

In Memoriam—Joe Giganti

We mourn the death of Joe Giganti, the president of the Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, who had recognized in the 1970s that an institution with such a magnificent past in recording labor struggles as well as revolutionary theory—beginning with the first English translation of Marx's *Capital*—should not be allowed to perish. Nor did he consider history to be the past, as was evident from his presence at the 100th anniversary commemoration of the Haymarket Martyrs in Chicago this May 4.

Joe Giganti was an activist both in American class struggles and in the work of International Labor Defense of which he was Illinois Secretary in the 1920s. That is the period when I first met him. As a young man, moving to Chicago from the downstate Illinois coal-mining region, Giganti put his mark on all the labor happenings in Chicago—whether it was the organization of "Red Sundays" when we went to support coal miners in downstate Illinois, or whether it was the work of the union militants at International Harvester.

He was expelled from the Communist Party in 1929, accused of Trotskyism. His labor organizing continued, as he edited the *Progressive Barber* and became involved in all freedom movements, including women's liberation. His many activities were in no way changed when, much later, he became a professor at De Paul University. It was then that he helped to organize the Illinois Labor History Society.

Although in his last years his activities were limited by poor health, that, too, had no relationship to his continuing interest in labor and socialist matters, as was clear on May 4 when he came to the Haymarket Martyrs' Monument and was as excited as ever, as he talked not only of yesterday's but today's struggles, in conversations with the Hormel strikers present there.

It is this legacy that he leaves to the new generation.

Our hearts go out to his beloved wife, Annette, in whom the Italian freedom dimension which Joe expressed over 50 years—whether it was in revolutionary journalism in *Il Lavoratore* or in the recent trip to Italy they both took—will live on. —Raya Dunayevskaya

**MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR
JOSEPH S. GIGANTI**

Saturday, September 20, 1986

The First Unitarian Church of Chicago

★

Opening musical selection
Martha Faulhaber

Leon M. Despres
Memorial Chairman

Raya Dunayevskaya
*Author of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation
and Marxist Philosophy*

William R. Waters
*Department of Economics
DePaul University*

Franklin Rosemont
Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company

Albert Verri
*Department of Labor Education
Roosevelt University*

Michael Gallaga
Nephew of Joseph Giganti

11070

September 26, 1986

Dear Annette:

Please forgive me for not remaining for the reception, but, outside of the fact that my own health is not up to par, the 60 years I have known Joe lay heavy on me, as memories kept surging back in such a todayish form that yesterday, today and tomorrow became one. ~~As you heard~~ As you heard -- I didn't read any speech but spoke extemporaneously, so I have no copy -- the Red Sundays of the 1920s did really merge into May 1986 and the 100th anniversary of the Haymarket martyrs with Joe's greatest interest shown in the presence of the Hormel and Iowa workers planning their future activities. The same held true for the decade of the '30s, when Depression and barbarism made Joe's barber shop a forum for all tendencies, not to mention that by the time the decade ended, universities, too, were on the agenda. As for the post-World War II world, and the academia, it certainly didn't divert Joe from all the Left tendencies, be it in thought or in activity. Do you realize, dear Annette, that for him to get me invited to dePaul University to speak on my then-latest work, Philosophy and Revolution, was not only a courageous thing to do, but showed that remembrance of things past was never just remembrance. Rather, it was the todayness, a todayness in which the future is present.

What impressed me most about this whole idea of past, present and future was the response of some of the audience at the Memorial Service, specifically a member of the board from Kerr, who came up to talk to me about the book I wrote on Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, bought a copy right on the spot, and began telling me about being in Austria recently, where he saw the movie on Rosa Luxemburg, and asked me if I knew anything about it. As it happened, I did, because though that moving portrayal of the great revolutionary has not yet been shown in Chicago, the director Margarethe von Trotta asked about me and about my book and was promised by someone who knew me that he would have a book inscribed by me and sent to her -- which I did. # So you see how alive it all was to me, and I had to leave.

I embrace you warmly,

Yours,

Ray

11071