

Favorite Weapon of Dictators



Union demonstrators smash windows of auto plant during Flint, Mich., strike. (Acme photo.)

Racketeers' Grip on Labor

(Continued from page eight.)

played in Herrin the miners armed themselves and went out to get the shovel men. They were not deterred in any way by the local authorities. Sheriff Melvin Thaxton held a card in the United Mine Workers union.

On June 21 the strip mine was surrounded by an armed mob. Without warning bullets and shotgun charges were rained down into the deep gulley made by the shovels that stripped the coal bed bare. The fire was returned by company guards and two union miners were killed.

A steady, determined battle followed. Several of the besieged were wounded or slain. In the evening officials of the company made overtures for peace. They agreed to close down the mine. It was understood that in return the workers would be allowed to depart in safety.

This hope was dashed in the morning. The mine union men had taken more favorable positions during the night. Again they poured a withering fire on the shovel men. The workers' situation was precarious, although they might have held out much longer. But they were for peace and agreed with the besiegers that they would lay down their arms if granted safe conduct. This was promised them.

Forty-seven men, weaponless, marched out of the pit. The mob surrounded them, forced them to march toward Herrin. On the way K. C. McDowell, the strip mine superintendent, lagged. He was a cripple. Only a mile from the mine he was shot and killed.

Three miles from Herrin the mob leaders who had made the fair promises vanished. Their places were taken by more bloodthirsty desperadoes. The new bosses lined up the prisoners on the roadside.

"A chance for your lives," one man cried. "Climb that fence and run for it."

Over the fence was a wood. The workmen broke for it. The mob remembered they were, in Lewis' words, "common strike-breakers." Rifles, shotguns, and pistols spoke. It was good hunting. Thirteen of the company men died before they reached the fence. Eight others who crossed were retaken in the woods. Two were hanged immediately.

For the other six a fate still more dreadful was reserved. They were taken to Herrin. They were reviled, cursed, spat upon. Then they were marched to a cemetery, lined up, and shot. Then, as a final mark of barbarity, the throats of three victims were slashed. It is almost incredible that one of the other three, left for dead, recovered.

The number of deaths in the Herrin massacre was never definitely known. Nineteen at least were given official burial. Eleven others have never been accounted for. It is believed some were slain and that their bodies were disposed of by the killers.

It was a successful purge. No man was ever convicted for his share in it.

Johnstown might well have trembled. How many Herrins 40,000 men of the mines could have strung together in a city like that steel center!

It was their custom to choose a member from a distant camp, send him to an appointed spot, and command him to kill. Refusal to do so meant death for the man appointed.

Altogether it is estimated that a hundred lives were sacrificed in the Molly Maguire purges. Not a member was ever convicted of first-degree murder. Only after years of investigation and prosecution was this evil organization broken up.

The Mollies, indeed, were but crude prototypes of the modern racketeer and his helper, the hired thug or gunman. Few American cities are or have been free of this vicious combination. Their victims are from all walks—legitimate labor leaders, other racketeers, or simple men who believe the law could and should protect them in the right to work.

Chicago has known them. Some unions they have been able to terrorize and dominate. In at least two instances their purges failed.

Back in 1933 the Touhy gang (most of its members are dead or serving terms for kidnappings) demanded control of the prosperous Milk Wagon Drivers' union. To serve notice they sprayed the union headquarters with machine gun fire. They bombed the homes of the regularly elected officials.



Sumner

Uncle Steve Sumner, veteran head of the union, was not ready to be bluffed. He and his associates fortified the headquarters, gathered guards, and defended themselves. The Touhys gave up the attempt. Uncle Steve, at 89, still heads his union.

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In 1928 another group of racketeers decided they wanted the place of John G. Clay, capable head of the Laundry and Dye House Drivers' union. Clay was solidly entrenched and defied them. They shot and killed him. One theory was that the gangsters who had gone into the laundry business were angered because Clay would not sell out his men to them. But they didn't win. The Chicago Federation of Labor saw to it that a respectable and able man took over.

A few months before Clay passed out, Big Tim Murphy, who had served a prison term for mail robbery, tried to take over the Inside Workers' union, another laundry organization. Other racketeers didn't like him. He was called one night to the porch of his home in Rogers Park and competently slain.

One of the most successful of the Chicago labor racketeers was Tommy Maloy. With guile and force he got control of the Moving Picture Operators' union about 1920. For fifteen years theater owners and machine operators alike truckled to him. Theater owners who didn't pay tribute were bombed; employees who talked back were beaten, occasionally shot.

Maloy was not above squeezing his own followers. He, restricted the number of regular members of his union. As the demand for operators grew he issued certificates to "permit men," who were forced to turn over to him 10 per cent of their earnings.

As such men must, Maloy overreached his goal. There was only one way to remove his leechlike grip on a great industry. Some one took it. On Feb. 4, 1935, he was shot and killed in the outer drive at 24th street.

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Men living by the gun have contempt for those who prefer to live in peace, to work honestly under the law.

We introduce Lloyd Rourke. In early February of 1938 Rourke was at work. He was a laundry driver. He was 36 years

old, a decent citizen who was giving value received for such money as he was paid. He had a cartage contract with the Del Prado hotel on the south side.

The Inside Laundry Workers' union had called a strike at the Del Prado. It had put pickets about the place to enforce its command that no laundry deliveries be made. Lloyd Rourke didn't obey. A group of thugs, supposedly cooperating with the pickets, beat him to death with baseball bats.

Policemen and prosecutors went through the usual routine of questioning suspects. They learned nothing. The purgers were safe. Labor racket killings are seldom solved.

Edward Shuler was a member of local 399, International Union of Operating Engineers. He worked in a loop building. In the fall of 1937 he had opposed Richard Wren, who was elected president of the local. He had been so vociferous in his demand for another chief that he was beaten in a meeting. He went to a hospital for treatment.

On March 25, 1938, Shuler left his place of employment. Some one had called for him and made arrangements for a meeting. Five hours later his body, with four bullet wounds in the head, was found on a west side street.

His widow told of threats Shuler had received. They had been forced, she said, to move several times. They had abandoned a telephone because of the terrifying messages received over the wires.

Again the investigative forces of a great city went through the motions. No one was ever charged with the murder. Shuler and that other little man, Rourke, got in the way of forces too great for the law as it is administered. Purged!

Let's look at the purge record of locals 191 and 184 of the painters' union of Chicago.

Frank Carr, financial secretary of 191, was slain in the union headquarters on Feb. 24, 1931. In June, 1934, an unsavory gangster, an ex-beer runner named Michael (Bubs) Quinlan, was shot and killed in a café. He had tried to muscle into control of the union.

Two months later Roy Thompson, business agent of local 184, was riddled with bullets in front of his home. On Jan. 6, 1936, a car load of gunmen opened fire on an automobile in which George Hennemann, secretary-treasurer of 191, was sitting. He dropped to the floor and escaped death. His wife, Elsie, was killed.

In June, 1937, Robert A. Shields was erased for some unpopular activity in local 184, to which he belonged. The roll of the painters' purge death is still growing. James G. Dungan, business agent of local 191, was blasted out of life on Aug. 8 of last year.

The police investigated, but got nowhere. They theorized that there was some trouble over union funds.

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One of the most spectacular and heartless of the racket labor killings took place in Teaneck, N. J., just outside of New York, on Feb. 19, 1937.

There had been a bitter jurisdictional battle between rival unions of men working in New York tunnels—sand hogs, they are called. On one side was R. Norman Redwood, business agent of the Hod Carriers, Building, and Common Laborers' union. On the other was Joseph Fay, a vice president of the International Union of Operating Engineers.

Redwood called a strike. It tied up a large sewer project and a subway. Fay didn't like that. Neither did Sam Rosoff, contractor, who boasted he was the fastest subway builder in New York.

The man, Redwood, was slain outside his home in Teaneck. His wife heard the shots. The killers drove away. There was, of course, the form of an investigation. The prosecutor's

office was told that Rosoff had threatened to kill Redwood if the strike was called. But neither Rosoff nor Fay ever went to Teaneck to tell what, if anything, they knew of the crime. Redwood was just the victim of a small purge from the ranks of racket-ridden New York unions.

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Minneapolis! Another city of rackets. During a truck drivers' strike in April, 1934, riots occurred. The strikers vowed they would not let any trucks move in the streets. They armed themselves with clubs. They beat to death a business man, Arthur C. Lyman. He had been in the injury. Forty-one persons were injured. By the use of violence the strikers tied up deliveries for two weeks.

Floyd Olson, the governor, called out troops. The orders were to keep trucks standing, to prevent their movement. A state administration played into the hands of the lawless—an example later followed by Earle of Pennsylvania.

One night in November, 1937, a neighbor found the body of Patrick Corcoran in the snow of a back yard. He had been liquidated in a labor racket war. He was secretary-treasurer of the General Drivers' union. Minneapolis drivers were familiar with the purge; they had been encouraged to use it during the strike three years before.

Another purge killing in Minneapolis was that of William S. Brown, president of the General Drivers' union No. 544. He was shot to death May 25, 1938. Almost immediately Arnold Johnson, a union business agent employed as a bodyguard by Brown, confessed the slaying. The confession was twice repeated to policemen, but when Johnson was tried in November he repudiated his statements and was acquitted. The motive for the erasure of Brown has never been exposed.

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No state has offered a better example of the consequences of labor purges than Oregon. In 1934 the teamsters' union of the Pacific coast came under domination of one Al Rosser. He ran it. And, because trucking is the key to industry, especially in a western state where distances are great, he soon was running labor unions all over the state. Any person or organization he disapproved of was in danger of being left without transportation. As his power grew, so grew his ideas, and, with a picket line of thugs and an arsenal full of tear gas bombs to enforce his decrees, he presently began to dictate to businesses as to just when and how they could operate.

In 1937 came the big labor war. The west coast lumberjacks were organized by the C. I. O. Rosser ordered his teamsters to stop trucking lumber. The lumber industry collapsed, throwing thousands out of work and costing Oregon \$9,000,000 worth of business in a few months.

On this tide of discontent came the C. I. O.'s Pacific coast boss, Harry Bridges, preaching communism. The public of Oregon was confronted with a choice between Rosser's Fascistic dictatorship of A. F. of L. unions and Bridges' communistic control over the C. I. O. in Oregon. Before election time, however, Rosser went one step too far. Police broke up his gang. He himself was sentenced to twelve years for burning a \$90,000 lumber yard.

This exhibition was too much for the electorate of Oregon. Urged by an A. F. of L. union not affiliated with the teamsters to vote "in favor of complete removal of racketeering and gangsterism from the labor movement," the voters of Oregon last November adopted by decisive referendum vote a law that has been described as "the most severe legal restraint on the activities of labor bosses ever enacted in the United States."

This law "outlaws any labor dispute not between an employer and a majority of his employees" or not concerned with "wages, hours, and working conditions."

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Recently the purge methods of the labor bosses suffered another blow. In a decision

handed down last Feb. 27 the United States Supreme court declared the sit-down strike illegal. "It was a high-handed proceeding without the shadow of legal right," said the court. "The employees had the right to strike, but they had no license to commit acts of violence or to seize their employers' plants."

The decision referred to a C. I. O. strike in the plant of the Fansteel Metallurgical corporation in North Chicago. Two years ago 100 employees seized the main buildings of the Fansteel plant and held them for eleven days in defiance of a court order. The workers were driven out of the buildings only

after \$100,000 damage had been done to the plant and equipment.

Thirty-nine strikers were convicted and sentenced to jail terms. Eighteen served their sentences, but the others appealed the verdict. It was on this appeal that the Supreme court handed down its decision. In another blast at the labor dictatorship which Lewis had plotted, auto workers of Detroit who were the victims of the C. I. O. purge of 1937 voted on March 7 to set up an independent union. Behind this repudiation of Lewis and the C. I. O. was an amazing and complicated picture.

Homer Martin, president of

the auto union, who led the break from the C. I. O. ranks, charged that Lewis and his followers cooperated with communists in an effort to wreck the union. In a bitter struggle over control of the local unions in the U. A. W. it was revealed that officers had been forced to travel with bodyguards, headquarters were barricaded with steel fences, and shotguns and clubs were used to repel attacks.

The situation appears further complicated by a split in the ranks of the anti-Martin force in the U. A. W., with the possibility that the country may yet witness the spectacle of a purge within a purge.

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