

The Chicago Martyrs

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When this number of *Freedom* appears, we shall be on the eve of anniversary which every worker, every lover of liberty, ought to engrave in fiery letters on his heart. On November 11, 1887, five Anarchists who had been the most devoted champions of the workers' emancipation were put to death at Chicago, merely to give satisfaction to the capital-owners and labor-robbers of America, who loudly cried for their blood, hoping that that blood would extinguish the revolt of the labour slaves.

On that day Parsons, Spies, Engel and Fischer were strangled on the scaffold by order of the middle class judges of Chicago. Lingg who was condemned to the same fate, deprived the blood-hounds of the pleasure of seeing his corpse, too, on the scaffold, and exploded in his mouth a small tube filled with explosive matter: while Schwab and Fielden were sent to endure one for 15 years and one for life, the horrid treatment of the American jails.

That day will be an historical date-not because five new martyrs were added to the already awfully long list of those who gave their lives for the sake of Freedom-but because it opens a new page in the history of the struggles of Humanity for its emancipation. Engel, Fischer, Lingg, Parsons and Spies, Schwab and Fielden, were not aiming at a political change in the institutions of the United States. What they struggled and died for, was a thorough change in the *economical* conditions; what they wished to overthrow was the yoke of Capital, not that of a despotic or tyrannical government.

Therefore the middle classes of America-all those, in fact, who live upon the sweat of the worker-had sworn to them so terrible a hatred. They knew, these rich people, that they could bring no distinct charge against any of those seven whose death they so loudly asked for. But the Anarchists had written and spoken against the tyranny of the idlers; they had called the workers to organize in order to dispossess the capitalists and to socialize capital and land; they had reconstituted the International Workmen's Association; they had declined all kinds of compromises in the war against Capital, and so they could be bribed neither by money nor by the attractions of position in the ruling classes. They were Anarchists, and their manly voices were listened to by the suffering masses. And that was enough: the hatred of the rich people towards these terrible foes knew no limits. For eighteen months they cried out in their papers and meetings: "Kill them! Let the workers know that the rope will be the appointed end of their leaders, whatever the part they may have directly taken in the Movement. They are followed by the masses-they *must* die!"

We have witnessed many atrocities during the last ten years, when the struggle for liberty has taken so acute a character all over Europe, bringing some fifty or sixty men and women to the scaffold, while thousands have been condemned to a slow death in prisons or exile. We have grown accustomed to see tribunals denying the simplest forms of justice. But, apart from the case of Lisogub who was hanged in Russia for having given money to the Revolutionary Party, we never saw anything approaching the contempt of all established forms of justice which we saw at Chicago. Never such immense sums of money so freely spent by the rich in obtaining the desired sentence.

Now that so many witnesses have been heard, it is known that in fact the Anarchists were not the promoters of the eight-hour movement in America. Despising compromise, they refused to join it. But, when they saw that -peaceful strikers-men, women and children-were clubbed and shot down like mad dogs, by the Chicago uniformed police and the private police of the rich capitalists of Chicago-the Pinkerton's men-they went to the meetings and tried to arouse among the workers the consciousness of their rights. It is proved, moreover, that when wild excitement followed in Chicago the butchery by which both the police of the State and the Capitalists tried to suppress the strike, Parsons and Spies did their best to prevent a bloody conflict which would have led to the defeat of the workers. It is proved, on the other hand, that the chief of the Chicago police wished to have an armed conflict and thought "to make short work" of some 3000 Socialists if he only "could get them in a corner without their wife's and children." It is known that owing to the efforts of Parsons, Spies and the others, the Haymarket meeting was of a peaceful character.

But that was not in the plans of the police. They rushed on the peaceful meeting, hoping to have now the opportunity of making "short work" which would crush the eight-hour movement, and then a bomb was thrown in their midst, killing a dozen of them and wounding another dozen. But it is known now that none of those who died on the scaffold had anything to do with the bomb: *the judges themselves recognized it.*

But what did it matter to them! They took seven men who were most prominent by their activity and their unlimited devotion to the cause of the people, and they said to them: "You were the soul of the movement and therefore you will be executed!"

A cry of indignation arose among the workers of America and Europe at this condemnation; and it would have been still more unanimous if it were believed that so wild a sentence could ever be carried out. Eighteen months had elapsed since May 1886, and the workers were sure that, passions being calmed by time, the capitalists of Chicago would never dare to execute the sentence which had been openly bought by the dollars of the Association of the rich labor-robbers of Chicago.

But the cowards had forgotten nothing. They had once trembled for their purses-now they cried for blood. In proportion as public opinion awakened and loudly demanded the withdrawal of the shameful sentence of death, the bloodhounds of the capitalist press yelled louder and louder. Never, never, saw we such a really cannibalistic spirit as that shown by the capitalist press of the States in October last. Take all history, search all its pages, you will find nothing like what we saw that time in America! Even during the excitement which followed the civil war of 1871 in France and the fall of the Paris Commune, the sight offered by the organs of the wealthy classes was less disgusting than that of the American capitalist press before the legal murder of November last. After having exhausted all imaginable and unimaginable means for maintaining the sentence of death, they wrote every day: "The death clothes are sewn for the Anarchists." . . . "The rope to hang them has been ordered. It has been handed over to the hangman." . . . "Experiments are made

to ascertain its strength." Such was the news eagerly communicated day by day to the readers, in a prominent place, by all the leading papers, of New York and Chicago. "The rope supports such a weight. It will do: the scoundrels will have become thinner when they know that they will be hanged." "Too much philanthropy in all that," added a middle-class joker; "they, ought to be hung by a rope which would break twice or thrice." "How best to hang them? All at once? Or by twos? Whom first? Parsons and Spies? No; better Engel and Lingg first: Spies is nervous, better let him suffer while his friends will be suspended in space!" And so on, and so on every day!

True, the man coward is the most sanguinary of all beasts : the cannibal reappears under the modern frock-coat and evening dress of those who before had trembled for their smart clothes.

And all this was carefully brought under the notice of Spies and Fischer, Parsons and Schwab, Engels, Lingg and Fielden.

But they remained calm. Until the morning of the 11th they were writing letters and answering the numerous telegrams they were receiving. Priests, calling themselves Christians, annoyed them with their hypocritical words: they sent them away. Engels discussed Anarchy with his warder. Fischer told to another that he had dreamed of his father's house in Germany, and how he felt like a child again with all the freshness of childhood. They sang the "Marseillaise" while the hangman made' experiments with a new "scientific" trap on the scaffold.

And, when they were called for, they marched, quiet and firm, to their death.

"Men and women of America," began Parsons, but his voice was stifled by the white cap.

"This is the most beautiful moment of my life! Long live Anarchy!" exclaimed Fischer. Engels loudly cried: "Hurrah for Anarchy!" and Spies added :

"Our silence after death, comrades, will be more powerful than our voices during life!"

Yes, their voices loudly speak from the grave, and call the workers to continue the struggle for Freedom.

The courageous wife of Parsons, Lucy Parsons, has come to England and will cheer English workers in their struggle for the emancipation of mankind.

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