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The First International in America

By

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PREFACE

The present work is a chapter in American labor and social history, spanning roughly the two decades after the Civil War. Within this scope I have given an account of organized labor in so far as it was a preserve of the many social and economic creeds that sought its sanction. Most of them have since sunk into obscurity, just like the revolutionaries, reformers, renegades and standpatters who proselytized or oppugned them. But the creeds resisted eclipse as long as conditions gave them plausibility. Meanwhile they shaped policies of trade unions.

Among the beliefs was the body of principles which formed the core of the program of the International Workingmen's Association, commonly known as the First International. The record shows that it had far less appeal than has been presumed. The sights set high by it were seen by but a small minority and understood by an even smaller one. According to the evidence, however, its principles were the nub of much debate. They seeded ideas which in one form or another became canons of conduct in the United States.

Of the Babel of doctrines, some lacked manpower, and went down. Others, with larger backing, continued into the twentieth century, without burrowing under the bulwarks of the accepted order, as had been foreboded. To see them in their proper setting, it was necessary to place them in the Atlantic community. The eight hour day, whose lineage has recently been traced to the time of King Alfred, had been a key demand of Robert Owen. Since it was the focal point of a comprehensive movement in the United States, where Ira Steward was its prime promoter, I have given it the attention it merits. Similarly, I have dwelt on the monetary dogmas of Edward Kellogg, although they had already been laid down by English and French reformers of the early nineteenth century. As preventives of human erosions, they were as effective as is magic ritual in warding off disease. But revised versions of them held the minds of Americans for many years. Panaceas, such as Colonel Greene's mutual banking and Stephen Pearl Andrews' pantarchy, each with its separate path to paradise, have also been included in our narrative by virtue of their worshippers in the American branch of the First International. Among them were the two Claflin sisters, of whom the older has been better known as Victoria Woodhull. With their fidelity to free love and the public scandals they were party to I am not concerned, save in so far as their

confession and conduct were the causes of friction within the Association. Their connection with section 12, the butt of burning dissension, and their publication of a radical weekly, more or less responsive to the policies set at the summit of the society they had enrolled in, have given them a place in the story.

Many organizations and intoxicating heavens appear and reappear in our account. But they revolve like satellites around the doctrines of the Association that have been pivotal to the present work.

The underpinnings of the International in America were insecure, for reasons which will be presented in the course of the narrative. Within the confines of a preface only three can be stated in skeleton form: The early triumph of liberalism, aided by the absence of feudalism; the country's expanse with its captivating potential; and the heterogeneous working population, in a large measure made up of emigrants from many countries. In spacing out the story, I have considered it essential to revert to the reasons on several occasions.

The will to write this book grew out of the question that kept intruding itself into the investigation of American labor's past: Why did the International Workingmen's Association, which enlisted a substantial following in Europe, fail to do so in the United States? The standard histories did not provide a satisfactory answer; nor did *Die Internationale in Amerika* by Hermann Schlüter. For, having eyed the Association like a refugee, he missed seeing the gap between its objectives and the dispositions of indigenous workers.

Its American branch, contrary to common opinion, was not a monolithic setup. Perhaps only a minority of its membership was faithful to the principles formulated by its steering body; and even the minority was at times torn by incompatible outlooks. Nor were the organization's units as obedient to its rules as has been thought. They often followed paths that were at cross purposes with what had been officially chalked out.

My first source of evidence has been the archives of the International in the United States, in the possession of the State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. I have also been amply served by the unpublished minutes of the General Council of the International from 1864 to 1872, made available by the Sozialforschung, formerly in Germany, and now in the United States. Useful, too, have been French police dossiers on Internationalists in the archives of the Paris Prefecture of Police and in the French National Archives; reports of French ambassadors in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs; private papers of Internationalists in the Municipal Library of Lyons; diplomatic communiqués from the Belgian consulates and legations in the archives

of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and dispatches from the American embassy in France, during and after the Paris Commune, in the National Archives, Washington, D. C., not included in the published documents. Permission to consult the manuscript of the apparently official report of the Hague Congress was given us by the Library of the University of Wisconsin. My gratitude goes to the staffs of the above research centers. I have appreciated the efforts of Mr. Garland F. Taylor, director of libraries, Tulane University, to uncover obscure publications in its large, uncatalogued holdings. To Mr. Leon Kramer, a learned friend, and to Professor Bert F. Hoselitz of the University of Chicago, I am deeply indebted for their valuable criticism of the manuscript and for their dynamic interest in its publication. To Rose who bore with fortitude many tedious hours among musty, at times scarcely decipherable, papers, I say laconically, "Thanks!"

S.B.

CHAPTER I

Background of the First International

The International in the Gilded Age

A history of the Gilded Age in America, irrespective of the scope, must take into account the bulging size of the nation's economy, and the crop of *isms* that sustained people's hopes. But to credit the *isms* with a great many adherents, as contemporaries did, would be inconsistent with the evidence. A number of social plans, such as "landed democracy," modeled on the homestead, or mutual banking as the alternative to national banking, won but few converts. Other schemes, for example, cooperation, banking reform and minimal interest rates, stirred imaginations, chiefly among skilled workers and small farmers, who were pained by the pressures of big industry and finance. These nostrums were not only promoted by trade unions and farmers' assemblies; they were also programmatic planks of third parties and, when these crumbled, were cherished by those with a nostalgia for the pre-industrial age.

The above sovereign remedies had two, common, inherent qualities. First, they were geared to economies which new techniques were plowing under. Second, they were respectful of private property, in fact, were calculated to protect it against possible inroads from the right and from the left. Probably this was the reason why persons high in the social scale regarded these specifics with approval.

A different reception awaited the governing tenets of the International Workingmen's Association in the United States. Save perhaps the eight hour solution, no other contemporary body of principles raised as much antagonism as they did. For they were taken to mean the denial of the premises of the established order. From the point of view of numbers, the Association in America was a small fraction of the National Labor Union at its height. Yet, hostility to the Union was neither as strong nor as enduring as that stirred up by the International. Long after its death, it was exhumed to serve as a warning that it could rise again in a form more terrifying than had ever been seen.

The premonition had been sounded during the life-span of the organization, without having called down upon it the forces of the American government. It withered in the United States instead of

having been crushed, as on the European Continent. Nor did the State Department consider it worthy of diplomatic negotiation as did the European chancelleries. Actually it was of small concern to American high public servants. Not so to employers of labor, who believed they saw it lurking behind striking workers, nor to the press and pulpit, which considered it the abettor of revolution and atheism. The bulk of the American intelligentsia, for that matter, seems to have been apprehensive of principles that in any way challenged the basic assumptions of existing society. This may explain why they were relentless foes of the International and the causes it sanctioned.

The intelligentsia of the Gilded Age were far from being of one mind on important problems stemming from laissez-faireism. Some bristled like porcupines at the sight of the self-made men who behaved as if their one aim was to corrupt rather than to convince; others sought a haven in some new Atlantis, or a dispensation in the social gospel. On the other side were the panegyrists of the hurly-burly competitive system. They argued that principles and scruples of conscience would hinder those with uncommon qualities from climbing to the top. Their advance should not be obstructed by an abstract code of behavior which had little or no bearing on the fixed laws of economics.

The intelligentsia by and large defended the basic tenets of the social order. Lawyers and academics, we are told, were at the bidding of the rising rich class. The first found legal support for monopolies. The second laid strictures on doctrines which disputed middle class standards or questioned the rights of property.¹ According to a discerning literary historian, novelists portrayed labor leaders as self-seekers and leeches, and the men they led as lawless and violent. Fiction which found fault with economic practices leaned at best to moderate reform.² During the Paris Commune, the American intelligentsia, like the European, warned of its peril to time-honored traditions and institutions. It would serve as an example to the common multitudes when they were displeased with things as they were.

The admonition reenforced the antidemocratic current. For if the Commune was the consequence of the popular approach, the people could not be trusted with the ballot. It could be a bombshell in the hands of the uncultivated. What were the alternatives to popular government, according to its American faultfinders? Nearly all agreed that the rule of an élite was the best possible in order to cleanse politics of corruption and to stop classes from colliding. Conceptions differed

¹ Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought* (New York, 1943), 519 f.

² Walter F. Taylor, *The Economic Novel in America* (Chapel Hill, 1942) 61 f., 324.

on the type of controlling authority, but they were at one that it should replace democracy.

Faith in a governing élite had many partisans among men of wealth, education and social standing. Opposing them was an assortment of Americans whom Walt Whitman wished to inspire with "the breath recuperative of sane and heroic life."³ Advocates of their causes were labor leaders and a sprinkling of educated intellectuals who defined democracy in the Jeffersonian rather than in the social democratic sense. This small number of intellectuals either enrolled in the International or remained on its fringes.

"All Men are Brothers."

The Association was the end of a long chain of events from 1789 to 1864. Its premises grew out of the belief that the changing order could be directed toward the welfare of all. The way to do it was the source of angry disputes. All agreed, however, that the preliminary was to unite under one banner those living on their wages.

The society was the first of its kind to disquiet at once diplomats and industrialists. Their uneasiness, real or fanciful, culminated in 1872 in a Holy Alliance akin to that of 1815. In each case the object was to safeguard society against what were thought to be subversive teachings.

The brotherhood of man grew into a popular cause after 1789. "All men are brothers," was the slogan of small traders, artisans and simple laborers in the western world. They were held together by the sense that mankind was one, irrespective of dynastic ambitions, that the triumph of popular sovereignty concerned all peoples. To promote this high purpose there arose popular societies in Europe and the United States from 1789 to 1795. Though they did not have formal, international ties, they felt themselves bound by common aspirations.

The Napoleonic Wars submerged these aims. But they reappeared in the third decade of the nineteenth century. The French formula, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, still summarized popular beliefs. However, technical innovations and industrial development gave the formula new

³ Selected examples of the campaign against democracy are the following: Brooks Adams, "The Platform of the New Party," *North American Review*, 1874, CXIX; Thomas A. Scott, "The Recent Strikes," *ibid.*, 1877, CXXV; Francis Parkman, "The Failure of Universal Suffrage," *ibid.*, 1878, CXXVII; W. M. Grosvenor, "The Communist and the Railway," *The International Review*, 1877, IV; J.S.W., "The Next American Revolution," *The Penn Monthly*, 1876, VII; [Jonathan Baxter Harrison], "Certain Dangerous Tendencies in American Life," *Atlantic Monthly*, 1878, XLII; Henry Adams, *Democracy: An American Novel*, 1880. See also Russel B. Nye, *Midwestern Progressive Politics* (E. Lansing, Mich., 1951), 21 ff.

⁴ Cited in Taylor, *op. cit.*, 37.

meanings, suggested by such neologisms as *emancipation*, *exploitation*, *proletariat*, *capitalism* and *socialism*. The slogan, "the workers of all lands are brothers," was sounded together with that of the French Revolution, "All men are brothers." In Great Britain, as in France, workers heard say that "the alliance of the proletariat has begun," that "the holy alliance of peoples" would in time yield to "the no less holy alliance of workers."

Principles inspired action. English workers of the 1830's took up the cause of the Canadians, defended the American Republic against the sallies of Whigs and Tories, and called for the peoples' unity to secure the liberties of nations.⁵ Flora Tristan, French feminist and socialist, drew up a blueprint for uniting workers internationally.⁶ French labor sheets acclaimed the British Chartists valiant fighters for "the deliverance of the proletariat." Already in the 1840's a labor alliance was proposed on both sides of the Channel.⁷

Simultaneously, international societies cropped up which strove to bring together workers of different countries. In the late 1830's a league of mutual assistance combined the German Federation of the Just and the French Society of the Seasons. But they were crushed in the reckless insurrection of May 1839 in Paris. In the 1840's sprang up similar organizations of which two merit notice. They were the Fraternal Democrats and the Democratic Association.

The Fraternal Democrats was founded in England in September 1845 by Chartists and political refugees. Its principal heads were two Englishmen, George Julian Harney and Ernest Jones; Karl Schapper, a leader of the German Workers' Educational Society; Jean Michelot of the French Democratic Society in London; and Louis Oborski, a Polish exile. A historian of the Fraternal Democrats has termed it "the first international organization of the working class."⁸ The core of its creed was: "The cause of the people in all countries is the same — the cause of labour, enslaved and plundered labour." They had to combine "for the triumph of their common cause."⁹

The Democratic Association came into being in Brussels, in 1847, in an atmosphere charged with revolution. There were insurrections in Austrian Poland and in scattered parts of Italy; and an economic crisis that year ultimately set Europe ablaze. The Association was made up of democrats, socialists and communists, from Belgium,

⁵ William Lovett, *Life and Struggles* (New York, 1920), I, 105-12, 132-37, 154-62.

⁶ Her plan was embodied in her small book, *L'Union ouvrière* (Paris, 1843).

⁷ *L'Atelier*, October 1842 and January 1843; *L'Union*, September 1845.

⁸ Theodore Rothstein, *From Chartism to Labourism* (New York, 1929), 128. See also A. R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge* (New York, 1958), 133-43.

⁹ Max Morris, ed., *From Cobbett to the Chartists* (London, 1948), 246 f.

Germany, France and Poland. Lucien Jottrand, a Belgian, was its president, and Karl Marx, a German, one of its vice-presidents. In November 1847, it delegated him to an international meeting in London, arranged by the Fraternal Democrats.¹⁰ The Association was a kind of international super-society, designed to bring together different national groups with like objectives. Perhaps on that account it stirred up a small newspaper polemic.¹¹ In London, Marx also attended a congress of the Communist League, the semi-secret successor of the German Workers' Educational Society. Asked to formulate the aims of the League, he and his friend, Friedrich Engels, drafted *The Communist Manifesto*, and ended it with the well known slogan, "Workers of all countries, unite!"

The Eclipse of Internationalism after 1848

At the height of the Revolution of 1848 many European workers and socialists believed they were at the threshold of a new order of peace, fraternity and security. The reign of labor was about to begin. But this vision was dispelled by the crushing of the Parisian workers in June, the same year. All the revolutions on the Continent were thereafter suppressed.

Reaction returned behind democratic emblems. Louis Napoleon restored the ballot to almost three million French workers who had been disfranchised by the royalists of the Assembly he had dissolved. The Prussian monarchy granted male suffrage, but so surrounded it with safeguards that it was inadequate as an instrument of democratic change.

Neo-absolutism cast internationalism into darkness. Save for a few ephemeral societies in 1850 and 1851,¹² international associations seem to have melted away. Modern industry went forward with confident strides, but the workers were spiritless. Chartism in Great Britain was passing out, despite the efforts of Ernest Jones to keep it alive. Labor organizations and cooperatives in France had been swept out by Louis Napoleon. In the rest of Europe democrats and socialists had either fled or made peace with the established system.

After six lethargic years there were signs of a reawakening. A committee, formed at the end of 1854 to welcome Armand Barbès, the

¹⁰ The report of the meeting and the exchange of correspondence between the Fraternal Democrats and the Democratic Association have been reprinted in Marx-Engels *Gesamtausgabe* Pt. 1, VI, 625-36.

¹¹ Walter Haenisch, "Karl Marx and the Democratic Association of 1847," *Science & Society*, II, 83-102.

¹² See e.g. *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, March 1928, 404-05.

long imprisoned revolutionary freed by Louis Napoleon, was remodeled into the better known International Committee. Its president was Ernest Jones, and the bulk of its membership was made up of political refugees. Marx stood aloof, but Alexander Herzen, the Russian liberal, promised to take part. Though the history of the Committee has already been written,¹³ something of its character needs to be noted here. In its short existence of a little more than a year, it observed revolutionary anniversaries at six public meetings. Its principles were as misty as those of utopians. From its point of vision, the big question before labor, as before all oppressed, was social; and the solution was preliminary to international peace, and to the "Universal Democratic and Social Republic."

Coincident with the Committee's exercise in revolutionary ritual was an attempt by Parisian workers to set up a Universal League of Workingmen. Their plan and program, put down in twenty-four articles, were meant to rescue labor from oppression by capital. The saving medium was to be international producers' cooperatives, created with labor's voluntary contributions.¹⁴ An international system of credit would finance the economic organization of labor that would ultimately render states and governments useless. The blueprint was fairly similar to one made by a Parisian cooperative association in 1849.¹⁵ For cooperation, a non-political panacea, was all that French workers could turn to under Napoleon's rigorous rule. Brought to England in 1856, the Parisian plan was the cause of a public meeting in London. A committee was appointed and instructed to build a British branch of the Universal League of Workingmen. But nothing came of it.

The most widely extended society of workers in the 1850's was the International Association. It was the outcome of an alliance of radical groups in England, initiated by the International Committee and the *Commune révolutionnaire*, a French society that plotted the overthrow of Louis Napoleon. The Association, with a life-span of approximately three years, 1856-1859, had the same aim as the defunct International Committee, that is, the "Universal Democratic and Social Republic."

The Association antedated the First International by five years. They resembled one another in name and structural design. Members of the first later assisted in building the second. And both had branches in

¹³ Rothstein, *op. cit.*, 166-79; Müller-Lehning, *The International Association* (Leiden, 1938), 28-38.

¹⁴ Müller-Lehning, *op. cit.*, 34-38; 74-78.

¹⁵ *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, 1913, III, no. 3, 486-511.

Europe and the United States. Here, in fact, the International Association seems to have had its best enrollment.¹⁶

The International Association in the United States

The United States was congenial to the budding of workers' internationalism. Its settlers had come from many countries; and their great mass was made up of laborers, artisans and peasants, in sum, of plain people living by their own labor. Eighteenth century intellectuals and well-wishers had concluded from the nation's early guideposts that it was going toward a grand goal. It was a haven of freedom, they said; it contained the seeds of the good life; it started fresh, unfettered by feudal relics. The hewing of homes under harsh conditions was apt to create a community without social caste. Labor, instead of being stigmatized, was regarded as the road to riches and honor.

In the first half of the nineteenth century social critics were blaming the United States for emulating Great Britain. Skills and the independent status of producers, the fault-finders said, were being sacrificed for the fortunes of a small number. America, their argument continued, was recapitulating the worst aspects of Europe—economic breakdowns, unemployment, distress, and classes facing one another like pugilists. There were signs of tempestuous times ahead. Feudalism, European style, had never rooted itself in the United States; but another type, which Fourier had termed "financial feudalism," was fastening itself on the country.

In truth, while the cost of poor-relief was rising in cities like New York, Boston and Philadelphia,¹⁷ mine and mill owners waxed wealthy, behaved like feudal lords and had influence in the upper echelons of government. The limits of an introductory survey preclude examination of the reform movements and the short-lived workers' parties of the first three or four decades, that aimed at restoring the social and economic equilibrium. Nor is it possible here to review the proposed panaceas and earthly paradises laid out in the United States. They were attempts to correct or to escape from a society alarmingly out of balance.

International fraternity has a history in America. Sacks of old records can probably yield early samples of it among the colonists. The French Revolution at any rate gave it public notice and fortified American thinking on the indivisible nature of democracy. The most articulate partisans of human brotherhood in the United States were men of

¹⁶ The most detailed account of the Association is by Müller-Lehning, *op. cit.*, 38-52.

¹⁷ Sara Zahler, *Eastern Workingmen and National Land Policy* (New York, 1941), 8.

letters, such as Jefferson and Paine, and the two poets, Joel Barlow and Philip Freneau. The main body of supporters was plebeian, that is, made up of yeomen, artisans, seamen, even school teachers, the sort of Americans who relied on brawn and brain for sustenance. At the time of the X, Y, Z, affair, William Manning, the Jeffersonian Yankee yeoman, looked forward to an international "Labouring society" that would at once banish war and permit each one to "enjoy the good of his labour."¹⁸ That, in essence, was the dual objective of the First International.

The objective was embedded in democracy, as everyday Americans understood it in the first half of the nineteenth century. The propensity of American workers to see in it a new way of life was on a par with the reverence British Chartists had for universal suffrage or with French plebeian esteem for the republic. Outlooks, so kindred and so lofty, kindled mutual international sympathies. Thus American workers rejoiced in the victories of their French brethren in 1830 and 1848; and Chartists called on the "Working Classes of America" to stand together against "aristocrats" during the war scare over the Oregon Territory. The purpose of such a war, the Chartists said to their American friends, was at once to divert the workers of both countries "from all social and political improvement" and to tread over the peoples' liberties. A contemporary authority is our witness that the Chartist appeal was widely circulated in the two countries.¹⁹

Increasing social friction on both sides of the Atlantic gave support to the argument that, regardless of geography, workers had like problems to solve. "The producing classes in this country," observed an American worker toward the end of 1840, "are as much in a state of servile vassalage, so far as their social condition is concerned, as the producing classes of foreign countries."²⁰ The best reason for uniting internationally, an American labor organization heard a speaker say in 1831, was to stop employers from setting workers of different countries against one another. "If one portion of them is oppressed, and forced to toil for naught, the produce of their labour is employed as a means of depressing the prices of their brethren in other lands."²¹ Actually that was an overriding reason for establishing the First International more than thirty years later.

Early American labor organizations with international perspectives were short-lived. All seem to have owed their origin to immigrants.

¹⁸ *The Key of Liberty* (Billerica, Mass., 1922), 66, ed. by Samuel Eliot Morison.

¹⁹ For the appeal, see Lovett, *op. cit.*, II, 319-25.

²⁰ *The Workingman's Advocate*, December 1, 1840.

²¹ Samuel Whitcomb, Jr., *An Address before the Working Men's Society of Dedham* (Dedham, Mass., 1831), 8.

According to Friedrich A. Sorge, who became the leading figure of the International in America, members of the League of the Just set up in 1845 a small secret society, Young America, which changed before long to the Social Reform Association with branches in Philadelphia, Newark, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Baltimore and Milwaukee.²² Then there was the Workingmen's League, from 1850 to 1855, which propagated ideas of land reformers and of the two utopians, Wilhelm Weitling and Robert Owen.²³ Meanwhile arose the American Workers' League under the inspiration of Joseph Weydemeyer, a friend of Marx. That accounted for its Marxist teachings, such as labor's political action and trade union organization, nationally and internationally.²⁴ But during its brief span of two years the League could scarcely further these objectives.

The contemporary Society of the Universal Republic, French in derivation, had on its roll Italians, Cubans, Hungarians and Poles. In character with its cosmopolitan façade, it held high the freedom of the press, political democracy, deliverance of oppressed peoples and abolition of slavery. Had it not been for their commemorative and, at times noisy, banquets to honor deeds etched in the revolutionary calendar, its branches might have never been heard of.²⁵ A sizable part of its membership probably leaned to socialism; but its confession of faith was closer to that of the French Jacobins of 1793.

The International Association was the successor of the above named societies. It was loose structurally, and apparently small numerically. Its recruiting in Europe seems to have been less successful than in the United States. It enlisted political refugees in New York, Boston, St. Louis and New Orleans, as well as followers of the French utopian communist, Etienne Cabet. The majority of the Association seems to have been French; Germans, Italians and Poles made up a minority.

From the viewpoint of principles the Association was far from homogeneous. Many *isms* divided the members. There were anarchists, Icarians, worshippers of French revolutionary Jacobinism, and random radicals. The variety of creeds was best seen among the French, represented by Claude Pelletier, Gustave Dime, Frédéric Tufferd and Joseph Déjacque. Pelletier, a printer by trade, had been elected in

²² "Die Arbeiterbewegung in den Vereinigten Staaten," *Die Neue Zeit*, Jahrg. 9, I, 775-76. See also Karl Obermann, *Joseph Weydemeyer* (New York, 1947), 31-32.

²³ For an account of the League, see Carl Wittke, *The Utopian Communist* (Baton Rouge, La., 1950), ch. xi.

²⁴ On the history of the League, see Obermann, *op. cit.*, 56-70, 79 ff.; also Hermann Schlüter, *Die Anfänge der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung in Amerika* (Stuttgart, 1907), 136 ff.

²⁵ The doings of the Society were reported in *Le républicain*, a daily, published in New York City from January 5 to December 30, 1854.

Lyons to the Constituent Assembly in 1848. Exiled by Louis Napoleon, he came to New York City where he set up as an artificial florist. He was at first a neo-Jacobin, but he turned later to a kind of libertarianism, as was shown by his utopia, *Atercratie*. Compared with earlier dreamworlds, Pelletier's was less inviting because it was commonplace. His vision, however, did not distract him from his idolatrous reverence for Jacobinism.²⁶ Of Dime and Tufferd only a few words need be said. The first, a fugitive from hard labor in French Guiana, was a cosmopolitan who had translated the French revolutionary slogan to mean the Universal Social Republic. The other, Tufferd, had a socialist bent. His social and economic tenets were akin to those of Pierre Joseph Proudhon, the French anarchist, but his probing was perhaps deeper.²⁷

Joseph Déjacque²⁸ was the best known French anarchist in the American branch of the Association. Thanks to him, its teachings and doings were reported in *Le Libéraire*, started and edited by him in New York City.²⁹ His utopia, *L'Humanisphère*, published in its columns, contained a full account of his views, which he liked to sum up as "revolutionary socialism." They were actually anarchist, minus historical perspectives. He was neither friendly to Jacobinism nor deferential to the first French republic. He considered it nothing more than the substitution of the bourgeoisie for the nobility, the replacement of one master by another.

The Germans of the Association had a separate branch, with its own statutes. Their main object was the unity of all peoples in order to erase the vestiges of privilege and caste.³⁰ The aim, in a broad sense, was also that of the Communist Club in New York City, which had assisted in bringing the branch into being. From its outset in 1857 the Club had been on good terms with the Association. In fact, its secretary, Albert Komp, was the Club's vice-president.

The Communist Club was a product of German immigration after 1848 and of German radicalism in the United States. A humanist offshoot, dedicated to free thought, it went in the direction of materialism,³¹ and thus came upon common ground with the communist

²⁶ Apart from *Atercratie* (New York, 1873), Pelletier wrote a play *Les hérétiques révolutionnaires socialistes du XVème siècle*, and three volumes of an unfinished *Dictionnaire socialiste*, styled on Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*.

²⁷ See his *Essai d'économie sociale* (New York, 1864).

²⁸ On Déjacque see Max Nettlau, *Der Forfrühling der Anarchie* (Berlin, 1925), ch. xxiv.

²⁹ *Le Libéraire* had twenty-seven numbers which ran from June 29, 1858, to February 4, 1861.

³⁰ The statutes were published in *Sociale Republik*, June 19, 1858.

³¹ On the free thought movement of German Americans see William F. Kamman, *Socialism in German American Literature* (Philadelphia, 1917), 53 ff.

tendency. The signers of the Club's statutes³² were Friedrich Kamm, president, Albert Komp, vice-president, and Fritz Jacobi, treasurer, forty-eighters all, like others of the thirty odd members, among them F. A. Sorge. Before socialism claimed him he had been with radicals in the republican party and a member of the Order of Secularists, founded in England to propagate rationalism.

The International Association won public notice in the United States through its meetings to commemorate revolutionary dates. More than one thousand assembled on June 23, 1858, to pay solemn respect to the martyrs of the June Days of 1848. Sorge, representing the Communist Club, gave the welcoming address.³³ Two months earlier, processions had been held to honor the Italian Felice Orsini, who had made an attempt on the life of Napoleon III. Around 5,000 persons had shown up at a torch parade, and approximately 100,000 had stood along the line of march. A smaller meeting had taken place in Cincinnati.³⁴ The anniversaries of the First French Republic and of the Polish uprising of 1830 were observed in two successive years by the American branches of the Association.³⁵ Needless to say they were among the casualties of the depression of 1857.

Founding of the First International

About five years lay between the end of the International Association and the establishment of the First International. The interval was crowded with events of vital importance. First, chronologically, was the economic crisis of 1857 that had dismal consequences in the United States and England, as well as in France and Germany. Second, the Austro-Sardinian War of 1859 converted the question of national liberation into an international cause. Finally, there was the American Civil War. To European entrepreneurs and workers, to liberals and democrats, especially in Great Britain and France, went much of the credit for having stayed their governments from intervening on the side of the Confederacy.³⁶

Few contemporaries marked out as plainly as did Harriet Beecher Stowe the class lines and the international scope of the Civil War. She likened it to a "revolution," concerning "all mankind," and discerned

³² A copy is in the State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Labor Collection, 15 A, Box 3.

³³ A report of the meeting is in *Sociale Republik*, June 26, 1858.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, April 24, May 29, 1858.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, September 25, December 4, 1858, and January 22, 1859; *Le Libéraire*, March 5, 1859.

³⁶ Samuel Bernstein, *Essays in Political and Intellectual History* (New York, 1955), 121-33.

in it "the war for the rights of the working class of society as against the usurpation of privileged aristocracies. You can make nothing else of it. That is the reason why, like a shaft of light in the judgment day, it has gone through all nations dividing the multitudes to the right and left. *For* us and our cause, all the common working classes of Europe — all that toil and sweat, and are oppressed. *Against* us, all privileged classes, nobles, princes, bankers and great manufacturers, all who live at ease." The workers, she went on, "suffered their part heroically, as if fighting by our side, because they knew that our victory was to be their victory. On the other side, all aristocrats and holders of exclusive privileges . . . felt that our victory would be their doom."³⁷

Meanwhile the importation of foreign labor compelled European workers to draw closer together. French and British labor leaders, introduced to one another at the International Exhibition of 1862 in London by past members of the International Association, returned to their respective organizations with the sense that an understanding was urgent. In the midst of their deliberations fell like a bombshell the news of the Tsar's suppression of the Poles. On September 28, 1864, at St. Martin's Hall, London, the International Workingmen's Association was founded. Its Preamble and adroitly drawn Rules were broad enough to admit workers of different persuasions.³⁸

The two big questions before the organization, at its outset, were Poland and the American Civil War. But it could do no more than to state its position. With reference to the Poles, it declared that they had a claim upon the leading nations to restore their national independence.³⁹ Regarding the American War, it voted an address Marx had drafted, congratulating the American people on the reelection of Lincoln and identifying workers' aims with the final triumph over the slaveowners.⁴⁰

³⁷ *Men of our Times* (Hartford, Conn., 1868), 12-13, cited by Charles H. Foster, *The Rungless Ladder: Harriet Beecher Stowe and New England Puritanism* (Durham, N. C., 1954), 55.

³⁸ Minutes of the Meetings of the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association (unpublished), October 5-November 1, 1864, hereinafter referred to as MSS. Minutes. The Preamble and Rules have since had many editions. The literature on the origin of the International is fairly extensive, but most of it is unreliable, and that includes J. L. Puech, *Le Proudhonisme dans l'association internationale des travailleurs* (Paris, 1907). One of the best accounts is by D. Riazanov, "Die Entstehung der internationalen Arbeiterassoziation," *Marx-Engels Archiv*, I, 119-202. A shortened version appeared in *L'Internationale communiste* October 1919, 864-74. See also Wilhelm Eichoff, *Die internationale Arbeiterassoziation* (Berlin, 1868), approved by Marx; G. M. Stekloff, *History of the First International* (New York, 1928), ch. iii; and an article by Edward Spencer Beesly in *The Fortnightly Review*, November 1, 1870, XV, 517-35, reprinted in the *New York World*, November 21, 1870.

³⁹ Resolution on Poland, written into MSS. Minutes, November 29, 1864.

⁴⁰ Marx and Engels, *The Civil War in the United States* (New York, 1937), 279 ff.

The assassination of Lincoln released antislavery sentiment in Europe. Plain people and intellectuals mourned the death of the great emancipator. The General Council of the First International sent condolence to President Johnson.⁴¹

Several years elapsed before the International gained public attention in the United States. But it was not entirely overlooked, in the interval. About six months after its establishment, it got editorial comment in the *St. Louis Daily Press*, a labor sheet. After saying kind things about Marx's Inaugural Address, the paper reprinted a longish excerpt from it.⁴² The *Daily Press* considered newsworthy the fact that its editorial had been read at a meeting of the General Council in London.⁴³

⁴¹ Reprinted in Hermann Schlüter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery* (New York, 1913), 195 ff., and in Marx and Engels, *op. cit.*, 283 ff.

⁴² January 10, 1865.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, April 1, 1865; MSS. Minutes, January 31, 1865.

CHAPTER II

The American Setting

Economic and Social Aspects

The Civil War raised the curtain on a new epoch in America's economic growth. Spurred by war-orders and protected by a high tariff, industry moved ahead with uncommon speed. Production climbed to new peaks in mining, steel, railroads and consumer goods. There was a building boom from 1865 to 1871. Manufactures almost doubled in the decade, 1860 to 1870. From the end of the War to the close of 1872 output almost doubled in rolled iron, nearly trebled in rails of all kinds, and went fully beyond that in pig iron.¹ The pace of agriculture was less steady. The wheat crop, save in 1871, rose, while corn and cotton fluctuated. But from 1874 to the end of the decade, the output of all three climbed despite several small downward slopes.²

The achievements of the American economy were cause for optimism. Already in 1870, American industry, according to a careful student, was superior to the British in efficiency. The second, however, still had a wider market.³ The conclusion confirmed what contemporary American industrialists had been saying. The American Iron and Steel Association asserted in 1873 that, by substituting "improved mechanical appliances for high-priced hand labor," American manufacturers "have obtained better results than countries which have depended mainly upon cheap labor and ruder machinery. . . . With all her boasted superiority, England uses today, in many of her manufactures, tools and machinery far inferior to American inventions which meet similar requirements."⁴

This did not mean that American industry had leaped from the small or moderately sized unit of production to the large one. The number of workers per establishment dropped slightly from 1860 to

¹ James M. Swank, *A Collection of Statistics relating to the Iron and Steel Industries of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1888), 8.

² Arthur F. Burns, *Production Trends in the United States since 1870* (New York, 1934), 284. See also Arthur Glen Auble, "The Depressions of 1873 and 1882 in the United States," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, February 1949.

³ Erwin Rothbarth, "Causes of the Superior Efficiency of U.S.A. Industry as Compared with British Industry," *The Economic Journal*, 1946, LVI, 383 f.

⁴ *Proceedings of the American Iron and Steel Association*, November 20, 1873 (Philadelphia, 1873), 24 f., "Annual Report of the Secretary."

1870, that is from above nine to something over eight, and rose to approximately ten and a half in the seventies. In the same ten year span the total H.P. increased more than 45 per cent; but per plant the increase was only a little better than 4 H.P. Industrial concentration was slow. Its greatest triumph was in textiles, which with 772 fewer establishments employed an additional 100,000 workers.

The nature of the laboring population was in keeping with the status of industry. Much of the labor force was unskilled, semi-rural, inclined to look upon their stay in the factory as temporary. Trade unions in the 1860's and 1870's were by and large made up of skilled workers, many of whom were willing supporters of panaceas that pledged to recapture their lost independence.

Industry and business were subject to cyclical behavior. There were two recessions in the five years after the War, but recovery was quick. Seen internationally, the few years before the depression of 1873 were known for an extraordinary inflation in prices, credit and business. Economists have ascribed this inflationary spiral to excessive railroad construction in the United States, Central Europe and Russia; to the opening of the Suez Canal; and to the Franco-Prussian War. In America prices rose, and profits were high. But the economic scaffolding was sensitive to shocks. Railroad stocks already flashed danger signals; and in October 1871 there was what Schumpeter referred to as "a premonitory panic on the stock exchange."⁵

Both conservatives and radicals laid recessions to capital concentration and reckless speculation. Efficiency and a larger output, they said, were obtained at a high cost in human values. Skills were casualties; low paid woman and child labor upset wage-scales; the market was glutted with consumable goods for which there were no buyers. Observers, who were partial to pre-industrial standards, were unhappy over the rapid social and economic transformations. The ruthlessness of bankers and promoter-speculators and the power of accumulated wealth threatened American institutions. According to one spectator, people were "at the mercy of a few men who recognize no responsibility but to their stockholders, and no principle of action but personal and corporate aggrandizement. . . ."⁶ "Their secret power," another witnessed, "stands watch at the head springs of legislation and public administration, and works with all the efficiency of a vast system backed by money."⁷

Mark Twain permanently affixed the title, "The Gilded Age," to

⁵ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Business Cycles* (New York, 1939), I, 336.

⁶ [Anon.], *Some of the Causes of Communism* (New York, 1879), 4.

⁷ [Anon.], *Corporations and Taxation* (n.p., n.d.), 8.

the post-Civil War period. Principles of public expediency were no hindrance to seekers of fortune. Theirs was a private, pecuniary motive, impelling them toward their ends, without regard to points of law. Soiled and seared men — Walt Whitman called them "vulgarians" — climbed to the pinnacle of the social pyramid. Contemporaries, such as Charles Francis Adams, Jr., a prominent publicist, and Edwin L. Godkin, editor of the *Nation*, could not abide their immorality and reckless business methods.⁸ Looking back at the period after the lapse of half a century, two writers concluded: "All that was vulgar in the republic, all that was raw and crude, rose to the surface and floated there."⁹

Trade Union Revival after the Civil War

The laboring class was the base of the social pyramid. Hard times faced workers after returning from the army. Their old jobs had been taken by women and children, and new ones were difficult to find after the stop of war-industries. Terms of employment were uniformly long hours and subsistence wages. A Senate Committee found that urban real wages had fallen one third from 1860 to 1865; increases of monetary wages had been eaten up by higher prices.¹⁰ David A. Wells, Special Commissioner of the Revenue, estimated in 1868 that during the eight preceding years the price of labor had risen 60 percent; necessary commodities, however, had climbed 90 percent.¹¹ Calculations of a much later date showed that money wages had increased by one-half, but the cost of living had doubled.¹²

The crisis of 1857 had practically wiped out American trade unions. But a revival had set in during the War. Within two years, from the end of 1862 to the end of 1864, 270 unions sprang up in 53 trades. Approximately a year later there were almost 300 unions in 61 trades. A novelty was their spread into new territories.¹³

The labor press was tangible proof of the national trend to unionization. It has been estimated that at least "120 daily, weekly and monthly journals of labour reform appeared during the decade 1863-1873."¹⁴ The best known were *Fincher's Trades' Review* in Philadelphia, the *Daily Evening Voice* in Boston, the *Daily Press* in St. Louis,

⁸ Edward C. Kirkland, *Business in the Gilded Age* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1952, chs. i-ii).

⁹ Heywood Broun and Margaret Leach, *Anthony Comstock* (New York, 1927), 75.

¹⁰ *Proceedings of the Second Session of the National Labor Union*, September 21, 1868, 17-18; *The Workingman's Advocate*, July 21, 1866.

¹¹ Cited by Albert S. Bolles, *The Conflict between Labor and Capital* (Philadelphia, 1876), 71.

¹² Wesley C. Mitchell, *History of the Greenbacks* (Chicago, 1903), 399.

¹³ John R. Commons and Associates, *History of Labour in the United States* (New York, 1951), II, 18 ff.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 15; also John R. Commons, ed., *Documentary History*, X, 142.

and the *Workingman's Advocate* in Chicago. The first was a weekly, established in June 1863 by Jonathan Fincher, secretary of the national union of machinists and blacksmiths. After two and a half years it had almost eleven thousand subscribers in thirty-one states and such important contributors as William H. Sylvis, president of the National Molders' Union, and Ira Steward, leader of the eight hour movement.¹⁵ The *Boston Daily Evening Voice*, launched in December 1864 by locked-out printers, was the organ of the Boston Workingmen's Assembly. The *Daily Press* of St. Louis was also started by printers in 1864. As far as is known, it was the first American paper to notice the Inaugural Address of the First International. The *Workingman's Advocate*, founded in July 1864, published articles on every aspect of labor, including the International Workingmen's Association.

Another novelty of the trade union movement was the growth of national bodies. From 1864 to 1873, 26 new national unions brought the number to 32. Internally, too, they seem to have fared well. Their membership, from 1870 to 1872, was put at 300,000 in round numbers.¹⁶ The figure seems small by modern standards; but the workers' organizations, like industry, were young.

The 1860's were the springtime of trade unionism in Europe and in the United States. French trade unions, legalized in 1864, laid plans for a national federation. Also in 1864, a conference, summoned by the Glasgow United Trades, culminated, four years later, in the British Trade Union Congress. The First International and the American National Labor Union each held its first congress in 1866.

Assembled in Baltimore, the National Labor Union congress made important decisions. In the first place, it officially set up the organization. Then it called for the establishment of international unions, the organization of the unskilled workers and the eight hour day. Finally it voted to lay the groundwork of a national labor party. But the words, "as soon as possible," had to be added as a concession to the opposition.¹⁷ Other demands of the Baltimore Convention were improvement of women's working conditions, slum clearance and housing, and the distribution of the public domain "to the actual settler only." The delegates advised against strikes unless all other means had been

¹⁵ On Sylvis see James C. Sylvis, *The Life, Speeches, Labors and Essays of William H. Sylvis* (Philadelphia, 1872), and Jonathan Grossman, *William Sylvis, Pioneer of American Labor* (New York, 1945); on Steward, Dorothy W. Douglas, "Ira Steward on Consumption and Unemployment," *Journal of Political Economy*, August 1932, XL, 532-43.

¹⁶ Commons and associates, *op. cit.*, II, 47 f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 96 ff.; James C. Sylvis, *op. cit.*, 66 ff.

exhausted, and expressed faith in cooperation as the answer to labor's grievances.

The National Labor Union's six subsequent conventions did not go far beyond the resolutions of the first. The second, in 1867, adopted a constitution and decided to raise funds for the purpose of organization. A formal platform was accepted in 1868, but the setting up of a labor party was put off until 1871, so strong was the opposition. By that time the National Labor Union was declining. It had reached its peak under the presidency of William Sylvis who had been elected at the third convention in 1868.

The final break up of the National Labor Union is best left to another section. All that need be said now is that in February 1872 it formed a National Labor and Reform Party. Its failure to put up a candidate for the presidency scattered what was left of the National Labor Union. Its successor, the Industrial Congress, lasted only a short time.

The Cooperative Ideal

Relevant at this point is a consideration of the cardinal principles held by the National Labor Union. Cooperation and monetary reform were the two pillars on which it set its hope of achieving an equitable distribution of the products of labor. The remedies were not peculiarly American, but were in fact versions of highly recommended cures in Europe. The first three congresses of the First International elevated cooperation to the rank of a therapeutic. Simultaneously the abolition of interest had many devotees in Europe, even though experiments had shown it to be illusory. Disciples of Proudhon, at the third congress of the International in 1868, for example, won a majority on a resolution that at once condemned interest as unjust and demanded an exchange bank to furnish free credit to borrowers.¹⁸

A likely explanation for the widely shared confidence in the two formulas was the craft-mindedness of workers in the United States as in Europe. Many had but recently left the small shop, or artisan's bench, or farm. Their former independent status, whether fanciful or real, remained anchored in their memories. Cooperation, teamed with monetary reform, alone held out the hope of regaining it within the framework of the expanding industrial system.

The best brains of the National Labor Union enlisted in the defense of the two recipes. Sylvis, for example, considered them better adapted to carry through "an universal emancipation from the power of capital," than "Trade unions as now organized." In fact, under "a just

¹⁸ *Le peuple belge*, supplément, September 14, 1868.

monetary system," he believed, unions would be superfluous.¹⁹ The highest men of the Union considered cooperation eminently suited to America. At its third convention it was resolved that cooperation was "one of the most powerful agents for the elevation of labor, and the equitable distribution of wealth among those who produce it." The persuasion was general that, "when the principle of cooperation is universally recognized by all the trades and callings, and put into practical operation, these unfortunate and unprofitable contests between capital and labor, called strikes or 'lock-outs,' will disappear from society, and labor find its just and true position."²⁰

This is not to infer that cooperation was without its adverse critics both in Europe and in the United States. Marx thought it was "excellent in principle" and "useful in practice," but he rejected it as the answer to capitalism.²¹ In the United States, Fred Bolte, a cigarpacker and an organizer of the American branch of the International, contended that, however large the sums cooperative societies had accumulated, they would lack "the power to carry out anything."²²

Kellogg and Monetary Reform

Cooperation, it has been said, was harnessed to monetary reform, which had been amply presented in the United States in 1848 by Edward Kellogg, a merchant, ruined by the panic of 1837. The full title of the revised edition of his major book²³ summed up his aims. His contention that money and banking enslave people was similar to the arguments of reformers in the Jacksonian era. His book, however, had the distinction of being a primary source of reform thinking. It got full notice first in the press and then in the National Labor Union. *The Workingman's Advocate* ran it serially; Horace Greeley sanctioned its currency plank in his *New York Tribune*; and labor leaders like William Sylvis, Andrew Cameron, editor of *The Workingman's Advocate*, and Richard Trevellick, thrice president of the National Labor Union,²⁴ had soaked themselves in its mimetic dogmas. Even Adolph Douai, editor of the *Arbeiter Union* in New York and later a champion of Marxism in the United States, was under its spell.

¹⁹ *The Workingman's Advocate*, December 12, 1868.

²⁰ *Proceedings of the Second Session of the National Labor Union*, September 21, 1868 (Philadelphia, 1868), 21.

²¹ "Inaugural Address," in Marx-Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1936), II, 439 ff.; *Capital* (Chicago, 1919), III, 521.

²² Letterbook, f. 166, Sorge manuscripts, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

²³ *A New Monetary System, the only Means of Securing the Respective Rights of Labor and Property and Protecting the Public from Financial Revulsions* (New York, 1861).

²⁴ See the biographic sketch by Clifton K. Yearley, Jr., "Richard Trevellick: Labor Agitator," *Michigan History*, December 1955, XXXIX, 423-44.

The Knights of Labor drew on it, as did farmers' organizations, inflationists and Greenbackers, the Labor and Reform Party and political associations with less meliorative platforms.²⁵

Kellogg was a kind of late Jeffersonian, with ideas uncommonly kindred to those of early British socialists, like John Francis Bray, John Gray, and James Bronterre O'Brien. He was no enemy of private property, certainly no socialist, but an antagonist of concentrated wealth which he regarded as the cause of contraposed classes. His was a pre-industrial vision, with the fixed aim of keeping the small farmer and artisan from going under. His method for rescuing them was a low interest rate of approximately one percent. Anything higher, he argued, gave the earnings of the producers to the capitalists without an equitable equivalent. A fall in the price of commodities diminished neither the total debts of the producers nor their legal obligation to pay them. On the other hand, creditors, capitalists in Kellogg's dictionary, to satisfy their claims, could compel laborers and farmers to sell. Such was the process, according to Kellogg, by which capitalists siphoned off the produce of labor. A low rate of interest would reverse the course, and within a few years, bring "competence and happiness where now exist only poverty and misery, . . . forever end the periodical depressions of trade, labor, and the prices of products, and the general oppression of the laboring classes."

Before that could be achieved the government had to strip national banks of the power to issue notes, given them during the Civil War. When money was "representative of actual property," it would "never fail to be a good and safe tender in payment of debts." Loaned to individuals on good security and at a uniform rate of interest, it would be "of invariable value throughout the Union." Kellogg called for a National Safety Fund, at once to apportion the amount of money required by business and to "secure the respective rights of labor and capital." Equitable monetary laws would restore the social equilibrium. For that reason, he believed, they were "of more importance to the laboring classes than all the machinery that has been invented during the last fifty years." No agrarian division, but a just standard was necessary. This would in time distribute property in keeping with the rights and interests of each.²⁶

Alexander Campbell, a disciple, recommended changes in the master's plan. In his *True American System of Finance* he proposed that to cover the war debt the government should issue bonds at three

²⁵ See Chester McArthur Destler, "Edward Kellogg and American Radicalism," *Journal of Political Economy*, 1932, XL, 338-65, reprinted in his *American Radicalism 1865-1901* (New London, Conn., 1946), 50-77.

²⁶ *A New Monetary System*, 38, 40, 192, 274 f.

percent. Even more than Kellogg, he stressed the point that since "capital" or accumulated labor, as he defined it, had the same rights as labor, the government was under obligation "to recognize and protect" both.²⁷

The National Labor Union adopted Campbell's revisions at its convention of 1867. Its Platform of Principles,²⁸ set in the style of the Declaration of Independence, held that the architects of the Republic had had in mind to give each citizen "the largest political and religious liberty compatible with the good order of society, and to secure to each the right to enjoy the fruits of his labor and talents." The Platform went on to say with Jefferson that "when a long train of legislative abuses" exhibited the design of reducing governmental institutions "to a state of servitude" necessity compelled the people "to put forth an organized and united effort for maintaining their natural rights." It said, like Kellogg, "that all property or wealth is the product of physical or intellectual labor, employed in productive industry and in the distribution of the productions of labor." The true source of labor's wrongs was the monetary system which condemned "the industrial wealth-producing classes . . . to lives of unremunerated toil."

The Platform asked for the repeal of the National Banking system, since it was "the very root and essence of slavery." To restore the rights of producers, money had to be converted from a force that funneled wealth to a few into a power that apportioned products to producers "in accordance with the labor or service performed in their production." The first step was to make treasury notes "legal tender in the payment of all debts public and private." Holders of the notes could exchange them for government bonds at interest "sufficiently below the rate of increase in the national wealth by natural production." Out of all this would come a just distribution of the products of labor between "non-producing capital and labor."

That in substance was Kelloggism, for which the National Labor Union found the title, "the true American, or people's monetary system." Once enacted, it would assist the setting up of cooperatives. Together they were "a sure and lasting remedy for the abuse of the present industrial system."

Steward and the Eight Hour Day

The National Labor Union also threw its weight behind the eight hour day, the arguments for which had been worked out by Ira

²⁷ *The True Greenback; or the Way to Pay the National Debt Without Taxes and Emancipate Labor* (Chicago, 1868), 6.

²⁸ See *The Workingman's Advocate*, December 7, 1867.

Steward, a machinist from Boston. Under his dedicated leadership the eight hour movement gained national dimensions.

A steadily diminishing workday and increasing leisure were the hub of his theoretical system. His chain of reasoning was as follows: "The great central idea of the Short Time movement is, that a proper amount of *leisure* or time for the working classes, will revolutionize their Habits, Manners, Customs, Feelings, and Ways of Living, since people who have time, are more deliberate, or precise and exact in what they do, than those who have *not* the proper amount of time. Deliberation tends to *thought*, and thoughtful people grow wiser, and wise people soon learn what belongs to them, and how to get it! . . . As the Habits, Customs, Ways and Living, etc., of workers improve, their wages increase; and the same circumstances which teach them *how to increase their wages* teach them at the same time *how to spend* them to better advantage; and from these twin facts — the *increase* and *wiser* expenditure of wages — results a gradual improvement in their *material* condition; and this means an improvement in their *morals*; for the great material cause of their *immorality* is *low wages*, foolishly expended!"²⁹

In Steward's logic the increased leisure of labor had the magic potential of closing the gap between classes. A reduction in hours will increase wages, and that, we read in one of his unpublished essays, "is the first step on that long road which ends at last in a more equal distribution of the fruits of toil. For wages will continue to increase until the Capitalist and Laborer are one."³⁰

Neither trade unions nor strikes, neither low interest rates nor cooperatives, neither state ownership, nor income taxes, nor land reform — not a single one of these correctives recommended by contemporaries, Steward affirmed, could free men from excessive labor. Rising wages alone, brought about by shorter hours, could achieve that end. The mounting material wants of the workers would absorb the interest of the banker and the profit of the capitalist. Once a better distribution of wealth was in sight, the capitalist would be forced to fulfill the needs of mankind "until every laborer on earth has become sufficiently a capitalist, and every capitalist is sufficiently a laborer. . . . And when every human being includes within himself the interests of these two classes, the conflict between them would cease; for, under such circumstances, a contest between a laborer and a capitalist would mean a man contending within himself."³¹

²⁹ *Boston Weekly Voice*, May 3, 1866.

³⁰ "A Reduction of Hours, an Increase of Wages," Ira Steward papers, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

³¹ "Theory of Wages," Ira Steward Papers, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

The blissful unity of man was an assumption stemming out of a deep faith in the power of human reason to smooth out resistance like a road-roller. Such confidence in rationality to propel progress put Steward near dreamers who believed they could lower heaven to earth. But he did not quite fit into their category. He never conceived of progress in general without the advance of science and the combined force of labor. The leisure and wants of wage earners will compel the use of improved technology; that in turn will further reduce the working time and sharpen the appetite for yet more products. And so progress will go forward peacefully until the workers "take possession — we, our children to come after us — of the vast Wealth our industry has created."³²

Also, eight hour organizations could best aid the process. Trade unions might reduce the working day; the same might be done by labor's independent political action. But as long as the unorganized workers, and they were the overwhelming majority, labored long hours the gains of organized workers would be temporary.

The first eight hour league, set up in Boston, was a model for others throughout the country. Around their standard gathered farmers, shopkeepers and other non-wage earners. But their main strength was among the urban workers.

Steward had the reputation of being an avid reader of economics. He is said to have studied John Stuart Mill's writings on the subject until he knew them by heart. The section in Marx's *Capital* he found most useful to his purpose was "The Working Day," which he helped bring out in English.³³ But he did not share Marx's views; nor could he accept Mill's wage-fund doctrine, according to which the existing wage rate expressed the ratio between the portion of capital set aside for the purchase of labor and the laboring population of the country. Though he rejected Kelloggism as the alternative to capitalism, he fell in with Kellogg's view of money as the source of exploitation.³⁴ Like many contemporary reformers, he regarded "self employment" as a lost ideal situation. But he did not crave its return, as they did. He looked to science and the power of labor to assist the coming of the good life. Such optimism earned him the praise of American Marxists. Sorge tells us that from 1876 on Steward was on very good terms with German members of the defunct International.³⁵

The eight hour agitation in the United States was a signal for the

³² "Meaning of the Eight Hour Day," Ira Steward Papers. See also his pamphlet, *Poverty* (Boston, 1873), 26 f.

³³ See e.g. an undated letter from him to Sorge in Steward Papers.

³⁴ "Borrowed Capital," Steward Papers, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

³⁵ Sorge, "Die Arbeiterbewegung," etc. *Die Neue Zeit*, Jahrg. 9, II, 398 ff.

International to line up behind the movement. Its first congress at Geneva declared that the limitation of the working day was the preliminary to labor's "improvement and emancipation." George Odger, British delegate, believed that the resolution would serve the international union of labor. In his considered opinion, the workers in the United States would never make common cause with the workers of Europe as long as they faced the challenge of cheaper production.³⁶

The National Labor Union spent much effort in behalf of the eight hour day. It defended it on three major grounds. In the first place, a shorter work-time would add stability to the republican institutions. In the second place, it would bring about the advancement of the working classes. In the third place, it would benefit employers. Greater leisure would release the workers' inventive genius and provide labor saving machines. For technical triumphs, history showed, were, to a large degree, the doings of workers.³⁷

The results of the eight hour agitation were disappointing. Six states enacted laws,³⁸ but did not enforce them. Besides, they did not include the agricultural workers. Nearly all the laws were voted during the two or three years after the Civil War, when the tide of the eight hour movement was strongest.

The eight hour issue continued to be a cause of ferment. Strikes for the short workday, in 1872, brought victory to a number of trades. Though the long depression, beginning in 1873, canceled the gains, the eight hour day remained a primary demand. Agitation for it during the depressed years furnished a basis for labor organization while trade unionism was in a relapse.

Before turning to the beginnings of the International in the United States, a few words should be said in summary of the National Labor Union's program. It placed cooperation on a higher plane than trade unionism; and it considered monetary reform far more important to its final goal than strikes. Irrespective of the merits of its principles, the Union held together, for about six years, the labor organizations of the country. It put its strength behind the eight hour day; it called on the workers to shift their allegiance from old political parties to one of their own making; finally, it counted on an international understanding of labor to reenforce its position vis-à-vis American industrialists.

³⁶ *Congrès ouvrier de l'association internationale des travailleurs, tenu à Genève du 3 au 8 septembre 1866* (Genève, 1866), 17 ff.

³⁷ *The Address of the National Labor Union to the Workingmen of the United States* (Chicago, 1867), 4 ff.

³⁸ Illinois, Wisconsin, California, Connecticut, New York and Missouri.

Beginnings of the International in the United States

The International Workingmen's Association tried from the outset to draw American trade unions into its orbit. To reach them, every avenue of approach was tried. The General Council, the Association's executive body, appointed an American in London, a certain Leon Lewis, who had written a "Requiem for Abraham Lincoln," its corresponding secretary for the United States. But he was quickly replaced by Peter Fox, a British journalist. This was only a makeshift.

Apparently the Council was so set on having a representative in the United States that it was ready to give a mandate to any sympathizer willing to act for it. In March 1866, Cesare Orsini, an affiliate of the International, then going to the United States, was given for distribution a bundle of the Association's *Address and Rules*.³⁹ He was the brother of the better known Felice Orsini, venerated by radicals for his attempted assassination of Napoleon III. Cesare reported from America that he had recruited in the International Wendell Phillips, orator of abolitionism and workers' advocate, Horace Greeley, Senator Charles Sumner, and James Stephens, the Fenian leader; that Phillips had offered the Association the proceeds of one of his lectures; that five European socialists residing in New York had promised to take on the duties of representatives, if the Council authorized them. Who they were may never be known, for their names were withheld.⁴⁰ Nor can Orsini's story be verified with the available information. However, it is extremely doubtful that either Greeley or Sumner or Stephens enrolled in the International; and it is not at all certain that Phillips ever did so.

Perhaps two of the five European socialists Orsini referred to were Claude Pelletier, already presented in the previous chapter, and General Gustave Paul Cluseret, a kind of modern condottiere. More will be said about him in another connection. For the purpose of placing him politically, it should be said now that he served reactionary and radical causes. Thus he had helped put down Parisian workers in June 1848, and later enlisted on the Union side in the American Civil War.⁴¹ The five and Orsini seem to have appointed themselves a

³⁹ MSS. Minutes, Oct. 3, 1865; March 20, 1866.

⁴⁰ MSS. Minutes, December 4, 1866; Report of Peter Fox at the Lausanne Congress in *Rapports lus au congrès ouvrier, réuni du 2 au 8 septembre 1867 à Lausanne*. (Chaux-de-Fonds, 1867), 20 f.

⁴¹ Cluseret had met Stephens in New York, and, according to all accounts, had accepted a Fenian offer to lead an Irish army against Great Britain. The plan petered out. See Gustave Paul Cluseret, "My connections with Fenianism," *Littell's Living Age*, 1872, CXIV, 353-65; John Rutherford, *The Secret History of the Fenian Conspiracy* (London, 1877), II, 256; William D'Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1947), 249 f. A brief article, "Cluseret's Career in New York" appeared in the *New York World*, April 28, 1871.

Committee of French and Italian Democrats, that announced itself to the public at a meeting in New York. It relied on "the solidarity of peoples" to throw off the outworn covering of society, and appealed to the American people to "write a finale to all their work by erasing every vestige of caste, privilege or inequality, whether civil or political." The natural complement of free labor was "the abolition of the wage system" and its replacement by cooperatives.⁴²

The General Council enlisted Pelletier and Cluseret to act as its French correspondents in the United States. Though not the most competent, they were the best possible. At least they were popular among French refugees in New York.

Two other Frenchmen, Izard and Victor Drury, arriving in the United States in 1867, claimed to represent the Council. Practically nothing of any value is to be had on the first, not even his given name. The little that has been reported on the second is conflicting. One account put him in the camp of Joseph Mazzini, the Italian nationalist;⁴³ another, in that of Louis Auguste Blanqui, the French archconspirator.⁴⁴ Drury's name will reappear in the course of the narrative. It may be said here that he later emerged in the Knights of Labor as a staunch supporter of cooperation, which he had already promoted before settling in the United States.

Whether the two Frenchmen came as official emissaries of the General Council cannot be established. They wrote from New York to ask for credentials, which apparently were never sent, on account of vilifying rumors about Izard. They attended the second convention of the National Labor Union before which they laid a plan, designed to consolidate the interests of American and European workers by means of international cooperatives and a central bank.⁴⁵ It was in keeping with the teachings of Proudhon.

The General Council, from its viewpoint, thought itself more fortunate in the choice of German correspondents in the United States. It empowered Sorge to act in its name in July 1868, and thereafter won the services of two other German refugees: Siegfried Meyer, a mining engineer, and August Vogt, a shoemaker.⁴⁶

The most important, immediate benefit looked for by American

⁴² The declaration was published in *La Tribune du peuple* (Brussels), December 9, 1866, perhaps at the request of Orsini, after returning to Europe. The paper was an organ of the International Workingmen's Association. A clipping is in the Blanqui papers, 9597, f. 187, National Library, Paris.

⁴³ Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor* (New York, 1925), I, 98 f.

⁴⁴ John R. Commons and associates, *op. cit.*, II, 433.

⁴⁵ The plan was published in *The Workingman's Advocate*, November 2, 1867.

⁴⁶ MSS. Minutes, September 29, 1868; *Marx Chronik*, 269, 272 and 273; and Marx's letter to William Jessup, October 28, 1868, *Sochineniya*, XXV, 540.

trade unions from an understanding with those of Europe was the curbing of labor immigration which American industrialists were furthering. Isolated attempts at restraining the importation of labor were made by such labor leaders as William Jessup, secretary of the New York Ship Joiners' Association, and William Sylvis. Both were firm in the belief that only the workers' international unity could prevent employers from replacing American with foreign labor. The National Labor Union made that its purpose from the start. After taking notice of the first gathering of the International in Geneva, it voted that the Executive Council, "in the event of another such convention being held before another meeting of this Congress, be authorized to send a delegate to such convention."⁴⁷ We shall return to the problem of labor competition.

Negotiations opened between the two organizations. During the London tailors' strike of 1867, the General Council appealed to Sylvis for assistance. In his reply he explained why he had to refuse the request. For the past two years, he wrote, his union had spent close to \$365,000 "in the way of warring against the capitalists." About 2,000 unemployed members needed help. Also a part of the union's funds was tied up in cooperative foundries which, in his opinion, were "the only effectual mode of dealing with the labor question." But he promised to solicit voluntary contributions. He added the name and address of William Jessup of New York, vice-president of the National Labor Union.⁴⁸

Letters were exchanged between the Council in London and the vice-president in New York. The first, through its corresponding secretary for the United States, invited the National Labor Union to be represented at the second international congress. As far as it is possible to determine, Jessup's answer has remained unpublished. Its major portion will therefore be cited here. He had long desired to correspond with the English workers and had written "two or three letters with that end in view."

"The corresponding secretary of the National Labor Union [he continued] is very dilatory in answering. As an officer of the National Labor Union, I exceedingly regret that your kindness in furnishing report and information relating to the Geneva Congress has not been reciprocated on the part of our corresponding secretary, as I hold it is a matter of great importance that the workingmen of both the old and the new countries should be in close communication in relation to the labor movement, as I believe it will prove of mutual benefit to all. I much regret that the day will be too far advanced when our national body meets to take action

⁴⁷ *The Workingman's Advocate*, September 1, 1866.

⁴⁸ MSS. Minutes, July 9, 1867.

by sending a delegate to the Congress of Lausanne. I would much like to see the working men of the United States represented therein. I shall take much pleasure in complying with your request to inform the Chicago Congress of the Assembling of your Congress on September 2nd. I shall also take the liberty, in making my report to that body, to read your letter, believing it of sufficient importance to make it public. I desire to assure your General Council, that, having been elected delegate to Chicago from the Working Men's Union of this city, I will immediately on my return write them full information as to the action taken by the Union [N.L.U.], and will forward such papers as contain the fullest acc't of the proceedings. My official term as vice-president will terminate with the sitting of the Union. I would like to maintain our correspondence in my other official position as President of the New York State Working Men's Assembly, or Corresponding Secretary of the New York Working Men's Union, and will be at all times happy to exchange documents relating to the labor question. I recognize the necessity of frequent intercourse between our two bodies, and if I hold an official position therein another year, I will do all in my power to maintain such intercourse, and will willingly furnish any information that you or the General Council may desire, or exchange papers or documents of interest."⁴⁹

Izard informed the General Council that Jessup was most serious with regard to the International.⁵⁰ In a letter of August 1868 he reported the inability of the National Labor Union to finance a delegate to the third congress of the International. At the same time, he acquainted the Council with the current brick-layers' strike in New York State, the purpose of which was the enforcement of the eight hour law. Workers, he wrote, had pledged \$150,000.⁵¹

The affiliation of the National Labor Union with the First International turned out to be more difficult than had been thought. A wide ocean was still a big impediment. Also matters of an internal nature kept the two labor bodies from advancing toward one another. The International was already weakened by factionalism. Simultaneously, the effect of Kelloggism and cooperation in the National Labor Union was a lesser interest in a labor alliance as a means of achieving final ends.

Nevertheless imported labor continued to threaten the American workers. Agreement between labor leaders on both sides of the Atlantic was difficult to attain. Each set of men had the objective of protecting wage scales in their respective countries. For example, British trade unionists, in the 1860's and 1870's, waged a long cam-

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, August 20, 1867.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, October 8, 1867.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, August 18, 1868.

paign to halt the importation of continental workers. It is common knowledge that that was behind the understanding British labor leaders sought to work out with French labor leaders from about 1860 to 1864. Yet, in all British trades, basic and small trade unions pushed emigration from 1850 to 1860, seeing it as a sort of panacea for raising labor's standards at home. Unions in fact set aside operating funds to help members make the voyage, and during the cotton famine and iron trade lockouts of the 1860's even accepted grants from American manufacturers to pay the voyage of unemployed workers. British labor executives tried to direct emigration towards British colonies, but the majority of skilled workers who had left Great Britain between 1860 and 1886 went to the United States, despite the opposition of American trade unions. American labor leaders, Sylvis among them, sought a flexible arrangement with British unions, that would adjust emigration to the American market. That, however, failed. During the depression in the American iron trade from 1867 to 1868, the situation was so desperate—three-fourths of the workers were unemployed—that Sylvis wrote a stiff note to the secretary of the Scottish molders, denouncing their "immigration scheme, and everything connected with it, as a direct and outrageous fraud practiced upon your own members and a gross imposition on us."⁵² It can be added that American and British molders' societies reached an understanding in 1871, in which they laid down rules with reference to the entrance of iron workers into the United States.

The British trade union conception of emigration stemmed from classical economic principles. They were the wage fund doctrine, referred to earlier in the chapter, the Malthusian law of population, and overproduction as a cause of crises, which Joseph Schumpeter placed very low in the scale of depression theories.⁵³ It scarcely needs saying that British labor's viewpoint on emigration fitted in nicely with the interests of American manufacturers, but collided with the requirements of American labor.⁵⁴

To control the competition of foreign workers was the first reason for American labor's desire to be represented at the congresses of the First International. Significantly, it was due to Sylvis, the stoutest antagonist of the American Emigrant Company, which had been organized to stimulate immigration, that the Chicago convention of the National Labor Union in 1867 elected a delegate to the congress

⁵² *The Workingman's Advocate*, March 21, 1868.

⁵³ *History of Economic Analysis* (New York, 1954), 279.

⁵⁴ For some of the data on emigration policies of British trade unions we are indebted to the first-rate article of Charlotte Erickson, "The Encouragement of Emigration by British Trade Unions, 1850-1900," *Population Studies*, December 1949, III, 248-73.

of the International in 1868.⁵⁵ He was Richard Trevellick, president of the International Union of Ship Carpenters and Caulkers. But lack of money kept him from going.

The beginnings of the International in America seemed promising in 1868 and 1869. First, the General Council had established communication with American labor leaders like Sylvis, Jessup and J. C. C. Whaley,⁵⁶ the first president of the National Labor Union and the head of the Washington Trades' Assembly. Also enlisted in the Council's service was Richard J. Hinton of Washington, D.C., who had been with John Brown in the raid on Harper's Ferry, and subsequently had been an officer in the Kansas Colored Regiment. Second, nuclei of the Association were taking form in the United States. The revived Communist Club of New York voted to become a section of the International,⁵⁷ and united with the General German Workingmen's Association to form the short-lived Social Party.⁵⁸ An account of these German groups has been reserved for the next chapter. In San Francisco, a society of German workers decided to affiliate with the International. The problem of Chinese labor, however, complicated its standing with local labor groups.⁵⁹ Workers in Chicago had in the interim sent \$378.00 to French Internationalists, on trial for conspiracy,⁶⁰ and in New York, again, the General German Workingmen's Association that had reorganized itself after the dissolution of the Social Party voted in February 1869 to join the National Labor Union as Local 5. In December of the same year it entered the International, and thereafter was known as section 1 of the International Workingmen's Association in the United States. The month before, its principles had been endorsed by a French society in New York.⁶¹

American workers' groups had already learned of the International's spreading influence and were asking its help. The striking horse-car conductors of New York City requested the General Council to publicize their appeal, "To the Impartial, Intelligent and Sympathizing People of the City of New York." It was a statement of grievances against the Second Avenue Company that had demanded another hour

⁵⁵ *The Workingman's Advocate*, August 31, 1867. For the letter in which Sylvis defended his resolution against the charges of the press that he had conceived it in hostility to emigration generally, see *ibid.*, November 2, 1867.

⁵⁶ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Letters to Americans, 1848-1895* (New York, 1953), 74, and *Sochineniya*, XXV, 540.

⁵⁷ MSS. Minutes, July 23, 1867.

⁵⁸ For a brief story of the Social Party see Hermann Schlüter, *Die Internationale in Amerika* (Chicago, 1918), 84 ff.

⁵⁹ MSS. Minutes, December 1, 1868; *Der Vorbote* (Geneva), November 1869, no. 11.

⁶⁰ Reported by the correspondent of the *New York Herald*, July 10, 1870, in his account of the third trial of the International in Paris.

⁶¹ MSS. Minutes, November 2, 1869.

a day, even though the men were already working 105 hours a week.⁶² And the paper stainers of New York State, on strike for higher wages, called on the General Council to forestall the importation of strike breakers.⁶³

A threat of war between the United States and Great Britain became a cause for cooperation between the International and the National Labor Union. Whatever the advantage sought by each country, talk of war inflamed feelings. Senator Charles Sumner declared that war was not inevitable, if the people united "to make it impossible."⁶⁴ The General Council, in an address drafted by Marx and sent to Sylvis, then president of the National Labor Union, appealed to organized labor "to stop a war, the clearest result of which would be, for an indefinite period, to hurl back the ascendant movement of the working class on both sides of the Atlantic."⁶⁵

Sylvis, in his reply, extended to European workers, "the right hand of fellowship," and urged the International not to relax its efforts until it succeeded. The American workers, for their part, he assured the Council in London, were determined to continue their struggle against the "monied aristocracy" that was "fast eating up the substance of the people. We have made war upon it and we mean to win. If we can, we will win through the ballot-box; if not, then we will resort to sterner means. A little blood-letting is sometimes necessary in desperate causes."⁶⁶

Sylvis died shortly before a delegate of the National Labor Union went to the fourth congress of the International. He was, as a correspondent wrote from Washington, "intelligently conscious of the great mission of labor"; and, as Sorge said, "one of the most earnest and energetic workers in our cause."⁶⁷ History is not written in the conditional tense, a historian once said. What Sylvis might have done in behalf of international labor unity, had he lived, cannot be known. Certainly he was one of its best champions in the United States.

At the time of his death the two organizations were moving to common ground. In August 1869, George Eccarius, General Secretary of the International, invited a representative of the National Labor

⁶² *Ibid.*, May 4, 1869.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, September 28, 1869; *Der Volksstaat*, October 6, 1869; *The Workingman's Advocate*, October 23, 1869.

⁶⁴ *Works* (Boston, 1880), XIII, 92 f.; see also MSS. Minutes, May 11, 1869.

⁶⁵ The full address was published in the *Beehive* (London), May 15, 1869; and in *The Workingman's Advocate*, May 12, 1869.

⁶⁶ Text in John R. Commons, ed., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1910), IX, 340 f., cited from *Report of the Fourth Annual Congress of the International Workingmen's Association*, 1869, 13; German text in *Vorbote* (Geneva), September 1869.

⁶⁷ *The Workingman's Advocate*, August 7 and 14, 1869.

Union to attend the fourth congress of the International. Significantly, the argument he pressed hardest, in order to persuade American labor leaders, was that of workers' emigration.⁶⁸ This was a sensitive point with organized labor in the United States.

The National Labor Union sent Andrew Cameron to the International congress in Basel, Switzerland. The correspondent of the *Washington Star* reported that amid a standing ovation he had stepped up to President Hermann Jung and offered the "hand of fellowship of 800,000 workingmen and women on the other side of the Atlantic. . . . It was an imposing sight to see the elected representatives of labor of the two worlds holding each other firmly by the hand for some time, and looking at each other as if they were hardly able to believe that it was really so."⁶⁹ Cameron's comparatively brief speech was substantially a fraternal salutation from American to European workers. He subscribed to the final aim of the International and saw in the growing unity of labor an earnest of its ultimate triumph. Turning to the problem of emigration, he said that the National Labor Union welcomed those who went to America, provided they did not hinder American trade unionists from reaching their objectives. An agreement, he believed, could be arrived at between the International and the National Labor Union. In conclusion, he invited the International to send a delegate to the convention of the National Labor Union in 1870.⁷⁰

Before returning to the United States, Cameron attended a meeting of the General Council in London. According to the unpublished minutes, he proposed a plan by which "trade unionists leaving here would at once join our ranks and make common cause with us when they arrive in America. . . . In every instance, where a dispute has arisen the threat of fetching men from the old world has been held out." Citing the case of the striking miners of Pennsylvania, he recalled an advertisement he had seen in Liverpool, under the caption, "Great Inducement to Miners, from 18 to 20 dollars a week." The fact was, he continued, the mining companies, through their own stores and houses, were in complete control of their areas.⁷¹

The General Council appointed a committee to draw up a plan on emigration, subject to further data Cameron had promised to send. It recommended: "1. That an emigration bureau, in conjunction with

⁶⁸ Letter cited in Richard T. Ely, *The Labor Movement in America* (New York, 1886), 227.

⁶⁹ Cited in *The Workingman's Advocate*, October 9, 1869.

⁷⁰ Speech of Cameron in *ibid.*, October 9, 1869; the official report of the Congress of Basel gives only the French text. *Compte rendu du IVe congrès international tenu à Bâle en septembre 1869* (Bruxelles, 1869), 150 ff.

⁷¹ MSS. Minutes, September 14, 1869.

the National Labor Union of the United States, be established; 2. That in case of strikes the Council should do its best to prevent workmen being engaged in Europe to be used by American capitalists against the workmen in America."⁷²

Cameron laid the draft before the convention of the National Labor Union in Cincinnati in 1870. No delegate of the General Council attended simply because it could not afford to send one. After complimenting Cameron on the faithful execution of his mission, the convention chose "a permanent committee of five, who shall constitute for the ensuing year the International Bureau of Labor and Emigration." Its duties were: to correspond with labor societies in Europe; to provide them with information on trade, labor, wages and strikes; and to publish data that might further "the one high purpose," that is "the complete unity and enfranchisement of labor everywhere."

The convention also adopted the motion of Sorge, delegate of Local 5, by which the National Labor Union committed itself to the principles of the International and pledged "at no distant day to affiliate with it."⁷³

It is not known whether the Bureau of Labor and Emigration fulfilled its obligations. Any communications it might have sent to the General Council were not reported in its unpublished minutes. The Bureau very likely remained a paper body. Nor did the National Labor Union yield to Sorge's prodding to associate with the International. He did, however, succeed in having it endorsed by the Workingmen's Assembly of New York, with which Jessup was connected. As far as the National Labor Union was concerned, it was moribund. Its disintegration shortly after 1870 left the recently formed American groups of the International without a firm labor base.

⁷² *Ibid.*, September 28, 1869.

⁷³ *The Workingman's Advocate*, August 27, 1870.

CHAPTER III

First Footings in America

American metropolitan newspapers were slow to notice the First International. They ignored its first congress at Geneva in 1866. Of the second, at Lausanne, several of them gave only cursory accounts.¹ The New York *World* alone evaluated it editorially. It approved of cooperation, but was lukewarm to the resolution which demanded state ownership of transport and exchange. The paper was hopeful that future congresses might discover a way to harmonize capital and labor.² The reporting of the congress of 1868 was somewhat more elaborate, though the general feeling was still one of indifference. The New York *World*, however, reprinted the lengthy stories of the London *Times*,³ and the New York *Times*, apart from summarizing the proceedings, conceded the argument of Proudhonists that cooperation was an alternative to strikes.⁴ The fourth congress of the International in 1869 was considered newsworthy by the large press of New York City and of other urban areas. Already the New York *World*, taking after the British *Pall Mall Gazette*, credited the Association with vast authority over the workers,⁵ and predicted that the issues before the International would "soon be the absorbing political questions" in the United States.⁶

By the fall of 1869, therefore, influential American newspapers were admitting the importance of the International. Indifference, observed the Boston *Daily News*, yielded to "anxious inquiry and unfeigned respect." It added by way of advice that the National Labor Union congress at Philadelphia and that of the International at Basel, both in 1869, were "an omen of change. And this change must be understood and met. Let old politicians be wise."⁷

The fact that a delegate of the National Labor Union had left for

¹ Brief references to the Lausanne Congress appeared in the New York *Tribune*, September 23, 1867; New York *Evening Post*, September 19, 1867; and the New York *Sun*, September 20, 1867. On September 25, the *Sun* reprinted an appraisal of the Congress from the London *Times*.

² *The World*, September 25, 1867.

³ *Ibid.*, September 23, 26, 29, 1868.

⁴ September 21 and 27, 1868.

⁵ The New York *World*, September 23, 1869.

⁶ *Ibid.*, September 29, 1869.

⁷ Cited in *The Workingman's Advocate*, October 2, 1869.

Switzerland directly after its convention in Philadelphia led inquiring observers to think that the two organizations were allies. This was not so. The idea was, however, fortified by a series of articles Cameron published after returning. Their object was to show that the International and the Union had the identical purpose of establishing "a true democracy." But they understood it differently. It meant collectivism to the first; and to the second, a wide distribution of property, freed from bankers' control.⁸

Cameron's faith was neo-Jeffersonian, and it was shared by many of the National Labor Union. It derived from the doctrine of natural rights from which private property got its sanction. Even sections of the International in America, once it seemed to be a going concern, subscribed to the belief. Uppermost in Cameron's mind was not whether Europe or America would be the first to attain freedom from want, but their respective paths to that end. His reasoning was that since the social malady was linked to despotism in Europe, and in America to "a maladministration of our institutions," a thorough reconstruction was necessary in one case; in the other, "a just administration of the fundamental principles upon which the government is founded alone is required."⁹

Cameron's theory of American exceptionalism is not under consideration now. Presumably it had support in organized labor. Implied in it was the promise, from rags to riches. The rapid industrialization of the country, the discovery of its immense resources, the large immigration, the quick rise of some to opulence, these astonishing changes fairly dizzied people and lifted ambitions like balloons.

American industrial advance was meanwhile cutting furrows between haves and have-nots. The highest men of the National Labor Union likened this development to a dark cloud over the republic. Its ability to survive, they maintained, depended on organized labor, allied with other wronged social segments. So intimate was the relationship between Europe and America, wrote Cameron, that many of the most objectionable features of the first were "being incorporated" by the second. "Consequently any movement tending to uproot them cannot but exert a beneficial influence in our own and other lands."¹⁰

Fear of the International in Europe

The International was already a sprawling society in Europe in 1869, and a cause of concern to industrialists and governments. It aided the

⁸ *Ibid.*, November 6, 1869.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

organization of labor, checked wage reductions and assisted strikers. Its appeals for help during labor troubles were answered by European and American workers.¹¹ It defended subject peoples, and it warned against the impending war between France and Prussia. In sum, it threatened to undo the premises and policies of the business community as of the political order.

By the time the fourth congress met, the International had gained prestige from its many triumphs. It had inspired the Land and Labor League in Great Britain and an agrarian program in Switzerland, which before long circulated in five European languages. Two papers, in sympathy with the International, were founded in Spain. Sections arose in Holland; and one, in Geneva, among Russian exiles.

The society looked sturdy. It had survived persecutions in France, Belgium, Prussia and Austria. On the eve of the Franco-Prussian War, its leaders in France were penalized and imprisoned. European police departments exchanged dossiers on it; and chancelleries were studying how to league the powers in order to stamp it out.¹²

The Rise of Section I

At the time of affiliation with the International, the Communist Club of New York had approximately twenty members. A number of them had been its founders in 1857. Among its new recruits were Siegfried Meyer, August Vogt and Konrad Carl, all three German immigrants. The first two have found a place in our story. Of the third, whose name will reappear in these pages, it need be said now that he was a tailor by trade and an effective labor organizer. These men, by helping to smooth out differences between the Club and the General German Workingmen's Association, hastened their merger.

The Association had come into being in November 1865. It was the product of German disciples of Ferdinand Lassalle, the German socialist and advocate of producers' cooperatives with state aid. Its instrument for lifting "the yoke of capital" from labor was the ballot. In keeping with its teacher's aim, it pledged to return to the workers the full proceeds of their labor. Adhering to the iron law of wages, that is, the amount paid to the worker was equal to what was "necessary for his subsistence," as the famous French economist, Baron Turgot, had formulated it, the Association put little value on trade unions and strikes. For neither the one nor the other could permanently alter the law. Besides, the promise of the full proceeds of labor appealed

¹¹ *Compte rendu du IV^e congrès international, tenu à Bâle (Bruxelles, 1869)*, 9-15.

¹² Bernstein, *op. cit.*, 186, 189 ff.

more to handicraftsmen than to factory workers. Sorge therefore concluded that Lassalleism was without a future in the United States.¹³

Mention has been made of the Social Party. It was divided into two main branches, an Anglo-American and a German-American, each with its committee and clubs.¹⁴ Perhaps to draw in adherents of the utopian communist, Wilhelm Weitling, the Party invited him to be on its executive committee. But he declined the honor.¹⁵ He continued to disapprove of labor's political action. After a setback in the local election of 1868 the Party dissolved.

German trade unions in New York that had been aloof from the Social Party formed an Association of United Workers for the purpose of establishing a labor paper. At a meeting on June 5, 1868, its aims were projected, and on June 13, the first number appeared with the title, *Die Arbeiter Union*. Its premise was that the conflict of interests was eternal and insoluble. Only an easing of labor's burdens could be looked for, and perhaps also a larger share of the world's earnings. Such improvements, the paper held, would be brought about by the trade unions provided they united.¹⁶

The *Arbeiter Union* fell in with the beliefs of contemporary American organized workers. It considered private property sacred, professed Kelloggism, agitated for the eight hour day and referred to monopolies as a menace to republican government. Since their political power "turned the scales to the side of large capital" labor could not avoid political action. To surrender politics to the rich, would "make them richer and the poor poorer."¹⁷ Consequently, it abandoned political neutrality, a reversal of policy which compelled a change of editors. W. S. Landsberg, a Malthusian, was replaced by Adolph Douai, a socialist.

Douai's life in Europe had alternated between teaching and journalism. Emigrating from Germany in 1852, he settled in Texas where his anti-slavery writings made him fairly unpopular. He moved north before the Civil War, founded German-American schools, edited newspapers, and got in with German socialists. At the time he assumed the editorship of the *Arbeiter Union*, he was partial to the principles of Kellogg. The paper also had Marxist contributors, so that excerpts from *Das Kapital* and chapters from Kellogg's *New Monetary System* could be found in the same issues. By 1870 Marx seems to have triumphed over Kellogg, at least in the columns of the paper.

¹³ "Die Arbeiterbewegung in den Vereinigten Staaten," *Die Neue Zeit*, Jahrg. 9, II, 439.

¹⁴ *Constitution and Plan of Organization of the Social Party for the City of New York and Vicinity* (New York, 1868), a four page leaflet.

¹⁵ Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen an F. A. Sorge und Andere* (Stuttgart, 1906), 5.

¹⁶ *Die Arbeiter Union*, July 11, 13, 1868.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, August 22, 1868.

The *Arbeiter Union* changed from a weekly to a daily on May 20, 1869. Its subtitle, "Organ of the National Labor Union," adopted in December 1868, spelled out its connection with the larger labor organization. Thereafter it published official bulletins of the National Labor Union, articles on financial capitalism, on land, credit and educational reform, on labor's relation to protection and free trade, on the eight hour day and cooperation. It reported labor events in Europe, and ran pieces by well-known Internationalists.¹⁸

These items were signs that it was shifting its position nearer to the International. A split in the German-American trade unions during the Franco-Prussian War brought down the paper. Its termination in 1870 indicated that Internationalists in New York were too few and their resources too meager to take it over.

They were, however, dedicated men who compensated by their energy their lack of forces and funds. Section 1 had only about fifty members in December 1869, when it emerged from the reorganized General German Workingmen's Association. But its library of social science and its discussions of social and economic theories equipped them to answer workers' questions.

The members of the section were a power in trade unions. There was not a workers' meeting or convention without their attendance. In its early days of burning earnestness, the section could well pride itself on its dynamic part in organized labor. It sent delegates to labor conferences, set aside strike funds, and gathered statistics on wages, hours and production. It was in more or less steady communication with the miners of Pennsylvania, with shoe-workers, machinists and bricklayers, with cigar makers, carpenters and furniture workers whose international union it was instrumental in building; and it could be credited with much of the early strength of the Cigar Makers' International Union. It is not an overstatement that the section was a training ground of labor leaders who later participated in establishing the American Federation of Labor.

The section also appointed a committee to promote the organization of Negro workers. Its cordial relations with them may explain the decision of the National Colored Labor Convention, in December 1869, to send a delegate to the fifth congress of the First International, scheduled to meet in Paris in 1870. The Franco-Prussian War forced its postponement.¹⁹

Furthermore, the section corresponded with German trade unions in Chicago, St. Louis and Milwaukee. It took part in eight hour meetings.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, October 31, 1868, and March 13, 1869.

¹⁹ *New National Era*, January 13, April 4, 1870.

During the Franco-Prussian War it defended the International against German-American chauvinists.

The section of course also had major failings and drawbacks that plagued it throughout its history. They will be examined in another chapter. One can be noticed here, namely, the want of a press. But in 1870, the section had great expectations. In June, that year, the General Council sent 200 membership cards to the German Labor Union in New York, where the section's standing was already high.²⁰

Franco-Americans and the International

Those in the United States, as in other countries, who countenanced or enlisted in the International did so for different motives. Many undoubtedly were persuaded by its ultimate aim, laid down in its Preamble, namely, "the emancipation of labor." A number of native Americans, it has been shown, looked to it to check the importation of foreign labor. Others saw it as the embodiment of their reform schemes or as a possible instrument of their ambitions. This side of its history will be considered under another head. For the present we shall consider the relations of Franco-Americans to the International.

The part of Franco-Americans in the International Association of the fifties has been looked at. Many of them, like other exiles in the United States, had taken up the abolitionist cause and fought in the Union Army. The War over, they organized themselves in St. Louis, first as Camp Frémont for the defense of republican institutions, should they be threatened, and subsequently as the French Radical Club. Perhaps prompted by the socialistic *Tribune française*, they founded, in November 1868, the "Union républicaine de langue française," which branched out to New York, Newark, Paducah (Ky.) and San Francisco.²¹ Several of its leaders can be named at this point. They were B. Hubert, a maker of surgical instruments, who, it will be shown, was deeply involved in the internal affairs of the International in America; Frédéric Tufferd and Claude Pelletier, who have figured earlier in the narrative; B. Mercadier and J. Loiseau, both ex-Icarians in search of other paradises. The Union's fortnightly *Bulletin*, begun in November 1869, published sympathetic articles on the International.

The Union observed important dates in the French revolutionary calendar. It feted such events as the capture of the Bastille, the declaration of the first French Republic, and the overthrow of Louis Philippe; and it commemorated the June Days of 1848.

²⁰ MSS. Minutes, June 28, 1870.

²¹ For a brief statement of its history and aims see *77^e anniversaire du 22 septembre 1792, célébré par les républicains de langue française de St. Louis, Mo., Etats-Unis d'Amérique* (St. Louis, [1869]), 5-12, 30-33.

No one set of principles was supreme in the Union. Though it venerated Marx, its view of the future was conventionally utopian. Thus its *Bulletin* printed an appeal for donations to erect an Icarian community. Pelletier recalled the many answers to the labor problem he had heard in its two New York branches. One found the solution in Proudhon's mutualism. Another objected that Proudhon's formula was applicable only where conditions were equal. He had greater faith in a phalanx, styled after that designed by the famous utopian, Charles Fourier. A third counted on cooperation, provided producers' and consumers' cooperatives united. That provoked the reply that cooperation, by creating a class of semi-bourgeois, would inevitably bring back class friction.²²

These different cures of the social ills were noticeably like the recipes peddled in France. This is not to say that the Union was a branch in exile. The fact was it concerned itself with American issues. It held, for example, that the labor question could never be settled without full equality for Negroes.

The Union and section 1 were far apart in matters of theory. The first was disposed to apply the standards of the handicraft system to industrial capitalism. Thus they saw only its festering sores and ugliness, not its dynamics and enduring values. The premises of section 1, on the other hand, starting from the new productive techniques, proposed to make capitalism yield the good life. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the section had any prospects of attaining its ends by some prefabricated community.

Establishment of section 2

For all that, the "Union républicaine" cooperated with trade unions to advance common objectives. It sent delegates to a benefit ball, in May 1870, in behalf of the *Arbeiter Union*, where they met representatives of Negro and women labor societies, and Richard Trellick, president of the National Labor Union. Victor Drury spoke for the "Union républicaine." In the same month, it joined German and American labor organizations in an address to the French Internationalists whom Louis Napoleon's government had indicted.²³ Again in May 1870, General Cluseret, who had been named corresponding secretary of the General Council two months earlier, negotiated the fusion of the Union's two branches in New York into a French section, which the General Council admitted to the International in August.²⁴

²² *Atercratie* (New York, 1873), 61 ff.

²³ The address was published in full by *Bulletin de l'union républicaine de langue française*, June 1, 1870.

²⁴ MSS. Minutes, August 30, 1870.

Thereafter it was known as section 2. Approximately one hundred Franco-Americans had in fact been meeting as a body before the General acted.

The inaugural meeting of the section was probably in early June. The *Bulletin* published the principal speech but withheld the name of the speaker. Throughout history, he said, there had been a conflict between "idleness and labor." Thus far the workers had won only the ballot with which they defended liberal causes. He cited the case of British labor preventing its government from intervening during the American Civil War. The purpose of the International, he said, was to augment labor's gains by securing its rights both in the United States and in Europe.

How could that be done? Neither technological change nor free trade, neither land reform nor cooperation, none of these methods would effect it, the speaker answered. Only labor unity and labor's independent political action would bring it about. At this point his program dovetailed the International's.²⁵

This is the appropriate place to supplement what we have already said about General Cluseret. Without loyalties to principles, he was apt to fight on any side that promised to further his ambitions. Frustrated by Napoleon III, he had served first under Garibaldi in Italy, and then under Union commanders during the Civil War. His subsequent plan to cut out a career in the Fenian movement and his part in the reckless uprising in Lyons, in September 1870, when the Russian anarchist, Michael Bakunin, made an extravagant bid for power, were a measure of his unbridled desire for advancement. The Paris Commune of 1871 made him head of its War Department. But he was dismissed and brought to trial.

The brief digression into the record of Cluseret may show the kind of American agent the General Council appointed in 1870. How he got its confidence is still a mystery. Possibly his prison term under Napoleon III had earned him entrée into radical circles. At any rate Internationalists in Paris gave him the right to speak for them in the United States.²⁶

The Council's other appointees were, before long, provoked by Cluseret's conduct. For example, Robert Hume of Long Island, its propagandist among native Americans, informed London that the General was treating colleagues like subordinates in an army.²⁷ In fact his behavior had embarrassed both Frenchmen and Americans. In a

²⁵ *Bulletin de l'union républicaine*, etc., June 15, 1870.

²⁶ See his letter to Eugène Varlin in *Troisième procès de l'association internationale des travailleurs de Paris* (Paris, 1870), 49 f.

²⁷ MSS. Minutes, May 31, 1870.

letter "To the American Workers" he had announced himself as the legitimate representative of France in America, biding the time when he would replace Napoleon's envoy to the United States.²⁸ Internationalists were bewildered. Section 1, after sending its own grievances to London, learned from Johann Philipp Becker, the Swiss labor leader who had been with Cluseret in Southern Italy, that he had proved himself capable of sacrificing all "to his vanity and ambition."²⁹

Apparently resentment against him was so strong in America that George Eccarius, the Council's general secretary, had to make a special plea in his behalf. Eccarius explained to Hume that the General had "had his feelings outraged by the French police." That was a likely reason "why the trade societies [the French] gave him credentials which induced him to institute a comparison between himself and the French ambassador at Washington."³⁰

Cluseret's credit fell in June 1870. Invited by section 1 to represent the General Council at the anniversary of the June Days, he declined because he had been in command of the Garde Mobile that had suppressed the workers. He remarked, however, that he had then been young and inexperienced.³¹ The explanation did not restore his standing among American Internationalists.

The Sections' Anti-War Meeting

No other issue, in 1870, absorbed the attention of peoples more than did that of war and peace. The French Internationalists, in particular, bore a heavy responsibility for the outcome. Acutely conscious that the security of the whole Continent depended on their success in restraining their adventurous ruler, they showed exemplary determination in blocking his warlike course. Public protests and many labor strikes were evidence of that. Wages and hours were their immediate causes, but underneath was a mounting enmity to the régime. So frequent were the capital-labor conflicts during 1869 and 1870, that a prize of 5,000 francs was offered for an essay that supplied the most practical plan to prevent their occurrence.³² But Napoleon had settled on a war with Prussia to steady his shaky prestige. On the eve of hostilities, he arrested many leaders of the International on the old charge of conspiracy.

²⁸ Cluseret's letter was published in *La Marseillaise* (Paris), April 2, 1870, and reprinted in *L'Egalité* (Geneva), April 9, 1870.

²⁹ Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 16.

³⁰ Folder of newspaper clippings on the International in America in State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. The name of the newspaper is not indicated.

³¹ Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 14.

³² *La Marseillaise*, April 19, 1870.

American labor societies at once took up their defense. In March 1870 the German Workers' Association of New York addressed the workers of Paris to state its conviction that they would in time "annihilate our common enemy. . . ." ³³ Again in New York, French, German and American labor organizations agreed on a common declaration which indicted the system of personal rule and vindicated labor internationalism. Napoleon's entire reign, it charged, had been a permanent conspiracy. From the viewpoint of French workers, only one path was left open, that of struggle against the domestic enemy. For he had closed the peaceful way through the ballot. The authors of the declaration were certain that his antagonists would finally triumph. ³⁴

Never before had a war aroused labor's opposition on as large a scale as did that between France and Prussia. Manifestoes were legion. That of the Paris Internationalists to German and Spanish workers spoke for sections and trade unions throughout France. The answer of Berlin labor groups and the German Social Democratic Party denounced the war as one between despots. The reply from Spain pledged undying loyalty to the French. The Belgian Council of the International summoned the peoples of Europe to turn the war of dynasts into a war of liberation. ³⁵

The General Council's two manifestoes were more than a month apart. The first, issued after the start of the war, likened it to "a fratricidal feud," brought about by Napoleon and Bismarck, and the workers' exchange of greetings to an earnest of brighter tomorrows. New circumstances, brought about by the overthrow of the Second Empire on September 4, 1870, were the reason for the second manifesto. The establishment of a republic, it said, had stripped the war of its dynastic character. Since the events had removed any valid basis for the expansionism of Germany, its workers should oppose the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. That would be the seed of another war. The French workers, on their side, should neither overturn the republic nor be swayed by the example of 1792. ³⁶

The Council's two addresses were noticed in the United States. The first impressed Senator Charles Sumner by the way it exposed "the pretence of balance of power and questions of dynasty as excuses for

³³ *Ibid.*, April 2, 1870.

³⁴ *Bulletin de l'union républicaine*, etc., June 1, 1870.

³⁵ *Le Réveil*, July 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 23, 1870; *La Marseillaise*, July 22, 1870; see also *La Réforme sociale* (Rouen), July 24, 1870, and *Bulletin de la fédération ouvrière rouennaise*, September 11-25, 1870; *L'Egalité*, August 13, September 22, 1870; *Association internationale des travailleurs, protestations contre la guerre* (Bruxelles, 1870), 6-15.

³⁶ Both manifestoes have usually been reprinted with Marx's *The Civil War in France*.

war. . . ." ³⁷ The second, published in at least three newspapers, ³⁸ was cited by Americans. Wendell Phillips made it the basis of his defense of the French Republic.

The anti-war position of American Internationalists had been known for some time. In July 1870 an address of the *Arbeiter Union*, inspired by section 1 and sanctioned by the Free Thinkers, a middle class organization, had explained the Franco-Prussian War as the culmination of the long-standing anti-labor policy of the two governments. All friends of freedom were called on to unite with labor in a solid block against them. ³⁹ On August 12th the *Arbeiter Union* published the first Manifesto of the General Council.

How the war split the supporters of the *Arbeiter Union* has already been pointed out. A similar split rent the staff and readers of *Der deutsche Arbeiter*, a trade union organ in Chicago. It ceased publication in August 1870.

Franco-Americans were among the most articulate foes of the war. The San Francisco branch of the "Union républicaine de langue française" pronounced it a blight on humanity; ⁴⁰ its eastern branches called for the abolition of monarchies and of standing armies, and reproved all who would divide American workers by the dynastic quarrels of Europe. ⁴¹ A declaration by section 2, released before the overthrow of Louis Napoleon had altered the character of the war, urged Frenchmen to transform it into a revolutionary war. ⁴²

American opinion on the war changed with the rise of the French Republic. Newspapers that had been sympathetic to Germany warned that it would outrage public sentiment in the United States if it imposed humiliating terms. The turn of events, they argued, had made Germany the aggressor against the French people. The Democratic State Convention of Illinois welcomed the French republic "into the family of free nations." In New York, a large meeting of Irish hailed the French as a model for all peoples seeking freedom. ⁴³

Shifting American opinion was probably an incentive to the two American sections of the International to draft an address, *To Their Brethren in Europe*. It was their first, joint, public statement. In content it epitomized what similar documents had said, but the tone was

³⁷ *Works* (Boston, 1880), XIV, 70 f.

³⁸ *The New York World*, October 6, 1870; the *National Standard*, September 12, 1870; *The Workingman's Advocate*, October 8, 1870.

³⁹ *Die Arbeiter Union*, July 30, 1870; reprinted in the organ of the Free Thinkers, *Die Neue Zeit*, August 6, 1870, 680-81.

⁴⁰ *Bulletin de l'union républicaine*, etc., September 1, 1870.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, August 1, 1870.

⁴² *Ibid.*, August 15, 1870.

⁴³ *The New York World*, September 13, 17, 1870; *New York Tribune*, September 13, 1870; *The Irish Citizen*, September 24, 1870.

different. It reasserted that at bottom the object of the war was to halt labor's advances. It then told a sordid story of Louis Napoleon's climb to power. In fact it pictured him a hireling of men of wealth in order to protect them against a resurgence of radicalism. But it reappeared in a shape more terrifying than before, the address went on to say. It haunted him, loosened his grip on things. Finally, in desperation, he decided on war. His surrender to the Germans had but transferred "the office of a Savior of Society to stronger hands."

The two sections shared the General Council's views on Alsace-Lorraine. The contemplated annexation of the two provinces, they predicted, would be as unjust and every bit as dangerous to peace as the partition of Poland. It would be a never-failing reason for large standing armies.⁴⁴

Pacifists and labor leaders endorsed the statement of the two sections. One of its signers was C. Osborne Ward, brother of the sociologist Lester Ward, and founder of a Labor Reform Association in New York. He was something of a utopian, with leanings to cooperation. Travelling through Europe in 1870, he spent time in a French jail under suspicion of being a Prussian spy. The real reason, however, was his membership in the International, "the most celebrated institution in the world," as he wrote to his wife on August 5, 1870.⁴⁵ In London he paid two visits to the General Council. Though cooperation had its drawbacks, he said there, it could resolve the labor question. He promised to become a trade unionist in America, for trade unions, he believed, were "a means of progressive reform in social and political questions." Their help was necessary to gain political power. The state would then undertake cooperation, even intervene to establish socialist colonies.⁴⁶

Ward was an example of the American reformers who at first had counted on the International to promote their programs. They will be considered under another head. More relevant now is the role of the two sections in enlisting support for an anti-war campaign. Especially noteworthy was the inspiring effect of their agitation in the United States. A Czech labor society in New York formed itself into a section of the International. Labor groups in Chicago corresponded with

section 1; and Internationalists in St. Louis were in direct relations with the General Council.⁴⁷

The sections of New York initiated the anti-war meeting of November 19, 1870. Apart from a number of trade unions, the following associations answered their call: the Social Democratic Workingmen's Society, recently formed by German socialists; the above named Society of Free Thinkers; the New Democracy of New York, or Political Commonwealth, founded by reformers in 1869; and several women's organizations. A united appeal, "To The Humane of All Nations," said that the war was a plot of despots to continue ruling, even though the price in human life and material goods was extremely high. The people of Europe had no other alternative than "to direct their combined efforts to establish an European Republic," modeled on the American.⁴⁸

The meeting, held in Cooper Union the evening of November 19, 1870, was "a perfect success," according to one reporter.⁴⁹ At eight the large hall was alive with about two thousand persons. F. A. Sorge, the chairman of the united committee, spoke in English and then interpreted his remarks in German and French. He was very proud to preside over the first international anti-war meeting in New York. The large assembly of men and women, he said, showed their determination to preserve republicanism; "to maintain free institutions against despotic rule; to defend the rights of man against the right by the grace of God." Reason told him "that there is something higher than patriotism, and that is humanity. . . . The greatest exploits of patriotism are those done in the interest of mankind and civilization. Above all we are men born all alike, and having the same right to the pursuit of happiness, life, and liberty."

When the applause died down, Sorge introduced J. W. Gregory, of the New Democracy. He read the greetings of Senator Charles Sumner and of E. H. Heywood, corresponding secretary of the New England Labor Reform League. The Senator advised the American workers "to unite with their brethren in other countries for the overthrow of the intolerable system [of standing armies]. I know of no reform by which the workingmen of Europe will be so much benefited. Let the tax of blood, as it is called, disappear, and civilization will win one of its grandest triumphs." Heywood hoped the meeting might awaken the workers of Europe "to a knowledge of their rights, with courage to assert them."

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, December 13, 20, 1870.

⁴⁸ A copy of the call, issued as a handbill, is in the Sorge papers, Miscellaneous, New York Public Library.

⁴⁹ *The Workingman's Advocate*, December 3, 1870.

⁴⁴ Copies of the address were mailed to the General Council in London, and to *Der Vorbote* in Geneva for distribution in Germany. *Ibid.*, November 1870, no. 11. *The Workingman's Advocate*, October 22, 1870. A clipping of the French text, from the *Messenger Franco-Américain*, without a date, is in Osborne Ward's scrap book. The German text was published in *Die Neue Zeit*, October 29, 1870, 86-87.

⁴⁵ Letter in the possession of his son, F. E. Ward, who graciously permitted citation from it.

⁴⁶ MSS. Minutes, May 31, August 30, 1870.

The principal speakers were Victor Drury, delegated by the French section, Mrs. L. D. Blake, representing the women's societies, Konrad Carl, sent by German trade unions, and Dr. Douai of the Free Thinkers. After citing figures on the high cost of armed peace, Drury asked for faith in the International to free peoples from that burden. The gist of Mrs. Blake's speech was that if women had equal rights with men they would be stout champions of peace, for they suffered every bit as much as the soldiers. The basic object of war, according to Carl, was to secure the thrones of princes, and the Franco-Prussian War was no exception. The main point in Dr. Douai's remarks was that the war would prolong the long standing enmity between the two countries.

The meeting voted seven resolutions that summed up the beliefs of the participating societies. Prefaced by as many Whereases, they read:

"1. That we condemn the continuance of the war against the French Republic, as highly unjust and only promoting the interests of despotism; 2. That we most heartily sympathize with our unfortunate brothers and sisters in France and Germany, equally suffering by this unjust war, provoked only for the benefits of despotic rulers; 3. That we stigmatize the enforced annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, as an act of barbarous and tyrannical injustice; 4. and 5. That we appeal to all true-minded citizens, to demand of the government of the United States to use its whole influence in favor of the Republic in France, to act in the spirit of the Declaration of American Independence, and thus aid to put an end to this cruel war; 6. That we ask the government of the United States to propose to the European powers, and to press vigorously the abolition of the standing armies and the establishment of a permanent International Court of Arbitration; 7. That we urgently invite those who are in favor of freedom, equality and eternal peace, to join in a brotherhood, which will insure true self-government to all nations, in order that they may no longer tolerate the rule of a few monopolists and speculators, who always incline to Despotism and even support it."⁵⁰

The meeting at Cooper Union drew national and international attention. Sumner, in the Senate, backed the resolutions. Several of them were ratified on January 21, 1870, at a meeting of the Social Political Workingmen's Association of Chicago.⁵¹ They had a similar welcome abroad. *Der Vorbote* of Geneva, edited by Johann Philipp Becker,

⁵⁰ Accounts of the meeting appeared in *The New York World*, November 20, 1870, and in *Die Neue Zeit*, November 26, 1870, II, 152-55. A summary was published by *The Workingman's Advocate*, December 3, 1870. A handbill, with the resolutions in English, French and German, is in the Correspondence of section 26, Philadelphia, International Workingmen's Association, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.
⁵¹ *The Workingman's Advocate*, January 28, 1871.

rejoiced in the stand of the Cooper Union meeting.⁵² In London, the Labor Representation League, then coming into prominence as a political instrument of trade unions, read the resolutions "with pleasure." The League's reply "to the workingmen of America," contended that British labor was on their side in their opposition to war. International conflict, it went on to say, threatened "the principles of free government, happily already established in America, rapidly developing themselves in England by constitutional action and painfully struggled for on the battlefields of France."⁵³

The young American sections of the International derived considerable prestige from the primary part they had had in stirring up anti-war sentiment. Already at the time of the meeting at Cooper Union, a project was before them to set up a central committee for the United States.

⁵² December 1870, no. 12.

⁵³ *The Workingman's Advocate*, January 14, 1871; *New York World*, January 7, 1871.

CHAPTER IV

Establishment in the United States

The efforts of the American sections to lay a foundation in the labor organizations should be prefaced by brief observations on the International in Europe before the outbreak of war. Governments accused it of abetting disturbances and inciting strikes. Though the charges could not be supported by evidence, it was hounded. In France it was tried three times, from 1868 to 1870, and each time ordered to dissolve. The Italian government imposed heavy restrictions on meetings and on the right to organize. Prussia and Austria made it illegal for workers' associations to affiliate with foreign societies. But in each of these countries bonds with the International survived persecutions.

The Association was less powerful than its enemies believed. Its defense of subject peoples, its anti-war declarations, its aid to strikers, and its siding with movements that dissented from the established order, these policies and practices inevitably gave it an appearance of strength. But the facts tell a different story. It was torn inwardly by factions. Far from being enormously wealthy, as the press presented it, it was forever short of funds. Arrears on dues from branches were a common complaint; and the General Council was often behindhand in rent on its modest headquarters. On the other hand, the achievements of the International in behalf of European workers won it a big following among them. It checked wage reductions, reduced working hours, organized low-paid segments of labor, mustered anti-war opinion, even furthered agitation for the enfranchisement of labor, as in Great Britain. These doings sizably increased its membership. By the same token, it fostered the belief that it was a power with a vast army, capable of dictating terms to governments.

Statesmen and publicists looked to an agreement among states to meet its threat to existing regimes. Even before the Paris Commune had caused a general hysteria, public servants, in the upper echelons of government, saw the urgency of an understanding at the highest levels with that end in view. A French Attorney General communicated to his superior, after the congress of Basel, his alarm over "this menacing organization which has been growing larger and stronger." This "big, black, spot of the future," to cite his own words, made

people ask "whether governments will not soon feel the need of coming closer together and uniting in order to defend themselves against the common dangers from these formidable leagues."¹ An important Swiss official offered the Belgian Government his plan for combating strikes and the International. But the Belgian Minister of the Interior preferred to depend on private initiative for that purpose.²

In other words, there was a good margin between semblance and reality regarding the International in Europe. A similar discrepancy developed in the United States. But preliminary to this side of its history is the story of its endeavors to become the voice of American workers.

Rise of the Central Committee

It has been noticed that, toward the end of 1869, American newspapers were giving sustained attention to the International. By the close of 1870, news items were supplemented by accounts of its beginnings, program and proceedings. A sign of its new importance was the authoritative reports, in the *New York World*, by persons at its summit, notably George Eccarius, general secretary of the International, and Robert Applegarth, an influential British trade unionist who had had a hand in its establishment.³ Equally significant was the reprint by the same newspaper⁴ of Edward Spencer Beesly's reliable article on the organization, recently published by the *Fortnightly Review*. Beesly, a professor of economics at the University of London, had presided at its inaugural meeting. Apparently the International had aroused curiosity in the United States by the time its New York sections arranged the anti-war meeting at Cooper Union.

The lines of communication between the American sections and the General Council were considered inadequate on both sides of the Atlantic. Relations with London through separate, tiny, national groups were better calculated to cultivate the national rather than the international outlook of labor, especially in the United States, where the working population was of diversified origin. Thus, when the General Council was asked by Robert Hume to appoint French agents, it turned down the request. Eccarius answered that the Association "recognizes no special national interests among the workingmen who may have been born in different countries. . . . We consider the interests

¹ Archives nationales, BB30389, Cour de Nancy, report of October 18, 1869.

² Archives, Ministère des affaires étrangères, Belgique, dossier 1248, Pt. 1, the Minister of the Interior to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, January 26, 1869.

³ See e.g., the *New York World*, October 8, November 28, December 18 and 26, 1870.

⁴ *Ibid.*, November 21, 1870. Marx, who had furnished Beesly with material for the article, (See Royden Harrison, "E. S. Beesly and Karl Marx," *International Review of Social History*, 1959, IV, Pt. 1, 51-52.) had his son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, translate it into French. It was published in *La Tribune* (Bordeaux), May 1871.

of the French workmen resident in the United States strictly identical with the interests of all other workingmen of the United States." Also worthy of citation is the part of the letter, which marked out the existing connections between Americans and the International's executive in London:

"To facilitate the inter-communication of such as may be separated by difference of language, and perhaps manners, we have correspondents who are conversant with these things, and to them we trust for managing the rest.

The communication with the United States is distributed among the secretaries of the different nationalities of the General Council. General Cluseret [returned to France in August 1870] and Mr. Pelletier are our French correspondents in America. They correspond with our secretary for France [Eugène Dupont]. Siegfried Meyer and Vogt are our German correspondents. They correspond with the German secretary here [Karl Marx], and the General Secretary [George Eccarius] manages the English correspondence; and besides such trade union officers as Mr. Jessup, we look to you [Hume] as our correspondent, in case any misunderstanding should arise between different nationalities, to endeavor to set matters right, but we cannot admit that either French or German have an opposite or special interest from any other workmen, and we always urge them on to take an active part in, and identify themselves with, the movement of the workmen of the country in which they reside, particularly in America."⁵

These divided responsibilities turned out to be troublesome. They were the source of disagreeable rivalries and personal animosities.

It is not to be assumed that, with the establishment of a central body in the United States, answerable to London, direct correspondence ceased between the General Council and American trade union leaders. That was neither possible nor desirable. But all official business, concerning the International in America, went to London via a central committee, once it was set up.

The idea of such a committee was broached in September 1870 by Eugène Dupont, corresponding secretary for France. Obviously he was speaking on behalf of the General Council in London. It was thought that a small body, invested with power and located in New York City, would before long cast a big shadow. The sections were at first reluctant to act on the recommendation, but finally yielded to pressures from members and friends as far west as Chicago. A meeting of the New York German and French sections on October 2, 1870,

⁵ MSS. Minutes, April 19, 1870; folder of newspaper clippings on the International Workingmen's Association, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. The name of the newspaper in which the letter appeared is not identified.

accepted the Council's original plan after listening patiently to a long speech of Osborne Ward, which was a monumental exaggeration of the strength of the International.⁶ In the last days of December 1870 the German, French and Czech sections organized the Central Committee of the International Workingmen's Association for North America.

The five articles of its provisional statutes, to be in force for a year, laid down its duties. Its members, one from each section, had to organize and centralize propaganda, send assessments to the General Council, and admit to the International persons and workers' societies that acknowledged its principles and statutes. Subcommittees would be created where more than two sections existed.⁷ The first three members of the Committee were F. A. Sorge, B. Hubert and V. Jandus. Sorge was the general secretary. The first two have been identified in these pages. About the third, the Czech delegate, nothing significant has thus far been uncovered. A fraternal gathering of the three sections on January 24, 1871, was attended by old Weitling. That was his last public appearance. The following morning he suffered a stroke and died the same day.⁸

The Committee lost no time in announcing itself. It issued two circulars, one to the sections and the other to labor societies. The first asked the sections to collect data on labor conditions, above all to be in good relations with the workers' organizations; the second summed up the principles of the international.⁹

The Committee's request to be accredited by the General Council stated that it would not be a rival of the National Labor Union. The formal acceptance of the Committee has been lost. According to Sorge's account the General Council promised to forward the necessary papers. It gave the Committee *de jure* status, but retained the right of corresponding with labor leaders. To bring the record up to date, the Committee was informed that the "Union républicaine" and a section of San Francisco had joined the International.

The story behind the recognition of the Committee was more involved than Sorge indicated. London seems to have had some misgivings about the Committee's long title. To be sure, the sections had agreed on it. But it was pretentious to speak for North America, when

⁶ Letterbook, f. 15-16, Sorge Papers, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. A report of the meeting appeared in the *New York World*, October 3, 1870. Ward's series of articles on the International, expanding what he had said at the meeting of October 2, 1870, appeared in *The Workingman's Advocate*, starting December 31, 1870 and continuing to June 1871. A general article on the International by him was published in the *New York World*, December 29, 1870.

⁷ *Bulletin de l'Union républicaine*, etc., January 1871.

⁸ Carl Wittke, *op. cit.*, 314; Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 18.

⁹ Schlüter, *op. cit.*, 126.

their voice was not heard beyond several labor societies of immigrants whom native workers could not understand. What was to be done? After a lengthy debate, the Council fell in with Marx's position. The unpublished minutes report him saying: "Nothing must be done to curb their action. they had done a good deal. The best thing was to write to them and to represent to them what they could do according to the rules."¹⁰

The Committee was in fact in an anomalous situation. Without a single delegate from the indigenous workers, it was an unparalleled case in the history of the International. Central bodies in Europe were composed, by and large, of natives; but the members of the Committee in the United States were all foreign-born. The General Council wondered whether the three American sections had not acted too hastily.

Sorge's reply was plain-spoken. It implied that the men at the pinnacle of the International were not familiar with American conditions. But his argument missed the bed-rock fact that the American Internationalists had thus far stayed aloof from the English speaking and native born workers. Since Sorge's answer revolved around an aspect of the International in America which marked it throughout its history, it merits citation at least in part. He wrote:

"1. Your communication contains the following passage: 'Still less seemed such a claim admissible in a case, where, as in the U. S., no branches of U. S. workmen do yet at all exist, but only branches formed by *Foreigners* residing in the U. S.' The term 'foreigner' is here undoubtedly misplaced and adopted simply by judging our situation in America (i.e. U. S.) to be similar to the situation of foreign workingmen in European countries."

That was not so. Sorge asserted, and for the following four reasons:

"a. Workingmen from other countries arriving here do not come with the intention of residing but temporarily here;

"b. they are in nowise regarded as *foreigners* or simple residents, but as citizens, the only distinction being made by calling them sometimes adopted citizens;

"c. they not only claim to be, but are *de facto et de jure* citizens of this country in full and unabridged political rights;

"d. they form an important and considerable part of this country's Trades Unions & Labor Societies, being well represented in every one, whilst some of the most powerful and best Trades organizations in the U. S. consist almost exclusively of so-called 'Foreigners,' viz. the Miners & Laborers Benevolent Association, the Cigarmakers International Union, the Cabinet-makers Societies, the Crispins etc., etc.

"The term 'foreigner' therefore does not apply to us at all."

¹⁰ MSS. Minutes, March 7, 1871.

Sorge took up the assumption that the New York sections had acted without forethought. Actually, he said, the proposal of a central committee had been made by Dupont. Also, Internationalists in Chicago had been demanding it. The rules of the International, moreover, called for "the formation of such central bodies."

He then underlined heavily the differences between American and European conditions. The United States lacked a "homogeneous population." Consequently, "circumstances are somewhat altered, and circumstances alter not only men, but above all cases; and our case should surely be judged and decided according to the circumstances of it widely differing from those of European countries."¹¹

Whether or not Sorge convinced the General Council is a matter of conjecture. Though it seems to have dropped the touchy question of the "foreigner," it could not be insensitive to the problem which plagued the International in America to the end.

It should be indicated now that a serious source of the Committee's weakness in the United States was the lack of an English press. The drawback hindered the growth of the organization from the start. The Committee was left with the alternative of sending its releases to labor papers. But very few of them were cordial, and the most important sheet, *The Workingman's Advocate*, sometimes ran edited versions.

The foreign language press, on which the Committee counted for assistance, was negligible. The semi-official *Bulletin de l'union républicaine* was a fortnightly or monthly. From June 1870 to its final number in September 1871, it published the doings of the sections, the French in particular, and the declarations of the General Council. But the circulation was small, even among Franco-Americans. Its successor, the weekly *Socialiste*, founded in New York on October 7, 1871, became, in November, the organ of the French sections in the United States. With the disappearance of the *Arbeiter-Union*, in September 1870, German Internationalists in New York lost their only paper. Nearly two and a half years elapsed before another could be started.

Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly, established May 14, 1870, was friendly to the International. But the responsible heads of the Association in America had little control over it, even as it became the organ of section 12. Despite reminders by the Central Committee to cease printing "anything regarding the International Workingmen's Association except authentic information,"¹² it continued its own way. Relations between the Committee and the *Weekly* deteriorated by the

¹¹ Letterbook, f. 14-16.

¹² *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, September 23, 1871.

end of 1871. But it was still possible to read in its columns useful accounts of the organization.

The Central Committee and Organized Labor

The record of the Committee shows its dedication to the cause of the workers. It urged the sections to organize them; it sent aid to strikers; it argued the case of labor, never failing to point out that its welfare was the concern of the International.

An example of the Committee's devotion was its defense in 1871 of the striking miners of Pennsylvania, led by the Miners and Laborers Benevolent Association. The German Workers' Association, even the conservative New York Workingmen's Union, responded to the Committee's appeal for financial aid. Its own sections collected \$60.00.

In addressing the strikers, the Committee interpreted their action in terms of its principles. It ascribed the high price of coal "to the insatiable greediness" of the mine owners. Shortages and high costs were inevitable, it said, "as long as the soil and its treasures, instead of naturally reverting to the whole society, will belong to the few rich speculators and jobbers." Since the workers' organization was their great obstacle to wage reductions, they were bent on destroying it. The issue from the miners' standpoint, continued the Committee, was bigger than their Association. It took in their entire being and the future of their families.¹³

The miners' answer must have gratified the Committee. They, too, held the owners, bankers and corporations responsible for "the extortionate rates." They, acknowledged, moreover, that their strike was eminently relevant to organized labor as a whole.¹⁴

The miners' organization survived the five months' strike. The Committee regarded that as a triumph, and jubilantly reported to London that their Association was "standing as powerful and influential as ever."¹⁵ That was an exaggeration, for it had been overstrained by the long ordeal.

It can be said parenthetically that the Committee's efforts to rise to the leadership of American workers were disappointing. There were several reasons for that. Some were beyond the control of the Internationalists in America. Others, however, were directly traceable to them. Primary was the reluctance of sections to adjust themselves to American conditions. This will be treated elsewhere in the text. It can be anticipated here that they congregated in national groups, learned

¹³ *The Workingman's Advocate*, April 1, 1871.

¹⁴ The reply is in the Sorge Papers, Miscellaneous, New York Public Library.

¹⁵ Letterbook, f. 12.

little English, and, especially the Germans, held themselves superior to native workers. Unhappily for the International, it was reaching out in the United States at the time the big labor bodies were thinning.

Sorge believed that Greenbackism had undermined the National Labor Union.¹⁶ The explanation was too simple. It is also possible to reason that its premature pledge to form a labor party contributed to its downward turn. Its falling off was already visible in 1870 in the types of delegates who attended the convention at Cincinnati. William Jessup remarked that, while the delegates at Baltimore, in 1866, had "represented some branch of mechanical pursuit," those at Cincinnati were "a strange mixture of mechanics, workingmen, ministers, lawyers, editors, lobbyists and others of no particular occupation."¹⁷

A majority of the delegates at Cincinnati voted to summon a special convention in 1871 to form a labor party. That cost the organization the withdrawal of labor bodies, including the Negro Labor Union. "The National Labor Union," Sorge wrote to the General Council on April 2, 1871, "is losing ground amongst the great National or International Trades Unions of this country; the Workingmen's Assembly of New York (Presidt[sic]: Wm. Jessup), the Cigarmakers International Union, the Bricklayers National Union, etc., all refusing at their last Conventions to appoint Delegates to the next Labor Congress in St. Louis."¹⁸ Not a single delegate was sent to it by the national trade unions. Neither did the Central Committee, which, apart from other reasons, could not bear the expense.¹⁹ It chose instead to submit for approval a circular of the General Council against Mr. Washburne, the American minister to France, with respect to his unfriendly attitude to the Paris Commune. The convention promised "to procure authentic information respecting the great events . . . in our efforts to promote the true interests of labor, civilization and progress throughout the civilized world."²⁰ That was a courteous way of relegating the circular to oblivion.

The convention at St. Louis was the least impressive of those held by the National Labor Union. Sorge, having followed the proceedings, wrote down his impressions for the benefit of the General Council. They were a valid estimate of the state of the labor organization.

"The National Labor Union held its annual Congress at St. Louis August 7th-10th. On the first day not a sufficient number

of delegates was present to transact business, whilst toward the close of the Congress about twenty delegates were voting. (The Congress at Cincinnati last year yet numbered more than 100 bona fide delegates.) They simply reaffirmed their former platform with this addition: that capital invested in railroads, telegraphs, etc. should not earn more than 6% interest. The leaders of the N.L.U. have learned nothing and, it is to be feared, will never learn to understand the labor question. All the great trade organizations having withdrawn previously with the single exception of the Miners, the Congress can hardly be called a Workingmen's Convention."²¹

The New York State Workingmen's Assembly languished with the rest of the organizations. In January 1871 President Jessup reported a standstill in the labor societies of the state. He laid it to a drop in business. Linked with that was a fall in wages without a corresponding decline in prices. He also observed a tendency on the part of trade unions to go into hiding.²²

This tendency had been noticeable since the 1860's. The Knights of St. Crispin, the shoemakers' association, for example, had started as a secret order in 1867. Two years later, garment cutters had formed the first secret assembly of the Knights of Labor which remained under cover until 1878.²³ Meanwhile three other clandestine workers' orders had come and gone: The Industrial Brotherhood; the Junior Sons of '76; and the Sovereigns of Industry.²⁴

This retreat into twilight seemed abnormal to the General Council, for European labor organizations were going in the opposite direction. It asked Hume and Jessup, for instance, to come out against trade union secrecy. But labor leaders, including Hume and Jessup, were themselves promoting it. And Internationalists in America could not be counted on to arrest the trend. It became so marked in the 1870's that the British consulate in the United States referred to it twice in a report on labor conditions.²⁵

From the above survey it can be concluded that the Central Com-

²¹ Letterbook, f. 47.

²² *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Session of the Workingmen's Assembly*, State of New York, 1871, 11 f.

²³ It is worth noting that the Patrons of Husbandry, though falling outside our present scope, was organized in 1867 along the lines of a secret Masonic order. The most detailed account of its early history is by its founder, O. H. Kelly, *Origin and Progress of the Order of the Patrons of Husbandry in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1875). For briefer accounts see J. Wallace Darrow, *Origin and Early History of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry in the United States* (Chatham, N. Y., 1904); Carl C. Taylor, *The Farmers' Movement, 1620-1920* (New York, 1953), ch. vi.

²⁴ Terence V. Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor* (Columbus, O., 1889), 120. E. M. Chamberlin, *The Sovereigns of Industry* (Boston, 1875).

²⁵ Great Britain, Foreign Affairs, Commercial, No. 22 (1877), *Reports Respecting the Late Industrial Conflicts in the United States*, 2, 50.

¹⁶ Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., p. 18.

¹⁷ *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Session of the Workingmen's Assembly*, State of New York, January 25-27, 1871, 64; see also *The American Workman*, August 27, 1870.

¹⁸ Letterbook, f. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 33.

²⁰ *The Workingman's Advocate*, August 19, 1871.

mittee had little authority among American workers by the middle of 1871. The national trade unions were distant. Native workers rejected it. The National Labor Union, or what was left of it after 1870, was turning into a forum for place-hunters and panacea-peddlers. Of the large labor organizations, only the New York State Workingmen's Assembly, thanks to Jessup, retained some of its previous sympathy with the International. The Assembly resolved in 1871 "to encourage the realization of the principles, condensed in 'Workingmen of all countries unite.'"²⁶

For a short span, in 1871, the Central Committee had high hopes of enlisting Irish Americans, who were numerous among the unskilled and unorganized workers. For after all, what non-Irish organization espoused the cause of Irish independence more than did the International?²⁷

In February 1871, the Central Committee opened an active campaign among Irish-Americans. It was well-timed. Five Fenian prisoners, released by the British in December 1870, had arrived in New York in January 1871. Their reception was one of the most enthusiastic hitherto given to newcomers. The Irish turned out en masse. Notables, and delegations from many societies came to honor the exiles. The Board of Aldermen received them; and Congress passed a resolution, cordially inviting them to the capital.

The Central Committee sent Sorge and Hubert to greet them. It said in its message that the Irish would never triumph over the English government, if they went on fighting alone, through secret societies. They should instead ally themselves with the International Workingmen's Association, the most determined antagonist of the class the English government represented.²⁸ Welcoming the five, Sorge added that the Irish people were among the most "genuine constituents" of the International. Its cause and that of the five Fenians were alike. He was confident that the unity of all workers would forever liberate the Irish. Hubert dwelt on the same theme.

The five Fenians were grateful for the greetings of the International, and proud that it recognized the service of the Irish in the cause of liberty and labor. They hoped to continue to merit "the cooperation

²⁶ *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Session of the Workingmen's Assembly*, State of New York, 1871, 78.

²⁷ The minutes of the General Council record lengthy debates on the Irish Question in 1867, 1869 and 1872. The collection on the International, in the State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, has a number of important leaflets on the Irish Question, that emanated from the General Council in London, or were inspired by it. Together with the leaflets are several handbills, announcing mass meetings in behalf of imprisoned Fenians.

²⁸ *The Workingman's Advocate*, June 17, 1870.

and aid of the International Association of Workingmen as well as of all the friends of freedom."²⁹

The Central Committee succeeded in enrolling a number of Irish in New York City and organized them into section 7. Its delegate to the Committee was John Devoy, one of the five Fenians. Its membership increased "rapidly" in the first month, according to Sorge, and went on gaining until May 1871. In August, however, he reported that the section "has lately been dormant."³⁰

Whatever gains American Internationalists made among Irish-Americans had been achieved over the strenuous opposition of the press and pulpit, the Catholic in particular. From March to May 1871, the Paris Commune was drawn as Satan in a new shape, and the International as its ally, prepared, through its branches in many countries, to replace the established order. In such a climate, the Central Committee found the going difficult. As it wrote to London in September 1871: "We have made great efforts for inducing the Irish Workingmen of this country to join the I.W.A., but religious and political prejudices and above all their leaders have to this day withstood our efforts. . . . Still we do not give it up and hope yet to gain a firm foothold among the Irish."³¹ Patience apparently had its reward, for in November the Committee claimed two more Irish sections, namely 24 and 28.³²

Fruits of the First Year

The advances which the Central Committee, in its first year in office, relayed to the General Council, seemed surprising, in view of the frightening stories on the International after the rise of the Paris Commune. Undoubtedly this unexpected result could be ascribed, in part at least, to the energetic beginnings of the Association in the United States. Its delegates, it should be repeated, were at meetings of the National Labor Union, the New York State Workingmen's Union, and national and local trade unions. It defended and aided strikers; and put itself behind the eight hour movement in Boston as in Chicago, in New York and San Francisco. In this far western city, the International's first section, dating from March 1869, had co-operated with the Mechanics' State Council of California in the agitation for the shorter work day, which, it can be said parenthetically,

²⁹ William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan, eds., *Devoy's Post Bag* (Dublin, 1948), 21; *Bulletin de l'union républicaine*, etc., February 1871.

³⁰ MSS. Minutes, March 14, 1871; Letterbook f. 1, 35.

³¹ Letterbook, f. 42 f.

³² *Ibid.*, f. 74.

had been behind the formation of the Council in 1867.³³ Before long the question of Chinese labor came between the two organizations.

There was a visible growth of the International in America after the creation of the Central Committee. By September 1871, the number of sections had increased from three to nineteen. Three of the nineteen were American; the rest were French, German and Irish. By October there were twenty-seven sections, among them four American. Seven more sections were admitted the subsequent month. Towards the end of the year the Committee claimed approximately thirty-five sections in the United States, with others "about to be formed in several other places," as it wrote on December 17, 1871.³⁴

Sorge's accounts to the General Council gave more than bare figures. They were also résumés of the sections' operations. An example was his report at the beginning of April 1871:

"Section N. 1 is active in the N.Y. Arbeiter Union, the central delegation of the N.Y. German trade Unions, and pushing the foundation of a new Workingmen's Weekly in the German language.

"Section 2 [French] have [sic] adopted a new constitution and plan of working and have [sic] nominated a Committee on Emigration.

"[Section] 3 [Czech] is gaining influence on their countrymen and the papers, appearing in their language, discussed cooperation pretty lively.

"[Section] 4 & 5 [German] are discussing the present situation, counteracting the influence and emanation of the German Chauvinistic press in Chicago.

"[Section] 6 [German] is doing good work especially among the German Cabinet makers and carvers of the city of N.Y.

"[Section] 7 [Irish] is increasing rapidly and trying (effectually) to gain influence in the new combination of Irish Revolutionary Societies in the United States (Irish Confederation).

"Section 8 [German] is actively engaged in propagating our principles amongst the numerous workingmen of a thickly populated suburb of the city of N.Y."

The German section of San Francisco, however, had ceased functioning, and was being reconstructed. On the other hand, sections 1 and 6 in New York were meeting together to study such questions as the working day, organization and agitation. A postscript added cheering news on the formation of the first American section.³⁵

Save for several gloomy facts, such as the break up of section 3, the lethargy of section 7, and the appearance of internal dissension, the

³³ *Constitution and By-Laws of the Mechanics' State Council* (San Francisco, 1868), 2, 22.

³⁴ Letterbook, f. 63 f., 78.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 1-4.

over-all picture in 1871 brightened with each monthly statement. That of May 21 announced the formation of section 10 (French) in New York. Two more French sections, one in St. Louis and another in San Francisco, were reported on June 20. According to the account of August 6, the New York sections had a well attended meeting in memory of the June insurgents and Communards. *The Civil War in France* had been printed in editions of one thousand each, one of them donated by the two sisters, Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin, both members of section 12. Admitted in July, the section, as Sorge informed the General Council, was "diligently discussing the subject of a universal language." Its delegate to the Central Committee was William West, an old-time reformer, who later led a schism in the American sections. Also in the Committee, representing section 13, was Dr. George Stiebling, a socialist intellectual from the Society of Freethinkers which published *Die Neue Zeit*.³⁶

The communiqués for the rest of the year were unusually optimistic. The joint monthly meetings of sections 1 and 6 were promoting the educational program of the Association. Section 2 was using its influence among Franco-Americans to set up new sections. In Chicago the German sections 4 and 5 had issued a new German edition of *The Communist Manifesto*. The French section in St. Louis had sent the Central Committee valuable information on the convention of the National Labor Union of 1871; and section 15 in New Orleans was drafting a report on the state of labor in the city.³⁷ The German section of San Francisco was submitting "very good accounts of the labor movement in California." Through all these months many other sections, representing different national origins, were added to the roster of the International in America. Despite its acknowledged defects, its enthusiasm and propaganda brought results.

Many of the new enlistments, particularly among the English speaking, were intellectuals and professional men. Examples were section 26 in Philadelphia, whose records have been preserved, and section 23 of Washington, D.C. An analysis of the membership of section 26 shows that though manual and white-collar workers were a majority, an influential minority came from the teaching, medical and legal professions. About sixteen were manufacturers or merchants. Section 23 had many civil servants and journalists. The question of affiliating with the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 13, 27, 35.

³⁷ It had grown out of the International and Republican Club of New Orleans. Presided over by the diligent Charles Caron, editor of the Club's monthly bulletin, *La Commune*, it zealously defended the Communards. See his letter in *L'Equité* (New Orleans), June 25, 1871. The Club was admitted to the International in July 1871. See *Karl Marx Chronik*, 450.

Central Committee raised what seemed like a point of punctilio, but which the section considered prudent procedure. To protect its membership, Richard J. Hinton, the secretary, refused to submit the list of members, their residences and occupations called for by the rules of the Committee. He preferred to correspond directly with London where he had sent the required register.³⁸ Hinton ultimately complied with the local rules. But Marx was of the opinion that the Committee had gone too far. It had no right to ask for more than the number and names of the members.

Sections had a measure of autonomy. They could select their officers and delegates to the Central Committee, determine their own methods of conducting business and manner of admitting members, provided they did not conflict with the statutes of the International. The rules of section 2, for example, stated that anyone could join, who was a worker, living by his own labor, spoke French, and was not guilty of any act that would deprive him of the respect of other workers.³⁹

Of another order were the conditions laid down by the Central Committee for the formation of a section. When a group of Americans asked for the regulations, Sorge replied: "It is essential that the Section should be composed of workingmen understanding their position towards capital and modern society, ready to make a radical change of society's structure and rebuild it anew on the basis of labor, men entirely free from present political affinities and rejecting all compromise."⁴⁰

These prerequisites were severe enough to bar all American workers from the International. In fact, had its founders made these the requirements for joining, they could not have established it. Neither British nor French trade unionists, to cite but two cases, could have conformed to them. By insisting on the acceptance of its orthodoxy, the Committee was setting off the International from American labor. Reference has been made to Sorge's protest against the use of the term, "foreigner," by which the General Council described the character of the first American sections. The term had not been employed carelessly. It carried the reproach that Internationalists in the United States were neglecting the native labor movement.

For all that, the Committee, in its first year, extended its authority beyond Eastern cities. Most of the sections were still in New York and its vicinity; but a good number were distributed among such metro-

³⁸ MSS. Minutes, July 25, 1871; Letterbook, f. 46; Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 32.

³⁹ The rules were published in *Bulletin de l'Union républicaine de langue française*, April 15, 1871.

⁴⁰ Letterbook, f. 65.

politan centers as Boston and Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago and St. Louis, New Orleans and San Francisco. A half dozen were made up of native Americans. The rest had drawn on the foreign born.

With a paucity of figures on the size of sections an accurate count cannot be made of their total membership at the end of 1871. Neither is it possible to compute it on the basis of dues paid to the General Council, for the data is not available. Consequently any estimate of the enrollment in the American sections can at best be approximate. Sorge wrote to the General Council on April 2, 1871, that he was transmitting dues for 293 enrolled members. Divided among the eight sections, then in existence, the average number per section was close to 37. On June 28, 1871, Sorge said there were "eleven Sections or Branch Societies of from 20 to 100 members each."⁴¹ If, on that basis, the average was raised to 60 per section, the membership would be over 2,000 for the thirty-four sections recorded in December. Taking into account about a dozen sections that were not in communication with the Central Committee, we would have the figure of over 2,700. If to that were added the members who lived in areas where sections did not exist, the total would not exceed 3,000 in round numbers. It very likely did not go beyond 4,000, after the increase in the first part of 1872. Even if the membership was 5,000 at its height, according to one historian,⁴² it was still very small, amounting to but one-quarter of one percent of the approximate 2,000,000 workers, male and female above the age of 15, engaged in manufacturing in 1870.⁴³

The reports of the Central Committee reveal that it set great store by what workers in America thought and did. In April 1871 it told of a lively debate on cooperation in the New York Workingmen's Union. Disapproval of the clause in its constitution, that "the interests of capital and labor are identical," elicited an admission that only workers should be delegated to the Union. Equally noteworthy, from the viewpoint of the Committee, were the resolve of the Workingmen's Assembly of the State of New York to press labor legislation, and the request of the Bricklayers' National Union for the addresses of "their sister trades and organizations in England and on the Continent." Of another category was the Committee's remark that the appearance of a labor party in New Hampshire had "overthrown the Republican ascendancy there." A fact which members of the General Council might have read with interest was the drift towards monopoly in the United States, as was reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Massachusetts.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, f. 28.

⁴² Morris Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States* (New York, 1903), 197.

⁴³ *Compendium of the Tenth Census* (Washington, D.C., 1883), Pt. ii, 929.

⁴⁴ Letterbook, f. 3-4, 12.

Of particular significance, according to the Committee, was the eight hour agitation. It excited all organized workers, and for that reason could serve to amalgamate the labor societies. The stone cutters of New York City, having won a shorter day, invited the local trade unions to join them in a mass demonstration on September 13, 1871. The purpose was to focus public attention on the eight hour demand. Despite a heavy rain that had muddied the streets, the trade unions came out. For two hours 20,000 working men were in line, bands playing and banners flying, while the walks and curbs were thronged with cheering crowds. According to one labor paper, "no grander, more imposing demonstration in favor of industrial reform has ever been made in this country than that which came off in the Empire City on the 13th instant."⁴⁵

The Central Committee's story added details regarding its local sections that took part in the big meeting. "They were the object of great curiosity and marked attention," it wrote to London, "and shouts of 'Vive la Commune' often greeted them. But especially cordial was the reception of the Internationals by the Trades-Unionists at the final countermarch of the procession and deafening cheers greeted the appearance of their banner (the red flag) on the stage at the mass meeting. Equally significant was the participation of colored (negro) [sic] organizations for the first time in a demonstration got up by the English speaking unions, (The German Unions having treated them as equals already years ago)."

The entire demonstration ended with a packed meeting. The Central Committee was pleased with the resolutions. Among the speakers were William Jessup, chairman of the meeting, who appealed for labor unity to fulfill the great object of the demonstration; and Ira Steward who had come from Boston to present the case for the shorter work day he had pleaded hundreds of times. The resolutions called on state governments to enact and enforce the eight hour day, put a stop to convict labor, arrest the spread of monopolies, repeal laws conferring privileges on a minority, and turn over to the people the administration of public utilities.⁴⁶

The Central Committee was so optimistic about the day's events that it hastily calculated the important consequences. "A new start has been given to the labor movement and it is being felt all over the country. The bonds of brotherhood between the different Trades Unions and Labor Societies has [sic] been fastened. The I.W.A. appearing

⁴⁵ *The American Workman*, September 23, 1871. *The National Standard*, September 23, 1871, and *The Workingman's Advocate*, September 23, 1871, said there were 25,000 marchers.

⁴⁶ Letterbook, f. 61; *The Workingman's Advocate*, September 23, 1871.

for the first time on the scene within the ranks of the Trades Unionists thereby gained largely in esteem and soon will probably gain in numbers."⁴⁷ Finally, "a permanent all-combining organization of the N. Y. workmen will in all probability spring from it and spread even farther." An excerpt from Marx's *Capital* on the "Normal Working Day," issued as a leaflet, was "distributed in thousands of copies."⁴⁸

The Committee's confidence increased during the next month. According to the information it forwarded to the General Council, the plasterers of New York city and vicinity had gained the eight hour day; the German cabinetmakers had begun "to organize and combine their fellow tradesmen all over the country on a firm basis;" the coopers had formed an international union, and the miners were hoping to do likewise; the women's organization of shoe workers had grown as a result of a successful strike in Lynn, Massachusetts. The Committee was happy to add that the sections had aided generously the refugees of the Paris Commune and the Chicago Internationalists who had been made homeless by the great fire.

The picture had a somber side, in the eyes of the men of the Committee. They feared that the failure of the political movement of labor to progress might sink the workers into political neutrality. In fact, that was what the Committee had been foreboding. The course it had been advocating was, first, "an extended and somewhat perfected organization" of the trade unions, and then, "a political movement of the working classes." This sequence had little appeal for labor leaders of the 1870's, but it was later followed by the American Federation of Labor.

Hindrances of the International in America

What were the reasons for the political apathy and weakness of American labor? The question puzzled Europeans and Americans alike. By all the laws of historical development, accepted by Internationalists and others, American labor should have kept pace with the nation's speedy economic growth. Instead, the second left the first far behind. Industry was moving forward by leaps and bounds, while labor organizations were either standing still or declining. What were the underlying causes? The question was apparently posed by the General Council, probably to get at the bottom explanation for the inability

⁴⁷ *The National Standard*, September 23, 1871, said the demonstration was "a striking illustration of the International's influence on American workers."

⁴⁸ Letterbook, f. 61. A copy of the leaflet is in the Sorge Papers, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. It was reprinted in *The Workingman's Advocate*, October 28, 1871.

of the International to make inroads into the native working population. Whether the answers of the Committee satisfied the superior body in London cannot be determined. Taken together they did not go to the root of the matter, as will be shown in a later chapter. Still, they were evidence of an earnest effort to inquire into the problem. The answers, prepared by a sub-committee and approved by all the delegates in August 1871, were sent to London. They were given in the following order:

1. The great majority of workingmen in the Northern States were immigrants who had come to seek their fortunes. "This delusion transforms itself into a sort of creed," kept alive by employers among their employees, who went on working, "in the belief of finally arriving at the desired goal." But the capitalists themselves made "its realization more and more impossible." From the viewpoint of the trade unions, the creed "has been the stumbling block over which they fall and perish."

2. The mushroom reform parties, with their respective paths to salvation, "well advocated and intelligibly presented to the workingmen," were "often gladly accepted" by them. The leaders of the parties were in the main scientists and philanthropists. They "perceive the rottenness of the governing classes as far as relating to their own ideas of morality, but they see only the surface of the question of labor." Desiring to better himself, the workingman "does not perceive the hollowness of that gilded nut shining before his eyes."

3. Workers' leaders were misguiding the labor movement. A number of them "have been actuated by ambition or other selfish motives." Others, though "honest and true," either followed the reformers or went with the old parties.

In the light of these hindrances what were American Internationalists to do? At no point in its memorandum, did the Committee raise the question. Yet that was the heart of the problem. Reference has been made in these pages to their isolation from the indigenous movement. The Committee, however, was silent on that. Instead, it defended the sections for their serious work "in the cause of labor," and itself for its endeavor "to keep the Sections clear of all political jobbers, also to inform the workingmen of their true interests. If the result has not yet been an entire success, it is not the fault of this C.C. [Central Committee]."⁴⁹ From its viewpoint, the reasons were to be sought in the above impediments.

⁴⁹ Letterbook, f. 39-42.

Friction between Committee and Council

Auxiliary factors were raising the stature of the International Workingmen's Association in the United States. The above memorandum said that as a result of the Paris Commune, "the more intelligent workingmen have turned their eyes more eagerly towards the I.W.A." Also, "the daily press has unintentionally glorified the General Council so much that their influence is highly increased." The problem of the Central Committee was how to turn this moral ascendancy to advantage. That, it added in a tone of reproach, depended as much on the General Council as on itself. London had to show it "more confidence" and give it "more ready support . . . than heretofore."⁵⁰

The Committee was in dead earnest. To read the grievances correctly, it is necessary to go back several months. It had not forgotten the doubts raised on its recognition. Then, it considered itself slighted by the tiny number of copies of the Council's Manifesto on the Paris Commune sent it from London. The Committee was embarrassed by its inability to supply the many requests for it. American editions finally eased the situation, but did not relieve irritations. Having learned that the General Council had also mailed the Manifesto to individuals outside of the International in America or hostile to it, the Committee naturally concluded that there was some design to undermine its authority. Consequently it wrote to London: "We cannot withhold our opinion, that the proper channel of distributing and collecting documents is through the agency of this Central Committee, and if the General Council sees fit to adopt another mode, the Central Committee should *at least be advised of it*. Transmitting documents and papers of such importance to the regularly organized branches by the medium of private individuals not connected with — nay! in some cases even opposed to the regular organization of the I.W.A. in this country — should be resorted to only in case of absolute need and imperious urgency, and might be found necessary in some countries of Europe, but never here."⁵¹

The top men of the International in London were probably unaware of the insecure position of the Committee. It was still a provisional executive whose power was disputed by local groups. Internal rivalries and doctrinal disagreements were already manifest. Furthermore, several sections preferred to be in direct relation with London rather than with New York; and members of the General Council were corresponding with members of section 12 whom the Central Committee regarded as troublesome.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 43.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, f. 34; italics are the Committee's.

These circumstances severely strained its patience. A fortnight later it wrote to London: "This C.C. is predominantly composed of wage laborers." Being trade unionists, earning their living in workshops, they "know the condition of the workingmen, we believe, as well if not better than men who never have been active producers, or men who are not connected with either trades unions or workingmen generally." Yet, it continued, "the General Council paid more attention till now to those scribblers than to the Central Committee." Summing up, it repeated its previous point that "for the purpose of strengthening the I.W.A. in this country . . . a lively, confident, frank intercourse between the General Council and this Central Committee is necessary."⁵²

From the angle of the General Council, the grievances of the Committee were without justification. The answer, drafted by Marx, argued that its members could not be expected, as private individuals, to give up corresponding with Internationalists in America. Under the rules of the Association, sections could communicate directly with the General Council. Regarding the Manifesto on the Paris Commune, it said that anyone had a right to send it to friends in America, for it had been on sale in London. Since the entire first printing had been bought up in forty-eight hours, the Council obviously could not send the Committee more than a limited number of copies.⁵³

Marx subsequently went further into the matter of correspondence with Americans. He reminded his friends that "in a Yankee country, the General Council had to consider the Yankees first of all." That was in accordance with the statutes. As an official body, he said, the Council had no direct contact with leaders of section 12. English members of the Council were communicating with them, but not officially. There were also exchanges of letters between Eccarius and Jessup, and between himself and Siegfried Meyer and August Vogt. All this correspondence, however, was of a private nature. Besides, added Marx, not one of the three was an intriguer, even though they took exception to the Central Committee. Meyer and Vogt were the Council's agents. Finally, he confided to Sorge that the Council was greatly indebted to him for what he had done in the United States.

Of all the charges by the Committee, the one that most surprised the Council was its partiality to middle class philanthropists. Marx replied that the entire record of the International disproved it. One of the purposes in founding the Association was the substitution of

⁵² *Ibid.*, f. 43-44.

⁵³ Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 29, 32.

"a real organization of the working class" for "the socialist or semi-socialist sects." "It stands to reason," he concluded, "that the General Council does not support in America what it combats in Europe."⁵⁴

That was how matters stood between London and New York at the end of November 1871. By that time the Central Committee had served eleven months. During this period an indeterminate number of American workers had come closer to the International. Their overwhelming mass, figures showed, was untouched by it. On this account, the American Internationalists were not altogether blameless.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 34 f., 38 f.

CHAPTER V

The Paris Commune in America

No issue of 1871, save political corruption, was given more headlines in the American press than the Paris Commune¹ and its defender, the International Workingmen's Association. The legislators of Paris were likened to gutter-bred terrorists or to appalling outlaws; and the Commune was held up as a dire example of popular rule in order to prove the political incapacity of the plain people. To entrust them with power was a big risk, columnists concluded. Bad as Louis Napoleon was he had at least warded off the popular threat.

The United States, newspapers warned, was no longer safe from the warfare of classes. The same conditions that had produced the Paris revolution were present in American cities. Trade unionists went away from meetings of Internationalists with the instruction that, since the conflict between capital and labor was common to every country, American workers would do well to imitate their European brethren.

American newspapers consequently dwelt on the international side of the Commune, ascribing it, as did the European press, to the cunning of the General Council in London. Strikes, they believed, whether in Pennsylvania or Washington, D.C., were the same sort of civil strife as the Paris Commune. The reason for the likeness was provided by *The Workingman's Advocate*. In both areas, it said, the aim was to "establish and define the rights of producers."²

The American press thus gave the Commune a frightening form. It could happen here, was the burden of editorials. Unless Americans had the proper preventives they too would face it. The prophylactics proposed by the press ranged from cooperation to compulsory schooling and from religious instruction to tax reform.³

The International Workingmen's Association haunted American journalists. As in Europe, so in the United States, they saw it behind all disturbances. Even the Chicago fire of 1871 was laid to Inter-

¹ For a more extended account of the Paris Commune by the American press, see Bernstein, *op. cit.*, 169-82.

² May 13, 1871.

³ *New York Times*, September 15, 1870; April 13 and July 6, 1871; *New York Herald*, February 20, 1871; *New York Tribune*, May 11 and August 26, 1871; *New York Standard*, September 20 and 25, 1871; *New York Evening Post*, December 7, 1871.

nationalists by the *Chicago Times* to the great indignation of *Le Socialiste*.⁴ In the belief of the *Catholic World*⁵ the International was the source of every popular misfortune. Never before had a labor organization been made so dreadful.

Critics of the Commune

The Paris Commune was disfigured beyond recognition. Shopkeepers, workers and labor leaders, intellectuals and radicals, even American Internationalists, credited the infamies fastened on it. *The Workingman's Advocate*, for example, turned from the view of the International to the opinion of the large metropolitan press. *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* similarly shifted its stand. At one time it commended the legislation of the Commune to Americans; at another, it accepted at their face value the stories on the wicked government.⁶ Both the *Advocate* and the *Weekly*, like the big press, equated Communards with Communists. But it was difficult to find agreement on the type of communism enforced in Paris. Some said it had come from Gracchus Babeuf and his fellow conspirators who had plotted the overthrow of the French government in 1796; others thought it was closer to the system worked out by the utopian, Etienne Cabet; still others found its source in Karl Marx. Actually, none of these three had been drawn on for the principles of the Commune. The majority of its governing body was either bound by traditions to the Jacobins of the French Revolution, or imbued with the teachings of the revolutionary, Louis Auguste Blanqui. The minority was soaked in the ideas of Joseph Proudhon. The program of the Commune was far from communist. The fact that the *Advocate* and the *Weekly* reprinted the General Council's *Address on the Civil War in France* did not signify their approval of it. The *New York World* had anticipated them.⁷ The fact was the *Address* was in demand, thanks to editorials in important newspapers.

Examples of American Internationalists dissenting more or less from the official position on the Commune were Osborne Ward and Richard T. Hinton. Though the first had read the Council's *Address* before the Cosmopolitan Conference, a kind of forum he had organized, he took an independent view. In an article he wrote for the *Workingman's Advocate* he was not only critical of the Commune; he declared that the International had disavowed everything it had done.⁸ As a

⁴ November 4, 1871.

⁵ February 1872, XIV, 705.

⁶ See e.g., August 26 and September 30, 1871.

⁷ It published almost the entire text on June 29, 1871.

⁸ July 8, 1871.

result, he was rebuked, first, by Franco-American Internationalists,⁹ and then by the Cosmopolitan Conference.

The second, Richard Hinton¹⁰ was, on the whole, sympathetic with the stand of the International on the Commune, but his conclusions differed from those that had the official stamp. The section in Washington, D.C., of which he was secretary, issued its own edition of the *Address* with a preface he had very likely written, at least in part, in which the "friends of order" were taken to task for their fictional reports on the Commune.¹¹

It was folly to decry the Paris uprising, was the underlying meaning of an article he did for the *Atlantic Monthly*. For its roots, he said, were in the broad conflict of capital and labor. The International was everywhere on the side of the latter. The fact that it had branched into the United States was no proof that the Commune was right behind it. To forebode Communes in American cities, argued Hinton, was to forget that Europe and the United States had unlike backgrounds. In the first, feudalism had graven deep dividing lines. There, but one way was open, the revolutionary way. The United States, on the other hand, had no feudal legacy. Here the avenues of reform lay through agitation, free and public. Classes had not been hardened like concrete. Conditions obviously needed correcting, such as the low wage-scales, the cruel practices of employers and the contract method of importing cheap labor. The program of the International in America, to answer American needs, did not have to be as extreme as in Europe. The principal remedies, according to Hinton, were cooperation, monetary laws, homesteads and the eight hour day. These measures would in time cure social ills and abate the clash of classes.¹²

Hinton was thus Americanizing the International. But he neither lessened hostility to the Commune nor furthered understanding of it by citing it as an example of the European method for changing things.

Defenders of the Commune

A small number of American journalists in Paris in time came out against the stories on the Commune. The best known were Frank M. Pixley of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, William Huntington of the *Cincinnati Commercial* and John Russell Young of the *New York Standard*. Young's account was considered and convincing.

⁹ *Bulletin de l'union républicaine*, etc., August 1, 1871.

¹⁰ For a laudatory appraisal of him see Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx, *The Working-Class Movement in America* (London, 1891), 197 f.

¹¹ *Chronicle* (Charlestown, Mass.), folder of press clippings on the International in the United States, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

¹² *Atlantic Monthly*, 1871, XXVII, 544-59.

Perhaps it should be said by way of preface that his daily, the *New York Standard*, had carried the same terrifying headlines on the Commune as had, for example, the *Tribune*, the *Herald* and the *Times*. And like them it had found relief in the "terrible purgation" of the French capital.¹³

Young had meanwhile gone to Europe on a confidential mission for the State Department. He visited every part of Paris, including barricades, sat at meetings of clubs, spoke with soldiers, walked into churches and roamed about Montmartre, reputed to be the center of "ruffians." Upon sifting the tales of horror, he discovered "exaggeration or falsehood." Close inspection showed him that Versailles, not Paris, had begun the shooting of prisoners "and unarmed men in cold blood." What about the pillaging Parisians? Young wrote that in going the rounds of the clubs he had heard no proposal for partitioning property, no appeal for plunder. He had never seen "a more orderly city." Montmartre, the allegedly "worst part of the capital," had no police, still it was quiet. He "walked over it," he said, "and no one troubled me. I was not even questioned. I saw no drunkenness, no ruffianism, no pillage. I saw one crowd at least of thirty thousand men and women, and it was orderly and good-humored as though it were a gathering at a New York county fair." Were the Communards "infidels," who rifled churches? Young had expected to find the Church of the Madeleine converted into "a stable or a wine cellar." Instead it was a quiet place of worship, guarded by a sentry. "The Madeleine," he wrote, "received more harm from the shots of the Versailles soldiers in combat than from the Commune during the siege."¹⁴

When newspaper editors chided Young for his report, he retorted:

"It would have been so much easier, so much more popular, so much more acceptable, to home people, to have united in the chorus of anger that seemed to come from the English written press. . . . But what we saw and what we heard and what impressions they made upon us — a stranger in a strange and deeply interesting land, among people whose history we had read with affection and deep emotion, we felt called upon to write and print. In that shape truth came to us, and we spoke it."¹⁵

Young's was a valuable American contribution to one of the badly chronicled episodes of modern history. Wendell Phillips, editor and

¹³ The *New York Standard*, May 30, 1871.

¹⁴ Young's account appeared in the *New York Standard*, June 15, 1871. It was re-published in his *Men and Memories: Personal Reminiscences* (New York, 1901), 166-207.

¹⁵ The *New York Standard*, November 8, 1871.

orator, declared it was "the ablest, most brilliant and searching of all essays on the Commune."¹⁶

Young's observations were confirmed by George Wilkes, whom contemporaries nicknamed the "fighting cock of journalism." In his reports to the *New York Herald*, he came to conclusions that disputed everything it had been printing on the Commune. Moderation, decency and justice were the virtues he had discovered in the government of Paris. It had guarded public morals, religion and property. The stories of plunder and incendiarism, according to Wilkes, were testimony of their authors' imagining powers.¹⁷

W. J. Linton, the renowned engraver and former British Chartist, sided with Young and Wilkes. Linton's articles in the *National Standard* aimed at clearing the Commune of the slander cast upon it. Not that he agreed with all of its principles. But he was at one with it "as far as wanting *some better social ordering than that of the Bonapartes and the Fisks*."¹⁸ He singled out the *New York Tribune* among the offenders he found well-nigh insufferable, not because its calumnies were more distasteful than those of other large newspapers, but because it had a reputation for probity and authority. Underneath the current accounts, he found what he believed to be the essence of the Commune: it had raised to the surface "the question of the abolition of misery." Its defeat had not settled matters. It had in fact put the entire issue before all peoples.¹⁹

Among the friends of the Commune in the United States were Positivists and prominent Irish Catholics. American Positivists judged it like their coreligionists in Great Britain and France. Partisans of moral persuasion, they could not forgive it its "political and repressive" measures. The conflict, they said, had confirmed them in the belief that a "thorough moral adjustment of the relations of capital and labor" was much needed. They also praised such legislative acts of the Commune as the abolition of the standing army, the repeal of the capital penalty and the admission of foreigners to public office. Consequently, they reproved newspapers for their false, horrifying stories.²⁰

The big majority of observant American Catholics probably agreed with the hierarchy that the Commune was anti-Christ. The charges leveled by the Catholic press and pulpit were that it had padlocked

¹⁶ The *National Standard*, August 26, 1871.

¹⁷ The *New York Herald*, September 16, October 3 and 13, 1871.

¹⁸ The *National Standard*, April 15, 1871. The reference is to James Fisk who rose from a Vermont peddler to a ruthless Wall Street manipulator. The italics are Linton's.

¹⁹ Linton's articles in the *National Standard*, directed against the *New York Tribune*, were collected in a pamphlet, *The Paris Commune* (Boston, 1871).

²⁰ The *New York World*, June 5, 1871; the *Irish Citizen*, June 10, 1871.

places of worship, put prelates to death and expelled God. This hostility was the product of materialism and republicanism; and it led straight to civil war. The only successful republics were in the Middle Ages, said Archbishop Manning in New York, because they had been anchored in authority and obedience.²¹

The Catholic press warned that all countries, including the United States, were susceptible to the subversive teachings of the Commune, which the International was seeding everywhere. New York, its American center, was unsafe, wrote *The Catholic World*. Its champions would not scruple to employ means "they judge likely to serve their ends."²²

A small minority of eminent Irish Catholics in the United States demurred or rejected the position of the Church. Among them were Boyle O'Reilly, an Irish-American poet, and the five Fenians who had been honored after their arrival in New York. They all resented the slurring of Paris which Irish patriots, they said, looked upon as an exemplar.²³

The weekly *Irish Citizen* of New York should be counted among the friends of the Commune in the United States. When Catholics referred to the death of the Archbishop of Paris at the hands of Communards, the weekly asked whether that was comparable to the "many thousands of innocent women and children . . . slain by the Versailles." It looked upon the spiritual side of the conflict as altogether minor. The Commune, it asserted, was fundamentally "a protest against the disgraceful peace," that had mortgaged the nation for generations, especially its workers. Their labor alone would provide the riches "which are to go in payment for their own abasement and the abasement of their children and their country."²⁴

The bulk of American intellectuals and men of letters, like the European, either gave no thought to the Commune and International, or were avowedly hostile. Only a small number of them lined up behind Paris and the Association. Perhaps they put some minds at rest, or persuaded others. Anyhow they told Americans that they had been misguided both on the Commune and the International.

Wendell Phillips

Wendell Phillips was of that small number. He stemmed from one of the first families of Massachusetts, but the causes he defended have linked him with the common people. His name had been a symbol

²¹ The New York Times, June 20, 1871.

²² February 1872, XIV, 706; see also *The Irish People*, April 22, May 27, June 10, 1871.

²³ William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan, *op. cit.*, 19 f.

²⁴ June 3, 1871.

of abolitionism. Once it had triumphed he announced: "We sheathe no sword. We turn only the front of the army upon a new foe."²⁵ That was the new industrialism and the wage system. He foresaw as early as 1840 that labor would need to take up where the anti-slavery forces had left off. The slave question was regional; the labor question, international. The one affected several millions; the other, many millions throughout the world.²⁶ Unlike other abolitionists, he had the faculty of seeing the cadenced flow of change and continuity. Slavery once gone, the problem of wage labor thereafter absorbed his energy.

His objective was the welfare of the workers, but his understanding of it and his way to gain it set him off from those socialists whose premise was the irreconcilable conflict between capital and labor. His ideas on economics were akin to those of a number of Jacksonian Democrats. Capital, by his definition, was "but frozen, crystallized labor," and labor "but capital, dissolved and become active." Their antagonism injured both, for neither one could exist without the other.²⁷ The economics of industrialism was as repellent to him as it had been for instance, to the American naturalist, Henry Thoreau. But unlike him, Phillips did not escape to fields and woodlands, there to seek the unfettered life of an ultra-individualist. The answer to industrialism would be given by the workers, he thought, through organization, education, cooperation and use of the ballot.

Social peace could be best secured, Phillips held, when labor and capital came together either in one person or cooperated. "Laws to protect labor from capital, and employer from his workmen," he wrote in January 1871, "will be needless when each man is both capitalist and workman, equally interested as employer and employed." Several months later he said at a labor convention in Boston "that the material condition of the wage-Laborer never can be what it ought to be until cooperation in producing wealth has superseded the wage system."²⁸ His opposition to monopolies and "privileged classes," his demand for universal education and a "perfect freedom of exchange," to cite his own words, his call for the eight hour day were all in his plan to restore the society of the artisan and all-around worker. That was his ideal.

Phillips was a kind of late Rousseauan or a neo-Jeffersonian. He called himself a Jeffersonian Democrat. He saw corporate wealth as

²⁵ Franklin H. Wentworth, *Wendell Phillips* (New York [1906]), 18.

²⁶ Carlos Martyn, *Wendell Phillips, the Agitator* (New York, 1890), 379 f.; Oscar Sherwin, "Prophet of Liberty. A Biography of Wendell Phillips," (1940), 433, unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University.

²⁷ *The Workingman's Advocate*, March 25, 1865.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, January 21, 1871; *The National Standard*, June 10, 1871.

the formidable foe of the steady, balanced order he longed for. That wealth was "bare, naked, shameless, undisguised." Its power, wielded often by single men, made fiefs of towns, counties, even of states. He was confident that labor would finally be the victor, not by subjugating capital, for the lines between them were "indefinite, like dove's neck-colors," but by an alliance with it. Meanwhile he asked for the shorter working day, banking and financial measures which, by cheapening credit, would make possible the establishment of cooperatives.²⁹

He counted on the workers to be the architects of his preferred order. Only by associating could they stand up "against that immense preponderance of power." "Simply organization," he once said at a meeting of workingmen, "I do not care whether it calls itself trades-union, Crispin, International or Commune; anything that masses up a unit in order that they may put in a united force to face the organization of capital, anything that does that, I say Amen to it . . . ; it can control the nation if it is in earnest."³⁰

Vernon Parrington saw in his theory of the wage system "Pretty much all of Marxianism."³¹ Parrington plowed deep in the thinking of Phillips, but to liken his economics to Marxism is to impute to him ideas he did not have. He never ceased believing that the nation's most important resource was happy men and women, that the test of a government was the protection it gave to men, not to money. But his outlook, in his own words, was bound by the limits of "a New England Town of some two thousand inhabitants, with no rich man and no poor man in it, all mingling in the same society, every child at the same school, no poorhouse, no beggar, opportunities equal, nobody too proud to stand aloof, nobody too humble to be shut out. That's New England as it was fifty years ago. . . ."³²

Phillips never squared his economic theory with advancing techniques and industrial growth. He eyed the facts of the new economy without assessing their importance in men's relations. Unregulated banks and financial manipulations were, in his view, the source of the social maladies. His cures were, therefore, of the type promoted by the National Labor Union. They were in keeping with his faith in the potential force of labor. As Parrington put it: "In a world of economic concentration, where caste follows property accumulation he had come to rest his hopes on the international solidarity of labor."³³

²⁹ Phillips, *The People Coming to Power* (Boston, 1871); *New York World*, March 5, 1875.

³⁰ Phillips, *The Labor Question*, 26 f.

³¹ Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought* (New York, 1930), III, 145.

³² Wendell Phillips, *Speeches, Lectures and Letters* (Boston, 1892), 2nd series, 163.

³³ *Op. cit.*, III, 145.

His stand on the Paris Commune was in character with the main body of his thought. There are indications that he may have read the General Council's *Address* on the Parisian uprising. In his own way, he committed the honor of the Communards to their successors, in the conviction that their example would influence later generations. Asking for deliberate judgment, he cited the warning example of the French Revolution for which American contemporaries had found the phrase, "a horrible monster, making the world turn pale." Phillips hoped Americans would learn by the mistakes of their ancestors.

It was fallacious to present the Commune as communist. It had no such program, he replied. Its aim had been the regeneration of France after a demoralizing reign. He paid tribute to the Communards. Those who loved their country had rather salute than slander them. He took a long view of their adversity, for "the struggle itself gives some of the blessings of liberty and teaches the way to it."

Phillips then turned to some of the printed stories. To begin with, he said, the Commune had not been concocted by a cabal of cutthroats. According to the evidence, "the movement was the *unanimous* wish of all Paris. The streets were so peaceful and orderly that the Bourse, the *Exchange*, refused to close and stop business."

What about pillage? Phillips asked, "Where? When?" and he answered: "The leaders arrested are poor. Those who fled are poorer still. They have not grown rich on pillage." He cited the case of Thiers' house which the Commune had doomed to destruction. "His papers were all sent to the Hôtel de Ville. His bronze and other objects of art to the Tuilleries. Where is the pillage?"

But the indictment charged the Communards with wilful bloodshed. Thiers was at fault, Phillips retorted. "*He set the example* — refused all exchange of prisoners, shot every Communist, men, women and children, especially every leader."

Finally, he spoke of the Communards as in a funeral oration. "The men who led the Commune," he said solemnly, "were among the foremost, the purest and the noblest patriots of France. . . . Those of them who are poor, starved rather than taste his bread. These long, honorable lives, all spent in noble protest against a cruel and sensual Despot . . . end at last in a desperate effort to lift France out of her horrible degradation. Such efforts never fail."

Phillips returned many times to the Paris Commune. He rebuked American journalists for having falsified the facts. Had they ventured to measure the merits of the Communards they might have likened them to the Americans who had led the Revolution. Phillips said it

in his own way: "The Commune is one end of the telegraph wire of Liberty; the *United States* are the other."³⁴

His defense of the Commune did not go unnoticed. The *New York Times* rated his articles as a mass of half-truths.³⁵ On the other hand, French Internationalists in the United States considered them the ripe verdict of a true philosopher. Section 17 in Springfield, Illinois, thanked "the great Abolitionist, the defender of John Brown, the great advocate of the proletariat against parasitic capitalism."³⁶

Whether Phillips came nearer the International while defending the Commune is not known. It was pointed out above that he looked to the international unity of labor to bring about the workers' aims. Did he enroll in the International? The only available evidence is Marx's report to the General Council, in August, 1871, that, according to the latest news from New York, Wendell Phillips had joined it.³⁷

On the assumption that he had taken the step, he did not seem to adapt his principles to those officially proclaimed by the organization. Actually, the American sections had many members who thought like him. A good example was Richard Hinton, whose ideas on the International were summarized above. At the time of the railroad strike of 1877, Phillips' voice was heard above the hysteria. He assured people that communism was not a threat to the United States. For here, he said in the manner of Hinton, class divisions were superficial. Not so in Europe. There communism was "the righteous and honorable resistance of a heart-broken and poverty-stricken people. . . ." The elements that bred communism were absent in America. "Strikes are not communism." The relations of capital and labor, he believed, "are unlike those of other lands." In his opinion, joint committees of employers and workers could settle outstanding questions. Capital should not dictate to labor. "That is slavery." He warned that when Americans had no alternative but to submit "the republic will here be impossible."³⁸

Phillips held to the end his convictions on the Paris Commune. In an interview he gave a reporter in 1878 he reasserted that America had nothing to fear from socialism. The press had misrepresented it, like the Paris Commune. The Commune "was not socialistic primarily, but grew more and more that way." It arose out of the larger problem of capital and labor. Was America suited to the growth of socialism?

the reporter asked. Phillips did not think so, but he saw no harm in presenting its principles for consideration. If they were ever attained, it would be through the ballot-box. That was the peaceful way, and it was also labor's way, he added, on condition that "force is not used by the other side." The interview ended on this note.³⁹

Phillips was neither a utopian nor a Marxist. His view of the good life and his methods for attaining it resembled the visions of utopians. But he relied neither on government help nor on philanthropy, as they did. Its achievement, he concluded, rested with the workers through their organization.

European Powers vs. International

The Paris Commune lifted the International Workingmen's Association from comparative obscurity to wide prominence. Not that governments had ignored it before 1871. They had in fact jailed its leaders and outlawed it. But the Commune made it look formidable.

Within the present scope only brief remarks can be made on the diplomacy of the great powers regarding the First International.⁴⁰ It was no secret to its high executive that European cabinets were negotiating an alliance against it. The unpublished minutes of the General Council refer to their international designs concerning it; and the report of the Council to the Hague Congress focused on their plans for an all-out attack on it. Documents in foreign archives not only confirm the Council's statements; they also disclose the cares diplomats were beset with over the organization. Supreme policy-makers of governments were certain that it was a world conspiracy calculated to undo the entire social edifice. In the context of this opinion, the Paris Commune was a trial venture in the grand strategy of a European revolution.

That was how the International was depicted in the plethora of material published after 1870. Other features were added before long. Joseph Mazzini, for instance, drew it as a Godless society, negating *patrie* and property. To the Vatican it was a new anti-Christ that had grown out of secularism, rationalism and science, since the eighteenth century. Statesmen and publicists who shared these notions cited as evidence Michael Bakunin's atheistic declarations, even though the organization had officially rejected them.

Governments acted with resolution to stamp out the organization. Labor strikes, interpreted by them as skirmishes by which it tested their vitality, were severely suppressed. Business men and industrialists

³⁴ *The National Standard*, July 8, August 19 and 26, 1871.

³⁵ July 8, 1871.

³⁶ *Bulletin de l'Union républicaine*, etc., July 15 and August 1, 1871; *Le Socialiste*, January 27, 1872.

³⁷ MSS Minutes, August 15, 1871.

³⁸ *North American Review*, July-August, 1878, CXXVII, 110 ff.

³⁹ *The National Socialist* (Cincinnati), June 29, 1878.

⁴⁰ For a fuller treatment, see Bernstein, *op. cit.*, 183-199.

got official sanction to set up counter-Internationals with philanthropic programs. The employers' associations, international in name only, were of short duration, perhaps because the strength of their enemy was ebbing. The defeat of the Commune had given it a fatal blow. Probably for the same reason the League of Three Emperors of 1872 answered no desired purpose, as far as the International was concerned. Prompted by the Russian Tsar and promoted by Bismarck, the agreement reached by Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary was more a pious pronouncement than a call for a crusade against the International.

American Views on the International

There might have been a basis for the madness over the Association in Europe. Its leaders were there as well as its headquarters and the bulk of its members. Americans, however, had little reason to be agitated by it. Here it was young, without a single, rare quality to promise an unusual course of conduct. But the expansion of it into a world wide secret society caused sensation. Thereafter its leaders, declarations and alleged cruelties, and the rumors of its well-laid plans of revolution were the themes of a far-flung literature. It became one of the best noticed societies in the United States. It is possible to draw a parallel between the abundant publicity and the growing size of the organization in the United States.

Articles on the International fluctuated from fantasy to fact. Records of its meetings refuted newspaper editorials; and its reports disproved printed stories. Newspaper accounts of similar items had wide margins of difference. A case in point was the interview with Karl Marx published by the *New York World* and the *New York Herald*. The version published by the first he considered worthy of confidence; that of the second threw him into a fit of anger.⁴¹

American business men were less prone than the European to draw plans for counter-Internationals. Perhaps the need was not as pressing as publications had led people to believe. Still, after the eight hour strikes in the spring of 1872, employers in New York City named a committee to draft the plans of a society for which the *New York World* found the French title, "Bosses' International." A questionnaire to sound business men on the methods that could best serve them against trade unions did not elicit anything new. They suggested employment of foreign labor, systematic spread of laissez-faire principles,

⁴¹ The account of the interview in the *World*, July 18, 1871, was reprinted by *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, August 12, 1871. For the story in the *New York Herald*, see the issue of August 3, 1871.

police protection of strike-breakers, and penalties for massing in streets or menacing scabs.⁴²

An organization of the kind contemplated does not seem to have come out of the committee's inquiry, unless it can be credited with several local agreements against labor unions and strikers. A national association of business and industry was still out of season. But in the climate of the crisis of 1873, two publications, *The Iron Age* and the *Bulletin of the Iron and Steel Association* were calling for the utmost possible unity of action among employers; and the Silk Association of America acclaimed the benefits to be derived "from consultation and harmony."⁴³

Evidence shows the existence of at least six employers' organizations in the 1870's of which the two most effective were the American Iron and Steel Association and the National Association of Wool Manufacturers. Both dated from the 1860's, but their enrollment of new firms was larger in the 1870's.

Judged by the press reports, the International was as big a threat to the United States as to Europe. It had enough inflammable matter to set off a conflagration. The *New York Evening Telegram* believed that New York "Communists," given the opportunity of the Parisians, would be "the same repulsive monsters." Men like Phillips "ought to be careful how they handle the combustible material with which they delight to toy." The *New York Herald* said that the society was "the nucleus of a mighty power," capable of indefinite expansion and of holding the world at bay. But it opposed legislation to outlaw it, such as the French had voted. It might feed on misfortune. To alienate people from it the publication of its proceedings was sufficient, the *Herald* concluded.⁴⁴

The *New York Journal of Commerce* warned that demonstrations like that of September 13, 1871, for the eight hour day, would end in "full-blown communism." It was convinced, however, that the great mass of workers were "conservatives on the subject of property." Only "men of foreign birth," it said, looked to "communism" in America.⁴⁵ The *New York Times* shared the view of the *London Times* that the International was capable of appealing to all classes. Its principles were "sufficiently specious to attract theorists and would-be reformers."⁴⁶

By the time the American press had put the last touches on the

⁴² *New York World*, July 12, 1872. See Bernstein, *op. cit.*, 193 f.; Léon Chotteau, *L'Internationale des patrons* (Paris, 1871).

⁴³ *Fourth Annual Report of the Silk Association of America*, April 26, 1876, 44.

⁴⁴ *The Evening Telegram*, June 27, 1871; *The New York Herald*, June 4, 22, August 6, 14, November 10, 1871.

⁴⁵ June 5, September 15, 1871.

⁴⁶ June 19, 1871.

canvas of the International, it had little resemblance to the original. It looked dark and diabolic. According to the *New York Times*, it was a refuge of political agitators, paupers, philosophers and the least reputable elements in all countries.⁴⁷

The organization's origin stimulated imaginations. Some derived it from the Italian, Joseph Mazzini; others from the Frenchman, Blanqui, or from the fanatic, amoral, Russian revolutionary, Sergei Nechaev. But Karl Marx was finally fixed upon as its real inspiration and force. European intelligence bureaus had fat dossiers on him. A rumor that he roamed the Continent caused the nervous, Tsarist secret service to arrest an Englishman named Marx, travelling on business.⁴⁸ The public had heard little about him before the Paris Commune.

The stories on him in America were less persistent in their malice than those in Europe. This might be explained by the fact that a number of influential American newspapers were accessible either to Internationalists or to their sympathizers. The two above mentioned versions of the interview with him, irrespective of his reactions to them, testified to the prime importance attributed to his comments. There was nothing sensational in what he said to the two American correspondents. The substance of his remarks was that the organization about which so much ink and emotion had been spent was simply a broad union of workers, publicly professing their common end of freeing themselves economically by political means. The kind of political means was left to the workers in each country to decide.

Nevertheless, extravagant accounts of the International went on appearing in the American press from east to west. For example, Carl Schurz, writing in the *Westliche Post* of Saint Louis, laid its beginnings in Sicily, perhaps to link it by inference with the Mafia.⁴⁹ Also its total membership was inflated, so that it ranged from one and a half to seven million. Its size in the United States was increased beyond reason. Our earlier calculations showed that the enrollment at its height did not exceed 5,000. But Drury, who might have known better, set it at 20,000 in June 1871, when it had just begun to take shape,⁵⁰ and towards the end of the year, the *New York Tribune* estimated it

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, June 19, 1871.

⁴⁸ *Cahiers du bolchevisme*, April 15, 1933, no. 8, 565 f. In addition to a dossier on Marx that had at one time been available in the archives of the Parisian prefecture of police, we have found interesting police reports on him during the Hague Congress in 1872, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brussels, Correspondance politique, légations, Pays-Bas, 1872, XVIII.

⁴⁹ August 7, 1871.

⁵⁰ His figures, first given in the *New York World*, June 21, 1871, were cited in the *Springfield Daily Republican*, June 28, 1871, and in the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, June 23, 1871.

at 300,000.⁵¹ The count of 6,400 members by the *New York World*⁵² was nearer to the facts.

Passions seem to have cooled somewhat in the second half of 1871. Accounts of the organization tended to be more candid, and its leaders were sought after for statements. Charles A. Dana, owner and editor of the *New York Sun*, thought it was seasonable to ask Marx for an article on the Association. Failing health and a full schedule prevented his writing it.

A rumor, started by a French Bonapartist, that he had died released a volley of sentiment in the metropolitan press for the principal figure of the International. Even though editorials might have been drafted with some deference to the adage, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*, they were sufficiently frank in their praises. From north to south and east to west, journalists ascribed to Marx the success of the organization.

This was the time for confessions. The *New York Herald* admitted that the Association had been badly presented "for political effect."⁵³ And Charles A. Dana wrote editorially in the *New York Sun* that its objectives were "to enforce justice, to prevent war and to secure for the laboring man his rightful share in the products of his industry and the benefits of society."⁵⁴ References to the International were uncommonly free from the taint of conspiracy.

Deliberate persons who inquired why the society was spreading in America, even though conditions were uncongenial to it, concluded that something other than aspersion was necessary, such as the study of its deeds and declarations. This approach will be looked at in the following chapter. The awkward fact about the organization was its rate of growth. From September to December 1871, the number of sections had almost doubled, and they were distributed from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The fear that the International might unsettle the American system was groundless. At the time of its greatest vitality its press in the United States was insignificant. Apart from *le Socialiste* which circulated in French sections, it had no official organ. The two weeklies, *The Workingman's Advocate* and *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, we have shown, were unreliable advocates of its cause. Of the German papers in 1871 only the *Neue Zeit* of New York, published by the Free-

⁵¹ December 4, 1871.

⁵² December 11, 1871.

⁵³ September 6, 1871.

⁵⁴ *New York Sun*, September 9, 1871. Some examples of the interest in Marx and the International outside of New York City were the accounts in the *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, September 6, 1871; *L'Equité* (New Orleans), September 24, 1871; the *Cleveland Leader*, September 6, 1871; and the *Daily Cleveland Herald*, September 6 and 7, 1871.

thinkers, supported it.⁵⁵ Of still greater consequence in retarding its development, it will be stressed subsequently, were its inner conflicts and its isolation from the American workers.

American Internationalists and the Commune

American Internationalists stood by the Paris Commune in an atmosphere of intense hostility. Without a solid footing in the organized trades and practically without a press, they could neither reply to calumnies nor plead the case of the Commune. Consequently, they fell back on the previously mentioned circular of the General Council against Elihu Washburne, the American Minister to France. Let us return to it at this point.

Disparaging stories about the Minister were making the rounds. One had it that he had pledged his government to extradite refugees of the Commune, although an existing treaty with France had no provision for surrendering political offenders. He assured the Secretary of State, however, that the report was "both false and absurd."⁵⁶ Furthermore, his care of German interests during the Franco-Prussian War and his help to thousands of destitute Germans had made him unpopular in France and contributed to a wave of anti-American feeling. A sample of that was the play, *L'Oncle Sam*. Neither politically sophisticated, nor observant of the rules of propriety, it might have been ignored had not the French government forbidden its presentation. The ban had to be lifted, so outraged was public opinion. According to Washburne, "there was such a demand for seats that they had to be purchased ten days in advance."⁵⁷

Such was the setting in which the Central Committee of the International in America issued an edition of the circular on Mr. Washburne.⁵⁸ Its purpose was to prove his dishonorable behavior and his duplicity with regard to the Paris Commune. The brochure might have been useful as a bill of indictment in a court of law. As a bit of propaganda, it fell flat. It utterly failed to arouse interest and was

⁵⁵ *L'Équité* in New Orleans was the first official paper of the "Club International républicain et d'assistance mutuel." Presided over by Charles Caron, it became section 15 of the International, which had meanwhile begun issuing *La Commune*, a monthly bulletin. We have been unable to locate more than two numbers of it. The first seems to have appeared in June 1871; number 14 is dated April 15, 1873; and number 20, December 27, 1873. *L'Internationale*, a weekly, is said to have appeared in San Francisco, but we have not succeeded in finding a single issue.

⁵⁶ National Archives, Foreign Affairs, Washington, D.C., Washburne to Secy. of State, August 5, 1871. See also Henry Blumenthal, *A Reappraisal of Franco-American Relations* (Chapel Hill, 1959), 200-02.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, communication of November 17, 1873.

⁵⁸ Republished in *The Workingman's Advocate*, August 5, 1871; *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, September 30, 1871; *Bulletin de l'union républicaine*, etc., August 20, 1871; see also Letterbook, f. 35, and MSS. Minutes, August 15, 1871.

deservedly buried by the convention of the National Labor Union in 1871, to which it had been submitted for approval.

Friends and sympathizers of the Commune came together on its anniversary. In 1872 there were solemn celebrations in New York and Boston, Newark and Paterson, Chicago, St. Louis and New Orleans, and at all of them appeals were made for assistance to needy Communards abroad. But the depression of 1873 dried up the American source of relief.

The fact that the best attended meetings were in New York City stemmed from special circumstances. The headquarters of the American Internationalists and the stoutest friends of the Commune were in the metropolis. Here also, or in its environs, lived European radicals who had sought asylum in the United States. Among them were a number of Communards, such as Edmond Mégy, a mechanic, a former fugitive from Louis Napoleon's police, and a commander of a legion during the Commune; Simon Dereure, a shoemaker, and Arsène Sauva, a tailor, both of whom will reappear subsequently as active Internationalists in the United States; the brothers, Gustave and Elie May, organizers of supplies for the Commune. They were joined in 1873 by Eugène Pottier, artist and poet, who, in June 1871, had composed the "International" which in time replaced the "Marseillaise" as the socialist anthem. In the eyes of many Franco-Americans, the Commune's refugees were men garlanded with glory. Very likely they were also respected by a number of native Americans who had applauded their pluck and prowess, without agreeing with their principles. Other Americans might have reasoned as did Wendell Phillips.

Two observances in New York in honor of the Communards won public notice. A meeting on July 2, 1871, sponsored by the local sections of the International, was "well attended and enthusiastic," according to Sorge.⁵⁹ Another, scheduled for Sunday, December 10, as a protest against recent executions of Communards, but prohibited by the police, involved the principle of the freedom of assembly. People came in defiance of the ruling and fell into line behind Internationalists. The arrest of five of them brought an outburst of indignation. A meeting called by sections 9 and 12 voted to march the following Sunday. The *New York Times* reproached the police for making heroes of Internationalists; and the *New York Tribune* maintained that people had the right to assemble, however distasteful the cause they represented. The police had to cancel the previous order.

Approximately ten thousand men and women were in the procession on December 17th. A catafalque, draped in red and with flowers

⁵⁹ Letterbook, f. 34.

wreathed, moved slowly along Fifth Avenue to the muffled drum-beats of a Negro guard. There were Cuban societies, with flags of blue and white; French refugees holding the red banner; Irish, led by Fenians; Germans, Italians and Americans, with their national emblems. A more cosmopolitan and orderly crowd had not been seen on the streets of New York.

Public figures and leading Internationalists were in the ranks. Theodore Tilton, editor of the *Golden Age*, was in the same carriage with Victoria Woodhull and Tennie Claflin, brokers on Broad Street and publishers of their famous *Weekly*. They had recently offended people's feelings with their professions of free love. Others were Theodore Banks, president of the painters' union and delegate of section 9 in the Central Committee; the thin and nervous C. Osborne Ward; J. B. Wolff, an ex-Methodist Minister, and an author of labor party platforms; the middle-aged and long-bearded J. K. Ingalls, his faith in agrarianism still sturdy; W. D. Hume, a plump school teacher on Staten Island; the Franco-American, W. M. Boucher, an advocate of a cheap credit scheme resembling Kellogg's and Proudhon's; the elderly Colonel Beeny and the just as elderly Lewis Masquerier, both relics of the land reform movement; Theodore Millot, a bookbinder, secretary of section 2, accompanied by B. Hubert, who had been head of the "Union républicaine."⁶⁰

By all accounts, the impressive gravity of the funeral cortège lent dignity to the International. People sided with it on the right to assemble, and the press invited some of its spokesmen to present its aims in the United States. Sorge, who had been against the procession, had to acknowledge its good results. "The whole affair created quite a stir," he informed the General Council, "and the daily press was full of statements and reports about the 'International.'"⁶¹ The tribute to the Communards served the interests of the Association.

CHAPTER VI

American Doctrines in the International

A revision of American opinion on the International was in process in the second half of 1871. This was referred to in the preceding chapter. The conclusion, however, must not be drawn that fear ceased to be a factor in printed stories. Their authors continued to ascribe to the Association "avowedly predatory" aims, "dreams of ignorant men," and a policy of "rule or ruin."¹ Long after it had gone out of existence, it was believed to be the instigator of labor disturbances.

Those with seemingly serene outlooks were equally sensitive to the challenge of the organization. But, said they, its call into question of the established order obliged its defenders to study the arguments and answer them. That was the way to persuade workers to shun the Association. And if conditions aided its growth, they should be corrected. At any rate, ran the new reasoning, if the object was to isolate the International, it had to be brought into the open and refuted.

The object of the new line was to put the Association in proper perspective. In keeping with the purpose, clubs and learned societies programmed the International for serious consideration. But the fresh estimates left unanswered the questions people were asking. If the organization was secret why was it able to recruit the millions of members it was said to have? Clandestine societies were not meant to be mass bodies. And why did it announce dates and places of meetings, publish proceedings, and have street processions? Such public activity could not be squared with the charge of secrecy.

Neither could authoritative articles in daily newspapers. Reference has been made to the contributions of the general secretary, George Eccarius, to the *New York World*. No one could possibly discover in his reporting on the International any design by it to instigate civil strife. Stories in other sheets,² documented with its rules and statement

⁶⁰ The best accounts of the parade were in the *New York Standard*, December 18, 1871; and the *New York World*, December 18, 1871.

⁶¹ Letterbook, f. 86 f.

¹ Elliot C. Cowdin, *France in 1870-71, an Address Delivered before the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art* (New York, 1872); D. A. Wasson, *The International* (Cambridge, Mass., 1873), a paper read before the American Social Science Association, reprinted from the *Journal of Social Science*, 1873, No. 5; the lecture of Charles Moran before the Liberal Club, the *New York Times*, July 15, 1871. See also "The Internationale," *Lippincott's Magazine of Popular Literature and Science*, November 1871, VIII, 466-74; and a short story, "The Communist's Baby," *The Overland Monthly*, February 1874, XII, 138-40.

² The *New York Star*, December 9 and 18, 1871; *The Evening Post*, July 28, 1871.

of principles, raised it in the scale of values. This is not to infer that the image of a hydra-headed International ceased to haunt Americans. But the presumably authentic accounts had the effect of dispelling some of the smog enveloping the organization. As a result, the *National Standard*, in a flight of optimism, thought that it was "permeating the entire network of society;"³ and the New York *Standard* predicted that, "as its objects and purposes are made apparent to the people,"⁴ they would look to it for guidance.

Respect for the worth of the Association also seems to have induced Congressman George F. Hoar of Massachusetts to place its authority behind his bill, providing for the appointment of a wages and hours commission. Hoar was not the first American legislator to turn the prestige of the International to his purpose. Senator Charles Sumner, it was shown in an earlier chapter, had regarded it as a strong force of peace. Hoar had not been upset by the horror stories on the Commune. He agreed with Wendell Phillips that a cause which had inspired so much heroism deserved the respect of Americans. He then reminded his congressional colleagues that the United States was indebted to international labor unity for having stayed foreign intervention during the Civil War. The International was the latest symbol of that unity. Referring to its London Conference, of September 1871, he had the clerk of the House read its resolution that called for a statistical survey of the workers' situation in Europe and America.⁵

Alternatives to the International

Congressman Hoar personified a disposition in the United States to judge the International on its own terms. Americans who pondered its program the better to blunt its arguments conceded the need of gratifying certain demands. For if improvements could convince workers that they could gain their ends without the International, if they could further be shown that the American environment was unsuited to its growth, its leaders would hear only the rebound of their voices.⁶

Opinions differed on the source of the abuses in the United States. The New York *Times* said it was organized capital and the venality

³ September 23, 1871.

⁴ December 18, 1871.

⁵ *The Congressional Globe, Debates and Proceedings*, second session, 42nd Congress (Washington, 1872), 102.

⁶ See e.g. the New York *Star*, July 12, December 18, 1871; *The Evening Post*, October 26, December 7, 1871; *The New York Times*, December 13 and 16, 1871; the *Weekly Miners' Journal* (Pottsville, Pa.), July 15, 1871; the *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, April 1, 1872; December 27, 1873.

of public officials.⁷ In the view of the New York *Evening Post* and other publications, it was class division and capital concentration, with the result that labor was being pushed to the wall.⁸ The belief was general that things would right themselves, once the nation got over the effects of the Civil War. The government could aid recovery by spending less and preventing the consolidation of capital. Everything would work out for the best through the democratic process. That, wrote the New York *Times*, was the way to redress wrongs in a country where every citizen governed in practice, and where liberty was consistent with order.

People, however, read different meanings in democracy. It was more than the counting of ballots, answered the Internationalist, Theodore Banks of section 9. He did not speak officially, but many in the organization thought like him. And many more probably agreed with his comment "that for years past the laws have been made by the rich, in their interest, and not in the interests of peace and justice." The people had no defense against the corporations, at whose bidding the federal and state governments enacted laws that corrupt judges interpreted. The *Times* admitted cases of corruption. But it could not conclude with Banks "that the existing order of things is neither more nor less than a vast edifice which rests upon swindling." The will of the majority, it held, was fundamental in the American government, a principle which secured the freedom of opportunity to everyone.⁹

Among the antidotes recommended against the teachings of the International, the laissez-faire doctrine had high priority. One influential writer argued, much like Proudhon, that any combination of workmen which undertook to regulate a branch of industry had as little to recommend it as any monopoly and, if permitted to grow, would end in servitude. Consequently trade unions and their Internationalist allies belonged to the category which he designated as "politico-industrial absolutism."¹⁰ The success or failure of the Association in America, according to another observer, depended to some degree on the employers themselves. Courtesy and benevolence, for instance, might smooth relations between capital and labor. Employers might also weigh a shorter workday. Apart from its possible benefits to them, it would spread so much good-will that the International could whistle down the wind.¹¹

⁷ December 16, 1871.

⁸ *The New York Evening Post*, June 8, 1871; *The Kansas Magazine*, January 1873, III, 37; *Every Saturday*, December 30, 1871, III, 626.

⁹ December 16, 1871.

¹⁰ Samuel Johnson, *Labor Parties and Labor Reform* (Boston, 1871), 4 f., reprinted from the *Radical*, November 1871.

¹¹ *Littell's Living Age* (Boston), January 20, 1872, XXIV, 182-84.

It would be tedious to inquire further into the methods designed to forestall the promise of the Association. Suffice it to say in summary that they started from classical economic theory. There was a small minority which said that a society spoken for by men like Phillips and Hoar "certainly means something."¹² Yet even those who paused between the classical economic and the Internationalist principles were inclined to favor free enterprise because it seemed to them to be the safest avenue to domestic security.

Reformers in the International

A good portion of the literature the International inspired in the United States did little to enlighten people. Passions were aroused, perhaps not to the same extent as in Europe; and the fiction of its might mastered minds on both sides of the Atlantic, long after its quiet dissolution in a tiny room in Philadelphia. History blushes at the revolutionary plots laid to it. But they achieved the object of keeping workers from organizing.

The literature, of which the Association was the target, discoursed on its futility in America. Authors admitted the presence of poverty on the one hand, and of accumulated wealth on the other. But they related success to industry and sober habits, which in a country like the United States brought great rewards. America was neither encumbered by castes, nor its people sidetracked, as in Europe, from acquiring the good things of life, by struggles for political democracy. Since Americans already had that, they could devote themselves to their own advancement.

The argument had undoubtedly convinced many Europeans to settle in the United States. But it had no bearing on the problem of survival faced by handicraftsmen and independent producers. For they could neither stand up to the new industrialism nor escape the power of banks and corporations. What then was the way out of the dismal situation?

Few, if any, contemporary social reformers got at the real grievances of the petty producers and small owners. Thus, in place of effective remedies reformers put forth spectra of panaceas and utopias, of which a sort of revival set in from the 1870's through the 1890's. All types of panaceas, from cooperation to cheap credit and from currency to land reform, had their vocal advocates in organized labor. Utopias were far less alluring, after the many pre-Civil War experiments; still they prefigured the great American dream.

Sorge tells us that the popularity of the International, early in the 1870's, made it attractive to all reformist schools. He recalled the

¹² *The Kansas Magazine*, January 1873, III, 36 f.

enrollment of money and land reformers, of language reformers, tax reformers, "reformers of every station and species, of every type and shade." They preferred to enlist in the American sections, with the hope of converting them and with the resolve to direct the organization on their chalked out routes.¹³

This uncommon interest in the Association was manifested at the same time in Europe. George Eccarius reported to the *New York World* in November 1871 that "there never has been a greater demand for the official documents of the association than there has been within the last three months, her Majesty's ministers being amongst the applicants, and the upshot of it all is that men who would probably never have troubled themselves about the matter are now inaugurating an earnest discussion of the aims of the association." But for its maligners, he continued, government ministers might never have read its addresses and rules or mentioned it in their speeches, and the *London Times* might never have given it lengthy notices. At the end of October 1871, it ran a long, unsigned, and apparently inside, story of the society,¹⁴ which, according to Eccarius, gave "the quietus to the scandal-mongers." There was a sudden change from malice to serious argumentative discussion, continued Eccarius, and "though the aims of the association were pronounced visionary, the international movement was considered a legitimate one."¹⁵

The awakened curiosity was contemporaneous with the reported gains of the organization after the Paris Commune. It seems to have branched into Holland, Denmark and Sweden.¹⁶ New sections were formed in Great Britain, and here also the Irish set up separate sections against British opposition in the General Council. From distant New Zealand came a request for literature; and in Victoria, Australia, a recently formed Democratic Association inserted in its program the preamble and rules of the International.¹⁷ There were small gains even in France, where terror reigned, according to letters read before the General Council. Secret sections had sprung up in Bordeaux, Toulouse, and in Paris itself. This expansion of the International in Europe coincided with its growth in the United States.

¹³ *Die Neue Zeit*, Jahrg. 10, I, 394.

¹⁴ Published in the *London Times*, October 27, 1871, the story gained authority in America where several newspapers reprinted it in whole or in part, or based their own accounts on it.

¹⁵ *New York World*, November 17, 1871.

¹⁶ Gustave Jaekkh, *Die Internationale* (Leipzig, 1904), 176 f.; Georges Bourgin, "La lutte du gouvernement français contre la première Internationale," *International Review for Social History*, 1939, IV, 65-66, 81-84.

¹⁷ MSS. Minutes, October 16, 1871; December 5, 19, 1871; January-June, 1872. A printed copy of the Victoria program is in the Sorge Papers, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Also, simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic, the Association was torn by internal dissension. It is not necessary now to recount the dispute between Marx and Bakunin. After the Paris Commune it had become crystal clear that the organization could not house their incompatible doctrines. The conference assembled by the General Council in September 1871 voted resolutions that were aimed at Bakunin and his followers in the Association. Secret societies were disclaimed; the General Council was empowered to act speedily against non-compliant branches; and disapproval of anarchist abstention from politics was voted. Workers, said the London Conference, were obliged to organize their own party with the object of effecting a change in social relations.¹⁸

The Conference laid out the next course of the International. But the resolutions were not all suited to the United States. American leaders held that the decision on political action was inapplicable because it was untimely. Also, the repudiation of secret societies could not win the sympathy of American trade unions that were at this time inclined to conceal their identity. But the greater dispute in the International, in America and in Europe, was over means and ends.

Departures from Orthodoxy

The International from its outset had, as its primary function, the unification of labor in the several European states. This in itself gave it authority. If to this endeavor is added its international appeals for aid to strikers, its intervention to prevent the importation of strike-breakers, its service as a clearing-house of information for labor societies, in sum, if these performances are put together, they can explain why its moral ascendancy was high among workers, in Europe especially. But the Paris Commune opened wider its inner rifts. The different schools of thought saw in the Paris Revolution the confirmation of their respective beliefs. Disciples of Proudhon and Bakunin considered it the concrete expression of federalism and anarchism. For Marxists it exemplified the workers' state. British trade union leaders said that by endorsing it the International had become a political society, which was inconsistent with its original purpose.

In America, too, the International was, to employ the phrase Lincoln had cited from St. Mark, "a house divided against itself." There were divergences within the same section. In section 1, which regarded itself as the guardian of Marxism, were converted Lassalleans who still

¹⁸ For the decisions of the Conference see the official publication by the General Council, *Resolutions of the Conference of Delegates of the International Workingmen's Association* (London, 1871). The report of Ecarius in the *New York World*, October 19, 1871, is useful.

clung to several of their master's tenets. Similarly ill-matched relationships existed in the German sections of Chicago. Section 2 in New York, predominantly French, was a Babel of doctrines, among them varieties of utopianism. The same sort of potpourri seems to have gone into the composition of the French sections in New Orleans and San Francisco. English speaking sections, that is those consisting of native born Americans or English immigrants, were medleys of reformers, many of them nearer to anarchism than to socialism.

Kelloggism had an honored place in the hierarchy of creeds. To illustrate its hold on American Internationalists we need merely recall that such prominent men as Banks and Hinton, and for several years, Adolph Douai, counted on it to liberate America from the banking monopoly.

Other Internationalists had divided loyalties. Some were indebted at once to Kellogg for their schemes of financial reform and to John Francis Bray, the Anglo-American economist and utopian, for their alternatives to banking.¹⁹ Bray's remedy lay in a proper supply of money to finance cooperative joint-stock companies of adult producers that would carry on the economic functions of society with the object of obtaining "equal remuneration for equal labor."²⁰ Still others in the American sections balanced between Kellogg and Proudhon.

Proudhon in America

A word should be said here about the social philosophy of Joseph Proudhon who had admirers and imitators in the United States. His much talked of saying, "Property is theft," had made him a bug-bear. But his bark was worse than his bite. The so-called iconoclast and dreaded revolutionist was, beneath his invective, a hidebound conservative, even a reactionary. His "revolutionism" was as explosive as a fire cracker. He had contempt for the common man; but for *la classe moyenne* from which he had stemmed he had deep compassion. No one had a more abiding hatred of democracy than he. His estimate of mankind was at once hierarchic and racist; hierarchic, because he looked to an élite to spur progress, as he conceived it; and racist in that he sanctioned the existence of superior and inferior peoples. His

¹⁹ See his *Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedies; or The Age of Might and The Age of Right* (Leeds, 1839), 150. All of Ch. x, "The Nature and Uses of Money," has that as the theme.

²⁰ For biographic material, based in part on his unpublished manuscripts, see M. F. Jolliffe, "John Francis Bray," *International Review for Social History*, 1939, IV, 1-38; also H. J. Carr, "John Francis Bray," *Economica*, November 1940, N. S., VII, 397-415; John Edwards, "John Francis Bray," *The Socialist Review* (London), 1916, XIII, 329-41; and the Introduction of M. F. Lloyd-Prichard to Bray's *A Voyage from Utopia* (London, 1957).

was a static order where neither science nor technology could enter. Its underlying principle was equation and balance in place of class conflict; and its formula was mutualism, his alternative to socialism.

The strictures Proudhon laid on finance capitalism were a source from which a number of American reformers drew their arguments against the new economy. Already in 1849, Charles A. Dana had introduced his credit and banking schemes to the American public in six articles in the *New York Tribune*, which the Unitarian preacher, William Henry Channing, friend of all good causes, quickly reprinted, in revised form, in his weekly, *The Spirit of the Age*.²¹ In the same year appeared William Greene's *Equality* which had the unmistakable marks of Proudhonism.

Proudhon's impress on American Internationalists is not always easy to recognize. It is visible in the ideas of Drury, Pelletier and Tufferd, as we have seen. And it is present in the previously mentioned scheme of low cost credit, by W. M. Boucher of New York.²² Also a resemblance can be seen between Proudhon's views on interest and strikes and those of Joshua K. Ingalls who will appear below.

Between Proudhon and Greene, the connection is clear. It is noticeable especially in the plan of mutual banking Greene laid before the French section of Boston which he had joined. Greene was a New England Yankee, tall, spare and distinguished, even at the age of seventy-four when he enrolled in the International.²³ His training had been many-sided — in mathematics, in the army, in the pulpit and in the law. Withal he had independent means and social position. Philosophically he was perhaps closer to anarchism than to any other set of principles; and his anarchism stemmed from several sources without being mimetic.

Mutual Banking, first published in 1850, and restating much of what he had said the year before in *Equality*, had a new edition in 1870, sponsored by the New England Labor Reform League. The booklet seems to have had a good sale, apparently too good in the opinion of Charles Moran, of the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, for he wrote a reply.²⁴ His pamphlet had something of the flavor found in the reply of the laissez-faire economist, Frédéric Bastiat, to Proudhon in 1848 and 1850. Both Moran and Bastiat rested their case on the harmonious relations of capital and labor, best achieved through enlightened self-

²¹ Republished by Henry Cohen, ed., *Proudhon's Solution of the Social Problem* (New York, 1927), 5-168.

²² *Science of Money* (New York, 1872).

²³ For a report of the formation of Section I in Boston, see the *New York World*, October 19, 1871.

²⁴ *Banking and Money. A Reply to Mutual Banking by William B. Greene* (New York, 1871).

interest. Man's individual efforts were most reliable to gain his own welfare. Gratuities of credit, if ever put into practice, would siphon off capital accumulations, without which industry was unthinkable.²⁵ Neither controversy was productive of a seminal idea.

Greene did not aim at abolishing private property or at putting an end to free competition. In these respects he was like Proudhon. For both believed that, by establishing a balance among small owners, fair competition, "natural to man" according to Greene, would blossom into "liberty and equality." Liberty was but a fancy as long as money lenders and owners of commodities kept prices and interest rates high. Once competition was in equilibrium, liberty would be brought to pass. And equality would be close behind. But it was the equality of a pre-industrial village, narrow and perhaps penny-pinching. Greene and Proudhon disliked socialism, principally because the state, as the new master, would submerge the individual. Demagogues alone would be the gainers.

Greene would join capital and labor in conjugal bliss, for they were "mutually necessary to each other." The way to that happy union was through a system of mutual banking. The blueprint of his Bank of Exchange — the term was not his own — was modeled on a pre-revolutionary plan for a land bank in Massachusetts, and on Proudhon's People's Bank, with this difference: instead of basing the paper money on the quantity of labor in a commodity, as Proudhon had done, following disciples of Robert Owen, the British utopian socialist, Greene founded it on real estate, in the manner of Kellogg. The rate of interest would be approximately one-half of one percent, enough to cover the cost of operation.

Greene expected his new monetary institution to refashion society according to his vision. It would "benefit the man who worked on his own land;" it would "render the lending of land impossible;" it would "ruin the employer who should refuse to labor with his own hands;" it would "cause a cutting up of the land into such small farms as would give a comfortable support to the families that actually labor upon them;" it would help artisans and farmers, who did not borrow from it, by the lower prices and higher wages which, in Greene's reckoning, rose with a fall in the rate of interest; finally, it would serve cooperatives, first, by releasing them from banks, and second, by binding them closely to farmers. Greene obviously had the same complete trust in the renovating power of the mutual bank that many utopians

²⁵ For the Proudhon-Bastiat controversy, which first appeared in *La voix du peuple*, 1848-50, see Frédéric Bastiat, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1878), 4th edition, V, 110-336.

had had in their sample communities. He likened his financial scheme to "a stone cut from the mountain without hands; for let it once be established in a single village, no matter how obscure, and it will grow till it covers the whole earth,"²⁶ Thus, by deposing money, he believed he could regain the individualist's realm which science and technique were invading.

Josiah Warren

The same realm was sought by American Internationalists who had come under the spell of Josiah Warren, the anarchist. He was of old Puritan stock, like Greene, and approximately his age. A stay of two years in Owen's colony at New Harmony had convinced Warren that happiness was a matter of social adjustment, in accordance with sound principles. If the end, as he saw it, was "the greatest practical amount of freedom to each individual," the way to it was through the "security of person and property" and a "just reward of labor." The props of his society rested on equal exchange. A model, embodying these features, was the "Time Store," or "Equity Store," he opened in Cincinnati in 1827. Its operating principle was "cost, the limit of price," or "Cost, the only rational ground of price, even in the most complicated transactions." For Warren's system had its roots in simple commodity production, in which price is equal to value, and the measure of value is the amount of labor spent in making the products. This was the standard of a "harmonious society," where idlers and government would be out of place. Only the individual would be sovereign. By giving labor its legitimate reward, the cost principle would make private interests compatible, and remove the causes of war. In brief, from mutual and fair exchange would spring "social sympathy."²⁷

Warren's first experiment lasted three years. It persuaded him that his principles were sound and merited further testing. Of the four subsequent trials — in 1835, 1842, 1847 and 1850 — only the last one, "Modern Times," at Brentwood, Long Island, had any staying power. It too finally went under.

²⁶ *Mutual Banking* (West Brookfield, Mass., 1850), 26, 32, 39; for sympathetic accounts of Greene's social philosophy, see James J. Martin, *Men Against the State* (De Kalb, Illinois, 1953), 125-34, and Rudolf Rocker, *Pioneers of American Freedom* (Los Angeles, 1949), 92-112.

²⁷ The above summary is based on Warren's *Equitable Commerce* first published in 1846. Two subsequent editions appeared in 1849 and 1852. The third edition was slightly revised by Warren at the request of Stephen Pearl Andrews. For biographical material, see William Bailie, *Josiah Warren, The First American Anarchist* (Boston, 1906). On his teachings, see Emil Helms, "Josiah Warren. Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des theoretischen Anarchismus," *Zeitschrift für Socialwissenschaft*, 1908, XI, 727-41, and Max Nettlau, *op. cit.*, 103-11; also Martin, *op. cit.*, 11-26, 35-54, 64-84, 94-103.

Warren's ideas were introduced into the International by disciples, of whom the better known were Stephen Pearl Andrews and Ezra H. Heywood. The first in time wove Warren's teachings into a brand-new system. The second found in Warrenism the fulfillment of his own kind of neo-Jeffersonianism.

Stephen Pearl Andrews

Andrews began his long reform career in the South, as a friend and defender of abolitionists. That made him so unpopular that even his illustrious place at the bar did not spare him persecution. He and his family barely escaped from a menacing mob. After joining Warren in the experiment at Brentwood, he set to work to make the anarchist's principles acceptable. He pronounced them the consummate achievement of a slow, steady advance toward the sovereignty of the individual. His lectures, published as *The Science of Society*, apart from being a tribute to Warren, already had the beginnings of his own sociology. His master's principle of individuality, realized through "cost the limit of price," was retained as the nub of the good society. Dominion over men through government would be only a passing phase. Fair exchange, as the unfailing fountainhead of mutual benefit, would be a strong social bond instead of a source of friction. Andrews added other unitary factors, which he borrowed from utopian socialists. Of particular value were the catalogue of the human passions and the law of attraction, both of which had been detailed by Charles Fourier, the famous French utopian.

The law of attraction was central in Andrews' *Love, Marriage and Divorce and the Sovereignty of the Individual*. It was the title of a pamphlet in 1853, on his controversy with Horace Greeley and Henry James, the father of William and Henry. Andrews argued that relations between the sexes, based on love, not only brought happiness, but also forwarded woman's emancipation from the domination of man. This end was consistent with his thesis that sovereignty resided in the individual. His argument was: "Human beings do not need to be taken care of. They need such conditions of Justice, and Freedom, and Friendly Cooperation, that they can take care of themselves."²⁸

The Basic Outline of Universology, published in 1872, contained the full sociology of Andrews. It is a massive and difficult tome, showing much erudition and little discipline. With Warren's anarchism he combined ideas obtained from Auguste Comte, Charles Fourier, Emanuel Swedenborg and Immanuel Kant. Neither Comte's hierarchical scaff-

²⁸ *Love, Marriage, and Divorce* (New York, 1853), 19.

folding nor his idealization of the Middle Ages suited the taste and training of Andrews; but Comte's principle of leadership was in line with his needs. To reconcile it with individualism he introduced Fourier's attractional theory, Swedenborg's mysticism and Kant's law of the antinomy. In balancing opposing propositions, the law was productive of truths. The ultimate truth would bring forth the universal harmony of a new order, for which Andrews found the imposing name, Pantarchy.²⁹ It would conciliate the individual and society, freedom and order, rights and duties, man and woman. The whole world "will find rest" in the pantarchic paradise, the *New York Standard* commented acidly. The earth will then no longer turn upon its axis, but upon Stephen Pearl Andrews.³⁰

With his full, flowing beard he looked every bit the apostle of another apocalypse. Since the International, by reputation, was cut out to serve social redemption, he bent his efforts to convert it into a pantarchic instrument. He therefore left the New Democracy he had aided in establishing in 1869 and enlisted in the International.

The sociology of Andrews, however eccentric, ranks with others that were meant to check the advances of capitalism. They had in common the aim of reviving a social order in which every individual was a king-pin. Whether such an order had ever existed was of little consequence to the system builders. They took for granted and idealized a way of life that was unsustainable under the new conditions. Thus they looked backward for their visions.

Ezra Heywood

Ezra Heywood, like Andrews, was indebted to Warren, for the type of ideas he energetically propagated. From a training for the ministry, Heywood turned to labor reform, and for several years his hobby was the New England Labor Reform League of which he had been a founder. Its program and constitution, dating from 1869, already contained the essence of his thinking that ultimately settled him in anarchism. Taking Jefferson's "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as his standard, he accused privilege and monopoly of fattening on the fruits of labor. Thus they voided the vital principle of cost the limit of price, by which he meant the amount of labor bestowed on a commodity. The proposition had been put forth by Warren. But Heywood set it in the economic framework of earlier utopian socialists.

²⁹ In addition to *The Basic Outline of Universology*, Andrews wrote a weekly column on Pantarchy in *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*. For a survey of his sociology, see Harvey Wish, "Stephen Pearl Andrews, American Pioneer Sociologist," *Social Forces*, May 1941, XIX, 477-82. See also Martin, *op. cit.*, 152-61; and Rocker, *op. cit.*, 70-85.

³⁰ August 27, 1870.

He held that consumption had to regulate production, not the market. The only just exchange was equivalent for equivalent, determined by the amount of labor expended. The discard of this rule, he argued, degraded exchange "to a species of piracy." There was a "studied effort to get the largest possible amount of another's service or property for the least possible return." Rent, interest and profit were the means of "extortion," "robbery" and "plunder." To make money otherwise than by earning it "is the business of counterfeiters. . . . Hence loans, purchase, mortgage, inheritance, all titles which supersede or violate the creative, irrevocable claim of labor, being morally wrong, are therefore void."

The violence of the attack on the economic system was as innocuous as Proudhon's. Heywood's perfect order was one of small owners, having "unrestricted liberty to create and exchange products." No special legislation; only opportunity and reciprocity. His was a free and open society without restraint or privilege and with the least possible amount of government. It was a community with middle class values. He believed that interest, rent, banks and monopolies could be replaced at all points by "free contracts, free money, free markets, free transit, and free land," provided tariffs were repealed and the currency replaced by another based "on actual values," "issued by voluntary associations on principles of mutual insurance."³¹

Heywood's was an anarchist ideal. He counted on the cooperative energies of capital and labor to arrive at "a divine and redeeming harmony." In 1868 he seemed well disposed to trade unions, cooperatives and eight hour leagues. While he did not expect the ballot to bring the millenium, he was in sympathy with the decision of the National Labor Union to embark on independent political action.³² But at the convention of the New England Labor Reform League, in 1871, he rejected all these methods. Proudhon would have accepted his reasoning on trade unions: They had the character of a monopoly; they were incompatible with liberty, and pernicious in practice; and they interfered with free competition, the motor of progress.³³ Drury's reply at the same convention that trade unions were a historical fact and the workers' means of defense against employers seemed to have no visible effect in changing the direction of Heywood's ideas. He was in full drift toward anarchism. He became a partisan of marriage

³¹ *Declaration of Sentiments and Constitution of the New England Labor Reform League* (Boston, 1869). Criticism of the existing economic system in the same terms as in the *Declaration* is to be found in several of his pamphlets. See e.g. *The Labor Party* (New York, 1868), *Hard Cash* (Princeton, Mass., 1874), and *Yours or Mine* (Princeton, Mass., 1875). For a summary of his ideas see Martin, *op. cit.*, 110-25.

³² *The Labor Party*, 12.

³³ See the *New York World*, May 6, 1871.

reform, and finally of free love, which set on his trail Anthony Comstock, the one-ideaed vice hunter. In 1873 Heywood was busy forming a New England Free Love League.

Whether Heywood modified the attitudes of American Internationalists cannot be determined. A number of them read his pamphlets, not because he had all the answers to their grievances, but because he stated so well current preconceptions on interest, inequality and monopoly.

Other Terrestrial Heavens

The above persuasions have been examined here because they had their converts in the International, as did other lines of thought, from utopianism to Marxism. Reference has been made to the partisans of Icarianism in section 15 of New Orleans. But this section did not have a monopoly of utopianism. The unpublished minutes of section 26 in Philadelphia disclose an uncommon inclination to Fourierism. The meeting of April 8, 1872, for instance, dwelt at length on the merits of the experiment in Guise, France, set up by the Fourierist entrepreneur, Jean Baptiste Godin. Its general plan, which had just been outlined in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, was quite attractive to the members, and the corresponding secretary, Isaac Rhen, spoke of the enterprise as "prophetic of the realization of the future on the question of labor."³⁴

Two other noteworthy utopian tendencies in the International in America derived from the British socialist, Robert Owen, and the American land reformer, George Henry Evans. Identified with them were Lewis Masquerier and Joshua K. Ingalls, each of whom wove his own social scheme with strands taken from both predecessors. Masquerier had speculated in land and failed. Inquiring into the reasons, he found himself going in the direction of Owen and Evans.

Masquerier's system was laid out in his *Sociology*,³⁵ written in his early years and revised when he was past eighty. His model of the good society was the homestead, with the pioneer as its perfect type. He divided the land into townships and then into smaller sections,

³⁴ MSS. Minutes of meetings, section 26, Philadelphia, I.W.A., State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. See also *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, April 1872, XLIV, 701-16. On Godin's experiment see Charles Gide, *Le Familistère de Guise et la verrerie ouvrière* (Paris, 1923), and my *The Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France* (New York, 1933), 55.

³⁵ Its full title is *Sociology: or, The Reconstruction of Society, Government and Property, upon the Principles of the Equality, the Perpetuity, and the Individuality of the Private Ownership of Life, Person, Government, Homestead and the Whole Product of Labor, by Organizing all Nations into Townships of Self-Governed Homestead Democracies—Self-Employed in Farming and Mechanics, Giving all Liberty and Happiness to be Found on Earth* (New York, 1877).

never below ten acres, in order to prevent the formation of cities. Only warehouses, wharves and foundries remained for the purpose of international commerce. The family combined agricultural with mechanical labor. No assessments were allowed, save a small poll-tax for the repair of buildings, roads and bridges and the education of children of both sexes. Masquerier disliked representative government as much as land nationalization and technological innovation. The first usurped the rights of the individual; the second deprived him of independence; the third cast him into penury. His objective was "landed democracy," because it secured a person's natural right to the soil. The farmhouse or homestead was the unit of sovereignty. A loose federation of such units was all that was necessary for common needs. Other usages and laws would fall into discard, especially the kind that managed to keep from producers the full fruits of their labor. He concluded from the accounts of the Paris Commune that it, too, had had the same aim. Though its struggle had been "superhuman and sublime," it had missed seeing that the means to its great end were "*equal, inalienable, and individual homesteads*."³⁶

Ingalls' position was nearer to Masquerier's than contemporaries might have thought. For Ingalls, too, had pictured a community without rent, interest and profit. As he described it in his last years, it grew out of Owenism, Evanism, Proudhonism and Warrenism.³⁷ He owed to Owen a belief in cooperation as the reconciler of conflicting interests; he agreed with Evans that, by giving easy access to the land and limiting the amount a person could own, wages would be high. Dana's articles on Proudhon drew him closer to mutualism; and Warren's principle of equitable commerce seemed to him the workers' best protection against land and money monopolists.³⁸

Reform Societies

Social reformers had come together in organizations after the Civil War.³⁹ The best known in the late 1860's and early 1870's were the New England Labor Reform League, the Cosmopolitan Conference and the New Democracy or Political Commonwealth. All of them had

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 34. For a summary of Masquerier's utopia see Frank Carlton, "An American Utopia," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1909-10, XXIV, 428-33. A brief account on Masquerier is to be found in L. L. Bernard, "Early Utopian Social Theory in the United States (1840-1860)," *The Northwest Missouri State Teachers College Studies*, 1938, II, no. 1, 90-94.

³⁷ *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian* (Elmira, N. Y., 1897), 56.

³⁸ See Ingalls, *Work and Wealth* (New York, 1878), and his *Economic Equities* (New York, 1887). See also Martin, *op. cit.*, 142-52.

³⁹ In New England alone there were in 1870 as many as seven such associations. See Bureau of Labor Statistics, Mass., *First Report* (Boston, 1870), 287.

in common the following characteristics: they were short-lived; they were debating rather than acting bodies, bent on battling with Mammon; and their main purpose was to enlighten public opinion. Their programs were so akin to one another that individuals could move from one organization to another without giving up principles. The charge made by all of them was that monopolies were new forms of privileged, feudal aristocracies. By their power over legislatures and courts they diverted America from the good life its forefathers had foreseen. Government had failed to protect the rights of the common people. All men of good will, irrespective of classes, were therefore obligated to change the basic principles of society. This would not be done through class war, but through reform. For the true interest of labor resided in its compatibility with capital.

The essential improvements the organizations called for had some resemblance to the demands of the National Labor Union. They asked for the reform of the currency, the curbing of banks, corporations and large land owners, equal rights for men and women, and universal suffrage. Socialism was not an issue in the programs. The object was to enroll the great majority in a campaign against rent, profit and interest. The final end was not the abolition of private property, but its wide distribution.⁴⁰

Reform organizations looked approvingly on the International. The New York Reform League praised it for having called attention "to wrongs which need to be righted."⁴¹ The New England Labor Reform League, having submitted its program to American Internationalists for criticism, was grateful for their comments. This is not to conclude that the League revised its statement of principles in terms of the criticism. The Cosmopolitan Conference placed on its agenda questions that were also before the International. The New Democracy asked the General Council to recognize it as the official representative of American workers.

At the time of the request it looked as if the National Labor Union would soon affiliate with the International. Cameron had already returned from the Basel congress, and the Union had pledged at its convention of 1869 to associate itself with the big Association. The New Democracy was put out by these amicable relations. In an address to the Council it refused to admit the view, held in London, that the

⁴⁰ The programs of the reform associations had wide circulation either as separate publications or in the press. See *The New Democracy or Political Commonwealth. Declaration of Principles and Plan of Organization* (New York, 1869); *Declaration of Sentiments and Constitution of the New England Labor Reform League* (Boston, 1869); the *National Standard*, May 13, 1871; the *New York World*, January 6, 8, 9, 16 and May 9, 1871.

⁴¹ The *National Standard*, May 13, 1871.

National Labor Union had a forward position on the rights of labor. The men at the head of it were "below the standard of opinion on these subjects (practical reform measures) which prevails among you in Europe." Labor in the United States, continued the New Democracy, was "somewhat less oppressed" and its "reaction against that oppression, such as it is, is less earnest and intense." But the American workers were steadily acquiring a "more earnest and more radical and comprehensive" understanding of the issues at stake, "and of the great peaceful revolution which alone can furnish adequate remedies for the deep-seated evils complained of." In the eyes of the New Democracy, the National Labor Union had nothing to recommend it. Its platform was archaic, "more than twenty years behind the public opinion of the most thoughtful and earnest labor reformers of the age." It had ignored the question of woman suffrage; it had failed to condemn the corrupt practice of giving huge land grants and subsidies to railroads; and it was indifferent to the referendum. In short, the National Labor Union was not fit to speak for the American workers.

At this point the New Democracy claimed to be their qualified champion. It introduced itself to the General Council as "an organization directly uniting political action, and peaceful revolution by that means, with labor reform and social reorganization." It considered itself eminently suited "to occupy that advanced ground in social reform, to which the labor unions have not, as yet, come fully forward," its reason being that it was the direct successor of the industrial congress and labor and land reform movement of twenty and twenty-five years ago.

The final part of the address uncovered the ultimate goal of the New Democracy. "In some way or other, in all countries," it wrote, "the people must learn to employ themselves on their own farms, in their own workshops, and they should exchange the products of their labor by agents of their own appointment, thus constituting a government 'deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed.'" First, however, the people had to win the referendum in order that law-making should be in their "own keeping."⁴²

The address caused little stir in the General Council. The secretary was instructed to draft a reply,⁴³ but whether it was ever drawn up, let alone sent, cannot be established. Certain it is that the Council was not induced to break off relations with the National Labor Union. To the International, the unity of the trade unions of the United States was more important than their program.

⁴² The address was published in *The Revolution*, October 28, 1869, IV, 260-61.

⁴³ MSS. Minutes, November 9, 1869.

After the lapse of more than a year, the Council learned that a New York Labor League, apparently an offshoot of the New Democracy, had applied for admission to the International. The League inquired the cost of affiliation and the changes it was obliged to make in its constitution. Again the record is silent on what was said in the Council. Possibly it preferred to have the League negotiate with the recently established Central Committee in New York. In May 1871, the New York Labor League and straying members of the dissolved New Democracy organized themselves as section 9.

Thus, in 1871, there were two broad divisions inside the International in America. One may be designated as middle class reformist, the other as socialist. Before long they split wide open.

CHAPTER VII

Feuds and Schisms

European Background

The story of the split among the American sections of the International must be prefaced by a brief account of its inner dissensions in Europe after the Paris Commune. The discord, it was indicated before, developed at a time when the organization was assuming larger dimensions, while its extinction was the aim of diplomatic pourparlers. Superficially, the strife was over the form of its organization. One wing, led by Swiss sections, wanted it a loose society, in which the General Council would be a corresponding bureau and a keeper of records. The other maintained that, in the harassing, post-Commune circumstances, the International had to have a central authority with power to act speedily. The two designs of its architecture were the outgrowth of two separate social philosophies which were broadly identified as anarchism and socialism. It must be added, however, that in the conflict between them each side had supporters who did not share its outlook.

The outbreak of the feud may be dated from the Conference the General Council held in London, in September 1871. We know that, as a result, the Council was given more power. Thereupon, anarchists met in Congress at Sonvillier, Switzerland, in November 1871. Here, in this watch-making village, sixteen delegates, with mandates from nine sections, of which several had a paper existence, defied the executive in London by going ahead with the plan of setting up a Jura Federation. Apart from drafting statutes that guaranteed autonomy to the sections, they sent out a memorandum to the federations of the International, which was an act of open rebellion against the General Council.

Its author was James Guillaume, a school teacher devoted to Bakunin. It should be said at the outset that the memorandum ignored the big problems created for the International by the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune. This is not to say that Guillaume overlooked labor issues in general. But he saw them as would a domestic artisan, that is, with little regard to questions arising from large-scale industry.

The anarchist social organization, mapped out in the memorandum, bore a likeness to the free, egalitarian community, envisioned by the

priest Jacques Roux, during the French Revolution. In Guillaume's view, the International was the embryo of this type of society. Hence, all authority in the International had to go by the board. As an immediate measure, the memorandum demanded a general congress.¹

The delegates at Sonvillier had expected wide support in the International. But they had miscalculated. The Belgian Federation ratified the principle of autonomy in December 1871, but did not go so far as to accuse the General Council of having violated it. Italian Internationalists, however, not only sanctioned the decisions made at Sonvillier. Their own congress at Rimini, in August 1872, also declared itself in favor of abolishing the General Council and reorganizing the International.² The rivalry between Marxists and Bakuninists in Spain meanwhile hindered Internationalists there from taking action.³ German, English and Dutch Internationalists were either cold or hostile to the memorandum from Sonvillier.

To offset the propaganda of the Jura Federation, the General Council wrote a reply, in which Marx's hand was visible. The Council at first reviewed the facts that had prevented the summoning of congresses in 1870 and 1871. It then went into the history of the anarchist rebellion. Behind it, said the Council, was the sinister spirit of Bakunin, working through his secret society, namely, the Alliance of Socialist Democracy, which he had never dissolved upon entering the International, although he had been ordered to do so. Its affiliates had disregarded the official stand of the International on the Franco-Prussian War; they had linked its name with reckless adventure by their insane uprising in Lyons in September 1870. In sum, they had derided discipline and disclaimed resolutions. The Alliance, in the opinion of the Council, was functioning in the International as a conspiracy, against which the London Conference had taken stern measures. Regarding autonomy demanded by the Sonvillier congress, the reply characterized it as a scheme for making each section a training school for Bakunin's Alliance.⁴

¹ The statutes and memorandum were republished by James Guillaume, *L'Internationale. Documents et souvenirs* (Paris, 1907), II, 236-41. A more extended statement by him was given subsequently in *Mémoire présenté par la fédération jurassienne de l'association internationale des travailleurs à toutes les fédérations de l'internationale* (Sonvillier, 1873).

² Consult Guillaume, *op. cit.*, II, 311-12.

³ Something of what went on in the upper echelons of the organization in Spain can be found in Friedrich Engels-Paul et Laura Lafargue, *Correspondance* (Paris, 1956), I, 9-29.

⁴ *Les prétendues scissions dans l'Internationale. Circulaire privée du conseil général de l'association internationale des travailleurs* (Geneva, 1872). Members of the Jura Federation answered the General Council in *Réponse de quelques internationaux, membres de la fédération jurassienne, à la circulaire privée du conseil général à Londres* (n.p., 1872).

Seen in the full fresco of the International after the Paris Commune, the call for autonomy coincided with a trend to decentralization. The dreadful defeat of the Parisians had made invalid the political calculations of the organization's strategists. The French, henceforth, would not awaken all of Europe with their alarms. They had spent themselves. The British labor movement had shown itself devoid of the revolutionary potential with which it had been credited by Marx.⁵ Its supreme heads had been chilled by the Commune. In their economic principles, they were nearer to the classical economists than to the socialists. Politically, they stood by the monarchical, parliamentary system. Persuaded that the revolutionary reserve in the British Isles had passed to the Irish, Marx and Engels furthered the formation of a British federal council, previously opposed by them, that would have authority only over the British sections. The Irish would henceforth have their own branches.⁶

Their champion against the British members of the General Council was Friedrich Engels. The Irish were a trampled people, he declared, much as the Poles were. Internationalism was not the sinking of national differences. If that were its meaning, it would be a good device for perpetuating the rule of the conqueror. "In the case like that of Ireland," the minutes of the General Council report him saying, "true internationalism must necessarily be based upon a distinctly national organization. The Irish, as well as other oppressed nationalities, could enter the Association only as equals with the members of the conquering nation."⁷ The Council settled the matter by assuming jurisdiction over the Irish sections, and appointing as their corresponding secretary, J. P. McDonnell, who had suffered imprisonment for his part in fighting for Irish independence. Toward the end of 1872, he settled in the United States. His name will reappear in the narrative.

The first congress of the British Federation was at Nottingham, in July 1872. It sanctioned the establishment of a labor party on the principles of the International and ratified the resolutions of the London Conference.⁸ But the British Federation was too weak to stop internal divisions. Before long it was rent beyond recovery.

Federal councils of the International came into being in several

⁵ Marx's confidential letter to the Brunswick Committee, in Marx, *Letters to Dr. Kugelmann* (New York, 1934), 102-09. A French copy of the letter, in the hand of Eugène Dupont, corresponding secretary for France, and signed by him, is in MSS. Papers of Albert Richard, Bibliothèque de la Ville de Lyon, 1², Liasse 55. The text in Guillaume, *op. cit.*, I, 263-68, is a translation from the German in *Die Neue Zeit*, July 12, 1902.

⁶ MSS. Minutes, October 16, 1871.

⁷ *Ibid.*, January 16, May 14, 1872.

⁸ *The International Herald*, July 27, 1872; Stekloff, *op. cit.*, 255 f.; MSS. Minutes, July 30, 1872.

countries after the Paris Commune. Was it presumed that the separate national federations would be the initial stages of labor parties, with platforms modeled on that of the International? The London Conference might have had that in view when it advised the erecting of federations. At any rate this was a recognition of the need of adjustment to changed circumstances. But the setting up of federations was at no time interpreted as autonomy at the highest level of the International.

Section 12

Autonomy was also an issue in America. Here, as in Europe, it had an anarchist side, with its taproot in the theory of natural rights. Out of it stemmed a social vision in which were reflected the ways of pre-industrial living. Americans who had drawn their ideas from Warren, even from Kellogg, were as apprehensive of government as were Europeans who had been indelibly impressed with the principles of Proudhon or Bakunin. There were also American autonomists who, by reason of faith in their respective blueprints of what America ought to be, counted first, on the spread of enlightenment and the democratic process to cleanse government of corruption, and then, on meliorative laws to direct the nation toward their primal model. Thus a boundary divided autonomists; but they lined up together against centralized authority.

The sections in America had to reckon with autonomists almost from the start. We have referred to the report of the Central Committee to the London Conference, in September 1871, which called attention to the programs of the reformers. The fact was that many of them had organized themselves in sections that soon rebelled against the Central Committee.

The strongest resistance came from sections 9, 12 and 26, with number 12 in the foremost position. It was a comparatively small organization, but its shadow spread over the entire International in America. The section was a catchall of many beliefs. It met either at 44 Broad Street, New York City, the brokerage house of Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee C. Claflin, or at their mansion on 38th Street. Here all types of opinions were passed in review, from spiritualism and atheism to currency and land reform, and from cooperation to capital punishment. Stephen Pearl Andrews usually presided. His patriarchal presence, his linguistic gift, his extensive yet unsystematic reading and his sociology that had outlined directions to a new Jerusalem had all pinnacled his prestige among the members. Also noticeable, but less imposing than Andrews, was William West, who had been among the founders of the New Democracy. He seems to

have had a talent for drafting declarations that reconciled opposing principles. Perhaps because he was considered a facile thinker, at least by Victoria Woodhull and Tennie Claflin, he was the section's delegate to the Central Committee.

Victoria and Tennie were two fortune-hunting sisters, with flexible moral standards. In that respect they were not unique. But they were of irresistible beauty, and were as prepossessing as they were unprincipled.

Early in 1870, they caused a sensation in Wall Street by starting a banking and brokerage business. Advertisements in the press announced that Mrs. Woodhull and Miss Claflin were buying and selling gold, bonds and securities, stocks of railroads, mines and oil-wells, lending and collecting, and issuing certificates of deposits in all parts of the nation. The two "Bewitching Brokers of Wall Street" promised to pay interest on daily balances. It was later learned that their benefactor had been the aging Cornelius Vanderbilt, founder of a financial dynasty. He had also helped to bring out *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* in May 1870.

Of the two sisters, Victoria was more versed in intellectual movements. Colonel Blood, her second husband and counselor, had laid out for her a brilliant future. She would ride at the head of crusaders in order to remake America according to her fancy. With uncommon confidence and eloquence she upheld many causes. How much she owed to Andrews, West or other reformers the ideas she furthered is still unanswerable. Probably she had taken them indiscriminately from several sources, as her miscellaneous program seems to suggest. Whether she pondered beliefs as well as she defended them remains a moot point. She reaped a certain popularity as an advocate of the women's rights movement. But she lost its favor by sanctioning free love. The improvements she stood for were the kind recommended by contemporary liberals and reformers. Among other things, she asked for proportional representation, civil service reform, dissolution of corporate monopolies, control of national banks, low rates of interest, conservation of the national domain, direct taxation, national education and an eight hour day. To these she added international arbitration and abolition of standing armies.⁹

Her *Weekly* ran many stories on the labor movement. Their premise was, by and large, that capital and labor were meant to cooperate for the welfare of all. Whatever inequalities existed could be corrected by

⁹ The essence of her program is to be found in her *Speech on the Great Social Problem of Labor and Capital* (New York, 1871), and in the *Platform of Principles of a Just Government*, presented at the suffrage convention in New York, May 11, 1871. It was republished in Paulina W. Davis, *A History of the National Woman's Rights Movement* (New York, 1871), Appendix.

legislation. The paper subscribed to Kellogg's theory on money, preferred free trade to protection and appealed to workers to vote only for candidates who promised to promote the greatest good for the greatest number.¹⁰

The *Weekly* was cordial to the International, even before it branched out in the United States. Its two major objectives, as they were defined for the paper by the British trade unionist, Robert Applegarth, were "to emancipate the working classes;" and "to secure a foreign policy of universal peace."¹¹ The owners of the *Weekly* shared these aims.

Mrs. Woodhull fastened her attention on the International as soon as it looked like a going concern in the United States. Its Central Committee was reporting gains from east to west, and was standing well with state and national trade union bodies. Under proper management the American branch could be at once a loud speaker, proclaiming Victoria's mission, and an instrument to elevate her to political eminence. By July 1871 the two sisters and surviving remnants of the New Democracy formed section 12. *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* was its organ.

Differences soon flared up between the section and the Central Committee. The *Weekly's* statements on the International so irritated the delegates of section 1 that they admonished the editors "not to give publicity in your *Weekly* to anything except authentic information."¹² Ignoring the intent of the warning, the number that carried it also had the program of section 12. It was, in every essential, at cross-purposes with the statutes of the International. Cast in the form of an appeal to English speaking Americans, the program interpreted "the conquest of political power" for the emancipation of labor to mean, first, "the political equality and social freedom of man and woman alike," and second, "the establishment of an Universal Government, based primarily on equality of rights and reciprocity of duties in the matter of production and distribution of wealth."

Had the appeal stayed close to the exposition of principles, it might have been ascribed to a misconception of the nature of the International. But readers seemed to see in it a plan to make the American branch a tool for personal ends. The announced principles were calculated to court all kinds of malcontents, including the crestfallen and disconsolate, the woefully wed and unwed. The address, moreover, invited English speaking Americans to form their own sections "in every primary election district." This amounted to saying that the

¹⁰ See e.g. *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, May 28, June 18, July 30, August 27 and December 3, 1870.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, May 28, 1870.

¹² *Ibid.*, September 23, 1871.

organization in America should become a political machine for placing candidates in office. Set up geographically, it would have municipal, state and national committees, corresponding to the respective legislative bodies. The plan, if ever executed, would remove the need of a single committee. In the eyes of those at the head of section 12, such a central authority was apt to be short-sighted, selfish and tyrannical. In fact, they attributed to such power-wielding bodies the excesses of "democratic proletarian revolutions."

Section 12 came upon common ground with the Jura Federalists. It demanded the decentralization of the International; and it contended that the object of the organization was to supplant every form of government.

Section 12 vs. Section 1

Section 12 challenged the Central Committee for power. Acting according to its own dictates, the section not only made decisions without consulting the superior body; in a letter to Eccarius, it also asked that the General Council should place it in authority over the entire American branch.¹³ Apparently the leaders of the extinct New Democracy, now setting policy for the section, had never abandoned the hope of being at the apex of a nation-wide reform movement. In 1869, it may be recalled, they had bid against the National Labor Union, just as they were now bidding against the Central Committee.

Section 1 was already in a directing position among the American Internationalists. Its sedulous leaders had a philosophy of history that gave purpose to their activity. And their explanations of principal problems seemed persuasive. To be sure, they were arbitrary at times; at others, blind to the facts. Always, however, they were dedicated men who, with all their defects, were regarded in London as the most competent pilots of the sections in the United States. Besides, they had good friends among socialists and labor chiefs in European capitals. Such men could not easily be elbowed out.

The address of section 12 aroused dissension in the Central Committee. After two consecutive, noisy meetings, supporters of the rebellious section succeeded, by one vote, in tabling the charges introduced by section 1.¹⁴

Section 12 might have been less self-assertive had it not had the support of two high-ranking members of the General Council. They were John Hales, the general secretary, and George Eccarius, the corresponding secretary for the United States. The first, an elastic

¹³ See Marx's letter in Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 32.

¹⁴ *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, November 11, 1871.

web-weaver by trade, had long been an advocate of autonomy. The second, a familiar figure in our story, had been shifting from Marx's position which he had defended for many years to collaboration with the Liberal Party. Withal a feud had been in existence between him and Sorge, which affected relations between New York and London. Without inquiring into the nature of the claims made by section 12 in its above mentioned letter, Eccarius read it to the Council and referred it to a standing committee.¹⁵ He had thus ignored the responsible heads of the International in America. To their surprise and chagrin,¹⁶ a resolution was voted, containing these points:

1. Each section in America had the right to a delegate in the Central Committee.
2. The organization's progress in the United States was in large measure due to the Committee.
3. There was no rule to prevent a section from spreading the Association among its nationals.

The Council asked the Central Committee to continue in office until the sections could summon a congress that would elect a new executive.¹⁷

Seen superficially the resolution sustained the New York Committee. Point two scarcely needed saying save for soothing its irritations. Points one and three were commonly accepted rules. In fact, the Committee insisted, it was the duty of each section to recruit members among its own nationals.

The significance of the resolution lay in what it left unsaid. Apart from its silence on the Committee's authority over the sections, it passed over the primary question of principles, which was at the bottom of the dissension. The Central Committee was in no mood to avoid this issue. Its November report to the General Council remarked that it had always followed the practice of adapting propaganda to the statutes and congress resolutions of the Association. This meant keeping away from any "subject foreign to them." The International, the Committee maintained, "is and ought to be a *Workingmen's* organization, nothing else." It should be guarded against "designing intriguers" who considered it useful only if it served their "self-aggrandizement." "We want to keep it pure and unpolluted for the future affiliation of the organized Trades-Unions, who will never connect with organizations tainted by adventurous ideas and actions."¹⁸ The Committee was

¹⁵ MSS. Minutes, October 17, 1871.

¹⁶ Letterbook, f. 78.

¹⁷ The text of the resolution was published by *le Socialiste*, November 18, 1871.

¹⁸ Letterbook, f. 78 f.

referring to free love, spiritualism and world government, causes fit for faddists and eccentrics. But was purism the answer to these panaceas? To steer clear of them for fear of contamination was a safe way to cloistered isolation. In its dispute with section 12, the Committee might have had more support, if its leaders had not set themselves up as spotless paragons.

The Committee's meetings grew turbulent. The delegate of section 26 reported on November 20, 1871, that the "rapid formation of sections latterly had made the body quite unweildly [sic] and in fact to speak truly its sittings had taken the character of a regular Bable [sic]."¹⁹ The wrangling revealed that the opposition led by section 12 was less united than had been thought. Section 2, one of the oldest in the United States and nearly all French, might have sided with the Central Committee to which it had something of a sentimental attachment. It had been one of the three sections that had called the Committee into being; and it had unanimously approved the strengthened position of the General Council, as a result of the London Conference. But the Germans of section 1 threw the French to the side of section 12 by treating them with disdain for their utopianism. Section 6 was displeased with the address that had opened the controversy, and wanted it modified. Others of the opposition were unsympathetic to autonomy, reasoning that if each section had the right to put its own construction on the rules and regulations of the International, it would be rudderless.²⁰ And leaders of the opposition set their sights in different directions. To Mrs. Woodhull section 12 was but the seed of a mighty organization by which she hoped to rise politically. On the other hand, T. Banks and J. T. Elliott, delegates of sections 9 and 26 respectively, did everything possible to set up in New York an independent Workingmen's Party with a moderate socialist program. The line-up against section 1, therefore, was far from homogeneous.

Section 1 brought charges against section 12. It had written to London without notifying the Committee; it had organized sections on the basis of its own program; it had violated the principles of the International by raising "the old prejudices of nativism (Know Nothingism);" finally, its approval of free love perverted the aims of the Association. "All this talk of theirs is folly," exclaimed Fred Bolte, the cigarpacker, at a meeting of section 1, "and we don't want their foolish notions credited as the views of this society. This nonsense which they talk of, female suffrage and free love, may do to consider in the future.

¹⁹ I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26, Philadelphia, letter of November 20, 1871. State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, letter of October 21, 1871.

but the question that interests us as workingmen is that of labor and wages."²¹

Two Federal Councils

With a majority of the delegates in the Central Committee behind it, section 12 demanded further modifications in doctrine. William West declared that women's equal rights were preliminary to any change of relations between capital and labor.²² In other words, the International had to shift its emphasis. Instead of advancing the cause which had been the reason for its foundation, it had to further the equal rights movement which, in its scale of values, was quite subordinate. The stress laid by section 12 on what it regarded as the primary aim of the Association had an even deeper meaning. If women's rights had the first claim on the efforts of Internationalists, there was no need to pursue the emancipation of labor. This of course spelled the abandonment of their program.

At last the foreseen split occurred. At the meeting of November 19 the Central Committee, in a surprise move, first adopted a resolution that a section had no right to a delegate unless two-thirds of its members were wage earners, and then voted, nineteen to five, to adjourn *sine die*.

The outvoted delegates constituted themselves a central committee.²³ They agreed to meet on December 3rd at the old headquarters in the Tenth Ward Hotel, at the corner of Broome and Forsyth Streets. But their rivals set a reorganization meeting on the same day and at the same place. Sorge tells us that they advanced the time of meeting by one hour, during which they resolved to organize a provisional federal council, scheduled a congress for July 1872 and reaffirmed the two-thirds rule.²⁴ This was tantamount to a coup d'état.

Before the above business was finished, the opponents arrived. Sorge said they came "in full force;" and according to Elliott, representing section 26, they were about twenty or more. Newspaper reporters counted twenty-five.²⁵ A mad scene ensued, lasting fully twenty minutes. Sorge said the antagonists were determined "to upset everything we had done and begin anew. It was with great difficulty that we succeeded in preserving enough coolness to prevent actual violence. Our appeals proving fruitless, we adjourned and the opposing party went

to another locality where according to newspaper information they formed a counter 'Federal Council.'"²⁶

Elliott's report to section 26 tallied in general with Sorge's account to the General Council. "When I presented my credentials with the other applicants," Elliott wrote to Philadelphia, "we would not be received but referred to a committee at which all demurred and a scene of confusion ensued."²⁷ Conciliation was futile, said the reporter of the *New York World*.²⁸ The reporter of the *New York Standard*, with a sense for the dramatic, painted a scene not unlike that at a baseball game when players and managers are at odds with one another and with the umpire. "Their passions were at fever heat," he wrote, "and they raved and shouted like mad men. . . . How the affair did not result in broken heads and bruised limbs is a matter of wonder to all engaged after it was over."²⁹

The opposition retired to another locale where they proceeded to form their own organization. After choosing a committee to correspond with American sections and with the General Council, they abolished the two-thirds test, considering it a barrier between workers and other classes, and fell in with the request of section 2 to hold a funeral procession in memory of Communards.³⁰ An account of the cortège has been given in an earlier chapter. For the present purpose it should be recalled that interference by the police was an unexpected service to the dissident sections. On December 18, 1871, they formed a rival Federal Council. Since it met either on Prince or Spring Street, it got the name Prince Street or Spring Street Council. We shall refer to it as such.

There were now two Federal Councils. Supporters of section 1 portrayed the two as "the party of Workingmen, demanding to treat exclusively the cause of labor, and the party of 'reformers,' demanding to treat and talk on the affairs of the universe."³¹ Each said that it alone represented the International in America; and each looked to London to decide in its favor. The Spring Street Council accused its antagonist of dictation, of setting class against class, of taking no account of woman's just claims to equality. Section 12 went so far as to call its opponents "a set of ignorant aliens." Elliott said they were tools of section 1. Their council, he wrote, was "simply being a

²¹ Letterbook, f. 79-80; *New York World*, November 2, 1871.

²² *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, November 25, 1871.

²³ *Ibid.*, December 16, 1871. They were E. Grosse of section 6; T. Banks of section 9; Dr. G. Stiebling of section 13; T. Millot of section 14, and H. Charnier of section 30.

²⁴ Letterbook, f. 80-81.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 81; I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26, letter of December 5, 1871.

²⁶ Letterbook, f. 81-82.

²⁷ I.W.A. Correspondence, section 26, letter of December 5, 1871.

²⁸ December 4, 1871.

²⁹ December 4, 1871.

³⁰ *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, December 16, 1871.

³¹ I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

spasmodic effort on the part of a few Commonists [sic] to hold and possess the control of our Association in their own interests."³²

The Federal Council at the Tenth Ward Hotel stated its case quite differently. In its report to London on December 17, 1871, it claimed to speak for "the *Workingmen's* Sections and the Workingmen's cause," for the following reasons: "We stand on the principles and statutes of the I.W.A. and nothing else. We want to preserve to our movement here the character of a *Labor* movement, which it surely will and would lose under the auspices of Section 12. We insist on maintaining the 'International' in this country as an organization of *Workingmen*, not as an incongruous body of all kinds of reformers, schemers and talkers."

The Federal Council then etched the lines between itself and its adversary. The sections tied to the Tenth Ward Hotel, it said, were "composed almost exclusively of wage laborers and trades unionists." Those standing with Spring Street were "shopkeepers and so-called independent men belonging to the middle class." The bulk of their members had "no connection whatever with the organized Trades and Labor Unions, and therefore necessarily no influence at all in genuine Workingmen's circles except by hard talking and high sounding phraseology." Several Spring Street sections, the Tenth Ward Council continued, were made up "exclusively of middle class men (small bourgeois)." Most of their sections had "men of all classes," with the "small bourgeoisie" in control. They had "more leisure to accept the offices and more money to make little sacrifices. . . . Their appeals, calls and proclamations address themselves therefore preeminently to the *citizens* and only in second place or even later to the workingmen."³³

The men at the Tenth Ward Hotel lost no time in publicizing their case. A memorandum, written by Bolte, accused "the Bogus reformers" of having sidetracked the Central Committee with their particular hobbies. The main issues of the International were beyond their understanding. Their demands of woman suffrage and woman's rights, said Bolte, were not of great moment to the labor movement. This did not mean that the Federal Council he spoke for lacked interest in questions regarding women's place in society. It believed that women should have the same rights as men. At this point Bolte also explained its position on the ballot. His argument was as follows: "Capital governs the elections, rules the legislature as well as any other thing, consequently the workingmen, who are not the lucky possessors [sic] of the all mighty dollar, never will gain much by performing his [sic] duty on

the election day, but will lose his [sic] time only." The International in America, under these conditions, had but to further the organization of workers and enlighten them on class consciousness.³⁴

Bolte's reasoning, if carried to the end, terminated in political apathy. If the ballot was a time-consuming business for workers, they had to concern themselves with problems of economics. In other words, pure trade unionism was their best alternative to political action, even on an independent basis, as long as their organizations were weak.

In another public statement, an "Appeal to the Workingmen of America," the Tenth Ward Hotel Committee reviewed the history of the split. The major portion of the "Appeal" served as the core of a later address, issued on the eve of the first congress in July 1872. The purpose of the full statement was to prove that what it referred to as the party of reformers had placed itself beyond the pale of the International.³⁵

The Tenth Ward Hotel laid down the conditions of re-union. They were three in number: "1. Only the labor question to be treated in the organization; 2. Only new Sections to be admitted, when at least two-thirds of their numbers are wage-laborers; 3. Section 12 and Sections formed on its 'appeal' to be excluded."³⁶ Anyone familiar with the causes of the split could tell in advance that reconciliation was unlikely on these terms.

The case of the two American Federal Councils came in due course before the General Council. Its ruling will be examined after a quick look at the size of each party in the dispute.

The Two Federal Councils after the Schism

An earlier, liberal estimate credited the International in the United States, at its height, with a maximum membership of 5,000. Conservative figures put the number of sections at twenty-seven or thirty, toward the end of 1871.³⁷ Three months later Eccarius informed the General Council that the two parties together had forty-one sections.³⁸ The count probably dated from the end of January 1872. Continuing our previous high average of one hundred members to a section, our total would be above 4,000. An undated letter of Elliott, written probably in April 1872, claimed thirty-eight sections for the Spring Street

³⁴ A copy of the memorandum, in Bolte's hand, is in I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Letterbook, f. 83. See also the *Appeal to the Workingmen of America*, in I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

³⁷ *New York Standard*, November 23, 1871; *American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register* (New York, 1872), XI, 414.

³⁸ MSS. Minutes, February 20, 1872.

³² *Ibid.*, letter of January 1, 1872.

³³ Letterbook, f. 82-83.

Council, with thirteen new ones in the course of formation, but credited only twelve to the Tenth Ward Hotel.³⁹ With the same allowance of one hundred to a section, the aggregate membership, based on Elliott's data, was over 5,000. But this, it should be said again, was the highest point ever reached by the International in America. The actual figure was probably much lower.

The American press seems to have leaned to the side of Spring Street as the break developed. The bias may be explained by the influence of reformers in editorial offices. "The most atrocious slanders are set afloat against some of our members and their honesty," Sorge wrote to London, "and nearly the whole press is favoring our opponents, instinctively feeling that by a victory of our opponents the organization of the International in this country would lose its aggressive point, its purity as a labor organization."⁴⁰

Spring Street had the advantage at the start. The fact that a number of its members were in the limelight helped its recruiting. Several of them, Drury and Banks among them, attended the women's suffrage convention in Washington. Elliott was occupied with the Labor Reform Convention in New York. Others were busy in the still surviving National Labor Union. Even foreign language groups were enlisted, despite a spirit of nativism at Spring Street. Of the six sections admitted in December 1871 and January 1872, one was Spanish and another Italian. In the eyes of those who prized civil liberty, Spring Street became a symbol of the right to assemble by compelling the police to revoke the ban on its procession in honor of the Communards.

The large turnout seemed likely to spread its reputation to the four corners of the nation. Elliott is our authority that it was "receiving letters continually from all parts of the country, asking for information, documents, etc." It went on enrolling sections, "three from Baltimore, one from Washington and others. One of the Baltimore sections is composed principally of spiritualists." The additions raised the number of sections to forty-three in February 1872, not counting a trade union of jewelers.⁴¹ From February to April, Spring Street lost three sections. Elliott omitted the total membership, for reasons that may be surmised. Either the records were incomplete, or the figures concealed skeleton sections.

The split almost crippled the Council at the Tenth Ward Hotel. It lost to its rival nearly all its native members; and it was without a press. The *Socialiste* went with Spring Street. Fear of infection forced

³⁹ I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

⁴⁰ Letterbook, f. 87.

⁴¹ Elliott's letter of February 13, 1872, I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

the Tenth Ward Hotel into an aloofness from those who contemplated an alliance for "Progress and Liberty." In the fluid society of the Gilded Age it was proud of standing for the "rights of labor" and for the "fruits of labor."⁴² These were its hallmarks of purity and its distinction from other groups.

The General Council's preoccupation with problems springing up after the Commune delayed consideration of the American question. Furthermore Eccarius was filibustering it by withholding facts from his colleagues. They finally saw it in perspective after hearing the report of the subcommittee that had been appointed. More delay, moreover, might have made it impossible for the Americans to send delegates to the forthcoming Hague congress.

The two Federal Councils were meanwhile going their separate ways, each calling in question the other's right to represent the International in America. The delay of the General Council was regarded as an offense by the Tenth Ward Hotel. Its head men had built up the organization, infused it with whatever energy it had. They could hardly remain calm while they suspected a plot to replace them by newcomers whose aims were at crosspurposes with theirs. Consequently they were sensitive to any oversight or mistake in London. Thus they spoke out against the appointment of Benjamin C. Le Moussu, a former Communard,⁴³ as secretary for the French sections in the United States; they resented the direct correspondence between sections and the General Council "on matters of general business instead of through the Federal Council";⁴⁴ and they were provoked by the dispatch of official documents to J. W. Gregory of section 9 that had been in the van of the secession movement. The fact that the documents happened to fall into the possession of section 12 was all the more exasperating. It was all a mistake, Marx explained.⁴⁵ But the damage had been done. Sorge, directly involved in the matter, was inclined to hold Eccarius guilty. The Tenth Ward Hotel was up in arms; and its report of January 7, 1872, read like a reprimand.

The older of the two Federal Councils had come out of the split with only a minority of the sections. They were, however, disciplined; and they observed a single program. Though they conceded increases to Spring Street, they disparaged their value. Most of its recent additions, they said; had "no correct idea of the principles of the International."

Recovery was slow at the Tenth Ward Hotel. Early in 1872, it

⁴² Letterbook, f. 88.

⁴³ A dossier on Le Moussu is in Archives nationales, Paris, BB²⁴ 863, S. 79-6268.

⁴⁴ Letterbook, f. 88.

⁴⁵ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 50 f.

announced fresh gains in California, Pennsylvania, Illinois and New York. But it was losing ground in the trade unions, not so much by its own failings, as by their wobbly condition. It cited several examples. In the anthracite regions of Pennsylvania, "The miners have agreed to a reduction of their wages during 1872. The Carpenters and Joiners National Union is dissolved." The Workingmen's Union of New York showed a marked decline. The only societies that were intact were the Plasterers and Painters, the Bricklayers, and the Arbeiter Union.⁴⁶

The Verdict of the General Council

The General Council entered into the American affair on March 5, 1872. Marx first read the subcommittee's report and then introduced a set of resolutions. They ordered the two Federal Councils to re-unite and abide by the conclusions of an American congress; new sections, with small memberships, to merge; all sections and affiliated societies to send delegates to the congress, set for July 1, 1872. Its functions were to choose a federal council and draft the rules of the organization in the United States, which on no account were to conflict with those of the International. The resolutions also suspended section 12 until the next general congress, for the reason that its course of action conflicted with the ends of the Association; sanctioned the two-thirds rule; and, in observance of the regulation voted by the London Conference, instructed sections to discard names suggestive of sects.⁴⁷

The American affair brought into the open the feud that had been festering in the General Council. No sooner had the resolutions been presented than Eccarius and several English members set upon them. Their principal target was the two-thirds test. There was no danger that the International would be taken over by middle class people, said Eccarius. He agreed with the English that no class ought to be prevented from joining.⁴⁸

He had apparently hoped to hinder a settlement. As the corresponding secretary for the United States, he had received documents that he kept from the subcommittee. In fact his entire behavior throughout the affair showed that he had prejudged it in favor of the Spring Street Council. Immediately after the meeting of March 12, when the resolutions were voted, he announced that he would not comply with them. He would sooner resign as secretary than send them to New York.⁴⁹ The following week he read a statement from

⁴⁶ Letterbook, f. 87, 96, 98.

⁴⁷ MSS. Minutes, March 12, 1872. The resolutions were published in full in the *New York World*, April 15, 1872, and in *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, May 4, 1872.

⁴⁸ MSS. Minutes, March 12, 1872.

⁴⁹ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 51 f.

the Spring Street Council, that imputed misrepresentation of facts to those who had indicted it for propagating doctrines foreign to the International.⁵⁰ He obviously had Sorge in mind. But he also had in his possession testimony which contradicted the statement. By April, when Marx again raised the American question, he had evidence that Eccarius had been acting in a treasonable manner toward the International. He had abused his official position by setting aside its decisions; and he had inflamed feelings at Spring Street by writing it that someone was withholding its letters from the General Council.⁵¹ Nothing was better conceived to turn the new Federal Council against the resolutions.

To accuse a man like Eccarius of faithlessness must have been a painful experience. He had been with the Association from the start, both as a founder and as its general secretary. Its trials had been his burdens, even at the cost of his livelihood. His was not a creative mind; but once others had mapped out the course he could be counted on to follow it. But events had pushed the organization into a perilous position. The attackers were without and within. Apart from governments, there were Jura anarchists, English federalists and American autonomists.

In such a critical period Eccarius was not only wanting in candor. He was aggravating the discord. And he had allies among the British members of the General Council. John Hales confessed having written to Elliott that had he known of the statement read by Eccarius, the resolutions might never have passed.⁵² Hales was then general secretary. Coming from such a source the letter had the effect of hardening the resistance of Spring Street to a reconciliation.

The revelation surprised members of the General Council. Marx charged Hales with serious misconduct. The minutes are silent on what others may have said. Relations between Hales and his colleagues thereafter became almost insufferable. During the debates on the revised rules the Council was planning to present at the Hague congress he fell out with the majority over the issue of a responsible executive.

A subcommittee was meanwhile investigating his record. On July 23, 1872, the General Council adopted its recommendation to suspend him, until the judicial committee reported.⁵³ Further inquiry into the charges against him ended abruptly when the Council began preparing the next general congress.

Insiders were led to believe that Hales and Eccarius had arrived at

⁵⁰ MSS. Minutes, March 19, 1872.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1872; I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

⁵² I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

⁵³ MSS. Minutes, May 11, July 16, 23, 1872.

some understanding on the American affair. When Marx had finally come to this conclusion, he made a frontal attack on his old friend that lasted several meetings. He accused Eccarius of having acted in the American affair according to his own whims. Most culpable, in Marx's opinion, had been the sowing of strife between the two Federal Councils. Eccarius said in his defense that he had been the victim of censure for some time. First, he had been berated for publishing a report on the London Conference, even though there had been no further reason for withholding the facts. Now he was blamed for the blunders of others, namely, Sorge, the General Council and Marx. Sorge was at fault for having insisted on excessive demands and on the two-thirds rule; the General Council, for its undue delay in mediating; and Marx, the chairman of the subcommittee, for not having convened it sooner.

Eccarius resigned as secretary for the United States, and was replaced by Benjamin Le Moussu.⁵⁴ Section 1 was of the opinion that, but for Eccarius, many among the dissenters might have fallen in with the verdict of the General Council.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, May 7, 11 and 21, 1871. On the estrangement between Marx and Eccarius, see *Marx Chronik*, 452, where reference is made to Marx's attempt at reconciliation, insisting, however, on Eccarius' blunders and refusing to surrender the right to criticize. In this connection, see the letter of Eccarius to Liebknecht, May 20, 1872, *Die Neue Zeit*, Jahrg. 21, II, 47-49; Engels' letter to Liebknecht, May 27-28, 1872, Marx-Engels, *Briefe an A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht, K. Kautsky u. Andere* (Moscow, 1933), I, 74-80.

CHAPTER VIII

Two American Federations

International Setting of the American Split

The schism among the American sections was an indication that the First International as a whole was giving at the seams. As has been shown, this was the effect of external assaults and internal dissensions. To the detriment of the Association, the two disabling causes seemed to converge like a two-pronged campaign. But there was no apparent connection between them. Suffice it to say that, after September 1872, the International had two important antagonists: The new Holy Alliance, in the shape of the League of Three Emperors, spoken of previously; and the organization that grew up around the anarchists who had been expelled by the general congress that year. In addition to these adversaries, but acting independently, were smaller bodies. The noisiest was the French Federalist Section of 1871, made up of eccentrics, including survivors of the defunct French Branch in London. Refused admission to the International,¹ the Section issued an abusive declaration against the General Council's dictatorial methods.²

Signers of the declaration also lent their names to a pamphlet of a Universal Federalist Council of the International Workingmen's Association and of Republican Socialist Societies adhering. This was a self-constituted executive committee, without an organization or membership behind it, which set itself up as the successor of the General Council. The twelve page brochure,³ defending autonomy, was looked upon by American dissenters as the program of a large secession movement.⁴ But this was not so. The signatories acted like the caucus of a big party. Actually they were an odd assortment of former and would-be Internationalists,⁵ whose guiding ideas on economics and society were basically like those of the American seceders, that is, anti-banking, anti-industrial, anti-monopolist and anti-authoritarian.

¹ MSS. Minutes, October 17, 1871.

² *Déclaration de la section française fédéraliste de 1871 siégeant à Londres* (London, 1871).

³ *Universal Federalist Council of the International Workingmen's Association and of Republican and Socialist Societies Adhering* (London, 1872).

⁴ See *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, June 1, 1872.

⁵ MSS. Minutes, May 21, 1872; *Le Socialiste*, June 15, 1872.

There was nothing in the declaration of the Universal Federalist Council that the Spring Street Council could not have endorsed.

This is not to imply that both Councils saw things in the same way. The fact was that, unlike the Universal Federalists, the Spring Streeters had faith in the use of the ballot, in a country like America. They had confidence in the American promise. What mattered was the right course for its realization.

Had the break in America started sooner than it did, the verdict of the General Council might have been different. Not that theoretical questions could be reduced to second place. The history of the International shows that they were fundamental in the heated debates that developed within it. But it was possible to keep the Association functioning around issues immediately affecting the workers. To have expected a uniform adherence to an established set of principles would have made the founding of the organization altogether impossible. At the time of the schism in the American sections only a fraction of their members shared Marx's views. That was also true in Europe. Even among the "purists" at the Tenth Ward Hotel his ideas were a source of disagreement.

Unfortunately the American rift intensified just as the International in Europe was facing its greatest test from governments and anarchists. Confronted by such formidable foes, its executive body acted decisively. The resolutions on the American question had to be as they were, Marx said in their defense, in order to keep the organization in its proper limits. Not that one side was entirely right, and the other entirely wrong. A study of the dispute led him to conclude that both were in the wrong. The resolutions, he further pointed out, were consistent at once with the rules of the International and with the recommendations of section 6 that had fallen in with Spring Street. The suspension of section 12 was the only action for which the Council held itself responsible. That was unavoidable, Marx explained, because the section's address had spread discord.⁶

A Balance Sheet of the Federal Councils

The two Federal Councils received London's decision at the end of March 1872. In terms of the settlement, individuals and sections reexamined their positions, with the result that lines shifted during the following months. Some came back to the Tenth Ward Hotel; others retired from the movement, in order to court causes that seemed to them more worthwhile. The final outcome, if both sides are considered

⁶ MSS. Minutes, May 21, 1872.

together, was a decrease in the number of adhering Internationalists in America.

Figures on the respective memberships, announced by the Spring Street council on June 16, 1872, gave it the advantage. The Tenth Ward Hotel claimed 950 members at its first congress in July. At the other congress, held by the seceders in the same month, thirteen sections were represented. But at a preliminary meeting on May 19, 1872, about twenty-five sections had sent delegates, according to the press. Nine had meanwhile withdrawn. On the assumption that all the other sixteen sections had maintained their ties with Spring Street until the split was final, their total membership, at the previous rate of one hundred to a section, was 1600 at the utmost. The New York *Herald* put it at 1400.⁷ Both sides together, therefore, had approximately 2500 members, or about one-half of the calculated maximum in the American International at its height. Undoubtedly, the breach was a cause of the decline.

The conditions for unity, proposed by the General Council, led to a reconsideration of loyalties. Members of section 2 (French) affiliated with Spring Street, but the influential Simon Dereure, a Communeard, went back to the Tenth Ward Hotel. That seems to have induced a few French sections to withdraw from Spring Street. Section 7 (Irish) and 10 (French) awaited the decision of London before choosing their side. An English speaking section in St. Louis rejoined the old Council; and new sections in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco applied to it for admission.⁸ In sum, while many scorned the solution of the General Council, others regarded it as the best possible to pull the two sides together, at least at the edges.

The Tenth Ward Hotel seems to have profited by its zealous defense of trade unions and strikers. Perhaps its rival's efforts to supplant it stimulated it to greater activity. At any rate, it wrote to London on March 3, 1872: "We endeavor to augment our influence in the trades unions, by responding willingly to their frequent calls for speakers...."⁹ And again on June 25: "We are constantly watching the events and in communication with the trades on strike. Speakers from our midst visit and address the numerous meetings and our movement is certainly improving."¹⁰

The strike referred to was for the eight hour day, and was the

⁷ May 13, 1872.

⁸ Letterbook, f. 93, 97, 102, 105, 113; MSS. Minutes, May 28, 1872; Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 50; also the letter of Le Moussu to Bolte, May 28, 1872, in I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

⁹ Letterbook, f. 91.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 111.

biggest on record at that time. Paced by the Eight Hour League, it fanned out from New York City to Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Ohio. At its peak, toward the end of May 1872, it involved at least 100,000 workers,¹¹ in thirty-two trades, fourteen of them connected with the Eight Hour League. George McNeill tells us that at the height of the strike as many as fifty unions were holding weekly mass meetings in New York City.¹² In other words, it was a movement of uncommon dimensions. In view of the large number of strikers, it was comparatively free from violence. Almost all the building trades were victorious, as well as several others. But the gains were wiped out later.

The strike revealed several traits that marked American labor in the post-Civil War decades. It showed, in the first place, a readiness on the part of trade unions to overlook craft differences on the immediate questions of wages and hours. Even conservative labor societies offered "active support in whatever emergencies may arise."¹³ As the strike moved to a climax, labor delegates from distant cities arrived in New York, with fraternal greetings and promises of assistance. The aid received from workers in the east was sufficient to convince the Eight Hour League that it could sustain a strike of six months. In the second place, the strikers discovered that the employing class was strong, with vast reserve power. There is some evidence of a cause and effect relationship between the eight hour strike and the tendency among industrialists of the 1870's to form a "united front," to borrow the phrase of the silk manufacturers. In the third place, labor's anti-radical sentiment was manifest. Whether the sentiment was an effect of the Paris Commune could not be determined. Be that as it may labor societies avoided strikers' meetings at which Internationalists were present, or opposed parades because they would likely serve "communist" propaganda.

This did not mean that American organized labor as a whole had been inoculated against principles that went beyond immediate issues. The New York Workingmen's Union, for example, assessed the strike as "the glorious movement now on foot for the emancipation of labor." The president of the New York Eight Hour League regarded the labor dispute as palpable proof of the broad conflict "not alone in this country, but all over the globe."¹⁴ The *New York World*, responsive

¹¹ The *Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 10, 1872; Florence Peterson, *Strikes in the United States, 1880-1936* (Washington, D.C., 1938), Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin no. 651, 19.

¹² *The Labor Movement. The Problem of To-Day*. (New York, 1888), 146.

¹³ *New York World*, June 1, 1872.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, June 1 and 10, 1872.

to popular opinion, observed editorially that behind the special causes of strikes lurked "the larger universal impulse which throughout the civilized world is determining the advent . . . of a greater radical change in the relations, not of labor with capital exactly, . . . but of the laboring classes with the employing, directing, and accumulating classes."¹⁵

Measures adopted by the Republican Party, then in power, benefited the strikers. For it was the year of a presidential election. Grant's administration had been so polluted by corruption that it offended the moral standards of citizens. People were outraged by revelations that predatory politicians had abused their official positions. Neither the President's reputation, nor the esteem the Party had earned for preserving the Union was considered sufficient to compensate for the loss of integrity. Something more was required to assure victory at the polls. This was the reason for the acts of the Republican administration in behalf of the workers. First, the President directed department heads to enforce an order of two years standing, that a reduction of the working day should not be taken to mean a cut in wages. Second, a special law of Congress reimbursed the workers the losses due to the non-enforcement of the order. Then there was the overwhelming vote for Representative Hoar's bill which set up a labor commission. Finally, the President refused to employ troops against strikers. This courting of labor had two motives, according to the Tenth Ward Hotel: "The ruling party of the administration is trying hard to gain a foothold in Workingmen's bodies and in our Sections," and "to secure Workingmen's votes."¹⁶

Sorge's reports to London furnish vignettes of the strike. The Eight Hour League had been slow to accept the advice of the Tenth Ward Hotel to organize shops and factories and place them under a committee. Even so, the League called for the broadest unity, regardless of political affiliations.¹⁷ Its speakers were among the first to admit the soundness of one big organization, subject to a single command. There was ground for the belief that such a combination was in the making. Funds, messages and delegates were received at the League's headquarters; meetings resounded at the news of employers' capitulations; more unions were swept up by the strike-wave; and a determined drive was on to create central trade and labor councils. The Tenth Ward Hotel informed London "that a new life of activity has sprung up almost everywhere amongst the working classes." The General

¹⁵ May 20, 1872.

¹⁶ Letterbook, f. 85 and 112.

¹⁷ *New York World*, April 8, 1872.

Council could be helpful to the strikers by hindering the hire of workers in Europe.¹⁸

Divisive forces, however, checked labor unity from developing further. There was, to begin with, the rooted bias against persons and organizations that had a radical label. Then the threats of employers to blacklist strikers were frequently effective. Also, a thoughtless act by Theodore Banks of the painters' union came near wrecking the united ranks of the strikers. In a letter to the press he announced that, unless the eight hour day was granted, there would be a general conflagration.¹⁹ That was sheer madness. Something of the immediate effect of the letter was communicated to London: "Several German and French Sections, the prov[isional] F. C. and numerous trades unions, the Workingmen's Union and many others protested against and repudiated it, whilst only one Printer's Lodge made a feeble attempt to defend him [Banks]. The whole press of course took advantage of it in denouncing less its author than the trades organizations and the Internationals. . . ."²⁰

Banks' letter cost him popularity among workers. Many of them withheld their support of a demonstration, led by him and several of his friends on June 10, 1872. Absent, too, were sections adhering to the Spring Street Council. At a meeting on June 21, to protest against police violence,²¹ he stayed in the background, while delegates of the Tenth Ward Hotel sat on the rostrum.²²

The seeming shift in the balance of forces persuaded the Tenth Ward Hotel to issue the previously mentioned eight page "Appeal to the Workingmen of America." Spacing out the story of the split, it cast on the Spring Street Council all the blame for the failure to restore a united branch in America. Accordingly, the "Appeal" left it "to the true men of labor, to *judge between us. . . . There the reformers, here the laborers.*"²³

The "Appeal" went out to all sections in the United States, without regard to their affiliation. With it was a call for a congress, which requested them to elect delegates in accordance with the rules of the International and the General Council's decision on the American question.

¹⁸ Letterbook, f. 109.

¹⁹ New York Star, June 5, 1872.

²⁰ Letterbook, f. 109-10.

²¹ The Workingman's Advocate, June 22, 1872.

²² Letterbook, f. 110-11.

²³ A copy of the "Appeal" is in I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

Vain Attempts at Unity

The call was dated June 2, 1872. For three months the two Federal Councils had had before them the resolutions sent by London. The older one voted to abide by them. They set ablaze Gallic tempers in section 2, affiliated with Spring Street. Members resigned in protest against the further deferment of unity. Others refused to have any dealings with the starched functionaries at the Tenth Ward Hotel. Since the members fluctuated between the two Councils, the section decided to follow a policy of watchful waiting, and declared itself independent of both.

Spring Street had meanwhile drafted its own terms of unity. It would consider consolidation "upon the basis of the General Rules," but not on the ruling of the General Council. The opposition thus set up between the general rules and the general settlement made agreement almost impossible. Committees of the two Councils sat in conference, each one resting squarely on its conditions. The Tenth Ward Hotel insisted on the resolutions; Spring Street was just as resolved to shelve them. Its argument was that if questions of principle and organization came up, and they could not be sidetracked, they "would surely create a division again." Moreover, it contended, the General Council had failed to take due account of all the evidence.

Twilight descended on re-union. The Tenth Ward Hotel said it was ready to "make every possible concession in regard to form and individuals," but it would not "compromise about principles or purity of the Association."²⁴ Spring Street confirmed its position by voting unanimously the resolutions of section 9. They scored the action of the General Council as "extremely arbitrary and contrary to the spirit of justice," and the two-thirds test as "a departure from the general rules of the International Workingmen's Association."²⁵ To these charges section 12 added others, namely, that the Council was exceeding its power by filling its own vacancies, and imposing on America "foreign systems," totally inconsistent with native conditions. The novel aspect of the accusation was a heavier accent on chauvinism and an ample spread of uncomplimentary epithets.²⁶

By the middle of May the split was virtually final. Negotiations broke down, and the two Councils made plans to erect separate organizations. The Tenth Ward Hotel scheduled its congress for July 6, in

²⁴ Letterbook, f. 94 and 102.

²⁵ New York Herald, April 22, 1872.

²⁶ New York World, April 16, 1872; Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly, May 4, 1872; New York Herald, May 20, 1872.

New York; Spring Street decided to meet in Philadelphia, the second Monday in July.

The Equal Rights Party

Before the two congresses met, a political event of some consequence set off a tempest in the Spring Street Council. Eleven of its members had signed a call for a convention in New York City on May 10, 1872, to nominate Victoria Woodhull for the Presidency. The call had a crusading ring. The government, it charged, had fallen short of its promises to secure equality and justice for every citizen. It was a political despotism, in so far as a minority appropriated political power, although the majority paid for its maintenance. It was "a conspiracy of office-holders, money-lenders, land-grabbers, rings and lobbies, against the mechanic, the farmer and the laborer, by which the former yearly rob the latter of all they produce." That kind of government could not be tolerated. The signers addressed themselves to all types of reformers, including temperance advocates and woman suffragettes. Everyone was entreated to take up the cause, who believed that "the principles of eternal justice and human equity should be carried into our halls of legislation, our courts and market places." The reformation, once begun, would "expand into a political revolution," which, by purifying the country of demagogism, official corruption and party despotism, would make it possible to have "a truly republican government which shall not only recognize but guarantee equal political and social rights to all men and women, and which shall secure equal opportunities for education to all children."²⁷

The program was only vaguely socialistic. It was designed to be a guidepost for those who had grievances to redress, who dreamed of a renaissance America that would inspire other peoples with its principles, as it had done in the past. There was nothing peculiarly proletarian in the document, although it went out to workingmen as well as to farmers.

The call for a convention to set up a third party seemed well-timed. Grangers were electing legislators who pledged to enact laws against monopolies. A National Labor Reform Convention had met in Columbus, Ohio, on February 21, 1872, and nominated Judge David Davis for president. His withdrawal brought down the recently formed Labor Reform Party.

The convention to nominate Mrs. Woodhull assembled in Apollo Hall on May 10 and 11, 1872. Five hundred delegates from twenty-two states — *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* claimed seven hundred — represented suffragettes, radical organizations and sects of many types.

²⁷ The call for the convention appeared in *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, April 20, 1872, and was reprinted on May 11, 1872.

among them spiritualists and atheists, free thinkers and free lovers. Judge Reymart of New York, in the chair, lent the dignity of his office to a venture with which he was not in complete accord. Delegates from sections 9, 12 and 26, all allied with the Spring Street Council, had a vital part in mapping policy. Apart from Victoria Woodhull, exulting in the honor she would soon rise to, there were Theodore Banks and J. T. Elliott, both labor leaders, Andrews, West and a number of old colleagues of the New Democracy. Andrews had the task of writing the platform.

The convention created an Equal Rights Party, of which the candidates for president and vice-president were respectively Victoria Woodhull and Frederick Douglass, Negro leader and journalist. The twenty-three articles of the platform demanded a constitution that would serve the changed conditions of the people; a civil and criminal code, uniformly applied throughout the nation; the referendum, proportional representation, and woman suffrage; government control of all public enterprises; public ownership of mines and waterways; distribution of public land to settlers only; a uniform currency, based on public credit; taxes on wealth and property; free trade; and international arbitration. The planks bearing on labor were minor, of the character identified today with the welfare state. They called for regulation of labor conditions, employment of the unemployed, and public improvements. Finally, one article attempted to reconcile faith in America's manifest destiny and belief in universal government as the final form everywhere.²⁸

The name, Equal Rights Party, might have reminded older people of the political body, with the identical name, promoted by mechanics, farmers and laborers in the 1830's. But the only resemblance between the two organizations was their title and short existence. The new party exhumed the ashes of its predecessor, but could not revive the flame.

Differences sharpened in the Spring Street Council. Drawn into one camp by hostility to the same persons and principles, seceders discovered that they were underwriting objectives they had never sanctioned. Undoubtedly they were at one with the rest of the Council's partisans on the major reforms listed in the program.²⁹ But they were unsympathetic to woman's rights, spiritualism and atheism. Nor could they see any consistency between manifest destiny and universal government.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, May 25, 1872.

²⁹ E.g. the platform adopted by section 26 in I.W.A., Philadelphia, section 26; MSS. Minutes, March 11, 1872.

Founders of the Equal Rights Party contended that it was the concrete expression of the principles of the International. But sections 2 and 10, both French, could not reconcile the platforms of the two organizations. The Party did not satisfy their sentiment of internationalism.³⁰ They finally bolted on the ground that the International could not be made an instrument of an American political party. The Association, they held, had one purpose in the United States, namely, "the organization and consolidation of the working class."³¹ Section 10 wrote to London that the old Federal Council was dedicated to the cause of labor, while politicians of the new one were counting on the International to advance their ambitions. Their eccentric doctrines, the section added, were a barrier between them and the workers.³²

The meetings at Spring Street on May 12 and 19 were stormy. The delegate of section 2 charged that designing demagogues were running the Council for political ends. The announcement of sections 2 and 10 on May 19 that they were resigning from the Council set off an outburst of mutual recrimination. Elliott's voice, rising above the din and the rap of the gavel, moved to accept the resignation. Osborne Ward, who had a mandate from a section in Terre Haute, Indiana, proposed that the differences should be referred to the congress of July. But Elliott was in no conciliatory mood. He rebuked the French, called them visionary and subservient to the General Council. They retorted with somewhat similar reproof. Elliott's motion had no sooner been voted than six other delegates announced the withdrawal of their sections. Then sections 6 and 13 said that they, too, would leave, unless section 12 remained suspended as the General Council had decided.³³

A few brief remarks on section 6 are in order. Though it leaned to the credo of Ferdinand Lassalle, it had recommended to the General Council terms for settling the American dispute.³⁴ Two of its members, Siegfried Meyer and August Vogt, agreed in principle with the Tenth Ward Hotel. But for the dissension between them and Sorge, they might never have joined the secession. The Apollo Convention, however, made their stay at Spring Street intolerable. Consequently, they

³⁰ The heavy penalties, imposed on socialists in Germany, moved the sections to express their solidarity with the victims. *Le Socialiste*, April 13, 1872. Similarly the measures of the Sagasta ministry against the International in Spain inspired section 2 to send an address to convey its sympathy. *Ibid.*, May 11, 1872. A manuscript copy of the address, together with other original documents, are bound with Oscar Testut, *Le dossier de l'Internationale* (Paris, ca. 1873), f. 39. The volume is in the National Library, Paris.

³¹ *Le Socialiste*, May 18, 1872. See also the *New York Herald*, May 13, 1872.

³² MSS. Minutes, May 21, 1872.

³³ *New York Herald*, May 13 and 20, 1872.

³⁴ MSS. Minutes, May 21, 1872.

persuaded their section to break off relations with it, unless it ratified the London verdict.

The fact that the above sections were reluctant to go back to the Tenth Ward Hotel indicated that the American split was not entirely due to differences of outlook. The seceders from Spring Street planned to unite in a third federal council. But pressure from London as well as local intermediaries imposed a temporary peace. It can be anticipated that, after having taken the road back to the Tenth Ward Hotel, several sections could not long abide its rules, and again left.

American Confederation of the International Workingmen's Association

The Spring Street Council was reduced in size after the Apollo Hall Convention. At least nine sections had withdrawn; and the remaining thirty-four, by its own count, had approximately 1500 members. Certain sections were probably paper organizations. A contemporary journalist likened Spring Street to "a ship that lost its masts." Its only hope was "to get to the port of Philadelphia about the second Monday in July."³⁵

Urged by John Hales,³⁶ Spring Street took the final step toward independence. On June 16, it disavowed all connection with the General Council for the reason that "they do not represent and are not doing the duty vested in them by the International Congress in accordance with the principles set forth in the general rules."³⁷ It was the general opinion that an American federation should be founded, native in inception and intent, and free from foreign influence. One of William West's counts against the Tenth Ward Hotel was its subserviency to a foreign body. The International in America was an importation, charged F. B. Hubert. It had been brought over by "men of foreign birth." Americans alone, he insisted, had the right and duty to chart its course.³⁸

The congress assembled by the Spring Street Council met in Philadelphia on July 9 and 10, 1872. The thirteen delegates, representing as many sections, had decided in advance to set up an independent International. They debated taxation, but could not come to an understanding either on its source or purpose. William West took a position somewhere between laissez-faireism and anarchism. He believed that

³⁵ *New York Herald*, May 20, 1872.

³⁶ See his letter to Hubert, published in *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, June 15, 1872.

³⁷ *New York Herald*, June 17, 1872.

³⁸ I.W.A., section 26, Philadelphia; MSS. Minutes, July 8, 1872.

"if a government could not run itself and pay its own way it had no right to exist." The delegates split three ways on the question. Several stood for taxes on property; others favored an inheritance tax; the rest would make every form of wealth pay.

The Preamble and Platform of the new organization was a paste-board job. It drew heavily on the Preamble of the First International and on programs of domestic and foreign parties. The delegates held themselves "to be in harmony with the working people of the world," but they reserved "the right to regulate this branch of the International Workingmen's Association without dictation from the General Council in London, England, except so far as its decrees may be consistent with the orders of the General (or Universal) Congresses of the Association, in which we may be represented as from time to time they may be held." The name of the branch was the American Confederation of the International Workingmen's Association, which had a kinship to the family of societies that included the Jura Federation and the Universal Federalist Council.

The articles of the platform were copied from the programs of the International and the Equal Rights Party. Most of them virtually duplicated statements of the first organization; the others repeated tenets of the second. Apart from its insistence on political and social equality, regardless of sex, creed, color or condition, the platform had a number of familiar demands, such as nationalization of the land and of the instruments of labor, "without harm to any one," for the purpose of securing general employment; reduction of the hours of labor; free, compulsory, secular, scientific and professional education; abolition of standing armies; and cooperative production with the view of superseding capitalism.

The rules drawn up at Philadelphia corresponded to the autonomous character of the American Confederation. They were consistent with "the largest freedom to the individual members of the sections and to the sections as well." The organizational plan was geographical. Starting in the election district, it rose to municipal and state councils and finally to a federal council. The structure had been designed by section 12 in its controversial address of September 1871. The Federal Council could make its own decisions, subject to a referendum. It could, for example, choose officers, appoint its own bureau of labor statistics and create a lecturing and publishing department; but it was divested of executive power. The constitution, drafted after the congress, restricted the prerogatives of officers and committees. Signifi-

cantly, there was no mention of the two-thirds rule for admitting new sections.³⁹

At least a third of the twenty-four members who made up the Federal Council had been in the public eye. Among them were William West, Theodore Banks, John Elliott, Robert Hume, Joshua Ingalls, and F. B. Hubert all of whom have appeared in the course of the narrative. West was also one of the three delegates chosen to represent the American Confederation at the forthcoming congress of the International at the Hague. Meanwhile the Federal Council was instructed to draft "an address to the working people," for the purpose of vindicating its independence of the General Council.⁴⁰

The address complemented the proceedings at Philadelphia. In addition to its wide notice in the press, it was published as a pamphlet in an edition of 5,000. Its understanding of the International was "a world's Trade Union, seeking by industrial organization and political instrumentalities to effect those industrial and social changes in the subsisting relations of employers and employees which are indispensable to the emancipation of labor." The final goal lay somewhere in the area staked out by Warren, Kellogg and Proudhon. In common with them, the policy-framers of the Confederation aimed at resolving capital-labor relations by merging "both of these parties to production and distribution." Their preferred society was static, undisturbed by technological improvements. Producers and distributors were the same persons, exchanging goods on an equitable basis. In essence that was Proudhon's mutualism which Colonel Greene had endeavored to Americanize. The aim, it should be recalled, stemmed economically from simple commodity production; socially and philosophically, from eighteenth century egalitarianism. That type of order was also in the mental horizon of Wendell Phillips. Whatever disturbed the equilibrium was destructive of liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Such was the social philosophy that shaped the thinking of the Federal Council's address. All persons were eligible to join the American Confederation. "Employers and employees, all professions and all classes," said the address, "all meet upon the same platform and together seek the accomplishment of the same common objects." But if the primary purpose was to coalesce classes, why dwell on the word "Workingmen" in the title? The address justified it by saying that the lofty aim of the Confederation was "the emancipation of the working

³⁹ The Constitution was published in the press. A printed copy of it is included in I.W.A., section 26.

⁴⁰ The above survey of the congress has been based on the official account, *Proceedings of the First Congress of the American International Workingmen's Association held in Philadelphia, Pa., July 9 and 10, 1872* (New York, 1872).

classes, male and female, industrially and socially, by the attainment of political power." However, it did not count on government to anchor the good society, for "the true remedy," it maintained, "is less government." The reasoning was that "to get rid of government a new one must be substituted in the place of the old;" and to arrive at that, political action and political power were indispensable. Government would be instrumental in executing an equal division of labor and an equal distribution of its products, "in such a manner," said the address, "that the kind, degree and reward of labor could be adjusted to the disposition, abilities and wants of the laborer, and all persons find employment." Thus "a greater degree of happiness must of necessity result to the working classes than they now enjoy from the mercenary and menial character of the relations subsisting between them and their employers."

The address finally appealed to men and women to unite into sections in their election districts. It did not shut the door to a reconciliation, if a new General Council were elected. But peace with the existing one was out of the question.⁴¹

The American Confederation was apparently preparing for a long life. But it had a weak start. A generous estimate would allow its thirteen sections at the utmost five hundred members at the opening of the congress. It had no status in the trade unions. Its following was among artisans and small middle class intellectuals. Not the least of its assets was the notice the press took of its proceedings and pronouncements. Also Eccarius and Hales were its mentors abroad. By the end of 1873 it was an insignificant body, cordial to the anarchist International, that had been hastily put together after the Hague congress in September 1872.

The North American Federation

By the end of May 1873 it was obvious to the Tenth Ward Hotel Council that reconciliation with Spring Street was a lost cause. The Tenth Ward had accepted the General Council's resolutions without reservations, and ruled out concessions that involved principles. When compromise failed, it went ahead with plans for its first congress. A bid for peace with those who had been estranged by personal differences was seen in Sorge's stepping down from his post of corresponding secretary for the exterior. Charles Praitsching took his place.

Seceders from Spring Street, it was remarked above, did not return directly to the Tenth Ward Hotel. A number never came back; others

⁴¹ For the text of the address see the *New York Herald*, August 5, 1872.

who did went off again. Though the old Council recouped some of its earlier losses, it never regained the following it had had before the breach. From its first congress in July 1872 to the dissolution of the International four years later, it slowly disintegrated.

The first congress met at the Tenth Ward Hotel, July 6-8, 1872. Here in a small room, decorated with red banners, crowded twenty-three delegates who claimed to speak for twenty-two sections and 950 members. Twelve sections, or a majority, were German; four were French; three others were Irish, Italian and Scandinavian. Only three sections were English speaking. Here was undeniable evidence to prove Marx's point that the American branch was composed principally of foreign born. Of the twenty-three delegates, eleven were members of the Federal Council. Bolte and Sorge were present, the first as corresponding secretary, and the second as delegate of section 1. Also in attendance were Carl Klings from Chicago, P. Hass from Philadelphia, the ubiquitous Osborne Ward, mandated by an American section in Brooklyn, and Hermann Meyer, a political refugee, a friend of Sorge and of the late Joseph Weydemeyer.

Robert Blissert, an Irish tailor, presided. He was a proxy for a San Francisco section. His opening remarks at once exalted labor internationalism and lashed those who deformed it into political pantomime. Karl Speyer's report for the provisional Federal Council surveyed the history of the International in the United States and the events that had culminated in the split. Praitsching then reviewed the Federal Council's correspondence from the start. It was learned from these accounts that the Communards abroad had received from the American sections well over one thousand dollars. More than two hundred and eighty dollars had been turned over to victims of the Chicago fire and to strikers in Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

Bolte laid four main propositions before the congress. They were as follows:

- "1. To establish a definite Federal Council.
2. Lay down Rules and Regulations for the organs of the I.W.A. in North America.
3. Define the position of the I.W.A. in this country toward the existing political parties.
4. Provide for a delegation and memorandum to the Congress of the I.W.A. in Europe."

The first two were voted unanimously. They founded the North American Federation and fitted it out with an organization and rules. A Federal Council, elected for one year, and continued in office if no

annual congress was held, was empowered to represent the Federation at home and abroad, collect dues, issue monthly and quarterly reports, refuse admission to societies and branches, recommend to the General Council the suspension of sections, canvass opinion on vital questions and call annual congresses. Sectional activity had to be attuned to the purpose of the International, namely, "The organization and centralization of the laboring masses for protection, advancement and complete emancipation of the working classes." Sections could submit projects for the consideration of the other sections, but it had to be done through the Federal Council. They had to send monthly reports to their local committees, in addition to labor statistics and facts on working conditions. Above all they had to stand well with the trade unions and further their growth. The principal functions of the local committees were to collect dues and special assessments, as well as to serve as intermediaries between sections and between them and the Federal Council.⁴²

The architecture of the North American Federation resembled a pyramid, with the sections at the base and the Federal Council at the tip. The Council was supreme. It was quite otherwise in the American Confederation (Spring Street); its Council's acts could be reversed by a referendum.

The third proposition was voted without any dissent. A resolution spelled out the position of the International in America in relation to the political parties. The congress made no distinctions among them. The radical and liberal, the Democrat and Republican were all put in one category, that is, the political agencies of "the ruling class." Consequently the preliminary steps of the International in America were, first, to loosen their grip on the workers, and, second, to unite them "for independent common action for their own interest, without imitating the corrupt organizations of the present political parties."

Proposition four was the occasion for a long debate between the Germans and the French. The first demanded that the congress should choose the delegates to the forthcoming congress at the Hague; the second insisted on reserving that right to the sections. Outsiders might have supposed that the issue was secondary. To insiders, however, it was important; it implied the touchy question of centralism versus autonomy. The difference might not have taken an acute form in the American sections, if anarchism had not assumed an alarming aspect in the International as a whole. In the light of this threat to its structure and program, the contention in its American branch acquired con-

⁴² The rules and regulations were published in a four page leaflet, of which a copy is in the I.W.A. papers at the State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

sequence. "It is a question of the life or death of the International at this Congress," Marx wrote urgently to Sorge on June 21, 1872.⁴³ A choice of the wrong delegates might do great mischief.

Here is the appropriate place to recapitulate that in the Franco-American sections members were divided by their social and political philosophies. They were either Proudhonists or Icarians, Jacobins or Blanquists; or, without knowing it, they were indebted to two or more of these schools. As far as is known, the Marxist viewpoint had made little or no progress among them. Whatever set of principles they subscribed to, they stood by the rights of sections against the claims of a higher authority. There was also an undercurrent of suspicion that the Germans, in the majority, might select delegates only from their own members.

The congress finally decided, 18 against 4, to appoint two delegates to the Hague, their expenses to be paid by the Federation. Then by a vote of 7 to 5 the sections were permitted to send proxies. This was a concession to the minority. The two delegates chosen were Friedrich Sorge and Simon Dereure. The first was probably the best known of the Internationalists in the United States, and the one held in estimation by the General Council. The second, it will be recalled, had sought asylum in the United States after the fall of the Paris Commune. It is difficult to associate him with a particular party. His economics resembled Proudhon's; his politics, Blanqui's; and his social vision, Cabet's. Germans in section 1 remembered that Dereure had led insurgents of section 2 back to the Tenth Ward Hotel.

Instructions were drawn up. The delegates were "to give complete support to the General Council," and to stand for "a strong centralization, for without it we would be powerless against the more and more increasing centralization of the ruling class." As a peace offering to the French and perhaps to others at Spring Street, the congress added: "But we are convinced that after the total abolition of all class rule the federative system will prevail, i.e. the independent communal administration."

The draft of instructions was the last act of the congress. It left undefined its position on the question of Chinese labor, raised by a section in San Francisco. The delegates were content to reject slavery in any form, including indentured Chinese labor, and urged the enactment of legislation to prevent it.

The Federal Council, at first limited to nine members, was later increased to eleven. The Germans had three; the French and Americans, two each. Both American delegates were Irish. The rest repre-

⁴³ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 59.

sented other national groups. With one exception, all resided in or near New York City.

The disagreement over the manner of electing delegates to the Hague congress had a sequel. Section 2, which had stood out for their selection by the sections, declined to contribute to their expenses. This encouraged sections 10 and 29 to do likewise. Contending that the congress had acted illegally, section 2 voted to assess its members for the purpose of sending its own delegate. It was suspended and its case referred to the Hague congress.⁴⁴

The delegate of section 2 was Arsène Sauva, a tailor by trade and a utopian socialist by persuasion. He had arrived in the United States around 1860 to join the Cheltenham Icarians at St. Louis. After the Civil War, in which he had served on the side of the North, he returned to France, enrolled in the International, fought in the Franco-Prussian War and defended the Paris Commune. Soon after its defeat he came back to the United States. His tailorshop on Bleecker Street, New York City, was a rendezvous of Internationalists and ex-Communards.

In view of the decisive nature of the Hague congress it merits consideration in an account of the International in America. It was the first general congress, attended by delegates of American sections; and it is particularly material to the present story because it made New York City the administrative center of the entire Association.

⁴⁴ New York *Herald*, July 29 and August 5, 1872. Our account of the congress was based on the official record in Letterbook f. 132-37. The reports in the New York *World*, July 7-9, 1872, were also useful. The resolution on political parties was later published in *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, September 27, 1873.

CHAPTER IX

The Hague Congress

The Anarchist Challenge

The International aged rapidly after 1871. By the end of 1873 it had survival value only in the United States. In Europe it was dead, but enemies would not let it rest. They mobilized temporal and spiritual forces to wage war on a ghost.

The General Council's report to the Hague congress reviewed the history of the offensive since the eve of the Franco-Prussian War. At first Louis Napoleon was the master mind of the operations, the report tells us. After his fall, the King of Prussia took up where he had left off. Regimes changed in France, but not the policy of exterminating the International. This was exemplified by the memorandum of Jules Favre, the Foreign Minister, to the great powers, which called for a European crusade against the Association. Even though the Gladstone Ministry refused its cooperation to the French government, it showed its true intentions, said the General Council, by its police action against sections in Ireland.¹

The report was silent on the split in the organization. Yet, it was common knowledge that the Hague congress would pivot on this problem. Its primary cause was anarchism, represented by the Jura Federation, contended Marx and Engels. There was a conspiracy to capture control of the Association. The plot, they were convinced, dated from 1869, when the General Council had admitted to the International Bakunin's Alliance of Socialist Democracy with the understanding that it would dissolve.² Instead of breaking up, it had spread its branches inside the Association. One of the counts against the Alliance was its character of Free-Masonry, through which Bakunin had expected to seize power at the congress of Bâle. When

¹ *Offizieller Bericht des Londoner Generalrats, verlesen in öffentlicher Sitzung des Internationalen Kongresses*. Haag, September 6, 1872. The French text was published in *La Liberté* (Brussels), September 29, 1872. For the English text see *Report of the Fifth Annual Congress of the International Workingmen's Association*, September 2-9, 1872.

² See a facsimile of the resolution of the General Council, in Marx's hand, in Gustav Jaechh, *Die Internationale* (Leipzig, 1904), Supplement. See also MSS. Minutes, March 9, 1869, and *Mémoire présenté par la fédération jurassienne de l'association internationale des travailleurs à toutes les fédérations de l'Internationale* (Sonvillier, 1873), *Pièces justificatives*, 45-57.

that had failed, his disciples proceeded to spread confusion in the International. Since 1870, they had been in open conflict with it, the indictment declared, and were proclaiming Bakunin's anarchism. But their revolutionism, said Marx and Engels, was akin to quixotism. Their promise to abolish the state at the very outset was absurd extravagance, for the state was certain to return in all its forms.³

Michael Bakunin was half-child, half-demon. Everything about him seemed extreme: his elephantine size, his elation and optimism, and his generosity that knew no distinction between thine and mine. Withal he was undisciplined and reckless, capable of make-believe and boldness, of artifice and artlessness. His prejudices were as petty as his heroism was sublime. He could excite admiration and acrimony. He was unable to sit long enough with an idea to fathom it. As restless as he was impotent, he jumped from one project to another without completing any. His discursive and unfinished articles and essays are an illustration. Destruction was his object. In the first days of a revolution he was a dynamo. He drafted programs, raced hither and yon, decrees in hand, shouting and gesticulating, while cigarette smoke erupted from him as from a volcano. When barricades were abandoned for deliberation, the raging giant was but dead weight. Alexander Herzen said that he "took the second month of pregnancy for the ninth."⁴

At home in conspiracy, he charted one secret society after another. Nearly all of them were paper plots, but the Alliance seems to have been real, conceived as a sort of invisible general staff to replace the visible General Council and command the recruited legions of the International.⁵ Not the urban proletariat, but the *moujik*, the poor peasantry, was his elemental revolutionary force. Nor did he discount the services of jail-birds and brigands. If let loose, they would cast society into deeper disorder and chaos. This discovery of ultra-revolutionary virtues in what the General Council termed "the depravities of the déclassés,"⁶ he owed to Wilhelm Weitling, just as he owed his anarchism to Proudhon. Out of this strange medley of intrigue, strategy and anarchist philosophy sprang the Revolutionary Catechism associated with the name of the Russian extremist terrorist, Sergei Nechaev. A careful student, however, has laid its authorship to

³ *L'Alliance de la démocratie socialiste et l'association internationale des travailleurs* (London, 1873), 11 ff., 17 ff., 118-35.

⁴ *My Past and Thoughts* (New York, 1926), V, 150.

⁵ E. H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin* (London, 1937), 421 ff.

⁶ *L'Alliance de la démocratie socialiste*, etc., 64 f.; Michael Dragomanov, ed., *Michail Bakunin's sozial-politischer Briefwechsel mit Alexander Herzen und Ogarjow* (Stuttgart, 1895), 352 ff.

Bakunin.⁷ He had a capacity to deceive and made no secret of it among friends. Nine months after he had entered the International, he wrote to Alexander Herzen, the Russian liberal, that if he flattered Marx it was because the time had not come for declaring war on him.⁸

A racist strain ran through Bakuninism. The Russian anarchist was a Germanophobe and an anti-Semite. His racism became, for his disciples, a kind of sanction for disdaining the General Council, in which their principal adversaries were German or Jewish. Even the choice of the Hague for the fifth congress was ascribed to nationalist motives; its proximity to Germany would permit the Germans to dominate it.⁹

Meanwhile the General Council was strengthening its hand against the anarchists. But there was a division in the Council over its extended powers. A majority, made up of Marxists and Blanquists, would have nothing less than a strong executive that could act quickly in emergencies. A minority, headed by Hales, shared the Jurassian opinion, that is, a Council that would play solitaire with statistics. Besides these two positions in the Council, another view was advanced by a minority in the Belgian Federation, which would abolish the executive. The Council rejected outright the Belgian proposal, and amended the rules, giving it the right to suspend branches, sections, federal councils and federations. It could furthermore change the time and place of a general congress, or substitute a private conference, if a majority of the federations sanctioned that. Then the Council voted the motion of Edouard Vaillant, Blanquist and Communard, to incorporate in the rules the resolution of the London Conference which prescribed political action¹⁰ in order to repudiate anarchist abstentionism.

In the Marxist offensive against the Bakuninists high priority was given to a report of a subcommittee on the Alliance.¹¹ It was an out-and-out indictment of Bakunin's society as a plot to wreck the

⁷ Carr, *op. cit.*, 380. For the Catechism see *L'Alliance de la démocratie socialiste*, etc., 89-96; and Hélène Izwolsky, *Michel Bakounine* (Paris, 1930), 235-41. For an interesting portrait of Bakunin see Alexander Herzen, *op. cit.*, V, 131-46.

⁸ M. Dragomanov, ed., *La Correspondance de Michel Bakounine* (Paris, 1896), 291.

⁹ Cited from the official *Bulletin* of the Jura Federation in Guillaume, *op. cit.*, II, 303 f. The French secret service in Geneva picked up the racist theme, rather than programmatic differences, to explain the quarrel in the International. On August 17, 1872, a French secret agent reported to the Prefecture in Paris: "The International is about to divide itself into two large branches: the Latin race, under the direction of Bakunin; and the Anglo-Saxon race, under that of Karl Marx." Archives de la préfecture de police, Paris, Dossier Bⁿ 1175, No. 89, Dossier Williams, Marx's pseudonym.

¹⁰ MSS. Minutes, June 11, July 2, 9, 10, 23, 1872.

¹¹ This was the basis of *L'Alliance de la démocratie socialiste*, etc., of which the authors were Marx, Engels and Lafargue.

International. Hales demanded more evidence. The whole affair, he countercharged, was "an intrigue on the part of one secret society to build itself up by the destruction of another." Engels replied that the report had been drafted with the same spirit as all other reports of the General Council. The evidence Hales wanted, he said, was in the correspondence of the Council. The vote of twelve to eight to accept the report¹² showed that the Council was far from united on the issue of Bakuninism.

While the Council was selecting its delegates to the congress, William West appeared, asking to be heard. That was refused him for the reason that he represented the suspended section 12. The Council's six delegates to the Hague congress were Marx, Eugène Dupont, Auguste Serrailier, Walery Wroblewski, Frédéric Cournet and Dr. Sexton, an author of rationalist tracts. Both Dupont and Serrailier were artisans. Cournet, a Blanquist, had served in the police department of the Paris Commune; and the Pole, Wroblewski, as a general in its army.

It is a significant commentary on the widespread stories, regarding the fabulous fortunes of the International, that the minutes of the General Council end with the report of an empty treasury. A loan by Engels permitted it to meet its obligations.¹³

Whether the Marxists could have set the stage for the Hague congress without the help of the Blanquists is an arguable point. Certainly the alliance with them, which did not survive the congress, was a source of some discomfort to leaders of the organization who mistrusted them. The same leaders also regretted the Council's procedure which did not discriminate between autonomists and anarchists. A settlement with the former, they contended, would have been preferable to an agreement with Blanquists. But this course had little support in the Council.

Anxieties Stirred by Hague Congress

Sorge traveled to the Hague via London. Arriving on August 19, he lost no time in meeting leading members of the General Council. At Marx's home he made the acquaintance of Léo Frankel, a jewelry worker, Charles Longuet, journalist and teacher, Benjamin Le Moussu, a draftsman, and Engels. The first three had been Communards. The following evening, Sorge attended a session of the General Council, where cordial greetings awaited him, save from Hales and Eccarius.

¹² MSS. Minutes, August 6, 1872.

¹³ *Ibid.*, August, 1872. The last two meetings lack complete dates.

Sorge learned that its majority was French.¹⁴ He also witnessed a case of its inner dissension. It had to order Hales, the preceding secretary, to turn over records in his possession, which it needed for its report to the congress.¹⁵

The congress opened September 2 and closed midnight September 7. Verification of credentials took three days, so drawn out was the dispute over mandates. Ninety-five of them were distributed among sixty-five accredited delegates. The biggest delegations were the French with eighteen, the Germans with fifteen, and the Belgians with seven. The British and Spaniards had five each; and the Dutch and Swiss four each. Two were Austrians. Five were distributed among the Danes, Hungarians, Australians, Irish and Poles.¹⁶ Twenty-one of the sixty-five delegates were members of the General Council, six of them representing it directly, and the other fifteen holding mandates from sections. Among the fifteen were Frankel, Longuet, Le Moussu and Engels. Others were Maltman Barry, a Tory journalist, George Eccarius, John Hales, Frederick Lessner, a tailor, Gabriel Ranvier, an artisan, Edouard Vaillant, an engineer, and J. P. McDonnell, a journalist. Equally known delegates were Désiré Brismée from Belgium, J. Philipp Becker, the labor organizer of Geneva, Victor Dave, mandated by a section in the Hague, James Guillaume and the watch engraver, Adhémar Schwitzguébel, both representing the Jura Federation, Paul Lafargue, founder of anti-anarchist sections in Spain, Karl Farkas, a Hungarian labor leader, and F. A. Sorge. Guillaume and Schwitzguébel had come with instructions to secede should the congress refuse to seat any of their allies or reject the anarchist position. There were also two delegates, known by the pseudonyms, Swarm and Walter, the one sent by a section in Toulouse, the other by a section in Paris. Both were in the service of the French police.¹⁷

Marx was the object of attention and curiosity. His name was on every lip. The correspondent of the London *Standard* reported that he

¹⁴ MS. report, in German, submitted to the North American Federation, "An die nordamerikanische Föderation der Internationalen-Arbeiter-Association, Bericht über die Delegation zum fünften allgemeinen Kongresse im Haag," signed by Sorge. This is a summary of the fuller report of the congress, also in manuscript. Both reports are in the Library of the University of Wisconsin. They have been translated by Hans Gerth and published under the title, *The First International. Minutes of the Hague Congress of 1872, with Related Documents* (Madison, Wis., 1958). Our references here are to the original reports.

¹⁵ MSS. Minutes, August 20, 1872.

¹⁶ See the distribution of delegates given by Stekloff, *op. cit.*, 228.

¹⁷ Archives nationales, BB²⁴ 792, S. 73-3987, Dossier on Dentraygues; *Procès de l'Internationale. Compte rendu des débats devant la chambre de police de Toulouse* (Toulouse, 1873); also Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 97 f., 106. The list of delegates was published by the congress, *Liste nominale des délégués composant le 5^{me} congrès universel, tenu à la Haye, du 2 au 7 septembre 1872*.

was "pestered by requests for interviews from people in all countries and politics."¹⁸ This was the first time he attended a congress of the International.

Italians and Russians were absent from the list of delegates. The Conference of Rimini, it was pointed out above, had broken off relations with the General Council. The president of the Rimini Confederation, however, was present as a spectator. Not a single Russian section was represented. Bakunin himself was not a delegate; he would have risked arrest during the journey from Switzerland, where he was then staying. On the other hand, the congress admitted three delegates from the United States; and mandates from five American sections were held by as many delegates.

The congress caused some anxiety in Holland. Wives of delegates, for example, Mrs. Jenny Marx and Mrs. Laura Lafargue, were compared with *tricoteuses*,¹⁹ as if their sole amusement was to watch heads fall while they knitted. Conservatives in the Dutch parliament, according to the Belgian ambassador, demanded the enforcement of existing laws which forbade international congresses. But it was considered good politics to let matters alone, perhaps to avoid party division and a possible polemic in the press. The Dutch Foreign Minister reassured the Italian and French ambassadors that preparations had been made to prevent disorder. The Hague, at the opening of the congress, in fact resembled a city under martial law. There were twice as many sentries; and troops from the local garrisons patrolled the principal streets.²⁰ To the correspondent of the *London Times*, however, the purpose of the extraordinary precautions was "to protect the delegates."²¹

The story went the rounds that the International was a band of desperadoes. People in higher social rungs spoke of it with fear and warned children to stay off the streets. The common people, according to a dispatch from the Belgian ambassador, were either unconcerned or were inclined to disparage it. On the other hand, the correspondent of the *London Standard* saw "the numerous and respectable company" in the hotel drink "Success to the International."²²

The Hague swarmed with spies of many countries. From a communiqué of the Belgian embassy we learn "that several governments have sent secret police agents to attend the sessions of the assembly

¹⁸ *Report of the Fifth Annual Congress*, etc., 6 and 24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁰ Archives du ministère des affaires étrangères, Bruxelles, Correspondance politique, Légations, Pays Bas, 1872, XVIII, pièces 71, 76, 85.

²¹ September 5, 1872.

²² Archives du ministère des affaires étrangères, Bruxelles, Correspondance politique, Légations, Pays Bas, 1872, XVIII, pièces 85 and 86; *Report of the Fifth Annual General Congress*, etc., 5.

and to keep close watch on the activities of their nationals who had come to take part in the congress. I am told that Russian and Austrian agents are present. The French are naturally in a majority, forming a real squad, commanded by a high police commissioner from Paris."²³ The private sessions of the congress, particularly during the first three days, must have taxed the resourcefulness of the agents. If the reports of the French police on Marx and those around him are an illustration, the secret agents seem to have drawn on incredible gossip or on their imaginations. Félix Pyat, the literary epileptic of the Paris Commune who was not a member of the International, was kept from attending the congress, wrote the police, for fear of arrest and extradition. They made him obedient to Marx's orders, though the two had never had anything in common save a mutual dislike of one another. Fear was the explanation for the absence of General Cluseret who was somewhere in Latin America. Bakunin, who had not left Switzerland, was listed among the delegates by French spies. They even made him and Marx partners in conspiracy.²⁴

A French dossier on Marx exemplifies the reporting of French agents. They pictured him petty and tricky, the braintrust of an underground in France, the purpose of which was to soften it for the German conqueror. He was in a plot to assassinate Thiers and the King of Spain. One spy reported from London that the General Council had loudly applauded Marx's disclosure of the scheme. Other communiqués had him living in grand style at the expense of governments, to which he had been revealing the secrets of the International. His desire to dominate it was in line with his plan of transforming it into a tool of Germany. While he was at the Hague, the reports continued, he was intriguing to foment trouble in Holland in order to give Germany a reason for annexing it. The better to deceive, he spoke in high terms "and without too much violence." The decision of the congress to transfer the General Council to New York, the spies had it, was but a subterfuge, for he had a way of directing the Association from London.²⁵

Fight Against Factions

The contest over mandates foreshadowed the strife over principles. The conflict turned out to be a *mêlée*. The committee on credentials consisting of Marx, McDonnell, Frankel and Dereure, among others,

²³ Archives, affaires étrangères, Légations, XVIII, pièce 85.

²⁴ Archives de la préfecture de police, Paris, Dossier Williams, B*1175, Nos. 81, 94 and 132.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Nos. 71, 75, 77, 81, 87, 89, 90, 98, 103, 104, 108, 113, 114, 117, 119, 121, 123, 124, 126, 133, 134.

opposed the seating of the Spanish delegates for non-payment of dues. Arsène Sauva, sent by section 2 in New York, disputed the mandates of Sorge and Dereure. Sorge was dead set against Sauva; Schwitzguébel, against Vaillant; Charles Alerini, a teacher of physics and disciple of Bakunin, against Lafargue; and Hales, against Barry. The committee laid aside Sauva's credentials from section 2, but seated him as delegate for sections 29 (Paterson) and 42 (Hoboken).²⁶

West's mandate from section 12 caused a wrangle. Speaking for the committee on credentials, Marx leveled charges against the section, that were a summation of the earlier indictment. He recalled its spiritualism and advocacy of free love, its placing of woman's rights above labor's demands, its distortion of the nature of the International, its disdain for the two-thirds rule, and its refusal to comply with the judgment of the General Council, even though it had invited it. Finally, the section had supported the Jura Federation.

West's reply lasted about one and one-half hours. He had traveled four thousand miles out of loyalty to those who had chosen him. Antagonists had slandered his section, but he was proud to be a member. He then reviewed the brief in its defense. Its suspension had been illegal, for the Council had not heard all the facts. That was why Eccarius had been unwilling to forward the decision. He took exception to the charges against his section. It had neither said nor done anything forbidden by the statutes and the resolutions of congresses. There was no reason to consider the woman and labor questions contradictory. He saw them only in their sequence, that is, the emancipation of women had to precede that of the workers. West derided the accusation of free love and spiritualism just as vigorously as he defended the place of the bourgeoisie in the International. They had the experience and the intelligence the movement needed. Consequently, Americans could not abide by the two-thirds test. Furthermore, the General Council could not prescribe what Americans ought to do. In conclusion, he outlined his section's platform.

Sorge brought more charges. To begin with, he said, section 12 had entered the International under false pretenses, the real purpose having been to further Victoria Woodhull's plans. The section's right to hold its views had never been contested as long as it had not ascribed them to the International. Its non-payment of dues was of a piece with the

²⁶ The first part of our account of the congress is based on the summary Sorge prepared for the North American Federation. For the rest of the story we have relied, except where otherwise indicated, on what appears to be the official report of the congress, in German, although most of the debates were conducted in French. The report in manuscript, "Protokoll des 5^{ten} allgemeinen Kongresses der Internationalen-Arbeiter-Association im Haag, September 1872," hereinafter cited as MS. Protokoll.

correspondence it had been having with the Jura Federation and the Universal Federalist Council. Apart from the section's intrigue to capture control in the United States, its endorsement of free love had hampered propaganda among the Irish. He ended with an appeal to the delegates to free the American branch from the obstructions of section 12.

Sauva and Guillaume came to its defense. The first after pointing out the accomplishments of Mrs. Woodhull, said that the General Council had acted hastily in suspending section 12. The second denied any official connection between the Jura Federation and the American split, although he had been in communication with Internationalists in the United States. The rest of his remarks were personal and abusive, particularly with regard to Sorge.²⁷

The congress threw out West's mandate. Only nine ballots were cast in his favor. Hales did not vote, for he had quit the congress after having conferred with anarchists. Eccarius abstained. Also denied were the credentials of the anarchists, Alerini and Nicholas Joukowski, Bakunin's associate in the Alliance.

The long debate over mandates left little time for the big issues. The General Council could count on French, German, Polish, Irish and some British support when the main questions arose. It knew in advance that the Belgians, Spaniards and Jurassians would resist the increase of its power. But with the given line-up of forces it was fairly certain of victory.

The Blanquists were a disturbing element. They were not numerous, but noisy, and biting at the bit to gallop toward revolution, with the International behind it. Though they were in alliance with Marxists against anarchists, they had their own opinion on the purpose of the Association. They were disciples of the romantic Louis Auguste Blanqui, a political revolutionist and a sentimental socialist, who had mastered the art of insurrection. But the laws governing this art had derived from conditions peculiar to France. Their effective operation, moreover, depended on a small, secret, disciplined group, acting under orders from the top command.

The recognized head of the Blanquists in the International was Edouard Vaillant. At first a Proudhonist, he moved over to the Blanquists during the Paris Commune. There political romanticism got its *coup de grâce*. In exile in London, Vaillant found intellectual satisfaction in Marx's writings, but he remained a Blanquist.

²⁷ MS. Protokoll, f. 41-48.

The Blanquists at the congress were a source of uneasiness to Marxists. In the first place, Blanquist influence over French delegates like Le Moussu and Dereure might reduce the majority the Marxists had lined up. Then, they proved to be hard bargainers, expecting due return for any support they gave their ally. Thus, on September 5, they introduced a resolution on political abstentionism, which, in one way, upheld the position of the General Council, and in another, pledged it to their romantic revolutionism. Their prefatory Whereas reaffirmed their faith in barricades and in some mystic force to advance their ends. They demanded that the General Council draft a plan for the next congress on "the organization of the revolutionary forces of the proletariat and of its political struggle."²⁸ But the Council's proposal on political action succeeded in diverting the delegates from the purpose of the Blanquists. Disappointed, they finally walked out of the congress.

On September 5, the congress entered upon its major issues. First, it appointed a committee to submit a report on Bakunin's Alliance of Socialist Democracy. Then it turned to the question of the General Council, which was bound up with the revised statutes to be laid before the delegates. Article 2 empowered the Council to enforce congress decisions and observance of the principles and rules of the Association. Article 6 gave it the right to suspend sections and federations until the next congress.

Autonomists and centralists were in sharp dispute over the articles. The arguments of each side, having been considered elsewhere in the narrative, need be stated only briefly now. Experience showed, said Guillaume in defending autonomy, that the General Council had been to no purpose in economic and political struggles. In fact, its attempt to be the general staff of the organization had retarded the growth of the federations. It had never built barricades, he exclaimed, and the likelihood was that it never would. Guillaume was apparently possessed with Bakunin's style of revolution. Marx replied that he would sooner give up the Council than see it reduced to a letterbox. If sections and federations were free to do as they liked, the Association would become a tool of politicians and police agents. Fear of its authority was unreasonable, he said. It had neither an army nor a budget. Its strongest force was its moral prestige. Without the consent of the Association as a whole it would be powerless. The adoption of both articles by large majorities²⁹ was a staggering defeat for the anarchists.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 64. Their proposal appeared in *La Liberté* (Brussels), September 15, 1872, and in their pamphlet, *Internationale et révolution* (London, 1872), 14 f.

²⁹ MS. Protokoll, f. 64-76.

General Council moved to the United States

The congress had been in session almost four days without having come to the questions upon which hinged the future of the International. When a squabble between Blanquists and British delegates threatened to consume more time, a resolution was presented which called for the transfer of the General Council to New York City. Sorge later said that he and Dereure had been taken by surprise. Of all the proposals at the congress, Engels wrote to Enrico Bignami, editor of the socialist paper, *La Plebe*, "this one alone met with some difficulty."³⁰

The seat of the General Council was neither fixed nor sacred. Still there were good reasons why London had been its home from the start. First, the city was a center of international movements and a refuge of continental radicals. Then, it was the birth place of the International. Finally, the General Council was comparatively secure from persecution in the British capital.

Nevertheless, from 1867 to 1872, members of the Council had been thinking of moving it to the Continent. Marx, himself, at first had Geneva in mind; then he suggested Brussels. But the Belgian Federation preferred to let the Council remain in London. Here Marx tried everything possible to secure it from control either by British trade unionists or by French Proudhonists. After the Paris Commune it faced greater danger from Bakuninists and Blanquists.

It occurred to Marx and his friends that New York City would be the safest place for the General Council. There it would be remote enough from those who desired to capture it. There, too, the branch had survived a serious split and shown bulldog stubbornness in its endeavor to spread over a vast area. Also, men in the top echelons of the International believed that the Council could be more serviceable, if it were located in the country where workers were going by the boat-load. Marx personally favored its transfer to New York City. It would rid him of exhausting labors that were interrupting his studies. By May 1872, he had made up his mind to withdraw from the General Council after the Hague congress.³¹

Engels gave the most cogent reasons for settling the Council in New York. They can be summed up as follows: Party discord had become so severe that the continued presence of the General Council in London would hamper its work; most of its members had grown weary of the steady charges against it and wished to retire; its further stay in the

³⁰ *La Plebe*, October 5, 1872, reprinted in *Critica Sociale*, 1895, 365. I am indebted to my friend, Elsa Fubini, for having provided me with the text of the letter.

³¹ Kurt Mandelbaum, ed., *Die Briefe von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels an Danielson* (Leipzig, 1929), 8.

city where it had already spent eight years might set it in a conventional form; its archives would be safer in New York than in any city on the European Continent; on the other side of the Atlantic was a strong, loyal, genuinely international organization, made up of various national elements. Engels even appealed to autonomists. The proposed residence of the General Council, he said, should satisfy the European Federations that were jealous of interference in their affairs.

Blanquists put up the strongest resistance. Vaillant's reasoning was that the Council would soon be implicated in the quarrels of the American Federation, and just as soon be entangled in American politics. Besides, New York was so distant from the theatre of battle, so far from the countries where the International existed illegally, that the Council would lose prestige as the protector of workers' interests.

The resolution before the congress had three parts, each of which was considered separately. The first part, regarding the transfer of the Council, was adopted by a small margin. Part two, designating New York as its seat, was voted by a good majority. Sorge abstained. He feared that the burden would be too heavy for the young North American Federation. Also among the abstainers were anarchists who wanted the Council to be far from their field of activity. Sauva stood out against the third part of the resolution, which gave the new General Council the right to increase its membership. That, he feared, would add more Germans to it. But his argument did not convince the delegates. The congress then elected the twelve members of the next General Council for 1872. Four were German, three French, two Irish, one Italian, one Swedish and one American.³² The twelve were also members of the North American Federal Council.

Marx versus Bakunin

The amendment in the revised statutes that laid down the policy of labor's independent political action was ratified after a controversy of a theoretical nature. Vaillant, who had drafted it for the General Council, said there was nothing anomalous in the proposed amendment. It was in accord with the Inaugural Address and with the policy adopted by the London Conference. Adolph Hepner, editor of the *Volksstaat*, was more adept in reproving political abstentionists than in refuting them. Guillaume, answering for the anarchists, said that they went beyond abstentionism, in that they aimed at the destruction of the bourgeois state. The only abstentionism they cared for was that recommended by Proudhon.

³² MS. Protokoll f. 77-84; *Association internationale des travailleurs; résolutions du congrès général, tenu à la Haye, du 2 au 7 septembre 1872* (Londres, 1872), 14 ff.

Charles Longuet, Marx's son-in-law, denied Guillaume's understanding of Proudhon. Longuet had retained an abiding admiration for him, even as he had spent long hours over the writings of his father-in-law. He contended that Proudhon's counsel to the workers in 1863 to withhold their support from the bourgeoisie had meaning only if it were placed in a historical setting. The workers at that time could neither assemble nor combine. Politically they were the tail end of the bourgeoisie. Abstention under these circumstances was an earnest way of striking at the Empire. Lapsing into the conditional mood, he asserted that had abstentionism been better applied on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War subsequent events would have been altogether different. The hypothesis was as little enlightening as were his comments on *The Communist Manifesto*,³³ at least as they were reported.

The Blanquists' declaration, vindicating their exit from the congress,³⁴ falls within the scope of the debate on political action. They accused the International of betraying the proletariat, and the General Council of impeding the revolution. Their objective was to take up the mission the International had abandoned and to marshal its forces for the hour of reckoning. The declaration was an expanded version of their statement at the congress on September 5. It was a typical Blanquist document, but it lacked the tom-tom beat of the master's phrases. The defeat of the Paris Commune was in their estimation but the loss of a battle. Revolution could still set Europe ablaze.

Vaillant, the principal author of the declaration, already showed Marxist leanings. He included in his scheme what Blanqui had considered of lesser value, namely, the organization of trade unions, national and international.

The Blanquists apparently spoke only for themselves. Several French delegates, claiming to represent clandestine Parisian sections, publicly dissociated themselves from the declaration, and reaffirmed their faith in the International.³⁵

The principal anarchists were expelled from the International on the last day of the congress. Sorge was in the chair. After the disposal

³³ MS. Protokoll, f. 84-91; *La Liberté*, September 15, 1872.

³⁴ *Internationale et révolution* (London, 1872). Though Dereure's name appeared after their statement of September 5, in which they proposed the barricade as the best of all methods, it would be inaccurate to call him a Blanquist. It is doubtful whether he knew at this time to what socialist school he belonged. Returning to the United States, he remained for a short time in the International, and then joined Sauva in the Icarian movement. He later returned to France where he enrolled in the Labor Party, founded by the Marxists, Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue. Engels, however, suspected him of continued sympathy with the Blanquists. Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 77 f.

³⁵ *La Liberté*, September 15, 1872. Serrailier's reply to *Internationale et révolution* started a small polemic. See *La Liberté*, April 13 and 27, June 8, 1873.

of preliminary business, comprising the sanction of international trade unions, a demand was heard to expel the foremost critics of the General Council. The evening of September 7, Theodore Cuno, representing sections in Düsseldorf and Stuttgart, presented the findings of the committee that had investigated the Alliance. The majority called for the exclusion of Michael Bakunin, James Guillaume and Adhémar Schwitzguébel, all members of the Alliance, and of three others, among them Benoît Malon, the socialist Communard residing in Switzerland. It also proposed to stop further action against five members who had solemnly stated that they no longer belonged to the Alliance.³⁶

The atmosphere of the meeting-hall reeked with acrimony. Roch Spingard, of the minority, mandated by a group in Charleroi, argued that the evidence proved but one thing, the attempt of Bakunin to organize a secret society within the International. On the remaining charges the facts were inadequate. Marx replied that testimony from the Spanish Federal Council and from persons in Russia was sufficiently convincing.³⁷ Called upon to defend himself, Guillaume refused, saying that it would only lend seriousness to what he called "the comedy of the majority." He remarked, however, with an eye to the autonomists, that the committee was passing judgment on them. The conclusion of the majority did not surprise him, for he had anticipated it. Schwitzguébel spoke briefly in a similar vein.

Then Victor Dave read a declaration, signed by anarchists and their sympathizers, which amounted to an act of secession. They would continue relations with the General Council only in matters of dues, correspondence and statistics; and they proclaimed the autonomy of the federations they represented. At the same time, they denied any connections between them and the Universal Federalist Council of London.³⁸

The balloting on the committee's recommendations revealed that party lines were less tightly drawn than had been supposed. Twenty-seven voted to exclude Bakunin, six were opposed, and seven abstained. Twenty-five against nine approved Guillaume's expulsion, and eight did not vote. However, the eviction of Schwitzguébel was turned down, seventeen to fifteen, seven abstaining. Among the seventeen were Dupont, Frankel, Longuet and Serrailier, all in the Marxist camp.

³⁶ MS. Protokoll, f. 103-04; Guillaume, *op. cit.*, II, 345 ff.; *Résolutions du congrès général tenu à La Haye*, etc., 12 ff.

³⁷ The full indictment of the Alliance is contained in *L'Alliance de la démocratie socialiste*, etc.

³⁸ The declaration is given in MS. Protokoll, f. 110-11, and in Guillaume, *op. cit.*, II, 348 f. The two sources differ on the number of signers. The first lists seventeen: seven Belgian, four Spanish, three Dutch, two Swiss, one American; the second has fourteen: five Belgian, four Spanish, two Swiss, two Dutch and one American.

Lafargue and McDonnell, two stout supporters of Marx, abstained. The decision dissuaded the delegates from pursuing the remaining charges.³⁹

The voting record of the American delegates shows striking divergencies. Sorge stood by Marx and Engels on every question, save on the minor one of increasing dues. Dereure had no marked loyalties. At one time he sided with the Blanquists, at another with the Marxists. He abstained from voting on the expulsion of Guillaume and opposed the exclusion of Schwitzguébel. According to the correspondent of the *London Times*, Dereure raised vigorous objection to the list presented for the new General Council.⁴⁰ Sauva followed no particular course. Seemingly bewildered by the warring factions, he knew not which way to turn. He had come to the congress, bent on supporting the General Council, but shifted his position on each issue. He voted for article 2 which empowered the Council to enforce the policies of the International. On the other hand, he rejected article 6 which authorized the Council to suspend federations. He favored the exclusion of section 12, but either abstained on or opposed the purge of the anarchists. After that he signed the declaration of the minority.⁴¹

The Hague congress, fifth in the series since 1866, was the climax in the history of the International. Thereafter it visibly declined. The congress, however, had pointed out directions for labor organizations, which appeared to be in line with political and economic developments. Indicative were its repudiation of anarchism, its emphasis on centralism and its call for independent political action. A historian correctly summed up its resolutions as "the will and testament of the old International to its future heirs."⁴²

The day after the congress minority and majority delegates traveled to Amsterdam. The first claimed to have spoken at four meetings, each one equally successful. Their effect, according to Guillaume, was to lay the foundation of the anarchist International.⁴³ If the four meetings were ever held, they were probably so small that they went unnoticed. Recent research has been unable to uncover anything on them, save what can be read in Guillaume's history and in the official *Bulletin de la fédération jurassienne*.⁴⁴

The meeting addressed by delegates of the majority was reported in the continental and British press, probably because the speakers

³⁹ *Résolutions du congrès général tenu à la Haye*, etc., 13 f.

⁴⁰ September 11, 1872.

⁴¹ See his letter of April 23, 1877, in Guillaume, *op. cit.*, IV, 194.

⁴² Stekloff, *op. cit.*, 253.

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, II, 351 ff.

⁴⁴ See *Bulletin of the International Institute of Social History*, 1951, no. 1, 8.

were then in the spotlight. Among them were Sorge, Marx, Wroblewski, Engels, Dupont, Lafargue and Becker from Geneva. Marx's speech attracted the greatest interest. It was his last official pronouncement on behalf of the organization that had demanded so much of his energy. One paragraph, later a point of controversy among socialists, merits consideration.

"Some day, the workers must conquer political supremacy, in order to establish the new organization of labour; they must overthrow the old political system whereby the old institutions are sustained. If they fail to do this, they will suffer the fate of the early Christians, who neglected to overthrow the old system, and who for that reason, never had a kingdom in this world. Of course, I must not be supposed to imply that the means to this end will be everywhere the same. We know that special regard must be paid to the institutions, customs, and traditions of various lands." In England and the United States, he said, and probably in Holland, the workers "may hope to secure their ends by peaceful means." But "in most Continental countries," he went on, "force will have to be the lever of the revolution. It is to force that in due time the workers will have to appeal if the dominion of labour is at long last to be established."⁴⁵

The final goal, as Marx viewed it, was inferred in the major resolutions of the congress, even in the decision to settle the General Council in New York. For the United States, he remarked, "is preeminently becoming the land of the workers." Half a million of them were going there yearly; and "the International must perforce strike deep roots in this soil upon which the workers are supreme."

The published summary of Sorge's speech unfortunately cannot be verified for its accuracy. Apparently he was confident that labor would some day achieve the aims visualized by early philosophers, Christians and French Revolutionists, namely, "love, peace, liberty, equality and fraternity."⁴⁶

Sorge returned to the United States with a responsibility he had not sought. Whether he liked it or not, the location of the General Council in New York would add to his burdens. Its problems, furthermore, would inevitably beset the North American Federation, for the care of both bodies was in the hands of the same men.

⁴⁵ Most of Marx's speech is reproduced in Stekloff, *op. cit.*, 239 ff. It is given in full in Rudolf Meyer, *Der Emancipationskampf des vierten Standes* (Berlin, 1874), I, 159 ff.

⁴⁶ The report of the meeting in *Algemeen Handelsblad*, September 10, 1872, was republished in English by the *Bulletin of the International Institute of Social History*, 1951, no. 1, 10-15.

CHAPTER X

Breakdown of the International in Europe

Travails of the General Council

The Hague congress got more attention in the American press than any previous assembly of the International. Practically every important metropolitan newspaper, from New York to San Francisco and from Chicago to New Orleans, reported the proceedings more or less briefly, and several even assessed the resolutions. The newspapers that took account of the settling of the Council in America saw in it a symptom of the Association's decline. Its chance of survival in the United States was even poorer, they remarked, for here was the actuality of what it had been striving to attain, as well as a prior faith in the country's inherent capacity to achieve the good life.¹ Few newspapers had the fear of the New York *Commercial Advertiser* that, with the hub of the International in New York City, labor troubles would be intensified. In America the leaders of the International would be at liberty to go on plotting.²

History has not justified the foreboding. But it suited the general framework of conspiracy in which the organization had been set.

The congress was a source of concern to American dissidents. There was despondency in the Spring Street group when it learned that its delegate had been refused admission. But a letter from European rebels, inviting it to their congress, restored its optimism. An alliance of American and European autonomists might prove too strong for the authoritarians. Members of section 2 were low-spirited. The congress had refused to honor the credentials of its representative. Nor did Sauva's detailed letter on the controversy over his mandate give reason for confidence. He had fought in vain, he wrote, to prevent the triumph of his antagonists. His advice was to submit.

The Tenth Ward Hotel rejoiced. But veterans were less buoyant. The congress had placed the entire burden of administering the International on the North American Federation. The task was difficult, even for men more sophisticated than those in the North American

¹ New York *Herald*, September 11, 1871; New York *Journal of Commerce*, September 12, 1871; Springfield *Daily Republican*, September 14, 1871.

² September 9, 1872.

Council. The responsibility had been made even heavier by the revised statutes that had augmented the powers of the General Council. And there were signs that its duties would be arduous. The European Federations were weakening; autonomists and anarchists were in rebellion. At no time, since its foundation, was the International in greater need of experienced leadership than after the Hague congress.

Save in a few cases, the new General Council consisted of men of integrity. Several had shown qualities of leadership on a local scale; others were obscure; and some among the better known were inclined to be provincial, or to subordinate their obligations to their calling. That was defensible, but not conducive to the good functioning of the Council. For instance, Fornacieri, the only Italian in the Council, was so badly in need of work that he could not come to meetings; he had no alternative but to resign. Dereure's oscillation at the congress between Marxists and Blanquists had made him suspect to both parties. On the advice of Engels, Sorge kept from him facts about the French movement, lest he reveal them to Blanquists. Finally, his going south in search of employment compelled him to get a leave of absence.

More vexing was the faithlessness of two members. The recording secretary, E. P. St. Clair, one of the two Irish in the General Council, not only ceased attending meetings, but refused to surrender the official records. The Council had some difficulty in recovering them. Then its treasurer, Levièle, representing the French, absconded with the entire treasury. He confessed his guilt and finally returned the sum; but he had meanwhile tried the Council's capacity to continue operating under distress. Needless to say, the two men were driven from the Council.³

The carpenter, S. Kavanaugh, would hardly deserve notice for any exceptional quality, were he not the sole remaining Irish representative after the expulsion of St. Clair. But the Council had little choice among Irish-Americans.

Fortunately it also had experienced men. Apart from Sorge, there were Karl Bertrand, Fred Bolte and Ferdinand Laurel, all three cigar workers; Konrad Carl, a tailor; and Karl Speyer, a cabinet-maker. All were German, save Laurel who was Swedish. Samuel Gompers, in retrospect, considered them "Brainy men who reveled in life as a test of ability. . . ." He had often sat with them at the Tenth Ward Hotel, working out "plans, policies and theories." The memory of the discussions was like a cherished legacy. "We dreamed together," Gompers

³ I.W.A., General Council. Instructions to Delegates. Addresses to Members, Papers, 1873-74, f. 73-74, 78, 118-20, hereinafter referred to as MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers. The instructions, etc., are in the Sorge papers at the Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

recalled, "and then thrashed out our dreams to see what might be of practical value."⁴

The Council at the outset faced rebuff from Edouard David, one of the French members, and C. Osborne Ward, the only American. Their names had been added as a concession to Sauva and Dereure. But David and Ward turned down their appointments. The first charged that the Council, as a body, was under the thumb of Marx; the second, that it was dominated by section 1 which he likened to a "ring."⁵

The General Council, therefore, had the initial problem of setting itself in order. Sorge had forbidden the placing of his name on the list of the new Council, perhaps to minimize causes of friction. But it had no sooner met than it acknowledged the need of his services. Others had more experience in trade unions; but he was expert in the affairs of the International in America. He had the confidence of prominent European socialists, and was on good terms with the highest men of labor in the United States. Gompers described him as "an able man, a musician of unusual ability. . . ."⁶

Before long factional disputes split the leadership of the International in America. The contest this time was among the victors over section 12. The principal division was between Bolte and Carl, on one side, and Sorge and his supporters, on the other. The first two had grievances against Marx and Engels for attempting to direct the Council by remote control, and for refusing to part with the Association's archives, on the ground that they were "absolutely indispensable" in the struggle against the secessionists.⁷ Critics read this to mean that the two socialists in London showed greater concern for their own reputations than for the International.

The "Fronde," as Sorge termed the inner quarrel, grew increasingly ill-natured as advice mingled with censure arrived from London. In the opinion of Marx and Engels, their knowledge of the situation in Europe gave them the right to map out policies and strategy. They undoubtedly desired to be of service to their less informed and less seasoned successors. But, however well intentioned, their counsel irritated a number of leading American Internationalists. They interpreted it as lack of confidence in their capacity. After all, they thought, they had inherited a weakened organization, as the facts from Europe showed. There, leaders were either in jail, or falling off. Blacklisted in Holland, Alphonse van der Houten, head of the International in

⁴ *Seventy Years of Life and Labor* (New York, 1925), I, 85 ff.

⁵ *Le Socialiste*, October 20, 1872; the *New York Herald*, October 21, 1872; the *London Times*, November 12, 1872.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, I, 84.

⁷ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 97.

Amsterdam, had to find work in England. J. P. McDonnell, secretary of the Irish sections in England, emigrated to the United States. The British Federation was split wide open; and the seceders were led by John Hales, George Eccarius and Hermann Jung, the Swiss watchmaker, an old collaborator of Marx. Also news arrived that the police had wiped out the last remaining sections in France.

In this dismal situation Marx and Engels had to take on burdens they had hoped to keep clear of by moving the General Council to New York. Thus, in 1873, they served as its corresponding secretaries for Spain, Italy, Portugal, England and Germany. Laden with cares, they were at times impatient with what seemed to them a cumbersome executive on the other side of the Atlantic. Its touchy members, however, were offended.

It can be said in their behalf that the impatience in letters from London sounded peremptory. On the other hand, the new Council, with its overdose of green men, might have avoided much bungling, had it shown greater regard for the directives of the two veterans.

Two illustrations may be cited. On November 19, 1872, the Council drafted an address to the Spanish regional congress containing a set of answers to anarchist charges,⁸ as if the leaders on the spot were incompetent to do so. José Mesa, the top figure of the Marxist Federation in Spain, conveyed to Engels the resentment of his colleagues.⁹

Far more detrimental to the International was the manner of appointing agents in France. Its illegality here demanded utmost discretion in communicating with the remaining nuclei. The individual best qualified to designate reliable deputies in that country was Auguste Serrailier, corresponding secretary for France, a person with the experience of a Communard and member of the General Council. But the high executive body of New York, under pressure from its French members, named van Heddeghem its agent in the Paris area, and Ferdinand Argaing in the Toulouse area. The first had not yet been exposed as a French police spy. The second was an unknown, whose name might have been sent to New York from France. The choices were unfortunate for the underground in France.¹⁰

Even the Council's official documents showed negligence. Drafted by Sorge either in bad French or in equally bad English, they were sent out without having been corrected either by Frenchmen or Americans. When Engels cautioned him to be more attentive to their form, he

⁸ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 28-31, 34, 36.

⁹ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 90.

¹⁰ For the documents on the van Heddeghem affair see MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 38-39, 43-44, 76-77; and *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, May 31, 1873; see also Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 89 f.

replied half ironically: "We have neither a Marx nor an Engels. That was why we were a bit uneasy about the transfer of the General Council to New York. . . . Besides, in our opinion, what matters most is the content, not the form. . . . Our European comrades, it is true, will see a difference between the publications of the old and new General Councils; but they ought to remember, and they will, that the new one consists completely of working wage-earners."¹¹

Sorge missed the essential point. Besides, statements of policy by the old Council had frequently been edited before they were issued, a practice which the new one might have followed.

The New General Council at Work

Two overriding reasons had been behind the master plan to transfer the General Council to the United States. The first, already referred to, was the concern lest it be captured by Blanquists or Bakuninists and be made the instrument of their respective conspiracies. The second stemmed out of confidence in the potential of American labor. From European shores, it looked not like a hobbledehoy, but like a vigorous, full-grown body. The fact that it had served to promote the victory of free over slave labor was ground for great promise. Furthermore, as Marx anticipated, the large emigration to the United States would make American labor a vital force. With that behind it, the International could have an important part in world affairs.

Those in the cockpit of the Association were obviously overoptimistic. Misled by the rapid rise of the now defunct National Labor Union, they were inclined to credit American labor with maturity and reserve power, without having taken into account its retarding factors, which inevitably impaired both the North American Federation and the new General Council.

Perplexities harassed the Council from the start. Two of its twelve members, we have shown, renounced their seats. In the following month four others either resigned or were expelled. On October 11 Sorge was called to the post of general secretary. There were also the complications of getting news to and from European branches, many of them illegal. The best that could be done was to designate mandatories. Thus Engels was responsible for communication with Spain. Italy, Portugal and finally with England. Walery Wroblewski took over correspondence with Poland, and Auguste Serrailier with France. They were empowered to settle disputes between branches, suspend members or organizations, appoint officials, collect dues and submit reports to the General Council.

¹¹ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 77, 82.

The records from 1872 on disclose a steady decline of relations between the Council and the European branches. Spies and arrests reduced the International in France nearly to a cipher. Communications with Hungary were kept open through the adroit Karl Farkas; but with Germany and Austria they were less satisfactory.¹²

Despite obstacles, the General Council interchanged intelligence with branches and federations. One of the few available media was a monthly survey, a sort of news bulletin on the life of the International, sent out to agents and correspondents. It supplemented the usual statements that contained the directives and requests of the General Council. Among the items it dwelt on were the need of data on the state of the branches and federations, their finances, their dues and contributions, the conditions of labor in their respective areas, and international trade unionism. Reports from branches and federations were the basis of the Council's circulars.

Finances harassed the new General Council even more than the old. The losses of the Association increased the burdens of the remaining branches. And obligations had not diminished. The Council had to pay printing costs, assist strikers and their families, send relief to widows and orphans of Communards, and meet the normal expense of administration. According to Sorge, not one cent in dues had arrived from Europe by March 2, 1873. His letter to branches and federations on April 25, 1873, opened as follows: "The General Council is absolutely without funds and, not having received any assessments, it has had to discontinue important work. We shall no longer beg what is due us. The federations will have to set down to their own negligence the inevitable consequences of this deplorable state."¹³ The same disheartening news went out on August 11, 1873. "The ordinary receipts of the G. C. are so ridiculously small and withal so irregular, that the postage amount of an active correspondence with the different parts of the world could scarcely be paid. This G. C. was during five months, from January to May 1873, without the means to pay even that postage and had to rely on the good will and sacrifices of its unsalaried officers." Different plans for increasing the revenue of the Council were proposed, but as far as is known no European federation ever paid all the assessments. Several sent only promises.

The North American Federation alone paid its dues in full. Furthermore, its less than 1000 members were called upon to contribute to several causes. There were collections for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, for

¹² MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 14, 35, 38-40, 48-49, 81, 101-02, 128; Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 83 f.; *Procès de l'Internationale*, Toulouse, 48.

¹³ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 21-22, 120.

destitute families of Communards, for strikers in the United States and abroad. The demands seemed never to stop, until Sorge reminded Europeans that apart from its reduced size, the American branch was as proletarian as any in Europe, and that American workers were equally subject to poverty.¹⁴

The new Council's unpublished papers reveal its determination to pull together the Association. No sooner had it reorganized than it wrote to the affiliates, reminding them of the purpose of the International. In keeping with previous policy it drafted a questionnaire on labor conditions and a project for uniting trade unions internationally.

To see the Council at its best, it is necessary to look briefly at its communiqués and its plan for an international trade union body. Its address of October 20, in French and English, though not a masterpiece of composition, was among the first it dispatched to all parts of the organization. It underscored the value of international labor unity under capitalism.¹⁵ Another piece, marked confidential, placed emphasis on the monthly reports of the federations, even laid out their form.¹⁶ For a survey of workers' conditions in Europe and America, the Council drew up a questionnaire which, from the point of scope, was as adequate as any that had previously been sent out to branches of the International.¹⁷ The questionnaire sought answers on wages, hours, time for meals, cost of living, size and condition of shops, unemployment and its causes, number of dependents in a worker's family, living quarters and industrial diseases.¹⁸ Unfortunately, it had to be shelved, probably for want of sufficient funds to defray printing costs.

Among the objectives of the General Council was the establishment of an international federation of trade unions, which had been a primary aim from the start. But nothing had been done. The new Council took the first serious step toward that end. In January 1873, it called on the trade unions to consider its preliminary draft.¹⁹ The main argument had been advanced many times in the United States and abroad. The widened character of the class conflict, said the Council, compelled the trades of separate countries to form a close alliance. The exporta-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 54-55, 67-68.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 1-4; I.W.A. Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

¹⁶ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 4-6.

¹⁷ Cf. the questionnaire of the General Council in 1868, in *Der Vorbote* (Geneva), March 1868, no. 3, 43 f.; and the draft of another in E. Fribourg, *L'Association internationale des travailleurs* (Paris, 1871), facsimile; also one by the Paris Federal Council, in the dossier on the International, Archives de la préfecture de police, Paris, D⁸ 422.

¹⁸ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 117-18.

¹⁹ It was published as a leaflet, under the title, *General Council of the International Workingmen's Association To All Trades and Labor Societies* (New York, 1873).

tion of labor required immediate attention. Unless it was brought under control, it would drastically reduce the workers' standards of living.

The organizational structure chalked out by the Council was pyramidal. Trade unions would first unite by industry; then they would set up central bodies; finally, these would combine internationally, with a council at the apex. The national units would aid each other, receive and assist their respective members, even extend to them the rights and privileges of trade unionists. Similar regard would be shown to political refugees. All national organizations were expected to do the utmost to prevent the export and import of labor under the contract system.

Judged by its effect in furthering international trade unions, the Council's draft had little practical value. The cabinet makers of Liège, Belgium, and the united cabinet makers of New York gave their approval. The Belgian United Carpenters announced the postponement of their congress in the anticipation that delegates of the American carpenters would attend. They even sent a copy of their new constitution which showed them to be an industrial union, ready to be part of an international federation. Their scheme of organization, it was observed, had been patterned on that of the American furniture workers.²⁰ British trade unions, however, were completely indifferent to the draft;²¹ and not a word about it arrived from Germany, Austria-Hungary or France. Sorge ascribed the reticence to severe legal restrictions. Anarchist ascendancy in the trade unions of Spain ruled out any cordial comments from that quarter. Save for the two above cases, American trade unions were as apathetic as the British to the project.²²

The coolness to an international trade union federation was a symptom of the chronic state of mind on the emigration of labor, described in an earlier chapter. British labor leaders, it was pointed out, encouraged emigration to sustain wages and living standards at home. An understanding with them was finally reached, but they made no concessions in their classical economic principles, by which they supported the belief that emigration was a reliable regulator of domestic wage-scales.

In such a climate international trade unionism had little chance of surviving. It was out of season, the General Council acknowledged. But untimeliness, in its opinion, could not justify the sanction of emigration by Internationalists. In Holland, for instance, they approved of it as did British trade unionists, and with the same reasoning. The Council hastened to show the Dutch that their practice was inconsistent

with the internationalism they professed. Emigration, it argued, merely transferred labor's conflict with capital to another area, but in no way resolved it. Moreover, it continued, the case of the Irish disproved the point that emigration kept living standards at home from falling. Despite the unusually large exodus from Ireland to the United States, the Irish who stayed at home were more wretched than ever. Seen from the side of trade unionism, emigration weakened it both at home and abroad; at home, by siphoning off the vigorous elements; abroad, by flooding the reserve pool of labor. Immigrants, the Council went on, were sometimes made strike-breakers by the authorities. It cited the example of recently arrived Italians who had been used to displace strikers of a gas plant in New York.²³

A Rival International

The International came out of the Hague congress lessened in size and authority. Reliable figures are lacking both on its total enrollment at its height and on its losses after the congress. It is doubtful whether the General Council itself had the facts on membership. All that can be had regarding losses is an approximate count of the sections that severed their ties with the Association. Forty-three American sections had seceded before the congress. But a number of them were paper groups. Anarchists claimed that twenty Italian sections had disowned the old General Council at the Congress of Rimini, in August 1872.²⁴ But how substantial they were is uncertain. The small Blanquist faction, after strutting out from the Hague sessions, organized independently.

Bakuninists and other anarchists who had been saved from expulsion formed a rival International. Its chief architects were in the Jura Federation. Only a few days after the Hague, it repudiated the congress and pledged to set up another association.

A preliminary meeting of autonomists was held at Saint-Imier on September 15 and 16, 1872. There were in all sixteen delegates, representing the Spanish, Italian and Jura Federations, illegal sections in France, and sections 3 and 22 in the United States. The two American sections had appointed as their proxy Gustave Lefrançais, a Communard and bitter anti-Marxist. All were of one mind. Unanimously they affirmed the principle that "the autonomy and independence of the federations and workers' sections are the prerequisite for the emancipation of the workers." This was the premise of the four resolutions they passed. One rejected the decisions of the Hague congress. A second concluded a "pact of friendship, solidarity and mutual defense

²⁰ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 84-87, 123.

²¹ *The International Herald*, May 3, 1873.

²² MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 124.

²³ *Ibid.*, f. 20, 62.

²⁴ See Guillaume, *op. cit.*, II, 311 and note 1.

among the free federations." A third defined the Bakuninist position on politics and the state. Every political organization, it declared, "can be nothing but the domination of a class to the detriment of the masses." If the proletariat rose to power, it, too, would be "a ruling and exploiting class." Consequently, "the first duty of the proletariat was to destroy all political power;" and "any organization of political power, said to be temporary and revolutionary to achieve that destruction, was but added deception and as dangerous to the proletariat as any existing government." Resolution four stated the anarchist position on trade unions. If freed from political and clerical interference, and federated along mutualist lines, they would be instruments of defense and of the ultimate liberation of labor. Strikes were but skirmishes, before "the great and final revolutionary struggle," to win for the worker "the right to enjoy the full product of his labor."²⁵

The Saint-Imier congress gave a certain coherence to the anti-centralists. For they disagreed on all important questions, save that of autonomy. The resolutions on politics and trade unions, for example, did not mix well either with the political philosophy of the British, or with American confidence in the ballot. But while feelings were inflamed discrepancies appeared unimportant.

The General Council in New York seems to have been dilatory and heavy-handed in reacting to its rivals. It waited two months to inform the Jura leaders that, in its reluctance to take disciplinary measures, it had confined itself to annulling their resolutions and ordering them to reverse their policy. It expected a reply within forty days.²⁶

Nothing could have been better planned to improve the credit of the Jura Federation. It first published the Council's directives in its official *Bulletin*, and then referred its resolutions to the sections. Backed overwhelmingly, the Federation defiantly reminded the Council of its suspending power.²⁷

The General Council had been outmaneuvered. It now had two alternatives: either to suspend the Federation, or to pronounce its exclusion from the International. The forty days had elapsed, and the Council still temporized. Finally, it chose the first course and called on the sections of the Jura to affiliate with the official Swiss Federation.²⁸

In the shape of things, the distinction between suspension and exclusion had strategic value. As Marx explained it to Bolte, suspension was applicable in cases where locals and federations had either contested the power of the General Council or violated the statutes and

²⁵ The four resolutions are given in full in *ibid.*, III, 6 ff.

²⁶ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 6-8.

²⁷ Guillaume, *op. cit.*, III, 42 f.

²⁸ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 9.

rules of the Association. But groups that had thrown overboard the entire organization had simply excluded themselves. If this had been made clear as soon as the Jura Federation had shown intentions of forming another organization, rebels in other countries might not have followed its example. To be consistent, Marx reasoned, the General Council would have to suspend all the rebels. However, that might be disastrous. Should their plans come to nothing, they still had the right to be present at the next congress and disrupt it. In other words, the suspension of the Jura Federation had offered foes of the International the chance to hinder it. What was to be done? To wait for their general congress, he advised, and then to declare that they had withdrawn from the organization.²⁹ Convinced that this was the correct course, the Council once more informed sections and federations of its powers and of the conditions under which they ceased to be part of the International.³⁰

The Old Withering International

Seen from the vantage point of London, the policies of the General Council looked awkward. Fairness, however, requires that they be judged in relation to the organization that was falling to pieces. The boldest measures could not have saved it. Events had reduced the problem to one of staving off its final end as long as possible, in order to prevent the anarchists from having full ascendancy. In other words, the survival value of the old International had become negative. It had to be shored up, if only to hold on to its name. For that was all there was of it, at least in Europe, at the end of the new Council's first year in office.

The prompt action of the Jura Federation went up like a flare at night that signaled to secessionists in other countries. Belgian autonomists needed little encouragement, although they and anarchists were at odds on outstanding issues. The Belgians were less inclined either to accept atheism or to conceive of the trade unions as the basis of the future order, but they shared with anarchists the principle of federalism and a distrust of the state. Belgian labor had passed through stormy days and bloody strikes. In the tests of battle with the state it had acquired an anti-authoritarian bias. On December 25, 1872, the Belgian regional congress repudiated the resolutions of the Hague congress.³¹

Their renunciation by the Spanish regional congress at Cordova had a background of bitter contest between Marxists and Bakuninists. In

²⁹ Marx to Bolte, February 12, 1873, Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 92-95.

³⁰ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, f. 32-34; Guillaume, *op. cit.*, III, 44 f.

point of numbers the second were the stronger in Spain. Having been the first to form sections of the International, they had established themselves in the trade unions, from which the late-coming Marxists could not dislodge them. Paul Lafargue, serving the General Council in Spain in 1871 and 1872, had then informed Engels of the preponderant influence of Bakuninism.³² Engels reported to Sorge the last day of October 1872 that only two local federations had approved the resolutions of the Hague congress. "The great bulk of the Spanish International," he conceded, "are still under the leadership of the Alliance which predominates in the F[ederal] C[ouncil] as well as in the most important local councils."³³

In the next few months the Marxists claimed to have made some gains. They had put together a national federation; and they still had their weekly *La Emancipacion*.³⁴ With the best intentions to be of service to the Federation, the new General Council sent it an address which its delegates were to present to the regional congress of Cordova.³⁵ It was in every sense an uninspiring document. The Council might have done better had it first drawn on the advice of friends on the spot. But, in the Spanish situation at that time, it is doubtful whether even the most stirring appeal could have affected the decisions of the congress. Anyhow, the address never reached its destination, for the Marxists were not represented.

The anarchists had it their own way at Cordova. According to their figures, their following was impressive. They claimed 42 local federations, with 236 sections and a total membership of 20,402. Twenty-eight other federations, which had not sent delegates, had accepted anarchist principles, and three more had sent good wishes to the congress.³⁶

To complete the account of the struggle in Spain between anarchists and Marxists it should be added that the Federation set up by the second dragged out a shadowy existence. It neither commented on the draft for an international federation of trade unions, nor answered the request for a report on the Cordova congress. *La Emancipacion* "is dying, if not dead," Engels wrote on April 15, 1873. "We have

³² Friedrich Engels, Paul et Laura Lafargue, *op. cit.*, I, 11.

³³ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 66 f.

³⁴ Letter of Engels in *La Plebe*, December 14, 1872, reprinted in *Critica Sociale*, 1896, 367.

³⁵ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 28-31.

³⁶ See the report of the Spanish regional federation at the anarchist congress of 1873, *Compte-rendu officiel du sixième congrès général, tenu à Genève, September 1-6, 1873* (Locle, 1874), 14 ff. For a comparison of these figures with those at the time of the Hague congress, see Max Nettlau, "Zur Geschichte der spanischen Internationale und Landes Föderation (1868-1889)," *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, 1929, XIV, 49.

sent them £15, but as scarcely anybody paid for the copies received it appears impossible to keep it up."³⁷

Sorge liked to believe that but for the civil war in Spain, the General Council might have won out.³⁸ Be that as it may, the disappearance of the Spanish Marxist weekly signaled the failure of the local organization. All the Council could do was to expel the hostile federations.

The story of the dissension in Great Britain was enmeshed in details of personal enmity, and related to differences over policy between the British trade unions and the General Council. The Hague congress had raised disagreement to the splitting point. Hales wrote to the Jura Federation in November 1872 that, though his party had not taken a stand on the Saint-Imier congress, preparations were in progress to sustain the insurgents when the opportunity arose. After dissenting from the anarchists on political action, he went on to accuse Marx and Engels of secret plotting.³⁹

Their answer brought a rejoinder from Hales; and this, in turn, evoked a reply from Frederick Lessner, a member of the old Council, and a friend of the two accused men.⁴⁰

Seceders from the British Federation held their first congress on January 26, 1873. There were only eleven delegates. They considered it something of a triumph to have among them Hermann Jung, long a trustworthy companion of Marx. Jung's loyal service to the International, from its beginning, had won him wide esteem. But vital issues had come between him and the majority of the Council. In the first place, he had not been convinced of the necessity of driving the anarchists out of the Association. In the second place, he had looked upon the alliance with the Blanquists as a risky business. Finally, he had taken strong exception to the manner of distributing mandates to the Hague congress, with the result that he had refused to be a delegate. In his speech he related, in a hushed silence, the disagreements between him and Marx.⁴¹ As foreseen, the seceders repudiated the resolutions voted at the Hague, and approved collaboration with the rebellious federations.⁴²

The prospects of erecting another International temporarily dimmed the major questions dividing the insurgents. But the frailty of the alliance became visible at their Geneva congress in September 1873.

³⁷ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 102.

³⁸ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 125.

³⁹ Guillaume, *op. cit.*, III, 24 ff. Similar charges were made in a release by Hales, Jung, Foster and others to the English sections, in January 1873, see *ibid.*, III, 29 ff.

⁴⁰ *The International Herald*, December 21, 1872; January 4 and 11, 1873.

⁴¹ See Guillaume, *op. cit.*, III, 48 ff.

⁴² *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, March 22, 1873.

The separate viewpoints were revealed in the debate on the structure of the new association. One group of delegates wanted to abolish the General Council; another said that an organization without some form of administration was inconceivable; a third, primarily the British, recommended a central committee to be at its head. Hearing this, the anarchists shouted, "Authority! Despotism!" Hales replied that anarchism was "synonymous with dissolution." It meant individualism, and that was the core of the society he aimed at changing. "The true application of the anarchic principle," he stated, "would dissolve the International" which the congress had been summoned to reorganize.⁴³

The new British Federation was far from a thriving concern. Its comparatively small membership melted away in its first year of independence. Eccarius, its delegate to the anarchist international congress of 1874, represented what to all intents and purposes was a defunct organization.

The other British Federation, that is the one affiliated with the General Council, thrived no better than its rival. Relations with New York were quite irregular; and credit and land schemes as well as principles of a Ricardian socialist nature were propagated on a par with official doctrine.⁴⁴ Sections disappeared as if they had evaporated. Bonds with the trade unions gave and finally parted. The national organization of British trade unions received in cold silence the advice of the Federation. The London Trades Council severed all ties with it in 1874 on the ground that the International did not represent bona fide trade unions.⁴⁵ Engels reported about the same time that the Federation's weekly, *The International Herald*, was "on its last legs." He hoped it could be kept alive to the next congress, less than two months off.⁴⁶

The congress met in Manchester the first two days of June 1873. The twenty-six delegates, among them Lessner and Serrailier, voted a set of rules, ordered the Federal Council to lay out a plan of propaganda, approved the General Council's project on the international federation of trade unions, and urged upon members "the necessity for the establishment of a new political party." The congress demanded these reforms: free, compulsory, secular education; land nationalization; abolition of inheritance; nationalization "of all instruments of production"; national credit for creating cooperatives; and an eight hour working day. Birmingham was chosen as the place for the next

⁴³ *Compte-rendu officiel du sixième congrès général, tenu à Genève*, 55 f.

⁴⁴ *The International Herald*, February 8, 15; March 1, 29; May 3, 1873.

⁴⁵ [George Tate], *London Trades Council, 1860-1950. A History* (London, 1950), 45.

⁴⁶ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 101.

congress.⁴⁷ But it never met. If the General Council in New York assessed the second congress as a success, it was because distance delayed the dismal tidings that the British branch of the International was passing out. Engels wrote on July 26 that it was in slumber, and on November 25 that it was dying. "There is almost no way of getting people together," he added.⁴⁸

Across the Channel, in France, the government quickly crushed the remnants of the International. First it was outlawed. Then, the law was stretched to include the press.⁴⁹ From 1871 to 1878, many labor leaders and socialists were put under lock and key. The trials of van Heddeghem, alias Walter, in Paris, and of Dentraygues, alias Swarm, in Toulouse, won wide notice. As agents provocateurs they had been responsible for the arrest of many Internationalists.⁵⁰ Engels informed Sorge on June 14, 1873, that Serrailier no longer had a single address in France. "Everything is absolutely finished."⁵¹

Some remarks are in order to round out the picture of the decadent Association in Europe. The Dutch Federation, small and weak to begin with, tried to sustain itself by straddling both Internationals. The result was that, besides falling short of its obligations to the General Council, it curtailed its own existence. The International in Denmark was even smaller than in Holland, and, for that reason, less able to withstand the hostile environment. Its demise was hastened by the infiltration of German Lassalleism. Lassalleian polemics against the International in Germany helped to drive further underground its small number of adherents. After 1873, the General Council heard little from that quarter. Similar, legal impediments hemmed in Internationalists in Austria-Hungary.

The same monotonous story of decline can be told of the Association in Italy, Portugal and Switzerland. Two new sections in Italy at the end of 1872 had raised the number to seven, distributed among such cities as Turin, Milan, Ferrara and Rome. But persecution soon took its toll; and *La Plebe*, their official organ, suspended publication. Instead of receiving dues, the General Council had to send relief. The Association in Portugal was estimated to have had, after the Hague congress, an enrollment of about 1,000, nearly all trade unionists. A series of labor defeats, however, brought down the trade union

⁴⁷ *General and British Federative Rules of the International Workingmen's Association together with a Report of the Second Annual Congress of the British Federation held at Manchester, June 1-2, 1873*, 16-24.

⁴⁸ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 116, 130.

⁴⁹ *Gazette des tribunaux*, August 7, December 7 and 25, 1872; and January 3, 29; February 5, March 1, 1873.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, February 5, March 5, April 9, November 7-8, 11, December 15-18, 1873.

⁵¹ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 111.

organization and its architect, the International. Its hitherto self-supporting organ, *O Pensamento Social*, stopped publication in April 1873. The International in Switzerland might have fallen to the anarchists had it not been for the indefatigable Johann Philipp Becker. The resignation of five delegates from the Jura Federation cheered Marxists, but it did not materially benefit the sections loyal to New York. A report from Buenos Aires, at the end of March 1873, announced the formation of three large sections. Was the International about to take seed in Latin America? The few isolated documents, bearing on the three Argentinian sections are silent on their doings. Nor did they answer the Council's letters or its request for dues.

The Last General Congress of the International

If the relations of the General Council with its branches were not exemplary, the fault, it has been argued, was not entirely due to its course of action. Even experienced men would have had their skills tested in tinkering a crumbling organization. In such circumstances it is difficult to distinguish between patch and botch.

The sixth congress of the International was its last and the least interesting. After the preceding five, it was a masterpiece of anti-climax. By force of circumstances it met in Geneva where the first congress had been assembled seven years before. Here was an important branch, headed by the toughened and battle-scarred Becker. And near by lived Nicolas Outine, organizer of a Russian section in Geneva, an adroit intriguer and a hater of Bakunin. Outine might be persuaded to stay long enough in order to serve on the committee of credentials.⁵²

Much ink and paper went into the preparation of the congress. For two full months the General Council was busy selecting an organizing committee, drafting instructions, sending addresses to sections and federations, and preparing the annual report. This account turned out to be the best balance-sheet of the organization on its downward course.⁵³

A long document, marked confidential, went to Serrailier, whom the General Council had named to represent it at Geneva. Its practice had been to delegate one or two of its members, if not to pilot the proceedings, at least to clad them with the panoply of its prestige. But in 1873, it could not pay the expenses of an envoy; and the North American Federation still owed three-fourths of what it had borrowed to send two delegates to the Hague. Consequently, the Council asked Engels to represent it at Geneva. But he declined for the reason that

⁵² *Ibid.*, 106 ff.

⁵³ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 118-30.

enemies might interpret his presence as Marxist dictation.⁵⁴ He persuaded Serrailier to replace him, and the Council at once appointed him.

The confidential document he received from New York contained his instructions. Its French might have amused him; but he was probably impressed with its precise form. It had directives on the collection of dues, on his expenses and remittances to New York, on internal disputes and anarchist defiance. Serrailier's orders were to introduce a set of resolutions, regarding the payment of assessments, the removal of the General Council to Europe, and the amending of the statutes. Appended to the instructions were supplementary resolutions on the enforcement of the Hague decisions, on political action and trade unions.⁵⁵

The instructions remained as a memento of the Council's remoter aims. Fresh developments had brought about a change in Serrailier's plans. As soon as it got about that neither the North American Federation nor the General Council would send delegates, gossipers had a field day. The Federation had been overrated, they said; and the Council itself lacked force to direct the organization on the proper course. Confidence fell. The English refused to vote the expenses of a delegate; legal restrictions ruled out German representation; the Portuguese and Spaniards were in want both of money and enthusiasm; and it was out of the question to count on direct French participation. It looked as if the congress would be a local gathering, if not a rump parliament, which could hardly raise the standing of the International. Also, a short time before the opening of the congress, news reached London that two members of the organizing committee had renounced both the General Council and the Hague resolutions. Engels dissuaded Serrailier from going to Geneva.

The congress opened on September 8, just after the anarchists had ended theirs in the same city. Twenty-eight delegates together had thirty-two credentials. Two were women; two others, German journalists; fifteen represented Geneva; and one, the Italian canton of Switzerland. Certainly the congress could in no way be considered general; and it looked like a hastily called-together affair.⁵⁶

Becker was at the helm. It was on account of him that the General Council remained in New York. The important resolutions related to trade unionism and political action. One ratified the Council's plan of international trade unions. Another, on political action, gave rise to

⁵⁴ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 114.

⁵⁵ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 109-17.

⁵⁶ For an article on the opening of the congress and on its delegates see the *New York World*, September 27, 1873.

considerable discord. Becker's compromise confirmed the general principle that the working class should participate in every political movement aiming at its emancipation, but let the national branches be guided by their own circumstances in setting their course.⁵⁷

Serrailier's absence from the congress incensed Becker. The load was too much for one man. He was sixty-four, still struggling against poverty to care for a large family. He did not know the reasons that had altered the plans of the General Council's deputy. All the same, Becker was satisfied with the outcome. But Marx thought that the congress was a colossal failure, and advised Sorge to ignore its decisions. Its only worthy act, in Marx's opinion, was to have put off the next general congress to 1875.⁵⁸

The International was coming to an end. The General Council could not even get the official report of the congress. To Sorge's urgent appeals Becker replied that he was having trouble to find parts of it, let alone a full account. The president of the congress had been expelled from Switzerland; one secretary had fled to Brussels; and another had disappeared with the original text of the resolutions. The records Becker finally sent were so fragmentary that they could not be pieced together.

The Geneva congress let down the curtain on the International in Europe. Only the North American Federation was left. And it, too, was tottering by the time the congress opened.

CHAPTER XI

Decline of the North American Federation

The Lost Cause of the American Confederation

Two seceded organizations stood facing the North American Federation after July 1872. They were the French section 2, and the recently formed American Confederation of the International Workingmen's Association. Neither one had a large membership; but they had their respective party organs, which the Federation lacked. Section 2 had *le Socialiste* that lasted until May 11, 1873; the American Confederation counted, at least in a semi-official way, on *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*. But that relationship ended with the breach of March 1873 between the two bewitching sisters and leaders of the Confederation. *The Worker*, a weekly founded in January 1873, was short-lived. However, the big metropolitan press was kinder to the dissenters than to the Federation.

The Hague congress further inflamed the hostility of the independent bodies. First it had rejected their mandates, save those of sections 29 and 42, both given to Sauva. Then it had not only moved the General Council to New York, but had armed it with more power, as if the purpose was to stamp out the rebellion in the United States.

Section 2 took the offensive. It expelled Dercure, dropped from *le Socialiste* the subtitle, organ of the French Sections of the International in the United States, and charged Marx and Sorge with all sorts of misdeeds.¹

The Confederation as a whole was less subject to spells of passion. It predicted the collapse of the General Council; and it anticipated cooperation with the European branches and federations that were repudiating the Hague congress.

Individual members were embittered by what had happened. For example, William West, a bigwig in the Confederation, could not forget how he had been snubbed at the Hague, ignored by the delegates, and denied admission. British Internationalists, with few exceptions, had refused him an audience or hospitality. After all these slights, he had found himself penniless. The American Minister in London had to

⁵⁷ For the resolutions of the congress see *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, October 18, 1873; Rudolf Meyer, *op. cit.*, I, 170 f.

⁵⁸ Sorge, *Briefe u. Auszüge aus Briefen*, etc., 121 ff.

¹ *Le Socialiste*, September 29, 1872.

pay his return passage.² It was no wonder that rancor ran through his report to Spring Street. In essence, it was a defense of the middle class point of view. It said in conclusion that the future of the American Confederation could be served by cooperating with the seceded federations.³

The conclusion corresponded with the report that had been received from Gustave Lefrançais who had represented the American sections 3 and 22 at the Saint-Imier congress. He assured the Spring Streeters that their friends abroad were already erecting the scaffolding of an anti-authoritarian International. The Council of the Confederation at once appointed a committee to draft a platform for the coming general congress.⁴

American dissenters set great store by it. Though small in number, they had exalted visions of the tomorrows they would model. They would be with their allies in one enterprise against the rival organization. For Americans as well as Europeans had written it off, and were standing by to sing its requiem. The seven or eight months after the Hague congress were their grand period of fraternity.

Autonomy and federalism were their points of contact. If the anarchists, in the interest of harmony, muted tenets they had been proclaiming, American and British schismatics, for the same reason, repressed a penchant for political action. An illustration was the Spring Street Council's "Circular to all Internationalists," adopted on April 6, 1873.⁵ The omission of dogmas likely to divide seceders made it hardly distinguishable from an anarchist declaration. It avowed disillusionment with government, dwelt on the "complete individual liberty and autonomy of all sections and federations . . .," as a basis for united action, and anticipated "the triumph of the great social revolution" which would "give to each the integral product of his labor."

The rest of the "Circular" was in keeping with these sentiments. The essence of the desired changes lay "in the complete decentralization or total destruction of authoritative power," the eternal enemy "of progress, liberty and justice." The final objectives were "integral education," abolition of "class monopolies," and collective ownership. Noteworthy was the conclusion that the success of these aims was compatible with "the triumph of anarchy and collectivism."

Few anarchists could have taken exception to these articles of faith. The men of the Jura Federation, after reading them, probably felt amply repaid for having piloted the movement toward another Inter-

² New York Herald, October 21, 1872.

³ His report appeared in *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, March 22, 1873.

⁴ New York Herald, October 21, 1872.

⁵ A copy is in the records of section 26, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin; also in *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, April 19, 1873.

national. The American secession was evidently on their side. There was joy at Spring Street when news arrived that the resolutions voted at Saint-Imier had been widely subscribed to. They were "the pact of federation," the Federal Council's secretary wrote back.⁶

With this coincidence the honeymoon ended. A statement of principles, drawn up by a special committee, was already under consideration at Spring Street. It was apparently adopted without lengthy debate and sent to the general congress that was to open in September. In tone the statement was as cordial as the circular; and there was the same stress on federalism. But through the concord cropped out discrepancies, like crocuses through snow. The great end, said the statement, would be reached through "Nationalization," that is nationalization of labor, land and money, of the instruments of production as well as of education. Other means were the referendum, and workers' cooperatives "with a view to the suppression of capitalistic domination."

Now, it is theoretically conceivable that nationalization might be achieved without the intervention of government. As far as the Federal Council was concerned, only political action and legislation could bring that about. Drawing on the program section 12 had issued in September 1871, Spring Street reaffirmed its stand for the political equality of women and the eradication of social distinctions derived from "unjust laws." To gain these objects, it was ready to seek the aid of all parties, so that "Government will be forced to begin the exercise of its true function." In the opinion of the Council, this was the way of progress in the United States, but not in Europe where suffrage was restricted and aristocratic remnants were honored.

The outlook of the Americans was thoroughly inconsistent with anarchism. They hoped that the time would come when "Government shall be to labor a protecting Providence, equitably supervising every branch of industry, commerce and insurance on the basis of equality for all in lieu of privileges to a few."⁷

The meeting ground of American dissenters and anarchists turned out to be as unsteady as dunes. Their common hostility to the old International held them together for almost two years. But ties woven out of antipathies were too slender to resist the stress of events.

Several reasons can be advanced to explain the dwindling credit of the anarchists in the immediate decade ahead. To begin with, methods of propaganda and visions of the ultimate end divided them. Some advocated propaganda by deed; others were averse to any direct action. Proudhonists were estranged from Bakuninists; communist anarchists,

⁶ *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, April 26, 1873.

⁷ *Ibid.*, April 19, 1873.

from individual anarchists. They were at odds even on the matter of terminology. There was bewilderment when Guillaume rejected such terms as "anarchism" and "social liquidation," on the ground that they were stale and rhetorical Proudhonist residues. He would replace "anarchism" by "federalism." It meant the same and expressed it more accurately. And "social liquidation" was "simply bourgeois and reactionary."⁸ Then, anarchists eyed economic society as if history had stopped moving. Capital concentration was a fallacy, the future would show. The tendency was toward the small units of production; they were the basis of the good order in a state of equilibrium.

The Geneva Congress of the Anarchist International

Consultations on the agenda of the general congress uncovered incompatible opinions among the participating organizations. They were unanimous in endorsing the federative principle; but they were split three ways on the alternative to the General Council. Nothing should supersede it, argued the Frenchman Paul Brousse, who was as thoroughgoing an anarchist in 1873 as he was a thoroughgoing revisionist ten years later. The Jura Federation proposed in its place three committees: one, to serve as a correspondence bureau; a second, to concern itself with statistics; and a third, to be a kind of international agency for assisting strikes. The British desired to have a federal executive council, a sort of central clearing house, without any power "to interfere in the internal affairs of the Federations."⁹ In keeping with federalism, it was decided to designate a federation each year to act as the bureau of the association.

The American Confederation leaned to the British plan. Both British and Americans even toyed with the idea of changing the name of the International. But that was hotly opposed,¹⁰ even though it was minor among the differences over the type of organization. A far greater strain on unity was the issue of the general strike. It had been approved at the congress of the International in 1868, but essentially as an anti-war measure. Anarchists in 1873, however, valued it as the saving remedy. They invested it with magic power, capable either of bringing down the social structure, without the risk of an open conflict with the state, or of serving as a prelude to the social revolution. But the Spanish insurrection, then going on, revealed two unforeseeable

⁸ James Guillaume to Victor Cyrille, September 22, 1873. Archives du département des Bouches du Rhône, Série 14 U, Liasse 101.

⁹ Both the Jura and British proposals appeared in *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, June 28, 1873. See also *Compte-rendu officiel du sixième congrès général de l'association internationale des travailleurs* (Locle, 1874), 50 ff.

¹⁰ Letter of Hubert to Mills, May 21, 1873, records of section 26.

developments: the workers, as in Barcelona, had declined to obey the order to strike; and the state, instead of staying on the side lines, had appeared in the shape of an army, determined to dispel dreams of labor emancipation.

The question caused acute dissension at the general congress in Geneva in the first days of September 1873. The anarchists clung to their faith in the general strike, although they had to acknowledge that it was subordinate to the international organization of trade unions.¹¹ Even so, argued John Hales, the principal antagonist of the general strike at the congress, by the time the workers were fully organized there would be no further need of a revolution, for the capitalists would have already been expropriated.¹² The Americans were not represented at the congress. But they had made similar observations in their appraisal of the agenda. Their reasoning was that the Europeans had to decide for themselves, according to circumstances. Should they resort to the general strike, the Americans would assist them, but not imitate them, for in the American experience, strikes "most generally result in simple waste of resources without corresponding benefit, except as an educational means."¹³

The Americans thus agreed in substance with the British that, as a means of emancipation, the general strike was as absurd as it was useless. Their own method was political action. Had the question of means been kept off the agenda, other disagreements might have been ironed out. But as things stood, the new International, established at the congress, was like a machine, hastily put together with odd parts.

By the time of the second congress, in September 1874, the substance of the organization was melting away. The Jura Federation acknowledged a drastic decline in its membership. Of its remaining eleven sections, only two were labor societies. The facts from Spain had it that the Federation had been involved in many strikes, arrests and skirmishes with the authorities. The Italians were not represented, probably because they had become illegal.¹⁴

The congress was set at odds by the question of the state. This arose out of a report on the organization of the public services, drafted by the Belgian socialist, César de Paepe. He reproached the anarchists for fearing the state and the socialists for making it a *deus ex machina*. His plan on the collective ownership and management of the social

¹¹ *Compte-rendu du sixième congrès général*, etc., 79.

¹² Guillaume, *op. cit.*, III, 116 ff., 120 f. The official report of the congress omitted the debate on the general strike.

¹³ *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, August 16, 1873.

¹⁴ *Compte-rendu officiel du VII^e congrès général de l'association internationale des travailleurs, tenu à Bruxelles du 7 au 13 septembre 1874* (Veviers, 1875), 23-32.

and economic services, already foreshadowed in his reports to the general congresses of 1868 and 1869, aimed at reconciling the two positions. Marx and Proudhon were drawn on. Instead of abolishing the state, as anarchists taught, de Paepe would have the workers take hold of it and use it to get control of the monopolized sectors of production that were ripe for socialization. And in place of the all powerful state on which socialists counted, he would introduce a federalized system which harmonized the functions of the state and the communes.¹⁵

These views had strong enough support, notably from Eccarius and the German delegates, to force their recognition by the congress. The final resolution was trimmed to suit every one. Each federation and social democratic party was told to follow its own political course.¹⁶

The new or anarchist International ran to seed after the congress of 1874. The Jura Federation, allegedly the strongest in the association, admitted in its report that year that it was losing ground to partisans of political action.¹⁷ The association as a whole could neither recruit labor societies, nor keep together what it had. Anarchist affiliates fell off in Switzerland, Holland and Belgium. Two years later, at the congress of Berne, observers saw only a shadowy organization. Its last congress at Ghent in 1877 showed that its followers had defected to the socialists.

The American Confederation had meanwhile faded out. In fact it was already ailing when the congress of 1873 opened. Still it hailed the insurgent Spanish anarchists, fighting under the slogan, "anarchy, negation of authority," as the successors of the Communards.¹⁸ And it called on its European allies to help it prevent the overflow of the American labor market. They could lend assistance by informing emigrants of the "misery, suffering and deception" they would very likely endure, and of the hostility of the American workers.¹⁹

The Confederation could not long conceal that its end was near. The addition of Victoria Woodhull to the Federal Council caused a small split. Banks of the painters' union opposed her entry on the ground that, as a leader of spiritualists and free lovers, she would bring discredit on the organization. Even the loyal William West found it difficult to support her. Immediately after her choice, Banks and

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 179 f. De Paepe's reports of 1868 and 1869 and his longer report of 1874 were assembled in two small pocket booklets, with a biographic introduction by Benoît Malon and published under the title, *Les services publics précédés de deux essais sur le collectivisme* (Brussels, 1895).

¹⁶ *Compte-rendu officiel du VII^e congrès général*, etc., 184 f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 ff.

¹⁸ *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, September 6, 1873.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, May 10, 1873.

another member resigned from the Council.²⁰ Their exit reduced even further the little trade union backing it had. *The Worker*, the new official organ, had to be discontinued after the eighth number.

The ranks were dissolving. In the fall of 1873, when the long depression descended on the nation, the skeleton Confederation had the choice either of joining the general movement of the unemployed, or of standing alone. Having taken the second alternative, it was overwhelmed by the sweep of events.

Lethargy in the North American Federation

Though the North American Federation showed greater staying power than its rival, it was anything but a prosperous concern. While its two delegates were in Europe, the Federal Council transacted little business, as if it were on the eve of dissolution. So much depended on what would be decided at the Hague. Even the minor matter of statistics was postponed. The Federal Council held back from printing its own questionnaire lest the congress adopt a standardized form. When it was found out that the item had been submerged by weightier questions, the Council lacked the means to pay the printer's costs. It then had to ask the sections to make their own investigations.²¹ This proved to be a poor substitute.

The ranks of the Federation thinned after the Hague congress. Two of its twenty-two sections²² had dissolved. Section 52 in West Hoboken, it was officially stated, turned out to be a paper organization.²³ Numbers 7 and 10 in New York and number 1 in Brooklyn were doubtful. Section 8 owed its origin to the fusion of sections 11 and 13 in New York, probably on account of falling memberships. The Federation's secretary, Fred Bolte, summed up the situation in these words: "It seems the Congress had absorbed all the energy of the Sections and a reaction took place, which lamed the action of the Federal Council as well as that of the Sections; it has been vainly delayed by the [General] Council till now to put into effect the plan of organization laid down by the Congress." According to his estimate, the membership had "rather decreased than increased with a few exceptions, as far as is known to the Council."

Apathy seems to have pervaded the North American Federation in the latter part of 1872. Letters of the Federal Council were not answered by the sections; rules were ignored. On December 7, 1872,

²⁰ *New York World*, March 3, 1873.

²¹ *Letterbook*, f. 137-38.

²² One German in St. Louis, and another English in San Francisco.

²³ *Le Socialiste*, September 29, 1872, denied it.

Bolte wrote to the General Council: "From Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Baltimore etc., not a single report relative to the respective Sections has reached us."²⁴ Some ascribed this lack of response to the absence of an official paper. The deficiency was supplied in February 1873, when the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* was launched. It probably re-awakened activity, but only among Germans. If the purpose of the North American Federation was to win the support of the American people, it could not expect to do it with a foreign language weekly.

Bolte believed that the want of interest was due to the presidential election of 1872. Undeniably it distracted Internationalists in a number of areas. But far more premonitory was the trade union retreat toward the end of 1872. The unions were too weak to retain the eight hour gains of the first part of the year. Nor was the International able to reenforce them. Bolte's picture of the situation at the close of 1872 bordered on the dismal. "The failure of the eight hour movement," he reported to the General Council, "and the great efforts made by a few unions to gain a success, have exhausted their power and purses, and in many cases a quite new organization is most wanted." In New England, for example, "the trades unions are oppressed by the capitalists as far as possible and the same is tryed [sic] by the same power in all other states; even the secret societies, the Crispins for inst[ance], are not excepted from this downbreak." He appealed to the sections of the Federation for a determined drive "to organize and nothing else but to organize the working people. The cry for help has been raised in many parts of America and has found its expression in New York in the 8 hour movement. There is one thing which will be proved true: the working men will stick to those who understand their call first, and who are the first ones offering themselves for assistance."²⁵

During the first six or seven months of 1873 the Federation seems to have oscillated between ebb and recovery. Signs of renewed activity were the founding of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, the establishment of new sections, and infiltration among New England textile workers. These gains were canceled by the disappearance of old sections, and by the search by others for direct routes to their visionary paradises. As a result, dues fell off, propaganda slackened, and rules were set aside.

An Official Organ

The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* was perhaps the most highly prized achievement of the North American Federation since the big schism of 1872. The paper was the first in the United States, which defended unre-

²⁴ Letterbook, f. 139.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 140-41.

servedly the principles of the International. Of its seven objectives given in the initial number, only the following need to be listed here: organization of labor; spread of socialist principles; "development of the workers' class consciousness"; and criticism of existing conditions. In harmony with the Preamble of the International, it strove for "the total emancipation of the working class by the workers themselves." Labor's success, it added, was premised on its national and international solidarity, of which the preliminary was its enlightenment on its own problems and interests.

The workers' aims were put in a historical framework in an article, "Our Political Situation." Here the author dwelt on the point that the founders of American political institutions had been political refugees. The parallel was easily perceptible. He weighed the results of the Civil War with respect to capital and labor. The first got control of the state and of all that that implied in its relations with labor. The second suffered a fall of real wages. The workers could reverse that by building their own political party.²⁶

After the first month the circulation of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* reached almost three thousand. This was a cause for great expectations. It should also have been a reason for reexamining the Federation's position with regard to American labor. A language barrier, it goes without saying, existed between the English speaking workers and the paper. Its character was typically German; and as such, it reflected the aloofness of its founders from the body of American workers. That the official organ of the North American Federation was in a foreign language was indeed anomalous in the history of the International. Such an abnormality could not be found in any other Federation.

Whether there was any correlation between the growing circulation of the paper and the ability of the Federation to regain some of its losses cannot be answered. The fact was that disintegrating sections were compensated by the rise of others, either in the same cities or elsewhere. A new section in Boston was founded by Americans. Germans set up sections in Pittsburgh, Staten Island and Chicago; and French, in Boston, Paterson, New York and New Orleans. The new section of the last named city was an offshoot from section 15 that had gone to Spring Street.²⁷

The Federation also focused on the reenforcement of trade unions. For they were its first line of defense. Its members went ahead to organize the New England textile workers whose distressing condition

²⁶ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, February 8, 1873.

²⁷ Letterbook, f. 225, 228, 256-57; *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, April 11, May 17, 1873; See also *La Commune, bulletin des sections de l'Internationale de la Nouvelle Orléans et du Texas*, No. 14, April 15, 1873.

was disclosed by the Massachusetts Labor Bureau. And they raised the prestige of the International among the trade unions of New York and the silk workers of Paterson.²⁸

On the other hand, the Federation lost ground to the American Confederation in the State Workingmen's Assembly of New York. Here the principles of the second body were assumed to be those of the International, and the Council at Spring Street as its rightful agency in the United States. Whether the misrepresentation had been due to design or just to ignorance was of less moment than its damage to the Federation.

It addressed the Assembly, at the end of January 1873, with the object of correcting the misconception. It went back to its previous warnings against reformers who had been fastening themselves on organized labor "either for selfish purposes or for advancing some hobbies of their own. . . ." The press had furthered their ends by falsifying the nature of the International. Workers knew it "only by hearsay." At this point the Federation recapitulated its aims. The tenet, that the emancipation of the workers had to be achieved by the workers themselves, was cardinal. From it stemmed all the others, which culminated in "the elevation of the oppressed to a position where equal rights and duties are enjoyed by every human being." This was labor's goal everywhere, attainable "by a combination of the men of labor not only of one country, but of all countries." Every advance of the workers was a step in that direction, the Federation declared. When trade unions demanded a wage increase they were putting up signposts to "the final emancipation of labor," that is, the replacement of the wage system by "associative labor." For that reason, it argued, the reformers' assurance of making every worker independent, that is his own employer, was without cause because it was inconsistent with the economic trend. Theirs were false promises, as false as were their panaceas of "universal freedom, free love, universal suffrage and more such universalities." The Federation ended on a hortative note: "Throw off all those hobbies, which bogus Reformers and small political quacks are only too ready to impose upon you, and let our watch-word be: Workingmen of all countries unite!"²⁹

The Workingmen's Assembly was not persuaded. The delegates heard the reading of the address, at least with outward deference, and then tabled it. It was easier to disprove the principles of the reformers than to dislodge them.

²⁸ Letterbook, f. 190-91, 228, 261.

²⁹ For the full address, see *ibid.*, f. 156-59.

Friction in the Federation

The reformers were not numerous, to be sure, but their influence was greater than the North American Federation liked to admit. In fact they had sympathizers even in its own sections. Time and again the Tenth Ward Hotel had to caution them against the propaganda of Spring Street.³⁰ But words of caution were not always effective in pulling them back into line. The Chicago sections, for instance, established a Loan and Homestead Society, chartered by the State of Illinois. There was little to distinguish the project from other social experiments. Needless to say, it had never been sanctioned at central headquarters.³¹ Sections elsewhere wandered into unexpected byways, even into Icarianism, in which at least seven Internationalists believed they could find a haven.³²

An illuminating illustration of the kind of creeds Internationalists clung to was a plan of inconvertible currency and mutual banking, put forward by section 1 of Boston. It should first be explained that the scheme was advanced in the section's address to the convention of the New England Labor Reform League on February 23, 1873. The address had a twofold purpose: to present the principles of the International; and to point out both its agreement and disagreement with the League. The entire piece was the product of a committee in which Colonel William B. Greene, one of the section's founders, had apparently held the pen. His teachings were surveyed earlier in the text. Before forwarding the address to the League the section sent it to the Federal Council for its opinion. The draft was returned with detailed comments on its inadequacies.³³

That in brief was its history. Of greater account here is its evaluation at the Tenth Ward Hotel. The criticism centered on inconvertible money, labor's relation to capital, and producers' cooperatives. From the Federal Council's viewpoint, inconvertible money, based on mutual banking, was totally removed from reality, for it derived first from a mistaken notion of economic development, and second from the failure to take note of the incompatibility of capital and labor. It was fairly certain, said the Council, that capitalists would never allow a change

³⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 152-54, 228.

³¹ *Ibid.*, f. 188.

³² See Albert Shaw, *Icaria: A Chapter in the History of Communism* (New York, 1884), 99, 163 ff.

³³ See William B. Greene, *Socialistic, Mutualistic and Financial Fragments*, 227. The final, revised address is republished in *ibid.*, p. 229-61. It appeared separately as a pamphlet, *Address of the Delegates of the Boston Section, No. 1 (French) of the Working People's International Association, made to the New England Labor Reform League in its Convention in Boston, Mass. (Princeton, Mass., 1873)*.

from convertible to inconvertible currency by which they would surrender interest and profits.

The whole conception of inconvertible currency and mutual banking was seeded in hostility to capital. This, the Council replied, was alien to the spirit of the International. Capital, it said, was "the surplus product of labor, laid aside and used in reproduction." It was "wealth invested in trade, in manufactories, or in any business requiring expenditures with a view to profit." The International had never pronounced sentence either on capital, or on the surplus product of labor, or on profits. It merely condemned "the subjecting of the laborers to capital, which is something altogether different." And by "subjecting" the Council meant "the dependence of the man of labor upon his employer who pays the worker only a part of the value of wages." The rest, that is, "the non-paid labor," was taken by the employer. The capitalist left "to the workingmen their natural working power only to be sold at any price suitable to the capitalist." Wage labor alone could explain capital accumulation. This was the reason for concluding that "the great cause of the I.W.A. is the emancipation of labor — that is the abolition of wage labor."

The Federal Council had as little faith in producers' cooperation as in inconvertible currency. It looked upon both as visionary schemes for escaping from capitalism under capitalism. The International, it said, had no blueprint for cooperation. Sections that had embarked on that enterprise had done so on their own responsibility. Experience showed, however, that to have the necessary money without the requisite power was to put things in reverse order. Cooperative production would emerge from the emancipation of labor and not vice versa. Capitalists, the world over, cooperated "on the exploitation of the workers." "Why should it be impossible," the Council asked, "to create a way of production by which nobody is exploited?"³⁴

The Boston section seems to have introduced some revisions into the address in conformity with the Council's criticism. Still there remained sufficient deviations from official doctrine. The final version contained such tenets as "the social autonomy of the people," "the best government is the government which governs least," and the full proceeds of labor to the workers. These were réchauffé residues of Warren, Heywood and of like reformers who contemplated the resurrection of an order of small owners and leveled incomes.

It should be said, for the sake of completeness, that the revised address failed to convert the New England Labor Reform League. Its

³⁴ Letterbook, f. 165-69.

reply omitted reference to the statutes of the International, but dwelt on the excellence of an inconvertible currency.³⁵

The above samples of departure from orthodoxy showed that the North American Federation was less homogeneous than it was thought to be. It could neither free itself from inner friction nor make significant inroads among indigenous workers. This does not imply its neglect to do so. There is ample evidence in its files which adds up to a decided policy to narrow the gap between itself and the laboring people. Sections were spurred to turn from talk to action in organizing workers, to cease their petty disputes and apply their capacities to the service of labor.

A Farmer-Labor Alliance

Before the Federal Council were two proposals. One recommended the organization of labor along industrial lines; the other, the breaking down of barriers between workers and farmers.³⁶ Little was done to promote the first proposal, although it followed from the General Council's plan of international trade unions. Probably the proposal was a consequence of the labor convention in Cleveland, in July 1873, that had set up the Industrial Congress of the United States.

The question of a farmer-labor alliance was thrust before the Federation by the Granger movement that spread like a prairie fire from 1872 to 1875. About 10,000 locals were reported in 1873, and twice that number in 1874. It was estimated that from May to July of that year the formation of new Granges averaged three a day in Iowa. Kansas had one Grange for every 84 persons in agriculture. By January 1, 1875, the total membership of all Granges exceeded 800,000.³⁷

The trend toward an entente with the farmers was never strong in the North American Federation. There were only isolated moves in that direction. Sections in California had yielded to pressure from the country; and a number of them in the middle west were agog about possible gains for the International from closer relations with the Grangers. Significantly, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* ran three articles which argued that an alliance with rural labor was both feasible and potentially profitable. The resolutions of the general congresses, argued the author, had enough latitude to justify such demands as reduced taxes, cancellation of mortgages and government credit. The three planks formed a concrete basis on which to appeal to the farmers. He also thought of ways to approach them. Their mutual interests with urban

³⁵ The reply was printed in the *Address of the Delegates*, etc., 21 ff.

³⁶ Letterbook, f. 191, 261.

³⁷ Richard T. Ely, *op. cit.*, 73 ff; Carl C. Taylor, *The Farmers' Movement, 1620-1920* (New York, 1953), 132 ff.

workers might be stressed. Farmers could be told, for example, that financiers and big middlemen were their common enemies, that the International was determined to protect the farmer's land against the usurer.³⁸

Defenders of a farmer-labor combination pleaded its advantages. The agricultural population was a vast, untapped source of strength; urban and rural working people, harnessed together, could command the nation. With sufficient foresight, the International could hold the reins of power.

The champions of a farmer-labor pact were comparatively few and uninfluential. Nor was the Federation fitted to further it. In the first place, the leadership was urban-bred, artisan-minded and out of touch with the farmer's grievances. Bolte admitted that benefits were in store for the International by associating with farm laborers, provided they could be organized to conduct the whole farmers' movement "into the track of a real labour movement or to expose it as a bourgeois reform movement."³⁹ Such an either-or policy was not likely to advance a farmer-labor understanding. In the second place, the bulk of the Internationalists was in the urban east, far removed from the main areas of the farmers' agitation, and given to believe, on the basis of their European experience, that the agricultural population was conservative, and had better be left to look after itself.

Thus, the North American Federation was on the periphery of the farmers' movement. In contrast to the several sectional attempts to find common ground with farmers, the Federal Council put aside the problem, until some way was found to direct the farmers toward the labor movement.

In its relations with labor unions, the Council frequently met with indifference or downright unfriendliness. It lost whatever standing it had had in the New York State Workingmen's Assembly, as it was pointed out above. Another illustration was the icy manner in which its address was heard at the second convention of the Industrial Congress, in April 1874.⁴⁰

Impediments of International

The question has come up several times in the course of the narrative why the Association was unable to get a secure place in the American labor movement. To pose the question is not to infer that Internationalists fell down in their obligations. Actually they did yeoman's service

³⁸ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, October 4, 11, 25, 1873.

³⁹ *Letterbook*, f. 261.

⁴⁰ *The Workingman's Advocate*, April 25, 1874.

as trade unionists or as protagonists of the eight hour day. And Internationalists were among the early founders of the American Federation of Labor.

In other words, the contributions of American Internationalists to the labor movement are not the concern now. Of account rather are the reasons for its inadaptability as an organization to American mores. That it persevered to implant its principles was an impressive part of its record; but it was unsuccessful. Here we shall risk the charge of repetition by attributing that to two sets of causes: one was in the International itself; the other in the history of the country and the character of the labor movement. The first set of causes, mentioned in another connection, stemmed from the foreign elements in the organization. They lived apart from the American workers, spoke their native tongues and claimed the superiority of their imported cultures. The most culpable were the Germans who at times behaved towards Americans like Prussian schoolmasters. With a firm belief in their infallibility, they were insufferable to those who resisted the forced feeding of dogmas.

The second set of causes was deep in the country's history and conditions. There were first of all the traditions investing its beginnings as the haven of oppressed, and as the land of promise. Here individuals could start anew, free from feudal restrictions and class frontiers. Here, too, they found republicanism and popular rights that European radicals were still demanding. Furthermore, the seemingly insatiable need of labor was luring to the American shores boat-loads of workers who came buoyed up with an animating optimism. The country had vast, vacant, fertile fields, ready for settlement at little cost.

Besides these hindrances, the International in America was confronted with a heterogeneous laboring population. A large portion of it was semi-rural and unskilled. Much as trade union Internationalists aspired to unite its growing mass, they could claim only a minimum of success. As skilled workers, they were inclined to look upon labor organization from the craft point of view.

In a more rounded estimate of the obstacles encountered by the International should be considered those segments of workers who were anti-monopolists, friends of reform, in many cases partisans of labor's independent political action. The existence of antagonistic classes was the primal premise from which they started in order to put society to rights. But they scorned a crusade against capital, for it was likely to endanger the supports of private property. For all that they were internationally minded, with a bent for the brotherhood of labor. This inclination could be observed in the west as in the east.

To *The Daily Plebeian* of San Francisco it was incontestable that "the victory of one people over any form of oppression is, in a measure, the victory of all. . . . All progressive causes are affiliated; . . . the interests of all peoples are identified, and the common good of the laboring classes all over the world is promoted by every local triumph."⁴¹ The Industrial Congress, successor of the National Labor Union, avoided international agreements, but it acknowledged "the self-evident truth that the labor question is cosmopolitan, embracing within its field of action the uncivilized as well as the civilized nations of the earth."⁴² This was as far as the tendency went in the direction of internationalism. The stopping point, it was evident, was a good distance away from the International.

New Dissensions in the Federation

The Association was thus unable to spread roots in the United States. Whatever base it had among English speaking workers was going to pieces. Had it not been for sedulous local leaders, in Saint Louis and San Francisco, for example, the last native sections might have been total casualties long before the dissolution of the Association.⁴³ German sections, too, such as those of Chicago, that had ventured into loans and homesteads, had a steadily falling register, partly on account of internal bickerings. The situation had become so intolerable that the Federal Council had to intervene and order the sections to penalize the parties in the dispute.⁴⁴ By the end of 1873, the membership of the Federation had dropped to a maximum of 750, divided among sixteen sections. The figure was perhaps too high. Even so, it represented, in round numbers, a loss of 200 members since July 1872. This also meant a reduced income. Of the \$200.00 the Federation had borrowed to send two delegates to the Hague congress, it still owed \$150.00. The debt was in excess of any assessment it could possibly levy.⁴⁵

Bolte's reports chronicle the Federation's increasing cares, falling revenue and sinking morale. Answers from sections came either late or not at all. Referendums fell through because branches did not forward their ballots.

As if to speed the deterioration, strife arose for the mastery of the Federal Council. The first congress had laid down the rule that in a

⁴¹ July 24, 1871.

⁴² *The Workingman's Advocate*, April 25, 1874.

⁴³ Folder, "Saint Louis Correspondence of the I.W.A.," State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin; also Letterbook, f. 179.

⁴⁴ Letterbook, f. 186-89, 223-24, 257.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 243.

locality with two or more sections, totalling at least fifty members, a local committee had to be formed. For one reason or another only the sections in New York seem to have conformed. The five sections there drew up statutes and elected Dr. George Stiebling their corresponding secretary. He had been a member of the Freethinkers' Society, it may be recalled, a journalist, and a delegate to the Central Committee in 1871. The majority of the local committee before long questioned the authority of the Federal Council.⁴⁶ Consequently section 1 submitted an amendment to the rules, that in localities where the Federal Council resides no local committee shall be established.⁴⁷ The revision was clearly designed to remove opposition to the Council. Only four sections voted against the amendment, but they were all in New York, that is, dangerously close to the Council.

Dr. Stiebling later gave another version of the origin and nature of the dispute. Differences came to the surface over the date and place for commemorating the Paris Commune. But this was a minor issue, which concealed the object of section 1 to dominate the Federation. Furthermore, he held, the amendment was unconstitutional, for an annual congress alone could change the rules, and only by a two-thirds vote. The four opposing sections, therefore, refused to dissolve the local committee.⁴⁸ This was a breach of discipline that foreboded a serious rift in the American organization.

The final outcome falls properly under another head. Apropos of the dispute among the New York sections, one fact may be noted here. In the new Federal Council, elected in the summer of 1873, Dr. Stiebling was chosen treasurer. With him in the post, his party gained an advantage in its conflict with section 1.

Of the eleven members of the new Council, several had served in the outgoing one. Bolte was again general secretary; Kavanagh was named recording secretary. The burdens fell on six or seven members. One had to resign for family reasons; four others, among them the two French delegates, either resigned or did not come to meetings.⁴⁹

The Federal Council entered upon its annual term of office in a climate of dissension. To aggravate its duties, it unhappily found itself at the head of an organization with depleted resources and bleak prospects. Dues dwindled, rules were broken and requests were disregarded. On the horizon were darkening clouds which within a few weeks immersed the nation in the worst economic crisis it had known.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 221, 257. See the resolution in *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, May 24, 1873.

⁴⁷ Letterbook, f. 245, 327.

⁴⁸ George C. Stiebling, *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Internationale in Nord-Amerika* (New York, 1874), 3 ff.

⁴⁹ Letterbook, f. 264, 275-79, 326.

The final report of the retiring Council, in August 1873, gave a dismal picture of the workers' situation. Pauperism and crime were increasing. In Massachusetts, "more than half of the factory working people . . . are in debt." And their condition in New York was no less gloomy.⁵⁰

The painful facts about the general congress in Geneva reached New York toward the end of September 1873. The North American Federation, it became apparent, was practically all that had been left of the "mighty" International. The tidings from Geneva coincided with the news that large business houses of the American metropolis had closed their doors.

CHAPTER XII

Labor in the Long Depression

The Crash of 1873

The economic depression of 1873 was the ninth in the history of the United States. From the point of severity it was second only to the crisis of 1929.¹ Earlier depressions had fallen heavily on England and France. That of 1873, however, hit hardest Germany and the United States, the two newly industrialized countries.²

The panic on the Vienna Bourse in May 1873 sent a tremor through the financial world. The sudden stop in the foreign sale of railroad bonds shifted the burden of carrying them to American bankers. Big business houses began to close the second week of September 1873. On the 18th, the Herculean pillar of Wall Street, Jay Cooke and Company, went down with a reverberating crash.

Gloom had crept into the bank's inner office in 1872. The bonds of its Northern Pacific railroad had dropped below par; it lacked credit to meet maturing obligations; reports of failure had to be disproved by Jay Cooke's agents; laborers on the line had not been paid for months. When work stopped for the winter, the rumor spread that construction would not be resumed.³

In the first half of 1873, a lull had settled on the bond market, as before a storm. Confidence was falling. Early in September big firms were already planning the suspension of operations.

The failure of Jay Cooke and Company threw the Stock Exchange into a frenzy. The announcement, heard in silence, a journalist reported, was followed by "an uproar such as has scarcely filled the exchange since it was built. Messengers fled every way with the story of ruin and down came the stocks all along the line."⁴

The debacle was nation-wide. The Stock Exchange closed for ten

¹ Clement Juglar, *A Brief History of Panics* (New York, 1893), 19; A. Ross Eckler, "A Measure of the Severity of Depressions," *Review of Economic Statistics*, 1933, XV, 77 and 79.

² Jean Lescure, *Des crises générales et périodiques de surproduction* (Paris, 1932), I, 79.

³ See Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, *Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1907), II, 387 ff.

⁴ *New York World*, September 19, 1873. See also Edwin L. Godkin's description of the scene in the Stock Exchange in *Reflections and Comments, 1865-1895* (New York, 1895), 79 f.

days on the 20th of September in the hope of recovering composure. But the main dikes had given way. Before the Exchange reopened the entire nation was being engulfed. Starting in October, mercantile houses and manufacturers were discharging their employees and locking the doors. At the end of the month the press described the state of affairs as a "labor panic." The entire economic structure seemed to collapse, as if some blind Samson had pushed away the main pillars. Nothing like it had been known to happen in the history of the nation.

Features of the American Economy in the Seventies

Save for some fluctuations from 1866 to 1873, the advance of the American economy had been steady, in fact had quickened in the two years before the crash. The uncommon prosperity had a number of causes, among them the Franco-Prussian War, the heavy demands of ship builders and machine manufacturers and railway enterprises. In 1871 alone more than 7,000 miles of rails had been laid in the United States, and that had stimulated unprecedented orders for locomotives, freight and passenger cars.⁵ America's coal output had exceeded Germany's by 1873. America was still a long way from Great Britain in steel and iron production, but its rate of increase was faster.⁶

Three unique qualities were already evident in American industry in the 1870's. First, it was extending its national market. Leaders of the iron and steel industry were estimating the potential of the south. Here, said the secretary of the Iron and Steel Association in 1873, "Labor is abundant and cheap," and "access to iron markets is not difficult; so that with sufficient capital, enterprise and skill, the manufacture of pig iron and bar iron may be pursued successfully and profitably in each of the States named."⁷ Second, business and industry were inclined to incorporate and concentrate. The big rise in incorporation was visible in the 1880's and reached a small peak in the 1890's.⁸ But concentration was unmistakable earlier, especially in the textile industry. The number of its establishments increased 36 percent from 1850 to 1890, but the labor force and the product per establishment jumped 248 and 465 percent respectively.⁹ Also wealth was more

⁵ Arthur Glen Auble, "The Depressions of 1873 and 1882 in the United States," (1949), 37, 248, an unpublished doctor's dissertation, Harvard University.

⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Pa., *Second Annual Report*, 1873-74, 202, 253.

⁷ *Proceedings of the American Iron and Steel Association* (Philadelphia, November 20, 1873), 48.

⁸ George Heberton Evans, *Business Incorporations in the United States, 1800-1943* (New York, 1948), 12, 13, 31 ff; George J. Stigler, "Monopoly and Oligopoly by Merger," *American Economic Review*, May 1950, XL, 228.

⁹ William Frank Willoughby, "The Concentration of Industry in the United States," *Yale Review*, May 1898, VII, 74 ff.

concentrated in the United States than in Great Britain, an economist concluded in 1889.¹⁰ Third, labor saving techniques made America's industrial efficiency superior to England's.

The Drop in Business

Business declined precipitously from 1873 to 1878. Misfortune pressed down on cities with impartial force. Commerce and industry slowed down to a snail's pace. Sellers were without buyers; stores and houses, without tenants. Money was abundant, but people could not borrow. Idle mills and factories, nation-wide, stood like tree stumps in a felled forest. Establishments, just paying expenses, reported the Pennsylvania Bureau of Labor Statistics in the second half of 1874, "were so very small a proportion of the whole as to constitute them exceedingly rare exceptions to the general rule."¹¹ Never before had affairs gone so low. Only the twentieth century can provide examples of like or sharper declines. From 1873 to 1878, the average fall in business was 33 percent, or one percent higher than from 1920 to 1921, but it was second to the drop of 56 percent from 1929 to 1932.¹²

The number of failures and the volume of liabilities set a new record. Almost 54,000 business houses defaulted on more than \$1,300,000,000 from 1873 to 1879.¹³ Noteworthy were the more than 1,330 failures in the south in 1875, amounting to over \$36,000,000.¹⁴ The collapse of 40 insurance companies lowered a dark curtain on many persons' futures.¹⁵ The heaviest losers were the holders of railroad securities. By the end of 1876 the companies had defaulted on bonds worth more than \$814,000,000.¹⁶

Depression Theories

The business palsy provoked speculation on its causes. In the opinion of the United States Commissioner of Labor, "it stimulated the study of panics and depressions to a greater extent than any preceding period."¹⁷ Few, if any, of the economic analysts confessed a

¹⁰ Thomas G. Shearman, "The Owners of the United States," *Forum*, November 1889, 266, 271.

¹¹ *Second Annual Report*, 1873-74, 433.

¹² Eckler, *op. cit.*, 77.

¹³ *First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor*, 1886, 67.

¹⁴ Great Britain, Foreign Affairs, Commercial, No. 5 (1876), *Reports from Her Majesty's Consuls on the Manufactures, Commerce etc.*, Part iii, 614.

¹⁵ Albert S. Bolles, *Industrial History of the United States* (Norwich, Conn., 1879), 846 ff.

¹⁶ Great Britain, Foreign Affairs, Commercial, No. 22 (1877), *Reports Respecting the Late Industrial Conflicts in the United States*, 35.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, 60.

need to revise their principles in the light of the crisis. Their explanations varied all the way from social Darwinism to socialism. Grangers, high taxes, inflated currency and trade unions were at the root of the depression, according to some; others ascribed it to overinvestment and overproduction, and to human nature, the most conclusive of all determinants; still others, to underconsumption or to anarchic production. The economist, Francis A. Walker, modified the overproduction theory to read "overproduction in certain lines."¹⁸ According to the economists, William Graham Sumner and Edward Atkinson, the new techniques brought the depression. If distress resulted, it was the price of improvement and progress.¹⁹

The object of the inquiry into the depression was not to discover antidotes. For the belief was supreme in the business community that breakdowns were but backward movements in the "undulations of trade." The premise for that was a providentially sanctioned order. Crises would come and go, and there was no way to help it. State intervention would be artificial interference with the scheme of the Great Artificer. We shall return to this conception of the economic system.

Reformers and socialists not only rejected it. They firmly held that depressions had palpable causes for which cures were possible. To present them here would be but to recapitulate what has been said in a previous chapter. Three, however, may be repeated. Andrew Cameron, who had absorbed Kellogg's gospel like a blotter, could find no other cause for depressions than the "false and wicked" financial system.²⁰ Financial reforms were the only way to prevent them from recurring. George McNeill, like his teacher, Ira Steward, ascribed them to the wage system and underconsumption. Safe anchorage lay ahead in the eight hour day. In the long run it would expunge the wage system, and by increasing labor's consuming power would use up the excess of production.²¹ Friedrich Sorge, the Marxist, was convinced that depressions derived from the disharmony between the way commodities were produced and the manner in which they were taken up.²² Only socialism could bring production and consumption into accord.

¹⁸ Cited in Paul Barnett, *Business Cycle Theory in the United States, 1860-1900* (Chicago, 1941), 74 f.

¹⁹ Most of the above answers are contained in the report of the congressional committee, inquiring into the causes of the depression, *Investigation by a Select Committee of the House of Representatives Relative to the Causes of the General Depression in Labor and Business* (45th Congress, 3rd session, Miscellaneous Documents, no. 29).

²⁰ *The Workingman's Advocate*, February 8, 1873.

²¹ See *Investigation by a Select Committee, etc.*, 116 ff.

²² F. A. Sorge, *Socialism and the Worker* (New York, 1876).

Organized Labor's Decline

The long depression exacted a heavy toll from the American workers. Wages fell, and with them went down the standard of living. Since strikes for the years 1873 and 1877 were poorly chronicled, their count must for the present be ruled out. The press discloses a steady wave of labor conflicts, several of them quite bitter and involving thousands of workers. Conspicuous were the strikes of the cigar makers in New York, of the New England textile workers and of the Pennsylvania coal miners. The predominating cause seems to have been resistance to wage cuts. For the same reason computations on the downspiraling of trade unions and employment must be postponed. The available testimony, however, suggests that the decline was considerable in both sectors.

Trade union losses before the crisis were accounted for earlier in the text. At the last congress of the National Labor Union on September 16, 1872, President Trevellick confessed that he had no way of knowing its total membership. Heads of state branches had not submitted reports; correspondence had lagged; and records were chaotic and incomplete, "for want of clerical help." The delegates adopted Cameron's motion to replace the National Labor Union by an Industrial Congress. The new organization gave little or no consideration to political action, in view of the recent unsuccessful attempt to nominate a labor ticket in the presidential election, but stressed instead what was likely to unite labor.²³ It can be anticipated that, save for a very brief period in May 1874, the Industrial Congress showed itself incapable of uniting the American workers. After its convention of 1875, it passed into history. Its proceedings are disappointing as a source for its numerical size.

A kind of inventory of the trade unions in the United States was drawn up in 1872 by William Jessup for the Bureau of Labor Statistics of Massachusetts, and was prefaced probably by George McNeill, the Bureau's first deputy. Jessup and McNeill were perhaps the two best informed men on American trade unions. Even so, they could not estimate the total membership. But their observations on unions are so penetrating that they are worth noting. The labor societies, we are told, were more or less infant bodies, having neither the dimensions nor size of comparable British unions. About a dozen were allegedly national. But a number of them were "more national in aim than in fact." The run of trade unions was in the nature of a makeshift, "local and temporary," neither vested with large financial reserves nor held

²³ *The Workingman's Advocate*, September 21, 1872.

in line by a general staff. They came together for some immediate object, such as a wage rise, a shorter workday, a strike; but before settling on the purpose they might break up. Lacking the stability of the British unions, they neither discussed nor arranged preliminaries before striking, but acted hastily, "without preparation and without resources." Consequently, "No genuine spirit of Unionism is awakened, no fraternity established." What was the explanation for the existence of unions in many trades? The account, published in the Bureau's Report, ascribed them to a small corps of faithful men, "rallying points around which the workmen gather in times of danger." Once they were past the peril, they went their separate ways.²⁴ Labor unions, even those calling themselves national and international, were craft organizations in the main, incapable of withstanding a long economic siege. But their tendency after the depression was to durability.²⁵

The workers' press was in keeping with the unstable character of the labor societies. Their newspapers were poorly supported and short-lived. They did not focus on immediate union problems; they were "more political than industrial, more given to argument than to fact, — to financial reform than trade unionism, or general trade matters."

It is therefore risky, in the light of the above remarks, to attempt a computation of the membership of the trade unions on the eve of the depression. One historian credited them with an enrollment of 300,000 from 1870 to 1872, and counted thirty-two national and international unions.²⁶ Contemporaries were reluctant to make estimates on a national scale. Trade unions that were secret were disinclined to reveal their registers. Terence V. Powderly recalled that there had been but few national unions with an enrollment "of over fifteen or twenty thousand."²⁷ Jessup's balance-sheet was blank on union memberships. All he reported was the approximate number of labor societies. In 1870, when he had spent the winter preparing a trade union directory, he had "secured the addresses of about 1,000 unions in the various trades." Approximately two years later, they were "fully 1500" in the entire country. He could not account for more than twenty-one national and international unions. The largest memberships were claimed by the shoeworkers, the coopers and the printers, the machinists and blacksmiths, the iron molders and the locomotive engineers.²⁸

It can be inferred from Jessup's evidence that workers set great store by the eight hour day. The movement had not yet spent itself in

²⁴ Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Mass., *Fourth Annual Report*, 1873, 250 ff.

²⁵ Lloyd Ulman, *The Rise of the National Trade Union* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), 4 ff.

²⁶ Commons and associates, *op. cit.*, II, 47 f.

²⁷ *The Path I Trod* (New York, 1940), 39.

²⁸ Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Mass., *Fourth Annual Report*, 1873, 255-59.

mid-western cities by the fall of 1872. In New York, however, workers were losing the shorter day they had won in the spring and early summer. Jessup was of the opinion that about 15,000 in New York and Brooklyn were still enjoying it at the end of October. The agitation for the eight hour day lost much of its force during the depressed years, but it never died out. A fairly common antidote then recommended against unemployment was the shorter work day.²⁹

The paucity of data precludes an estimate of trade union deterioration resulting from the depression. Yet the available facts show substantial drops in the registers of unions. The panic came upon them like a frost on spring blossoms. The list of casualties was long; and the better part of the survivors came out of the ordeal fairly thinned.

The evidence on organized trades suggests a downward direction. The decrease in New York City, the *New York Times* tells us, amounted to more than 20 percent after the first year of the crisis. If the figures given by the *New York Herald* in November 1873 are compared with those published by the *New York Times* in December 1874, the first year's loss in the metropolis was above 36 percent.³⁰ In 1877 the City's total trade union enrollment was put at 5,000.³¹ The unions in Chicago, with few exceptions, *The Workingman's Advocate* tells us, "lost all life and vigor."³² W. H. Foster, of the Typographical Union in Cincinnati, testified in 1883 that trade union membership in his city had gone below 1,000 by 1878.³³ Years later, Gompers recalled "that in 1877 there were not more than 50,000 organized workmen on the American continent."³⁴

National unions, by and large, were almost devastated by the depression. Their number decreased from about 30 in the early 1870's to 8 or 9 in 1877. The printers declined from 9,797 in 1873 to 4,260 in 1878; the cigar makers, from 5,800 in 1869 to 1,016 in 1877; the coopers, from 7,000 in 1872 to 1,500 in 1878; and the iron molders, from 7,500 in 1874 to 2,854 in 1879. The union of the machinists and blacksmiths was cut down to one-third of its former size. The Furniture Workers Association, set up by the First International in July 1873, was a skeleton three years later. The tailors' national union

²⁹ See also the replies to a questionnaire on the eight hour day, sent out by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ohio, *Second Annual Report*, 1878, 280 ff.

³⁰ *New York Times*, December 5, 1874; *New York Herald*, November 6, 1873.

³¹ Sartorius von Walterhausen, *Die nordamerikanischen Gewerkschaften* (Berlin, 1886), 202, note.

³² July 17, 1875.

³³ Senate Committee on Education and Labor, *Report upon the Relations between Labor and Capital* (Washington, D.C., 1885), I, 411.

³⁴ United States, Industrial Commission, *Report*, VII, 615.

fared even worse. Formed in 1871, it fell to pieces in 1876.³⁵ Of the 2,440 unions reported in the census of 1880 the overwhelming number was of recent origin, that is since 1878.³⁶

On the basis of the data on hand three tentative conclusions may be offered on trade unions during the 1870's. First, though the national organizations suffered a big mortality, they were not wiped out as in 1857. Only three unions had then survived the panic; in 1877, about three times that many remained alive. The contrast suggests a toughening on the part of organized labor, even a capacity for self-renewal. For during the hard times four new national unions had come into existence,³⁷ and the railway unions had even increased their memberships. Second, trade unionism seems to have sustained itself better on a local and regional than on a national basis. This may explain the numerous yet confined strikes of the period and the persistence of the eight hour agitation. Third, there was a tendency to amalgamate on a national scale, impressively demonstrated at the Pittsburgh Congress of 1876. Put together, the data indicates a reserve power in the labor organizations, which could not be wasted by the crisis. Without this latent force the resurgence of trade unionism after 1878 might have been arrested.

Fallen Living Standards

Facts are plentiful to establish the impoverishment of the American workers during the depression. Though there is some disparity on the degree of their deprivation, opinion is unanimous on their reduced economic status.

Wages went down like an avalanche. Pennsylvania reported a drop of more than 50 percent in monetary wages from 1870 to 1876. If reckoned in terms of what they could buy, the reduction was practically absolute. The price of necessities was almost as high in 1876 as in 1870.³⁸ Employers and employees of Missouri arrived at different estimates of wage declines. According to the employers, losses since 1872 were from 10 to 34 percent; the figures of employees ranged

³⁵ Walterhausen, *op. cit.*, 203, note; Commons and associates, *op. cit.*, II, 176 f.; Frank T. Stockton, *The International Molders Union of North America* (Baltimore, 1921), 23; George E. McNeill, *op. cit.*, 377. Commons and associates err in attributing the extinction of the Order of the Crispins to the crisis. *Op. cit.*, II, 177. Its decline had begun in 1871. By June 1874 the Order had disintegrated, due to the loss of many strikes. Revived in 1875, it could not stand the strain of the times, and disappeared in 1878. See Don D. Lescohier, *The Knights of St. Crispin, 1867-1874* (Madison, Wis., 1910).

³⁶ Jos. D. Weeks, "Report on Trades Societies in the United States," *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880, XX.

³⁷ Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen; National Union of Horseshoers; Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers; Granite Cutters' National Union.

³⁸ Secretary of Internal Affairs, Pa. *Annual Report*, 1875-76, Pt. iii, IV, 816.

from 16 to 50 percent, the bulk being in the bracket of 30 percent and higher.³⁹ The calculations of a Special Committee on Labor in Illinois showed that, from 1872 to 1879, the cost of skilled labor had fallen 50 percent; that of unskilled labor, even lower.⁴⁰ The decline in Ohio was 29 percent for skilled workers and 40 percent for common laborers. The price of groceries, however, was only 12 percent less than in 1871.⁴¹

The Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics came to this conclusion from the study of the evidence: "Years of steady employment, coupled with health and strength and the will to labor, was not and is not a guarantee to the laborer, that if sickness overtakes him he shall not become a pauper, or that when death comes that his children shall not be thrown upon the charity of the community."⁴²

The margin between wages and the cost of living convinced the Bureau of Massachusetts, "That in the majority of cases workingmen in this Commonwealth do not support their families by their individual earnings alone. . . . That fathers rely, or are forced to depend, upon their children for from one-quarter to one-third of the entire family earnings. That without children's assistance, other things remaining equal, the majority of families would be in poverty or debt."⁴³

Dependence on children's earnings was as common in American as in English and French workers' homes. The consequences were the same, irrespective of geography or nationality. To Governor Washburn of Massachusetts it was as plain as it was unpleasant, "That the strength of the operatives in many of our mills is becoming exhausted, that they are growing prematurely old, and that they are losing the vitality requisite to a healthy enjoyment of social opportunity."⁴⁴ The Governor's observations bring to mind the earlier criticisms of Richard Oastler, the British Tory radical, and of Simonde de Sismondi, the Swiss-Italian economist.

Witnesses before a Senate Committee in 1883 testified that wages

³⁹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Missouri, *First Annual Report for the Year Ending January 1, 1880*, passim, and tables 103-04.

⁴⁰ Illinois General Assembly, *Report of Special Committee on Labor* (Springfield, 1879), 35 ff. The calculations were higher than those of the Chicago trade and labor council, representing twenty-seven trade unions. Its average of wage reductions exceeded 37 percent. See *Investigation by a Select Committee of the H. of R. Relative to the Causes of the General Depression* (46th Congress, 2nd session, House, Miscellaneous Documents, no. 5), 101-09, "Wright Committee Report."

⁴¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ohio, *Second Annual Report*, 1878, 253; and *Third Annual Report*, 1879, 222.

⁴² *Second Annual Report*, 1878, 23.

⁴³ Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Mass., *Sixth Annual Report*, 1875, 384.

⁴⁴ Cited from the Governor's annual message of 1874 by the Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Mass., *Seventh Annual Report*, 1876, 291. The full text of the message appeared in the *Springfield Daily Republican*, January 9, 1874.

were at a subsistence level or below. Konrad Carl, a tailor, who had been a founder of the First International in America, declared that real wages in his trade were about 50 percent less than they had been before the Civil War. According to P. J. McGuire, an organizer of the American Federation of Labor, 10,000 textile workers in Massachusetts averaged less than \$300.00 a year each, and 60,000 miners in Pennsylvania less than \$290.00.⁴⁵ In other words, 70,000 workers in the two most industrialized states earned less than a dollar a day in the years after the long depression. That meant "absolute poverty," in the opinion of the Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics.⁴⁶ Gompers said that in the five heavily industrialized States⁴⁷ the average annual wage for 300 working days was \$405.65. Based on a family of five, it came to about \$81.00 per person, or \$14.00 less than the annual cost of maintaining a pauper.⁴⁸

Related to the question of wages was the practice of employers to withhold workers' pay "from one to four months."⁴⁹ The pay, moreover, was frequently in the company's scrip, redeemable in the company's store. If taken in trade elsewhere, the scrip was discounted at 50 percent; in national currency, it was worth only forty cents on a dollar.⁵⁰

Even at par value, the scrip meant a wage cut. Prices in companies' stores were invariably higher than elsewhere. A worker, near Toledo, Ohio, for example, testified that if his wages were in cash he could save at least 40 percent by shopping in Toledo. In Missouri commodities at the companies' stores were marked up from 10 to 40 percent over those of the same quality at neighboring shops; and in Pennsylvania, the mark-up was from 5 to 17 percent.⁵¹ Terence V. Powderly wrote years later that the workers were "robbed through company stores. I was obliged to submit to being robbed too, and I know that I paid exorbitant prices for necessities, in some cases fifty percent more than I would have paid elsewhere."⁵²

In many areas the workers' situation was aggravated by their compulsory renting of the company's houses. That, together with its scrip and prescribed purchase at its shop — commonly known as the truck

⁴⁵ Senate Committee on Education and Labor, *Report*, I, 317, 417.

⁴⁶ *Second Annual Report*, 1878, 23.

⁴⁷ Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Massachusetts and Illinois.

⁴⁸ Senate Committee on Education and Labor, *Report*, I, 291 f.

⁴⁹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Missouri, *Second Annual Report, for the Year Ending January 1, 1881*, 15.

⁵⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ohio, *First Annual Report*, 1877, 176.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 179; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Missouri, *Second Annual Report*, 15; Hyman Kuritz, "The Pennsylvania State Government and Labor Controls from 1865-1922," 185, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University.

⁵² *Op. cit.*, 37.

system — served employers in two ways. First, said the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Massachusetts, it yielded them "a saving in their interest account"; second, by getting employees into debt, it bound them "in a sort of local slavery, which will retain them in their employ, from positive pecuniary inability to remove from the premises."⁵³

Official inquiries agree that a large portion of the American workers fell into debt, especially in the cheerless 1870's. In 1870, a comparatively prosperous year, the Labor Bureau of Massachusetts discovered that "the morrow of the largest portion of labor is mortgaged for the necessary expenses of yesterday. To him it is despair, not hope, that drives the spur. . . . Even 'pay day' after a month's toil has been known to bring a cloud of darkness to an industrious, temperate man who knew not how to divide his earnings among a number of creditors."⁵⁴ Wherever figures were obtainable they invariably showed that the incomes of thousands of families were too low for primary needs. The Labor Bureau of Pennsylvania had it that 171,512 workers received an average annual wage of \$545.61; but 226,220 earned an average of \$346.95; and 38,856 single women, only \$230.53. In the first and second categories 135,786 and 169,665 respectively were heads of families.⁵⁵ Irrespective of the average annual wage in each category, it was inadequate to buy necessities.

Similar findings were given out in New Jersey, Ohio and Missouri. Out of 114 families in New Jersey 55 said that their expenses had exceeded their earnings, in several cases by as much as \$160 or more. Questionnaires in Ohio in three consecutive years elicited replies that confirmed one another. The returns of 61 workers' families in 1877 revealed that 30 had an average debt of over \$61 each. It was reported in 1878 that 29 out of 41 miners' families had not earned enough in the five preceding years to pay expenses. More than half of the 29 owed from \$75 to \$500 each. Answers from 97 workers' families in 1879 disclosed that the wages of 42 were insufficient for their basic requisites. The ratio was apparently higher in Missouri, where 97 out of 147 families confessed their inability to earn the cost of necessities.⁵⁶

The facts of the crisis were hard to reconcile with the great expectations that had lured thousands of immigrants. Human herds, gaunt and haggard, rendered idle or eking out the barest subsistence, were a frequent sight during the 1870's. Where was the promised abundance?

⁵³ *Third Annual Report*, 1872, 409.

⁵⁴ *First Report*, 1870, 161.

⁵⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Pa., *Second Annual Report*, 1873-74, 512.

⁵⁶ Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industries, N. J., *First Annual Report*, 1878, 56-58, table V. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ohio, *First Annual Report*, 1877, 304 f.; *Second Annual Report*, 1878, 55; *Third Annual Report*, 1879, 230. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Mo., *Second Annual Report*, 1881, 45.

people asked. Or was America destined to recapitulate the worst aspects of Europe? Despair destroyed confidence; and social friction threatened to break forth into flame.

The Social Imbalance

Class dichotomies dawned on America. Of course, they had been known and written up before. But this time the evidence was piling up so fast that it could not be passed over. Drawn further apart, capital and labor eyed one another like two hostile camps. The period of big labor strikes opened.

America of the 1870's was class-divided. The figures on strikes for the period, 1873-1879, are too inadequate to arrive at a reliable total or to determine the size of the labor force directly involved. The Federal Labor Bureau counted 247 strikes and lockouts for those years. But the number is far too low for the nation as a whole, if notice is taken of hundreds of labor conflicts reported in the press. The cigar makers alone had 89 recognized strikes from 1873 to 1879; and the coal mining districts were never free from strife for any extended period.

Yet capital and labor were in accord on primary principles. American workers shared with their employers basic economic tenets, as has been pointed out in these pages. Divergence arose on the issue of government intervention. Workers, like employers, held to the doctrine of natural liberty which allowed every man to be on his own, but they could not believe that poverty was punishment for improvident living. The experience of the depression had dispelled faith in that dogma, but not in the premises of the economic system. Actually at no time during the decade were they seriously jeopardized, despite the numerous strikes.

Whatever panaceas found favor with labor, they were not a cause of hostility on the part of employers. Industrialists sanctioned certain cures, but were unfriendly to the organization of labor. That awakened their deepest and wildest emotions, for it strengthened labor's bargaining power. Labor combinations once launched, employers feared, might meddle in the affairs of capitalists, perhaps infringe on the rights of private property. Such a course of conduct was similar to, if not the same as, that of socialists and communists. Even inquiries into labor conditions were looked upon with distrust, and there were demands to prevent them.⁵⁷ Bureaus of labor statistics were regarded as intrusive and troublesome.

Their reports were anything but revolutionary. What they said on social classes, however, put in doubt the canons of the business com-

⁵⁷ See e.g., Bureau of Labor Statistics, Pa., *Second Annual Report*, 1873-74, 421, 429.

munity. The lack of harmony in capital-labor relations was a matter of concern to all advanced nations, said the Bureau of Pennsylvania. The fact that "the cause of the toilers of the earth is presented from a higher and more advantageous standpoint now than ever before" was, in its opinion, "the best answer to those who hold all such discussion to be visionary, demagogical, and, what is now fashionable in some quarters, to denounce as 'communistic.'" The Bureau went on to deny "that the suffering and privations of the poor . . ." were "incurable." For "the hope of human progress is not an *ignis fatuus*, but a real and tangible good, to be advanced by patient labor and earnest faith in the eventual triumph of right over wrong."⁵⁸

The Bureau's views were shared by others in and out of Pennsylvania. Its Secretary of Internal Affairs, for example, noted in the centennial year of America's independence that "the antagonism between rich and poor, learned and illiterate, is making itself fearfully manifest."⁵⁹ And in the fourth year of the depression the Bureau of Massachusetts was compelled to write: "Socially, class distinctions have increased. Wealth is aggregated and protected. Poverty is congregated and demands protection. Two classes, permanent and antagonistic: the laborer, poor and ignorant; the capitalist, rich and cultured. On the side of the first are numbers and brute force; on the side of the second, cunning and power."⁶⁰

A common corrective was cooperation. It provoked little apprehension, for experience proved that it had neither challenged nor interfered with the success of business enterprise. Great Britain's rise to economic supremacy had not been impeded by its growing cooperative movement. Schulze-Delitzsch's cooperative credit societies had not stopped the expansion of German banks and industrial establishments. French entrepreneurs, aristocrats, even Napoleon III himself, had extended financial support to cooperatives. In sum, cooperation was considered a safe and desirable activity for workers.

The Conservative Analysis

Inquiry by labor bureaus into the roots of poverty called forth the censure of the business élite. It denied any validity to their thesis that the worker's declining condition had its source in industrialism, monopoly and competition rather than in his imprudence. And it likened to subversion such logic as was advanced by the Ohio Bureau,

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 419 f.

⁵⁹ *Annual Report*, 1875-76, Pt. iii, IV, 814.

⁶⁰ *Eighth Annual Report*, 1877, 57.

that labor troubles stemmed from the worker's attempt to wrest at least a portion of the increased wealth "for his own benefit," that in "self-defense" he had to unite "with his brethren."⁶¹ Such reasoning not only justified his combining with others; it also implied support for his claim to a bigger slice of the business earnings. Carried to its conclusion, the reasoning made untenable the classical economic position.

Equally unpardonable, from the viewpoint of the business élite, was the poking of labor bureaus into the doctrine of natural rights. For it was the unquestioned assumption of the social structure. To inquire into the doctrine might either undermine it or strengthen the case of labor, since defenders of labor were aiming to establish its title to the good things of life on the same ultimate ground of natural rights. If they succeeded, they would eventually invade the premises of private property.

Labor's cause was well pleaded in the name of natural rights by the Labor Bureau of Pennsylvania. The fact that it spoke for the most industrialized state in the Union probably vested its views with authority. Starting from Rousseau's equality of rights, it questioned whether the law-making body that permitted capital to incorporate and to transform the small producer into a wage earner could at the same time make him an inferior citizen, deprived of the right to share "in all the grandeur of the progress his labor helps to produce!" The Bureau went on to vindicate the equity of the worker's stand. When he protests that "he gets less and less" of the increasing wealth produced annually; that with the progressive concentration of capital, "the numbers of his class increase" and "the pressure upon them becomes heavier; that their attempts to organize to secure their share of the benefits of this progress are met with charges of conspiracy, of brutal violence, of agrarian murders"; that the few are taking from the many the natural resources, meant for all; when he presents these grievances and calls for an inquiry "into the condition of affairs for the public good, should he be turned away with a cold negative?" The reply was implicit in the question.⁶²

Whether natural rights were metaphysical or historical had little bearing on the controversy. Actually they had become articles of belief. Consequently the argument that they were valid only if they applied equally to both sides opened the existing order to radical changes.

⁶¹ *Second Annual Report*, 1878, 32 f.

⁶² *Second Annual Report*, 1873-74, 428.

The Conservative Remedies

Deviation from approved premises, especially by official or semi-official bodies, has frequently been looked upon as heresy by conservatives. And in the critical 1870's they regarded as subversive anyone who disputed the American promise, for in doing that he was in effect telling the aggrieved to rely on their combined strength to get their ends. The reply to him revived the long-held thesis that America held out greater opportunities to the worker than did Europe. The argument can be quickly summarized: The foreign laborer found in the United States exceptional opportunities; apart from earning more and eating better than he had in Europe, he was unhampered by caste; he shared in law making; the roads to riches lay open; through free education his children could rise in the social scale; and by the Homestead Act a sizable farm was accessible to him. In the opinion of the *New York Times*, the Act made the United States "the only socialistic, or more correctly, 'agrarian' government of the world."⁶³ And since America already achieved or was achieving, without fanfare and unfurled banners, what trade unionists and socialists were demanding in Europe, of what use were workers' coalitions or radical catechisms?⁶⁴

Comparing Europe with America was a poor way of buttressing the great promise, according to the Labor Bureau of Pennsylvania, especially when hunger was harvesting its victims. The only value of the relative estimates, the Bureau answered, was "to make texts to be quoted in our journals, upon which discourses are founded, glorifying the superior treatment and condition of our working classes over those of other countries, a sort of 'whistling to keep our courage up,' while our streets swarm with mendicants, forced to become such by a system that has thrown at least one-third of all our working population idle and kept them so for a year and a half."⁶⁵

The degree to which the great promise had weakened its hold on American workers, as a result of the crisis, could not be measured, unless statistics on immigration and emigration were taken as indicators. But they could also be indices of trends in opportunities of employment. Be that as it may, immigration declined and emigration rose after 1873.⁶⁶

It was of some concern to industrialists that most of the emigrants were artisans and laborers. Their exit might ultimately mean higher

⁶³ December 28, 1873, and January 20, 1874.

⁶⁴ See e.g., *The Iron Age*, November 20, 1873, XII, 18; April 29, 1875, XV, 15; *New York Times*, January 20, 1874; *The Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, December 27, 1873.

⁶⁵ *Second Annual Report*, 1873-74, 464.

⁶⁶ For the figures see Great Britain, Foreign Affairs, Commercial, no. 17 (1877), *Reports from Her Majesty's Consuls*, etc., II, 297.

wages. To the New York *Times* a falling immigration was something to be grateful for. It meant "the absence of a very disturbing influence to the working classes at home."⁶⁷ But business men calculated more than they theorized, and accordingly came forth with proposals to obviate a labor emergency. Only unionized labor was expendable. Manufacturers should profit by the low cost of labor to store up big stocks in order to anticipate competition with European producers. "It will be a long time before materials and labor can be had so cheaply as now," *The Iron Age* wrote.⁶⁸ Localities could plan public works. Trade unionists who refused jobs at lower wages were no objects of sympathy. To aid them was no charity. Should the reservoir of labor fall so low that its price had to be raised, manufacturers would do well, ran the advice, to draw on cheap labor in the south. To these measures should be added the educational program put forth by the president of the American Iron and Steel Association. He recommended outlays on night schools, libraries, lectures and appropriate literature, in the belief that such expenditures would prove to be a sound investment.⁶⁹

The policy with regard to vagrants was severe. They were regarded as criminals in need of reform; otherwise, it was argued, the United States would be overrun with depraved paupers. Business men and legislators favored one of two courses, either to put vagrants or tramps, as they came to be called in the 1870's, in workhouses, as in Great Britain, or to treat them like felons. But neither procedure was a solution of the problem of vagrancy. Though the crisis had expanded it to national dimensions, no long range, national plan with a corrective purpose was projected. The spirit of laissez-faire had so much force at high governing levels that remedies for unemployment were considered intrusions into the operation of the natural economic laws. While labor leaders cried out, "A Tramp is a man, an unfortunate man, . . . the product of recent times,"⁷⁰ legislatures in nine states enacted laws against him. The common characteristic of the enactments, a labor sheet remarked, was "the spirit of ferocity and oppression against a class of unfortunates who, without a fault of their own, are out of work."⁷¹

⁶⁷ June 12, 1875.

⁶⁸ July 20, 1876.

⁶⁹ *Proceedings of the Convention of Iron and Steel Manufacturers*, May 6, 1879, 12.

⁷⁰ *National Labor Tribune*, cited in *Iron Molders' Journal*, September 10, 1875, 428.

⁷¹ *The Labor Standard*, February 17, 1878. The nine states were N. H., Mass., Conn., Pa., Del., N. J., Me., Ill., and R. I. Strong opposition prevented in the 1870's the voting of vagrancy laws in N. Y., O., and Ind. States, among them N. Y., passed such laws in the 1880's. Where state laws did not exist, municipalities adopted local ordinances. I am indebted to Mr. Herbert Gutman for the above list of states that passed vagrancy laws.

Among the antilabor acts of the 1870's were blacklisting and conspiracy trials. It was no innovation during the decade to index and deny employment to workers who had testified before investigating committees. The novelty was the marked increase of the practice on a scale rarely equalled.⁷² The same can be said of conspiracy cases. Workers had been prosecuted for many years either at common law or under general statutes on the charge of combining. From 1863 to 1871 alone there had been at least ten such court actions. Prosecutions increased during the long depression. Of the many trials for conspiracy from 1873 to 1880, that of John Siney, president of the National Miners' Association, got national notice. The trial, though ending in acquittal, was a factor in the breakup of the Association.⁷³ It may be noted that during the 1870's the conspiracy issue was a cause of increased tensions in the relations of employers and employees. Both sides manifested greater resolve, the one to have more restraining laws passed, the other to compel the repeal of those in existence.

Depression and Class Division

There were American Cassandras among the defenders of the economic system who predicted difficult times ahead. For the depression seemed to have pushed the bottom out of the vaunted prosperity. The secretary of the American Iron and Steel Association warned Americans that henceforth they would need to tighten their belts. Workers would have to be "contented with lower wages" and business men with smaller profits.⁷⁴ The economist, David A. Wells, who had been charting the progress of the American economy, conceded a tendency since 1860 "to equalize the conditions of life as between Europe and America, and these conditions have now approached each other so nearly that the American labourer must make up his mind henceforth not to be so much better off than the European labourer. . . . Men will hereafter in this country have more of a struggle to escape from the place in which they may be born."⁷⁵ In a similarly dejected tone, the Labor Bureau of Ohio announced, even as the depression was showing signs of ascending from the trough, that, unless labor rose in the social scale and got "its fair reward . . . of the wealth it helps to produce, the future of America will be one of anarchy, of discontented

⁷² McNeill, *op. cit.*, 154.

⁷³ Edwin E. Witte, "Early American Labor Cases," *Yale Law Journal*, 1925-26, XXXV, 829 ff.

⁷⁴ *Annual Report of the Secretary of the American Iron and Steel Association, presented at the annual meeting at Philadelphia, February 11, 1875*, 82.

⁷⁵ Cited in Great Britain, Foreign Affairs, Commercial, No. 22 (1877), *Reports Respecting the Late Industrial Conflicts in the United States*, 19.

classes, of degraded peasantry, and all the once fair promises of our land come to naught."⁷⁶

The above remarks, from highly respected quarters, were in essence an admission that class frontiers were becoming difficult to cross in the United States. That was also the opinion of conservative contemporaries, among them the earnest Reverend Jesse Jones. Events since 1873 convinced him that "nine-tenths of those who now work for wages are as powerless to rise above their present condition as a slave on the auction-block was to walk free to his own home. The fact is that a fixed, hopeless, proletariat, wage class is the very foundation of our present industrial system."⁷⁷

Assessed in terms of recent research, the observations were astonishingly well-grounded. Investigation of the American industrial elite in the 1870's has shown that a negligible number of workers climbed into the class of industrial leaders. Three key questions were put by the investigators before summing up the findings: "Was the typical industrial leader of the 1870's, then, a 'new man,' an escapee from the slums of Europe or from the paternal farm? Did he rise by his own efforts from a boyhood of poverty? Was he as innocent of education and of formal training as has often been alleged?" The answers were as follows: "He seems to have been none of these things. American by birth, of a New England father, English in national origin, Congregational, Presbyterian, or Episcopal in religion, urban in early environment, he was rather born and bred in an atmosphere in which business and a relatively high social standing were intimately associated with his family life. Only at about eighteen did he take his first regular job, prepared to rise from it, moreover, not by a rigorous apprenticeship begun when he was virtually a child, but by an academic education well above average for the times."⁷⁸

In the light of such class demarcations, it is understandable why many defenses were used against workers. Described above were the antivagrancy enactments, conspiracy laws and blacklists. These expedients were calculated to secure the social and economic system. A like purpose was behind the employers' associations, named in a previous chapter. Although they claimed to aim at tariffs, markets and lobbies, the names of at least two, the International Labor Defense Association and the Bosses' International, revealed other ends.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *Second Annual Report*, 1878, 26.

⁷⁷ *The International Review* (New York), 1880, IX, 53.

⁷⁸ Frances W. Gregory and Irene D. Neu, "The American Industrial Elite in the 1870's," *Men in Business* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), 193-211, ed., William Miller.

⁷⁹ See *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, August 1874.

Unemployment in the Long Depression

There has been little agreement on the number of jobless during the long depression. The able Bureau of Labor Statistics of Massachusetts put their number at no more than 570,000. The "popular estimate," based on an "appalling" situation, was 3,000,000. H. M. Hyndman, the British Socialist, was certain that the evidence could sustain an even higher number. Equally convinced was the Bureau of Labor Statistics of Pennsylvania. It believed that the unemployed amounted to at least one-third of the working population, asserted to be 10,000,000 in 1878. If the round sum of 3,000,000 could be credited, reasoned Joseph Schumpeter, it would point to a relatively larger unemployment in the 1870's than in 1929 and after.⁸⁰ Between the lowest and highest aggregates were the totals of 2,000,000, derived from three independent sources,⁸¹ and 1,000,000, given by the secretary of the American Iron and Steel Association.⁸² In view of the comparatively limited industrialization, even the lesser figures were frightening.

The data on unemployment in big cities is scattered and inadequate. In Chicago, we are told, a demonstration of unemployed, December 22, 1873, assembled 20,000 idle. Of the 25,000 arrested there in 1874 the great majority were said to have been jobless.⁸³ Records on home relief in Boston showed that within three years, 1874-1877, the number getting help had risen from almost 10,000 to a little less than 21,000.⁸⁴ A safe assumption is that the statistics did not account for all of the city's unemployed. Conservative calculations in New York City indicated that one-fourth of its population, that is 93,750, was without work in the second half of 1874. Subsequent opinion ranged between 75,000 and 105,000, with a leaning to the first figure as the more probable.⁸⁵ The second figure approximated the 110,000, announced at a meeting in Cooper Union, December 11, 1873.⁸⁶

The curve of the depression continued to dip until the end of 1876. The iron and steel manufacturers predicted in May 1874, that unless

⁸⁰ Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Mass., *Ninth Annual Report*, 1878, 9; W. Goodwin Moody, *Our Labor Difficulties* (Boston, 1878), 22; H. M. Hyndman, *Commercial Crises in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1892), 117; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Pa., *Second Annual Report*, 1873-74, 464; Joseph Schumpeter, *Business Cycles* (New York, 1939), I, 337.

⁸¹ Reported at a mass meeting in Cooper Union, *The Workingman's Advocate*, January 15, 1876; at the convention of the Labor Reform League, May 6, 1877, *New York Times*, May 7, 1877; and Moses Hull, *Our Financial Distress* (Boston, 1878), 6.

⁸² *Annual Report to December 31, 1874*, 7 f.

⁸³ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 23, 1873; Lloyd Lewis and Henry Justin Smith, *Chicago. The History of a Reputation* (New York, 1929), 150.

⁸⁴ Leah Feder, *Unemployment Relief in Periods of Depression* (New York, 1936), 48.

⁸⁵ New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, *Thirty-First Annual Report*, 29; *Thirty-Second Annual Report*, 33.

⁸⁶ *New York World*, December 12, 1873.

business revived, two-thirds of the furnaces in blast would blow out before September, and at least 500,000 men, representing 2,500,000 persons, would be unemployed.⁸⁷ Economists, who had interpreted the collapse in business as a small recession, conceded after the first year that a return to normalcy could not be looked for in the near future. Municipalities, state governments and the Federal Government were bombarded with appeals for relief and work. Meetings and demonstrations, petitions and delegations, with programs and resolutions, called for an easing of hardships, in several instances for the eradication of the causes. One of the first plans to cope with the problem of unemployment was presented by the First International in America.

CHAPTER XIII

Organization of the Unemployed

Private Relief

Unemployment spread like an epidemic through the nation after September 1873. Never before in its history had so many men and women called for help or gone roaming in search of food and shelter. Their number kept increasing; and by November they were taxing the resources of relief agencies. The chilled air announced that frost and sleet were not far off; but there was nothing on the horizon that promised improvement.

The degree of privation was appalling. The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor reported "thousands of able and generally industrious men and women reduced to distress and beggary, by the failure of employment."¹ The situation was similarly dismal in Ohio² and Massachusetts. Figures on the distribution of charity in Springfield, Massachusetts, during five successive years, may serve as a barometer of rising destitution in the state. The city supported every thirty-fourth person of its population in 1873; every twenty-third, in 1874; every seventeenth, in 1875; every fourteenth in 1876; and every tenth, in 1877, ending in April.³

There had been no preparations for the emergency. Men of affairs frowned upon government meddling in economic matters. For success in getting ahead, they believed, was best served through self-interest and self-help. Distress was a by-product of the natural laws of trade as they worked themselves out. Government's part was to prevent interference with them. Things would finally regulate themselves without official intervention. At all events, its ability to do good was limited; and it might do a lot of harm. The pastor, Henry Ward Beecher, cited the book of Job in defense of laissez-faire. Suffering, he told his congregation, was the divine way of improving the individual both in heart and imagination.⁴

Classical economic theory, in other words, ruled out remedies for destitution. Private relief alone was permissible, provided it was given

¹ *Thirty-Second Annual Report*, 1875, 43.

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ohio, *Second Annual Report*, 1878, 10 f.

³ Cited in *The New Orleans Democrat*, July 8, 1877.

⁴ *New York World*, November 24, 1873.

⁸⁷ *The Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 1, 1874.

with discretion, and used to undeceive the misguided. The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor said that its chief function was to expose the "fancied wrong" of the degraded idle, upon which "the deluded Communists base their frantic appeals, . . . and [to] arrest the growth of this great festering mass of lawless audacity, which would rend asunder the bonds of society." Helping persons of that type would "encourage dissolute, reckless, ruinous habits" and accelerate "the process of engendering pauperism, and of disloyalty to all authoritative order, both human and divine." The Association set great store by implanting "respect for divine and social order, self-reliance, sobriety, and industry." It was convinced that the futility of radicalism during the depression was due to these teachings. Its attitude to relief, it wrote after two years of unmatched misery, "has done more for the security of person and property than any other movements that have been projected for that purpose in this city."⁵

The indications are that relief was regarded in the same manner in other cities. Private donations in Indianapolis were too small to provide even the most modest needs. Only 9,719 families in Chicago were helped in 1874 by the reserve fund left after the great fire. The other distressed families had to shift for themselves. Relief in Boston was of little consequence in reducing misery. Soup kitchens in New York, set up by organized and voluntary charity, fed from 5,000 to 7,000 persons.⁶ It is fair to say that the number assisted on a national scale amounted to a low percentage of the unemployed.

Schemes for alleviating unemployment were many. The most publicized were work-sharing, distribution of western lands to settlers only, labor legislation, public works on city, state and federal levels, and an eight hour day. The Bureau of Labor Statistics in Ohio estimated that the shorter work day would raise employment by twenty percent.⁷

Stirrings of Unemployed

Beginning in November 1873, jobless assembled in cities throughout the country to present grievances and demand remedial measures. Where there were directing groups, the meetings often brought forth concrete proposals that were put before the municipal authorities. Otherwise they were incoherent, rent by factional feuds and conflicting purposes. Programs were at first hasty drafts, prompted by urgency. Before long they acquired a certain uniformity, as if they derived from a common source. Hopes were pitched high at the outset.

⁵ *Thirtieth Annual Report*, 1873, 42; *Thirty-Second Annual Report*, 1875, 51.

⁶ Feder, *op. cit.*, 44 f., 53, 62 f.

⁷ *Second Annual Report*, 1878, 278 f.

The unemployed seem to have swung into action early in November 1873, as reports of their doings indicate. The City Council of New Haven, Connecticut, promised a delegation to study the relief projects.⁸ A large meeting in Paterson, New Jersey, pledged aid to the needy.⁹ Furniture workers in Louisville, Kentucky, resolved to continue demanding the eight hour day without a reduction in wages.¹⁰ In Newark, Philadelphia and Chicago plans were laid to organize the unemployed.

New York City was the focal center of their activity. Here at least four organizations were attempting to exercise control over them. Two were trade union bodies: the Workingmen's Central Council, and the Workingmen's Union. The other two were the dissident and now moribund Spring Street Federal Council, and the North American Federal Council, that is, the North American Federation of the International. But the paramount influence was that of the Workingmen's Council and the Federation. Actually, organizational walls gave to the pressure of events. Spring Streeters found themselves following the courses of the labor councils; and official Internationalists, standing on the same ground as groups with which they had been at odds.

It would be a tedious undertaking and even more tedious reading to relate the particulars of the many meetings of the unemployed in November 1873. In part they were spurred by what Francis Bacon once termed "the rebellions of the belly"; in part they were answers to appeals by labor organizations. Viewed generally the meetings requested Congress and the New York State Legislature to call special sessions for the immediate purpose of setting up public works; and the City government, to open municipal markets where provisions would be priced at cost, as well as to initiate local projects. Anticipating the reply that funds were not available, meetings advised the selling of bonds and the issuance of scrip in small denominations. The officials said in response that the redeeming of bonds and the payment of interest were prior obligations; and that appropriations could not be considered before the first of the new year.

City departments found some work for unemployed. But they were only a small fraction of the fast growing army of idle. Furthermore, the charge that the portioning out of jobs was connected with political patronage did not raise the standing of the local politicians.

The agitated atmosphere had a temporarily bracing effect on the failing Spring Street Council. It petitioned the City's Mayor and Common Council to act quickly before winter set in; it appealed to Congress

⁸ *New York Sun*, November 12, 1873.

⁹ *Ibid.*, November 25, 1873.

¹⁰ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, November 29, 1873.

to regard the unemployed as "the wards of the nation," entitled to jobs in "the various branches of useful industry" that the government might establish; and it called upon President Grant to summon a special session of Congress for the purpose of sanctioning internal improvements and the printing of legal tender money.¹¹

These applications in behalf of the jobless were the last impressive acts of the Spring Street Council before dissolution. To them went its last bit of vitality. The members who were left took up with other causes, including Positivism. With remnants of other societies, they founded *The Toiler* in May 1874, in the anticipation of making it an organ of a brand-new labor party. But the paper went under, after nearly seven months of struggle to survive.

The Manifesto of the First International

The North American Federation undertook to chart a course for the unemployed, but was unsuccessful in the end. Two fundamental reasons may be offered to explain the failure. The crisis came at a time when a struggle was in progress for the control of the official Federal Council; also, the Federation as a whole was losing members and dues. Yet, for all its drawbacks, it produced the most workable plan for uniting the unemployed in New York City. That and its minimum program were more or less imitated elsewhere.

The severity of the depression might have surprised American Internationalists, but not the depression itself. From their diagnosis of capitalistic economy, they concluded that its inherent quality was to break down periodically. But, asked Internationalists, was the collapse of the 1870's its denouement? Or did it have sufficient staying power to survive and climb out of the depth to which it had sunk? Romantics, it will be shown subsequently, were so certain of its approaching end, that they wanted to hasten its demise by insurrectionary means, and then proceed with the establishment of socialism. This type of activism, decried by the sober men of the Federation, was a cause of more splitting.

The Federal Council was one of the first organizations to regard the early failures of business houses as the beginning of a general breakdown. Even before the closing of the Stock Exchange on September 20th, a warning went out from the Tenth Ward Hotel that distress was about to devastate the country.¹² The imminent peril was laid to the workings of the economic system in which the owners of capital, with

the government's connivance, drew off millions from the earnings of labor and shifted disaster on the workers. The indictment served the Federal Council to motivate the minimum program it outlined in its "Manifesto To The Working People of North America," issued in November.¹³ It likened the industrial and railroad magnates to "highwaymen," living "on the work of others," as the feudal nobility had done. Thanks to their monopoly of political power, they legalized "their ill gotten gains," and protected "the swindling operations of those unholy speculators." All the workingmen got was unemployment, misery, and reduced wages.

The workers, too, were blameworthy, the Manifesto maintained. They shared the current belief in "the identity of interests between capital and labour," but were unwilling to hear the warning words of their "fellow workers: There is no harmony between capital and labour, but strife, incessant strife, only to be ended by the complete subjugation of one or the other. . . . To avoid the fate of slaves all workingmen must organize, combine their forces, increase their numbers, and centralize their powers." The Manifesto further urged precaution against phrases like "liberty," "equality before the law" and "free trade," as well as alertness against entanglement in war. The workers should disdain all talk of "benevolence." They "don't want charity, but work, they scorn alms, but claim the products of their labour or its equivalents, for securing a human existence to themselves and families."

The Manifesto contained a plan for organizing the unemployed. Its structure rested on the block committees. They in turn set up ward committees which sent delegates to a central committee of the City.¹⁴ The Federal Council probably expected to apply the plan on a national scale. But that was beyond its capacity at the time.

Also in the Manifesto was an immediate program to be presented to the local and state authorities. It consisted of three demands: 1. Work for all able bodied at the usual wage rate, and an eight hour day; 2. an advance of either money or produce, sufficient to feed for one week workers and their families in distress; 3. a moratorium on rent from December 1, 1873, to May 1, 1874.

Plan and program were simple and direct. It provided common ground on which unemployed of different beliefs could come together.

¹¹ *The Workingman's Advocate*, November 15, 1873; *New York Times*, November 6, 1873; *New York World*, November 11, 1873.

¹² *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, September 20, 1873; Letterbook, f. 268-73.

¹³ It appeared in English in leaflet form. The German text was published in *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, November 29, 1873. A summary of the Manifesto, citing the three immediate demands, was given in the *New York Times*, December 1, 1873. The full text was reprinted in *The Communist* (New York), June 1931, X, 568-71.

¹⁴ This method of bringing together the unemployed resembled a plan recommended by Germans in New York City during the crisis of 1857. See *Der Arbeiter*, March 27, 1858.

It can be anticipated that both organization and demands were so well adapted to exigent needs that they were patterns for other cities.

The first successful efforts at uniting the unemployed of New York City were made by the tenth ward. Here street committees were functioning by the middle of November. At the Tenth Ward Hotel, headquarters of the Federation and International, sat a central committee, directing organization, ordering door-to-door visits to carry its message, give instructions, announce meetings, and take account of the number out of work. Thus was opened a line of communication between tenants and central committee. It was in session daily to receive the reports of agents and to listen to workers who volunteered to tell what went on in their neighborhoods. The coming and going at the Tenth Ward Hotel was so continual that a special service was recruited to keep order.

The overwhelming response was greater than had been anticipated by Internationalists. Thronged meetings supported the minimum program of the Manifesto with arguments that the central committee had apparently sown among the idle. The course of the reasoning was as follows: Workers' savings were altogether inadequate to tide them over the trial of unemployment; depressions were not their doing; they were powerless to prevent over-production and business anarchy; to withhold from them the basic necessities they had produced was criminal; the first obligation of municipality or state was the well-being of all the people.¹⁵

The example of the tenth ward was imitated. Before many weeks passed twenty-three like associations had arisen. Their core was German. Report had it that by December they had enrolled 10,000 members.¹⁶ Street committees, obeying directives from ward committees, went from house to house, recording the number of wage earners and their minimum needs.¹⁷ Meetings and propaganda were consistent with the aims of the North American Federation. To the twenty-three ward associations, must be added the union of French workers, constituted on December 4, 1873, on the basis of the same minimum program.

The tenth ward organization, sparked by section 1, stirred its rivals to act. The initial unanimity at the large meeting of November 23 was broken by the intervention of ex-Internationalists to demand a city-wide central committee of unemployed. Their resolution to this effect got immediate approval. So worthy a purpose could scarcely be

¹⁵ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, November 29, 1873.

¹⁶ *New York World*, December 12, 1873.

¹⁷ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, January 3, 1874.

opposed by the section without losing face. But the object of the resolution, namely, to check the section from rising to ascendancy over the unemployed, was apparent to all. Antagonists had stolen a march on Internationalists.

The Effect of the Manifesto in Other Cities

It is beyond the available evidence to estimate the force of the Federal Council's Manifesto. Yet, no one can reasonably deny that it animated thousands of unemployed far beyond the metropolis. Philadelphia, Camden, Newark, Boston, Cincinnati, Chicago and Louisville, among other cities, had associations of unemployed, similar to that of the International in New York City.¹⁸

Almost 5,000 workers of Philadelphia assembled on November 9, for the purpose of uniting the jobless. The program of the Manifesto was taken as standard. Even its reasoning was echoed in motivating the demands. In the same month two other meetings were held in Philadelphia. One voted resolutions that were in essence like those of November 9. The audience was informed of the requests that had been laid before the city government: an eight hour day; strict supervision of sweat-shops; prevention of child labor; and speedy help to the unemployed. The second meeting, with an estimated attendance of 3,000, put its trust in the recently founded Patrons of Husbandry and in financial measures that would curb "the accumulative power of money."¹⁹

Meetings of unemployed attracted persons with dissimilar beliefs. But it is not an overstatement that sections of the International were the most forward in Philadelphia, as elsewhere, in promoting the claims of the idle. A minimum of ten ward associations was counted in Philadelphia. The same source assures us of a growing registration. It was probably during this floodtide that organizers crossed over to Camden, N. J., where they united the unemployed along Internationalist lines.²⁰

The story is somewhat similar in other cities. In Newark, New Jersey, a two months old labor defense council that Internationalists had created initiated the organization of the unemployed. Again the patterns of New York City and Philadelphia were repeated: ward associations, meetings, minimum demands, and socialism as the solution of crises.²¹ The programs of unemployed in Boston, Cincinnati and

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, December 13, 1873; *New York Sun*, December 5, 1873.

¹⁹ *New York Sun*, November 28, 1873; *New York Times*, November 28, 1873; *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, December 6, 1873.

²⁰ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, November 29, December 13, 1873; January 10, 1874.

²¹ *Ibid.*, December 13, 17, 1873; February 7, April 4, 18, May 19, 1874.

Louisville had some likeness to that of the Manifesto. They endorsed the eight hour day, called for work in place of charity, and for provisions at cost in municipal markets.²² The hand of the International was as plain in Chicago as in Philadelphia or Newark. A labor committee, the outcome of a rapprochement with Lassalleans, got more than 6,000 signatures on its petition which asked essentially for the things that were listed in the Manifesto.²³

Gap Between International and Unemployed

Resemblances of organizations and programs were prima-facie evidence in the eyes of conspiracy-hunters that the International was at the head of a plot to shape the united unemployed into an instrument of power. At least the French Consul General in New York City thought so when he introduced the Manifesto as testimony for the benefit of his superior in France.²⁴ The reports of the Consul General are in the main untrustworthy as a source on the International in America. But his crediting it with the design of prosecuting its war against capitalists with an army of unemployed cannot be easily dismissed. The aim though quite ambitious, was looked to as a possibility. Winter was on the way, and nothing was in sight that might soften its severity. With zeal as hot as pepper, Internationalists contended that they alone were capable of leading the people out of their social hell.

Facing a grim future, workers might have heard their arguments and perhaps reasoned as did the *Coopers' New Monthly* which wrote that "if things continue to go on as they have been doing of late we may be converted to their [Internationalists'] way of thinking."²⁵ But, all things considered, native workers did not go that far. Robert Schilling of the Coopers' International Union is our witness that anything likely to curtail "personal or individual liberty is obnoxious to them."²⁶ The International, as far as they knew, would least observe that liberty in pursuing its end. Thus the French Consul General was justified in ascribing to it high hopes of acting as the general staff of the unemployed in the United States. But he exaggerated their influence on American labor. The International, as indicated above, undoubtedly exerted more power over unemployed than was acknowledged. But lead them it could not, even in times of distress. It was getting to be a

²² *Ibid.*, December 20, 1873 and January 3, 24, 1874; *New York World*, December 15, 1873 and January 14, 1874; *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, December 22, 1873.

²³ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, December 20, 1873.

²⁴ Dossier on the International in America, Archives de la préfecture de police, Paris, NN 848-941.

²⁵ December 1874, I, 5.

²⁶ *Coopers' Monthly Journal*, June 1875, VI, 165 f.

pattern of procedure in the 1870's for labor leaders to start their speeches with scorning remarks on the International, and for labor journals to dismiss its program as visionary and "communistic."²⁷

Meeting of December 11, 1873

Events were moving to a climax by the end of November 1873. The number of idle was growing. Municipal governments answered their requests either with cold negatives, or with profuse explanations that the opposition of taxpayers stood between the legitimate desires of the idle and the benevolent law-makers.

Pressures from unemployed compelled labor leaders to take common action. Early in December, a committee of ways and means was formed by trade societies and section I of the North American Federation, among other organizations. Bolte was the section's delegate. Whether the Federal Council had sanctioned the alliance is not known. It was sufficient that the delegate was a high official in the Federation.

The committee arranged for a mass meeting on December 11 to consider a list of vital questions. It included the causes of the depression; the proposed relief measures and their disregard by public servants; the discrepancy between social need and productive industry; and the inconsistency between concentrated wealth and democracy. The committee also proposed to explore ways of readjusting the tax burden, by limiting fortunes and employing labor in order to free it from degrading charity.²⁸

The evening of December 11 was wet and cold. Yet, even before the meeting opened 4,000 persons packed the hall of Cooper Union Institute and approximately another 1,000 remained outside. Figures were posted on the distressing situation in New York City: 10,000 homeless men and women, of whom 7,500 lodged in overcrowded station houses; 1,500 fed each day from one private house; 110,000 idle in the City and 182,000 in the state; 600,000 New Yorkers living in crowded tenements; and 38,000 women earning an average of \$3.44 a week. Turning from one side of the hall to the other, one could read such slogans as "Civil Rights have passed — Now for the Right to Work"; "Freedom for Labor — Death to Monopolies"; "We want no India-rubber dollar"; "We Demand Suspension of Rent for Three Months"; "We Strike at Evils not Men." One question might have challenged theoretical minds: "Does Speculation or Labor Create Wealth?" Placards asked for graduated taxes, ceilings on wealth, and

²⁷ See e.g. *Iron Molders International Journal*, January 1874, 194 ff.; *Miners' National Record*, February 1875, 49.

²⁸ *The Workingman's Advocate*, December 6, 1873.

"Equal Laws and Homes for the Industrious." A banner, suspended above the speakers, gave notice: "We mean business. Politicians, please take a back seat." Telegrams of fellowship arrived from Chicago and Cleveland.

George Blair opened the meeting. Though only 28 years old, he could claim ten years of active service in the cause of labor. He was successively founder, secretary and president of the Box-Makers' Union; and he was president of the Workingmen's Central Council which he represented in the committee of ways and means. Theodore Banks, chosen chairman of the meeting, was introduced earlier in the story. A trade unionist of long standing, a leader of the Painters' Union, a past member of the International as well as of the Spring Street Council, he would have had a prominent place in a Who's Who of American labor. Banks first reviewed the developments that culminated in the meeting, and then defined its primary purpose, namely, to create the conditions under which work would be made permanent.

That was the long-range objective. For immediate realization, the following measures were proposed to the local government: The furnishing of food, clothing and shelter to the unemployed; the initiation of public works of a useful nature, such as housing projects for workers. To pay for these enterprises the committee of ways and means recommended the rescinding of sinecures, the reduction of civil service salaries to a maximum of \$5,000, and a higher tax rate.

John T. Elliott, whom we saw defending the American secession from the International, read "An Address to the People of the United States." It indicted the system in which a handful of unprincipled men could cause so much distress. Viewing the problem from the standpoint of natural rights, the Address concluded in the spirit of Jefferson that the test of good government was its fulfillment of the right to labor; and in conformity with Charles Fourier, that this right was the first of the rights of man.

The remaining speakers had little or nothing to add, save postures and platitudes. The waving of the Declaration of Independence by the liberal John McMackin but festooned the Jeffersonian tenets of the Address.

Eight resolutions were voted. The first notified the City's government that the unemployed would send their bills to its treasury "to be liquidated until such time as we shall obtain work and pay for all our work." This was more extreme than the minimum program of the North American Federation. Four resolutions demanded work; termination of the contract method used by the City's departments; maintenance of wage scales; an eight hour day; and an income tax. The other

adopted propositions set up a Committee of Safety of fifty delegates. It was given power to summon a convention of labor and farmers' organizations.²⁹ The Committee represented a coalition. Its membership was drawn from two labor councils, a French society, including former Communards, German unions, a faction of free thinking liberals, the remains of the Spring Street Council, and section 1 of the International in New York.

The Unemployed in Chicago

The large meeting in the nation's metropolis acted like a dynamo, setting in motion unemployed in other cities. In Louisville, Kentucky, they came out in large numbers on December 20, and escorted their delegation to the city council.³⁰ A similar assembly took place in Pittsburgh. The demonstrations in Cincinnati on December 15 and 22 were the result of united action, in order to present a common list of demands.

Demonstrations in Chicago, on December 21 and 22, exceeded in magnitude the meeting in New York City. Estimates on unemployment in Chicago varied as much as they did in other cities, but all agreed that the idle were numerous. The first to begin uniting them were Lassalleans and Internationalists. Forming a provisional Labor Committee for the purpose, they appealed to other societies to affiliate with it. The Workingmen's Union and the carpenters did so; but the more moderate bodies were aloof. From their standpoint, the immediate needs of labor were secondary. Of primary importance were free, secular education and the Homestead Law. These, they held, were the pledges of simple, homespun democracy. Only Francis A. Hoffman Jr. stepped out of their ranks to aid the Labor Committee. He was the son of an ex-Governor of Illinois and a past president of the Chicago "Arbeiter Verein."

The Committee called upon the workers of Chicago to unite as workers in the east had done. Its premise and arguments were socialistic. The fundamental proposition was that economic crises were intrinsic to the capitalist economy. They would recur at more frequent intervals, with greater severity. Their results would be greater concentration of capital and falling living standards for workers. The Committee's remedy against "the damaging consequences of this fearful crisis" was "the energetic union and concentration of the working-

²⁹ The most extensive report of the meeting was in the *New York World*, December 12, 1873.

³⁰ The *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, December 22, 1873; *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, December 22, 1873.

men of the Old World as well as those in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and in other places busily engaged in this direction . . . ; and then it will be hardly possible that while we have overfilled magazines with the staff of life and empty tenements — that the masses should starve, freeze to death, or wander without a shelter."

The Committee's immediate program had four demands:

"1. Work for all who have no work and are able to work, with sufficient wages. 2. Aid in money or provisions for the suffering people, out of the Treasury. 3. All disbursements to be made by a committee appointed by workingmen, for the purpose of fair dispensation. 4. In case of insufficient cash in the Treasury the credit of the city shall be resorted to."³¹

Roughly 6,000 had affixed their names to the demands. The figure by no means represented all of Chicago's unemployed; but it corresponded to a substantial number on whom an estimated 25,000 persons were dependent.

Thousands answered the Labor Committee's appeal to meet in Turner Hall on December 21. The assembly was the largest Chicago had ever seen. It approved of the immediate program which a delegation was to put before the Mayor and City Council the following day. The meeting also instructed the Committee to lay the groundwork of a labor party.

The large meeting seems to have completely surprised politicians and press. The Mayor pleaded ignorance of the preparations that had been in progress. Had he known what was happening he would have been in the audience, he said. Newspaper reporters got the history of the Labor Committee from Carl Klings, a cutler, representing the Socio-Political Workingmen's Union. Hoffman, who had been one of the speakers in Turner Hall, assured them that the attendance was made up of law-abiding people who wanted work. Though he personally leaned to the let-alone principle, he believed that in extraordinary times government ought to provide work, or expect to see crime increase. Charity would not do. Labor regarded it as a type of begging. In the last analysis, it was better to spend on public improvements than on a large police force.³²

Early Monday evening, December 22, workers came in thousands to accompany their delegation to the City Council. The police asked the Labor Committee to call off the procession lest it develop into a riot. The answer was that rioting was foreign to the peaceful purpose

³¹ The address of the Committee was reprinted in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 23, 1873.

³² Both interviews were printed in *ibid.*, December 23, 1873.

of the marchers. Moreover, it was too late to turn back a crowd of roughly 20,000.

Actually there were no signs of disorder. The reporter of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* observed that men "collected together in small knots, and quietly discussed the situation." The Star Spangled Banner and the Red Flag waved side by side. Slogans read: "Workers of All Lands, Unite!" "One for All and All for One"; "Unity Gives Strength." Others said: "Work or Bread"; "Death to Destitution."

The delegation finally presented the demands. Speaking for it, Hoffman more or less repeated what he had said in the above interview. He hoped that the government might find enough funds to feed and lodge the idle. And he mildly chided it for having called out practically all the police against citizens whose peaceful bearing belied the frightening stories that had been circulated.

Mayor and Aldermen were obliging. The first regretted not having been informed of the workers' suffering. The second appointed a special committee to cooperate with the Labor Committee on a plan to aid the unemployed.

By the time the two committees came together, the government had changed front. The City could neither help nor borrow, the treasurer said. The unemployed should make application to the Relief and Aid Society, reputed to have \$600,000. The Labor Committee replied that the City ought to procure that reserve for public improvements. The Relief and Aid Society said it lacked power to make loans, but offered to assist the destitute. In 1874 it cared for over 9,700 families.³³

The New York Committee of Safety

Meetings and demands of unemployed were dealt with severely in the press. Invectives that had been laid aside were put back into service. Influential newspapers cried "Communist!" and "Internationalist!" when unemployed congregated. The *New York Times* and the *New York Tribune*, the *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *St. Louis Republican*, to cite but five of the better known sheets, revived the argument that socialism could never thrive in America, and again, as during the Paris Commune, sounded the warning that foreigners were bent upon setting its cities ablaze. Hungry men needed watching; or their peaceable gatherings might grow turbulent.

The unemployed were rebuffed almost everywhere. Municipalities were neither ready nor disposed to embark on plans of relief that might

³³ For an account of the meetings see *The Workingman's Advocate*, January 3, 1874; Feder, *op. cit.*, 53.

have meant higher taxes. Moreover, welfare economics was unwelcome in the Gilded Age. Seen with the wisdom of hindsight, the organizations of unemployed, however slight their gains, reenforced the trend toward labor unity just after trade unionism had entered upon lean years. From 1874 on, two currents are visible in what remained of the organized trades. One moved toward amalgamation; the other toward independent political action. The two directions of labor will be looked at in a later chapter. For the present, let us return to the story of the unemployed.

It may be recalled that out of the meeting in New York City on December 11 arose, as from Pandora's box, a Committee of Safety. Whether the name was intended as a pledge of decisive action, as some believed, or whether, as others said, it was designed to emphasize the insecurity of the times, in either case it was reminiscent of the French Revolution and the Paris Commune. The Committee therefore called down upon it charges of plotting to raise Communes in American cities. Not only its name was produced in evidence, but also its membership. Three out of the fifty were Internationalists. The number was too small to determine the Committee's course of action, yet big enough to give it a "communist" label. The president, George Blair, defended the Committee as the best possible compact. In a letter to *The Workingman's Advocate* he pointed out that while Internationalists were "identified with the movement" and were its "most active workers," it was "not an International movement, but one of the people." No one asked, he went on: "Are you an Internationalist, a Communist, Labor Reformer, etc.?" What mattered was: "Are you in the interest of the unemployed, and in favor of practical reform based upon the emancipation of labor on the principles of justice, humanity and equality?" The real reason for the anxiety, intimated Blair, was not the Internationalists in the Committee, but the unity it represented "on the question of bread and for further political action."³⁴

The red tag attached to the Committee in the end aggravated disagreements within it. At the outset, however, the object of easing the anguish of the hungry muted discord. At its first meeting it placed tried men in the highest posts. Blair was chosen president, and Bolte and Elliott vice-presidents. Its method of uniting the unemployed was scarcely different from that of the Internationalists. The plan called for ward committees responsible to the Committee of Safety.³⁵ The *New York Times* said on December 27 that eight ward committees

³⁴ *The Workingman's Advocate*, January 10, 1874.

³⁵ *New York World*, December 16, 1873.

were active; and according to Blair, the Germans organized nearly every ward.

Meetings followed one another during the next two weeks. The succession seemed like a systematic rehearsal for some big turnout. The Committee had in fact decided to call out thousands of New Yorkers for a monster demonstration at Tompkins Square on January 13, 1874.

On January 6 the Committee of Safety made public the course it intended to take. It offered to cooperate with the Board of Aldermen in working out unemployment projects; it proposed the establishment of a labor and relief bureau with power to draw on the City's treasury; and it announced that after another fortnight it would be replaced by a temporary body for the purpose of building a labor party.³⁶ Thus, in New York, as in Chicago, heads of the unemployed were endeavoring to shift the course of the movement to independent political action.

By the end of the first week of January, the alliance represented by the Committee was falling apart. The first to leave was the liberal faction, because its major plank on graduated taxation had a minor place in the deliberations. Then the two trade union councils, both involved in political patronage, found fault with the Committee's policies and with the presence of Internationalists.³⁷ To make matters worse, George Blair gave up the presidency of the Committee, perhaps on account of chidings from the Workingmen's Central Council. Internationalists, however, said that he had been duped by the tales that they were conspiring to set up a New York Commune.³⁸

Internationalists, too, before long severed their relations with the Committee. Apart from dissension over principles, there was disagreement over a Mr. Keyser, a former accomplice of Boss Tweed and a backer of the Committee. Its Internationalist delegates withdrew on orders from section 1. The resignation had the further consequence of splitting the central committee of the German trade unions. Section 1 seceded from it because its representatives in the Committee of Safety had declined to walk out with the Internationalists.

The Committee, however, continued to be the target of malicious epithets. The metropolitan press, with but few exceptions, broke all canons of decency. Members of the Committee were termed "sham-workingmen," "demagogues," "impudent vagabonds" and "ridiculous adventurers," and their aims equated with the sinister aspirations

³⁶ *Ibid.*, January 7, 1874.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, January 13, 15, 1874; *New York Herald*, January 12, 1874; *New York Times*, January 13, 1874; *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, January 31, 1874.

³⁸ Gompers, *op. cit.*, I, 96 f.

ascribed to the Paris Communards. Not to be outdone in the free-for-all of aspersion, the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor called them "Communists, Internationalists and Free-Thinkers," late-comers for the most part, intriguing a change of "the whole political and social condition of the civilized world."³⁹

Actually the Committee was needlessly vilified. Its power was only apparent, and those at its summit were, like its maligners, averse to the ends imputed to it. The bottom reason for concentrating fire on it was its seeming success in bringing together the idle. For there was no telling how far they would go once they were on the move under the command of a general staff.

This fear of the unknown may account for a design to convert the Committee into an abettor of plunder. Whether the idea had come from City Hall or from private citizens cannot be answered. In any event, a group appeared around an elderly man, Patrick A. Dunn, who urged unemployed to help themselves to what they needed, if the City failed to act. Dunn was said to have been a member of the Bricklayers' Union, but it could not confirm his claim to membership.⁴⁰ Summoning a meeting on January 5, 1874, in Union Square, he was all set to incite his listeners to rash deeds. It was a freezing, rainy day. Still about 1000 were at the appointed place. Also present were two members of the Committee, Theodore Banks and Peter J. McGuire, a twenty-two year old Irish-American, a gifted orator, a Lassalleian socialist, and subsequently a founder of the American Federation of Labor. The two had obviously come to defeat Dunn's reckless pursuit. The details of the meeting may be omitted. Dunn opened it with a disavowal of communists and then directed his indignation at the Committee and the City fathers. His call for a march on City Hall was parried by McGuire's motion, accepted by the audience, that only a delegation should proceed to the Mayor and then report the interview to the re-assembled audience in City Hall Park. Roughly 2,000 waited there but to learn the disagreeable fact that the government would do nothing in their behalf.

A similar encounter took place on January 8. Again McGuire outmaneuvered Dunn. Instead of going to City Hall, which the second demanded, people retired to Tompkins Square. Here McGuire was free to impress upon them the necessity of taking orders from the Committee of Safety, and to remind them of the big meeting on the 13th.⁴¹

³⁹ *Thirty-First Annual Report*, 1874, 52 f.

⁴⁰ *New York Herald*, January 15, 1874.

⁴¹ *The New York Sun*, January 6, 9, 1874; *New York World*, January 9, 1874.

The Episode at Tompkins Square

The situation grew taut during the next five days. Meetings followed one another almost without let-up. Gompers likened them to "a folk-movement born of primitive need — so compelling that even politicians dared not ignore. . . . Those in authority did not rest comfortably."⁴² The press predicted that an impending evil would soon befall the City; and police were about in force. The Federal Council of the International pledged support of the meeting on January 13th. So did the Workingmen's Council of the nineteenth ward. On the eleventh it came forth with a program that seemed like another edition of what the National Labor Union had stood for: cooperation, land distribution, monetary reform, an eight hour day, labor arbitration, and severe restrictions on the importation of cheap labor.⁴³

As the day of the demonstration neared, police interference pushed to the foreground the issue of the right to assemble. This constitutional question almost overshadowed the purpose of the meeting. Rumors of imminent outbreaks and blood curdling plots raced back and forth. The word Commune sounded with a sustained monotone, like a siren, as if society were suspended between revolution and order.

Two days before the gathering at Tompkins Square, the Committee of Safety addressed a circular letter to all New Yorkers. The motive was apparent in the context. It was to disabuse the public of the wrong conceptions that had been disseminated regarding the Committee. It presented the following points: It had done everything in its power to prevent sporadic meetings and to curb violent tendencies; the abuse heaped upon it was no substitute for promises made to the idle; not the Committee, but public officials and press had called for the cracking of skulls; if it counseled political action, it was accused of political ambition; if it demanded work, it was indicted for inciting to riot. Who, except workers, it asked, could earnestly take up the problem of misery? The final point of its defense was intended as proof of its peaceful intentions. The meeting it had scheduled for the 13th, it said, had but one aim: to reaffirm the demands of the unemployed.⁴⁴

On the eve of the demonstration the police stepped into the picture. First they limited the line of march. The Park Commissioner had issued a permit for the meeting; but the police ruled that the procession had to halt some distance from City Hall. Long conferences between police and delegates only drew them further apart. The Committee appealed

⁴² *Op. cit.*, I, 92.

⁴³ *New York Sun*, January 9, 1874; *New York World*, January 11, 12, 1874.

⁴⁴ The full text of the circular was published in the *New York World*, January 11, 1874.

to the Governor. He replied that the municipal authorities had full power to rule on the use of the streets.⁴⁵

Meanwhile the idea of forbidding the demonstration took hold at police headquarters. To prepare the public mind for the act there were reports of trade union desertions, and stories of foreign gold for a Commune fund. McGuire was denounced, even by his own father, as an idle, worthless fellow. The evening of January 12, Dunn's group requested that the police should annul the meeting.⁴⁶ That, in fact had already been done, although the order was not publicized. Only the *Times* and the *World* inserted it under a mountain of news. At the last moment the Committee called off the parade, but the public was not informed in time.

Around 500 persons were in the Square by 9 A.M. The morning was cold and clear. Women and children came, for the meeting promised to be festive as well as solemn. It was estimated that by 10:30 at least 10,000 persons were in the Square and the adjoining streets. Societies arrived, their banners unfurled and placards epitomizing programs. In the center was a group from the tenth ward, clustered around a red flag. No one had been stopped from entering the Square nor told that the meeting had been canceled.

Fifteen minutes later the Square was in confusion. Police, mounted and on foot, charged the mass of men, women and children, as if they were bearing down upon an armed enemy. The sudden assault, from all sides, had presumably been planned by high strategists. Those who could not run fast enough were trampled; others, driven into the first shelters they found, were pursued. The tenth ward organization showed fight, but it was outnumbered, beaten and dispersed. Gompers recalled that the police had kept up the attack all day long.⁴⁷ Hundreds were injured; thirty-five were arrested, and taken to the Essex Market Police Court. A small number received prison sentences. The others were set free.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ New York *Evening Post*, January 12, 1874; New York *Tribune*, January 13, 1874; New York *World*, January 9-13, 1874.

⁴⁶ New York *World*, January 13, 1874; New York *Times*, January 13, 1874; New York *Herald*, January 13, 1874; New York *Sun*, January 13, 1874.

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, I, 96.

⁴⁸ An account of the affair at Tompkins Square by the French Consul General in New York to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris, dated January 13, 1874, fixed the attendance at 6,000 and the number arrested at 200, even though the press agreed on the round figure of 10,000 and published the list of the 35 arrested. The Consul General's primary concern was the French refugees who had come to the meeting. In that connection he forwarded the *Courrier des Etats-Unis* of January 14, 1874, which contained a protest of "Les Ouvriers de Langue Française" to the Mayor. The society considered him the cause of the hapless episode. Archives de la préfecture de police, Paris, "L'Internationale en Amérique," NN. 902 and 904.

The tragedy had a ludicrous side. Five members of the Committee of Safety visited the Mayor on the 14th to beseech his help in calming the workers. There might otherwise be regrettable retaliation. The City's chief executive first declined, and then lectured his five visitors on the functions and principles of government. To provide work for jobless, he asserted, was a foreign idea, entirely out of keeping with the American way of life. A similar appeal to a police commissioner was treated just as scornfully.⁴⁹ This showed that the Committee had lost every reason for being.

⁴⁹ New York *Times*, January 14, 1874.

CHAPTER XIV

New Perspectives

Sentiment on the Episode at Tompkins Square

Opinion on the events of January 13, 1873, ran from complete approval to indignant protest. The police perhaps acted intemperately, editorials conceded. Yet they sanctioned the violence; otherwise revolution would have triumphed over order. The *World* hoped that the experience might have taught the true workingmen to shun those who had resisted the guardians of the peace. The resisters, according to the *Tribune*, were "those poisonous rogues" at the head of the workingmen, and foreigners. Both the *Commercial Advertiser* and the *Times* were squarely on the side of severity. The communists needed it, said the *Advertiser*, for the evidence was conclusive that they had taken command of the movement for revolutionary ends. The swift action of the police could have only "a salutary effect"; it would persuade "respectable persons" to sever all connections with them. "Defeat of the Communists" was the headline of the article in the *New York Times* on the rough treatment of the assemblage at the Square. They were not Americans, but foreigners who had brought their faith with them, the newspaper said editorially. Possibly, as a result of the incidents, employers would hire only native workers who were immune to communism. The *Times* gave notice that, in New York as in Paris, the creed was observed by a "hydra-headed class," under the direction of the International and the Committee of Safety.¹

The weekly *Irish World*, though equally haunted by the red spectre, nevertheless took the part of the distressed and the defeated. Its stand was of some significance because its readers were Irish Catholics. Bowls of soup, it admonished the City fathers, were no substitute for work that could be had on public improvements, financed by a small tax. The weekly leaned to the side of the workers, but fearing communist influence over them it called on capital and labor to negotiate a peaceful settlement.²

Stories of discovered plots and bombs appeared in the press for

¹ The *New York World*, January 14, 1874; The *New York Tribune*, January 14, 1874; *New York Commercial Advertiser*, January 14, 1874; *New York Times*, January 20, 23, 1874.

² The *Irish World*, January 24, 1874.

weeks after the Tompkins Square episode. The alleged authors of subversion were ex-Communards and Internationalists. There were accounts of incendiary designs, particularly against churches and schools; hair-raising reports on stores of bombs, enough to blow up the City, said to have been found in the house of a past Internationalist and a bosom friend of former Communards; and extravagant revelations that the French refugees in New York had set themselves up into a super secret body, resembling the French underground of the 1830's.³

The stories were meant not only to keep high the emotional pitch. Their other purpose was to vindicate the City government. For all things considered, its victory thwarted the conspirators who had hoped to test their methods in the biggest American metropolis. Thanks to the vigilance of the police, the International was repulsed. It continued to watch events, the accounts cautioned, waiting and preparing to launch another attack. It was re-forming its columns and recruiting more forces. Actually, its enrollment, it was indicated elsewhere, had dropped to a maximum of 750 by the end of 1873. Yet the public was being told that it was enlisting thousands of new members, 7,000 in Chicago alone.⁴

There were also those whom the Tompkins Square affair had scandalized. It would be a gross error to classify them politically or socially. Outraged feelings were shared by conservatives, liberals and radicals, by persons high and low in the social scale. The second fortnight of January 1874 was filled with meetings, promoted by workers' groups and other citizens whose chief concern was the constitutional right of assembly. Police interference to prevent the Society of Free-thinkers from convening evoked the stout protest of the journalist, John Swinton, who joined the staff of the *New York Sun* the following year. In a letter to the *Tribune* he reminded people who might have forgotten that both the federal and state constitutions guaranteed the right of peaceable assembly, even to communists. He judged the conduct of the police on January 13th as "an outrage on decency and human nature." A tour of inspection that day had shown him that the unemployed had merely aimed at displaying their wretchedness. Was it an offense for communists to have been behind the movement? he asked. If that was so, he answered, if it was a crime "to believe in Communism, or to propagate Communistic doctrines," it was up to

³ *New York Tribune*, January 22, February 2, 25, 1874; *New York Evening Mail*, January 28, 1874; *New York World*, January 29, February 2, 1874; *New York Sun*, February 2, 1874; *New York Herald*, February 25, 26, 1874; *New York Commercial Advertiser*, January 26, 1874; *Courrier des Etats-Unis*, February 26, 1874.

⁴ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 25, 1873; *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, December 27, 1873.

the proper authority to determine it. The New York Police were not that authority.⁵

The biggest meeting of the fortnight was on January 20 at the Cooper Institute. Five thousand men and women filled the hall to capacity even before the chairman called for order. In attendance were trade unionists, French and German workers, freethinkers, liberals without defined faiths, reformists and Internationalists.

Swinton's was the most substantial and best reasoned speech of the evening. The "illegal and felonious" action of the police, he explained, had persuaded him to enter the fight in defense of popular rights. For unless men and women who cherished public liberty united the "cruel and shameful" conduct of the police would continue. If they could forbid meetings of Communists, they could by the same token refuse to permit any gathering. He cited the historical parallels of the American Abolitionists and of the English Levellers and Chartists. Both Leveller and Chartist had been terrible words, he said, "more terrible to the English aristocracy than the word 'Communist' can be in this country." The time had come to face the issue. He called on the City government to dissolve the Police Commission and dismiss the Police Superintendent.

A set of resolutions was voted which summed up the over-all purpose of the meeting. They censured the transgression of the people's liberties, deplored the shabby reporting of the events, and pledged resolute resistance to "any future violation of our rights."⁶

The sequel of the meeting on January 20, was a formal request for a state investigation of the week-old episode. Despite retarding factors, the committee appointed to prepare the petition finally adopted Swinton's draft. It depicted the misery of the workers in the depression. They were not lazy loafers, desiring to live at public expense, but honorable men and women who wanted to work at fair wages. Swinton went over the events prior to January 13, the preparations of the Committee of Safety and the maneuvers against it. No assembly could have been more peaceful, he said. There was no resistance to authority. Mistaking the despair of hungry people for hostile intent, the police

⁵ *New York Tribune*, January 23, 1874.

⁶ The meeting was reported at length in the *New York World*, January 31, 1874, and *The Workingman's Advocate*, February 7, 1874. It may be added that Swinton's line of thinking was shared by the *Iron Molders' International Journal*, February 1874. It, too, felt outraged by the Tompkins Square affair. The charge that the people had congregated for riotous purposes was baseless, it asserted editorially. The issue at stake in the metropolis was national in scope, for it involved the right of peaceful assembly. The *Journal* ended the editorial with this notice: "The cry of Communism is 'too thin.' Every protest, petition or demand of labor is met with the cry of 'Commune,' and we earnestly hope the fable of the boy and the wolf will not be the result of the continued effort to create public opinion against outraged labor."

got up the cry that the unemployed were revolutionists, anarchists and communists. He hoped the legislators would not be misled by epithets. He was ready to believe that few of those who had yelled "Communist" knew what it meant. If communism was subversive, clubbing was the best way to spread it. He derided the terror of the police commissioner who had discovered plots, bombs and conclaves of conspirators. It all seemed as if the chief prefect of Napoleon III had taken up his duties in New York.⁷

The legislature was not moved to start an investigation. The petition remained a dead letter, to serve as historical evidence of the resentment aroused by the assault on civil rights.

Unitary Trends

Police cruelty and the hurricane of protests and passions it unloosed were by-products of the depression. A more direct result was a tendency on the part of workers to combine in defense of their minimum standards or, to put it more broadly, for reasons of security. This was the principal motive behind the unity of the furniture workers, coal miners, iron and steel workers, railroad men, and the Association of United Workers of America. Though the Furniture Workers' Association of North America antedated the depression by a few months, it is included here among the organizations that stoutly protected the interests of workers. Weakened by declining membership and depleted treasury, it nevertheless maintained itself during the crisis and afterwards expanded beyond its original size.⁸ In that respect the Miners' National Association was less fortunate. It was founded in October 1873 by delegates from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and West Virginia, under the leadership of John Siney who, two years earlier, had been at the head of the drawn-out miners' strike in Pennsylvania. He was elected president of the National Association. Despite initial difficulties, its membership rose rapidly in the first two years, reaching the figure of 35,000 in 1875. But its success was short-lived. A series of wildcat strikes so crippled the Association that it closed its national headquarters in the Fall of 1876.⁹

The iron workers' organization was more permanent than the miners'. Four separate crafts in the iron industry united in August 1876

⁷ The petition was delivered to the legislature on March 25, 1874. It was published as a pamphlet, John Swinton, *The Tompkins Square Outrage* (New York, 1874).

⁸ McNeill, *op. cit.*, 376-7.

⁹ For the history of the Association see Chris Evans, *History of the United Mine Workers of America* (n.p., [1918]), I, 26-85; also Andrew Roy, *A History of the Coal Miners in the United States* (Columbus, Ohio, 1902), 156-75. On its convention of 1874, see *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, November 28, 1874.

into the Amalgamated Association of the Iron and Steel Workers. Strikes during the first two years were few. From 1878 to 1879, however, they were fairly numerous. "We have not been without a strike a single day," the President reported in August 1879. Growth was slow the first year, from 3,000 to 3,755 members; after that it rose, reaching a rough 20,000 in 1882.¹⁰

The three railroad unions showed a surprising potential in the 1870's. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, dating from 1863, rose from 6,000 members in 1870 to nearly 11,000 in 1876. For the remaining years of the decade only data on the Brotherhood's number of divisions is available. There were 189 in 1876 and 192 in 1877; 191 divisions were listed in each of the two succeeding years.¹¹ With the figures of 1876 as a base, and with an average of 60 members to a division, it can be concluded that, despite all the unreason provoked by the big strike of 1877, the Brotherhood held its own. In the same difficult decade, it published a monthly journal and paid benefits to widows and orphans. But for its existence, according to a calculation of 1874, its members would have lost over a million dollars in reduced wages in the first year of the crisis.¹²

The rate of progress of the other two railroad unions was less regular. The Conductors Association, established in 1868, fluctuated between an estimated 1,000 members in 1872 and 1,058 in 1877. After a few lean years it well exceeded its original strength. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen developed more rapidly, from 600 members in 1875, when it was two years old, to 3,500 in 1877. The strike slowed its gains; but recovery was quick. Its enrollment in 1880 was 4,500.¹³

The Association of United Workers of America stemmed out of an ambitious socialist plan to integrate all of the nation's labor societies. Its principal promoters were the two well-known Internationalists, F. Bolte and J. P. McDonnell, who had settled in the United States at the end of 1872. The purpose of the Association was to break down national barriers among workers. But it did the best recruiting among Irish and Americans. Its rules and aims had much in common with those of the International.¹⁴ Upon entering, a person had to disavow

¹⁰ McNeill, *op. cit.*, 287, 307; Commons, *op. cit.*, II, 179.

¹¹ I am indebted for the figures to Mr. Donald S. Beattie, Director of Research and Statistics in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

¹² *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, November 1874, VIII, 593.

¹³ Edwin Clyde Robbins, *Railway Conductors. A Study in Organized Labor* (New York, 1914), 18; McNeill, *op. cit.*, 324 f.

¹⁴ See *General Rules of the Association of United Workers of America* (New York, 1874); for McDonnell's socialism, see his manuscript lectures, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

any connection "with existing or future American political parties that did not aim at the Emancipation of Labor." The Association was never large, yet many of its members turned their abilities to labor's organization, including the Knights of Labor.

An impressive demonstration of labor unity in the 1870's was the nation-wide turnout on May 18, 1874, in defense of the eight hour day. Significant was the synchronization of the meetings in response to an appeal by the Industrial Congress of North America. Mention has been made of its establishment and its three conventions. Its greatest achievement was the broad response it enlisted against the attempts to repeal the eight hour day wherever it was in force.

Actually the eight hour working day had taken on immediate programmatic value. Many considered it a practical means of reducing unemployment, without contemplating it as a great social lever, as did Steward. On the other hand, industrialists contended that existing laws prescribing it acted as a brake upon recovery, and demanded their rescinding.

Organized labor responded quickly. At the end of March 1874, delegates, claiming to represent 18,000 workers, met in New York City and issued a circular letter to all labor societies. It requested them to summon meetings which, on an agreed date, would as with one voice ask for the dismissal of civil servants who had violated the eight hour law.¹⁵ The Industrial Congress endorsed the letter and fixed May 18 as the date.

The call was observed far and wide. The hall of Cooper Institute was so densely packed that thousands remained in the streets. Chicago had one of the largest workers' meetings in its history. In San Francisco 10,000 attended; and in Detroit, 2,000. Among other cities where workers assembled in substantial numbers were Boston, Cleveland and Columbus (Ohio), Springfield (Illinois), Jackson (Michigan) and St. Paul (Minnesota), Buffalo, Syracuse and Rochester, all in New York, and Washington, D. C.

Accounts of the meetings fall beyond the present scope. Although no single organization dominated the scene, the separate meetings sent greetings to one another, voted similar resolutions, and reproved police violence by those in power.¹⁶ Workers' response from coast to coast to the bidding of the Industrial Congress was a sign of awakening and fresh vistas.

¹⁵ New York World, March 30, 1874.

¹⁶ Reports of the meetings on May 18, 1874, appeared in *The Workingman's Advocate*, May 23—June 6, 1874. The resolutions passed in Columbus, O., and Washington, D.C., were printed in the *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, May 19-20, 1874.

Attempts at Independent Political Action

Equally noteworthy was the inclination of American labor to independent political action. The hastening factors were the ruthless policies toward the unemployed, the drop of living standards, the assault on the eight hour law, and the revival of conspiracy laws. Existing political parties, whether on account of their broken promises or their alliance with big business, were termed unfit to represent the workers' interests.

The same charge was brought simultaneously by European workers against their home-grown political parties. This is not to suggest that American labor was internationally minded. On the contrary, it was disposed to shun international links, as has been pointed out in more than one instance. The convention of the Industrial Congress in 1874 received without comment an address from the International in the United States, and confirmed the stand of its Committee on Foreign Trade Unions that the Industrial Congress was "a purely American institution, . . . neither having nor seeking entangling alliances with foreign organizations or institutions." But correspondence with foreign labor societies was considered useful for exchanging information.¹⁷

The demand for a labor party was reenforced by the socialist argument. Since the 1860's Lassalleans had been contending that political action alone was the path to the new dispensation. Internationalists, too, pressed the point that a labor party was the logical and necessary sequence of the clause in the preamble, "That the economical emancipation of the working classes is the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinated as a means." But the official policy of the North American Federation was to wait until the workers had established strong trade organizations.

American democracy was itself a stimulant to labor's independent political action. The wide suffrage was appraised as a mighty potential which, under the direction of the united workers, could yield the answer to their grievances. Then there was the persuasive example of the farmers' experience. Their parties were winning sizable representation in the legislatures of Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and California, in several cases compelling the enactment of laws against railroads. Most of the farmers' reform parties were absorbed by the greenback movement. Their experience, however, had taught urban workers that a labor party could be productive of great gains.

Workers' independent political action had been tried locally and countenanced nationally before the depression of 1873. The Social

¹⁷ *The Workingman's Advocate*, April 25, 1874.

Party of New York City, it was pointed out in an early chapter, had entered politics in the late 1860's with very disappointing results. Also in the same decade, the National Labor Union had adopted the resolution of a delegate from Chicago binding it to the political action of labor. In the same City, a labor leader, named Carl Klings, identified with the International, had taken a similar position in *Der deutsche Arbeiter* launched by him in March 1869. Labor should not look for remedies or happiness, he wrote with a sense of finality, without "possessing political power." Yet one would be put to it to uncover a connection between his goal and his moderate program. Chicagoans might also be credited with the organization of the St. Louis Labor Reform Party in 1869, which fell apart during the Franco-Prussian War.¹⁸

After this look at previous pioneering in the political independence of labor, the attempts of the 1870's appear neither strange nor sudden. In fact they were furthered by the same political elements. But the circumstances were different, brought about by the depression. In this unprecedented situation, unemployed and workers who fortunately continued to have jobs, even at reduced wages, were inclined to favor political action apart from existing political parties.

Such was their general direction on a wide geographical scale. But they veered locally. In Philadelphia, the unemployed organized themselves, as in New York City, and toward the end of 1873 united the ward committees into a workers' party. Its program showed that it was the outcome of an alliance between Lassalleans and Internationalists. The cardinal principles were clearly contributed by the first. The big objective was a people's state; and its reason for being was to secure to the workers all the proceeds of their labor, by replacing the competitive system of production with cooperative labor. The other aims of the party were Internationalist, in keeping with the Preamble of the Association. The program declared that the working class had the burden of emancipating all of society, that while its mission was international in scope, it had to be carried out nationally by the respective political movements. Of the minimum demands, the most radical was that which called for state control of monopolies and public services, and their operation by cooperatives.

The ways of labor's political action varied from area to area. In the west and southwest, reformers tried to resuscitate the National Labor Reform Party with a program that was more anti-capitalist than pro-labor. In New York City, past members of the Committee of Safety and section 12 came together on a set of planks for an Industrial

¹⁸ *Der deutsche Arbeiter*, August 28, 1869 and April 9, 30, 1870.

Workingman's Party. McGuire was its secretary and Swinton its candidate for Mayor in 1874. After its feeble showing in the election its handful of followers melted away. Labor parties also arose in 1874 in Cincinnati and Newark. In the first city, the Social-Political Workingmen's Society started out with a program which was essentially like that of the monetary reformers and anti-monopolists. Before long, however, Internationalists succeeded in modifying it. The principles of the Labor Party in Newark were so much like those of the Party in Philadelphia that it would be but repetitious to go into them.¹⁹

The current of opinion in support of political action was apparently strong enough to pull the conservative Workingmen's Assembly of New York State from its mooring. Though tied to oldtime politicians, it pledged in January 1874 to participate in constructing a labor party. Its most extreme objectives were civil service reform, low tariffs and monetary measures.²⁰

The Social Democratic Workingmen's Party

Internationalists and Lassalleans, it was seen, argued that the political action of labor was indispensable to achieve its ends. But they differed over the timeliness of independent political organization, a disagreement which stemmed from their opposite outlooks on trade unionism.

The International in America reasoned that before the workers could have their own party they had to combine economically, that is, build strong trade unions. To reverse the process would destroy confidence in the political action of labor. In countries where trade unions already flourished, a labor party was both consequential and essential. However, in the United States trade unionism was retarded and weak. Workers were pulled in all directions; their gaze was fixed on fortunes likely to fall to them; their backgrounds and linguistic frontiers were seeds of strife. The first task, therefore, was to have strong trade unions, faithful to common interests and united nationally. Political action, ran the argument, that did not grow out of real conditions was simply a dogma.

The Lassalleans underestimated the importance of trade unionism. Their point was that under capitalism wages were determined by the cost of bare subsistence. This law ruled out or at least minimized the value of trade unions. For if wages could not be raised above the level of subsistence, workers had little, if any, urgency to unite along economic lines. But they could rise above the law if, in place of the

¹⁹ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, January 10, February 7, April 18, 1874.

²⁰ *New York World*, January 31 and February 9, 1874.

existing productive system, cooperative labor was the rule. That change could be effected if their political party took hold of things, by way of the ballot, and introduced the people's state. The full proceeds of labor would then go to those who had created them.

It was of some significance that German Lassalleans who had come to the United States found that their theory was inapplicable in the American environment. Still they succeeded in converting workers to their belief. Among the better known political organizations that were indebted to Lassallean teachings were the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party of North America, to use its full name, and the Workingmen's Party of Illinois. They deserve a place in the canvas of American labor in the 1870's.

The Social Democratic Workingmen's Party was a combination of nine small societies and parties that united in May 1874. Four of them, three German and one French, had left the International.²¹ Though speaking for North America, the Party was an eastern organization from the start.

To lend eminence to its high ambitions, the Party timed its first convention to coincide with the nation's birthday. It met in New York City on July 4, 1874. Resolutions called for an official organ and for unity with a similar party that had been established in Illinois. There was little to distinguish the program put forth by the convention from that issued by a workers' party in Philadelphia at the close of 1873. Both, though Lassallean at bottom, had borrowed principles from the International. The goal of each party was the people's state. After that the road would be opened to the extinction of class rule and the emancipation of the workingmen from capitalism. The Social Democrats acknowledged that the social and political questions were inseparable. But they viewed the social problem outside the international framework in which the Preamble of the International had set it. Their internationalism was confined to "hearty sympathies to all workingmen of other countries struggling for their liberty."

Behind the apparent doctrinal unity of the Party were sources of controversy, which in time cropped out and tried tempers. There was, to begin with, the recurring issue of trade unionism. Then, the full proceeds of labor to the workers, as the conception of just social relations in the good society, was inconceivable to those who had been in the Marxist school. That was a formula for the artisan's dream-world, they said. As a principle of a socialist order it was unsound economically and impossible socially.

²¹ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, May 30, 1874; *The Toiler*, May 23, 1874; *Vorbote* (Chicago), May 30, 1874.

The minimum program was divided into two categories, political and economic. The Party promised to strive for such reforms as the referendum and recall, a unicameral legislature, abolition of sinecures, free administration of justice, and free and compulsory education. The economic demands were direct taxation, state aided cooperatives charged with the management of monopolies, repeal of conspiracy laws, weekly payment of wages, an eight hour day, cancellation of the contract system, abolition of prison labor, regulation of woman and child labor, sanitary inspection of workshops and homes, bureaus of labor statistics and supervision of banking and insurance.²²

A shortened version of the Party's program and constitution was voted by its second convention in July 1875. The major revisions were in the demands, but the statement of principles was practically as it had been. So was the centralized structure of the Party.²³ The annual congress selected the governing committees, but supervision of the Party's affairs was properly the work of an Executive Board and Control Commission, elected by the entire membership. The branches had the care of local affairs, including the designation of candidates for public office.

The *Social-Demokrat*, its central organ, revived the title of the earlier Lassallean sheet in Berlin. Starting in November 1874, the Party's paper ran to August 1876, when it was replaced by the *Arbeiter-Stimme*. Roughly 1,500 copies of each issue of the *Social-Demokrat* circulated in New York City, Philadelphia, New Haven and in a few towns of New Jersey. Among its contributors were A. Strasser, of the Cigar Makers' Union, Dr. Stiebling, recently expelled from the International, and Adolph Douai, who had edited *Die Arbeiter-Union*.

The bulk of the Party was made up of Germans in eastern cities. It seriously attempted to erase national and geographical boundaries, but was apparently unsuccessful. Its two best propagandists among native workers were P. J. McGuire, of the old Committee of Safety, and the Scotch born Hugh McGregor, a jeweler by trade, a volunteer in Garibaldi's army, and a member of the Spring Street Council. With all their experience they could not win a firm footing for the Party. Nor could it make more than slender gains in several cities of the middle and western states.²⁴ It is doubtful whether the membership at

²² The English text of the Platform was published in *The Toiler*, August 8, 1874; the German text, in the first number of *Social-Demokrat*, November 28, 1874. For a summary of the proceedings of the first convention, see *Vorbote*, July 18, 1874.

²³ *Platform and Constitution of the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party of North America* (New York, 1876). It was published in *The Socialist*, April 15, 1876.

²⁴ Cleveland, Detroit, Evansville (Ind.), Indianapolis, Louisville, Milwaukee, and San Francisco. See Strasser's report, *Social-Demokrat*, February 28, 1875.

any time exceeded 1,500. The *Social-Demokrat* did not pay for itself, although it had subscribers in fifty localities.

Probably because the Party knew it had reached its maximum growth, it made earnest efforts to amalgamate with other socialist organizations. Its offer to unite with the Workingmen's Party of Illinois opened cordial relations. Instructions to the executive committee at the second convention to seek a basis for broad socialist unity were taken by the International as an overture to an understanding.²⁵

The same convention had modified the Party's position on trade unionism, a source of discord from the outset. Orthodox Lassalleans, especially recent arrivals from Germany, were bent on giving priority to political action. Their argument, though already considered, needs further exposition. Their low estimate of trade unions derived from the iron law of wages, which was but a minimum-of-existence theory. From it was drawn the conclusion that the lot of labor under capitalism was to subsist, regardless of any economic combinations the workers might enter into. Wages, on which their living standards depended, gravitated toward the minimum determined by the iron law. No trade union strength could alter or void it.

The iron law led its defenders into a political blind alley. If the workers' only way out of their misery was their own party and the ballot, they could scarcely count on allies outside their class. For the law implied that all non-proletarians formed one exploiting mass. American facts, critics answered, did not support the Lassalleian argument. Workers had been able, through their trade unions, to win an eight hour day and raise wages. Furthermore, critics continued to say, the use of the ballot was more widespread in the United States than in Europe. Yet the American workers were no nearer to socialism.

Disagreement over trade unionism came to a head at the Party's second convention in 1875. The advocates of labor's economic organization won a signal triumph by passing the resolution, "That, under existing circumstances, the organization of the working classes in Trades Unions has become an urgent necessity; and every member of our Party is in duty bound to join the Union of his trade. In places where no unions exist new ones shall be organized."²⁶ This narrowed the gap between the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party and the International.

The Workingmen's Party of Illinois

The Workingmen's Party of Illinois antedated the Social Democratic Party by almost six months. Among the immediate factors that brought

²⁵ *Vorbote*, July 31, August 21, 1875.

²⁶ The resolution was published in *The Socialist*, April 15, 1876.

the Illinois organization into being was the large meeting of unemployed in Chicago on December 21, 1873, described in the previous chapter. The platform of the Workingmen's Party said nothing that might disturb the sleep of the well-to-do, so wrapped was it in moderation. Not a single clause could be interpreted as socialistic, save perhaps, in a broad construction, the appeal for enactments to give people an equal right to prime necessities. The Party pledged to put through these reforms: abolition of monopolies; municipal or state control of transportation and communication; state management of savings banks and insurance companies. For the immediate advantage of labor, the Party promised to eradicate the contract system, get quick judicial action for the recovery of wages, make education compulsory to the age of fourteen and restrict child labor. Other legislation would introduce the referendum and recall, impose taxes on incomes and wealth and aid labor associations. A comparison of the program with those promoted by reformers and farmers would show a wide overlap.²⁷ The reason lay in the Party's aim at an alliance of urban workers and small farmers. Consequently no strictures were laid on private property; and the official paper, *Vorbote*,²⁸ at first steered clear of trade unionism.

The Party in Illinois seems to have served as a receptacle for all kinds of creeds, each claiming to have the key to salvation. Alongside reformists and revolutionaries were old-style Lassalleans and revisionist Internationalists. Subsequently orthodox Internationalists entered the Party and veered it to their way of thinking.

The International in America was inevitably forced to take part in the war of *isms* in Chicago. Apart from the dispute over the vital issue of trade unionism, explained above, there was a revival of insurrectionism, such as had plagued the General Council during its European residence. Whether or not this type of putschism was a reaction to police violence against the unemployed remains an unanswered question. At any rate both in and on the periphery of the International romantics counted on the taking up of arms to get to their visionary realm. A master strategist of insurrection, like Louis Auguste Blanqui, would probably have considered their tactics absurd; but they amused chocolate soldiers, or gratified the dreams of those who, having been pulled from their anchorage in handicrafts, desired to avenge themselves on society for having been cast into a competitive arena of gladiatorial combat. This kind of fancy-fed adventurism was calculated

²⁷ The platform of the Workingmen's Party was published in *Vorbote*, February 14, 1874; *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, February 7, 1874; *The Springfield Republican*, January 13, 1874.

²⁸ It started publication on February 14, 1874.

to give substance to the far-flung stories that foreigners were plotting to throw American cities into convulsions.

These developments reached into Chicago sections and strained their relations with central headquarters. Section 1 of this City had paid assessments to the Federal Council, but not to the General Council; and section 3 had not squared its accounts with either.²⁹ Moreover, it showed pronounced leanings to the general course of the Workingmen's Party of Illinois. The General Council took a strong stand against the deviation.³⁰ The section's reply evoked a long rejoinder. In the course of reaffirming its reproof, the Council reviewed the policies of the Illinois Party. Its platform, said the Council, scarcely distinguished it "from all bourgeois parties." The minimum program, save for one or possibly two articles, could be sanctioned by the left wing "of the propertied classes, especially the petty-bourgeoisie." The International did not object to the demands; but it disapproved of their prominence and their overshadowing the labor program. That, in its judgment, had to be "unequivocal and unmistakable."

The Council then went into the question of trade unionism. That a section of the International should need lessons on the uncommon importance of trade unions was a painful surprise to it, for each congress of the Association had given them a primary place in the workers' striving for a better way of life. The Council likened them to "the cradle" of labor. Workers naturally chose what was "nearest them, i.e., they unite with the companions of their trade. The trade unions," it continued, "provide the first troops in the class struggle, for their members combine as wage earners against their exploiters. . . ." This placed upon Internationalists the obligation to further trade unionism. Economic conditions, to cite the Council, "are pushing the trade unions on to the correct path, from the economic to the political struggle against the propertied classes. Every one who looks at the labor movement with open eyes knows that."

The Party's organ, *Vorbote*, the Council pointed out, had not only suppressed news on trade unions. It had even underrated them, which was consistent with Lassalleism. The Council did not use the name, but implied it by reasserting, perhaps more stoutly than before, that trade unions were indispensable in all industrial countries, although they alone could not achieve the final end.³¹

The underestimation of trade unionism, the Council concluded, stemmed either from insufficient faith in the workers or from a sense

of despair. The consequence, in either case, was foolhardiness, instead of sober, economic activity. The Council admonished section 3, and indirectly the Workingmen's Party of Illinois against time-worn romanticism. Violent outbreaks by unorganized workers, it warned, were the shortest way to disaster and delusion.³²

Two sets of circumstances brought together the two organizations. By the middle of 1873, strong Internationalist pressure in and out of the Party compelled it to align its trade union policy with the International's. *Vorbote*, thereafter, published its news items and added Sorge to the list of contributors. Also, both associations were losing ground faster than had been foreseen. The Party's ticket, in the election of 1874 in Chicago, had received a surprisingly small number of ballots. Simultaneously the International was weakening. The best it could hope for, as a final act, was to leave a legacy of its principles to a united socialist movement.

A rapprochement between the International and the Party continued through 1875. By autumn of that year its platform had been so revised that, in the judgment of the General Council, it had become "International without adopting the name."³³

²⁹ See Report of General Council, dated April 11, 1874, *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, May 9, 1874.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, May 9, 1874.

³¹ The full reply of the General Council is in MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 175-82.

³² Cited in Schlüter, *op. cit.*, 320 f.

³³ Report of November 3, 1875, *Vorbote*, November 20, 1875; the full program was published in *ibid.*, November 6, 1875.

CHAPTER XV

The Impregnable Order

Defenses of Society

The International was torn by factional strife before it faded out. Caught up by the events of the crisis, it could not escape being battered by them. Its plan to give a head to the movement of the unemployed was well adapted to its greater purpose of taking the helm of organized labor. But other pulls were too much for it. Its program was passed by, save where its members were in command. The larger workers' combinations — in mining, iron, steel and railroads — stood off from it.

Also socialist organizations arose during the depression, whose platforms were, at vital points, incompatible with the main principles of the International. But circumstances forced them into concessions. The socialist party that came out of the negotiations in 1876, was an amalgam of Lassalleans and Marxists, much like the socialist merger in Germany the previous year. The adopted program in either case was a compromise. The decisive difference was the big gap between American socialism and trade unionism. Efforts to bring them together failed, even though both had been under attack for two or more decades. A number of the arguments came under consideration in the course of the narrative. Of concern now are those that were propagated by a substantial popular literature during the 1870's and after. Their purpose was to justify the social order against the claims of trade unionists and socialists, even though it had never been more secure.

The premises of the 1870's were of the usual variety. Only they were strengthened with elements from new social philosophies, like Auguste Comte's Positivism, and social Darwinism, cogently defended by the Englishman, Herbert Spencer, and the American, William Graham Sumner. Also drawn on were contemporary accounts of utopian communities. Primary in the defense of the existing system was the postulate that it had been providentially planned. This was an article of faith that had come down from the seventeenth century Puritan divines, and had since been fortified by classical economists and moralists.

It is appropriate at this point to summarize these arguments. The answer to the demand for higher wages was the wage fund doctrine.

explained in a previous chapter. Since the wage fund was the specific portion of the product of industry that went to labor, it was the sovereign adjuster of relations between capital and labor. Only an increase in the total capital would bring a rise in the wage rate. Failing this, workers could win higher wages only at the expense of other workers; and any attempt to do that was nothing but a struggle of labor against labor, as the economist W. Stanley Jevons put it. Consequently, labor combinations and strikes were useless. If the effect was penury, it was the fault of the workers. They did not restrain their appetites. Besides, a wage-lift would result in large families, and the workers would again find themselves in need. Nature could not be cheated, the English clergyman and economist, Robert Malthus, had warned. His "two ratios" were supreme.

Defenders of the status quo charged that reformers were mountebanks for promising to rid society of its disorders. The eight hour day would not only augment the number of loafers; it would extinguish the acquisitive instinct. Free credit was incompatible with free competition in a free society. On the other hand, joint-stock companies and cooperatives were useful. They might promote the peaceful coexistence of capital and labor and very likely act as antidotes to trade unionism and radicalism.

The main point against trade unions was that they were inconsistent with the law of supply and demand, which the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Connecticut defined as a "law of nature."¹ And "natural" seems to take the sense of providential," Leslie Stephen once observed.² Workers should therefore submit to the inexorable law. It governed the rise and fall of wages. If their trend was upward, it was due to employers' competition for operatives, not to the intervention of trade unions. Actually, contended economists, nature was a more reliable protector of workers than were labor unions. They did only harm. If allowed to go on they would throw the social order into turmoil, as efficiently as would socialists and communists.

Neither socialism nor communism, it was affirmed in the popular literature of the 1870's, had anything to say to democratic America. Here classes were fluid, and a hereditary aristocracy non-existent. Socialism and communism had no more future in the United States than had had the utopians. This statement was based on the histories of their communities that appeared in the seventies.³ The conclusion

¹ *First Annual Report*, 1874, 31 f.

² *The English Utilitarians* (London, 1900), III, 206, reprinted by the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1950.

³ John Humphrey Noyes, *History of American Socialisms* (Philadelphia, 1870); Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (New York, 1875); W. A. Hinds, *American Communities* (Chicago, 1878).

drawn from these works was the futility of meddling in the handiwork of Providence. The socialists and communists would equally fail, for they were the heirs of the utopians. The successors could no more than their forerunners gain a permanent foothold in the United States. Its institutions and its mores had a claim on men's minds; and they had rooted themselves in the process of growth. The first big advance in history was the replacement of primitive communism by private ownership. That could not have happened without the possibility of permanent investment and without the right of permanent possession as the preliminaries.

The question came up whether the historical process had halted with the emergence of the present order or whether it would continue to move forward. Those who believed that social change was continual, and consequently endeavored to direct it, were they mild reformers, eight hour advocates, or Internationalists and collectivists, were all considered equally subversive, and in need of watching. The only variation in the estimate, if we are to judge by the published stories, related to the International, and the difference was one of degree.

Opinion regarding the Association, during and after the depression, lost whatever sense of balance it had had in the first few years of the 1870's. In the remainder of the decade, the society was painted dark and gruesome. It was the elusive demon that stayed in the shade and walked at night, attired with accoutrements of war. Precisely when its enrollment was dropping far under 1,000, newspapers, we have pointed out, discovered more than 7,000 new names inscribed on its books in Chicago. At the same rate of growth in the other cities where it had sections, its membership in the United States would have reached the huge figure of 1,400,000, with which the Paris Prefecture of Police credited it as late as April 24, 1876, just a few months before its quiet disappearance.⁴

Before going further into the reasoning calculated to vindicate the social structure, it is well to recall, as was indicated in the opening chapter, that an articulate, conservative minority was sharply critical of the social system in which old sanctions were scrapped. They might have approved Mark Twain's portraits of the crude characters of his *Gilded Age*, or been amused by his satire on corrupt democracy in "The Curious Republic of Gondour."⁵ Or they might have had a nostalgia for some system with an élite at the summit. Not the misery,

⁴ Archives de la préfecture de police, Paris, Dossier, "L'Internationale en Amérique," NN 916-917, 919-920.

⁵ First published anonymously in the *Atlantic Monthly* XXXVI, 1875, 461-63.

but the imbalance brought by industrialism was the source of their disquiet.

The quest for an equilibrium produced schemes and doctrines that were designed to shore up the social arrangement. Proposals, other than those intended for restricting the ballot, already considered under another caption, were meant to curb public criticism and to forbid strikes by injunction. Still others would call into being a kind of paternalism, similar, to an extent, to Auguste Comte's idea of it. The object was to teach benevolence to employers and obedience to workers. These rules of conduct were regarded as the cement of an enduring moral order.

Supplementing these canons was the thesis that the capitalist was only a steward, holding his capital for the good of the people. This trusteeship doctrine was traceable to Saint Paul. But it was John Calvin who had made it a moral principle, namely, that ownership carried with it duties to one's neighbors. In the nineteenth century, the English Christian socialists leaned on the doctrine to check laissez-faire, and Jevons brought it into correspondence with economic liberalism.

The doctrine fitted neatly into the view of society as providentially determined. Employer and worker, rich and poor were God's creatures, essential to one another. Their respective duties were prescribed by moral laws.⁶ The disparity of their material rewards was reconciled by the promise of compensation in the next world. If workers were unfairly treated on earth, "they should first lay up treasures in heaven."⁷ In the terrestrial realm master and servant had to live in peace, the first rendering protection, the second service. Each, regardless of his station, ought to perform his function in the settled social organism.

The respective classes had their fixed status in the divine, architectural plan. The laboring class was beneath the last rung of the social ladder, for, being without property and compelled to alienate at once its capacity to labor and its freedom, it had no real stake in civil society. "The working class," to cite a modern political scientist, "was in effect in but not of civil society." And he suggested that that might have been a secularization of the Calvinist conception of full membership in the church reserved for the elect only.⁸ In American political terms, all of this meant the exclusion of workers from participation in the choice of the nation's lawmakers.

⁶ W. Stanley Jevons, *Methods of Social Reform* (London, 1883), p. 108.

⁷ Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915* (New Haven, 1940), 15.

⁸ C. B. Macpherson, "The Social Bearing of Locke's Political Theory," *The Western Political Quarterly*, 1954, VII, 4 f.

The Social Gospel

Conscience-stricken Protestant divines were pained by the clash between business practice and Christian precepts. Inquiring into the conflict, they discovered a wide gap between the business gospel and the Christian Gospel. This posed for them the same sort of problems that English Christian socialists had been confronted with after 1848. In America, as in England, society was in turmoil; distress contrasted frightfully with abundance; and Christian principles were casualties.

These principles were the essence of the social gospel as it was interpreted by Washington Gladden, a Congregational minister in Springfield, Mass. Its objective was peace between capital and labor. He saw drawbacks to private property, but he did not reject it. His alternative to class strife was Christian forbearance and Christian law. Workers and employers had reciprocal obligations, the first to be industrious, the second to look after their workers' well-being. He subscribed to the doctrine of business stewardship, which implied a fixed, God-given order, although he acknowledged its impermanence as long as capital and labor acted like Cain and Abel. He ruled out legislation and labor combinations as the roads to salvation.

The only excuse for trade unions was the union of capital in corporations and the mutual benefits they offered the workers. But strikes and force to keep others from working were morally wrong and socially harmful. There was a community of interests. If one class suffered, it brought suffering upon the rest.

What future was in store for the workingmen? Neither servitude nor a restoration of feudalism, Gladden answered. And certainly not socialism on which he laid all the strictures of the social-Darwinists. He considered it beyond the potential of any system to achieve an equal distribution of wealth before people had improved morally. Meanwhile, private ownership was best suited to man's needs. Cooperation could mitigate its maladies by making the worker his own employer. But he had to save beforehand by being frugal and sober. That was as far as Gladden went in his social philosophy.⁹

Among advocates of the social gospel movement was the Christian Labor Union, a small group in Boston, founded by laymen and clergymen in 1872. Its work was principally educational. During its brief history of six or seven years it held two conventions and launched two periodicals.¹⁰ It was the only organized effort of the 1870's to place religion on the side of labor in its conflict with capital. The Union's objective, in the words of a leader, was "the extension of law, under

⁹ See his *Working People and their Employers* (Boston, 1876).

¹⁰ *Equity*, April 1874-December 1875; *Labor Balance*, October 1877-February 1879.

gospel sanctions, to the industrial sphere," with the warning "that the same cause — the poverty of the people — which crowds the cities, also empties the churches."¹¹ This sounded very much like Theodore Parker's upbraiding of the wealthy for keeping the poor in poverty and shutting them out of places of worship.¹² Economically the Union aimed to resuscitate the free artisan through cooperation and to bring about the public ownership of monopolies. It took the part of strikers, thoroughly disapproved of scabs and was at one with reformers and socialists that only by their combined strength could workers first control and then compel the state to further their welfare. Under spiritual shepherding, society would approximate the Edenic Commonwealth where reigned social harmony and mankind shared the blessings of art, science and industry.¹³

The Union gained the support of men like Ira Steward and George E. McNeill. But it stood at a distance from the International, for it held to the belief that the Association was an incendiary, bomb-throwing body.¹⁴

"A Child Under Age"

Toward the end of 1873 the First International was a wasted body. The North American Federation alone held together; and it, too, was disintegrating. Its domestic quarrels were public knowledge. Disagreements on trade unionism and political action, it was shown, almost split sections in cities like Chicago, St. Louis and Philadelphia. Indifference to the call to nominate candidates for the General Council only exhibited the depth of the decline. The Geneva congress of September 1873, to recall one of its decisions, had voted to retain the General Council in New York and made the North American Federation responsible for its choice. The endeavor to observe this obligation revealed a greater want of interest than had been imagined. The Federal Council could neither assemble the New York sections for the purpose of designating nominees, nor persuade others to do so. Only a minority replied.¹⁵

Behind the apathy had been a contest between sections 1 and 8 for supremacy in the Federation. Section 1, the oldest, held its highest

¹¹ Edward H. Rogers, "Like unto Me;" or, the Resemblance between Moses and Christ (Chelsea, Mass. [1876]), 13 and 15.

¹² See Theodore Parker, "On the Perishing Classes in Boston" (August 30, 1846), *Collected Works*, VII (London, 1864), 45, ed., Frances Power Cobbe.

¹³ That was the dream of T. Wharton Collens, a member of the Union, in *The Eden of Labor: or the Christian Utopia* (Philadelphia, 1876).

¹⁴ For a good account of the Christian Labor Union see James Dombrowski, *The Early Days of Christian Socialism in America* (New York, 1936), ch. vii; also Hopkins, *op. cit.*, 42-49.

¹⁵ Letterbook, f. 328-29.

posts, and had absolute majorities in both Councils and in the management of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. Also two of the editors were members of the section. Its power, it was seen, had been put to the test in the fall of 1873. Heading a minority, section 8 defied the order to abolish the local council and was suspended.

Splits followed. Seceders from section 1 formed section 5; others breaking off from number 6 were recognized as number 4. Meanwhile section 8 had gone through a reorganization. By the end of January 1874, sections 1 and 4 were opposing sections 6 and 8. The first two had a majority in the General Council; the other two, in the Federal Council.

The rift developed into a duel between the two Councils. Carl and Bolte, delegates of section 1 in the Federal Council, resigned after it had decided to have another meeting in New York for the purpose of nominating a new General Council. Charges, akin to an excommunication, were brought by the General Council against its rival on February 5, 1874. Actually it was a rump body, left with only three out of seven members. On the plea that it had failed to reply to the indictment the General Council dissolved it and assumed its duties until the election of a successor. The Council summoned a special congress, suspended section 6, and expelled Dr. Stiebling for refusing to surrender the records and treasury of the Federal Council.¹⁶

Coinciding with the splits were controversies that had grown out of the depression. It was indicated in a previous chapter that sections of the International had broken rules by promoting labor parties, and sanctioning platforms that were at odds with socialist principles. Examples were sections 3 and 5 in Chicago and New York respectively. Then the role of the Federation among the unemployed was a source of discord. Its Manifesto of November 1873 had reared the hope that it would improve its standing among workers. But the Federal Council, as Bolte explained, "took no active part in the movement" because it had neither the power nor the means to lead.¹⁷ Inertia was too trying for impatient romantics, so that sections 6 and 8 in New York censured it for not having given the order to take up arms.

Bolte made several counts against the two sections. They had scorned all caution against "useless demonstrations and thoughtless actions in so important a question as bread and shelter for the working people in distress"; they had abandoned the unemployed "to the club of the City Police"; the International had derived nothing but odium

¹⁶ MSS. Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 148-49; Stiebling, *op. cit.*, 13; *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, March 28, 1874.

¹⁷ Letterbook, f. 330-31.

from their unreasoned haste, "blabbering speeches, shallow phrases, irrational action and vain show before a vast multitude of people without the slightest idea of organization."

Bolte conceded that the International "has been more loosened by the Bakuninists and the Bourgeoisie than generally is known." The Spring Street Council and the press, he added, had so weakened it in America that its condition was "that of a child under age." This was the best reason, he said, for keeping it in firm hands. The rebels, in his opinion, were incapable of directing it, or of presenting candidates for the General Council. They lacked "the proper calmness to perform such an important duty as to recommend to their brethren in the country the names of those men, who are able to conduct the association in this critical condition for the next two years."¹⁸

So much for the unsound state of the International in America on the eve of its second congress, according to one of its best informed spokesmen. Its depleted ranks gave as little ground for optimism. The twenty-three sections reported by the General Council divided themselves linguistically into sixteen German, four French, two American and one Scandinavian, and geographically among fourteen localities. The most alert were in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Baltimore. One section in New York and another in Cincinnati seem to have gone into deep slumber. According to the Council's report only fifteen of the twenty-three on the list of the Federation had given any account of themselves; and but eleven had paid their assessments in full.¹⁹

Second Congress of the North American Federation

The congress opened in Philadelphia on April 11, 1874. Approximately one half of its sessions was consumed by wrangling over mandates and personalities. The delegate from section 2 in Chicago protested against the representation of section 3 in the same city. Rude words were traded in the dispute over Stiebling's mandate. There was dissension between Strasser and Sorge, and between Stiebling and Bolte. Charges brought against Carl and Bolte were rejected by the congress. A majority upheld the abolition of the local committee in New York City and the suspension of the insubordinate sections until they were prepared to acknowledge their errors. The members who had defied the rules were expelled.

The congress laid out the course of the Federation. The resolutions of the Hague congress were declared binding in view of the incomplete records of the Geneva congress. With confidence unjustified by the

¹⁸ I.W.A., Correspondence, 1871-76, section 26.

¹⁹ The report of the General Council was published in *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, May 9, 1874.

facts, the delegates voted to summon a general congress of the International in England in September 1875. The functions of the Federal Council were absorbed by the new General Council. There was really no need for both, for the American Federation was the International.²⁰

The resolution on political action merits longer consideration. In character with the clause of the Preamble, "that the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the workingmen themselves," the congress opposed any cooperation with political parties, whatever their name, and ruled that members who had not been authorized to serve them would be suspended. This was consistent with what had been set forth at the London Conference and Hague congress. The rest of the resolution conformed to American conditions. One paragraph read:

"The political action of the Federation confines itself generally to the endeavor of obtaining legislative acts in the interest of the working class proper, and always in a manner to distinguish and separate the workingmen's party from all the political parties of the possessing classes."

The "legislative acts" were the minimum program. It demanded a normal working day, that is not to exceed eight hours, employer's responsibility for accidents, a lien law to protect wages, extinction of child labor, sanitary inspection, bureaus of labor statistics and abolition of indirect taxes. These enactments would be achieved within the limits of political action marked out for the Federation. It "will not enter into a truly political campaign or election movement," stated the resolution, "before being strong enough to exercise a perceptible influence, and then, in the first place, on the field of the municipality. . . ." From there, "this political movement may be transferred to the larger communities . . . , according to circumstances, and always in conformity with the Congress Resolutions." The resolution ended with a reaffirmation of labor's independent political action as the International understood it.²¹

The resolution defined the position of the North American Federation in relation to the labor parties growing up in 1874. It stood by the general principle of political action, but looked upon its application in the United States as a matter of development and timing. This did not convince the opposition. The sections that were contemplating unity in a socialist party left the Federation, and the following month, as has

²⁰ *Ibid.*, April 25, May 2, 1874; Stiebling, *op. cit.*, 14; *Volksstaat*, June 3, 1874, published a summary of the congress.

²¹ The resolution on political action in English was issued as a leaflet. The German text appeared in *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, April 25, 1874.

been indicated, assisted in establishing the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party of North America.

The limitation of political action to the attainment of labor legislation subsequently fitted the purpose of trade union neutrality. The organization of labor unions, it was pointed out, was declared to be the Federation's focus of activity, first because they fought for the immediate advantages of the workers, and second, because participation in politics, on an independent basis, had to have strong labor unions. Consequently, the policy of labor's independent political action was, so to speak, put in cold storage. This position in time acquired sanction. First put forth and justified by Internationalists, it later hardened into a settled trade union dogma.²²

Further Feuds

The history of the North American Federation between its second congress in 1874 and its last in 1876 is a record of still further decline. Within two months after April 1874 it lost nine of its twenty-three sections, of which ten were sending reports; in three the membership was dropping off. The section in Stapleton, Staten Island, adjourned *sine die*. The section in Pittsburgh appeared to be shaky. Section 1 of Philadelphia had to expel members for deviating from settled policies. From Chicago came news that section 1 was failing and section 3 still favoring the program of the Workingmen's Party of Illinois. A communication from the section in New Orleans about its diminishing register and resources was answered by Sorge that its condition was not uncommon. He explained it by the workers' inability to apprehend "their economic oppression" under political liberty.²³

The Federation was cracking from the base to the summit. The second congress, though successful in laying down a political course, had been unable to heal wounded vanities or to cure festering sores. They had been rankling from the start, when Siegfried Meyer and August Vogt had opposed Sorge's power in the first Central Committee. Hostilities rose anew after the Hague congress. Sorge's elevation to the post of general secretary was resented by rivals. No one disputed his disinterested devotion and dependability. His convictions controlled his conduct; by the same token, they blinkered his estimates of men and events. Adversaries said he was dictatorial. Others valued him as "a man of education and deep discernment," and found him to be "of a retiring, modest disposition."²⁴

²² David Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism* (New York, 1926), 17.

²³ MSS, Instructions, Addresses and Papers, f. 190-91.

²⁴ McNeill, *op. cit.*, 615.

Of consequence, too, was a distrust of white collar workers. Sorge was a professional musician, with the look of a college professor; Carl and Bolte, who disapproved of him on several scores, were tailor and cigarpacker respectively. Their feeling of affront at the interference of Marx and Engels in the affairs of the General Council, referred to in an earlier chapter, was of a piece with their lack of confidence in intellectuals at the head of a workers' movement. The fact that the advice was frequently funneled through Sorge did not help to appease matters.

Passions broke loose in the summer heat of 1874. The immediate cause was a motion by Sorge that the General Council should suspend business for a year, at the end of which its usefulness would be further studied. A committee of three would, in the interim, take charge of its archives.

The motion, if read correctly, meant the dissolution of the International. This was a recognition of its true state, for it had ceased to represent the world of labor. A few Swiss sections still reported, but no Federation existed other than the American.

The Association had arisen in the 1860's to accomplish two principal purposes: first, to prevent the importation of cheap labor; and second, to oppose dynastic wars. The defeat of the Paris Commune had turned the limelight on the disagreements of its ill-mated parties; the Hague congress parted them. The center of the International was moved to the United States to save it from seizure by insurrectionary elements. Optimists who had conjectured its bright future in the United States guessed wrong. Its footing in American labor was infirm; its role among the unemployed, weak. Consequently, it postponed independent political action.

Looking at the record of the International as a whole after its anti-climactic general congress of 1873, one is inclined to ask whether its official break up directly after that would not have been more salutary for workers' organizations. The lingering of the International, for three years after the abortive Geneva congress, left a legacy of bitter feeling among friends and foes without furthering either its aims or the interests of workers. The members of the International, as far as America was concerned, would probably have continued to promote its point of view in the trade unions, even after it had dissolved.

The argument has of course been based on hindsight, although Sorge's proposal to suspend the General Council seems to indicate that he came to that conclusion. The reasons he advanced showed that he had reflected a long time before taking the step. These were his major points. The General Council had lost authority. Regular com-

munication with it had ended after the Geneva congress. Foreign assessments arrived only from Austria, and they were but a fraction of the full amount, so that the American Federation had to bear practically all expenses. Furthermore, the Council could neither counteract nor take responsibility for the secret societies that used its name. It had neither followers nor resources in the United States. To speak for labor in general would be presumptuous on its part.²⁵

The facts were unanswerable. But Carl objected to the motion; and interpreted it as a ruse to give Sorge full power. Sorge met the charge by surrendering his post of general secretary and his membership in the Council. Karl Speyer also announced his retirement from the same body. A majority, however, sided with Sorge. It complied with his request to be relieved of his duties as general secretary, but insisted on retaining him as a member of the Council. Speyer was selected to fill the vacancy, a choice which very likely disappointed Carl. For there were indications that he had been coveting the office.

This happened on September 25, 1874. Two days later sections 1 and 4 met together to settle the issue raised by Sorge's resignation from the Control Committee of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*.

What lay behind the quarrel over the central organ? Sorge was not one to be silent when the policy of the paper was in question. He said that readers were thoroughly unhappy and reluctant to renew their subscriptions. In order to improve it he proposed that Wilhelm Liebknecht, the veteran German socialist, be invited to contribute a weekly column on social and political events in Europe. That was the weakest section of the paper, in Sorge's opinion. A compromise was reached that Liebknecht should write a fortnightly column.

Carl was thoroughly displeased. As editor of the paper, he regarded the invitation of Liebknecht as a way of slighting his own articles. Meetings of the paper's Control Committee became immoderately stormy. Alone against the team of Carl and Bolte, Sorge withdrew.

That was how the question stood when it came up at the joint meeting of sections 1 and 4. The side of Carl and Bolte called for the acceptance of Sorge's resignation and the filling of the vacancy. But the attendance refused to accept the withdrawal, despite the efforts of Bolte, the chairman, to prevent a vote.

Those in command of section 1 took things into their own hands. Carl and Bolte, backed by a body-guard, seized control of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. From then on, we hear charges and counter-charges. Carl accused Sorge of having been in collusion with an Austrian police spy; Sorge laid to Carl acts of a corrupt nature. One side excommunicated

the other. The General Council suspended section 1 and expelled Carl, Bolte and Praitsching from the International. Section 1 in turn dropped Sorge and Speyer from its list of members.

The administrative council had meanwhile taken legal action to recover the property of the paper. After dragging on for more than a year, the case terminated in a decision against section 1. In the interim the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* had gone under. Its successor, the *Neue Arbeiter-Zeitung*, survived it by less than five months.²⁶

Ebb and Recovery

Sections went to pieces during the six or seven months after the above schism. Of the twenty-three claimed at the congress in April 1874, eighteen were listed in February 1875. Five of these seem to have been paper bodies with unknown enrollments. The other thirteen had a total register of 231. Admitting the existence of the five paper sections and allowing each of the eighteen an average of 20 members, the total of affiliated Internationalists in the United States, in the early part of 1875, was approximately 360, at the utmost 400.

The make-up of the sections showed plainly the incurable weakness of the entire Federation. Nearly all the members were foreign born. Fourteen out of the credited eighteen sections were German, three French, and one English, that is, consisting of natives and of British immigrants. If the five paper sections were canceled, the other thirteen were ten German and three French. The Federation did not have a single, functioning, English section in the early months of 1875.²⁷ The geographical distribution showed that New York City, from which had radiated its activity, had only section 4. Chicago, on the other hand, had four sections and San Francisco three. The largest, with forty members, was in Lawrence, Mass., among the textile workers. It, too, was predominantly German.

Signs of recovery were apparent in the Spring of 1875. New sections were reported in Camden, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Grand Rapids (Mich.) and Milwaukee, where a women's section had come into being. At the end of the year, the affiliation of the United Workers stirred hopes of having an English organ. The section in Lawrence wrote that it was giving its utmost to recruit English speaking textile workers. Section 1 in Philadelphia was aiding the striking coal miners of Pennsylvania. The General Council, apart from contributing to John Siney's legal expenses, appealed to the Federation for financial help.

²⁶ Twenty-one numbers appeared from October 24, 1874, to March 13, 1875.

²⁷ Letter of General Council, February 17, 1875, I.W.A., St. Louis Correspondence, State Historical Society, Madison, Wis.

²⁵ Schlüter, *op. cit.*, 331 ff.

Seven sections and several trade unions answered the call, even though times were hard.²⁸ Seen concretely, the Federation totaled twenty sections and 653 members in good standing. The largest sections were in St. Louis, Grand Rapids, Milwaukee, Lawrence and Manchester (N. H.).²⁹ Its fanning out nationally was considered a prognostic of recuperation. So was its footing among unskilled workers, particularly in New England. During this period of revival it came nearer to the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party and the Workingmen's Party of Illinois. Both organizations, it was shown, had trimmed their programs in order to make them acceptable to the International. In the middle of 1875 the three socialist associations were already converging toward common ground.

"New Brotherhood" of Labor

The improvement of the Federation coincided with an undercurrent of labor unity. The previous chapter noted the amalgamations among furniture workers, miners, iron and steel workers, and railroad employees. Of account, too, though not spectacular, were the many labor meetings, local in the main, mentioned in the press. They had no visible signs of direction from without. Put together and seen in the climate of the time they look like a spontaneous mass response to immediate issues, especially regarding wages and hours. This display of unity at the base is a likely explanation for the enduring interest in the eight hour day and the many unchronicled strikes. Probably these unheralded stirrings also acted as restoratives on the North American Federation.

The bustle caused labor leaders to believe that they were about to witness a "revival in the minds of most of the men in the different branches of trade."³⁰ The General Council observed that "a close connection among the different trade unions has become a necessity. It can no longer be deferred."³¹ A similar observation was reported by an important labor sheet months later: "From Boston to St. Louis, it [labor] extends the magic grip of a new brotherhood into which none can enter but who are prepared to battle for the rights of humanity, and the cause of justice and right against the power of Capital to enslave."³²

The "new brotherhood" was manifested at two national labor con-

²⁸ *Vorbote*, May 29, July 24, September 25, 1875. An address by Internationalists of Chicago to the miners was published in *The Workingman's Advocate*, August 21, 1875, and in the *National Labor Tribune*, September 25, 1875.

²⁹ Letterbook, f. 427.

³⁰ *The Workingman's Advocate*, July 17, 1875.

³¹ *Vorbote*, April 24, 1875.

³² *National Labor Tribune*, January 8, 1876.

ventions in Pennsylvania. The first met in Tyrone, December 28-29, 1875, under the chairmanship of John M. Davis, editor of the *National Labor Tribune*. The avowed objective, like that of the second convention at Pittsburgh, was to unite workers' organizations. The 132 delegates, save two, were all from Pennsylvania. Two of the three important bodies represented were secret: the Junior Sons of '76 and the Knights of Labor. P. J. McGuire appeared for the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party. The North American Federation, although invited, sent only an address which arrived too late to be read. McGuire learned that most of the delegates were small farmers and lumbermen, who "were astonished at the idea of abolishing the wage system."³³ The majority report of the committee on platform, submitted by Dr. S. Dunham, secretary of the Junior Sons of '76, was conservative. Little is known of the minority report, written in part by McGuire, although he sent an account of the convention to the *Social-Demokrat*. Few resolutions had a direct bearing on trade union matters. Nearly all of them might have been drafted by financial reformers and antimonopolists who had assembled twice in 1875. Several delegates at Tyrone had attended both meetings.

The value of the convention at Tyrone lay, not in its resolutions, but in its initiative to get all labor groups into one big congress, from which, it was hoped, a single workers' organization might emerge. Thus, before adjourning, the delegates empowered the chairman to select a committee of 37, one from each state, that would draw up plans for another convention to be assembled at Pittsburgh.³⁴

The Tyrone convention voted to request the participation of all labor societies that aimed "at elevating labor." The time for protests and petitions was over, said the signers of the invitation to Pittsburgh. They acknowledged that the coming issue was something far more than "hard and soft money." Its scope took in "the right of men to have what they earn," their title to steady employment, "which is possible under a government based on the right relations of Labor and Capital." The high purpose, according to the *National Labor Tribune*, was to shift the government from the political to the industrial basis by the united might of workers and farmers.³⁵

The second labor convention opened in Pittsburgh on April 17, 1876. The delegates, most of them again from Pennsylvania, held more or less the doctrines of the Knights of Labor. It is difficult to count the number of trades represented, since delegates were listed by states

³³ *Social-Demokrat*, January 9, 1876.

³⁴ A short account of the convention at Tyrone appeared in the *National Labor Tribune*, January 8, 1876.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, January 15, March 11, 1876.

rather than by organizations. One attempt to divide them occupationally was unsatisfactory. The well informed Internationalist and printer, Conrad Conzett of Chicago, estimated that 450,000 workers were represented.³⁶

Divisions were visible among the 136 delegates. Trade unionists and Knights stood apart on the type of workers' unity. Supporters of independent political action were at odds with partisans of the major political parties. And between socialists and greenbackers lay a kind of no man's land where several persuasions abided.

Surprising to many was the common stand of the twenty-four socialist delegates, the result of a rapprochement among their organizations. The two socialist parties had given in on the question of trade unionism; and the North American Federation had consented to discuss socialist unity. The next chapter will show that cordial relations among the three organizations had advanced to the point where their delegates were disposed to make significant concessions to one another. They sat on the same platform at a rally the evening of April 15; and the next day they reached an understanding on a common course of action.³⁷ Consequently, on April 17, when the convention opened, the socialists were united on policy.

The two delegates of the International had come with directives. Eight in number, they were of the character that precluded an accord with non-socialists at the convention. Negotiation was possible only on the basis of the statutes of the International and its memoir to the Tyrone convention. Preliminary to any agreement was the sanction of the clause, "the abolition of the wage system." The two delegates were also obliged to seek assent to the resolution on political action, voted at the second congress.³⁸

The instructions were in keeping with the address the Federation had sent to Tyrone. The goal, it said in the communication, was "the introduction of cooperative production in lieu of the capitalistic production, in the interest of favored individuals." This was the "only radical remedy for the working classes." The way to effect it was through their organization in trade unions, internationally bound, and comprising skilled and unskilled workers. These combinations could put a stop to the importation of labor either for subduing strikers or for canceling workers' gains. The Federation thus recapitulated the original purpose of the International. The economic interests of labor, it continued, were best furthered by independent political action. But

³⁶ *Vorbote*, May 13, 1876.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, April 21, 1876.

³⁸ *Letterbook*, f. 358.

it was advisable to postpone it "until the organization of the working classes has progressed far enough, until the laborers in the organization are sufficiently disciplined, that they can come forward as a distinctly separate party, diametrically opposed to the old political middle-class parties, that they can pursue and carry out their own objects."³⁹

Difficulties of Labor Unity

The proceedings at the Pittsburgh convention revealed the brittle nature of the plans for labor unity. The committee on resolutions, dominated by greenbackers, came out with a set of four proposals that exalted the cause of the monetary and credit reformers. The proposals were at variance with the invitation to the convention, in which monetary issues had been declared out of season. Needless to say, the socialists rejected all of them, and after their vote, walked out in a body.

The kind of labor organization was another cause of disagreement. Neither the socialists nor the fraction of trade unionists would accede to secrecy, still adhered to by the Knights of Labor. In compliance with the Knights' insistence, the convention appealed to workers to unite "under one head, each for all and all for one, upon a secret basis, not antagonistic to their duty, to their families, their country and their God."

The delegates also split on independent political action. Nineteen greenbackers and socialists out of the twenty-one in the Committee had succeeded in bringing before the convention a motion providing for "a Workingmen's Party, free from corruption, to liberate the working class from moral and industrial bondage." Debate was deferred to the last day. A substitute proposal was finally pushed through, which said that independent political action was "extremely hazardous and detrimental to the labor interests." It also urged the establishment of trade unions and labor leagues "to educate the people first." Meanwhile, the two existing political parties should be compelled to promote labor's program "by personal and organized efforts at primary elections of both parties and through the primaries in the nominating convention."

Other resolutions, though comparatively minor, imaged the many interests represented by the delegates. They stood for the repeal of the Burlingame treaty, condemned convict labor, the truck system and high interest rates. On the positive side they favored the enforcement and extension of the eight hour law, a revision of the homestead law to facilitate workers' settling on public lands, a severe usury law,

³⁹ The address was first published in *Vorbote*, April 29, 1876. The English text appeared five months later in *The Labor Standard*, September 30, 1876.

internal improvements, fixed rates on railroads, and government subsidy of cooperatives. Cooperation, thought the majority, contained "the efficient factors that will eventually emancipate the working classes from the wage system."

Before adjourning, the convention authorized the chairman to appoint a standing committee to call it together again, if necessary. Perhaps to placate the socialists, it owned the desirability of "communication with the Trades Unions of the world."⁴⁰

The socialists were not appeased. One paper, close to the International, said that the convention "turned out to be a grand fraud." Instead of standing by the abolition of the wage system, it lapsed into a financial plank. Thus it proved that it was still very much attached to capitalist ways.⁴¹ The irrepressible old Owenite socialist, John Francis Bray, who followed the proceedings from Pontiac, Michigan, where he had settled, concluded in a letter to a socialist sheet that the convention was a total failure, because it lacked a great motivating principle. It preferred "to nail together a number of planks, all good enough in their place, but out of place in these times." Equally blameworthy, according to Bray, was its fear of labor's independent political action. Changed circumstances, he wrote in another letter, required such action by the trade unions, if only "to mark the secession and consolidation of the wages class as a distinct political element."⁴²

On the other hand, the *National Labor Tribune* considered the convention "the most successful . . . which has met in this country." The delegates recognized "the magnitude of the work before them"; they refrained from long, discursive speeches; and they expressed "the average sentiments, neither extreme nor conservative."⁴³ Eulogy notwithstanding, the convention missed getting its main objective, namely, the uniting of labor. In fact it drew more heavily the dividing lines.

The convention was the last in a series of general labor assemblies that had begun in 1866. In the decade, from the first congress of the National Labor Union to the National Labor Convention at Pittsburgh, many social and economic creeds had been directed with full blast at organized labor, and with varied effects. Among the least successful were the doctrines of the International, for reasons indicated here on several occasions.

CHAPTER XVI

Socialist Unity

The French Delegation at the Centennial Exposition

The labor convention in Pittsburgh closed as the nation was throbbing with preparations to celebrate its one hundredth birthday. Men dedicated to the cause of labor, who assessed the American Revolution in retrospect, discovered its relevancy to contemporary American labor. For the nation's example cast a shaft of light on what labor leaders with foresight had been striving to achieve for a decade at least. Like the thirteen colonies, the labor societies could rise to power and eminence if they acted in common. The parallel kindled the minds of some of their spokesmen. "Make this broad, fair land indeed the home of the brave and land of the free," one of them exclaimed before 6,000 workers observing the centenary, "and future generations of happy, free and contented workers will bless the memory of the men of 1876, as we now cherish the memory of the men of 1776."¹ *The Workingman's Advocate* anticipated "another revolution" which, it held, was "as essential today as that inaugurated in 1776." But in the dictionary of its editor, Cameron, "revolution" meant legal action to remedy the wrongs of legislation, and the establishment of "an industrial party" that, in time, would supplant the old parties. It was up to men of good will, who aimed at making national wealth serve national welfare, first to rescue the caucuses from politicians, then to conquer the state legislatures and congressional districts, and finally to "revolutionize" Congress.²

Such thoughts inspired by the approaching centennial were regarded by vindicators of the political and social setup as inflammatory. Had conditions improved, they might have been less disposed to draw heretical conclusions from the century-old precedent. But the economy was still on its back; the unemployed were morose; and the problem of vagrancy was growing more insoluble. Observance of the anniversary might overexcite imaginations. To be sure, the nation was following the road marked out by Alexander Hamilton. But neo-Jeffersonians

⁴⁰ For reports on the Pittsburgh Convention see *National Labor Tribune*, April 22, 1876, and *The Socialist*, April 22, 29, 1876.

⁴¹ *Verbote*, April 21, May 13, 1876.

⁴² *The Socialist*, May 13, 27, 1876.

⁴³ *National Labor Tribune*, April 29, 1876.

¹ *The Socialist*, April 15, 1876.

² *The Workingman's Advocate*, March 6, 1875.

were numerous who endeavored to attain "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

An immediate cause of apprehension was the announcement that a delegation of French workers would attend the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia. In view of the prevalent notion of terrorist Communards, the question arose whether the emissaries of French labor would bring with them the germs of revolution. While many were quite calm, believing that America had been immunized, many others were anxious. Economic depressions had been known to start revolutions. That of 1847, for instance, had stirred practically all of Western Europe. Already American unemployed had resisted local governments. French workers were undesirable guests at American festivities. Furthermore, a story spread that their prime reason for coming was to look into the likelihood of displacing American workers at lower wages.

Neither the fear of labor competition nor the dread of revolutionary contagion had any basis. French workers were either disinclined to expatriate themselves or apathetic to radicalism after the Commune. Their sole act that French authorities had deemed dangerous was to resurrect in Paris a central trades council. Its moderate program ruled out strikes and abided by social peace. Even so, the trades council was ordered to dissolve.³ By 1876 the republican regime had sufficient confidence in labor's conformity with the established system, and gave financial assistance to the delegation.

Association with American workers might have been countenanced in high French bureaus; the example could have only a salutary effect on French labor representatives. The workers of the United States, despite more than two years of distress, showed no signs of rebelling against their government. Even the American Internationalist was considered by the Parisian prefecture "less phrasemonger, less striker and revolutionary, and much more industrious than the European."⁴

The delegates, before embarking, sent to the United States a conciliatory message, in which they said that the object of their visit was informational and fraternal. Apart from their interest in the quality of American products, they desired "to celebrate with their American brethren the glorious centennial of a sister republic."⁵ Published in the English organ of the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party, the communication might have been noticed by hundreds of workingmen in eastern and mid-western cities. The Labor League of Philadelphia

replied with a series of warm resolutions. American labor, it answered in substance, was gratified by the French workers' attendance at the Exposition. A trade union committee was appointed to arrange for their reception and, notwithstanding the personal feelings of labor leaders in New York, to express "the fraternal esteem which is entertained by the mass of the workingmen composing those unions."⁶

The Labor League underrated the conservatism of New York's trade unionists. As far as it is possible to gauge their sentiments, a majority shared their leaders' antagonism to the delegation. Comparatively few of the City's labor societies supported the welcoming committee formed by socialists. Its resolutions reaffirmed labor's international interests and promised to give the visitors full assistance in their investigations of American conditions. A sub-committee was instructed to collect funds for their entertainment.⁷ All told, however, the prospect of their arrival was less gratifying to New York than to Philadelphia trade unionists.

Once at the Exposition, the French went at their purpose with industry and thoroughness.⁸ A guide to their inquiry was a questionnaire their colleagues from Lyons had distributed among American workers and socialists. The thirty-four questions roamed over many subjects, from living costs and working hours to education and type of army. The draft seemed to avoid digging far into the economic system. Nevertheless there were questions on monetary and real wages, child and woman labor, unemployment, technology and capital-labor relations, on labor societies, their right of assembly and their status vis-à-vis the state. Also inquired into were civil and political liberty, woman's place in the home, factory and community, and the condition of the French worker in the United States.

Apparently only socialists submitted answers. From them the French learned that working hours in the United States were from 8 to 16, for an average weekly wage of six or seven dollars; unemployment was general; children and women were hired without restrictions; convict labor was amply used; taxes fell heavily on the workers; industry was unplanned, given to concentration. On the other hand, trade unions were free from government restraints; suffrage was general, although abused by professional politicians; civil and political liberties were in force; and elementary education was free, in some states compulsory. The data warranted the conclusion that while American workers had many rights, and their children could have at least elementary instruc-

³ Bernstein, *The Beginnings*, etc., ch. ii, section 2.

⁴ Archives de la préfecture de police, Paris, Dossier, "L'Internationale en Amérique," N 916-917. The memorandum was dated April 24, 1876, that is before the departure of the delegation to the United States.

⁵ Published in *The Socialist*, May 13, 1876.

⁶ *Ibid.*, May 27, 1876.

⁷ *Vorbote*, June 24, 1876; *The Socialist*, July 1, 1876.

⁸ See *The Socialist*, July 22, 1876, for a letter by an observer, signing himself "espion," assigned to follow their activities.

tion, their economic standing was scarcely enviable. They could organize, but employers were in a position to impose terms.⁹ To document the final point, the French cited the yellow-dog contract, although in their country the same results were obtained by the *livret*, a worker's clearance certificate, signed by the employer. But that, they said, was comparatively mild.¹⁰

American socialists for their part, were critical of the Parisians for having renounced strikes "under all circumstances." Since the question was the concern of all French workers, their delegates were counseled to expedite the summoning of a national labor congress.¹¹

Whether the exchange of admonitions had any bearing on the courses of conduct of the respective working classes is not known. All that can be said is that the extinction of the yellow-dog contract was on the agenda of the American trade unionists. And the recommendation to the French to convene a labor congress came a bit too late. The idea had been aired in France three years earlier. Still, the delegates might have taken the advice to heart, and promoted labor unity. Slightly more than two months after their return the first French labor congress assembled in Paris. Of its 360 representatives a number had been at the Centennial Exhibition.¹²

Socialist Unitary Trend

Labor and socialist unity had international reach in the 1870's. In September 1877 forty-two delegates held a universal socialist congress at Ghent, where they voted unanimously the establishment of an international federation of trade unions. Privately fourteen of them pledged to draw up plans for a socialist international.¹³ Wilhelm Liebknecht spoke for the Social Democratic Party of Germany, founded in 1875.

The German example inspired socialists in America. Here each socialist organization, predominantly German in its make-up, had an abiding interest in what went on in the homeland, so that *Vorbote* and *Social-Demokrat*, like other German-American sheets, ran news items and articles on German affairs. Probably more cogent than the foreign precedent was the disappointing outcome of the Pittsburgh convention. Workers were gravitating to the Knights of Labor. Others were beguiled by romantics. The socialist groups consequently had to yield to the pulls of their memberships and merge into one political party.

⁹ For the full text of the questionnaire, see *Courrier des Etats-Unis*, July 22, 1876. The text and the answers of socialists appeared in *Vorbote*, July 29, 1876.

¹⁰ *The Socialist*, July 29, 1876; on the *livret* see Bernstein, *op. cit.*, 189, n. 4.

¹¹ *The Socialist*, July 22, 1876.

¹² Bernstein, *op. cit.*, ch. ii, section 5.

¹³ Stekloff, *op. cit.*, 344 ff.

Significant strides were made in 1875. Each of the two Lassalleian parties acknowledged that the economic organization of labor was preliminary to its political organization; and both parties conformed their programs to the International's requirements. The concessions came as answers to demands by the rank and file.

It will be recalled that, not long after its formation, the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party proposed marriage to the Workingmen's Party of Illinois, and, in July 1875, voted to open negotiations for socialist unity. The Workingmen's Party of Illinois, for its part, preferred to woo the North American Federation. Relations between these two organizations became so cordial that the General Council was invited to send its official notices to *Vorbote*. In April 1875 the Illinois Party made an overture of unity to the North American Federation. The Federal Council evinced a readiness to consider it.¹⁴

Toward the fall of 1875 the question of socialist unity absorbed the memberships of the three organizations. Everywhere they debated it, studied the terms of the respective executive bodies, and in anticipation drafted provisional statutes for a single party. In the North American Federation sections were requesting a congress that would coalesce all socialist groups.¹⁵ And since members of the Federation had been instrumental in trade union amalgamations, related previously, the unitary movement, in labor and socialism, may be considered of a piece. An illustration was the case of the United Workers of America, organized in 1874 by J. P. McDonnell, a member of the International.

"What's in a Name?"

The road to unity, however, was still strewn with obstacles. Major differences over principles had practically dissolved, even to the satisfaction of the General Council. But there was a residue, of an emotional sort, that was resistant to argument. Of the three American socialist organizations, the International was the oldest. To stalwarts its name had become a standard, in fact a pledge of labor's final emancipation. To surrender it in the interest of unity seemed to them like sacrificing the ultimate goal.

Sentiment for the name thus developed into a hallowed dogma. The General Council warned that without the title, International, the united party would turn its back on a glorious past and go off in a wrong direction. The Council consequently instructed the sections to stand pat. Its arguments were: no other name symbolized so well the similar interests of labor in all lands; it was the best choice for the American

¹⁴ *Vorbote*, April 24, May 1, 22, 1875.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, April 24, July 24, 1875.

workers, who stemmed from many nationalities; name and program complemented one another; the word "International" required no translation, it was the same in all languages; to preserve it was a question of honor to American Internationalists, first, because their European comrades were openly acknowledging it, regardless of adversity, and second, because they had been charged by a general congress to care for it.¹⁶ In sum, the international solidarity of labor would suffer a setback, if American socialists scrapped the title "International." The program was in the word and the word in the program.

The unyielding disposition of Internationalist die-hards nearly wrecked the unity movement. Was it their purpose to raise insurmountable obstacles? negotiators were inclined to ask. Accord was possible on every vital point; but the name, International, seemed to be impenetrable to argument. Doubt arose in their minds about the sincerity of the General Council. For in its letter to the sections, where it had spelled out the reasons for clinging to the name, it had also proposed that the socialist organizations, instead of uniting as equals, should apply for admission to the North American Federation.

It was an open secret that in sections of the Federation members were weary over the wrangle and looked forward to an understanding. It was common knowledge, too, that the question of name had divided Internationalists. Section 3 of Philadelphia led the supporters of the Council. The strongest opposition to it was in Chicago, where its arguments were subjected to a severe test and found wanting in cogency. Critics, therefore, concluded that the name could be given up without impairing principles; but they could not bring round the local adherents of the Council, who had already asked the Illinois Party to consider statutes that contained the name "American Federation of the International Workingmen's Association."¹⁷

"Declaration of Unity"

Despite the Council's resolute stand, negotiations continued. The Social Democratic Workingmen's Party insisted that the condition for any discussion was the principle of equality. Represented at the first meeting, October 1, 1875, were the Social Democrats, the United Workers, section 4 (New York), section 1 (Hoboken) and French groups. Among the better known delegates were Strasser, McDonnell, Bertrand, Sorge and Sauva, who attended as an observer. The need for unity was acknowledged by everyone; and all, save the French, agreed on a centralized party. The French, thereafter, absented themselves

from further conferences. Social Democrats and United Workers attacked the position of the International. To be annexed by it, the first said, would answer no useful end, for it had been inactive since the congress of Geneva in 1873. Antipathy to it among American workers would make propaganda nigh impossible. McDonnell, speaking for the United Workers, also emphasized the workers' dislike of the International and cited the example of the Irish. He believed that the name, "United Workers" would be most appropriate for the party. The delegates of the International made a concession to the principle of parity and suggested an alliance of the organizations instead of their unity. The Social Democrats rejected that. At the same time they were sympathetic to McDonnell's alternative name.

After two months of conferences the delegates came to a deadlock. Internationalists stood by their conditions; Social Democrats were just as resolute in having one organization that took in all socialist societies. At last it was conceded by all that a socialist convention should be called for the prime purpose of working out a settlement.¹⁸

What were the reasons for the compromise? To begin with, a revolt was brewing in the socialist organizations against those at the top who held out for their own terms. Further resistance might have gotten them only the total disregard of the insurgents. Other reasons lay outside the socialist organizations. They were the deep unrest engendered by the depression and the disillusion of "an immense number of workingmen" with "the present political and social system," to cite from a letter of Hugh McGregor. He believed, as did many contemporaries, that the disenchanted workers were disposed to change things "from the very foundation."¹⁹ Plainly, unless socialists came together in one organization, they could not expect to exploit the volume of discontent and the eager interest in changing things, starting at the base. But before they could iron out differences, antimonopolists and monetary reformers were well on the way of putting forth the Greenback Party, and appealing for the workers' support. In fact, several prominent labor leaders had expressed approval of it. Greenbackers appeared in force at the two labor conventions, in Tyrone and Pittsburgh, where they were strong enough, as it was pointed out, to determine their course.

No single socialist organization could stand up to the combined strength of financial reformers and their allies. The poor showing of the Illinois Party in the elections of 1874 had persuaded it to strive for socialist unity. Its own membership was around 600. The North

¹⁶ See the circular to the sections of the N. A. Federation, *ibid.*, August 21, 1875.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, September 11, 1875.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, December 4, 25, 1875.

¹⁹ *National Labor Tribune*, September 25, 1875.

American Federation was only a little larger, but it was toughened. The Social Democratic Workingmen's Party was the largest numerically. Its 1500 members represented a strong force. Its Lassalleanism, however, had alienated it from the trade unions.

The invitation of the socialists to the Pittsburgh convention hastened their understanding. A request by the Central Committee of the Illinois Party for united action was readily accepted by the General Council. It instructed its delegates to insist, first, on the approval of two demands: the convening in Philadelphia of "a real unity congress of all independent socialist associations;" the appointment of a committee "in order to work out a program and plan of organization." Once these preliminaries were settled, the delegates should endeavor to get assent to the following four points: the party was to be known as "United Workers;" its program was to be drawn from the Preamble of the International; the resolutions of the Federation's second congress were to serve as the basis of national policy; and international labor unity was to be a governing principle. The rest of the instructions were relatively minor. They pertained to the plan of organization, the location of the party's central headquarters, its press, and representation at the unity congress.²⁰

Like the Party of Illinois, the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party fell in with the above demands. It called a special party congress in Pittsburgh to coincide with the labor convention.²¹ The purpose of the congress was twofold: to offset the ascendancy of greenbackism over labor; to be a sort of informal conference that all socialists could attend.

The delegates of the socialist parties arrived at Pittsburgh with orders to stand together against greenbackers and their allies. We have shown that, after voting against the monetary and credit schemes, they left the convention in a body. On April 16, they were all present at the opening of the Social Democratic congress, and in the evening, they met in plenary session to clear away impediments. The meeting was in essence a socialist convention. Questions, theoretical and organizational, were debated to the first hour of the morning. When divisions had been erased, a committee was chosen to draft a pact. It was adopted on April 19th. Thereafter, it was the topic of discussion by socialist groups throughout the country. One thing was certain: whatever opposition it was likely to provoke it was a binding agreement for a permanent union.

The "Declaration of Unity" was a formal statement of the program

²⁰ Letterbook, f. 360-61, emphasis in the original.

²¹ See *Social-Demokrat*, April 30, 1876, for a report of the congress.

the delegates had worked out. The principles and type of organization were more or less settled. Other parts either needed filling in or were subject to revision. The value of the Declaration lay in this: it laid out the common ground which no party to the compact could desert without losing face and possibly followers; and it threw open to full inquiry and debate the entire question of socialism. Invited by the signers, sections examined theoretical issues. The counter-projects and amendments that arrived from the east and the middle-east, were testimony of a broad, absorbing interest in socialist problems.

The Declaration represented a triumph for the forces of unity. The name it proposed, "Socialist Labor Party of the United States of North America," served as a basis of discussion. The substance of the settlement was in the platform. Its principles stemmed from the Preamble of the International. In keeping with the preliminaries laid down by the North American Federation, the party was "a centralized, national, organization," presupposing "international action."²² The political policy, too, was the same as the Federation's. It promised to take an "active part in the politics of the country, both in general and for obtaining legislative enactments," without entering upon an election movement "before it is strong enough to exert a perceptible influence." Economically, the party aimed "at the organization of the Trades Unions on a national and international basis, for the improvement of our economical condition and for the spreading of our ideas and principles." In sum, the delegates had derived the basic tenets from the North American Federation. For the minimum program, however, they went to the platform of the Democratic Workingmen's Party, whose demands were listed in an earlier chapter. The Declaration went on to stipulate that the socialist press should be the property of the party. At the unity congress, each organization would have one delegate for every 500 members in good standing.²³

Discussion of the Declaration

In the three months that intervened between the unity pact and the unity congress, trade union and socialist amalgamation overshadowed all other questions in the International. Thanks to its members, the Trades and Labor Council was revived in New York in April 1876. Its constitution and rules, emptied of socialist terminology, granted the necessity of confronting the united millions of capital with the

²² Emphasis in the Declaration.

²³ The English text of the Declaration was published in *The Socialist*, May 6, 1876; the German text in *Vorbote*, April 29, 1876, and in *Social-Demokrat*, April 30, 1876.

united millions of workers.²⁴ Conrad Conzett, the esteemed trade unionist of Chicago, went on campaigning for the organization of the workers on an economic basis, in the belief that once drawn into the economic struggle they would find themselves entering politics.²⁵ In character with the general climate, the General Council offered "its cordial aid and support" to *The Socialist* provided it changed the title and admitted to its managing board appointees of the International and United Workers.²⁶

Meanwhile socialists were going over the "Declaration of Unity." The results of their scrutiny were requests for numerous changes as well as alternative drafts. At least a dozen sections of the North American Federation and nine branches of the Social Democratic Party submitted what to them seemed necessary amendments. Revisions asked for related to the annual congress and its powers, the choice and functions of the governing committees, the character of local sections and the control of the press. Radical changes were called for by section 1 of Hoboken and section 3 of Milwaukee. The first preferred the name "United Workers of North America" for two reasons: the word "socialist" was not so unique that it could not be used by other parties; it frightened English speaking workers. With this proposed alteration the section submitted another minimum program, and subsequently new statutes. Section 3 of Milwaukee, the only women's section of the International in America, desired to insert in the statement of aims the "Right to Labor," a reference to women's political and social equality, and producers' cooperatives for the purpose of securing the full proceeds of labor. The same Lassalleian idea was put forth by other sections as well.²⁷ Significantly none of the reported criticisms opposed the Declaration for its avowed purpose. All seem to have assumed that socialist unity was a foregone conclusion. Only the aims and architecture of the party formed the substance of the amendments.

Dissolution of the International

The First International made its exit from history with a declaration of faith in a socialist future. Its independent existence was a matter of a few months after the Pittsburgh pact. Name and organization were to be consigned to the pyre in July 1876. There was the consolation, however, that its spirit would rise from the ashes to govern the course of the young socialist movement.

²⁴ *The Socialist*, April 29, 1876.

²⁵ *Vorbote*, May 13, 1876.

²⁶ *Letterbook*, f. 393.

²⁷ *Vorbote*, May 6, June 17, 24, July 8, 1876.

The General Council's two circulars, in March and June 1876, acknowledged its inability to continue functioning as the head of the Association. Actually the only Federation of any consequence was the American. A few sections still lingered in Switzerland. But with Germany, Hungary, Austria and Denmark connections had almost ceased. Though some contact had been restored with France, the possibility of reviving the International there had to be ruled out. The Council completely discounted Spain and Italy where anarchism was ascendant. In England, the last traces of the Association had been erased by the trade unions.²⁸

With these dreary facts before it the Council summoned its last conference. A general congress, under the conditions the Council had portrayed, would be an even greater fiasco, if that were possible, than that of Geneva in 1873. Conferences, moreover, had not been uncommon in the International during emergencies. They had replaced congresses in 1865 and in 1871. The sections were informed that before sending delegates they would have to pay dues and debts to the Federation.²⁹

Within one week, July 15-22, 1876, assembled the conference of the International and two congresses that sealed socialist unity. All three met in Philadelphia, while the Centennial Exhibition was in progress.

Ten delegates constituting the conference of the International met quietly July 15. No reporters packed the entrance, nor were people on hand to mourn the going of the once "mighty" organization. There was a funereal air about the meeting, as if the ten had come to act as pall-bearers. The Association, which statesmen and monarchs had credited with limitless forces, was passing out unnoticed and virtually unlamented. Among the delegates were Otto Weydemeyer and F. A. Sorge. Weydemeyer had moved from St. Louis to Pittsburgh, where he agitated among workers in heavy industry. Sorge, founder and defender of the International in America, was still as indefatigable as when he had first set up the Central Committee in December 1870. Bearded and bespectacled, with eyes that focused straight at one, as if they were X-raying his thoughts, he looked more like a diplomat than a socialist propagandist. Also present were Karl Speyer, a cabinet-maker, and Albert Currlin, a German worker in St. Louis. Within the next few years he shifted his allegiance to anarchism.

All business was finished in less than a day. Speyer's report reviewed the troubled history of the Association in its final period. The general

²⁸ *Letterbook*, f. 410-11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 412.

picture had not changed since the Council's circular of June 25. The four resolutions he submitted were adopted in silence. The first abolished the General Council; the second and third called upon the united party in the United States to maintain the bonds of union and, if events demanded it, to summon a universal congress with the object of re-creating an international organization; the fourth made Sorge and Speyer the keepers of the General Council's archives. The round of business, once disposed of with impeccable parliamentary procedure, the delegates said farewell in a prepared pronouncement. It was at once a swan-song and a hymn to roseate to-morrows. It tempered the notice of death with faith in resurrection. "The International is dead!" the delegates announced, as after the decease of a monarch. In the absence of a successor, they could not cry: "Long live the International." They could only say without fanfare: "Workingmen of all countries, unite!" The last official declaration of the International merits citation.

"Fellow-workers

"The general Conference of Delegates at Philadelphia has abolished the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association. Thus the visible bond of the Association no longer exists.

"The International is dead! The bourgeoisie of all countries will again cry out, with scorn and joy, and with trumpet blasts will announce the resolutions of the Conference as documentary proof of the defeat of the international labor movement. Let not the shrieking of our enemies divert us from our purpose. We have given up the International in the light of the political situation in Europe; but in recompense we see the advanced workers of the entire civilized world acknowledging and defending its principles. We are confident our fellow-workers in Europe will shortly set right their national affairs and then will be in a position to put aside the barriers separating them from the workers in other parts of the world.

"Comrades! you, who have been loyal to the International with love and courage, will find means of widening the circle of its followers even in the absence of an organization. You will add new partisans who will go on struggling in order to reach the goal of our Association.

"The comrades of America pledge themselves to guard and foster the aims of the International until conditions are more congenial for bringing together the workers of all countries in common action. The cry will then resound again and louder:

"Workingmen of all countries, unite!"³⁰

³⁰ A summary of the proceedings of the Conference was issued as an eight page pamphlet, *Verhandlungen der Delegierten-Konferenz zu Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1876). For another translation of the final declaration see Hillquit, *op. cit.*, 206.

The same ten delegates to the conference opened on July 16 the third and final congress of the North American Federation. Three excluded sections were not admitted, and three others had not sent representatives. Thirteen delegates held a total of seventeen mandates. The ventilation of views on the best way to reach native American workers revealed that the problem had been weighing heavily with the delegates. All of them seem to have fallen in, at least in principle, with Sorge's counsel, to get nearer to the trade unions. He urged the focusing of propaganda on New England, then regarded as a vital center of American industry. Particularly relevant was his advice to shun imitation of foreign models, especially the German.³¹

The last reports were an inventory of the Federation. In its treasury was a balance of over \$76.00. It had 635 members distributed among 22 sections, not including three that had been excluded for violation of rules. Of the 22 sections a number had failed to clear their obligations. Section 1 in San Francisco, numerically the largest, had no delegate at the congress. Neither did the three of New Orleans, Paterson, N. J., and Grand Rapids, Mich. Figures based on paid dues showed that the numerically largest sections were outside of New York. The two of the metropolis had only 21 and 25 members each, and neighboring Hoboken, where Sorge resided, but 18. On the other hand, section 1 of San Francisco had 67; section 1 of St. Louis and the section in Lawrence, Mass., 60 each; the section in Grand Rapids, 54; and section 1 of Milwaukee and section 2 of Chicago, 40 each. The memberships of four other sections ranged from 30 to 38. Sections 1 in Baltimore and Pittsburgh had 13 and 11 respectively; that of Cincinnati, with only five remaining members, had practically gone out of business.³²

The instructions to Sorge and Weydemeyer, the Federation's two envoys to the unity congress, scheduled for July 19, were the major business of the congress. The delegates were all of one mind. The two representatives had to stand by the Federation's policies on trade unions and political action. Other items related to the party's press and to the seats of its highest committees. The proposed compromise on its name was the "Workingmen's Party of the United States." Finally a resolution was voted on women's rights that would be laid before the unity congress. This will be considered below. The delegates adjourned on July 18th, completely confident that they had cleared away the last obstacles to socialist unity.

³¹ *Vorbote*, July 29, 1876.

³² *Letterbook*, f. 427.

The Workingmen's Party

The unity congress, which opened July 19th, lasted four days. Seven societies sent delegations, but the credentials of three were thrown out. The German Free Congregation of Philadelphia was refused admission on the ground that it was not a workingmen's group. Equally barred were the delegates of the Slavic Workingmen's Society of Cincinnati and the Workingmen's Union of Milwaukee. They could attend as observers.

The organizations in good standing, save one, have already found a place in the narrative. Sorge and Weydemeyer represented the 635 members of the North American Federation. The Workingmen's Party of Illinois, with 593 members on its register, had one delegate, Conrad Konzett. A. Gabriel of Newark, N. J., A. Strasser of New York, and P. J. McGuire of New Haven, were the three delegates sent by the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party of North America on the basis of its 1500 members. The credentials of Chas. Braun, mandated by the 250 members of the Social Political Workingmen's Society of Cincinnati, were accepted after some controversy. The seven delegates of the congress thus spoke for approximately 3,000 organized socialists in the United States.

The congress then settled down to the main order of business. A vote of 4 to 2, after long debate, adopted the name, Workingmen's Party of the United States. The platform won almost complete unanimity. There was disagreement on the article which called for governmental transfer of industrial enterprises to producers' cooperatives. The clause, Lassalleian in nature, was passed over the opposition of Sorge, Weydemeyer and Konzett.

The platform in its final form, was a compromise. The North American Federation furnished the preamble; and the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party, the minimum demands.

The Party's constitution caused considerable discord. The main source of the controversy was the fourth article, bearing on local elections. Maintaining that they were permissible under certain conditions, McGuire gained a majority for the following clause: "No Section shall take part in a political movement without the consent of the Executive Committee." The delegates of the North American Federation considered the vote crucial, for the congress had already designated New Haven, where McGuire resided, the seat of the board of supervision, the Party's highest body. The power he might have over it could weaken the Federation's position on political action. Sorge and Weydemeyer announced that there could be no concessions on a matter so important. They would abide by the strict instructions given them. The

Party's withdrawal from all election movements, at least for some time, was the condition of their cooperation. Sorge appealed to the delegates to rescind the above clause, but the majority stood fast. He tried a strategical move. He had observed that while the majority was determined to cling to the clause, it might, in the interest of unity, also acknowledge the Federation's settled policy. By a vote of 4 to 3 the delegates assented to a resolution he had drafted. It was the most plain-spoken statement American Internationalists had yet made on political action, more plain-spoken than the declaration of policy at the second congress in 1874. The seven "Considerings" declared "that the economical emancipation of the working classes is the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means; that the Workingmen's Party of the United States in the first place directs its efforts to the economical struggle; that only in the economical arena the combatants for the Workingmen's Party can be trained and disciplined; that in this country the ballot box has long ago ceased to record the popular will, and only serves to falsify the same in the hands of professional politicians; that the organization of the working people is not yet far enough developed to overthrow at once this state of corruption; that this middle class Republic has produced an enormous amount of small reformers and quacks, the intruding of whom into the Workingmen's Party will only be facilitated by a political movement; and that the corruption and misapplication of the ballot box, as well as the silly reform movements, flourish most in the years of presidential elections, at such times greatly endangering the organization of workingmen."

For these reasons, the resolution concluded: "The sections of this Party as well as all workingmen in general are earnestly invited to abstain from all political movements for the present and to turn their back on the ballot box.

"The workingmen will therewith save themselves bitter disappointment and their time and efforts will be directed far better towards the organization of the workingmen, which organization is frequently destroyed and always injured by a hasty political movement. Let us bide our time! It will come."

The resolution pointed to paths of procedure that in time proved to be incompatible with primary principles of the Federation. This will be referred to in the epilogue.

The question of centralization revealed other disparities of outlook. The Social Democrats wanted authority divided between two committees, as in their own organization. Sorge answered that separation of powers in the highest echelons would spell paralysis. Instead of

centralization, which the delegates favored, its opposite would in effect prevail. He demanded the vesting of power in the Party congress and in the executive committee. Again a majority supported the Social Democrats.

The Party's scaffolding was conic. At the apex was the board of supervision, assisted by the executive committee. The base consisted of the sections, each with at least 10 members, all speaking the same language. At least three-fourths of them had to be wage-earners. The Party congress, held biennially, was given final authority. The burden of enforcing its decisions was put on the executive committee. Its other functions were the planning of propaganda, maintaining relations with socialist parties abroad, supervising the press, and suspending members and sections. In such extreme cases the board of supervision had to concur. It was the highest authority, a kind of watchdog guarding the executive committee and the Party as a whole, especially the administration and the editorial policy of the press. If necessary it could suspend editors until the next congress. The executive committee was located in Chicago, the board of supervision in New Haven.

Agreement on the press was reached without difficulty. *The Socialist* and *Social-Demokrat* were changed to *Labor Standard* and *Arbeiter-Stimme* respectively. The Party took over the stock and assets of *Vorbote* and appointed Conzett its editor. McDonnell was chosen to edit the *Labor Standard*; and A. Otto Walster, a journalist, the *Arbeiter-Stimme*. The congress resolved that no local paper could be started without the permission of the executive committee.

The resolution on women's rights was in keeping with the policy on political action. Once the Party was committed to abstention from all political movements, once it looked disparagingly on the ballot, it could not be a consequential champion of women's political rights. The delegates therefore endorsed the draft of the North American Federation, which read: "The emancipation of labor is a social problem, a problem concerning the whole human race and embracing both sexes. The emancipation of women will be accomplished with the emancipation of men, and the so-called women's rights question will be solved with the labor question. All evils and wrongs of the present society can be abolished only when economical freedom is conquered for men as well as for women.

"It is the duty therefore of the wives and daughters of the workingmen to organize themselves and take their places within the ranks of struggling labor. To aid and support them in this work is the duty of the men. By uniting their efforts they will succeed in breaking the

economical fetters, and a new and free race of men and women will rise, recognizing each other as peers.

"We acknowledge the perfect equality of rights of both sexes, and in the Workingmen's Party of the United States this equality of rights is a principle and is strictly observed."³³

With the close of the unity congress, the International in America passed into history. Its principles were its legacy to socialists in the United States. But the principles were not productive of an American socialist movement, comparable in force and magnitude to that of Europe. The reasons lie outside the scope of this story which terminates with the amalgamation of the socialist societies.

³³ For the above account of the Unity Congress we have relied on the manuscript copy of the official proceedings in the Labor Collection, 13A, Box 2, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Epilogue

The Legacy of the International in America

Character of Workingmen's Party

It is not the intention here to relate the story of the Workingmen's Party of the United States. Within the borders of an epilogue only broad aspects of its early history can be spaced out.

The Party, it was seen, came out of a compromise. Disagreements had been subdued, but not wiped out. Still, the Party passed through a brief, peaceful honeymoon after July 1876. Within less than a month after its establishment, its statutes and principles were ratified by the United Workers of America.¹ Though the approval did not represent a substantial addition to the Party's strength, it was an earnest of what other labor groups might do.

By the first week of August 1876, the Party's organization was already in order. Phillip van Patten, a middle class native American, was chosen national secretary. The executive committee summoned the sections to agitate around such planks as the eight hour day, abolition of conspiracy laws and government ownership of railroads and telegraph lines. The first two were meant for factory workers; the third, for farmers and antimonopolists. For the corporations, reported the British Consul General in the United States in summing up opinion, wielded "almost incredible power," forgetting entirely "that property has its duties as well as privileges."² Consistent with the Party's internationalist outlook, the committee invited correspondence from foreign socialist and labor societies.³

At no time in the tempestuous year of 1877 was the Party inattentive to its ultimate aims. If its speakers were not always politic they were at least not complacent. They addressed audiences in nearly every large industrial center. Proclamations, demonstrations, meetings and lectures were evidence of brisk, directed activity. Its fruits were the Party's expansion and the speedy growth of its press. From 1876 to 1877 at least twenty-four newspapers circulated in all parts of the

¹ *Labor Standard*, August 12, 1876.

² Great Britain, Foreign Affairs, Commercial, No. 22 (1877) *Reports Respecting the Late Industrial Conflicts in the United States*, 6 f.

³ *Labor Standard*, September 16, 1876.

country. Eight of them, including a daily, were in the English language. Of the fourteen German papers, seven were dailies.⁴

However, native workers were cool to its appeals and unmoved by its fulminations against the infamy of poverty. Out of 55 sections at the end of October 1876, only 16 spoke English at their meetings; the other 39 carried on in their native tongues. Of the second category, 33 were German, four Czech, one Scandinavian, and one French. Only 23 of the 82 sections listed in July 1877 were English speaking, and they were losing members. Trade unions were as apathetic to the Party as the general public. "We called public meetings in all parts of the country," wrote Robert Schilling more than a decade later, "but the masses were slow to move. Oft-times, after posting bills and paying for advertising, we were also compelled to contribute our last nickel for hall rent, and walk home instead of ride."⁵

It was an up-hill pull, enough to strain the patience of impetuous enthusiasts. In their hasty search for short-cuts, they were inclined to be forgetful of regulations laid down by the unity congress. Differences, believed to have been effaced, reappeared. The combustible questions of political action and trade unionism again inflamed feelings.

Renewed Discord

Rebellion broke out against established rules. Opposition to the Party's order "to abstain from all political movements for the present" started in New Haven early in September 1876. Here the section, of which McGuire was the master mind, presented a ticket in the coming local election,⁶ with the sanction of the executive committee. The section's eight reasons for embarking on such a course need not detain us. Its strongest argument was that the Party would profit by the experience. Nor is it necessary to enumerate the answers of former Internationalists. More relevant to the dispute was the imitation New Haven had inspired. Sections in Milwaukee, Cincinnati and Chicago nominated local candidates in defiance of official regulations.

The unexpected success aggravated the dissension. The two socialist candidates in New Haven came off with comparatively small votes, but they were in front of their greenback rivals. The nominee for alderman in Chicago got one-sixth of the total ballots in his ward. He was Albert Parsons, later famed by the Haymarket Affair. Six socialists were elected in Milwaukee; and in Cincinnati the socialist vote was almost

⁴ Hillquit, *op. cit.*, 225.

⁵ "History of the Labor Movement in Chicago" in [Lucy E. Parsons], *Life of Albert Parsons* (Chicago, 1889), xvi.

⁶ *Labor Standard*, September 30, 1876.

4,000. The following year, after the big railroad strike, the Party's ticket in Louisville, Kentucky, gained nearly 9,000 votes, which placed it far ahead of the Democrats. Five of the seven socialist candidates were elected. Such unforeseen results encouraged other sections to enter upon the same political course, so that the rebellion against rules was Party-wide.

Whether or not the Party's political course, as defined by its constitution, was defensible is irrelevant to the story. It has been introduced in order to show the breach it caused. Two major sides took shape: one, calling for a revision of the rules to permit participation in electoral campaigns; the other, standing by established policy and contending that any departure from it was premature and would end in disappointment. The good showing on a local scale was no proof of its propaganda value, they argued, for in several cases success was the outcome of compromise with reformists and greenbackers.

In addition to the above rift developed an anarchistic trend that diverged in two directions. One pointed to anarcho-syndicalism, as exemplified by a resolution adopted in New York, "that we recognize trade unions as a great lever by which the working class will be economically emancipated . . .";⁷ the second went toward anarchism. Thus from the Party's official political procedure, interpreted by many as political abstentionism, arose incompatible outlooks and bitter wrangling that alienated the respect of experienced labor men. Illustrations were Ira Steward and his partisans who were deterred from enrolling in the Party by the insurrection against its platform.

Intraparty strife was intensified by a renewed conflict over trade unionism. The debates at the unity conference, it was assumed, had resolved the question once and for all. But it was reanimated by the controversy over political action. McGuire's indictment of the Party's political policy also summed up the principal points against trade unionism. His main charges were: trade unions wore blinkers; they neither supported the socialist press nor shared the Party's principles. They would very likely desert it, even after it had won them benefits; burdened by them, the socialist movement might be steered into conservative channels; the economic crisis had raised obstacles between them and the Party's program; dues to two organizations might compel members either to choose between them or to doubt the need of both if one could do the work. In sum, concluded McGuire, political action was better adapted than trade unionism to place labor's problems before the American people.⁸

⁷ *Ibid.*, October 2, 1876.

⁸ *Ibid.*, January 6, 27, 1877.

The official position was defended by recent members of the International. They denied any dichotomy between the Party and the trade unions. Instead of being mutually exclusive, the two complemented one another. The first provided intellectual and theoretical guidance; the experience of the second corrected or confirmed theory. European practice showed that even unskilled labor could combine under the Party's direction. In fact trade union foes could be made friends if their fraternal interests were fostered. Advocates of the adopted program acknowledged that trade unions were inclined to be narrow, but that was no proof of an inherent antagonism to socialism. The example given was the *Arbeiter-Union* which the German trade unions had founded in New York to promote labor's political action. The danger that trade unions might repudiate the Party after profiting from its efforts in their behalf was of less consequence than its political campaigning. Its fight to improve the material condition of the workers was the best political propaganda. To term the eight hour day "a milk and water measure," as McGuire had done, revealed a misunderstanding of the political value of economic demands. On the contrary, ran the reply, the eight hour day was "the most political of all measures," in the words of Ira Steward, "the great gulf which must be opened between the old capitalistic parties and ourselves." McGuire's reasoning, that if socialism could not win the minds of trade unionists when they were many, it would totally fail to do so when they were less numerous, was answered: "Simply because they were not prepared for our ideas." Their education was the purpose for establishing the Party.⁹

The dispute gained in acrimony, especially after the *Labor Standard's* announcement on January 27, 1877, that it would henceforth refuse to print attacks on the platform. The executive committee thereupon appointed Dr. George Stiebling co-editor of the *Labor Standard*. The appointee, who had been expelled from the International, could be counted on to check McDonnell's authority. A still greater threat to his position was the paper's financial deficit which caused its interruption for a fortnight. The Social Democratic Printing Association had refused it further credit.

The Split

Its reappearance on May 12, thanks to friends, was a sign that the rift in the Party was about to widen into an open split. The paper had the support of the board of supervision, but the executive committee remained hostile. It was decided to transfer the board of supervision to Newark and the *Labor Standard* to Boston. From there it moved to

Fall River where Ira Steward's followers aided McDonnell in bringing it out. By that time it was the special organ of the International Labor Union.

The subsequent course of the split needs only brief sketching. A special convention to revise the Party's program and constitution was summoned against the opposition of former Internationalists. The convention met in Newark at the end of December 1877, but the forces around the *Labor Standard* were conspicuously absent. It was a foregone conclusion that the revisers would have their way. The *Labor Standard* and *Vorbote* were stricken from the list of the Party's organs; its name was changed to Socialist Labor Party; and its platform and rules were amended to make political action its proper and essential function. The convention recognized the need of amity with trade unions and of their organization, but these objectives were presumed to be secondary to participation in politics.¹⁰

The changes jeopardized the Internationalist principles secured in the negotiations for socialist unity. Consequently McDonnell, Sorge, Speyer and Weydemeyer withdrew from the Party and moved nearer to the group around Ira Steward. We shall return to them presently. Of more immediate interest are the railroad strike of 1877 and its relation to the above history of the Workingmen's Party.

The Railroad Strike

Seen in the chain of events since 1873, the railroad stoppage looks like a culmination of a prolonged strike wave. Actually a series of railroad strikes had been in progress nearly a full year before it climaxed in a big movement. Its history is not the purpose here, but it cannot be dismissed without some observations. Its novelty was its national and bloody character, bloodier than any previous labor dispute in America; novel, too, if we rule out the Civil War period, was the despatch of federal troops into the disturbed areas, at the request of governors. This was regarded as a precedent involving the great issue on the role of government, and freighted with possibilities on its function in capital-labor conflicts. How far the federal government could intervene and with what means were still matters of conjecture. Certainly by sending troops against strikers it took a long stride on the road to interference.

The strikers lacked a unified command, although the railroad workers, as we have shown elsewhere, had sturdy organizations. But they were unprepared to act in common under one general staff. The

⁹ *Ibid.*, January 13, 27, 1877.

¹⁰ Commons and associates, *op. cit.*, II, 277 ff.

rapid spread of the strike can be ascribed to widely felt resentment over frequent wage-reductions and labor saving methods rather than to orders from the top. The fact that the strikers in many areas returned to their jobs after three or four days points to the absence of a joint directorate.

Certain aspects of the strike dismayed people. Its unexampled national scope caused apprehension. Then the sympathy of the populace for the strikers filled many with foreboding. Confirming that were the appalling reports: Milita and workers were mingling like boon companions; strikers were disarming troops or building barricades; pitched battles were in progress, with casualties on both sides; and finally, a workers' committee was in power, temporarily of course, in St. Louis. Loud, delirious outcries might have shocked strangers into believing that reason had deserted the molders of opinion. Press and pulpit exclaimed: "Commune!" "International!" "Socialism the Danger of the Hour!" One could well believe civil war was raging, if the following headlines were taken at face value: "Armed Rebellion," "Insurrection," "Revolution," "Rebellion of Labor."¹¹

Dissenting Views

Articulate opinion was high-pitched, and seems generally to have supported government intervention to restore social peace. But how? On the right there was a plethora of plans, different in design, yet drawn with one aim: to contain the activities of the working people. Trade unions should be shorn of the power they had over the workers, one desired. Another would have every county in the north provided with at least one workhouse.¹² Thomas Scott, head of the Pennsylvania Railroad, indicated several means: the injunction; stationing of armed units in business centers; and a larger army, which many believed necessary, including the Secretary of State, William Evarts.¹³ Akin to these were proposals to form a National Guard, build armories and set up vigilance committees. Pulpits and reputable journals advised the curtailing of the democratic process.

Views dissenting from the right roamed all the way from confidence in the status quo to maintain itself, without additional aids, to an all out defense of the strikers. E. L. Godkin, of the *Nation*, saw no reason for alarm over the rise of socialism. To be sure it was "one of the

¹¹ J. A. Dacus, *Annals of the Great Strikes* (Chicago, 1877), is still the best account of the labor troubles.

¹² *New York Tribune*, April 27, 1878; *Bulletin of the American Iron and Steel Association*, October 17, 1877, XI, 273.

¹³ *American Historical Review*, 1932, XXXVII, 286-89; *New York Times*, July 25-26, 1877; *North American Review*, 1877, CXXV, 359 ff.

diseases of our civilization," but it was not fatal; nor would it "last very long at any one period or place." If the present order needed doctoring, he could prescribe no better medicines than an increased farming class and the fostering of the worker's habit to save.¹⁴ The *New Orleans Daily Democrat* tried to balance between employers and strikers. Its faith in laissez-faire inclined it to the first, but the wage reductions disposed it to favor the second. In conformity with southern tradition, it was averse to federal interference, as an invasion of states' rights.¹⁵ E. H. Heywood, the anarchist, was as little perturbed as Godkin by the cries of "socialism" and "communism." As understood by Heywood, the terms meant emphatic reassertion of self-rule in the Jeffersonian sense. The violence of the social order only showed how much it had deviated from that aim. The final answer was not force, but Josiah Warren's formulas, "Cost the limit of price" and "Individual sovereignty."¹⁶

Of the Americans who took exception to conservative opinion on law and order were Wendell Phillips and John Swinton. Phillips' call for reason in the din of unreason went unheeded, save by a tiny number. Capital-labor conferences, his antidote to economic warfare, received attention earlier in our narrative. But the climate was so charged with class friction that calm consideration of the remedy was out of the question. Swinton's was a less temperate solution. Between the power of monopolists, which he likened to "a social volcano," and the workers, striving to escape starvation, there was no compromise. Only labor's united political action could resolve the issue.¹⁷

From available evidence it seems that the strikers had the sympathy of the bulk of labor. It believed that the railroad owners were at fault, because they had forced wages below the subsistence level, increased unemployment by economizing on labor, and brought in the militia. Furthermore, charged labor critics, incorporating capital was at cross purposes with the general welfare and with the course marked out in the Declaration of Independence. Consequently workers at their meetings voted assistance to the strikers and censured authorities for the use of armed force. A theme commonly dwelt on at labor assemblies was that only by the organization of trades and their national federation could workers stand up to capitalists. As for the label, "Commune," a contributor to *The Monthly Journal* of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers asked: "What is it according to its true definition? Nothing

¹⁴ *International Review*, 1879, VI, 678, 693.

¹⁵ July 23-26, 28, 1877.

¹⁶ E. H. Heywood, *The Great Strike, its Relation to Labor, Property and Government* (Princeton, Mass., 1878), 17 ff.

¹⁷ Dacus, *op. cit.*, 248.

at all," he answered, "merely a newspaper sensation or paragraph, or foolish notion in some merchant's, broker's, or railroad manager's head, which causes him to open his lips in folly and conceit. It often is the topic of a sermon by some minister who deserts the Gospel and its teachings in search of a theme that will attract popular attention."¹⁸

The railroad workers lost the strike. In its duration of two weeks, it spread to seventeen states and left a sediment of bitter feeling. Socialism and communism stirred passionate polemics. The literature they spawned did not survive its immediate purpose, so dated was it and so poor in quality. Its bulk was proof of the interest aroused by the two *isms*.

The Workingmen's Party neither instigated the strike nor had a significant part in directing it. The Party reacted slowly to the events. But members were inevitably sucked into the maelstrom; and in Chicago, the executive committee was drawn into the agitation and given a share in the command. Before very long the Party's speakers were in every important city, addressing big audiences, sometimes of ten and twenty thousand, cautioning them against violent and rash acts and bidding them to organize. Their energy and eloquence contributed to the Party's increased enrollment and larger press.

The strike focused attention on the differing attitudes to political action, considered above. Participation in elections with an independent Party ticket was sanctioned, thus reversing the policy which the North American Federation had made a condition of unity. As a result, a number of its old leaders seceded and, together with eight hour advocates, established the International Labor Union.

The International Labor Union

The underlying purpose of the Union was to combine the unskilled workers in order to minimize their competition with the skilled. Founded in the beginning of 1878, it soon had branches in seventeen states. McNeill was its president; and on the central committee were Albert Parsons and Robert Schilling, Otto Weydemeyer, Friedrich Sorge and John Swinton. J. P. McDonnell and Karl Speyer were on the executive board.¹⁹ The cluster of names showed that the International Labor Union was the offspring of the Eight Hour League and International. The first, it can be recalled, defended Steward's wage theory of which the shorter working day was the nub. The second had

¹⁸ July 1882, XVI, 338.

¹⁹ Eugène Dupont represented Indiana. He was probably the Dupont of the General Council in London. *Labor Standard*, March 24, 1878.

firmly supported the organization of trade unions and their federation nationally and internationally. It is indeed doubtful whether Sorge and Weydemeyer, for instance, went along with Steward's economics of the wage system, embodied in the Union's program. Yet the doctrines of both schools dovetailed at three main points: "That the wage-worker is forced to sell his labor at such prices and under such conditions as the employer of labor shall dictate;" "That political liberty cannot long continue under economic bondage;" "That the first step towards the emancipation of labor is a reduction of the hours of labor." To Internationalists, as to Eight Hour Leaguers, these principles were a solid basis from which the skilled and unskilled workers could set out "to the end that poverty and all its attendant evils shall be abolished forever."²⁰

Of the Union's rules only a few need to be noticed here. Membership was open to all who lived on their wages, save those who had acted against the interests of labor. Congresses would be annual. Provision was made for assisting needy members, including unemployed.²¹

The Union did not spread far. The bulk of its strength was among the textile workers in the east, especially in Paterson and Fall River; and its main area of agitation, according to Speyer, was New England.²² The branches were of two kinds: one consisted of members of one trade; the second brought together workers of different industries.²³

The International Labor Union was never large. McNeill credited it in 1878 with branches in thirteen states, totalling from seven to eight thousand members. Speyer's calculation about a year and a half later gave it from fourteen to fifteen hundred members.²⁴ The steep drop was due to a number of hard fought, unsuccessful strikes. The decline continued. Only one branch lingered in Hoboken in 1881, thanks to Sorge's care, and it, too, disappeared in 1887.

The International Labor Union was a beam of hope. It was a strictly American body that looked to cordial relations with the workers of other countries. Its congress in December 1878 elected McDonnell its fraternal delegate to the next British trade union congress, but he could not make the voyage. There is some evidence of communication between the American organization and the short-lived International Labor Union in London, created by ex-Internationalists in January

²⁰ For the program of the International Labor Union see *ibid.*, February 10, 1878; McNeill, *op. cit.*, 161 f.; see also *The National Socialist*, May 11, 1878.

²¹ *The Labor Standard*, November 30, 1878.

²² Letterbook, f. 453.

²³ *Ibid.*, f. 444.

²⁴ *Investigation by a Select Committee of the House of Representatives Relative to the Causes of the General Depression in Labor and Business* (Washington, D. C., 1879), 115; Letterbook, f. 454.

1878.²⁵ The two labor societies never came together, principally because the one in London seemed to fall apart in its first year.

It was still unseasonable to reunite labor internationally. Besides, 1878 was a bad year in socialist and labor annals. German antisocialist laws drove the Social Democrats underground and into exile. French socialists were jailed for having planned an international labor congress. Conditions in Italy and Spain were still inclement for the growth of socialist organizations. British trade union leaders considered the temperance cause and Malthusianism far more productive of benefits to workers than an international federation of labor.

The International Labor Union in the United States was an attempt to fill the void left by the outgoing First International. To that end the Union pursued two objectives: To organize the unskilled; and to acclimatize the principles of its predecessor. But the Union was powerless to achieve either. It was like a solitary flickering light that burned out in a few years.

It can be claimed with confidence that American labor leaders who had passed through the school of the International were the best protagonists of the American trade union movement. Among them were Bolte, Carl and Speyer, Strasser and McDonnell, to name but five of those who have appeared in this narrative. Samuel Gompers himself acknowledged his indebtedness to Internationalists. They had taught him, he wrote, "the primary importance of economic organization." "We knew that the trade union was the fundamental agency through which we could achieve economic power, which would in turn give us social and political power."²⁶ That was the bequest of the First International to American labor.

²⁵ The principal organizers were George Eccarius, Hermann Jung, John Weston and John Hales, all of whom had broken with Marx. The minutes of the International Labor Union (London) were examined and their best parts published by Max Nettlau, "Ein verschollener Nachklang der Internationale: The International Labor Union," *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, 1920, IX, 134-45. The French police viewed the I.L.U. in London with some alarm. A handwritten manuscript of three and a half pages, in the dossier on the International, dated September 10, 1878, traced the beginnings of the I.L.U. to the minority at the Hague congress, consisting of hardened revolutionists. Archives de la préfecture de police. Paris. Dossier DB/422. Behind the alarm of the police was the decision of the I.L.U. to send delegates to the International Labor Congress, planned by the Marxist, Jules Guesde, and other French socialists. They had been in correspondence with the I.L.U. in London. Guesde and 39 others, it is known, were arrested and brought to trial. See Bernstein, *op. cit.*, 129 ff.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, I, 127, 210.

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