

“Death In The Haymarket” Book Review

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Part 1 – Overview And Main Idea

Back in the early days of the United States, the country was not the superpower it is today. In fact, back when she was not even the beacon of human rights she is portrayed as today. During the 19th century, a lot was going on in the U.S. The nation was expanding its borders westwards, fighting a deadly civil war and undergoing the Industrial Revolution.

All these events were crucial for the U.S., and it would be these events that would lead to the U.S. entering the global political and economic arena. The Industrial Revolution helped the country to grow economically and shift from an agriculture-based economy to a manufacturing-based economy. The switch allowed the nation to earn more money than it was making previously, as a nation.

The economic uplift experienced from the Industrial Revolution allowed the U.S. to send troops to fight the Mexicans in the south and acquire native lands in the west. The invasion and annexation of new territories and settlements required heaps of money. Another event triggered by this was the American Civil War. The Americans fought the Civil War because the South felt its importance lagging behind as the North financed the new developments in the country.

During this period, the Government was too busy to focus on one thing, not that it was highly interested in certain situations. The developments that engulfed the U.S. were significant and benefitted the wealthy upper class. The high class was least bothered by the common man, who did all the hard work. Novelists from 19th century America have repeatedly written about the poignant lives of the masses of that era.

During the 1880s, labor unions popped up to fight industrialists for their rights. These unions consisted of employees who worked in factories. These employees were fighting to protect the common interest of workers. For those who worked in the Industrial sector, unions fought for better wages, reasonable working hours and safer working conditions.

By the mid-1880s, fear had gripped the entire country. The labor movements across the country had become anarchical, and most Americans feared them. Even the ideas of the action seemed to be at odds with capitalism. The union leaders had also declared that they might resort to using the dynamite.

Chicago, back then, was the center for labor movements. Hence, it was quite natural for the locals there to fear for their lives. In May 1886, the union attacked a factory, resulting in retaliation from the police, which left two seriously injured. It was followed by a union meeting at the Haymarket. At the

meeting, the anarchists used fiery speeches against the industrialists and the Government. The statements were so inflammatory that the police arrived to disperse the crowd. At that moment, someone threw a bomb at the police officers, leaving seven police officers and seven civilians dead and around 60 police officers and 50 people injured.

The novel, "Death in the Haymarket" by James Green(Knight) records this incident in a dramatic, story-like manner. The writer mentions that the editorial writers denounced the anarchists and demanded that the Government take prompt action against them. Green has very strongly condemned the terrorists and their actions.

Part 2 – The Good

The author has very clearly described the events that took place at Haymarket in a much broader context(*James Green's Death in the Haymarket / Solidarity*). He has connected the incident with the socioeconomic and political history of the working class and the capitalist barons from the Civil War up till the events of the fateful day. He has explained that the events were a reaction, not an action, to an ongoing struggle between the laborers and their masters. I believe that these explanations are quite useful in explaining the author's idea that the workers were victims and not the other way around.

Part – 3 The Bad

Greene has blamed weapons of mass destruction, like dynamite, for the entire event(Potruff). He has claimed that it is these weapons that have given power to small anarchist groups to manipulate events and impact the country's politics. This, I believe, is the weak point in the book because the dynamite was only a tool used by the Government could take the workers seriously. The workers had legitimate demands and needed to be heard. Since the Government had turned its back on the working class, they had no other options.

Works Cited

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