# Chicago,1 with a population of about three and a half million, is the second largest city in the United States(New York is the first). It is a centre of industry for the middle part of the country, the most important Great Lakes port,2 the largest city of Illinois and the seat of Cook-County.3

Chicago is also the place where Mayor "King Daley"6 directed the police to brutalize the young people protesting against the US aggression m South-East Asia while the Democratic Party convention was going on there in August 1968.

The city is first in the nation in manufacturing of machinery and electronic parts. Famous are the stockyards and meat-packing plants, i where cattle from the western prairies are shipped and from which meat is distributed all over the couritry.7 Called the "Great Central Market of the USA", Chicago is the railroad and grain centre of the nation. Chicago has a vast commerce by many railroads and by the lake, and exports wheat, meat and manufactured goods.

An unrivalled rail centre, Chicago is called the "Cross-Roads of the Continent". It is served by 19 trunk lines and handles 50,000 freight Cars daily. Also, 40 per cent of the country's motor freight moves in and out of Chicago. More airlines converge on Chicago than any other city of the USA.

Chicago is also an important centre of culture and science. It is the  
seat of the University of Chicago and of several other institutions, and  
has -important libraries and art collections. Chicago was the site of the  
first nuclear chain reaction (1942) and is still a leader in nuclear  
research.8

Owing to its position, Chicago has been the meeting-place of many political conventions. From six to seven million tourists come to Chicago fevery year, and another million and a half who come to business and political gatherings.

In its rapid growth, Chicago survived the great fire of 1871,9 the gang wars of 1920's and early 1930's, political machinations of its "bosses" and financial speculations of its tycoons. The city was from the start a big melting-pot of different nationalities. For years Chicago had a racial stratification unusual even for American cities. It was German, Polish, Italian, Slavic, Greek, Jewish. Half a million Black Americans live in its South Side, which is one of the most exclusively black areas in the world. About one in four Chicago citizens is black. The Chicago Negroes are almost as numerous as those in New York, a city twice as large. Chica­go's Negroes have a long history of participation in basic industry. They are the most proletarian of all nationality-ethnic groups, and today togeth­er with other militant workers they wage a particularly bitter and difficult battle for their right to live and work. Called the "City of the Big Shoub ders",10 Chicago has long become the centre of American working-class movement In the 1880's Chicago was already a scene of bitter labour wars, and the big strike of Chicago workers of 1886 led to the establishment of May Day as the holiday of workers of the whole world.

**THE CITY**

**OF SUPERLATIVES**

Chicagoans like to claim that their city has the biggest and greatest of just about everything. Chicago is the second largest city, in the United States; it is also the tenth biggest in the world. It is important not to say this in Chicago. The point to bear in mind about Chicago while talking to Chicagoans is that, no matter what its own size, it has the biggest every­thing in the world. Other places in America have the biggest something, but Chicago has the biggest everything. You may be convinced after all that most Chicago things are bigger than anywhere else; it is unfortunate that they are never the things that one wanted to be big enough. There is, for example, the Merchandise Mart, which claims to be the world's largest commercial building, with seven and a half miles of corridors and its own police force.

In their claims to the biggest and greatest, Chicagoans in a remarkable number of ways are right Although it is no longer the nation's largest meat-packing centre—Omaha, Nebraska, now claims this distinction, Chicago is the nation's busiest air, rail and truck centre, and, since the opening of the St Lawrence Seaway in 1959, the world's greatest inland seaport. Chicago also has the world's largest grain exchange (the Chicago Board of Trade), the world's 'largest hotel (the Conrad Hilton with 2,600 rooms), and the world's largest convention and trade-show facilities. Chicagoans resent any implication that their home is in any sense the "second city" in the US, as New Yorkers have been known to call it. They believe Chicago is really an American city (while" "New York is not America") and point with pride to, among other things, the number of red-blooded American authors—including Theodore Dreiser," Frank Norris,12 Upton Sinclair'3 and Carl Sandburg14—who have called Chicago home.

**SKY-SCRAPERS IN THE PRAIRIE**

When you arrive in Chicago, you may find it hard to believe that this busy, noisy, modern metropolis with its towering sky-scrapers was until well into the 19th century a muddy onion swamp. But by 1871 this unprom­ising site had become a city of 300,000, the metropolitan centre of the American Midwest. Then, on October 8 of that year, disaster struck. It all began in the barn of a certain Mrs. O'Leary on West De Koven Street where, as the legend goes, a cow kicked over a kerosene lantern, starting a fire that quickly swept the city. The blaze destroyed more than 17,000 buildings that left third of the city's people homeless. Yet in one sense this tragedy was responsible for Chicago's main contribution to the devel­opment of modern architecture. The fire levelled the entire business dis­trict, and the city's engineers and architects *•.* had to rebuild from the ground up. Armed with a series of technological innovations—most notably steel framework and the hydraulic, lift—they set to work and in the last decades of the 19th century the sky-scraper was born..William-Le Barren Jenny, one of the construction engineers, used this new method when he received the commission to build the Chicago office of the Home Insurance Com­pany. It was ten stories high, much taller than any building ever before erected.

The building was the first "sky-scraper", a term now so common for a high building that few people realize that, to begin with, a "sky­scraper" was a triangular sail used high on the mast of sailing vessels be­fore steamships came into use.15 Quickly a new Chicago arose of brick and stone. Within a year the business district was restored along the crescent formed by Lake Michigan in the city's west. Here lies America's second-ranking canyon of finance, La Salle Street, where the Board of Trade Building towers above a forest of sky-scrapers. Each sky-scraper is stamped by a specific commodity: the Wrigley equals chewing-gum, the "Chicago Tribune" and the "Daily News" mean newspapers, the Continental Illinois—banking, the Chicago Temple—offices of reputed firms, the Merchandise Mart—wholesale dry goods, the imposing Marshal Field—department store de luxe, and so on. Each building stands as if a huge monument to a trust. While you ride through Chicago you have an opportunity to see a little of the city. The streets are usually crowded with traffic at whatever hour you arrive. Over your head thunders the local elevated train, which runs on a platform. If your route takes you near the shore of Lake Michigan, you will see a broad boulevard along the water-front with eight lanes of fast-moving traffic. Beautiful, tall office buildings and hotels make a spectacular picture against the blue waters of the lake. If your route lay further back from the lake, you would see narrow, crowded streets lined with rows and rows of red-brick houses.

Vegetable sellers may push little carts through the streets and call out \the names of things for safe in any one of a number of languages. \ One of Chicago's many nicknames is the "Windy City", and despite me US Weather Bureau, which lists Chicago as only the nation's 19th windiest, it richly deserves this nickname—as you will soon agree if you *a\e* caught on a Chicago street corner when an icy January gale screams oflf Lake Michigan. Wind is not the only extreme characteristic of the lo^al weather. Chicago is noted for its subzero (Fahrenheit) temperatures in winter and 90°-plus temperatures in summer. And don't be misled if you arrive in winter and it seems unreasonably warm. Chicago weather changes quickly.

**THE CENTRE OF CLASS WARS**

The most proletarian of American cities, Chicago was a scene of bitter labour wars, of the Haymarket affair (1886) and of the Pullman strike (1894). .

Called the "Red Square" of Chicago, Haymarket has become world-famous for the Haymarket affair of 1886. (The official US history books call it the "Haymarket Riot".)

The spring of 1886 was marked by a national strike movement for the 8-hour working day. At the giant McCormick Harvester plant in Chicago, six striking workers were killed by the police. A mass meeting for May the 4th was called in the Haymarket. Suddenly the crowded square shook with the explosion of a bomb thrown by an unknown hand. Seven policemen and four workers were killed, and many were injured. Amid wild hysteria eight labour leaders were arrested. All eight arrested workers were convicted in what is now commonly recognized as a frame-up. Four of them—Parsons, Spies, Fischer and Engel—were hanged. Five years later, Governor John Altgeld of Illinois, a rare type in US politics, freed the four Haymarketers remaining in prison and proclaimed their innocence. The movement for the 8-hour working day and the Haymarket affair caused a great swell of trade-union organization. Furthermore International May Day emerged from this movement, for the Interna­tional Socialist Congress, convened in France in 1889, declared May the 1st as the day of celebration by world labour. A monument in honour of the Haymarket martyrs, erected by the labour movement, now stands in Waldheim Cemetery outside Chicago. The Chicago police have not forgotten Haymarket either. In fact, they put up. a monument on the site of the tragedy. Not to the victims, but to their executioners: a 3-metre statue of a policeman was put up on a tall pedestal in the hope, apparently, that the people of Chicago would cover it with flowers in token of their respect. There were no flowers, but there were bombs. In fact, the "New York Times" remarked that this was "Chicago's most frequently bombed statue". There was a series of explosions in October 1969 in protest against the police attack on a youth demonstration during the Democratic Party convention. A year later there was another explosion; it cost $ 5,500 to repair the damage. Guarding the statue became a problem. In 1970, after it had been repaired, it was placed under round-the-clock guard. To make double-sure, it was constantly scrutinized by a hidden TV camera., This cost the city $ 68,000 a year, more than the statue had cost. There were several suggestions how to reduce the cost. 'In the end, it was decided to/ remove the bronze statue from Haymarket Square and put it in a safe place. It now stands in the lobby of Chicago police headquarters.

**THE "GANGLAND CAPITAL OF THE USA"**

In its bustling growth, Chicago survived the political machinations of mayors like "Big Bill" Thompson,16 the speculations of Samuel Tnsull17 and the gang wars of Al Capone's days.18 The one thing for which Chicago is known around the world is crime. In January 1919, the sale of whiskey was prohibited in the USA. Prohibition gave rise to the. illegal liquor trade with big profits for the powerful criminal gangs who shared the money with the police and politicians in order to buy immunity from arrest. The gangs competed with each other in the illicit liquor trade ("bootlegging"), gambling, the operation Or "protection" of night-clubs and illicit bars ("speakeasies"). They also supplied strike-breakers to employers and the trade-union chieftains who used them against the militant left-wing. Murder, arson and vandalism were engaged in as business enterprise on a practical basis. The combination of war profits, polyglot political structure, building boom and prohibition turned Chicago, figuratively, overnight in the crime centre of the USA, the "gangland capital of the USA". • And even now, thanks to countless film and television shows depicting that era of ^Chicago's history, some visitors expect to see black limousines filled with scarfaced gangsters roaring about the streets. Organized crime is still a part of Chicago's life—as it is in most US cities.

Crime has become an integral part of the American way of life. As Americans themselves put it, "in the US you feel very afraid to walk the streets at night. Even in the daytime it is sometimes dangerous but especially so at night."\*

1 "Chicago" seems to have a clearly established than usual. A French explorer who visited the region in 1688 said the natives called it "Chicagou" because of the abundance of wild onions growing there. Scholars have thought it was the disagreeable odour Of the little wild onions that inspired the Indian name, and that "place of the bad smell" might be more accurate interpretation of the name.

2 Among Chicago's numerous nicknames are the "Lake City" and the "Queen City of the (Upper) Lakes".

3 Similar to other US cities, Chicago has a dual city and county govern­ment. Chicago and its suburbs comprise Cook County which exercises certain governmental functions over the entire area. Other functions are retained individually by the City of Chicago and the suburbs in a municipal form. This political structure, based on a capitalist economy, provides  
fat profits for bankers, bondholders, real-estate dealers, public utility;  
interests, politicians, the police and criminals.

4 The American Peace Crusade—an American organization embrac/ ing peace supporters of all walks of life.

5 The Young Workers Liberation League—a progressive youth organization of the United States. It fights against militarism and racism, for democracy and socialism, for all young people's demands for work and education. Its main aim is a democratic government and full civil rights \*' for all.

6 "King Daley"—Richard J. Daley, former mayor of Chicago, "boss" of the Democratic political machine fbr Cook County. Got notoriety in 1968 when he brutally dispersed the peaceful demonstration of students during the Democratic Party nominating convention in Chicago.

7 Today new process and techniques have made it unnecessary to move America's meat to Chicago for processing (the butchers have gone to the prairies) and the memories of those moutains of flesh, that pervasive scent of the stockyards, are like many other things of Chicago's past, just a terrible ghost-story.

8 In 1942, at the University of Chicago, Enrico Fermi and other scien­tists set off the world's first controlled atomic reaction.

9 The Chicago fire (October 8—9, 1871) devastated an area three and one-half miles square, left almost 100,000 persons homeless. By 1871 Chicago was a city built of wood. Even the side-walks were of pine and a dry season preceding the fire made the city a virtual tinder-box.

10.The phrase is taken from "Chicago" (1914), a poem in free verse by Carl Sandburg: "Hog Butcher of the World, Tool-Maker, Stacker of Wheat; Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler: Stormy, Husky, Brawling City of the Big Shoulders."

11. In 1912 Theodore Dreiser (1871 — 1945) published "The Finan­cier", a novel about Frank Cowperwood, a shrewd and ruthless business­man, who accumulated a fortune through financial machinations. The fashionable North Side of Chicago could not bear "The Financier", for it cut too close to the bone, so the publisher, Harper's, refused to publish its sequel "The Titan". Frank Cowperwoo,d was too clearly identified with Charles Yerkes, the Chicago magnate (who donated the Yerkes Obser­vatory to the University of Chicago). Yerkes' earlier corrupt manipula­tion of Philadelphia's municipal funds, followed by imprisonment, was known to his colleagues in Chicago, but he was given access to the public funds again. Dreiser had become familiar with tVse "robber barons" while working as a journalist in Chicago.

12 "The Pit", a novel by Frank Morris (1870—1902), brought to life the spectacular wheat market on La Salle Street in Chicago. "The Pit" was actually a sequel to "The Octopus", which tells of the struggle between the California wheat farmers and the railroad companies.

13. "The Jungle", a novel by Upton Sinclair (1878—1968), was published in 1906. Its detailed first-hand description of conditions in the Chicago stockyards sparked off a campaign that led to the passage of a Pure Foodand Drug Act and a Meat Inspection Act by the US Congress. The novel gave a most compelling picture of the humans engaged in the industry where only the squeals of the animals escaped being converted into profits.

14. Sandburg, Carl (1878—1967). Born in Illinois, Carl Sandburg wrote in his free verse of the turbulent life he had observed in the small prairie towns of Illinois and in the raw metropolis in Chicago. He first gained reputation with his "Chicago Poems" (1915). He was awarded the Pulit-zer Prize (1951) for his "Collected Poems".

15. Within a decade, however, New York City captured the tallest sky-scraper lead and held it. The champion until May 1973, was Man­hattan's 1,350-feet-high, twin-towered World Trade Center, which tops the Empire State Building by 100 feet. But now, after a lapse of about 80 years, Chicago again boasts the tallest tower—the Sears, Roebuck and Co. Building, which soars 1,450 feet above the city.

16. "Big Bill" Thompson (1869—1944) served three terms as mayor of Chicago, became notorious for political machinations. Thompson practised what in American political terminology is known as the "spoils system"—"to the victor belongs the spoils". In the 1920's it seemed that power in Chicago was shared between Thompson, entrenched in City Hall, and Capone, sitting with his gunmen in the Lexington Hotel. This state of bliss was enjoyed by the financiers, industrialists, gangsters and

politicians.

17. Samuel Insull (1859—1938)—public-utilities financier. By 1907 he overcame the competing publjc-utilities companies in Chicago and soon he came to control the city's transit system. When the Depression broke out in 1929, Insult's pyramid of corporations was one of the first to collapse into bankruptcy. Thousands of his stockholders were ruined. Insull dis­appeared before he could be brought into court

18 Al Caponet(1899—1947)—American gang leader in Chicago in the 1920's. He received tribute from businessmen and politicians. His crime syndicate terrorized Chicago and controlled the gambling there. Capone' was mysteriously murdered and given a funeral featured by more than twenty truckloads of floral wreaths and numerous limousines filled "with gangsters. Thousands watched while the newsreel cameras cranked away. Crime as big business went on; in time the warfare between gangs pro­duced a new "czar".