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Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Mumia honoured in France

We reprint below an article from the 12 May issue of *Workers Vanguard*, newspaper of the Spartacist League/US, on the international campaign to free US death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. In Britain, the Spartacist League, Spartacus Youth Group, and Partisan Defence Committee are mobilising trade unions and campus organisations to join the campaign and demand "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty!" The British state does not currently have the death penalty, but is still responsible for the deaths of prisoners in custody, most of them black. And last July, the cop execution of Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes on the London Tube recalled the British rulers' de facto "shoot-to-kill" policy, deployed against "IRA suspects" in Northern Ireland for decades. The killing of de Menezes ex-

posed what Labour's "war on terror" is all about: expanding the state's powers of repression, aimed at minorities and ultimately the working class.

Join the international campaign to free Mumia, fighter against racist oppression and America's foremost class-war prisoner!

On 29 April, the city government of Saint-Denis, a suburb of Paris, named a new street in honour of class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. Some 150 people attended the dedication ceremony, held a few steps from Nelson Mandela Stadium. The French Communist Party (PCF) city mayor, Didier Paillard, hailed Mumia for becoming "a symbol of the fight for justice". Patrick Braouezec, PCF member of parliament and president of the group

of towns that includes Saint-Denis, said, "We in Saint-Denis wished to find an event which would allow us to salute the fight led by Mumia in prison, not just for him but for all those today who are on death row and who have been condemned to death."

The fight to free Mumia, America's foremost class-war prisoner, has reached a critical turning point. His legal case has been put on the "fast track" by the Third Circuit federal appeals court and decisions that will put his life in the balance could be made within months. At the event in Saint-Denis, Rachel Wolkenstein, Partisan Defense Committee counsel and a former member of Mumia's legal team, emphasised: "The cops, prosecutors and the entire so-called 'criminal

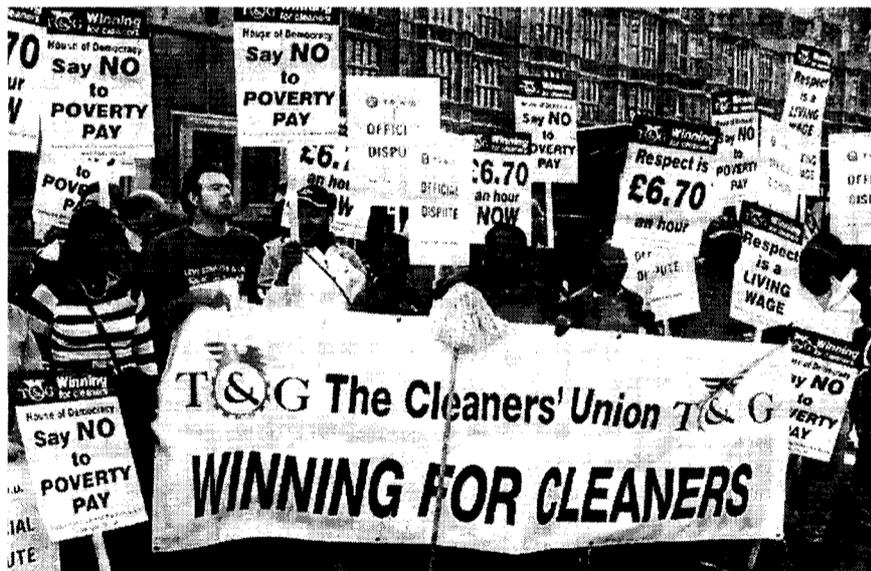
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Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

Down with Labour's racist "war on terror"!

The widely-hated Blair government had a disastrous showing in the 4 May local elections, losing control of 16 councils and getting a smaller share of the vote than both the Tories and Liberal Democrats. The elections took place amid a furore of racist hysteria which the Blair government has continued to fuel at every opportunity. The morning the results became known Blair sacked his Home Secretary Charles Clarke because of a scandal whipped up by the press over "foreign criminals on the loose", which amounts to a demand for automatic deportation of all foreign nationals who serve prison sentences, even for minor offences. Blair is also being goaded to crack down on the hundreds of thousands of immigrants in this country who either have not applied for legal status or have been denied it—dubbed "illegal" immigrants. Asylum seekers are refused the right to work, which the Church of England condemned as using destitution as a "tool of coercion", yet Blair intends to fast track the deportations of refugees, stripping them of the minimal protection offered by the Human Rights Act if need be.

Immigrants and asylum seekers often risk their lives to make it to countries in Europe, including Britain, only to face massive repression from the state when



House of Commons cleaners, mainly immigrants, on strike against poverty pay and for better working conditions, July 2005.

they get here. Many immigrants who have settled here have their applications for legal status refused and face dawn raids on their homes, followed by detention and deportation. As a result of a racist press frenzy over "health tourism", on 15 May, Ese Elizabeth Alabi, a 29-year-old mother from Nigeria who fell ill while visiting her partner in Britain, died because new immigration restrictions denied her the heart transplant she urgently needed. The situation for all immigrants and minorities has worsened as a result of the government's "war on terror". This targets Muslims in the first instance but is designed to regiment the whole working class. Any Muslim, Asian, African—or Brazilian—who is deemed a "terror

suspect" can be locked up indefinitely or even shot down by cops, as was seen in the killing last year of Jean Charles de Menezes, a Brazilian immigrant electrician who was on his way to work.

From the point of view of the working class of this country, the real "criminals on the loose" are the blood-sucking capitalist class and the Labour government who are responsible for the brutal colonial occupation and plunder of Iraq and Afghanistan as well as hideous class exploitation at home. We say: All British and US troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now! For class struggle against the British capitalist rulers and the Labour government! We call for a class-struggle fight against Labour's racist "war on terror" and

demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants who are in the country, regardless of whether they are deemed "legal" or not. Exploitation and racism are inherent to the capitalist profit system and thus we vehemently oppose reformist appeals to the capitalist government and state to "defend" immigrants. Instead we seek to bring to bear the social power of the multiethnic working class in a struggle in defence of immigrant workers. This would give an enormous boost to the capacity of the entire working class to defend itself against the vicious Blair government.

The working class in Britain has been taking it in the neck for decades and the unions have been severely weakened. Under Blair, private companies now make millions out of the gutting of health care and state education, while the working class is under the gun. Royal Mail is provocatively trying to force a pay offer on postal workers that was previously rejected by the CWU union; at the Vauxhall car plant in Ellesmere Port 900 workers face redundancy as the US car giant GM slashes jobs due to falling profits while Peugeot plans to close its plant at Ryton in Coventry throwing 2300 workers out of their jobs. With pensions under attack, in March over one million local government workers struck over plans to raise the retirement age from 60 to 65, at which age most of them can expect to receive a meagre £30 per week from the pension fund they have paid into.

Britain's "flexible" economy is based on vicious exploitation of workers—both native-born and immigrant—who earn pitiful wages. The Bank of

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Immigrants...

(Continued from page 1)

England brags that, with low unemployment in Britain at present, immigrant labour from Eastern Europe and elsewhere "has helped limit wage increases and reduced inflationary pressures. That, in turn, tends to keep down interest rates and aid growth" (*Financial Times*, 10 February). Britain's economy — one of the most unequal in Europe — is highly dependent on a new generation of immigrants whose conditions are often worse than those faced by previous generations. Forced labour, debt-bondage and violence towards workers is rampant, including in the government's own departments. As Felicity Lawrence noted in the *Guardian* (3 February 2005):

"the state uses migrants' forced labour in many cases — when it outsources local authority care to the private sector, when it uses agencies to recruit NHS nurses who end up living on £5 a week, when it uses contract cleaners provided by the cheapest bidder for its offices, or when subcontracted migrant labour is used on private finance initiative construction. The UK has Europe's most flexible labour force; it lives in fear and squalor, is paid a pittance and is bussed round the country to work in the shadows of the night shift."

The country was shocked by the barbaric conditions of immigrants when in February 2004, 23 Chinese cockle pickers drowned in Morecambe Bay. These immigrants had no legal rights as workers, worked for "gangmaster" contractors in a form of debt-bondage and were given no safety instructions, not even the times of the tides. A Chinese immigrant hit the nail on the head when he blamed "the brutality of capitalism for the tragedy", while journalist Hsiao-Hung Pai argues, "another Morecambe bay is waiting to happen" (*Guardian*, 28 March).

By denying very basic rights to immigrant workers, the capitalist rulers seek to keep them in fear and prevent them from engaging in struggle against their brutal oppression, the better to drive down the wages and working conditions. Heathrow Airport catering giant Gate Gourmet made a classic move last year to set new immigrants against British minority workers to lower wages for all. The firm provocatively sacked 670 low-paid workers, mainly Sikh women, and replaced them with East European and African immigrants at even lower wages. This was met with a tremendous show of union strength by the multiethnic work force at British Airways, who staged a wildcat strike that crippled BA's entire international operation, costing millions in prof-

its. This class-struggle response was exactly what was needed, defying the anti-union laws and helping to shatter the myth that British trade unions no longer have any social power. But the trade union leadership under TGWU leader Tony Woodley snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by ending the "illegal" strike, having obtained nothing for the sacked Gate Gourmet workers and leaving union representatives at BA to be victimised. Not surprisingly, when Woodley appeared at London's May Day demonstration this year (to argue for pressuring New Labour to enact a law guaranteeing trade union freedom!) he was booed and jeered by sacked Gate Gourmet workers.

A class-struggle fight to defend immigrant rights would revitalise the working-class movement as a whole, drawing in vast new layers of immigrant workers whose social weight in the economy is growing. It would also inevitably come into a conflict with the capitalist profit system, which underlines the importance of class independence of the working class from the capitalist state and its agencies. As the example of Gate Gourmet shows, this requires a struggle against the politics of the existing trade union leaders. We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, which must be forged in opposition to the union misleaders' strategy of class collaboration and by countering illusions that the capitalist system can be pressured to protect the rights of workers.

Spurred into action by the Morecambe Bay atrocity, the trade union bureaucracy supported a Gangmasters Licensing Act that was passed in parliament, forcing gangmasters to register with the government, while the state carried out a wave of repression against "illegal" Chinese immigrants! And while trade union leaders have begun to recruit immigrant workers into the unions, the majority are still unorganised and severely exploited. Polish, Hungarian, Latvian and other East European workers can be seen working on building sites, often without helmets or safety boots or harness.

Britain's larger unions — the TGWU, GMB and Unison — are appealing to the Blair government for an "amnesty" for immigrants that would grant them the right to remain but with second-class status. Instead of craven appeals to the viciously anti-working class, anti-immigrant Labour government, what's needed is to mobilise the social power of the whole working class in defence of its most vulnerable sector in a struggle for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. The imperialist bourgeoisies manipulate immigration, turning it on and off at different times, not according to the interests of workers but the needs of the capitalist profit system. This is why, with the eastward expansion of the European Union, workers from the new EU countries were excluded by the capitalist rulers of Germany and France, where unemployment levels are high. At the same time these governments sought to lower wages within Germany and France by threatening to move production to Eastern Europe where labour costs are substantially lower. The working classes of both countries have waged struggles against attacks by their own governments, including the recent student-worker struggles in France (see page 12).

Immigrants flee ravages of counterrevolution

In Britain and Ireland — where unemployment is relatively low — the governments grant work permits to East European workers, but have stripped them of many of their basic legal rights as EU citizens. Today in Britain, by and

large, the "illegal" Chinese cockle pickers have been replaced by "legal" Polish workers, who are unable to claim sickness or unemployment benefit and often work in the same horrific conditions as "illegal" immigrants. Two Polish workers lost their lives while working on a fruit farm in Twyford due to sheer neglect of their safety. They became caught in a rope-reeling machine they were operating, but were unable to read the operating instructions without translation. According to *Poland Monthly* (January 2006) the TGWU wrote a letter to the Polish prime minister, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, complaining about the plight of tens of thousands of Polish workers in Britain who are "paying up to £50 per week for transport to the factory, whether they got work that day or not; paying three or four times the market rate for accommodation tied to the agency; being charged bogus fees, denied the right to join a union and facing eviction and dismissal if they complained".

Polish workers are today being driven to emigrate because of capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the collectivised economy and gutted the extensive health care, housing and other social programmes enjoyed by workers before counterrevolution. Appealing to the Polish capitalist government today to protect emigrant workers in Britain is futile, to say the least. What's needed is a strategy that relies only on the power of the working class itself. When workers throughout Ireland demonstrated last December in support of Irish Ferries workers who faced being replaced by East European workers at a fraction of Irish workers' wages, our comrades issued a leaflet calling for the power of the working class to be harnessed behind defence of immigrants, declaring: "Unions must organise immigrant workers! Full wages and benefits for immigrants!" (see *Workers Hammer* no 193, Winter 2005-2006).

Capitalist restoration has devastated the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, causing immiseration and unemployment on a mass scale. As revolutionary internationalists we opposed the eastward expansion of the EU, which was designed to open up these countries that were reeling from capitalist restoration to further imperialist penetration. Our position stems from our principled opposition to the EU itself, an imperialist consortium centred on the main European imperialist powers designed to improve their competitiveness against their American and Japanese rivals. Such an alliance is necessarily at the expense of the working class in Europe, including its minority component, and of the neo-colonial masses elsewhere.

The EU originated in the 1950s as an alliance of rival imperialist powers sharing a common hostility to the Soviet Union. As Trotskyists who uphold the programme of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, we fought to the end for defence of the Soviet Union. In spite of its degeneration under the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy that usurped power in 1924, the Soviet Union remained a workers state based on the collectivised economy that issued out of the revolution, the greatest achievement of the working class to date. We applied the same programme to the workers states created in Eastern Europe in the wake of the Soviet Union's victory over the Nazis in WWII, which were qualitatively the same as the Soviet Union after its political degeneration. We stood for unconditional military defence of these workers states against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution; at the same

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How the Bolshevik party was forged

For decades social democrats have tried to disprove the need for a Bolshevik party — a professional revolutionary vanguard of the working class of the type that led the Russian October Revolution. At best they have argued that such a party was only suited to the conditions of autocratic Tsarist Russia. For "democratic" countries such as Britain the reformists have insisted a more "civilised" road to socialism must



TROTSKY

be followed, that is, through the institution of parliament — the bourgeoisie's talking shop. But as is made clear by Lenin below, Bolshevism was the highest expression of the accumulated political experience of the working class and oppressed. As such it was able to lead the world's first and — to date — only workers socialist revolution. It is upon this experience that those fighting for the socialist liberation of humanity must build.

Russia achieved Marxism — the only correct revolutionary theory — through the agony she experienced in the course of half a century of unparalleled torment and sacrifice, of unparalleled revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, practical trial, disappointment, verification, and comparison with European experience....

On the other hand, Bolshevism, which had arisen on this granite foundation of theory, went through fifteen years of practical history (1903-17) unequalled anywhere in the world in its wealth of experience. During those fifteen years, no other country knew anything even approximating to that revolutionary experience, that rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement — legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, local circles and mass movements, and parliamentary and terrorist forms. In no other country has there been concentrated, in so brief a period, such a wealth of forms, shades, and methods of struggle of all classes of modern society, a struggle which, owing to the backwardness of the country and the severity of the tsarist yoke, matured with exceptional rapidity, and assimilated most eagerly and successfully the appropriate "last word" of American and European political experience.

— V I Lenin, "Left Wing" Communism — An Infantile Disorder (1920)



LENIN

WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!
For a Socialist United States of Europe!

The Spartacist League is the British section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

EDITOR: Eibhlin McDonald
PRODUCTION MANAGER: James Palmer
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Spartacist Publications, PO Box 1041, London NW5 3EU
E-mail: WorkersHammer@compuserve.com
Subscriptions: £3 for 1 year, Europe outside Britain & Ireland £5, overseas airmail £7

Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.
The closing date for news in this issue is 27 May 2006.
Printed by Newsfax International Ltd (trade union) ISSN 0267-8721

Join the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defence!

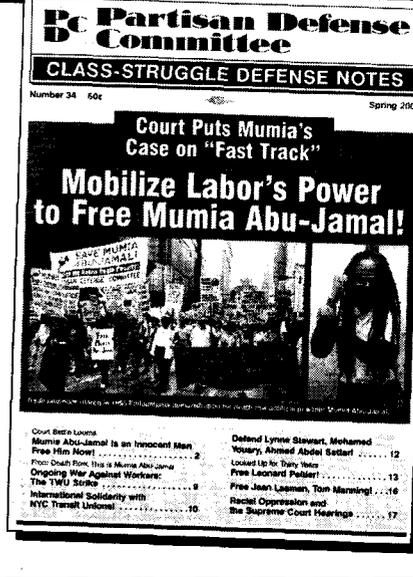
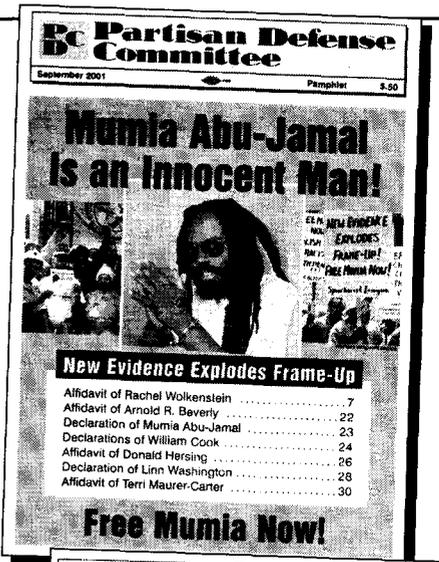
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Organise protest! Pass motions in your unions, campus, community and religious organisations demanding Mumia's freedom. Get your union or organisation to make a contribution and join rallies and protests for Mumia. Publicise Mumia's case in your union or organisation's newsletter.

Spread the word! Contact the PDC for copies of our pamphlet, *Mumia Abu-Jamal Is An Innocent Man!* This pamphlet arms activists in the struggle for Mumia's freedom with the explosive evidence which completely

destroys the more than two-decades-long frame-up of this eloquent fighter for black freedom. It is available for 40p. Get the PDC badge: "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!" £1 each.

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stigmatised as potential 'Islamic terrorists', 'casseurs' [hooligans—a racist codeword] and 'anti-Semites'. When young people revolted in the *banlieues* [suburban minority ghettos] last fall, the workers movement should have taken up their cause. They should be freed, granted amnesty and all charges dropped!"

In her speech at Saint-Denis, Wolkenstein emphasised: "A labour-centred campaign on Mumia's behalf must be built on the principle of political independence of the working class from the capitalist class enemy and its state. In the US, just as the so-called 'war on terror' is supported by both major parties of capitalism, Democrats and Republicans, Mumia is in all their gun sights. In France, that means no illusions in a new Popular Front." This was a warning against the attempts in France by the PCF, the Socialist Party and several small bourgeois parties—such as the Chevènementistes, the Left Radicals and the Greens—to form a new popular-front capitalist government, disarming the working class by tying it to the class enemy.

It is crucial that Mumia's fight be taken up internationally. A week before the Saint-Denis event, a French delegation from the PCF and CGT trade union federation participated in a meeting in Philadelphia for Mumia's defence. Earlier this year, a coalition including the PCF, the CGT, and other labour, anti-racist and left groups launched a drive to raise 100,000 euros (close to \$130,000) for Mumia's defence. And in Mexico City on May Day, a comrade from the ICL section Grupo Espartaquista de México addressed a rally of some 15,000 people sponsored by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), calling on Mexican workers and youth to join the campaign for Mumia.

The key to Mumia's freedom lies in the social power of labour. In her speech, Wolkenstein referred to the fact that France was rocked this spring by two months of massive protests, involving student youth and workers, and strikes against the hated First Employment Contract, forcing the government to back down. This is the kind of social power that must be mobilised behind Mumia's cause! As Wolkenstein stated: "That Mumia is innocent is the truth. That the capitalist state has spent decades putting its lying, corrupt class- and race-biased forces to work to see Mumia dead is also the truth. But we need to use these truths and bring out more power, social power, to fight for Mumia's freedom." **Free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty!** ■

Mumia...

(Continued from page 1)

justice system' have colluded to kill Mumia for the crime of being an eloquent and effective critic of racist oppression, for being a former Black Panther Party member, and for being a MOVE supporter. In Mumia, the US government sees the spectre of black revolution."

Mumia Abu-Jamal was framed up and sent to death row, falsely charged with killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner in 1981. Shredding their own precedents, court after court has rubber-stamped the wholesale trampling of Mumia's rights at his 1982 sham trial. The courts have barred proof of Mumia's innocence, including, the *sworn confession* of Arnold Beverly that he—not Mumia—shot and killed Faulkner. In fact, in the current round of court hearings, Mumia is barred from presenting evidence that he had nothing to do with Faulkner's killing. Mumia's opening brief, due 13 July, is limited by the courts to three issues: the DA's [District Attorney's] racist jury selection that kept blacks off the jury in Mumia's 1982 trial; the DA's prejudicial closing argument stating that the jury should convict because Mumia would get "appeal after appeal"; and the grossly biased state post-conviction hearings before the notorious hanging judge Albert Sabo, who presided over the original trial.

Wolkenstein was invited to address the Saint-Denis gathering to speak on the Beverly confession and other evidence that proves Mumia's innocence. Referring to the current legal proceedings, she warned, "We cannot be lulled by the fact that the courts have agreed to hear legal issues which could lead to a new trial or new appeals proceedings. It is necessary and urgent, now more than ever, for there to be a mass mobilisation based on the power of labour.

The rallying cry for this movement must be to free Mumia now! That Mumia is an innocent man—that the frame-up was racist and political." This is a vital point in the fight for Mumia's cause. The international mass movement that stayed the executioner's hand after a death warrant was signed in 1995 has since been demobilised, not least by the reformist left and liberals who subordinated the fight for Mumia's freedom to the call for a "new trial". These groups promoted the illusion that the very same courts that have kept Mumia on death row for 24 years could give him justice.

In an interview printed in the PCF's daily newspaper, *L'Humanité* (25 April), Mumia himself said, regarding the current court hearings: "I have very little hope in a favourable decision from the Federal Court which has accepted to look at three points of the petition submitted to appeal by my lawyers". As Wolkenstein underlined in her speech: "We must place all our faith in the power of the masses. It is that power, centred on the power of labour to shut down the workings of this system, which can free Mumia now. The courts will provide justice for Mumia only when faced with the determination of that power."

Other speakers at the Saint-Denis event included Robert Bryan, Mumia's attorney; Pam Africa and Ramona Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (ICFFMAJ); Julia Wright, daughter of author Richard Wright and co-ordinator of the International Communist League in Solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal and Political Prisoners, Paris; and Leslie Jones from the Youth for Mumia and the ICFFMAJ. Also present at the event were our comrades of the Ligue trotskyste de France, section of the International Communist League, who for years have played a key role in bringing Mumia's case to broader forces in that country. Mumia

sent a note of thanks and solidarity to the gathering.

Ramona Africa, who spent seven years in prison for the "crime" of being the only adult survivor of the government's 1985 bombing of Philadelphia MOVE, powerfully spoke of the government's vendetta against MOVE and Mumia: "The government murdered my family but nobody went to prison for it except me. Nobody sits on death row for burning babies alive. But they want to convince you that Mumia is a murderer and that he should be executed. Mumia is innocent."

In the US, the death penalty is a legacy of black chattel slavery and represents the pinnacle of state terror. Though in France the death penalty has been abolished, minorities, particularly those of North and West African descent, face daily police brutality and racist discrimination, a legacy of French colonialism. As Wolkenstein stated, minority youth in France "are

ICL Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program

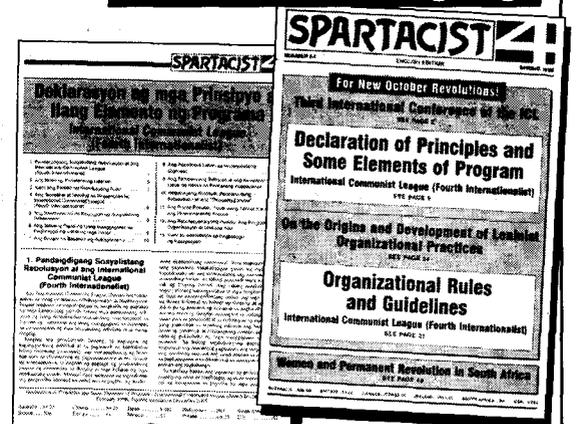
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Class struggle, Labour betrayal and the fight for Irish independence

The article below is an edited version of the presentation given by comrade Edward Welles of the Spartacist Group Ireland at a dayschool in London on 15 April on James Connolly and the Easter Rising of 1916. The presentations also included a report on the struggles of workers and students in France against attacks by the government (see page 12) and an account by comrade Julia Emery of how votes for women were won, examining the role of the Suffragettes and the impact of the Russian Revolution.

Hello, comrades. The events that will be covered in this talk are of critical importance for revolutionaries in Ireland and Britain, who seek to fight for workers revolution on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea. In particular, it is important to emphasise that the experience of the Russian Revolution provided the answers to the problems that class-struggle fighters like James Connolly, James Larkin and John Maclean grappled with, and it is the programme of the Russian Revolution for the dictatorship of the proletariat that we take as our model today.

James Connolly is best known for having led the Easter Rising of 1916. This event is being officially commemorated this weekend by the Irish capitalist state which, since its inception, has been brutally repressive against Republican nationalists, against the working-class, women and Travellers. The state commemoration is an attempt by [Irish Taoiseach] Bertie Ahern's Fianna Fail Party to make sure that Sinn Fein are not the only ones claiming to be the rightful heirs of the 1916 Rising.

Irish workers also look to James Connolly, as well as James Larkin, as socialist leaders of working class struggle. Photos of the Irish Ferries demonstrations last December showed trade unionists passing under Larkin's statue in Dublin, evoking the spectre of "Larkinism", that is to say, of militant class struggle against the capitalist order. Meanwhile, the Irish Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy, as well as reformist left groups such as the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party, try to claim the legacy of Connolly in order to pass off their own particular types of Labour reformism as some kind of "socialism". In the case of the Irish Labour Party and the union bureaucracy, this most commonly takes the form of the argument that the interests of the working class must be subordinated to the "national interest".

Connolly's life was one of dedicated service to the international working class. Connolly was also part of the left wing of the Second International and shared many of the weaknesses of pre-WWI left social democracy. The real tragedy is that he did not live to see the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 or to encounter the politics of the Third International, especially on the national question and on the necessity for a party of proletarian revolutionaries to carry through the programme of workers revolution. We stand on the shoulders of class fighters like Connolly and

Maclean but seek to use the Bolshevik method of Lenin and Trotsky to build a party capable of achieving the socialist society to which they devoted their lives.

Connolly was primarily a revolutionary syndicalist who relentlessly pursued the class struggle against the bourgeoisie. He was an internationalist and

class collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Connolly was in the opposite camp from the social-chauvinists; he was also part of a left-wing opposition to the "socialist" tendency in Britain headed by the virulently chauvinist and pro-imperialist Henry Hyndman, leader of the Social Democratic Federation. But Connolly was not able to draw similar

same time, Connolly's politics were influenced heavily by De Leon as well as by the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World in the US. But he had other problems which Lenin's party addressed, notably the question of national oppression. Connolly was a tenacious fighter against the national oppression of Ireland and an advocate of independence. Following Marx, he argued that the subjection of one nation by another could only harm the interests of the working class of each nation. The early programme of his Irish Socialist Republican Party had a fairly advanced position, calling for an Irish Socialist Republic. Bear in mind that outside Belfast, Ireland was then a heavily agrarian society. Connolly's position should be contrasted to the programme of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, which was merely for "legislative independence" for the colonies, ie, a form of "Home Rule".

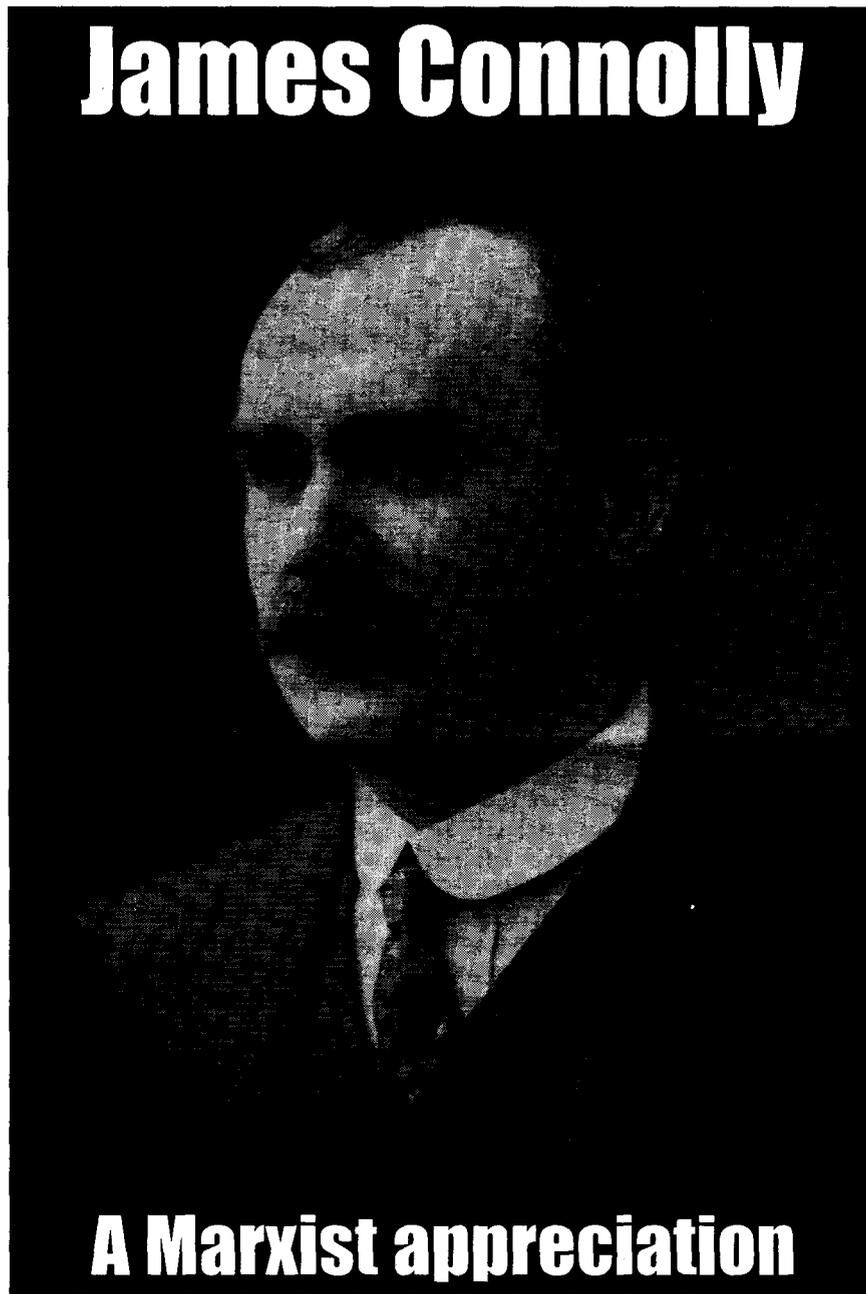
Marxists and the national question

Connolly also opposed the Irish Parliamentary Party, the mainstream nationalist party in Westminster. It advocated a peaceful transition to "Home Rule" as part of a deal brokered with the British Liberal Party, which of course never materialised. Connolly was trying to grapple with the national question in the context of the Second International but he was unaware of Lenin's debates with Rosa Luxemburg on the question of self-determination and, executed after the 1916 Rising, Connolly did not live to see the Comintern deal with these issues. He tended to see an inherently socialistic element in Irish nationalism, and didn't really see the petty-bourgeois nature of Irish republican nationalism: he tended to think that consistent nationalists would be forced to adopt a socialist programme. For us, as for Lenin, Marxism and nationalism are fundamentally counterposed. As we wrote in our *Theses on Ireland* (1977):

"Thus, while revolutionists struggle against all forms of national oppression, they are also opposed to all forms of nationalist ideology. It is a revision of Leninism to claim that the 'nationalism of the oppressed' is progressive and can be supported by communist internationalists."

Whatever weaknesses there were in Connolly's theoretical understanding of the national question, his unquestionable strength was his determined, lifelong battle for the interests of the working class.

The Bolsheviks, basing themselves on the work of Marx and Engels on the Irish question in England, were able to apply a Marxist approach in the context of Tsarist Russia, which was a prison house of oppressed nations. Their position was that the proletariat of the oppressor nation must fight for the right of secession for the colonies that its "own" nation oppresses, while socialists in the oppressed nation must place particular emphasis on the need for unity between the proletariat of the oppressed nation and the proletariat of the oppressor nation.



Popperfoto

one of the foremost leaders of the working class in these islands. His dedication to the principles of the class struggle made him an ardent opponent of the union bureaucracy and the craft-unionist "aristocracy of labour" which dominated the trade unions in Britain (as well as in the United States). Connolly and Larkin's fights against these union misleaders came to a head over the 1913 Dublin lockout. A small but privileged layer, composed mainly of skilled workers, benefited from the privileged position of Britain as the oldest, most powerful imperialist power. Competition between the imperialist powers for a redivision of the world led directly to the inter-imperialist carnage of WWI, which showed that the choice facing the working class was socialism or barbarism.

The politics of the British Labour Party and union leaders consisted of

conclusions as Lenin, whose conception of building a revolutionary vanguard party through a split from the social-chauvinists and opportunists was unique at this time. However, before WWI Lenin also regarded the experience of the Bolshevik Party as exceptional and applicable only to the Russian situation. This changed with WWI, after the majority of the parties of the Second International supported their "own" bourgeoisies on the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914. The experience of the imperialist war and the October Revolution showed that the Bolshevik model in fact supplied the strategy and tactics for the imperialist epoch.

Connolly's lack of a conception for a revolutionary party was his greatest weakness. In part he recoiled from the model of a disciplined party following his experience in Daniel De Leon's American Socialist Labor Party. At the

We uphold this tradition today and apply it to Ireland. Opposition to British imperialism in Ireland is a litmus test for revolutionaries here and we call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. This is not in itself a revolutionary demand but it must be the beginning for a revolutionary perspective. The Orange statelet is based on Protestant ascendancy and the oppression of Catholics, and we regard the Good Friday Agreement and the imperialist "peace process" as a fraud which is based on the continuing oppression of Catholics and the presence of the British Army. Northern Ireland is a situation of interpenetrated peoples, where both the Protestant and Catholic communities lay claim to the same territory. Within the framework of capitalism the exercise of self-determination by one community must necessarily be at the expense of the other. We are opposed to the nationalist perspective for a united capitalist Ireland, as the forcible incorporation of the North into the southern clericalist state

trast to the Second International which had pro-imperialist policies, clearly expressed in 1914 when the German social democracy, the French Socialists and the British Labour Party all supported their own ruling classes in the war. The Third International was built in the struggle for a break with the politics of social democracy. It championed the right of oppressed nations to self-determination and was built on the understanding that only through the construction of revolutionary parties could the working class achieve state power.

The Second International and revolutionary syndicalism

James Connolly in Dublin and John Maclean in Glasgow represented the best traditions of revolutionary opposition to the bourgeoisie in these islands. John Maclean was jailed for his militant internationalist opposition to WWI, and in recognition of his courageous and principled stand he was made Soviet

American Trotskyism who was won to Bolshevism from the Industrial Workers of the World, described how Lenin approached the syndicalists:

"All that hodgepodge of ultra-radicalism was practically wiped out of the American movement in 1920-21 by Lenin. He did it, not by an administrative order backed up by police powers, but by the simple device of publishing a pamphlet called 'Left-Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder."

Cannon continues:

"The 'Theses and Resolutions' of the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920 also cleared up the thinking of the American communists over a wide range of theoretical and political problems, and virtually eliminated the previously dominating influence exerted by the sectarian conceptions of De Leon and the Dutch leaders."

—*The First Ten Years of American Communism* (1962)

No such process took place in Britain.

Another weakness Connolly had was over the question of religion and the

as politicians. Otherwise the question of religion should be avoided entirely. This is why Connolly stated that the ISRP 'prohibits the discussion of theological or anti-theological questions at meetings, public or private'."

—*The Politics of James Connolly* (1990)

Of course, this is rich coming from a member of the Socialist Workers Party, which championed a host of clerical-backed counterrevolutionary forces against the Soviet degenerated workers state and which today carries out the most grotesque adaptations to religious reaction, especially to Islamic forces. On the question of religion, we agree with Lenin's Bolsheviks that, while religion should be a private matter in relation to the state, it is not a private matter in relation to Marxism or to the revolutionary party.

The "great labour unrest"

The "great labour unrest" refers to a massive wave of class struggle that rocked British imperialism from around 1911 to 1914, when it was stopped abruptly by the outbreak of war and the surge of chauvinism that accompanied it. At this time British imperialism was being squeezed by her rivals abroad, notably Germany and the United States, while facing three major problems on the domestic front: massive working-class unrest; the struggle for extension of the franchise to women; and the growing demand for Home Rule for Ireland. The latter sparked widespread hysteria among the Ulster Unionists. The British Tories deliberately fanned the flames of Unionist bigotry and mobilised the House of Lords against the Liberal government while the officer corps of the army staged a mutiny at the Curragh camp in County Kildare, declaring that the army would not enforce Home Rule against the Unionists. This highlights the fact that parliamentary democracy is nothing but a disguise for the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie centred on its armed forces. Home Rule had long been viewed as an inevitability, but it now became clear that this wasn't going to be decided in the Houses of Parliament.

In 1901 the British trade unions faced a massive attack on their right to exist, in the form of the Taff Vale decision. Largely in response to this, the union bureaucracy created the Labour Party. But by 1910-11, many workers had become disillusioned with Labour and looked towards syndicalism, represented in London by Tom Mann. Mann was influenced by the French syndicalists and in turn influenced Ben Tillett, then leader of the London dockers. Syndicalism took hold quite widely in Scotland and among miners and railwaymen in South Wales, as well as in the London docks where there was a major strike in 1913. In 1914, as a result of the wave of militancy, the Triple Alliance of the three most powerful unions in the country—the dockers, miners and railwaymen—was formed.

The "new unionism" of the early twentieth century gave great impetus to the class struggle by organising unskilled and semi-skilled workers into large general unions, which was politically explosive. Larkin's transport union in Ireland was one such union. It had been founded after the defeat of the Belfast dock strikes of 1907, when Larkin, as an organiser for the British-based National Union of Dock Labourers, had led a very militant strike of Protestant and Catholic workers in Belfast, which was betrayed by the union leadership in Britain and

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The shell of the Dublin General Post Office after massive bombardment by British imperialists. Although defeated, the Easter Rising dealt a decisive blow to British colonial rule in Ireland.

would involve a reversal of the terms of oppression against the Protestant community.

Our demand is for an Irish workers republic as part of a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles, which leaves open the question of where the Protestants will fall: we recognise that the nature of the Protestant community in the North has not yet been determined in history. We also call for an anti-sectarian and programmatically-based workers militia to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage in the North. Our perspective does not underestimate the difficulties but sees the necessity for the intervention of even a small number of revolutionaries into the actual points of class unity that emerge in the North that can lay the basis for building a Bolshevik party. We are for the building of workers parties dedicated to the programme of workers revolution to end British imperialist rule, the Orange statelet and the Irish clericalist state. We believe that a party capable of such a task must be a tribune of the people—fighting for women's liberation, full citizenship rights for all immigrants, while opposing racism and homophobia.

We look to the tradition of Lenin's Comintern which put forward an internationalist perspective. This is in con-

Consul in Glasgow in early 1918. Although Maclean survived longer than Connolly, after April 1916 he spent long periods of his remaining seven and a half years in prison. He was inspired by and sought to emulate the Russian Revolution but never acquired the experience of working in a Leninist party.

Revolutionary syndicalism was in part a reaction against, and a left opposition to, the reformism of the Second International. In Britain it was also a reaction against the conservative craft unionism of the main union leaders. The classic syndicalist call was for "One Big Union" and syndicalism tended to look at the general strike as the decisive weapon. The Bolsheviks, drawing on the experience of the 1905 Russian Revolution, understood that what was necessary was state power. The primary distinction between Leninism and revolutionary syndicalism was the need for a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class that was prepared to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat. At its Second Congress in 1920, the Communist International went to some lengths to win to Bolshevism the syndicalists and others who opposed social chauvinism and pursued the class struggle in WWI. James P Cannon, the founder of

family. He had a dispute with De Leon over this in the US, where Connolly was in the wrong. It is useful to consider that Marxists in Britain and Ireland in Connolly's time had access to a very narrow range of Marxist texts. The main text they had was *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* by Engels; they had the first volume of *Capital* and the *Communist Manifesto* but they didn't have much else. Coming from Edinburgh and Dublin, Connolly had adapted somewhat to the pressures of social conservatism, especially the Catholic church. He was certainly for such progressive causes as women's suffrage and organising women into trade unions. But he essentially regarded questions of religion, sexuality, and so on, purely as matters of individual conscience about which socialists had nothing to say, and he viewed with suspicion those who he thought were introducing these questions into the labour movement in the service of liberal reform. I would emphasise though that the pressures coming from the Catholic church in Ireland were very great. Irish Clifite Kieran Allen aptly described Connolly's position in the following way:

"In so far as the clergy involved themselves in politics they should be attacked



Connolly...

(Continued from page 5)

suppressed by the deployment of the British Army.

Lenin saw the significance of "Larkinism" and the organisation of

pressures that Connolly and Larkin had to deal with. It arose over the proposal to send children of locked-out families to Britain to be looked after during the dispute. This proposal was vehemently denounced by the priests, who would rather have the children starve in Dublin than be sent to the homes of working-

workers were locked out or on sympathy strikes across England. One hundred and fifty thousand pounds—an enormous sum at the time—was raised among workers in Britain. The main obstacle to solidarity strikes was the British union leadership and Larkin and Connolly fought tooth and nail against

who, he said, "were standing in their road, and they would have to be pulled out of the road. They were about as useful as mummies in a museum. The weapon that was wanted was the sympathetic strike used in a scientific manner." He said of Havelock Wilson, the leader of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union, and Labour's Philip Snowden, "I am not going to allow these serpents to raise their foul heads and spit out their poison any longer", and denounced the union leaders who "had neither a soul to be saved nor a body to be kicked" [laughter] (quoted in *James Larkin*, by Emmet Larkin, 1965).

Larkin's powerful appeals got a wonderful reception among the union ranks and resulted in further wildcat solidarity strikes, including among 30,000 railwaymen. This forced the British Trades Union Congress to call a special conference, at which the fate of the Dublin workers was sealed. Everyone knew what to expect from the right-wing union leaders. But the supposed "left" Ben Tillett, who had spoken on all the platforms next to Larkin, now came out as the worst traitor of all. Tillett proposed a motion denouncing Larkin's attacks on the British union leaders, which opened the floodgates for a torrent of invective against Larkin.

Nevertheless the Dublin workers were determined to fight it out, even in the face of wholesale scabbing by British workers, especially in the Seamen's and Firemen's Union. Pickets were attacked by cops and armed scabs, and a 16-year-old girl, Alice Brady, was shot dead on picket duty. But despite their heroism and sacrifice, on 18 January 1914 the transport union told workers to go back to work on whatever terms they could secure. The last workers returned in mid-March.

The outbreak of WWI

The role of the Labour traitors in the lockout prefigured their role in WWI. Those who had sabotaged solidarity action, like Ben Tillett and Labour's Arthur Henderson, declared in favour of the imperialist war effort in 1914.



Left: Dublin, 31 August 1913: police baton-charge strikers in O'Connell Street. Right: James Larkin exemplifies tradition of class-struggle internationalism for Irish proletariat.

unskilled workers, noting that:

"The Irish proletariat, awakening to class-consciousness, is pressing the Irish bourgeois scoundrels engaged in celebrating their 'national' victory. It has found a talented leader in the person of Comrade Larkin, Secretary of the Irish Transport Workers' Union. Larkin is a remarkable speaker, a man of seething Irish energy, who has performed miracles among the unskilled workers—that mass of the British proletariat which in Britain is so often cut off from the advanced workers by the cursed, petty-bourgeois, liberal, aristocratic spirit of the British skilled worker."

—"Class War in Dublin", 29 August 1913

The conflict between the militant syndicalists and the more conservative union leaderships came to a head over the Dublin lockout of 1913, which pitted the working class of Dublin not against the British colonial overlords but against the Irish bourgeoisie. This kind of class polarisation was much more difficult to achieve in Ireland after partition when the Irish Labour Party and TUC mired the working class in collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

The Dublin lockout of 1913

The lockout started on 2 September 1913 when around 25,000 workers were locked out by 400 companies in an attempt to destroy the transport union. The bosses were led by William Martin Murphy of the *Independent* newspaper and the Dublin police rampaged through the city, targeting union members and running riot in working-class areas. Two union members, James Nolan and James Byrne, were clubbed to death in the street and soon you had scabs firing pistols in the streets with impunity while strikers were thrown in jail on the most trivial of charges. It was in this context that the Irish Citizen Army was formed, to defend pickets against attack.

One famous episode during the lockout gives you a sense of the kind of

class families in Britain, who might even have been Protestants or atheists—God forbid! [Laughter] Women were physically prevented from sending their children either to Britain or Belfast by paying mobs of priests and other reactionary scum, such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians, who were backed by the police. And some women who proposed sending the children away were arrested for "kidnapping", while priests persuaded some parents to give perjured evidence against them.

The lockout was of central significance to the workers movement in Britain. The

these traitors, demanding sympathy strikes and not just financial support.

Larkin was soon imprisoned for leading the union and Connolly launched a campaign to free him. A great rally was held in London on 1 November, the speakers including Connolly and Sylvia Pankhurst (who was actually expelled from the Women's Social and Political Union because of her support for the Dublin working class). Larkin was very popular with the unskilled workers in Britain and soon tens of thousands of British workers began to take up the demand for a general strike demanding



Scottish revolutionary internationalist John Maclean (far right) led militant Clydeside workers. Massive 1919 Clyde general strike (right) was met with armed troops.

workers in Dublin desperately needed solidarity strikes by British workers, which could have stopped rail and sea traffic to and from Dublin. There was certainly massive sentiment for this from the rank and file of the British unions: railwaymen in Liverpool began to black all Dublin traffic very early in the dispute, and soon between 13-14,000

his release.

Larkin was released after only 17 days in prison and he embarked on a famous tour of Britain that became known as his "fiery cross" crusade. This was an attempt to spark a revolt by the rank and file of the unions in Britain in defiance of their leaders. Larkin denounced the Labour Party leaders

Henderson later achieved infamy as a member of the government that ordered Connolly's execution and is credited with leading cheering in Parliament when the executions in Ireland were announced.

Initially, there was a wave of chauvinist enthusiasm for the war across Europe including in Britain. Many thousands of Irish workers signed up to serve in the



The Bolshevik school of experience

We reprint below remarks by comrade James Robertson from the Prometheus Research Library at the 15 April dayschool.

The issue of the 1916 uprising is a matter of *before* and *after*. If you go back to John Brown's taking Harper's Ferry—where he was subsequently smashed by then-Colonel Robert E Lee, chief of the Confederate armies a year later—Frederick Douglass said

On the Easter Rising

to John Brown, don't do it, you can't possibly win. That's on the way *in* to something. Beforehand, something like the Paris Commune should not have been done—it would, on the basis of analysis, lead to a massacre. But after the fact, when the workers have gone out and raised their arms, you must defend this, and learn from it, but *above all defend it*. Lenin had a big quarrel with George Plekhanov about an uprising. He said to Plekhanov, after the fact if you announce publicly that they should not have taken up arms that makes you a criminal to the working class.

Going into the Easter uprising in Dublin, you can see that there was about everything wrong with it. Capitulation to the nationalists, isolation.... I think Connolly is quoted as saying, we cannot win this because the arms have not arrived, our connections with the countryside have not been sustained, but it's better to go and fight. Well, if a Marxist-Leninist had a chance to talk to him then, one would say: you're out of your mind, don't do it. But, they did it. And it was a blow against British imperialism and against the whole capitalist world order. It must be defended *fully, thoroughly, completely* as an act against the oppressor.

I'd like to get to the core of my remarks, that is, why the Bolsheviks were so special. That's crucial. In the



Moscow, 7 November 1918: Celebration of October Revolution. Through the course of many struggles the Bolsheviks were forged as a party capable of taking state power.

Tsarist empire there was a multi-faceted, repetitive and massive school of experience for the working class, the like of which took place nowhere

What made the Bolsheviks different

else on this planet: working in parliament, boycotting parliament, armed insurrection, going underground, dealing with the national question. Everything happened over and over. The Bolsheviks were tested, tested, tested, making every kind of mistake along the way; fighting with the boycottists, having a narrow party, having a broad party, throwing away the conditions of membership. Every kind of circumstance took place. Somebody here made the point that Lenin didn't generalise from the particular experiences of the Bolshevik faction, which retrospectively was seen as the party after 1912, until the war came. Then, looking at the response of the different sections, above all the German section

of the Second International, Lenin came to appreciate the uniquely valuable quality of the Bolsheviks' own experience and used it as the core for the documentary programmatic basis for the founding of the Third International. And it happened that way, there was nothing special, there were not men of a special mould (to quote Stalin) in the Bolshevik Party. They just had a special kind of experience: a very broad mobilisation of the working class and a big section of the intelligentsia.

OK, "One Big Union" reminded me, there was the Winnipeg General Strike and it was smashed. Jack Mac Donald, who came to found the Canadian Communist Party, learned trade union tactics from that and they had a pretty good party up in Canada. But they never had any factionalism, so they were easily rolled up by the Stalinists. However, practically every founding leader of the Canadian Communist Party became a Trotskyist. Maurice Spector didn't like Jack

Mac Donald so Maurice Spector became a Trotskyist. Jack Mac Donald looked at where the party was going and became a Trotskyist [laughter]. Because that was what was indicated in terms of remaining faithful to the programme. But the American party reflected the diversity of its origins out of both the IWW and the Socialist Party, so there was a lot of factionalism which became institutionalised. It became an illness in the American party, but an illness that by 1928 became a great virtue, because some people were going to go over to Stalin unconditionally and others were going to look really critically at Stalin. And furthermore there was a certain amount of factional loyalty, so you had a chance to go and talk to your own people before you got expelled.

I really appreciate the talks by both Edward and Julia. I thought they were extremely powerful explanations. And they are insights gained from the heights of our experience—and this is important—the commanding heights when you can see very far because the class struggles are very large and all the fundamental questions are posed. Now we're in an unusually deep trough, and the experiences that are immediately available to us are not very good. So we had better make very heavy reference back to the experiences of the workers movement when it could see much further: 1918 through 1921. And furthermore, there's a quote by Lenin in January 1917. He gave a talk in Switzerland and said: "We of the older generation may not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution." Now, I run into various panacea-mongers who say, what is your immediate perspective? Don't pay so much attention to your immediate perspective, because you don't know what's going to happen in February! [Laughter]. What is your *programme*? That is the decisive question.

forces of the British Empire, including many members of the transport union. Connolly and Larkin denounced the war from the outset and tried to formulate a practical programme of opposition to it. Connolly called for Irish workers to take action, hoping this would spark a Europe-wide conflagration against the war. In Scotland, John Maclean raised the standard of socialist internationalism against imperialist militarism. But the outbreak of war and the ascendancy of jingoist sentiment made the years of 1914 to 1916 very difficult for Connolly. He was rightly fearful also over the prospect of partition, which Connolly foresaw would lead to a "carnival of reaction". In 1914, he described with prescience what partition would mean:

"All hopes of uniting the workers, irrespective of religion or old political battle cries will be shattered, and through North and South the issue of Home Rule will be still used to cover the iniquities of the capitalist and landlord class, I am not speaking without due knowledge of the sentiments of the organised Labour movement in Ireland when I say that we would much rather see the Home Rule Bill defeated than see it

carried with Ulster or any part of Ulster left out."

—"The Exclusion of Ulster", 11 April 1914

The accumulation of defeats, betrayals and the reactionary climate of these years took a toll on Connolly and there was a shift in his internationalist perspective. Particularly in the months before the Rising you can see a real despair about the prospects of British workers revolting against their own rulers. Which isn't to say he adopted a nationalist perspective.

In honour of the 1916 Rising

This nationalist bent obviously came to inform his thinking leading up to the Easter Rising. At the same time, Connolly remained the head of the Irish Citizen Army and was general secretary of the transport union after Larkin went to America, and did important work to bring the union back into solvency after the lockout. Having observed the prostration of the Second International and the trail of Irishmen going off to be butchered in the trenches, Connolly felt desperate to act against the war. At the same time his early

avowals of internationalist solidarity with Karl Liebknecht were followed by statements which viewed the victory of German imperialism as a lesser evil.

What Connolly didn't have was Lenin's understanding that war is the mother of revolutions. Lenin too had seen the collapse of the Second International, and initiated an uncompromising struggle to build a new international and to turn the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war. The programme of revolutionary defeatism was a key plank in the programme of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and was central to the struggle for the Third International. The key political task was to bring proletarian leadership to the struggle for national liberation. Connolly's enormous political abilities could have been brought to bear in the work of forging a Bolshevik-type party that alone could provide such leadership.

Connolly's writings investing the Irish national struggle with an inherent socialist character did take on a more pronounced flavour. He began to orient towards the petty-bourgeois nationalists in the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the

Irish Volunteers. For several months before the Easter Rising Connolly entered a political bloc with a wing of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, in which he made serious adaptations to their nationalism and religiosity. The 1916 Proclamation which Connolly signed was a bourgeois-nationalist document, steeped in religious piety, beginning as it did, "Irishmen and Irishwomen: in the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom."

The leaders of the Rising had a plan for a national uprising which, through various shortcomings, blunders and betrayals, went seriously awry. Centrally, they were counting on a shipment of German weapons which was captured by the British off the coast of Kerry. Of course the chances of the rebellion succeeding, even if all had gone to plan, are another matter. In any case, the insurrectionary leaders wanted to strike a blow for Irish independence and against the British

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France...

(Continued from page 12)

launched viciously racist campaigns against the *banlieue* youth, which set the stage for the fascist Le Pen's showing at the 2002 elections and the return of the right. In fact the racist legislation and ongoing provocations against *banlieue* youth by the current minister of police are just the extension of legislation and practices widely carried out by the Socialist Party prime minister Jospin, who to this day believes he was not harsh enough in his racist campaigns and that this is the reason he lost the 2002 election to Le Pen.

The history of how workers struggles have been derailed in France is the story of the popular front. So it is not a coincidence that on the heels of the anti-CPE movement the CP has already embarked on a major campaign to commemorate the 70th anniversary of June '36, from May Day on. Throughout the strikes, campus occupations and mass demonstrations, we have warned against these protests being channelled towards a new capitalist "popular front" in the elections to take place next year.

This is what our opponents have been working towards. And with some success. Six months ago when Socialist Party leaders tried to get into workers demonstrations or leftist meetings, they risked being pelted with eggs or snowballs. This is now past and they are seen by many as a truly lesser evil for next year's elections. They managed to rebuild some so-called leftist credentials with a less than minimal posture of opposing the CPE. Instrumental in this turn-about has been the so-called far left, mainly the Pabliste Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) and Lutte ouvrière (LO).

During the strikes LO basically disappeared any criticism of the labour bureaucracy. After all, it was carrying out LO's maximum programme of successive days of growing workers mobilisations to scare off the government and force it to withdraw some of its attacks. On the campuses where we intervened, LO, as well as the Taaffeites and the Pablistes, were liquidated into the mobilising committees together with the mainstream social democrats from the Socialist Party and CP. And they worked to keep the general assemblies within the narrow framework of organising the struggle, trying to shut us up when we intervened with our revolutionary programme.

At the Paris Saint-Denis campus, at one point they became the loyal waterboys of the university administration, ie those who directly represent the bourgeoisie on campus. Faced with the possibility of a campus occupation, the president of the university announced the administration was going to shut down classes and organise debates with the teachers and the students. The left was over the moon. The Pablistes wrote (see "red" no 65): "this policy [of broadening the means of struggle] has paid out since today, the campus is ours: on 17 March the Council of Administration of the campus passed a motion (presented by the students, teachers and striking workers) ... suspending classes from 20 to 26 March to make the campus a place of debate and mobilisation." This was our opponents' micro popular-front government on campus.

Racist hysteria against minority youth

In the last week of March there was a hysterical racist campaign against "casseeurs", which means something like

hooligans. It targeted for mass state repression the same dark-skinned youth from the ghettos who revolted last autumn against their daily racist oppression following the death of two youths. In the course of the anti-CPE struggle about 5000 people have been arrested, over 60 of whom are today serving closed prison terms. We opposed from the get-go this anti-"casseeur" campaign and demanded freedom for all those imprisoned, while most of our opponents were busy organising human chains (that is, cordoning off the protesters) and advocating in the student meetings to protect the majority white students from the barbaric hordes from the city estates. This was an outright capitulation, including to the minister of police Sarkozy. Of course now they are all running big campaigns for amnesty (with the vocal exception of LO however). These campaigns are a good thing of course, but



Left: Protesting students occupy Gare de Lyon rail yard in Paris, 30 March. Right: Plainclothes cops beat youth at end of protest by student groups and trade unions in Paris, 28 March.

we must point out that the current posture of these opportunists is in sharp contrast to what they did and said at the height of the repression.

The French bourgeoisie has been fomenting race hatred to seek to divide the working class, and the left's capitulation to this is another form of class collaboration. Under Mitterrand in the early 1980s, immigrants from North Africa who were the spearhead of militant strikes in the car industry were accused of being stooges for the Islamic fundamentalists. Today it is the children and grandchildren of African and North African immigrants in the housing estates who are stigmatised as potential Islamic terrorists, anti-woman thugs and anti-Semites.

We have consistently opposed these campaigns, while noting that these youth are not only victims of racism, but are also integrated in the (admittedly shrinking) industrial proletariat, ie they are part of the only social force to overthrow this racist, decaying capitalist system. Some of our better sales in the last year or two have been at car plants, to older immigrants as well as to a new generation of dark-skinned youth.

The unions should fight to organise these younger workers, including the many temporary workers or those without fixed contracts. We fight for strong industrial unions, as against the division in France between competing unions based on political divisions.

To rebuild their credentials the left is likely to mobilise in coming weeks against a new, draconian, anti-immigration law which would prevent immigrants from bringing in their family and settling down. We oppose this law and fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. We fight against discrimination in housing and education. At the

same time we recall that in 1996, after the December 1995 strikes, the unions and the left mobilised tens of thousands in defence of undocumented workers, before doing an about-face when they got into the government.

There are thus many ways in which class collaboration was expressed by our opponents throughout this CPE struggle. Our task was to intervene exposing this and counterposing to it our own revolutionary programme. One hot issue was also the question of Iran. You surely heard about Chirac's statement back in January threatening Iran, including with nuclear strikes, in case they might consider getting the kind of weapons they need to defend themselves against imperialist attack. Our signs defending Iran against our own bourgeoisie were often the most controversial. We pointed out that support to

employees in Germany, and a major strike in heavy industry may take place in the next weeks. On the day of one of the biggest trade union mobilisations in France, 28 March, there was, as you know, a major strike of 1.5 million council workers here.

With the exception of the very chauvinistic Parti des travailleurs, the French left and so-called far left has been in support of the European Union. They have supported its extension to the former deformed workers states of Eastern Europe, and they even support Turkish membership. Now of course they don't want the Bolkestein Directive, which is however a direct consequence of the eastern extension of the EU. Our opponents want a "social Europe", ie to maintain the current welfare state. Fundamentally they accept a *capitalist* Europe, which can only be "anti-



your own bourgeoisie abroad always sets you up for attacks at home, a point which is particularly valid regarding the prime minister de Villepin. After the fiasco of the referendum on the European constitution last year, an extremely weakened Chirac named de Villepin as his prime minister, trying to take advantage of de Villepin's popularity, gained in the UN in early 2003 as an opponent of Bush's war against Iraq. With de Villepin's CPE attack we have been paying with a vengeance, in a sense, for the support given at the time by the left groups to Chirac/de Villepin against Bush.

For a socialist Europe!

Similarly our opponents have fundamentally adopted the foreign policy of their own bourgeoisie over the European question. They accept that Europe must be strong against America. Indeed, the French bourgeoisie lost its colonial empire a long time ago and is a third-rate imperialist power. To push its own interests in the world it often has to lean on its alliance with other European powers in this post-Soviet world marked by overwhelming domination of the United States as the only superpower. The European Union, which before was an economic appendage to the anti-Soviet NATO military alliance, is now an unstable imperialist consortium which serves to regulate competition among European powers and to strengthen them against their rivals outside Europe, against their own working classes, and against immigrants.

So all over Europe the various capitalist classes are going after their own working class, which is resisting. There has been hard class struggle by the European dockers, who repelled the Port Package in January. There was recently a two-month strike of public

social", racist and imperialist. We instead oppose the EU on principle. Our alternative is the *socialist* united states of Europe, which means workers revolution and rebuilding Europe on a socialist basis, with an internationally planned and democratically centralised economy.

As I said earlier, the background for the CPE attack is the iron necessity for the French bourgeoisie to destroy the so-called welfare state. They are forced to do this not simply because they are bad people, but because if they don't increase their own profit rate they won't be able to compete on the international market. So they are obliged to destroy the workers' gains. And the social democrats, who want to administer the bourgeois state, will make whatever promises (when they are in opposition) that they will be a lesser evil, but once they administer the bourgeois state they are also obliged to attack the workers. This is what Mitterrand did, and this is what Jospin did, each time with the participation of CP ministers.

We have stressed in our interventions and our propaganda how the welfare state came about: it was a concession to the working class in Western Europe following the Soviet victory against Nazi Germany. With Soviet tanks on the Elbe in Germany the western bourgeoisies feared a communist takeover, and the workers felt encouraged to fight for concessions. Despite Stalinist misrule and despite the relative scarcity and poverty of the economies in the East, there was no unemployment there, no misery and no mass racist terror as in the West, because the capitalist class had been expropriated and the economy collectivised. These were gains never achieved even in the richest capitalist countries. We Trotskyists defended the Soviet degenerated workers state and

Immigrants...

(Continued from page 2)

time we fought for proletarian political revolution against Stalinist bureaucratic misrule.

SWP and Socialist Party: the bankruptcy of reformism

In contrast to our record, our reformist opponents including the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party supported counterrevolution, cheering reactionary Solidarność — a clerical-nationalist, anti-communist movement that was the spearhead of counter-revolution in Poland—and welcoming Yeltsin's counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the biggest defeat for the international working class to date. At home these reformists are openly reconciled to the existence of the capitalist order, which they seek to pressure for a few crumbs. The SWP's Respect coalition gained 16 seats in the May elections, taking 12 from Labour in heavily Muslim Tower Hamlets on a programme of opposition to the occupation of Iraq. Respect is not even nominally part of the working-class movement, but a cross-class populist coalition with Islamic religious forces, which disavows secularism and rejects the fight for abortion rights for women. We would not call for a vote to this coalition which would be contrary to the most elementary principle of the class struggle—class independence of the working class. Respect makes no pretence to stand for the overthrow of the racist capitalist order. Its response to the threat posed by the fascist BNP, who won 11 seats from Labour in Barking and Dagenham, is purely electoral: vote for Respect, or support "Unite Against Fascism". This campaign is sponsored by a host of New Labour luminaries, including London Mayor Ken Livingstone. Their main

election poster said: "Stop the fascist BNP—use your vote on 4 May", a back-handed call to vote Labour which is obscene: the main threat to Muslims, immigrants and minorities in this country comes from the racist Blair government and the capitalist state. The BNP's racist filth about "Islamification of

be won away from the BNP by a left party that puts forward a class-based alternative" (*The Socialist*, 11-17 May). While shamelessly pandering to backward consciousness among the working class, the Socialist Party's slogan "no to terrorism, no to war" (adopted in the aftermath of last



News Line
May Day 2006, London. Sacked Gate Gourmet workers confront TGWU leader Tony Woodley who sold them out last year. Bosses replaced low-paid Asian women with even lower-paid immigrant workers.

Britain" is finding receptivity precisely because Labour's "war on terror" has made anti-Muslim racism "respectable".

The Socialist Party won a number of council seats, and criticised Respect for gaining support primarily from among Muslims and for lacking a "class-based appeal to all sections of the working class". This is a polite way of saying that Respect should have appealed to potential BNP voters! According to the Socialist Party: "The white working-class BNP voters of Barking and Dagenham will only

year's London bombing) expresses this outfit's refusal to oppose the Blair government's "war on terror". Their maximum programme is for preservation of the "welfare state" within the framework of decaying capitalism.

Fascists are paramilitary race-terrorists, who cannot be defeated at the ballot box. Their provocations must be stopped by union/minority mobilisations in the streets. Feeding off economic decay, the fascists have been making inroads into derelict former

the deformed workers states of Eastern Europe, and we continue to do so for China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba.

The problem with the Stalinists is precisely that they did not want to take over Western Europe. This is why we fought for proletarian political revolutions in the East. The Stalinists believed in peaceful coexistence with imperialism. It was in the name of peaceful coexistence with imperialism that they offered to withdraw the Red Army from Afghanistan in early 1989. Of course this betrayal did not pacify imperialism, it ushered in instead the final collapse of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. And with the Soviet Union gone the bourgeoisies feel the need to take back their earlier concessions.

We steadfastly defended the Soviet Union, when our opponents cheered at the capitalist counterrevolution. I see there is a very relevant article about the British Cliffites in the current issue of *Workers Hammer* ["SWP wanted the post-Soviet world, now they've got it", issue no 194, Spring 2006]. Now the same reformists whine about attacks on the welfare state, but their support to counterrevolutionary forces in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was their own contribution to the current attacks on workers gains in the West. They also contributed to this outcome by demoralising workers with their own participation in the anti-communist campaigns about how supposedly Stalin was the natural heir of Lenin and Trotsky.

Today the immense majority of workers do not identify their struggles any more with the fight for new proletarian revolutions. In our interventions around the CPE people often would appreciate our opposition to the racist campaign against the

so-called "casseurs", or our warnings about the new popular front, but they generally disliked the title of our paper, *Le Bolchévick*, because this title proudly identifies with the Russian Revolution of October 1917. We got booed most in general assemblies when we talked about the need for a revolutionary workers party or the need to defend the existing gains in China and the other deformed workers states. This is the stream we have to swim against in this period.

I see a number of comrades in this room from the SL/B and the SGI who could give eyewitness reports on our intervention in France against the CPE. Comrades came from most of our European sections and from the United States to help us out at some point in our intervention. This intervention is really a little showcase example of what our international is all about in this current period. Our international leadership organised the reinforcement of our leadership on the spot in France, as well as in terms of comrades to carry out our intervention in general assemblies of students, factory sales and at demos and opponent events.

We are well aware of the retrogression of consciousness in this post-Soviet period. But this does not mean that there is not going to be any class struggle. It is the exploitation of labour at the root of the capitalist system which constantly pushes the workers and oppressed to rise against their lot. And these struggles are the objective basis for the consciousness of the working class to change. At the same time revolutionary consciousness is not spontaneously generated in the course of day-to-day struggles of the workers.

It must be brought to the workers by the revolutionary party—which is our role.

So the retrogression of consciousness is not for us a mantra which would mean that everything is useless and we should just wait for better times to come. It is not something linear and we are not doomed to continue to witness it forever. Things will change. It is now that we are preparing for these better times, first of all by maintaining our programme, which is the concentrated expression of the lessons of past class struggles and the only realistic future against imperialist barbarism, and second by seeking to popularise and implement it where we can in order to build our party.

The question for a small Leninist organisation like ours is to be prepared to seize the opportunity when struggles happen, to intervene with our programme at a moment of increased receptivity to our ideas. This is what we tried to do. We took advantage of the window of opportunity we had and we intervened.

A focus of our work was intervention in the students' general assemblies, presenting our views to broader layers of students in struggle. We continued intervening for days and weeks on the same campuses, in Rouen and Paris, so that the same students could test in the struggle our programme as counterposed to that of our reformist opponents. While sales of our paper were pretty slow in the beginning, they picked up after a while. Students would come up to say they had been listening to our interventions over several weeks, and now they would buy our paper. This included also a number of subscriptions

textile towns in Lancashire, riding on the back of a major fascist provocation in Oldham in 2001. The BNP laid siege to the Asian population whom they attacked, aided and abetted by the police. At the time we published a leaflet calling for an end to the police occupation of Oldham, and for union/minority mobilisations to defend Asians against the BNP. We also made clear that the fight against fascism must be linked to a fight for workers revolution to eradicate the capitalist system of private profit that engenders economic and social ruin.

The multiethnic revolutionary workers party we seek to build would infuse wide layers of the working class with an understanding that to defend its own interests—opposing redundancies, defending working conditions and fighting for better wages—it is necessary to oppose the British capitalist rulers on a broad range of issues. The decisive questions we fight for today include: opposition to the colonial occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and to the racist "war on terror"; withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland; for women's liberation through socialist revolution. We stand for unconditional military defence of the remaining workers states in China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam, against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. At the same time we fight for a proletarian political revolution to establish a regime based on workers democracy and a revolutionary internationalist perspective, as opposed to the myth of building "socialism in one country". In Britain, as in other imperialist countries, we view immigrants as a living link to the struggle for Trotskyist parties in their countries of origin, as well as a vital component in building a party dedicated to the overthrow of racist British capitalism. ■

sold to our press. I don't have final figures yet but we sold something like 40 to 50 subscriptions to *Le Bolchévick* in March and April. Our forums and class series have been better attended than in years. The task for us now is to keep struggling with these new subscribers and people who gave us their name, in order to win over a few of them to our programme and to joining our organisation. This is the challenge which the LTF is facing now. Thank you. ■



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Empire. The Rising began on Monday 24 April 1916, in the teeth of British imperialism at war, with the aim of creating an independent Irish republic. Around 150 men and women of the Irish Citizen Army were joined by around 700 of the Irish Volunteers, a nationalist force influenced by the old Fenian conspirators of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. They occupied several important buildings in the city, but the only real question was how long it would take the British to amass a force adequate to put down the Rising. By the end of the fighting, the British outnumbered the rebels by 20 to one. After attempting to storm the rebel positions, in the process of which they incurred serious losses, the British changed tack and began to bombard their headquarters in the General Post Office. They crushed the rebellion within five days.

Once the Rising had taken place, it was imperative for Marxists to take a side in its defence, as an elementary expression of support for Irish independence and the defence of an oppressed nation. There is an important distinction to be made between participating in something and having a position in defence of it. The Rising was suppressed with brutal ferocity by British imperialism. Much of central Dublin was reduced to rubble and hundreds of people were killed. Over the course of the next two weeks the British embarked on a series of executions of its leaders. When 14 had been killed, it was widely thought that would be the end. But no, the *Independent* newspaper, mouthpiece of William Martin Murphy (commonly known to the Dublin working class as William "Murder" Murphy) who had led the bosses during the lockout, howled for Connolly's blood. On 12 May Connolly was executed in Dublin's Kilmainham Gaol; he had suffered a leg wound in the fighting and so he was shot while tied to a chair.

Those who do not defend the Rising are guilty of a capitulation to the imperialist order. In *The discussion on self-determination summed up* (1916) Lenin described it as "the touchstone of our theoretical views" on the national question. He polemicised against Trotsky as well as Karl Radek, who described the Rising as a putsch and criticised it on the spurious pretext that the national question was now redundant as an issue for mobilising the masses in Europe. Lenin argued:

"We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise every popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are 'opposed' to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors as a 'putsch', we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites."

For Lenin, the events in Dublin were part of the struggles unleashed by the war which revolutionaries should seek to use. He understood that under imperialism, national oppression would become more of a focus for struggle, not less. Any socialist worth his salt had to defend the Rising and this obviously drew a hard line against the various social-democratic apologists for imperialism. Lenin argued that it was the misfortune of the Irish rebels that "they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had had time to mature".

The Rising was a herald of the struggles to come, including colonial risings against imperialism. Lenin also noted that "it is only in premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements that the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians". Within 18 months, the Russian Revolution shook the world, although of course Connolly could not have known that was going to take place. The Easter Rising can be compared



Workers in Britain opposed imperialist intervention to crush Bolshevik Revolution. 1919 Manchester leaflet for "Hands Off Russia!" campaign (above).

to John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859 as a giant historic landmark of the struggles that were about to break loose. The soldiers who destroyed slavery in the course of the second American revolution—the Civil War—marched to the tune of "John Brown's body". The Easter Rising and its brutal suppression provided the inspiration for a generalised revolt against imperialist rule in Ireland. It is the same forces of bourgeois reaction and their reformist lackeys that today seek to disappear the examples of John Brown and Easter 1916.

Socialist Party in the tradition of William Walker

By way of contrast to our position, I want to talk briefly about the Socialist Party. Historically their tendency has opposed the call for immediate withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. Moreover they have held that the path to socialism lies through the passing of an Enabling Act in the British Parliament. Well, recently they published an article on Connolly (*Socialist View*, Spring 2006) which attacks Connolly for making statements "which could be read as supporting the idea that independence would give a boost to the struggle for socialism", and they lament that the programme Connolly developed on the national question was "one-sided and, as such, would not reassure the mass of Protestants". Behind this lies a not very well-concealed adaptation to anti-Catholic prejudice. They also lecture Connolly—who spent years organising Protestants and Catholics in trade unions—for not knowing how to unite Protestants and Catholics in Belfast! Really, what the Socialist Party hates about Connolly is his persistent opposition to British imperialism, to Orange reaction and to Protestant ascendancy.

The Socialist Party stands much closer to the tradition of a gentleman named William Walker, a very prominent

Belfast trade unionist and member of the ILP in the 1900s who capitulated quite openly to Orangeism. He became the object of Connolly's ire for his opposition to Home Rule, to Irish independence and to equality for Catholics and also for his belief that the Irish labour movement should have no separate party but should be subordinate to the British Labour Party. Now this might sound familiar to anyone who knows the Socialist Party: Walker's retorts to Connolly were invariably to denounce him as a nationalist and to insist that the ILP was building municipal socialism in Belfast, rhetorically asking "how many of you are there, what have you done, and what are you going to do that the ILP cannot do?" Connolly correctly noted that the standard of Walker was "not the sacred banner of true Internationalism, but is instead the shamefaced flag of a bastard Imperialism!" (quoted in *James Connolly*, Donal Nevin, 2005).

Class struggle in the war of independence

The years after Connolly's execution saw a resurgence of anti-British sentiment in Ireland, notably over the executions after the Rising, the continuing deferral of Home Rule, the threat of conscription and the bloodbath in Europe. The bourgeoisie began to take an anti-British stance and Sinn Fein became a prominent force, winning a majority of seats in the 1918 election. This was combined with a resurgence of working-class militancy which was inspired by the Russian Revolution and the revolutionary upsurge across Europe after the war. The transport union experienced a revival, with nearly 70,000 members by the end of 1918, and the number of strikes went through the roof. This marked the beginning of the war of independence of 1919-21. It was met with vicious repression by the British military forces which included the notorious "Black and Tans" [irregular military units] and auxiliaries who made widespread use of collective punishment, torture and assassination against the civilian population, perhaps best exemplified by the burning of Cork.

In the cities and towns in the South, the proletariat was active during the war of independence. In addition to the Limerick Soviet, there were land seizures and workers protests, often organised by returning Irish-Americans with experience in the revolutionary syndicalist IWW. April 1920 saw a hunger strike by over 100 nationalist and trade union prisoners; a two-day general strike throughout the South

secured their unconditional release. The Irish Labour Party and TUC played a truly treacherous role in these years. Although they had refused to call for Connolly's release after the Rising or to condemn his execution, labour misleaders like William O'Brien and Thomas Johnson now used the authority of Connolly, and their one-time connection to him, to justify their own betrayals.

Labour became the loyal opposition to the Catholic Irish bourgeoisie, agitating for anti-conscription strikes against the British authorities, which had the backing of Sinn Fein and the Catholic hierarchy, while refusing to oppose the nationalists or even to stand candidates in the 1918 general election. Later, the Labour Party and TUC supported the wretched Treaty, despite the fact that it strengthened communalist divisions among the proletariat in the North. After independence they worked hand in glove with Eamon de Valera—who was to become long-time taoiseach and later president of the clericalist state—and his Fianna Fail party, establishing a framework of class collaboration that persists to this day in the form of so-called "social partnership" with the bosses.

The Belfast strike of 1919

Belfast was key to a revolutionary perspective for Ireland in these years, as home to the industrial proletariat in Ireland. It was of strategic importance because this was where British imperialism built its ships and it had engineering. There was an important class axis between Belfast, Glasgow and Liverpool. The obvious problem in Belfast was that class consciousness was poisoned for a long period by the sectarian division. The 1919 strikes that took place in Belfast and Glasgow's "Red Clydeside" were part of a wave of class struggle across Europe, Britain and Ireland in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1917. It is not an exaggeration to say that the October Revolution and the early Soviet government were a beacon to the workers and oppressed of the world. The necessary task was the forging of a revolutionary party with a perspective to take state power, which was the key lesson of October 1917.

In Glasgow and Belfast, growing resentment over the wartime privations came to a head at the end of the war over demands for a shorter workweek. In January 1919 in Belfast, workers in the power stations, gas works and shipyards went on strike and within days the strike committee had complete control of the city. The same month there was a massive

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strike in Glasgow. The majority of the Belfast strikers were Protestant, and while the strike was in the ascendancy, sectarian divisions were reduced. Significantly, the head of the strike committee, Charles MacKay, was a socialist of Catholic background. This was a very real opening for the sectarian divide to be transcended and could have given a tremendous impetus to the struggle for an Irish workers republic. The political situation was relatively open: in the 1918 general election, Sam Kyle, a socialist in the ILP and supporter of Home Rule, got 23 per cent of the vote standing in Belfast's heavily Protestant Shankill on a platform for an independent socialist Ireland!

The 1919 strike in Belfast was by far the most significant strike in the wave of militancy that swept Ireland during the independence struggle and its defeat was a crushing blow to the unity of the workers movement throughout Ireland. Days before troops were moved into Belfast, troops had also been positioned in Glasgow's George Square, against a huge demonstration of striking workers. There was a big question about whether the troops would attack the workers if ordered to do so, but this was never tested. The strike leaders were arrested on the demonstration and jailed; the national leadership of the engineering union in London disowned the Glasgow and Belfast strikes which were then settled separately. The Dublin labour bureaucracy did not support the Belfast strikes, which was criminal. The Protestant bosses in Belfast played the "Orange card" to defeat the strike, but the "Green card" was also used to divide the working class. During the Belfast strike, Lord French, the British Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, decided to release some Sinn Fein leaders from prison in the hope that their conservative nationalism would help drive a wedge between Protestant and Catholic workers. He explained:

"I did not however, consider that the time was ripe for an actual move in the direction of an immediate release of prisoners until the strikes in the North occurred and a very dangerous crisis was at hand which might plunge the whole country in disaster."

— quoted in Conor Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland* (1996)

This period also saw a series of militant struggles in the South, such as the "Limerick Soviet", when the town of Limerick was shut down by a general strike in opposition to British military repression. This strike was sold out by the personal intervention of Labour leader Thomas Johnson. Partly following the example of British workers who had refused to load munitions destined to be used by counterrevolutionary forces against the Soviet Red Army, in early 1920 dockers and rail workers in Ireland refused to transport arms or personnel for the British Army. The Miners Federation in Britain voted to "down tools" to force the withdrawal of British troops but the union leadership managed to prevent this.

The massive wave of strikes that exploded in Britain in 1919 was derailed by the leaders of the Triple Alliance, Robert Smillie, JH Thomas

and Robert Williams, when prime minister Lloyd George called their bluff. The famous encounter was related by Aneurin Bevan, in which Lloyd George told these union chiefs that the government was at their mercy and they had the power to bring it down if they wanted to:

"But if you do so," went on Mr Lloyd



Dublin, 9 December 2005 demonstration in solidarity with sacked Irish Ferries workers: Irish building workers union placards demand unionisation of immigrant workers. Capitalist press saw spectre of "Larkinism".

George, 'have you weighed the consequences? The strike will be in defiance of the government of the country and by its very success will precipitate a constitutional crisis of the first importance. For, if a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state, or withdraw and accept the authority of the state. Gentlemen,' asked the Prime Minister quietly, 'have you considered, and if you have, are you ready?' 'From that moment on,' said Robert Smillie, 'we were beaten and we knew we were'."

— *In Place of Fear* (1952)

This was a classic betrayal by the leaders of the most powerful unions in Britain. It graphically showed the vital necessity of building a revolutionary party capable of struggling for state power.

The Irish Civil War

British forces had been repeatedly menaced by effective guerrilla struggle led by Michael Collins and in the middle of 1921 the British government was forced to offer a truce to the Irish nationalist leaders, followed by negotiations that led to the Treaty. The British knew that the nationalist leaders Collins, Griffith and Eamon de Valera would preserve the capitalist order. Collins signed the Treaty in December 1921. Its conditions were humiliating—offering an Irish state of 26

counties in the South, which meant accepting partition and remaining subordinate to the British Crown.

Many nationalists felt betrayed that this Treaty had been foisted on them after so much hard-fought struggle. Some took up arms against the Treaty, which led to a bitter civil war. It was not fought primarily over partition, but over

the minimal terms offered by the British. The dissident nationalist "anti-Treatyites" were brutally suppressed by the new Irish state under Michael Collins. Armed and instructed by the departing British forces, supported by the church and the big capitalists and based on the most reactionary social forces, the new state was ruthless against these opponents of its rule, killing 77 people by summary execution and jailing over 15,000 Republicans. The anti-Treaty forces seized the Four Courts in Dublin but were dislodged and fought a guerrilla struggle in which Collins himself was killed.

The civil war lasted from June 1922 to May 1923, in the ebb-tide of the working-class upsurge. It was necessary for Marxists to fight intransigently against the Free State repression of the anti-Treaty forces, which was part of the "blooding" of the new bourgeois state. During the civil war, Marxists would have fought for the unity of the working class North and South, Protestant and Catholic. The Labour leaders in the South supported the new bourgeois state and the Free State army's brutal repression during the civil war. The imprint of this civil war remains today. While he was hounding Republicans last year, interior minister Michael McDowell made it known that both his grandfather and great-uncle were involved in repression of Republicans during the civil war.

In Moscow in December 1922 the Fourth Congress of the Communist International forthrightly condemned the executions of Republicans. They also denounced the treachery of the Labour Party that supported the executions: "the action of the majority of the Labour Party, headed by Johnson, in supporting the executions, is the most criminal betrayal these traitors to the working class have yet perpetrated". The resolution also sent fraternal greetings to the "struggling Irish

national revolutionaries" whom it predicted would "soon tread the only path that leads to real freedom—the path of Communism". The term "national revolutionaries" obscures the dividing line between communism and nationalism, and the leaders of the nascent Irish Communist Party who attended the Fourth Congress latched onto such weaknesses as an excuse for a political adaptation to nationalism. They even offered pages of their newspaper to the nationalist forces led by de Valera.

The nationalist perspective of the dissident Republicans offered no way forward. While they drew their support from poorer layers of society, their perspective was counterposed to a class orientation which would have sought to unite Catholic and Protestant workers especially in the North. Therefore we think that calling for a military victory to the anti-Treatyites in the civil war would have been a betrayal of the working class, especially in the North, where the nationalists organised a boycott of Protestant shops and businesses, and the military campaign often targeted civilians. The political bankruptcy of the anti-Treatyites became clear in later years when their leader de Valera became the father of the clericalist, anti-woman, anti-working-class Irish state.

So to conclude. James Connolly did not live to see the Russian Revolution, and it is of course impossible to know whether he would have made the transition to become a Bolshevik. However, the Communist International's Marxist perspective on the national question would have been a powerful weapon to win people like Connolly to Communism. Bolshevism could have provided him with a template for how to organise a revolutionary party in Ireland. Connolly was essentially a fighter for the international working class, and in spite of his flaws and problems, we honour him. We base ourselves on the lessons of the Russian Revolution, and the experiences of the Bolshevik Party, the early Communist International, and stand for the rebirth of the Fourth International. Rather than using Connolly's authority to justify some form of opportunism, as our opponents do, we look to the most advanced conceptions of modern scientific socialism as the way forward for workers revolution. ■



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France

Workers, students defeat CPE

We reprint below an edited version of the presentation given by Herminio Sanchez, editor of *Le Bolchévik*, newspaper of our French section the *Ligue trotskyste de France*, at a *Spartacist League/Britain dayschool* in London on 15 April.

I am sure the British press has been following events in France so I am not going to go into the details of what happened. I would also like to point to a presentation I gave in Paris last week, which is published in *Workers Vanguard* [no 868, 14 April 2006] which you can pick up here if you haven't already, and which draws some lessons of this fight.

This struggle extended over two months on some campuses. The period between 7 March and 4 April was marked by three increasingly powerful days of strike action by the trade unions, which finally forced the government to throw in the towel. This is the first significant victory the French working class has achieved in years. Last year's referendum was a defeat for the government, but this CPE [First Employment Contract] defeat was achieved in the street and not the ballot box, so it has more significance. It should encourage workers in France and more broadly in Europe and elsewhere to fight continued attacks against their gains.

The CPE was supposed to institute two-year probation periods, ie total job insecurity, for any youth under 26. It was an attack against the unions, and finally they mobilised against it. It has been pushed back. At the same time, even before the CPE was conceived, youth already had to wait on average until age 28 to get onto the stable employment market; ie not temp jobs or work placements. Most of the so-called "Equal Opportunities Act", of which the CPE was only one clause, is being implemented. This includes throwing youth out of the school system into apprenticeship from age 14. The CNE [New Employment Contract], which was instituted last summer, and which is a kind of CPE for everybody in companies with a workforce under 20, has been in place since last August and for now will continue. In other words repelling the attack of the CPE does not even start to address the current crucial problem of unemployment, which is particularly acute for women and youth, and even more so in the ghettos. This is what Chirac calls the benevolent "French model". The capitalism of the so-called welfare state is itself a system of institutionalised job insecurity and racist discrimination.

To fight unemployment, work must be divided among all hands, with no

No to a new popular front! For a Socialist United States of Europe!



Reuters

Above: 4 April mass protest by students and workers in Paris. Below: Members of Sud trade union federation demand repeal of "First Employment Contract" law.



François Préneau

loss in pay. We are for a 30-hour working week, with 40 hours pay. Against job insecurity, we are for full, indefinite contracts for everybody. We are for massive building projects to rebuild the decaying *banlieues* [suburban ghettos] and transport facilities, and for decent health and education for all.

The alternatives generally posed by the social democrats in France is either to go all the way towards a "social-liberal" or even a "neoliberal" society, ie Anglo-American-style capitalism, or to maintain the present so-called welfare state. This is no alternative. We have consistently intervened in the recent social struggle with a programme of socialist revolution. This is the fundamental dividing line between us and our opponents, who peddle illusions that you can achieve lasting gains under capitalism and thus derail workers from an understanding that what is desperately

needed is to overthrow the whole racist capitalist system.

The popular front in history

As you know, the classic way in which class collaboration subordinates the working class to its capitalist exploiters in France has been the popular front. The first so-called socialist in history to enter a capitalist government was Millerand in France over a hundred years ago. In the mid-1930s, with the degeneration of the Communist International, a new policy of forging coalitions with bourgeois parties was pushed by the Stalinised Communist Parties (CPs), particularly in France. These kinds of coalitions, including the participation of bourgeois forces, based on a bourgeois programme to administer the bourgeois state, is what we call a popular front.

The 1936 popular-front government

in France betrayed a huge wave of strikes and factory occupations which could have led to a proletarian revolution. Instead, the CP tied the working class to its own bourgeoisie through a "popular front" with the bourgeois Radical Party. And in the name of the popular front the CP told workers it was time to end the strike and support "their" government. Of course, ever since the wave of workers militancy subsided, the successive popular-front governments chipped away at the concessions made by the capitalists at the height of the strike, and demoralised the working class. With the formation of the 1935 popular front the CP also endorsed French bourgeois militarism, thus paving the way for World War II. It abandoned its policy of opposition to French colonialism.

Again in 1944-1947 the French CP went into a class-collaborationist alliance, this time including with the right-wing Gaullists, and saved the class rule of the French bourgeoisie, which had been up to its eyeballs in collaboration with the Nazis. Over 99 per cent of the officer corps had initially supported the Vichy regime, which was also adopted by the same parliament (minus the MPs from the CP, which was banned), which had brought in the 1936 popular-front government.

Again after May '68 a new popular front was devised—the "Union of the Left"—which came to power in 1981 with Mitterrand, including the participation of the CP in the government. The CP's down payment was renouncing any support to the intervention of the Red Army in Afghanistan, and a racist attack against an immigrant hostel in a Parisian suburb on the eve of the election. After less than two years in power the government turned against the working class that had elected it and set about attacking workers' gains, which at bottom have been under relentless attack ever since.

In December 1995 there was an important strike wave against attacks on health care. Most public transport was shut down for two weeks. The strike wave finished off the right-wing Juppé government, but it brought in the capitalist government of the "plural left" including Jospin for the Socialist Party (SP), Marie-George Buffet for the CP (she is the current leader of the CP), and a host of bourgeois politicians including Jean-Pierre Chevènement as minister of police. This government deported thousands of undocumented workers, privatised more companies than any right-wing government before, and

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