

Who are we ?

● The International Workers Committee Against War, Exploitation, for a Workers' International (IWC) was set up at the World Conference held in Mumbai (India) on Novembre 19, 20 and 21 gathering delegates from 28 countries.

● The IWC was set up on the basis of the Mumbai Manifesto against war, exploitation and precarious labour which was endorsed by labour activist and trade union and political organisations officers from 46 countries (*)

● Its continuations committee is composed of labour activists from all political/ trade union backgrounds:

Innocent Assogba (Benin),
Alan Benjamin (USA),
Colia Clark (USA),
Constantin Cretan (Romania),
Berthony Dupont (Haiti),
Ney Ferreira (Brazil),
Daniel Gluckstein (France),
Rubina Jamil (Pakistan),
Apo Leung (China),
Gloria Gracida (Mexico),
M.A. Patil (India),
Mandlenkosi Phangwa (Azania),
Klaus Schüller (Germany),
Jung Sikhwa (Korea),
John Sweeney (Great Britain),
Mark Vassilev (Russia),
Nambiath Vasudevan (India).

(*) Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Azania, Belarus, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Korea, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

May Day 2019: One and Only One Working Class!

Since the 1889 Congress of the Workers International, the 1st of May has been the international day of the workers' struggle, in honour of the Chicago martyrs, that is, the U.S. workers who had been executed for having fought for an eight-hour workday. One hundred and thirty years later, throughout the world, workers still mobilise on this day against that same capitalist system of warmongering and exploitation. They mobilise for their demands, with their organisations and under one and the same red flag.

We would like to warmly thank the International Workers Committee correspondents in twenty-five countries who have contributed to this report.

United States

The behemoth cranes used to load and unload international container ships were stilled, and the Port of Oakland was shut down, on May 1 at the initiative of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10, reports our correspondent Mya Shone. The May Day action focused on stopping plans for construction of a sports stadium and luxury apartment towers on port property that would eliminate the jobs of 73,000 workers throughout Northern California. Sara Nelson, International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO — whose call for a national general strike compelled Trump to end immediately his government shutdown — joined ILWU leaders and rank-and-file members representing locals throughout the West Coast, as well as Oakland teachers and community activists, in a militant rally and march that later joined up with an immigrant rights mobilisation.



Mexico



correspondents in Mexico.

On the other side of the border, participation by Mexican workers in May 1 actions was widespread, particularly those in the maquiladora industrial zones (delocalized factories in Mexico where workers are overexploited) such as the city of Matamoros (*photo*), where tens of thousands of workers have mobilised for a 20% wage increase and a bonus of 32,000 pesos ("20-32"), as well as against company ("Charro") unions, report our

Ecuador

Further south on the continent, the answer to the call for demonstrations from the United Workers Front (FUT) — which brings together labour and student organisations — was particularly substantial. Our correspondent, José Limaico, has informed us that Ecuadoran President Lenin Moreno has just agreed to sign the accord demanded by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which includes massive firings in public service, the pushing back of retirement age and privatisation of “profitable” public companies (telephone, electricity and oil). After years of splintered actions, the labour movement has begun to make a common front this May Day, around the slogans and demands shouted by demonstrators from Quito to Guayaquil, refusing the IMF’s decrees: *“Fuera Moreno! Fuera FMI!”* (Out with Moreno! Out with the IMF!)



Peru



Several thousand demonstrators marched in Lima, at the call of the CGTP (Confederación General de Trabajadores del Peru, or General Confederation of Peruvian Workers), whose leaders chastised the Bizcarra government as *“enemy of the workers and the people”*, stated our Peruvian correspondents.

Brazil

“The only way to block Bolsonaro’s pension ‘reform’ is in the streets and with a general strike!” declared Vagner Freitas, president of the CUT (Unified Workers Central) at the May Day demonstration in São Paulo. Our correspondents from the newspaper *Resistir!* report that 200,000 workers gathered at the call of all the trade unions, who announced that on June 14 there will be a national day of strike to defeat this counter-reform plan of far-right President Bolsonaro.



Lula



Throughout Brazil on this 1st of May — but also in demonstrations around the world — many demonstrators demanded the liberation of Lula (*photo: Paris action*).

Greece

Our correspondents have reported that in Greece, where the working class has been subjected to the European Union's austerity plans for nine years now — plans implemented by all of the successive governments, including the present « leftist » government of Alexis Tsipras — division once more rules in Athens. On one side, the leaders of trade unions GSEE and ADEDY called to demonstrate at the Place Kathmonos, while PAME, the trade union faction of the Greek Communist Party, gathered at Place Syntagma, and other trade union and political organisations called to meet in front of the Polytechnic University. A fourth gathering was convened in front of the Labour Ministry. There was the same division in the city of Thessalonica, preventing the workers from making a united stand against the Tsipras government whereas, paradoxically, a wave of strikes is swelling in transport (maritime, bus drivers, etc.)



Serbia



In Belgrade, in Serbia, the demonstration was organised jointly by the two biggest trade unions, the Association of Independent Unions of Serbia and Nezavisnost. Thousands of workers came out to express their dissatisfaction, as reported by our correspondent Jacim Milunovic. The social situation in the country has been marked by “tripartite social dialogue” but the real “dialogue” is the one led by the government with foreign investors, each translating their demands into new laws against the workers.

Hungary

“On this May Day we are in Batonyterenye, a small town in the north of the country, with a group of workers. It’s a gathering of former miners who are still organised in their union. There are about thirty of us, in a vegetable garden at one of their homes. They are telling the stories of their lives, when there used to be work, and what the 1st of May used to mean. A Romani woman tells us, ‘My father worked, and on the 1st of May a bonus was given, thanks to which we were able to buy a washing machine, a television... It was a big celebration!’ The discussion goes on. The leader of the Hungarian European left is with us, and a personality, one of the heads of the Socialist Party, arrives, introducing himself as an MP at the European Parliament. They briefly outline their platforms: doing away with poverty, lowering the price of energy, improving healthcare, education, doing away with corruption, etc. Obviously, not a word against privatisations. Conclusion: the European elections could change our lives, circumventing the government with the help of the European Parliament. Everyone just looks at each other, dismayed and appalled.” (From our correspondent in Hungary)



Great Britain



Workers demonstrated in London (*photo*) and in other cities, as reported by our correspondent John Sweeney.

Germany

In Germany, where the trade unions traditionally organise the marches, the workers took over the demonstrations to express their demands — here, to defend collective bargaining agreements — in the face of the anti-labour policies of the government of Grand Coalition between Merkel and the leaders of the Social Democrat Party (SPD).



Belgium

"This year", say our correspondents from Comité unité-Eenhedscmité, "the May Day rallies and marches in Belgium have been the opportunity for drawing up the balance sheet of the Michel government's policies of social destruction, and to express the workers' will to do away with these policies (general elections will take place on 26 May). The balance sheet shows a loss of purchasing power, retirement at age 67, forced and free labour for long-term unemployed, etc." (photo: demonstration in Ghent)



Iceland

Icelandic workers also demonstrated in the streets of Reykjavik (photo by our correspondent).



Portugal

The demonstrations called this year by the two major trade union confederations, CGTP and UGT, explain our correspondents from Portugal, took place in the context of the Socialist Party government's undermining of the right to strike. This anti-labour effort has been supported by the Parliament, by the Communist Party, and by the Left Bloc. In recent months, the government, in the name of providing "minimum service," has twice ordered the requisition of strikers: first the nurses, then the workers transporting hazardous materials. In the same vein, the government has had the parliamentary majority approve attacks on workers' gains, allowing employers to extend the trial period of new hires from three to six months, thereby allowing employers to dismiss a worker without compensation at the end of six months of a "trial period."



Spanish State



the counter-reform of the Labour Code be abrogated with slogans against repression and for the independence of Catalonia: “Only the Republic will make us free!” “Freedom for the political prisoners!” “Up with Independence!”

The UGT and Workers Commissions (CCOO) unions called over seventy demonstrations in the context of the situation opened by the results of the April 28th elections. Our correspondents have informed us that the leaders explicitly desired a “progressive government”, an alliance of the Socialist Party and Podemos, which, they claimed, should “abolish the more harmful aspects” of the reform of the Labour Code enacted by the Rajoy government in 2013. In Barcelona (Catalonia), 5,000 workers answered the UGT and CCOO's call in the morning and then, in the afternoon, marched in their thousands, responding to the call of the platform “Let us Institute the Republic of Social rights!” linking the demand that

Russia

In the countries of the former Soviet Union, the weight of Stalinism and of the regimes that it brought forth can still be felt. In Russia, for instance, one can witness the regime's “patriotic” marches celebrating “Spring and Labour” vying with marches called by the Communist Party, where orthodox icons are brandished side by side with portraits of Stalin. In a situation that still bears the mark of the Summer 2018 mobilisations against the reform of retirement pensions, groups of working class activists have taken initiatives to reclaim the essence of May 1st. In Irkutsk, Siberia, they decided to call their own rally around a banner quoting the lyrics of The Internationale : “*Neither God, nor Caesar, nor tribune...*” (photo).



In Moscow, taking up the traditions of the POSDR (the Socialist Democratic Worker's Party of Russia) under the czar's regime, activists organised a discussion group in a forest to discuss the problems of the working class movement (photo).

Belarus

In Moldavia, a similar initiative was taken on the very spot where the first demonstration against the czar's regime was staged in September 1901, while in Belarus, activists held up posters calling back to mind that May 1st is indeed the day of workers' international solidarity (*photo*).



Turkey

In Turkey, as we have been informed by our correspondents, following the municipal elections where the majority of voters rejected Erdogan's representatives in the major cities and towns of the country, worker participation in the May Day demonstrations was massive (over 200,000 demonstrators in Istanbul).

Pakistan



"No to privatisations!" and "Down with exploitation!"

In Pakistan, the comrades of the All-Pakistan Trade Union Federation (APTUF) marched in the name of "a red salute to the Chicago martyrs" in demonstrations organized in several towns of the country, including Lahore (*photo*) and Karachi. In their press release, Rubina Jamil, president of the All-Pakistan Workers Confederation and Anwer Gujjar, president of APTUF and railway trade unionist, emphasized the need to "analyse the successes and the failures of the labour movement struggle for emancipation, in order to move forward and do away with capitalism and imperialist oppression." The trade unions' banners and slogans stated, "No to the IMF and to the World Bank!", "No to the exploitation of women workers!",

India

Despite tensions between India and Pakistan and military escalation in recent months, it is under the same red flags as their brothers and sisters in Pakistan that Indian workers responded massively to the call of their trade union organizations. Our correspondent, Nambiath Vasudevan, reports how, in the city of Mumbai, the trade union confederations of NTUI, INTUC, HMS, AITUC and CITU organised a joint march, where the presence of women workers — in particular members of the domestic workers' union — was especially high, as was that of workers in the formal sector (covered by the Labour Code) and the "informal" sector. The defense of workers' conquests, the struggle to obtain a social security system, and the fight against the anti-worker and divisive communitarian policies of the BJP government (Hindu, anti-Muslim nationalist party, in power in India) were at the center of the speeches.



China (Hong Kong)



The struggle against anti-labour repression in China was present at the rally called on May Day in Hong Kong, our correspondent Apo Leong tells us. Demonstrators carried a banner demanding the liberation of the workers imprisoned in the People's Republic of China (*photo*), where the Chinese government hunts down labour strikes.

Kanak

A few thousand kilometers from there, in the French colony of Kanaky (New Caledonia) in the Pacific Ocean, many workers answered the call from the Union of Kanaky Workers and the Exploited (USTKE) to demonstrate in the streets of Noumea (*photo*). Among the workers' demands this year: refusal of the plan for the reform of retirement pensions in New Caledonia — an idea from the local MEDEF (bosses' union). The plan consists of "*changing from a system of distribution based on inter-generational solidarity to a system of capitalisation, with all the risks that this would include*".



Azania

While the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), a component of the ruling coalition, was holding a meeting in Durban, in the presence of Cyril Ramaphosa, president of the Republic, a workers' meeting was being held in Polokwane Stadium, at the call of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (SAFTU). One of the speakers, Irvin Jim, leader of the United Steelworkers Union (NUMSA), stated on this occasion: "*Everything that was on the agenda under the racist Apartheid regime is still on the agenda, because the ANC has only replaced a white regime with a black one. Since 1994, the working class has been the victim of a South African economy that has*



remained the same, with unemployment, layoffs, and precarious jobs... The ANC tells the black people that they must accept to live with 20 rand per hour [about 1.20 euros, the 'minimum wage' rate introduced by Ramaphosa — editor's note]. They have become zealous servants of white monopoly capital. They have challenged the constitutional right of workers to organize!"

Morocco

Our correspondents from the *Tribune des Travailleurs* participated in the May Day demonstrations, the day after the signing of an agreement between trade union leaderships, the government and the bosses. While the agreement includes a 500-dirham increase for public service employees (half of which will be paid in July 2019, and the other half in 2020), it opens the way, in return, for a generalisation of hiring with temporary contracts in the public service and a reform of retirement pensions. It does not respond to the contract-worker teachers who have been on strike for weeks. A large part of the demonstrators disapproved this agreement, seeing it as a step backward and an infringement on their rights. Some of the trade unionists are even calling for the unions to withdraw from the social dialogue.



Algeria

A May 1st of Struggle

There were three firsts on May 1st: no joint meeting of the leadership of the trade union confederation and the government to "celebrate labour"; the organisation of demonstrations by the Autonomous Trade Union Confederation (CSA), only a few months after its proclamation; and the return to class-struggle fightback, in the streets, by the authentic trade unionists of the UGTA confederation after 20 years of ban on demonstrations imposed by the Bouteflika-Benflis government.

Abdelkader Bensalah, acting head of state, did not dare to publish the traditional "message to workers." Ever since he was installed as head of State by Army Chief of Staff Gaïd Salah, he has not left the presidential palace even once.

An estimated 150,000 workers responded to separate calls to mobilise by the CSA and by the free trade unionists from the UGTA.

The CSA organised marches in every city across the country. In the capital city of Algiers, several thousands marched from Place du 1er-Mai to the Grande Poste, despite several rows of police cordons along the way. But the march took place. On the steps of the Great Post Office, the trade unionists reaffirmed their participation in the revolutionary process by chanting all the slogans of the popular movement: "*Down with the System!*" and "*We are not afraid!*" CSA trade unionists also chanted, "*Free the UGTA!*"

Undoubtedly, the free trade unionists of the UGTA have gotten stronger. They succeeded in gathering thousands of leaders and tens of thousands of workers in Algiers, in front of the headquarters of the trade union confederation, and in the cities of the interior. Two main slogans were chanted: "*For an Independent and Democratic UGTA!*" and "*System Clear Out!*"

In three cities, May 1st had a special flavour. In Djelfa, 400 kilometers south of the capital city of Algiers, a march had been planned by the "*cachéristes*"* in support of Army Chief of Staff Gaïd Salah. The workers prevented it. Politicians who had ventured into the city were ejected bodily by the crowd.

In Annaba, 700 kilometers east of Algiers, the former "number 2" of the UGTA tried to demonstrate with the workers. He was simply asked to refrain from doing so. The workers did not give him a choice. And it was as the workers chanted their favorite slogan: "*You have devoured the country,*" that he took his car and left this big working class city.

Finally, in Oran, 700 kilometers west of the capital, the workers gathered with immense joy: After three weeks of strike action, they had just signed the memorandum of understanding with management, all their demands having been met. Their strike was conducted despite pressure from leading experts who said that the strike was "*endangering the country.*"

Amar Lounes

* "*Cachir*" is a kind of Algerian dried sausage. The parties in power habitually give out *cachir* sandwiches to attract participation in their rallies.

Benin

The Workers' Fightback Against the Anti-Democratic Regime

This May 1st 2019 has taken place just after the announcement of the provisional results of the 28 April legislative elections. These elections were marked by low participation (22.99 %, according to the official source but in reality, much less) because only the two parties created at the initiative of the president of the Republic and businessman Patrice Talon participated. After the presentation of these results, the opposition and the two former heads of State called on the president of the Republic to commit to the path of re-establishing democracy.



On Wednesday the 1st of May, while six of the trade unions handed their list of grievances over to the minister of Labour, workers in the Benin Workers Union Confederation (CSTB) marched to the Place de l'Etoile Rouge, to hold their traditional rally. They were violently dispersed by the police, who used tear gas and rubber bullets. The workers were then forced to hold their rally at the Labour Exchange.

Several hours later, the city of Cotonou was the theatre of a popular uprising. In fact, the people — who were already very wound up against the electoral hold-up that was taking place, against the growing poverty and attacks on freedoms — had been informed that the power in place had sent a horde of police and soldiers to the home of the former president of the Republic, Boni Yayi, to arrest him. This resulted in a number of clashes between the revolted population and the police and soldiers. There are reports of both injuries and deaths.

Our correspondent in Porto Novo