

THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Devoted to International Socialism

PUBLISHED BY

The Socialist Publication Society, 243 55th Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Issued Every Two Months—25¢ a Copy; \$1.50 a Year

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VOL. III

MAY, 1919

No. 2

The First of May, 1919

Ever since the first day of May was adopted by the International Congress of Paris in 1889 as the International Socialist holiday it has been the milestone from which the class-conscious labor movement has looked backward over another year of activity to gage the work it had accomplished. On that day workingmen and children, in every civilized nation in the world lined up in impressive demonstrations to demand from a capitalist world greater political and industrial freedom and better conditions of livelihood. It was conceived particularly as an international demand for an 8-hour day, for social legislation, for equal suffrage for men and women, and as a protest against militarism and war. In most countries the first of May was celebrated as a workers' holiday. On this day the class-conscious workingmen and women asserted, if only for a day, their freedom from capitalist domination. And by this token it signified to them the great international brotherhood of the working-class, fighting for liberation from capitalist oppression.

Then came the war, and the first of May became a day of sorrow. May 1, 1915, was one of the most tragic days in the history of the International. Instead of brotherhood there was mass murder and hatred, in the place of anti-militaristic propaganda there were war-credits, in the place of better industrial conditions had come industrial slavery, political freedom had made way for political oppression. But events move swiftly in war times, and a year later the black despair of that first May Day had given place to a new, more hopeful spirit. The neutral countries once more celebrated their proletarian holiday with

something of the old hopefulness of spirit. In England there were impressive May Day demonstrations, and even in Germany, France and Austria the radical minorities arranged protest-demonstrations against the war that were disrupted by police and military forces. Karl Liebknecht delivered his famous address on the Potsdamer Platz. All over Europe hundreds of arrests attested to the fact that the international proletariat was alive, that the movement was recovering from the stunning blow it had received.

The first day of May, 1917, was a day of hope reborn. Only a few short weeks before the Czar had been driven from his throne. Russia, a new, free, glorious Russia was holding out its promise of peace to a war-weary world. With anxious eyes the world looked toward Germany and Austria for an answer, Revolution in the Central Powers seemed inevitable. There were reports of a general strike in Germany, of uprisings and mutinies. For us, here, not even the entry of the United States into the war could rob that first of May of its splendid promise.

A year later the romantic glamour that had surrounded the first period of the Russian revolution had disappeared. The war of the classes against each other had set in with a bitterness and an insistence such as the world had never seen before. Revolutionary Russia lay in the throes of Civil War. German troops were overrunning western Russia, cutting off the newly established Soviet government from its most fruitful source of supplies. Peace seemed further off than ever before. But the gloom that filled the hearts of the proletariat was no longer one of despair. Now they knew that even though peace might be years in coming, it would come, not at the expense of the working-class. Now they knew that every day of war was shaking at the very foundation of the capitalist class, that out of the wounds of the murdered proletariat was flowing the life-blood of world capitalism. Now they knew that peace, when it did come, would find a working-class, hoping, working, fighting, suffering and dying for the coming of a better day.

Another short year has passed. The world is aflame. Revolution is on the wing. From city to city, from nation to nation, from heart to heart it leaps, devastating and destroying, creating and achieving. And once more we are celebrating the first of May!

The old first of May! But with a new meaning. The working-class demands that loomed so big five years ago, have become a matter of course. The 8-hour day has become the standard of capitalist production; even conservative working-class organiza-

tions the world over are striving for the six-hour day, for the five-day week. Universal suffrage is on the eve of its realization in every capitalist country: for the revolutionary proletariat it has been superceded by new political ideals. But the world is still in arms, and each day threatens to bring new outbreaks, new wars. International armament under Capitalism has become a chimera, permanent peace an empty phrase, a dream that will not and cannot be fulfilled so long as Capitalism with its greed for territories, markets and spheres of influence continues to exist.

And yet the first of May looms big with promise. Arrayed against the harbingers of new wars that sit in Paris and in Washington, in London, aye and in Berlin, there will stand a working-class that understands, better than it ever understood before the meaning of proletarian brotherhood, a working-class that is ready, more desperately ready than ever before, to give that last full measure of devotion to a course that has become to them a tremendous, living reality.

Let it be a first of May worthy of the greatness of the year that has passed, worthy of the future that lies before us.

L.

Church and School in the Soviet Republic

By N. BUKHARIN

The working class and its party—the Communist-Bolshevist Party—aim not only at an economic liberation, but also at a spiritual liberation of the toiling masses. And the economic liberation itself will proceed all the more quickly, if the proletarians and day-laborers will throw out of their heads all the crazy ideas that the feudal landholders and the bourgeoisie and manufacturers have knocked into them. We have already seen how easy it was for the former governing classes to hedge in the workers on all sides with their newspapers, their magazines, handbills, their priests, as well as with their schools, which they had succeeded in transforming from an instrument of enlightenment into an instrument for obscuring the popular consciousness.

THE BELIEF IN GOD AND IN THE DEVIL IS A CONFUSION OF THE MIND OF THE WORKERS

One of the instruments for the obscuring of the consciousness of the people is the belief in God and the devil, in good and evil