

Class Collaboration or Class Struggle

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE.

May Day was born in gigantic struggles of the American working class. The nation-wide strikes of May 1st, 1886, were the culmination of a period of gigantic struggles that seemed to promise to put the American working class well up in the vanguard of the world proletariat. The inspiration of this great struggle and of the heroic martyrdom of the Haymarket victims, caused the working class of Europe and of the entire world to convert May Day into International Labor Day.

Since the American working class celebrated its first May Day, there has been a colossal expansion of American capitalism. Trusts which were only in the process of birth have become all-powerful and they and the still more powerful banks have become completely dominant in American political life. The development of imperialism and the swift ascent of the American ruling class to a commanding position of world empire have resulted in a great split in the American working class—a systematic corruption and bribing of the bureaucracy and large sections of privileged workers. This has brought with it divisions in the ranks of the working class which leave the vast mass of the workers unorganized. It has brought with it the development of the theories and practice of class collaboration, and even a rival labor day—class-collaboration labor day—which comes in September. The official leadership of the American Federation of Labor has abandoned May Day, just as it has abandoned the class struggle of which it is the symbol.

Forty-two years after the historic struggles of 1886, the fruits of class collaboration and class betrayal show themselves only too clearly. The basic unions that formed the backbone of the organized labor movement are in ruins, or under an attack that threatens to destroy them. The bulk of the American working class is organized. In structure, in policies, in tactics, in viewpoint, in strength—in every respect—the existing unions are inadequate to cope with the tremendous power of the huge monopolies that dominate industry.

In place of "more democratic," in place of growing into "industry democracy," in place of peacefully entering into socialism,

as the reformists and class collaborationists have tried to tell us, American capitalism has grown into a powerful financial oligarchy, that exploits the workers and poor farmers, that destroys the petty bourgeoisie, that dominates industry and government, that crushes with its iron heel the colonial peoples, that supports fascist dictatorship in all quarters of the globe.

The A. F. of L. bureaucracy has made an open confession of bankruptcy, pleading with big business to accept its officials to "manage" the workers and to "maintain peace" in industry.

The "heroic" liberals who were going to "bust the trusts" have passed into oblivion or have become the official minstrels to sing the praise of these same trusts. The socialist party, which was going to reform capitalism out of existence, has reformed itself out of existence. The label is still there, but with the class struggle abandoned and no mission left but the dirty task of showing the capitalists and the A. F. of L. bureaucracy how to fight the "Reds," the socialist party is leader even than pre-war trust-busting.

Yet never was there greater need of class struggle, of powerful weapons of struggle, than on this May Day, 1928. American capitalism, concerning which so many illusions were deliberately fostered by the liberal and socialist "theoreticians" is showing itself in all its viciousness. American "prosperity" has brought unemployment in its train, and that working class which the reformists were flattering as "the best off in the world" proves to be the worst off of any of the industrially advanced countries, because America alone has no insurance for its unemployed workers.

American democracy has shown itself nakedly as a financial oligarchy, as an open and brutal dictatorship of Wall Street, over the masses of American workers, and much of the rest of the world. That "pacifistic" government which entered into the world war "to end all wars" is openly preparing for a new imperialist war that will be far more terrible than the last. Unemployment, war, union-smashing, injunction government, wholesale arrests, break-up of picket lines, open dictatorship by Wall Street—such is the face that American capitalism presents to us today. And

it is with this capitalism that the socialists and the A. F. of L. bureaucracy would have us "cooperate." These conditions cry aloud for a strengthening of the working class, for the building of its organizations of struggle, for the repudiation of the class collaborationists, for their expulsion from the labor movement.

We must restore to May Day the spirit of struggle that the Haymarket martyrs bequeathed to it. And

we must raise our May Day struggle to a higher level than ever they dreamed of, for have we not the lessons of the Russian revolution?

On many points the American working class is beginning to fight harder. Let us make this a May Day of class struggle. And let us make it the beginning of a year of such struggles as will carry the American working class forward to its goal.

How the Chinese Worker

May Day is an international labor day. But May Day was of little significance in the history of the Chinese labor movement until 1922. Up to that date, it was the intellectuals, the professors and the students, who were enthusiastic about it. It was always an occasion for the intellectuals to issue special numbers. It was the magazines and newspapers and for the students to have a "holiday." It is interesting to note that when it is a day for the workers of the entire world to demonstrate solidarity and ceaseless fight against the capitalist class—the historic enemy of the working class, the intellectuals have a whole day's rest. As to the Chinese working class, May Day still meant little. There were only a few unions organized which were also "illegal." They had to work on that day as hard as on any other day.

Great Seamen's Strike.

In January, 1922, the great seamen's strike, at Hongkong and Canton, took place. It lasted for 56 days, ending in the recognition of the Seamen's Union and increases in wages. In the same year, the strike of the railwaymen on the Peking-Hankow line, in the course of which many of the leaders and strikers were shot, took place. But, a central Railwaymen's Union was organized in Hankow with a membership of 50,000. All these, with the successful results of other minor strikes, stimulated the whole movement and led to the formation of unions in various parts of the country. It was on the May Day of this year that the Chinese working class for the first time, demonstrated its solidarity. On that day, the first All-China Labor Congress, on the initiative of the secretaries of all the existing unions, was held at Canton. A membership of 230,000

was represented. Of more importance was that in this congress, the first one in the history of the Chinese labor movement, it was decided that the unions be organized along industrial lines.

As I do not attempt to write on the history of the Chinese labor movement, I will not, therefore, set down the development of it. Only those events, most important and significant, that have taken place on past May Days will be written here.

All-China Labor Congress.

On May Day, 1925, the Second All-China Labor Congress was held at Canton in an atmosphere of rising and militant labor movements. In this congress 600,000 workers, or three times the number in 1922 were represented. However, the militancy and solidarity of the Chinese working class were not shown by the increasing membership represented in the congress only, but by the correct ideology, tactics and leadership this congress decided to follow also. It was in this congress that the working class organization, the All-China Labor Federation, was inaugurated. It was in this congress the decision to have this organization affiliated to the R. I. L. U. was made. In other words, the May Day of 1925 marked the beginning of the entering of the Chinese proletariat into the world proletarian movement.

On the May Day of the following year, 1926, the first anniversary of the organization of the All-China Labor Federation, the Third All-China Labor Congress was held. In this session 1,200,000 workers were represented, comprising 639 unions. In Shanghai, at that time, the labor movement was "illegal" and was suppressed by the northern militarists. There was a "drop" in the membership in the unions. The num-