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***Remember the Fallen Fighters!***

# **The Origins of May Day**

**“The time will come when our silence is more powerful than the voices you strangle today.”**  
(Louis Lingg, working class fighter, libertarian socialist (anarcho-syndicalist) militant,  
one of four hung in 1887 by the bosses and rulers in retaliation for the FIRST MAY DAY.)

**One hundred years ago, workers rose up and created a day that millions now cherish. May Day originated to mark the sacrifices of the libertarian socialist (anarcho-syndicalist) movement in that great revolt.**

May Day is the day of international working class solidarity, which reminds us of our common struggle across the world for a decent life, democracy and socialism. The first May Day was held in South Africa in 1902. In 1984, Black workers in South Africa took up a successful campaign to have May Day recognised as a public holiday.



## **THE BOSSES ATTACK**

This support for struggle alarmed the racist ruling class of the USA. It became determined to smash the workers movement.

On Monday, May 3, events came to a head at the McCormick Machine Company in Chicago, where the struggle for an 8 hour day coincided with a several months long lockout of union members. That afternoon, strikers clashed with scabs at the plant. The cops then opened fire, killing and injuring an unknown number of workers.

This massacre outraged the IWPA and the workers movement. The IWPA organised a mass protest in the Haymarket Square in Chicago on May 4. As the meeting ended, 200 police attacked the crowd. An unidentified person (probably an agent provocateur) threw a bomb into the middle of the police, injuring several and killing one. Under the order "Fire and kill as many as you can!" the police shot into the crowd, killing and wounding more than a 100.

## **MILITANTS MURDERED**

The capitalist press and the Church started a howling outcry against the libertarian socialists (anarcho-syndicalists), blaming them for the violence!

Across the country, mass arrests, raids, and bannings of radicals followed. 8 leading

## **THE FIRST MAY DAY**

The origins of May Day lie in the struggles of the libertarian socialist (anarcho-syndicalist) movement. This fact is conveniently hidden by the history books.

In the USA, the libertarian socialists (anarcho-syndicalists) established an organisation called the International Working Peoples Association (IWPA) in the early 1880s. The IWPA fought against racism, against the class system and for a stateless socialist society. Centring around large cities like Chicago, the IWPA wielded a large working class influence, promoting workers culture and revolutionary politics.

In Chicago alone, the IWPA had 5 newspapers and political leadership in the huge Central Labour Union.

In 1886, the IWPA threw its support behind the call for a General Strike for an 8 hour day on Saturday, May 1.

At least 340,000 workers, Black, White, and immigrant, joined this strike across the country. In Chicago, up to 50,000 struck and 80,000 attended a march organised by the IWPA and the Central Labour Union.

libertarian socialist (anarcho-syndicalist) militants from the IWPA and the Central Labour Union were arrested and falsely convicted for throwing the bomb. Despite world wide protest, and the obvious bias of the trial all were given the death sentence for murder. Four were hung in November 1887; 1 committed suicide before the execution.

*200,000 people lined the funeral procession in Chicago, and 20,000 crowded into the cemetery.*

Later the State admitted what all workers knew: that these men had nothing to do with the bombing. The truth was that the bosses were using the hysteria around the bomb to attack the working class movement. In 1889, the American delegation to the International Socialist Congress in Paris

proposed that May 1st be adopted as a workers' holiday to commemorate the struggle for an 8 hour day and the execution of the "Chicago Eight".

*Since then May Day has become a day for international solidarity. We should honour the memories of these great working class fighters by fighting for the ideas for which they sacrificed everything: the ideas of libertarian socialism (anarcho-syndicalism). It is a disgrace to do otherwise.*

Standing on the gallows with his comrades Albert Parsons, Adolph Fisher, and George Engel, Louis Lingg shouted to the capitalist hangmen: "**The time will come when our silence is more powerful than the voices you strangle today**". That time is now.

**These are the beliefs the "Chicago Eight" died for...**

**The "Pittsburgh Manifesto"**

(of the International Working People's Association, adopted 1883)

By force our ancestors liberated themselves from political oppression, by force their children will have to liberate themselves from economic bondage... What we would achieve is, therefore, plainly and simply

**FIRST-** Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means, i.e. , by energetic, relentless, revolutionary and international action.

**SECOND-** Establishment of a free society based upon co-operative labour organisation of production.

**THIRD-** Free exchange of equivalent products by and between the productive organisations without commerce and profit-mongery.

**FOURTH-** Organisation of education in a secular, scientific and equal basis for both sexes.

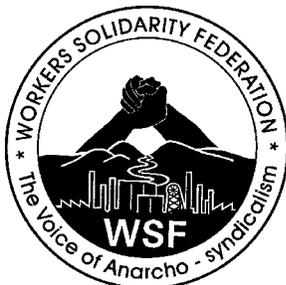
**FIFTH-** Equal rights for all without distinction of sex or race.

**SIXTH-** Regulation of all public affairs by free contracts between the autonomous (independent) communes and associations, resting on a federalist basis...

The day has come for solidarity. Join our ranks! Let the drum beat defiantly the roll of battle: "Workmen of all countries unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to win!"

Tremble, oppressors of the world! Not far beyond your sight there dawns the red and black lights of the *JUDGEMENT DAY!*

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