

cut. . . . We must fight against every attack on our standards. . . .

3RD RAILMAN: Aye, and more . . . we must fight to get back the conditions of the 1919 agreement.

ALL: HOW CAN WE FIGHT?

4TH RAILMAN: Can we trust Robley and Tramp?

ALL: NO.

4TH RAILMAN: Who can we trust?

ALL: OURSELVES.

1ST RAILMAN: Comrades, is this not true? How can we trust the Tramps and Robleys who already have inflicted wage-cuts upon us? Did not Tramp agree to cut the wages of the textile workers by 6¼ per cent? Did not Robley and Tramp both recommend the last wage-cut? You *know* they did.

Comrades, we must recognize our enemies including both the company directors and their lackeys, the reformist union leaders. . . . We must fight to defend our conditions by building up rank-and-file depot and station committees everywhere. We must build our *own* leadership. . . . THE ALL-IN DEPOT COMMITTEE.

ALL: Long live the all-in Depot Committees of Action. Fight for the 1919 agreement.

W.S.

The First of May (1932)

A mass speaking scene by Tom Thomas

If possible groups should march through hall to platform singing a revolutionary song, and stop just as they get to platform and shout:

ALL: THE FIRST OF MAY – THE WORKERS' DAY

1ST GROUP: Throughout the world.

2ND GROUP: With flags unfurled,

3RD GROUP: Workers of every race and land,

4TH GROUP: Workers who toil by machine or hand,

5TH GROUP: March! (*Begin to march on to platform singing softly*

WHIRLWINDS OF DANGER)

1ST GROUP: (*Join in*) March.

2ND GROUP: (*Join in*) March.

3RD GROUP: (*Join in*) March.

4TH GROUP: (*Join in*) March.

(*Speaker runs forward*)

SPEAKER: March. (*Keeping time to the rhythm of the marching*)

Out of their slums and their hovels –

GROUPS: March.

SPEAKER: Out of the sweatshops and factories –

GROUPS: March.

SPEAKER: Out of the darkness of the mines, and the stench of the mills –

GROUPS: March.

SPEAKER: On to the streets to the *light* –

GROUPS: March.

SPEAKER: To unite in the struggle for *life*.

ALL GROUPS: FOR LIFE

(*Groups arrange themselves in a semicircle behind speaker. Marching or marking time stops.*)

SPEAKER: In 1889 the Socialist International called on the workers of the world to demonstrate.

ALL GROUPS: For a universal 8-hour day. Against capitalist war.

For international solidarity between the workers of all countries.

SPEAKER: And every year since 1889 –

1ST GROUP: A spectre has haunted Europe.

2ND GROUP: A spectre has haunted the capitalist rulers of the world.

3RD GROUP: The spectre of the working masses refusing any longer to toil for the profits of the rich.

4TH GROUP: The spectre of the growing solidarity of the working masses of the world.

5TH GROUP: The spectre of the working men and women of the world organizing to overthrow the system of profits and mass murder.

ALL: THE SPECTRE OF COMMUNISM.

SPEAKER: And on one day in the year at least, as they dine and wine, or read the reports of their ever growing profits, the bourgeoisie of the world have shuddered and grown alarmed –

1ST GROUP: Have called out their police –

2ND GROUP: Have arrested and batoned –

3RD GROUP: Have warned their armies –

4TH GROUP: Have charged and murdered –

ALL: *But* have failed to stop the advance of the working class.

SPEAKER: In 1889 there were May Day demonstrations –

1ST GROUP: In Germany –

2ND GROUP: In France –

3RD GROUP: In England –

4TH GROUP: In America –

5TH GROUP: In Belgium –

SPEAKER: By 1899 there were *more* May Day demonstrations –

1ST GROUP: In Norway and Sweden –

2ND GROUP: In Switzerland –

3RD GROUP: In Italy –

1ST GROUP: In Canada –

2ND GROUP: In China and Australia –

3RD GROUP: In Mexico –

4TH GROUP: In South Africa –

5TH GROUP: In Argentine, Brazil, and Chile –

SPEAKER: But by this time capitalism had its agents firmly established within the ranks of the working class, and when

on the first of May, 1914, the Labour leaders in every country spoke of the international solidarity of the working class the capitalists could afford to smile. **THEY KNEW THEIR MEN.** And when in August 1914 the guns were fired, the mass murder started –

1ST GROUP: The workers were led –

2ND GROUP: The workers were driven to the slaughter –

3RD GROUP: *By their own leaders.*

4TH GROUP: By Renaudel and Longuet in France –

5TH GROUP: By Scheideman and Kautsky in Germany –

1ST GROUP: By Plekhanov and Martov in Russia –

2ND GROUP: By Renner and Adler in Austria –

3RD GROUP: By Macdonald, Henderson and Clynes in England.

ALL: By the trade unions, Labour Party and ILP in England.

SPEAKER: And May Day became a day in all countries for inciting the working class to fiercer hatred, and to a more bitter struggle against their brothers. Only Lenin's word sounding across the battlefields gave hope and direction to the working masses slaughtering each other for their masters.

(A large portrait of Lenin is held up, and three players group round it with megaphones, and deliver the following, emphatically)

The only way out for the working masses in every country is to turn the Imperialist war into a Civil War against their oppressors. Peace, Land and Bread.

SPEAKER: And on May Day 1917 –

ALL: The working class of the world was rejoicing in the overthrow of the Tsar. *(Exultant)*

SPEAKER: While the Russian workers were organizing to gain power, to take over the factories and land, and to drive out their capitalists and landowners. Under the leadership of Lenin and the Communist Party they succeeded, and on May Day 1918 there had been established for seven months –

ALL: **THE FIRST WORKERS' STATE. THE RUSSIAN SOCIALIST SOVIET REPUBLIC.** *(Triumphantly)*

(The 1ST GROUP unfurls Red Flags and waves)

ONE VOICE IN 1ST GROUP: The land for the peasants –

2ND VOICE: The factories for the workers –

3RD VOICE: Complete equality for women –

4TH VOICE: Freedom for all the enslaved races –

ALL 1ST GROUP: Culture, Art, Science, LIFE, for the working people.

SPEAKER: And now the spectre has become a *grim reality* to the capitalists of the world.

1ST GROUP: And for the workers –

2ND GROUP: A HOPE

3RD GROUP: A PROMISE

4TH GROUP: A G U A R A N T E E –

5TH GROUP: The guarantee that capitalism can be overthrown –

ALL: AND WILL BE OVERTHROWN.

SPEAKER: Hundreds and millions of pounds and thousands of lives were spent by the capitalists of the world in attacking the

2ND GROUP: We fought and struggled in Germany –

3RD GROUP: In France –

4TH GROUP: In England –

5TH GROUP: EVERYWHERE

ALL: To defend the First WORKERS' STATE.

SPEAKER: And every May Day since has been proclaimed – in the Soviet Union –

1ST GROUP: A step further forward in the building up of socialism.

SPEAKER: And in the capitalist world –

2ND GROUP: Solidarity with the Soviet Union!

3RD GROUP: Hands off the Workers' Country!

4TH GROUP: Down with the decaying capitalist system!

5TH GROUP: Defend wages and hours!

SPEAKER: The class struggle in the capitalist countries grows fiercer.

2ND GROUP: Every May Day, Paris is an armed camp –

3RD GROUP: Police and Army mobilized –

SPEAKER: By whom?

4TH GROUP: Socialists and Conservatives alike.

5TH GROUP: Hundreds of arrests.

SPEAKER: BERLIN, May Day 1929 –

2ND GROUP: Demonstrations forbidden –

SPEAKER: BUT –

3RD GROUP: Demonstrations took place (*raises flags*)

4TH GROUP: Hundreds of workers murdered

SPEAKER: By

5TH GROUP: The SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC POLICE.

SPEAKER: England, May Day, 1926 –

2ND GROUP: The first General Strike – (*Raises Red Flag*)

3RD GROUP: Betrayed!

SPEAKER: BY WHOM?

4TH GROUP: The Labour party –

5TH GROUP: The trade union leaders –

SPEAKER: MAY DAY, 1932! The crisis of capitalism grows more and more acute. In England –

2ND GROUP: 3 million unemployed.

SPEAKER: In Germany –

3RD GROUP: 6 million unemployed.

SPEAKER: In the United States –

4TH GROUP: 12 million unemployed.

SPEAKER: IN THE WORLD –

5TH GROUP: 40 million unemployed.

ALL: Hundreds of millions starving.

SPEAKER: But in the Soviet Union –

1ST GROUP: No unemployment. 2 million more in industry. The Five Year Plan of socialist construction.

SPEAKER: And the starving millions are demanding from decaying capitalism

ALL GROUPS: BREAD AND LIFE (*low and grim*)

SPEAKER: Capitalism can no longer give them –

ALL GROUPS: BREAD AND LIFE! BREAD AND LIFE!! (*fierce*)

SPEAKER: Capitalism in every country can only give them –

1ST GROUP: Unemployment –

1ST AND 2ND GROUPS: Lower wages – (*with increasing anger and bitterness*)

1ST, 2ND, and 3RD GROUPS: Longer hours – (*with increasing anger and bitterness*)

1ST, 2ND, 3RD AND 4TH GROUPS: Starvation – (*with increasing anger and bitterness*)

ALL: MISERY! (*with increasing anger and bitterness*)

SPEAKER: And in every country of the world, the workers are breaking loose from the shackles that tied them to the will of their masters! (*exultantly*)

SPEAKER: In the United States

2ND GROUP: Hunger Riots – Strikes

SPEAKER: In France –

SPEAKER: In SPAIN

ALL GROUPS: REVOLUTION!

SPEAKER: In Austria

ALL GROUPS: Armed Revolt!

SPEAKER: In China

ALL GROUPS: 60 million people in Soviet China!

SPEAKER: Everywhere – demanding

ALL GROUPS: BREAD and LIFE! BREAD AND LIFE!! (*fierce and urgent*)

SPEAKER: Everywhere the workers' May Day demonstrations are threatened by –

2ND GROUP: Police –

3RD GROUP: Rifles –

4TH GROUP: Machine-guns – (*Threatening*)

5TH GROUP: Armoured Cars –

SPEAKER: EXCEPT –

1ST GROUP: Only in the Soviet Union. WE MARCH *with rifles, with Machine-guns, with Armoured Cars, with Aeroplanes.*

(*while all other groups sing softly Soviet Airmen's song, shouting at finish with 1st Group*)

ALL GROUPS: DEFENDING THE USSR.

SPEAKER: (*with tremendous emphasis and enthusiasm*) Millions and millions of workers and peasants, men and women alike, Tartars, Russians, Georgians, and Kirghiz, demonstrating freely on the streets their implacable hatred of capitalism and their determination to defend the workers' country.

2ND GROUP: Millions of workers

(*begin emphatically, but not too loudly – from here build up to final climax*)

2ND AND 3RD GROUPS: In the capitalist world,

2ND, 3RD AND 4TH GROUPS: Marching!

(*all begin to mark time*)

2ND, 3RD, 4TH AND 5TH GROUPS: Demonstrating!!!

SPEAKER: Demanding!!!!

(*The voices must keep to rhythm of foot-beats*)

2ND, 3RD, 4TH AND 5TH GROUPS: BREAD AND LIFE!!

SPEAKER: All the workers of the world united in the common struggle –

1ST AND 2ND GROUPS: Against Capitalism!

3RD, 4TH AND 5TH GROUPS: Against Imperialism!

(*cease to mark time*)

ALL GROUPS: IN DEFENCE OF THE SOVIET UNION!! FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY OF THE WORKING CLASS! UNITED . . . IN . . . THE . . . COMMON . . . STRUGGLE . . .

(*converging forward to centre behind speaker with flags raised*)

1ST GROUP: FOR THE WORLD

1ST AND 2ND GROUPS: FEDERATION

1ST, 2ND AND 3RD GROUPS: OF SOCIALIST

1ST, 2ND, 3RD AND 4TH GROUPS: SOVIET

ALL GROUPS: REPUBLICS!!

(*All sing 'the Internationale'.)*

Notes

The group passages must be made as clear to the audience as the solo passages. By careful rehearsal and attention to consonants each group can be made into one mass voice. But this mass voice does not grind out the phrases mechanically with equal emphasis on each syllable. It deals with them like an orator would, with well-marked changes of rhythm, emphasis and intensity, reinforcing the message of the words by appropriate 'tone-colours' of the voice. The Groups stand on stage alert, in a uniform posture, giving an impression of eagerness and proletarian discipline.

Particular attention must be paid to the crescendo of volume and intensity that so frequently occurs, each group building up to the climaxes where all speak together. A steady shout throughout is the very opposite of what is intended. The scene can be made thrilling and dramatic, holding the interest of the audience at every turn.