

Class Consciousness, Organization Growing

May Day Celebrated In 24 Cities

This year thousands of workers in over a score of cities in the U.S. joined millions of workers from around the world in celebrating the First of May—the international day of celebration and struggle of the world's workers. The day in which class conscious workers amass their forces, take stock of the development of their movement, map out the key arenas of battle in the year ahead, and once again declare their intention to be free of the bonds of wage slavery.

It is the day when the working class that holds power in the socialist countries celebrates their victory and extends the hand of solidarity to the oppressed throughout the world. And in all countries it is the day when the workers not only advance their fight against the rulers they face most directly, but also reaffirm that the workers of all countries have a common interest and a common goal in opposition to the exploiters of all countries who try to pit the workers of every nation against each other and against the toilers in the Third World, and who prepare to use the workers as cannon fodder in their wars of plunder.

This year's May Day activities in the U.S., held in over 20 cities, were a step forward in the class struggle in this country and reflected real advances that had been made in the past year. The main advance of this year's May Day activities over those of previous years was the growing number of workers, employed and unemployed, who participated in the celebrations and who are coming out of the thick of the class struggle and out of battles involving thousands of workers and more. As one worker in Detroit put it, "May Day is the day that we tell the rich to go to hell," and this year more workers, in a more organized and powerful way, were determined to make such a statement.

This year the workers who rallied on May Day not only celebrated and assessed the progress of their movement—especially the fact that over the last year significant advances have been made in waging a more organized and protracted struggle on several key fronts—but left the demonstrations more determined and with great enthusiasm to take a vital step in both consolidating these advances and laying the basis for much greater advances in the future: the building of a national workers organization.

The May Day demonstrations—consisting of a variety of activities including marches, rallies and car caravans—ranged in size from a few dozen in cities where the class conscious struggle of the workers is just beginning to develop, to 450 and 500 in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area respectively. In most cities, attendance ranged from 125 to over 200.

The turnout and the composition of the May Day events were closely connected with the overall stage of development of the class struggle in this country, and were an important indication of the pressing tasks facing those workers determined to be in the forefront of the struggle against the class enemy. On the one hand the numbers were small, compared to the class as a

whole. But more importantly, those who saw the need to participate and build May Day were, in their majority, those workers who are deeply involved in the struggle of the masses, in many cases in new rank and file organizations, linked in struggle with hundreds and thousands of workers, and determined to build each and every battle of the workers as part of the overall class struggle of the workers against the capitalist tormentors.

Increased Organization

Since May Day 1976 several important class battles have taken place in which organization of the rank and file, and a core of active and advanced workers has developed. In many cities these workers provided a solid basis for building May Day and greatly added to its overall working class character. In several cities, especially Detroit, numbers of auto workers came out for May Day who had been actively involved in the battles around the 1976 auto contract, and who, in the course of this and subsequent battles, had helped to make that struggle more than simply a fight around a contract but, in the eyes of a great many auto workers, an opportunity to hit back at their oppression and increase their ability to fight on.

Similarly the past year saw increased organization and rank and file resistance in the steel industry—both in the course of using the Sadlowski election campaign to further the struggle against the union machine and in the struggle that is gathering steam now against another sellout being rammed down the workers' throats. In many of the celebrations steel workers came to bring out their own experience in struggle and join together with workers of all industries.

A particularly strong showing of unemployed took part in this year's May Day events, which reflected the upsurge in the struggle of the unemployed over the last period. Led by the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC), one of the national sponsors of May Day, unemployed have waged a sharp fight against Carter and the capitalists' cutbacks on unemployment insurance. Speakers from UWOC spoke out forcefully against the ruling class attempts to further drive down the unemployed and use them as a reserve against those workers still on the job.

The participation in the marches and from the speaker platforms of people active in many different battles going on in the various cities helped give life to the slogan hoisted at May Day: "Workers Unite to Lead the Fight Against All Oppression." In the Northwest, workers and others have come forward in the battle to free Bornson and Davis (two imprisoned workers jailed for taking over a food stamp office and demanding food for their families).

In Honolulu two of the tenants of Waihole-Waikane valleys, scene of a protracted battle against eviction, spoke out about that struggle and how in the course of

it the face of the enemy has become clearer to themselves and others. In the San Francisco Bay Area activists from the battle to save the I-Hotel participated, and in Cleveland quite a few people joined in as a result of the battle against police enforced gas cutoffs.

Also significant this year was the celebration of May Day in several areas where no such activities had taken place in recent history, and the big advances in size in a few of the celebrations.

In St. Louis fifty people, including a significant number from industry in that city as well as a good turnout of unemployed, held the first May Day demonstration in that city in decades. Pittsburgh, Pa. and Norfolk, Va. were also the scenes of May Day activity for the first time in recent memory. In El Paso, Texas a significant advance took place when 70 workers gathered in a park for a May Day rally and defeated an attempt by some opportunists to try to disrupt the rally and provoke an incident. Seattle's May Day also marked a big step ahead when 175 (over twice the size of last year's crowd) attended a dinner and program.

The celebration of May Day in new cities, including some important industrial centers, is further evidence of the growth of class consciousness among a still small but highly significant section of workers rooted in the battles taking place in their shops and industries and determined to advance the overall struggle of the working class.

In the course of building May Day hundreds of thousands of leaflets were distributed across the country, thousands of buttons were worn, tens of thousands of posters were put up. All of this, coupled with countless discussions, helped to make May Day a big question among broad groupings of workers.

In New York a "May Day float"—a flatbed truck equipped with a giant cutout of the May Day symbol and broadcasting fighting working class music by Prairie Fire—toured New York City and northern New Jersey, and rallies were held outside factories. In the coalfields a similar effort was made to bring out May Day to the mines through mini-rallies held in many locations.

A great many workers who are not yet ready to take the step that participating in May Day signifies, expressed their agreement with the demands and slogans and lent their support to the demonstration in various ways, from buying buttons to signing banners carried in the marches.

A Part of Ongoing Battles

Efforts were made to bring out May Day as part of the overall battle of the working class; not only in its overall role as a summation and concentration of the class struggle as a whole, but by linking it closely to particular battles now in progress. In New York, for example, UWOC brought May Day into the fight against Carter and the bourgeoisie's attacks on the unemployed. After UWOC's "Carterville" (tents set up to dramatize the plight of the unemployed) was attacked by police (see graphic on page 19), UWOC went throughout the New York City area using a flatbed truck to expose the attack, and point the way forward in continuing the battle, including calling on the unemployed to join in the May Day march.

At each of the May Day celebrations speakers from the Revolutionary Communist Party presented the Party's view of the development of the workers struggle as well as the goal of revolution, socialism and communism. At the rallies these speeches were met by great enthusiasm, and they increased workers' desire to know more about communism and the RCP.

The RCP's role in the May Day celebrations, as well as May Day itself, sparked quite a bit of discussion about communism, not only among those who participated but also among the far broader numbers of workers who read the May Day literature and actively discussed the question of May Day.

In the decades after World War 2 the bourgeoisie launched a frantic anti-communist campaign which was aided by the betrayal of the CPUSA and the fact that the working class had no vanguard for two decades. The legacies of this are still present today and a weight on the growth of the working class struggle. Coupled with the attacks of the bourgeoisie on communism, has been the relatively strong position of U.S. imperialism in the post World War 2 period. And while this position is eroding and crisis growing deeper, still the bottom has not entirely fallen out of U.S. bourgeois society, and revolution does not yet appear as a burning necessity and a real possibility to many workers. Not only are even many of the more advanced workers affected by all of this to one degree or another, but these workers immediately come up against the fact that in participating in May Day they themselves are likely to come under attack as "reds" by employers, reactionary union officials and even some misinformed fellow workers.

In some of the working class organizations, the question of whether to participate or not was hotly debated. In the coalfields area the bourgeoisie launched a wave of red-baiting. In several factories in upstate New York, workers building for May Day came under particularly sharp attack, including firings and an instance of a foreman ripping off May Day buttons from people, declaring it "illegal" etc. The capitalists tried to say that May Day was something that only communists celebrated



Four hundred and fifty march in May Day '77 celebration to New York City's Union Square. From Seattle to Norfolk, Va., from Hawaii to Boston, thousands of workers rallied under the blood red flag of the working class to the same end.

Statement on May Day, 1977

By the Central Committee, Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

Fellow workers, brothers and sisters:

Today we are celebrating as our class celebrates—in militant and determined action, rallying and marching in unison, showing to those who have not joined us that there is a way forward and declaring to those who block that way forward, the capitalists, that we will gather the strength of our class to go through and over them, for they will allow it no other way.

And we are not celebrating alone. While thousands in this country are once again raising the bright banner of May Day, in open defiance of the capitalists and all other keepers of the past, literally hundreds of millions, in all parts of the globe, march in the same spirit and proclaim a common future that we will bring about together—a world without exploiters and tormentors of the people, where all oppression has been ended.

Nearly 100 years ago the struggle of our class in this country for the eight hour day gave rise to this great international holiday of the working people. And to our class in this country today falls a great task—to strike at and finally pound to dust the chains of capitalist enslavement that bind not only the great majority in this country but many millions more throughout the world. History and the development of human society places this responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the working class here and throughout the world, and the working class will not and cannot fail to carry out this historic mission, for only in this way can the evils we face be eliminated and human society advance.

Today we face many difficulties. Our rulers, and those like them in every country, on the verge of their extinction, lash out like wounded beasts. At the same time they call on us to sacrifice still more for them, to wound ourselves so they have more blood to suck. Everywhere among our class there is anger—but there is also confusion, and the ranks of those who have recognized the real face of the enemy, and have come to know real friends, are yet few.

Still these ranks are bound to swell, because every attack finds many more with no choice but to fight back, to question "does it have to be this way?" and to seek the means to make a better way.

Ten million today are denied a job. That is ten million whose frustration can and will become a hammer striking at the capitalists who have torn the means to live out of their hands.

Tens of millions more still with a job are driven harder every day, forced to

spend up their lives to enrich those who are rich only because they do not work but hold the whip to make others work for them. That is tens of millions more whose anger will become a battering ram pounding at the fortress of these modern day tyrants.

The great majority of people in this country, the workers and all others oppressed, are forced to live amidst the decay and rot of this system—cities falling apart, desperadoes and police making the streets unsafe to walk, filth and corruption lurking everywhere, discrimination and injustice like a deep-cut wound, and the prospect of war looming on the horizon, a war in which millions would be murdered by rival gangsters in their contest to rob and plunder throughout the world. The great majority of people have no way out of this but to rise up, join ranks, turn their fear and outrage into the concentrated strength of millions, against which no force on earth can stand, and direct that strength against the source of every outrage, the capitalist rulers.

The road forward is the road of hard struggle, and only through struggle comes progress. Out of all the battles that rage wherever there are oppressors and oppressed will be forged step by step the unity and understanding to wage and win the decisive battle, to tear down the capitalist prison-house and then continue the struggle until mankind has been freed from all forms of slavery.

Increasingly at the head of the oppressed must and will march the organized ranks of the working class, raising its own banner and rallying millions into a mighty force. A great step toward this is being taken this year in the formation of a national workers organization on Labor Day weekend in Chicago. The Revolutionary Communist Party hails the development of this organization and will work, together with many other workers, to build it as a tremendous weapon of the working class in the fight against all oppression.

As thousands all over the country hold these May Day celebrations, joining together people out of many battles and demonstrating our common desire and determination to carry forward the cause of the working class, we are not only strengthening our movement today, drawing the battle lines and exposing the face of the enemy more clearly, we are also planting the seeds of a more powerful movement in the months and years ahead. There is much work to be done and a world to win.

The future belongs to the working class—we must dare to make it! ■



Workers from Cincinnati, Dayton and Louisville, Ky. joined forces for a May Day march and rally in Cincinnati. Carrying banners from numerous plants and industries, they expressed the determination of the working class to battle the capitalists' attacks.

May Day...

Continued from Page 10

and was alien to the working class. All-in-all the role of communists in May Day heightened what is a general feature of the workers struggle in the U.S. today: that the stakes are higher, that struggle is not entered into lightly but when workers do come into battle they do so with all the more determination and perseverance.

Question of Communism

The main way that the anti-communism question was answered was by bringing out the purpose and nature of May Day, how its demands and its thrust are entirely in the interest of the working class, how May First itself originally grew out of the struggle of the broad masses of workers in this country and around the world, and how it both reflects and advances their struggle. In many of the celebrations efforts were made to bring out May Day's historical sweep, as well as its international character, by raising some of the important battles of the past. In Detroit, for example, a car caravan went to a cemetery in the shadow of Ford's River Rouge plant, where four workers were murdered in the famous Hunger March in the early years of the Depression, and laid wreaths at each of the grave sights where the martyrs are buried.

Among those workers who were won to participate in May Day, and many others as well, the fact that communists were involved in building May Day as part of the struggle of the working class laid the basis for furth-

er discussion about the final goal of the working class struggle.

Working Class Internationalism

May Day is the *international* holiday of the working class, an important weapon for building the solidarity of the class worldwide. This, too, was reflected at the May Day celebrations. This year's celebrations took place as the flames of revolutionary struggle are sweeping southern Africa and the U.S. bourgeoisie is scurrying frantically about and using all sorts of tactics to try to protect their sources of pillage there.

At the rallies speakers spoke to the demand raised: "U.S. Out of Southern Africa, Superpowers Hands Off!" and laid out the stand of the working class in this conflict: resolute opposition to the robbery and aggression of our own rulers and their mirror-image competitors in the Soviet Union, and full support for the struggling masses in southern Africa. In many cities numbers of foreign students, active in the struggles of their peoples in the fight against their domestic exploiters and the imperialist powers that prop them up, took part in the demonstrations, helping to lend them an internationalist character.

Workers left the rallies with a deeper understanding of the need to stand shoulder to shoulder with workers and the oppressed worldwide. And many are preparing to go to Washington, D.C. to participate in the African Liberation Day demonstration.

On the Monday after the May Day activities, newspapers in many cities across the country headlined the May Day activities that were viciously attacked by the ruling classes in several countries. They were hoping to try to portray May Day as a day of fanaticism and pointless violence. But what the facts really underline is that

throughout the world May Day is the day that the working class raises the banner of its class—a banner which will spell doom for the bourgeoisie's "paradise" of exploitation. As they see the threat to their rule mount, there is no crime they will not stoop to—including gunning down people in some countries, and mercilessly beating hundreds in Spain even as the rulers there piously declare they are returning to "democracy."

May Day was also a battle internationally between revolutionary forces of the working class and the revisionists and social democrats who try to gut the revolutionary heart out of May Day and turn it into a "socialist" version of Labor Day in the U.S. In the Soviet Union and their revisionist satellites, this was exactly what May Day was—a lifeless affair where the forms of the revolutionary past are perverted into revisionist extravaganzas. Not only did the revolutionaries have to contend politically with the revisionist versions of George Meany, but in some countries clashes resulted as well, as revisionists tried vainly to stomp out the flames of revolutionary May Day.

Elsewhere in the world great demonstrations also took place where, in most places, workers unfurled the red flag and pointed to the future of the workers struggle throughout the world—revolution, socialism and communism. In this country May Day brought together both workers who are already fighting with the final aim in mind and those who do not yet see the necessity or possibility of completely remaking the world.

Workers left the May Day demonstrations with a clearer understanding of the task which falls on them. Though only a few thousand in all, these more class conscious workers play a critical role in moving the entire class forward. Workers came from many different arenas of struggle and out of battles big and small, but they came determined to further the immediate battles they face and still more to take up the battles against all oppression and aim it squarely at the heart of the problem—the capitalist exploiters.

The struggle to build the May Day demonstrations as well as the events themselves, brought to the fore active and advanced workers and brought out sharply the key role they play. In those areas where rank and file organization has taken a firmer hold, bringing together a core of workers increasingly at the head of the rank and file and seeing the face of the enemy and the basic nature of the struggle against it, the workers were better able to bring out May Day as part of the struggle they are waging. In speeches by the RCP in many cities, the Party strongly emphasized the role of this active minority of workers, who must continue to be in the forefront of the struggles of the broad masses of the workers and the oppressed, struggles that will increase in size and strength as capitalism falls into further decay intensifying the exploitation of the workers and pushing the level of oppression further down on the backs of the masses.

In this spirit workers returned to the factories and mills able not only to report on the May Day activities to their fellow workers, but more importantly to fight even harder around the tasks that May Day focused, especially the key battle to seize the time in '77 and form a national workers organization in Chicago on Labor Day weekend. ■