

# Editorial Page of the Communist

## May Day 1920

The proclamation issued by the Third International calling for a May Day Demonstration Strike for Peace with Soviet Russia, marks a new epoch in the world-revolutionary movement, and also marks a new policy in proletarian tactics with regard to aiding Soviet Russia.

Before the advent of the Third International, May Day had lost whatever of revolutionary significance and character given to it by its promoters. It was intended to be a day of general strike all over the world—it was intended to be a day when the international proletariat would raise the threat of revolution before the eyes of the Master Class—but, instead of trying to give revolutionary character to this Day of Promise, the defunct Second International consciously turned it into the channels of speech-making and merry-making and away from revolutionary practice. This corrupting policy corroded every principle and theory of the class struggle, until Capitalism, class-conscious to the core, incorporated not only May Day demonstrations into its normal life, but the whole Second International movement as well.

But the rise of the proletarian dictatorship in Russia, the establishment of a Soviet Republic—the formation of a new Communist International, free from the corrupting influences of the old International, has changed the course of the international revolutionary movement and turned it back into

Today, the Third International, vanguard of the class-conscious proletariat of the world, is calling for a Demonstration Strike for Peace with Soviet Russia—and the working class of the world are thrilled with the message and making ready to respond by the tens of millions to this rallying cry of revolution.

The European proletariat are preparing feverishly for this day. Crushed, starving, degraded by the infinite tragedy of the late world war, they mean to end the rule of Capitalist-Imperialist exploitation and set up workers' republics in place of the bourgeois republics and monarchies that guide and shape the destinies of humanity today. The International Demonstration Strike for Peace with Soviet Russia on May Day will be the first step in this direction.

May Day 1920 will be the beginning of the realization of the hopes and aspirations of the European masses.

But what of the American workers?

Are they ready to strike a blow for Peace with Soviet Russia—are they ready to strike a blow for their own emancipation—are they ready to follow in the foot-steps of their European comrades?

Are the American workers satisfied with their conditions and with their government?

Are you satisfied with your "high wages" which cannot even buy enough food for your wives and children?

Are you satisfied with your government's use of injunctions, troops and machine-guns to break your strikes?

Are you satisfied with your government's intervention and blockade of Soviet Russia?

Are you satisfied with your government's attacks, raids, deportations and

jailings of workers who dare to fight openly *IN YOUR FIGHT*—in your struggle with the enemies of your class?

Are you satisfied with the cost of food—the high rents—the cost of clothes? Are you satisfied with your miserable wages—with the miserable increases which your labor fakers have "procured" for you—are you?

Are you satisfied to continue to toil with sweat and blood to fill the pockets of your bosses, your union grafters and your government officials, who use that stolen wealth which you create to crush you and starve you and shoot you when you go out on strike?

Are you satisfied to stand idly by while this gang of international murderers destroys the only working class government in the world—the Soviet Republic of Russia?

You are not.

We know you are not. We know you are stirring. We know you are discontented. We know you are striving blindly to change this state of things. But you don't know where or to whom to turn.

Everybody you have trusted has betrayed you.

Wilson has betrayed you.

The Government has betrayed you.

The American Federation of Labor, supposed to be your union, has betrayed you.

The newspapers, the church, the professors, the liberals, the reformers have all betrayed you.

Even the Socialist Party has betrayed you.

Where shall you turn?

If you want to be free, if you want to get rid of this rotten capitalist government; if you want to help your worker-comrades in Russia to maintain their great working class government; rise to the true status of men and women; turn to the Communist party of America, the only party which aims at the destruction of this damnable capitalist government and the establishment of the Communist Society, through the dictatorship of the working class.

Do you want to own and control the industries in which you work?

Do you want a workers' government in America?

Do you want a Soviet Republic of the United States, in which you, the workers, rule?

Show your solidarity, your strength, your determination to act like soldiers of the working class revolution when the time comes—stop work on May Day—quit your shops and factories and mines and stores—pour out on the streets by the millions and show your enemies that you are demonstrating for peace with Soviet Russia.

## The Party Crisis

The Communist Party is facing its first internal crisis. On the surface it seems to be nothing more than a "revolt" against the authority of the Central Executive Committee. If that were the real reason, or the only reason, the situation would not be serious. But underneath the surface there is basic disagreement with the very policies and tactics of the Communist Party itself, as laid down at its first convention. The cleavage goes down into the very structure and foundations of the Communist Party.

The statement prepared by the Central Executive Committee and printed elsewhere in this issue, outlines these fundamental differences. We do not intend to deal with them here. What we do want to point out is the larger aspects of this cleavage as it affects the course of the Communist movement, its propaganda and agitation in the United States.

The question resolves itself to this—what kind of propaganda shall the Communist Party of America promulgate to the workers in this country?

When we have answered this question, all others will be answered—the form of organization, its aims and method of achieving those aims.

The "secessionists" believe that subscribing to the three fundamental and basic policies of the Third International, namely,—Proletarian Dictatorship, Mass Action and Soviet Power, is sufficient in itself upon which to build a Communist movement in this country. The next step in their opinion, is to procure "contact with the masses"—to give the Communist Party a mass character—"to relate it up with the immediate and every-day struggles of the working class."

With which we quite agree. The difference comes in when the problem is tackled, when the manner of adapting Communist tactics is applied to the given situation. No Communist is foolish enough to want to keep the party detached and isolated from the masses. That way lies stagnation and failure. The S. L. P. is a striking example of such decay. But, likewise, one must beware of the danger that lies in trying to come to the masses at a time when the masses—due to apathy and inertia before the full reaction to capitalism appears—are not receptive to the message of Communism. This is the very rock upon which the Second International was smashed to pieces. This is the lesson which the Third International has learnt—and learning, guides its course away from this dangerous shoal.

"We must not isolate ourselves from the masses." That has been the cry of the Second International in the last decade and especially during the world-war. And in attempting not to "isolate" themselves from the masses they were drawn into the vortex of imperialist ambitions—because they kept too close to the masses and followed them to their own destruction.

That is the struggle between the two wings of the Communist Party of Germany today. The very same. One group retains its representation in the bourgeois Ebert government "betriebsrate" (Workers Councils) on the plea that it does not want to "isolate itself from the masses"; the other, calls for the Communists to withdraw from these bourgeois government institutions and urge the formation of revolutionary Workers Councils free from the curse of government control.

In England today, there are four Communist groups which have been negotiating for unity into one Communist Party for more than a year, but as yet without success. What has prevented the unity of these four groups? The British Socialist Party refuses to withdraw from the Labor Party on the plea that it does not want to "isolate itself from the masses."

So we see that this internal struggle within the Communist Party of America is not peculiar to this country alone. It is evidently a universal phenomenon which appears in all revolutionary movements at a certain stage of their development.

This cry of "contact with the masses" holds in itself the seeds of future compromise, vacillation and betrayal. It is the cry of confusionists and sentimentalists who seem to think that a Communist Party must have "contact with the masses" at all stages of its development. They do not see, that if they attempt to run after the masses, at a time when the masses are not ready for them, they will, in their zeal, reduce Communism to a theory and practice that will meet with the approval of the politically immature masses. They will compromise principles and tactics in order to get "contact with the masses."

Is it necessary to have "contact with the masses" at all times? Let us put the case more concretely. Is it absolutely necessary to have "contact with the masses" in America at the present time, when the economic and political forces are as yet undeveloped to bring with it that degree of class-conscious and revolutionary faith which will compel the masses to accept Communism?

For what will happen if we sacrifice our Communist policies (as the "secessionists" are willing) in order to get this contact?

Of course, our opponents will say that they defy us to show them where they intend to sacrifice Communist policy in order to get this "contact with the masses." Well, we shall show them. The leaders of the "secessionists" have expressed themselves already, unwittingly perhaps, on this very question.

They have stated in the course of discussions in the Central Executive Committee—as a close reading of their articles and leaflets will substantiate,—that a real vital fundamental difference existed as to their conception of mass action, and as to the manner of propagating it to the workers. They have stated openly, that there are times when it is advisable to keep silent on the USE OF FORCE (armed revolution and civil war) as the means of overthrowing the capitalist state.

There you have the deadly seeds of compromise and opportunism already germinating in the Communist movement. There are times, they say, when it is advisable to propagate the USE OF FORCE and there are times when it is best to keep silent. Undoubtedly, one of the times to keep silent, is when you are trying to get "contact with the masses," before they are ready to accept the full implication of Communist theories and tactics!

And when the Communist Party is swamped with these politically immature masses, they will clog and hamper the revolutionary effectiveness of the Communist Party, holding it back when the time for real action arrives. These masses flocking to the party when it was silent on the necessity of the USE OF FORCE to overthrow the bourgeois state will refuse to accept that tactic when the revolution comes. It will mean that these masses, having not yet cut the Gordian knot which binds them

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