and other oppressed people that was building prior to the events of 9/11. As seductive as it is to turn to the '60s and '70s as the main repository for inspiration and guidance for revolutionaries in North America, Kilmore and John Albert draw out some important lessons from a major wave of mass struggle from a time and place not so distant from our own.

Closing with a hot take from Kenny Lake, *kites* enters the fray of the PPW debate. However, Lake cuts away from the existing *universality: yes / no* shape of the debate by drawing our attention to the actual historical experience of the people's war in Peru and addressing some of the strategic innovations of Chairman Gonzalo and the Communist Party of Peru that go ignored or unstudied by what Lake trenchantly refers to as the "church of PPW universalism." Lake's intervention also addresses the overall legacy of dogmatism within the Maoist movement, the disarray caused by the loss of socialism in China in 1976, the relationship between the subjective forces for revolution and the "objective situation," and other questions of revolutionary strategy being confronted practically today.

HIT US UP

We're making *kites* as accessible as possible by posting each article online along with downloadable PDFs, but we both welcome and encourage you to order one or many copies of the bounded edition available from our distributor Kersplebedeb at LeftWingBooks.net (where bulk-pricing options will be made available to encourage group study and local distribution). For purchases of 10 or more, please contact us directly at kites-journal@protonmail.com. Any proceeds from the sale of *kites* will be ploughed directly back into efforts to expand its circulation, organizational capacity, and political endeavours being undertaken by those revolutionaries engaging with its contents.

We offer *kites* in these various formats to project revolutionary

communist politics far and wide, but we also want to allow for engagement with this material in a way that minimizes attracting the attention of the repressive-surveillance apparatuses. We definitely encourage those with active social media presences to critically engage with and discuss our materials on their platforms and raise the level of debate above the personal attacks and arrogant posturing that often suffocate revolutionary politics on the Internet. Indeed, we are looking forward to hearing your feedback directly and beginning a conversation around any questions that may arise. That said, let's be clear that all Internet communication can potentially be viewed by our enemies. So if you are seeking to develop a connection with us, especially if you are writing on behalf of an organization, we encourage the use of PGP encryption (you can find instructions for this in the *Contact Us* section of our website).

We mandate *kites* to develop a form through which the theory, strategy, historical and practical summation, and concrete analysis of contemporary conditions – all crucial necessities for building a revolutionary movement aimed at overthrowing capitalism-imperialism North America and throughout the world – is developed, disseminated, and debated. We take this responsibility seriously and with humility, and will do our utmost to rise to the tasks in front of us. We hope others will join us on this endeavour to fly high while staying grounded in the people and with all the challenges ahead.