

Down With U.S. Provocations Against Palestinians!

Israel Out of West Bank, East Jerusalem!



Reuters



DPA

Left: Palestinians outside Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif protest Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, December 8. Right: Aftermath of December 9 Israeli bombing of Gaza following similar Palestinian protests.

With his official recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, President Trump delivered U.S. imperialism's latest provocation to the long-suffering Palestinian people. Along with protesters throughout the Muslim world, Palestinians took to the streets in East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Israeli forces wounded hundreds of Palestinians and killed at least four. This was par for the course for the Zionist capitalist rulers, whose state was created through the expulsion of Palestinians and has been maintained ever since through brute terror.

Trump's announcement was largely symbolic, since Jerusalem has long served as Israel's de facto capital. But it was loaded symbolism. The Old City of East Jerusalem is not only of prime importance for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It also represents Palestinian national identity, and national dispossession. Along with the rest of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem was seized by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and subsequently annexed. The vast majority of Palestinians in the city lack Israeli citizenship, face the constant threat of expulsion and are increasingly surrounded by Jewish settlers, many of whom are heavily armed.

As a Palestinian activist put it, Trump gave "a green light for Israel to speed up its colonization of Jerusalem." He also gave something to his base among pro-Israel Christian evangelicals back home, who hope that Jewish migration to Israel will usher in the "second coming"—after which the Jews (and other "infidels") are to be consigned to hell.

It is in the vital interest of working people throughout the world to stand for the

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

defense of the Palestinian masses and to demand that all Israeli troops and settlers get out of the Occupied Territories. The current protests broke out 30 years after the eruption of the first *Intifada* (uprising), which lasted from 1987 to '93 and was met with fierce repression. The second *Intifada*, which began in 2000, was met with not only a higher death toll but the rounding up of thousands into Israel's torture dungeons.

The endless cycle of Israeli terror and desperate attempts by Palestinians to fight back is based on the foundation of Israel as a semi-theocratic Zionist state. Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs are interpenetrated peoples, laying rival claim to the same territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Within a capitalist framework, such situations necessarily mean that the exercise of self-determination—i.e., setting up a national state—can only come about at the expense of the other's national rights. This has, indeed, been the lot of the Palestinians.

Beyond Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians languish in wretched refugee camps policed by Arab bourgeois regimes, with Israel denying them the right to return to their homeland. The only possibility of a just, democratic solution for the Palestinian masses lies in proletarian revolutions in Israel and the entire region to overthrow capitalist rule. In a socialist federation of the Near East, the right to self-determination for Palestinians and Israeli Jews alike would be respected, conflicting claims over land and resources would be equitably resolved, and discrimination

on the basis of language, religion and nationality would be eliminated.

Some Democrats in Washington, along with several Republicans, have cynically criticized Trump's Jerusalem announcement as undermining the "prospects" of a "two-state solution"—i.e., the sham promise of a viable Palestinian state sometime in the future. This phantasm was at the core of the "peace process" through which the U.S. and its United Nations tool gave cover to the Zionist regime as it turned Gaza into a giant Palestinian concentration camp and sent hundreds of thousands of Jewish settlers into the West Bank, squeezing the Palestinians there and cutting them off from their brothers and sisters in the rest of Israel/Palestine.

The "peace process" was enshrined with the 1993 Oslo accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the late Yasir Arafat. Far from offering even a deformed expression of self-determination, the agreement brokered by the Clinton White House established the Palestinian Authority (PA) as the overseers of the Palestinians. Since 1993,

Israel's rulers have moved to largely cut off Palestinian laborers from the country's economy, while the number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank has more than tripled. The Israeli organization Peace Now estimates that the rate of settlement construction this year is running at two and a half times that of 2016. The PA, currently

led by the utterly discredited Mahmoud Abbas, is little more than the police auxiliary of Israel and its U.S. backers. The PA's betrayals set the stage for the growth of the reactionary, anti-woman fundamentalist Hamas, which has controlled Gaza since 2006 and falsely poses as champions of Palestinian national liberation.

Trump's announcement took the veil off what has long been actual U.S. policy. The 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act, passed by Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support, mandated both recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and preparations to move the U.S. embassy there. (Successive administrations, including Trump's for now, have refrained from carrying out the move.) As a presidential candidate, Barack Obama declared in 2008 that any negotiation between Israel and the Palestinians must accept that "Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel, and it must remain undivided." Washington's support for Israel is driven by the latter's role as a linchpin for U.S. imperialist interests in the Near East, fortified by over \$3 billion a

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Celebrating the 1917 Russian Revolution

For New October Revolutions!

PART TWO ★ SEE PAGE 6



¡Viva Marshawn Lynch!

Giving the finger to U.S. imperialist patriotism and anti-Mexican racism, NFL star Marshawn Lynch sat down for the Star Spangled Banner and rose to his feet for the Mexican national anthem at the Raiders vs. Patriots game at Azteca Stadium in Mexico City on November 19. Immediately after the game, Lynch happily accepted the gift of a Mexican national soccer jersey from a reporter and sent his greetings of “What’s up with my *amigos*?” to Mexicans living in his hometown of Oakland, California.

Lynch’s act represents something America’s racist rulers hate: black defiance. What he did was a breath of fresh air in the putrid atmosphere of racist cop and *migra* terror. This proud black man, nicknamed “Beast Mode,” was defying the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism. And that is just how Trump took it. The next day, he complained in a tweet that Lynch showed “Great disrespect!” and demanded that the NFL suspend him. A few months ago, Trump told his Confederate-flag-waving supporters in Alabama that any NFL player who doesn’t stand up for the anthem was a “son of a bitch” who should be fired. ***Hands off Marshawn Lynch!***

What Lynch did was an expression of solidarity with Mexico. And it was widely welcomed in that country, which suffers

under the boot of U.S. imperialism. The multiracial working class, with its strategic component of black workers, has every interest in opposing the depredations of the U.S. capitalist rulers. The same ruling class that strangles neocolonial Mexico through NAFTA and other means—while wreaking death and destruction around the world—also wages war on working people at home and unleashes its cops to kill black youth on the streets. This is “business as usual” for the capitalist rulers, regardless of whether there is a Democrat or a Republican in the White House.

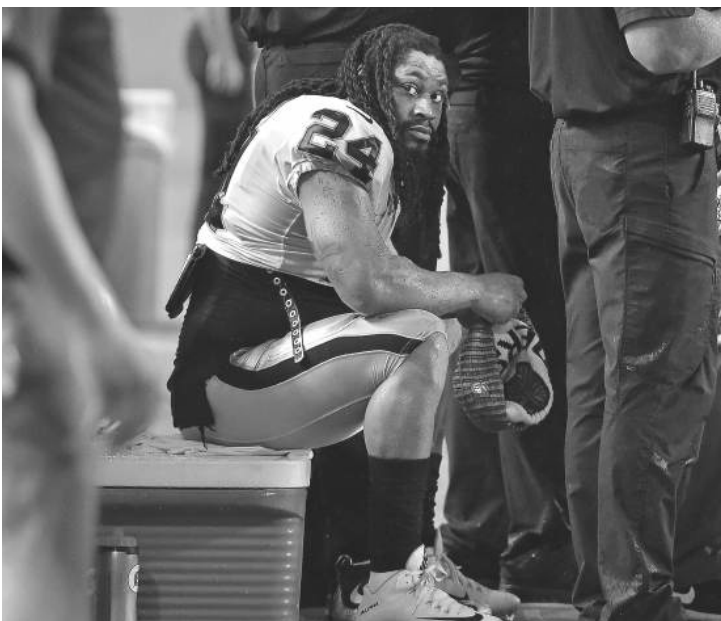
Throughout U.S. history, the fate of black people has been intertwined with that of Mexico. In the 1846-48 Mexican-American War, the U.S. stole half of Mexico’s territory in order to expand black chattel slavery (see “Mexican-American War: Prelude to American Civil War,” reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 22, July 2012). We fight against the racial and ethnic divisions fomented by the capitalist rulers. Our aim is to build workers parties that can lead the struggle for socialist revolutions on both sides of the Río Bravo (Rio Grande)—to sweep away both the rapacious U.S. imperialists and their Mexican bourgeois lackeys.

In one of Marshawn Lynch’s rare interviews last year, he told Conan O’Brien what he thought of Colin Kaepernick’s

act of taking a knee to protest cop killings of black people: “I’d rather see him take a knee than stand up, put his hands up, and get murdered.” Before he became unofficially banned from playing for the

vinlove/USA Today

Marshawn Lynch sits out U.S. national anthem before game in Miami, November 5.



NFL, Kaepernick said, “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color.” ***¡Viva Marshawn Lynch! ¡Viva Colin Kaepernick! ■***

New York Vaping Ban

Your Rights Up in Smoke

On November 22, New York joined the growing list of states attacking the rights of electronic cigarette users. Under Governor Andrew Cuomo, the Clean Indoor Air Act has been expanded to ban vaping in workplaces, bars and restaurants. Vaping is popular not least because it allows (ex-)smokers to get nicotine without the carcinogens in cigarettes.

Yet Cuomo & Co. sell this cruel prohibition as a “public health” measure, claiming that e-cigs “carry long-term risks to the health of users and those around them.” In fact, a report by Britain’s Royal College of Physicians last year called for vigorous *promotion* of vaping as a way to quit cigarettes. The report noted: “Provision of the nicotine that smokers are addicted to without the harmful components of tobacco smoke can prevent most of the harm from smoking.” Describing the report, the *Guardian* (29 April 2016) stated that it “lays to rest almost all of the concerns over these products.” In the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control also recognizes that e-cigs are the most popular way for smokers to kick the habit and are more effective than other nicotine replacement products.

The entire purpose behind bans on vaping, tobacco, alcohol and drugs is to regiment the population, especially youth. The capitalists want the workers they exploit to be docile, the better to extract profits from their labors. As far as we’re concerned,

people ought to be able to read, eat, drink, smoke, and enjoy whatever consensual activities they want without cops, courts, bosses and yuppie totalitarians sticking their noses in.

The smoking bans of recent years have rested on the spurious grounds of the harm of secondhand smoke, despite there being no effective way of measuring exposure to environmental smoke. In 2011, then New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg went so far as to ban smoking ***outdoors*** in the city’s parks and beaches. Bloomberg extended the ban to cover vaping, even though vape has none of the potential hazards of secondhand smoke—because it is ***not*** smoke. The vaping ban came into effect under Democratic mayor Bill de Blasio, who this August signed a series of bills further attacking the rights of smokers, including by curtailing access to electronic cigarettes. It is now illegal to vape, or puff anything, in that patch of Central Park named Strawberry Fields in honor of the cigarette- and weed-smoking John Lennon.

Jeff Seyler, a leading member of the American Lung Association, claims that the New York State ban will help shield children from a “dangerous and often lifetime of addiction to nicotine.” But addiction to nicotine can be as safe as addiction to that other hugely popular stimulant—caffeine. Modern-day Puritans treat addiction itself as a supposed moral failing and push prohibition and stigmatization. We Marxists vigorously reject this.

The rulers of this country don’t care one bit about the health of the population. The New York City Housing Authority was recently caught out for having falsely claimed to have carried out inspections of public housing for lead paint. So much for de Blasio’s concern about health, including for children!

The Democrats, no less than the Republicans, are a party of the capitalists and Wall Street. Under capitalism, millions are killed off through malnutrition, inadequate medical care and other effects of poverty. And the capitalist exploiters then seek to deny workers even the smallest pleasures. As Marxists, we fight for a workers America—a society of material abundance and individual freedom. ■

NOTICE

Workers Vanguard skips an issue in December.

Our next issue will be dated January 12.



TROTSKY

Proletarian Rule vs. Constituent Assembly

The Bolshevik-led 1917 Russian Revolution established working-class rule, which was expressed through the Soviets, democratically elected workers councils. Standing opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat was the Constituent Assembly, which served as a “democratic” cover for counterrevolution. After it convened on 5 January 1918, the Assembly refused to recognize Soviet authority; the Bolshevik delegates walked out and

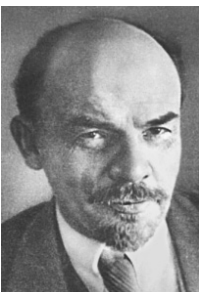
the body was dissolved by the Soviet government. Drawing on the lessons of the Russian Revolution and other historical experiences of the workers movement, we Marxists reject the call for constituent assemblies, which is a call for a new capitalist government.

The October Revolution, by giving power to the Soviets, and through the Soviets to the working and exploited classes, aroused the desperate resistance of the exploiters, and in the crushing of this resistance it fully revealed itself as the beginning of the socialist revolution. The working classes learned by experience that the old bourgeois parliamentary system had outlived its purpose and was absolutely incompatible with the aim of achieving socialism, and that not national institutions, but only class institutions (such as the Soviets) were capable of overcoming the resistance of the propertied classes and of laying the foundations of socialist society. To relinquish the sovereign power of the Soviets, to relinquish the Soviet Republic won by the people, for the sake of the bourgeois parliamentary system and the Constituent Assembly, would now be a step backwards and would cause the collapse of the October workers’ and peasants’ revolution....

The Right Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties are in fact carrying on outside the Constituent Assembly a most desperate struggle against Soviet power, calling openly in their press for its overthrow and describing as arbitrary and unlawful the crushing of the resistance of the exploiters by the forces of the working classes, which is essential in the interests of emancipation from exploitation. They are defending the saboteurs, the servants of capital, and are going as far as undisguised calls to terrorism, which certain “unidentified groups” have already begun. It is obvious that under such circumstances the remaining part of the Constituent Assembly could only serve as a screen for the struggle of the counter-revolutionaries to overthrow Soviet power.

Accordingly, the Central Executive Committee resolves that the Constituent Assembly is hereby dissolved.

—V.I. Lenin, “Draft Decree on the Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly” (6 January 1918)



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD



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SPARTACIST

Marxismo e Parlamentarismo Burguês

Por que rejeitamos a demanda por uma “assembleia constituinte”

Tradução do espanhol realizado por espanhóis e, de agosto de 2017, do inglês do Comitê Executivo Internacional do Liga Comunista Revolucionária (Quarta Internacionalista)
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Our comrade Bonnie Breen died in New York City at the age of 63 after a prolonged illness. Her death is a painful blow to comrades around the world. A longtime leading cadre of the International Communist League, Bonnie was greatly respected: a hard-working communist and a tenacious character who rejected the idea of mellowing with age.

Bonnie was born in Sacramento into a religious Christian Science family and broke from her upbringing. From a young age, the genocide of Native Americans sparked her social conscience and burning hatred of the crimes of the U.S. government. Like many of her generation, Bonnie was radicalized by the Vietnam antiwar movement, the Black Panthers' fight against racial oppression and the struggles for women's sexual freedom and social equality. Recruited as a campus activist at UC Berkeley in 1974, Bonnie, unlike most New Leftists, stayed true to the ideals of her youth and devoted her entire life to the fight for socialism.

Bonnie was red in tooth and claw—one of the ICL's finest polemicists. In 1985, after the spectacular blowup of the British Healyites, pretenders to orthodox Trotskyism, Bonnie was selected to be on a team with more senior comrades to interview Jim Robertson and other 1966 London Conference participants on our definitive rupture with Gerry Healy two decades earlier (see "Healyism Implodes," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 36-37, Winter 1985-86). A short list of Bonnie's greatest hits can be found in issues of our *Hate Trotskyism*, *Hate the Spartacist League* pamphlet series. Just as everything V.I. Lenin wrote was a polemic against false ideas and organizations that were roadblocks on the path to proletarian state power, so too the ICL exposes our opponents claiming to be Trotskyist, including by reprinting their polemics against us.

Bonnie wrote the 1984 article, "Marxism and Bloodthirstiness" (reprinted in *Hate Trotskyism*, *Hate the Spartacist League* No. 5: "The Bolshevik Tendency"), which stakes out the Marxist position that we are for the victory of just causes and the defeat of imperialism, but do not groove on the deaths of American soldiers sent to die for the U.S. ruling class. Year after year, Bonnie led our intervention at the U.S. Socialist Workers Party annual summer camp, engaging the few subjectively revolutionary elements there and often scoring that organization's internal bulletins. Bonnie was also the main author of the 1990 *Hate* bulletin produced by the Spartacist League/Britain and the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group against Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group. This pamphlet is a must-read for anyone seeking to understand the Russian Question and what it meant to be Soviet defensists in a period when Cold War II burned white-hot.

After her recruitment, Bonnie went on to be a Spartacist organizer in Boston and Cleveland. She rocketed to the leading national body of the Spartacus Youth League, serving as national organizational secretary and then editor of the monthly *Young Spartacus*. Our treaty on youth-party relations, modeled on the Bolsheviks' work among youth, provided for an exchange of representatives on leading bodies. Bonnie was elected by the youth organization as its full representative on the Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee. She was a central participant in the struggles to hammer out a correct political line for the youth organization on many important questions—including mobilizing against fascist terror, driving CIA/NSA and military recruiters off campus, intervening in campus divestment struggles, and combating the racist rollback of affirmative action in university admissions as part of our fight for open admissions and free tuition.

In the time-honored tradition of communist youth organizations making periodic forays into ultraleft sectarianism, Bonnie and the national youth leadership (as well as the party reps) had to be won away from a position that distorted the united-front tactic. They had insisted that other organizations must agree with our defense of the Soviet Union to engage in joint actions against U.S. imperialism in Central America in the 1980s. The fights to correct such errors are valuable parts of our party's revolutionary continuity.

In 1978, the party waged a fight against the jocu-

Bonnie Breen



WV Photo



1954–2017

larly named "cloned youth"—a layer of young male intellectuals who imbibed the alien bourgeois values of great male "thinkers" served by female "doers." Bonnie was one of several "earnest young women" whose symbiotic relationship with the "clones" was inimical to the Spartacist League's conscious policy to develop leading women and black cadre. But Bonnie was won over, hard, and through this fight became a younger peer of the senior party leadership. One party rep to the youth press recalls that Bonnie was the best and most enjoyable of many *Young Spartacus* editors he worked with because she did not bow to power, nor was she subjective or defensive. She cared most about achieving political clarity.

SL/U.S. National Chairman Jim Robertson motivated a battlefield promotion for Bonnie as a full member of the Central Committee in 1986 for her stand-out role in combating instances of party passivity in the face of rising fascist activity and fighting political liquidation. Later that year, Bonnie was transferred to Britain to help lead the section in the wake of the collapse of its leadership, which had indicated a willingness to support Labour Party traitor Neil Kinnock in upcoming elections. Bonnie took over as editor of *Workers Hammer* and wrote the savage polemics exposing Kinnock as "Thatcher's poodle" and giving voice to the angry coal miners and other proletarian sectors that had been stabbed in the back by Her Majesty's Labour leaders.

Bonnie was a night owl on the prowl in the party office wherever she was stationed in the world. Her nocturnal habits and organizational skills positioned her to carry out a key task during the ICL's 1989-90 intervention in the nascent political revolution in East Germany—from London. As there were no accessible phone lines from East Germany to West Germany, teams of Spartacist comrades in the East would make late-night calls to Bonnie in London, and she would then relay their reports and needs to a Spartacist organizer in West Berlin. Hours later, Berlin-based comrades would give boxes of our propaganda weapon, *Spartakist-Arbeiterpressekorespondenz*, to train conductors and ask them to toss a carton from the train in Eisenhüttenstadt or wherever Bonnie reported that there were potential recruits to the Spartakist-Gruppen waiting to use our literature to fight capitalist reunification of Germany.

Bonnie became an alternate member of the ICL's International Executive Committee in 1992. She transferred to Australia, where in 1993 she became

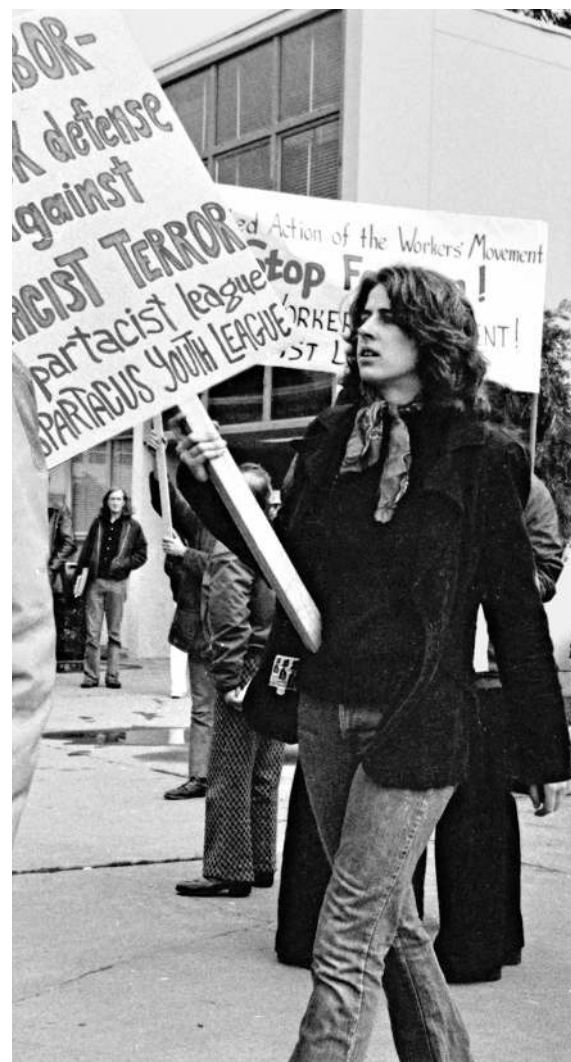
editor of *Australasian Spartacist* and subsequently the central leader of the section. An Australian comrade wrote: "Bonnie had a lasting effect on raising the understanding of the section here, and by extension internationally, as to the horrendous legacy and hideous present of Aboriginal oppression and the role of this question in the battle for social revolution." Bonnie fought to win the section to champion even partial victories in the Aboriginal struggle to claw back some of their land and/or wrest compensation.

In 1996, Bonnie moved back to the United States, where she worked closely with *Workers Vanguard*, remaining on its Editorial Board until her death. She went off the IEC in 1998, but was re-elected to that body as an alternate member in 2003, briefly serving in the International Secretariat. In 2004, she became a full member of the SL/U.S. Central Committee and was part of the Political Bureau for several years. Bonnie played a crucial role in working with young writers and paid special attention to training the editors of the *Young Spartacus* pages of *Workers Vanguard*. Her death evoked an outpouring of grief and tributes from former youth editors who closely worked with her. One comrade recounted how she "despised those who pretended to know more than they did, and had great fun expressing this."

Bonnie's sense of humor was forceful and angular, but also dry and ironic. She was keenly attuned to the world of bourgeois politics, in all its absurdity and hypocrisy, and was a news junkie. Bonnie had a stubborn, adventurous and independent spirit. She was also known for her keen sense of fashion. In recent years, Bonnie's health deteriorated, and she left the SL/U.S. Central Committee in 2015 and the IEC earlier this year.

Already seriously ill, she was hit hard by the death of comrade Ed Cliffel in September. They were close friends who enjoyed feisty arguments—suitably lubricated with copious quantities of vodka, wine and cigarettes. Her last contribution to the party was a written remembrance of Ed.

Ever unbowing to convention, Bonnie lived the life she wanted and devoted herself to the cause of international proletarian socialist revolution. We honor her and miss her.



Young Spartacus

Bonnie at united-front demonstration initiated by Spartacus Youth League against Nazis at San Francisco State University, April 1975.

Ireland: Water Charges Protesters Acquitted!

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Hammer* No. 239 (Autumn 2017), publication of the *Spartacist League/Britain*, section of the *International Communist League*. Since the publication of the article, charges were dropped against the remaining eleven adult defendants. On December 4, Jason Lester, who was 15 at the time of his arrest, won his appeal to overturn his conviction.

WORKERS HAMMER

DUBLIN—Cheers broke out in a Dublin courtroom on 29 June when a jury unanimously returned a not guilty verdict in the trial of six protesters outrageously charged with the “false imprisonment” of then-Tánaiste (deputy prime minister) and Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton and her adviser Karen O’Connell in November 2014. The charges arose from a protest in Jobstown, Tallaght, a suburb of Dublin, against the Irish capitalist government’s attempts to introduce charges for domestic water use—a regressive tax which disproportionately impacts working-class families. During the protest, a number of people had sat down on the road in front of the Tánaiste’s car. This simple act of civil disobedience, which allegedly delayed Burton and O’Connell for a couple of hours, was the basis for the bogus charge of false imprisonment. Carrying a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, the charge is normally applied in cases of kidnapping or rape—it had never before been used against protesters.

Upon walking free from court, the acquitted protesters—Michael Banks, Frank Donaghy, Kieran Mahon, Scott Masterson, Michael Murphy and Paul Murphy (as well as a seventh man, Ken Purcell, the charges against whom were dropped towards the end of the prosecution case)—were greeted with cheers and chants of “No way! We won’t pay!” Paul Murphy is a TD [member of Irish Parliament] for Solidarity (formerly the Anti-Austerity Alliance), the electoral vehicle of the reformist Socialist Party, and both Kieran Mahon and Michael Murphy are Solidarity councillors, while Masterson is an activist with the left-wing Republican group Éirígí. The Partisan Defence Committee, a legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League, wrote to the Irish Department of Justice and Equality denouncing the prosecution of the Jobstown protesters and made a contribution to the Jobstown Not Guilty campaign. We welcome the not guilty verdict, which was a resounding victory for the right to protest and an embarrassing defeat for the government.

However, another eleven protesters are still facing trial, nine of them on these very same bogus charges. Moreover, several juveniles have been hauled before the non-jury Children’s Court on various charges arising from the Jobstown protest. A 16-year-old received a six-month prison sentence after being convicted of damaging a window of an unmarked police car. Last year, a judge convicted a 17-year-old, who was only 15 at the time of the protest, of false imprisonment. Although he

did not receive a custodial sentence, the young man now has a criminal conviction hanging around his neck. **We demand the dropping of all outstanding charges and the immediate overturn of the juveniles’ convictions!**

The acquitted Jobstown defendants were fortunate to be tried by a jury and not a non-jury court like the Special Criminal Court. The Irish ruling class has long used the Special Criminal Court to imprison those it perceives as “enemies of the state,” especially Irish Republicans, and recently opened a second such court, despite the relative lack of major Republican activity. The courts, the police, prisons and military are the core of the



Press Association

Dublin: Jobstown defendants outside courthouse after not guilty verdict, June 29.

capitalist state, which exists to defend the rule and wealth of the bourgeoisie. Trial by a jury “of one’s peers” is nonetheless a democratic right which can provide a modicum of protection against capitalist despotism. **Abolish non-jury trials!**

The heavy-handed prosecution of the Jobstown protesters reflects the determination of the Irish ruling class to retaliate against activists involved in the massive years-long protests which beat back the attempt to introduce water charges. Protests against water charges drew in wide layers of society, from farmers to the working class and even the urban middle classes. Many of the national protests were huge, with demonstrations in Dublin bringing the city to a standstill. The government was forced to back down and not only scrap the water charges but also refund those who had paid.

Water charges were part of the punitive austerity measures dictated by the “troika” of the EU’s European Commission and European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after the economic crisis of 2008. The troika insisted that domestic water supplies should no longer be funded from general taxation, but that each household should be charged individually. Successive governments showed their willingness to carry out EU orders “above and beyond the call of duty.” The bourgeois Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael parties got stuck in [enthusiastic], slashing public sector pay, unemployment benefits, welfare payments and child benefits and depriving thousands of free medical care (see “Ireland Ravaged by European Economic Crisis,” *Workers Hammer* No. 213, Winter 2010–2011). In 2011, the Labour Party entered

government with Fine Gael and betrayed the hopes of its working-class base that it would moderate the bourgeoisie’s austerity drive. Instead, Labour ministers like Joan Burton quickly earned themselves reputations as “austerity junkies” and worse.

Water charges came on top of other recently imposed regressive taxes, including bin [garbage collection] charges and a property tax. The amounts involved in these taxes were insignificant for the wealthy but truly onerous for workers. The Irish ruling class relished the opportunity to shift even more taxes onto working people while preserving Ireland’s deserved reputation as a tax haven for the bourgeoisie and multinational companies.

The EU is an imperialist bloc led by Germany which subjugates dependent European countries such as Ireland, Greece, Portugal and those of Eastern Europe. It serves to co-ordinate attacks on the working class and immigrants all across Europe. Consistent with the EU’s drive to privatise any and all public services, the government established a semi-state company, Irish Water, laying the basis for future privatisation. Having already privatised refuse collection across Ireland, the EU and the government are now targeting public transport. **Down with the EU! For a workers Europe!**

Capitalist State: Enemy of Workers and Oppressed

The Jobstown protesters were especially targeted by the state because they were mostly working-class and several were leftists. Prior to and during the trial, the government and their thugs-in-blue made it very clear that they wanted all defendants thrown in prison. Just two days after the protest, then-Taoiseach (prime minister) Enda Kenny stated that the protest “almost amounted to kidnapping.” The arrests were carried out in dawn raids. One man was arrested while getting his kids ready for school; three squad cars full of cops were involved in the arrest of a 14-year-old. Paul Murphy rightly pointed out that communities were “being terrorised by the actions of gardaí” (Irish police).

The bourgeois media also made it very clear that they stood with the government. The *Irish Times* was positively sickened by the not guilty verdicts. Throughout the trial, the defendants and their supporters had taken to social media to counter the lies and disinformation of the prosecution and its media mouthpieces. Aiming to forestall such successful defence tactics in the upcoming trial of another six defendants, the trial judge, Melanie Grealley, issued a sinister warning “that there is no right for anyone to express themselves over social media in relation to an ongoing trial” (*Irish Independent*, 28 July). Judge Grealley has even threatened to alter bail conditions to include a ban on the use of social media in relation to the trial. **No to any gagging orders!**

Throughout the trial, Gardaí were caught out giving evidence that was contradicted by video footage. Indeed, the “evidence” given by the cops was so dubious that the judge even had to advise the jury that the video footage “be regarded by you as the primary and most reliable source.” While the police witnesses tried

to portray Paul Murphy, in particular, as a thuggish ringleader egging on a supposedly violent crowd, the video showed him attempting to calm down the protesters.

It is no surprise to Marxists that the cops would so openly attempt to stitch [frame] up anybody resisting the diktats of capitalist rule. The capitalist state is not some neutral arbiter between the interests of the different classes but exists to enforce the rule of the bourgeoisie. The role of the cops includes breaking strikes and terrorising the oppressed. The cops regularly target Republicans and mete out brutal violence against the homeless, immigrants (or anybody deemed “foreign”) and Travellers [a historically itinerant ethnic group]. In late June, a unit of Gardaí armed with assault rifles stormed a Traveller halting site in North Dublin. The residents, including young teenagers, had guns pointed at their heads and were handcuffed and forced to lie on the ground. These events only came to light because one of the residents and victims was John Connors, a well-known actor and social activist. As another resident aptly put it, the cops treated the Travellers “like dogs.”

The Socialist Party actively conceal the class nature of the capitalist state, even when their own supporters are on the receiving end of its repression. At a press conference the day after his acquittal, TD Paul Murphy called for the Minister for Justice to establish “a public inquiry to ask the question about how did this conspiracy take place” to stitch up the Jobstown protesters. Even a liberal commentator like Fintan O’Toole recognised that “there is a much more obvious explanation” for the prosecutions than a political conspiracy. “It’s social class,” he pointed out in the *Irish Times* (4 July), further noting: “Prisons are mostly for the poor.”

The Socialist Party claim the police and prison guards are “workers in uniform” that should be part of the trade union movement. They even went so far as to call for support to a threatened “strike” in October 2016 by the ominous Garda Representative Association (GRA), which represents over 10,000 cops (see “Ireland: CWI Hustles for Cops,” *Workers Hammer* No. 238, Spring 2017). In addition to demanding more cops and higher pay, the GRA has campaigned for more widespread use of weapons, including Tasers and submachine guns. The government quickly acquiesced to the demands of its thugs, handing over €50 million for pay increases and, within months, launching a new Armed Support Unit. Cops and prison guards don’t belong in the unions!

The Socialist Party’s touching faith in the guard dogs of the capitalist rulers flows from their reformist programme. They seek to use the mass protests against water charges, bin charges, property tax, etc., to bring about “a left government.” No matter how “left” it might be, any government established through a bourgeois parliament would still be a capitalist government and would be responsible for overseeing the exploitation and oppression inherent to the capitalist system. As Karl Marx explained in his analysis of the Paris Commune of 1871, the first seizure of power by the proletariat, “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes” (*The Civil War in France*, 1871).

The only way to justice and liberation for the workers and oppressed is through socialist revolution led by the advanced layers of the proletariat organised in a revolutionary party and involving the formation of workers councils (soviets) and workers militias. Such a revolution, like the Russian October Revolution of 1917, would sweep away the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, expropriate their wealth and establish the rule of the working class: a workers state that would suppress the former ruling class and fight for the spread of the revolution internationally. **For an Irish workers republic, part of a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles! ■**

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Partisan Defense Committee

The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League.

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

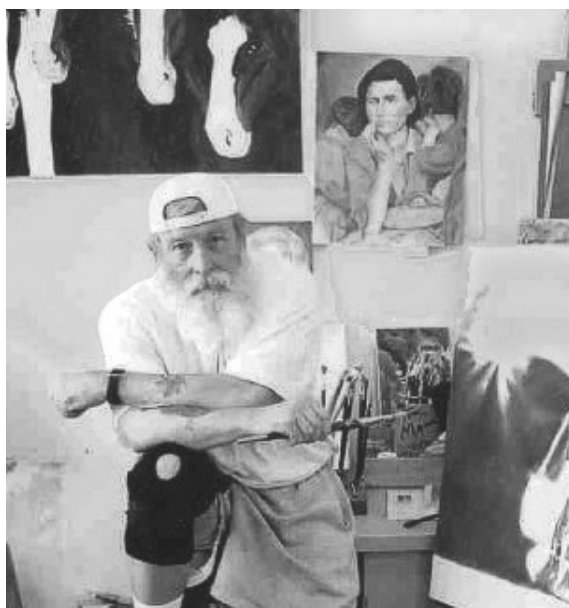
32nd Annual Holiday Appeal

Free the Class-War Prisoners!

This year's Holiday Appeal marks the 32nd year of the Partisan Defense Committee's program of sending monthly stipends as an expression of solidarity to those imprisoned for standing up to racist capitalist repression and imperialist depredation. This program revived a tradition initiated by the International Labor Defense under James P. Cannon, its founder and first secretary (1925-28). This year's events will pay tribute to a former stipend recipient, Lynne Stewart, who succumbed to the effects of metastasized breast cancer last March. A courageous radical lawyer who defended numerous poor people and fighters for the oppressed, including the Ohio 7, Stewart had been incarcerated for her vigorous defense of a fundamentalist sheik who was convicted in an alleged plot to blow up New York City landmarks. We honor her by keeping up the fight for the freedom of all class-war prisoners. The PDC currently sends stipends to 12 class-war prisoners.

* * *

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a former Black Panther Party spokesman, a well-known supporter of the MOVE organization and an award-winning journalist known as "the voice of the voiceless." Framed up for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia police officer, Mumia was sentenced to death explicitly for his political views. Federal and state courts have repeatedly refused to consider evidence proving Mumia's innocence, including the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed the policeman. In 2011 the Philadelphia district attorney's office dropped its longstanding effort to legally lynch Mumia, condemning him to life in prison with no chance of parole. Last year attorneys for Mumia filed a petition under Pennsylvania's Post Conviction Relief Act (PCRA) seeking to overturn the denial of his three prior PCRA claims by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. If successful, he would be granted a new hearing before that court to argue for reversal of his frame-up conviction. On September 7, Judge Leon Tucker ordered a private review of the complete file of the prosecution by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office of Mumia's case, looking for evidence of the



Facebook

personal involvement of then D.A. Ronald Castille, whose refusal as a judge to recuse himself during Mumia's PA Supreme Court appeal is the basis for this PCRA. After a two-year battle, Mumia was finally able to begin lifesaving treatment for hepatitis C. In May, lab tests showed that he was free of this life-threatening illness. But the drawn-out period during which he was refused treatment left him with an increased risk of liver cancer.

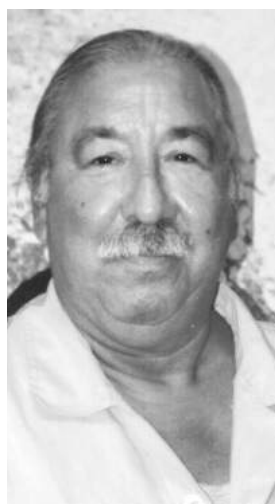
Leonard Peltier is an internationally renowned class-war prisoner. Peltier's incarceration for his activism in the American Indian Movement has come to symbolize this country's racist repression of its Native peoples, the survivors of centuries of genocidal oppression. Peltier was framed up for the 1975 deaths of two FBI agents marauding in what had become a war zone on the South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation. The lead government attorney has admitted, "We can't prove who shot those agents," and the courts have repeatedly denied Peltier's appeals while acknowledging blatant prosecutorial misconduct. Before leaving office, Barack Obama rejected Peltier's request for clemency. The 73-year-old Peltier is not scheduled for another parole hearing for another seven years. Peltier suffers from multiple serious medical conditions including a heart condition for which he had to undergo triple bypass surgery. He is incarcerated far from his people and family.

Seven MOVE members—**Chuck Africa, Michael Africa, Debbie Africa, Janet Africa, Janine Africa, Delbert Africa and Eddie Africa**—are in their 40th year of prison. After the 8 August 1978 siege of their Philadelphia home by over 600 heavily armed cops, they were sentenced to 30-100 years, having been falsely convicted of killing a police officer who died in the cops' own cross fire. In 1985, eleven of their MOVE family members, including five children, were massacred by Philly cops when a bomb was dropped on their living quarters. Collectively known as the MOVE 9, two of their number, Merle Africa and Phil Africa, died in prison under suspicious circumstances. After nearly four decades of unjust incarceration, these innocent prisoners are routinely turned down at parole hearings.

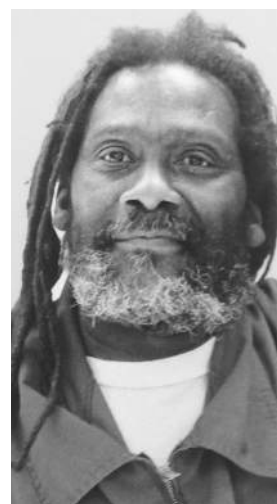
Jaan Laaman and Thomas Manning are the two remaining anti-imperialist activists known as the Ohio 7 still in prison, convicted for their roles in a radical group



L'Humanité



whoisleonardpeltier.info



Justice for the MOVE 9

Left: Thomas Manning at Leavenworth Prison, with his paintings. Above (left to right): Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier and Eddie Africa.

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. Before their arrests in 1984 and 1985, the Ohio 7 were targets of massive manhunts. Now Laaman and Manning face prison torture where they are isolated in solitary confinement for extended periods. Manning has been deprived of necessary medical attention. The Ohio 7's politics were once shared by thousands of radicals but, like the Weathermen before them, the Ohio 7 were spurned by the "respectable" left. From a proletarian standpoint, the actions of these leftist activists against imperialism and racist injustice are not crimes. They should not have served a day in prison.

Ed Poindexter is a former Black Panther supporter and leader of the Omaha, Nebraska, National Committee to Combat Fascism. He and his former co-defendant, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa, who

died in prison last year, were victims of the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO operation, under which 38 Black Panther Party members were killed and hundreds more imprisoned on frame-up charges. They were railroaded to prison and sentenced to life for a 1970 explosion that killed a cop, and Poindexter has now spent more than 45 years behind bars. Nebraska courts have repeatedly denied Poindexter a new trial despite the fact that crucial evidence, long suppressed by the FBI, proved that testimony of the state's key witness was perjured.

Contribute now! All proceeds from the Holiday Appeal events will go to the Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund. This is not charity but an elementary act of solidarity with those imprisoned for their opposition to racist capitalism and imperialist depredation. Send your contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013; (212) 406-4252. ■

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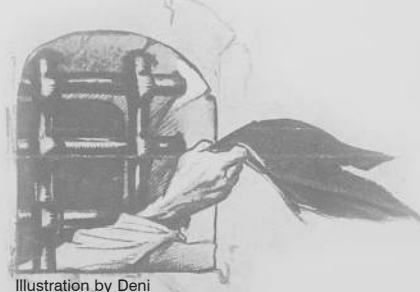


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Partisan Defense Committee

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

Number 40 50c Fall 2017

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Spartacist League/PDC contingent at anti-fascist protest in Berkeley, August 27.

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Left: 18 June 1917 demonstration demands “All Power to the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants!” and “Down With the Capitalist Ministers!” Right: October 1918 meeting of the Council of People’s Commissars in the Kremlin, chaired by V.I. Lenin (center).

We print below the second part of a presentation, edited for publication, given by Spartacist League speaker Diana Coleman at a November 4 forum in Chicago. Part One appeared in WV No. 1123 (1 December).

PART TWO

The first Provisional Government, which was established after the February Revolution, was brought down by the uproar over its pledge to continue the hated imperialist war. A new cabinet was formed on May 5. This time Socialist-Revolutionary (SR) Party and Menshevik leaders in the soviets (councils of workers’ soldiers’ and peasants’ deputies that arose in the wake of the February Revolution) took ministerial posts, alongside the bourgeois Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) Party, in the capitalist government. Trotsky later called this Russian coalition government “the greatest historical example of the Popular Front” (“The POUM and the Popular Front,” July 1936).

The popular front was the name that the Stalinists would use, starting in the 1930s, to designate their coalition government betrayals. In South Africa it’s called the Tripartite Alliance. Such class collaboration is not a tactic but the greatest betrayal! When a workers party enters a popular front with capitalist parties, whether in government or in opposition, it is a pledge by the traitorous working-class leaders that they will not violate the bourgeois order; in fact, they’ll defend it.

The mood in Petrograd was changing in favor of the Bolsheviks, who had a near majority in the factories. In early June when a demonstration called by the Bolsheviks was banned by the Menshevik/SR-led Soviet, the Bolsheviks stood down and called it off. The conciliationist Soviet leadership then called a demonstration on June 18, but to their horror the workers came out en masse under Bolshevik slogans, including: “Down with the offensive!” “All power to the soviets!” and “Down with the ten capitalist ministers!”

Trotsky was now back in Russia and, finally understanding the need for a hard

Leninist party, was working closely with Lenin. In response to the coalition government, Lenin and Trotsky devised the slogan, “Down with the ten capitalist ministers!” It meant: break the coalition with the capitalists; the soviets should take all the power!

By early July, Petrograd was in semi-insurrection. Workers and soldiers infuriated by the coalition government, now led by Alexander Kerensky, were demanding “All power to the Soviet!” In his *History of the Russian Revolution* (1932), Trotsky vividly quotes an eyewitness who saw Victor Chernov, an SR minister, trying to speak to a crowd of workers and soldiers: “A husky worker shaking his fist in the face of the minister, shouted furiously: ‘Take the power, you son-of-a-bitch, when they give it to you!’”

But the conciliationists didn’t want the power! This is very different from the Bolsheviks. Speaking at the First Congress of Soviets in June 1917, Lenin called for a Soviet government and asserted: “According to the previous speaker...there

was no political party in Russia expressing its readiness to assume full power. I reply: ‘Yes, there is. No party can refuse this, and our Party certainly doesn’t’” (“Speech on the Attitude Towards the Provisional Government,” 4 June 1917).

The Bolsheviks were worried that a July insurrection in the cities was premature, that it would not be backed by the peasantry, and thus it would be impossible for the workers to hold power. But after initially opposing the July demonstrations, the Bolshevik leadership decided that it was better to go with the masses and try to provide leadership and prevent a premature insurrection. The Bolshevik estimation was correct, and after the demonstrations, a period of severe repression followed. Bolsheviks were killed, Trotsky was arrested and Lenin went into hiding. The repression, however, did make clear to the workers the true nature of this popular-front government—that it was nothing other than the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

While in hiding, Lenin devoted what he thought might be his last days to writing *The State and Revolution*. He argued that while the bourgeoisie uses lies to hide its dictatorship, the truth is that the state is not a neutral arbiter above classes. He defended Friedrich Engels’ understanding that the core of the state is armed bodies of men—the military, prisons and police—who hold a monopoly of violence over society. These instruments exist for the social domination by the ruling class—under capitalism, the rule of the bourgeoisie.

Lenin’s pamphlet codifies a central lesson of revolutionary struggle: that the proletariat cannot take over the bourgeois state to wield it in the interests of the working class. Rather, the proletariat must smash the old state machinery, create a new state and impose its own class rule—the dictatorship of the proletariat—to suppress and expropriate the capitalist exploiters. As you can see, this was not an abstract discussion but a part of an ongoing political debate. There was supposed to be a seventh chapter of *The State and Revolution*, but Lenin had to stop writing and go back to Petrograd to

actually lead the revolution. As he noted in a postscript: “It is more pleasant and useful to go through the ‘experience of the revolution’ than to write about it.”

By August, the bourgeoisie had realized that only a military coup could stop the revolution and called on the commander-in-chief of the army, General Kornilov, to crush the soviets. Kornilov was a monarchist general of the anti-Jewish “Black Hundred” type. Trotsky notes that Kornilov had the heart of a lion and the brain of a sheep. The conciliationist soviet tops were paralyzed in response to the counterrevolutionary offensive, but the masses rallied around the Bolshevik-organized united-front action that stopped Kornilov in his tracks.

Lenin was very clear:

“*Even now* we must not support Kerensky’s government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren’t we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course we must! But this is not the same thing; there is a dividing line here, which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who fall into compromise and allow themselves to be *carried away* by the course of events.

“We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, *just as* Kerensky’s *troops* do, but we do not support Kerensky. *On the contrary*, we expose his weakness.”

Lenin was also very clear on the war even though by this time the German army was approaching Petrograd: “We shall become defencists *only after* the transfer of power to the proletariat” (“To the Central Committee of the RSDLP,” 30 August 1917).

It is also worth noting that a victory for Kornilov would have meant not only a slaughter of the pro-Bolshevik masses, but would also have been fatal for many of the compromisers as well. The failed coup showed that bourgeois democracy, as represented by the Provisional Government, was not viable in the historical sense in Russia in 1917. The real choices were represented by the Bolsheviks on the one hand and Kornilov and the forces of military reaction on the other.

Toward the Seizure of Power

A crucial corner had been turned by the beginning of September. The masses were



VAAP

Bourgeois Provisional Government troops seize Bolshevik headquarters in Petrograd as part of wave of repression following July Days.

convinced that the old soviet misleaders were politically bankrupt and that only the Bolsheviks would take decisive action to end the war, stop capitalist sabotage of the economy and lead the soviets to power. The general staff of the army was no longer capable of mobilizing military units against revolutionary Petrograd. The countryside was aflame as returning peasant soldiers seized the landlords' fields and torched their huge mansions. On September 4, Trotsky was released from prison, and by the 23rd he was elected chairman of the Petrograd Soviet.

The Bolsheviks finally had solid majorities in the Moscow and Petrograd Soviets. Trotsky declared, "Long live the direct and open struggle for a revolutionary power throughout the country!" The bourgeoisie and the conciliationists tried some parliamentary diversions—the Democratic Conference and the Pre-Parliament—but it was too late for that. The crucial upcoming event was the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which was very popular with the masses because it was sure to have a Bolshevik majority.

The first showdown in the Bolshevik leadership over the insurrection was the famous central committee meeting of October 10, where the insurrection was voted up ten votes to two—Gregory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev voted against. As Trotsky wrote: "Whatever remains in the party that is irresolute, skeptical, conciliationist, capitulatory—in short Menshevik—all this rises to the surface in opposition to the insurrection" (*Lessons of October*, 1924). The resolution, as is typical of Lenin, starts with the international situation, that is, the ripening of world revolution; the insurrection in Russia is regarded as a link in the chain. The idea of having socialism in one country was not in anyone's mind then, even Stalin's.

Alexander Rabinowitch, in *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (1976), tells a funny story about this meeting which had to be held secretly because Lenin was still subject to arrest:

"By an ironic twist of fate the gathering was to be held in the apartment of the left Menshevik Sukhanov.... But on this occasion Sukhanov was not in attendance. His wife, Galina Flakserman, a Bolshevik activist since 1905...had offered...the use of the Sukhanov flat, should the need arise."

Rabinowitch continues:

"For her part, Flakserman insured that her meddlesome husband would remain away on this historic night. 'The weather is wretched, and you must promise not to try to make it all the way back home tonight,' she had counseled solicitously as he departed for work early that morning."

He must have been irritated to miss this meeting.

So, after this decisive resolution, the workers were arming, drilling, setting up the Red Guards. Workers at the weapons factories were funneling weapons directly to the Red Guards. But there were still differences in the leadership. There was another meeting on October 16, where Lenin again argued for insurrection and Kamenev and Zinoviev again voted against it. Then Kamenev and Zinoviev

got a public statement printed in a non-Bolshevik newspaper opposing the insurrection. Lenin called them strikebreakers and demanded their expulsion from the party. Luckily for them, the revolution intervened. Stalin voted with Lenin for insurrection but defended Kamenev and Zinoviev and minimized the differences. He was keeping his options open in case the revolution didn't come off.

A decisive step toward the seizure of power came when the Petrograd Soviet, at the behest of the Bolsheviks, invalidated an order by Kerensky to transfer two-thirds of the Petrograd garrison to the front. Trotsky noted:

"The moment when the regiments, upon the instructions of the [Soviet] Military Revolutionary Committee, refused to depart from the city, we had a victorious insurrection in the capital, only slightly screened at the top by the remnants of the bourgeois-democratic state forms. The insurrection of October 25 was only supplementary in character."
—*Lessons of October*

The Seizure of Power

On October 24, Kerensky foolishly tried to shut down the Bolshevik newspaper. The Military Revolutionary Committee immediately sent a detachment to reopen it and also to start taking over the telephone exchange and other key centers. Even at this point Lenin was frustrated with the lack of progress of the insurrection and went in disguise to the Bolshevik headquarters at the Smolny Institute to oversee preparations person-



Yakov Steinberg

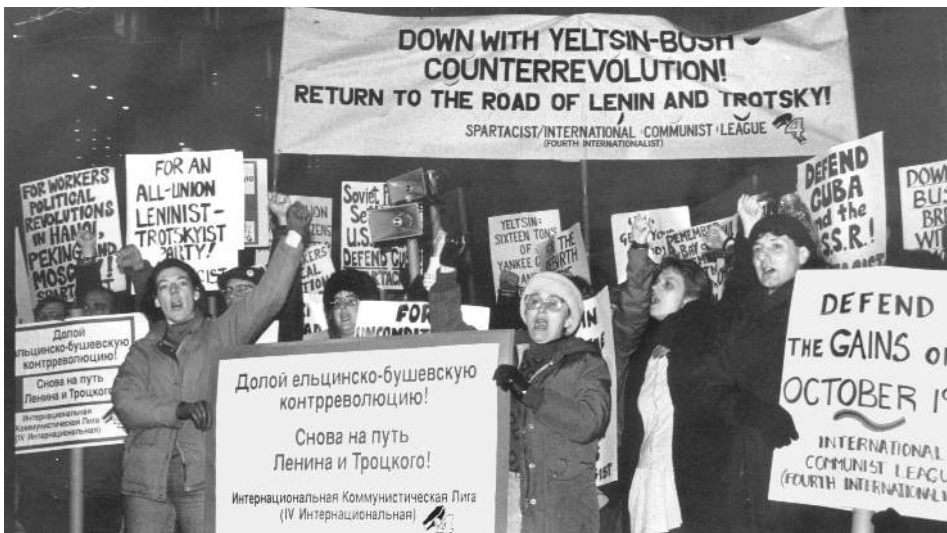
Petrograd, October 1917: Putilov factory workers militia in shooting exercises.

ally. One Bolshevik remembered that Lenin "paced around a small room at Smolny like a lion in a cage. He needed the Winter Palace at any cost: it remained the last gate on the road to workers' power. V. I. scolded...he screamed...he was ready to shoot us" (Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*).

Kerensky, by the way, escaped in the safety of a diplomatic vehicle flying the American flag. He wound up here in the U.S., home to counterrevolutionary *gusanos* of all varieties, at the Hoover Institution at Stanford. There he wrote and lectured about how to fight communism—something which he hadn't done too well in life.

The cruiser *Aurora* was firing on the Winter Palace when the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened. Lenin got up and opened his speech with the famous sentence: "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order." The three-point agenda was: end the war, give land to the peasants and establish the socialist dictatorship. The Bolsheviks' proclamations were punctuated by the steady boom of Red naval artillery directed against the government holdouts in the Winter Palace, which was finally taken.

As we've seen, the soviets by themselves do not settle the question of power. They can serve different programs and leaderships. As Trotsky wrote in *Lessons of October*, "Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer." At the opening session of the Congress of Soviets, the Mensheviks and the right-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries were enraged that the Bolsheviks had taken power and walked out. Trotsky basically said "Good riddance!"



WV Photo

ICL defended Soviet degenerated workers state against capitalist restoration. January 1992 protest by the Spartacist League outside Federal Reserve Bank where Boris Yeltsin met with Wall Street paymasters.

Consistent with their opposition to the seizure of power, the right wing of the Bolshevik Party leadership around Zinoviev and Kamenev argued for a coalition government. They had to back down when it became clear that there was nobody to form a coalition with. Far from wanting to help run a workers state, the Mensheviks and SRs immediately started organizing a counterrevolutionary uprising against the Bolsheviks, which was quickly suppressed.

Let me state as a general rule that it is a bad idea to seek a coalition with those who are actively trying to overthrow the work-

the banks, restarting industry and laying the foundations of the new soviet state.

On November 15, the new Soviet government issued the "Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia," putting forward the following principles: equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia, the right of self-determination up to secession and formation of a separate state, abolition of all national and religious privileges, and the free development of all national and ethnic groups inhabiting Russia. Trotsky comments in his *History of the Russian Revolution*:

"The bourgeoisie of the border nations entered the road of separatism in the autumn of 1917, not in a struggle against national oppression, but in a struggle against the advancing proletarian revolution. In the sum total, the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations manifested no less hostility to the revolution than the Great Russian bourgeoisie."

True enough, and certainly the local bourgeoisie of various border areas were willing lackeys of the imperialist powers, including of course the U.S., which tried to overturn the Russian Revolution. But this is why Lenin's position on the national question spoke so powerfully to the working masses. What he wanted was a *voluntary union* of nations. Writing in December 1919 about the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Lenin said:

"Regarding it as beyond dispute for every Communist and for every politically-conscious worker that the closest alliance of all Soviet republics in their struggle against the menacing forces of world imperialism is essential, the R.C.P. [Russian Communist Party] maintains that the form of that alliance must be finally determined by the Ukrainian workers and labouring peasants themselves."
—"Draft Resolution of the C.C., R.C.P.(B.) on Soviet Rule in the Ukraine"

The question of national divisions does not go away the day after the socialist revolution, but only in the more distant communist future. The idea that the national question was no longer an issue was defeated in the debate in 1919 over the Russian party program. Actually, it was another go-around with those who had proposed "imperialist economism" before the revolution (see Part One of this presentation).

The party program asserted not only that "the colonial and other nations which are oppressed, or whose rights are restricted, must be completely liberated and granted the right to secede." It also emphasized that "the workers of those nations which under capitalism were oppressor nations must take exceptional care not to hurt the national sentiments of the oppressed nations...and must not only promote the actual equality, but also the development of the language and literature of the working people of the formerly oppressed nations so as to remove all traces of distrust and alienation inherited from the epoch of capitalism" ("Draft Programme of the R.C.P.[B.]").

Indeed, Lenin's last struggle was waged against the Great Russian chauvinist bullying of Georgian Communists by Stalin and others. This was part of the struggle against the developing Stalinist bureaucracy. As Trotsky said: "Whatever may be the further destiny of the Soviet Union—and it is still far from a quiet haven—the

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1917...

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national policy of Lenin will find its place among the eternal treasures of mankind” (*History of the Russian Revolution*).

This talk cannot take up in any depth the question of the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union. 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 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.

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 collectivized, planned economy—remained. We of the International Communist League stand on the heritage of Trotsky’s Left Opposition, which fought against Stalin and the degeneration of the revolution. We stood for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and 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 proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucracy, restore workers democracy and pursue the fight for the international proletarian revolution.

The gains of the revolution were apparent, for example, in the material position of women. Despite the grim poverty of Russia at the time of the October Revolution, the young workers state implemented far-reaching measures of equality for women. The Soviet government established civil marriage and allowed for divorce at the request of either partner; all

laws against homosexual acts and other consensual sexual activity were abolished.

As explained in a pamphlet, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia* (1923), by Grigorii Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene, the Bolshevik position was based on the following principle: “the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters, so long as nobody is injured, and no one’s interests are encroached upon.” This is light-years ahead of the consciousness of liberals and fake leftists today, like Socialist Alternative, who go ballistic over our defense of



Women join men in training for Red Army, Moscow circa 1918. Russian Revolution began to lay material basis for women’s equality.

Roman Polanski, who has been persecuted for consensual sexual activity, and NAM-BLA (the North American Man/Boy Love Association), which advocates the right of consensual relationships between youth and older men.

One of the few recent good articles in the *New York Times* about the Russian Revolution was an August 12 piece by Kristen R. Ghodsee titled “Why Women Had Better Sex Under Socialism.” It was mostly about East European countries, which became bureaucratically deformed workers states after World War II. The article stated: “A comparative sociological study of East and West Germans conducted after reunification in 1990 found that Eastern women had twice as many orgasms as Western women.” Some examples:

“Consider Ana Durcheva from Bulgaria.... Having lived her first 43 years under Communism, she often complained that the new free market hindered Bulgarians’ ability to develop healthy amorous rela-

tionships. ‘Sure, some things were bad during that time, but my life was full of romance,’ she said. ‘After my divorce, I had my job and my salary, and I didn’t need a man to support me. I could do as I pleased’.”

From a 30-something working woman of Germany today speaking of her mother’s desire for grandchildren: “She doesn’t understand how much harder it is now—it was so easy for women [in East Germany] before the Wall fell,” referring to the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989. “They had kindergartens and crèches, and they could take maternity leave and have their

imperialists felt they had a free hand to project their military might.

We actively fought counterrevolution from East Germany to the Soviet Union itself. The Socialist Workers Party of Britain, then affiliated with the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the U.S., was just the bluntest of the “left” cheerleaders for counterrevolution when they triumphantly proclaimed: “Communism has collapsed.... It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing” (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 31 August 1991).

Bhaskar Sunkara, editor of *Jacobin* and big shot in the Democratic Socialists of America, has this to say about the Russian Revolution:

“One hundred years after Lenin’s sealed train arrived at Finland Station and set into motion the events that led to Stalin’s gulags [really?!], the idea that we should return to this history for inspiration might sound absurd. But there was good reason that the Bolsheviks once called themselves ‘social democrats’.”

So Sunkara believes Leninism leads to Stalinism and wants to return to every rotten social-democratic position that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had to fight against to make the Russian Revolution. Todd Chretien, ISO honcho, endorses the article with a few oh-so-polite caveats and says: “Today, like it or not, all of us socialists are on the same train, even if we might start out on different cars...and communication between compartments is flowing freely”—between what he calls the “healthy sections of the socialist left,” i.e., the reformists of various varieties.

Well, we Trotskyists of the ICL are not on their train. We don’t spend our days trying to refurbish the capitalist Democratic Party; we don’t support U.S. imperialism’s bloody wars around the world; and we don’t promote counterrevolution in those countries, like China or North Korea, where capitalist rule was overthrown. And our goal isn’t trying to reform the capitalist system.

During World War I, Rosa Luxemburg posited that the choices were socialism or barbarism. That’s true now, too. We know we have a long row to hoe and that we are a small international revolutionary Marxist propaganda group. We also know that the tide will again turn and that future workers revolutions will need the Bolshevik political arsenal. Their cadres must be educated in the experiences of the October Revolution. So that’s our job and no one else’s. To quote James Cannon, “We are, in fact, the party of the Russian revolution. We have been the people, and the only people, who have had the Russian revolution in their program and in their blood” (*Struggle for a Proletarian Party* [1943]). ■

Israel...

(continued from page 1)

year in aid. We say: *No U.S. aid to Israel!*

Fearing that Trump’s antics could further inflame the Near East, France and Britain led the chorus at the UN scolding him for undermining the mythical “peace process.” This is truly cynical coming from the very imperialist powers whose divide-and-rule strategy helped lay the basis for the conflicts that continue to rip through the Near East. With the Sykes-Picot Treaty of 1916, Britain schemed with France to seize and share the region, drawing arbitrary borders to forcibly divide or lump together distinct ethnic or religious populations. In the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Britain promised that Palestine could become a “Jewish homeland,” which would necessarily be at the expense of the native Arab population.

For their part, Jordan and other brutally oppressive Arab states are today, as ever, mouthing empty words of solidarity with the Palestinians while waiting for their next paycheck from Washington. Egypt, another recipient of massive amounts of U.S. military aid, keeps its border with the Gaza Strip shut tight. The Arab bourgeois regimes are committed enemies of Palestinian self-determination.

The dismemberment and ghettoization of much of the West Bank have led many Arab nationalists and Israeli liberals to

abandon support for a “two-state solution” as hopeless. A year ago, Palestinian Authority legislator Mustafa Barghouti called for “a struggle to gain full and equal democratic rights in one state.” Who could possibly believe that the Zionists would allow themselves to be outnumbered by Palestinians in a unitary state?! That many Palestinian activists are pursuing such futile aims is a sign of their desperation in the face of murderous repression and continual dispossession.

The Zionist garrison state must be shattered *from within*, through workers revolution. Palestinian nationalists and ostensible socialists internationally generally regard the Israeli population as one reactionary mass hopelessly in thrall to Zionism. Indeed, the bunker mentality fostered by Israel’s rulers runs deep among all classes of that society. But like all capitalist countries, Israel is rent by class divisions, with a working class of mainly Jews but also some Arabs and immigrants from Africa and elsewhere exploited by a tiny, wealthy minority. Along with massive social inequality, Israel’s Palestinian citizens choke from judicial and economic discrimination, while many secular Jews, especially women, chafe under the dominance of religious zealots in the government and society.

Israeli workers can and must be broken from the stranglehold of Zionist chauvinism and won to defense of Palestinian national rights. To carry out this difficult

but essential task, it is necessary to forge a revolutionary proletarian vanguard that also fights to break Palestinian militants from the dead end of petty-bourgeois nationalism and anti-Jewish bigotry, seeking to unite Jewish and Arab workers around their *class* interests. The Interna-

tional Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) dedicates itself to building such parties as the indispensable agencies for workers revolutions from the Near East to the imperialist U.S., the main enforcer of murderous oppression and exploitation around the world. ■

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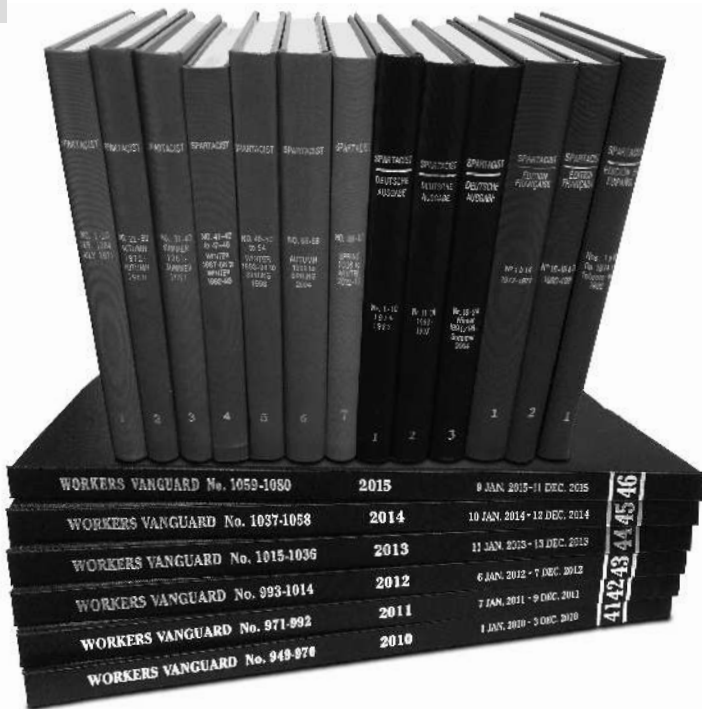
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Down With the EU!, #1113, 2 June (3)</p> <p>On Manchester Bombing, #1113, 2 June (3)</p> <p>London Fire: Capitalist Murder, #1114, 30 June (8, 7)</p> <p>CAMPUS PROTESTS</p> <p>Milo Yiannopoulos: Right-Wing Provocateur Targets Campuses, #1106, 24 Feb. (8, 7)</p> <p>Defend Anti-Fascist Protesters at Columbia!, #1121, 3 Nov. (1, 3)</p> <p>Canada—See Quebec. See also Mexico.</p> <p>Cannon, James P.—See Quote of the Week.</p> <p>CARPENTERS—And see also Civil Liberties: Cases.</p> <p>De Blasio Screws NYC Carpenters (L), #1115, 28 July (2, 3)</p> <p>Castile, Philando—See Police.</p> <p>CATALONIA</p> <p>Independence for Catalonia and the Basque Country! For Workers Republics!—For Class Struggle Against Spanish Prison House of Peoples! (<i>Espartaco</i>), #1112, 19 May (3, 6, 7)</p> <p>Catalan Masses Defy Spanish State, #1119, 6 Oct. (8, 7)</p> <p>Spain Strangles Catalonia, #1121, 3 Nov. (1, 2, 6)</p> <p>Charleston, S.C.—See Aerospace Workers.</p> <p>Charlottesville, Va.—See Fascism.</p> <p>Chávez, Hugo—See Venezuela.</p>
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