

November 11th

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Year after year, the rising sun of November 11th throws over the world the elongating shadow of the Chicago gallows. Year after year, the knowledge of the history of the governmental crime spreads and spreads. Year after year, the voices strangled to death cry louder through their silence⁶.

It is as if all these years were a thin screen behind which walk the spectres of the Revolution, wearing on this day the faces of those men, done to death for speaking — Parsons, Fischer, Engel, Lingg, and Spies. It is as if these mute faces were bidding us remember their prophecies, and to note how truly they are marching to fulfilment. Every year the governments' hands become redder with the blood of martyrs to free speech. Every year we hear yet more plainly the whizzing of the wings of 'the birds of the coming storm'⁷. Sometimes we fancy it is already the sound of the storm itself. And sitting in our corner we repeat the history of November 11th, and grind our hatred sharp.

We tell ourselves again of the famous McCormick Strike; we see the police riding down on the defenceless people, crying 'Shoot the God damn sons of bitches!' We see men clubbed, bruised, knocked under the horses' feet in the sacred name of the McCormick Reaper Works. We hear our comrades calling for a meeting of protest. We shift our eyes to the Haymarket on the 4th of May, 1886. We see Parsons, Spies, Fielden speaking from the wagon, and the crowd listening. Then the police, marching in double column, coming down Desplaines Street, turning about — firing! A man falls, struck by a police bullet. He clutches his side and writhes upon the ground; a thin line of blood oozes out. Others have fallen. Suddenly a Vengeance goes over our heads, a thing like a lighted cigar, that falls and bursts with a low, sullen, roar. And men fall everywhere.

Then comes the terror! People rushing to accuse, others to escape accusation. Imaginations become realities, and men see bombs reflected from their eyes wherever they look. The police, affrighted, become ferocious. They seize and club at every turn. It is indeed the Reign of the Police. And gradually the Anaconda of the Law coils tighter and tighter. It accuses our comrades — Parsons, who brought his wife and children to the meeting — presumably to be mangled by the bombs! — Fischer, because he set up the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*; Spies,

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because he was the editor; Engel, because he, too, set rebellious type; Fielden, because he spoke often at workingmen's meetings, bidding them prepare for the violence of Capital; Schwab, mild and gentle Schwab, who also 'wrote articles'; Neebe, for he had a red flag in his house, and organised trade unions; Lingg, oh! beautiful cold Louis Lingg, who was a bombmaker, but who did not even know till the next day that a meeting had taken place, and whose bombs bore no resemblance to the Vengeance.

They arrested them — all except Parsons, who voluntarily came into the court and gave himself up for trial, because he believed himself so sure of proving his innocence that he did not doubt the issue. Bitter mistake! The capitalists and their tools, Judge Gary and Prosecutor Grinnell, had determined to hunt Anarchy to death. The procession of iniquities, called 'The Trial', begins. The State's Attorney boasts that he will have the jury packed to kill; boasts openly in the court that though these men are being tried legally for murder, or conspiracy to murder, it is Anarchy which is on trial. It is a *political opinion* which is to be hanged, here in this astounding Republic, which sprang into existence as the expression of the free political opinion.

Not a man on the jury who does not admit that he is already prejudiced against the prisoners. Not a single 'peer' among the twelve; all are of the very parasite class which our comrades had shown in their articles and speeches could not continue but at the expense of the slavery of the producers. The verdict was pronounced before a word of witness was taken, and we all knew it. Then the delays, the agony, the tigerish coquetting with justice of the prosecution. The horrible purrings about 'our homes', 'our country', and 'our free institutions'. Then the speeches — immortal voices, going to the ends of the earth! And loud over them the frank, harsh, defiant, ringing sentence of him who was least an orator but bravest among those who were all brave: 'I do believe in force — *Hang me for it!*'⁸

Then the petitions to the governor, the telegrams from the ends of the earth, the pleadings of their families; the swaying of the popular minds towards mercy; the petition tables in the streets; the crowds rushing to sign or to knock the tables over, as they swing towards this or that; the forbidding of all public speech on the subject by Mayor

Roach; the forbidding of the singing of the *Marseillaise* — wonderful song that it should stir into prohibition our free institutions; the slow passing of days and the tightening, the relentless, desperate tightening, of the coil of the Anaconda.

The commutation of the sentence of Fielden and Schwab to life imprisonment. The refusal of Parsons to appeal for commutation, though he knew it would be granted if he did, preferring to die with his comrades, rather than oblige Grinnell and 'do something to make the Anarchists hate them'.

November 10th! Lingg triumphs over the Law through a dynamite cartridge given him in a cigar by a friend. He smokes the cigar and dies with *Hoch die Anarchie!* on his lips. In his cell at night, Parsons sings *Annie Laurie*, listens to the builders putting up the gallows, and sleeps.

November 11th! A thick cordon of police around the jail; Mrs Parsons and Mrs Holmes, with the little Lulu and Albert Parsons, going from one to the other for permission for the promised last interview. Hustled on till at last arrested and thrown in prison, even the little children's bodies stripped naked in the terrorized search for dynamite. And so, with wife and children lying in cells, the condemned man goes to the gallows and never knows.

Waldheim! And the last act of the sowing is completed. Under the raw autumnal sky, men with bare heads are baptized with the solemnity of that faith which already seems springing from the yet unclosed tomb.

And the years pass. The cemetery authorities forbid 11 November processions to the tomb. They cannot forbid the processions of thoughts and acts which go out from it. As the development of the struggle in which they died so early goes on, more and more clearly sound their prophesies, more and more clearly do we recognise that their work is our work, that one Vengeance is the mother of many, that the crimes of States are accumulating, and from the Chicago gallows to the Barcelona torture-room there is one logical alliance of the powers that starve men, and that from the corners of the earth to its centres there is growing the opposing solidarity of the starved.

We watch for the morning of the End, and the light grows over Waldheim!

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