

Two Bolshevik Heroines – Anna Mai and Anna Pauker ¹

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Every day new reinforcements come to swell the ranks of the Communist Parties. These are the best elements of the proletariat and of the great army of working people, who have come to the fore in the day-to-day struggles and are drawn to its vanguard, the “new type” of party. They learn by their own experience, they are educated and trained by the Party, and they strive to emulate the foremost fighters in all the detachments of the international working-class movement. We all remember the words of Comrade Dimitroff at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International:

“Cadres receive their best training in the process of struggle, in surmounting difficulties and withstanding tests, in studying favorable and unfavorable examples of conduct. We have hundreds of examples of splendid conduct in times of strikes, during demonstrations, in jail, in court. We have thousands of instances of heroism, but unfortunately also not a few cases of faintheartedness, lack of firmness, and even desertion. We often forget these examples, both good and bad. We do not teach people to benefit by these examples. We do not show them what should be emulated and what rejected....

“... the worthiest examples of proletarian heroism must be popularized, must be contrasted with the manifestations of faintheartedness, philistinism, and every kind of rot and frailty in our ranks and the ranks of the working class. These examples must be used most extensively in educating the cadres of the labor movement.”

Among the heroic figures of those proletarian revolutionaries who serve as an example to all by their indefatigable activity and their perseverance in the struggle to their very last breath and to the last drop of their blood, many are women.

“The experience of all liberation movements has shown that the success of a revolution depends on the extent to which women take part in it.”

So, Lenin said at the first congress of working women, held in Moscow in November, 1918.

We give here two examples of heroines of the proletarian cause, the Bulgarian, Anna Mai, and the Rumanian, Anna Pauker.

Anna Mai, Bulgarian Communist, was the delegate on whose initiative the Second International Working Women’s Conference (Moscow, 1921), decided to set aside March 8 as International Women’s Day, in commemoration of the historic date when the working women of Leningrad came out in action.

All her life this proletarian revolutionary fought for the cause of the working class. Cruel tortures in fascist dungeons were not able to break her militant spirit. She preferred to die on the rack rather than give in.

It was in her early youth that Anna Mai had cut herself off from the bourgeois home of her parents, and, becoming an elementary school teacher, linked her life forever with the struggle of the proletariat.

A true pupil of Blagoyev, the founder and leader of the Social-Democratic Party of Bulgaria, she followed her teacher, and after the split took place, she belonged to the ranks of the Bulgarian Tesnyaki Party, which later became the Communist Party.

In 1906, when abroad in Belgium, Anna Mai not only studied, but took part in the active struggle of the Belgian workers among whom at that time, under the influence of the first Russian revolution, great strikes were taking place. Here Anna Mai was in the midst of the masses. On her return to her native Bulgaria, Anna threw herself heart and soul into Party work, conducting propaganda and agitation among the workers of town and country, and telling them of the revolutionary movement of the West European proletariat. Living always among the working people, studying, and enlarging her experience, Anna Mai rapidly advanced to the forefront among the Party workers, became secretary of the big Plovdiva Party organization, and delegate to all Party congresses.

Anna Mai paid particular attention to work among the most backward section of the working people—the women. When in 1913, during the Balkan war, women's protest meetings began to be held under the leadership of the Tesnyaki Party, Anna Mai was the chief organizer and moving spirit of them.

In 1915, when Bulgaria entered the world imperialist war, the Bulgarian peasant women began to agitate for peace and bread, chiefly in the province where Anna Mai was directly engaged in work. These demonstrations of the peasant women found an echo in the demonstrations of working women in the towns and in the unrest among the soldiers.

In 1919, when the Tesnyaki Party became the Bulgarian section of the Communist International, Anna Mai became editor of the women's Communist paper, *Equality*, became a member of the women's committee of the Central Committee of the Party, and conducted study courses for Party workers. At the same time, she organized big strikes in factories where women were chiefly employed.

During the glorious uprising of the Bulgarian workers and peasants in September, 1923, many women – workers, peasants, and teachers – pupils of Anna Mai – fought heroically and risked their lives on communications' service.

The September uprising was ruthlessly suppressed. A White terror raged in the country, but Anna Mai remained at her post and continued to work underground.

Then came fascist provocation – the Sophia Cathedral was blown up in April, 1925 – and Anna Mai along with hundreds of other Communists fell into the hands of the brutal fascist band. She was asked to confess, was subjected to inhuman tortures, but she bore all with clenched teeth, and not a word passed her lips.

To what excesses the fascist brutes went in their treatment of Anna Mai is proved by the fact that one of the prison warders, horrified by her appearance after the torture, called upon another prisoner to the corridor, and pointing to Anna's cell said: "Go and give her some water, she looks ghastly." No one ever saw Anna again, dead or alive.

Anna Pauker, Rumanian Communist, was sentenced in 1936 by a military tribunal to ten years' penal servitude.

Anna Pauker was born and reared in poverty in an obscure little provincial town in Rumania. While still a child Anna started to work. When still a thirteen-year-old school girl, she had to coach her stupid and lazy classmates, the children of better-off parents. At seventeen Anna was teaching in the Jewish High School in Bucharest. At this time, she was already connected with the Socialist Party of Rumania, was a constant visitor at workers' clubs and distributed the Party paper, the Rumanian Worker.

In 1918, illegal Communist groups were formed within the Socialist Party which waged a struggle against the opportunist party leaders. Anna was one of the most energetic members of these groups, which afterwards became the Communist Party of Rumania. Under the pressure of the Communists the Socialist Party of Rumania called a congress in 1921 to decide on joining the Communist International. All the congress delegates were arrested by the police. To those Communists who had escaped arrest fell the heavy task of rallying the forces of the newly formed young Communist Party. And it was here that Anna Pauker's rich revolutionary activity developed to its full extent. While working as an organizer, a propagandist, and a mass agitator, she waged a tireless struggle at the same time against the opportunistic elements within the Party. The struggle reached its height in 1923/1924, when the Rumanian liquidators began to oppose the existence of the illegal Party organizations, tried to carry through an anti-

Party line on the agrarian and national questions, and finally went so far as to defend those who through cowardice in face of the Rumanian Siguranza (secret police), gave away Party secrets under interrogation, and betrayed their comrades.

During the whole course of her militant activity Anna Pauker was subjected to constant persecution – searches, interrogations, imprisonment, and enforced banishment. But whatever country she sought refuge in she studied the experience of the revolutionary movement of that country, learned the language, and steadily enriched her theoretical knowledge. In this way she became one of the foremost revolutionary leaders of Rumania.

Anna Pauker's popularity among the proletarian masses was so great that the fascists, the last time they arrested her, were afraid to bring her to trial in the capital, Bucharest, but chose instead a quieter spot – the provincial town of Craiova. Eighteen other anti-fascists were tried along with Anna.

On her first appearance in the court Anna Pauker firmly declared:

“Our trial is the trial of anti-fascism. We here pronounce the most severe condemnation of fascism.”

Anna's passionate and militant speech at the trial was continuously interrupted by the fascist judges and by the hooting of the court which was packed with secret police.

“I see that I am denied the right to defend myself. You will send me to penal servitude. But the masses of the workers are with me,” said Anna quietly in conclusion.

Her courageous behavior was an example to the other prisoners on trial. One of those who were being tried along with Anna, a girl student named Rodoshevskaya, whose physical strength was so undermined by beatings and starvation that she was carried into the court on a stretcher, declared from where she lay:

“The secret police beat me, beat me brutally. They dashed my head against the wall, but no matter what tortures they may inflict on me, I will never do the bidding of the secret police, the worst enemy of the working class.”

While the sentence of ten years' penal servitude was being passed on all nineteen accused, they sang the International. Thus, do many, many Communist women live and fight to the death against fascism for the cause of the working class.