

# Long Live the First of May ! <sup>1</sup>

*April 1912*

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Comrades !

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 eulogise 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 the 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!"

That is how the workers in free countries celebrate the First of May.

The Russian workers, ever since they began to realise their position, and not wishing to lag behind their comrades, have always joined the general chorus of their foreign comrades and, jointly with them, have celebrated the First of May in spite of everything, in spite of the brutal acts of repression of the tsarist government. True, for the past two or three years, during the period of counter-revolutionary bacchanalia and disorganisation of the Party, industrial depression and the deadening political indifference of the broad masses, the Russian workers have been unable to celebrate their glorious workers' festival in the old way. But the revival that has started in the country recently; the economic strikes and the political protests of the workers in connection, say, with the rehearing of the case of the Social-Democratic deputies in the Second Duma; the growing discontent among broad strata of the peasants because of the famine which has affected over twenty gubernias, and the protests of hundreds of thousands of shop assistants against the "renovated" system of the Russian diehards—all go to show that the deadening torpor is passing off, giving place to a political revival in the country, primarily among the proletariat. That is why this year the Russian workers can and must on this day extend a hand to their foreign comrades. That is why they must celebrate the First of May in one way or another together with them.

They must declare today that they are at one with their comrades in the free countries—they do not and will not worship the golden calf.

Moreover, to the general demand of the workers of all countries they must add their own Russian demand for the overthrow of tsarism and the establishment of a democratic republic.

"We detest the crowns of tyrants!" "We honour the chains of the martyred people!" Death to bloody tsarism! Death to landlordism! Death to the tyranny of the masters in factories, mills and mines! Land for the peasants! An eight-hour day for the workers! A democratic republic for all the citizens of Russia!

That is also what the Russian workers must proclaim on this day.

It is lies and grovelling before Nicholas the Last when the Russian liberals assure themselves and others that tsarism has consolidated itself in Russia and is capable of satisfying the principal needs of the people.

It is deception and hypocrisy when the Russian liberals sing in all keys that the revolution is dead and that we are living under a "renovated" system.

Look around! Does long-suffering Russia resemble a "renovated," "well-governed" country?

Instead of a democratic constitution—a regime of gallows and brutal tyranny!

Instead of a popular parliament—the black Duma of the black landlords!

Instead of the "unshakeable foundations of civil liberty," instead of the freedom of speech, assembly, press, association and strike promised by the Manifesto of October 17—the dead hand of "discretion" and "prevention," the closing of newspapers, the deportation of editors, the suppression of unions and the breaking-up of meetings!

Instead of inviolability of the person—beating up in prisons, outrages against citizens, the bloody suppression of strikers in the Lena goldfields!

Instead of satisfaction of the peasants' needs—the policy of still further driving the peasant masses from the land!

Instead of a well-ordered administration—the thieving by quartermasters, thieving at railway Head Offices, thieving in the Forestry Department, thieving in the Naval Department!

Instead of order and discipline in the governmental machine—forgery in the courts, swindling and blackmail by criminal investigation departments, murder and provocation in the secret-police departments!

Instead of the international greatness of the Russian state—the ignominious failure of Russian "policy" in the Near and Far East and the role of butcher and despoiler in the affairs of bleeding Persia!

Instead of peace of mind and security for the inhabitants—suicides in the towns and horrible starvation among 30,000,000 peasants in the rural districts!

Instead of improvement and purification of morals —incredible dissoluteness in the monasteries, those citadels of official morality!

And to complete the picture—the brutal shooting of hundreds of toilers in the Lena goldfields! . . .

Destroyers of already won liberties, worshippers of gallows and firing-squads, inventors of "discretion" and "prevention," thieving quartermasters, thieving engineers, robber police, murdering secret police, dissolute Rasputins—these are the "renovators" of Russia!

And yet there are people in the world who have the effrontery to say that all is well in Russia, that the revolution is dead!

No, comrades; where millions of peasants are starving and workers are shot down for going on strike the revolution will go on living until the disgrace to mankind— Russian tsarism—is swept from the face of the earth.

And on this day, the First of May, we must say in one way or another, at meetings, mass gatherings or at secret assemblies—whichever is the most expedient— that we pledge ourselves to fight for the complete overthrow of the tsarist monarchy, that we welcome the coming Russian revolution, the liberator of Russia!

Let us, then, extend our hands to our comrades abroad and together with them proclaim :

*Down With Capitalism !*

*Long Live Socialism !*

Let us hoist the flag of the Russian revolution bearing the inscriptions :

*Down With the Tsarist Monarchy !*

*Long Live the Democratic Republic !*

Comrades! Today we are celebrating the First of May ! *Long Live the First of May !*

*Long Live International Social-Democracy !*

*Long Live the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party !*

***The Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.***

Published in leaflet form in April 1912

1. The leaflet "Long Live the First of May!" was written by J. V. Stalin in Moscow, at the beginning of April 1912. It was printed clandestinely at a legal printing plant in Tiflis and all the copies were subsequently sent to St. Petersburg.

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