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Russians Mark May Day with Protests Against Government

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Communist supporters burn a portrait of President Vladimir Putin in downtown Moscow

Tens of thousands of people turned out all across Russia to mark May Day, the traditional labor day there, and many were marching to protest against government policies.

Many rallies had a festive atmosphere on the first day of May, especially because this year the traditional worker's holiday is also Orthodox Easter.

Tens of thousands of people turned out all over Russia from across the political spectrum.

Many were supporters of President Vladimir Putin and his government, saying it is important to support the rights of workers.

But some of the largest gatherings were protest demonstrations organized by the Communists and other opposition parties. In Moscow, thousands of marchers denounced recent budget cuts that have affected the elderly and those living on retirement pensions.

High inflation and the rising cost of energy have led to a steep increase in prices for most goods and utilities. Many say workers' salaries are not keeping pace.

"Not a single Russian worker should receive a wage that is insufficient to cover basic living costs," said a demonstrator.

Some marchers carried portraits of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, expressing nostalgia for the Soviet period.

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