



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 1, 2018

History of May Day

Most Americans associate May Day with the hanging of flower baskets or the National Day of Prayer. With the Cold War now a distant memory, we seem to have forgotten that May 1, or May Day, while traditionally representing the coming of spring, has been for over a century the most important calendar day of the year for communists, socialists, and anarchists. This was the traditional day in the Soviet Union and the communist bloc countries for massive parades, replete with missiles, tanks, rank upon rank of goose-stepping troops, red flags, and huge posters of Marx and Lenin. This has not changed in countries that are still officially communist, such as China, North Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam. In non-communist countries of the world, the communist and socialist parties have continued to hold May Day celebrations, usually under the banner of International Workers Solidarity Day.



According to *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, communist countries and communist parties celebrate May Day “by mobilizing the working people in the struggle to build socialism and communism.” The same source goes on to report: “On May Day the working people of the Soviet Union show their solidarity with the revolutionary struggles of the working people in capitalist countries and with national liberation movements. They express their determination to use all their power for the struggle for peace and building of a communist society.”

Andy McNerney, a staff member of the communist Workers World Party and a leader of the ANSWER Coalition’s illegal alien organizing effort, extolled the glories of May Day in the Spring 1996 edition of *Liberation & Marxism*. McNerney wrote:

Every year, the ruling classes around the world are again reminded of their vulnerability and of the power of their gravediggers. On May 1, the world working class displays its strength in demonstrations and strikes. May Day — International Workers’ Day — is a reminder to the ruling classes that their days are numbered.... From 1919 onward, the success of May Day in the United States would depend on the success of the communist movement.

“The decision to make May 1st a day of annual demonstrations,” says *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, “was made in July 1889 by the Paris Congress of the Second International, to commemorate an action by the workers of Chicago, who organized a strike for May 1, 1886, demanding an eight-hour workday, and held a demonstration that ended in a bloody confrontation with the police.”

The communist encyclopedia’s account of May Day’s origins cited above is deceptive and deficient on



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several important points. The Chicago strikes and demonstrations of 1886-1888 culminated in the violent Haymarket Square riots, which included the murder of Chicago police officers, when anarchists hurled a dynamite bomb into police ranks. In the aftermath of the terrorist event, Captain Michael J. Shaack of the Chicago Police Department launched an in-depth investigation that resulted in a monumental 700-page book exposing a vast network of communists and anarchists working in concert across the nation, with direct ties to confederates in Europe. Captain Shaack's expose, *Anarchy and Anarchists*, demonstrated that what appeared on the surface to many people to be spontaneous, desultory incidents were actually very meticulously planned revolutionary events.

American labor unions, recognizing the communist effort to exploit May Day worldwide as well as the communist effort to penetrate and control labor, refused to follow the Marxist-led Second International and instead have traditionally celebrated Labor Day in September.

Photo of May Day demonstration in Moscow, May 1, 2014: AP Images

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