

KICK 'EM WHILE  
THEY'RE DOWN

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BY THE

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In the future, hopefully 2020 will go down in history as the year of squandered possibilities for revolutionary advance in the US. We say hopefully because the other possibility—2020 as the year when all the signs of impending catastrophe were present, but those who claimed commitment to ending injustice failed to find a way to stop the catastrophe—is all too likely.

For 2020 was a year of deepening and multiplying crises in the US—wildfires, hurricanes, and other climate-change-driven disasters breaking all previous records; COVID-19 laying bare the inability of the capitalist-imperialist system to provide decent healthcare, employment, or basic necessities for many; police brutality and the oppression of Black people leading to *waves* of massive nationwide rebellions and protests; and deep divisions in society, including among the bourgeoisie, expressed in a bitterly contested election and the ability of Trump to trample on the normal functioning of bourgeois politics. All of these crises present the possibilities for communists to expose the workings of capitalism-imperialism to millions; to organize the proletariat, rebellious youth, oppressed

New York City through March and April of 2020 gave the world a concentrated, early view of what happens when a private medical system in a country that couldn't give two shits about its people confronts a contagious new pathogen. The 5000+ Covid-19 deaths in NYC in those two months alone so far exceeded the capacity of the city's morgues that mass graves had to be dug on Hart Island. Some 650 bodies of the deceased remained in refrigerated trailers in Brooklyn at the end of 2020 because no known relative could be found or no relative could afford a burial.



people, and those in the petty-bourgeoisie willing to betray their class into a revolutionary people; to wrest leadership of the resistance movements away from opportunists and reformists and divert resistance towards revolutionary objectives; and to repolarize class alliances in society in a way favorable to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

But throughout 2020, there was no political force able to accomplish this. The simple reason is that there is no vanguard communist party in the US, or even a critical mass of communist cadre committed to forging one. Of course, stating this obvious but largely unacknowledged problem will not resolve it. So let's examine the potential opportunities for revolutionary advances in the US and the ideological and political barriers that have stymied the development of the subjective forces for revolution.

## US IMPERIALISM IS TRIPPING OVER ITSELF... SO LET'S KICK IT WHILE IT'S DOWN

At this point in human history, the international arena is overall decisive in shaping national conditions and the crises that open the door for revolutionary advances. This fact is what makes the post-modernist obsession with "community" and local change all the more paltry from the perspective of making revolution—not because revolutionaries don't need to pay attention to local conditions and build organization in "communities," but because we need to understand and anticipate how global contradictions will present opportunities in particular places for revolutionary advance. So we begin this outline of the current political situation in the US with an overview of US imperialism's decline over the last couple decades.

The George W. Bush administration brought a cabal of so-called neo-conservatives into the commanding heights of US imperialism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> An easy way to become familiar or refamiliarize yourself with this historical period is to watch the 2018 movie *Vice*, which makes clear that the then vice president was playing a far more important role running the administration behind the

Their core belief was that the Clinton administration had squandered the opportunity to cement US global hegemony into place after the collapse of the Soviet Union, since 1956 the rival imperialist power that had kept US imperialism in check for decades. The events of 11 September 2001 gave the neo-cons the excuse to pursue their goal of unchallenged global supremacy by bringing a region of the world that had tremendous oil resources as well as considerable opposition to US domination (albeit mostly from bourgeois and reactionary forces) to heel. They succeeded in ousting their former allies whom they had armed—the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq—relatively easily, only to spark fierce resistance to US military occupation from local populations, create a breeding ground for armed religious fundamentalist forces (including a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan), and strengthen Iran's position in the region.

In short, the neo-con dream of establishing unchallenged US imperialist global hegemony proved a spectacular failure, with their military misadventures backfiring. While the US was tied down in

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scenes than was Bush, its public face.

Donald Rumsfeld shaking hands with Saddam Hussein on 20 December 1983, just weeks after being appointed Special Envoy to the Middle East by President Reagan. Rumsfeld was an architect of not one but two wars in Iraq, the first being the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88, the second being the US invasion and occupation of Iraq in March 2003. Each of these wars claimed the lives of over a million people, but neither of them succeeded in cementing the long-term objectives of US imperialism.



Afghanistan and Iraq, several new governments in US imperialism's "backyard" (note the arrogance of imperialist terminology) of Latin America sought better economic terms with imperialist powers other than the US. Russian and Chinese imperialism were happy to take advantage of the situation and make greater economic and political inroads not only in Latin America but also in Africa and Asia. The US military remains the most powerful in the world by a substantial margin, but its economic prowess has obviously declined at the very time when the Chinese bourgeoisie's has dramatically increased. The 2008 US financial collapse, made worse by the increasingly speculative nature of finance capital, brought this into plain sight.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> It is beyond the scope of this lengthy editorial to delve into the questions of political economy crucial to understanding the decline of US imperialism. A helpful starting point for understanding those questions can be found in José San Miguel's "Theses on Capitalist Crisis and War," published in *kites* #2.

The widespread deployment of US troops and special forces in Africa is an attempt to curb the rising economic influence of China on the continent.



The Obama administration was left with the task of cleaning up the messes—financial and military—left by the previous representatives of the bourgeoisie in power. Their predictable bailout of the banks and financial firms that caused the financial collapse through unbridled speculation on the housing market fed into growing discontent among those sections of the petty-bourgeoisie who, saddled with college loan payments and other debt, were confronting the fact that the stable, salaried employment their parents had enjoyed would not be available to them. This made Occupy Wall Street a compelling rallying cry and tepid forms of socialism an attractive idea to many, even if both proved incapable of posing any solution to the crises that attracted so many youth to them. Occupy Wall Street became mostly a carnival of postmodernism and direct democracy fetishism, and the defining features of “democratic socialism” have been, above all, anti-communism and anti-revolution.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, the Obama administration sought to wind down US military occupation, essentially trying to admit defeat without admitting defeat. What's clear from this period is that after the neo-cons, no section of the bourgeoisie put forward a clear program for how to successfully contend with challenges to US imperialist hegemony. The Obama administration tried containment and maneuvering as best it could. The “pivot to Asia,” with US naval ships stalking the South China Sea, and the strengthening of AFRICOM were attempts to contain Chinese imperialism.

When it came to maneuvering, US imperialism attempted to take advantage of the Arab Spring rebellions to promote the creation of regimes friendly to US imperialism (and willing to provide bases for AFRICOM in North Africa), but found again that forces beyond its control—including reactionary religious fundamentalists—were also strengthened as social contradictions burst out into rebellion and civil war. With new military interventions off the table given its failures in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US could only succeed in its objectives in some countries (for example, Egypt, where the events surrounding the coup against democratically elected President Morsi were straight out of the CIA playbook) while miserably failing in

others (like Libya, where there is now civil war and slave markets). Whether it was a success or failure for US imperialism, in all cases it was a disaster for the masses. Syria is a particular case in point, where civil war has taken a brutal, genocidal toll on the people and spilled over into Iraq, and the US has lost ground to Russian imperialism and was unable to prevent Turkey from backing religious fundamentalist forces in opposition to US allies.

Furthermore, the US bourgeoisie no longer has the freedom to intervene in Latin America in the heavy-handed way that led to fascist military dictatorships in one country after another in the decades after WWII. As a result, several governments making radical social reforms, cutting deals with Chinese and Russian imperialism, and strengthening their nations' economic independence have held on to power. The US continues to intervene in less blatant ways, and at times far-right forces have been able to oust reform-minded governments (such as in Brazil, Ecuador, and temporarily Bolivia). The wave of rebellions that swept one country after another in Latin America over the last year shows that class conflicts and a popular refusal to accept the capitalist order will give US imperialism no peace anytime soon, even if as yet there exists no shining path to thoroughly ridding capitalism-imperialism from Latin America.

Given the neo-cons' strategic failures, the Obama administration's limited tactical success at containment and maneuvering, and the inability of any section of the US bourgeoisie to offer a coherent program for continued US imperialist world dominance, it's no surprise that an unhinged outer-borough racist reality-TV star member of the bourgeoisie was able to mount a successful bid for presidency. What followed was only more strategic blundering when it came to dealing with challenges to US hegemony, but we should take seriously the fact that some in the US bourgeoisie, represented principally by arch-reactionary John Bolton's mustache, believe that the old alliances with Western Europe are no longer effective and becoming a drag on US imperialism. This has been expressed in everything from decreasing the US budget to NATO to the dramatic reshuffling of diplomatic alliances, such as attempts to make peace



Chinese President Xi Jinping meeting his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing on 26 April 2019, just one among the more than thirty times the two allies have met.

with North Korea. Given the constant personnel changes and the policy-by-Tweet nature of the Trump administration, it's difficult to sum up a coherent program being pursued by US imperialism over the last four years, which in itself is a further and welcome sign of the growing weakness of US imperialism.

In any event, US imperialism's increasing loss of supremacy to Russian and Chinese imperialism, to regional powers such as Iran and Turkey, and to countries formerly under US hegemony but now looking for more favorable terms within the system of capitalism-imperialism is something the US bourgeoisie will not acquiesce to. This fact will give rise to future global conflicts, which could go beyond the current proxy wars, covert operations, and saber-rattling with naval destroyers and fighter jets. Increasing imbalances between the economic power and domain of foreign domination among imperialist powers are exactly what gave rise to World Wars I and II. The current disequilibrium between US imperialism's military might and foreign reach, on the one hand, and its increasing economic crisis, on the other, are almost like a twisted mirror image opposite of Germany in the 1930s.<sup>3</sup> That should give revolutionaries in the US a sober picture of their urgent responsibilities.

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the clearest example of these imbalances is how the US, through AFRICOM,

## THE SOCIAL GLUE IS INCREASINGLY FLAMMABLE ...BUT WHO'S GOING TO LIGHT THE MATCH?

Not surprisingly, as rivalries between imperialist blocs have increased, challenges to US hegemony grown stronger, and international diplomacy and alliances among imperialists frayed or gone into crisis, social conflicts within the imperialist heartland have grown more acute. Under the veneer of multicultural tolerance provided by the first Black president in US history, the oppression of Black people—the lynchpin and Achilles' heel of US imperialism—gave rise to growing resistance. The rebellions sparked by police killings that started in Black proletarian neighborhoods were amplified by broader sections of people taking to the streets in protest, with the Occupy Wall Street movement having fertilized a new generation of activists now confronting the brutal oppression of Black people. And these rebellions and protests gave fuel to struggles in every domain of society, from popular culture to professional sports to education to office jobs, over the myriad forms of oppression Black people face.

The US bourgeoisie's need to pursue domestic sources of oil due to its failures in the Middle East and Latin America as well as deeper economic shifts were the sparks for an uprising among the US's other historically oppressed people. The encampment and protests at Standing Rock in 2016 seeking to prevent the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline ushered in a powerful wave of resistance by Indigenous people in the US, brought a new generation of Indigenous radicals to the fore, and forced a broader reckoning with the historical and present-day oppression of Indigenous people.

Struggles over the social and legal position of immigrants, especially from Mexico and Latin America more generally, likewise were sources of growing social conflict. As tends to happen

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maintains a strong military presence in Africa, while Chinese business interests and infrastructure projects have thoroughly penetrated various countries in Africa.

after economic crises and the decreased need for labor that follows them, the Obama administration dramatically increased the number of deportations of immigrants. At the same time, the bourgeoisie had to confront what to do with millions of young immigrants, especially but not only those who were undocumented: would they be allowed to pursue the petty-bourgeois aspiration of upward mobility, or be slotted into proletarian class positions, subjected to white-supremacist terror and subjugation, and/or face deportation? The bourgeoisie's answer has been "all of the above," and the mix of liberal bourgeois "tolerance" and fascist bourgeois scapegoating has made the "immigrant question" a continued site of conflict, with substantial numbers of immigrant youth involved in radical and reformist organizing efforts.

Among youth as a whole, though experienced differently according to class and social position, the existential crises of climate change and school shootings have been the cause of massive protest and public debate. And the oppressive and profit-driven workings of several key institutions of society, such as education and healthcare, have sparked conflict, including substantial union strikes. Manifestations of 21st-century patriarchy have likewise given rise to public debate and resistance, even if frequently limited by bourgeois political horizons with little change for the masses (though we can firmly uphold the imprisonment of rapist Harvey Weinstein and look forward to the day when such people face the punishments enacted by a future dictatorship of the proletariat).

Through all the waves of resistance over the last decade, while the proletariat has at times burst into powerful rebellions that forced all classes to respond, it has not yet become a sustained, organized, class-conscious force. Repression, including assassinations of key leaders in Ferguson, Missouri, is a part of the reason for this dilemma; we will explore some of the deeper reasons below. Whatever the reasons, the consequence is that reformists and opportunists have had considerable success at pulling resistance and public debate back into the well-worn official channels of bourgeois-democracy, as well as using groundswells of resistance

to serve their own ends, whether they be funding for and a greater salary in nonprofit sector jobs or Twitter celebrity and mainstream media appearances. More damaging than the individual opportunism is the promotion of reformist political programs, sometimes dressed up in radical language, which, when combined with sanction from the Democratic Party and mainstream media, trains protesters and people questioning the oppressive nature of society in a thoroughly bourgeois class outlook.

While protests and rebellions were shaking the social order, the social base for open white supremacy, archaic forms of patriarchy, and proud imperialism was festering. Perturbed by the decline of empire, demographic changes in the US, and the perception of any loss in their privileged position to the elevation of a few oppressed people into higher ranks in the social order, this social base of mostly white upper-tier-stable-working-class and petty-bourgeois Americans lashed out in fascist rage. The Tea Party movement directed much of its virulent racism at Obama, since for them a Black president was beyond the pale of acceptable governance, betraying their desire to go back to a pre-Civil War social order. Not surprisingly, Donald Trump, a master of political theater, was able to rally this social base—which numbers in the tens of millions—behind him by dispensing with bourgeois niceties, flouting bourgeois political norms, and confirming the fascist feelings that have always lurked beneath the surface in the US. Trump was simultaneously a perpetual liar and the most honest US president in history, saying openly what all US presidents have acted on and likely thought privately (exhibit A: referring to several oppressed nations as “shithole countries”).

From the days of bigoted verbal abuse and physical assaults after Trump’s electoral victory, to the fascist violence in Charlottesville, to numerous other incidents, the more diehard members of the fascist social base enacted their revanchist fantasies against oppressed people and anti-fascist protesters. Fortunately for our side, they remained splintered into contending fascist organizations, some with their shit (and weapons stockpiles) together and others pathetic internet trolls,

frat boys, and wannabes. The disorganization and infighting among this social base was mirrored in the Trump administration itself, with a revolving door of appointees and a failure to implement much of a coherent program. (By contrast, the George W Bush administration was able to pass the Patriot Act, create the Department of Homeland Security, and cement numerous police state measures into law while establishing an international network of torture sites.)

That's not to say the Trump administration hasn't had its share of serious fascist operatives or that it hasn't enacted policies that have done serious damage, such as the Muslim ban or the caging of immigrant children separated from the parents. Inside and outside government, there are those who have enthusiastically carried out fascist violence, from ICE agents to federal police to mass shooters to street brawlers. But there's also plenty of bluster and social media bravado within the fascist camp, and we should take care to distinguish declarations from deeds. Trump himself was always part grifter, part fascist politics. And few in the fascist social base are willing to risk their lives, or even inconvenience themselves, to carry out their darkest fascist nightmares. Unlike Indian Prime Minister Modi, Trump is not at the head of a centralized, well-organized cadre of fascists.

In a tweet attempting to score political points using bourgeois anti-China hysteria, reactionary US senator Marco Rubio accidentally provides a clear analysis of the incoming administration.



Attempts to make sense of the last four years by comparisons to past fascist regimes have all the usual pitfalls of analysis by analogy. That's not to say there are not important lessons to learn from history, but we also need to look at (1) the fact that the bourgeoisie is perfectly capable of carrying out fascist measures against some sections of people while practicing liberal tolerance towards others, and (2) the wide range in forms of bourgeois class dictatorship around the world today, from the "Communist" Party of China's highly centralized neoliberalism to Putin almost singularly running the show in Russia to France's liberal parliamentary democracy which practices intolerance towards Muslims. The US itself has long contained a mix of fascistic elements which morph overtime, from the Christian fundamentalists who were more central to Reagan's and George W Bush's reigns but who played a far more secondary role in the Trump administration, to the 1990s militia movement (an adherent of which was responsible for the 1995 Oklahoma City federal building bombing), to more long-standing organizations of white-supremacist terror such as the KKK, to the Tea Party, to today's frat boys and potbellied middle-aged crackers organized on social media and brandishing their gun collections on the streets.

On the flip side of fascist ascendance, over the last year, we have seen the bourgeoisie increasingly abandon Trump. At the 2020 Republican Convention, the Trump campaign could only muster B-list political figures, family, and friends as speakers. Playing a central role in Trump's legal and public challenge to the election results is Rudy Giuliani, the half-whiskey, half-syphilis fascist whom the bourgeoisie stopped relying on for anything serious years ago. With the exceptions of a few arch-reactionaries, Republicans in Congress appear to be mostly positioning themselves to ensure the future votes of Trump supporters rather than seriously attempting to overturn election results. That's not to say fascist political operatives couldn't still pull off some crazy shit, though the chances of it succeeding are minimal. More importantly for the years to come, the fascist social base is quite dedicated to their world outlook no matter how it conflicts with reality, as evidenced by the anti-mask "give me convenience or

give me death” movement. And revolutionaries have to confront the fact that this social base includes not insignificant numbers of people from oppressed nationalities and upper sections of the proletariat, who were likely attracted to notions of family, religion, small-business entrepreneurship, and social order. To repolarize society for revolution, we will eventually need to win some of these people over to at least friendly neutrality, rupturing with any “enlightened” petty-bourgeois elitism we may have and being willing to conduct political work among people who eat at Bennis’s.<sup>4</sup>

Bourgeois politics may well get ever more farcical as the crises heat up—maybe an Ivanka Trump vs. Kim Kardashian presidential race in 2024? Reality TV as political reality demonstrates the duality of appearance under capitalism: they are both a material force and an obfuscation of materiality. Beneath appearances and motivating both fascist political operatives and bourgeois forces seeking a

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4 To be clear, we intend this in no way to advocate “finding common ground” with fascist-populist politics, nor do we have any side in the silly “class vs. race” debates between mechanical Marxism and postmodernist identity politics.

A Leftist satirist of political fiction really couldn’t write a more cartoonishly servile personality to serve US imperialism than Biden’s top choice to lead the CIA, Darrell Blocker. Born to an Air Force family, Blocker rose through the ranks of the CIA for three decades to become the agency’s top man in Africa. Blocker, a recent convert to Judaism, has lived much of his life as a Zionist and defender of Israel, having admitted to writing against the First Intifada in his entrance essay to the CIA, and is well known for flying the Israeli flag outside his home in Senegal. Pictured is Blocker speaking at a fundraising gala for the MOSAIC Federation, an organization that is one part NGO, one part paramilitary operation that uses the banner of anti-human trafficking to conduct its operations.



Silicon-Valley-powered intersectional imperialism is an imperialist power in decline, desperate to find a way to hold on to its stranglehold on oppressed nations around the world to keep extracting the resources and the surplus value of superexploited labor that allow it to maintain a modicum of social peace at home.

So why, with US imperialism in decline, with no section of the bourgeoisie able to put forward a coherent political program, with deep divisions in the bourgeoisie and among the people, is there no organized revolutionary force in the US capable of taking advantage of this situation? Why is there not a boot to kick US imperialism while it's down?

## THE PAC-MAN POLITICS OF LEFTIST FANTASYLANDS

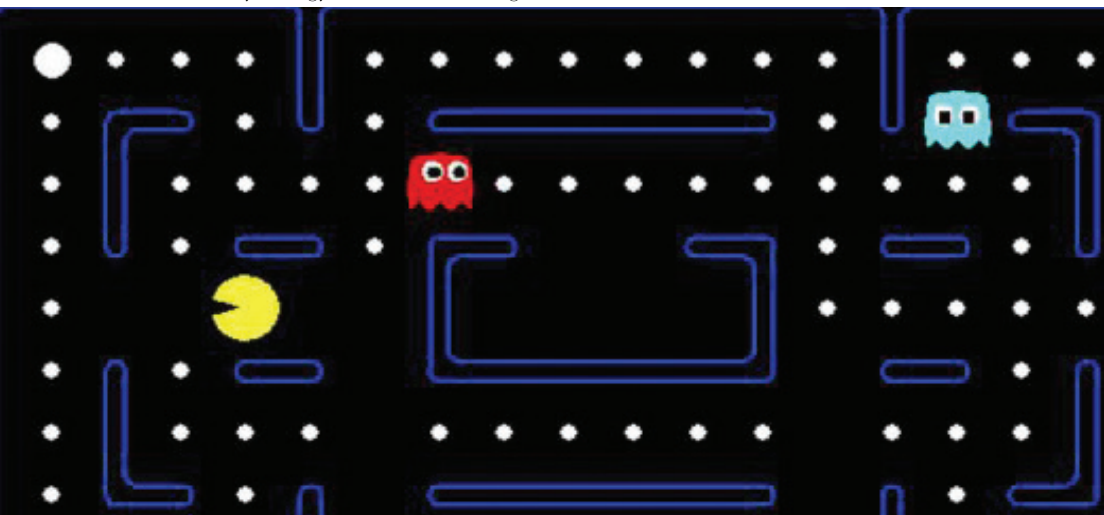
Reflecting on how parliamentary politics in Western Europe had served to strangle revolutionary politics, Stalin once remarked that “in Russia, there was no parliament, thank God.” Today we could add: “in China, there was no Left, thank God.” For in the course of the Chinese revolution, the Communist Party of China had no parliament and few organized Leftists to contend with, and could more easily draw clear lines of demarcation between revolution, on the one hand, and feudalism, imperialism, and bureaucrat capitalism, on the other. (To bring this up to the end of the twentieth century and for those with a dark sense of humor: in Villa El Salvador, there was no longer a Left in the Spring of 1992.)

By contrast, the Left has grown considerably in the US over the last decade. Some old crusty revisionist organizations managed to garner new recruits by refashioning themselves with the latest trends, a groundswell of new organizations, most small and local, have emerged, protests are now a part of the culture, and legions of millennials and gen Z members declare their allegiance to this or that Leftist ideology on Twitter. While this has helped to increase the amount of protest and create a widespread discourse of critique,

the most powerful resistance has emerged from among Black and other proletarian masses with no connection to the Left, and the voices with the deepest critiques of capitalism-imperialism remain for the most part peripheral to the Left. The Left in the US stays largely stuck in the maze of what can be called *Pac-Man politics*.

The hegemonic strategic thinking in the US Left is that, like Pac-Man chomping pellets, you can gradually eat away at the institutions of capitalism until the system crumbles and can be replaced with new, “bottom-up” institutions that the Left has been fertilizing. Pac-Man politics has its reformist and “radical” varieties. In the former, getting progressive officials elected, especially at the local level, will gradually eat away at the bourgeoisie’s monopoly on state power. In the latter, mutual aid networks, tenant organizations, general assemblies, etc. will increasingly meet people’s needs and supplant the bourgeois state. In more sophisticated (but no less wishful) versions of “radical” Pac-Man politics, this gradual “bottom-up” building of counter-institutions will be able to take a leap when a major crisis causes the capitalist system to collapse, and the people have no where else to turn but the counter-institutions Leftists have created—like that moment when Pac-Man gets extra big and fast and is able to not only chomp more pellets but also vanquish the ghosts that were stalking him.

Is this not how much of the Left approaches its political work, chomping away at whatever campaign or issue happens to appear before it, until cynicism (invariably masked as “burn-out”) finally sets in? The alternative to the Pac-Man politics of Left activism is the conscious application of a hard-earned and sound revolutionary strategy of a communist vanguard.



All varieties of Pac-Man politics rest on the illusion that bourgeois state power does not need to be decisively overthrown through revolutionary civil war. All who tried to radically transform society without shattering bourgeois rule have fallen down as a consequence of this illusion. In many cases, their attempts were drowned in blood and their leaders were assassinated. Kwame Nkrumah lived to critically reflect on Ghana's experience, and his writings from exile show him rejecting his previous belief in the possibility of peaceful change. While we are lacking a communist analysis of contemporary Venezuela and Bolivia, one thing is certain: *not* fully destroying the bourgeois repressive state apparatus and *not* fully expropriating the capital of the bourgeoisie in those countries has only hindered the possibilities for revolutionary transformation.

Unfortunately, owing to lack of seriousness and strength, the US Left will never get to the point of learning these lessons in practice, and the lack of (self-)critical summation—the fantasylands of “bottom-up” counter-institutions in which Leftists live—makes it unlikely they will be able to learn these lessons in theory either. Thus the US Left is principally an impediment to the emergence of a revolutionary movement, with the illusions it promotes about state power wrapping radical-minded youth in a maze like Pac-Man, constantly eating the pellets but never finding a way out. Anyone who has seriously studied revolutions, from 1917 Russia to 1980s Peru to turn-of-the-century Nepal, should not be surprised by this statement, since, in each example, the Left overwhelmingly sided with the bourgeoisie against the revolution.

What is thus required of anyone getting serious about revolution is to decisively break out of the maze of Pac-Man politics that is the Left. And besides getting a sober understanding of state power, that also means getting real about the need for a vanguard party. Proponents of Pac-Man politics—even those who are members of entities called parties—rail against the supposed elitism of vanguard parties. They articulate their anti-vanguardism in the name of the masses, heralding an ideal of spontaneous, bottom-up, direct democratic practices by the masses. You can read a steady

stream of articles in publications like *Viewpoint Mag* or *Commune Mag* extolling such spontaneity and justifying it with the theories of obscure Italian organizations from the 1970s while railing against the elitism of communist vanguard leadership (ironically written in the elitist style and terminology they learned in grad school). Yet the vast majority of mutual aid networks and other counter-institutions that US Leftists have built have failed to involve the masses in any broad, meaningful, or lasting way. By contrast, you can look at what the Communist Party of the Philippines has achieved by applying the mass line method of communist leadership: deeply and broadly involving hundreds of thousands if not millions of the masses in a revolutionary movement.

The anti-vanguardism of the US Left at base rests on a desire to stick within one's comfort zone. It's a fear of the masses and a refusal to get to know them as they are rather than as you learned about them in a postmodernist college class. It's often justified with postmodernist identity politics ("it's not my place to..."). Ironically, this anti-vanguardism is the very definition of elitism, and serves to justify maintaining a petty-bourgeois class position rather than the potential discomfort of integrating with the masses (and why is that such a discomfort for Leftists?).

One last problem with Pac-Man politics worth noting is its failure to ever put forward a concrete political program, even on questions short of revolution. Leftists busy themselves with protests and mutual aid, but never with a clear vision for where they're going, with a clear set of demands to make concerning particular injustices, or with a clear strategy for organizing people beyond the Left. This is particularly glaring in relation to COVID-19, the rebellions against police brutality over the summer, and the 2020 elections. In the large sea of Leftists, no one could offer a coherent program for the direction of the resistance movement—the demands to be fought for and the means to unite all who can be united around a plan of action. Thus widespread anti-vanguardism, failure to integrate with the masses, and a lack of critical and nuanced analysis of particular contradictions in society helped enable the bourgeoisie

to bring outbreaks of discontent, protest, and rebellion back within safe channels and resolutions that do not threaten bourgeois rule. The cycle of mini-crisis, protest, and no real resolution continues...

## CASE STUDY: 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY “ABOLITIONISM,” THE GREAT REFORMIST SWINDLE, AND THE ONE-HIT WONDER

Speaking of the lack of coherent programs... Bringing together Pac-Man politics with an updated, fashionable version of Khrushchev’s theory of “peaceful transition” is 21st-century “abolitionism.” In issue #2 of *kites*, we put forward a critique of abolitionism, with its delusion that you can somehow abolish prisons or police—crucial repressive apparatuses of the bourgeois state—without overthrowing bourgeois rule. The above discussion of Pac-Man politics reveals how “abolitionism” is part of a larger trend of imagining you can gradually eat away at bourgeois institutions one by one until the system collapses. Here, it’s worth digging into how and why abolitionism as a (vague) strategy came to hold such sway among the US Left (while, conversely, holding little sway among proletarian masses—seriously, *talk to them about it*).

It is often assumed that “abolitionism” was a spontaneous product of the resistance movements, where, as people joined protests and came to see the fundamental nature of prisons and the police, they started articulating the desire to completely dismantle these institutions. While “abolish” as a word has been used by various resistance movements over the last several decades, the truth about the present conception of abolitionism is that it was consciously promoted by prominent reformists since the 1990s before becoming the cool new trend proving how woke you are today. And chief among those prominent reformists is Angela Davis, who has become something of a saint in the US Left. When “radical” Leftists learned that Davis considered a Biden victory in the 2020 presidential election to be a positive step forward (because he

would supposedly be more amenable to pressure from the resistance movements than Trump would be), many were shocked and dismayed that the person they thought was the bearer of the most radical politics of today would consider a Democrat in the White House to be a positive step forward. Reality check: this has been Davis's view for decades.

Angela Davis is no doubt an intelligent, articulate intellectual, with the experiences of growing up Black in Birmingham, Alabama during segregation and involvement in radical movements of the 1960s and early '70s, who has written incisive critiques of oppression in the US. A communist critique of her writing is beyond the scope of this essay; here we will focus on the history of her reformist politics and role in fostering the illusions behind "abolitionism."

Practically speaking, Davis is the activist equivalent of a one-hit wonder who used her early celebrity to drive a lifelong but increasingly dull career. She first took the spotlight when then Governor Ronald Reagan, driven by white supremacy, patriarchy, and anti-communism, waged a campaign to get her fired from her teaching position at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1969. This earned her a reputation as a spokesperson for the radical movements of the time, but Davis had by then joined the Communist Party, USA. The CP had given up on revolution by the 1940s and quickly and enthusiastically signed on to Khrushchev's theory of peaceful transition to socialism in the 1950s. Those CP members who took inspiration from revolutionary China and the leadership of Mao Zedong left the CP, and the New Left that emerged in the 1960s was called the New Left to demarcate itself from the crusty old CP.

Seeing the rise of the Black liberation movement and the Black Panther Party, the CP did what can be expected of an opportunist organization and tried to make inroads with this rising revolutionary tide and divert it back into the safe boundaries of bourgeois-democracy (resulting in, among other things, the BPP's United Front Against Fascism). Davis developed a close correspondence with

revolutionary communist, BPP member, and prisoner George Jackson. When Jonathan Jackson made an armed attempt to free his older brother during a hearing at the Marin County Courthouse in 1970, Angela Davis was charged with aiding the attempted escape and placed on the FBI's most wanted list. Her trial was in the public spotlight and became a major political battle. Other than Davis's CP membership, so far so good.<sup>5</sup>

Davis's case was severed from the other defendants, and she was found not guilty. One of those defendants, Ruchell "Cinque" Magee, is still in prison. "Free Angela Davis and All Political Prisoners" had been the rallying cry, but the second half of that slogan was never really put into practice. In 1973, Davis founded a CP front—the National Alliance Against Racism and Political Repres-

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5 The Black Panther Party eventually made a policy against dual membership in the BPP and the CP, likely in recognition of how revisionist organizations used more liberal membership policies to gain a foothold in revolutionary organizations for opportunist purposes. Davis chose membership in the CP...

On 17 August 1970, the 17-year-old Black Panther Jonathan Jackson entered the Marin County Courthouse in San Rafael, California with the intention of liberating the "Soledad Brothers" Fleeta Drumgo, John Clutchette, and his big brother George Jackson. Jonathan Jackson entered the courthouse with three firearms in his possession, armed the defendant on trial (James McClain), and was joined by two other San Quentin prisoners who were present as witnesses, Ruchell "Cinque" Magee and William A. Christmas, in taking hostages to be negotiated in exchange for the liberation of the framed-up "Soledad Brothers." As they attempted to flee, Jonathan Jackson, McClain, and Christmas were shot and killed along with Superior Court Judge Harold Haley.



sion—which refused to come to the defense of Black Liberation Army members facing trial and prison.<sup>6</sup>

Davis then settled into a comfortable academic career and continued being the CP's greatest asset for promoting its reformist politics. She ran for vice president on the CP ticket in 1980 and 1984. Her support for Democratic presidential candidates fits well within the CP's notion of helping get the Democrats in power and then seeking to pressure them to...start the peaceful transition to socialism?...the strategy makes no goddamn sense and is not worth taking seriously.

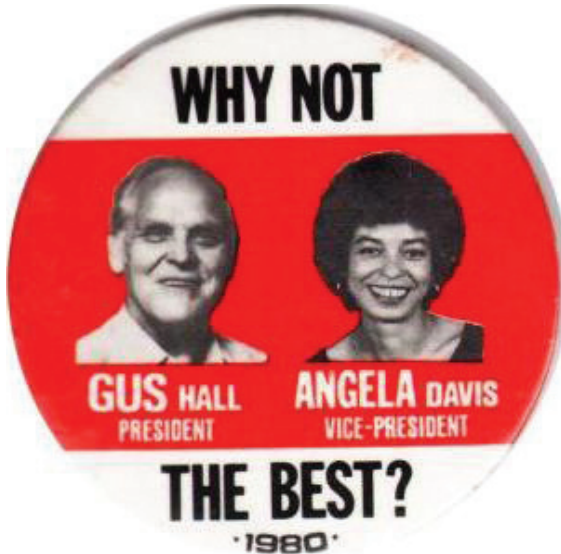
The collapse of the Soviet Union—which, by the late 1980s had been socialist in name, capitalist-imperialist in reality for nearly four decades—threw the CP into crisis. Angela Davis co-founded the Committees of Correspondence, whose moniker grossly illustrates the CP's disgusting notion that “communism is 20<sup>th</sup>-century Americanism.” Davis's writings increasingly married CP reformism with the postmodernist politics that were increasingly coming to dominate her comfortable home in academia. In 1997, she was part of founding Critical Resistance on the basis of these politics.

Consistently in Davis's writings and talks, in stark contrast to George Jackson's writings, you will never hear her discuss or advocate revolution. Instead, Davis began advocating “abolition,” at first in relation to prisons but more recently in relation to police. The present-day concept of “abolition” is the perfect marriage of yesterday's CP reformist politics of peaceful transition with today's Pac-Man politics. What it evades is the necessary violent struggle to shatter bourgeois rule, which is the only struggle that can abolish the repressive state apparatuses, such as prisons and police, that the bourgeoisie depends on to maintain its rule.

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6 On Davis's lack of support for revolutionary political prisoners, see Jared Ball's 2018 interview with Dhoruba bin-Wahad, “Unsilencing Stealth Histories of Armed Struggle and Shortcomings in Left Media Analysis,” on [imixwhatilike.org](http://imixwhatilike.org).

In the last couple decades, Angela Davis became an increasingly prominent speaker on the university lecture circuit, where “abolition” and other reformist illusions resonate with petty-bourgeois students who have little direct experience with the bourgeoisie’s repressive state apparatuses. Her early “hits” from now five decades ago, her intelligence and eloquence, and her success at adopting and developing postmodernist philosophy and politics within her CP reformist framework have made Angela Davis the idol of the Left and woke crowd. Growing protests against the oppression of Black people over the last decade generated more interest in her writings, and “abolition” became the “radical” trend and litmus test of wokeness. “Abolition” is even now anachronistically applied to previous generations of revolutionaries, with some calling George Jackson an abolitionist (he called himself a communist and revolutionary). Few have stopped to question just what kind of (reform-



Angela Davis twice ran for vice president on a ticket with arch-revisionist CPUSA leader Gus Hall.

ist) politics Angela Davis has been promoting all these years or the absurdity of believing that the bourgeoisie would allow its prisons and police to be abolished without an all-out civil war...

## POSTMODERNISM'S ENCIRCLEMENT AND SUPPRESSION CAMPAIGN

The all too easy, uncritical acceptance by so many “radicals” of Pac-Man politics, “abolitionism,” or Angela Davis’s updated version of Khrushchev’s peaceful transition comes amid a backdrop in which communist and revolutionary politics have been pushed out by concerted efforts in the realm of ideology and philosophy. In the 1960s and ’70s, college campuses became centers of radical movements, with thousands emerging from the student activism of SDS, SNCC, and other organizations as serious revolutionaries. In 2020, those who begin to question the oppressive nature of our world and get involved in resistance movements are indoctrinated with a heavy dose of postmodernism at college (if they attend), which weighs down their scope of imagination, collective commitment, and political practice.

Postmodernism is a broad term for a philosophy and politics whose defining features include a rejection of any universalist project of liberation (especially communism), a heavy dose of relativism, an emphasis on “discursive practices” over material transformation, personal moral choices elevated above collective struggle, an emphasis on lifestyle and cultural changes, and the obnoxious use of ever more idiotic terminology. The main effect of postmodernism has been to transform people’s political commitments to being about themselves rather than the world—hence the explosion of increasingly narrow and petty-bourgeois forms of identity politics and the application of therapy concepts to “radical” politics.<sup>7</sup> There are valuable in-

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7 We have nothing against therapy or applying lessons from therapy to our politics—quite the contrary—but therapy techniques should not be confused with the practices needed to make revolution. It’s tempting to show up at the next protest

sights to learn from postmodernists, including in their critiques of Marxism, but in the philosophical domain, postmodernism constitutes the main enemy of revolutionary communism in North America today.

And it is a formidable foe, because it has become deeply entrenched in liberal and progressive academia and nonprofit activist organizations over the last several decades, and in more recent years has garnered considerable mainstream media dissemination. How does a philosophy succeed in such widespread impact when the study of philosophy is something only a small portion of society engages in?<sup>8</sup>

In part as a response to the radical movements of the late 1960s, French philosopher Michel Foucault laid down the foundations of postmodernist philosophy in a voluminous output full of new or newly defined theoretical jargon words such as episteme, power relations, genealogy, and archaeology. Foucault did pick up on some very real weaknesses in the communist movement, especially in regards to mechanical and determinist approaches to materialism, and for that reason it is well worth it for communists to study his works.<sup>9</sup> Foucault also proved adept at advancing his career by astutely positioning himself in relation to political events and resistance movements, something that subsequently became standard practice among American academics, as witnessed by the numerous grad students and professors trying to ride the coattails of the Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter movements to benefit their own careers.<sup>10</sup>

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with a banner that says “Fuck Self-Care! Serve the People!”

8 To our knowledge, Maoist China was the only place in the world to ever organize a mass study of philosophy involving members of all social classes. Long Live the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution!

9 The international communist movement is sorely lacking a serious engagement with and critique of Foucault’s works, and this weakness of ours is a result of our “poverty of philosophy,” itself a consequence of the dogmatism among us.

10 For an account of how Foucault positioned himself in relation to political movements to benefit his career, see Gabriel Rockhill’s “Foucault: The Faux Radical,” published 12 October 2020 in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*’ *The Philosophical*

By the 1980s, Foucault was all the rage in American academia. Postmodernist scholars and scholarship proliferated, at times playing a positive role in contending with and supplanting crusty old white men and their ass-backwards ideas from entrenched university positions. By the new millennium, postmodernism had become the dominant philosophy and politics in most of the humanities and social sciences (the discipline of history is a holdout, in part because bullshit and historical research don't go together well), and its position was particularly well-fortified in the smaller liberal colleges that turn out a large number of progressive activists.<sup>11</sup> Thus, with the exception of Liberty University alums, everyone who gets a college degree today in the US, even if they have never read Foucault, has been trained in postmodernism on some level. And this includes a substantial number of upwardly-mobile proletarians.

Those college graduates who went on to get jobs at nonprofit activist organizations tended to be those most exposed to and trained in postmodernism by their college professors. With nonprofit activist organizations proliferating and garnering massive funding as a conscious bourgeois policy following the radical movements of the 1960s to ensure that the rebellious impulses that led to such movements could be contained and deflated, postmodernism was thus in the position to become the guiding political philosophy of activist culture. From its two bastions of academia and nonprofit activist organizations, postmodernist philosophy and politics has seeped down into virtually all resistance movements and critical discourse on oppression. Mao once said that “first people fight back, then they seek out philosophy.” Today in the US, as soon as people fight back or even start asking questions, they are inundated with postmodernist ways of thinking, enforced in part by the insistence on mastering an

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*Salon* ([thephilosophicalsalon.com/foucault-the-faux-radical](http://thephilosophicalsalon.com/foucault-the-faux-radical)).

11 It's tempting to suggest that after the revolution, Western Massachusetts should become either an autonomous zone or a labor camp for postmodernist intellectuals. Either way, little labor would ever get done there.

ever-changing and ever-more-nonsensical vocabulary that is a requirement for proving one's wokeness. Although postmodernism tends not to resonate with proletarians given how little it makes sense with their life experiences and because (fortunately?) many proletarians never attend college, it has made considerable inroads among proletarian youth who get involved in political activism.

A lesson to draw here is the need to pay attention to what is going on in the bourgeoisie's ideological state apparatuses and contend, from within and without, against theoretical trends that seek to strangle revolutionary politics. Postmodernism's largely unchallenged rise to a supreme hegemonic position within liberal academia has resulted in the allegiance of most intellectuals to a "progressive" form of bourgeois rule (which will likely never come to fruition beyond liberal petty-bourgeois enclaves, but if it did, it would look like the dystopia of the *Hunger Games* movies rather than that of *V is for Vendetta*) against any concept of revolution. This allegiance is institutionally enforced, because in order to advance their careers, academics are generally required to write and teach in ways that at least resonate with postmodernist politics—this is how ideological state apparatuses enforce bourgeois ideology. Furthermore, with postmodernism guiding what is taught in most college classrooms, a deeply anti-communist petty-bourgeois philosophy and politics masquerading as a radical critique of oppression is spread far and wide, and especially among youth who are getting involved in resistance movements and developing their political consciousness. Add to this that involvement in activist organizations—especially but not only the careerist nonprofit ones—requires an allegiance to postmodernism and mastery of its idiotic jargon, and the result is a highly effective ideological encirclement and suppression campaign against the emergence of a revolutionary movement. The postmodernists have unfortunately succeeded in their belief that if you change the discourse, you change the world. Our task is to break people out of the encirclement, and doing so will

require a growing ability to contend with postmodernist philosophy and politics from a communist perspective—another reason communists have to read Foucault.

## THE BOURGEOISIE'S ANTI-COMMUNIST COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

Whereas postmodernism was generated largely by “enlightened” petty-bourgeois intellectuals and received the support of the liberal bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie as a whole united behind an anti-communist counter-offensive that stretches back decades but became more intellectually sophisticated beginning in the 1970s and used the collapse of the Soviet Union to boast the “proof” of its claims in the early 1990s. A robust anti-communist book publishing industry produced bestsellers that provided theories of (non-class) “totalitarianism” and gave vivid accounts of the purported horrors of communist regimes. Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is a still-influential example of the former, while Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* exemplifies the latter and reveals much about the nature of anti-communism. First off, it gained in popularity exactly when the US was dramatically expanding its prison population, especially of Black

Behind the scenes of his April 1974 appearance on France’s literary TV program *Apostrophes*, anti-communist literati heap their praises on Russian fascist Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Clearly, Stalin’s *actual* gulags fell disappointingly short of the tall tales that this charlatan made a career of churning out to Western audiences if Solzhenitsyn survived them.



proletarians, and subjecting its prisoners to brutalities that make Soviet labor camps seem quaint by comparison. Second, when American intellectuals critiqued US prisons, they often did so by adopting anti-communism, treating the US prison system as a Soviet-style stain on American democracy, as revealed by the title of “abolitionist” Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s book on California’s prisons, *Golden Gulag*. Third, when Solzhenitsyn later wrote the book *200 Years Together* on the Russian revolution that was dripping with virulent anti-Semitism and betrayed his Nazi outlook, for some reason it didn’t receive the same publicity as *The Gulag Archipelago*.

What started as the work of arch-reactionaries with the support of the liberal section of the bourgeoisie was increasingly joined by liberal petty-bourgeois intellectuals writing studies of the horrors of communism. Jung Chang’s and Dennis Halliday’s *Mao: The Unknown Story* is perhaps the best-known example, and may well be the only book George W Bush ever read cover to cover (he called it his favorite). Scholarly anti-communism contains at least the veneer of research, and though the intellectual sophistication and research methods of the anti-communist book shelf is in truth not that impressive, the sheer size of the shelf makes it a time-consuming task to refute. It’s only recently, after the bourgeoisie successfully won its anti-communist ideological counteroffensive and no longer sees the need to prioritize this sphere of propaganda work, that some scholarship has begun to emerge challenging the anti-communist narrative and refuting the veracity of the empirical evidence it rests on. Mad props to Mobo Gao, Dongpin Han, and Pao-yu Ching for their valuable contributions in contending with the anti-communist narrative and its factual inaccuracies.

As with Foucault, we might ask: how much impact did these anti-communist books have, especially among the proletariat? The immediate answer is quite a lot; many were bestsellers. But the deeper answer is that, as with Foucault’s philosophies, the arguments in these books have seeped into the popular consciousness, including by way of politicians, media pundits, and popular culture popularizing the anti-communist narrative such books articulated. The bourgeoisie has done its ideological work, and the result is that revolution, the dicta-

torship of the proletariat, and communist vanguard parties are widely viewed as leading to a disaster worse than capitalism-imperialism. As with postmodernism, anti-communism may not hold as much sway among the proletariat, but its propagation has deflated the proletariat's hope for a future other than the existing order. So on the ideological front, we have much work to do to refute the anti-communist narrative with an unapologetic but nuanced and factually accurate defense of the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Winning ground on this front is a necessity to break the proletariat out of the view that no alternative to this capitalist hellscape is possible and to wrench the stranglehold of petty-bourgeois ideology off of radical-minded youth.

## ENTER MARXISM-LENINISM-MEMEISM

A statistical survey of gen Z Twitter profiles might suggest that among the new generation, given the number of hammer and sickle emojis, the anti-communist narrative no longer holds sway. Unfortunately, what people declare their political allegiances to be on social media usually has little to do with their operative ideology (big fuckin' surprise). It's too bad there's not a teleportation machine that can transport North American Twitter communists into a real communist party—say, for example, the Communist Party of the Philippines today or the Communist Party of China when it was under Mao's leadership—to sort out who's down for living up to their social media proclamations. For who among them would enthusiastically embrace actually being part of a revolutionary struggle: integrating with the masses, functioning under the collective discipline of a vanguard party and yes, waking up before 9am? The rise of social media communists—a phenomenon best described as Marxism-Leninism-Memeism—does not signify a widespread refutation of anti-communism. For when it comes down to the core principles of communism—the need for revolutionary civil war to overthrow bourgeois rule, the need for a dictatorship of the proletariat to advance the socialist transition to communism, and the need for a vanguard party to lead that whole process—Twitter

communists, even if they profess agreement to those principles, are ideologically averse to committing their life to them. Just take the principles and practices enumerated in Mao's *Red Book* as a litmus test for the life of a communist and ask: how many with a hammer and sickle emoji in their Twitter profile them live up to them?

So why are all these kids (and we use that word here to call attention to their deliberate and stubborn immaturity, not their age) calling themselves communists if they are fundamentally opposed to communist principles? The simple answer is that between post-modernism and social media, politics is now a personal identity rather than a practice and commitment, and to some, communist is a cool identity. The deeper answer is that the decline and collapse of the international communist movement means that there are few real communists, let alone a communist movement, to contrast with the fake posturing of Marxism-Leninism-Memeism. The people's wars in Peru and Nepal were defeated and/or betrayed, with the remnants of revolutionary forces in both countries left in a dif-

From sunrise to sunset, New People's Army guerrillas in the Philippines spend their lives in and out of their encampments conducting social investigation, carrying out propaganda and cultural work, re-organizing village life, and carrying out service provision for the rural masses. Hand in hand with victories in the armed struggle, this mass work forms the basis for building and expanding the red political power of the revolution.



difficult position to pick up the pieces and move forward. The Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, a promising embryonic center of communists around the world from 1984 until the mid-2000s, imploded due to a combination of defeats, internal differences, and ideological degeneration. The 1960s/70s generation of communists in the US has largely given up, degenerated, or become dogmatic hacks, as demonstrated by the current state of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, which decided to make a bad remix of the WWII-era CP's Popular Front by going all-in on tailing the liberal bourgeoisie this last presidential election.<sup>12</sup>

To our knowledge, the places in the world where substantial numbers of real communists exist and/or are well-organized into disciplined, fighting organizations are the Philippines, India, Nepal, and Italy.<sup>13</sup> For those few in North America who have donned the social media identity of a communist but have some serious desire to go beyond appearances, it's time to get real, learn from the international comrades we have today and from our revolutionary history, and rupture with Twitter role-play and become communist cadre.

## TRAINING DAY

This editorial poses the stark necessity to no longer allow opportunities for revolutionary advance to pass us by or slip from our hands. As polemical as this essay has been, we write out of confidence that the US bourgeoisie is confronted by crises on multiple fronts for which they have no solution, and should they lose their footing, a revolutionary movement in the US could kick them while they're down. And although 2020 has passed us by, we only expect

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<sup>12</sup> See Kenny Lake's "On Infantile Internet Disorders and Real Questions of Revolutionary Strategy: A Response to the 'Debate' over the Universality of Protracted People's War" in *kites* #1 for a fuller discussion of the recent history of the international communist movement.

<sup>13</sup> We don't have clarity on the current state of the communist movement in Turkey. And we'd love to be pleasantly surprised about the existence of serious communists elsewhere.

the crises to deepen and multiply over the coming years—not in a straight downhill slope for the bourgeoisie, but with periods of relative stability guaranteed not to last long.

Gaining the strength to kick them while they're down will first require the development of serious communist cadre—not Marxist-Leninist-Memeists—and the eventual consolidation of those cadre into a vanguard party. “To be such a person”—to borrow the title of an inspiring aria from the Chinese revolutionary opera *The Red Lantern*—involves the right combination of practical experience in class struggle, integration with the masses, and rigorous, dynamic study of communist theory and revolutionary history. The contents of issue #3 of *kites* are geared towards training just such communist cadre.

Kenny Lake’s “Malcolm X Didn’t Dish Out Free Bean Pies: Distinguishing Charity and Social Work from Revolutionary Strategy” aims its polemical fire at the disturbingly widespread trend of “red charity,” wherein would-be communists dress up free food distribution and other forms of charity in revolutionary slogans. In the course of dissecting the dead-end of “red charity,” Lake draws lessons from the history of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords, argues for the central role of political agitation in revolutionary practice, and sets the record straight on the meaning behind Mao’s famous slogan “serve the people.”

The Organization of Communist Revolutionaries in the US contributes two training manuals to this issue of *kites*. “Drawing Blood: A Guide to Communist Agitation” is a political and practical handbook in the art of agitation, which Lenin considered central to communist practice. “Looking Back to Face Forward: The Role of Summation in the Revolutionary Process” explains the importance of step #3 in Mao’s “4-step method” and provides practical guidance for the act of writing summations.

“Catching Fire” is a submission we received from a reader in the Los Angeles area who interviewed people during the height of protests against police brutality this past summer. It is a model

of social investigation in the midst of rebellion, learning from the views of the masses and wielding their words in the summation of earth-shattering political events. We encourage other readers to learn from this model and conduct social investigation, especially among the proletariat, in their areas and turn this social investigation into revolutionary journalism.

“When We Ride on Our Enemies,” part 3 of the series *The Specter That Still Haunts: Locating a Revolutionary Class within Contemporary Capitalism-Imperialism*, considers how communists in Peru, the Philippines, and India organized slum populations and people pushed off their land by the extractive industry as decisive forces in revolutionary people’s wars. Understanding this rich and under-theorized history encourages communists to think creatively about potential opportunities, created by changes in the capitalist-imperialist system, for revolutionary mobilization of the masses. This article is a welcome contrast to the posturing of those who love to claim the rhetoric of “people’s war” but have done little to learn the lessons that recent revolutionary people’s wars provide us with, let alone apply those lessons to their own circumstances.

We conclude issue #3 of *kites* with a parody: “From Postmodernist Nonsense to Plain Proletarian English: A Translation Guide.” Besides making you laugh, we hope this translation guide can be instructive in unapologetically challenging the postmodernist nonsense that passes for radical politics in the US these days.

This editorial focused exclusively on events in the US in part due to the intense political crises that have gripped the top imperialist power in the world over the past year. In issue #4 of *kites*, we aim to address questions of more direct relevance to revolutionaries in Canada. Finally, we hope to hear from our readers on how you are using the content of *kites* in your own study and practice, your feedback on and criticism of that content, and your suggestions for how *kites* can best serve the development of communist cadre and a revolutionary movement.