

The Cleveland May Day Demonstration

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THE workers of Cleveland who are striving to throw off the yoke of oppression and exploitation have received their baptism in blood.

They have learned that the ruling class will not even permit workingmen to peaceably demonstrate. They have been shot, brutally clubbed and crushed by army tanks and heavy military trucks, all because they dared march through the streets of Cleveland carrying their banners demanding *freedom for Debs, freedom for Mooney, freedom for all political and industrial prisoners and work for the unemployed through the six hour day and dollar per hour minimum wage.*

The May Day Demonstration in Cleveland was the greatest outpouring of militant workers that this city has ever seen. Arranged under the auspices of the Socialist Party, the I. W. W., W. I. U. and nearly a score of A. F. of L. unions participated. The plans for the demonstration called for four sections of the procession to assemble in different parts of the city, all of which were to meet at a given point and then to march to the Public Square, where speeches were to be made.

Up to a certain point the program was carried out successfully. The different sections assembled and marched through miles of the city streets carrying their red banners and thousands of red pennants and signs bearing the *May Day* slogans. When the four sections arrived at Central and E. 9th Street the streets were lined for blocks and blocks in every direction by the various columns. No more glorious sight could be imagined by the mind of those inspired by the ideal of the Social Revolution than to look down these lines from the point of intersection and to see the scores of red banners waving high in the air, and then, with a mighty cheer, to see a veritable cloud of red as thousands of pennants were thrust high over the heads of the marchers.

Not less than twenty thousands workers participated in the procession and when the head of the line reached the Public Square another twenty or thirty thousand workers were there to greet the marchers.

The joined sections started down E. 9th Street and the head of the line had covered three-fourth of the distance to the Public Square without the slightest trouble. Rather were the marchers applauded and cheered, as they had been applauded and cheered while the sections were passing through the working class sections of the city to the meeting place.

When the head of the line was within a block of the Public Square the first trouble occurred. An officer in the uniform of the Red Cross jumped from a "Victory" Loan truck and endeavored to take a red flag which a soldier in uniform was carrying at the head of the procession. A scuffle followed in which other soldiers from the truck and some business men joined. During the scuffle one of these business men drew a revolver and wildly threatened the workers in the procession. In five minutes, however, the struggle was over. The lieutenant and his supporters were

driven back to the sidewalk, the head of the line reformed and with the red flag still flying, marched on to the Public Square.

Up to this point the police had been conspicuous by their absence from the line of march. With the exception of two or three traffic officers at important corners, not a policeman was to be seen. This fact was particularly noteworthy as it is the custom in Cleveland, when there are parades, to station officers a few hundred feet apart, along the whole line of march, and the police had asked for and had received a detailed statement of the plans for the procession.

When the head of the line entered the Public Square there were two noteworthy events: first there was a great wave of cheers and applause from the twenty or more thousand workers who were assembled there to participate in the meeting, and the police made their appearance. They came down Superior Ave., which divides the "Square" into northern and southern section, headed by the mounted squad, followed by auto load after load. The newspapers later reported that seven hundred men had been concentrated at the Central Station, who now descended upon the marchers.

The head of the line was not molested. The first thousand or so of workers marched onto the square and took possession of the "Victory" Loan speakers' stand, which had been built over the stone blocks placed on the Public Square for the use of speakers at public meetings. These marchers with the workers already assembled covered the entire section of the square.

The chairman of the meeting was about to introduce the writer as the first speaker when an officer and a few soldiers tried to climb to the platform, demanding that the soldier holding the red flag give it up. Comrade Lawrence A. Zitt, the chairman, entered into an argument with him and showed him the foolishness of his conduct and had him calmed down, when, without warning, a squad of mounted police dashed into the audience, driving their horses over the assembled workers and clubbing them as they went.

Meanwhile the police had cut the line a block away from the Public Square and had begun their attack all along the line, stretched out over a half mile and upon the thousands who had not yet left the meeting place of the sections.

What followed is indescribable in its brutality. The police drove their horses into the lines crushing and beating men and women alike. The police autos were similarly driven into the ranks of the workers. The police were soon joined by truck loads of soldiers and members of Cleveland's Black Hundred, the Loyal American League, and by army tanks which everywhere drove into the line of marchers. One heavy truck loaded with soldiers and the Black Hundred drove along the line while those on board, armed with

long, heavy clubs, with nails projecting two or three inches from the end, beat everyone within reach.

The sudden attack of the police, the quick appearance of the trucks loaded with the Black Hundred and their helpers, the tanks, all prove that the whole affair was carefully planned in advance in order to teach the workers who dared take up the fight against their masters, a lesson.

Of course the workers fought back and fought bravely. But they were caught at a disadvantage, with their lines extended through the heart of the city four abreast, as it no doubt had been planned that they should be caught. The fighting continued from about 2 o'clock until late in the evening.

Two of the workers were shot by police officers, one being killed on the spot and the other has since died in the hospital. Hundreds were brutally beaten, men and women alike, and about a hundred and fifty were arrested.

The brutalities did not cease with the attack made upon the streets. The writer was arrested with others, and worker after worker placed in the same cell block told of how the police took advantage of a dark corridor leading into the station to administer some extra blows with their clubs. One man, unable to stand up, was dragged into the corridor, set on his feet and told to stand up before the registry clerk, and when he collapsed was brutally shoved into a corner. The floor before the clerk's window was soon covered with blood from the workers' wounds and medical aid was not furnished for hours after.

While the fighting was going on a crowd of hoodlums, with police looking on, entered the party headquarters and tore and smashed everything they could lay their hands on.

Rumor says after the slaughter was over the Chamber of Commerce gave a dinner to those who did such effective work in their interest and that many thugs and hoodlums received wads of money from the same source.

The arrested workers are being charged with "disturbance" and are being railroaded to the workhouse to serve sentences of thirty days and a fine and costs. The writer is charged with "causing a disturbance," but the authorities are working hard to frame-up some evidence for a more serious charge in order to fasten responsibility for their own bloody work on other shoulders.

Meanwhile, the Socialist organization remains intact in spite of the destruction of the party headquarters. Committees are at work arranging for protection of those in prison and to raise the thousands of dollars needed to pay fines. The workers have had their lesson. They have learned how "democracy" meets a peaceable protest. They know from the thousands who marched that their power is greater than ever. Another day is coming. They will go on until victory is achieved.

The Red First of May in Boston

ON THE morning of May Day, the Comrades of Boston assembled at Dudley Street Opera House; at 11 o'clock a meeting was in session. ... Outside were police and a patrol wagon; they had come prepared for trouble, and were disappointed at being unable to "start something." The night before four comrades (one of them a former Canadian soldier who had fought four years in the war and had more decorations than one could count) were arrested for distributing a leaflet, "May Day—and the Revolution." Bail had been granted the night before, but withdrawn in the morning. ...

At the meeting, there were addresses and the singing of Socialist songs in English, Lettish, Russian and Italian. At two-thirty, it was decided to hold another meeting at the New International Hall, the new headquarters of the Roxbury Socialists, because many comrades had been unable to get in the Opera House. The comrades flowed out in the street, and began walking to New International Hall, which was about twenty minutes walk away. They formed in line, in order to facilitate matters and not obstruct anything; at the head of the crowd was a Red Flag and a flag of Soviet Russia. At least one third of the crowd of 1000 were women and children. The mood was one of gaiety. There was no disturbance, no obstruction of traffic—just a crowd marching on.

Then a group of young thugs, including soldiers and sailors, were seen to hold a consultation. The plan was explained by one—"we'll head them off and grab the flag." But they didn't. A policeman appeared; the gangsters held a consultation with him, and he sent a call for the reserves.

Still there was no disturbance. Then, suddenly, two police wagons appeared, and about fifteen policemen jumped out. They did not ask the crowd to disperse. They did not parley. They immediately, with drawn clubs, assailed the front of the crowd, where the flags were, and where there were at least ten women and children. The police used clubs freely, and smashed the Red Flag. This brutal, unprovoked assault was resisted. For fifteen minutes there was a struggle; broken heads and smashed faces, including those of women and children.

Then the police, having destroyed the Red Flag and made a number of arrests, drew their revolvers. The crowd was at bay. One comrade, an old man of fifty, barred his breast, and said: "Kill!" Deliberately, Sergeant Casey took aim and shot this comrade, straight at the breast. The bullet hit the comrade's watch, and this saved his life, but he is now under a physician's care. We have the dented watch and the bullet. ...

This first shot was the signal for indiscriminate shooting by the police. In the meanwhile, more police arrived, thugs with sticks and stones attacked our comrades, and the fight became general. Scores of comrades were in the police wagons under arrest; and thugs with sticks went into the wagons, protected by the police, and beat up our comrades. ...

While the fighting was still going on, a large group of the comrades marched down a side street, formed in line, and proceeded on their way to New International Hall. Then two more police wagons appeared, scores of police; they again attacked our comrades, again shot at the crowd with deliberate intent to kill.

Then the crowd dispersed. Two policemen had been shot, four of our comrades, one a woman; and many heads of comrades and police had been smashed. About forty had been arrested. ...

But this was just the start of things. Police and thugs surrounded New International Hall, arrested everyone there, ate up the sandwiches and cake prepared for the formal opening, and wrecked the whole place. At Dudley Street Opera House, more comrades were arrested, the police beating them up mercilessly. Up until midnight the fighting went on, police and thugs assaulting everyone they suspected of being "foreigner" or a Socialist.

All together, 112 comrades were arrested (one a boy of 15, who the police lyingly accuse of carrying a revolver) among them about 20 women. ...

There was no disturbance until the police came. They started it.

The police deliberately assaulted the crowd. The police loaned their clubs and "billies" to young thugs to beat the women and children.

The police beat up prisoners, in one case, at least, lining up a comrade against a wall while four of them brutally beat him about the face.

And now our comrades are being tried before a prejudiced judge, while the police indulge in more lying in one day than Ananias could in a year. Sentences of 18 months, one year and 6 months are being imposed on men and women.

The Socialists of Boston are now aware, more clearly than ever, of the class justice of bourgeois society. And they are more determined than ever that Capitalism shall go.