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Issue #9



May / June 2019



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# PRIDE IS A VISION

**BUILDING A SOCIALIST  
MOVEMENT FOR EQUALITY**



# STONEWALL AT 50



*"The Battle of Stonewall - 1969" by Sandow Birk*

**By: ANDREA Z.**

With Pride month drawing to a close, we are faced with a historically profound and presently urgent anniversary, that of the Stonewall uprising, which occurred 50 years ago today. It is a day when we remember our struggles, and those who went before us, when we remember our victories, and those who won them. Because, ultimately, it was at Stonewall that our movement began, when we stepped out of the closet and into the streets, when we cast aside old notions of quiet assimilation and began our long, and still-continuing road to full and open equality. Stonewall was not the first uprising, nor would it be the last. But it is the one that has had the largest impact on the public consciousness, and on our own movement, and so it is only fitting that we honor it today.

In 1969, when the uprising occurred, homosexuality, transness, and gender nonconformity were illegal, punishable by incarceration in a prison or psychiatric hospital. There was also little sympathy in the general public for LGBTQ+ people, or their mistreatment at the hands of the system. For these reasons, meeting openly and publicly was highly inadvisable, and the community turned to establishments like the Stonewall Inn as safe havens. Though many, including Stonewall, were operated by organized crime groups, they nevertheless served as vital meeting places, where relationships could begin and flourish in relative safety, where political ideas could be exchanged, and the beginnings of social and political networks established. They were islands in a hostile sea, and they enabled our communities to survive and thrive. It should go without saying, therefore, that they were constant targets of police harassment and abuse.

Police would send undercover agents to infiltrate bars and other establishments suspected of catering to the LGBTQ+ community, and if they were found the "evidence" they were looking for, those establishments would be raided. The objective of this was not only to arrest the patrons or close the bars, but also to publicly shame both, in the hopes of inviting further abuse. Even those patrons who might escape arrest would be marched out in full view of crowds and cameras, their names would often be listed in the press, and they could expect to lose jobs, families, housing, and possibly even their lives in the aftermath. As with so many things under the dictatorship of capital, that cruelty, that additional, unofficial punishment, was half the point.

It was on one such raid, on June 28th, 1969, when things would not go as the police had planned. The patrons of the Stonewall Inn were a cross-section of the entire community, with gay men mingling with lesbians, trans women, and drag queens, and they refused to go quietly. As the cops attempted to force them out onto the street, a crowd began to gather from the surrounding neighborhood. But this was Greenwich Village, and the crowd that assembled was not there to shame the patrons, but to support them, and resist the cops. Two trans women of color, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, would throw the first bottles, but the entire community joined in the act of resistance. The uprising would last throughout the night and into the following day. Though the Stonewall Inn itself was largely destroyed, likely by the police, something new had been born from the fight.

In the aftermath of Stonewall, as homophobic media poured slurs and abuse down upon the community, LGBTQ+ people were meeting and organizing in ways that they had not done before. The community, far from being cowed or broken as the police had intended, was instead galvanized, and filled with a radical spirit that entirely broke with the old, timid rhetoric of the past. Where previously groups like the Mattachine Society had held sway, preaching a message of total assimilation into straight and cis-led society, now new groups like the Gay Liberation Front were formed, pushing aggressively and openly for equality for the LGBTQ+ community. The message now was no longer that we should hide ourselves and cater to the fears and prejudices of straight, cis society, but that society must change to cease its persecution of us, that it should be expanded to tolerate people such as ourselves living as we are. Persecution of our communities would not end at Stonewall, indeed it continues today, but it marked a vital moment in our collective history, the moment when we stood up for ourselves and told the whole oppressive system that they would no longer act with impunity. From that moment on, where they went, they would face resistance.

The legacy of Stonewall has grown somewhat muddled today. Assimilationist voices remain present in the community, and predominate in mainstream LGBTQ+ political organizations. There is a push in certain areas to set aside the old radicalism, and once again to try and accommodate the prejudices and fears of the bigots in our society. Nor is that bigotry limited to those outside



Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, respectively

our communities. In the years since Stonewall, there has been a concerted effort by certain individuals and groups to erase the role played by transgender and bisexual people, both at Stonewall and at other major acts of resistance, and to portray the struggle for equality as one waged by cisgender gays and lesbians alone. The cops, those old and constant enemies of LGBTQ+ people, have found themselves welcomed in some circles, as though their oppressive actions had ceased, when in fact they continue as viciously as ever, only in new forms. Pride events may have more attendance than ever, but they are also filled with corporate influence and merchandising, the proceeds from which go, all too often, to bribing bigoted politicians with lobbying money.

But radicalism is growing again, both in the LGBTQ+ community and outside it. As oppressive voices grow louder and more aggressive, so too has the response to that oppression. It is a radicalism which has its origins in queer people of color, in transgender and nonbinary people, in all the many people who were left behind by the bourgeois assimilationist trends in the leaders of the past, but one which can appeal to and benefit us all. It is a radicalism that will not be silent in the face of abuse, which will stand up against oppression in all its forms, which will not rest until we have achieved full equality. And though the capitalists and their pawns may strip our rights away, though they may throw us in cells, though they may abuse us, though they may even kill us, they cannot kill the spirit of resistance that was born at Stonewall. The spirit of Stonewall and of Pride lives on in each of us, binding us together, inspiring us to organize and take action, pushing us always forward towards our goals, and against that spirit there is nothing the capitalists can do. The struggle began with a riot. The struggle ends with a Revolution.

# AN EMPOWERING NIGHT AT MILWAUKEE PRIDEFEST



Women workers in the May Day Parade in New York City in 1936. Tom Mooney was a labor activist fraudulently convicted of a bombing, who spent 22 years in jail before being pardoned in 1939.

By: ANDREA Z.

On June 8th, 2019, I attended Milwaukee's annual Pridefest. This was my first time attending, and although I had plenty of friends and acquaintances tell me what to expect, I still wasn't entirely sure what it would be like. I worried that the reactionary trends in our society would have infected it, that I would be confronted with bigoted protesters outside, and TERFs and other prejudiced elements of our communities inside. Fortunately, I can say that those fears were unnecessary. Pride was an amazing, and deeply heartening experience, one which gives me great hope for our future.

The first thing one notices when attending a major Pride event for the first time is just how many people there are. Thousands of people spread out all over the festival grounds, with a massive line of others waiting to get in, and this continues all day and most of the night, for four days. The second thing you notice is that you're looking at people from every community and demographic, of every sexuality and gender identity, of every race and age, all together in celebration both of our own individual communities, and of all of us collectively. It's a place without so many of the barriers capitalist society has thrown up between us, and where, through their absence, we can see just how artificial and unnecessary those barriers are.

For me, having never before been around more than ten or fifteen other LGBTQ+ people at one time before, this was an incredibly inspiring experience. It was a reminder that, as outnumbered as we can sometimes feel, there are still so many of us out there, people who are willing to defy society's bigotry and come out to express themselves and support each other. Whether they were there to make a political statement, to support a friend or loved one, or just to have fun, the crowd illustrated perfectly that a different and better world is possible.

Pride is not without its issues, of course. There were, regrettably, cops present, though thankfully not very many of them. This has been a very contentious issue in LGBTQ+ circles, as assimilationist voices push for cops' inclusion, while radical voices, remembering the long history of police abuse of our communities, argue for their exclusion. It was particularly galling to see them there, considering that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, when police violence and oppression sparked the first major act of resistance, and led to the creation of the modern LGBTQ+ liberation movement. The trend seems to be gradually moving against the police, though it remains to be seen whether "No Cops at Pride" will eventually become the norm. As if to drive this point home, while writing this article, I heard about the police in Detroit escorting uniformed Nazis as they harassed Pride attendees. The police are not, and have never been, friends to our communities.

Corporations were also well-represented, selling rainbow-colored merchandise of every description. While it is true that such products help increase the visibility of our cause as a whole, we must also remember that these same companies routinely donate large amounts of money to right-wing politicians, whose laissez-faire economic policies

often come packaged with extreme bigotry, which the capitalists choose to ignore. By buying their products, we may well find ourselves indirectly funding our enemies. I didn't see anything as egregious as the Lockheed-Martin or Northrop-Grumman floats which have occasionally been seen at Pride events elsewhere, but the pervasiveness of the corporate presence still chafes.

Beyond these issues, though, one other loomed large over all the festivities: the ongoing attacks on our rights by the Trump administration, and reactionary governments like it all around the world. In speaking with other attendees, I found universal opposition to these policies, and clear support for the trans community, which has borne the brunt of recent attacks. The trouble was a lack of clear options for what to do about them. Dissatisfaction and lack of faith in the Democratic Party are high, but in the absence of other, Left-oriented options, it can be difficult to see an alternative. There is a sense of something almost like resignation, as though the present situation can only be endured, until the government changes and Trump's policies can be reversed.

It is here that I see a tremendous potential for leftist organizing. People are eager for an alternative, a path to freedom and equality which doesn't run through capitalist boardrooms and disinterested legislative committees. Anti-capitalist sentiment is running high, especially among younger LGBTQ+ people. For example, in my own experience, anti-capitalism is nearly ubiquitous in the trans community, which has endured so much suffering at the hands of the capitalist system, and support for some kind of revolutionary socialism is growing. Without genuine leftist efforts at organization, however, many of these people will likely be taken in by social-democratic movements, offering only a watered-down, and ultimately ineffective, path to change. We can, and should, work to provide an alternative to this, one aimed specifically at the issues and concerns of LGBTQ+ communities and individuals. Support us now, and we will support you to the end.

Though the festivities will come to an end soon enough, and we'll all return to our respective corners of the world, I hope we'll carry the spirit of Pride with us when we go. I know I will. Because Pride is more than what it appears to be.

Pride is more than a parade or a party. It's more than a social gathering or a community support group.

Pride is a vision of the future, a glimpse into the better world that can be, if we stand together and build it.

**PEACE, EQUALITY  
SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY &  
All Power  
To The  
Working  
People!**

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# DAYTON AGAINST THE KLAN



By: M. Bessler

On Saturday, May 25, Dayton, Ohio served as the staging ground for a long-awaited face-off between fascism and its opponents. Several months beforehand, a KKK-affiliated group out of Indiana (whose name isn't even worth mentioning) announced their intention to hold a rally at Dayton's Courthouse Square. Emboldened by the election of the neo-fascist Donald Trump in 2016 and the mounting tide of overt fascism in the United States in the years since then, the Klan hadn't ventured into Dayton for a public event since 1994.

Remembering the hatred and violence that exploded in Charlottesville in 2017, Ohio's "Gem City" initially braced for civil discord on a grand scale. In the weeks leading up to the event, the city announced road closures and mobilization of large numbers of police. Indeed, there was ultimately more effort by the city to protect the fascists from those who would show up to oppose them than to protect the community from the fascists. Citizens were repeatedly urged to stay away from downtown and the fascists themselves were provided with a fortified "safe space" that kept them far away from those who would oppose them. Somewhat ironically, heavily-armed police took up stations in front of Dayton's Old Courthouse – a building that once hosted Abraham Lincoln – to stand guard on behalf of present-day proponents of the Confederacy.

But the community would not be discouraged from engaging in the critical mission of opposing fascism, particularly in light of the current socio-political climate in America. Members of area churches, representatives from political organizations throughout the region, fellow travelers, and concerned citizens braved scorching heat, large contingents of police in riot gear, and the plausible threat of provocateurs and covert agents, to stand against hate, racism, and fascism. An estimated crowd of over 600 people – including contingents from Marxist-Leninist organizations, democratic socialist groups, Black Panthers, and Antifa – were assembled on the street in front of Courthouse Square by the time that the Klan took to the street.

As for the Klan, their numbers didn't even garner a double-digit headcount. A pathetic troupe of nine fascists goose-stepped around their pen for around two hours. Some waved the flags of the Klan and the Confederacy, while others strutted about with American flags. If they had any sort of coherent message, their words were drowned out by the chants, drumbeats, and brass instruments that blared back at them from across the square.

The city of Dayton reportedly spent \$650,000 for arrangements and security for the Klan event, which ended without violence or police intervention. The episode received extensive coverage from local and regional media, as well as national, mainstream outlets, many of which highlighted the city government's preparation efforts and the reactions of local businesses and institutions. But the biggest story and the true victory of the day belongs to the community-oriented, politically astute masses who stood boldly and collectively against fascism. The cohesion and solidarity on display in downtown Dayton on May 25 should serve as a reminder to the proponents of fascism and – their symbiotic allies, the ruling class – that they are hopelessly outnumbered and that working, class-conscious people are a powerful force that they cannot defeat.

# MAY 8TH UBER/LYFT STRIKE: A FORMER UBER DRIVER ON THE COSTS OF THE GIG-ECONOMY

By: L. Giering

L. Giering is a student, communist, and former Uber driver, who was forced out of the rideshare industry due to its slim profit margins and high expenses. He wrote the following solidarity statement to drivers striking today, May 8th.

Rideshare workers for Uber and Lyft are planning to strike in several US cities today, May 8th. Drivers in San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and Washington DC have agreed to stay offline for 12 hours today in protest of low pay and unfair contract terms that increasingly shave off profit margins for drivers. As a former Uber and Lyft driver myself who had to abandon the job because of the poor pay, I experienced the same poor treatment and send my firmest solidarity to the drivers who are choosing to strike.

As contractors, rideshare drivers have more financial responsibilities than most other jobs, yet they often make less per hour, and often fail to make minimum wage per hour. It is even worse for couriers, who are very often paid less than \$10/hr before expenses. I spent several months driving for Uber EATS in addition to shuttling passengers; I would have outright lost money if I were driving a vehicle that got any less than 25 miles per gallon. Sometimes I was effectively paying to work for Uber, which naturally contributed to my eventual departure. Rideshare drivers and couriers, known together as 'gig-economy' workers, are conveniently labeled as contractors, while having few of the freedoms all workers should have. The executives of these companies have cleverly shifted the burden of basic business expenses to their workers while neglecting to compensate us appropriately for those expenses, be it tolls, gas, or repairs.

This is what the gig economy is, in the grand scheme of things—and why it is so important to strike. While gig-economy executives make billions of the toil of workers, and seek to sow division between part-time and full-time workers, workers must stand together. Those who do not have the luxury of treating their Uber and Lyft work as a "side-gig" should not be condemned to live in abject poverty. Those workers who provide essential services to the economy should not live in destitution. A fair day's pay for a fair day's work was the call of the old labor movement in the United States, and we must take it up again, all workers, together, against those who buy yachts with our hard work. Solidarity to the strikers, and may the strike serve as a mechanism for underlining our collective power as workers. As famous communist and labor activist Joe Hill once wrote, "If the workers take a notion, They can stop all speeding trains."



New York: Uber drivers protest the company's fare cuts and go on strike in front of the car service's New York offices on February 1, 2016 in New York City.

# THE FASCISTS ARE ON THE MARCH AGAINST WOMEN'S RIGHTS—WE MUST RESPOND

By: J. Palameda

Ever since the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, the religious right in the United States has waged unrelenting war on the right of women to bodily autonomy, often using terroristic tactics in its war. With the rise of Donald Trump, buoyed by the unwavering support of christian extremists who care more about persecuting minorities and women than Trump's own failures in character, the issue has been turned over "to the states," effectively subjecting all those women living in republican-controlled states to the whims of predominantly white, male, and ultra-conservative state government officials.

Let it be said openly that the legislation signed into law in Alabama is cruel, black-hearted barbarism. To refuse abortion rights to victims of incestual abuse and rape, and to punish doctors who seek to perform safe and healthy abortions with decades more jail time than a rapist is an open manifestation of patriarchy and the rotten heart of religious fundamentalism in the United States. Those who write off children thrown in a barbed-wire encircled concentration camp for crossing the border deify a zygote. Those babies that become women should not be allowed to access abortion in cases of incest and rape because, as fascist Matt Walsh absurdly claimed, that would destroy "evidence."

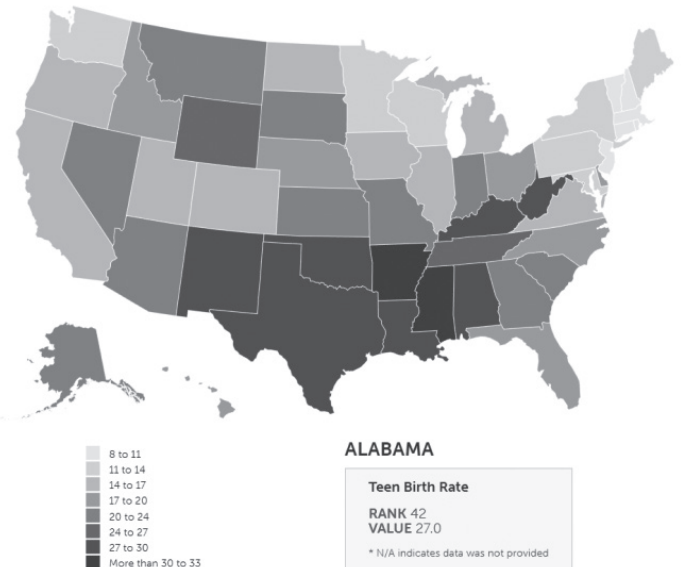
But the outrageous and barbarous nature of the anti-abortion legislation popping up in conservative states should not push the goal posts to the right, as some moderate democrats have allowed for. For Pelosi and many other moderate democrats, abortion is no longer a "litmus test" issue, and routine attacks on abortion are within the bounds of the party's ideology. This is how Obama moderation works: by openly opposing only extreme manifestations of fascist policy, and attacking the "purity" of leftists who stand vehemently by their principles, the body politic of the country shifts right. No longer is abortion a make or break issue for Pelosi's democrats—supporting abortion for rape victims is. Trump's mistreatment of immigrants is barbaric, but Obama's abuse of immigrants was within the bounds. There are countless examples. This is how the Democratic Party has and will abandon working class people in an attempt to appeal to moderate republican voters.

In the wake of the Alabama legislation, and similar legislation that will likely crop up in "red states" across the country, we say emphatically that safe abortions are the right of all women, no matter the circumstance. We will not allow the right wing and liberals to creep the discourse right, and write out of the discussion that abortion is a universal right. And while liberals scoff at the barbarity taking place in "red states," working people in those states will continue to suffer. A recent poll revealed that only about a quarter of women in Alabama support banning abortion in all cases, which is line with the statistics from around the country. Those states that restrict access to birth control, comprehensive sexual education, and abortion also see the highest teen pregnancy rates. While wealthy Alabamians will find ways to circumvent the law and avoid repercussions, working class women will suffer under increased police persecution, already under the burden of skyrocketing education, career-training, and healthcare costs.

Because that is ultimately the goal of this legislation, and the goal of fascists: to restrict the autonomy of women, designate their role as strictly domestic, and hamper their career, educational, and creative ambitions. Republicans and their fascist allies clearly do not care about the livelihoods of children—they actively endorse the brutalization and death of immigrant children. No, the issue is not the lives of children—it is the subjugation of working class women. Fascists have sought this since the very beginning. In 1933, the Nazi government discouraged women from seeking higher education, and put many women in domestic skills and German culture classes rather than the standard curriculum. The ideal woman in Nazi Germany was the child-rearing mother, securing the future of the race. An educated, empowered, and struggling woman, who exercises autonomy over her destiny and body, is a threat to fascist ideology, and it is why they fought and are fighting so vehemently to hamper such a person's development and freedom.

At the crossroads of many of the issues we face in the contemporary US—from the rise of fascism, to the struggles of working people to subsist and survive, to healthcare costs, to the war on women, to the failure of the democratic party to stand in a meaningful way by working people across the country—lies the current attack on abortion rights. The fascists continue to sow division between people and workers, and target those sectors of the working class that have been torch-bearers: women, organized labor, immigrants, and more. To fight the rising tide

## Teen Birth Rate Among Girls Age 15-19



**Those states that restrict sexual education and abortion rights have the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country.**

of fascism in the US, we must respond with the antithesis of fascism: working class unity, and a movement that aims to undermine all those things that play a part in denying women the right to abortion. Women across the country, no matter where they are from, or the circumstances of their pregnancy, have the right to chose their destiny, to decide when and if they want to have children, and to, above all else, exercise autonomy over their own body.

The fascists are on the march against women's rights, and we will respond—with the momentum of the largest marches in the history of the country in our sails. Our targets are not only those misogynistic and patriarchal lawmakers who restrict abortion rights to barbaric levels, but also the bosses who harass their employees with impunity and deny equal pay or maternity leave, administrators who deny students access to sexual education and birth control, the legal system that favors rapists over victims, and moderate, establishment liberals like Nancy Pelosi who make fundamental human rights a "fading" issue.





# IMPERIALISM AGAINST VENEZUELA, MILITARISM, AND RACISM ARE ONE ENEMY, SAY NEW JERSEY ACTIVISTS



By: J THALMANN

On Saturday, March 16, elements of the American Party of Labor traveled to Washington DC to attend the National March on the White House: US Hands Off Venezuela. We were able to attend thanks to the efforts of Bob Witaneck from NJ Anti-War Agenda. He organized a bus ride from Newark, New Jersey to Washington DC.

The bus was packed with about fifty activists and revolutionaries from various organizations. The most represented group on our bus was the Salvadoran liberation party, FMLN. Others included the New Afrikan Black Panthers Party, the Green Party, Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) and many more. Witaneck stated that the conversations we had on the bus were as important as our attendance in the march itself, because they helped build lines of solidarity between activists who had been strangers the day before. This is key to NJ Anti-War Agenda's efforts to build a broad New Jersey based coalition to stand against war and imperialism.

When we arrived at Lafayette Park, we were greeted by a crowd of about 1,500 protesters. Signs read "US Hands Off Venezuela" and "No Blood for Oil". I helped carry NJ Anti-War Agenda's banner, which drew a lot of attention as protesters and photographers came by to take pictures of us around it. One woman snapped a few photos and told us she was sending the pictures directly to people in Venezuela.

The crowd was a diverse collection of anti-war activists. People of various races and religions came together to fight for a common cause. My experiences there certainly challenged the right wing notion that the anti-war movement has historically been constituted only of privileged white, out-of-touch leftists defending tyrannical governments in the so-called third world. There was a large Spanish speaking presence at the rally, and many of the chants were in Spanish.

After a few hours of rallying at Lafayette Park, we finally hit the streets. I lagged toward the tail end of the march. This position also gave me a sense of scale, as I could see a trail of protesters extend far beyond where the eyes could see. The beautiful sunny day also gave us greater visibility. The sun was on our side, but the gusting winds sided with Guaido.

There were many onlookers, many of whom were snapping pictures on their phones. Among them, I could see some scoffing faces, but others seemed to be nodding along to our chants and statements made over our sound systems. Witaneck was using his sound system to persuade observers to join in, arguing that it's in all of our interests to resist imperialism. He was not entirely unsuccessful in his efforts.

As the march concluded, we gathered inside of a church and met at an auditorium on the top floor. Here, we listened to a variety of speakers. First on the list was whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, who released the Pentagon Papers which exposed the lies surrounding the Vietnam War. He could not be there in person and instead joined us via live video.

Another speaker was Honduran activist Lucy Pagoda, who blasted the hypocrisy of the

US government demanding Venezuela accept American aid, while at the same time refusing to help Honduran refugees. She argued that the United States bears some of the blame for the plight of these refugees, because the Obama Administration helped overthrow their democracy in 2009.

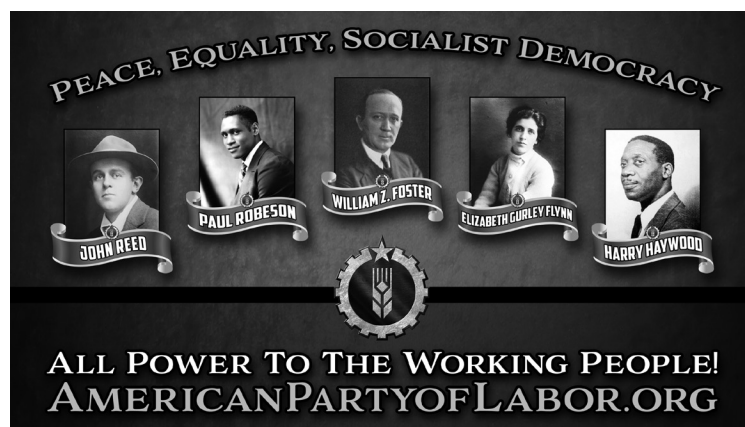
Max Blumenthal also spoke, describing his recent trip to Caracas, and how his own observations contradict the American media narrative. Former Green Party presidential candidate, Jill Stein, joined us by live video. She stressed that imperial aggression against Venezuela is not simply a Trump policy, but part of a bipartisan consensus of Democrats and Republicans.

Among our New Jersey contingency, we had one speaker, Shaka Zulu, of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party. He delivered a powerful speech about the interconnectedness of imperialism, militarism, and racism. He stressed that people power is needed to overcome these problems, and that relying on institutions like Congress and the World Bank is a mistake.

The protest received coverage from media outlets such as RT, Telesur and The Real News Network. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro even shared a video of the protest on Facebook and thanked protesters for standing up for Venezuelan sovereignty.

Marches like this one are crucial for the anti-war movement. As it currently stands, the movement is much weaker than it was in prior decades. This is largely due to the deception of the Obama Administration and the false perception that the United States was moving away from interventionism. However, leftist thought and anti-war sentiments have been on the rise in recent years. Trust in mainstream media outlets who pedal pro-war propaganda has been eroding. Organizations like NJ Anti-War Agenda are a crucial part of this change.

Despite illusions of its omnipotence, the US government cannot carry out its functions without the consent of the governed. That is why we must take to the streets and resist, particularly in light of the most recent intensification of the US government's attempt to topple the democratically elected government of Venezuela. To resist this open imperialism is in all of our interests as working class people. The same forces that push an imperialist foreign policy are working against us domestically. They drive white supremacy, deregulation, and austerity. At the same time that factories close down and job prospects disappear, and the social safety net is being slowly stripped away, the US government puts its eyes on oil-rich nations like Venezuela, and seeks to create enmity between international working people. Thus, when we as marchers said "Hands off Venezuela," we openly acknowledged, as Shaka Zulu argued in his speech, that we face one enemy—and it is not Nicolas Maduro or the Venezuelan people.



## FACING RIGHT WING HATE AND IMPERIALISM HEAD-ON: THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY OCCUPATION STORY

By: J THALMANN

The Venezuelan embassy in Washington DC became a flash point in the struggle between the peace movement and Washington's imperialist agenda. Activists who were living inside the embassy experienced what can only be described as a siege. A mob of right wing extremists surrounded the embassy and cooperated with the Secret Service and DC Metropolitan police to block activists from delivering food and supplies to the people inside. After more than a week of conflict, the embassy's electricity and water were shut off. However, the activists inside made it clear that they would not be moved. Eventually, the State Department gave up on their siege tactics and instead raided the building and arrested four activists, in a brazen violation of international law.

### History of the Occupation and Early Developments:

The embassy siege was an outgrowth of the political crisis in Venezuela, in which the United States recognized the unelected opposition leader, Juan Guaido, as interim president. Next, the United States began handing over property of the Venezuelan government in the United States to representatives of Guaido. This has included a military attaché and a diplomatic building. These events worried activists who feared that the Venezuelan embassy would be next.

In response, members of Code Pink, the ANSWER Coalition, and Popular Resistance contacted the Venezuelan government to request permission to occupy the embassy to block it from Guaido's representatives. The Venezuelan government agreed, and on April 10, the Embassy Protection Collective was born. Dozens of activists made the embassy their home. At the time, Venezuelan diplomats continued to conduct their business in the building, but they were ordered to leave by the American government. By April 25, the collective was alone inside the building. The goal of the collective was to hold out long enough so that the US and Venezuela could enter into a Protective Power Agreement with a third country which would take control of the embassy until diplomatic relations could be restored.

At the time, things were peaceful. The activists were free to come and go as they please. Journalists could freely meet with the collective inside and tour the building. However, the peace was broken on April 30, when a mob of Guaido supporters arrived. They spewed rape threats, death threats and bigoted slurs. They even physically assaulted activists while the Secret Service stood by and did nothing. At the time, supporters of the collective maintained a presence directly in front of the embassy doors, where they put their bodies on the line to protect their allies inside.

The next day, May 1, Guaido's "ambassador," Carlos Vecchio arrived on the scene. He planned to take control of the embassy but was unable to do so thanks to the large presence of peace activists. Anya Parampil of the Grayzone Project confronted Vecchio, and attempted to ask him a question. The opposition responded by assaulting her. Vecchio did not utter a word to discourage such behavior. In fact, he went on Twitter and lied that the peace activists were the violent ones, despite witnessing violence from his own side. Vecchio fled the scene after delivering a speech that was drowned out by a sound system from inside the embassy.

The violence escalated in the following days. The opposition attempted to damage people's hearing by blaring megaphones and banging pots and pans in their ears. At night, they would go for the eyes. They aggressively shined flashlights, strobe lights and laser pointers at people's faces. Whenever embassy protectors came to the windows, they would be bombarded with light. These tactics have been thoroughly documented by activists and journalists inside and outside the embassy. A police officer was caught on video shining a flashlight into an embassy window to imitate these tactics.

The siege intensified when the opposition gained control of the sidewalk outside the embassy doors. This event marked a turning point, because it gave the opposition a number of strategic advantages. They could now fully surround the building, block food from entering, attempt to break inside the building and prevent members of the collective from reentering if they leave. The opposition began pounding on the doors, breaking security cameras and committing other acts of vandalism.

The Secret Service, and the State Department to which they answer, knew that storming the building would be a flagrant violation of the Vienna Convention. This is why they resorted to siege tactics instead. However, the Vienna Convention specifies that a host country must preserve the integrity of embassies. Therefore, allowing a mob to vandalize the embassy with impunity is a violation of international law. In addition, the plan to hand the embassy over to Guaido's representatives would also violate the Vienna Convention because the building is the lawful property of the ruling Venezuelan government.

Selective concerns for international law seem to have shaped the State Department's tactics, leading them to attempt to starve out the Embassy Protection Collective. The opposition formed human chains to prevent supplies from getting through. They have also assaulted embassy protection supporters who have attempted to deliver food and supplies. Security forces directly participated in these siege tactics. Ariel Gold of Code Pink was arrested and charged with "throwing missiles" when she tried to throw bread to the embassy protectors. Gerry Condon, president of Veterans for Peace, was tackled to the ground by the Secret Service and left bloodied when he tried to deliver a cucumber.

The de facto embargo has not been entirely successful. Peace activists succeeded numerous times in delivering food and other supplies to the embassy. Creative methods were employed, such as pulley systems and ropes tied to backpacks. Still, the Embassy Protection Collective had to resort to rationing food. Many activists called the Secret Service to demand they let food in. The Secret Service responded with a prepared statement claiming that they were not blocking food. This statement has been disproven by abundant video footage showing officers blocking supplies and even throwing food away.

### Who Were the Opposition?

The opposition, who largely consisted of people of Venezuelan, Cuban and Nicaraguan backgrounds, called the Embassy Protection Collective "invaders" and "appropriators." They condemned the activists inside for allegedly speaking on behalf of Venezuelans. It is the opposition, they argue, that truly represents the will of the Venezuelan people. However, President Nicolas Maduro was elected in 2018 with 68% of the vote, in an election determined to be fair by over 150 election observers. Perhaps it is those millions of voters who truly represent the will of the Venezuelan people. The embassy protectors have received praise from people in Venezuela who remain loyal to their elected government.

However, the opposition will not tell you about the millions of people who defend their country from imperialism. In fact, they have shown their complete and utter contempt for the majority of Venezuelans. The vile, boastful and shameless bigotry on display outside the embassy was one constant reminder of this contempt. Latina women were told that their facial features were too indigenous, and therefore ugly and inferior. Alina Duarte of Telesur filmed a man as he spewed racist and sexist bile at her. He claimed that he was prettier than her because he is white, whereas she was ugly because she is indigenous. He peppered his rant with misogynistic and racist slurs. Duarte later released photos of the door of her apartment, showing that the opposition had attempted to break in.

Anti-black racism was also proudly on display. Black activists were compared to monkeys and called racial slurs. One member of the opposition said that he owns a business in which he refuses to hire black people. These attitudes are consistent with the racism that runs rampant in Venezuela, particularly among members of the opposition. The opposition in Venezuela has often compared

Chavez to a monkey and Maduro to a gorilla. In 2017, a young man named Orlando Figuera was lit on fire by the opposition. His killers assumed he was a supporter of the Bolivarian project because of his black skin.

Bigotry against the LGBT community was another common theme in the attacks against peace activists. Oppositionists frequently punctuated their threats and condemnations with anti-gay slurs. A non-binary supporter of the collective said they received more anti-LGBT insults in one week outside the embassy than they received in the past two years. A trans activist was called "that thing." Other members of the opposition, who have a better understanding of optics and PR, tried to rectify the situation by bringing out rainbow flags. Still, homophobia and transphobia continued.

Oppositionists with backgrounds in PR and marketing attempted to put themselves front and center in order to control the narrative. They painted over the bigoted right-wing mob with an image of liberalism and identity politics. These well connected strategists argued that their position had nothing to do with a left-right divide, nothing to do with class and nothing to do with race. It was simply a matter of freedom versus dictatorship.

The website AskAVenezuelan.com emerged as the voice of the mob. When confronted about the upper class character of the opposition, this site's Twitter account conceded the point. They tweeted "#AskAnUpperClassVenezuelan" and argued that only upper class Venezuelans could be the voice of the Venezuelan people, because the rest are trapped under Maduro. The site is owned by Nelli Romero, a DC based lobbyist and business owner. Romero supports not only sanctions on Venezuela, but a military invasion. These policies are opposed by the overwhelming majority of the Venezuelan people, even those who oppose Maduro.

Some members of the opposition stand to financially benefit from a military invasion of Venezuela. A Senior Principal Architect at Raytheon was identified among the crowd. Raytheon is one of the world's largest and most notorious arms manufacturers, and has a direct stake in promoting wars around the world. Other oppositionists include a marketing strategist for the Inter-American Development Bank and a senior manager for the International Finance Corporation. These neoliberal institutions drive austerity and privatization in Latin America while cutting environmental protections. There were also members of right-wing think tanks and interventionist lobbying groups among the mob sieging the embassy.

These violent, bigoted, well-connected and well-financed oppositionists worked hand and glove with the Secret Services and DC Metropolitan Police. As one Secret Service officer was overheard saying, the pro-Guaido crowd is "essentially US government." The opposition was allowed to construct a whole encampment of tents around the embassy whereas peace activists were arrested for putting up tents. Three members of the opposition broke into the embassy, and one smashed up a room, but none were arrested. Another choked a peace activist on camera, but the Secret Service refused to arrest him. On May 6, the Secret Service took the bizarre action of chopping down two trees across the street from the embassy. This was done in response to members of NJ Anti-War Agenda and American Party of Labor who used one of those trees to hang a large banner.

### The End of the Occupation:

Things took a turn for the worse when the electricity was shut off at the embassy on May 8. This action was carried out by the electric company, Pepco, on the order of Carlos Vecchio. The right wing mob celebrated, but the embassy protectors inside released a video stating that they had no intention of leaving. Then, on May 11, the water was shut off. It is unclear who is responsible for the shutoff. DC Water denies any responsibility for the action. The water proved to be a more critical blow than the electricity. On the same day that the water stopped running, several members of the collective exited the building. They later explained that this was a mutual decision among the collective to best preserve resources.

On May 13, a trespassing notice was placed on the embassy. The notice declared that the US government does not recognize the "former Maduro regime" and instead recognizes Guaido's representatives as the lawful owners of the building. Embassy protectors were told to leave the building or face arrest. Interestingly, the notice had no letterhead, no stamp and no signatures. The government agency responsible for producing the document clearly did not want to be identified.

It soon became clear that security forces were preparing to break into the building. It seemed arrests were imminent. As a result, some of the people inside the building, including two embedded journalists, exited. This left only four members of the Embassy Protection Collective inside the embassy. That night, security forces entered the building, but no arrests were made. The officers repeatedly asked the embassy protectors if they would leave voluntarily. Each time, the activists told them "no" and made their case for why they must stay. The officers then left the building and put a new lock on the doors.

This victory for the Embassy Protection Collective would be short lived. The authorities would be back inside the building in a few days. But before then, on May 15, Reverend Jesse Jackson arrived at the embassy to support the collective. He and his team successfully delivered four bags of food, water and supplies to the embassy. The police stood by and allowed this to happen. Oppositionists, on the other hand, tried to steal the supplies and block their passage, but were unsuccessful. The very next morning, just as spirits were high, the authorities raided the building and arrested the four remaining protectors.

The four activists were charged with a Class A misdemeanor - interfering with a federal law enforcement agent engaged in protective functions. The charge carries a maximum penalty of one year in prison and a \$1000 fine. Interestingly, the four were not charged with trespassing, despite the trespassing notice. According to Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, legal counsel for the collective, the government wanted to avoid the trespassing charge because they did not want to enter a legal battle over who owns the building. The four are due back in court on June 12.

At the time of writing (May 20), Guaido's representatives have not yet entered the building. The possibility that the conflict will be resolved with a Protective Power Agreement remains on the table. Still, even if such an agreement is not met, and the embassy does fall to coup forces, the embassy protectors have achieved something remarkable. They have shown that the anti-war movement is alive and well, and that the methods of direct action and civil disobedience remain viable. The collective put the US government in a position to expose itself as a repeated violator of international law. What was meant to be a quiet transfer of diplomatic authority turned into a drawn out siege in which the State Department's dirty tactics were put on full display for the world to see.

Now, the Trump administration is turning its fury against Iran and threatening the complete destruction of that country. We have already seen what interventionist wars have done to Iraq and Libya, and what covert coups have done to countries like Honduras. We must not allow the rapacious US war machine to destroy Venezuela, Iran or any other country. Actions like those taken by the Embassy Protection Collective are vital for restraining the dark impulses of empire. As Che Guevara famously said, "I envy you. You North Americans are very lucky. You are fighting the most important fight of all - you live in the heart of the beast."



# WORKERS' COMMUNIST PARTY OF FRANCE: THE MAIN LESSONS WE DRAW FROM THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

## Parti Communiste des Ouvriers de France



Translated by MLtranslations.org

The stakes at the elections revolved around who, Macron's party – LRM La République en marche (The Republic on the Move) allied with MoDem (Democratic Movement), or the Rassemblement National [RN – National Rally] of Marine Le Pen, would be in the lead after the first round. The "European" stakes were put at the service of this confrontation. The participation rate of 50.7% has certainly increased (7 points more compared to the record of abstentions in 2014), but this is primarily related to the national issue, and does not reflect any renewed membership in the popular strata of European construction, for the EU and its parliament and its plethora of deputies. It is in the popular circles that the abstention rate is strongest.

This "duel," wanted by the two protagonists, was largely orchestrated by Macron. From this point of view, he suffered a failure: not only is his list not in the lead, but his score, compared to that of the first round of presidential elections, did not increase. He is more and more a right-wing candidate, who has won a part of the right-wing electoral base that does not recognize itself in the line of Wauquiez (head of The Republicans – translator's note). The collapse of the LR (The Republicans) list, led by the very right-wing Bellamy (who increased his reactionary statements in the last days of the campaign) testifies.

The RN list got 23.3% of the votes, which is obviously worrying. It garners a lot of voices among the sectors that are close to the yellow vests. It is in these areas and regions that the RN gets its highest numbers and it is also where the electoral mobilization has been stronger.

It also attracted the votes all the tendencies of the extreme right and reaction that could, through several candidates, during this campaign, show their hatred of migrants, of Muslims, etc. These candidates served as spokespersons of positions that Marine Le Pen herself preferred not to put forward.

The political current that can speak of victory is undoubtedly the EELV (Europe Ecology – The Greens), which achieved a high vote. The protest movement of some of the youth, who were still mobilized in "climate" marches the day before the elections, has in many EU countries contributed to the high votes of the ecology parties that were running. If all the parties tried to capture the votes of this mass movement, by "greening" their program, it is the parties or movements that mobilize mainly and for a long time on these questions which appeared the most legitimate to bring this question, especially at the European level. Macron tried in a rough way to "win votes of the EELV," announcing on the eve of the elections pseudo-measures for the preservation of the environment: he failed, so great is the distance between some of his words and the reality of his policy, serving the monopolies of agribusiness, pharmacy chemistry, not to mention nuclear power.

The Socialist Party "kept itself afloat" by exceeding the 5% mark that allowed it to have seats in the European Parliament. Its main campaign argument was: do not let us be left out of the [European Parliament in] Strasbourg. They want people to forget the years in which it supported the European Socialist Group (PSE) and its policy of alliance with the right of the EPP (European People's Party) to co-manage the European authorities, at the service of the interests of the monopolies. It is not with some Members of the

European Parliament that it will get out of its increasing marginality.

France Insoumise (France Unbowed) led an active campaign to achieve a double-digit vote, like the result of J.L. Mélenchon in the first round of presidential elections. Very active in support for the yellow vests, it tried to the end to present itself as the only "useful" vote, by claiming the leadership of the left opposition pole to Macron. The vote achieved, while not negligible, did not allow the FI to claim this leadership.

We are not happy to see the PCF miss the 3% mark that would have allowed, at least, the reimbursement of its campaign expenses. That said, its campaign for "another Europe" is neither clear nor credible in popular circles. This is also true for other forces that cling to this idea.

### In conclusion

The campaign was dominated by distorted and divisive themes, such as "nationalism against progressivity," giving rise to a reactionary escalation against immigration, for more "Security," more "control," etc.

It served Macron to continue to reduce the entire political debate to a clash between his current and the RN. The majority of workers, working people, women, young people, etc. do not identify themselves in this choice. If the movement to the right of political forces, in their speeches and positions, is a reality, if the level of electoral influence of the RN and company is worrying, we are in opposition to all the theses that want to convince us that reaction would be hegemonic in working-class and popular circles: if more than 5 million votes were won by the RN, it also means that the vast majority did not make this choice.

The workers' and people's interests, the first victims of the neoliberal governments and the EU, were absent from this campaign. They will not be represented in the European Parliament.

Paris, May 27, 2019

Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Workers of France

### Some Figures:

Votes: 47,344,857

Abstentions: 49.88%

RN	5,281,734	23.3%	23 elected
LRM-Modem	5,076,464	22.4	23
EELV	3,052,533	13.5	13
LR	1,920,601	8.5	8
FI	1,428,480	6.3	6
PS	1,402,129	6.2	6
Hamon	741,252		Not elected but reimbursed for campaign costs
PCF	564,741		Not reimbursed for campaign costs

The European elections of 2014 were organized in 7 large regions. The abstention rate was 57.5%



# MESSAGE FROM THE AMERICAN PARTY OF LABOR TO THE DOMINICAN COMMUNIST WORKERS PARTY (PCT).



*Comrade Kyle Pettis of the APL with members of the PCT's Teacher's Union and the Frente Amplio (April 15, 2019).*

Recently, the American Party of Labor was invited by the Dominican Communist Workers Party to visit the Dominican Republic with an end to strengthening the bonds between our parties and peoples. Comrade Kyle Pettis represented the APL as a guest of the PCT. During his time on the island, Comrade Kyle met with Dominican comrades engaged in all aspects of mass, popular, and worker's struggles.

Comrade Kyle presented the following message from the APL to the PCT:

## ENGLISH:

Esteemed comrades,

On behalf of the cadre and Secretariat of the American Party of Labor, allow me to offer my deepest and most heartfelt revolutionary greetings to our comrades of the Dominican Communist Party of Labor.

The history of US imperialist depredation in the Dominican Republic is a long and shameful one. However, the history of proletarian internationalism, of the solidarity of working peoples of all lands, and of the unbreakable bonds that exist between communists is a glorious and powerful one. We are honored and delighted to be present here in the Dominican Republic, amongst our brothers and sisters, to meet with comrades of the PCT, and to strengthen the revolutionary bonds between our parties and our peoples.

Let this be but the first of such encounters. Let us build links of steel between our parties and peoples. Let us march together in the great army of the proletarian revolution.

Long live the Dominican Communist Workers Party!

Long live the American Party of Labor!

Long live the revolutionary friendship and unity of our parties and peoples!

Alfonso Casal

National Chair (APL)

Victor Vaughn

National Secretary (APL)

## SPANISH:

Estimados camaradas,

En nombre de los cuadros y la Secretaría del Partido Estadounidense del Trabajo, permítanme ofrecerles mis más profundos y sinceros saludos revolucionarios a nuestros compañeros del Partido Comunista del Trabajo.

La historia de la depredación imperialista estadounidense en la República Dominicana es larga y vergonzosa. Sin embargo, la historia del internacionalismo proletario, de la solidaridad de los pueblos trabajadores de todas las tierras y de los vínculos inquebrantables que existen entre los comunistas es gloriosa y poderosa. Nos sentimos honrados y encantados de estar presentes aquí en la República Dominicana, entre nuestros hermanos y hermanas, para reunirnos con los compañeros del PCT y para fortalecer los vínculos revolucionarios entre nuestros partidos y nuestros pueblos.

Que esto sea, solo el primero de tales encuentros. Construyamos lazos de acero entre nuestros partidos y nuestros pueblos. Marchemos juntos en el gran ejército de la revolución proletaria.

¡Viva el Partido Comunista del Trabajo!

¡Viva el Partido Estadounidense del Trabajo!

¡Viva la amistad revolucionaria y la unidad de nuestros partidos y pueblos!

Alfonso Casal

Presidente Nacional (APL)

Victor Vaughn

Secretario Nacional (APL)



# HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE USSR

EDITORIAL - By: A. CASAL

The fact that homosexuality was criminally sanctioned under Soviet law is something that is often thrown in the face of communists in general, and used to "discredit" Comrade Stalin in particular. Indeed, "Stalin hated gays" is something I've seen posted online numerous times by trots and anarchists. I doubt Stalin ever wrote or spoke a single public word on the matter. In any event, such an accusation is by, its very nature, decontextualized and misleading. What needs to be stated is that Soviet legal and medical opinion on this question was no different than what was generally accepted in the world at large, namely, that homosexuality was a psycho-sexual disorder, a form of mental illness. Additionally, there were arguments made that attempted to tie homosexuality to fascism – especially considering that many of Hitler's Brownshirts were homosexual.

Bad as this may seem, it needs to be seen in historical context. Science advances, knowledge grows and deepens. The science of human sexuality was in its infancy for all of Stalin's life. Stalin died in 1953. He died before the 'sexual revolution', and he never heard of Alfred Kinsey, Masters and Johnson or the 'Hite Report.' In fact, it was only in 1975 that the American Psychological Association itself ceased to classify homosexuality as a mental disorder. To expect that Stalin, and Soviet Russia in the 1930s, would foresee the advances in medical and psychological science that would occur forty years in the future is either naïve or malicious. It should be noted, by comparison, that the GDR had a much more open and positive policy with respect to homosexuality. This can be explained by the fact that studies in sexology were more advanced in Germany than in any place else in the world. But this too has to be seen in historical context, as part not only of the deepening of scientific knowledge, but the spread of such knowledge throughout the society in general. By 1987, GDR law stated that "homosexuality, just like heterosexuality, represents a variant of sexual behavior. Homosexual people do therefore not stand outside socialist society, and the civil rights are warranted to them exactly as to all other citizens."

So, here is the real answer. As Marxist-Leninists, we are scientists. As scientists we seek to advance human knowledge and understanding. And, as our knowledge and understanding grows, so does our ideology. Today, there is not a single communist worthy of the name who does not whole-heartedly support gay rights.

Moreover, I think it should also be pointed out that, despite the view that homosexuality was a mental disorder, the actual law in question, Article 121 of the Soviet Criminal Code, was pretty much only enforced in cases of pedophilia, with some 800 – 1000 prosecutions annually.

Wikipedia (everyone's quick go-to) quotes the 1930 "Great Soviet Encyclopedia" as follows: Soviet legislation does not recognize so-called crimes against morality. Our laws proceed from the principle of protection of society and therefore countenance punishment only in those instances when juveniles and minors are the objects of homosexual interest ... while recognizing the incorrectness of homosexual development ... our society combines prophylactic and other therapeutic measures with all the necessary conditions for making the conflicts that afflict homosexuals as painless as possible and for resolving their typical estrangement from society within the collective

–Sereisky, Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 1930, p. 593

Actually, Communists were MORE progressive on the question of gay rights than was the bourgeois society of the time. Once again, the important thing here is the level of scientific understanding and the extent to which that knowledge has been spread throughout society at large. Germany had the longest history of psychological and medical research on human sexuality. There was an Institute of Sexology as early as the 1920s. The Nazis closed it down when they came to power. Leading medical researchers at the Institute of Sexology were affiliated with the KPD. That's right, the KPD, the "STALINIST" German Communist Party. Many German Communists were not only supportive of gay rights, but were pioneers of sexual liberation. In fact, a number of them sang the health praises of nudism. This includes Markus Wolf's father and family. Markus Wolf would later become the head of foreign intelligence for the GDR; the man the CIA would call "the man without a face" because they didn't possess a photograph of him.

Furthermore, "Lenin decriminalized homosexuality" is a much beloved trotskyite trope that they love to throw at Marxist-Leninists. The facts, are a little different:

"The initiative for revocation of antihomosexual legislation, following the Revolution of February 1917, had come, not from the Bolsheviks but from the Cadets (Constitutional democrats) and the anarchists (Karlinsky, 1989). Nevertheless, once the old criminal code had been repealed after the October Revolution, the antihomosexual article also ceased to be valid. The Russian Federation criminal codes for 1922 and 1926 did not mention homosexuality, although the corresponding laws remained in force in places where homosexuality was most prevalent – in the Islamic republics of Azerbaijan, Turkmenia, and Uzbekistan, as well as in Christian Georgia."

"Soviet medical and legal experts were very proud of the progressive nature of their legislation, In 1930, the medical expert Sereisky (1930) wrote in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia: "Soviet legislation does not recognize so-called crimes against morality. Our laws proceed from the principle of protection of society and therefore countenance punishment only in those instances when juveniles and minors are the objects of homosexual interest" P. 593).

"As Engelstein (1995) justly mentions, the formal decriminalization of sodomy did not mean that such conduct was invulnerable to prosecution. The absence of formal statutes against anal intercourse or lesbianism did not stop the prosecution of homosexual behavior as a form of disorderly conduct. After the 1922 Penal Code was published there were in that same year at least two known trials for homosexual practices. The eminent psychiatrist Vladimir Bekhterev testified that "public demonstration of such impulses ... is socially harmful and cannot be permitted" (Engelstein, 1995, p. 167). The official stance of Soviet medicine and law in the 1920s, as reflected by Sereisky's encyclopedia article, was that homosexuality was a disease that was difficult, perhaps even impossible, to cure. So "while recognizing the incorrectness of homosexual development ... our society combines prophylactic and other therapeutic measures with all the necessary conditions for making the conflicts that afflict homosexuals as painless as possible and for resolving their typical estrangement from society within the collective" (Sereisky, 1930, p. 593)."

"The precise number of persons prosecuted under Article 121 is unknown (the first official information was released only in 1988), but it is believed to be about 1000 a year. Since the late 1980s, according to official data, the number of men convicted under Article 121 has been steadily decreasing. In 1987, 831 men were sentenced (this figure refers to the entire Soviet Union); in 1989, 539; in 1990, 497; in 1991, 462; and for the first 6 months of 1992, 227, among whom all but 10 were sentenced under Article 121.2 (figures are for Russia only) (Gessen, 1994). According to Russian lawyers, most convictions have indeed been under Article 121.2, 80 percent of cases being related to the involvement of minors up to 18 years of age (Ignatov, 1974). In an analysis of 130 convictions under Article 121 between 1985 and 1992, it was found that 74 percent of the accused were convicted under 121.2, of whom 20 percent were for rape using physical force, 8 percent for using threats, 52 percent for having sexual contact with minors and 2 and 18 percent, respectively, for exploiting the victims dependent or vulnerable status (Dyachenko, 1995)."

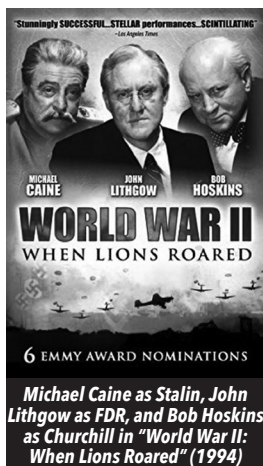
SOURCE: <http://www.gay.ru/english/history/kon/soviet.htm>

So, in conclusion: Lenin DID NOT specifically decriminalize homosexual activity. The Tsarist criminal code was declared null and void, the anti-homosexual statutes along with all the others. The 1922 and 1926 Soviet criminal codes did not mention homosexuality, but anti-homosexual laws remained on the books in the Islamic republics and Georgia. When homosexuality does re-enter the Soviet criminal code, prosecutions are relatively rare (1,000 per year out of a population of 200 million) and those that were prosecuted targeted instances of rape, child abuse, and abuse of dependent and vulnerable persons.

Those are the FACTS. Was the law perfect? Of course not! Was it a good law or something to be admired or replicated? No. Was the law abused and innocent people sanctioned? Likely, as in all legal systems. But, the intent and extent of the law was far different from what anti-Stalin and 'left anti-communist' propaganda would have one believe.



# STALIN AT THE MOVIES



It is strange to say that, considering he was one of the most significant figures in world history, Joseph Stalin has rarely appeared on the silver screen. Certainly, when compared to the number of films portraying individuals as widely diverse as John F. Kennedy and Adolf Hitler, the number of movies where Stalin appears is miniscule.

There were a number of films made in the former Soviet Union, both during his lifetime and afterwards that featured the Soviet leader as a character. But these films, such as *The Vow*, *Unforgettable 1919*, and the well-received documentary *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* are almost impossible to view outside of Russia; and, with the exception of the latter, may not even exist on tape or DVD. That being the case, I'll

limit my observations to those productions an American or Canadian viewer would be likely to see or can easily find.

The most widely distributed film about Stalin would be the eponymously titled HBO docudrama, *Stalin*. My own opinion towards the film can perhaps be guessed by the slogan the producers, used to publicize the film here in the United States: "For four decades the Russians had a word for death...Stalin!"

I feel the film not only slanders Stalin, showing him as a thug and a brute, but is one of the most anti-communist films ever made. This should come as no surprise considering that Robert Conquest, former British Intelligence agent and extreme reactionary, was cited as a major consultant in the film's credits. The film bases itself on the crudest anti-communist stereotypes that are not only offensive, but even rejected by contemporary bourgeois scholars such as Sheila Fitzpatrick and J. Arch Getty.

Interestingly enough, the film totally ignores the period of WWII, jumping from 1941 to 1946. I think there is a very sound reason for this. To wit, the film's makers wanted to avoid anything that would show Stalin in a positive light. After all, even conservative historians praise Stalin's heroism and leadership in the anti-fascist war.

Considering the film, purely as a film: I think most of the principles were totally miscast. Robert Duvall looks so little like Stalin that to affect even a slight resemblance, tons of make-up had to be applied to him. The end result is that Duvall's Stalin goes through 40 years of Russian history with only one expression on his face – a constipated grimace. The actor playing Beria sports a full head of hair, and Maximilian Schell is way too tall and thin to play Lenin.

These may seem like quibbles, but then again, this is a film that purports to show historical truth. More appropriate actors could have been found. For example, Edward James Olmos for the role of Stalin, Patrick Stewart as Lenin, Bob Hoskins or Ed Asner as Beria, etc., etc. The film is visually beautiful, and nicely scored. But these attractions pale before the distortions of historical truth.

2017's *The Death of Stalin* is, as the titled implies, not actually based on the life of the Soviet leader; rather, its focus is on the events following his demise. Based on a French graphic novel, the film is a wildly uneven farce whose sole purpose appears to be to depict various Soviet historical figures as malevolent buffoons. There seems to

have been no attempt at verisimilitude in the casting; with the casting of thin, lanky American actor Steve Buscemi as Nikita Khrushchev serving as a fitting comment on the rest. The film was praised in the British press, but drew fire from some historians for gross historical inaccuracies, such as creating a fictional massacre of mourners at Stalin's funeral. The film was banned in Russia and several former-Soviet republics, and never entered into general release in the US.

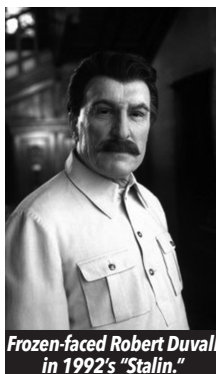
Most of the other films portraying Stalin, while not as execrable as *The Death of Stalin* or the HBO TV production, are weak to one extent or another. In *The Winds of War*, Stalin has but a cameo role, and his purpose is mainly to silence a Russian critic of the hero. *The Inner Circle* and *Europa, Europa* both use Stalin as a symbol. In the first film Stalin represents the protagonist's conflicted relationship with his wife; and in the second Stalin represents the hero's fears and fantasies about wartime Europe. There was an American TV movie, *Meeting at Potsdam* where Jose Ferrer did a fairly good job of playing Stalin. But this film is presently unavailable to home viewers.

For my money, the best cinematic portrayal of Comrade Stalin was by the British actor Michael Caine in the mini-series *World War II: When Lions Roared*. Widely available on video, this movie is unique in that it consists solely of the communiques and meetings between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill. The dialog is taken straight from their correspondence and the minutes of meetings. In other words, there is no fictional dialog or scenes – just the straight, accurate, historical truth!

Caine's Stalin is superb. Comrade Stalin appears as a man of high intelligence. Complex and shrewd, yet also very human. But what comes through most of all, is Stalin as totally dedicated to the Soviet Union and to smashing the fascist hordes. This is the film for anyone seeking a cinematic interpretation of Stalin.

Finally, there is, of course, the film version of Ambassador Joseph E. Davies' memoir, *Mission to Moscow*. This film succeeds in capturing Soviet Russia, as seen through the American ambassador's eyes, but it's hard to find and is a bit dated. Made in the 1940s, the wartime propaganda, though understandable, is rather unsubtle and simplistic. Not a bad movie, by any means. But not the best.

So, to my lights, *World War II: When Lions Roared*, stands as the best film treatment, to date, of Stalin and his era.



## **The American Party of Labor is...**

a revolutionary working class organization. Our aim is to abolish the capitalist system and all its horrors by replacing it with socialism, a system based on the principle laid out by Marx, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work." This is the first phase toward the higher phase of communism, defined by the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

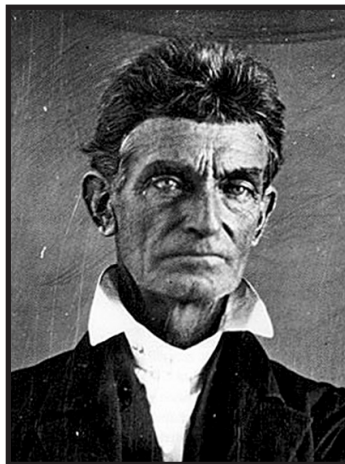
### **Who Can Join? How Do I Get Involved?**

Every working person who is sick of being abused by capitalism, is open to our plan for change, agrees with our Program and Platform and is over the age of 18 is welcome to join.

We recommend that you check out our publications page to get a more in-depth look at the Party. Another good place to look is our online library. The cornerstones of our Party are the works of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and Enver Hoxha.

You can find everything that you should know about us here, and you can join online or contact us and connect to members in your area.

If we don't have a presence in your city, we'll get to know you and help you establish one.



**"These men are all talk;  
What is needed is action  
— action!" John Brown,  
New England Anti-Slavery  
Convention, 1859**

## **Why is Marxism-Leninism the Best Answer? Can't We Regulate Capitalism or Try to Create Some Kind of Third System That Isn't Fully Communist or Capitalist?**

One must understand there is an important fundamental difference between Marxism and other so-called anti-capitalist or "third way" theories. Marx, unlike many thinkers of his day, did not just see a problem with capitalism and start proposing an alternative system. Instead, he and his compatriots analyzed capitalism itself to understand how the system worked. Marx's ideas for revolution are based off of that analysis, not ideas he dreamt up on his own. Solutions to the problems of capitalism can only be reached by understanding and observing the system itself, not by dreaming up some wonderful Utopian alternative. As for regulating or restraining capitalism, this has been done many times before.

Oftentimes the governments of capitalist states must restrict the private sector for various reasons. The problem is that political power is still stacked in favor of the ruling class, and if you slap regulations on big business, they have every avenue and all the resources necessary to see those regulations overturned in the long run. What truly led to the collapse of the old socialist bloc was not that these countries followed Marxism-Leninism, which was ultimately too radical, but rather quite the opposite— that these nations all came under the impression that they needed more and more market style reforms, until they had more or less become capitalist countries.

Nowadays, ideas such as "21st century socialism" would have us do basically the same thing, if not less – regulate capitalism, nationalize some industry, and try to maintain a welfare state— without expropriating the ruling class, without giving the nation a clear direction for the future, and worst of all, without putting the working class in power. This kind of idea can only lead to temporary gains for the workers.

## **How is the American Party of Labor Different than Other Socialist, Communist, or Left-Wing Parties or Organizations?**

First of all, the main difference is that we see the solution to the problems of the working class in revolution and the seizure of state power by the working class and its political organizations. The methodology by which we strive for revolution is Marxism-Leninism—that is, the scientific methodology of social/economic revolution first devised by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and contributed to by figures such as Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin and the late Albanian leader Enver Hoxha. This does not mean, however, that we look at these figures the way religions look at their own prophets, nor do we see their every written word as some kind of Holy Scripture or their every action as blameless and divine.

That being said, we critique their actions from the Marxist methodology of historical dialectical materialism, analyzing actions and events in their historical context, taking into account the benefit of hindsight and trying to avoid idle speculation about what could have been if certain events had or hadn't happened, etc. Because we uphold the general line of these figures, from Karl Marx to Enver Hoxha, we consider ourselves "anti-revisionist," and it is in this way that we differ from most communist parties or organizations in the United States.



**Legalize Workers - No More Detentions, No More Deportations, Abolish I.C.E.!**

**Guaranteed Work and a Livable Income!**

**Socialized Healthcare For All!**

**Nationalized Healthcare!**

**Free Education For All!**

**Equal Rights, Pay, and Housing For All!**

**End All Wars of Aggression!**

**Abolish Private Prisons, Free All Political Prisoners!**

**No Platform for Fascists!**

**Abolish Profit Made By the Exploitation of Labor!**

### **Our General Line.**

1. The American Party of Labor comes from and represents the American working class. From time to time and place to place there may be individuals who are admitted to the Party who do not have a working class background, or are not currently considered to be working class by Marxist-Leninist ideology and principles. Such individuals are exceptions to the general rule, as they have in effect transcended their class through conscious application of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

2. The American Party of Labor maintains that value in society is produced by human action within the material world. That is to say, value is created by the consumption of labor power. The working classes, which have only their labor power to sell for their daily sustenance, therefore make production possible. We call for the reorganization of society to provide the means of production to the working class to be administered either under an elected or selected management or collectively through a council system.

3. The American Party of Labor demands the abolition of private property and that all means of production be in the hands of the working class. Profit under capitalism is extracted surplus value from the consumption of labor power and constitutes a theft from the working class by the capitalist ruling class. Under our system, the working class will be paid the full value of their production less the necessary deductions to support the state and its various cultural, economic and social support projects.

4. The American Party of Labor demands that all oppressed nations within the context of the American Empire, including, but by no means limited to, Indigenous peoples, Native Hawaiians, Guamanians and Puerto Ricans (within the context of Puerto Rico), be given national self-determination as to whether or not they wish to remain in the American socialist state, which shall be constructed on the remnants of the United States. We call for the end of the so-called commonwealth system in all U.S. imperial possessions. The nations in these political organizations should either choose to become a U.S. state or an independent country.

5. The American Party of Labor demands the cancellation of all current

debt held by developing countries to the U.S. These loans were not made with the intention of helping the people of these countries, but rather to enslave those countries with debt.

6. The American Party of Labor is a party against all imperialism. We are opposed to all wars of aggression on the world stage and all other threats of war and military intervention. We call for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from abroad. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all occupied peoples and with all nations living underneath neo-colonial regimes. We call for the end of foreign aid to Israel, Colombia and other outposts of capitalist and imperialist aggression.

7. The American Party of Labor is an internationalist party. All peoples around the globe struggling for their emancipation from their own systems of exploitation are our allies. We extend our hands to all revolutionary organizations guided by Marxism-Leninism worldwide and to national liberation movements of exploited peoples of all countries because our cause is one and the same.

8. The American Party of Labor demands the U.S. withdrawal from NATO and other imperialist alliances.

9. The American Party of Labor stands fully against the militarization of the U.S.-Mexican border. It supports the rights of immigrants and the ending of neo-liberal policies in other countries, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, that drive sustenance farmers off their lands and to the United States due to a lack of economic opportunity in their native countries.

10. The American Party of Labor has a more generalized list of our demands and positions in a separate document called the Party Platform.

## **The Red Phoenix is published bi-monthly by The American Party of Labor.**

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