



U.S. Friends of the Soviet People

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AUTUMN/WINTER 2017

U.S. Affiliate to the International Council for Friendship & Solidarity with the Soviet People

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Centenary Celebrations of the Russian Socialist Revolution



New York Metro
Tuesday, Nov. 7, 6 – 9 pm
Workers' Education Center
25 Broadway, 7th fl. NYC

(N, R or W to Rector St.;
2, 3, 4, or 5 to Wall St.)

Organized by 1917 Centenary Committee
Contact: (347) 512-2547,
Celebrate1917Centenary@gmail.com

Los Angeles
Saturday, Nov. 18, 2-4 pm
First Unitarian Church
of Los Angeles, Severance Room,
2936 W. 8th St.
Vermont Ave. Metro Line or Bus 204
RSVP: (323) 239-6335
Auspices: US Friends of the Soviet
People, Party of Communists USA,
October 100

Buffalo, NY

LiveStream Showing of NYC celebration,
followed by discussion.
Tuesday, Nov. 7, 6:00 – 9:30 pm
At Rust Belt Books, 415 Grant Street,
Buffalo, NY

Sponsored by: Buffalo Branch, USFSP;
Buffalo Branch, Workers World Party;
Party of Communists USA, Buffalo, Club

Washington DC Metro
Saturday, Nov. 4, 6 – 9 pm
With potluck dinner
@ home of Dean Richards
15405 Short Ridge Ct.
Silver Spring, Md. 20906
301-598-5427
Cathwkr@aol.com

Collingswood (near Camden), NJ
Sunday, Nov. 12, 1:00- 3:45 pm
Library corner Haddon & Frazer Ave.
Sponsored by NJ Friends of ML Today

Uriah, AL
Film showing and discussion:
Mission to Moscow
Sun. Nov. 5, 5 – 8 PM
At Zack's house: 251-294-3241
zackarymartyrs@gmail.com

* Orgs listed for identification purposes only

The Hundredth Anniversary of the October Revolution and its Significance for the US

Contributed by George Greene, Member of Secretariat, Party of Communists USA (PCUSA)

The great socialist revolution in Russia on November 7, 1917, was a consequence of imperialism, the highest state of capitalism. Imperialism resulted in the division of all areas of the world among the great powers. But this division of territory can only be changed by force. This situation resulted in the First World War, which gave rise first to the democratic revolution in Russia in February 1917, and then to the socialist revolution in October of that year, with the slogan of Peace, Pan and Land.

The US at the beginning of the 20th century was one of the great powers. It had investments in particular in Latin America, but also in the oil fields in parts of the Middle East. One of the first wars of the imperialist period was in 1898, when the US took possession of Puerto Rico and the Philippines, also of Guam and Samoa in the western Pacific, and made Cuba a Protectorate, from the old Spanish empire.

The United States also participated in World War I starting in 1917. That was in the administration of Democratic President Woodrow Wilson, who was elected in 1916 for his second run under the slogan: "He kept us out of war." After taking part in that war, the US became a great power on the world scale.

But the United States had not only a big bourgeoisie, but also a big workers' movement. It began with the great nationwide strike of the railroad workers in 1877, going through the struggle for the eight-hour working day, particularly in Chicago in 1886 (from which came the International Day of Workers, May Day), and another major railroad workers strike in 1894. The latter was led by Eugene Debs, a revolutionary and member of the Socialist Party.

But the labor movement in the US at that time lacked a clear revolutionary orientation. Part of the movement was headed by the Socialist Party, which included both revolutionaries and reformists.



Founding Convention of the Communist Party of America, 1919

Another important part was led by the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), the "Wobblies." That organization was revolutionary but also syndicalist, which did not want to participate in political struggles. The unions in that period were small, consisting in their great majority of the most highly skilled and highly paid workers, the craft workers, in the American Federation of Labor (AFL), led by the class-collaborationist Samuel Gompers. The vast majority of unskilled workers were not organized into unions, and included most of the immigrant workers, as they are today. (At that time most of the immigrants were from the poorer countries of southern and eastern Europe and Ireland, but also from Germany and other countries.)

When the US became involved in World War I, there was a split in the workers' movement. Most of the reformist leaders of the Socialist Party supported the war, but there was also a centrist, Kautskyite trend that opposed the war in words but refused to break with the pro-war reformists. The revolutionary leader Debs opposed the war, saying, as Lenin quoted: "there is only one holy and, from the proletarian standpoint, legitimate War, namely: the war against the capitalists, the war to liberate mankind from wage-slavery." That is why the US government imprisoned Debs. It is relevant to know that in 1920, Debs ran as the Socialist Party candidate for the US President from prison,

winning almost a million votes, more than 3% of the total. (The IWW opposed the imperialist war, but at that time it lost importance particularly because of its syndicalist line.)

In the United States, as in many other countries, the workers learned from the teaching of the Bolsheviks, that, without a firm revolutionary party, they could not organize a socialist revolution.

With the October Revolution, the internal struggle in the revolutionary movement came to a head. In the Socialist Party, most of the workers' nuclei, including the immigrant workers who were organized in the so-called "Language Federations," wanted to throw out the reformist leaders to form a revolutionary, communist party. But they were divided by tactical, secondary questions, particularly whether it was possible to transform the SP into a revolutionary party, or if it was necessary to form a new party. Those who thought it was possible to change the SP from the inside were expelled from that party by its leaders. (The workers' leader Debs, putting his organization above politics, remained in the SP and soon ceased to be relevant.)

Thus, in September 1919, there were two communist parties. One, the CLP (Communist Labor Party) was composed in the majority of US-born workers, who were expelled from the SP at its convention, and the other, CP (Communist Party) consisted in the majority of immigrants who had decided to leave the SP.

The October Revolution, and in particular the formation of the Soviets (workers' councils) also had an influence on the broad workers' movement. In February 1919, before the formation of the communist parties in the USA, the first general strike in a city, Seattle, Washington, took place. It began with a strike of

shipyard workers, which was then supported by all the workers of the city. They formed a Strike Committee, similar in some respects to the workers' councils in Russia, although their demands were basically economic. The strike was not successful, particularly when the bureaucratic leaders of the unions withdrew from it. But it had an important influence in the thinking of the workers in the country, who learned that they had the power to run the city.

Also in September 1919, there was a strike of workers in the steel industry, led by William Z. Foster. The strike was not successful, but Foster soon became the leader of the CP, playing an important role in the revolutionary labor movement.

The formation of the Communist International (Comintern) or Third International was of great importance for the communist movement in the USA. First, when the two parties applied separately for membership in the Comintern, the leadership of this organization rejected both parties. It said that there were not differences of principle between the two parties, and they should join and apply again. This was done by the parties, and in 1921 they entered the Comintern, first under the name of the Workers Party and then under the name of the CPUSA (Communist Party USA).

In recent times, the CP has become an opportunist and reformist organization, which opposes the October Revolution and Soviet socialism. For that reason, a few years ago, we formed a new communist party to revive the revolutionary traditions of the old CP. It is called the **Party of Communists USA**.

Excerpted by a forthcoming article in The Communist, theoretical organ of the PCUSA

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