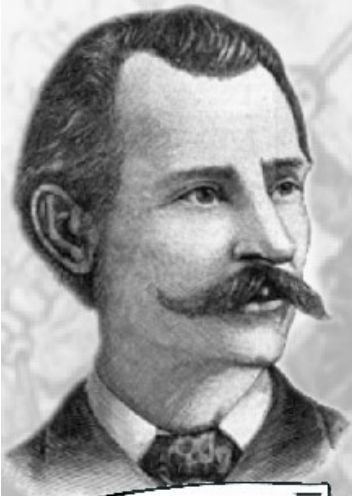


# Hayday and the War



Albert Parsons



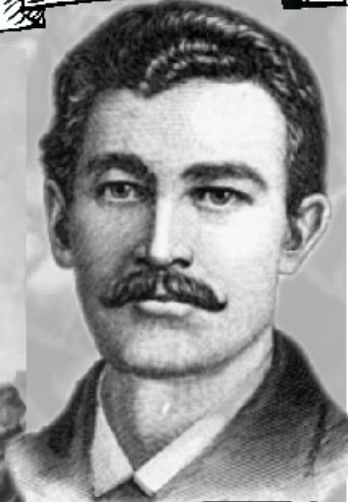
Samuel Fielden



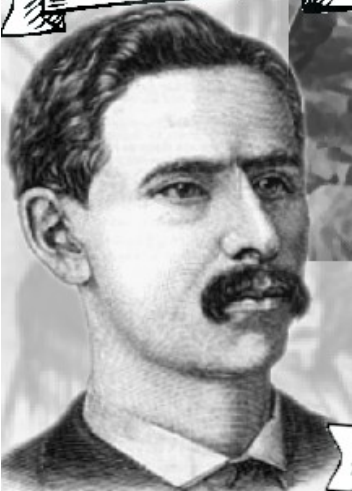
August Spies



Michael Schwab



Louis Lingg



Adolph Fischer



George Engel

*NWBCW Chicago statement on the 137th  
anniversary of the Haymarket affair*

War has at all times in part been the strengthening of the Capitalist class's stranglehold on the workers. Today we see wars, like the one in Ukraine, where infrastructure left and right is built up in the name of "national sovereignty" and "protecting the homeland" or "reclaiming" in the case of Russia or any number of ideological excuses to bring and continue war and build an arsenal. But when this war ends and even while it continues, this building of destructive weaponry is pointed right back at the working class to subdue and break our organization.

Haymarket is a prime example of this very factor at play in the historical development of capitalism. But it is only one in a series of events that occurred at the time. All tracing back to the civil war and the bolstering of the military which took place during this time. However it is imperative to state here on the matter of the civil war, the stakes here were extraordinarily large. This war in many respects was a war over wage labor vs slavery and industrial capitalism vs the agrarian southern economy. But it's important to put the idea "needing to win" the war in its context. During the events of the civil war many enslaved people had escaped by their courage and wit to the northern camps, some had even resisted working anymore.<sup>1</sup> Eventually this led to many formerly enslaved people being enlisted in the armies and the moment this large mass of forced laborers were given weapons there was no way they were going back. Any attempt at an end to the war would only have resulted in more violence and war and would have been a death blow to the United States at large. There is no timeline in which this could not occur. The enslaved people had essentially fought to free themselves. To state the north winning the war was imperative ignores this factor and undermines the real work of these freedom fighters.

This is important because it puts into perspective the connection between the enslaved people in the south and the industrial workers in the north in the struggle, as well as the development of the industry in the North as a product of the war. The massive demand for the products of war led to massive changes to manufacturing in the North, especially Chicago. The garment industry, which began the war as a craft industry made up of many small firms, underwent great centralization and transformed into large manufactories.<sup>2</sup> In 1862, Chicago surpassed Cincinnati as the city which packed the most pork in America.<sup>3</sup> Chicago fed and clothed the Union Army, while its workers were dominated more and more by capital. In the summer of 1864, Eduard Schläger described the Illinois Central Railroad importing 60 Belgian Machinists to break a strike as the beginning of the "war between Capital and Labor",<sup>4</sup> and Edward McComas remarked, "The present war was not caused by the laboring men of the North, nor fought under his direction, not continued for their interest—their only part in being to bear its burdens and shed their blood in its ranks".<sup>5</sup> Merely 2 years after the Civil War, workers initiated a strike larger than any other seen in Chicago at that time, pushing for the eight hour day.<sup>6</sup>

It was clear that the war was not for a war for the betterment of anyone but the pockets and power of the capitalists as enslaved people suffered the most horrifying conditions, brutality, dehumanization, rape and death and industrial workers languished in their continued declining conditions and long hours, left to live and die for profit. Had the workers in the north identified their interest with the enslaved people in the south, the war would not even be a subject of debate as it was clear how little the leaders of this war cared for either group. Proved further by the horrendous conditions and treatment after the war of black people to this very day. What win is the North's over slavery, if the post reconstruction period had black people working as perpetual indentured servants and in consistent fear for their life at the hands of mobs organized by politicians and small businesses owners, telling any white workers to lynch and destroy those whom they very well have the same interest with or threatening them to silence with the same fate. To make matters worse in the prison system slavery was still legal as punishment for the benefit, and strengthening rule of, the capitalist class.

Once the war ended the built up arms did not just remain idle. The war created a massive and well equipped standing army, as well as transforming the military from just a fighting force to an all around force for conquest and rule through modern science and industry. Pekka Hämäläinen points out that “As the Civil War gave way to Indian wars, the United States slipped into a state of perpetual war.”<sup>7</sup> The military used the modern science of the time to survey and record data/make maps about the Great Plains. The information gathered led to the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, and the violation of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty.<sup>8</sup> The newly created war machine then turned towards the indigenous people living in the west. They were massacred by the US Military in numerous instances, the most famous of which being the Wounded Knee Massacre. General Philip Sheridan, among others in the military and government, supported the slaughter of the buffalo en masse and President Grant vetoed the bill (H.R. 921) protecting buffalo.<sup>9</sup> Both men got their power through the Civil War. The effects and actions of the army and people put in power following the civil war led directly to the genocide and forced resettlement of indigenous people of the plains.

Back in Chicago, in 1877, as the mass strike was generalized into an uprising, the bridges were lifted and 2 companies of soldiers from the Dakota Territory who had been fighting in the Sioux Wars were brought in to suppress the workers.<sup>10</sup> This became essentially all out war between the workers and police with the aid of the army and blood spilled in the streets. More than 30 workers were killed during the 1877 uprising,<sup>11</sup> but that didn't keep them from standing against the police again during the Haymarket-

Affair, where workers were still attempting to win the eight hour day. In response to the Haymarket Affair the Commercial Club of Chicago further militarized the city by donating the land for Fort Sheridan, a military base north of the city specifically for easy access for soldiers to get down to the city to break strikes and stop any worker uprisings.<sup>12</sup> To put more salt on the wounds It was named after and supported by General Philip Sheridan. Soldiers from Fort Sheridan were used to repress workers when they rose up again during the Pullman Strike in 1894.<sup>13</sup>

The workers weren't able to gain any political footing during the Civil War (despite making the products of war), and are completely left out of determining what Reconstruction looked like. The real result was that the Civil War began a process of militarization that's ongoing to this day. Hämmäläinen sums it up as "The United States emerged from the catastrophic war not as a nation but as an empire."<sup>14</sup> That empire conquered the west, genociding the Indigenous Americans already living there and when the workers rose up, the foot soldiers of that empire were sent into its cities to beat the workers back down.

Here in Chicago, at the 137th anniversary of the Haymarket Affair, we say No War But the Class War, because history has always and will always show that any war the capitalist class wages, no matter how it attempts to justify it, will always end in nothing but the loss of life and violent repression used to destroy the working class movement. Only a united and organized international working class, regardless of nationality or locality can stop this destruction.

## Notes

1. DuBois, W.E. Burghardt. Black Reconstruction. Digitized Copy. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935. Pg. 55-84
2. John Jentz and Richard Schneirov, Chicago in the Age of Capital, Print University of Illinois Press, 2015. Pg. 47
3. Cronon, William. Nature's Metropolis. Print. W. W. Norton & Company, 1992. Pg. 230
4. Jentz and Schneirov, Chicago in the Age of Capital. Pg. 72
5. Jentz and Schneirov, Chicago in the Age of Capital. Pg. 77
6. Schneirov, Richard. Labor and Urban Politics. Print. University of Illinois Press, 1998. Pg. 35
7. Hämäläinen, Pekka Kalevi. Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power. eBook. Yale University Press, 2020. Pg. 545
8. Hämäläinen, Lakota America. Pg. 499
9. All About Bison. "History of Legislation -," December 29, 2022. Accessed April 29, 2023.  
<https://allaboutbison.com/history-of-legislation/>.
10. Jentz and Schneirov, Chicago in the Age of Capital. Pg. 204
11. Schneirov, Labor and Urban Politics. Pg. 75
12. Hannah, Eleanor. "Fort Sheridan." Encyclopedia of Chicago, 2005. Accessed April 29, 2023.  
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/478.html>
13. Hannah, "Fort Sheridan."
14. Hämäläinen, Lakota America. Pg. 537

## Sources

1. John Jentz and Richard Schneirov, *Chicago in the Age of Capital*, Print (University of Illinois Press, 2015).
2. Hämäläinen, Pekka Kalevi. *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power*. eBook. Yale University Press, 2020.
3. Schneirov, Richard. *Labor and Urban Politics*. Print. University of Illinois Press, 1998.
4. Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis*. Print. W. W. Norton & Company, 1992.
5. Hannah, Eleanor. "Fort Sheridan." *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 2005. Accessed April 29, 2023.  
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/478.html>.
6. All About Bison. "History of Legislation -," December 29, 2022. <https://allaboutbison.com/history-of-legislation/>.
7. DuBois, W.E. Burghardt. *Black Reconstruction*. Digitized Copy. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935.

About the No War But the Class War Chicago Committee:

We are a gathering of workers with political knowledge taking action towards international working class organizing and we're putting forward a message in the interests of the working class. This is part of a greater initiative put forward by the Internationalist Communist Tendency. You can see the Call for action statement at the QR code below or go to [Leftcom.org](http://Leftcom.org) to search the article.

To find NWBCW Chicago go to:

<https://chicagonwbcw.wordpress.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/people/NWBCW-Chicago/100089619724462/>

<https://twitter.com/NWBCWChicago>

