

Many people believed that the deaths of Spies, Parsons, Engel, and Fischer on the gallows of the Cook County Jail would be the last act of the dramas of Haymarket. At a Chicago Bar Association dinner for judge Joseph Gary following the executions, corporate attorney Wirt Dexter warmly praised Gary for his conduct of the trial. As an officer of the Relief and Aid Society, Dexter had been a target of radical criticism since the mid-1870s, when demonstrators demanded that the Society distribute its resources to starving Chicagoans. Dexter now made the stirring if dubious



declaration that he and other like-minded lawyers, guided by men like Gary, formed "the conservative element" that would effectively deal with contemporary social turmoil. "When men armed with destructive theories seek their enforcement, which would speedily make for us an earthly hell, other professions will expostulate," Dexter assured his listeners, "but the law—and I say it with Judge Gary sitting in our midst—will hang!" Gary, who was roundly applauded that evening for his performance during the trial, followed Dexter's remarks with his own speech, in which he attacked labor organizers.

Police Inspector John Bonfield's brother James, a detective on the force, meanwhile declared that there would not be another red flag in Chicago for fifty years. Captain Michael Schaack, who had played such a major role in the arrests following the bombing, similarly bragged that "there will be a big crowd of Anarchists on their way back to Europe in the coming few weeks." Schaack, who adored the limelight in which Haymarket had placed him, was determined to stay there—and to keep receiving funds from businessmen worried about unrest. So Schaack was quick to reject the notion that the threat was over, if equally quick to assure the public that he would squelch any further trouble. "I tell you," he advised a Chicago Daily News reporter, "the anarchist business has only commenced, and before it is through with we will have them all in jail, hung, or driven out of the city."



More surprising—and disturbing—were the responses of some of those who had supported clemency or believed a great injustice had been done, but who still wondered if the harsh punishment brought certain positive results. Lyman Abbott, a one-time lawyer who had become a clergyman and the influential editor of the socially aware *Christian Century*,

had opposed the death penalty for the anarchists and described Haymarket as "tragic," but he later said that it "served a useful purpose" in that it "put an end to the [communist] International in America and awakened the complacent and self-satisfied nation to the existing perils." In his reminiscences of the case prepared almost a half-century after the trial, attorney Samuel McConnell, a leader of the clemency movement who was elected to the Circuit Court in 1889, observed that "the hanging of these men did do away with the hysteria which had pervaded the body of the people." He added, with regret, that perhaps the public did not care who was hanged, as long as someone was, to ease its anxiety.

In the aftermath of Haymarket, those who had labored hard for mercy became upset and even angry that they had been forced to defend individuals whose ideas they despised while their own causes suffered as a result of guilt by association. On the day Spies, Parsons, Engel, and Fischer were hanged, socialist Joseph Gruenhut, who worked in Mayor Harrison's administration, said that the Haymarket bomb "not only killed the eight-hour movement, but forced us to espouse the cause of men who have been and some of whom still are our most bitter enemies."

Although there is a measure of truth in Gruenhut's statement, it is also in a substantial way incorrect. The trial and punishment, reflecting a desperate willingness to twist the law in the very name of justice, had revealed the authorities' fear of weakness in the social order more than a confidence in its strength. The executions provided a catharsis of sorts, but did not even approach a conclusion to the dramas of Haymarket, or to the controversies animating them. The considerable attention the anarchists continued to command even after—perhaps even because of—their deaths testified to the lasting dramatic controversy.

Haymarket Lives On

By dawn on Saturday, November 12, the day after the hangings, mourners and the curious filled the Milwaukee Avenue neighborhood where the bodies were placed on view. An enormous crowd assembled the following day to watch the funeral coaches bear the dead and grieving to the railroad station for the journey to Waldheim Cemetery, about ten miles west of downtown in the suburb of Forest Park. In spite of some objections from the managers of the cemetery, the gravesite quickly assumed the status of a shrine, the semiofficial locus of ceremonies of remembrance and resistance. Almost immediately plans began for the erection of a monument, and in December of 1887 the Pioneer Aid and Support Association was founded to raise funds

for this project and to assist relatives of the deceased. On June 25, 1893, yet another procession of several thousand people marched through the downtown and then boarded the train to dedicate the completed monument at Waldheim. Fourteen-year-old Albert Parsons Jr. lifted the veil off sculptor Albert Weinert's hooded figure of justice and liberty facing the future resolutely as she places a laurel wreath on the brow of a fallen worker.



Slightly more than four years earlier, the teenage son of Officer Matthias Degan, for whose death the anarchists were executed, had played the same role on a very similar occasion in unveiling a monument to the slain policemen. Located in the center of Randolph Street just west of Desplaines Street, a few hundred feet away from the site of the bombing, this statue represented a Chicago policeman with his right hand raised to command peace. A committee of businessmen led by R. T. Crane, in front of whose factory the rally was held and the bomb was thrown, largely paid for the statue. For the better part of a century, the two statues would be the sites of partisan demonstrations that recalled Haymarket in very different ways. Similarly, the anniversary of the bombing in early May and of the executions in mid-November served as occasions for rallies to honor the police and law and order, or to celebrate the anarchists and the cause of labor. The former took place exclusively in the city, whereas the latter occurred not only in Chicago but throughout America and the entire industrial world, especially England and Europe.

Discussions of the meaning of Haymarket continued in many other forums. A week before the hangings, Dyer Lum, the militant anarchist who had likely been the one who smuggled explosives to Lingg in prison and who counseled Parsons to reject clemency, took over the editorship of Chicago's English-language anarchist newspaper, the Alarm, which had been shut down right after the bombing. Lum and others, including Parsons's widow Lucy, claimed that the executions only served to inspire their movement. Whether or not Lum was correct, the hangings certainly failed to put an end to labor activity, including violent strikes, or public discussions of social and economic justice. Many of those who had opposed the death sentence wore a gold lapel pin in the shape of a gallows, with a fine wire "noose" suspended from the end of the crossbeam. Jane Addams, Chicago's most famous social activist of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, recalled that the rhetorical posturing on all sides after the executions was followed by broad and salutary considerations of the some of the issues the anarchists raised.

But the memory of Haymarket continued to be a source of bitterness and division. Radicals like Lum and Most, the latter of whom was imprisoned for a year for a speech he made in New York the day after the hangings, now added the theme of revenge to their talk of revolution. Protestors produced numerous tracts in America and abroad that expressed outrage at the

"judicial murder." In 1889, the same year Lucy Parsons's published her *Life of Albert R. Parsons*, which featured writings by and about her husband, Michael Schaack released his 698-page *Anarchy and Anarchists*. In his book, Schaack was almost as openly critical of what he saw as the indifference and incompetence of Police Superintendent Frederick Ebersold following the bombing as he was impressed with his own exploits in hunting down the anarchists. The book drew a strong retort from Ebersold, who called Schaack a "low-bred" man eager "to keep himself prominent before the public." Ebersold claimed that Schaack pouted like a child when Ebersold had wisely refused to support his continuing red-hunt.

Conflict and Discussion Continue

Neither Ebersold's criticism nor even the suspension of Schaack, Inspector Bonfield, and several other officers for corruption affected police harassment of left-wing political activists. In the collection of the Chicago Historical Society, for example, are two flags seized by the police from members of the German Socialist Party during a May Day parade in 1892. Still, the eight-hour campaign did revive, and the national labor movement gathered more adherents among workers, as well as increasing—if by no means universal—acceptance among the general public. Periodicals carried thoughtful articles, which, while careful not to appear to endorse socialism, still insisted that reform measures were required to deal with the ills and inequities that the socialists—and, one might add, the Haymarket accused—had decried. Lyman Abbott noted that if the Haymarket bomb fortunately led to the discrediting of radicalism, it at the same time "demanded of the reformers . . . that they direct their thoughts to a study of the question of how the evils could be cured and the perils averted."

Some Chicagoans became personally involved in reform in ways that either sidestepped or transcended politics. During the summer of 1890, in a practice popular among middle-class young women, Fannie Gary, the daughter of the judge in the Haymarket case, substituted for a female worker in a tailor shop so that the woman might have a two-week vacation. Whether Miss Gary had any idea that Albert Parsons and Samuel Fielden were summoned to speak at the Haymarket while they were attending a meeting to help organize female seamstresses is unknown.

Others directed their attention to the three convicts in prison. The amnesty movement's ranks swelled to close to one hundred thousand people. Adding their voices to this cause were several newspaper editors and prominent members of the legal profession, including judges as well as attorneys, and two members of the grand jury that had indicted the anarchists for murder. The Amnesty Association's appeal to Joseph Fifer, who had succeeded Richard Oglesby as governor, fell on deaf ears, but both advocates and opponents sensed that the possibilities had changed dramatically when Democratic Party candidate John Peter Altgeld was elected to the state's

highest office in November 1892. They were impatient with Altgeld's delay in taking action, and his refusal to voice his opinion until he was ready.

The Pardon and Its Aftermath

Altgeld voiced that opinion loud and clear on the morning of June 26, 1893, the day after the Haymarket monument was dedicated at Waldheim. In one of the bravest and most eloquent documents of its kind, Altgeld did not



merely grant clemency, as some asked, on the assumption that the prisoners were guilty but had been "punished enough." After his painstaking review of the case, Altgeld concluded that the trial was so full of errors that it was "clearly [his] duty" to "grant an absolute pardon to Samuel Fielden, Oscar Neebe, and Michael Schwab."

Altgeld entrusted the delivery of the pardon papers to banker E. S. Dreyer, one of the grand jurors who had indicted the anarchists in the first place and who now was an outspoken supporter of amnesty. By evening, the jailed men had been set free. They returned home quietly, while Altgeld faced a storm of criticism. The Republican press interpreted the victory of its nominees in the November elections, including Judge Gary, as the casting of Altgeld "into outermost political darkness . . . with his mob of Socialists, Anarchists, single-taxers, and office-holding louts at his heels." The accuracy of this view is hard to judge. At the time of the pardon, Altgeld received considerable praise as well as criticism, though even fervent supporters of his decision, including Jane Addams and Clarence Darrow, questioned whether he might have done better to have been a little less personal in his criticism of the conduct of the police and court officials, and to have stuck more dryly and dispassionately to points of law. Although Altgeld lost his bid for reelection in 1896, he ran ahead of presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan. What is certain, however, is that the furor his own decision provoked was a sure indication that the pardon was hardly to be the final word on Haymarket.