



Leon Czolgosz

Leon Czolgosz (1873-1901), the son of Polish Catholic immigrants, spent most of his life working in factories. Enraged at the rich and powerful's exploitation of the poor, Czolgosz became interested in anarchism. He attended lectures and heard anarchist Emma Goldman speak in Cleveland on May 6, 1901.

Fascinated with Goldman's beliefs, Czolgosz followed her to Chicago and spoke to her as she was on her way to the train station. As Czolgosz's interest in anarchy deepened, he decided to follow the example of Gaetano Bresci, who assassinated King Umberto I of Italy in July, 1900. Czolgosz shot President McKinley twice at close range in Buffalo, New York, on September 3, 1901.

The Assassination



A contemporary depiction of the assassination.

President William McKinley was shaking hands with the public during a reception at the Temple of Music Pavilion at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, when the assassination occurred.

When the President reached to shake Leon Czolgosz's hand, Czolgosz shot him twice. The first bullet grazed the President but the other one lodged in his abdomen.

Eight days after being shot, President McKinley died of a gangrene infection to the wound. After McKinley's assassination, Congress passed legislation officially charging the Secret Service with the protection of the President.

Leon Czolgosz went on trial nine days after the President passed away, and was sentenced to

death. Before being executed by electric chair on October 20, 1901, Czolgosz is quoted as saying, "I killed the President because he was the enemy of the good people! I did it for the help of the good people, the working men of all countries!"

The President: William McKinley

President McKinley, the 25th President of the United States, led the nation to victory in the Spanish-American War, raised protective tariffs to promote American industry, and maintained the gold standard for U.S. currency.



William McKinley

Historical Context: Emma Goldman and the Anarchist Movement

Emma Goldman, a Russian immigrant to the United States, was a well-known writer, speaker, and anarchist leader. Over the course of her life, she argued against conscription, supported birth control, and encouraged Americans to overthrow their leaders as a means to end the plight of the working class. After McKinley's assassination, police arrested Goldman on charges of planning the murder, but prosecutors could find no evidence linking Goldman to the attack.



Emma Goldman

For further resources on Leon Czolgosz, go to:
<http://www.milwaukeeep.com/season/assassins.html>

"I did it because it is wrong for one man to have so much service when other men have none..."

—Leon Czolgosz, Assassins