

FIRST OF MAY

May Day in India.

By V. Chatterjee.

The fact that all cable lines between India and the outside world are absolutely controlled by British imperialist agencies is being conspicuously brought home not only to the labour press but even to the bourgeois press of Europe and America in connection with the present revolutionary mass movement in India. The MacDonald Government is determined to isolate India as far as possible, so that no help or stimulus from outside should be given to the great mass revolt of the Indian people for their independence, and also that the world proletariat should be kept ignorant of the regime of terror with which the revolt of the Indian masses is being met. This deliberate isolation was very clearly shown by the suppression of all news regarding the **May Day celebrations** in India. There was just one telegram of 11 lines in the "Times" of May 2nd in which the following was reported:—

"May Day passed quietly in Calcutta. By leaflet and street propaganda efforts had been made to promote a complete **hartal**. Although shops and bazaars in the native quarters closed their doors and there was a deficiency of omnibuses and taxicabs, the city was quiet, a full service of tramcars was run, and the streets were less crowded than usual. Extra police were stationed in all dangerous areas, and their presence discouraged demonstrations....."

This telegram suppresses the truth about the actual happenings in **Calcutta**, while it does not even mention the magnificent demonstrations in all the industrial areas. We are in a position today to give a few facts to show how the class-conscious proletariat of India gave proof of its solidarity with the international proletariat on May Day.

In **Calcutta** the partial strikes and street demonstrations took place in the face of the terror initiated by the Government against the working-class and youth organisations. The offices of the trade unions (jute workers, textile workers, etc.); of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, of the youth and students organisations were constantly raided by the police, and the officials and several workers arrested just a few days before May 1st. P. K. Majumder, Manager of the **Jugabarta Press** was arrested on April 30th because he had published an account of the May Day celebration, and Nipendranath Choudhuri was arrested on the same day as publisher of the May Day Bulletin. The "Times" reporter did not mention the fact (reported by the Nationalist "Free Press of India") that the omnibuses and taxis did not run **in spite** of the fact that the police had threatened to cancel the licenses of the drivers if they did not turn up on duty as usual. Not only the regular police but military pickets were stationed at road crossings, and special military and police forces were concentrated in the Bhowanipore quarter where the recent violent conflicts had taken place between the masses of demonstrators and the police.

In **Lahore**, where British Imperialism had often succeeded in setting up religious riots between Hindus and Mohammedans, remarkable solidarity and revolutionary enthusiasm was displayed by the workers. According to the report in the "Tribune" of Lahore, the mass meeting convened on May Day by the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (Revolutionary Youth League) was particularly marked by the strong participation of the workers of the city. The most active interest was displayed by the railway workers (North Western Railway) who turned out in full force. Speeches were made explaining the significance of May Day, condemning capitalism, and calling upon the workers to unite for the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism. The first resolution unanimously passed was one expressing solidarity with imprisoned Communist workers all over the world and welcoming the international brotherhood of workers and peasants.

In **Amritsar**, the ground had been well prepared by the Naujawan Bharat Sabha as well as by the Workers' and Peasants' Party. Propaganda for May Day had been made by leaflets and posters in Urdu and Gurmukhi (the languages of the Punjab) and the revolutionary monthly magazine, the **Kirti**, published at Amritsar, issued a May number in both languages containing splendid articles on May Day, on Marx, Lenin, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. A mass meeting was organised by the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, and a procession was then formed which marched through the principal streets, terminating in the park **Jallianwala Bagh**, the scene of the unforgettable massacre of workers and peasants perpetrated by General Dyer on April 13th, 1919. At that place the Red Flag was hoisted, and Comrade Ajit Singh in hoisting the Flag, exhorted the large mass of assembled workers "to maintain the honour of the flag at all costs."

The reports of the celebrations in South India show the influence that is still exercised by the religious-reformist labour leaders Shiva Rao, Giri & Co., who are doing their best to keep down the revolutionary temper of the workers. No details are to hand of the very well attended and successful demonstration held at **Gondia** under the auspices of the B.N.R. (Bengal-Nagpur Railway) Labour Union. At the special meeting organised by the **Perambur** Branch of the M. S. M. (Madras Southern Mahratta) Railway Employees' Union, the chairman Govindrajula Naidu made a speech on the present situation in the country and on the need for strictly adhering to non-violence!!! Resolutions were passed condemning the police for resorting to shooting and dispersing demonstrators, but also asking for contributions to the **Satyagraha** (non-violent) fund!

In **Colombatore**, an important industrial centre, a meeting of all the workers of the town was held and the first item of the programme was the hoisting of the Red Flag. Resolutions were passed conveying fraternal greetings to the workers of the world on the celebration of May Day, and demanding the release of the Meerut and other class war prisoners in India. But before the resolutions were passed the President of the Labour Union, Ramaswami Aiyengar, declared that in the existing circumstances the only way open to India to achieve independence was by following the principles of Gandhi and fully imbibing the spirit of non-violence! After the meeting a procession was formed which marched through the principal streets of the town, carrying the Red Flag but nevertheless shouting "Gandhi ki jai" (victory to Gandhi)!

It is obvious that the finest demonstrations took place in **Bombay**, the city of the revolutionary textile and railway workers, of the most advanced section of the Indian proletariat. During the whole day there were several processions of employed and unemployed workers, led by the recently organised Workers' Volunteer Corps, wearing red badges with the emblem of Hammer and Sickle. In the evening a very well attended mass meeting was held at Parel and from there the workers marched in procession to Chawpatty. The special May Day number of the "Workers' Weekly", the organ of the militant working class, published in Bombay, issued a stirring appeal to the oppressed masses of India to make May Day the symbol of the fight against imperialism, against capitalism, against international reformism and social fascism.

While the above-mentioned facts show to some extent the solidarity that was displayed by the Indian workers with the international revolutionary working class, it should also be remembered that solidarity with the Indian workers constituted one of the central features of the May Day demonstrations of the European and American proletariat. One of the outstanding slogans of the mass demonstrations in **London** and **New York** was "for the Independence of India and support for the Indian Revolution". It is the most important immediate task of the workers of the world to carry these slogans into action and to organise the widest possible moral and material support for the workers and peasants of India in their heroic struggle against foreign and native enemies for their national and social emancipation.