MAY DAY FOR AUSTRIA!

With Grave Alarm—But With Great Hope!

An Appeal by Jay Lovestone

Comrades, Fellow-Workers and Friends:

THIS is not an open letter to any one in particular or to all readers of the Workers Age in general. This is not just another appeal for help, just one of the many worthy appeals for aid that confront us on all sides in these hours of need. But, on this occasion of May Day, I think it would not be out of place for me to have a few solemn words with you—this means with all workers and all genuine friends of labor in every section of the country, in every labor organization, in every factory and mine.

We are living upon the rim of a volcano. History is moving—unfortunately, too often backward—at a terrific pace. What once took decades in the lives of nations, now appears to be happening in but a few hours. These are hours of decision involving the fate of mightiest countries, biggest classes, firmest ideas and most sacred ideals, devoted men and cherished premises. Yet, there is even more at stake. These are hours when all of us must make decisions, must take sides.

I take you to Austria. I was in that unfortunate land when Hitler's hordes swooped down upon it. Here was a remaking, not only of the map of Europe but the beginning of a remaking of the map of the whole world. In retrospect, I can say that I would have given up everything for the opportunity to be on the scene and to participate in the last-minute efforts of labor to head off disaster. In prospect, I can only say that I would give my all to prevent the recurrence of such fatal blows to the working-class movement of Austria and the entire world.

Never shall I, nor ever can I, forget Black Friday (March 11th) in Vienna. Painful and ineradicable are my memories of that night of darkest howling reaction—with Nazi Storm Batallions trooping thru the streets, with windows smashed and heads cracked, with the Swastika flying high and the workers spirit driven low, with German Nazi bombers from Munich darkening the sky at dawn, and many hundreds of workers spending their last night at home burning papers and preparing to. . . . Really, how can one know what capitalist reaction means until he sees it on the march, until he lives thru it?

I shall never forget the moments of parting with my Vienna comrades. These hours were crowded with terror, with fear, yet with unbreakable determination, with gripping courage, with unconquerable hope. I shall always prize and be inspired by these stirring words of farewell to me and greeting to you, to all of you, coming from our leading comrade in the Communist Opposition of Austria:

"Please tell the American comrades how very much their interest in us, how much their support of us, has always meant to us. Tell your workers and friends that we Austrian prolets have fought in the past, will fight again in the nearer future than many now think possible. Just now we are beaten. Too many socialists and Stalin-communists have placed faith in the so-called 'great democracies' for help against Hitler. Too many workers have trusted the fascism of Mussolini and the black clerico-fascism of Schuschnigg as against the brown fascism of the German Nazis. But we shall all learn, terrible tho the price may be for the lesson. Hitler is a savage and costly task-master. However, the very hell to which he is dooming the class-conscious fighters of our ranks will also serve in time to teach us self-reliance and force our class to break the chains and smash the gates of the Nazi inferno.

"In these trying weeks, in the harrowing months to come, your solidarity will mean much more than you can ever begin to imagine. For a moment, put yourselves in our frightful situation. Some of us prefer an immediate horrible end to horrors without an end. But very many of us—and these numbers will grow with time—have their hearts, their minds, their souls, set on facing no end of horrors, to live and fight in the days to come when our labor movement will be reborn—healthier, cleaner and clearer, more militant than ever, genuinely revolutionary. It is in such moments that our thought about your being with us, your hoping with us, your working for us, your unstinted support of us, warms our hearts, inflames our hatred of all capitalist reaction, steels our revolutionary purpose, and

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May Day for Austrian Labor

By Jay Lovestone

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welds our now crushed ranks into the serried ranks of the victory of tomorrow."

My friends, these are no high sounding, empty phrases. These are simple, straightforward, painful, profound words uttered by a metal-trades worker communist, to whom communism is not a habit, not an order, not a fad, not a fashion, not a convenience, not a profitable faith steeped in the swamp of the People's Front of Daladier-Thorez-Blum. Here is a call from the darkest depths of that hell now known as Greater Germany. It is not a cry of anguish or despair. It is a challenge, a call to war on fascism. Here is a call that must return conviction even to those whose faith and ideals have been shaken to their very foundations by the recent crimes of Stalinism and the bloody onslaught of fascism. This is a call that will inspire hope and courage in the weakest and most despondent of us, that will bring life even to the deadest in our midst.

To this comrade and to thousands of others like him—comrades in the Revolutionary Socialist Party, comrades in the Communist Party, comrades in the Austrian Communist Opposition, workers hitherto unorganized—we owe a debt. We owe these courageous workers, these indomitable fighters, a debt of immeasurable gratitude, a debt due to them as the outpost of the higher, the socialist civilization of tomorrow, fighting a desperate rearguard action in the rat-ridden trenches of the blackest reaction of the dying capitalist civilization of today. This debt we can at best pay only to a very small extent—measured in moral and material support.

In more ways than one are we American workers still in a privileged position. Think of the plight of the working masses in that smoldering volcano known as the continent of Europe. I am not asking anyone to make any sacrifice. In the present situation, to call instant generous material help to the Austrian workers a sacrifice would be an insult to the workers responding. In these days, so crucial to the life of humanity, it would be folly even to think that it is necessary to urge repeatedly any working man or working woman, any genuine friend of labor and the cause of social progress, to give with joy and pride for saving thousands of unheralded heroes and unknown soldiers of our Austrian class brothers.

In these days of gravest alarm, there is also hope invincible. Heed the stirring and trail-blazing message I feel so honored to transmit to you from our comrades under fire. Extraordinary duty calls us all. Remember the inspiring days of Vienna in February 1934. Do not forget these men and women—these families of the blood of our class — these working-class folk whose stature in devotion, courage and conviction towers to such noble heights. They cry to all of you, to all of us, for help today—right now, at once!

Comrades and friends: I plead not for a lost cause or a lost war, I plead for the heroes of but a lost battle who need your help to reform their lines, to rebuild their ranks, so that they may serve as the shock troops in the battles of tomorrow that will bring victory in our common war against capitalist reaction and for our common ideal of socialist advancement.

Vienna's proletariat has flashed an SOS to the workers of the United States. Our members, our friends, all workers, will answer the call forthwith and answer with full heart and warmest spirit. There can be no response too generous or too prompt. Send on something right now to the Austrian Workers Solidarity Fund, Room 707, 131 West 33rd Street, New York City, Jay Lovestone, treasurer.

TORONTO, CANADA

JAY LOVESTONE

will speak
Friday, May 13, 8 p.m.
on
"CRISIS OVER EUROPE"
at
Labor Temple
167 Church Street