

## Editor's Introduction

On the night of May 4, 1886, a dynamite bomb was thrown into a group of policemen who had just begun to disperse a small crowd of workingmen still milling about in the Haymarket in Chicago's West Side. One policeman was killed instantly by the bomb, several others were wounded so severely that they died later. The police immediately opened fire, and before the Haymarket riot ended, several workers were killed (how many is unknown) and at least 200 were wounded.

A wave of hysteria swept Chicago and the rest of the nation. During it a number of anarchists were indicted. Though no sound evidence proved their connection with the actual bomb-throwing, they were tried freely for their opinions. Seven men—Albert R. Parsons, August Spies, Samuel J. Fielden, Michael Schwab, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Louis Lingg—were condemned to death, and one—Oscar Neebe—to fifteen years' imprisonment.

The Haymarket Affair is linked to two important developments in the post-Civil War period: the battle for the eight-hour day and the rise of the Social Revolutionary or anarchist movement. The eight-hour day was a major slogan of the labor movement. The

struggle for the eight-hour day began in the 1860s and produced some early results. Six states adopted eight-hour laws by 1867. A number of city councils enacted ordinances extending the eight-hour day to their public employees. In June, 1868, Congress enacted the first federal eight-hour law in American history, granting the eight-hour day to government employees.

These laws, however, were ineffectual. The state laws did not provide any means of enforcement, and the federal law was subject to such varied interpretations that it did not secure the eight-hour day for all workers who were supposed to be covered. In 1876, the United States Supreme Court completely nullified the law by declaring that the federal government could make separate agreements with its employees.

In the early 1880s emphasis in the struggle for the eight-hour day was still on legislative action. But it soon became obvious that if labor was to secure the shorter working day it would have to achieve it by its own power, by its ability to stop work at plants whose employers refused to grant the eight-hour day. At its 1884 convention, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada (organized in 1881 and changing its name in 1886 to American Federation of Labor) adopted an historic resolution which asserted that "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor from and after May 1, 1886, and that we recommend to labor organizations throughout this district that they so direct their laws as to conform to this resolution." The following year the Federation repeated the declaration that an eight-hour system was to go into effect on May 1, 1886.

In the months prior to May 1, 1886, thousands of workers, skilled and unskilled, men and women, Negro and white, native and immigrant, organized and unorganized, members of the Knights of Labor and of the Federation, were drawn into the struggle for the shorter working day. "There is an eight-hour agitation everywhere," *John Swinton's Paper*, a leading labor weekly, reported in mid-April, 1886. By that time almost a quarter of a million industrial workers were involved in the movement, and so powerful was the upsurge

that about 30,000 workers had already been granted a nine-or-eight-hour day.

In Chicago alone, 400,000 workers went out, and more than 45,000 were granted a shorter working day without striking. A Chicago paper reported that "no smoke curled up from the tall chimneys of the factories and mills and things had assumed a Sabbath-like appearance."

Chicago was the main center of the agitation for a shorter day, and in Chicago the anarchists were in the forefront of the movement. It was to no small extent due to their activities that Chicago became the outstanding labor center in the country and made the greatest contribution to the eight-hour movement. An examination of this group is essential to a correct understanding of the events that were taking place in May, 1886.

As far back as 1875, a small group of Chicago socialists, the vast majority German immigrants, had formed an armed club to protect workers against police and military assaults. This club came to be known as the *Lehr und Wehr Vereine* (Study and Resistance Association). The attacks on workers during the Railroad strikes of 1877 by the police, the militia, and the United States Army resulted in the movement's growth. Although most of the members of the armed groups belonged to the Socialist Labor Party, the national executive committee denounced such organizations on the grounds that they gave a false picture of the objectives and policies of the socialist movement. In 1878 all members of the S.L.P. were ordered to leave the clubs, but this order was resented by the Chicago socialists, and, together with other issues, led to a split in the party in 1880.

That same year, a group that had seceded from the S.L.P. in New York formed an organization known as the Social Revolutionary Club. Soon Social Revolutionary clubs sprang up in other cities—Boston, Philadelphia, Milwaukee and Chicago—where there were large populations and immigrants whose new and bitter experience in labor struggles in the United States made them particularly receptive to anarchist ideas with their emphasis on the abandon-

ment of political action in favor of physical force as the mechanism of social revolution.

The Chicago club, the most important in the movement, was led by Albert R. Parsons and August Spies. Both were militant trade unionists who had run for office on the socialist ticket in Chicago. But both had lost faith in political action, and were searching for a new method to meet the attacks by the police upon the working class and their organizations, the most brutal of which had occurred in Chicago.

A national conference of Social Revolutionary clubs was held in Chicago in 1881. But it was not until the arrival of Johann Most from England in 1882 that the Social Revolutionary movement united its ranks and became an active force. A powerful orator, a caustic and brilliant writer, temperamental and egotistical, he rapidly became the acknowledged leader of the American anarchists. Following a tour of the country, Most paved the way for a congress of American anarchists at Pittsburgh in October, 1883.

Twenty-six cities were represented at the convention where the International Working People's Association (the "Black International") was formed. Most dominated the convention. An ardent advocate of terroristic tactics, he opposed the struggle for immediate demands—shorter hours, higher wages, better working conditions—as mere sops thrown to the workers which only served to tie them closer to the capitalist system. The manifesto of the I.W.P.A., written in the main by Most, ended with an appeal to one remedy for the evils of capitalism—*force!*

Two distinct elements were present at the Pittsburgh congress—united primarily by their opposition to political action. The delegates from New York and the other eastern cities, led by Most, favored individualistic acts of terrorism. The western delegates, led by Parsons and Spies, agreed with Most on the futility of political action and the value of force, but they believed firmly in trade-union work. Basing itself upon the direct action of the rank-and-file, the trade union would not concern itself with immediate demands. Instead, it would serve as the instrument of the working class for

the complete destruction of capitalism and the nucleus for the formation of a new society. Its chief weapon as a fighting unit against capitalism would be force and violence.

This mixture of anarchism and syndicalism came to be known as the "Chicago Idea," and was adopted by the Pittsburgh congress. Although the trade union was not to contend for immediate demands, in practice the followers of the I.W.P.A. were often compelled, in order to win a hearing from workers, to support immediate demands. Consequently, the I.W.P.A. made headway among trade unions, especially in the mid-west, where the Chicago section, led by colorful and militant personalities like Parsons, Spies, Schwab, Fielden, and others, penetrated deeply into the trade-union movement. Chicago had five to six thousand members of the I.W.P.A., and the Social Revolutionaries published five papers including the *Alarm* in English, a fortnightly and monthly edited by Parsons with an edition of 2,000–3,000; the daily *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, edited by Spies, with an edition of about 5,000. There was also the short-lived paper, *Der Anarchist*, a monthly published by George Engel and other extremist members of the I.W.P.A.

By staging impressive mass demonstrations and parades, conducting speaking tours all over the mid-west, the Chicago Social Revolutionaries were able to exert much greater influence than their numbers would indicate. They dominated the Central Labor Union of Chicago which consisted of 22 unions in 1886, among them the seven largest in the city. The Social Revolutionaries threw themselves wholeheartedly into the movement for the eight-hour day, and were largely responsible for the tremendous upsurge in Chicago for the shorter working day. At the outset, the anarchists had not looked with favor on the eight-hour demand, first, because its acceptance was "a virtual concession that the wage system is right," and, secondly, because even if successful, the shorter working day was trivial compared to the struggle to abolish the wage-system and might even divert the energies of the workers from activity to overthrow wage slavery. But when the Chicago anarchists saw how deeply

the working class was stirred and how bitterly the industrialists opposed the movement, they understood that they would have to join in the common front. As Parsons explained later, the Social Revolutionaries endorsed the eight-hour movement, "first, because it was a class movement against domination, therefore historical, and evolutionary and necessary; and secondly, because we did not choose to stand aloof and be misunderstood by our fellow workers."

Despite their work for the eight-hour day, the Social Revolutionaries repeatedly made it clear that direct action—force, violence—was the cure-all for the problems facing the workers. As the following resolution of the Chicago Central Labor Union, introduced by Spies in October, 1885, put it: "We urgently call upon the wage-earning class to arm itself in order to be able to put forth against their exploiters such an argument which alone can be effective: Violence. . . ."

Since February 16, 1886, a strike had been in progress at the McCormick Harvester Machine Company. When on May 1 the eight-hour strikes convulsed Chicago, one-half of the McCormick work force joined the eight-hour strike movement. On Monday afternoon, May 3, an eight-hour mass meeting was held by 6,000 members of the lumber shovers' union of Chicago. The meeting was held on Black Road, a block from the McCormick plant, and was joined by 500 McCormick strikers. The workers listened to a speech by August Spies, who had been asked to address the workers by the Central Labor Union. While Spies was speaking, urging the workers to stand together and not retreat before their employers, the strikebreakers were beginning to leave the nearby McCormick factory. The McCormick strikers, aided by several hundred lumber shovers, demonstrated against the scabs, trying to drive them back into the plant. Suddenly a special detail of 200 police arrived, and, without warning, attacked the strikers with clubs and revolvers, killing at least one striker, seriously wounding five or six others and injuring an undetermined number.

Outraged by the brutal assaults he had witnessed, Spies returned to the office of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and composed a circular in which

he called upon the workers of Chicago to "rise in your might. . . . To Arms! We call you to arms." This came to be called, because of its heading, the "Revenge Circular." Spies originally had headed it "Workingmen! To Arms!" A compositor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* added the word "Revenge" without Spies' knowledge. It appeared in both English and German.

About half of the 2,500 copies of the circular were distributed, and a protest meeting was later called at Haymarket Square, Randolph Street between Desplaines and Halsted, for the night of May 4. In the announcement of the meeting was inserted the lines, "Workingmen Arm Yourselves and Appear in Full Force." Spies insisted that these be stricken from the announcement or he would not speak at the meeting. Although the line was cut out of the circular, some two to three hundred of the 20,000 handbills distributed did contain the words to which Spies had objected.

The Haymarket Square could accommodate over twenty thousand people, and it was chosen for the gathering because the promoters of the meeting expected close to that number of workingmen to turn out. They were disappointed. When the meeting began about twelve to thirteen hundred were on hand, many having left because the gathering was an hour late in getting started. Because of the small crowd, it was decided to change the site from Haymarket proper to the mouth of Crane's alley, a half block away. A truck wagon was used for a speaking stand.

Spies opened the meeting at 8:30 P.M., and spoke for half an hour. He was followed by Parsons. Throughout their speeches, the crowd was orderly. Mayor Carter H. Harrison was present from the beginning of the meeting, and after listening to the speeches of Spies and Parsons, concluded that "nothing had occurred yet, or looked likely to occur to require interference." He advised Police Captain John Bonfield at the near-by Desplaines station house that all was orderly at the meeting, and suggested that the large force of police reserves concentrated at the station house be sent home.

It was close to ten in the evening when Parsons introduced

Samuel Fielden for the final talk. Fielden spoke about ten minutes when a threatening storm caused many of the people in the gathering to seek shelter. Not more than two hundred persons were now on hand. Fielden was finishing his talk. Suddenly a police column of 180 men, headed by Captains Bonfield and William Ward, moved toward the speaker, halting about three or four paces from the end of the wagon. Captain Ward turned to the people present and commanded the meeting immediately and peaceably to disperse. He waited a moment and repeated the order, this time calling upon individuals in the small audience to assist. Fielden protested, "We are peaceable." At the same time, he, Spies, and others on the wagon began to descend.

At this moment a bomb was thrown among the police. It killed Policeman Mathias J. Degan instantly; six others died later. About seventy police officers were wounded. The police opened fire upon the spectators. How many civilians were wounded or killed from police bullets never was ascertained exactly.

A reign of terror swept over Chicago. The press and pulpit called for revenge, insisting that the bomb was the work of socialists, anarchists and communists. Staging "raids" in the working-class districts, the police rounded up all known anarchists and socialists. Meeting halls, printing offices, and even private homes were broken into and searched in the round-up. "Homes were invaded without warrant," writes Professor Harvey Wish, "and ransacked for evidence; suspects were beaten and subjected to the 'third degree'; individuals ignorant of the meaning of socialism and anarchism were tortured by the police, sometimes bribed as well, to act as witnesses for the state." "Make the raids first and look up the law afterward!" publicly counseled Julius S. Grinnell, the state's attorney, when a question was raised about search warrants.

On May 27 thirty-one persons were indicted. They were charged with being accessories to the murder of Policeman Mathias J. Degan and with a general conspiracy to murder. Of those indicted, only eight actually stood trial: Spies, Parsons, Schwab, Fielden, Fischer, Engel, Lingg, and Neebe. Several purchased immunity by turning



state's evidence. One, Rudolph Schnaubelt, was arrested and released but never found again. The others were to wait until the trial of the eight was completed.

The trial opened on June 21, 1886, at the criminal court of Cook County, with Joseph E. Gary as trial judge, State's Attorney Grinnell as chief prosecutor, and William P. Black, a successful corporation lawyer with liberal beliefs, heading the defense. The candidates for the jury were not chosen in the usual way by drawing names from a box. In this case, a special bailiff, nominated by the State's Attorney, was appointed by the court to select the candidates. The defense was denied an opportunity to present evidence that the special bailiff had publicly stated: "I am managing this case and I know what I am about. These fellows are going to be hanged as certain as death. I am calling such men as the defendants will have to challenge peremptorily and waste their time and challenges. Then they will have to take such men as the prosecution wants."

Exactly what the bailiff predicted happened. After the defense had exhausted all its peremptory challenges, a jury, openly prejudiced against the defendants, was selected. The defense accused Judge Gary of having made trial by an impartial jury impossible, by allowing jurors to serve "who had *formed and expressed* an opinion of the guilt and innocence of the accused, based upon newspaper articles and rumors." The judge, the defense charged, even allowed jurors to sit when they acknowledged that they had formed an opinion in reference to the guilt or innocence of the defendants, based upon what they had read, heard or believed to be true.

Seven of the defendants were present when the trial got under way. Missing was Albert R. Parsons, who had baffled a police search for six weeks, and, thoroughly disguised, was perfectly safe in Wisconsin. Just as the preliminary examination of candidates for the jury began, Parsons walked into the courthouse and informed Judge Gary: "I present myself for trial with my comrades, your Honor."

No proof was offered by the State that any of the indicted men

had thrown or planted the bomb, and at no time during the trial was the State able to connect the defendants directly with the throwing of the bomb, or even to establish that they had in any way approved or abetted this act. In fact, only three of the defendants had been present—Spies, Parsons, and Fielden—and only Spies and Fielden were at the scene when the bomb exploded. No proof was offered that the speakers had incited violence; indeed, Mayor Harrison described the speeches as “tame.” No proof was offered that violence had been contemplated. Parsons, in fact, had brought his wife and his two small children to the meeting.

That the eight men were being tried for their ideas and not for any deeds was made clear from the outset. The trial closed as it had opened on this note, as witness the final words of State’s Attorney Grinnell’s summation speech to the jury: “Law is on trial. Anarchy is on trial. These men have been selected, picked out by the grand jury and indicted because they were leaders. They are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. Gentlemen of the jury; convict these men, make examples of them, hang them and you save our institutions, our society.”

In his instructions to the jury, Judge Gary made it clear that it was not necessary for the State to identify the bomb-thrower or even to prove that he came under the advice or influence of the accused. The judge held that it was entirely competent for the State to prove that “these several defendants have advocated the use of deadly missiles against the police on occasions which they anticipated might arise in the future. . . .”

On August 19 the case was given to the jury, which returned a verdict of guilty against all eight defendants, condemning seven to death and Neebe to fifteen years in prison.

After a motion by the defense for a new trial was denied by Judge Gary, the convicted men were called upon to speak before sentence was pronounced. Their speeches lasted three days.

“Your Honor,” began Spies who spoke first. “In addressing this court I speak as the representative of one class to the representative of another. . . .” He spoke for hours, refuting the charge of murder

and conspiracy, charging the State with deliberately plotting to use the Haymarket tragedy as an excuse to assassinate the leaders of the working class, accusing the employers of using the same episode to destroy the eight-hour movement by murdering those whom the workers looked up to as their leaders. But he was confident that this conspiracy would not succeed:

“If you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labor movement . . . the movement from which the downtrodden millions, the millions who toil in want and misery expect salvation—if this is your opinion, then hang us! Here you will tread upon a spark, but there and there, behind you—and in front of you, and everywhere, flames blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out.”

The case was appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court and argued by Leonard Swett, the old law associate of Abraham Lincoln, and Captain Black and Sigismund Zeisler in the March 1887 term. Judgement was affirmed on September 14, with the entire court sustaining both the rulings and verdict of the lower court. An appeal to the United States Supreme Court was denied on November 2.

Immediately after the Supreme Court had denied the defendants writ of error, a movement for a pardon was launched. The A.F. of L. at its convention passed a resolution pleading for clemency. “In the interests of the cause of labor and the peaceful methods of improving the condition and achieving the final emancipation of labor,” wrote Samuel Gompers, A.F. of L. president, “I am opposed to the execution. It would be a blot on the escutcheon of our country.” While the leadership of the Knights of Labor refused to join the defense efforts, many K. of L. locals did. Many prominent Americans also protested against the verdict and petitioned for a commutation of the sentences. Among them were William Dean Howells, Robert G. Ingersoll, Lyman Trumbull, who had been a judge of the Illinois Supreme Court and 18 years a U.S. Senator, Henry Demarest Lloyd, Stephen S. Gregory, later president of the American Bar Association, Murray F. Tuley, then chief justice of the Illi-

nois Circuit Court, and Lyman Gage, later Secretary of the Treasury. Howells, a distinguished novelist and editor and dean of American letters, called the verdict "the greatest wrong that ever threatened our fame as a nation."

The defense movement transcended national boundaries. William Morris and George Bernard Shaw addressed a protest meeting in London. A group in the French Chamber of Deputies telegraphed protests to the Governor of Illinois, as did the Municipal Council of Paris and the Council of the Department of the Seine. The petition called the impending executions a "political crime" which would be an "everlasting mark of infamy upon republicanism." Meetings of workers urging a pardon were held in France, Holland, Russia, Italy, and Spain, and many contributed out of their scanty wages for the Haymarket defense fund.

As the execution date, November 11, 1887, drew near, a petition signed by thousands pleaded for amnesty, and a flood of resolutions, letters, and memorials, in which leaders in the professions and business joined heads of labor unions, poured in upon Governor Richard J. Oglesby asking for a pardon. The defense chartered a train which left Chicago on November 8, 1887 for Springfield. Another delegation came on the next day and a large delegation from New York City. Of the three hundred persons who came to plead with the Governor, probably a third came from outside the state.

Two of the defendants, Fielden and Schwab, petitioned the governor to spare their lives, and Spies asked Oglesby to release the other defendants and execute him to satisfy the demand for vengeance. The letter which Spies, Fielden and Schwab addressed to Governor Oglesby stated that "we never advocated the use of force excepting in the case of self-defense. . . . Whatever we said or did, or said or did publicly, we have never supported, or plotted to commit, an unlawful act, and while we attack the present social arrangements, in writing and speech, and exposed their iniquities, we have never conspicuously broken any laws. . . ."

Judge Gary and prosecutor Grinnell joined in asking mercy for Fielden and Schwab, and Governor Oglesby commuted their sen-

tence to life imprisonment. Lingg committed suicide by exploding a bomb in his mouth a day before the execution. Parsons, Spies, Engel, and Fischer were hanged on November 11, 1887.

The authorities turned over the four bodies to friends for burial, and one of the largest funeral processions in Chicago history was held. It was estimated that between 150,000 to 500,000 lined the route taken by the funeral cortege. The five caskets—Lingg was buried with the other four—were buried in a temporary vault at Waldheim Cemetery. Estimates of the number who observed the burial exercises varied from 10,000 to 25,000. On December 18, 1887, the caskets were placed in a permanent grave. A monument to the executed men was unveiled June 25, 1893 at Waldheim Cemetery.

The struggle for amnesty for Fielden, Schwab, and Neebe continued, and more and more thousands, convinced of the injustice of the convictions, urged clemency upon Oglesby, and upon his successor, Governor Joseph Fifer. But it was not until the election of John Peter Altgeld as governor of Illinois in 1892 that a victory was at last won.

On June 26, 1893, Altgeld issued his famous pardon message in which he made it clear that he was not granting the pardons because he believed that the men had suffered enough, but because they were innocent of the crime for which they had been tried, and that they and the hanged men had been the victims of hysteria, packed juries and a biased judge. He noted that the defendants were not proven guilty because the state "has never discovered who it was that threw the bomb which killed the policeman, and the evidence does not show any connection whatsoever between the defendants and the man who threw it." Altgeld attacked Judge Gary's ruling that it was not necessary for the State to identify the bomb-thrower or even prove that he came under the advice or influence of the accused, pointing out that "in all the centuries during which government has been maintained among men, and crime has been punished, no judge in a civilized country has ever laid down such a rule."

The fearless governor was subjected to a torrent of abuse and

invective. But the A.F. of L. convention in December, 1893 praised the pardon as “an act of justice,” and the trade unions distributed 50,000 copies of the message.

In his definitive study of the Haymarket Affair, published in 1936, Henry David concludes: “On the basis of the reliable evidence, they (the eight individuals convicted of the murder of Degan) must be considered innocent.”

To bring matters more closely down to the present: On May 14, 1968, Chicago’s administration again commemorated the seven policeman who were slain in the Haymarket Affair. Once again there was a memorial parade. But in the year 1968, for the first time in eighty-two years, a leading Chicago paper dissented; since this itself is historic, it is worth lengthy quotation. On April 25, 1968, the Chicago *Daily News* editorialized:

Surely Chicago can find a better way to honor her policemen than by maintaining the fiction that the so-called Haymarket Riot was a glorious chapter in anyone’s history. . . .

For the police were attempting to break up a peaceful meeting, and doing so against the expressed wishes of the mayor.

The seven policemen were killed by a bomb. The identity of the bomb-thrower was never established, yet this minor flaw didn’t prevent Chicago from using the “riot” to do itself great discredit.

After a general panic, in which a police captain manufactured evidence, eight persons were put on trial, and the story of the trial still sends shudders through persons with a sense of justice. Four men were hanged, not so much for what they did or didn’t do as for their offbeat views.



In October 9, 1886, the *Knights of Labor*, a weekly labor journal published in Chicago, carried on page 1 the following announcement: “Next week we begin the publication of the lives of the anar-

chists advertised in another column." The advertisement, carried on page 14, read:

THE STORY  
OF  
THE ANARCHISTS  
TOLD  
BY THEMSELVES.

PARSONS SPIES FIELDEN SCHWAB  
FISCHER LINGG ENGEL NEEBE

The only true history of the men who claim  
that they are  
CONDEMNED TO SUFFER DEATH  
For exercising the right of Free Speech.

Their association with Labor, Socialistic and Anarchistic  
Societies, their views as to the aims  
and objects of these organizations, and  
how they expect to accomplish them;  
Also their connection with the Chicago

HAYMARKET AFFAIR

Each man is the author of his own story,  
Which will appear only in the  
KNIGHTS OF LABOR  
During the Next Three Months.

The following week, October 16, 1886, the *Knights of Labor* carried the first part of the autobiography of Albert R. Parsons which was completed on October 23. Spies' autobiography ran in the issues of November 6 and 13; Fischer's in that of November 20 and 27; Engel's in the issue of December 4; Schwab's in that of December 11 and 18; Fielden's in the issues of February 19, 26, and March 5, 1887, and Neebe's in the issue of April 30. There the series ended,

with no explanation of why Lingg's autobiography was not included. On September 17, 1887, the *Knights of Labor* announced that it had published the lives of the anarchists separately and each autobiography could be obtained for ten cents or all complete for fifty cents. It listed the autobiographies that were available as those of Spies, Engel, Parsons, Fielden, Fischer, Schwab and Neebe. Then on October 8, 1887, the journal carried the heading: "Introduction to the Story of the Anarchists," and the explanation: "The following was written by Capt. W.P. Black, Chief Counsel, as an introduction to the story of the anarchists. It seems to the publishers that it may have some influence in deciding the fate of these men, and therefore we publish it now."

Evidently it was planned to publish the autobiographies, with Black's introduction, in book form, but nothing came of the project. The complete text of the autobiographies of the seven Haymarket victims and Captain Black's introduction remained buried in the files of the *Knights of Labor*, and is reprinted now for the first time.

I made repeated efforts to locate the autobiography written by Lingg in libraries and historical societies throughout the United States. But to no avail. However, this past summer while visiting the German Democratic Republic, I located in the library of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Berlin, the files of *Alarm*, the anarchist paper published in Chicago. Copies of this paper are available in the United States but only scattered issues exist for late 1888 and early 1889. The Berlin library, however, has a complete file of *Alarm*, and in the issues of December 29, 1888, January 5, 12, 1889, I found the autobiography of Lingg. Thus the present volume contains the autobiographies of all the Haymarket men.

The style of the autobiographies varies. It is turgid, as in Neebe, pedantic, as in Fischer, or labored, as in Engel, while that of Parsons, Spies and Fielden is often eloquent. The defects are to be expected from men who were writing in what was not their first language. (Except for Parsons and Fielden, the authors of these autobiographies were of German birth, or of German descent, and received whatever education they had in Germany.) What all con-



tributed, regardless of style, is an important picture of conditions in Europe and America which caused these men to be drawn into the radical movement, and, in several of the autobiographies, a detailed account of their activities in this movement. All contributed, too, a courageous and strong pleading for a cause close to their hearts, a firm belief in the "iniquities" of capitalism and in the justice of the anarchist society which they hoped to achieve.

The speeches of these men in court have been often reprinted in most modern languages. Now with the reprinting of their autobiographies we have a more nearly complete picture of America's first labor-revolutionary martyrs.

In the main, the text of Captain Black's introduction and of the autobiographies is reproduced as it appeared in the *Knights of Labor* and *The Alarm*. However, obvious typographical errors have been corrected though foreignisms have not been altered. For the sake of readability, long stretches of text have been broken into paragraphs.

I am indebted to the staffs of the Tamiment Institute Library of New York University and of the Chicago Historical Society for having placed their files of the *Knights of Labor* at my disposal. I am also indebted to the library of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Berlin for placing their file of *Alarm* at my disposal and furnishing me with a photostatic copy of the autobiography of Louis Lingg published in that paper.

The entire manuscript was read by Dr. Herbert Aptheker and his suggestions were most helpful.

Philip S. Foner  
Lincoln University, Pennsylvania  
September, 1968



## Introduction by Capt. W.P. Black

“Thus it is, that no revolution in public opinion is the work of an individual or a single cause, or of a day. When the crisis has arrived the catastrophe must ensue; but its agents, through whom it is apparently accomplished, though they may accelerate, cannot originate its occurrence. Woe to the revolutionist who is not himself a creature of the revolution! If he anticipate, he is lost.”—Sir Wm. Hamilton.<sup>1</sup>

To the king of old came a vision in the night season. Sleep, twin brother of death, the leveler, had fallen upon him for a time, bringing oblivion of state and care; but at last his sleep fled away from the disturbing phantasia of his dream; yet so indistinct was the impression, so little understood its lesson, that the very vision was gone from him, when he rose from his troubled slumbering. In vain he appealed to and commanded his wise-men to tell alike his dream and its interpretation. Tell us your vision, was their cry, and we will interpret its teaching. At last a foreigner, one of a captive and despised race, that dwelt in the midst of the people, came for-

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ward to meet the king's demand.

The vision was of an image burnishing and shining, whose appearance was of an armored man, with head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. What a fit object of worship and admiration—man panoplied with riches, honor, beauty and strength. Yet only man, with feet ever in contact with the earth, and infected with the weakness of his clay. The power of human devising, buttressed with all that human wisdom, skill or craft could command, but having its origin from the human planning and owing its endurance to selfish scheming. That this mighty image, emblem of the highest result of moral devising for the establishment of power, should come to naught before a stone cut out without hands, with no touch of human designing upon it which beat against the mighty image and ground it till all its riches and strength became as the dust of the summer thrashing floor, and were carried away by the winds; while the unwrought stone grew to fill the earth, might well oppress the monarch with some image. The object of his veneration became as naught before a power that knew no human law. Who but a captive could interpret such a vision—who but one of a people abject and despised divine the portent of its magic teaching? Human government with all its variations of condition, from the gold of the head to the clay of the feet. Its riches and poverty, power and oppression, glory and shame; its reverse forms and irregularities; to be overthrown by a kingdom of natural law and force, without artificial constraint, that should be one, and fill the whole earth. This was the story of the vision that broke from the lips of the captive seer, becoming the prophecy of the aspirations and endeavors of the common world.

But the vision has a double teaching, not only does it present the thought of all governments constituted on the basis of artificial restraints and man-made legislation, giving place to one universal state of society controlled by national law; but it also suggests a process for the substitution which history has thus far verified, viz.: the overthrow by force of the order to make room for the new. De-

struction to clear the way for construction—revolution against the old preceding the evolution of the new—this is the teaching of the vision as well as the lesson of history. And still another thought is suggested in this chaldaic story, that for the new grows, if it be worthy to abide, by virtue of innate force; helped neither by arbitrary enactment nor by artificial conditions. The stone, taken from the rocky foundations of the world, rejected by the visitors, yet growing to fill the whole earth, is but a type of truth—of the true—which is self-existent, indestructible and at last all-subduing, finding expression to one finite comprehension in what we call natural law, which is for our discovery. In the proportion in which we can discover truth in its relations to social conditions and life, do we discern natural law; and in the measure of our observance of that law do we approximate the harmony of the relations of life in which artificial or arbitrary regulations of conduct become unnecessary. Such a state of society has been the dream of the poets, the philosophers, the seers of all ages, and it has also been the nightmare of every established order of society since history commenced the record of human governments, in which the law of activity, the motive of endeavor, the mainspring of enterprise, has been the unnatural desire for mastery. To the votary of the existing order, he who desires the true is but a disturbing visionary, while he who resolves upon the betterment of society is the obnoxious revolutionist.

It is a law of the activities of life that all people are divided by their own election into two classes: Conservatives and progressists, subjects and rebels. The one class yielding unfaltering obedience to the existing conditions of society, desire the preservation of the accustomed government, while the other class, with vision opened to the defects and inequalities marking the inter-relation of men, long for a better order, and by this inert yearning of the spirit are often driven into open rebellion. The former is, as a rule, the major class. Whether it be that centuries of government wherein the many have been in subjection to the few have resulted in a pre-riatal [*sic*] disposition of obedience, or whether it be that a natural love of ease and

a selfish hope that in some way and at some time ourselves may pass from the servile to the ruling class, from the popular ranks of the man who are the slaves of existing conditions to the limited class who, by fortuitous circumstances, are promoted to place and distinction; certain it is that the greater number of every people are predisposed to quiescence under established regulations of society, even when those regulations are recognized as unjust or felt to be harsh. "All experience hath shown," declared the revolutionary patriots of 1776, "that mankind are never disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed."<sup>2</sup> Very grave, therefore, is the work he essays who would take issue with the form of society of his day. The task he sets before himself is full of difficulties and fraught with peril. Perhaps no language has furnished a more vigorous description of this than the German of Schiller,<sup>3</sup> who wrote:

What is thy purpose? Hast thou fairly weighed it?  
 Thou seekest ev'n from its broad base to shake  
 The calm, enthroned majesty of power,  
 By ages of possession consecrate—  
 Firm rooted in the rugged soul of custom  
 And with the people's first and fondest faith,  
 As with a thousand stubborn tendrils twined.  
 It is an unseen enemy I dread,  
 Who, in the hearts of mankind, fights against me—  
 Fearful to me but from his own weak fear.  
 Not that which proudly towers in life and strength  
 is truly dreadful; but the mean and common,  
 The memory of the eternal yesterday,  
 That ever warning, ever still returns,  
 And weighs to-morrow—for it weighed today.  
 Out of the common is man's nature formed,  
 And custom is the muse to whom he cleaves.  
 Woe, then, to him whose daring had profaned  
 The honored heirlooms of his ancestors!

There is a consecrating power in time,  
And what is gray with years to man is godlike.  
possession, and thou art in right;—  
The crowd will lend the aid to keep it  
Be in sacred.

Poetic picture, but historic verity. Every advance that the world has thus far known in the evolution of society, the revolution of governments, has been an advance achieved by the few against the many, but for the whole, and whose benefits have fallen to the common heritage of that portion of our race whose destiny was touched by the struggle. The crowd have lent their aid to conserve the accustomed order; but in spite thereof truth in its holy courage has triumphed, and another step in the stairway of events leading up the mountain of progress toward the star-crowned heights of the sublime and truly ordered being has been laid by heroic hands and cemented in the martyr blood of those devoted truly to the good of the people. Always there have been found those who were ahead of their age in their vision of truth and conception of righteousness in government, who have dared adversity and challenged death in their determination to speak the truth received and to teach and lead the people in its light. Is it ordered that our hearts, the hearts of the multitudes, reject the truth until we see it written with the warm heart's blood of some man who stands a courier of the advancing dawn? Is abstract truth indifferent to us, and we can become the children of the truth, and loving it, only when we behold it worshiped in the life-libations of some noble hearts? The fact we recognize that every reform in social relations has become established only after sacrifice has been exacted by the demon of disorder that sits enthroned in power and buttressed round by custom. It is because, and only because, generous souls become possessed of the passion of beneficence, that divine spirit of self-abnegation for others' good, that the world's history as a whole is a history of progress instead of retrogression, and the trend of what we call civilization rather toward truth and liberty than to-

ward despotism and error. To these, who have thus spent themselves for the world's advancement, no truer, nobler words may be applied than those of Lowell:<sup>4</sup>

Many loved truth, and lavished life's best oil  
 Amid the dusts of books to find her,  
 Content at last, for guerdon of their toil,  
 With the cast mantle she hath left behind her;  
 Many in said faith sought her;  
 Many with crossed hands sighed for her;  
 At life's dear peril wrought for her,  
 So loved her that they died for her,  
 Tasting the raptured sweetness  
 Of her divine completeness.  
 Their higher instinct knew

Those love her best who to themselves are true,  
 And what they dare to dream of, dare to do,  
 They followed her and found her  
 Where all may hope to find,  
 Not in the ashes of the burnt-out mind,  
 But beautiful with danger's sweetness round her.  
 When faith made whole with deed,  
 Breathes its awakening breath  
 Into the lifeless creed,  
 They saw her plumed and mailed,  
 With sweet, stern face unveiled,  
 And all-repaying eyes look proud on them in death.

I do not mean, of course, that all rebels are right, or that all of those who have joined issue with the established order are benevolent in their motives or beneficent in action. Not every malcontent is of noble spirit, or takes up a just contest against the powers that be. But conceding that many who pose as reformers make but a sorry masquerade, while others who impeach the social order



present no scheme for remedy that can command their crusade to the judicious; yet it remains beyond question that the faults of the present system are as obvious as they are grievous, and imperatively demand reform. It is apparent also to the student and dispassionate observer that the reform which must be effected, if adequate to the demands of the situation, must go to the roots of the established order as to effect a complete revolution thereof; and for this very reason it is found that every step in this direction meets with a fixed resistance.

The theory of past reforms in administration, upon which have been based the changes of government from absolutism to democracy, has been that the only panacea for existing disorder was political liberty. But much as may be claimed to have resulted of good from the world's advancement in this direction, the highest types of republican government, with universal enfranchisement and a substantially absolute political quality, serve only to show that political liberty does not insure a prosperous, happy or advancing condition of society as a whole. The most that can be truly said is that political liberty produces conditions that may prove favorable for the application of the true remedy for the social disorder.

That a grave disorder afflicts society, threatening its very life, who can doubt! It is evidenced in the abiding poverty of the great masses of the people, and the abounding suffering of a mighty host, neither the suffering nor the poverty being justly chargeable to any fault on the part of their victims, but both being a natural result of the operation of the forces and principles sanctioned and upheld by the society of today. Nor is it an answer to this impeachment to say that this suffering and poverty have always existed; for as certainly as that one ought to seek the purifying blood whose taint was manifested in ulcers and plague spots, rather than to say lightly: They have always been upon me; so surely ought society to address itself to the work always of preventing poverty and suffering by seeking and removing the causes of these disorders. If it be true that among the inalienable rights of every man is "the pursuit of happiness," then the society in which that man lives owes to that man the

conditions which will make possible the fruition of the hope of a happy life, and will crown the earnest best endeavor of every man in that direction with an assured success. Nor is to be forgotten that with the increasing intelligence which is reaching the masses the conditions of their poverty and suffering are rendered more unbearable, and their consequent misery the more acute. It follows that political equality and its attendant conditions soften but quicken the abject anguish of the poor and miserable; and that some other remedy must be sought for, or the problem of human unhappiness abandoned as unsolvable.

This last is the alternative of the pessimist. There are not a few who hold to the view that the societary evils, the inequalities of condition, with all the resultant suffering, grew out of the fixed dispositions of humanity; and that as they have always existed in the past so will they always exist in the future. And the major portion of those who thus hold, it is feared, make this opinion a refuge for their own selfishness in deciding to essay either remedy or amelioration. It is inevitable, say they, and wherefore vex our souls or tax our brains and purses with vain efforts to meet the evil?

To this doctrine of hopelessness, two classes of society furnish at least theoretically an exception. The Christian speaks in his enunciation of the gospel of a coming kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy, under the personal sovereignty of Christ, the kingdom of Daniel's interpretation of the vision. It is probable that very few, however, of those holding this creed feel as resting upon them any sense of duty to bring about the answer to their traditional prayer. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "The poor always ye have with you," is often quoted, not because of the duty enjoined by the great teacher, to relieve the oppressed, minister to the sick and help the afflicted, but as though it were a prophecy that had in it some way a divine justification of conditions, which result confessedly from the infirmities and selfishness of humanity. The other class, who look forward to a condition of universal happiness as the heritage of humanity, to be possessed when the heirs know and assert their rights, strangely enough are

almost universally unchristian in creed, though not in practice. The socialist, as the latter-day agitator, while generally a materialist, yet insists that the evils pregnant in society result, not from uncontrollable dispositions to evil, tainting the entire body of the people and rendering them incapable of deliverance, but from conditions which are susceptible of changes, doctrines which should be corrected and forces which should be brought into subjection to an enlightened theory of societary life. Whether they are right or wrong, can only be demonstrated finally by a fair experiment upon their theory, but meantime, at least, its purpose is exalting and its demand of a fair trial is emphasized by the confessed failure of the present system and order.

It is no part of the purpose of an introduction such as this, to go into any extended analysis or defense of socialism—and this will not here be attempted. The pages of this volume will themselves furnish cogent arguments upon the vital questions of modern society, and food for thought for every candid and inquiring reader. There is need here for nothing more than a suggestion. The ultimate of socialistic doctrine is claimed to be anarchism. Perhaps, to be exact, it should rather be said, that anarchists claim that their views are the ultimate of socialism. Certain it is, that no one becomes an anarchist save as he advances in the study of socialism as a science, and that very many of the most advanced and able socialists become anarchists in doctrine. But what is said we must allow them to define their own doctrines, declare their own position, rather than take the description of their views and purposes from their enemies. Perhaps no more intelligent and suggestive definition of their position is to be found anywhere than from the pen of Michael Schwab, in his autobiography. He says:

“Anarchism is order without government. We anarchists say that anarchism will be the natural outgrowth of universal co-operation (communism). We say that when poverty has vanished and education is common property of the people then reason will reign supreme. We say that crime will belong to the past, and that erring can be righted by other means than those of today. Most of the

crimes of our day are engendered directly by the system of today, the system which creates ignorance and misery.”

Stop a moment! Consider this definition, and let us ask ourselves if there is anything in such a teaching to justify our resentment or provoke our fears. That it has an import of offense to the property system of today must, of course, be conceded; for the basis of all this social agitation is the thesis: That with property enough in the world (the product of human labor applied to natural forces and the resources of the earth, which was originally a common heritage of the race), for the comfortable support and reasonable maintenance of all human beings, want and misery have fallen, (and this chiefly to the laborers who produce by their efforts that aggregation of natural products which men call wealth), because of the undue appropriation, through superior force, astuteness, or the application of prior accumulations for the purpose of further increase, of the results of the labor of the many by the few; and it is the project of socialism to restore the resources of nature to the common heritage, and to assume to the general body of the people the means of production, prohibiting private ownership either of natural resources (land, mines, water-power, etc.), or the instrumentalities of production, including all kinds of machinery, and making such industries as mining, transportation, etc., the enterprises of the state. This is not the confiscation of private treasure, or the prohibition of private property; but it is a means to prevent private accumulations, save as the direct result of personal industry and labor, economy and thrift; and it proposes an end to the system which has given us as its types the millionaire and the pauper, the corporation invested by legislative grant with the prerogations and powers of government itself, and who makes, but does not share its dividends. Capitalism may well discern in socialism a spectre that coming to power, will prove its nemesis; but to the great body of the people the project of socialism is not necessarily threatening, and we may fearlessly consider its complaints and promises. While anarchism is not a process, but a possible result of processes, a condition that may obtain as a sequence of the application in society of the doc-

trines of socialism, and that is only hateful to the selfish, terrible to the timid, because its predicate is the complete overthrow of the present system, the abolition of the present order.

But the position of the advanced socialist and the anarchist is that he does not produce the overthrow he predicts, is not responsible for the disorder he foresees, violence being foretold by him as the armed opposition of the established order to the execution of the sentence pronounced against it by the enlightened judgment of a socially educated people; the resistance of "the classes" to the impending abolition of those privileges so long exercised by them that at last they are claimed and defended as rights, which even the majority may not abrogate; and disorder being recognized as the result of this struggle which must intervene before natural right, triumphing over human selfishness becomes the order of a new system of society, where men may live righteously ungoverned from without. It is true that there is in man a natural disposition to precipitate the catastrophe through which reform is anticipated; but so long as the prophet of the reform confines to advice, to preparation for resistance of the attack which he foresees, and which all experiences proves will surely come before a surrender of the privilege will be made, or a deprivation of privilege acquiesced in, he cannot be justly accused of sedition, or of bringing on the conflict for whose inevitable coming he prepared. Still the very prophecy serves, in the nature of things, to hasten the event; and it is perhaps, therefore, not wholly unnatural that where disturbed by the vision of a seer we involve in our resentment the prophet whose words forecast the downfall of our selfish prosperity.

The men who tell their stories in the following pages are men whose lives have become involved in the social ferment, the agitation of which is about us all. They present a striking group. While six of them are Germans, or of German descent, one is a typical American, and the other a thorough Englishman. All are, in the fullest sense of the word, self-made men. Each could have far better served his own selfish interests by adapting himself to the existing order of society and seeking his own advancement in service of

capital. How each was led to the adoption of the special views which he now champions, and the results thereof, is the story which is told, and which does not here need even summary. Perhaps even better than in their life stories their special views are evidenced by the speeches which they respectively made in court when asked if they had aught to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon them. These masterly utterances received from us neither comment nor commendation. Life and utterance alike plead for these men, and these autobiographies and speeches are put before the public in the hope that a perusal of them may prove not only of interest but of profit, and may lead candid thinkers to a dispassionate consideration of the cause for which they have lived and plead and are ready, if needs must, to die.

To the American reader two questions will occur. Is the scheme these men espouse practicable? Is there occasion with us for this agitation? Much will be found in this book to be considered in determining these questions—questions which each must answer for himself. But as we sit at ease and ponder these themes as matters of investigation, let us remember that there is a great multitude to whom they are matters of vital interest, and who will hold the consideration of these questions until a conclusion is reached and with whom a conclusion means action. There is a maladjustment of society that bears most hardly upon that class of our people which constitute the majority. In view of this condition he is no patriot who sings paeans to the praise of our country and its institutions, its form of government and conditions of society, but rather he who inquires after a remedy recognizing the wrong. Five years ago the writer of these lines concluded a lecture on socialism with these words:

Let us not be alarmists; but neither let us shut our eyes to the signs of the times, our ears to the mutterings of the multitudes. The miserable man whose rags will scarcely shut out from his grinning flesh the splashings of the millionaire's barouche as it dashes by him filled with richly-attired people, all unmindful of his distress and sore need, the very horses kept in a comfort far surpassing any-

thing he can hope for, and who creeps to his tenement home, in garrett or basement it may be, to see his wife and children suffer for lack of sufficient food and warmth, albeit he may have toiled all day, or sought vainly for employment, will listen with heart-bitterness to the whisperings (is it fiend or angel?) which tell him that these things proclaim a wrong in urgent need of righting. The winds that buffet him, the cold that pinches and the hunger that gnaws at his flesh, and at that of those he loves, will emphasize this theme; and if it can at the same time be truthfully said to him that there is no hope for him from above—that earth's mighty ones will yet more and more use their power to fortify their pride and establish their arrogance—and that the alone chance of his deliverance is in his own right arm, put forth to shake the pillars of the state when his poverty is so mocked and made light of, he may prove indeed but a blind Samson, seeing no way clearly before him to deliverance and sure to perish in the overthrow he precipitates; but with the wailing of his babe in his ears, with the picture of his hopeless and enduring misery about him, he will one day join his comrades, in anguish in the travail and carnival of utter despair, in which will perish the thrones of a power malign to him, that the people may learn the necessity, in the ordering of life, of a loving consideration for and helpfulness of the poor, who are earth's multitudes. So reads the lesson of the world. Shall we of this land learn by the experience of others, or shall we wait our own?

*W.P. Black.*  
*Christmas, 1886.*

