



UMSEBENZI'S INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ROUND-UP

# MAYDAY

2017



**SOUTH AFRICA:** Let's go! Cosatu and SACP prepare to march on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange to deliver a memorandum demanding fundamental changes to the South African economy



**Bangladesh:** Garment union members protest in Dhaka for a living wage and decent accommodation for the 4-million garment workers – and education for their children



**CUBA:** Hundreds of thousands of Cubans gather in Havana's Revolution Square in the May Day gathering – Cuba's biggest political event of the year



**GREECE:** A member of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) marching in Aspropyrgos outside Athens demands an easing of EU-imposed austerity measures



**PROTEST:** Where it all began – police fire on workers in Chicago’s Haymarket Square during a general strike to demand an eight-hour working day

## Celebrating past victories and others yet to come

**M**AY DAY – recognised as workers’ or labour day by about half the countries in the world, and celebrated by socialist activists in many more – has its roots in brutally and often murderously suppressed workers’ struggles for a living wage and an eight-hour working day.

Today, 130 years after it was first linked to workers’ struggles, it is a public holiday, celebrated as Workers’ Day, International Workers’ Day or Labour Day (or, in parts of Europe as Spring Day to mark the first day of spring) in 100 of the world’s 195 countries (excluding Japan, where it falls between two other public holidays and an unofficial bonus holiday). In the USA it is a national holiday – but officially as an explicitly anti-communist and anti-trade union celebration. The link to workers’ struggle is only acknowledged by the CPUSA and worker and anti-capitalist activists.

The first to link May Day to the struggle for workers’ rights was the Second International (full name: the Second International Workingmen’s Association) in 1887. The Second International, established in 1880, was an international federation of communist, socialist and

workers’ parties and trade union federations strongly influenced by Marxist perspectives, in which Frederick Engels, co-author with Karl Marx of *The Communist Manifesto* was honorary president.

The organisation recognised the day to mark the savage suppression the previous year (1886) of a general strike in Chicago in the US. The strike had culminated in a mass protest on 4 May 1886 in Chicago’s Haymarket Square during which police shot four strikers and activists and arrested hundreds of others after a bomb exploded, killing a dozen policemen and strikers. Four union leaders were put on trial for murder, found guilty and hanged – only to be pardoned seven years later by the state governor who acknowledged they and other, imprisoned, activists had been victims of “hysteria, packed juries and a biased judge”. The four are still remembered in the US labour movement as the Haymarket Martyrs.

The Second International recognised May Day as “international workers’ day” in 1899, and in 1904 called on “all Social Democratic Party organisations and trade unions of all countries to demon-

strate energetically on the First of May for the legal establishment of the eight-hour day, for the class demands of the proletariat, and for universal peace.”

The day is deeply rooted in workers’ struggles for an eight-hour working day (with a second eight for recreation and the final eight for sleep) – drawing on Marx’s assertion *Capital* in 1867: “By extending the working day, therefore, capitalist production...not only produces a deterioration of human labour power by robbing it of its normal moral and physical conditions of development and activity, but also produces the premature exhaustion and death of this labour power itself.”

Although skilled workers had successfully achieved an eight-hour working day in New Zealand and parts of Australia, the first country to adopt eight-hour working day was the Soviet Union – doing so just four days after the October Revolution in 1917.

The first international treaty to mention it was the Treaty of Versailles (in 1919, marking the end of World War 1) in an annex establishing the International Labour Office, now the International Labour Organisation.



**LEBANON:** Members of the Lebanese Communist Party and its allies march through Beirut



**NIGERIA:** Workers gather in Lagos' Agege Stadium to celebrate May Day



**TURKEY:** Defiant demonstrators charge towards Istanbul's Taksim Square, despite a ban on a May Day gathering there



**TURKEY:** Demonstrators in Ankara shout their demands from inside a police van



**KENYA:** Not yet uhuru – domestic workers demanding 'decent work' march towards Nairobi's Uhuru Park



**CUBA:** Parents joining the tens of thousands of Cubans marching to Havana's May Day rally keep their sleeping daughter cool – under a giant Cuban flag



**CUBA:** Celebrating socialism – hundreds of thousands gather in Havana's Revolution Square



**ARGENTINA:** An anti-government May Day protest outside the House of Congress in Buenos Aires



**EL SALVADOR:** Workers and leftwing activists march through San Salvador – with planned privatisation of pensions a key target



**USA:** Police block opponents of Donald Trump's anti-immigration policies marching through central Los Angeles – one of hundreds of protest marches on a day officially designated 'Loyalty Day'



**HAITI:** Workers chant anti-government slogans during a demonstration in Port-au-Prince



**BRAZIL:** Ten of thousands demonstrate against President Michel Temer on May Day in Sao Paulo



**USA:** Marching against capitalism and Trump administration anti-immigrant policies in San Francisco



**PUERTO RICO:** Led by unionists, feminists and even locally popular rapper Residente, tens of thousands protested against Trump-imposed austerity measures on the island



**FRANCE:** A French policeman in flames after being hit by a Molotov cocktail thrown by anarchist protesters in Paris. Syrian refugee photographer Zakaria Abdalkafi, who caught the image, said afterwards that although police had kicked and beaten him during the protest 'he was a human being being burned alive in front of me ... the demonstrators didn't care ... they kept throwing things'



**GREECE:** Members of the 800 000-strong Greek Communist Party-affiliated All-Workers Militant Front (PAME) during their 24-hour strike on May Day



**GREECE:** PAME members preparing for a general strike on 17 May



**ITALY:** Crowds gather in St. John in Lateran Square in Rome for a union-organised May Day concert



**UK:** 8 000 trade unionists and activists crowd Trafalgar Square to hear opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn’s May Day message (read by MP John McDonnell): “May Day greetings for peace around the world ... United, we can win!” Corbyn was away – campaigning for next month’s elections



**RUSSIA:** Part of the 1-million-strong Moscow May Day demonstration chanting ‘Peace! Labour! Russia! May!’



**FINLAND:** Members of the Communist Party of Finland marching in central Helsinki under the banner ‘Proletarians of all countries unite!’



**SPAIN:** The Communist Party of Euskadi (EPK) – the Basque wing of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) – marches in Barcelona demanding reversal of removal of legal protection of Spanish workers



**PHILIPINES:** Marching in Manila against low wages and outsourcing (contractualisation)



**PHILIPINES:** ... and trying to break through police ranks to reach the US embassy



**SRI LANKA:** The People's Liberation Front parade through Colombo party, with a motorcycle escort for a portrait of Lenin



**INDIA:** Indian communists and trade union members on the march in Bangalore



**INDONESIA:** Trade unionists push through police line on the way to the presidential palace in Jakarta to demand better pay, an end to outsourcing, and free health care



May Day courage: Maria-Teresa Asplund confront Swedish neo-Nazis

## Hell no! No Nazi is going to march on these streets!

On her way to a May Day anti-racism demonstration, activist Maria-Teresa Asplund, 42, saw 300 neo-Nazis marching through Borlänge in central, Sweden.

Thinking, “Hell no, they can’t march here!” she stormed into the street, raised her fist and blocked the march by members of Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), a political party campaigning against immigration by sub-Saharan Africans. The marchers stopped, unsure of how to deal with the furious, 160cm woman in front of them. “I was so angry, I just went out into the street,” she said afterwards. “I was thinking: No Nazi is going to march here, it’s not okay.”

Police broad the deadlock by moving her out of the way, and she left to join thousands of comrades in an anti-racist demonstration, unaware that she had been photographed and had become an instant social media celebrity.

In a country where the racist Sweden Democrats hold the balance of power in parliament and enjoy support of one in five voting Swedes, Asplund says racism “has been normalised ... it’s become okay to say the N-word ... I have friends who have been attacked ... I have had calls at night, screaming at me. I feel ashamed that we have this problem. The police say it is a democratic country, so they can demonstrate. But these are Nazis!”

## Cde Ivana – Died fighting for Rojava

A banner in the May Day march in London commemorates the death of German teenager Ivana Hoffman – an activist born of South African parents. She was killed fighting for the Turkish-Kurdish Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP) against Islamic State (Isis) extremists near Tel Tamr in northern Syria.

Cde Ivana, 19, from Duisburg in Germany, was killed in a clash in on 6 March after joining MLKP late last year. In a video taken shortly before the clash in which she died and posted on her Facebook page she says, “For one week we’ve been holding our base to defend the Rojava (the Kurdish term for liberated Kurdish territory) revolution. I decided to come to Rojava because they are fighting for humanity here, for rights and for internationalism that the MLKP represents. We are here as the MLKP to fight for freedom. Rojava is the beginning.”



Internationalist: Ivana Hoffmann shortly before leaving Germany to fight for Kurdish freedom

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