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 it still remains responsible for the deaths of prisoners in custody, most of them black. And last July, the police execution of Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes on the London Tube recalled the British rulers' "shoot-to-kill" policy, deployed against "IRA suspects" in Northern Ireland for decades. The killing of de Menezes exposed what Labour's "war on terror" is all about: expanding the state's powers of repression, aimed at minorities and ultimately the working class.

The international campaign to free Mumia, fighter against racist oppression and America's foremost class-war prisoner, has a disastrous showing on 4 May, the vote than both the Tories and Liberal Democrats.

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Newspaper of the Spartacist League

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!
Mumia honoured in France

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 furor of racist hysteria which the Blair government has continued to fuel at every opportunity. The morning after the election, Blair sacked his Home Secretary Charles Clarke because of a scandal whipped up by the press over hundreds of thousands of immigrants in this country who either have not applied for legal status or have been denied it — deemed 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 they get there. 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 campaign at the time of the “IRA suspects”, 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 asylum seekers 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 in Saint-Denis in Northern France, throwing 2500 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 England is continuing on page 2.

Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

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

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 and 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’
Immigrants...

(Continued from page 1)

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February 2004, 23 Chinese cockle pick-
drowned in Morecambe Bay. These immi-
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1920, February 10). Britain's economy
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How the Bolshevik party

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_V I Lenin, "Left Wing" Communist - An Infanticide Disorder (1920)

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Mumia... (Continued from page 1)

 justice system' have colluded to kill Mumia for the crime of being an elo­ quent 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 went to prison for 20 years and Mumia's case is in the courts.

In an interview printed in the PCF's daily newspaper, L'Humanité (25 April), Mumia himself said, regarding the current court hearings: "It has very little hope in a favourable decision from the Federal Court which has accepted to look at three points of the petition submitted on Mumia's behalf. In her speech, 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 Holmes, Mumia's attorney; Pam Africa and Ramona Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu­Jamal (ICFFMA); Pa Julia, daughter of author Richard Wright and daughter of author Richard Wright and co-ordinator of the International Committee in Solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal and Political Prisoners, Paris; and Leslie Jones from the Youth for Mumia and the ICFMMFA. Also present at the event were our comrades of the Ligue tigrety 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 African and African descent, face daily police brutality and racist discrimination, a legacy of French colonialism. As Wolkenstein stated, minority youth in France "are stigmatised as potential 'Islamic terrorists', 'flaunts' [bizarre] - a racist codeword] and 'anti-Semites'. When young people revolted in the banlieues [suburban minority ghettos], there was no protest, 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 to free Mumia must be built on the principle of politi­ cal 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 par­ ties — such as the Chevénementistes, the Left Radicals and the Greens — to portray the so-called 'Islamic terrorism' as their own political issue and as a reason to justify police repression and the death penalty!" 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 neo-conservative Con­ tract, forcing the government to back down. This is the kind of social power that must be mobilised behind Mumia's cause! As Wolkenstein said, "That Mumia is innocent, that the capitalist state has spent decades putting its lying, corrupt, class- and race-based 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 now! Abolish the racist death penalty!"
The article below is an edited version of the presentation given by comrade Edward Welles of the Spartacist Group Ireland at a daychool in London on 15 April on James Connolly and the Easter Rising of 1916. The presentation 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 emphasize 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 Taoiseach [Bertie Ahern's Fianna Fail Party to make sure that Sinn Fein are not the only ones claiming to be the heirs of the rights 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 spectacle 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 a part of a left-wing opposition to the "socialist" tendency in Britain headed by the virulently chauvinist and pro-imperialist Hynman, leader of the Social Democratic Federation. But Connolly was not able to draw similar conclusions as Lenin, whose conception of building a revolutionary vanguard party through a split from the social-chauvinists and opportunist parties 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 an imperialist party was his greatest weakness. In part he recoiled from the working class was socialism or barbarism. The politics of the British Labour Party and union leaders consisted of 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 imperial 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 the need for unity between the proletariat of the oppressed nation and the proletariat of the oppressor nation.
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 withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. It 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 Irish Ireland, as the forcible incorporation of the North into the southern clericalist state 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 see 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 foundations of a building a Bolshevik party. We are for the building of workers parties dedicated to the programme of workers revolution to end British imperialism, to the Republican statelet, the Orange statelet and the Irish clericalist state. We believe that a party capable of such a task must be a tribune for the working class—fighting for the people’s freedom and democracy in Ireland.

We look to the tradition of Lenin’s Comintern which put forward an internationalist perspective. This is in contrast 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 social democracies 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 those islands. John Maclean was jailed for his militant internationalist opposition to WWI, and in recognition of his courage and principled stand he was made Soviet citizen.

Connolly’s time had access to a very narrow range of Marxist texts. The New York Times of 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 dockers. Its most prominent example was the dock strike of 1919, which left the dockers and miners—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 effectively went on the offensive. Larkin’s transport union in Ireland was one such union. It had been founded after the defeat of the lock strikes of 1907, when Larkin, as organising for the British-based National Union of Dock Labourers, had led a very minor strike and was himself locked out. In Belfast, as was betrayed by the union leadership in Britain and continued on page 6
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-

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 bourgeosie scoundrels engaged in celebrating their 'national' victory. It has found a talisman in the person of Comrade Larkin, Secretary of the Irish Transport Workers' Union. Larkin is a remarkable speaker, a man of searing Irish energy, who has performed miracles among the unskilled workers— that mass of the British proletariat which in Britain is not often cut off from the advanced workers by the cured, 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 leaders came to a head over the Dublin lockout of 1913, which pitied 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 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: railworkers 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 "grey 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
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 up arms that makes 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 national struggle because you don’t know what’s going to happen in February! [Laughter]. What is your programme? That is the decisive question.

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 this. 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 a multi-faceted, massive move for experience for the working class, the like of which took place nowhere 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 bourgeoisie, 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 so 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 tactism, as they were expelled out 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 he was indicated in terms of maintaining faithful to the programme. But the American party reflected the diversity of its origins out of the Communist Party, so there was a lot of factionalism which became institutionalised. It became an illness in the American party, but an illness in 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 are immediately available to us are not very good. So we had better 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 national struggle because you don’t know what’s going to happen in February! [Laughter]. What is your programme? That is the decisive question.

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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 confrontation 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 from the outset and tried to formulate a practical programme of opposition to it. Connolly called for Irish workers to take up arms that makes 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 national struggle because you don’t know what’s going to happen in February! [Laughter]. What is your programme? That is the decisive question.
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, undertaken by the current minister of police are just the extension of legislation and practices widely carried out by the Socialists in the late 1990s, led by Lionel Jospin, who to this day believes he was not harsh enough in his racist campaign and that this is the reason he lost the elections in 2002.

The history of how workers struggles have been detailed in France is the story of how the left's leadership was 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 front LO, the fédération of the Prime League communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) and Lutte ouvrière (LO).

Despite LO's best efforts 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 scotch off the government and force it to withdraw some of its attacks. On the campuses where we intervened, LO, as well as the TAAF and the Pabolites, were liquidated into the mobilising committees together with the next wave of Socialist Party militants from the Socialist Party and CP. And they worked to keep the general assemblies which were the forum 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, on those who did not support the bourgeoisie on campus. Paced with the possibility of a campus occupation, the president of the university announced the administration's determination to close classes and organise debates with the teachers and the students. The left was over the next week forming a collective list, which in turn was "defeated" (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 CNT and a group of the Alternatives Syndicale group passed a motion (presented by the students, teachers and striking workers from 21 to 26 March) to make the campus a place of debate and mobilisation. This was our opponents' micro-protest front programme.

Racist hysteria against minority youth

In the last week of March there was a hysterical racist campaign against "casseurs", which means something like hoodlugs. It targeted for mass state repression the same dark-skinned youth from the banlieue who told him they would not be afraid of police as long as the state continued to attack 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-democratic mass repression 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 all the calls for Sazky. Of course now they are all running big campaigns for amnesty (with the voice of the main teachers union, SNESU, which is often our most contentious). We pointed out that support to 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 popular- ity, 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 do the work of other European powers in this post-Soviet world marked by the weakening 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 to strengthen them against their rivals outside Europe, against their own working classes, and against immigrants.

All over Europe the various capitalist classes are going after their own working class, which is resisting. There are more than a hundred strikes in the European dockers, who repelled the Port Package in January. There was recently a two-month strike of public 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 workers.

With the exception of the very chauvinistic Parti des travailleurs, the others have supported the CPE and been in support of the European Union. They have supported its extension to the former deformed workers states of Eastern Europe, and they have supported Turkish membership. Now of course they don't want the Bolton Directive, which is however a direct consequence of the capitalist extension of the Union. Our opponents want a "social Europe", ie to maintain the current welfare state, which is an expression of the French capitalism, which can only be "anti-

social", racist and imperialist. We instead oppose the EU on principle. Our alternative is the socialist united states of Europe, which means workers revo-

lution 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 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 the CP and the PCF.

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 bour-

geoisies feared a communist takeover, and the workers felt encouraged to fight for concessions. Despite Stalinist mis-

rule 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 nationalised. These gains never achieved even in the richest capitalist countries. We Trotskyists defended the Soviet degenerated workers state and
time we fought for proletarian political revolution against Stalinist bureaucratic misrule.

SWP and Socialist Party: the bankruptcy of reformism

In contrast to our record, the reformists organise the reformist Worker's Party (SWEP) and the Socialist Party supported counterrevolution, cheering reactionary Solidarność – a clerical-nationalist, anti-communist movement that was the spearhead of counterrevolution in Poland – and welcoming Yeltsin as a counterrevolutionary in the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the biggest defeat for the international working class to date. At home these reformists are openly recon­ ciled to the existence of the capitalist order, which they see to be useless for a very long time. The SWP's Respect coalition, formed in 1995, was taking 12 Labour in heavily Muslim Tower Hamlets on a programme of opposition to the occupation of Iraq. Respect is not a working-class movement, but a cross­class populist coalition with Islamic reli­gious forces, which disavows socialism and rejects the fight for rights for women. We would not call for a vote to this coalition which would be contrary to the main task of the working class – struggle independence of the working class. Respect makes no pretence to be a preparation for the racist capitalist order. Its response to the threat posed by the fascist BNP, who won 11 seats from Labour in Barking and Dagenham in 2006, is to form the Respect or support “Unity Against Fascism”. This campaign is sponsored by a host of New Labour luminaries, including London Mayor Ken Livingstone. Their main

the deformed workers states of Eastern Europe and Russia 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 the Low Countries, and why we fought for proletarian political revolu­tions in the East. The Stalinists believed in a peaceful coexistence with imperial­ism. It was in the name of peaceful coexistence with imperialism that they offered to withdraw the Red Army from Asia. We know of course the 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 Communist Party Workers Weekly (SWEP) over the past 50 years in the current attacks on workers gains in the West. They also contributed to this out­come. Stalin's is the exploitation of workers at the root of the capitalist system which constantly puts 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 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 learned from the struggles and the only realistic way ahead 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 support and finding ways of how to proceed. 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 counter­ posed to that of our reformist oppo­ nents. While sales of our paper were low 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 sold to our press. I don't have final figures yet but we sold something like 40 to 50 subscriptions to Le Bolchévik in March and April. Our forums and class series have been better attended than in years. The British Communist Party is working on gling with these new subscribers and people who gave us their name, in order to win over a bigger layer to our pro­gramme and to joining our organisation. This is the challenge which the LTF is facing now. Thank you.

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Publication de la Ligue trotskiste de France


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 precisely from among Muslims and for lacking “a-class-based appeal to all sections of the working class”. This is a politic 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

Be won away from the BNP by a left party that puts forward a class-based alternative” (The Socialist, 11-17 May). While sheathing themselves to backward consciousness among the working class, the Socialist Party’s slogan “no to terrorism, no to war” (adopted in the aftermath of last year’s London bombing) expresses this outfit’s refusal to oppose the 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/mobility mobilisa­tions in the streets. Feeding off eco­nomic decay, the fascists have been making inroads into dereilt former 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 defending them, 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/mobility mobilisations to defend Asians against the BNP. We also made clear that the fight against fascism is not 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 wider layers of workers with the understanding that to defend its own interests – opposing repressions, defending working conditions and fighting for a better world – is neces­sary to oppose the British capitalist rulers on a broad range of issues. The decisive questions we fight for today include the social 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 imperialism and internal counterrevolution. At the same time we fight against the populist de­finition to establish a regime based on workers democracy and a revolutionary internationalist perspective, as it is necessary to the myth of building “socialism in one country”. In Britain, as in other imperialist countries, we view immi­grant 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.

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9
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, revolutionist movements that mass upheavals can acquire, knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, cannot be substantiated. Within 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 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 Civil War had a revolutionary war—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 imperial 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 with­

Lenin argued that we “would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat’s great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise the popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and cross the. 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 the condition of the proletariat, the most mobile and enlightened section of capitalist society, the proletariat, against its oppressors as a ‘peace’, we should be sinking to the same level of stu­

For Lenin, the events in Dublin were part of the struggles unleashed by the war which revolutionaries should seek to use. In contrast to the need for a broader imperialism, national oppression would become more of a focus for struggle, not less. Any socialist worth his salt had to defend the oppressed and thus he pointed out that the hard line against the various social-democratic apologists for imperialism. Lenin argued that it was the misfortune of the Irish proletariat that they rose prematurely before the European revolt of the proletariat had time to mature.”

Workers in Britain opposed imperial­

Connolly correctly noted that the standard­

The British authorities, which had the
to this day in the form of so­

The Belfast strike of 1919

Belfast was key to a revolutionary perspective for Ireland in these years, as home to the industrial proletariat in Ire­

The 1919 strikes that were part of a wave of class struggles inspired by the Russian Revolution and the war of independence of 1919-21. It was 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-American volunteers with experience in the revolutionary syndicalist IWW. April 1920 saw a huge strike by over 100 nationalised 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 to Connolly, and their one-time con­

Workers in Britain opposed imperial­

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 Ireland. Much of central Dublin was reduced to rubble and hun­dreds of people were killed. Over the course of 4 months, the British embarked on a series of executions of its leaders. When 14 had been killed, it was evident that the fight was not finished or at the end. But no, the Independent newspaper, mouthpiece of William Martin Murphy (commonly known to the Dublin working class as William “Murder” Murphy) who led the bosses during the lockout, howled for Connolly’s release after the Rising. It 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 polemicized against Trotsky as well as Karl Radek, who described the Rising as a putch and criticised it on the spurious pretext that the national question was an issue for mobilising the masses in Europe. Lenin argued:

“We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletarian’s great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise the popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and cross the. 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 the condition of the most mobile and enlightened section of capitalist society, the proletariat, against its oppressors as a ‘peace’, we should be sinking to the same level of stu­pidity as the populists.”

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WORKERS HAMMER
strike in Glasgow. The majority of the Belfast strikers were Protestant, and while the strike was in the ascendency, 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 strike, which was against the CPR.

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 1919 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 strike in the North occurred and a very dangerous crisis was at hand which might plunge the whole country in disorganization.”

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

The 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 and led to armed military repression. This strike was sold out by the personal intervention of Labour leader Thomas Johnson. Partly following the example of Belfast 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 miners’ strike was exploded in Britain in 1919 was detailed 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 Ancrein 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:

“...if you do so,” went on Mr Lloyd 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 withhold 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 general terms of the 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 British Army. The Miners Federation of the new bourgeois 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 of the most criminal betrayers of the working class have yet perpetrated.” The resolution also sent fraternal greetings to the “struggling Irish workers in Ireland” and “the whole of the oppressed working class of Ireland and the Irish working class in Britain.”


France
Workers, students defeat CPE
We reprint below an edited version of the presentation given by Hernando Sánchez, editor of Le Bolchevique, newspaper of our French section the Ligue trotskyste de France, at a Spartacist League/Britain dsegraph in London on 15 April.

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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 966, 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 not to save the class rule of the French capitalists at the height of the class struggle. With the formation of the 1935 popular front the CP tied the working class to its own bourgeoisie through a “popular front” within the bourgeois Radicals. 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 struggle and demonstrated the working-class. With the formation of the 1935 popular front the CP also endorsed French bourgeois militarism, 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 French bourgeois, 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 had been blanked), 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 which 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. The CP, however, did 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 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 CP are a return to the “first-class 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 capital 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 Radicals. 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 struggle and demonstrated the working-class. With the formation of the 1935 popular front the CP also endorsed French bourgeois militarism, paving the way for World War II. It abandoned its policy of opposition to French colonialism.

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