

## Defend China, North Korea!

### U.S. Steps Up Military Provocations



U.S. Navy; Reuters (inset)

**U.S. aircraft carrier *Carl Vinson*, accompanied by Japanese warships, in East China Sea, March 9. Inset: South Korean and U.S. troops in joint military exercises, January 24.**

Seizing on recent weapons and missile tests by the Pyongyang regime, the U.S. warmongers are escalating their threats against North Korea and China. On March 7, the U.S. began the installation of an advanced missile shield system in South Korea, the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), with its battery of weapons and powerful missile-tracking radar. Nearly a week later, Washington announced that Gray Eagle surveillance and attack drones would also be permanently stationed in South Korea. On March 17, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, speaking in Seoul, threatened a military strike against North Korea, declaring, “All options are on the table.”

The Trump administration, echoed by the capitalist media, claims that the purpose of THAAD and other such measures is to protect Washington’s South Korean client state from a nuclear nightmare supposedly about to be unleashed by North Korea. In fact, it is the U.S. imperialists who have the North in their gun sights. Some 320,000 U.S. and South Korean troops are currently staging joint military exercises, whose scenarios include “decapitation” raids aimed at “taking out North Korea’s leadership” (*Korea Herald*, 13 March). With the aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* in the port of Busan and F-35B stealth fighter planes overhead, the war games include the elite SEAL Team Six assassination squad that killed Osama bin Laden. In addition, Japanese, U.S. and South Korean warships met up on March 14 for coordinated military drills near the North Korean coast.

Beyond all this, the National Security Council is reportedly considering the open redeployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea. While North Korea is in the U.S. imperialists’ immediate cross-hairs, their ultimate target is China, the largest and most powerful remaining country where capitalist rule has been overthrown. Military experts have noted that the THAAD batteries would be of no use against a hypothetical low-altitude North Korean missile launch directed at the South. However, the system’s tracking radar could cover much of eastern China, giving the U.S. the ability to degrade the viability of Beijing’s nuclear deterrent. Stating that China would “take the necessary steps to safeguard our own security interests,” a Chinese foreign affairs

spokesman warned the U.S. and South Korea not to “go further and further down the wrong road.”

In his March 17 press conference, Tillerson stated in regard to North Korea, “The policy of strategic patience has ended.” In fact, whether under Republicans or Democrats, U.S. imperialism’s sole policy toward North Korea has always been to destroy its social revolution on the road to overturning the 1949 Chinese Revolution. This included the 1950-53 Korean War—waged under the flag of the United Nations—in which the U.S. and its allies devastated the peninsula.

China and North Korea are bureaucratically deformed workers states where capitalist class rule was overthrown through social revolutions. Capitalist/landlord rule

was toppled in North Korea by guerrilla forces acting under the protection of the Soviet Army following World War II. The establishment of proletarian, collectivized property relations freed the northern half of the country from imperialist domination. At the same time, both the Chinese and North Korean workers states have been ruled since their inception by nationalist, Stalinist bureaucratic castes that exclude the working class from political power.

Despite Stalinist mismanagement, North Korea’s planned economy significantly outperformed the capitalist South until the mid 1970s, creating a modern industrial infrastructure. Yet being divided from the South by a “demilitarized zone” packed with more weaponry per square meter than anywhere else on earth greatly distorted its economy. The situation became desperate in the aftermath of the 1991-92 counter-revolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, which had provided the bulk of North Korea’s military and technological aid. In the mid 1990s, the North was hit by a terrible famine, stemming from floods and droughts, from which it has never fully recovered.

It is the duty of the working class internationally, especially in the U.S., to stand for the defense of China and North Korea against the predatory U.S. rulers, their Japanese allies and their South Korean underlings. The overturn and expropriation of capitalism in these countries—as well as in the other remaining deformed workers states of Cuba, Vietnam and Laos—are historic gains for the international proletariat. Their unconditional military defense against imperialist attack and capitalist counterrevolution is integral to the cause of world socialist revolution.



**Seoul, November 30: Striking workers from Korean Confederation of Trade Unions call for resignation of South Korean president Park Geun-hye, who was removed from office earlier this month.**

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# Shame on Corbyn for Opposing “Brexit”

# Britain Out of the European Union Now!

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer (No. 238, Spring 2017), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

## WORKERS HAMMER

In last year’s Brexit referendum, [Labour Party leader] Jeremy Corbyn carried the baton for the City of London and trampled on his working-class and minority supporters by campaigning to remain in the EU. Crime hasn’t paid. Corbyn may have capitulated, but the Blairites [right wing of the Labour Party] will be satisfied by nothing short of his political annihilation. As New Labour’s prince of darkness Lord Peter Mandelson ranted at a 20 February *Jewish Chronicle* event: “Why do you want to just walk away and pass the title deeds of this great party over to someone like Jeremy Corbyn? I don’t want to, I resent it, and I work every single day in some small way to bring forward the end of his tenure in office.”

The bourgeoisie and its Blairite agents despise Corbyn for his talk of socialism, his support to trade union rights and his stated support for unilateral nuclear disarmament. In the eyes of the imperialist rulers, Corbyn’s opposition to the Tri-



London, June 2016: Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale campaign for Britain to remain in the EU.

dent nuclear missile system in particular makes him unfit to govern. On Remembrance Sunday [British equivalent of Veterans Day] in 2015, the head of the armed forces, General Sir Nicholas Houghton, made that view clear in a thinly veiled coup threat during an appearance on the Andrew Marr show.

Mandelson and the rest of the cabal led by Tony Blair spent two decades trying to transform Labour into an outright cap-

italist party. They abandoned even lip-service to socialism, abolished Clause IV [of the party constitution—nominal commitment to “common ownership of the means of production”] and attempted to cut Labour’s ties to the unions. Corbyn’s election as Labour leader in September 2015, and his resounding re-election a year later, called the Blairite project into question. Driving the Blairites out of the Labour Party would constitute a step towards the political independence of the working class, despite the bankruptcy of Corbyn’s parliamentary reformist programme. For Marxists, it would offer an opportunity to expose the pretensions of the Labour lefts to speak for the working class. It would also further the struggle to win the most advanced workers and youth to the perspective of building a revolutionary workers party.

Corbyn continues to accommodate the Blairite agents of capital within Labour. Despite having the support of the majority of the party’s hundreds of thousands of members, Corbyn has not insisted on mandatory reselection of the despised Blairite MPs [forcing sitting MPs to seek the endorsement of party activists], or the removal of witch-hunting general secretary Iain McNicol. To avoid a split in the Parliamentary Labour Party last November, Corbyn and his allies John McDonnell and Diane Abbott absented themselves from Parliament during the vote on a motion by the Scottish National Party (SNP) calling for Blair to be held to account over the Iraq war. This unrequited peace offering was an offence against the hundreds of thousands of members who flooded into the Labour Party to support Corbyn, in large part driven by justified hatred for Tony Blair’s crimes.

The class war in the Labour Party poses the question: what type of party is needed to represent the interests of working people and the oppressed? The old Labour Party that is Corbyn’s model prided itself on being a “broad church,” meaning that it had room for a wide spectrum of political currents and opinions. Bloc affiliation of the trade unions to Labour ensured that the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats called the shots. In practice, such a “party of the whole class” necessarily submerges the most advanced layers of the working class into the most backward ones, with the result that the right wing dominates and the left bends to it for the sake of unity. Such parties are inevitably chauvinist, based on the dominant ethnic grouping and tied to the defence of the imperialist interests of their own ruling class. Corbyn’s leadership of Labour illustrates what that kind of party means in action—subordinating the needs of workers, immigrants and the oppressed to the likes of Tony Blair and his bourgeois cronies.

A Leninist vanguard party, in contrast, consists of the most politically advanced layers of the working class and oppressed, as well as elements of the petty bourgeoisie who have been won to the cause of proletarian revolution. A vanguard party would not tolerate the existence of pro-capitalist elements and English chauvinists in its ranks. It would champion the defence of immigrants, women and minorities, whose liberation must be tied to the proletariat’s struggle against capitalist class rule. Actually fulfilling the burning needs of working people and the oppressed cannot be achieved through a Labour majority in Parliament—it requires breaking the power of the capitalist exploiters through socialist revolution. To that end, the workers need their own steeled and tested combat party, modelled on the Bolshevik party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, which led the working class to power in the Russian October Revolution of 1917.

## EU: Enemy of Workers, Oppressed

Attempting to undermine the Brexit vote, Remoaners [supporters of remaining in the EU] have been waging a dirty smear campaign to brand all leave voters as anti-immigrant racists and UKIP [UK Independence Party] supporters. In fact, the driving force behind the leave vote was seething discontent over workers’ plunging living standards, chronic unemployment, privatisations and benefit cuts, which have been brought about by the City of London fat cats in collaboration with the EU. The lie that the EU is a defender of immigrants is graphically refuted by the many thousands of dark-skinned people trapped behind razor wire and armed checkpoints in refugee camps and detention centres for seeking entrance to racist Fortress Europe. To combat the poisonous racism the bosses whip up against refugees and immigrants and to advance proletarian unity, it is necessary to take up the fight *against all deportations and for full citizenship rights* for all those who make it to this country, whether from the EU or outside of it. In order to defend the livelihoods of all workers in Britain, the trade unions must fight to *organise the unorganised*, including bringing immigrant workers into the unions and ensuring they receive equal pay and conditions.

The EU is a reactionary bloc between European bourgeoisies. The European imperialist powers—centrally Germany, Britain and France—have used it as a means to plunder dependent countries such as Greece and Ireland, including through the German-controlled euro currency. From its inception, the EU has been a weapon to increase the exploitation of the working class across Europe. The “economic miracle” that has made Germany the dominant imperialist power in Europe was built on the backs of the German proletariat. To replenish their coffers following the financial meltdown of 2007-08, the London, Frankfurt and Paris banks used the EU institutions to bleed white the smaller nations of Europe, most starkly destroying the very fabric of Greek society.

The Brexit referendum result was a blow against the EU capitalist cartel and a defeat for the bankers and bosses—no thanks to Jeremy Corbyn. After repeatedly voting against EU treaties from Labour’s backbenches [where MPs who are not party leaders sit], Corbyn campaigned for remain, while trying to sugarcoat his betrayal with the qualifier that he was “only 70 to 75 per cent” in favour of the EU. Corbyn hasn’t gone so far as to spit in the face of voters by trying to overturn

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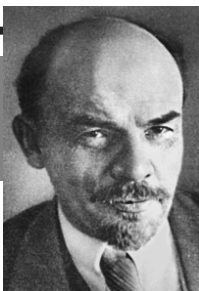
TROTSKY

The crucial factor in leading the working class to victory in the Russian October Revolution of 1917 was the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin. Writing in 1926, Victor Serge, who at the time identified with Leninism and its continuity in the Left Opposition of Leon Trotsky, described how the Bolshevik cadre was forged through years of conscious preparation and experience in struggle.

The great Russian Bolsheviks choose to describe themselves as “professional revolutionaries.” It is a description perfectly suited to all real agents of social transformation. It rules out from revolutionary activity all dilettantism, amateurism, playing about and posturing; it locates the revolutionary irrevocably in the world of labour, where there is no question of “airs,” nor of finding interesting ways to fill up one’s leisure time, nor the spiritual or moral pleasure of holding “advanced” ideas. For those who do this work, their job (or profession) fills the best part of their life. They know it is a serious business and that their daily bread depends on it; they also know, with varying degrees of consciousness, that the whole social life and destiny of men depends on it too.

The job of a revolutionary requires a long apprenticeship, gaining purely technical knowledge, as well as love for the work and understanding of the cause, the means and the end. If, as often happens, he is obliged to take another job—in order to live—it is the job of being a revolutionary which fills his life, and the other job is only something secondary. The Russian Revolution was able to triumph because in twenty-five years of political activity it had formed strong teams of professional revolutionaries, trained to carry out an almost superhuman labour.

—Victor Serge, *What Everyone Should Know About Repression* (New Park Publications, 1979)



LENIN

## The Bolshevik Revolutionary

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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# Courageous Radical Lawyer

## Lynne Stewart



lynnestewart.org

### 1939–2017

Radical attorney Lynne Stewart died in Brooklyn on March 7 at the age of 77. The immediate cause was a series of strokes which, together with metastasized breast cancer, finally drained the life out of this tireless fighter for the oppressed. Lynne's death will be keenly felt by the incarcerated opponents of the U.S. government, for whom she fought until the end. Without her, the world is a lonelier, crueler place for these prisoners and their families. We offer our condolences to Lynne's husband, Ralph Poynter, and her entire family.

Born in Brooklyn and raised in Queens, New York, the young Lynne Stewart worked as a librarian in an all-black school in Harlem, developing her political consciousness through direct exposure to and confrontation with the entrenched racism of this society. She went on to law school at Rutgers. A proponent of 1960s New Left radicalism, Lynne dedicated herself to linking struggles of those in the outside world with those behind bars, fighting to keep militant leftists and others reviled by the capitalist state out of the clutches of its prison system.

Paying tribute to the work of Lynne and Ralph, class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal noted that they fought for decades for such groups as the Black Panthers and the Puerto Rican Young Lords, "but mostly, they fought for the freedom of the poor and dispossessed of New York's Black and Brown ghettos." One of her most prominent cases was the defense of Larry Davis, a young black man in the Bronx who in November 1986 shot his way out of a murderous siege by cops and then became a folk hero for escaping an enormous manhunt for more than two weeks. With Lynne Stewart and William Kunstler arguing Davis's right to self-defense, in November 1988 he was acquitted of the attempted murder of nine police officers. This stunning legal victory on behalf of victims of racist NYPD terror made Lynne a marked woman in the eyes of the state.

Lynne was also part of the legal team for the Ohio 7, who were prosecuted for their roles in a radical group that took credit for bank "expropriations" and bombings of symbols of U.S. imperialism, such as military and corporate offices, in the late 1970s and '80s. Having already been sentenced to decades in prison, the Ohio 7 were further prosecuted by the Reagan and Bush Senior administrations under "seditious conspiracy" laws as part of an attempt to criminalize leftist political activity. The government spent over \$10 million but failed to win a conviction—a victory for the working class and for all who would oppose the policies of the capitalist rulers. The Ohio 7's Jaan Laaman recalled: "Lynne truly was fearless and could not be intimidated by prosecutors, judges or FBI and other gun-toting goons."

With such a bio, Lynne found herself directly in the state's crosshairs. In February 2005, she was convicted of material support to terrorism and conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government for her vigorous legal defense of Egyptian fundamentalist Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, who had been convicted for an alleged plot to blow up New York City landmarks in the early 1990s. The purported "material support" was communicating her client's views to Reuters news service. The "fraud" was running afoul of Special Administrative Measures imposed by the Clinton administration that stripped prisoners of basic rights, including the ability to communicate with the outside world and the Sixth Amendment right to counsel. Her Arabic interpreter Mohamed Yousry and paralegal Ahmed Abdel Sattar were also convicted. As we wrote in "Outrage! Lynne Stewart, Mohamed Yousry, Ahmed Abdel Sattar Convicted" (WV No. 842, 18 February 2005):

"The verdict gives the government a green light to prosecute lawyers for the alleged crimes of their clients, thereby shooting the basic right to counsel to hell.... If nobody can get a lawyer to zealously defend him from prosecution, then fundamental liberties, from the right to a trial and an attorney, to even the right of free speech and assembly, are choked."

The George W. Bush administration made Lynne Stewart's prosecution a centerpiece of the bogus "war on terror," having seized on the September 11 attacks

to greatly enhance "anti-terror" measures enacted by Democratic president Bill Clinton. Indeed, she and her codefendants were convicted under Clinton's 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act.

Judge John Koeltl, who praised Lynne for representing "the poor, the disadvantaged and the unpopular," gave her a 28-month sentence, far less than what the prosecution demanded. Outraged by such "leniency," the government went to extraordinary lengths to appeal. At the instigation of the Obama administration, a ruling by a three-judge panel of the Second Circuit Court of Appeals directed Koeltl to resentence her to ten years of hard time. On 15 July 2010, Koeltl complied.

We noted at the time that this was intended to be a death sentence for Lynne, who was suffering from Stage IV breast cancer. In prison she was taken to chemotherapy treatments in leg irons and handcuffs shackled to a chain around her waist; the weight of the chains was so heavy that guards had to essentially carry her from her cell to the prison hospital. In December 2010, she was transferred to the federal women's prison in Carswell, Texas, far from family and supporters. Lynne was being brutally punished for nothing other than standing up to the U.S. government.

It was through the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee's work in publicizing and rallying to the defense of Lynne Stewart and her codefendants that we came to know and work with her and Ralph, who had differences with our Marxist views. The two of them later became regular honored guests at the PDC's annual Holiday Appeal benefits for class-war prisoners. Not ones to shy away from a good argument, Lynne and Ralph were quite happy to tweak our noses at the Holiday Appeals and get theirs tweaked in return. With a shared commitment to the fight for solidarity with victims of capitalist state repression, our mutual respect grew as we engaged in political debate.

Lynne's political principles included not throwing her codefendants under the bus for her own interests. At a Lynne Stewart Defense Committee meeting following her 2005 conviction, PDC supporters stressed the importance of fighting for freedom for her codefendants, Yousry and Abdel Sattar. Lynne applauded this statement. But the defense committee, run by the National Lawyers Guild, abandoned her codefendants.

Longtime "movement" lawyer Liz Fink, who quit the legal team days before Lynne Stewart's resentencing, filed court papers that despicably tried to exonerate her client

by framing up Yousry. Fink accused him of conversing in Arabic with the sheik to further the latter's aims—a fabrication that the *New York Times* (7 March) repeated in its obituary for Lynne Stewart. Lynne rose up in court to disavow her attorney and announced that those were Fink's words, not hers. In fact, Yousry had been writing a PhD thesis on radical Islam in Egypt under the guidance of Near East historian Zachary Lockman, who had advised him to interview the sheik. Yousry's prosecution left his life in ruins.

In greetings read out by Ralph to a PDC Holiday Appeal in January 2011 in NYC, the imprisoned Lynne denounced the chilling effect of Justice Department witchhunting of political opponents, declaring: "That message once again must be shouted down, first by the resisters who will go to jail and second by us, the movement who must support them by always filling those cold marble courtrooms to show our solidarity and speaking out so that their sacrifice is constantly remembered." In another letter, she conveyed the deep human solidarity that continued to drive her even under the inhumane conditions of incarceration. She wrote that with the monthly stipend she received as part of the PDC's support to class-war prisoners, she was able to purchase books and, after finishing them, put them into "circulation" for other inmates. Lynne also used the stipend to help provide other imprisoned women with items like coffee, peanut butter and shampoo.

In 2013, as Lynne's health precipitously declined, more than 40,000 people signed petitions demanding her release. At the



WV Photo

**Lynne Stewart with her husband, Ralph Poynter, speaking at New York City PDC Holiday Appeal benefit, January 2016.**

request of her attorney, a medical doctor associated with the PDC meticulously documented how Lynne met all criteria for hospice eligibility by the government's own guidelines. This played a role in procuring her release later that year when the Justice Department, after months of obstruction, finally allowed Koeltl to free her on the grounds of her "terminal medical condition and very limited life expectancy." Arriving at LaGuardia airport on New Year's Day 2014, Lynne, who could barely walk, told her supporters, "I'm going to work for women's group prisoners and for political prisoners." Being back with her family and back in the struggle literally added years to her life.

In honoring Lynne Stewart, we recognize a hard, effective champion of the oppressed. We salute her lifework, which is an inspiration to those fighting for social justice against the rulers of this racist capitalist society. ■



Lynne Stewart

**Lynne and Ralph with Albert Woodfox shortly after he was released from prison in 2016. Woodfox, a member of the Angola 3, spent nearly 44 years in solitary.**

China, North Korea...

(continued from page 1)

The defense of China and North Korea against imperialism necessarily includes these countries having nuclear weapons and effective delivery systems. The U.S. openly threatens a nuclear “first strike” against its perceived enemies. Indeed, U.S. rulers are the only ones to have ever used such weapons, killing 200,000 Japanese civilians in the 1945 atomic incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The threat of imperialist war and the nuclear annihilation of humanity can ultimately be ended only through the revolutionary overthrow of the world imperialist order by the working class. But, today, in the face of U.S. imperialism’s unchallenged global nuclear hegemony, the only meaningful way to ensure national sovereignty is the possession of a credible nuclear deterrent. It is welcome that the North has gone some way toward developing such a deterrent, including ballistic missiles covering northeast Asia. North Korea has also made important advances in developing missiles that could reach the U.S. Pacific coast.

The dangers of lacking such a deterrent were demonstrated in Libya. In 2003, as part of signing on to the U.S. rulers’ “war on terror,” Muammar el-Qaddafi renounced Libya’s nuclear weapons program and welcomed imperialist inspectors. Eight years later, he was overthrown and murdered by local forces sponsored by the U.S. and other imperialist powers, setting the stage for the bloody chaos that has since engulfed that country. It was one thing for the U.S. to attack semicolonial Libya. But it would be quite another to go to war with North Korea, which has some means to defend itself. Though no rational human being would consciously embark on such a course, the system of imperialism is not rational and neither are the rulers in the White House and Pentagon.

U.S. Imperialism’s Devastation of Korea

Today, most bourgeois commentators characterize North Korea’s development of nukes as the product of a bizarre and rogue dictatorship. There is much that is peculiar about the dynastic, mythologized, bureaucratic rule of the Kims. But, as North Korea’s post-World War II history underscores, Pyongyang’s drive to secure nukes is a rational, indeed essential, policy of self-defense.

Following the World War II defeat of Japan, the former colonial master of Korea, the peninsula was partitioned along the 38th parallel between the deformed workers state in the North and a capitalist police state under American military occupation in the South. The U.S. puppet



U.S. sowed death and destruction in Korean Peninsula during the 1950-1953 war. Above: Aftermath of U.S. air raid on Pyongyang. Below: North Korean and Chinese fighters celebrate victory in a battle against U.S. forces, 1953. Intervention of Chinese People’s Liberation Army turned tide against U.S.



government staged ruthless attacks on insurgent workers and peasants over the next several years, notably the suppression of the 1948-49 Jeju uprising, which saw the slaughter of up to 30,000 people.

U.S. imperialism’s full-scale invasion of Korea was preceded by a civil war that erupted in June 1950 when the North Korean army crossed into the South. North Korean troops reached Seoul within a week, pushing aside South Korean forces that had been trained by the Japanese imperialists. As they advanced, the North Koreans were welcomed as liberators by the workers and peasants.

The U.S. military inflicted unspeakable barbarities in the course of the war. This included the slaughter of three million North Koreans and nearly a million Chinese soldiers, whose intervention was instrumental in turning the tide against the U.S. and other imperialists. As his-

torian Bruce Cumings wrote in his 2004 book *North Korea: Another Country*:

“North Koreans will tell you that for three years they faced a daily threat of being burned with napalm; ‘you couldn’t escape it,’ one told me in 1981. By 1952 just about everything in northern and central Korea was completely leveled. What was left of the population survived in caves.”

Eighteen of the country’s 22 largest cities were largely or totally obliterated. In the closing weeks of the war, U.S. bombers deliberately destroyed irrigation dams that provided water for three-quarters of the North’s food production. The war ended in a stalemate. But a peace treaty was never signed, and since then the U.S. has maintained a massive military presence in the South while subjecting North Korea to decades of military threats and economic sanctions.

During the war, the U.S. repeatedly threatened nuclear strikes, but held back out of fear of retaliation by the Soviet Union, which had developed its own nuclear capacity. Had the Soviets not possessed a nuclear arsenal, the U.S. imperialists could very well have turned North Korea and China into irradiated rubble. The U.S. deployed nuclear weapons at its bases in South Korea starting in 1958, only officially withdrawing them in 1991 amid the collapse of the USSR. To this day, nearly 30,000 American troops are stationed permanently in the country, a daily threat not only to North Korea and China but also to the combative South Korean working class. *All U.S. forces and bases out of South Korea!*

Imperialist Threats and Stalinist Treachery

Since China is vastly more powerful than North Korea both militarily and economically, the U.S. rulers often invoke supposed threats from the Pyongyang regime to justify their military operations in East Asia that are primarily aimed at Beijing. Trump’s chief strategist, Steve Bannon, stated last year, “We’re going to war in the South China Sea in five to ten years.” More recently, Tillerson threatened that the U.S. and its allies would

block China’s access to islands and land reclamation and construction projects in the South China Sea. China’s development of reefs and islands in this area is an important measure of defense against imperialist encirclement. Tillerson’s statement is an ominous declaration of intent to attack China at the heart of the world’s busiest maritime trade route.

Washington’s military buildup in East Asia is a bipartisan policy. It was Democratic Party president Barack Obama who prepared the THAAD deployment, part of an escalation of U.S. military pressure against China and North Korea that followed his 2010 declaration of a “pivot to Asia.” Obama greatly increased the number of U.S. troops in the Asia-Pacific region, oversaw repeated aggressive naval operations in the South China Sea, and put in place a cyber- and electronic-warfare program to disrupt North Korean missile tests. On leaving office, he reportedly urged Trump to make North Korea his “top national security priority.” Now Trump wants tens of billions of dollars in additional funding for the Pentagon.

The Beijing regime retaliated against the U.S.’s THAAD deployment by forcing the closure of South Korean businesses inside China and banning tours and charter flights to South Korea. Such measures could have a real impact on South Korea’s already faltering economy since China is, by far, the country’s main trade partner and source of foreign tourism. These economic sanctions against Washington’s South Korean quislings are principled and defensible—and stand in stark contrast to the Beijing regime’s repeated, utterly indefensible support to sanctions against North Korea.

In 2013 and again last year, China helped the U.S. to draw up UN sanctions resolutions against North Korea following the latter’s nuclear tests. Washington has at times been frustrated by China’s unwillingness to actually enforce such sanctions. However, last month the Chinese government announced that it would suspend coal imports from North Korea, a measure that, if implemented, would greatly undermine the beleaguered North Korean economy. Such treachery is nothing new for the Beijing Stalinist bureaucrats, who, as early as 1992, cut off cheap oil shipments to the North in order to secure diplomatic and economic relations with South Korea.

China has also repeatedly pressured North Korea to stop its development of nuclear weapons. In so doing, China’s Stalinist rulers are spitting on the memory of the Chinese troops who died fighting imperialism in the Korean War. Beijing’s collaboration with Washington against Pyongyang harms the defense of China itself. Capitalist counterrevolution in North Korea would bring U.S. forces right to the Chinese border, hugely intensifying the imperialist military threat. For its part, the various manifestations of the Kim dynasty in North Korea have episodically displayed a willingness to abandon their efforts to obtain deterrent capacity in exchange for economic assistance from the U.S. imperialists.

Key to the defense of the deformed workers states is the fight for workers political revolution to sweep away the nationalist ruling bureaucracies. These privileged, parasitic bureaucratic castes offer their services to the imperialists as they pursue the chimera of “peaceful coexistence” with the world capitalist order. The imperialists, for their part, may be willing to deal in the short run, while never abandoning their hostility to the survival of proletarian power anywhere on the planet. If these workers states had governments based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism, they would forge communist unity against the imperialists, including through regional economic planning and support to struggles by working people and the oppressed abroad.

South Korea in Turmoil

Washington’s rush to deploy the THAAD missile shield comes amid widespread social unrest in South Korea. Since last October, up to two million protesters have

# ICL Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program

The Declaration of Principles of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is a concrete expression of our purpose: to build national sections of a democratic-centralist International which can lead the struggle for worldwide socialist revolution. This important document, which was adopted at the Third International Conference of the ICL in early 1998, was published in the four language editions of *Spartacist* and additionally in eleven other languages.

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**国际共产主义同盟**

**(第四国际主义者)**

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**SPARTACIST**

**원칙들에 대한 선언과 강령의 몇 가지 요소들**

**국제공산주의동맹**

**(제4 인터내셔널주의자)**

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4

WORKERS VANGUARD



# Corbyn...

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the referendum results like Tony Blair & Co have. He has however underscored his loyalty to British capital by pushing for the British bourgeoisie to maintain tariff-free access to the European single market—that is, to maintain its position in the European consortium.

The consequences of Corbyn’s continued support for the EU were amply demonstrated in the 23 February by-elections in Copeland and Stoke. Both of these long-time Labour constituencies had registered massive leave votes in the referendum, but Labour put forward two staunchly pro-remain candidates in the by-elections. In Stoke, the Labour candidate, Gareth Snell, insulted the millions of workers who voted to quit the EU by calling Brexit a “massive pile of shit.” The result of Labour trying to shove remain candidates down the throats of voters was a Tory victory in Copeland and a sharp drop in Labour votes in Stoke.

## Corbyn and the EU: A Correction

Following the Blairites’ attempted coup against Corbyn last summer, our own newspaper accommodated to Corbyn by prettifying his line on the reactionary EU. The lead article in *Workers Hammer* No. 236 (Autumn 2016) [reprinted in *WV* No. 1096, 23 September 2016] falsely stated that “there is a clear class difference” between Corbyn and Blairite leadership contender Owen Smith over the EU because: “Corbyn pledges to honour the vote for a British exit; Smith is committed to keeping Britain in the EU despite the vote and has even called for another referendum to reverse the verdict.” In fact, there is no class difference between Smith and Corbyn over the EU. Although Smith oozes contempt for the working people who voted leave, Corbyn betrayed when it mattered by crossing the class line and serving the bourgeoisie in campaigning for the EU.

In the front-page article of our following issue, “Down With the EU—For a Workers Europe!” (*WH* No. 237, Winter 2016-2017), we buried Corbyn’s support for the remain vote while focusing our fire almost exclusively on the Blairites as the “heavy battalions of the anti-Brexit backlash.” The task of revolutionaries is to raise, not degrade, the consciousness of the working class. By covering for Corbyn’s betrayal on the EU, we helped to reinforce illusions in a Corbyn-led Labour Party. This ran counter to the otherwise correct thrust of our propaganda: to defend

Corbyn against the bourgeoisie and their Blairite agents while exposing the bankruptcy of his old Labour reformism.

The failure of Corbyn—like social democrats and trade union misleaders throughout Europe—to mobilise against the EU has ceded the oppositional ground to openly anti-immigrant reactionaries like UKIP, as well as outright fascists. The inveterate Labourites of the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) outrageously called for abstention in the referendum.



London, June 2016: Spartacist supporters at rally for Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

They spent most of their time denouncing Brexit supporters as racist and backward and their honcho Alan Woods claimed: “There is not an atom of progressive content in either the Brexit campaign or the Remain campaign. They stand for the interests of two wings of the ruling class and the Tory Party. Neither has anything in common with the working class. We can have nothing to do with either” (socialist.net, 17 June 2016). In fact, as we noted in the leadup to the referendum: “A British exit would deal a real blow to this imperialist-dominated conglomerate, further destabilising it and creating more favourable conditions for working-class struggle across Europe—including against a weakened and discredited Tory government in Britain” (“EU: Enemy of Workers and Immigrants,” *WH* No. 234, Spring 2016) [reprinted in *WV* No. 1087, 8 April 2016].

## For Working-Class Rule!

In *Parliamentary Socialism* (1972), his insightful history of the Labour Party,

Ralph Miliband aptly observed: “Of political parties claiming socialism to be their aim, the Labour Party has always been one of the most dogmatic—not about socialism, but about the parliamentary system.” Parliamentary democracy is merely one form of the dictatorship of capital. The idea that socialism can be achieved through Parliament rests on the illusion that exploiter and exploited, rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed all have an equal vote in how society is

run. How can there be equality between slave and slave owner? If the bourgeoisie’s attempts to inculcate obedience in the “unwashed masses” through the churches, schools and their kept media should fail, and the wage slaves begin to behave in a non-slavish manner, the exploiters have at their command all the force of the state—at its core the cops, courts, prisons and the military. All past experience of class struggle shows that fundamental change in the interests of the working class cannot be achieved by attaining a “socialist” majority in the “Mother of Parliaments” and leaving the capitalist state intact.

Against all the wealth and repressive force of the bourgeois exploiters, the proletariat has revolutionary potential deriving from its numbers, its organisation and its role in production. As the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution showed, a victorious realisation of that potential can only come about under the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party. To construct such a party requires ruthless political combat against all purveyors of the snake-oil

Such support to a representative of the enemy class is a flagrant betrayal of the workers’ interests. But being in bed with elements of the South Korean bourgeoisie is nothing new for the SWP and its Korean followers, now known as Workers Solidarity. SWP founder Tony Cliff and his supporters broke from the Trotskyist Fourth International in 1950 when they refused to defend the Soviet Union, China and North Korea during the Korean War. Steeped in Cold War anti-Communism, the Cliffites went on to support any and all reactionary forces arrayed against the Soviet Union in the name of “anti-Stalinism,” cheering on the counterrevolution that finally destroyed the USSR.

The South Korean working class can only advance its struggles through a complete break with all wings of the capitalist class enemy and by standing for the defense of the North against counterrevolution. What is needed is the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist party that can lead a struggle for the revolutionary reunification of Korea: socialist revolution to oust the rapacious bourgeoisie and expropriate the capitalist *chaebol*—the conglomerates that dominate the economy in the South—combined with workers political revolution to remove the Stalinist bureaucrats in the North.

The fight for revolutionary reunification must be linked to the struggle for proletarian political revolution in China

of class collaboration. That includes left Labour reformists like Corbyn, as well as the bureaucrats atop the trade unions who push the illusion of class peace with the bosses and thus obstruct effective working-class struggle.

Margaret Thatcher’s policies of privatisation and union-bashing were deepened by New Labour and reinforced and extended under the EU. Today, workers face chronic unemployment and low-wage precarious jobs; nearly a million people are working on zero-hours contracts [no guaranteed number of hours]. Over the last year there has been a series of limited strikes—station staff in the London Tube, drivers and guards on the railways, cabin crew at British Airways, junior doctors—with the potential to spark a broad fight against the bourgeoisie’s austerity offensive. Determined all-out strikes in the Underground, rail, the airports or the NHS [National Health Service] could turn the tide. Picket lines mean don’t cross! However, rather than waging such a fight, the labour lieutenants of capital at the heads of the trade unions have restricted the actions to sporadic strikes here and there, involving only part of the workforce. Rather than mobilise trade union power in struggle, the union misleaders acquiesce to bourgeois legality and push the illusion that workers’ interests can be advanced through Parliament. A new leadership of the unions must be forged in the crucible of class struggle and as part of the fight to win the working class from Labourite reformism.

Labourism is and has long been a major obstacle to revolutionary consciousness within the working class in Britain. Our strategic perspective is to break Labour’s working-class base from illusions in parliamentary reformism as part of building a party which can lead the working class to power. Trotsky argued for such a revolutionary perspective against the Labourites of his day:

“England, like all the other capitalist countries, needs an economic revolution, far exceeding in its historical significance the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century. But this new economic revolution, a reconstruction of the entire economy according to a single socialist plan—cannot be put through without a preceding political revolution. Private property in the means of production is now a much greater obstacle in the path of economic progress than were the guild privileges in their day, also a form of petty-bourgeois property. As the bourgeoisie will under no circumstance relinquish its property rights, it will be necessary to set in motion the use of an outright revolutionary force. History has not devised any other method. England will be no exception.”

—Where Is Britain Going? (1925) ■

taken to the streets of Seoul and other cities to demand the ouster of President Park Geun-hye, an arch anti-Communist who oversaw sweeping attacks on the unions and democratic rights alongside a particularly belligerent stance toward North Korea. Park Geun-hye is the daughter of the U.S.-backed dictator Park Chung-hee, a former Japanese collaborator who ran South Korea through savage repression in the 1960s and ’70s. Having donned a thin “democratic” veil in the late 1980s, the South Korean rulers have continued to repress militant labor struggle and groups that express any support to the North.

Facing impeachment on corruption charges, Park Geun-hye was kicked out of office only three days after the THAAD deployment began. While Park and her interim replacement have strongly backed Washington’s missile shield, the opposition Democratic Party of Korea (Minjoo) called on the U.S. to delay its installation. With the opposition far ahead in the polls, the U.S. moved to make THAAD *a fait accompli* before presidential elections in May.

The mass demonstrations against the now-ousted president were joined by students, workers in the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) and farmers whose livelihoods have been devastated by the 2012 U.S.-South Korea free-trade deal, as well as opposition bourgeois parties. South Korea’s working class has repeatedly shown its potential power, not

least in the enormous struggles of the 1970s and ’80s that broke the stranglehold of the corporatist, CIA-sponsored unions and gave rise to independent unions, now grouped in the KCTU. Amid the turmoil of the past six months, the KCTU has led strikes at Hyundai Motor Co. and among truckers and rail workers as well as other large-scale work stoppages.

But the KCTU leadership has long channeled working-class militancy into support for the liberal wing of the South Korean bourgeoisie. In 1998, it supported the election of Kim Dae-jung, a capitalist politician who made a fortune in the shipping and newspaper industries, and whose “sunshine policy” of engagement with the Pyongyang regime aimed at undermining the deformed workers state through capitalist economic penetration.

Today, Minjoo’s likely presidential candidate, Moon Jae-in, seeks to revive such policies. He also calls himself “America’s friend,” adding: “If necessary, we will have to strengthen sanctions even further, but the goal of sanctions must be to bring North Korea back to the negotiating table.” In the last presidential elections, the South Korean supporters of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) called for a vote for this bourgeois politician, claiming that “giving critical support to Moon” was a “tactical compromise” (“Statement by All Together on the South Korean Presidential Elections,” 10 December 2012).

and the extension of working-class power to the centers of world imperialism—from the U.S. to West Europe and Japan. Vanquishing the U.S. imperialist war machine requires an American workers revolution. The Spartacist League is dedicated to building the party that can lead such a struggle as the U.S. section of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. ■

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## Russian Revolution...

(continued from page 8)

on an internationally planned economy. The economic devastation and isolation of the Soviet workers state led to strong material pressures toward bureaucratization. In the last years of his life, Lenin, often in alliance with Trotsky, waged a series of battles in the party against the political manifestations of the bureaucratic pressures. The Bolsheviks knew that socialism could only be built on a worldwide basis, and they fought to extend the revolution internationally, especially to the advanced capitalist economies of Europe; the idea that socialism could be built in a single country was a later perversion introduced as part of the justification for the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution.

In early 1924 a bureaucratic caste under Stalin came to dominate the Soviet Communist Party and state. Thus, the equality of women as envisioned by the Bolsheviks never fully came about. The Stalinist bureaucracy abandoned the fight for international revolution and so besmirched the



RGAKFD

**Left: Peasant women harnessed like oxen to pull river barge in prerevolutionary Russia. Right: Woman doing laboratory work in Uzbekistan in 1950s. Collectivized planned economy laid basis for great strides forward for women.**



Max Penson

the most powerful and most advanced capitalist country in Europe, was thrown into a revolutionary situation in 1918-19; much of the rest of the continent was in turmoil. The Bolsheviks threw a good deal of the Soviet state's resources into the

able to suppress the proletarian revolutionary opportunity in Germany in 1918-19, with the active collaboration of the military/police forces.

Social-democratic parties like the German SPD and the British Labour Party bear central historical responsibility for the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. Yet they howl along with their capitalist masters that the early Bolshevik regime under Lenin inevitably led to Stalinist despotism, that communism has failed and that capitalist "democracy" is infinitely preferable to communism. They are echoed by many of today's leftist-minded youth, who equate communism with the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet workers state. Anarchist-influenced youth hold that hierarchy is inherently oppressive, that small-scale production, decentralization and "living liberated" on an individual basis offer a way forward. This is a dead end.

Despite the triumph of the bureaucratic caste in 1924 and the consequent degeneration of the Russian Revolution, the central gains of the revolution—embodied in the overthrow of capitalist property relations and the establishment of a planned economy—remained. These gains were apparent, for example, in the material position of women. That is why we of the International Communist League, standing on the heritage of Trotsky's Left Opposition, which fought against Stalin and the degeneration of the revolution, stood for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and an intransigent fight against all threats of capitalist counterrevolution, internal or external. At the same time we understood that the bureaucratic caste at the top was a mortal threat to the continued existence of the workers state.

We called for a political revolution in the USSR to oust the bureaucracy, to restore soviet workers democracy and to pursue the fight for the international proletarian revolution necessary to build socialism.

### Heritage of Bolshevik Work Among Women

A host of books published over the last decade and a half speak to the enormous gains made by women in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks immediately began to put into place civil law that swept away centuries of property law and male privilege. Wendy Goldman's valuable *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) focuses on the three Family Codes of 1918, 1926 and 1936 as turning points in Soviet policy, serving as markers for the party and state program on the woman question. The 1918 Code, the "most progressive family legislation the world had ever seen," gave way to the 1926 Code, which came into effect in a period of intense political struggle between the Stalinist bureaucracy and oppositional currents arrayed against it, centrally Trotsky's Left Opposition. The 1936 Family Code, which rehabilitated the family in official Stalinist ideology and made abortion illegal, codified the wholesale retreat under Stalin in the struggle for women's equality.

Goldman's book is only one among many publications since 1991 that have profited from the increased access to archives of the former Soviet Union. Another, Barbara Evans Clements' *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) is a group biography, centering on selected longtime party members. Clements has assembled a database of several



**1923 display of *Kommunistka* editorial board (clockwise from top): Nadezhda Krupskaya, Nikolai Bukharin, Alexandra Kollontai, Polina Vinogradskaya, Klavdiia Nikolaeva, Mikhail Olminsky. Inessa Armand is at center.**

great ideals of communism with bureaucratic distortions and lies that, in the end in 1991-92, the working class did not fight against the revolution's undoing and the restoration of capitalism under Boris Yeltsin.

The Russian Revolution marked the beginning of a great wave of revolutionary struggle that swept the world in opposition to the carnage of WWI. The October Revolution was a powerful inspiration to the working class internationally. Germany,

fight for world socialist revolution, creating the Communist International (CI) for this purpose. But the young parties of the CI in Europe had only recently broken from the reformist leadership of the mass workers organizations that had supported their own bourgeois governments in WWI and were not able to act as revolutionary vanguard parties comparable to the Bolsheviks. The reformist, pro-capitalist and deeply chauvinist leadership of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) was

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# FROM THE ARCHIVES OF SPARTACIST

hundred Old Bolshevik (party members before 1917) women cadre, which she analyzes for trends in origins, education and party activity.

*Bolshevik Women* focuses on prominent party members such as Elena Stasova, a Central Committee member and the CC secretary in Petrograd in 1917. Another is Evgeniia Bosh, described by Victor Serge (a one-time member of the Left Opposition who later broke with Trotsky) as one of “the most capable military leaders to emerge at this early stage” of the Civil War (quoted in Clements, *Bolshevik Women*). Bosh committed suicide in January 1925 when the Stalin faction purged Trotsky as People’s Commissar for War. Yet another was Lenin’s close friend and collaborator, Inessa Armand, the first head of the Zhenotdel until her death in 1920.

Less well known are Konkordiia Samoilova, another longtime party cadre, whose work after 1917 focused on Zhenotdel field activities; Klavdiia Nikolaeva, removed as head of the Zhenotdel in 1925 due to her support to the anti-bureaucratic Opposition; Rozaliia Zemliachka, who became a stalwart bureaucrat and the only woman to sit on the Council of People’s Commissars under Stalin; and Alexandra Artiukhina, who headed the Zhenotdel from 1925 until its liquidation by Stalin in 1930.

The International Communist League’s work among women stands on the traditions established by Lenin’s Bolsheviks. Some of the earliest issues of *Women and Revolution* published original research on the Russian Revolution and Bolshevik work among women by Dale Ross, *W&R*’s first editor, based on her PhD dissertation, *The Role of the Women of Petrograd in War, Revolution and Counter-Revolution, 1914-1921* (1973). The second and third issues of *W&R* (September-October 1971 and May 1972) published in two parts the Bolsheviks’ “Methods of Work Among the Women of the Communist Party” from the Third Congress of the Communist International (1921). [A new English translation of this document, “Theses on Methods and Forms of Work of the Communist Parties Among Women,” was published in *Spartacist* No. 62, Spring 2011.] The new information available has further confirmed and enriched our solidarity with the Bolshevik road to the emancipation of women.

Subsequent issues of *W&R* explored other aspects of the fight for women’s liberation in the USSR. Of special significance is “Early Bolshevik Work Among Women of the Soviet East” (*W&R* No. 12, Summer 1976). This article detailed the heroic efforts of the Bolshevik government to transform conditions for the hideously oppressed women of Muslim Central Asia, where Zhenotdel activists themselves took to the veil in order to reach these secluded women. It is beyond the scope of the present article to deal with this important subject.

## Marxism vs. Feminism

For Marxists, the special oppression of women originates in class society itself and can only be rooted out through the destruction of private property in the means of production. The entry of women into the proletariat opens the way to liberation: their position at the point of production gives them the social power, along with their male co-workers, to change the capitalist system and lay the basis for women’s social independence from the confines of the institution of the family. Marxism differs from feminism centrally over the question of the main division in society: feminists hold that it is men vs. women; for Marxists, it is class, that is, exploiter vs. exploited. A working woman has more in common with her male co-workers than with a female boss, and the emancipation of women is the task of the working class as a whole.

The Marxist view of the family as the main source of the oppression of women dates from *The German Ideology*, where Marx and Engels first formulated the concept that the family was not an immutable,



Arkady Shaikhnet

timeless institution, but a social relation subject to historical change. In the classic *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), Engels (working with the material available at the time) traced the origin of the institution of the family and the state to the division of society into classes. With the rise of a social surplus beyond basic subsistence, a leisured, ruling class could develop based on a private appropriation of that surplus, thus moving human society away from the primitive egalitarianism of the Stone Age. The centrality of the family flowed from its role in the inheritance of property, which required women’s sexual monogamy and social subordination. Engels termed this “*the world historical defeat of the female sex.*”

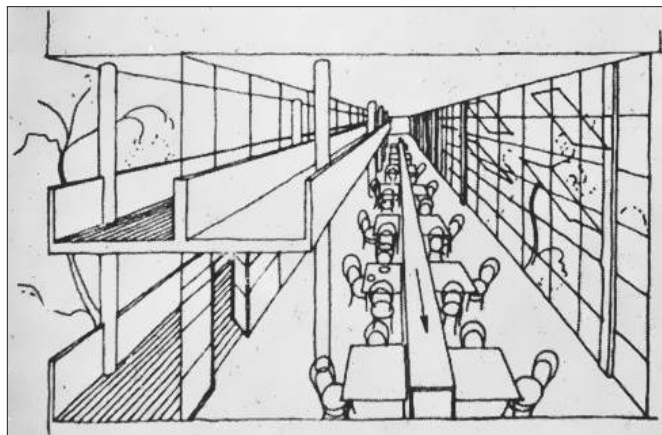
A collectivized, planned economy seeks to productively employ all adults with the goal of maximizing the wealth, including leisure time, available to all. In contrast, in the boom-bust cycle of a capitalist economy, each capitalist enterprise seeks to maximize its rate of profit. Inevitably, capitalist firms seek to reduce costs (and increase profits) by reducing both wages and jobs, leading to an impoverished working class, a pool of chronically unemployed workers and long hours for those who do work. Isolated in the family, women make up a large component of the reserve army of the unemployed, hired during economic booms and sent “back to the kitchen” during hard times. When women are drawn into the workforce in great numbers, the capitalists then try to reduce real wages for men, so that it takes the income of two working adults to raise a family.

The necessary role of the family—the function that must be replaced and cannot be abolished—is the rearing of the next

generation. Under capitalism, the masses of youth are slated for wage slavery and service as cannon fodder in the bourgeois army, and the family plays an important role in training them to obey authority. It is also a major source for inculcating religious backwardness as an ideological brake on social consciousness.

While many aspects of the capitalist system serve to undermine and erode the family (the employment of women and public education are two examples), capitalism cannot provide a systematic solution to the double burden women shoulder, and must seek to bolster its weakened institution. Bourgeois feminists, whose quarrel with the capitalist system is their own subordinate status within it, address this by arguing for a redivision of household tasks within the family, increasing men’s share of domestic responsibilities. Marxists seek to transfer housework altogether to the public sphere. As the Bolshevik leader Evgeny Preobrazhensky (later allied with Trotsky) said, “Our task does not consist of striving for justice in the division of labor between the sexes. Our task is to free men and women from petty household labor” (quoted in Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*). Thus one of the tasks of the socialist revolution is the full replacement of the institution of the family with communal childcare, dining halls and laundries, and paid maternity leave, free health care, and special efforts to draw women fully into social and political life.

In Russia, the feminist movement was part of a broader bourgeois-democratic current that opposed tsarism and wanted to modernize Russia as an industrial capitalist society. For example, in 1906 amid the continuing ferment of the first Russian Revolution, the three main feminist



Barsch and Vladimirov

**Left: Soviet childcare facility in 1920s. Inset: Sketch of projected collective dining facilities in the Soviet Union, 1929.**

organizations, the Women’s Equal Rights Union, the Women’s Progressive Party and the Women’s Mutual Philanthropic Society, directed their efforts toward the passage of equal rights and woman suffrage bills in the newly established Duma (parliament). When the predominantly liberal First and Second Dumas were dissolved by the autocracy, the Russian feminist movement went into decline.

In 1917 the main “women’s issue” in the eyes of the working woman was opposition to the bloody imperialist war that had been raging for three years. The war sparked the February revolt, which began with the mass outpouring of women on International Women’s Day. After the abdication of the Tsar and the establishment of the bourgeois-democratic Provisional Government, most of the ostensible parties of the left and of reform—including the Russian feminists—considered the main goals of the revolution to have been accomplished. Therefore, they abandoned their opposition to the war and supported the renewal of the imperialist slaughter in the name of “democracy.”

The Bolsheviks fought for the soviets of workers and peasants deputies to become organs of the rule of the exploited and oppressed, *including* women, and to end the war immediately without annexations of other countries. The best fighters for women’s liberation were the Bolsheviks, who understood that the liberation of women cannot be isolated from the liberation of the working class as a whole. Nor can it be fully achieved, least of all in a backward country—even one with a revolutionary government—in political, social and economic isolation from the rest of the world.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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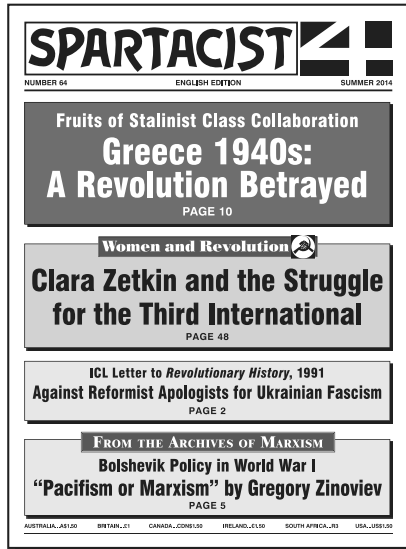
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Adolf Strakhov



Above: Soviet poster from 1926 proclaims: “Emancipated Woman—Build Socialism!” Right: Women workers demonstrate in Petrograd, March 1917. Banner reads: “Comrade Workers and Soldiers, Support Our Demands.”



Viktor Bulla

## The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women

The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was the greatest victory for the world’s working people and for all of the oppressed. The spark for the revolutionary upsurge was a mass outpouring of women in Petrograd on International Women’s Day (IWD), March 8 (February 23 by the old Julian calendar). While in recent years bourgeois feminists have usurped IWD, in fact it is a *workers’* celebration that originated in 1908 among female needle trades workers in Manhattan.

As part of our celebration of the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution, we reprint below the first part of an article that initially appeared in the *Women and*

### PART ONE

*Revolution* pages of *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 59, Spring 2006. Various reformist outfits, including the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Socialist Alternative (SAIt), have been issuing their own articles on the Russian Revolution, to which they occasionally pay homage. But this is nothing more than whitewash of their record of spitting on the heritage of the world’s first and only successful proletarian socialist revolution.

When capitalist counterrevolution triumphed in the former Soviet Union in 1991-92, following decades of Stalinist misrule, these organizations reveled in the final undoing of the workers state. The virulently anti-Soviet ISO echoed its British cothinkers, whose paper cheered, “Communism Has Collapsed” and declared that this was “a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing” (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 31 August 1991). For its part, SAIt’s cothinkers headlined in their Russian newspaper, *Rabochaya Demokratiya* (October 1991), that “Where We Were” was “On the Barricades in Moscow,” i.e., on the side of Boris Yeltsin’s imperialist-backed counterrevolution.

In stark contrast, the International Communist League fought in defense of the Soviet Union and its social gains, calling for proletarian political revolution

against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Today, we uniquely uphold the program for new October Revolutions, the only program that will lay the basis for the full emancipation of women and the liberation of all humanity in a world communist society.

\* \* \*

“‘Liberation’ is an historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the development of industry, commerce, agriculture, the conditions of intercourse.”

—Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (1846)

Today, millions of women even in the advanced capitalist “democracies” endure nasty and brutish lives of misery and drudgery. In the United States, to name just two instances of anti-woman bigotry, abortion rights are under increasing attack and quality childcare is scarce and too costly for most working women. Conditions for women in the Third World are worse by orders of magnitude. But even 15 years ago women in the Soviet Union enjoyed many advantages, such as state-supported childcare institutions, full abortion rights, access to a wide range of trades and professions, and a large degree of economic equality with their male co-workers—in short, a status in some ways far in advance of capitalist societies today.

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution made these gains possible. No mere cosmetic gloss on the surface, the Russian Revolution was, in the words of historian Richard Stites, a

“classical social revolution—a process not an event, a phenomenon that cannot be fused, triggered, or set off by a mere turnover of power which confines itself to the center and confines its efforts to decrees and laws enunciating the principles of equality. True social revolution in an underdeveloped society does not end with the reshuffling of property any more than it does with the reshuffling of portfolios; it is the result of social mobilization. Put in plain terms, it means bodies moving out among the people with well-laid plans, skills, and revolutionary euphoria; it means teaching, pushing, prodding, cajoling the stubborn, the ignorant, and the backward by

means of the supreme component of all radical propaganda: the message and the conviction that revolution is relevant to everyday life.”

—Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978)

This thoroughgoing effort to remake society was made possible by the smashing of tsarist/capitalist rule and the Bolshevik-led seizure of power by the soviets—workers and peasants councils—in October 1917. The estates of the landed nobility were abolished and the land nationalized; industry was soon collectivized. The new workers state took the first steps toward planning the economy in the interests of the toilers. This brought enormous gains to working women. The Russian Revolution sought to bring women into full participation in economic, social and political life.

Since the counterrevolution that restored capitalism in 1991-92, women in the ex-Soviet Union face vastly worse conditions somewhat akin to the Third World. Massive unemployment, a plummeting life expectancy, and a resurgence of religious backwardness—both Russian Orthodox and Muslim—are just three examples. From 1991 to 1997 gross domestic product fell by over 80 percent; according to official (understated) statistics, capital investment dropped over 90 percent. By the middle of the decade, 40 percent of the population of the Russian Federation was living below the official poverty line and a further 36 percent only a little above it. Millions were starving.

### Women’s Liberation and World Socialist Revolution

The Bolsheviks recognized that without qualitative economic development, the liberation of women was a utopian fantasy. Working to maximize the resources at hand, the early Bolshevik regime did all it could to implement the promise of women’s emancipation, including the formation of a party department that addressed women’s needs, the Zhenotdel.

But at every step their efforts were confronted with the fact that short of a massive infusion of resources, the results were limited on all sides. Leon Trotsky, the leader together with V.I. Lenin of the Russian Revolution, explained that from the beginning the Bolsheviks recognized that

“The real resources of the state did not correspond to the plans and intentions of the Communist Party. You cannot ‘abolish’ the family; you have to replace it. The actual liberation of women is unrealizable on a basis of ‘generalized want.’ Experience soon proved this austere truth which Marx had formulated eighty years before.”

—*The Revolution Betrayed* (1936)

The grim poverty of the world’s first workers state began with the economic and social backwardness inherited from the old tsarist empire. Foreign investment had built modern factories in the major cities, creating a compact, powerful proletariat that was able to make the revolution in a majority-peasant country. The revolutionary workers were, in most cases, only one or two generations removed from the peasantry. The workers supported their cousins in the countryside when they seized the landed estates and divided up the land among those who worked it. The alliance (*smychka*) between the workers and peasants was key to the success of the revolution. But the mass of peasant smallholders was also a reservoir of social and economic backwardness. The devastation wrought by World War I was compounded by the bloody Civil War (1918-1920) that the Bolshevik government had to fight against the armies of counterrevolution and imperialist intervention, throwing the country’s economy back decades. The imperialists also instituted an economic blockade, isolating the Soviet Union from the world economy and world division of labor.

Marxists have always understood that the material abundance necessary to uproot class society and its attendant oppressions can only come from the highest level of technology and science based

*continued on page 6*