

## EDITOR'S REMARKS

### Haymarket

The First of May is a day of many meanings. In different times and parts of the world during the last century its celebration has featured frolicking families, bloody clashes with police, huge manifestations, small sectarian gatherings, and stiffly official state festivities. Decades before the international observances of 1890 it was associated in workers' minds with the struggle for an eight-hour day, with dreams of a new society, and simply with joyous affirmation to themselves and others that the working class was a presence to be reckoned with in modern life. Since 1886, however, one could not think of May Day without remembering Spies, Parsons, Schwab, Fielden, Fischer, Engel, Lingg, and Neebe.

This issue is dedicated to that memory. Its purpose, however, is not to commemorate their deeds, but rather to learn what they meant to their contemporaries in the labor movements of Europe and America. The bomb hurled at policemen in Haymarket Square, the wild shooting that followed, the trial of eight social revolutionaries and subsequent hanging of four of them, and later Governor Altgeld's pardon of three who had been imprisoned, were events that captured the attention of participants in workers' movements in every industrial land. How they responded, however, depended on their own political beliefs and situations.

Bruce Nelson starts our historical travels in Chicago, where the eight-hour movement had three distinct layers, separated by ethnic, as well as occupational and ideological differences. Only by bringing all three into view can he show the real importance of the International Working People's Association. Nelson's article has also contributed to *ILWCH*'s continuing scholarly controversy over the role of republican ideology in American labor history, by showing the vehemence with which champions of "democratic republicanism" in the movement denounced advocates of "atheistic socialism."

Hartmut Keil has probed the aftermath of the May events in Chicago's German community and found loyalties of class stronger than those of nationality. Bourgeois German-Americans disowned not just the anarchists, but recent German immigrants in general. Belegued immigrant labor organizations sought allies by charting a reformist course and identifying socialism with their cultural heritage, rather than aggressive struggle.

Marjorie Murphy finds the French anarchist and socialist press interested in the Knights and the American eight-hour movement, but cautious about attributing too much significance to Chicago's events until the trial and death

sentences rallied them to the defense of imperiled comrades. In Germany, writes Raymond Sun, leaders of the Social Democratic Party were well acquainted with the American scene and quickly drawn to the aid of their persecuted countrymen in Chicago. Nevertheless, the men on trial espoused the same anarchist doctrines that the outlawed socialists of Germany were determined to expunge from the workers' movement. Socialists' attempts to save the convicted anarchists while using the trial to instruct workers in the folly of anarchism left them walking a slippery intellectual tight rope.

The group of Perrier, Debouzy, Collomp, and Cordillot has cast its research net over much of continental Europe. While they found Spaniards who embraced the Haymarket martyrs fervently and Scandinavian parties which echoed the German line, they also identified prominent individuals who were drawn into the anarchist fold by the personal example of Chicagoans. In France socialists and anarchists were in dispute about the lessons to be drawn from America's eight-hour movement, but on one thing they agreed: the republic which had just received the Statue of Liberty was no political haven for workers. Out of this variegated reaction emerged a difficult question for the Second International: how closely should its call for a world-wide May Day be identified with the American legacy?

John Laslett takes us to Britain, where he finds important radical thinkers convinced that the labor movement in the U.S., and especially the Knights of Labor and Henry George's mayoralty campaign, compared very favorably with the lethargic liberalism dominating the Trades Union Congress. By the end of the eighties, however, the hostility shown by Powderly and George toward the Haymarket prisoners and then the birth of new unionism on London's docks transferred the laurels of leadership to their own country's workers.

The Scholarly Controversy section has been displaced by these articles for the current issue of *ILWCH*, but Works in Progress reappears at last. So many reports have been submitted by our readers that only the first half of the alphabet can be included this time. More news about readers' current research and recent publications will be included in the Fall 1986 number.

D. M.