

1ST OF MAY

THE ORIGINS OF MAY THE FIRST

In the 1880s, workers in the United States were living in increasingly precarious conditions — the unemployment rates were rising, employers lowered wages and work lasted up to 18 hours a day. In opposition, workers organised left-wing unions and federations and started innumerable strikes. The height of the strike wave was in 1886 when workers organised over 1,400 strikes. There were different demands, including the abolition of the whole wage system, rise in salaries, and shorter working hours. One of the main demands all over the US was establishing an 8-hour work day by the 1st of May.

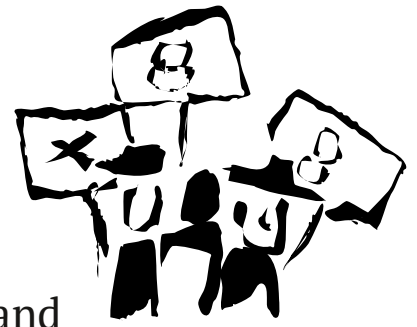
On the 4th of May in Chicago at Haymarket Square a rally developed into one of the most important events of the time, later referred to as Haymarket Affair.

A crowd gathered to protest against police brutality, as two workers were killed by police the previous day during an 8-hour work day rally.

The gathering was just about to end when 180 policemen suddenly approached to disperse the crowd. Someone, not identified to this day, threw a bomb at the police squad which triggered an exchange of fire. Several policemen died and as a result, a nationwide campaign was set up against left-wing organising. Eight active anarchists in Chicago were accused of initiating the bombing, although they were not related to the bombing. After an unfair trial, the court found them guilty — Albert Parsons,



August Spies, George Engel and Adolph Fischer were hanged. The jury used the court case to show their opposition to anarchism.



Both in Europe and the US, the Haymarket Affair and the following court hearings were widely reported by the left-wing media and a lot of people were angry at the brutality of the state. Many realised that republicanism hardly differs from absolutist tyrannies of the past — the state is always a violent institution. In a couple of years, May 1st became an international workers day, commemorating the Hayday Affair, the killed anarchists, and the struggles of the workers — a symbol of anticapitalism, antistatism and a struggle against oppression. The workers' struggle continued all over the world. Up until today, May 1st reminds us that the workers have fought to get the rights they have today and that fight is still worth fighting — with solidarity, unity, and organising against the oppressors.



WHAT IS ANARCHISM?

The term *anarchism* is a broad one, containing different strains of thought, but all of them are critical of power relations. Historically, anarchists have opposed the state and capitalism but they have also brought attention to other oppressive power hierarchies like sexism, racism, homophobia, and environmental issues. Anarchists believe that when someone gains power over others, the power will sooner or later corrupt them so that they will take advantage of it. As an antidote, anarchist organising is decentralised and horizontal — all people are equal and should be able to decide over themselves and their surroundings. In the process, anarchists value solidarity, intersectionality, and mutual aid. They believe that we should live by our values starting from this moment, and not wait for a revolution or instructions from above — we can start the revolution ourselves by opposing oppressors, creating communities, and supporting people around us.