

## Damage Control over NSA Revelations

# Spying, Repression, War: Pillars of Capitalist Rule



Above: NSA headquarters in Fort Meade, Maryland. Right: Aftermath of December 11 U.S. drone attack on wedding convoy in Yemen. Barack Obama, shown above right with spy chief James Clapper in June 2010, has expanded Bush-era domestic spying and drone terror programs.

In a special Christmas message broadcast on British television, National Security Agency (NSA) whistle-blower Edward Snowden warned of the dangers posed by mass surveillance: “A child born today will grow up with no conception of privacy at all. They’ll never know what it means to have a private moment to themselves—an unrecorded, unanalyzed thought.” A global spying apparatus assembled by the U.S. government can now sweep up the telephone, Internet and location records of whole populations and easily defeat the most common communications encryption methods, as is known the world over thanks to Snowden. With video cameras also dotting city streets and drones preparing to swarm the skies, the capitalist rulers are determined to make personal privacy a relic of a bygone age.

With each new document released by Snowden further exposing U.S. imperialism’s dark underbelly, Washington has suffered no shortage of embarrassment. So much so that some in the government, beginning with the head of the NSA task force assessing the impact of the leaks, have floated the possibility of granting Snowden amnesty in order to stanch the flow of revelations. Various bourgeois commentators, rankled by the trampling on *their* rights but not wanting the spymasters to lose more face, have picked up this theme. Thus a recent *New York Times* (1 January) editorial declared: “It is time for the United States to offer Mr.

Snowden a plea bargain or some form of clemency that would allow him to return home.” The government itself continues to treat Snowden as a traitor who deserves to feel the full wrath of bourgeois justice. As Marxist opponents of the capitalist-imperialist order, we say: Drop all charges against Edward Snowden!

A debate within the government is also unfolding over how precisely to carry out damage control and package the snooping to make it more palatable to the public. Congress, which the NSA recently all but admitted is also subject to its surveillance, now has dueling comprehensive bills on the floor. One, dubbed the Freedom Act, is designed to restrict the NSA program that collects and stores records of virtually all telephone calls made in the country. The other would approve it in its current form. The same sides were drawn in competing federal court decisions last month. One judge concluded that the program is likely unconstitutional and “almost Orwellian” in scope. Eleven days later, another judge gave his enthusiastic stamp of approval, observing: “This blunt tool only works because it collects everything.”

Meanwhile, a panel convened by the president issued a report with 46 recommendations to make the eavesdroppers at least appear more accountable. Evidently with tongue in cheek, Obama commented: “There are ways we can do this potentially that give people greater assurance that



Facebook

there are checks and balances, sufficient oversight and transparency.” Left unsaid was his role in more deeply enshrouding the Bush-era surveillance programs in secrecy. From the time he first assumed office, Obama publicly embraced the Patriot Act provision that was the legal basis of the phone “metadata” program, fully aware that the NSA was violating existing procedures for the program laid out by the rubber-stamp secret court ostensibly overseeing it.

Regarding reform packages, such as the Freedom Act, that seek to put some limits on mass surveillance, we wrote in “Spying and Lying in the Belly of the Beast” (WV No. 1034, 15 November 2013): “It would be welcome if such efforts created some speed bumps for the agents of U.S. imperialism. It would be foolish to believe that reforms will ever significantly impede the imperialists’ spying on whomever they want whenever they want.”

The Freedom Act sponsors and other bourgeois reformers are cleaning up after the likes of Director of National Intelligence James Clapper. Early last year, Clapper denied under oath that the NSA was stockpiling data on Americans, only to have Snowden prove him a liar. Public mistrust deepened when Clapper subsequently explained that the statement was the “least untruthful” he could make. Subterfuge is, of course, in the nature of spying. But note that in this case the target is not a foreign power. In capitalist society, where a tiny minority of the population lives off the labor of the working class, the rulers will always resort to spying, lying and violence to keep the vast majority down.

The history of U.S. government spying and repression as a handmaiden to its imperialist wars abroad was the topic of forum presentations by Spartacist League

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## The Russian Revolution and the Roma...4

# John Reed on Liebknecht and Luxemburg

Upholding the revolutionary traditions of the early Communist International, we commemorate the “Three L’s” this month, marking the assassination of German Communist Party founders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg on 15 January 1919 and the death of Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin on 21 January 1924. Liebknecht and Luxemburg were murdered by reactionaries amid the counterrevolutionary terror unleashed by the Social Democratic government against a workers uprising.

Karl Liebknecht’s name is synonymous with intransigent opposition to one’s “own” bourgeoisie in the crucible of interimperialist war. His declaration that “the main enemy is at home” became the watchword for generations of revolutionaries at times of war between imperialist powers. When the Social Democratic Party fraction voted for the Kaiser’s military budget at the Reichstag (parliament) session of 2 December 1914, Liebknecht, then a member of the party, broke ranks and cast the sole vote against war credits. With Liebknecht prohibited from motivating his vote on the Reichstag floor and barred



Willy Römer



Panorama

**Left: Karl Liebknecht addressing Berlin demonstration of workers and soldiers in January 1919 during proletarian insurrection. Right: Rosa Luxemburg.**

world’s first successful proletarian revolution—the Russian October Revolution of 1917 under the leadership of Lenin’s Bolshevik Party.

We print below a piece by John Reed from a special issue of *The Revolutionary Age* devoted to Liebknecht and Luxemburg and published on 1 February 1919. The ellipses were part of the article as printed. Reed was a radical American journalist who was won to Bolshevism while reporting on the October Revolution. His book *Ten Days That Shook the World* vividly depicts the insurrectionary days in Petrograd. Upon his return from Russia, Reed was instrumental in founding the American Communist movement. *The Revolutionary Age* was the organ of the left wing of the Socialist Party, out of which emerged many of the pioneers of American communism.

\* \* \*

## Karl Liebknecht’s Words

By John Reed

When I was in Berlin in December, 1915, I went to see Karl Liebknecht. He had an office in a district Social Democratic headquarters, in the poorer section of the city—on a street, I remember, which looked very like Washington Street in Boston. It was a large, bare room, the walls hung with pictures of Bebel and the elder Liebknecht, and memorials of historic events in the great history of the German Social Democracy.

Liebknecht sat at a table in the middle of the room, the lower half of his face faintly illuminated by a green-shaded lamp. He wore a semi-military coat buttoned up to the neck. There were dark circles under his eyes, but that was all the evidence of fatigue about him. His hand played nervously with a paper-cutter as he talked; his eyes never left mine. His face was dark and full—almost round—with a gentle expression.

The door to the inner hall had been left

open. It was empty, except for two or three forlorn-looking women in widows’ weeds, who were sitting sadly and motionless on chairs along the wall, waiting for some official of the branch on business connected with death-benefits....

“The war?” I asked, pointing toward them. Liebknecht nodded. “The best of us—” he said slowly, in halting English interlarded with German words.

I had not seen the statement which Liebknecht had sent out to Holland, and which was even then being published all over the world, especially by the Allied capitalist press—then calling him “the bravest of the brave.” So it was more or less natural that I should ask him whether his attitude of extreme hostility to the War and the Government was still the same.

“There is no other attitude for a Social Democrat to take,” he said, with a faint smile of amusement. “As each problem of capitalist aggression arises, it must be met full and squarely. In spite of the prodigious influence brought to bear in all countries of the world upon their peoples, the international working class is still not convinced that this War is their War. As representative of the workers, I voice this sentiment.”

“And the chances of world Revolution?” “To my mind,” he answered serenely, “nothing else can come out of the War.”

This is practically all of our conversation. Other questions which I asked him, which if he had answered, might have revealed the plans and projects of the movement, or the work then being done, he refused to answer. After all, he did not know me....

Rosa Luxemburg I never knew, but

from talks about her with comrades who did, I have come to think of her as one of the great constructive brains of the Left Wing movement in Europe—an intellect which, like Lenin’s in Russia, would have been of incalculable value in the establishment of the new order in Germany, of which Karl Liebknecht was the flaming prophet.

Liebknecht was arrested, and while being taken in an automobile to prison by a group of “armed volunteers,” (no doubt aristocratic young officers), was shot “while trying to escape” “when the automobile broke down” crossing the Tiergarten. In other words, he was taken to a quiet spot and simply murdered. Rosa Luxemburg met a more terrible fate. She was beaten to death by a “white-collar mob,” and her body thrown into the canal.

It was the bourgeoisie of Berlin, of Germany, of the world—the bankers, business men, officers, “respectable people”—who actually did the killing.

But it was the Ebert-Scheidemann Government, the Kaiser Socialists, so long detested by the Allied capitalist press—who by suppressing the revolt of the German working-class with the aid of the Kaiser’s troops, allowed that mob to shoot holes in Karl Liebknecht’s back and trample the life out of Rosa Luxemburg. And the Allied capitalist press applauds....

What the capitalist newspapers have to say about it is a matter of comparative indifference to us. We are occupied with a closer and more dangerous enemy in our own ranks—the moderate Socialists, who, to their other crimes against the workers, have now added the crime of murder. ■



**The Revolutionary Age, organ of the left wing of the American Socialist Party, dedicated 1 February 1919 issue to Luxemburg and Liebknecht after their assassination.**

from the German press, his statement was published in a Dutch socialist newspaper.

Recounting Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg’s revolutionary opposition to their “own” capitalist governments is particularly timely as bourgeois ideologues, with no small amount of hypocrisy and deception, begin to mark the centenary of the outbreak of “the war to end all wars” in August 1914. WWI was not caused by an assassin’s bullet but by the struggle of the imperialist powers to redive the world and further their exploitation of labor and control of markets. While some nine million mainly working-class conscripts would die as the imperialists’ cannon fodder, the carnage would also lead to the

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# PDC Holiday Appeal: Greetings from the Class-War Prisoners

The Partisan Defense Committee held its 28th annual Holiday Appeal events in December to raise funds for monthly stipends and holiday gifts to class-war prisoners and their families. At the December 15 event in Chicago, Spartacist League spokesman Patricia Kepler explained how the Holiday Appeal is an elementary act of solidarity: “We are here today to honor those who have been thrown behind bars, framed up, tortured by this country’s many governments—Republican and Democrat—for the simple reason that they stood up, spoke up and fought against the crimes of U.S. imperialism at home and abroad. Their fight is our fight.” She continued: “Although many look to the Democratic Party as a lesser evil, the simple fact is that Obama has done the job that the main body of the ruling class selected him for: overseer for the capitalist profit system that criminalizes young black men and chews up working people, spitting them out when their labor is no longer needed.”

In Chicago, the audience heard a recorded greeting from Alex Stuck, who had just been released from prison. He is one of the Tinley Park 5, a group of



Ralph Poynter, Lynne Stewart's husband, speaking at the New York Holiday Appeal, December 15.

anti-racist militants thrown into prison for dispersing a meeting of fascists outside Chicago in May 2012. They are the most recent additions to the stipend pro-

gram. In his greeting, Stuck stressed the importance to prisoners of knowing that there are people on the outside fighting for them:

“I remember while I was locked up I was reading a book. It was fiction, but it mentioned something about this French word called *les oubliettes*. Apparently the translation means ‘a forgetting place,’ and that’s what they call their French prisons. While I was locked up, I ran into a lot of people who had either severed their ties or just didn’t have any family, and that is exactly why the prison is a ‘forgetting place.’”

In his remarks at the Chicago event, SEIU Local 73 chief steward Joe Iosbaker of the Committee to Stop FBI Repression thanked the PDC for the support he received when he was targeted by the FBI in a series of raids against leftist and labor activists in 2010.

In New York City on December 15, Ralph Poynter read greetings from his wife, radical lawyer Lynne Stewart (see article on page 12 about Stewart’s subsequent release from prison). Stewart’s greetings conveyed the deep sense of human solidarity that continued to drive her under even the most inhumane conditions. She wrote that with her monthly stipend, she was able to purchase books and, after finishing them, put them into “circulation” for other inmates. Stewart has also used the stipend to help other imprisoned women without resources, providing them with coffee, peanut butter and shampoo. She noted: “I remember back to the days when I was out there and also understand that the people who find themselves put behind bars by a cunning government with evil aforethought, are the same as you and me. I understand that even better now.”

In her message, Stewart demanded freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther Party spokesman and well-known MOVE supporter who was framed up for the killing of a policeman in Philadelphia in 1981. While Mumia was taken off death row in 2011, he remains in prison with no chance of parole despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence. The fight for Mumia’s freedom has been at the forefront of the PDC’s work since the late 1980s.

Many of the other PDC stipend recipients have been in prison for decades as their demands for parole or release are repeatedly denied. Hugo Pinell is the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison. Jaan Laaman and Tom Manning were impris-

oned for their roles in the Ohio 7, a radical group that took credit for bank “expropriations” and bombings against symbols of U.S. imperialism in the late 1970s and 1980s. Ed Poindexter and Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa, former Black Panther supporters, were framed up as part of the FBI’s deadly COINTELPRO operation in which 38 Black Panther Party members were killed. Leonard Peltier was incarcerated for his activism in the American Indian Movement.

The PDC also sends stipends to the remaining eight members of the MOVE commune who were framed up on conspiracy and murder charges after a vicious police assault on their home in Philadelphia’s Powelton Village in August 1978. In WV No. 1034 (15 November 2013), we reviewed the film *Let the Fire Burn*, a powerful documentary on the bombing of MOVE’s Osage Avenue commune in May 1985. Orchestrated by black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode along with federal agencies, this act of racist state terror incinerated eleven people, including five children, and reduced an entire city block in the black working-class neighborhood to ashes.

We appreciate the many letters and greetings to the events received from the prisoners, which are displayed at the Holiday Appeals for attendees to read. We print selections from the prisoners’ letters and greetings here.

\* \* \*

**Jaan Laaman**

26 November 2013

When the PDC states that, “the principle of non-sectarian class struggle defense guides their work...,” I can firmly tell you,



4strugglemag

this is exactly what they do. Even as a relatively small organization, they are consistent and determined in their solidarity and support.

A recent Workers Vanguard article quoted James Cannon, a leader of the historic International Labor Defense, on

*continued on page 11*

## The World We’re In

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

The following commentary dated 21 November 2013 was read at the Holiday Appeal event for class-war prisoners in New York City, December 15.

Who believed that the world that we see before us would be here, like this, when the last 2 elections were held?

OK—perhaps some of you had a clue. But for most of us, deep down, we believed we were on the brink of epic change. We thought that the social problems gnawing at the community, joblessness, the immense and monstrous mass incarceration system, homelessness, and the serious social problems of schools would be—well, at the very least, addressed.

That they are not honestly on the agenda is shocking. Shocking.

We learned, slowly, over time, that the color, complexion, or ethnicity of those in power are largely of no import: their ideas/ideals/beliefs are.

I know that this wasn’t widely articulated; but I also know and sense that it was felt.

The feeling of mass depression, of betrayal in the Black community is actually quite profound.

Oh, I don’t mean of the well-to-do, the moneyed, or the petit-bourgeoisie, but among the poor, the working classes, the average folks.

They feel like they were played.

But we know that this is the very essence of politics—this is the way things go—especially in capitalist societies.

This has been the practice since the American Revolution—a revolution that actually—perhaps for the first time in history—benefited the gentry, the wealthy, the ruling classes. This Revolution waged in the name of ‘freedom,’ was marked by the explosion of the slavery system, unbridled invasions of Indian lands west of the Appala-



CSDN

chian Mountains, and the resurrection of the new rulers—American aristocrats, in the place of the British.

They used their media, their priests and their sycophants to sell their revolution, while living in, and trying to preserve one of the most unequal societies on earth (especially for Africans!).

This shows us the value of groups like the PDC. They question. They challenge. They protest the powers that be.

We should all learn a lesson from these recent experiences, if only to know, deep in our bones, that for the capitalists, ‘change’ only refers to what you get when you try to break a dollar.

Thank you all, once again, for helping my boy, Jamal,

**Ona Move! Long Live John Africa!**  
Mumia Abu-Jamal

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## CORRECTION

In the article “Imperialists Put Off Strike on Syria, For Now” (WV No. 1030, 20 September 2013) we incorrectly referred to François Hollande as the Socialist Party prime minister of France. He is in fact the president of France; the prime minister is Jean-Marc Ayrault.



# The Russian Revolution and the Roma

In Hungary, racist thugs firebomb their homes and shoot at fleeing victims. In the Czech Republic, neo-Nazi stormtroopers threaten to exterminate them in gas chambers. In the Slovak Republic, an off-duty cop on a mission to “restore order” shoots and kills three of them. In Bulgaria, racist assailants wearing brass knuckles attack them. In France, thousands last year suffered eviction under the government led by Socialist Party president François Hollande. In each case, the victims have one thing in common: they are all Roma (Gypsies).

From one end of the continent to the other, Roma are falling prey to heightened violence and xenophobia as the countries of the European Union (EU) reel under the effects of the capitalist economic crisis. In mid October, Greek cops seized a four-year-old girl and arrested her parents, accusing them of kidnapping on the assumption that Gypsies could not possibly have a fair-haired, blue-eyed daughter. A few days later, Irish authorities took a page from this playbook, ripping two light-skinned Roma children from their parents. Encouraged by state persecution of the Gypsies and feeling the winds of official racism in their sails, fascist skin-heads in Serbia got into the act, attempting to abduct a fair-skinned Roma child.

The racist frenzy against the ostracized and historically persecuted Roma, who number 10 to 12 million in Europe, has been drastically escalated in recent months by governments of both the left and the right with the aim of deflecting workers’ anger away from the capitalist class enemy. As Trotskyists, the International Communist League has always opposed the EU as an imperialist trade bloc that was established to further the exploitation and immiseration of the workers and the oppressed, including Europe’s millions of immigrants, under the domination of German as well as French and British capital.

Although the EU’s legal framework includes the 1985 Schengen agreement, which supposedly guarantees the free movement of peoples in member countries, capitalist “Fortress Europe” has increasingly stepped up repression of immigrants and severely gutted the right to asylum. When Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, their citizens, including many Roma, were restricted from working in Germany, France and Britain. While these restrictions have now been formally lifted, a furor stoked by Britain’s Conservative/Liberal Democratic coalition government against Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants shows that they will continue to be hounded from one corner of Europe to the other.

As our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France explained in a leaflet issued last October (see “French Government Crackdown on Roma, Immigrants,” WV No. 1035, 29 November 2013):

“In a precapitalist economy, the Gypsies occupied a marginal economic niche as artisans, peddlers and artists. With the development of capitalism, they were pushed to the margins of society, enduring abuses that culminated in the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Gypsies by the Nazis. The truth is that decaying capitalism is incapable of ‘integrating’ the Roma and all the more so in periods of crisis.”

Europe’s Gypsy populations do not comprise a single nation based on a cohesive territory or even a common language. Their character is similar in some ways to the position of European Jews in feudal society, who, playing an economic role as merchants and money-lenders, constituted a “people-class,” as analyzed by the

Trotskyist Abram Leon. While Gypsies were even more socially marginalized, the two share a long record of suffering brutal victimization and hatred.

In defending the Roma against the capitalist state and fascist gangs, we seek to mobilize the working class to demand the recognition of their languages, dialects and culture; to champion the right of both

in history. In the tenth century, a Gypsy people known as the Liuli began to move into an area of Central Asia that would later be part of the tsarist empire in order to escape Muslim assaults in their original homeland in northern India. In the early 15th century, Gypsies moved into Ukraine. Later in that century, persecution in Germany forced Gypsies to

way of life. Reduced to the status of pariahs, many Gypsies were forced into slavery or serfdom, resulting in cultural backwardness and political exclusion.

In tsarist Russia, Gypsies were subjected to police measures and discriminatory laws. In the mid 18th century, Empress Elizabeth issued a decree forbidding Gypsies from entering the capital of St. Petersburg and its environs. In 1783, the Senate sought to prevent Gypsies from moving from one landowner to another. Subsequently, it decreed that wandering Gypsies would be placed under surveillance and returned to their original districts.

Some Russian Roma were able to enjoy relative prosperity and stability because they belonged to Gypsy choirs, which were popular among the nobility up until this class was crushed by the Russian Revolution. Nevertheless, the waning years of the tsarist autocracy also coincided with increased oppression of Roma. For example, in 1906 the tsarist regime and several other European governments signed on to an agreement with Prussia to persecute nomadic Roma populations.

Understanding that the capitalist ruling classes foment racism and nationalism to divide and weaken the workers of different backgrounds and thus to maintain their hold on power, the Bolsheviks irreconcilably opposed anti-Semitism and all national, religious and ethnic oppression. The “Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia,” adopted shortly after the October Revolution, proclaimed “the right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination” and “the abolition of any and all national and national-religious privileges and disabilities.” The declaration committed the workers state to “the free development of national minorities and ethnographic groups inhabiting the territory of Russia.”

Animated by the Bolshevik program of combating national chauvinism and uniting the workers of the world against the capitalist-imperialist system, the early Soviet state made a heroic effort to bring progress, modernity and freedom to the Roma peoples. As historian David M. Crowe remarked in *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (1994):

“The 1920s saw something of a Gypsy renaissance take root in Eastern Europe and Russia as Roma intellectuals struggled to carve out a niche for the Gypsies in the new nations. Though their efforts to create organizations and publish works in Romany were admirable, they were crippled by inexperience and lack of financial support as well as centuries-old prejudice and indifference. The most remarkable, lasting gains for Roma came in the new Soviet Russian state.”

While the Roma in Soviet Russia would go on to progress in ways unimaginable in the capitalist world, their advances were also circumscribed and in part reversed under the Stalinist bureaucracy that seized political control in 1923-24. While the Bolsheviks under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky had upheld the equality of all nations and languages as part of their program for world socialist revolution, Stalin’s regime would increasingly be marked by Great Russian chauvinism as it promoted the nationalist, anti-Marxist dogma of “building socialism in one country.” Even in 1922, it was Stalin’s assault on the national rights of the Georgians that prompted Lenin to argue for his removal as General Secretary of the Communist Party.

It is necessary to understand that despite the political counterrevolution, the Soviet Union remained a workers state.

## Capitalist Europe: State Persecution, Fascist Terror Target Gypsies



EPA

Above: Ataka party fascists foment anti-Roma terror at October 2011 rally in Sofia, Bulgaria. Below: Roma expelled by police from their camp near Lyon, France, August 2012.



AFP

nomadic and sedentary Roma to equality in education, housing and employment; and to demand full citizenship rights for Roma wherever they live. Ultimately, only socialist revolution will make possible the full, voluntary assimilation of Roma into European society with full and equal rights. This was the prospect offered by the Russian October Revolution of 1917 led by the Bolshevik Party.

### The Prospect of Emancipation

Migrations of Gypsies to what would eventually become the territory of the Soviet Union occurred at different times

migrate into Poland and Lithuania, where Polish officials demanded that they be expelled. Russia annexed these territories in the 18th century.

In a 1931 work titled *Tsygane Vchera i Segodnia* (*Gypsies Yesterday and Today*), Alexander V. Germano, the Soviet Union’s leading Roma writer and intellectual, outlined the history of the European Roma as a bloodstained chronicle of persecution and alienation. Gypsies were burned at the stake, hanged, massacred and exiled. With villagers and officials relegating them to living temporarily on the outskirts, nomadism was reinforced as a

Although distorted by the rule of a privileged bureaucracy and subjected to the immense pressures of the hostile imperialist powers, the collectivized, planned economy resulted in enormous social advances for the Soviet peoples, particularly the more benighted, as in Central Asia. In his groundbreaking analysis of the Soviet Union under Stalin, Trotsky observed in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936):

“It is true that in the sphere of national policy, as in the sphere of economy, the Soviet bureaucracy still continues to carry out a certain part of the progressive work, although with immoderate overhead expenses. This is especially true of the backward nationalities of the Union, which must of necessity pass through a more or less prolonged period of borrowing, imitation and assimilation of what exists.”

The Struggle for Enlightenment

From sedentarization campaigns to the education of Roma children in their own language and the creation of vibrant cultural institutions, the Gypsies in the years following the Bolshevik Revolution made truly substantial strides. Among the major catalysts of this social transformation was a group of Gypsy activists, whose efforts are documented in a new book by Brooklyn College assistant professor Brigid O’Keeffe, *New Soviet Gypsies: Nationality, Performance and Selfhood in the Early Soviet Union* (2013). The heirs of Moscow’s prerevolutionary Romani intelligentsia that originated in the Gypsy choirs, these militant youth were energized by the revolutionary fervor in which early Soviet Russia was steeped.



Poster announcing 1852 Gypsy slave auction in Wallachia, part of today's Romania.

A prominent leader of this work was I.I. Rom-Lebedev, who along with his friends organized a Communist Youth League (Komsomol) cell for Roma in Moscow in 1923 to promote enlightenment and combat fortune telling, begging and other practices inimical to productive labor. With the assistance of their trade union, the youths created a red corner in Petrovskii Park filled with books and journals, aiming to transform Roma into conscious Soviet citizens. A year later, the Komsomol comrades participated in the formation of an Action Committee of Member-Founders of the Gypsy Proletarian Society, which included three activists who had served in the Red Army, three Communist Party members and three Komsomol members.

In July 1925, the Action Committee received approval from the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) to form the All-Russian Gypsy Union (ARGU). Within a year of its founding, the ARGU’s influence had spread well beyond Moscow Province, leading to the formation of affiliates in Leningrad, Chernigov, Vladimir and Smolensk. Meanwhile, letters from Roma throughout the Soviet Union began to pour in to



Moscow Romanichoir, 1910.

Moscow’s ARGU chapter, which by early 1926 claimed 330 members.

The Soviet Union’s first Gypsy collective farm was formed near Rostov in 1925 by a group of Roma who had supplied the Red Army with horses during the Civil War. Soon thereafter, the ARGU worked with the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture and the Nationalities Department of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee to establish the Commission on the Settlement of Toiling Gypsies, aiming to encourage Roma to abandon nomadism. Before long, Gypsies began to settle on lands set aside by each Soviet republic. Between 1926 and 1928, an estimated 5,000 Gypsies settled on farms in the Crimea, Ukraine and the North Caucasus. This was out of a total Roma population estimated as anywhere from 61,000 to 200,000, including nomadic Roma and others with settled lives in the cities and their outskirts.

Despite the efforts of the state and the militant activists, many Roma resisted moving to state lands. In addition to being atomized and largely illiterate, the Gypsy masses mistrusted authority, having suffered centuries of brutal oppression and ostracism. Not unlike women Communists who donned the veil to deliver the Bolsheviks’ message of emancipation to the women of the Muslim East, Gypsy Union activists went among the Roma to win them over. A poster written in both Russian and Romani explained Soviet efforts to liberate the minority peoples of the former empire from backwardness. It declared that while the tsars had oppressed nomads, imprisoning them in irrationality and alienation, now nomadic tribes with the help of Soviet power “are beginning to settle on land, to take up agriculture. They have their own land, their own farmstead, woods, villages, their own schools.”

Indeed, it was in the sphere of education that the Roma achieved some of their most impressive gains. A 31 October 1918 decree by the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narkompros) titled “On National Minority Schools” had declared that Gypsies, like all Soviet nationalities, had a right to an education in their native language. In January 1926, the Soviet Union’s first Romani-language classrooms were established in Moscow, inside existing Russian elementary schools. Students were instructed in reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing, crafts, music, physical education, history and civics, and efforts were made to establish literacy centers for adults. Romani-language schools would also be established on collective farms where Roma settled.

Teachers also struggled valiantly to teach another subject: hygiene. Both inside and outside of the classroom, Roma children and their parents were taught the importance of washing, brushing their teeth and combing their hair. The Moscow Department of Education was alarmed at the high rate of malnutrition and illnesses such as anemia, tuberculosis and typhoid fever among Roma children.

But neglect of basic hygiene was by no means confined to the Roma; it reflected the generalized material want and ignorance that pervaded early Soviet Russia, an overwhelmingly agrarian society that had inherited centuries of backwardness.

Lacking Romani-speaking teachers or even a Romani alphabet, pupils were initially taught in Russian. To surmount such hurdles, Gypsy Union activists, together with a linguist at Moscow State University, spearheaded a drive to create a Romani alphabet and standardize the language. A May 1927 Narkompros decree directed that the new alphabet be based on Cyrillic script with a few modifications, a break from the earlier Soviet practice of developing new alphabets, such as for Turkmen, based on Latin script.

Before long, the first Romani-language textbooks were published. A magazine in Romani, *Romany Zoria* (*Gypsy Dawn*), debuted in November 1927, followed by *Nevo Drom* (*New Road*), a reading primer intended for use by adults. The first Romani grammar book for use in Gypsy classrooms, *Tsyganskii Iazyk* (*The Gypsy Language*), appeared in 1931, while a 10,000-word Romani-Russian dictionary was published in the late 1930s. O’Keeffe asserts: “Although nearly all of the early Soviet Romani educational initiatives were terminated by the eve of World War II, many Romani students had already emerged from the practical and political education that they received in the late 1920s and 1930s as literate, integrated Soviet citizens.”

Paralleling the fight for Roma education was the struggle to assimilate Gypsies into the working class, resulting in the establishment of several industrial artels (cooperatives) in Moscow. By 1931, there were 28 Roma artels in the capital employing 1,350 workers. Crucially, two of the earliest and most successful, Tsygkhimprom (Gypsy Chemical Manufacturing) and Tsygypishcheprom (Gypsy Food Produc-

tion), did not exclusively employ Roma. At Tsygypishcheprom, Gypsies labored alongside workers of at least eleven other nationalities.

Despite the modest progress, the Council of People’s Commissars and other leading Soviet bodies had grown skeptical of the Gypsy Union. In March 1927, the Moscow Control Commission’s Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate conducted a surprise inspection of the ARGU, concluding that its leadership was top-heavy with profiteers, stage performers and white-collar workers and that its membership consisted heavily of speculators on the horse market and other non-proletarian elements. In response, Gypsy Union leaders protested that their work had been hampered by skeptical, intolerant and mistrustful state officials.

When the ARGU was disbanded in February 1928, the NKVD declared that it had failed to adopt concrete measures to combat “fortune telling, begging, gambling, drunkenness, and other particularities of the Gypsy population.” Besides the fact that such social ills were hardly “Gypsy particularities,” eradicating them would require years of struggle in the best material circumstances, not to mention in the backward conditions then prevailing in Soviet Russia. Despite the ARGU’s dissolution, its members would go on to play a prominent role in Soviet life, contributing to the Roma cultural awakening of the late 1920s and early ’30s.

Roma Rights Rolled Back

The Roma would not be spared the massive social dislocations that accompanied the First Five Year Plan and the campaign to forcibly collectivize agriculture launched in the late 1920s. While Trotsky and the Left Opposition had been fighting for planned industrialization and voluntary agricultural collectivization to strengthen the USSR’s socialized economy, the regime of Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin encouraged the kulaks (rich peasants) to enrich themselves. By 1928, the kulaks’ growing self-consciousness had become a dagger pointed at the workers state, as seen in their blockade of grain to the cities, posing the threat of famine. The bureaucracy then abruptly turned against the kulaks. Having laid none of the technical or economic foundations, with Stalin’s characteristic brutality the Soviet state moved to collectivize the peasants and initiate an adventurous rate of industrialization. This turn foreclosed the immediate threat of capitalist restoration in the USSR.

In the midst of the ensuing chaos, thousands of Roma fled to the already overcrowded urban centers. Among them were many Vlach Roma, a people that had immigrated to Russia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries from Romania and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Unlike the relatively established Russka Roma, the Vlach Roma often spoke no Russian. Now, with no other choice but to squat in tent cities on the edge of Moscow, they were deemed “foreigners” by the authorities.

continued on page 6

2

WOMEN and REVOLUTION

Fourth Reich Racism Targets Immigrants

Stop Persecution of Gypsies!

BRF is in the past several years, as the State's regime of racism begins to crumble, one of the most oppressed groups in the world. The Gypsies have been the target of the most brutal persecution in the history of the world. In the past several years, as the State's regime of racism begins to crumble, one of the most oppressed groups in the world. The Gypsies have been the target of the most brutal persecution in the history of the world.

23 April 1941

2

Letter

Vichy France and the Persecution of the Gypsies

In "Fourth Reich Racism Targets Immigrants" (Winter 1990-91), we wrote about the death of the Gypsies in the hands of the Nazis. This was a tragedy of the first magnitude. The Gypsies were the only people in the world who were persecuted for their race. They were the only people in the world who were persecuted for their race.

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23 April 1941

10 JANUARY 2014

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Roma...

(continued from page 5)

From 28 June to 9 July 1933, the secret police rounded up 1,008 Romani families in Moscow—5,470 people in all—and deported them to West Siberian labor colonies.

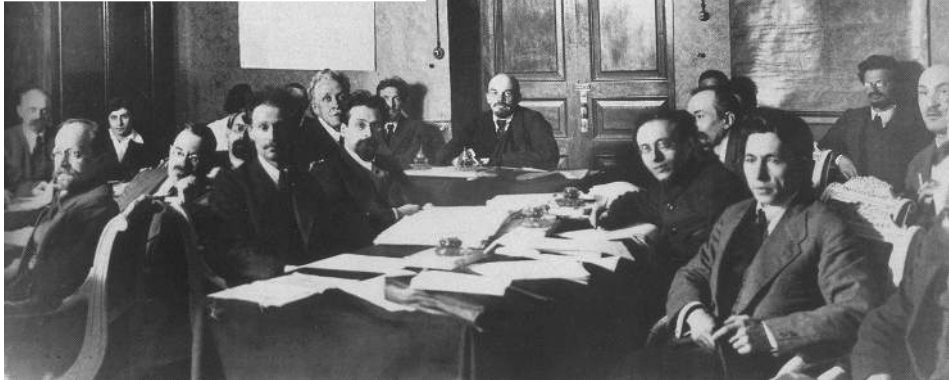
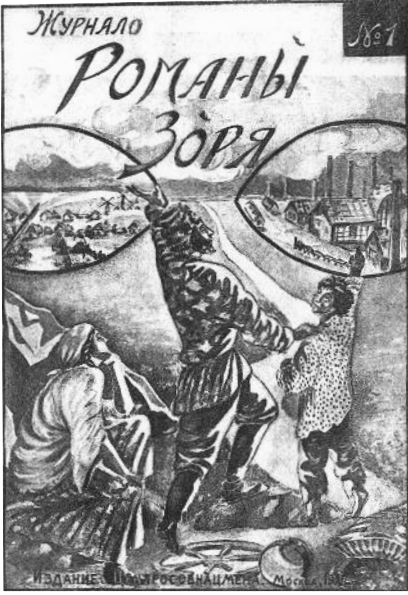
Such deportations coincided with attacks on the right of the Roma to be educated in their own language. In 1932, the first teacher-training courses for Roma had commenced in Moscow’s Central Institute for the Advancement of Qualified Education Cadres (TsIPK-KNO). Eight months later, 15 Romani students graduated and awaited placement in schools throughout the vast stretches of the Soviet Union. Before long, however, some of the students began to complain of employment discrimination. In response, TsIPKKNO terminated the program. Other instances of discrimination and protest by Roma students followed. Finally, in January 1938 the regime issued a decree, “On the Liquidation of National Schools and National Departments Within Schools,” that led to the end of instruction in Romani. The decree also spelled the closure of schooling in Assyrian, Estonian, Finnish, Polish, Chinese and several other languages.

By this time, the bureaucracy was increasingly exhibiting the nationalism inherent in its doctrine of “socialism in one country.” After the Nazis rose to power in Germany, posing an imminent danger to the Soviet Union, in 1935 the Stalinists adopted the policy of the People’s Front, directing Communist parties to politically support and sometimes even join “progressive” capitalist governments that were supposedly friendly to the USSR. The Stalinists’ explicit renunciation of the need for workers revolutions abroad to spread proletarian rule to the economically advanced capitalist countries went hand in hand with their embrace at home of the putrid nationalism that the Bolshevik Revolution had rejected from its first breath.

Appeasement of imperialism served only to weaken the workers state in the face of its class enemies. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the very existence of the workers state was in question. While Trotskyists opposed all the imperialist powers in the war, they called on the Soviet proletariat and the workers of the world to fight in defense of the Soviet Union in its hour of danger. Meanwhile, the Stalinist regime dubbed the USSR’s military struggle the Great Patriotic War in a bow to Russian nationalism.

An estimated 30,000 to 35,000 Soviet Gypsies were slaughtered by the Nazi invaders during the *Pořajmos* (the Gypsy Holocaust). Soviet Roma played their part in combating and eventually defeating the fascist scourge. The Theatre Romen, the world’s first professional Roma theater, staged performances for the Red Army, while some of its troupe members became soldiers. Roma were also part of Soviet partisan units in Belorussia and Ukraine, prompting the chiefs of the German army field police to demand the ruthless execution of Gypsy bands suspected of being partisan supporters.

Notwithstanding bureaucratic rule, Soviet Roma achieved a high level of assimilation and cultural development in the years following the war. David Crowe



cites Gypsy scholar Lajko Cherenkov’s observation in the early 1970s:

“It is rare to meet a Rom in the USSR to-day who cannot read and write, while before the war among certain groups, for instance those in Bessarabia, nobody could. Most of the young generation to-day are finishing eighth or tenth class, and one cannot distinguish in towns between Rom and other nationalities in this respect.”

East European Roma Under Stalinism: Integration at the Bottom

The victory of the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany laid the basis for the overturn of capitalist property relations in East Europe and East Germany. By 1948, deformed workers states modeled economically and politically on Stalin’s Soviet Union had been created through the agency of Soviet forces and the domestic Communist parties. Exceptionally, the Yugoslav deformed workers state issued out of the victory of Marshal Tito’s partisans. The destruction of capitalist rule in these states brought significant gains for the Roma populations. But their treatment at the hands of the ruling bureaucracies was uneven and contradictory, varying from country to country.

Before the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) assumed power in February 1948, that country’s government ministers had called for harsh and restrictive measures against the Gypsies. The KSC, in contrast, stated that its ultimate goal was to integrate the Roma with the rest of the population and raise their economic, social and cultural level to that of the Slavs. But while the new Communist regime correctly blamed previous capitalist governments for reinforcing the low social and economic status of the Roma, it initially took only halting steps to improve their lot and integrate them into the workforce and the broader society. In 1958, the government enacted a law punishing nomads with deprivation of liberty for six months to three years while also

condemning racist bigotry against Roma.

While a struggle against nomadism was necessary, the KSC bureaucracy, like its Moscow brethren, implemented it through bureaucratic fiat as opposed to advocating voluntary assimilation. This fact should not blind anyone to the substantial gains for the Roma. Recognizing that some 67 percent of Slovakia’s Gypsy population of 153,000 lived in settlements that



Soviet Red Army greeted in Bucharest, Romania, August 1944, on way to smashing of Nazi scourge.

were unfit for humans, the KSC regime in 1965 initiated a program to demolish the substandard housing, resettle Roma in the more prosperous Czech lands and provide them with subsidies and loans to buy new homes. The resettlement policy continued throughout the 1970s, resulting in a dramatic improvement in Roma living conditions. By 1980, more than 70 percent of Roma lived in apartments, while the

proportion of people living in unfit housing had dropped to 49 percent from 80 percent a decade earlier.

Progress was also made in the area of education. From 1971 to 1980, the percentage of Roma children who finished public school rose from 16.6 to 25.6, while the number of those attending colleges and universities increased from 39 to 191. In the same period, adult literacy rates jumped to 90 percent. Meanwhile, by the early 1980s, over four-fifths of the Roma were working in industry.

But such gains came with a price. The resettlement program was inadequately funded and it also fostered growing resentment toward the Roma arrivals in the Czech lands. Then in 1972, the government of Gustav Husak inflamed racist sentiments by passing a decree encouraging Roma women to be sterilized. The pretext for this cynical and outrageous campaign was the supposedly “unhealthy” size of the Roma population. Although constituting one of the largest Roma cohorts in East Europe, the Czechoslovak Gypsies accounted for less than 2 percent of the country’s population by 1980.

More backward and destitute than relatively industrialized Czechoslovakia, and with only a minuscule prewar Communist Party, overwhelmingly rural Romania was far less hospitable to its Roma citizens. As early as the 12th century, Gypsies began to arrive in what would become the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, regions that would eventually form part of modern Romania. By the late 14th century, Gypsy families had become enslaved to local monasteries, inaugurating a centuries-long descent into slavery that would come to an end only in 1864. Although life improved after emancipation, the Roma remained impoverished

### Spartacus Youth Club Events

CHICAGO

Saturday, Jan. 25, 2 p.m.  
**Communist Manifesto:  
Workers of the World Unite!**  
222 S. Morgan,  
Third Floor, Buzz 23  
(Take blue line to UIC-Halsted stop)  
Information and readings:  
(312) 563-0441  
chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, Jan. 25, 12 p.m.  
**Labor’s Turning Point  
Video Showing**  
3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215  
Information: (213) 380-8239  
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

Visit the ICL Web Site:  
**www.icl-fi.org**

VANCOUVER

Thursday, Jan. 16, 6:30 p.m.  
**The 1917 Russian Revolution:  
How the Working Class  
Took Power**  
UBC, Irving Barber Learning Centre  
Room 157  
Information and readings:  
(604) 687-0353  
trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

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WORKERS VANGUARD

redressing the many problems besetting the Gypsy population, from illiteracy, bad housing, unemployment and crime to lack of hygiene, high rates of infant mortality and the prevalence of venereal disease, typhoid fever and tuberculosis. A special law emphasized the need to find jobs for Roma in construction and agriculture and mandated that public officials help them build homes. But under the demented Ceausescu, whose independence from the Kremlin won him the plaudits of the U.S. and other imperialist powers, the regime robbed the state of the resources necessary for housing, educating and caring for the Roma by spending billions to pay off the country's debt to foreign bankers.

As Romania's working people faced increasing impoverishment, the Stalinists wallowed in Romanian nationalism, with particularly dire consequences for the Roma and the Hungarian minority. In 1966, the government enacted a decree banning abortions for women under 45 who had not yet produced four children, a special blow to the poorest and largest families. In 1989, it was revealed that because of this vile policy, orphanages were overflowing with more than 100,000 children, disproportionately Roma. Ceausescu's regime also carried out forced resettlements. While mainly targeting the Hungarian population, this policy led to the destruction of entire Gypsy neighborhoods, forcibly resettling their inhabitants in large apartment buildings frequently located in urban ghettos.

As the Hungarian Roma expert István Kemény remarked, the Roma had been integrated in a certain sense by the early 1970s, but "at the very bottom of the social hierarchy" (cited in Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*). To one degree or another, this statement aptly describes the position of Roma throughout the degenerated and deformed workers states.

**Counterrevolution: Catastrophe for Workers, Minorities**

The Stalinist regimes' sporadic and contradictory efforts to assimilate the Roma and foster a climate of full equality ran aground amid material shortages and economic dislocations. These maladies themselves stemmed from the relatively low productivity of the bureaucratically ruled workers states and their hostile encirclement by the economically more powerful imperialist countries. When the terminal crisis of Stalinism in East and Central Europe struck in 1989-92, the International Communist League fought, to the best of our ability and resources, to forge the revolutionary parties needed to win the battle against capitalist counterrevolution and for proletarian political revolution against the disintegrating bureaucracies. However, the workers, whose consciousness had been poisoned by decades of Stalinist misrule, failed to act decisively against counterrevolution, leading to the overthrow of those workers states.

During our interventions into the events in East Germany and the Soviet Union, we warned repeatedly that capitalist restoration would revive all the old crap of social reaction against women, Jews, immigrants, ethnic minorities and oppressed nationalities. In 1990, skinhead fascists began to target Gypsies and Vietnamese immigrant workers in Czechoslovakia. In Romania following the overthrow and execution of Ceausescu in December 1989, anti-Gypsy pogroms became the order of the day. With the government and the media in the forefront, Romania's Roma were labeled "a social sore" and "the dregs of society," echoing Hitler's ravings against the Jews.

Bereft of a revolutionary leadership, many workers were susceptible to such poison. In "East Europe: Reaction and Resistance" (WV No. 505, 29 June 1990), we reported a mass mobilization of Romanian miners that put down counterrevolutionaries in Bucharest, after which some miners infected by venomous racism went on to attack Gypsy quarters.

From the Balkans to the Baltics and in Russia itself, the nationalist torrent that helped destroy the workers states

reached a bloody apex in the aftermath of that defeat. Everywhere, the Roma were hounded, attacked and forced to flee for their lives. As Isabel Fonseca noted in her 1995 book, *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey*: "The most dramatic change for Central and East European Gypsies since the revolutions of 1989 has been the sharp escalation of hatred and violence directed at them. There have been more than thirty-five serious attacks on settlements in Romania alone, mainly in remote rural areas, and mostly in the form of burnings and beatings." Not surprisingly, several Roma who spoke to Fonseca in the town of Constanta in 1991 looked back favorably on life under Ceausescu.

The wave of violence, combined with intense Roma poverty, forced tens of thousands to flee to Germany. Once there, the desperate Roma were set upon by howling neo-Nazi gangs, who burned down their hostels as police watched. The government of reunited capitalist Germany went on to sign an agreement with Romania in September 1992 to deport Romanians—primarily Roma—back to their homeland.

In an article in *Women and Revolution* No. 38 (Winter 1990-91) titled "Fourth Reich Racism Targets Immigrants—Stop Persecution of Gypsies!" we sounded the alarm that the Roma "are fleeing Eastern Europe in fear of their lives." The article went on:

"They are the No. 1 victims of the torrent of all-sided murderous racism engulfing Eastern Europe with the collapse of the Stalinist regimes and the plunge into an uncontrolled market economy. Bourgeois ideologues hail the



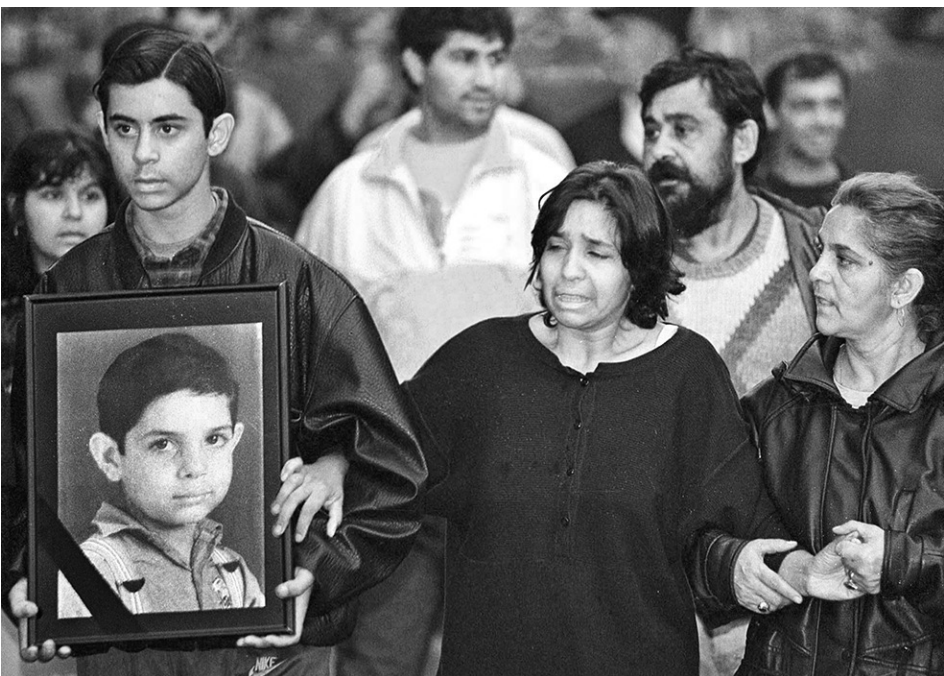
**May 1993: German Trotskyists protest at site of Neuengamme Nazi concentration camp near Hamburg against deportation of Roma by Social Democratic city government.**

'death of Communism,' but with the return of capitalist exploitation has come the resurrection of all the nationalist, anti-Semitic, anti-Communist murderous scum which dominated the region before the victory of the Red Army in 1945."

**For the Socialist United States of Europe!**

The ICL fought to the last to defend the gains of the October Revolution against capitalist restoration. In contrast, virtually all of our leftist opponents fell over themselves to support the forces of counterrevolution in the name of "democracy," "freedom" or "national independence." Today, some of these groups complain that the Roma are mistreated in post-counterrevolution Europe. A case in point is Sozialistische Alternative (SAV), German section of Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), to which Socialist Alternative in the U.S. belongs. In the second part of an article on the Roma in *sozialismus.info* (4 February 2013), SAV writes about the period following capitalist restoration in East Europe:

"For the most part, Roma were the first to be laid off because they were generally more poorly educated and had a lower level of education. Most Roma received nothing from the blessings of capitalism and were therefore among the first and biggest losers of the transformation. Out of need, many thus increasingly turned again to their family structures.



**Belgrade, Serbia: Gypsy mother of 14-year-old boy killed by Serbian skinheads marches during November 1997 protest joined by Jewish community.**

That there are Roma who have to collect garbage or engage in crime to maintain themselves is not their fault. No, it is the fault of the capitalist economic system, which proves incapable of guaranteeing them a suitable standard of living."

One would never know from these lofty truisms that the CWI's Russian affiliate stood on Boris Yeltsin's barricades in 1991 as this U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary led the final assault on the workers state that had issued out of the October Revolution. Or that the CWI's sections have helped fan the flames of racist bigotry on

As the Spartacist League/Britain reports in "EU Austerity Fuels Racism: Irish State Abductions of Roma Children" (*Workers Hammer* No. 225, Winter 2013-2014), previous restrictions on the types of jobs that Bulgarian and Romanian citizens could take in Britain, where as EU citizens they could visit visa-free, expired as of January 1. As this deadline approached, the Tory-led government rammed through a host of measures restricting the rights of Bulgarians and Romanians to claim unemployment and housing benefits. The Labour Party, which had authored the job restrictions, responded that these racist measures came too late!

The rulers of EU heavyweights Germany and France, together with those of dependent countries like Greece that are chafing under the imperialist bankers' dictates, use the Roma and other desperate immigrants as scapegoats for the mass unemployment, austerity, poverty and other ills generated by the capitalist system itself. Only the overthrow of capitalist rule through workers revolution can rid the continent of these evils, paving the way for a Socialist United States of Europe in which all peoples will have a free and equal place.

To achieve this goal, the ICL fights to build revolutionary internationalist workers parties whose mission is to instill in the proletariat the consciousness that it is the historic gravedigger of the capitalist system. As Lenin wrote in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), revolutionary socialists must act as "*the tribune of the people*.... able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects;...able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation...in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat." As vicious state repression and pogromist attacks sweep Europe, defense of the Roma and all immigrants is a key immediate task of the workers movement. ■

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# NSA...

(continued from page 1)

spokesman Alison Spencer held in October and November in New York City, Paris and London. The following article is based on those talks.

\* \* \*

When the New York Spartacist League asked me to give this talk, it looked like the U.S. government was going to slam missiles into Syria at any moment, continuing the terror and destruction for which it is known worldwide. A funny thing happened to Obama on the road to Damascus—certainly not a conversion, but a collision with an unexpected obstacle.

A war-weary population that had elected Obama as an ostensible peace candidate was not supportive of attacking Syria. The ruling class was divided, with a majority of Congress undecided or opposed, and even Washington’s British poodle had slipped the leash and refused to heel. The so-called socialist government of France, the former colonial overlord of Syria, was unique among the European powers in calling for support to planned U.S. airstrikes. Capitalist Russia was, of course, a significant obstacle, and Putin was able to forestall U.S. airstrikes in exchange for UN weapons inspectors stripping Syria of chemical and other weapons. This part of the story is not over, and we recall the UN’s role in setting Iraq up for the U.S. imperialist kill.

We oppose both sides in the conflict in Syria: the butcher Assad as well as the motley opposition, which is a patchwork of Islamist and secular forces backed by other states in the region. The overriding threat to working people in the region and around the world would be the direct intervention by U.S. imperialism. That is why we say: U.S. get your bloody hands off the world! If the U.S. goes in, we will seek to win workers and antiwar youth to *defend Syria*, primarily through class struggle and political agitation at home. We vigorously oppose the starvation sanctions the U.S. has implemented against Syria and Iran.

The focus of this talk is the domestic developments, their history and what can be done to advance opposition to U.S. terror abroad and repression at home. The discontent over bombing Syria is a small, notable crack in the domestic political consensus that has allowed U.S. imperialism to ride roughshod all over the world since the “war on terror” was launched in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. Private Manning, who revealed the mundane and sensational workings of U.S. imperialism in Iraq, Afghanistan and worldwide and is now languishing in Leavenworth prison, deserves some thanks for this development. Edward Snowden, who revealed the vast surveillance state run by the National Security Agency (NSA) and is now living in Russia, deserves some thanks for this. And Julian Assange, whose independent news organization, WikiLeaks, published the bombshells released by Manning, and who is still sheltered from U.S. prosecution in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, deserves some thanks for this, too.

Their revelations lifted the hem on the cloak of democracy and revealed the normal murderous and repressive workings of the American government. The beginning of wisdom for people troubled by the revelations of what the U.S. is doing at home and abroad is to understand that *it is not our government*. It is the government representing the interests of the capitalist ruling class. The government pretends to be neutral and to rule on behalf of “equality of all citizens.” But the American capitalist state, whatever form its government may take and no matter which of the two major capitalist parties (Democrat or Republican) rules, is a machine for the repression of one class by another. As the leader of the Russian workers revolution, V.I. Lenin, wrote: “Democracy...serves the bourgeoisie as a screen to conceal their domination and



AFP

Left: Edward Snowden in Russia, October 2013. Right: Journalist and filmmaker Laura Poitras, shown at 2011 Sundance Film Festival, has crucially assisted Snowden, continuing years of documenting U.S. spy agencies’ dirty work.



Getty

as a means of deceiving the people...in practice ‘democracy’ sometimes stands for the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*, sometimes for the impotent reformism of the petty bourgeoisie who submit to that dictatorship” (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, 1918).

There is a thick fog of “impotent reformism” obscuring clear vision of the significance of the information leaked by Manning and Snowden. The prevailing view among liberals and reformists is that Obama’s war on whistle-blowers has gone too far, that it mars the image of U.S. “democracy” worldwide, makes a mockery of the “war on terror” and makes life uncomfortable. But fundamentally, these social democrats and liberals want their civil liberties and their witchhunts, too, because they share the Obama administration’s aim of defending the interests of American imperialism.

The liberals’ class allegiance blinds them to the simple fact that the spy agencies’ central purpose is to do the dirty work that goes on behind the scenes of the “normal” administrative mechanisms of bourgeois democracy—the surveillance, burglaries, black-bag jobs, infiltration and tricks by agents provocateurs, extraordinary renditions, torture and murder. A whole system of class exploitation—and in this country racial oppression—that

of U.S. military atrocities—the documentary evidence of the frame-ups of civilian dissidents as “terrorists,” the abuse of prisoners and the subjugation of the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan under U.S. military occupations.

Most infamous was the video discovered by Manning of a U.S. Apache helicopter gunship firing on unarmed civilians, killing several, including two Reuters journalists. The diplomatic cables Manning released revealed the workings of U.S. imperialism, from the most routine capitalist exploitation to the most grisly terror and bizarre plots: how the United States blocked raising the minimum wage in Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere; how the FBI trained torturers for the Mubarak regime in Egypt; how Hillary Clinton authorized the theft of the UN Secretary-General’s DNA—seriously! When it comes to depravity, do not underestimate the creativity of the American ruling class.

Manning was naive and enlisted with the U.S. Army because he believed the patriotic lies about keeping the world safe for democracy. When he saw what the U.S. was actually doing, he gathered irrefutable evidence and tried to give it to the “respectable” press. Manning’s intent was to put the government under public scrutiny and spark public debate to change U.S.



Corbis

September 2013: Demonstrators in Stockholm salute Chelsea Manning, sentenced to 35 years in prison for revealing the workings of U.S. imperialism abroad.

is maintained through state repression is not going to come crashing down or be fundamentally reformed by blowing whistles or through Congressional cosmetic reforms behind which the state continues its murderous work. Nothing less than victorious socialist revolution can abolish capitalism’s secret police and their deadly “dirty tricks.”

## Manning’s Prosecution and Freedom of the Press

I was present in the military courtroom throughout the first week of the court-martial of Private Manning, then known as Bradley Manning, and covered the trial for *Workers Vanguard* [see WV Nos. 1026 and 1028, 14 June and 9 August 2013]. An army intelligence analyst in Iraq, Manning had access to the records of the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and diplomatic cables. Every helicopter flight, every drone dispatched, every combat exchange, every encounter with civilians and prisoners is recorded in “significant activity” reports. These “SigActs” in Army-talk are the war logs

policy. But the utterly craven *New York Times* and *Washington Post* found these cables and war logs too hot to handle, so Manning submitted the trove of documents to WikiLeaks. Betrayed by Adrian Lamo, who finked to the Feds, Manning was arrested and held in pretrial detention for more than three years in conditions even the UN’s own special rapporteur on torture called cruel and inhuman punishment: solitary confinement, stripped naked, taunted, put on suicide watch (that’s where they drive you to the brink of suicide and watch). Manning was then sentenced in a court-martial to 35 years.

Manning was charged with “aiding the enemy,” an offense that can carry the death penalty. The prosecution argued that by communicating with *you*, the public, via WikiLeaks, Manning released information that could have been read by “enemies” of the U.S. Although the military judge ruled that the prosecution did not prove this charge, the precedent was set that publishing could be a serious criminal offense because anyone, including declared or undeclared present or future

enemies, might benefit directly or indirectly from information published in any newspaper. Although “aiding the enemy” is a charge under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, it can apply to *any* person. Meanwhile, who is the enemy? The Pentagon insists that it’s a secret—as if the people being bombed in Afghanistan, targeted by drones in Pakistan or tortured by U.S. soldiers in Iraq don’t already know the U.S. is waging war against them.

The “war on terror” was launched as a rationale for the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq and in order to escalate government secrecy and repression at home. “Terrorism” and “national security” are trump cards to override all democratic rights, civil liberties and proletarian rights—gains wrested through labor and social struggles. There are no declared battlefields in the “war on terror,” but they are everywhere, including the cellphone in your pocket. This is not a war in any traditional sense but a pretext to promulgate unfettered terror and destruction abroad in pursuit of profit, in pursuit of oil, in pursuit of U.S. global domination over its imperialist rivals.

The U.S. government has created its own security nightmare for the ruling class through the metastatic spread of its security apparatus in the wake of 9/11. Almost everyone is spied on now without even the pretext of suspicion of criminality. The government has “back doors” to grab your telecommunications, your banking and medical records, your photos, your email, your texts. It takes vast armies of employees with digital trowels to move the crap around the Augean stables of classified intelligence created by the government. How much information is classified? That’s a secret. How many security clearances? That’s secret. Why was surveillance authorized, when and by whom? That’s secret, too.

Manning’s prosecution is a watershed case for so-called freedom of the press. I can tell you from being in the courtroom that Julian Assange and WikiLeaks were effectively the co-accused in this show trial, named so often by the prosecution that you expected Assange to be sitting at the defense table. But the prosecution’s ultimate target is *you*. The government goes after the truth-tellers and the few journalists with the guts to publish because they want to restrict what you read, the better to seek to bind you to the ignorant belief in American bourgeois democracy as a force for good in the world.

## Targeting Labor, Blacks, the Left

After conviction and sentencing at the trial, which was held at Fort Meade, where the NSA is headquartered, Bradley Manning announced that she wants to live as a woman and be called Chelsea. She is now undergoing undoubtedly gruesome psychological testing and a period the prison authorities call indoctrination in the all-male military wing of Leavenworth prison, where she has requested hormone treatments. Lurid and scurrilous attacks in the press can’t bury her under a mountain of lies. She has a mind as strong as a steel trap and did what she did out of an unusual moral courage and sense of history. She told the government informant who betrayed her that she was going to release the evidence of the hor-



rible things the U.S. was doing because “I feel, for some bizarre reason, it might actually change something.”

It did. It motivated a young man named Edward Snowden to come forward and reveal that *everyone’s* telecommunications are vacuumed up by the NSA’s PRISM Internet surveillance program. The government’s most secret spy agency (“No Such Agency”) does this in cahoots with the titans of the big telecommunications businesses: Microsoft, Google, YouTube, Facebook, Yahoo, Skype, Apple. Further leaks by Snowden showed the NSA’s sophisticated “social media” software to link people. It is the digital equivalent of the McCarthyite House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) gone high-tech and global. Only now the government doesn’t need a crude bully like Senator Joe McCarthy to terrorize people in courtrooms to name names and answer “are you now or have you ever been...?” They simply grab the names of everyone you associate with and what you do and when you do it through pervasive spying.

How does this work? Let’s say that New York City transit workers organize for a strike. A union leader calls the stewards, they call their co-workers, maybe their supporters in a Spartacus Youth Club strike support committee, a press contact or two, and of course everyone calls Gene, labor coordinator for the Partisan Defense Committee. All this “metadata”—who you call, when you call, who else they call, where they are located—becomes a huge trove of information for the government to keep for a crackdown *in the future*, whenever it becomes convenient for them to label action taken by working people a “conspiracy” that “threatens national security.”

It’s not hypothetical. Look at what happened on the West Coast to the ILWU longshore union, which was an early target of the Bush administration’s campaign for “national unity” against “terrorism.” In the 2002 ILWU contract negotiations, the Homeland Security chief told the union president that a strike would “threaten national security.” Bush threatened to bring in federal troops and Navy scabs in the event of a strike. This is a living illustration of a crucial point: the so-called “war on terror” is ultimately a war on the labor movement, black people and all the exploited and oppressed.

We know the latest news about pervasive government spying because Edward Snowden contacted a brave and technically savvy journalist and filmmaker, Laura Poitras. She has been uncovering and writing about U.S. surveillance for many years. The government put her on a “watch list” six years ago, a list that is now estimated to have about a million names. Every time she flew in or out of the country, the government would harass her, seize her notes and electronics. She has written to Congressmen and filed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to find out why she was put on a watch list and, surprise, has not received the courtesy of a reply. In an interview with the *New York Times*, she asked: “When did that universe begin, that people are put on a list and are never told and are stopped for six years?”

Now, her question troubled me because she’s a bright and capable woman but evidently has no sense of history. “When did that universe begin?” I thought, “Didn’t your mother ever tell you that everyone who fights the government is on a list? Did you never hear of Joseph McCarthy? About Julius and Ethel Rosenberg?” That someone so bright and capable could be shocked to be on a list shows the impact of amnesia and oblivion as deliberate government policy. The history of labor and class struggles, the histories of our heroes and martyrs, is deliberately wiped out in order to perpetuate injustices today.

So my answer to Laura Poitras is that this “universe,” where one is put on a list and not told why, began with the origins of private property and the state, with the advent of a ruling class that exists off the exploitation and subjugation of others. The pervasive historical ignorance today is a product of the post-Soviet period we

live in. The imperialist victors write the history and consciously endeavor to wipe collective memories clear of the dearly acquired lessons of past social and class struggles. Every fighter for social change in this country has been on a list. And in this capitalist country founded on black chattel slavery, a special place is reserved on government watch lists for fighters for racial equality, from Denmark Vesey and John Brown to Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Mumia Abu-Jamal. Reds in particular upset the order of this country—capital on top of labor and white on top of black—by fighting to unite the working class through integrated class struggle.

### The Espionage Act and the War Against Bolshevism

Manning was prosecuted under the 1917 Espionage Act. Manning was nobody’s spy. In fact, the Espionage Act has always been used to criminalize dissent and repress labor and leftist opposition to the United States government



Bettmann

**Left: IWW protests in NYC’s Union Square against suppression of Colorado coal strike, May Day 1914. Right: June 1914 cover of *The Masses*. IWW members and *The Masses* contributors were prosecuted under 1917 Espionage Act for opposing World War I.**

during wartime. Its earliest victims, in September 1917, were Wobblies, members of the Industrial Workers of the World, whose offices were raided across the country. Their union newspapers and property were destroyed, and many left-wing labor organizers were arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

World War I was also the midwife to revolution, and America was particularly haunted by the one unfolding in Russia in 1917, even before the workers seized state power under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party. A radical journal, *The Masses*, covered the events and the unprecedented horror of the war. In its August 1917 issue, John Reed wrote an article, “Knit a Straight-Jacket for Your Soldier Boy,” that described how the ghoulish, gruesome reality of a war that President Woodrow Wilson claimed was the road to eternal peace was literally driving soldiers out of their minds. John Reed was charged under the Espionage Act for this article, in which he did not write a single word in opposition to the U.S. government—the article was entirely excerpted from a New York *Tribune* report cataloguing the alarming growth of mental illness in the armed services. Similarly, Manning did not write a single word against the government but merely publicized *the government’s own reports* on its nefarious doings.

The editor of *The Masses*, Max Eastman, stated in his closing argument that the charge of conspiracy had not been proven, merely that all the defendants believed in the philosophy of socialism. And he went on to say that the socialists believe that “true liberty is not guaranteed to a citizen merely by the possession of the right to vote. They think that democracy will begin when the people rule in industry as well as in politics.” I find that a particularly good expression of what we mean by our fight for a workers state based on collectivized property, administered by working people in control of an egalitarian, socialist planned economy.

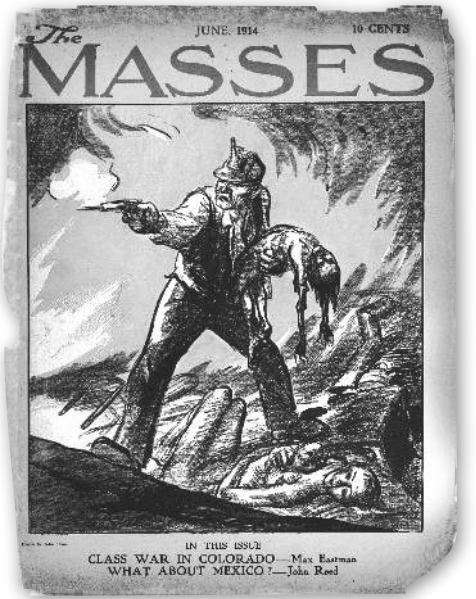
The first trial ended in a hung jury, so the Feds tried them again. Right outside the courtroom, a band played “The Star-Spangled Banner” as war hawks sold Liberty Bonds. By this time, some of the defendants had succumbed to the strong current of patriotic opinion in WWI. *The Masses’* business manager, Merrill Rogers, had become pro-war and was so eager to show that during the second trial that he jumped to his feet to salute the flag in the courtroom each time the band outside played the national anthem. After the fourth disruption, the judge banned jumping up to salute the flag in his courtroom—this in a trial for sedition.

Although the government lost the court case against *The Masses*, it succeeded in destroying the radical newspaper by pulling its mailing permit. When the September issue went to press, the Post Office refused to mail it on the grounds that the magazine had skipped an issue—that is, the August issue the Feds had seized! As John Reed wrote in the September issue, in an article ironically titled “One Solid

conducted hearings on hundreds of organizations, newspapers and trade unions with alleged Communist ties. This is what some historians have called “the little Red Scare”—just a dress rehearsal for the later McCarthy hearings. Under Roosevelt, J. Edgar Hoover launched the FBI’s index file system of people deemed a threat who could be detained indefinitely.

Our direct political forebears in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) were on that list and were as well the first victims of the 1940 Smith Act. The SWP opposed World War II as an interimperialist war in which workers had no stake except to defend the Soviet Union. The party engaged in no acts of sabotage in the Army or elsewhere and did not advocate, as we do not advocate, the overthrow of the government by force. James P. Cannon’s trial testimony, published as *Socialism on Trial*, retains its utility today as an exposition of basic Marxism against capitalist state repression.

The allegation that Marxists advocate the violent overthrow of the U.S. govern-



Month of Liberty”: “All of which goes to prove that in America law is merely the instrument for good or evil of the most powerful interest, and there are no Constitutional safeguards worth the powder to blow them to hell.” John Reed went on to write a gripping eyewitness account of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, and became a founding member of the American Communist Party.

The Bolshevik Revolution struck terror in the hearts of U.S. lawmakers. The backdrop to President Wilson’s prattling about “democracy” was murderous race-hate terror and union-busting at home. In 1917, white mob violence claimed the lives of hundreds of black people in East St. Louis. Striking miners in Arizona were beaten and imprisoned. Even their lawyer was locked up, just as with Lynne Stewart, who is dying in prison today for defending a client the U.S. government deemed a threat. In November 1919, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer sought deportation of thousands of foreign-born workers, claiming that there were “thousands of aliens...direct allies of Trotsky”! In just one year, between 1919 and 1920, some 1,400 people were arrested under sedition laws. Hundreds were convicted and imprisoned; thousands of foreign-born radicals were deported.

The corollary to American imperialist domination of the world was the political imperative to equate radical dissent with treason. And it still is.

### Anti-Communist Repression Under FDR

People typically associate McCarthyism and the anti-Communist witchhunt with the 1950s, an era of fear and social conformity. In fact, the McCarthyite repression was prepared years earlier under the liberal darling Franklin Delano Roosevelt with the creation in 1938 of HUAC, led by Congressman Martin Dies. After the onset of World War II in September 1939, HUAC gained traction and

ment has always been a pretext for repression against leftists. In fact, Marxists have no abstract position on violence per se. In fact, the capitalist government is not “overthrown” violently or nonviolently. The historical probability is that in a revolutionary situation there may well be little government to “overthrow,” and surely not this government in its present form. Not even the tsar’s deadly secret police, the Okhrana, could save an outmoded repressive regime from being swept aside by the working people when they were politically conscious and organized around their own interests in the Russian Revolution. Victor Serge wrote in *What Every Radical Should Know About State Repression* that all that was required at that point was a good push of a broom.

We recognize that the ruling class will use the machinery of its state to violently repress those it perceives as opponents or threats to its rule. In response to that, we Marxists are not pacifists but recognize the necessity of self-defense of the working people. We are not conspiratorial putschists; indeed, nothing could be more open than a Marxist party whose success in winning the majority of the working people to understand the necessity of organizing in their own independent class interests is entirely dependent on the broadest propagandizing of our views. These are some of the lessons to be learned from Cannon’s testimony in Minneapolis. The significance of the Smith Act prosecutions included establishing the precedent that no actions were required to prove wrongdoing. Merely words, even thoughts, could cost an opponent of the government his or her liberty.

The background to the state repression was that the Trotskyists had led a citywide general strike in Minneapolis in 1934 and had won a huge battle to organize the truckers into Teamsters Local 574. J. Edgar Hoover claimed that the SWP’s opposition to the war and its prominence in the leadership of a union smack at the

*continued on page 10*

# NSA...

(continued from page 9)

center of the nation’s transportation network posed a domestic security risk. So they were put on a list and government spies and informants inside the union got busy with dirty work. Prime targets of government spying included not only SWP leaders like Cannon but also union members who had formed the Union Defense Guard, a group of 600 armed union men organized in 1938 to defend their union from violent attacks by the fascist Silver Shirts. So the Smith Act that was allegedly enacted to go after Nazi sympathizers in the U.S. was used first to go after union militants who had stopped the fascists and had won a big working-class organizing victory that redounded around the country.

A man named Daniel Tobin led the International Brotherhood of Teamsters at the time. Tobin actively sought the intervention of the FBI into his own union to clean out the reds. In so doing, he merely called in a favor from the president of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt. They were close friends, a relationship cemented during Tobin’s service as chairman of the Labor Division of the Democratic Party during two of FDR’s presidential campaigns. The price to be paid for this labor anti-Communism was high. Solidarity within the labor movement was thrown back, gains won against the employers through the great 1934 general strike were threatened, and the confidence of workers to organize and speak out was shaken through the use of informants and state prosecution.

This illustrates the role of the union bureaucracy and how in subordinating labor to the Democrats (and Republicans) it injures the whole of the working people. Having paved the way for government intervention in the union, the pro-capitalist Teamsters bureaucracy itself became, much later, the target of government union-busting under the RICO anti-racketeering laws. And in a twisted irony, this time it was unprincipled, self-proclaimed leftists who invited the government in to drive out the allegedly mob-allied bureaucrats. The state was only too happy to oblige—clean out the reds one decade, then at some point clean out the business unionists at the behest of leftists. As the executive of the capitalist class, the government’s interest is to bust unions in order to drive down wages, boost profits and divide the working class.

The Stalinist Communist Party (CP) criminally supported the Smith Act prosecutions of the Trotskyists and union militants in Minneapolis. This unprincipled subservience to the capitalist state did not spare them from prosecution shortly thereafter, and we Trotskyists of course defended them. The state is not neutral, and we do not appeal to it to act as the arbitrator for disputes within the workers movement and the left. We do not use the state to go after our political competitors in the workers movement. We oppose

government intervention in the unions. Labor must clean up its own house.

## The Cold War Witchhunt

Government spying and repression escalated apace with expanding U.S. involvement in WWII. Shortly after the U.S. entered the Pacific arena after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, FDR issued Executive Order 9066, asserting presidential authority to remove persons of Japanese descent from the entire West Coast to remote, barren detention camps. The report justifying the internment stated: “The Japanese race is an enemy race.... The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.” This Executive Order was not revoked until 1976. Detention of people deemed enemies by reason of national origin or descent is the policy of the Obama administration today. At the end of August, as Obama prepared to slam missiles into Syria, the FBI stepped up its surveillance of Syrians inside the U.S., dragging people in for “questioning” on suspicion of nothing except their national origin, religion or descent.

Continuing in FDR’s footsteps, Harry Truman ordered atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August

tion of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg—two Jewish Communists who were guilty of nothing except defending the Soviet Union.

The struggle for black freedom is largely what cracked that Cold War consensus. Not only the civil rights movement but also the Black Power movement, and of course the social revolution in Vietnam, which defeated U.S. imperialism on the battlefield, changed the political climate. The movements for women’s rights and gay rights were also part of that unique period of volatile social struggle. But fundamentally, social change was driven by the fight for black equality. Interestingly, this period of social struggle also gave rise to the Freedom of Information Act, which promised people the right to know if the government was spying on them. If you’ve seen an FOIA file, however, you know how partial this gain is and how the government gets around it. With black magic marker. Good luck reading a document that is almost entirely blacked out.

## Defending Marxists’ Right to Organize

The government did not roll over and stop spying on people. It just became more covert and deadly with a program called COINTELPRO, short for Counter-



**Teamsters leader Daniel Tobin (right) with President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944. A key backer of FDR, Tobin aided prosecution of Trotskyists and Teamsters union militants.**

1945, an unparalleled war crime. The Truman Doctrine became the carte blanche for U.S. military intervention around the globe, reverberating in the actions and declarations of the Obama White House today.

Meanwhile, Hitlerite fascism was destroyed in World War II by the Soviet Red Army. As the end of the war became a race to Berlin, the Cold War effectively began. The U.S. and its allies, like Britain and the Vatican, swept up every Nazi war criminal and scientist they could grab, got them to safety through a channel appropriately called the Rat Line, and put them to work in American spy agencies and military programs. Latin American death squads were trained by ex-Nazis under the aegis of the CIA; the U.S. rocket program was developed. And it didn’t stop there. Henri Alleg, a French-Algerian Communist who fought alongside the Algerians in their struggle for independence from French imperialism, revealed that French torturers in the Algerian war were borrowed by the U.S. to serve as teachers in the Army’s infamous School of the Americas.

The Cold War on the domestic front under Truman included instituting a loyalty oath for government employees. Labor was crippled by the Taft-Hartley Act, which outlawed secondary strikes and barred Communists from union office. The 1950 McCarran Act legitimized FBI record-keeping on “subversives”—hundreds of thousands of people were put on lists to be watched and detained in times deemed national emergencies. Liberal Democrat Hubert Humphrey amended the McCarran Act to set up concentration camps for “subversives” in the U.S. and sponsored the 1954 Communist Control Act that made membership in the CP a crime.

The point of the Cold War witchhunt and repression was to coerce the entire population into ideological conformity. The government’s bloody signature of those years was the 19 June 1953 execu-

Intelligence Program. Originally launched in 1956 to disrupt the Communist Party, it was expanded in the 1960s to target the Black Panther Party, the Socialist Workers Party, the Spartacist League and others. The U.S. government killed 38 members of the Black Panther Party through COINTELPRO. Some, like Geronimo Pratt and later Mumia Abu-Jamal, were framed up for crimes they did not commit and sentenced to decades behind bars.

In the late 1970s, the Spartacist League learned that we were on the government’s list of subversive organizations, known as the ADEX file. The FBI lyingly claimed that it had abolished this hit list of individuals and organizations, but in fact it just concealed it more deeply. In 1983 the FBI issued new “Domestic Security/Terrorism Guidelines” that equated Marxist political opposition to the government with criminal terrorism and recycled the timeworn claim that we were not openly, but therefore presumably covertly, for the “violent overthrow of the government.” In refuting that charge, we replied that the capitalist state defends an entirely unjust system that oppresses the majority through force and violence.

It’s this government that massively incarcerates more of the population, especially black men, than any other government on earth. It’s this government that in one day of bombing Iraq destroyed the accomplishments and culture of millennia of human civilization. It’s this government that throttles men, women and children in Cuba and North Korea with blockades. It’s this government whose military carpet bombed Vietnam and reinforces the neocolonial subjugation of masses of working people throughout Latin America, Asia and Africa. It is this government in this so-called democracy that has even rolled back the Voting Rights Act, disenfranchising many black people again.

We fought the FBI’s deadly surveillance and targeting of us with every legal, moral

and political resource at our disposal—as we have fought every lying allegation of violence or terrorism—because our party and our comrades matter to us and to society. We make a difference in initiating massive labor and minority mobilizations to stop the KKK, in mobilizing an early and unique union-centered protest in defense of immigrants and against the Patriot Act. We struggled to forge a revolutionary leadership—the subjective factor—in the fight against capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and East Germany; the kind of leadership needed in the coming battles in the remaining deformed workers states.

Now, we didn’t win all those struggles, obviously, but we seek to be a factor and influence the outcome of the fight in the interests of the international working class. Today, this is above all a programmatic struggle: We fight to keep authentic Marxism alive through our literature and organization in a period in which it is largely considered irrelevant because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the mistaken identification of communism with Stalinism. This propagandistic work may strike you as having more in common with librarianship than terrorism, but as Lenin said, drawing on Marx and Engels, without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. So program comes first. Besides, the FBI has it in for librarians, too, and claims under the Patriot Act the right to seize the records of what books you borrow.

We sued the FBI in 1983 and won. Our legal brief outlined the history of covert and systematic disruption aimed at destroying the Spartacist League’s predecessors and the SL itself. We called the new Domestic Security/Terrorism Guidelines “McCarthyism with a drawn gun.” In pursuit of our own legality and freedom, we struck a blow against the government’s crusade to criminalize *all* dissent. We said at the time that this victory was significant, that it placed a legal hurdle in front of the government’s present and future attempts to repress the SL. But we had no illusions that the government would stop its surveillance or dirty tricks, which are an inherent part of the arsenal of repression of labor by capital.

The point of punishing Chelsea Manning, the point of punishing Lynne Stewart, the point of a worldwide manhunt for Snowden and Assange is to pummel all of you to accept unbridled government repression as normal. And under Obama’s National Defense Authorization Act, indeed any one of you can be put in indefinite military detention. So I wondered while preparing this talk, in light of what has been recently revealed about what U.S. imperialism is doing at home and abroad, why do intelligent people believe in the proven lie of bourgeois democracy? Why do they think communism, which has not yet been achieved, is dead?

In wrestling for an answer, I found a good one by James P. Cannon. This unjust system doesn’t keep on running by itself. It is actively propped up by its agents within the workers movement. Cannon said:

“This game of confusing and misrepresenting has been facilitated for the capitalists, and aided to a considerable extent, by the Social Democrats and the labor bureaucracy, who are themselves privileged beneficiaries of the American system, and who give a socialist and labor coloring to the defense of American ‘democracy.’ In addition to all that, we have to recognize that in this country, more than any other in the world, the tremendous pressures of imperialist prosperity and power and the witch-hunt persecution, have deeply affected the thinking of many people who call themselves radicals or ex-radicals. These powerful pressures have brought many of them to a reconciliation with capitalist society and to the defense of capitalist democracy, if not as a paradise at least as a lesser evil, and the best that can be hoped for.”

—“Socialism and Democracy,”  
*International Socialist Review*  
(Fall 1957)

## On Daniel Ellsberg and Soviet Spies

Cannon was speaking of an earlier generation of reformist leftists in and around

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The Soviet Union in Lenin's time also spied in defense of the workers state, and we hail that. We have no abstract position against spying per se; it depends which



no credit

The workers revolution that was made in Russia was not made solely for Russia. It was conceived of and achieved as the opening shot of a struggle for world socialist revolution. But it was not extended internationally, largely but not solely due to a failure of leadership. The cost for delay in international extension of the revolution was high, measured not only in failed revolutions in Germany and later the rise of fascism but also in the monstrous growth of a repressive bureaucracy led by Stalin in the Soviet Union. But the essential material gains of the revolution—the establishment of a workers state that had overthrown pri-

Stalin and his heirs pursued a policy of “peaceful coexistence” with U.S. imperialism, selling out revolutions internationally. This appeasement of capitalist rule led ultimately to counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and across East Europe and East Germany. So in a sense, my answer to Daniel Ellsberg is that the worst crimes of the Stalinist bureaucrats were not their bloody spying and repression against their own population but that they sold out to the capitalist West that Ellsberg and the liberals defend! They gave away

I want to conclude with a word on the press. The role of the capitalist media in the Chelsea Manning case—initially refusing to print the Afghan and Iraq war logs and diplomatic cables, all but ignoring the pretrial detention under torturous conditions, playing up every prosecution lie and sowing contempt for Manning with creepy articles about her background and private life—this all had an impact on the case and exemplifies the role of the media under capitalism to support the interests of the ruling class. If you do not yet have a subscription to *Workers Vanguard*, then I will sarcastically observe that your FBI file looks suspiciously skinny. So subscribe now, in self-defense and to educate yourself and to support the international struggles we engage in and write about. ■

which the PDC is modeled, saying, “The procession that goes in and out of the prison doors is not a new one. It is the result of an old struggle under new forms and under new conditions. All through history those who have fought against oppression have constantly been faced with the dungeon of a ruling class.”... But the boot heel of U.S. imperialist repression stomps on. We now have fellow class war prisoners, like our sister Lynne Stewart, who is actually dying, as we speak, in a federal prison cell in Texas. We also

Red Season's Greetings to all of you,  
your families and close people.

And it feels good to share a space *filled* with resistance, applauding its advances, never doubting its outcome. Fully understanding that when subjugation is the aim



*Long Live John Africa!*

\* \* \*

We urge WV readers to support the work of the Partisan Defense Committee by becoming a sustaining contributor or by sending money earmarked for the Holiday Appeal stipend fund. Contributions can be sent to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013. For more information about the class-war prisoners, including addresses for correspondence, see: [www.partisandefense.org/stipend.html](http://www.partisandefense.org/stipend.html). ■



**Hugo Pinell at California's Pelican Bay State Prison, 2001.**

PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Station  
New York, NY 10013-0099

Some of you have been with me for 27 years now and this is what I want to talk to you about. I am here, still, and I'll resist relentlessly, but I am very much alive, healthy of body, mind, emotions and spirits, humanly functionable in a freedom

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Defend South Korean Rail Union!



Left: Workers defend KCTU union federation headquarters in Seoul against raid by riot police during rail strike, December 22. Right: KORAIL workers and other unionists demonstrate against Park Geun-hye government, December 28.

JANUARY 6—On December 30, after a brutal campaign of repression by the South Korean government, the Korean Railway Workers Union (KRWU) ended a 22-day-long strike against the state-owned company KORAIL. In the longest rail strike in the country’s history, some 8,700 workers stopped work to fight plans to set up a KORAIL subsidiary, which the union denounced as a move toward privatization.

The right-wing government of President Park Geun-hye pulled out all the stops to break the strike, which it deemed illegal. While the company suspended nearly 8,000 strikers, police raided KRWU offices in five cities and warrants were issued for the arrest of 35 union leaders on charges of “obstruction of businesses.” When the union refused to back down, on December 22 some 4,000 riot police surrounded the Seoul headquarters of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), of which the KRWU is a member, and stormed the building, attacking and pepper-spraying workers defending it. Some 130 were arrested, but the union leaders were not found and several went into hiding. While 13 are still at large, six have been indicted. The jobs of nearly 500 strikers have been threatened. **No reprisals against the KORAIL strikers and their union leaders! Free all arrested strikers! Drop all the charges!**

The union ended the strike, which had severely disrupted passenger and freight transport, after reaching an agreement with Park’s New Frontier Party and the rival bourgeois Democratic Party. A parliamentary committee composed of members of both ruling-class parties has been established “to further discuss the issues that led to the strike and the long-term development of rail industry” (*Wall Street Journal*, 30 December 2013).

Regardless, the government has proceeded with its plan to issue a license for a subsidiary to operate a high-speed rail line in the south of the country. The union has filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, which controls the railways, calling for the license to be revoked, and the KCTU has vowed to mobilize workers to demand Park’s resignation. Meanwhile, the government continues to pursue union leaders. KORAIL has sued the union, demanding over 15.2 billion *won* (\$14.5 million) for operating losses during the strike. The company, which has blood on its hands for the death of an 84-year-old woman boarding a train operated by scab labor, is vindictively seeking to extort payment from the union for “hiring and personnel costs” for 208 scabs recruited to break the strike.

On December 28, up to 100,000 people

rallied in defense of the 700,000-strong KCTU. The Korean Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU), which was long tied to South Korea’s capitalist government, also endorsed the call for this mobilization. Statements of solidarity have come in from unions around the world. The KCTU has planned further nationwide actions on January 9 and 16.

The capitalist state has had a vendetta against the KCTU since its founding in 1995. It launched a general strike the following year, calling out its 500,000 members and shutting down production at strategic companies like Hyundai, Daewoo, Kia and Ssangyong. The KFTU called out its members then as well.

The current class battle comes amid a series of attacks on the workers movement and dissident political parties by the government under Park Geun-hye, the daughter of Park Chung-hee, who headed South Korea’s brutal anti-Communist military dictatorship for close to 20 years. A leader and several members of the Unified Progressive Party are currently being tried for sedition, while the government is moving to ban the party for supporting North Korea, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, and plotting to “stage revolutions.” Two days after the attack on KCTU headquarters, President Park visited soldiers near the Demilitarized

Zone between North and South Korea and told them that they should “mercilessly react” to any provocations from the North.

It is the class duty of workers in South Korea and around the world to stand in defense of North Korea against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution. The U.S. and allied imperialists and their South Korean henchmen slaughtered more than three million Koreans and reduced much of the peninsula to rubble in the 1950-53 Korean War in an attempt to roll back social revolution. The American proletariat has a special obligation to demand **all U.S. troops out of South Korea**, where the imperialist military presence continues to target the North Korean and Chinese deformed workers states and helps fortify capitalist rule against the combative proletariat in the South.

As Marxists, we stand for the revolutionary reunification of the Korean peninsula: socialist revolution in the South to overthrow capitalist rule and workers political revolution in the North to oust the corrupt, nepotistic Stalinist bureaucracy that exists as a parasite on the workers state. From the Korean Peninsula to the U.S. and Japanese imperialist heartlands and beyond, what is needed is to forge revolutionary workers parties to lead the fight for proletarian rule. ■

## Defiant Lynne Stewart Finally Released

On December 31, leftist attorney Lynne Stewart finally left behind her the prison walls that have been “home” for the past four years after her frame-up conviction in a “war on terror” show trial. Terminally ill with Stage IV breast cancer, the 74-year-old Stewart walked out of the Federal Medical Center Carswell, a women’s prison hospital in Texas, and flew home to New York City, where she was greeted by family and friends. This brought to a close her months-long fight for the right to die at home surrounded by loved ones, a demand supported by more than 40,000 petitioners worldwide.

After months of obstruction, the Justice Department finally allowed U.S. District Judge John Koeltl, Stewart’s trial judge, to order her release on the grounds of her “terminal medical condition and very limited life expectancy.” The relief of Stewart’s supporters is tinged with the bitter knowledge that federal authorities had vindictively prolonged her imprisonment knowing her terminal condition. In fact, from the working-class point of view, this partisan of the downtrodden and oppressed should not have spent a single day behind bars.

In 2005, Stewart was convicted of giv-

ing material support to terrorism when representing blind Egyptian Islamic fundamentalist cleric Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, who was convicted for an alleged plot to blow up New York City landmarks in the early 1990s. The purported “material support” was to communicate her client’s views to Reuters news service. Her Arabic translator Mohamed Yousry and paralegal Ahmed Abdel Sattar were also convicted. These watershed convictions gave the capitalist government a green light to prosecute lawyers as co-conspirators of their clients—a frontal attack on the right to counsel enunciated in the Constitution’s Sixth Amendment. Originally sentenced to 28 months in prison, Stewart was resentenced in 2010 to ten years at the instigation of the Obama administration.

An unbowed proponent of 1960s New Left radicalism, Stewart dedicated her adult life to keeping Black Panthers, militant leftists and others reviled by the capitalist state out of the clutches of its prison system. As she wrote in a message to the New York City gathering of the Partisan Defense Committee’s Holiday Appeal for class-war prisoners last month, among her clients were Jaan Laaman and Tom

Manning of the Ohio 7 (see article on page 3). When Stewart ultimately found herself walking in the same shoes, she embraced that role without blinking. And her incarceration did not break her in the least. When she arrived at LaGuardia airport, she told her supporters, “I’m going to work for women’s group prisoners and for political prisoners.”

The Spartacist League and PDC have stood by Stewart and her codefendants from the beginning, despite our differing political outlooks, and have fought to publicize her case in the broader workers movement. This is an expression of non-sectarian, class-struggle defense of cases that are in the interests of the entire working people. The government’s barbarous treatment of this individual, whose “crime” was to zealously fight in the courts to uphold the rights of the oppressed that are purportedly sanctified in the Constitution, is itself an indictment of the class bias of American bourgeois justice. For champions of Stewart’s defense and that of all the class-war prisoners, let this be a clarion call to join the fight to mobilize the multiracial working class to sweep away the entire system of capitalist exploitation



January 1: Lynne Stewart after release from Texas prison.

and oppression—and the “justice” system that enshrines it—through socialist revolution. ■