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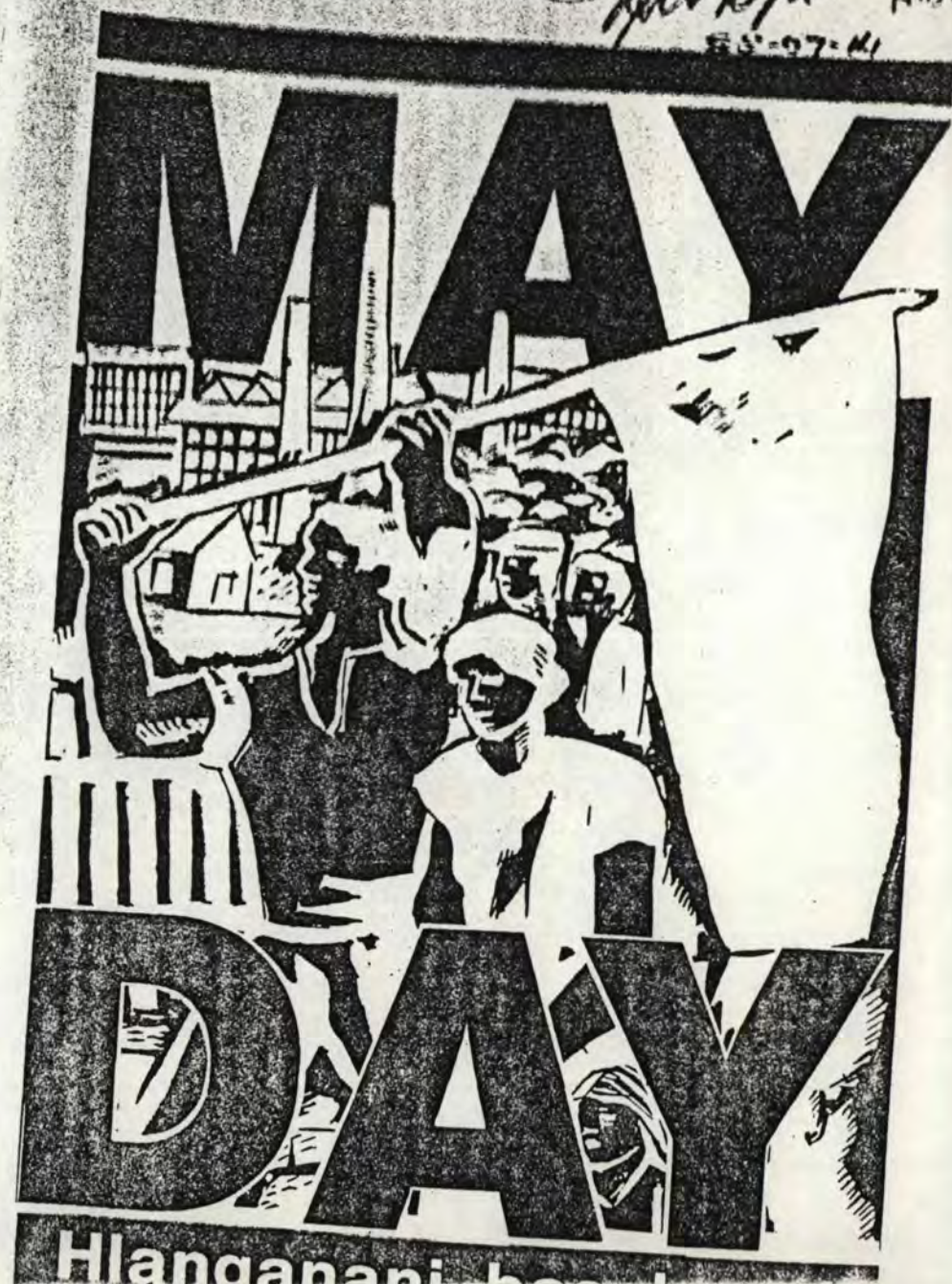
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## Contents.

Introduction .....	Page 5
Workers of the World Unite! .....	Page 13
A History of May Day in South Africa ...	Page 23
Conclusion .....	Page 65

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## Preface.

81 years ago May Day was first celebrated in South Africa.

Since then trade unions and other organisations have been fighting for improved conditions in the factories. They have struggled for a higher standard of living in their communities and for better education for their children.

Much has happened in between. Worker federations have grown, been smashed and revived. Political organisations have taken root, weakened and strengthened again.

And now - after many quiet years - May Day seems to be permanently back on the political calendar.

Those workers now continuing the fight against exploitation and oppression carry with them a long and proud history.

It is a story which has been kept from the workers. It belongs to them.

This booklet aims to return the story of May Day to the people who will carry its ideals forward.

**WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!**

**MAY DAY**

**MAYEBUYE AFRIKA**

**MAY DAY**

**MASS MEETING**

**THURSDAY, MAY 1<sup>ST</sup> at 6 PM.**  
**on NEWTOWN MARKET SQUARE**

**Roll Up in Your Thousands!**

Tlaang phuthehong e kgolo  
 ena re tlo bolella Muso gore  
 re kgotshe melao ena ea  
 gagoe e masoe ea bokgoba.

Wozani kulentlanganiso  
 enkulu nizoxelela-u Hulu-  
 meni ukuti ni katele imiteto  
 yake emibi.

**Nkosi Sikelel' i Afrika!**

## Introduction.

Inspiring international worker solidarity

May Day is about capitalism, and the struggle of the working class against exploitation and class domination.

Capitalism is based on profits the bosses extract from workers. To make profit, bosses must make sure workers are available, trained, obedient, and powerless. Powerless to stop bosses from making them work harder for lower wages, and powerless to prevent the bosses retrenching them.

Ruling the workers obviously involves a lot of coercion. Without it, the bosses could never be sure that the workers will submit to poverty and exploitation.

So the bosses have to control the working class. This control is sometimes non-violent

and very subtle; often violent and brutal.

The bosses must control where workers live and how they live, so they can be certain that their workers will arrive at work on time, and in a fit state to work.

They must control the workers' education, so that they can be sure that the workers are suitably trained and conditioned for lives of wage slavery. They must control worker organisation in the factories, communities and the political arena, so they can never be sure that workers will not rise up and challenge capitalism.

Class domination, class resistance.

This class domination has forced workers to organise and resist. The brutal attempts by the bosses and their governments to suppress worker organisation, and to deny legitimate demands of the workers have led to the May Day commemorations.

May Day is a workers day. It began as a campaign for shorter working days without reduction in wages. But it has come to symbolise the right of workers to organise and struggle and the victories of worker organisation.

A manifesto published by the United May Day committee in 1937 stated that 'May Day is not only a day of international struggle for the eight-hour day; on this day, the workers in every country demonstrate their will and desire

Don't forget!

# LABOUR DAY DEMONSTRATION

## GRAND PARADE

Saturday, May 1st, 3p.m.

TRADE UNION & LABOUR  
SPEAKERS

COME ALONG ON THE DAY  
OF WORKERS' SOLIDARITY

SHOW THE DIGNITY AND  
STRENGTH OF LABOUR

AMPLIFIERS PROVIDED

In the early years workers were invited to mass rallies by leaflets like this

for political and economic emancipation. It is a day on which the working class reviews its forces, records the lessons of the past, prepares for the tasks ahead, and reaffirms the inspiring pledge of international solidarity'.

The issues and demands taken up in May Day commemorations have ranged from bread and butter questions of low wages and bad working conditions, through to the cost of living, the constitutional system and anti-worker legislation.

### Towards a Workers Co-operative Commonwealth.

On May Day 1937, a demonstration in front of the Johannesburg City Hall greeted workers of all lands, and pledged to continue the struggle against exploitation and to strive for the establishment of a workers cooperative commonwealth.

A pamphlet called on the government to declare May 1st a public holiday, limit the working week to forty hours, provide state insurance for all the unemployed and repeal the Riotous Assembly Act.

The meeting reaffirmed its support for the principals of freedom of speech and press, and the right of all workers to organise politically and industrially. It demanded that the government provide for the payment of a living wage to counteract the rising cost of living. It ended with a call to all present to demonstrate that, 'in spite of racial, religious and language barriers, the workers of

the world are one ; that they have one enemy, and that that enemy is the exploiting class, and that they will pledge themselves anew to ignore all national antagonisms, and unite against their class enemies - the capitalists, and the struggle for the liberation of the toiling millions from their misery and their degradation.'

The proceedings ended with the traditional singing of the Red Flag, sung by workers around the world on May Day:

### THE RED FLAG.

The People's Flag is deepest red;  
It shrouded oft' our martyred dead,  
And 'ere their limbs grew stiff and cold  
Their heart's blood dyed its ev'ry fold.

CHORUS: Then raise the scarlet standard high!  
Within its shade we'll live or die.  
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,  
We'll keep the Red Flag flying here.

With heads uncovered swear we all  
To bear it onward till we fall,  
Come dungeons dark, or gallows grim,  
This song shall be our parting hymn.

CHORUS: Then raise the scarlet standard high!  
Within its shade we'll live or die.  
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,  
We'll keep the Red Flag flying here.



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Published by May-Day Committee, Box 2678 Capetown

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May Day celebrations have always provided a platform for the organised working class to put forward political demands. A 1939 May Day workers rally in Durban adopted a number of resolutions. These opposed all proposals 'to segregate the workers on the grounds of race and colour' and urged the government 'to recognise the non-european people as citizens of this country and to extend to them the necessary democratic rights to ensure their political and economic upliftment'. These demands for full political rights, democracy and the abolition of anti-worker legislation have formed common themes, which link workers' struggles from decade to decade.

#### Against discrimination. For non-racialism.

In 1952 at a May Day demonstration at the City Hall in Johannesburg, speakers dealt with the constitutional crisis and the report of the Industrial Legislation Commission.

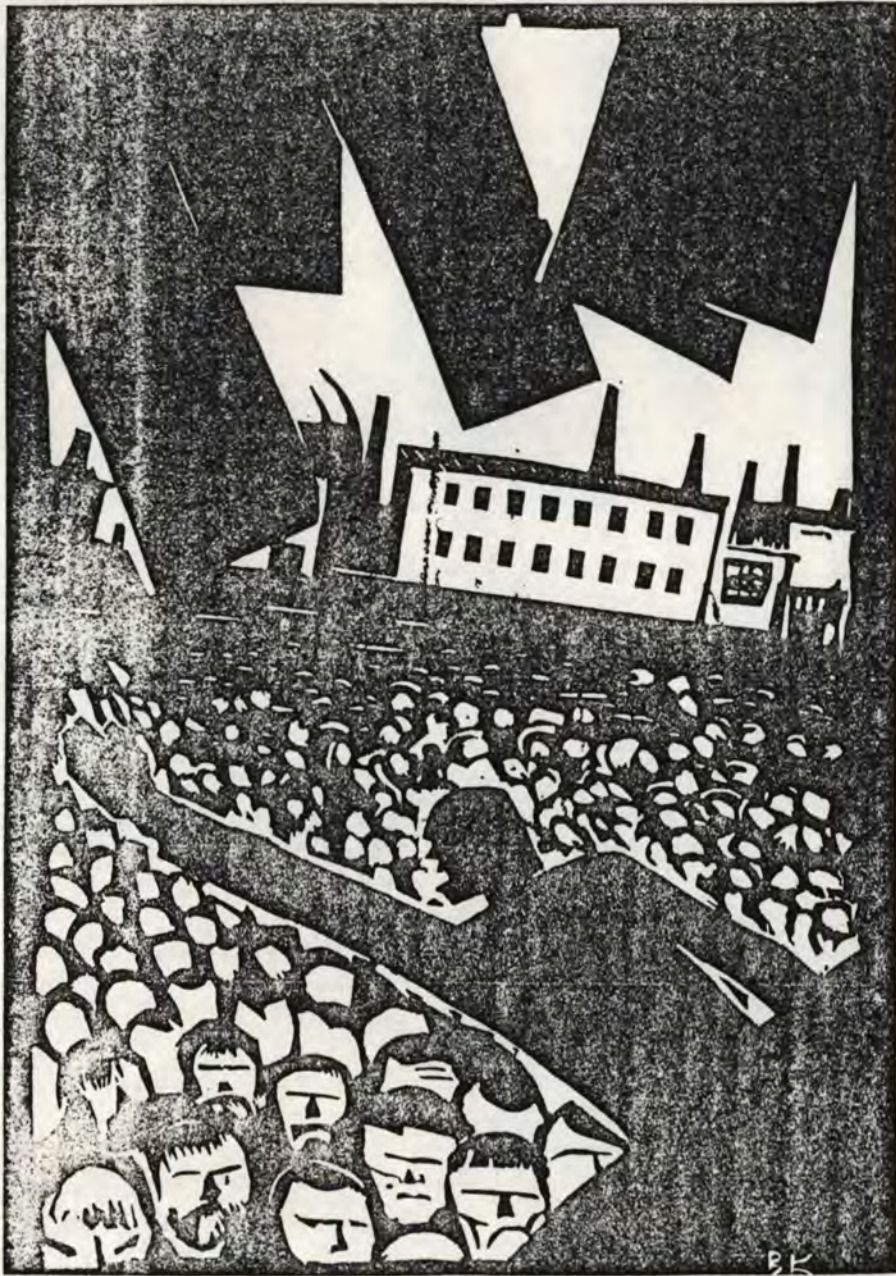
In 1954 at a May Day meeting in Cape Town a unanimous resolution stated: 'This mass meeting denounces all legislation in South Africa which discriminates between one section of the population and another. It pledges itself to work for the abolition of all special laws directed against Non-European, and all repressive legislation against the people of the country as a whole, such as the Riotous Assemblies Act, the Native pass laws and all other undemocratic legislation.'

In 1939 J.C. Bolton, the organising secretary of the Furniture Workers Industrial Union in

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Natal wrote in his May Day message that 'the international situation is such, that democracy is in grave danger, the need for workers to unite in an effort to secure the emancipation of the workers has never been so urgent.'

May Day has always stood for the unity of workers internationally, as well as nationally. The fact that capitalism is an international system, exploiting workers worldwide, has always been at the centre of May Day commemorations. The unity of workers of all lands in opposition to international capital and the imperialist governments which underwrite it has been a major element of May Day commemorations.



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## Workers of the World . . .

May Day started as a struggle for an eight hour day

'What could give workers greater courage and faith in their own strength than a mass work stoppage which they had decided themselves?

'What could give more courage to the slaves of the factories and the workshops than the uniting of their forces ?'

So wrote Rosa Luxemborg, worker leader and socialist, in 1894, some 8 years after the first May Day strike had been organised.

The idea of a workers' day began in Australia in 1856. Workers saw it as a way of uniting them in their demands for a shorter working day and better working conditions.

In the early days of capitalism, the system was blatantly exploitative and brutal. The owners

of industry used children as cheap and controllable labour in the sweatshops and mines. Work hours in Australia, and in most of the 19th century capitalist world, were long. Some people worked 18 hours a day, six days a week. And unions, in those days, were universally illegal.

The only way of winning a shorter working day, the workers said, was to fight for it through calling a national general strike. But because there were no unions, a workers' holiday was organised. It aimed to celebrate the workers' cause with poetry, music and festivals.

### The Bosses were scared and angry.

The first such day was held in Australia on April 21, 1856. Although it was only planned to happen once in support of the demand for shorter working hours, it was so successful and so angered and scared the bosses, that the workers decided to make it an annual event.

The struggle of the Australian workers inspired others around the world. The idea for a self-proclaimed workers holiday spread to the United States and, in 1886, US workers decided to hold a general strike of their own in support of the demand for an eight hour day.

Like other bosses in Australia and Europe, the American factory, farm and mine owners were interested only in profits. They forced men, women and children to labour for 18 hours a day, six days a week, in very dangerous conditions and for extremely low wages. The

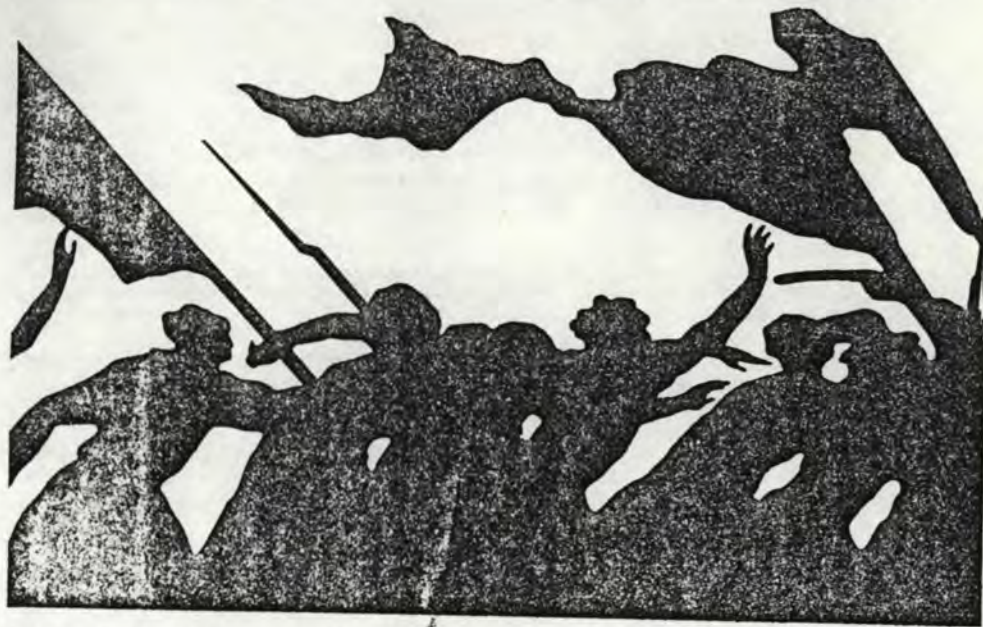
profits they made were gigantic. And it was the workers who paid the price. In the early days of capitalism workers would live, on average, to the age of 30 - 35 years.

The American working class first tried to change the laws of the country to give them an eight hour day. In 1868, after intense worker action, a law was passed making it illegal to make anyone work for more than eight hours a day.

But the capitalists just ignored the law, and







the government did nothing about it. That is why P.J. McGuire, a founder of the carpenters' union said: 'The only way to get the eight hour day is by organising. In 1868 the United States government passed an eight hour law, and that law has been enforced just twice. If you want an eight hour day, get it yourself'.

There was much opposition from the bosses and their newspapers to the call. They said the shorter work day would cause 'loafing, gambling, rioting, debauchery and drunkenness, as well as force capital to pay lower wages.'

But there was also opposition to the eight hour day - which came from the far left. They said: 'to grant the point that the capitalists have the right to eight hours of our labour is more than a compromise; it is a virtual admission



that the wage system is right.'

But the American workers were not concerned about whether the system was right or wrong. They said that the wage system was a reality, and that millions were suffering under that reality. For them the changes they were looking for were going to be won in struggle. The reality had to be changed, not solely the principle.

After months of organising, on May 1st, 1886, 350 000 workers in 11 562 places of work downed tools. 185 000 workers were immediately granted and eight hour day by their bosses. Elsewhere bosses conceded a nine or ten hour day (but still a six day week) to a further 2 million workers.

The strike took its toll, however. The bosses

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were looking for revenge. They wanted to break the strength of the workers and bring them under the control and discipline of employers.

On May 3, 1886, six workers were gunned down by the police as they stood at their locked factory gates.

The next day, at one of many peaceful meetings called to protest at the police killings, a bomb was thrown at the police by an unknown person. All hell broke loose as the police used this incident as an excuse to attack workers, their organisations and their leaders.

### Worker leaders put on trial.

Four worker leaders were put on trial, found guilty and executed. Many others were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Although workers had won a shorter day, capitalist management attempted to ensure that workers would be more cautious in the future.

The workers were. Stunned by the brutality of the bosses, American workers did become careful. But the workers did decide to hold a mass stayaway in 1890 and every year after that.

The Second International, an international organisation of socialists set up in 1889 supported the idea. It called for 'a great international demonstration so that in all countries and in all cities on our appointed day, the toiling masses shall demand the legal reduction of the working day to eight hours.'

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May 1st, 1890 was chosen. Labour Day was born. The first international labour demonstration took place, celebrated in hundreds of towns and villages in the advanced capitalist countries of Austria, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Belgium Norway, Sweden, Poland, Britain and the United States.

From that day, May Day became a prominent feature in the constant struggle of workers for both a better deal under capitalism, and the fundamental transformation of society. It heralded a new era in human history - where the struggle between classes became conscious and fundamental. It symbolised the workers' position as exploited labourers producing wealth which the owners of industry took for themselves.

But, most important, May Day represented the first major growth in the power of the working class to change history and society. It was a day in the calendar of the ongoing struggle of the working class to create a society free from exploitation.

### Uniting across national boundaries.

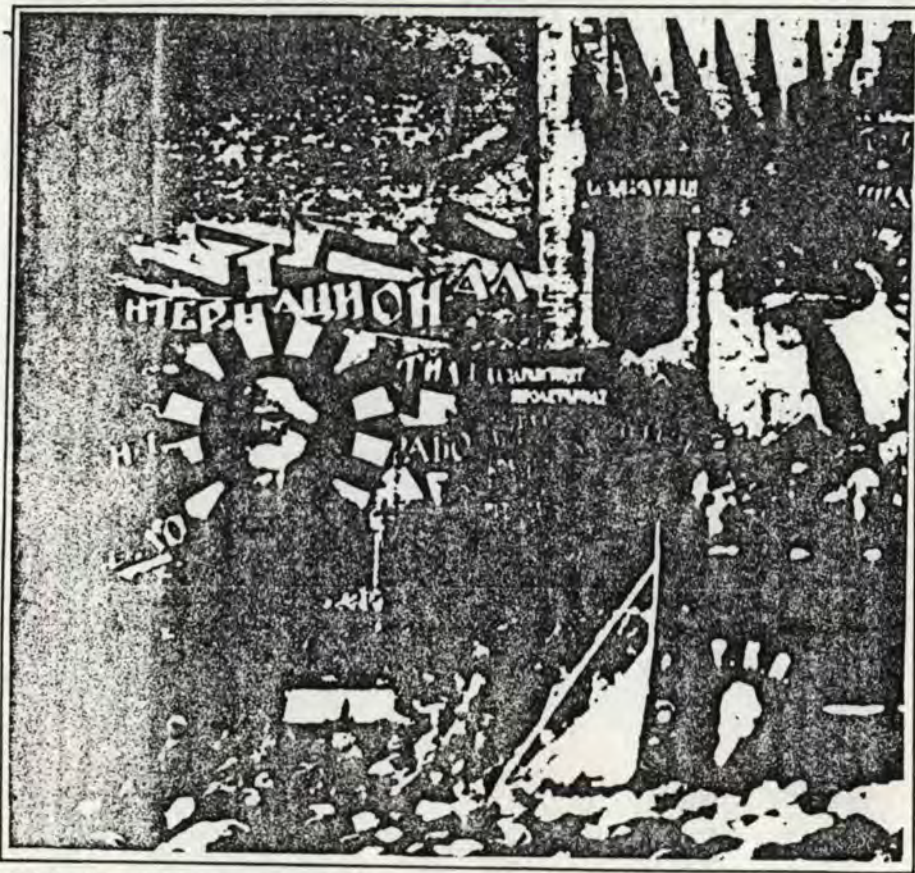
What made May Day even more remarkable was that the International managed to unite working class communities across national boundaries. Capitalism had created a powerful nationalist force, setting one country (and its working class) against another in competition and antagonism. Breaking down this national chauvinism was not easy.

The bosses recognised this and did everything

they could to encourage 'patriotism', which they saw as the best way of dividing and co-opting the working class.

In other countries the ruling class was less sophisticated, and simply banned unions, worker protests and strikes. In Russia strikes grew year by year, until in 1905, workers, soldiers and peasants united in mass action against the brutal and exploitative Tsarist rule.

It was to be events in Russia that would



Celebrating the first anniversary of the October Revolution in Red Square

ultimately reshape the nature of international workers' day and the international working class movements .

During the late 1890's there was deep division and debate between reformist and revolutionary elements of the working class. Reformists argued that the working class alone should strike in the factories - forcing capitalism to reform itself bit by bit. Revolutionaries, however, said that capitalism could not be reformed but must be entirely transformed.

### The working class takes power.

The Bolshevik revolution swept the Russian working class into power in 1917. After that May Day, for the first time, became an official state holiday. It ensured that Workers' Day would be celebrated forever.

Today May Day is observed internationally. It is a celebration of working class power and culture; it is an expression of international working class solidarity; and it celebrates the victories of workers over exploitation and oppression.



South Africa's workers demand the right to strike, picket and form trade unions

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## May Day in South Africa

A story of struggle and sacrifice

IT WAS ON May 1, 1904 that South Africa had its first experience of international workers' day.

A group of socialists converged on South Africa's industrial capital, Johannesburg. Market Square echoed with socialist slogans, working class demands and speeches as experienced trade unionists from Europe rallied South Africa's white workers.

The owners of the mines and industries were shocked. Never before had the workers - black or white - had the courage to publicly say they were proud to be workers, with the power to change the face of South African society. Never before had workers paid tribute to their fellow workers elsewhere in the world, while condemning capitalists at home.

Despite the good response the 1904 May Day rally received, it took some time before it was established as an annual event.

## The Socialist League - the force behind May Day

The force that was to put May Day on the annual calendar was the International Socialist League (ISL). Formed in 1916, the ISL opposed the great imperialist First World War - as did many progressive organisations around the world.

At its inaugural conference it passed a resolution stating: 'We pledge our energies to the New International for the building up in South Africa of such industrial labour solidarity as can alone destroy capitalism, militarism and war, and in the fullness of strength unfold itself in a socialist commonwealth.'

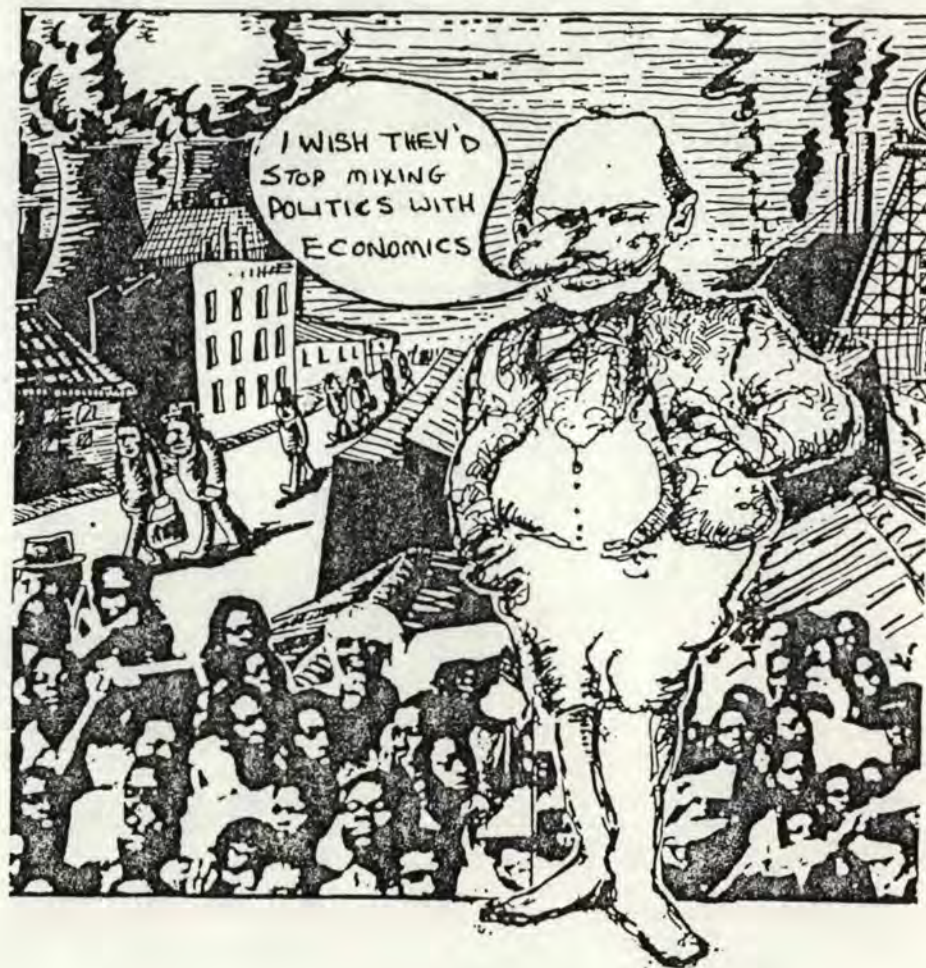
## The challenge of uniting the working class

Up to this point May Day celebrations were exclusively white. The ISL took up the challenge of uniting the working class across colour lines. Their task was difficult.

The ruling class in South Africa had realised the control and power a divided working class gave the bosses, and worked hard at developing and consolidating divisions where they already existed, creating new divisions, and widening existing ones.

In the factories African workers were allowed to do only certain work, and were paid far less

than their white counterparts. While white workers earned more, and their jobs were protected by legislation, factory and mine owners began to undermine their position so that they could replace whites with cheaper black labour and make more profits.



And while the bosses were manipulating the situation for their profitable ends, they could sit and watch white and black workers struggle between themselves, rather than as a united force against the owners.

The ISL took this situation seriously, and began trying to unite the South African working class. In 1917, the May Day celebrations included an African speaker for the first time. Horatio Mbele, a Transvaal activist in the young African National Congress, addressed the crowds.

### War fever wrecks the celebration

The meeting was broken up by soldiers and civilians who, in the midst of war fever and nationalism, were enraged and threatened by the ISL's anti-war and non-racial position. The ISL, however, continued to move slowly towards a full acceptance of non-racial principles. They recognised that racial divisions were weapons of exploitation and a powerful tool to weaken the working class politically.

African workers tended to be suspicious of white working class organisation, often justifiably so.

In 1920, for example, coloured workers refused to participate in the May Day celebrations on the Rand because of their treatment in a dockworkers' strike in Cape Town earlier in the year. White workers had helped to break the strike.

Nonetheless, the May Day demonstrations in 1920

were successful. Many white workers - who were at that time nearing their militant peak - simply took the day off.

In 1921 the ISL dissolved to form the Communist Party of South Africa. Under its leadership, worker protests were again strengthened by the participation of African and coloured workers, particularly in Durban where a strong contingent attended a mass rally.

### Workers Day a paid public holiday?

The demand for May Day as a paid public holiday grew. The events of 1922 were to change forever the nature of May Day in South Africa. For years, South Africa's owners - particularly on the mines - had been replacing skilled and expensive white labour with cheap and unskilled black labour.

Realising their 'privileged' position was threatened, white workers revolted against the mine owners, demanding from the government laws which would protect their position. The government crushed the Rand revolt, using the army and Air Force. White worker organisation was crushed, and the chances of non-racial working class unity set back years.

### The call goes to parliament

The pressure for a May Day holiday continued, however. Indeed, it became so intense that in 1926 a Bill was introduced to parliament proposing a public holiday. But, instead of May 1st, the Bill proposed the first Monday in May.

Workers protested, arguing that May 1st had become an international symbol of working class organisation and solidarity. The Bill was dropped when the government refused to concede this.

### "African workers must participate"

In 1925 Clements Kadalie, general secretary of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU) wrote to the all-white South African Trade Union Congress, informing them of an ICU decision that 'the African workers, being part of the international Labour Movement, must participate in the May Day celebrations.'

The 200 000 strong ICU decided that resolutions to be adopted at the May Day celebrations should include:

\*'Pledge its solidarity with the Indian workers in India, the Negro workers in America, and a pledge to do everything in its power to organise all Non-European workers in the Union and throughout the African continent.'

\*'That the ICU should send fraternal greetings to, and recognise its solidarity with, workers of all lands. In particular that it greets the victorious Republic of Russian workers, British miners and other workers who are faced with an attack on their conditions of life.'

\*'A declaration against the suppression of workers' organisations and the imprisonment, torture and death of the finest members of the working class at the hands of all capitalist governments.'

\*'Its reaffirmation of its determination to keep May 1st each year as labour day, despite the efforts of the Union government to obscure the issue by fixing the first Monday in May as a public holiday.'

\*'A pledge to renew afresh the struggle against the employing class with a view to the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a Workers' Commonwealth, and to support the movement to unite all trade unions under the banner of the SA Trade Union Congress, in order that the full strength of organised labour may be available in the struggle ahead.'



**INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL  
WORKERS UNION OF AFRICA.**

Established January, 1919.  
Branches throughout the  
Union of South Africa and  
South West Africa.  
All Correspondence to be  
addressed to the National  
Secretary.

HEAD OFFICE  
24 LOOP STREET, CAPE TOWN.

PHONE NO. 8220 CAPE TOWN.  
TELEGRAPH ADDRESS: "WUAF" CAPE TOWN.

(NATIONAL ORGANISATION DEPARTMENT)  
16, Market Street,  
Johannesburg,  
27th April, 1926.

Official Organ: "THE WORKERS HERALD."

W. H. Andrews Esq.,  
General Secretary,  
S.A. Trade Union Congress;  
Trades Hall,  
Johannesburg.

Dear Sir,

I have to thank you for the receipt of your letter of the 15th instant, and the resolution passed unanimously by the National Council of the South African Trade Union Congress, and in reply beg to inform you that our recent Conference decided that the African workers being part of the international Labour Movement must participate in the May Day celebrations.

I am now directed to ask if the South African Trade Union Congress could be good enough to send one or two speakers to address our demonstration which will assemble outside the Inchcape Hall, Eloff Street Extension on May Day at 2 p.m. sharp, or during the evening at our Workers Hall,

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours fraternally,

*Clements Kadalie*  
National Secretary.

As the African working class grew in size and strength, so did their participation in the May day celebrations.

In 1928 African workers marched in their thousands. Among them were a small contingent of whites, who had remained true to working class unity.

On May Day, 1929, the white SATUC held a demonstration in the Johannesburg City Hall where the following resolution was adopted: 'This meeting of Johannesburg workers, assembled on May Day, greets its fellow workers in all lands and renews its pledge to continue its struggle against the brutal exploitation of the toiling masses in mine, field, factory and workshop.'

'It regrets that the S.A. government has given so little attention to the workers' demand for an eight hour day, the May Day holiday, and the amendment of the various Acts affecting the workers.'

### Resisting militarisation of the youth

'It pledges itself anew to resist the militarisation of the youth of the nation and the obvious preparations for new wars, and demands universal disarmament as the only preventative.'

'It demands free speech and the right to organise politically and industrially for all workers, and the repeal of the provisions of those sections of such Acts as the Native Administration Act which take away this right.'

In the early 1930's, May Day was celebrated in different ways. The registered unions and bureaucratic labour movement supported international labour solidarity and established links with unions in other countries as this telegram shows:



A 1930 May Day greeting to the Garment Workers Union from clothing workers in Poland  
Yet such unions' meetings remained closed to African workers.

On the other hand there were the militant mass meetings called by the Communist Party. Police disrupted one such May Day meeting by only attacking African workers in the audience and on the platform.

According to a report in the Johannesburg Star,



According to a report in the Johannesburg Star, 'police tactfully intervened and with their truncheons persuaded the natives to go away. They went in something of a hurry. There were no Europeans among the injured.'

Despite the harassment, there were more attempts to organise non-racial May Day celebrations. This pamphlet put out by the Johannesburg May Day Committee shows their opposition to racially segregated meetings:

## MAY DAY, 1930.

What is this May Day?

It is the day set apart by the organised workers of all lands on which they leave the shops, mines and work places, and meet together to demonstrate that in spite of racial, religious and language barriers the workers of the world are one; that they have one enemy, and that enemy is the exploiting class and all its parasites, and particularly the exploiting class in the country in which they live.

It is the day on which the workers renew their determination to ignore national antagonisms and unite against their class enemies, the capitalists.

To do this effectively no worker should be seen at his job on this day. All should in one way or another come together in defiance if necessary of the laws of the Master Class, and pledge themselves anew to continue the struggle for the liberation of the toiling millions from their poverty and degradation.

The only means by which this is possible is the overthrow of the capitalist system and the inauguration of the Co-operative Commonwealth of all the workers. Millions of workers in every country will demonstrate in the streets and in halls on May 1st.

In many countries they will be clubbed, arrested, imprisoned and slaughtered—but still they will demonstrate in favour of International Solidarity. In one country only—Soviet Russia—will they demonstrate with the full approval of the Government.

The Workers of South Africa are urged to take their place in this World Demonstration.

The pamphlet ends with a call to 'the workers of Africa to demonstrate on May day under the slogans:

For the Solidarity of Workers of the world.  
Against Imperialism and War Preparations.  
Against repressive, fascist and class legislation which aims at the prevention of effective working class organisation.

Against the policy of class collaboration and the so-called Industrial Peace.

For the World Co-operative Commonwealth of Workers.

Workers of the World Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains! You have a whole world to gain!

### Africans are expelled from the Committee

In 1931 'non-Europeans' were expelled from the United May Day Committee. The African May Day Committee was set up in response, to organise joint May Day celebrations.

After booing and yelling outside the 'official' May Day meeting, several thousand workers, mostly Africans, settled down to listen to Communist Party speakers. Izzy Diamond drew cheers from the audience by referring to the assembled black workers as 'comrades'.

As the speeches ended, a mixed crowd of around 1 000 formed a procession. They attacked the Carlton Hotel and the Rand Club - institutions which symbolised the mine bosses' wealth and power. A large number of demonstrators were arrested.

Workers protested against the arrests and

In 1930 a May Day pamphlet urged workers to 'unite against their class enemies, the capitalists'

following trial of worker leaders. Thousands signed a petition calling for their release.

## PETITION.

ON BEHALF OF THE MAYDAY PRISONERS.

365

To His Excellency the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa.

We, the undersigned members of the South African public, beg Your Excellency to remit the sentences recently passed against ISSY DIAMOND and two others for "incitement to public violence," including a possible deportation order for Diamond, on the following grounds:

(1) To deport, as if he were a common malefactor, a respectable citizen of unblemished character, settled in the Union since two years of age, with his wife and dependents and established business here, and knowing no other country, for acts arising out of the fact that he, by virtue not of foreign associations but of experience of South African conditions only, has honestly and self-sacrificingly espoused the cause of the local unemployed, would, we feel, be an act of harsh and brutal persecution from which a Government itself avowing sympathy for the workless and no doubt deploring their appreciation might well recoil.

(2) As regards the racial composition of the Mayday crowd on which the Judge, President and the Minister of Justice have both repeatedly commented, it would have been strange if, with native unemployment to-day almost as widespread as white, meetings of Johannesburg unemployed were confined to whites. In any case, to contend that the incident is more heinous when addressed to whites and blacks than to whites only is, we respectfully submit, unwarranted either in law or in actual experience; indeed, the likelihood of violence resulting is probably less in the case of such a mixed crowd than of either an all-white or an all-black one.

(3) The degree of incitement whether of whites or blacks was in fact so slight that at the Carlton Hotel, where it would have been easy to commit violence, none whatever was attempted or even threatened (and the part played by de Villiers and Jones in particular was quite insignificant). The incident was less serious than even that of the Rand Club, the charge in respect of which broke down.

(4) Similarly Diamond's speech of March 21 resulted in not even a suggestion of violence; it was evidently not taken in that sense by the audience (which apparently included no natives); indeed, it would not have been a matter for prosecution at all but for an afterthought on the part of the Attorney-General. Further, the two detectives' (surprisingly identical) version of this speech, besides containing several manifest absurdities such as "No raiding can be done to-day" or "We must overthrow the Government and the Town Council," was so flagrantly at variance, on vital points, with the notes alleged to have been taken by one of them at the time that, although the jury accepted it *holus bolus* (whereas on the contempt charge it accepted the accused's version in preference to the Crown's), yet we make bold to say that no judge would have convicted on it. The sentence of twelve months for this speech, therefore, we submit, constitutes a miscarriage of justice such as can now only be made good by a remission, especially when we compare it with the much lighter sentences or even complete immunity received not only by many "stamp operators" but by members of Parliament and even Ministers in respect of "incitements" far graver and resulting in far greater actual violence than Diamond's.

(5) We cannot refrain from adding that in our view the frequent public references to the whole affair, pending trial, by the Minister of Justice, must appreciably have influenced the jury against the accused.

(6) Failing other relief we would urge that the prisoners should at least receive specially lenient treatment as political prisoners, or at any rate be given the choice of being sent to a farm colony.

Johannesburg, October, 1931.

NAME

ADDRESS

W. Sykes.  
G. Simpson,  
E. Paterson,  
E. Stander,  
M. Munis,  
B. Luss,  
Arbuuckle.

P. Strydom.  
A. Hicks.  
C. Marais  
M. Mare  
J. Labuschage  
A. Cox  
J.A. Scott

After May Day demonstrations in 1931 Issy Diamond and two other worker leaders were jailed for 'incitement'. This petition called for their release

A meeting of Cape Town workers declared: 'These arrests and conviction, part of a series of similar acts, betrays the keenness of the government to suppress the rising discontent of workers in its initial stages, by utilizing the police and courts - the instruments of capitalist class justice.'

'It is necessary to struggle firmly against these convictions as, if allowed to stand, they will lead to the further intensification of a policy of suppression against all the activities of all sections of the working class movement.'

Nevertheless, Issy Diamond was jailed for a year.

### New movement towards unity

The African May Day Committee survived into the 1930's, increasing its efforts to have joint white and black worker May Day celebrations.

In 1936 a committee representing the all-white South African Trades and Labour Council, agreed to 'co-operate with all sections for the purpose of a demonstration, but could not co-operate with a non-European body for the arrangement of a social function.'

But the economic depression weakened the Communist Party and the labour movement for much of the early 30's, and few May Day celebrations took place.

May Day, 1937 heralded massive celebrations once more. The United May Day Committee set up by the SAT&LC and the Cape Federation of Labour unions organised a grand parade in Cape Town. The parade was attended by unions like the Amalgamated Engineering Union, Cape Stevedoring and Dock Workers' Union, Tramways and Omnibus Workers' Union, Chemical Workers Union and the Railway and Harbour Workers Union. The Communist Party and the South African Socialist

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