



MAY DAY

Anarchist Origins of 1st May

THE IDEA OF turning the 1st of May into a day of action for workers was first proposed at the 4th congress of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). It was decided to launch, starting from the 1st of May 1886, a wide campaign of agitation and struggle focused on limiting the working week to forty hours. The most radical actions took place in Chicago. At that time, Chicago had the

most developed workers movement in the USA with a strong anarchist presence.

Following the 1st of May 1886, strikes were still ongoing as the fight with employers became tougher. On the 4th of May, a meeting gathering around 15,000 people was attacked by police. By the end of the day, both sides had suffered



Anarchist monument, Chicago

numerous dead and wounded. It was a perfect occasion to muzzle the protest. Eight of the main organisers, all anarchists, were arrested and sentenced to death. The sentence was turned to life imprisonment for three of them.

**Hanged
Then Acquitted**

On 11 November 1887, Albert Parsons, Adolphe Fischer, George Engel and August Spies were hanged. Their comrade Louis Lingg committed suicide the day before to avoid execution. A few years later, they were acquitted of all charges and the court admitted that the police and justice system set up the case to criminal-

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We remember:
Albert Parsons
Adolph Fischer
August Spies
George Engel
Louis Lingg
Samuel Fielden
Michael Schwab
Oscar Neebe



State, Police and Capital

THE 1st OF MAY is an occasion to remind us that the fight against capitalism is still going on. Nowadays in Europe, strikes and social struggles are seriously discredited. Yet, the difference between rich and poor keeps growing, the financial markets are back in the saddle and traders are still handling billions of dollars. Are we wrong to ask for more when half of the world's wealth is owned by 1% of the population? Meanwhile, workers are asked to make more and more effort to "save" the economy and put the State back on its feet with its batch of new taxes (such as the bedroom tax) and cuts in public services. We are heading toward a neo-liberal capitalist system in which the State's main purpose is to maintain social control so capitalism can develop without constraint.

Workers are producing everything and yet they own very little. This analysis is old and well known but

despite it, workers in Europe slowly give up the fight for a fair redistribution and instead just hope that troubles will fall on someone else. In addition, work has been sanctified so that the idea is widespread that if you don't want to be a good worker that produces and obeys it makes you lazy, a parasite or an idealist (choose yours!).

As anarchists, we think that human beings shouldn't be defined by the surplus value they bring to capitalism. Work should be the way to produce by necessity and not to create new needs. Work must be organized so everyone can work less, and for means other than profitability. No capitalist society will ever achieve full employment because it needs a pool of unemployed people so the necessity to work can make us accept bad working conditions. In order to reorganise work, we need a society free from



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May 1968-

THE YEAR 1968 was marked by many events—the huge demonstrations throughout Europe and America against the American intervention in Vietnam, unrest in Czechoslovakia, riots in the black ghettos of the USA and student occupations in Britain. But what surged to the fore were the events of May–June 1968 in France.

Today, in a period which seems the opposite of 1968, it's hard to realise that a vast movement of struggle, with youth at its forefront, shook the world. But 1968 was prepared for on a number of fronts — counter-cultural as well as political.

This large countercultural movement flourished above all in the United States, but also in northern Europe. By 1968, however, this movement was beginning to run out of steam. Before May 1968, tiny minorities were engaged in agitation, and these were ignored by practically every political observer in France. One inquiry published in a book before the events, described young people as completely depoliticised and eager to integrate as quickly as possible into work and 'adult life', which was never questioned.

It was at Nanterre University where the March 22nd Movement formed with anarchist students. These groups led off the occupation of the admin block after the arrest of militants of the Vietnam Committees. This agitation came together with that led



-May 2018

in the university living quarters against sexual repression and the segregation of young women and young men.

This led on to May 1968: demonstrations with tens and hundreds of thousands of participants, 10 million workers on strike, pickets in front of occupied factories even in very small towns, the nights of street fighting and barricades against the brutal riot police, and an attack on the Stock Exchange, the universities and high schools occupied, President De Gaulle had to temporarily flee France.

But the originality of May–June 1968 was down, not to the student revolt, but to the entrance onto the scene of the workers, from 15th May. Before that, young workers were joining the students on the barricades. If the libertarian and situationist students lit the first spark of revolt, it was at Nantes, the day after the great demo at Paris and the occupation of the Sorbonne on the 13th May, where the revolt spread to the workers.

The Sud-Aviation Bougenais factory was occupied by the workers. This movement spread to all of France. From the 15th May, a strike began at Renault-Cleon at Rouen. The industrial workers, followed by those in the public sector, set off a chain of events that spared few sectors of society. So action committees were set up among film-makers, architects, in the high schools and teaching fac-



ulties, the banks and offices, each offering a savage analysis of the institutions and where the Sorbonne was the most eloquent example of discussion and debate between different sectors of society. However, except at Nantes, where students were admitted to meetings of the strike committee, co-ordination between students and workers was difficult.

The union bureaucrats, many in the Communist Party, exploited the differences between the 'adventurism' of the students and the 'realism' of the workers. Many workers perceived students as spoiled children of the bourgeoisie who could reject what they themselves had never had the privilege to experience. But equally there was little sign of revolutionary tendencies among workers to go beyond the limits set by the union bureaucrats. The thousand workplaces occupied and open as forums for free discussions were not seen as ways of moving forward.

Soon, the occupations were abandoned by the majority of

workers who left only the Communist Party and the union central it controlled, the CGT, running things. As for realism, the bureaucrats fixed a deal of vague promises on retirement payments and conditions and family pay-outs, and a pay rise that was swiftly wiped out by a galloping rate of infla-



Beauty is in the street, Paris 1968 poster



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Upcoming Events

6 May: Norwich Anarchist Bookfair 2pm-11pm, Bedfords Crypt, 1 Old Post Office Yard, Bedford Street NR2 1SL www.facebook.com/events/175234316411777

2 Jun: London Radical Bookfair 12-6pm, Goldsmiths University, 8 Lewisham Way SE14 6NW www.londonradicalbookfair.wordpress.com

London ACG Events at 'Anti-University'

9 Jun 3-5pm 'Anarchist Fitzrovia' walk. Meet at ticket barrier, Great Portland St. tube.

10 Jun, 3pm 'What happened to revolution?' meeting, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. WC1

17/6/18 Cambridge Radical Bookfair 1-5pm, Portland Arms, 129 Chesterton Rd, Cambridge CB4 3BA www.facebook.com/events/157165304991137

WHO WE ARE...

The Anarchist Communist Group (ACG) is a revolutionary anarchist communist organisation made up of local groups and individuals who seek a complete transformation of society, and the creation of anarchist communism.

This will mean the working class overthrowing capitalism, abolishing the State, getting rid of exploitation, hierarchies and oppressions, and halting the destruction of the environment. To contribute to the building of a revolutionary anarchist movement we believe it is important to be organised.

We are committed to building an effective national and international organisation that has a collective identity and works towards the common goal of anarchist communism, whilst at the same time working together with other working class organisations and in grass roots campaigns.

We do not see ourselves as the leaders of a revolutionary movement but part of a wider movement for revolutionary change. In addition, we strive to base all our current actions on the principles that will be the basis of the future society: mutual aid, solidarity, collective responsibility, individual freedom and autonomy, free association and federalism.

If you are considering joining the ACG, then to see where we are coming from in terms of ideas and politics, we suggest you look first at our **Aims & Principles** on our website www.anarchistcommunism.org

Then if you think the ACG is politically the right place for you, simply drop us a line at info@anarchistcommunism.org or write to the postal address at the top left of this page.

The Revolts of 1968: an incomplete list...

Brazil: Military police kill student Edson Luís de Lima Souto, resulting in major protests against the military dictatorship.

Britain: Over 10,000 anti-Vietnam war demonstrators outside the US Embassy. Fighting with police. 86 injured. 200 arrested in London.

Czechoslovakia: Warsaw Pact tanks cross into Czechoslovakia. Uprising against invasion.

France: Mass revolt. Over 10 million workers strike.

Germany: Rudi Dutschke shot and wounded. Demos, riots in Berlin, Essen, Frankfurt Hamburg. In Munich the Springer building is wrecked.

Ireland: Strike at General

Electric owned plant Shannon. Mass housing actions and occupations against rent increases and evictions, Dublin. Civil rights march, Duggannon. NICRA demonstrations, Derry.

Italy: Battle of Valle Giulia. Students fight police.

Jamaica: Rodney riots. Demonstrators close down university. Protests spread, turning into riots. Several people killed. Kingston.

Mexico: Student resistance and demonstrations. 10,000 protesters in Tlatelolco plaza, Mexico City. Soldiers open fire killing around 400 people.

Pakistan: November, daily riots, strikes and demonstrations.

Poland: 20,000 students and workers demonstrate, fighting with security forces. Warsaw.

Russia: Eight Russians demonstrate in Moscow against Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Spain: Student demonstrations shut down University of Madrid for 38 days.

Sweden: Students occupy university and clash with police.

USA: Boston. 235 men turn in their draft cards in front of 15,000 anti-war protesters. Student strike and demonstrations in New York & San Francisco. University buildings occupied, Columbia. Bombing of University, Southern Illinois. Demonstrations, rioting,

looting against racial discrimination, housing conditions, exploitation in Miami. Tens of thousands of anti-war protesters battle with police at Democratic National Convention, Chicago. Memphis Sanitation Strike. Police fire at 200 black protesters, killing three, injuring twenty-seven in Orangeburg.

Holy Week Uprising (after the



Holy Week Riots, Washington DC

REVOLUTIONARY CLASS STRUGGLE NEWS