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MAY DAY CENTENARY SPECIAL

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RED SALUTE TO THE MAY DAY MARTYRS



The Chicago Blood Bath, May 3, 1885. The worker is picking up the Red Flag to convey the May Day pledge to the International Proletariat

**“There will come a time when our silence
will be more eloquent
than our words !”**

— August Spies

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

Stalin's May Day Speech

Moscow, May 1, 1945, After Victory Over Fascism

Comrades, Red Armymen and Red Navymen, non commissioned officers, and petty officers, of the officers Army and Navy, generals and admirals! Working people of the Soviet Union!

Today our country is celebrating the First of May the international festival of the working people.

This year the peoples of our motherland are celebrating the First of May during the victorious consummation of the Great Patriotic War.

The stern times when the Red Army was fighting back the attacks of enemy troops near Moscow and Leningrad, near Grozny and at Stalingrad are gone, never to return. Today our victorious troops are routing the armed forces of the enemy in the heart of Germany, far beyond Berlin, on the River Elbe.

In a short space of time Poland, Hungary a large part of Czechoslovakia, a considerable part of Austria, and Vienna, the capital of Austria, were liberated.

At the same time, the Red Army captured East Prussia, the hotbed of German imperialism, Pomerania, the larger part of Brandenburg and the main districts of Berlin, the capital of Germany, and has hoisted the flag of victory over Berlin.

As a result of these offensive battles waged by the Red Army the Germans lost in the course of three to four months over 800,000 men and officers taken prisoner, and about 1,000,000 in killed. During the same period Red Army forces captured or destroyed as many as 6,000 enemy aeroplanes and 12,000 tanks and self propelled guns, over 23,000 field guns and an enormous quantity of other kinds of armaments and equipment.

It must be noted that in these battles Polish, Yugoslav, Czechoslovak, Bulgarian and Rumanian divisions successfully attacked the common enemy side by side with the Red Army.

As a result of the crushing blows that were struck by the Red Army, the German command was compelled to shift dozens of divisions to the Soviet German front, thereby denuding whole sectors of other fronts. This circumstance helped the troops of our Allies to develop a successful offensive in the west. Furthermore, by striking simultaneous blows at the German troops from East and West the Allied troops and the Red Army succeeded in cutting the German forces into two isolated parts and in effecting a junction between our troops and the Allied troops, thus forming a single front.

There can be no doubt that this circumstance signifies the end of Hitler Germany.

The days of Hitler Germany are numbered.

More than half her territory is occupied by the Red Army and the troops of our Allies. Germany has lost her most vital regions. The industry still remaining in the hands of the Hitlerites cannot supply the German army with a sufficient quantity of arms, ammunition and fuel. The man power reserves of the German army are exhausted. Germany is entirely isolated and stands alone, if her ally, Japan, is left out of account.

In their quest for a way out of their hopeless situation the Hitler adventurers resort to all sorts of tricks, even going to the extent of making advances to the Allies in an endeavour to sow discord in the Allied camp. This new chicanery of Hitlerites is doomed to utter failure. It can only hasten the collapse of the German forces.

Mendacious fascist propaganda is intimidating the inhabitants of Germany with absurd tales to the effect that the armies of the United Nations are out to exterminate the German people. It is not part of the task of the United Nations to exterminate the German people. The United Nations will extirpate fascism and German militarism, they will sternly punish the war criminals, and compel the Germans to make good the damage they have caused to other countries. But the United Nations are not touching, and will not touch, the civilian population of Germany if they faithfully carry out the demands of the Allied military authorities.

The brilliant victories the Soviet troops have achieved in the Great Patriotic War have revealed the titanic might of the Red Army and its high military skill. In the course of the war our motherland acquired a first class seasoned army capable of defending the great Socialist gains of our people and of protecting the state interests of the Soviet Union.

Notwithstanding the fact that for nearly four years the Soviet Union has been waging a war of unprecedented magnitude calling for colossal expenditures, our Socialist economy is growing stronger and expanding and the economy of the liberated districts, which was plundered and wrecked by the German invaders, is successfully and rapidly reviving. This is the result of the heroic efforts of the workers and collective farmers, of the Soviet intelligentsia, of the women and young people of our country who are inspired and directed by our great Bolshevik Party.

The World War, which was unleashed by the German imperialists, is drawing to a close. The collapse of Hitler Germany is a matter of the very near future. The Hitler bosses, who fancied themselves the rulers of the world, have now been left with a broken pitcher. The mortally wounded fascist beast is at its last gasp. The task now reduces itself to delivering the finishing stroke to this fascist beast.

(Contd. on page 47)

Revolutionary Traditions of May Day

B.T. Ranadive

THOUGH May Day in our country is largely associated with the raising of many urgent and partial demands, the revolutionary tradition of May Day always combined partial demands with declarations of the international solidarity of the working class and a firm faith and determination to end the capitalist system and capture political power for the working class.

This combination of struggle for partial demands with proletarian internationalism and deposing the capitalist class from political power combined the immediate practical struggle of the working class with its ultimate objective of social emancipation, its objective of socialism.

The trend in the working class movement which confined itself to the immediate struggle only, which looked upon May Day as only a day for declaration and assertion of partial demands, diverted the working class movement from its revolutionary objectives, and ending of capitalist rule and establishing socialism and working class power.

The social transformation that we see today in the world in the course of hundred years from the observance of the first May day, with one third of the world going over to socialism is the direct achievement of the revolutionary traditions of May Day.

In the course of hundred years one third of the world has gone socialist; the old imperialist system has been liquidated; formerly enslaved countries like India have been liberated; the world has seen the great socialist revolution of Russia led by the Bolshevik Party and Lenin; it further saw a complete smashing of the fascist force by the Red Army, the working class and the people of the Soviet Union; it saw the success of the great Chinese revolution and grand victories of socialist revolutions in a number of countries in Europe, in Cuba, in Korea, and the unimaginable and unparalleled victory of the working class and the people of Vietnam.

Two Lines — Revolutionary and Reformist

These victories were the direct result of the revolutionary line of the world working class movement which was embodied in Marxism and Leninism. The observance of the first May Day, the economic demands raised and the political demands put forward were all in consonance with what the first International guided by Marx had taught the working class movement. It is no accident that only those parties which remained faithful to the initial ideology proclaimed in relation to the First May

Day were the leaders of the successful socialist revolutions; such were the Marxist-Leninist parties.

It is no accident either that those who strayed away from the revolutionary understanding guiding earlier May Day observance never succeeded in organising a socialist revolution or a peaceful transition to socialism in any capitalist country. They mostly functioned as an opposition party under the capitalist framework and when elected to form an government they were unable to change an iota of the exploitative system. The histories of these parties, the reformist socialist democratic parties of Europe and the Labour Party of Europe show that they not only turned a back on revolution but also on international unity of the working class. On all crucial occasions this reformist trend betrayed international solidarity and deserted the banner of proletarian internationalism.

During the first imperialist war, during the anti-fascist war the Labour Party of Britain, the Socialist Democratic Party of Europe betrayed the banner of proletarian unity. They remained with their respective governments and during the anti-fascist war they joined the struggle against Hitler only when their governments desired to join it.

The centenary of May Day comes as a fresh call to us to determinedly pursue the militant course of the movement and take the country out of the perilous situation facing it.

Pre-1866 Developments

Hundred years back a brutal capitalist system hardly recognised any rights for the working class. But the struggle for the limitations of working hours, for 8-hours day was already developing both in Europe and the USA, the seats of capitalism.

In August 1866 in the USA a working men's convention held in Baltimore passed a resolution demanding 8 hours day. Within two weeks of this convention the Geneva Congress of the 1st International founded by Marx made the same demand saying: "The legal limitation of the working day is a preliminary condition without which all further attempt at improvement and emancipation of working class must prove abortive. The Congress proposes 8-hours as a legal limit of the working day".

The two contingents of the working class were simultaneously raising the same demand and preparing for a platform for common action and solidarity. This was stated in clear terms in the Geneva Congress resolution: "As this limitation represents the general demand of the workers of

North American United States the Congress transforms this demand into the general platform of the workers of the whole world". Thus began the platform of international action and solidarity.

But this was just the beginning. Between 1866-86 which saw the ushering of May Day with its militant traditions, the working class movement went through many ordeals, facing massacres and executions. But it continued to march forward. It had found reliable guides in Marx and Engels and the International Association of Working Men (1st International), founded by them. The activities of the International reached their climax in the uprising of the workers of Paris and the rise of the Paris Commune, the first state of the working class in 1871. The brutal massacre of the communards was followed by a raging reaction in the countries of Europe. The Head Quarters of 1st international had to be transferred from London to New York. The International ceased to exist in 1876. The first organisation to cement the international solidarity and unity of the working class came to an end.

But the struggle of the working class continued. It could not be entirely suppressed. In October 1884 at the Fourth Congress of the Federation of Organised Trades and Labour Unions of the United States and Canada it was decided that 8 hours shall constitute a legal day's labour from May 1886.

The resolution envisaged a strike on May 1st and this was the beginning of the militant strike tradition of May Day. By 1886 May several thousand workers and several organisations were ready to strike for eight hours day.

Chicago's Blood Bath

The strike was most militant in Chicago where thousands of workers participated in direct action. The employers and the US capitalist government decided to hit back. During the course of the demonstration on May 4th which was organised to protest against police action against the workers on May 3, provocators and hirelings organised a bomb outrage to damn and implicate the leaders of the workers. The events of May 3rd and May 4th which led to what is known as the Hay Market affair was the direct outcome of the May 1st strike. The demonstration held on May 4th at Hay Market Square was called to protest against the brutal attack of the police upon a meeting of striking workers on May 3rd during which six workers were killed and many wounded. The protest meeting was peaceful but the police launched an unprovoked attack. A bomb was thrown into the crowd killing a sergeant. A clash ensued with the result that several police men and four workers were killed. But the authorities were not satisfied with this blood of workers. The fighting leaders of the workers, Albert R. Parsans, August Spies, Adolph Fischer and George Engel were framed and sent to the gallows and other militant workers of Chicago were sent to long terms of imprisonment.

Capitalist justice demanded lives of four working class leaders for demanding 8 hours day, for attempting to limit the exploitation of the workers. Thus started another militant tradition of May Day, the tradition of revolutionary sacrifice.

The defending accused displayed courage and dignity during their trial. They defended themselves and at the same time they accused the authorities. Parsons who had escaped arrest appeared before the court and took his place besides his colleagues. On November 11, 1887 Albert Parsons, August Spies, George Engel, Adolph Fischer were hanged. Spies's last words were "There will come a time when our silence will be more eloquent than our words."

Three leaders who were sentenced to life imprisonment were released in 1893. The new Governor of Illinois had to admit that their guilt had not been proved and that like the other executed leaders they had been the victim of the biased jury. The principal witness had been bribed. American bourgeois justice now stood exposed before the world.

The sacrifices of American workers were not in vain. The developing working class movement in Europe decided to join hands with them. The first Congress of the Socialist International, the Paris Congress which met in 1889 decided to internationalise the observance of the May Day.

Socialist International

The first Congress of the Socialist International was not an ordinary event. The working class movement did not have an international centre after the dissolution of the first International. But the ideas of Marx and Engels continued to guide the working class movement and a new upsurge in political consciousness and organisations was taking place.

Engels was still alive to guide the movement. This was the period when socialist parties of the working class were being formed on the basis of a correct Marxist programme. These parties met in Paris to form the first Congress of the New Socialist International later on known as 2nd International. The first session was attended by Frederick Engels who was all along guiding these parties to give a correct political and organisational form to the new international union of workers.

The parties and leaders who met in First Congress were all influenced in a large measure by Marxist teachings and while deciding to internationalise the May Day they applied the Marxist understanding to the current situation. They therefore could not be content with only declaring for urgent economic demands but combined the partial struggle with the struggle against war and the struggle to end capitalism.

Programme of Partial Demands

Like the first international before it the Paris

Congress called for a comprehensive programme of immediate demands which, in the conditions obtaining then, was bound to lead to intense class conflict and rise in the revolutionary consciousness of the working class. The programme included (1) an 8 hours working day to be established by legislation; (2) prohibition of child labour; (3) restriction on juvenile and female labour; (4) special regulation for night work and hazardous occupations; (5) the establishment of mandatory weekly day of rest; (6) the prohibition of remuneration for work in kind or through factory run shops; (7) the establishment of state institution of factory inspectors. There was also the demand for equal pay for equal work of men and women irrespective of nationality and for an "unrestricted complete freedom of unions and coalitions."

The demands enumerated above clearly show the primitive conditions of living obtaining at the time and the unbridled character of exploitation carried on by the capitalist class. In this situation a concerted international movement for these demands for regulating by law the working day was bound to lead to revolutionary consequences.

The Geneva and Brussels Congresses of the First International had elaborated a similar programme of partial demands. The Paris Congress resolution now again presented a programme of international working class movement systematically presenting the immediate demands of the proletariat. It was further asserted that attainment of these demands was "absolutely imperative in all countries where the capitalist mode of production prevails", in order to "counter the destructive influence of the existing economic system."

Political Struggle and War

But the Congress did not content itself with proclaiming a programme of partial demands. The resolution on international labour protection stated that "Labour and the whole of mankind can only be emancipated by the proletariat organised as a class on an international scale, which must win political power in order to expropriate the capital and convert the means of production into public property." This connected the struggle for immediate needs of the working class with its ultimate goal of socialism.

When the Paris Congress met, the danger of militarism and war was growing in Europe. Prominent leaders of the Socialist parties and above all F. Engels were already busy working out a policy of opposition to war by the working class. The Paris Congress therefore adopted a resolution on disbandment of standing armies and calling for arming of the entire people. This resolution exposed the direct connection between wars and capitalism and underlined that world wide triumph of socialism was the best guarantee that there will be no war.

Internationalisation of May Day

It was in this background that the Paris Congress passed a resolution internationalising the observance of May Day. The resolution said "The Congress decides to organise a great international demonstration so that in all countries and in all cities on one appointed day the toiling masses must demand of the state authority the legal reduction of the working hours to 8 hours as well as the carrying out of the other demands of Paris Congress. Since similar demonstration has already been decided on May 1st 1890, by American Federation of Labour at its convention at St. Luis in December 1888, this day is accepted for the international demonstration. Workers of the various countries must organise this demonstration according to conditions prevailing in each country.

At its next Congress in Brussels in 1891 the Socialist International called upon the workers to observe May 1st to demand the eight hour day and to ensure peace among the nations. This was a very important addition to preserve peace because without preserving peace working class solidarity lost all meaning. The First International under the guidance of Karl Marx in its manifesto on Franco-German war (1870) had already called upon the workers to protect peace and maintain their solidarity. Under this inspiring call the workers of Paris sent fraternal greetings to the workers of Germany when the rulers of the two countries were at war. The call of the IInd International to raise opposition to war and demand peace among nations on May Day was the tradition of internationalism set by the Ist International.

The resolution also demanded that May Day should be observed by organising strikes wherever possible.

How the 1st May Day was Observed

The convening of the Paris Congress was the result of the increased activities among the working class and its rising international consciousness. It was preceded by a large number of strike struggles in all countries of Europe and political advance of the working class on the electoral and parliamentary front. It was not surprising at all that the call of the Paris Congress to observe May Day met with enthusiastic and massive response in Europe and America. On May 1st 1890 hundreds and thousands of workers filled the streets of industrial cities in most of the European countries. In some cities of Germany, France and Denmark a number of factories came on strike to mark the international day. Massive demonstrations were witnessed in a large number of cities. More than a hundred thousand demonstrators demonstrated in Vienna, 60 thousands in Budapest and between 40 to 50 thousands in Marsailes and Lyons, 35 thousands in Prague, between 20 to 30 thousand in Roubaix, Lille, Stockholm, Chicago and many other cities, 20 thousands in Warsaw and 3 thousands in Lvov

(History of International Working Class Movement, Vol. 2).

In Spain and Britain the day of international solidarity was marked on the first Sunday of May 4th. In Barcelona nearly hundred thousand workers demonstrated.

Engels on May Day

Engels took part in the preparations of the London workers for the 1st May Day demonstration. In spite of the influence of the reformist trade union leaders over the workers the situation was extremely favourable. Because at the beginning of 1880 the English workers' movement especially in London had seen a new upsurge due to the fact that success crowned the determined activity of Elenor Marx Aveling, Dr. Edward Aveling, the leader Tom Menn, John Burns and others to draw the less qualified workers such as the gas and coal workers into the movement. These proletarians organised themselves into their own trade unions for unskilled workers because they had been denied admission into the old trade unions. Engels supported the mass movement, as well as the 1889 strike at the London dock to the extent that he could. Now at last a fresh revolutionary breeze began to blow through the proletarian movement in England also. That made itself apparent at the London May Day demonstration. (Engels Biography, Peoples Publishing House, P. 506).

The May Day rally was held on 4th May a Sunday in Germany. Engels considered it to be truly overwhelming and in his letter to Bebel he wrote "I was on platform four (a large truck) and could only see a part of the crowd one third or 1/8th but jammed together as far as the eye could see. 250 of 300 thousand people of which more than three quarters were demonstrating workers. Avelings, Lafargue and Stepniak spoke from my platform I was only an onlooker." And then at the end of his letter he writes "I carried by head two inches higher when I descended from the truck."

In his preface to the Fourth German edition of the Communist Manifesto written on May 1, 1890 Engels writes "Proletarian of all lands unite. Few were the voices to respond when we launched these words into the world 42 years ago on the eve of revolution in Paris, when for the first time, the proletariat arose and fought for its own rights. On Sept. 17, 1864 the proletariat of practically every land in Western Europe joined hands in the International Workingmen's Association of glorious memory. The international survived only for 9 years. Nevertheless the union that organisation created will live for all times; it is today stronger than ever. Indeed events are showing this to the full. As I write these lines the proletariat of all Europe and of America is holding a review of its forces. It is mobilised for the first time as *one* army marching forward under *one* flag and fighting for *one* immediate aim; an 8 hour working day established by legal enactment

as was demanded by the Geneva Congress of the International Workingmen's Association, and again by the International Socialist Congress held at Paris in 1889. The spectacle that we are now witnessing will make the capitalists and land owners of all lands realise that today the proletarians of all lands are in every truth united.

"If only Marx was with me to see with his own eyes".

Firings and Killings Again

This first international action of the working class did not pass off without blood shed. The ruling classes understood the challenge behind it and in several places they tried to suppress it with brutal firing and terror. On the 1st May Day there were clashes with police in Italy on May 1, 1890 and in France, Italy and Spain in the following years. In Northern French town of Fourmies a peaceful May Day demonstration was met with the rifle fire. At least 50 people including men, women and children fell to the ground. Ten died instantly. The Fourmies slaughter was denounced by the French workers. At a parliamentary by-election the socialists nominated Paul Lafargue as their candidate. (He was in prison for speaking out against the Fourmies shooting). The election swept Lafargue into the Chamber of Deputies.

In Russia where the trade union movement was illegal and political parties were not permitted legal activities, May Day was repeatedly accompanied by mass arrest, jailings, shooting etc. Nonetheless its appeal continued to increase and it began to play a more and more prominent role in the struggle for democracy.

As years went by new and new contingents from different countries joined in the observance of May Day and widened the circle of proletarian international unity. Every year on the First of May thousands from industrial countries were joined by tens of thousands from the industrial cities of colonies and May Day became a symbol of the fight for international freedom for socialism, for abolition of exploitation of man by man. It became the widest expression of protest against the imperialist capitalist system. The militant section of workers from individual factories and some whole districts decided to go on strike to express their solidarity with the demands of international proletariat.

May Day became the tradition of the entire working class movement.

May Day in Russia

In Russia under the guidance of Lenin and the Social democratic party the observance of May Day became a rallying point for the revolutionary activity of the working class. Lenin and the Social Democratic Party saw to it that the May Day was not reduced simply to charter of demands, that it kept

before it the revolutionary objective of ending the rule of capitalists and that it always upheld the banner of proletarian internationalism opposing war and standing for international peace. Lenin also saw to it that May Day did not simply become a day of international solidarity voicing general slogans of internationalism but also become a rallying point for discharging the immediate revolutionary task facing the Russian proletariat, an instrument for rallying the working class as the leading force in the democratic and socialist revolutions. Everything that Lenin wrote on May Day, and the corrections that he tried to introduce were intended to see that the working class fulfilled this role and stuck to the revolutionary traditions and ideology of May Day.

In Russia the First May Day meeting was called by Brusnev Organisation of St. Petersburg. It was held secretly on the first Sunday of May, 1891 in a place that can be easily vacated in the event of a police raid. One of the speakers said "What we need first and foremost is an organised force, consisting of workers consciously striving for an improvement of their conditions, that could compel the government to grant their political rights, for this is the sole condition that gives us the opportunity to set about reshaping the existing economic system."

Lenin on May Day Demands

Within ten years May Day celebration in Russia made quick political advance. Lenin wrote in his preface to the pamphlet *May Day in Kharkov*, written in 1900, "what made the May Day celebrations in Kharkov an event of outstanding importance? The large scale participation of the workers in the strike, the huge mass meetings in the streets, the unfurling of red flags, the presentation of demands put forth in proclamations and the revolutionary character of these demands, the 8 hour days and political liberty. The legend the Russian workers have not yet matured for the political struggle, that their principal concern should be purely economic struggle, which they should only little by little and very slowly supplement with partial political agitation for partial political reform and not for the struggle against the entire political system of Russia—that legend has been totally refuted by the Kharkov May Day celebrations." (Collected Works Vol. 4 p. 358).

Lenin notes here that the workers have broken through the cordon of economic demands and are coming out on May Day with political slogans with basic political demands. Lenin at the same time tells the Kharkov comrades that it is erroneous to include all kinds of sundry economic demands in the May Day proclamation. The economic demands should be of a really revolutionary character which will enhance the revolutionary consciousness of the working class and aid the political struggle. Lenin writes "Let us take for example the demands put forward by the Railway Workshop employees. Of

the fourteen demands eleven have to do with minor improvements which can quite easily be achieved even under the present political system—wage increases, reduction of hours, removal of abuses. Included among these demands as though identical with them, are the following three: (4) introduction of an eight hour day, (7) guarantee against victimisation of workers after the May 1st events (10) establishment of a joint committee of workers and employers for settling disputes between the two parties. The first of these demands (4) is the general demand advanced by the world proletariat; the fact that this demand was put forward seems to indicate that the advanced workers of Kharkov realise their solidarity with the world socialist working class movement. But precisely for this reason it should not have been included among minor demands like better treatment by foremen, and a ten per cent increase in wages. Demands for wage increases and better treatment can (and should) be presented by the workers to their employers in each separate trade; these are trade demands put forward by separate categories of workers. The demand for an eight hour day, however, is the demand of the whole proletariat presented not to individual employers, but to the state authorities as the representatives of the entire present day social and political system, to the capitalist class as a whole, the owners of all the means of production. The demand for eight hour day has assumed special significance. It is a declaration for solidarity with the international socialist movement. We need to make the workers understand this difference so that they do not reduce the demand for the eight hour day to the level of demands like free Railway tickets or the dismissal of a watchman. Throughout the year the workers, first in one place and then in another, continuously present a variety of partial demands to their employers and fight for their achievements. In assisting the workers in this struggle, socialists must always explain its connection with the proletarian struggle for its emancipation in all countries. And the First of May must be the day on which the workers solemnly declare that they realise this connection and resolutely join in this struggle." (p. 362, 363, Vol. 4)

This is how Lenin demarcates the concept of revolutionary May Day from the reformist understanding which seeks to convert it into a day of declaration of partial demands.

May Day and Concrete Revolutionary Tasks

Lenin further told the workers that May Day should not simply mean a general declaration of international solidarity but address itself also to the concrete revolutionary tasks facing the working class in each country.

Combining urgent economic demands having revolutionary significance with a general expression of international solidarity and desire for socialism was not enough. To be able to reach

the goal of socialism it was necessary that the working class of each country addressed itself to the concrete problems of revolution facing it. It was therefore necessary to raise these problems in May Day meetings as part of the struggle against capitalism. This is what Lenin said in 1902 in his letter to Northern League "It should have been added that in our country May Day also became a demonstration against the autocracy, a demand for political liberty. Pointing to the international significance of the holy day is not enough. It must also be linked with the struggle for the most vital national political demands." (Page 168 Vol. VI Collected Works)

Lenin emphasises the same point in connection with the approaching May Day of 1903: "Finally we must try to bring the answer of the workers out on to the street, to broadcast our demands through demonstrations and to show publicly the numbers and strength of the workers, their class consciousness and determination. Let the coming May Day celebration be not only a general declaration of our proletarian demands but also a special and definite answer to the manifesto of Feb. 26" (Page 348, 350, Vol 6, Lenin Collected Works).

The manifesto of Feb. 26th was the manifesto of Russian Czars to befool the people.

The political demands that Lenin asked to be raised on May Day were (1) Immediate and unconditional recognition by law of the freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and an amnesty to all political prisoners and members of religious sects, (2) Demand of the convocation of a constituent assembly which will be elected by all citizens and establish an elective form of Government, (3) Immediate and unconditional recognition by law the full equality of the peasants with all other social stratas and convocation of peasant committees for the abolition of remnants of serfdom in the country side. In short, Lenin asked that the demands for maturing democratic revolution should be fully expressed on May Day.

Russo-Japanese War

By 1904 the Russo Japanese war had already started. It was no longer a question of working class opposition to war in general, but of opposing Czar's war against Japan. Many social democrats and others who considered themselves to be socialists wavered in their opposition and some got overwhelmed by the fumes of bourgeois chauvinism. In this situation Lenin wrote a leaflet for the May Day asking the working class to oppose the war. He wrote "our people are perishing from want and starvation at home, yet they have been dragged into a ruinous and senseless war for alien territories lying thousands of miles away and inhabited by foreign races. Our people are ground down in political slavery yet they have been dragged into a war for the enslavement of other peoples. Our people demand a change of political order at home but it

is sought to divert their attention by the thunder of guns at the other end of the world".

Then Lenin calls on the workers to enter into a decisive battle against the Czar's rule: "Comrade workers, let us then prepare with redoubled energy for the decisive battle that is at hand. Let the ranks of social democratic proletariat close ever firmer. Let their word spread ever further afield. Let campaigning for workers' demands be carried on ever more boldly. Let the celebration of May Day win thousands of new fighters to our cause and swell our forces in the great struggle for the freedom of all the people, for the liberation of all who toil from the yoke of capitalism.

Long live the eight hour day.

Long live International Revolutionary Social Democracy.

Down with the criminal and plundering Czarist autocracy (Page 202, Vol. 7, Lenin Collected Works).

May Day During 1905 Revolution

1905 was the year of revolution and the May Day slogans had to be addressed to the revolutionary situation that was rapidly developing all over the country. The Russo-Japanese war was still continued and it had to be opposed and the working class had to be reminded of the international unity of the socialist movement. Lenin wrote another leaflet for May Day of 1905 and said, "Comrade workers the great holiday of the workers of the world is coming. On the first of May they celebrate their awakening to light and knowledge, their association in one fraternal union for the struggle against all oppression, against all tyranny, against all exploitation, for a socialist system of society. ...

"Down with the enmity between workers of different nationalities and different creeds. This enmity can only benefit the plunderers and tyrants, who live by the ignorance and disunion of the proletariat. Jews and Christians, Armenians and Tatars, Poles and Russians, Finns and Swedes, Letts and Germans, all, all of them march together under the one common banner of socialism. ... On the first of May this union of the workers of all countries, international Social Democracy reviews its forces and gathers its strength for a further unremitting and unswerving struggles for freedom, equality and fraternity.

The leaflet continues "Hundreds of thousands of young lives have been torn away from the people to perish in the Far East. ... And what is the war for? For Manchuria, which our predatory government has seized from China. Russian blood is being shed and our country ruined for the sake of foreign territory.

"Let this year's First of May be for us the cele-

bration of the peoples rising, let us prepare for it and await the signal for the decisive attack on the tyrants. ... Prepare then for the great battle, Comrade workers, stop work in the factories and the mills on the First of May, or take up arms according to the advice of the committees of the Social Democratic Labour Party. ... The St. Petersburg workers proclaimed on the famed 9th of January: Freedom or Death. Workers of all Russia, we will repeat the great battle cry, we will not shrink from any sacrifices; through the uprising we will win freedom; through freedom, socialism.

Long live the First of May. Long Live international Social Democracy. Long live the freedom of the workers and the peasants. Long live the Democratic Republic. Down with the Czarist Republic. Down with the Czarist autocracy" (Lenin Collected Works, PP 348, 350 Vol. 8).

It will be seen that the various struggles were led by the political party of the working class, the Social Democratic Party with Lenin at its head. It was able to keep to the revolutionary traditions of May Day, combining the struggle for partial demands with opposition to predatory war and determination to end the capitalist system. Together with this the Social Democratic party raised political slogans and revolutionary demands which were necessary in the Russian conditions to fulfill the task of the impending democratic revolution and clear the road to socialism. Step by step as the revolutionary situation developed the May Day in Russia began to reflect the immediate revolutionary demands of the entire people and by 1905 Lenin could raise the demand of taking to arms on May Day.

In these years Russia was the storm centre of revolutionary movement. The working class of Russia led by the Bolshevik party and Lenin and following the revolutionary teachings of Marx and Engels was able to recover from the defeat of 1905 and achieve a successful socialist revolution in 1917.

Sliding Back from Revolutionary Tradition

But the situation was quite different in the advanced capitalist countries of Europe, some of which at one time headed the Marxist movement of the working class. The "peaceful" period of capitalism, the development of capitalism into imperialism and the emergence of a privileged labour autocracy in the imperialist countries benefited by the loot from colonial countries and a certain expansion of parliamentary and democratic rights for the workers created illusions about peaceful development towards socialism. A revisionist tendency gradually arose inside the social democratic movement which considered class struggle and revolution as totally unnecessary and therefore began to discard the militant tradition of working class movement, traditions embodied in the celebration of May Day.

The revisionist tendencies and outlook were primarily represented by the trade union leadership. In fact the British trade unions were being conducted on a reformist and collaborationist line for a long time and always rejected celebration of May Day by means of strikes. As early as 1879 Engels observed in relation to the British trade union movement: "for a number of years the English working class movement has been hopelessly describing a narrow circle of strikes for higher wages and shorter hours, not, however, as an expedient or means of propaganda and organisation, but as the ultimate aim. The Trade Unions even bar all political actions on principle and their charters, thereby also ban participation in any general activity of the working class as a class...No attempt should be made to conceal the fact that at present no real labour movement in the continental sense exists here".

This was the situation a decade before the foundation of the Socialist International. The same trend began to develop in the continental parties also which naturally sought to deprive the May Day of its revolutionary content and restrict it to raising few demands for economic reform within the frame work of the capitalist system.

Lenin on Jena Congress

Lenin noted these developments in the German party as early as 1905. In this article, Jena Congress of German Social Democrat Worker's Party he wrote: "Another question that came up for discussion in Jena prior to the question of political strike is also highly instructive for Russia. This was the question of May Day celebrations or to be more exact (to take the gist of the matter and not the item that gave rise to the discussion), the question of the relation of the trade union movement to the Social Democratic Party. Proletary has spoken several times about the profound impression made on German Social Democrats, and not only on them alone, by the Cologne Trade Union Congress. It became more than evident at this congress that even in Germany, where the tradition of Marxism and its influence are strongest, anti-socialist tendencies towards "pure trade unionism", of the British i.e. absolutely bourgeois type are developing in the trade unions, mark you, social democratic trade unions. That is why from the question of May Day demonstration in its literal sense, there inevitably arose at the Jena Congress the question of trade unionism and social democracy, the question of economism to speak the terms of trends within the Russian Social Democratic movement.

"Fisher who delivered the report on the question of May Day, frankly stated that it would be a bad mistake to ignore the fact that in the trade union the socialist spirit is disappearing. Now here, now there. Things had gone so far that, for instance, Bringmann, representative of Carpenters Union had uttered and published sentiments like the following:

"The strike on May Day is like a foreign body in the human body". "In the given circumstances the trade unions are the sole means for improving the conditions of the workers", etc. And these symptoms of disease as Fisher aptly termed them are supplemented by number of others. In Germany, as in Russia, and indeed everywhere, a narrow trade unionism or economism is linking with opportunism (revisionism).

The newspapers published by the same Carpenter's Union wrote about the crumbling foundations of scientific socialism, the erroneousess of the theory of crisis, the theory of collapse etc. The revisionist Calwer did not call on the workers to show discontent or increase their demands but be modest, etc, etc.

"Bebel fully recognised the danger of narrow trade unionism. He went on to say that he knew even worse examples of this craft union apathy. Young trade union leaders go so far as to jeer at the party in general, at socialism in general, at the theory of class struggle." (Page 293 Vol. IX).

While this was the trend which was developing in Western Europe, in Russia, because of the guidance of Lenin and in the midst of the developing revolutionary situation, May Day demonstration began to symbolise the revolutionary activities of the entire people. In June 1912 in his article 'Revolutionary Upswing' Lenin wrote "The great May Day strike of the proletariat of all Russia and accompanying street demonstrations, revolutionary leaflets, revolutionary speeches before gatherings of workers have clearly shown that Russia has entered a period of revolutionary upswing." (Vol. 18, Page 208).

May Day, 1912-1913

Lenin underscored the importance of 1912 May Day when he said that on this day the working class emerged as a leader of the entire people. He wrote "Let our slogans be", the St. Petersburg committee wrote in their leaflet, "a constituent assembly, and eight hour working day, the confiscation of the landed estates. And further on the leaflet launches the call: "down with the Czarist government, down with the autocratic constitution of June 3, Long Live the Democratic Republic Long Live the Socialism."

"Hundreds of thousands of St. Petersburg proletarians followed by workers throughout Russia resorted to strikes and street demonstrations not as one of the separate classes of bourgeois society, not with "their own" merely economic slogans but as the leader raising aloft the banner of revolution for the whole people, *on behalf of* the whole people and *with the aim* of awakening and drawing into the struggle *all* the classes who need freedom and are capable of striving for it."

The number of those who struck work on May

Day in support of revolutionary demands was 300 thousands.

Lenin once more emphasised the leading role of the working class in the political struggle while describing the May Day demonstrations of 1913. "And now comes May Day action by Russian working class, who first held a rehearsal in Riga and then went to resolute action in St. Petersburg on May First.... The tasks of the approaching revolution have come to the fore again in all their grandeur and the forces of the advanced class leading it stand out in bold relief before the hundreds of old revolutionaries, whom persecution by hangmen and desertion by friends have not defeated or broken, and before millions of people of the new generation of democrats and socialists."

Describing the happenings and repression in connection with the May Day Lenin writes, "Weeks before May Day the government has appeared to have lost its wits, while the gentlemen who own factories behaved as if they had never had any wits at all. The arrests and searches seemed to have turned all the workers' districts in the capital upside down. The provinces did not lag behind the centres. The harassed factory owners called conferences and adopted contradictory slogans, now threatening the workers with punishment and lockouts, now making concessions in advance and consenting to stop work, now inciting the government to commit atrocities, now reproaching the government and calling on it to include a May day in the number of official holidays."

"But even though the Gendarmes showed utmost zeal, even though they "purged" in the industrial suburbs, even though they made arrest right and left according to the latest "list of suspects", it was no use. The workers laughed at the impotent rage of Czar's gang and the capitalist class and derided the government's menacing and pitiful "announcements"; they wrote satirical verses and circulated by hand or passed them on by word of mouth. They produced as if from no where fresh batches of small poorly printed "leaflets", short and plain but very instructive calling for strikes and demonstrations and reminding the people of the old uncurtailed revolutionary slogans of the Social Democrats, who in 1905 led the first onslaught of of the masses against autocracy and against monarchy".

Under the leadership of the Social Democratic Party and under the guidance of Lenin every May Day became a nightmare for the ruling classes and a source of inspiration and organisation for the people as a whole.

Imperialist War of 1914—Collapse of Reformism

In August 1914 when the first imperialist war broke out the Bolshevik party opposed the Czarist imperialist war and decided to use the war crisis

for the purpose of revolution and capture of political power. Initially it had to face tremendous repression and opposition from the reformist elements in the working class. But keeping to the international traditions of opposing war they finally succeeded in overthrowing the Czar and the rule of the capitalists and establishing the First Socialist State of the world.

Unfortunately the militant traditions of earlier May Day were lost under the pressure of the reformist leaders of trade unions in Britain, Germany, France, the USA and elsewhere. They tried to convert the May Day into a general holiday instead of a day to review the class forces in the battle for vanquishing capitalism and ushering in socialism.

These reformist leaders abandoned strike as a method to observe May Day and often chose only a factory holiday to observe May Day. Besides pursuing their class collaborationist policies they gradually gave up their international outlook and began to take vacillating and reactionary positions on the question of imperialist war. The result was that when the 1st world war broke out, instead of opposing it and protecting international unity of the working class these leaders supported their imperialist rulers in conducting the war. Only the revolutionary wing the Bolshevik Party led by Lenin in Russia, the revolutionary wing of social democracy in Germany led by Rosa Luxemburg stood by internationalism and opposed war. The tradition of militant May Day and its international character was preserved by communists, and revolutionary trade unions. It is because of this that the working class of Russia could organise a successful socialist revolution and ensured the biggest triumph for the common movement.

Reformist Line Continues

After the end of 1st world war the reformists did not change their tactics and they went in for greater and greater collaborations with capitalist governments. They concentrated their attention on certain economic demands and devoted May Day exclusively to the reiteration of immediate demands. It was left to the Communist and militant trade unions to carry forward the tradition of militancy and class struggle and fight the rising fascist forces. The Communist Party of Germany and the militant section of the working class covered themselves with glory in the anti fascist struggle. But the reformist leaders of British and French trade unions would not join collective struggle against Hitler fascism and continued to side with their respective imperialist governments in their dirty international intrigues against the USSR. During this period the labour movement in USA came under the domination of class collaborators and toughs working in league with the management. Year by year the earlier international outlook and militancy was choked out.

The result was that for a long time during the second world war the working class movement of Europe and America could not play its proper role and often lent itself to imperialist intrigue against the Soviet Union. However the banner of working class ideology and socialist revolution had now reached several countries in Asia and elsewhere. In these countries the revolutionary tradition of May Day was kept alive during the anti imperialist struggle and the result was the triumph of one of the biggest revolutions in the world the victory of the Chinese revolution followed by the revolutions in Korea, Vietnam, and the socialist revolutions in Eastern Europe directly under the impact of victories of red armies.

Nothing can surpass the grandeur and historic importance of May Day 1945 observed by the victorious working class and people of the Soviet Union.

The order of the day of the Supreme Commander in Chief, Stalin said: "Working people of the Soviet Union, Today our country is celebrating the first of May, the International festival of the working class.

"This year the peoples of our motherland are celebrating the First of May during the victorious consummation of the Great Patriotic war.

"The stern times when the Red army was fighting back the attacks of enemy troops near Moscow and Leningrad, near Grozny and Stalingrad, are gone, never to return. Today our victorious troops are routing the armed forces of the enemy in the heart of the Germany, far beyond Berlin, on the river Elbe. The collapse of Hitler Germany is a matter of the very near future."

It will be clear that wherever the class tradition of earlier years and international solidarity was maintained the working class advanced rapidly. In other states it was let down by reformist leaders. The hundred years since the Hay Market affair show that notwithstanding massacres, executions and tortures the working class movement had registered unprecedented triumphs with capitalism abolished over one-third of the world. On the centenary day the working class must recall not only the great sacrifices of the earlier martyrs but also the magnificent triumphs of the international working class movement which should speed our efforts to move forward to socialism in our country.

Response to New Situation

Life and class realities are however asserting themselves. Today even the reformist trade unions of Western countries are facing the danger of nuclear war and have to speak against it. Whether they lodge their protest in May Day meetings or not they are unable to ignore the danger of war and have to oppose it at their annual conferences. The leaders of many of these organisations are unwilling

to blame their own imperialist governments and are not unwilling to pass on the blame to the Soviet Union. But the mass of workers has seized the initiative and in many countries despite the opposition of their leaders they have joined the wide peace movement in which millions are involved. A powerful organisation like the British Trade Union Congress had to come out in total opposition to war and the British Labour Party at one of its conferences voted in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Due to the nuclear danger the old spirit of international unity and internationalism is again coming back and the tradition of the earlier May Day to oppose international conflict is again being revived. Of course it is true that the Socialist Parties which have great influence over the working class in these countries even now continue to play their game of reformism and anti-Sovietism and by their behaviour and practice do everything to split the ranks of the working class on the question of war itself.

Mighty Force of Peace

But guarding the international traditions of May Day has arisen a powerful and invincible force — the force of the working class of all socialist countries and the people of these countries, a force which runs into hundreds of millions. Never before was there such a force to guard the international unity of the working class and to oppose the internecine war. Never before international unity of the working class had the advantage of being backed by powerful socialist states.

This mighty force is backed by tens of millions of working class from capitalist and third world countries which are now rallied under the banner of the World Federation of Trade Unions. The World Federation of Trade Unions which includes under its banner the working class of socialist countries has been the most consistent fighter for protecting world peace and international unity, and it is being aided in a powerful manner by the world peace movement.

Such are the powerful forces defending the international unity of the workers. But the danger of war continues and the centenary called on all sections of the working class to redouble its efforts to frustrate the war mongers.

May Day in India

In our country the working class movement has been observing May Day for the last 50 years or more. In fact the demand of eight hour day was made in our country by the Railway workers of Howrah as early as 1862. There was also an effort from Bengal to establish contacts with the First International and a letter was written to that organisation which is noted in one of the minutes International Workingmen's Association. However from the beginning the trade unions of our country could not unitedly adopt or accept the observance of May

Day. In the 20s or 30s except the Communists hardly anybody observed the day. Later on those who decided to observe it from among the non Communists did so under the influence of the reformist IInd International and the reformist trade union movement of Great Britain. Many trade union leaders consider May Day as something foreign and refused to accept it as a common day for international unity of the working class. That is because they had no concept of working class as a class and the necessity of international unity. Today also there are some trade union organisations in our country which consider May Day as an alien intrusion in our movement.

The trade union movement could not observe a common May Day in the spirit of May Day internationalism and its call to end the capitalist system because of the same reason that plagued the western movement. One wing of trade union leadership not only did not want any reference to socialism it did not want any reference to politics in the trade union movement. These leaders were definitely anti-strike and its support was used by the government to befool the British public opinion that Indian labour was supporting the British against the demand for national independence. Their policy of collaboration with the British having been defeated they split the AITUC in 1929. They wanted unity on the basis of rejection of political anti-imperialist struggle, a rejection of all politics by the trade unions and avoidance of strikes.

It is easy to understand therefore that there could not be a common observance of May Day along with these sections.

Bourgeois Nationalism and Internationalism

Things were not easy either with the nationalist section. One section of the nationalists in the trade union movement was opposed to introduction of any independent politics for the working class and in fact was opposed to introduction of any politics inside the trade union movement. Its deeply bourgeois nationalist outlook also prevented it from thinking in terms of internationalism or socialism. In fact it also counterposed internationalism to nationalism and patriotism and charged the communists with dependence on foreign ideology. The radical national wing however was prepared to put the problems of independence and freedom before the working class, give call for anti-imperialist action but was opposed to internationalism. A large number of these radicals, soon developed an anti-Soviet attitude.

It will be seen therefore what in these years observance of May Day based on its basic call was not possible in association with any wing. The Communists therefore were often forced to observe May Day by themselves. Sometimes in the interest of unity they observed May Day in association with radical nationalists, the Congress socialists and called upon the workers to fight for freedom and

independence. But in such meetings the call for international solidarity and unity was very weak.

Communists Stand by Revolutionary Tradition

But the communists and trade unions influenced by them were able to carry the spirit of internationalism and May Day to the sections following them. They were the first to organise the first anti-war strike in Bombay when the 11nd World War started. Within a few days of the declaration of war they organised in Bombay on October 2, 1939 an anti-war protest strike in which more than 90 thousand workers participated. This was the first anti-war strike against the 2nd World War in the world labour movement. The resolution unanimously adopted at the mass meeting of the workers proclaimed: "This meeting declares its solidarity with the international working class and the people of the world, who are being dragged into the most destructive war by the imperialist powers. This meeting regards the present war as a challenge to the solidarity of international working class and declares that it is the task of the workers and people of different countries to defeat this imperialist conspiracy against humanity".

The Communists were the first to start resisting the war burdens imposed on the people. They started their resistance with the strike of 1 lakh 75 thousands textile workers for dearness allowance in Bombay in March 1940. The Bombay strike unleashed a wave of strike all over the country.

Opportunist Trend

After independence the trade union wing controlled by the National Congress split away from the AITUC making it clear that it did not want to associate with the communists in the trade union movement. This was an open device to bring the working class under the influence of bourgeoisie, reject internationalism and develop class collaborationist politics inside the working class. The INTUC was founded to achieve this purpose. It was of course difficult to have a common May Day observance with the INTUC which rejected revolutionary politics and international class unity.

However things did not go well either with those who remained in the AITUC. The virus of reformism of collaborating with the bourgeois landlord government soon caught a section of AITUC. The revisionism also invaded a section of the then CPI leadership which finally led to a split in both the organisations. All these finally ended in both the CPI and the AITUC supporting the reactionary emergency rule. It was obviously not possible in those years to have a common May Day expressing the revolutionary content of the earlier May Day.

Struggle for Trade Union Unity

This lack of cohesion and a common revolutionary ideology still dogs the trade union movement. It is

of course essential that the trade union movement should growingly unite as without it the full class force of the working class cannot be felt by the rulers that be. But the existing trade union unity achieved through the National Campaign Committee does not go beyond announcing and acting for certain immediate economic demands.

Till now the committee has been unable to come out with united resolution opposing war and exposing the US imperialist aggressor. It has been unable to explain to the workers the dangers and horrors of nuclear war and the fact that the war is also connected with the US imperialist plans of global domination including the enslavement of India. The National Campaign Committee cannot be said to possess a common international outlook nor has it got a common outlook and the problems of democracy and unity facing India. It is because of this that during all these years a proper May Day paying tributes to the spirit of internationalism and revolution of the earlier May Day could not unitedly be observed in all parts of India.

Things have however changed and things are changing. The challenge of nuclear war is now rousing large sections of our people including those trade unions who till now showed pathetic indifference to it. The challenge of internal divisive forces is also rising making many trade union organisations aware of the responsibility to meet it. However many organisations are still totally unaware of the US imperialist conspiracies against our country and the responsibility of US imperialists for the danger of nuclear war.

The initiative recently taken by the INTUC leadership to call a meeting of several Trade Union Centres to develop common understanding on the question of war, fight against divisive forces and to express protest against apartheid constitutes a sign of growing awareness of the wider problems facing the working class and the trade union movement. It is a welcome step and every effort should be made to create common consciousness and a sense of urgency among the workers regarding these problems.

While welcoming the growing consciousness about war danger the CITU and its unions must regard the May Day centenary as an occasion to fully revive the spirit of earlier May Day in the light of our manifesto. It will be doing a great harm to the militant course of the working class movement if May Day centenary is allowed to be vulgarised into a declaration of some economic demands divested of all revolutionary content.

The centenary slogans must cover the three components of the revolutionary tradition of May Day. One, partial demands carrying revolutionary significance and capable of creating class consciousness to fight the existing order. Two, immediate tasks facing the revolutionary movement in India. Three,

fight against war and protection of international unity of the working class.

The May Day centenary manifesto includes all these components. It says, on May Day the working class must unitedly voice its protest against the economic policy of the government and protest against the freedom given to multinationals to penetrate our economy.

It must demand a halt to attacks on trade union rights and condemn official policy of computerisation. Calling for immediate opening of all closed factories and concerns, it must demand immediate adequate unemployment relief and further demand that the right to work should be embodied in the Constitution as a fundamental right. It must call for immediate and total nationalisation of the cotton textile, jute and sugar industries.

The working class must announce its preparedness and determination to champion the cause of the people and the peasants and agricultural workers. It must demand complete overhauling of agrarian relations, break-up of concentration of land and the distribution of the land to the tillers.

On May Day the working class must proclaim its determination to fight the forces of authoritarianism, defend and expand the democratic rights of the people and work for the state of people's democracy to open the way to socialism.

It must declare its resolve to fight imperialist conspiracies which are undermining the unity of our country, the secessionist and divisive forces which are unleashing forces of disintegration, and communal and obscurantist agencies which disrupt the unity of the toilers.

In view of the constant pressure on our foreign policy of non-alignment and the vacillations and trends already in evidence the working class must keep a vigilant watch on the conduct of our foreign policy and by timely intervention prevent any anti-national compromise. The policy of non-alignment which opposes war and stands for peace and which helps to keep a number of third world countries out of the orbit of imperialist domination is of great help to the working class in fighting the menace of war and discharging its international responsibility. The policy of non-alignment which befriends the Socialist countries enables Indian people and the working class to throw their weight against the war mongers and on the side of peace.

International unity of the working class and opposition to all militarist, imperialist and aggressive wars is an integral part of the revolutionary heritage of May Day struggle. The centenary manifesto correctly observes "Today the entire world is again threatened with the danger of nuclear war. It is not a war between two super powers, but a war that is being organised by the imperialist camp against the Socialist camp which is

the achievement of hundred years of struggle of the world working class.

Why do the imperialists seek to unleash a war against the socialist camp? Because there is no unemployment, no poverty, no economic crisis, and no capitalist exploitation in the socialist countries. Practical achievements of socialism are attracting like a magnet millions of people towards it. The imperialists want to stop this march of progress and reconquer the whole world again for their exploitation.

The USA and its imperialist allies are spending millions of dollars on nuclear and other armaments while more than 30 millions are unemployed and starving in these countries. To be able to attack the Soviet Union they have deployed missiles in Europe and are also increasing their conventional armaments. Reagan's Star War Project is a diabolical device to carry nuclear war into outer space.

The USA imperialists not only seek to destroy socialist system they also seek to reconquer the entire world for imperialistic exploitation. The nuclear war plan is also a plan for global domination, for re-enslavement of third world countries like India.

That is why the USA imperialists and Reagan refuse to accept any limitation on nuclear armament, any limitation on military expenditure and refuse to leave outer space free from nuclear weapons. The USSR has made several proposals for limitation of nuclear strikes. But the American govt. did not respond and refused to pledge that it would not be the first to use the nuclear strike. In fact the star war project is precisely intended for nuclear first strike.

In these circumstances the recent proposals made by Comrade Gorbachov, General Secretary of the CPSU to eliminate nuclear weapons by the end of this century, and to take initial steps towards the aim, serve cause of peace and show a way to save humanity from a most destructive war. The CITU and the entire working class of India must lend their full support to these proposals. Their adoption will protect international unity of the working class and uphold the banner of proletarian internationalism.

The appeal of the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions, Soviet Union, to the Working People and Trade Unions of the World on the statement of Comrade M.S. Gorbachov constitutes an urgent call for international unity and action against the danger of nuclear war.

The appeal coming from the working class which only four decades back had to sacrifice 20 million lives, the flower of the working class, in the struggle against fascism and for the freedom of all people must find adequate and effective response on May Day. It reminds India's working class, as contin-

(Contd. on page 18)

May Day Manifesto, 1986

ON the Centenary of May Day This Year the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) sends its greetings to the working class of the world, to the working class and people of all socialist countries, to the working class and the people of capitalist countries struggling against unemployment and deteriorating economic conditions and to the national liberation fighters all over the world. It sends its greetings to the working class and the people of all third world countries who are struggling against poverty and backwardness and whose independence is being daily threatened by the US imperialists.

The CITU also sends its warm greetings to all honest people, workers, and working people, men and women who are waging a brave and courageous struggle against the danger of nuclear war which the US imperialists threaten to impose on the world.

The Indian Trade Union movement sends its warm greetings to the workers of countries of the sub-continent, the workers of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

The Trade Union movement is confident that imperialist attempts to create tension and conflict between Pakistan and India will be foiled by the joint efforts of the workers of the two countries.

The movement sends its warm greetings to the working class of Sri Lanka, to the left forces and Communist Party of Sri Lanka who are holding aloft the banner of working class unity in the midst of wide-spread chauvinism.

Never before in recent history was there so much international unity, so many millions involved for a common purpose, as is the case with the peace movement of our time.

Every year for the last hundred years workers from all parts of the world have come out on the streets to honour the memory of the Chicago martyrs who had the courage to demand 8 hours day from an owning class which still then refused to accept any limitation on their exploitation of their workers.

Every year they have come on the streets to honour the memory of those who were shot down by the USA police.

Every year they have come out on the streets to honour the memory and courage of the working class leaders of Chicago who were framed for the May Day killings and who walked to the gallows with erect head.

The observance of May Day was originally confined to a few countries of Europe and the USA. But soon voice of working class unity began to

reach all the continents and May Day with its demands for limitation of working hours and other demands began to be celebrated over increasingly large number of countries. Today it is celebrated in all socialist countries, in all the advanced capitalist countries and in all newly liberated countries.

On May Day the working class every year announces that it is a single army determined to put an end to the capitalist system and rescue humanity from the perennial curse of poverty and unemployment.

Within hundred years of the First May Day when the ruling classes would not tolerate even the demand for a reduction of working hours, the working class sided by the people and fighting for their cause has smashed one bastion of exploitation after another and today its triumphant banner waves over one third of the world.

The 1917 Revolution led by Lenin and the Bolshevik party was the first big blow given to the capitalist system. A new type of state was born with the working class leading the state, supported and aided by the vast majority of toilers.

The mighty anti-fascist victory of the Soviet Union in which the working class, the red army and the people of Soviet Union played a glorious role gave another shattering blow to the world imperialist system and another big chunk of the world was torn away from the capitalist system. The victory of the great Chinese revolution, the victories of socialist revolutions in several European countries, the victory of the Cuban and the Korean revolution and the unparalleled victory of the Vietnamese revolution were the direct result of the increased strength of the world working class determined to put an end to the capitalist system.

The smashing victory in the anti-fascist war led by the first working class state, the Soviet Union, disintegrated the imperialist system and enabled the enslaved countries to regain their independence from the yoke of imperialism. It enabled country like India to achieve her independence with comparative ease.

How could this transformation be achieved in such a short time. It was because the revolutionary section of the working class movement continued to abide by the revolutionary traditions of the earlier May Day. The earlier May Day was not only devoted to the defence to immediate interests of the working class, it also inscribed on its banner, the slogan of international unity of working class and of capture of political power for the working class to end the capitalist system and its exploitation.

Those who strayed away from the path and concerned themselves only with the immediate

demands of the working class turning a blind eye to the basic objectives of socialism and working class power and to the need of international unity gradually turned into reformist collaborators of the capitalist governments.

These who carried forward the revolutionary traditions of the earlier May Day and combined the daily practical struggle of the working class with its basic objective of socialism and never lowered the banner of proletarian internationalism were able to organise successful socialist revolution.

They were also able to place the working class at the head of the people in the national liberation movement, they were also able to build an alliance of the worker and peasants in the national liberation movement for subsequently turning to socialism. Such were the Marxist Leninist parties who led the socialist revolutions.

Hundred years of working class experience calls on the working class of India to review its own actions and struggles and examine whether they are in consonance with the revolutionary traditions of the international movement.

In India though the May Day is being observed for more than half a century, by and large its observance still remains confined to the immediate partial demands.

The May Day centenary calls upon India's working class to break with this tradition of exclusiveness and emerge on the national scene as a leading class seriously tackling the grave issues facing the country and building a formidable force in alliance with the peasantry to combat all reactionary forces and open the path to wider democracy and socialism.

It calls upon the working class to raise the slogans of People's Democracy in place of the existing bourgeois-landlord rule so that the state power controlled by the people can make easy transition to socialism.

Every section of India's working class must fully realise what the May Day fighters hundred years back had already realised that poverty, unemployment and economic crisis cannot be overcome without ending the capitalist system.

The centenary calls upon the working class of India to examine whether the international consciousness of the working class is sufficiently high to discharge its immediate responsibility in regard to international movement. A very big section of the working class under the influence of bourgeois ideology and reformist unions, is devoid of international consciousness and often takes a hostile attitude to the successful socialist revolutions of the world.

The talk of two super powers indulged in by the

ruling party and opposition bourgeois parties which equate the imperialist USA with the socialist Soviet Union is easily accepted by this section. It is necessary to repair this damage.

International unity of the working class and opposition to all militarist, imperialist and aggressive wars is an integral part of the revolutionary heritage of May Day struggle. Today the entire world is again threatened with the danger of nuclear war. It is not a war between two super powers but a war that is being organised by the imperialist camp against the socialist camp which is the achievement of hundred years of struggle of working class.

Why do the imperialists want to unleash a war against the Socialist Camp? Because there is no unemployment, no poverty, no economic crisis, and no capitalist exploitation in the socialist countries. Practical achievements of socialism are attracting like a magnet millions of people towards it. The imperialists want to stop this march of progress, destroy the socialist system and reconquer the whole world again for their exploitation.

The USA and its imperialist allies are spending million of dollars on nuclear and other armament while more than 30 millions are unemployed and starving in these countries. To be able to attack the Soviet Union they have deployed missiles in Europe and are also increasing their conventional armaments. Reagan's Star War Project is a dibolical device to carry nuclear war into outer space.

The nuclear war plan is also a plan for global domination for re-enslavement of countries like India.

That is why the USA imperialists and Reagan refused to accept any limitation on nuclear armament, any limitation on military expenditure and refuse to leave outer space free from nuclear weapons. The USSR has made several proposals for stopping the piling of nuclear armaments, for slowing down the drive towards war. It has made a unilateral declaration that it will not be the first to use nuclear strikes. But the USA Govt. did not respond and refused to pledge that it would not be the first to use nuclear strike. In fact the star war project is precisely intended for nuclear first strike.

In these circumstances the recent proposals made by Comrade Gorbachov, General Secretary of CPSU to eliminate nuclear weapons by the end of this century, and to take initial steps towards the aim serves cause of peace and shows a way to save humanity from a most destructive war. The Trade Union movement and the entire working class of India must lend their full support to these proposals. Their adoption will protect international unity of the working class and uphold the banner of proletarian internationalism.

The cry of Workers of the World Unite loses all its meaning if the working class of India is unable to

fight the menace of an aggressive war against the successful socialist revolutions, an aggressive war for global domination. May Day centenary calls upon all our unions and all its members to devote their utmost energy to propagate against the danger of war and rouse India's working class to join its hands with the world working class in the struggle for peace.

On May Day centenary the working class and trade unions must announce their decision to break with the tradition of confining their activities to partial demands and express their role in meeting the problems facing our country and our people.

By concentrating only on immediate issues the working class and the trade union movement have converted themselves into a narrow force isolated from the large mass of people especially in peasantry and the agricultural workers.

Today every section of Indian people is under attack from the Union Government. The economic policy of the Rajiv Government with its concessions to the demands of World Bank and IMF constitutes a danger to our economic independence.

The Non Aligned foreign policy is also under attack from the USA and other sources. Waverings and vacillations are being already witnessed which may lead to dangerous anti-national compromises.

Simultaneously the working class is being directly attacked. Hundreds of big factories are closed. Thousand of small factories have been rendered sick. Majority of them are declared unviable, that is, they cannot be reopened again.

The number of registered unemployed in the cities has reached the figure of 3 crores. The government with its declared policy of computerisation and automation wants to add a few more millions to the ranks of the jobless.

To implement its policy the Rajiv Government takes several anti-labour measures, restrict the right and freedom of the trade union movement. The Supreme Court judgement in relation to section 311 (2) of the Constitution strengthens its hands to claim arbitrary powers for the dismissal of its employees. The Government takes steps to attack collective bargaining and illegalise strikes.

On May Day the working class must unitedly voice its protest against the economic policy of the government and protest against the freedom given to multinationals to penetrate our economy.

It must demand halt to attack on trade union rights and condemn official policy of computerisation. Calling for immediate opening of all closed factories and concerns, it must demand immediate unemployment relief and further demand that the right to work should be embodied in the Constitution as a fundamental right. It must call for imme-

diated and total nationalisation of the cotton textile, jute and sugar industries.

All sections of Indian people are getting crushed under the burden of high prices and high taxation. The agricultural worker is denied employment and gets only bonded labour's wage. The number of unemployed in rural areas exceeds four crores. The peasant is denied remunerative price for his produce. The landlords continue to furture the Harijans and Adivasis and murder them with impunity.

On May Day Centenary the trade union movement must break with its traditional outlook of ignoring the peasantry and come out in defence of the rural masses.

The working class must announce its preparedness and determination to champion the people, the peasantry, against oppression, high taxation and high prices. It must demand overhauling of agrarian relations, break up of land concentration and distribution of land to tillers. The working class must realise that without getting a firm support of the peasantry, without a firm alliance with it, its striving for advanced democratic rights and socialism cannot be realised.

On May Day the working class must proclaim its determination to fight the forces of authoritarianism and defend and expand the democratic rights of the people.

It must declare its resolve to fight imperialist conspiracies which are undermining the unity of our country; the secessionist and divisive elements which are unleashing forces of disintegration and communal and obscurantist agencies which are disrupting the unity of the toilers.

On May day the working class must decide to lend its full support to the left forces in the country engaged in fighting authoritarianism and the forces of disunity and division. It must decide to frustrate all conspiracies of the Central Govt. against the Left Front Govt's of West Bengal and Tripura.

The great damage to national and class unity inflicted by these forces can be gauged from the happenings in Punjab and Assam. The CITU congratulates the working class of these two states and the working class of Tamil Nadu for their courageous fight against divisive and regional chauvinist forces.

On May Day the working class must express its determination to protect national unity, to defeat imperialist machinations against our peoples and fight all measures which compromise our economic independence and our foreign policy of non-alignment.

In view of the constant pressure on our foreign policy and the vacillations already evident, the working class must keep a vigilant watch on the conduct of our foreign policy.

On May Day centenary the CITU calls upon the entire working class to build trade union unity, an invincible unity, which will not only put up a successful defence for the immediate interests of the working class but will also keep sight of the objective of socialism, capture of political power and is able to discharge the immediate responsibilities facing the movement on the national plane.

The National Campaign Committee which represents the existing level of trade union unity, deals only immediate issues leaving out the problems facing the country, the people and the international movement. It is not able to speak with one voice on questions of war and peace, on imperialist conspiracies against the people, on defence of national unity, exposure of divisive and communal forces, and defence of peasantry and rural masses. Unless these limitations are removed trade union unity will neither be able to defend the interests of the working class nor will it be a force expressing the aspiration of the toiling people of India.

The CITU calls upon all the unions, other sister organisations and federations to broaden and deepen the scope of trade union unity so that it can really be a weapon of revolutionary change.

The CITU warmly welcomes the initiative taken by INTUC to develop common trade union action on the question of opposition to war, opposition to divisive forces and opposition to apartheid. The united trade union movement must turn in this direction and throw its full weight against war, against national oppression and against the divisive forces in our country.

The United trade union movement must take steps to unleash a massive campaign for peace among the workers so that the voice of the working class is linked with the great movement for world peace in other countries.

The task is comparatively easy in our country because the ruling party and the government led by it follow policy of non-alignment and peace and oppose all war moves. Given the initiative and leadership of the united trade union movement, the peace movement in our country can become an all embracing movement involving all sections of our people. On the centenary of May Day the CITU and the working class raise the banner of proletarian internationalism, the banner of solidarity of the international working class in the fight against war and for end of national oppression, for peace, democracy and socialism.

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gent of the world working class, to take firm and active stand against the developing war danger.

The appeal says, "General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, M.S. Gorbachov made a statement advancing a programme of complete and world wide elimination of nuclear arms before the year 2000 and laying down other major peace actions... Mankind is offered a clear, coherent and thoroughly thought out programme of concrete action whose realisation would allow the 20th century to be completed by marking it with peace and disarmament."

The appeal says "on behalf of 137 million Soviet Trade Union members, the AUCCTU appeals to the working people of all countries, to all trade union organisations, to give their all round support to the Soviet Union's large scale programme for the complete elimination of nuclear arms throughout the world before the end of this century".

It calls "on the working people and trade unions of the world to press for the other powers, primarily, the USA joining in prolonged Soviet unilateral moratorium on any nuclear explosions; to fight for banning completely the developing and production of new types of weapons of mass annihilation including space strike system; to demand a complete destruction of chemical weapons; to help in every possible way to ensure that the process started by the Soviet-US summit in Geneva will result in the realisation of the principled accords arrived at during that meeting, and in concrete agreements to be adopted on the issue of halting the arms race and promoting mutual trust".

The appeal adds, "It is only through concerted efforts that the edifice of lasting peace can be erected. Further development depends to a considerable extent on how much united the battle front will be in fighting against the danger of war... Any delay is intolerable. In order to enter the third millennium without the weapons of mass annihilation it is necessary to act today."

This is a concrete programme for fighting the danger of nuclear war, for frustrating the imperialist plans and for welding together the international working class into a single united army for defending peace. The May Day centenary in our country must fully respond to this appeal, popularise the Soviet proposals for peace and rouse our entire working class to discharge its international obligations. This is one of the most important issues facing the working class all over the world and the May Day Centenary should not find India's working class lagging behind in the struggle for world peace.

28.2.86

Hundred Years of Achievements of the Working Class

Nrisingha Chakrabarty

THE struggle of the Chicago workers in May 1886 for establishing an eight hour work day, the establishment of which would have meant subordinating the political economy of the capital to the political economy of the labour, had opened a new chapter in the forward march of the revolutionary working class. The death defying courage of Parsons, Spies, Fischer and Engel the leaders who after being framed with the evidence of a witness found to have been bribed, mounted the steps of the gallows with revolutionary convictions has no parallel. Their stifled voice found an echo in Germany. The working class of many countries in Europe had by that time organised their own parties, i.e. Social Democratic Parties. The Social Democratic Party of Germany issued an appeal from its Congress held in October, 87 for holding an International Congress of Workers obviously with the idea of internationalising the incident and observing May Day through out the world.

Second International

Friedrich Engels, the indefatigable colleague of Karl Marx, took pains for the success of the Congress which was held in Paris on July 14, 1889. Under his guidance the Congress adopted a programme for economic demands like eight hour work-day, establishment of a mandatory weekly rest with pay, prohibition of child labour etc., while at the same time it gave a clarion call for the working class to organise as a class on international scale in order to win political power for bringing an end to the wage slavery. This Congress internationalised the sacrifice of the Chicago workers and called upon the workers of the world to observe May 1 in 1890 on a global scale for voicing the demand of eight hour work day as well as other demands as finalised by this congress. It also gave a call for peace by disbanding the existing army and arming the people.

Manifestation of Revolutionary Consciousness

The holding of the Congress and its revolutionary call for immediate demands with class relevance, for organising the working class as a class to seize power etc. was the manifestation of revolutionary consciousness of the working class on a world scale. Such consciousness led the Second International to give a call for peace between the nations from the next congress held in Brussels in 1891 and thus hold high the banner of proletarian internationalism.

Thus with the path so charted, the working class had marched from victory to victory. But all the way was not a bed of roses. The working class had to traverse the path, a tortuous path full of ups and downs, with revolutionary upsurge and counter

revolution, with success and suppressions, through tremendous sacrifices.

It should be understood that establishment of trade unions in all countries was important. Freidrich Engels had said that "without the means of resistance provided by the trade unions, the worker could not have obtained ever what was due to him under the laws of the system of wage labour." This we witness even today.

But by the time the Chicago Hay Market mobilisation of the working class was suppressed on the May Day of 1886, the working class had formed their political parties which continued to raise the level of consciousness of the working class. The internationalisation of the May Day brought these parties together which advanced the cause of proletarian internationalism still further.

The Paris Congress of the International held in 1900 condemned the colonial policy of the bourgeoisie and decided "to establish ties among the socialist parties of different colonies."

Intensification of Struggles

Armed with the revolutionary line, the workers of Czarist Russia, started to move ahead. A strike in Putilov armoury in January 1905 later on developed to a political general strike in Moscow on December 7 and armed struggle from December 9 with barricades in the streets. Though this could be suppressed for the time being, this became a dress rehearsal for the successful proletarian revolution later on. During this period workers of other countries lent support.

Collapse of Socialist International

With the outbreak of the First World War, the working class was put to a serious test in upholding the proletarian internationalist line. Though there were substantial sections of workers who followed this line many leaders of the working class movement in different countries had betrayed this line and took up a reformist — revisionist line. With the start of First Balkan War, the difference came into open. This was imperialist war which was aimed at redivision of the colonies generally accompanied with bourgeois propaganda of national chauvinism. Those who succumbed to such propaganda were led astray. But who upheld the proletarian internationalist line however, succeeded in conducting revolution in their country and achieve socialism.

When it was very clear that the bourgeoisie was preparing for a war rousing the working class and

the people on slogans of loyalty to the country, defend the motherland etc., the International Socialist Bureau in its meeting held on July 29 and 30, 1914 pleaded its inability to do anything against this. Lenin wrote "The alliance with the bourgeoisie used to be ideological and secret. It is not public and unseemly." (Col. works. 21, p. 443). William Foster also wrote in his book, Outline History of World Trade Union Movement that by 1913 it was also established that the leaders of AFL in USA received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the National Association of manufacturers and the Republic Party. (p. 208).

Efforts in Zimmerwald Conference (Sept, 5-8, 1915) and Berne Conference (April 24-30, 1916) to receive the spirit of the Socialist International failed and the International virtually collapsed.

Revolution in Russia Against CZAR

From the time of Russo-Japanese war in 1904 a difference had arisen in the working class movement in Russia. The majority who under the leadership of Com. Lenin had been consistently upholding the revolutionary line, were known as Bolsheviks.

Despite the differences in the leadership, the working class has been going ahead with the struggles. On March 8, 1917, a strike started from Putilov works, spread throughout the capital. A company of the Pavlovsky Regiment joined the revolutionaries on March 11 and the Czar Nicholas II abdicated on March 15 the revolution succeeded.

With the successful revolution at the Centre it spread like wild fire and by March 17 it succeeded even in Tashkent and Vladivostok. With it sprang up 513 Soviets of workers and soldiers' Deputies. There was conflict in powers, because Duma was led by revisionist Mensheviks whereas the majority of the Soviets were held by Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin, who pursued the revolutionary line based on proletarian internationalism.

Socialist Revolution in Russia

This also led to upsurge and armed struggles in Germany and Austro-Hungary. Struggles were intensified in many countries. The question of peace came to the fore front. In Germany, long drawn struggles forced a change in the authorities and publication of a resolution on Peace. In Austria, the Parliament gave some concessions to the workers. In Hungary the Premier resigned and a coalition was formed. In France, Britain, Italy, Romania, USA etc. the struggle got intensified. May Day rallies held in many countries expressed solidarity with the Soviet revolution. In France the 'Republican Association of War Victims' led by Henri Barbusse, advanced the slogan 'War on War'.

After the February revolution in Russia, the

Kerensky govt. started repression on the Bolshevik Deputies who refused to surrender arms and demanded all power to the Soviets. Lenin had to go underground and conduct yet another revolution. On November 7, the Provisional Govt. of Petrograd was deposed. The uprising in Moscow was started on November 10 and on November 16, the revolutionary forces entered Kremlin breaking down the enemy resistance.

The first act of the Socialist Govt. was to secure peace. Despite annexionist demands of Germany and the Bourgeois Govt. of Finland declaring independence, the Soviet Govt. of Russia had signed an armistice at Brest Litovsk on December 15, 1917 which was formalised in March 18. Thus the first Socialist country was born directly out of correct application of the revolutionary line based on proletarian internationalism. Its firm adherence to the principle of peace between nations has not only demonstrated by the Brest-Litovsk agreement but also on the "Decree of Peace" which was issued after the November Revolution by Lenin. This led to revolt and upsurge by the soldiers in Bulgaria and the navy sailors in Germany. These were however short lived and ruthlessly suppressed.

International Solidarity in Support of Russia

The imperialist countries first physically blocked the main ports of Soviet Russia and encircled the State both militarily and economically. Later on when Kolchak and Dennikin started a counter revolution within the country, they despatched soldiers to various parts of Russia and gave the counter revolutionaries material help, including military help.

This was the period when once again the revolutionary proletarian line based on internationalism was put to test. It was seen that the Social Democrats who were leading the Socialist International known as Second International, met at Berne on February 3, 1919, but refused to support the Soviet Russia or give a call for seizure of power by proletariat when favourable upsurges were taking place. All revolutionaries boycotted this and then established a Communist International. Those who met at Berne had already decided to revive International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU).

The revolutionaries of different countries organised solidarity support to the Socialist Soviet Russia. Workers refused to send arms to Russia, sailors refused to sail warships. There were political general strikes. It was under pressure of this powerful movement that forced the imperialist powers to lift the blockade and armed intervention. This triumph was the direct achievement of the line of international solidarity of the working class in changing the order of the society. It was only those who followed this line truthfully have succeeded in overthrowing the power of the capitalist exploiters.

Advancing the Struggle in the Colonies

The successful revolution in Russia and its defence both against internal counter revolution or the blockade and attacks by the imperialist powers had not only created a favourable situation in Europe but also in the colonies ruled by those countries. Trade Unions and Communist Parties were formed and the struggles were advanced in India, China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Cuba, Argentina, and other countries. Soviet Russia in turn helped the revolutionary movements elsewhere and forces of peace, progress and socialism were strengthened.

In China it started from 1927 after successful resistance to Japanese aggressive war in 1924 and had continued upto 1949 when the revolution became victorious. But before that it had to overcome and trounce the fascism which rose on an international scale.

Rise and Defeat of Fascism

The failure of the bourgeoisie of Germany, Italy, etc to secure favourable terms during Versailles Treaty after the First World War and the growing strength of revolutionary forces at home had given rise to fascism in these countries. They formed parties on the slogan of national socialism but attacked the socialists who were following a revolutionary internationalist line. British and other imperialist powers had been aiding and egging them on to attack Soviet Russia. But the war broke out when Germany attacked Poland in September 1939. The revolutionary proletariat of Russia and mighty Red Army finally vanquished the fascist forces under the leadership of Joseph Stalin. It was under his leadership that the Soviet Russia could build up itself into such a powerful country. Again it was his leadership that provided the military gain over the fascist forces.

The revolutionary internationalist line of the proletariat taught the working class how to forge a formidable unity—unity with hated forces like those of imperialism albeit for a short duration—to isolate the rabid fascist forces. The imperialists delayed opening of Second Front when German fascist forces were making rapid advance within Russia. But that did not deter the Red Army, the proletariat, the working people and particularly the women of Soviet Russia to advance the cause. Churchill in a message in February 1945 said "Future generation will acknowledge their debts to the Red Army".

Harry Trueman, the U.S. President had to appreciate "The magnificent contribution made by the mighty Soviet Union to the cause of civilisation and liberty". Charles De Gaulle said that the French people "Know that it was Soviet Russia who played the main role in their liberation". This was one of the biggest achievements of the revolutionary proletarian internationalist line which promotes peace,

defeats fascism, defends socialism and liberates people groaning under foreign rule.

Other Countries Overthrow Capitalist Systems

Such a magnificent victory over the fascist forces who claimed themselves invincible naturally influenced the working class. Being inspired by this victory and with the help of the Red Army, the working class of Romania overthrew the Dictator Antonescu's regime on August 3, 1944. On September 9, 1944, the patriotic Front in Bulgaria led a popular revolt and established a new Govt. It happened in Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. Half of Germany was also free. States based on Socialism came into existence in these countries.

Defeat of the Japanese fascists in the Far East led to a massive liberation movement in Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, Korea, Vietnam and Indo-China. Japanese were driven out from all these countries and it was impossible for the old imperialist rulers, Dutch, British and French, to re-establish their enslavement.

In India, the navy rose in revolt and the working class gave them solidarity support much against the wishes of the bourgeois leaders who were hammering out a compromise with British rulers.

The help of the Red Army to the Chinese people to drive out the aggressors was acknowledged by Mao-ze-Dong who wrote "This has never happened in the history of China before. The influence of this event is invaluable". It actually led to the success of revolution in 1949. Acknowledging the great victory, Kim-II-Sung said "the defeat of imperialist Japan by the Soviet army ensured the liberation of our country from prolonged colonial domination".

It was thus proved to the world that the revolutionary line of proletarian internationalism helps the working people to seize power from the capitalist exploiters and establish a form of govt which banishes the exploitation of man by man. It also showed that this line was not a line of annexation of other countries for their rule or keeping it as their market, as the cowardly invasion of Grenada by the U.S. imperialists has shown.

It also showed that this line was advancing peace and not war. Basing on this line, Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, etc have become free. Today more than one third of the world is now socialist and the socialist system has become a world system inspiring and attracting others.

The Lessons of History

Lessons of the past hundred years show that the working class, wherever it had pursued this revolutionary line of proletarian internationalism which was laid down in the First International and reiterated once again the Second International in

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World Conquering March of the Proletariat

Kedarnath Bhattacharjee

ONCE May Day was a day of Spring festival. Festive mood used to pervade the countryside of Europe with the appearance of greenery and hawthorn all around. This is a time when snows begin to melt after the terrible cold spell of the winter and flowers and new leaves cover the trees. With the advent of Spring the whole of Europe used to be in a festive mood. On this day May-Poles were erected and decorated with May flowers and a girl was selected as May-Queen, while others used to sing and dance. This was the festival of May Day.

After the unforgettable events of 1886 in America, May Day assumed a new meaning, a new significance. Today May Day is the world-wide festival of the working class holding processions and demonstrations expressing their indomitable will to bring about a society without exploitation. Now-a-days May Day is nothing but a Labour Day. In terms of season, May First is Spring in some places of this earth and unbearable Summer elsewhere. But to the working people of the world, May Day brings the mood of Spring invariably. That is why in a leaflet entitled "Long Live the First of May" in 1912, Stalin wrote:

"As far back as last century, the workers of all countries resolved to celebrate annually this day, the First of May. That was in 1889, when, at the Paris Congress of the Socialists of all countries, the workers resolved to proclaim, precisely on this day, the First of May, when nature is awakening from her winter sleep, when the woods and hills are donning their green mantles and the fields and meadows are adorning themselves with flowers, when the sun shines more warmly, the joy of revival fills the air and nature gives herself up to dancing and rejoicing—they resolved to proclaim loudly and openly to the whole world, precisely on this day, that the workers are bringing spring to mankind and deliverance from the shackles of capitalism, that it is the mission of the workers to renovate the world on the basis of freedom and socialism.

Every class has its own favourite festivals. The nobility introduced their festivals, and on them they proclaim their "right" to rob the peasants. The bourgeoisie have their festivals and on them they "justify" their "right" to exploit the workers. The clergy, too, have their festivals, and on them they eulogize the existing system under which the toilers die in poverty while the idlers wallow in luxury.

The workers, too, must have their festival, and on it they must proclaim: universal labour, universal freedom, universal equality of all men. That festival is the festival of the First of May.

"That is what the workers resolved as far back as 1889.

"Since then the battle cry of workers' socialism has rung out louder and louder at meetings and demonstrations on the First of May. The ocean of labour movement is expanding more and more, spreading to new countries and states, from Europe and America to Asia, Africa and Australia. In the course of only a few decades the formerly weak international workers' association has grown into a mighty international brotherhood, which holds regular congresses and unites millions of workers in all parts of the world. The sea of proletarian wrath is rising in towering waves, and is more and more menacingly advancing against the tottering citadels of capitalism. The great coal miners' strike which recently flared up in Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, America, etc. a strike which struck fear into the hearts of the exploiters and rulers all over the world, is a clear sign that the socialist revolution is not far off.

"We do not worship the golden calf!" We do not want the kingdom of the bourgeoisie and the oppressors! Damnation and death to capitalism and its horrors of poverty and bloodshed! Long live the kingdom of labour, long live socialism!

"That is what the class-conscious workers of all countries proclaim on this day. And confident of victory, calm and strong, they are marching proudly along the road to the promised land, towards glorious socialism, step by step carrying out Karl Marx's great call: "Workers of all Countries, Unite!"

May Day brings indomitable self-confidence in the mind of the working class and rouses boundless terror in the minds of the exploiters. That was why there was no dearth of efforts to erase the legacy and significance of May Day. Those very efforts were intensified in subsequent periods in America itself.

The aspiration expressed in the resolution adopted at the founding convention of the National Labour Union on August 20, 1866, "to free labour from capitalist slavery", was restated in the resolution presented to the striking workers by the Leaders of the American Federation of Labour in the first May Day demonstration in Union Square, New York, on May 1, 1890: "While struggling for the 8-hour day we will not lose sight of the ultimate aim—the abolition of the (capitalist) wage system".

"In the United States May Day was not abandoned when war was declared in 1917. The proletarian elements in the Socialist Party took seriously the anti-war resolution of the Party adopted at the Emergency St. Louis Convention early in April and utilized May Day to protest against the imperialist war. The demonstration in Cleveland held on May First, 1919, and organised by Charles E. Ruthenberg, the local secretary of the S.P. and

later one of the founders and general secretary of the Communist Party, was particularly militant. Over 20,000 workers paraded the streets to Public Square and were augmented there by many thousands more. The police brutally attacked the meeting, killing one worker and fatally wounding another." (2)

Eugene V. Debs wrote in the May Day edition of the weekly Worker in 1907, "This is the first and only International Labour Day. It belongs to the working class and is dedicated to the revolution."

In the May Day edition of the same paper, Charles E. Ruthenberg wrote in 1923: "May Day—the day which inspires fear in the hearts of the capitalists and hope in the workers—the workers the world over—will find the Communist movement this year stronger in the US than at any time in its history.... The road is clear for greater achievements, and in the United States as elsewhere in the world the future belongs to communism."

It was, therefore, natural for the exploiting rulers to do everything to erase the very spirit of May Day from the minds of the toiling people. That is why the Hoover administration in the USA took a unique method in that direction by proclaiming May 1 as Child Health Day. The leaders of the A.F. of L., who had meanwhile already forsaken their ultimate aim of abolishing capitalism, became an instrument in the hands of the ruling class. This is evident from the following reference to the subject in a report submitted by the Executive Council to the 1928 Convention of the A.F. of L.:" The Communists still maintain May 1 as Labour Day. Hereafter May 1 will be known as Child Health Day, as the President is directed by the resolution passed by Congress to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe May 1 as Child Health Day. The object is to create sentiment for year-round protection of the health of children.

It is a most worthy purpose. *At the same time May 1 no longer will be known as either strike day or Communist Day.* (Emphasis added) (3) Such was the conspiracy to which the A.F. of L. leaders became a party! But in spite of all this, May Day remains not only in its own glory, but also in the hearts of ever-increasing number of toiling millions all over the world. May Day is no more confined within the boundary of the United States, it has now spread in almost every corner of the earth. The manner in which it spread all over the world is full of variety and peculiarities. A few historical instances may here be cited to have an idea of its impact.

Great Britain

The first observance of international May Day started from May 1, 1890. But the first May Day rally of Great Britain was, however held on May 4, 1890, in Hyde Park with the participation of hundreds of thousands of working people. This

rally was organised under the initiative of Eleanor Marx, the daughter of Karl Marx, and her husband, Edward Aveling. The unskilled workers' unions formed under the initiative and leadership of Tom Mann, London Trades Council and the "Old" Unionists too participated. In this connection, Engels wrote:

"The May Day celebration of the proletariat was epoch-making not only in its universal character, which made it the first international *action* of militant working class. It also served to register most gratifying advances in the various countries. Friend and foe agree that *on the whole continent it was Austria, and in Austria it was Vienna, that celebrated the holiday of the proletariat in the most brilliant and dignified manner, and that the Austrian, above all the Viennese, workers thereby won themselves an entirely-different standing in the movement.* Only a few years ago the Austrian movement had declined almost to zero, and the workers of the German and Slav crown territories were split into hostile parties wasting their forces on internecine strife. Whoever had affirmed, a mere three years ago, that on May 1, 1890, Vienna and the whole of Austria would set an example for all others of how a proletarian class holiday should be celebrated, would have been laughed at. We shall do well not to forget this fact when judging those squabbles stemming from internal discord in which the workers of other countries are wearing away their forces even today, as for instance, in France. Who will assert that Paris cannot do what Vienna has done?"

"But on May 4 Vienna was thrown into the shade by London. And I hold it to be the most important and magnificent in the entire May Day celebration that on May 4, 1890, the English proletariat, rousing itself from forty years of slumber, re-joined the movement of its class.

"What the numerous onlooking bourgeois politicians took home with them as overall effect was the certainty that the English proletariat, which for fully forty years had trailed behind the big Liberal Party and served it as voting cattle, had awakened at last to new, independent life and action. There can be no doubt about that: On May 4, 1890, the English working class joined the great international army. And that is an epoch-making fact. The English proletariat has its roots in most advanced industrial development and moreover, possesses the greatest freedom of political movement. Its long slumber—a result, on the one hand, of the failure of the Chartist movement of 1836-50 and on the other hand, of the colossal industrial upswing of 1848-80—is finally broken. The grandchildren of the old Chartists are stopping into the line of battle. For eight years already the wide masses have been stirring now here, now there. Socialist groups have emerged, but none has been able to outgrow the bounds of a sect; agitators and alleged party leaders, including mere speculators and pushers, they have remained officers without soldiers...The powerful movement of the masses will put an end to all these

sects and little groups by absorbing the men and showing the officers their proper places. Those who don't like it may sneak away. It won't come off without friction, but come off it will..."(4)

China

May Day was first observed in China in the year 1924 under the leadership of Dr. Sun Yat Sen But it was, however, banned in the regime of Chiang Kai Shek. With the advent of the People's Republic of China, May Day has become a day of annual festival of the people.

Germany

From the very first year of international May Day, this day has been observed in Germany. During the period of the rise of fascism under the leadership of Hitler, the May Day demonstrations and rallies began to face dastardly armed attacks. But every time the German working class showed its indomitable will to repel all these attacks in defence of May Day.

At last on January 30, 1933, Hitler was made the Chancellor by President Hindenberg. In the next month, i.e. on February 27, the fascists, the worst enemies of mankind, started their criminal activities by putting fire to the Reichstag, the parliament of Germany of those days. In order to weed out the working class organisations and their leadership, the brutal fascist efforts were further intensified. Thousands of leading workers were sent to concentration camps and were subjected to inhuman physical torture. But in spite of all that, the working class movement could not be wiped out.

The hypocrisy and trickery practised by the unscrupulous fascist leaders in order to crush the organised working class movement has been graphically described by William L. Shirer in his book, the Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, thus:

"The free trade unions, which, as we have seen, once had crushed the fascist Kapp putsch by the simple means of declaring a general strike, were disposed of as easily as the political parties and the states — though not until an elaborate piece of trickery had been practised on them. For half a century May Day had been the traditional day of celebration for the German and European worker. To lull the workers and their leaders before it struck, the Nazi Government proclaimed May Day, 1933, as a national holiday, officially named it the 'Day of National Labour' and prepared to celebrate it as it had never been celebrated before. The trade union leaders were taken in by this surprising display of friendliness toward the working class by the Nazis and enthusiastically cooperated with the government and the party in making the day a success. Labour leaders were flown to Berlin from all parts of Germany, thousands of banners were unfurled acclaiming the Nazi regime's solidarity with the worker, and out at

Tempelhof Field Goebbels prepared to stage the greatest mass demonstration Germany had ever seen. Before the massive rally, Hitler himself received the workers' delegates, declaring, 'you will see how untrue and unjust is the statement that the revolution is directed against the German workers. On the contrary.' Later in his speech to more than 100,000 workers at the airfield Hitler pronounced the motto, 'Honour work and respect the worker!' and promised that May Day would be celebrated in honour of German Labour 'throughout the centuries'.

Late that night Goebbels, after describing in his most purple prose the tremendous enthusiasm of the workers for this May Day celebration which he had so brilliantly staged, added a curious sentence in his diary: 'Tomorrow we shall occupy the trade union buildings. There will be little resistance.'

That is what happened. On May 2 the trade-union headquarters throughout the country were occupied, union funds confiscated, the unions dissolved and the leaders arrested. Many were beaten and lodged in concentration camps (5). Mr. Shirer pointed out further:

"A document which came to light at Nuremberg shows that the Nazis had been planning for some time to destroy the trade unions. A secret order dated April 21 and signed by Dr. Ley contained detailed instructions for 'co-ordinating' the unions on May 2. S.A. and S.S. troops were to carry out the 'occupation of trade union properties' and to 'take into protective custody' all union leaders. Union funds were to be seized, The Christian (Catholic) Trade Unions were not molested on May 2. Their end came on June 24."

That was how May Day was celebrated by the fascists in 1933. It may also be mentioned here that a few days later, i.e., on May 10, 1933, the fascist gangsters called 'Black Shirts' burned about 25,000 books which were the valuable collections of the University over a long period, in front of the Berlin University itself under the leadership of Hitler's publicity man, Goebbels, who greeted the action as a patriotic job.

In spite of all these terror tactics, the working class movement could not be crushed in Germany by the fascist beasts. In subsequent years May Day continued to be observed regularly, although secretly, and May Day Manifestos and leaflets were distributed all over the country by adopting various novel means and unthinkable methods without being detected by the fascist intelligence.

Finally, on May 1, 1945, the victorious Soviet Red Army entered Berlin and dug the grave of fascism. On April 29, 1945, General Weilding told the Fuehrer that the enemy would reach the Chancellery by May 1 at latest — in a day or two, that is. Mr. Shirer described one event thus:

"General Krebs set out shortly after mid-night of April 30 — May 1 to see General Chuikov, the Soviet commander of the troops fighting in Berlin. One of the German Officers accompanying him has required the opening of their conversation.

The Russian General demanded the unconditional surrender of everyone in the Fuehrer's bunker as well as of the remaining troops in Berlin."

The May Day celebration of that year was indeed a great festival of working class victory over fascism.

Russia

Under the leadership of Lenin, May Day became a powerful instrument for revolutionary upsurge of the working class. May Day strikes, rallies, demonstrations, leaflets and manifestos everything was applied by Lenin with profound skill in order to develop revolutionary consciousness and organisation.

In 1896, while he was in prison, Lenin wrote a May Day leaflet for the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class, one of the first political groups in Russia. The leaflet was smuggled out of prison and 2,000 copies were distributed among workers in 40 factories. This was how Lenin, from the very early period of his revolutionary activities, tried to acquaint the Russian workers with the implications of May Day as a day of demonstration and struggle. "When a month later the famous textile strikes of 1896 broke out, workers were telling us that the first impetus was given by the little modest May Day leaflet", wrote a contemporary who helped to issue it.

Under the leadership of Lenin, May Day used to be observed with sufficient preparation which at times started even six months earlier. In early November of 1900, Lenin wrote in the preface to pamphlet, May Days in Kharkov, thus: "In another six months, the Russian workers will celebrate the First of May of the first year of the new century, and it is time we set to work organising the celebrations in as large a number of centres as possible, and on a scale as imposing as possible. They must be imposing, not only in the number of participants, but in the organised character and the class-consciousness the participants will display, in their determination to launch a resolute struggle for the political liberation of the Russian people and, consequently, for a free opportunity for the class development of the proletariat and its open struggle for socialism. It is time to prepare for the forthcoming May Day celebrations, and one of the most important preparation measures must consist in learning what the Social-Democratic movement in Russia has already achieved, in examining the shortcomings of our movement in general and of the May Day movement in particular, in devising means to eliminate these shortcomings and achieve better results."

"The demand for an eight-hour day, however, is the demand of the whole proletariat, presented, not to individual employers, but to the state authorities as the representative of the entire present-day social and political system, to the capitalist class as a whole, the owners of all the means of production. The demand for an eight-hour day has assumed special significance. It is a declaration of solidarity with the international socialist movement. We need to make the workers understand this difference, so that they do not reduce the demand for the eight-hour day to the level of demands like free railway tickets, or the dismissal of a watchman. Throughout the year the workers, first in one place and then in another, continuously present a variety of partial demands to their employers and fight for their achievement. In assisting the workers in this struggle, socialists must always explain its connection with the proletarian struggle for emancipation in all countries. And the First of May must be the day on which the workers solemnly declare that they realise this connection and resolutely join in the struggle."(6)

In the very initial writings of Stalin in 1901, we find the indications of the victorious march of May Day:

"The First of May celebrations in Russia laid the road to the political struggle and to political demonstrations. And to the only weapon they possessed in their struggle in the past — the strike — the Russian workers added a new and powerful weapon — the political demonstration, which was tried for the first time during the great Kharkov May Day rally in 1900."

In the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party held in 1903, Lenin himself drafted the resolution on May Day.(8)

In April of 1904, Lenin, in his characteristically simple, directed and penetrating style, wrote the leaflet on May Day giving a clarion call to the toiling deprived millions:

"Comrade workers! May Day is coming, the day when the workers of all lands celebrate their awakening to a class-conscious life, their solidarity in the struggle against all coercion and oppression of man by man, the struggle to free the toiling millions from hunger, poverty, and humiliation. Two worlds stand facing each other in this great struggle: the world of capital and the world of labour, the world of exploitation and slavery and the world of brotherhood and freedom.

"On one side stand the handful of rich blood-suckers. They have seized the factories and mills, the tools and machinery, have turned millions of acres of land and mountains of money into their private property. They have made the government and the army their servants, faithful watchdogs of the wealth they have amassed.

"On the other side stand the millions of the disinherited. They are forced to beg the moneybags for permission to work for them. By their labour they create all wealth; yet all their lives long they have to struggle for a crust of bread, beg for work as for charity, sap their strength and health by back-breaking toil, and starve in hovels in the villages or in the cellars and garrets of the big cities.

"But now these disinherited toilers have declared war on the moneybags and exploiters. The workers of all lands are fighting to free labour from wage slavery, from poverty and want. They are fighting for a system of society where the wealth created by the common labour will go to benefit, not a handful of rich men, but all those who work. They want to make the land and the factories, mills, and machines the common property of all toilers. They want to do away with the division into rich and poor, want the fruits of labour to go to the labourers themselves, and all the achievements of the human mind, all improvements in ways of working, to improve the lot of man who works, and not serve as a means of oppressing him.

"The great struggle of labour against capital has cost the workers of all countries immense sacrifices. They have shed rivers of blood in behalf of their right to a better life and real freedom. Those who fight for the workers' cause are subjected by the governments to untold persecution. But in spite of all persecution the solidarity of the workers of the world is growing and gaining in strength. The workers are uniting more and more closely in socialist parties, the supporters of those parties are mounting into millions and are advancing steadily, step by step, towards complete victory over the class of capitalist exploiters." (9)

Explaining the fundamental principles and describing the objective situation of Russia, Lenin urged the Russian worker to play his worthy role in the days to come.

Then came the historic "Bloody Sunday" on 9th January of 1905 when the blood of thousands of workers was shed on the streets of St. Petersburg. The first Russian Revolution started thereafter. Lenin again wrote the leaflet "The First of May" of April, 1905. As usual, he reiterated the lofty ideals of the toiling people and then narrated the events of the day and urged the workers to rise in revolt:

"Workers of St. Petersburg, about two hundred strong, went to the Tsar on Sunday, the Ninth of January, with the priest Georgi Gapon in order to submit these demands of the people. The Tsar received the workers as enemies. He shot down thousands of unarmed workers in the streets of St. Petersburg. The struggle is now on all over Russia ... Let all the people arm, let a rifle be given to every worker, so that the people themselves, not a handful of plunderers, may decide their own destiny ... The St. Petersburg workers proclaimed

on the famed Ninth of January: Freedom or death Workers of all Russia, we will repeat that great battle-cry, we will not shrink from any sacrifices: through the uprising we will win freedom; through freedom, socialism" (10)

In 1912 the workers had to shed their blood again in the Lena Gold Mines. Protests and strikes began to spread all over the country. On April 4, 1913, the first anniversary of that bloodshed was observed through the widespread and militant demonstrations of workers. 250,000 workers of St. Petersburg joined the strike of May first. In his article 'May Day Action By the Revolutionary Proletariat', Lenin analysed the entire course of events and pointed out the inexorable force of Russian Revolution drawing the necessary lessons thereof:

"Oppression alone, no matter how great, does not always give rise to a revolutionary situation in a country. In most cases it is not enough for revolution that the lower classes should not want to live in the old way. It is also necessary that the upper classes should be unable to rule and govern in the old way. This is what we see in Russia today. A political crisis is maturing before our very eyes". (11)

This very political crisis and the organised might of the working class ultimately led to the Great November Revolution of 1917, which for the first time shook the very foundation of the world capitalist system. In that very year on May 1, Pravda published Stalin's article 'May Day', which declared with unshakable self confidence:

"The Russian revolution is the first to be forcing a breach in the wall that divides the workers from one another. The Russian workers, at this time of universal 'patriotic' frenzy, are the first to proclaim the forgotten slogan: 'Workers of all Countries, Unite.'" (12).

Lenin himself built up that organisation which could unite the workers of all countries. The Third Communist International did indeed spread the ideas of working class solidarity, class struggle and revolution. Every year that International used to give a call to the entire working class of the world and organised militant demonstrations and rallies of the working people in every corner of the earth. That is why May Day is so well-known, so dear to the toiling people all over the world and has become a part and parcel of the working class movement.

Vietnam

Soon after the formation of the Third Communist International, Ho Chi Minh, the first Communist of Vietnam, joined the Congress of the newly organised Communist Party of France and resolutely raised the question of liberation of all colonies including Vietnam and also the question of international solidarity. Subsequently, in 1930 was formed the Indochinese Communist Party which was later transformed into Vietnam Workers Party in 1951. The national liberation movement of

Vietnam under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh created an awe-inspiring consternation all over the world because the liberation of Vietnam became possible after about 45 years of bitter, devastating and direct military confrontations with the three major imperialist powers like France, Japan and the U.S.A. While such an all-pervading battle was continuing, Ho Chi Minh breathed his last on September 3, 1969. But the heroic people of Vietnam held his banner high and scored victory after victory which ultimately led to final liberation of Vietnam.

That May Day became very much dear to the people of Vietnam under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, was evident in the last stage of the liberation war. The National People's Liberation Army was moving very fast at that time in order to liberate Vietnam before May Day itself. At last on 30th April, 1975, the satellite government of South Vietnam surrendered unconditionally to the Liberation Army. The American war-mongers fled from Vietnam with all their satellite troops. The bloody battle of long 20 years came to an end with the fall of Saigon. Then Saigon assumed the new name of Ho Chi Minh City. Amidst this historic victory celebration, the next day, i.e., May 1, 1975, was observed as the first May Day of liberated Vietnam.

(Contd. from page 21)

which the May Day was internationalised, that it has been able to overthrow the yoke of wage-slavery of capitalism. Wherever it had departed and followed the line of compromise and collaboration it has only increased its own misery. Let us take for example what is happening in Great Britain. In a country in which the people of various races found a place to organise themselves — the Indian ratings of merchant navy had observed May Day in London Hyde Park in May 1925, is now occasionally torn by racial strifes, organised by reactionary forces.

A Sharp Contrast

The past 100 years, rather the past 70 years after the success of the November revolution in Russia in 1917 shows, how the socialist economy grows from strength to strength, how it ensures job for all, how it banishes unemployment, how it goes about providing humanity all what they need, how the life standard including education, health and old age security is looked after in the Socialist States, and above all how these countries desire and preserve peace between all nations.

A sharp contrast is seen in the capitalist world where economic crises are the order of the day. Even before the effects of one crisis is overcome another crisis sets in giving it almost a permanent character. How the unemployment is increasing every day reaching to a new height today after the 1928 crisis, how the services and social security is cut, how the workers are being forced to cut their

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wages in order to retain their jobs. The world today also notes how being unable to solve the problem at home, the imperialist countries, led by their gendarme the U.S. imperialists are building up giant industrial-military complex and starting a programme of Star War which is essentially a programme of militarisation of outer space with the option of first nuclear attack — all with the aim to destroy the socialist world and socialism.

Defend Socialism

This perfidious attempt of the U.S. War mongers should not be allowed to succeed. Their design is to destroy the socialist world which is the achievement of the past hundred years' struggle of the revolutionary working class, and establish global domination. This is bound to fail. For over 120 years, the call "workers of all lands Unite" has been inspiring the working class. The internationalisation of the May Day has brought the working class on a common platform for a hundred years. The call for peace between all nations is also as old as this common stand of the working class.

On this day while recapitulating the achievements of the past hundred years, the working class in all lands must realise that the Socialist system which has now developed as a world system has to be guarded and preserved. They must move hand in hand against the nuclear designs of the imperialist powers especially the US imperialists who have started a mad arms race even endangering outer space. The defence of the socialist world and socialist system, is a task which we can ignore only at our peril rather the peril of humanity and civilisation.

Unprecedented Record in Agricultural Development

Relentless efforts of the Left Front Government yield spectacular results

West Bengal's economy is primarily agro based. Keeping this in view the Left Front Government—since it came to power—has continuously been striving to implement programmes for improvement of agriculture as well as agriculturists and development of irrigation. Many and varied schemes like ensuring timely availability of agricultural inputs, agricultural price support schemes, improved marketing facilities, crop insurance, distribution of mini-kit, increased use of pesticide etc. have been drawn up to generate increased agricultural production and employment opportunities. Food grains production has surpassed all records. Emphasis has been laid on converting mono-crop areas into multi-crop ones. During the last eight years seeds of different crops worth about Rs. 210 crores have been imported from other states to meet the demands of local farmers. State Seed Corporation functions to make the state self-reliant in production & distribution of quality seeds. West Bengal is pioneer in introducing the farmers old age pension scheme in the country.

As irrigation is complementary to increased agricultural production the Left Front Government has also taken steps to improve the irrigation facilities. Apart from major irrigation projects a host of medium & minor irrigation schemes have been completed. Irrigation facilities are being extended to one lakh hectares of land every year. Various flood control and bank protection measures have paid dividends. With World Bank Aid a new technique of irrigation system is operative in hill areas.

Bold and dynamic steps to increase agricultural production and irrigation facilities by the Left Front Government has given the farmers a filip and a new dimension to look forward to.

Progress in Agriculture (in lakhs)		
	1976-77	1984-85
Rice	64 Tonne	79.23 Tonne (approx.)
Jute	34.70 bales	43 bales
Potato	16.57 Tonne	31 Tonne

Government of West Bengal

AJ/-2.7.85

May Day and Struggle for Eight Hours' Day in India

M.K. Pandhe

ON May Day this year the working class all over the world will be observing the centenary of the Martyrdom of the Chicago workers who heroically fought for their legitimate demand for introduction of 8 hour day and against exploitation by the capitalist class. The Second International in its 1889 meeting at Paris decided to organise celebrations of May Day as International Labour Day.

In India the message of May Day reached very late. It was observed on a national scale for the first time in 1927 by holding demonstrations and rallies in which along with other working class demands, the demand for 8 hour day was specially highlighted. This observation of the May Day was rightly described by Com. R.P. Dutt as "the Symbol of the opening of a new era of the Indian Labour movement as a conscious part of the International labour movement." (India Today P. 384).

The struggle for achievement of 8 hours day in India was a long and an arduous one. The hours of work were brought down step by step through hard struggles. Com. Sukomal Sen in his book "Working Class in India" reported that as early as in April-May, 1862, 1200 workers of Howrah Railway Station went on strike for some days demanding 8 hours day. However, in general the demand was made for reduction in hours of work because there was no limit on hours of work in early factories and establishments. Working for 14 to 16 hours a day was a normal phenomenon without any weekly off. Even there was no tiffin break permitted in those days when the workers had to take their meals while doing their work.

This excessive and cheap labour in India was adversely affecting the Lancashire millowners in U.K. who found it difficult to compete with textile mills in India. They therefore raised a hue and cry about the shocking conditions in Indian factories. Questions were also raised in British Parliament highlighting the limitless hours of work in Indian factories. The Factory Commission which studied the working conditions in 1884 went into this aspect of working hours. The Bombay Mill-hands Association led by Shri N.M. Lokhande in its memorandum to the factory commission demanded "That work in mills should commence at 6.30 a.m. and close at sunset." It also demanded "That half an hours recess be allowed to them at noon."

The first Factories Act passed in 1881 did not provide anything about limiting the hours of work. It only prohibited employment of children below 7 years of age, but no hours of work were limited for them also.

The factories Act of 1891 was made applicable only to factories employing 50 or more persons. It

raised the minimum age limit for the employment of children from 7 to 9. It however permitted employers to extract 9 hours of work per day from the child labour. The Act limited the hours of work for women workers to 11 per day and banned night shift work for them. This act did not specify limit on hours of work for the male workers, but allowed half an hour tiffin break every day. As a matter of fact, when electric lights came in factories in 1895 attempts were made to increase the hours of work and some strikes were organised against that.

Resistance Against Excessive Hours

Periodic demonstrations of workers against the shocking working conditions, spontaneous stoppage of work, destruction of machinery or beating the jobbers or mukadams were the early forms of resistance to the exploitation in the absence of any organised trade union movement. Several philanthropic persons took up the cause of the workers pressed the need for improvement in the matter.

As a result of these struggles the Factories Act had to be amended once again in 1911 limiting the hours of norm for male adults to 12 hours a day and for children 6 hours. These provisions were not implemented by several factories due to lack of proper inspection machinery and strong penalties for violation of the Act.

Several strike struggles have been reported immediately after the end of the First World War on the question of reduction of hours of work. The intensity and sweep of the strike was described by the official publication: Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour (No. 43) in the following words:

"Conditions particularly as regards longer working hours which had formerly been accepted as inevitable, were no longer regarded as tolerable; and while trade unions, as they are understood in the west, were still almost unknown, the value of concerted action was rapidly realised. Some strikes of importance occurred in the cold weather of 1918-19 and there was more widespread outbreak of industrial unrest in the following winter. Several of the bigger strikes at this period were directed towards securing a ten hour day and so much success was achieved that the embodiment in 1922 of the sixty hour week in the factories Act presented little more than the enforcement on the industry generally of a principle already accepted by the great majority of employers.

Phased Reduction in Working Hours

The factories Act 1911 was applicable to the textile industry only with regard to the hours of work. But the 1922 Act was made applicable to all

the industries indicating the movement for reduction of hours of work spread to other industries during the period. By amendment to the factories Act 1922 the coverage of the Act was extended to all factories using power and employing 20 or more persons. It reduced hours of work to 11 a day and 60 a week and provided payment for overtime work at the rate of $1\frac{1}{4}$ times the normal wage.

The feelings of the rising militant Working Class of India was reflected in the Action Programme drafted by the emigre Communist Party of India which was circulated to Gaya Congress in 1922. The programme declared inter alia "To secure an eight hour day, minimum wage and better housing for industrial workers". The bourgeois national leadership however did not support the demand for 8 hours working day since it was hitting out the interests of the Indian Bourgeoisie. However it found support among the workers increasingly.

The strike struggles for further reduction in hours of work continued even after attainment of 10 hour day. According to official statistics between 1921 and 1928 there were 64 strikes on the question of leave and reduction in hours of work. Of these strikes 32 were in Bengal, 24 in Bombay Presidency, 5 in Madras Presidency, 2 in Bihar and Orissa while one in U.P.

In the year 1928 when acute recession swept the entire capitalist world its impact was felt in India. The Bombay textile mill owners, with a view to pass on the burden of the recession on the shoulders of the workers planned to increase the hours of work. The strike Committee of Bombay textile workers in April, 1928 demanded that there should be "no increase in working hours" and forced the millowners to withdraw their step."

The demand for eight hours day had been gaining ground in the country and it was raised during several strike struggles. In memoranda submitted to the Royal Commission on Labour this was highlighted by several organisations and the Commission had to take cognisance of this demand. The majority of the Commission however did not agree to concede the demand on the following grounds:

"From the point of view of the industry, the employer is entitled to claim that until the worker is ready to approximate more nearly to western standards of discipline it is undesirable to attempt an 8 hour day, and even $8\frac{1}{2}$ hour day would involve an amount of dislocation that would be serious" (Report page 45).

However three members of the commission, Mr. Cliff, N.M. Joshi and Dewan Chaman Lall voiced the feelings of the Indian workers. The Report says, "They hold the view that the essential requirements of a worker working under Indian conditions, is first a shorter working day and second the provision of suitable rest periods during the working day. In their opinion the institution of an 8 hour

day in factories under present conditions is not only desirable but both practicable and necessary." (Report Page 46).

L.L.O. Convention on Hours of Work

As a result of the pressure from the international labour movement the 8 hour day concept had to be given due importance when the International Labour Organisation was formed in 1919. The first ILO convention relates to limiting the hours of work to eight in a day and forty eight in a week and it was made applicable from the year 1921. The then British Government ratified the Convention which permitted to allow more than 8 hours of work per day for India, The spirit of the Convention was not implemented. The minority members of the Royal Commission on Labour only wanted to ensure the full implementation of the ILO Convention. The Indian capitalists resolutely opposed introductions of 8 hours day and the British Government supported them since British Capital in India was also interested in continuing extra hours of work for the Indian workers.

The Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India which was translated into several Indian languages and widely distributed at the Karachi Congress in March 1931 noted the 5 point main tasks for "the present stage of Indian Revolution" which mentioned, "The adoption of an 8 hour working day and radical improvement of conditions of labour; increase in wages and state maintenance for the unemployed." The Platform was published in the December, 1930 issue of IMPRECOR. This highlights how the demand for 8 hours day was becoming extremely popular among the Indian workers in those days. This demand frequently found its place in the strike struggles in the early thirties.

As a result of the pressure of these struggles the Government of India was forced to further modify the Factories Act in the light of recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour in India. The hours of work were limited to 10 per day and fifty four per week in permanent factories only. Including weekly rest it worked out to be 9 hours of work daily. However for seasonal factories the hours of work continued to be eleven per day and sixty per week. The foreign Government did not even spare the women workers who were forced to work for 10 hours a day in seasonal factories.

However in several industries where three full shift working was introduced the workers could achieve 8 hours day through their struggles. This was further extended to some more factories during the Second World War when continuous full three shift working was introduced.

However, a formal amendment to the Factories Act was brought by the Government of India only in the year 1948 providing for a 48 hours week.

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First Observance of May Day in India

Sukomal Sen

AFTER three years of the May Day battle of the Chicago workers and their martyrdom for eight hours duty, it was the International Socialistic Congress of workingmen which opened in Paris on July 14, 1889 that urged for united proletarian action on an international scale for carrying forward the battle started by the working class of Chicago.

Engels wrote after witnessing the jubilation and response evoked by the resolution passed by the Congress calling for simultaneous celebration of May 1, 1890, in all countries: 'This was the best of what our congress achieved'.

But in countries like India which remained under colonial rule at that period the situation was altogether different. The process of development of capitalism over the ruins of feudalism as it was in the case of Europe was not to be found in India. Capitalism started generating in India only in the latter half of the last century. So also the Indian working class. The first Construction of the Railways in 1853, the consequent development of some ancilliary industries to sustain the Railways, development of the coal mines, tea plantation and the sprouting of the Jute Mills and textile Mills ushered in a halting and painful course of industrial development in India under British rule. And therefore, the independent action of the proletariat and their international consciousness as was evident in the working class struggles of the western countries could not be expected in India. Although working class resistance to capitalist exploitation started from the day of inception of capitalism in India, formation of modern trade unions took some more time and it started to come into being only in the second decade of the present century. Thus historical reasons much delayed the observance of May Day in India.

However, the Indian working class even at its nascent stage fought for shortening of working hours. The strike of 1200 labourers of Howrah Railway Station in April-May 1862 demanding 8 hours work a day was the first strike action of the Indian workers according to still available sources. This strike of the Railway workers within 9 years of the beginning of the industry for 8 hours work a day occurring in the middle of the last century is surely an event of sufficient historical importance.

Someprakash the Bengali weekly published from a suburb of Calcutta in its issue of 5 May 1862 carried the following news about the strike: 'Recently 1200 workers of Howrah Railway station have struck work. They say that the workers of Locomotive Department work 8 hours a day. But they have to work 10 hours. Work has been stopped for some days. The Railway Company should fulfil

the prayer of the workers, otherwise they won't get any man'.

This strike for eight hours' duty should not, however, be construed as an instance of highly organized and class conscious performance of the Indian working class. Coming as it did, in the absolute infancy of the Indian proletariat, it was associated with the inescapable shortcomings of that period, in respect of both organization and consciousness.

The eight hours' struggle in India was a prolonged and tortuous one. Early sympathisers of the labouring class with philanthropic ideas raised the issue of limiting working hours as back as between 1870 and 1880. The culmination of these attempts was the enactment of the first Factory Act 1891. This Act fixed 9 hours work for child labours between 9 and 14 years, 11 hours work for female labours, daily half-an-hour break for tiffin and one day's compulsory rest in a week. But this Act did not make any limitation of the working hours of the male labours. Moreover, as the Factory Labour Commission said, they could not conceive of any conditions which can ever call for state interference in the matter. Working hours of male labourers were recommended to be limited after long two decades when the Indian Factory Act of 1911 fixed the hours of the Cotton Mill workers to be 12 hours a day.

It would be utter reformist if the May Day observance is looked at from the angle of fixing duty hours only. The Socialist International Congress in 1889 asked the international working class to unitedly observe the day from a revolutionary standpoint. Later Lenin in 1895 raising the demand of May Day for fixing working hours to 8 hours a day highlighted the revolutionary significance of the day. To him May Day symbolised the political struggle for freedom which must be continuous. Further, to him, May Day signified the advance of the proletariat as a class which must culminate in the struggle for and final triumph of socialism. It would be interesting to note that when the first May Day was observed in India, the organisers of the celebration did not altogether forget this revolutionary message of May Day, on the contrary they urged the workers to win freedom and establish their own state-power.

The first May Day was observed in India in 1923 at Madras through the effort of M. Singaravelu Chettiar, one of the earliest believers in Marxism of this country. At that time no Communist Party had been formed in Indian soil. An emigre Communist Party of India was formed at Tashkent in 1920. In India only some Communist groups were

functioning in different parts of the country. Of course, All India Trade Union Congress was formed in 1920. But that Trade Union Congress did not take any official resolution for observance of May Day till 1927.

It all goes to the credit of revolutionary spirit of Singaravelu Chettiar that he first took the initiative of organising May Day rally on Indian soil. Singaravelu was in correspondence with M.N. Roy who was then in charge of the emigre Communist Party and was editing the journal 'Vanguard' from Berlin and was clandestinely sending copies of it to India. Singaravelu formed the Hindustan Labour Kisan Party in 1923 and held May Day meeting in Madras in the same year. He also published the 'Labour Kisan Gazette' a fortnightly in English and 'Thozhitalan' a weekly in Tamil. He was also arrested and was accused in the 'Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case' in 1924.

The Hindu published from Madras in its issue of 2 May 1923 covered the news of May Day celebration in Madras. According to this newspaper, two May Day meetings were held in Madras — one presided over by Singaravelu Chettiar at the Beach opposite to High Court and the other at Triplicane Beach Presided over by S. Krishnaswamy Sarma. The Hindu reported, 'there was an enthusiastic gathering of labourers'. The Hindu summed up Singaravelu's speech of the May Day meeting at Madras sea beach in the following words:

"M. Singaravelu Chettiar in explaining the significance of the day, said that the 1st of May was a sacred day for the workers all over the world. The labourers in India also should celebrate the day in a manner belittling their position and signify their cooperation with their comrades in other parts of the globe, and also lay the foundation stone of a labour office so that in the years to come it might attain its full growth and be a source of strength to the suffering labourers in this country. It should also make them realise that they belonged to one class. With reference to the adverse criticism, that appeared in the 'Madras Mail' in regard to the new party the speaker said that only bonafide labourers were celebrating the day and as such there was no cause of alarm. Further the party aimed at the solidarity of labour for a common end. In the natural process of revolution labour would ultimately wield power after putting forth a great struggle".

While explaining the creed and programme of the new party the recapitulated the history of the labour movement in Madras and the failure of the unions, and told them that the failure was due to the indifference of the National Congress and to the aid given to the capitalists by the State. In an industrial warfare so long as the state was on the side of the capitalist and safeguarded the vested interests no union would flourish or survive. They should aim at Labour Swaraj though it was an anathema for the capitalists. Unless they had that Swaraj their condi-

tion would not be improved ... The general principles and the programme of the party were then explained and in accelerating the progress of the movement, the party would make use of the Congress and its method, the Swaraj Party, of the Trade Unions, of the Governmental Institutions.

'P. Natesa Mudali, a labourer then addressed them, on the need for a party to protect labour.

'The gathering then dispersed'.

While reporting on the speech of Singaravelu on Swaraj, the newspaper, however, added, 'By Labour Swaraj he did not mean to hold out to them the driving away of the Britishers which apart from being a stupendous task was also an impossibility. But in working out this scheme there should be a climbdown on their part and there would be an inclination in them to lessen and mitigate the existing evils'.

About the other May Day meeting at Triplicane Beach, the newspaper reported as below:

'S. Krishnaswamy Sarma presided over the May Day meeting at Triplicane Beach. 'M.P. S. Velayutham read out the main portion of a Tamil Manifesto (by M. Singaravelu) issued to Hindustan Labourers and Kisans for organising a political party of their own.

'Subramaniya Siva and Shankarlal spoke.

'The meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to the Chair'.

In addition to the above report of the two May Day meetings at Madras on 1 May 1923, the newspaper published another news item also which pointed out Singaravelu's contact with another strong centre of working class movement at that time. It was a message to Calcutta by Singaravelu. The newspaper reported. 'The following press telegram was sent to Calcutta by the Labour and Kisan Party of Hindustan today:

'Labour and Kisan Party inaugurated May Day, Madras. Comrade Singaravelu presided. Demonstration successful. Resolved government to declare Holiday next. President explained Party's non-violent creed. Demanded economic relief. Urged world workers' unity for securing Labour Swaraj. Recommended opposition inside, outside government institution. Traced next stage, in world evolution to egalitarian workers' role. Appealed Indian workers to unite the world labour. Substantial labour representations in the Congress, the New Party in Government absolutely necessary. Chettiar answered 'Mail's frantic attacks Party', Labour Swaraj scheme, nothing new. Announced same at Amritsar Congress. Bolshevik gold-myth exposed. South Madras Labour successful meeting Triplicane Beach. Comrade Velayutham explained Manifesto'.

Singaravelu also strongly raised the demand for 8 hour's working day among other welfare measures

for the workers. The action programme of the Labour and Kisan Party of India of Singaravelu demanded 'Eight Hours' law, 6 hours for minors and nursing women and four hours for children'.

'Vanguard', Vol. 2, No. 9, 15 June 1923, edited by M.N. Roy and published from Berlin also carried the news about the May Day meetings at Madras on 1 May 1923.

'Vanguard' reported:

"First May for Indian workers.

"The First of May was celebrated for the first time in India as a proletarian holiday, when in response to the call of M. Singaravelu Chettiar, Veteran Indian socialist, two mass meetings were held in the open air in the city of Madras, where the grievances of the workers formed the theme of the address and the establishment of a worker' and peasants' party was announced in accordance with the manifesto previously published in the Tamil language. The audience was composed of workers and peasants and speeches were made in the vernacular so that everything was understood by them. The significance of May Day was explained, and the formation of a political party of the working class for the attainment of Labour Swaraj' was urged. Comrade Singaravelu who presided over one of the meetings welcomed the advent of the first of May as a proletarian holiday in India and explained the growth of the class struggle in India as in other countries, of the world. The aim of the workers of India should be Labour Swaraj, he declared. So long as the state was on the side of the capitalists and safeguard the vested interests, labour organisations could accomplish little to change the lot of the expropriated working class. The relation of the Indian labour to the international proletarian movement was also made clear and the necessity of organising a working class party to head the struggle for economic and political power emphasised. It was declared that the new party would work within the Congress. Resolutions were passed declaring for celebration of May First as an annual working class holiday in concert with international labour; demanding economic relief for the Indian working class, urging a united front with the workers of the world to secure Labour Swaraj; recommending opposition to government institutions and declaring for working inside the Congress as a separate working class party. The meetings were largely attended and the demonstration passed off successfully. Telegrams to the press of other provinces were sent by the labour and kisan party urging similar celebrations of May Day throughout India".

Thus Singaravelu Chettiar took the first individual initiative in observing May Day in India in 1923. Thereafter in 1927 at the direction of AITUC, May Day was observed in several labour centres including Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The General Secretary's report of the Kanpur Session of AITUC in November 1927 mentioned: 'May Day Celebrations

on large scale' in that year where 'thousands of workers took part'. The General Secretary's report expected that 'these celebrations will become an annual feature of the Trade Union Movement at all important labour centres".

From the documents of the Meerut Conspiracy Case it appears that in the May Day meeting at Bombay on May, 1927, the then Labour Leaders Philip Spratt, Thengdi, Mirajkar, Jhabwala, Nimbalkar, Ghate and Joglekar were present.

In the May Day meeting of 1928 in Bombay Nimbalkar, S.A. Dange, Bradley and Joglekar were also present.

On May 1, 1928, May Day was observed in a big way in the City of Calcutta. A big procession converged at Maidan and a meeting was held under the presidentship of Mrinal Kanti Bose. According to Intelligence Branch report kept in the National Archives, New Delhi, along with 1000 strikers, several hundreds of tramwaymen and other workers joined that procession and rally. Intelligence report mentions details about the speech delivered in the meeting by Philip Spratt in English and its Hindi rendering by Bankim Mukherjee. According to that report, Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta and other speakers spoke in the meeting and they emphasized the need of achieving freedom. It is reported that among others Muzaffar Ahmad was also present in that meeting.

Although it may appear surprising today, the first May Day observances in India were not a very easy affair. For instance, the Police Commissioner of Calcutta sought to ban the May Day procession in Calcutta on May 1, 1928 by a declaration under Sec. 62 of the 1862 Bengal Act and notice was served on many leaders who led the May Day procession. But the procession and rally were organized despite such prohibitory orders.

When Meerut Conspiracy Case was instituted in 1929, many of the accused were charged that they participated in May Day celebrations in 1927 and 1928. The Committal order passed by R. Milener White charged Spratt, Thengdi, Mirajkar, Jhabwala, Nimbalkar, Ghate, Joglekar, Bradley, Alwe, Dange, Kishorilal Ghosh, Muzaffar Ahmad and others that they were present in May Day meetings. Against Dr. Viswanath Mukherjee, a labour leader of U.P. and an accused in Meerut Conspiracy Case the charge was that he 'celebrated May Day in 1928', his announcement contained the communist slogan "workers of the world unite".

But the Meerut Conspiracy Case proceedings instead of frightening the working class from coming close to communism and observing May Day, produced an opposite result. Communism came to be known in India in a big way and after 1928 May Day started being observed in wider manner in many industrial centres of the country. Today, when the entire world is celebrating the centenary of May Day, these heroic saga of first observance of May Day in India will surely inspire the Indian working class in carrying forward the revolutionary tradition of May Day.

Giving Shape to Mass-Based Education

New Spate of Healthy Culture

The Education and cultural affairs in West Bengal have undergone a radical change during the last eight years' regime of the Left Front Government. This present Government is engaged in the noble task of wide expansion of education, making education realistic and life-oriented and reaching the same to all levels of people. A healthy and normal milieu has emerged in the field of education in place of chaos and despondency. In this State, education upto XII class has been made free. Books are being distributed at the primary schools free of cost. The mother tongue has been given its due status making it the only language for compulsory study at the primary stage. Besides, more than six lakhs of people have been brought under the fold of Adult Education Scheme, now being implemented through 22,000 centres. Under the non-formal Education Scheme, children in urban and rural areas are getting the benefit of education through 16,000 centres. Democratic rights have been established in the Universities, getting them rid of undesirable controls. Recently Vidyasagar University has been set up at Midnapore. Continuous efforts are also being made unimpededly to make higher education research-oriented.

There has also been a new awakening in the cultural precincts of the State. While the age-old traditions are being kept unimpaired, new cultural developments, as a counter to the worn-out decadent culture, have come up during the last eight years through multifarious schemes of the Government. Rajya Sangeet Academy, Folk Culture Institute, Girish Mancha, Modhusudan Mancha, Art Gallery, Art Film Centre and the Colour Film Laboratory now under construction at the Salt Lake City, are but a few manifestations of the Government endeavours. Besides, financial grants to the new and old authors for publication of books and financial assistance to the distressed persons in the fields of drama, yatra, art, painting and sculpture, music and folk culture, bear testimony to the efforts of the present Government. To aid to this, the introduction of Abanindra, Alauddin and Dinabandhu Awards by way of recognition to the distinguished talents for artistic creativity in the fields of art, painting and sculpture, drama and music respectively is an unprecedented achievement of the Left Front Government.

The Left Front Government is pledged to help growing a healthy culture.

Government of West Bengal

k.p.r.

May Day and Proletarian Internationalism

P.K. Ganguly

MAY Day is the symbol of promise to build up the international solidarity of the working class. A hundred years back the working class took this revolutionary promise as the Chicago martyrs laid down their lives fighting against capitalist slavery. The promise took the form of a prairie fire and engulfed the globe denouncing the capitalist exploitation of labour. The demand for eight hour work took the concrete form of a demand to end of the capitalist system itself, the system of wage slavery, and usher in a society where there would be no exploitation of man by man. Led and guided by the leadership of the revolutionary detachments of the working class in all countries, headed by Marx and Engels and then by Lenin, the Hay Market incident thus paved the way for an unremitting revolutionary struggle against capitalism, imperialism, holding high the banner of proletarian internationalism.

The demand for shorter working day was brewing up almost from the beginning of the factory system in the United States. Resentment was growing against the then prevailing working time — from sunrise to sun set. A trial against the leaders of the striking Philadelphia Cordwainers in 1806 revealed that the workers were forced to work for even 19 to 20 hours a day. The strike struggles demanding reduction of working hours to 10-hour a day started from the first quarter of the Nineteenth century itself in United States, Britain, Australia and other places, which sowed the seeds of internationalism of the demand of the working class—a demand of major political significance. The demand for precisely 8 hours' work, 8 hours' rest and 8 hours' recreation was raised by the building industry workers of Australia in 1856 and the demand was reverberated by the workers in the United States, England, France, Germany and other places where capitalism was making a headway. The struggle got a spirit in USA almost immediately after the American Civil War (1861-65) for the emancipation of the black workers. Several labour unions combined on the national level to form the National Labour Union under the leadership of H. Sylvis in August 1866 at Baltimore. The founding Convention of the National Labour Union called for a law to limit the normal working hours to 8 hours a day. It declared that 8 hour day was an indispensable condition for freeing labour from capitalist slavery.

Beginning with 1840s Marx and Engels laid the ground work for the doctrine of scientific communism and the theory of class struggle. They prepared a core of proletarian revolutionaries, formed the Communist League in 1847 and presented the Manifesto of the Communist Party to the working class with the call, "Workers of All Countries, Unite!" Fighting relentlessly to give practical shape

to the call, they formed the first International Workingmen's Association (First International) on September 28, 1864. The workers of Europe and America got the schooling in proletarian internationalism along the path of conscious and organised struggle for their emancipation from the capitalist yoke and for the triumph of the socialist system where there is no exploitation. Marx stated that the trade unions should not confine themselves to "a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system", but should "use their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class", i.e., the ultimate abolition of the wage system itself. With this scientific and classic enunciation and guideline to the course of the working class struggle, the Central Council of the First International unanimously adopted on August 21, 1866 that "8 hours be recommended as the standard for daily labour as the preliminary condition without which all further attempts for improvement and emancipation of the working class must prove abortive; it is indeed to restore the health and physical energies of the working class, as well as secure them the possibility of intellectual development, social intercourse and social and political action." The proposal of the Central Council was adopted unanimously at the Geneva Congress of the International in September, 1866.

The revolutionary propagandists of the international were persecuted and excuted. But the struggles of the working class against the capitalist oppression took a widespread and militant form. The persecutions went on ruthlessly and the International was banned in several countries. But the world scientific outlook of international proletarian solidarity, which had struck deep roots among the working class, could not be downed. The idea spread to Denmark, Portugal, Holland, Australia, New Zealand, South America and other countries. The General Council of the International which was compelled to shift its Head Qrs. from London to New York, even at its last stage, paid serious attention to the struggle in USA.

The working class struggle shaped towards a common objective and had transcended the national barriers. As already stated, the Marxian tenet that "emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem embracing all countries, and depending for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced countries", and that, "the unity of the bourgeoisie can be shaken only by the unity of the proletariat on a world scale", had struck deep roots among the working class. While referring to the struggle on working day in his first volume of the "Capital", published in 1867, Marx made a telling reference to the Civil War in America and the solidarity of class interests between the Negro

and white workers: "In the United States of America any sort of independent labour movement was paralysed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labour with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labour with a black skin is branded. But out of the death of slavery a new vigorous life sprang. The first fruit of the Civil War was an agitation for the 8-hour day — a movement which ran with express speed from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California." Calling attention to how almost simultaneously, i.e., within two weeks of each other the National Labour Union at Baltimore and the Geneva Congress of the First International adopted similar resolutions on 8-hour work, Marx said: "Thus on both sides of the Atlantic did the working class movement — a spontaneous outgrowth of the conditions of production, endorsed the same movement for limitation of the working hours and concretised it in the den and for the 8-hour day."

The significance of the international working class movement in the 1860s and 1870s was that it got the ideological and political leadership of the First International under the guidance of Marx and Engels. Assessing the then growing Franco-German militarism Marx and Engels proceeded to raise the banner of proletarian internationalism to oppose war in the interest of the working class and included the demand for disbandment of the standing armies in the Paris Congress resolution. The First International thus laid the foundation of the politics of the working class against the capitalist system, connecting it from the demand of 8-hour work to opposition of war on an international scale. The understanding of the socialist principles of the society of the future led to intensification of the struggles of the working class. Alongwith the 8-hours work demand, Europe and America witnessed the first mass actions by the workers against the growing militarism by the ruling cliques, under the banner of proletarian internationalism. These actions culminated in the most significant achievement of the 1871 — the Paris Commune where the workers held the red flag for than a couple of months.

In this background of struggle to scientifically expose the horrors of capitalism, the direct struggle for the 8-hour day started in USA in 1884 with its nerve centre at Chicago. It's no wonder that Marx's scientific evaluation of the capitalist character laid itself bare in the Hay Market, spilling the blood of the workers, sparked the anger and hatred of the working class against the capitalist system itself and May 1 was unanimously declared to be observed as the International Day of the working class to reiterate its pledge every year to end the class divided society in each country.

Hay Market turned red with the blood of six workers who fell to police bullets, and Spies, Parsons, Engel and Fisher were hanged after a cooked up trial. But through their death they announced the doom of the capitalist system. The

working class demonstrated its international character by sweeping into militant actions in all countries. Braving the ruthless machinery of the ruling clique the working class in America heightened up the strike struggles. The AFL was compelled to call for observance of May 1, 1890 again with strike struggle in pursuance of the 8-hour work demand. Due to the ground work laid by the First International, the international links of the proletariat continued to expand. After Marx's death, Engels continued to guide the working class with the banner of proletarian internationalism. The joint anti-militarist and anti-colonialist actions of the socialist organisations and the militant strike struggles consolidated the international links. The efforts made by Engels and his revolutionary associates met with success. About 400 delegates from the organised socialist movement from 20 countries met a Paris on July 14, 1889 to form the Second International. Hearing the report from the American delegates, the Paris Congress called upon the working class of all countries to observe May 1 from 1890 and organise demonstrations according to conditions prevailing in each country. The resolution passed in the Congress in this respect reaffirmed that scientific socialism was the ideological foundation of the working class movement. It stated that, "labour and the whole of mankind can only be emancipated by the proletariat organised as a class and on an international scale, which must win political power in order to expropriate capital and convert the means of production into public property." The Congress thus advanced the programme of struggle for the direct, vital needs of the working class and at the same time added to it the programme of struggle for the ultimate goal — the triumph of the socialist social system. As the Congress was being guided by Engels on the Marxian principle of proletarian internationalism, it further elaborated the task of international labour in a resolution on disbandment of standing armies and on arming of the entire people. The resolution emphasised on the direct connection between capitalism and war and stressed that socialism was the best guarantee that there would be no war. This was the essence of proletarian internationalism that was enunciated on the Marxian principles for the May Day. It clashed head-on with the reformists and opportunists, being guided by the bourgeois propagandists, who tried and are still trying at the contemporary period, to squeeze out the revolutionary and internationalist essence of the May Day and limit the demands to some economic and immediate needs only, keeping the capitalist structure intact.

The urge for united international proletarian action was demonstrated by the working class in all countries on May 1, 1890 by massive actions. This simultaneous international proletarian demonstration made deeper inroads into the revolutionary instincts of the working class throughout the world with their large participation every year, despite the reformist trend which started to corrode the Second International itself. The unscientific bourgeois

reformism could not however corrode the science of proletarian revolution. The response of the workers which came from the experience of their own lives was recorded in the 1893 Congress of the Second International at Zurich where Engels was present: "The demonstration on May Day for the 8-hour day must serve at the same time as a demonstration of the determined will of the working class to destroy class distinctions through social change and thus enter on the road leading to peace for all peoples, to international peace."

After the death of Engels, the Second International also met its gradual end. But Lenin was there to pick up the red flag and the May Day got established as the Red Day of the working class demanding peace, democracy and socialism, which the ruling circles in each country abhorred. This was precisely because Lenin advanced the theory of Marx in the era of imperialism and consolidated the principle of proletarian internationalism. He translated the Marxian science into practicality by establishing the first socialist state in the world and announced the Decree of Peace. Proletarian internationalism became an integral part of May Day to denounce imperialist wars, colonial and neo-colonial enslavement and for the struggle for peace.

The end of the Nineteenth and the beginning of the Twentieth century saw a further development of the role of trade unions in class struggle and internationalisation. Because of the economic crisis which heralded the beginning of the Twentieth century, the ruling circles concentrated their attack on the trade union organisations. Pre-monopoly capitalism's evolution into monopoly capitalism and then to imperialism made it imperative for the working class to raise their struggle to political level and internationalisation to meet the challenges of imperialism. Lenin formulated the guidelines in his classic, "What Is to Be Done?" Alongwith the consolidation of national trade union centres, a number of international associations and federations were formed. The characteristic feature of the May Day movements in those years was that a greater significance was put to political demands. In Russia the strikes clearly acquired a political orientation heralding the first revolution (1905-1907). In May, 1901 there was pitched battle between the workers and the Czar's police at St. Petersburg Obukhov factory which followed from the dismissal of a large number of workers due to their participation in the May Day strike. The 3600 workers of the factory struck work demanding freedom to celebrate May Day, reinstatement of the dismissed workers, an 8-hour working day and right to elect workers' representatives. (International Working Class Movement, Vol. 2). General strikes also became frequent in several countries with political demands. Apart from Russia, such strikes occurred in Spain, Italy, Sweden, France, Netherlands, Belgium, USA, etc. on May Days or thereafter. (International Working Class Movement, Vol. 2 & 3). But the particular feature of the May Day and general strikes during the

early Twentieth century was the anti-war demands raised by the workers. In its 1906 May Day appeal the International Socialist Bureau called upon the workers of every country "to use all means in their power to preserve peace among nations, and to defeat the war-like schemes of the capitalistic governments." (International Working Class Movement, Vol. 3). The 1905-1907 revolution in Russia, although defeated, stepped up the activities of the Marxist revolutionaries and hastened the process of the final assault. At the call of Lenin the May Day movement entered the mainstream of the fierce class struggle against imperialism, against war.

During the closing decades of the Nineteenth Century large sections of women workers also joined the mainstream of the movements. Unbridled exploitation, discrimination and denial of political and civil rights to women workers made their problem a burning social question. The two Internationals had consistently championed the demands of the women workers. The appeal of May Day and the process of internationalisation of the working class brought large number of women workers under the vortex of the struggles. Women leaders of the revolutionary movement like Roza Luxemburg, Laura Lafargue (Marx's daughter), etc left no stones unturned to mobilise the women workers. While describing the first May Day celebration in 1890 at London, Engels noted the participation of women workers: "There were dockers there in their rough working clothes, kid gloved, top hatted gentlemen compositors, East End working girls in their feathers and finery." (International Working Class Movement, Vol. 2). The First International Socialist Women's Conference at Stuttgart in 1907 laid the foundation for joint international action for women's suffrage. The Conference established an International Socialist Women's Bureau led by Clara Zetkin. In its second conference at Copenhagen in 1910, Clara Zetkin declared the goal of women as not only a free woman, but a free mankind. The Conference decided to mark an International Women's Day in March. Thereafter massive demonstrations and rallies were held on the day from 1911. Headed by Clara Zetkin, by International Women's Secretariat paid particular attention to women's participation in anti-war struggles. (International Working Class Movement, Vol. 3) In order to protect the working women from being trapped by the bourgeois-feminist movement and draw them into the common channel of the proletarian class struggle, Lenin repeatedly stressed that the task of social emancipation of women was indivisibly linked with the triumph of socialism. The Bolshevik Party under his leadership paid constant attention to this question for the successful completion of the socialist revolution. Speaking at the first All Russian Congress of Working Women on November 19, 1918, Lenin said, "The experience of all liberation movements has shown that the success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it" (Collected Works, Vol. 28 p. 181). The prole-

tarian women's movement in Russia was the first to embark on this road. The Amsterdam Congress of the Second International in 1904 recorded this in a resolution: "The Russian Women's movement which awakened simultaneously with the general liberation in that country ... is, by and large, unquestionably shedding the bourgeois character typical of the women's movements in some other European countries". (International Working Class Movement Vol. 2).

The fact that the May Day is being observed by ever larger sections of the proletariat and its international character is ever broadening, reaching every nook and corner of the globe, is because, its essence of proletarian internationalism has been enriched due to the scrupulous attention paid by Lenin on the question. May Day got indivisibly linked with the question of proletarian internationalism because of the general experience of the international working class movement, their experience of struggle in each country and the international interest of the working class.

As Lenin explained, by acting against its own national oppressors and exploiters, the working class erodes the international system of exploitation and oppression, with which its class antagonists are closely linked, and thereby helps the working people of other countries to fight for emancipation. He said that the attainment of the immediate aim of the working class movement of Russia — the overthrow of the Czarist autocracy, which was the most powerful bulwark of European and Asian reaction, would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. (What is To Be Done?)

Therefore, the revolutionary struggle of the working class in each country is of international significance and helps to develop international proletarian solidarity. The May Day struggle therefore has to be waged in pursuance of the demands of political significance in each country, as well as in pursuance of the demands of the international situation.

Lenin's exposure of the imperialists' character and his programme on war, peace and revolution gradually imbibed the anti-war spirit in the May Day rallies and united the forces of peace that remained loyal to Marxism and proletarian internationalism. In Russia and also in other countries the May Day rallies during the First World War reverberated with the cry against the imperialist war mongers. His programme of turning the imperialist war into a civil revolutionary war against one's own government turned the table against the Czarist war mongers and gave birth to the first socialist state of the world.

For the ruling classes, as Lenin explained, war had become a source of unprecedented profit. "War is a terrible thing, yes. But it is a terrible profitable thing" ("May Day and War"; Collected

Works, Vol. 36, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1971, P. 325; International Working Class Movement, Vol. 3, p. 571). Combining the great power of the monopolies with that of the state, state monopoly capitalism ensured largest possible profits and direct the policies towards militarisation of the economy and divert the entire production, manpower, raw materials to build up military industrial complexes to suit the interests of the large monopoly conglomerates engaged in war efforts. To check the growth of resistance by the working class they launch economic coercion on the workers accompanied by direct violence. Lenin's elucidation of imperialism's drive against the working class gave a big boost to the trade unions to hold high the banner of proletarian internationalism to fight against the imperialist war designs which increasingly found expression during the May Day rallies, which turned into pitched battles with the Police, particularly in Germany. Led by Liebnicht, about 10,000 people took to the streets in Berlin on May 1, 1916, shouting "Down with War, Down with the Government". Liebnicht, Luxemburg and others were arrested and sentenced. Repression was let loose on the Spartacus members also for organising the anti-war May Day demonstrations. Following the May Day arrest of Liebnicht, a massive political strike was launched by 55,000 Berlin workers, the first anti-war strike during war time. Women workers in large number also took part in the anti-war May Day demonstrations all these years. Demonstrating unique show of international solidarity, the May Day anti-war rallies in different countries expressed solidarity with the revolutionary forces of Russia. The May Day leaflets distributed in Italy and France in 1916-1917 called upon the people to follow the example of Russia. The leaflets read "... If everyone had followed that example, the war would have already ended. ... Follow the example of your Russian Comrades, do not engage in fratricide" (International Working Class Movement, Vol. 3, P. 664).

The Second bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia exerted positive influence on the entire international working class movement. It was the beginning of the transformation of the imperialist war to civil war—a factor indispensable for the liberation of mankind from wars and poverty. And then, the victory of the October 1917 Socialist revolution opened a period of revolutionary upsurge sweeping over Europe and other continents. The revolutionary preachings of the May Days further advanced the principle of proletarian internationalism. The October revolution demonstrated in reality that the international working class had reached the state of maturity, when it had become capable of taking the fate of society into its own hands from the greedy capitalist-imperialist classes. Proletarian internationalism became not merely a slogan, nor merely theoretical, but a practical principle. Today's social and political gains of the workers in the capitalist countries and the national liberation of the peoples of dependent and colonial countries would have been inconceivable if the socialist state

had not taken birth due to the revolutionary activities of the working class holding high the banner of proletarian internationalism. Thanks to the May Day pledge of the working class. To further the coordination of the revolutionary forces and safeguard the socialist state Lenin went ahead to form the Communist International in 1919. The mass revolutionary upsurge continued, the May Day rallies became more militant and all embracing. Imperialism however did not sit idle. The threat of its doom made it all the more frantic to kill the socialist state. Helped by the social-democratic demagogues, misleading the working class, the fascist Hitler launched its blitzkrieg against the Soviet Union to fulfil his dream of world domination. But the indefatigable revolutionary forces led by CPSU headed by Stalin pierced through the fascist forces to give the death blow to Hitler's fascism. The price paid by the Soviet Union were 20 million lives. Out of the blood of the 20 million Soviet people and another 30 million fighters from other countries against fascism grew the socialist camp taking away one-third of the capitalist world. It was an irony of fate for Hitler, but certainly due to the progress of social development on the lines of Marxism-Leninism that the red flag was hoisted on Hitler's citadel itself on May 1, 1945.

The working class kept the promise of May Day. But it has still to carry on and cover a yet long and more tortuous path. The imperialists have not changed their character. Hitler is dead. But he has given birth to his successors—the American imperialists and their cohorts—the NATO allies, dreaming the dead barbarian's dream—to vanquish the Soviet Union, the Socialist camp, and dominate the world. The plans are more crude and devastating—a nuclear holocaust, star wars, chemical and biological war and everything a mad man can dream in its frenzy to exterminate the humankind itself. But the Soviet Union has accepted the challenge and the responsibility to protect the socialist State—the working class state, the achievements of the sacrifice of several generations of the working class—the promise of the May Day. The dialectics of social development, the unflinching science of Marxism-Leninism has called upon the working class again to stand the fiery test and hold high the banner of proletarian internationalism to protect the achievements of socialism, peace and the mankind and sound the death knell to the imperialist war mongers, the traitors of mankind. And the working class all over the world has responded magnificently projecting itself as the biggest anti-war force mobilising people from different walks of life to save humanity, to save the world from the nuclear holocaust. The forces of peace have increased and expanded. Massive demonstrations are sweeping around the globe denouncing Reagan's war pursuits and star war project. India's working class cannot afford to lag behind the situation, being confronted with imperialist conspiracies. The U.S. imperialists are feverishly arming the Pakistan military ruler. The policy of non-alignment is under pressure from the Reagan administration. The May Day centenary programmes must be set according to the demands

of the situation, the demands of proletarian internationalism. Let the centenary rallies mobilise thousands of the working class, the toiling people to declare unstinted support to the efforts of the Soviet Union to avert war and establish peace. Let the Indian working class respond to the appeal of M.S. Gorbachov, to the concrete programme of the C.P.S.U. for the complete elimination of nuclear arms throughout the world before the end of the century. The CITU has to take the lead. Let us start the fight determinedly, expose the imperialist powers headed by the USA, frustrate their war designs, fulfil Gorbachov's proposal to enter the third millennium without the weapons of mass annihilation.

Hail the Red Flag!
Long Live May Day!
Up with Proletarian Internationalism!
Down with War Mongering Imperialism!
Long Live Socialism, Peace, Democracy!

(Contd. from page 30)

This enactment first gave legal status to the concept of 8 hour day in India.

Yet some establishments continue to work for more hours even now. In Motor Transport industry workers are working 9 hours a day in several establishments. The Loco-running staff in railways are still forced to work upto 14 hours a day. The Government of India is taking shelter under the modifications provided in the ILO Convention. The trade union movement in our country has not been able to ensure implementation of this concept in all the industries. The agricultural workers and workers in unorganised sector continue to toil from dawn to dusk even now.

While observing this May Day the working class of India while reviewing the glorious achievements of the revolutionary movement of the working class all over the world should also take the pledge to implement 8 hour day to the workers in all the establishments. This will be a fitting homage to the martyrs who shed their blood for 8 hour day and other pressing demands of the workers.

Fight for Further Reduction in Hours of Work

The working class and the T.U. movement all over the world has been raising the demand for further reduction in hours of work. Forty hour week with 2 paid weekly offs has already been implemented in several advanced capitalist countries in the world through united struggles of the working class. In a recent Seminar convened by the National Labour Institute on I.L.O. Conventions this demand was unitedly raised by all the trade union representatives. The demand is reflected in some of the Charter of Demands by the trade unions in the recent past.

On the centenary of May Day the trade Union movement should pledge to fight for socialism and end of the present exploitative social system. The struggle for introduction of 40 hour a week should form a major component of the programme of this struggle.

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**Issued by the
Department of Industries,
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May Day and Fight for Peace

Samar Mukherjee

Historical Background

THIS year is the Centenary year of the international May Day. This has provided the occasion to review the hundred years' history of May Day along with the onward march of the world working class. May Day which is observed each year by the working class throughout the world on 1st of May is a day of international solidarity of the working class in action in their struggle against wage slavery and for building a new society.

TO UNDERSTAND the real significance of this international day one should recall the clarion call first voiced by the great teachers of the working class KARL MARX and FREDERICK ENGELS in 1848 through the famous Communist Manifesto authored jointly by them. By scientifically analysing the historical role of the working class in building the future Society where there will be no exploitation, no unemployment, no poverty by abolishing capitalism. Their manifesto gave the call "working men of all countries unite". The manifesto declared that "the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win".

May Day and the Struggle for Peace

THE FIRST International under the guidance of KARL MARX in its manifesto on Franco-German war called upon the workers to protect peace and extend solidarity. The Second International under the inspiration of Frederick Engels in its Zurich Congress held in 1893 adopted the following resolution on May Day:

"The demonstration on May First for 8-hour day must serve at the same time as a demonstration of the determined will of the working class to destroy class distinctions through social change and thus enter on the road, the only road leading to peace for all peoples, to international peace."

The struggle against war has been combined with the revolutionary struggle for social changes. This has been fully demonstrated through the success of the November Revolution in Russia in 1917 in the midst of the first world war which was an imperialist war. The fight for peace provided tremendous sweep to the revolutionary movement of the working class first to overthrow the Czar and then to overthrow the bourgeois government which were interested to continue the war. The November Revolution brought state power to the hands of the working class through the Soviets. Immediately after coming into power the Soviet Government passed a Decree on Peace.

On the question of war and peace the international working class movement was divided into two camps between the revisionists and the revolutionaries. The revisionists supported the war and rallied behind their own bourgeois governments. They became social chauvinists and the stooge of the bourgeoisie. Such a thing happened in the case

of Mensheviks in Russia. The revolutionaries opposed the war and fought against their own bourgeois government with a view to overthrow their rule in order to end war.

Comrade Lenin on the question of peace and war formulated tasks before the working class. In an article written on June 27, 1917, he himself posed the question "Is there a way to a just peace"? He gave the following reply: "There is: through a workers' revolution against the capitalists of the world. Russia to-day is nearer to the beginning of such a revolution than any other country. Only in Russia can power pass to the Soviets, immediately, peacefully, without an uprising, for the capitalists could not resist the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants' Deputies". The power was not peacefully transferred as Lenin visualised then due to the betrayal of the Mensheviks who had till then dominated the Soviets. That is why the working class of Russia took power in their hands through armed insurrection. The revolution was successful on the 7th November and the Decree on Peace was announced on 8th November. The Decree says: "The workers and peasants' government created by the Revolution of October 24-25 (November 7th and 8th) and basing itself on the Soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants' deputies, calls upon all the belligerent peoples and their governments to start immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace".

THE SUCCESS of the November Revolution and the establishment of a new classless society free from exploitation is the highest achievement of the revolutionary working class imbued with the true spirit of the International May Day. It became the beacon light to toiling people of the world and became a bastion of world revolution. That is why Soviet Union became the main target of attack of the World Imperialism.

Imperialism is the real source of war. The more it is faced with crisis, the more it tries desperately to get out of the crisis through war and militarisation. All inner contradictions within the imperialist camp get intensified along with the growing contradiction between imperialism and socialism. The factors that led to the second world war are directly linked with the great world economic crisis of 1929-34. The emergence of fascism in Germany and some other capitalist countries are also related to this crisis.

THE SECOND world war which started as an imperialist war but later turned into an anti-fascist peoples war has proved the inner vitality and strength of Soviet Union, a State ruled by the working class. Its Red-Army which was the army of class conscious workers and peasants fully devoted to high ideal of making the world completely free from exploitation and oppression has shown its superiority in all respects in courage, sacrifice and military skill by defeating the most powerful bar-

baric fascist forces of Hitler. The defeat of fascism has changed the correlation of forces in favour of socialism and democracy. Though two big imperialist powers America and Britain joined with Soviet Union in defeating Hitler, but imperialism as a whole has been weakened. As a result, on the one hand those East European countries which were under the occupation of Hitler were liberated with the help of Red Army and turned socialists, on the other hand waves of upsurges in the national liberation and freedom movements forced the imperialists to grant independence to many colonies and semi-colonies.

DURING the second world war in its first phase when the character of war was imperialist war May Days were observed as anti-war days. But after the perfidious attack on Soviet Union by the Hitlerite hordes when the character of the war changed into anti-fascist peoples war, May Days have been observed with added determination to help the Soviet government and Red Army with more production of arms and materials in order to defeat the fascist forces.

THE TARGET for defeating Hitler before May Day and hoisting the Red Flag over German Reichstag on the May Day proved how the entire people, the entire army including generals were inspired by the spirit of May Day.

MARSHAL G. ZHUKOV has written in his "Reminiscences and Reflections":

"The battle of Berlin has reached its peak. All of us wished to finish off the Berlin group by May 1st. Although agonised, the enemy continued to fight for every house, for every cellar, for every storey and roof.

"April 30, 1945 will always remain in the memory of the Soviet People and in the history of their struggle against Nazi Germany.

"At 6 P.M. Reichstag was stormed once again.

"Witnessing the historic battle for Reichstag personally the Commander of the Third Shock Army Kuznetsov immediately called me at the command post and reported rejoicingly:

"Red flag is on the Reichstag! Hurrah, Comrade Marshall," (page 385)

Commander G. Zhukov issued the following order on the same evening:

"The hour of the final victory over the enemy is nearing.

The Soviet flag is already flapping over the main building of the Reichstag in the Centre of Berlin."

"At the end of the day on May 1st the Nazis in the Reichstag could no longer withstand the onslaught and surrendered.

"On the 30th I got on the line to Moscow straightaway and called Stalin. In a little while Stalin was on the line. I reported to him about Hitler's suicide and the letter from Goebbels proposing armistice. Stalin answered: Now he has done it, the bastard. Too bad he could have been taken alive. Where is Hitler's body? According to General Krebe Hitler's body was burnt.

"Tell Sokolovsky that there can be no talks — either with Krebs or any other Hitlerites — only unconditional surrender, said the Supreme Commander.

"If nothing special happens don't call me till morning. I want to have a little rest before tomorrow's May Day Parade." (P. 390)

The grand May Day parade was held in Red Square. Comrade Stalin read out the order of the day in which he said: "This year the people of our motherland are celebrating the first of May during the victorious consummation of the Great Patriotic war...The brilliant victories the Soviet troops have achieved in the great patriotic war have revealed the titanic might of the Red Army and its high military skill. In the cause of the war our motherland acquired a first class seasoned Army capable of defending the great Socialist gains of our people and of protecting the State interests of the Soviet Union."

Forty years have passed since the defeat of Fascism. Face of the World has changed since that time. The biggest country in population, China has built Socialism through people's democratic revolution. Now more than one third of the peoples of the World are living under Socialist System. Influence of Socialism is spreading very rapidly throughout the World including Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Threat of Thermonuclear War

The World has reached a stage threatened by Thermonuclear war. Unless checked by a gigantic powerful world wide anti-war peace movement the threat may any time become a reality and destroy the entire human race. Such a huge power of destruction has accumulated in the hands of the war mongers and the constant drive for more sophisticated weapons has created great concern for the future of the human Society.

Threat to World War always come from the imperialist powers. In the present situation it is the American imperialism led by President Reagan which is responsible for the mad pursuit of the policy of gaining military superiority over Soviet Union to crush the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries with a view to contain communism. Reagan has taken initiative to spread the sphere of atomic war into outer-space by the project called Star War.

Against this war drive powerful voices have been raised from various sources and various platforms against star war project and stock piling of huge number of Atom Bombs. The Soviet Union along with other Socialist countries and democratic forces has stood firmly against their policy. The Soviet Union has made unilateral announcement that they will not use atomic weapons first against any country. They requested American Government to make

similar statement but America refused. In order to create an atmosphere for negotiation for the elimination of the threat of atomic war and for disarmament, Soviet Union has declared many proposals such as moratorium on the experiments of new weapons, step by step ridding the earth of nuclear weapons.

THE GRAND proposals announced recently by Mikhail Gorbachov, the General Secretary of the CPSU has created wide response throughout the world though the American Government has not yet changed its attitude, though Mr. Reagan met Comrade Gorbachov in a summit conference in November last. The Soviet proposals have far reaching significance. The essence of the proposals is to make the World completely free from nuclear threat by the end of the 20th Century. The proposals are divided into 3 stages.

In the first stage within next five to eight years both USA and USSR will reduce by one half the nuclear arms that can reach each other's territory. On the remaining delivery vehicles of this kind each side will retain no more than 6000 war-heads. This stage will include the adoption and implementation of the decision on the complete elimination of intermediate-range missiles of the USSR and USA in European zone, both ballistic and cruise missiles as a first step towards ridding the European continent of nuclear weapons.

Second stage should start no later than 1990 and last for five to seven years. Following the completion of the first stage should include the elimination of all tactical nuclear arms namely the weapons having a range of upto 1000 KM.

THE THIRD stage will begin in 1995. At this stage the elimination of all remaining weapons will be completed. By the end of 1999 there will be no nuclear weapons on earth.

This peace initiative taken by the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries is being combined more and more with the demand for development and new economic order. The huge money now spent in the manufacture of weapons of destruction should be diverted for the development of the underdeveloped countries and to save millions of people who are now dying of starvation. The scientific talents which are now engaged to produce dangerous weapons of destruction can be utilised for making this world beautiful by making the world free from threat of war. So the working class should come forward as the champion of peace not only to defend the achievements which they have registered during the hundred years of struggles but also to build a new world of peace and prosperity. All efforts and proposals of the Soviet Union for disarmament should be supported and strengthened by mobilisations of the working masses throughout the country. All conspiracies of imperialism headed by American imperialism should be bitterly opposed.

AMERICAN IMPERIALISM is helping the reactionary forces with arms and money to intervene in internal matters of various countries to establish its domination. It is helping the apartheid regime of South Africa against black people, it is helping Israel to attack and deny the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people for their State in their homeland, it is helping the counterrevolutionary forces of Afghanistan to replace the present revolutionary government by a stooge government, it is arming Pakistan with the most sophisticated arms to endanger the security and Sovereignty of India, Afghanistan and Soviet Union. It is helping the extremists and secessionists in India and encouraging all divisive forces to create de-stabilisation in India. It is encouraging ethnic fight in Sri Lanka to establish naval base in that country.

Now the Seventh fleet of America has been berthed in Karachi causing concern for India and other neighbouring gulf countries. It is openly threatening military intervention in case of Nicaragua and Libya.

Tasks Before Indian Working Class

The Government of India as the head of the non-aligned countries is pursuing a policy of peace, for disarmament and against nuclear war. It is also supporting the liberation movements of the Palestinian and African people. This foreign policy is objectively helping the peace movement so the working class should support this policy but simultaneously make the people conscious about its weaknesses. The government and the ruling party is not mobilising the masses behind the foreign policy. The government is reluctant to identify openly the responsibility of American imperialism for creating war situation. Instead they are advocating the theory of two super powers thereby equating America with Soviet Union.

The more dangerous development is the internal economic policy of the Government of India. They have opened the flood gates of Indian economy to the foreign multinational corporations who are responsible for creating war situation. The acceptance of conditionalities imposed by World Bank and IMF while getting loans from these institutions have threatened our independence and exposed the present foreign policy to pressure from the imperialists. That is why the working class should come forward along with all the toiling masses and democratic forces to fight against the policy of dependence on foreign multinationals and the policy of strengthening capitalism in India.

The Working Class of India should draw lessons from the experience of the hundred years of May Days. In order to achieve real peace the struggle for peace should be combined with the struggle for the change of the capitalist system by new social system.

In India the basic weakness of the working class movement both in relation to peace as well as

change of the Social system is reflected in their struggles mainly remaining confined to partial demands. This is due to dominance of bourgeois and feudal influence over the working class. That is why the working class in India is relatively passive and indifferent regarding peace movement and movement for basic change of the society. These weaknesses must be removed by the sustained efforts of the trade unions particularly by the CITU drawing the lessons from history of November Revolution, achievements of the Socialist countries and new peace offensives of the Soviet Union. Indian working class should emerge as the leading force to change the present policies of the government in alliance with peasantry and other democratic forces.

The UNO has declared this year to be the peace year, so the fight for peace gets added importance this year.

CITU's Message to CGIL

(The following speech was delivered by E. Balanandan, Treasurer, CITU in the XIth Congress of CGIL held at Rome from February 28-March 4.)

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions sends its warm greetings to the 11th Congress of the CGIL and wishes success to its deliberations. It conveys through the Congress its greetings to the entire-working class of Italy, Waging a united and courageous struggle against unemployment and severity of economic conditions, the necessary consequences under capitalism of a growingly computerised society.

The CITU congratulates the CGIL on its success in defending the salaries and living conditions of the workers under very difficult circumstances and on its success in maintaining and strengthening trade union unity.

The CITU is deeply concerned over the threat of war hanging over the world. The deployment of US missiles in Europe has increased the threat of war. The Centre of Indian Trade Unions expresses its solidarity with the working class of Italy whose security is threatened by the increased war danger.

The threat of nuclear war hangs over the entire world threatening its very existence. The CITU stands shoulder to shoulder with the world working class and all the peoples of the world to prevent war and defend peace. It denounces the US imperialists who are organising this inhuman war against the USSR to destroy socialism, the achievements of world working class over a hundred years, and dominate the world. Reagan's Star War Project is not a defence project but a design to carry nuclear

war into outerspace and deserves the condemnation of all sections and working class. Silence will mean complicity in the crime.

The CITU congratulates the peace forces in Italy and Europe for their heroic fight to protect peace and prevent war. The forces of peace and international solidarity are helped by the consistent peace policy of the USSR and other socialist countries. The working class of India highly appreciate the proposals for nuclear disarmament made by Gorbachov, General Secretary of the CPSU and lends its support to them.

The desire for world peace is shared by all sections of the people in our country including the Government of India which pursues a foreign policy based on nonalignment.

The CITU once more wishes success to the 11th Congress and is confident that its deliberations will contribute to strengthening working class unity and the spirit of proletarian internationalism which is so necessary today to fight the imperialist war conspiracies.

The CITU is confident that the centenary year of May Day will see the fighting forces of world working class more united and fully determined to end the challenge of war.

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Much done, yet much more to be done!

Limited power, want of finance — foiling all conspiracies at every step, the people of Tripura from the eight years experience have learnt that Left Front Government is the People's Government.

Government of Tripura

New Hopes for Labour

UNDER LEFT FRONT RULE

In spite of constraints, for the last eight years the Left Front Government has taken various steps to make the industrial climate of the state conducive and favourable for growth in all sectors.

- * Industries have been encouraged to come up in the backward areas, where various facilities are being offered, such as: infrastructural facilities, financial support — like equity participation, long-term loan, guarantees, cash incentives etc.
- * For development of industry, joint-sector ventures with private sector partners have been planned. Haldia Petrochemical Project is a step ahead in this direction.
- * In 1984 approval for 152 industrial units involving investment of Rs. 75.95 crores was received. The West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation has so far assisted 318 units with project cost of Rs. 584 crores. Moreover, to assist the entrepreneurs, Industrial Development Agency (IDA) has been set up.
- * Development of an Electronics Complex in the Salt Lake area has been planned with a provision of Rs. 52 crores.
- * In the Small and Cottage Industry sector the State Government's policies have been fruitful. The number of registered small-scale units set up has been increased to 1,71,000 from 97,000 in 1977.

Through the years, the struggle of the working class received all support from the Left Front Government for improvement of their service conditions, employment security and re-opening of mills and factories which have been locked out or closed out by employers. Under the renewed pledge for the welfare of the working class, the workers have gained confidence — their dignity and self respect restored.

- * Broadbased tripartite bodies were revived and re-constituted and collective bargaining encouraged. As a result, major industry-wise wage settlement could be arrived at and harmonious industrial relations continued in the State.
- * Contract labour practice has been abolished in many places. Minimum wage for the workers has been fixed up.
- * State amendment of important labour laws has provided better relief, protection and benefits to workers.
- * West Bengal Labour Welfare Board has been running 54 welfare centres in industrial and plantation areas of West Bengal. Also two Holiday Homes at Digha and Darjeeling are run by the Board. Three more Holiday Homes at 'Procreabong' at Darjeeling, Haldia and Bakkhali are now under the plan.
- * During the last 8 years 95,347 persons have been appointed through employment exchanges.
- * Over 52 lakhs people are now benefited under ESI scheme. 21 service dispensaries and 3 new hospitals with additional 1000 beds have been installed under this scheme.

Left Front Government facilitates industrial growth and supports the cause of the toiling masses.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

(.....ICA/1985)