

Revolutionary women: Yevgenia Bosch

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This site, along with www.workerspower.com ^[1] begins a new series on revolutionary women to highlight their often forgotten role in the communist movement. Katja Teran starts the first in the series on Yevgenia Bosch

Yevgenia Bogdanovna Bosch was born on 11 August 1879 (23 August after the calendar was modernised) in Ochakiv in the Ukraine.

Victor Serge, the communist writer, who was once a supporter of Trotsky's Left Opposition, called Bosch one of the "most capable military leaders to come to the fore in the early stages of the Russian civil war."

Although there is unfortunately very little surviving information about her, Serge's comment shows that Bosch was no insignificant figure in the struggle for soviet power in the Ukraine.

She engaged in political activity from a very early age and quickly began to make a name for herself in the communist movement. She joined the revolutionary social-democrats in 1901 at the age of 22 and took part in political activity, mainly in Kiev. Work at that time was mainly underground. She joined the Bolshevik (revolutionary majority) faction in 1903.

She broke with her husband in 1907 and became one of the leaders of the regional organisation in 1909. In 1912 she was arrested and imprisoned, catching tuberculosis, which severely aggravated her congenital heart and lung condition. Nevertheless she escaped from prison in 1914 and at Lenin's invitation attended the conference of Russian revolutionaries in Berne in 1915. She opposed Lenin's support for the right of nations to self-determination and campaigned against his policy.

By the February 1917 revolution, her standing in the movement was such that she was elected as a member of the Kiev Committee of the revolutionary Russian Social Democratic Workers Party, and was a member of the Kiev Soviet. From April onwards she served not only as a chair of the District Committee of the RSDWP in the southwestern region, but was also a delegate to the 6th party conference in 1917 and the 7th All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

Initially Yevgenia opposed the idea that the Bolsheviks should lead the revolution forward to socialist tasks, and her newspaper Social Democratic Voice argued that "We believe that the development of productive forces and social power of the proletariat have not reached the level at which the working class could carry out the socialist revolution". However, in April she was persuaded of Lenin's view that the working class should go forward to take the power and break the hold of capitalism.

By September preparations began in earnest for the armed uprising against the capitalist Provisional Government and for the establishment of soviet power in Kiev, Vinnytsia and other cities ? and Yevgenia Bosch was at the centre of the action. It was above all for her outstanding military skills that she was elected at the first All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets to be part of its central executive.

After the defeat of Petlyura?s counter-revolution, the first soviet government took power in Ukraine, she took on the post of People?s Secretary for Home Affairs ? taking direct charge of the struggle to resist the bosses and landlords? counter-revolution.

At the January 1918 congress of Ukrainian peasants in Kharkiv she declared:

"The fight must end with the transfer of power into the hands of the working class, which we see in Russia, where power has passed into the hands of workers in their organisations - the Soviets of Workers and Peasants? deputies. ... We must go on, must stop at nothing and eventually strangle the power of capitalism.?"

On the great issue of the Brest-Litovsk Peace of 1918, Bosch initially opposed the peace and supported the position of the ?left-communists?; she later worked on behalf of the Communist Party?s central committee as a military and state official.

In 1923 she backed the Left opposition of Leon Trotsky against the emerging bureaucratic faction of Stalin, and signed the first official statement of the opposition, the Platform of the 46. Increasingly opposed to the party?s course, suffering from ill-health and great pain from heart disease, cardiac asthma and pulmonary tuberculosis she took her own life on 25 January 1925.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.workerspower.com>