

The Industrial Squad—The Bosses' Cossacks

By JOSEPH ZACK

THE war has brought many innovations in its wake, various adaptations of fascism according to the varied needs the employers have in each country. In New York we have in the city's police force an institution called the Industrial Squad. This force is supposed to preserve "law and order" in industrial disputes and has under its authority the uniformed police whenever its activities call for it.

Perhaps many workers don't know that the underworld, that is that part of the population consisting of gangsters, thieves, murderers, etc., have anything to do with strikes, with employers' associations, or with anti-labor law enforcement and nowadays even with control of unions. If the workers don't know this they had better get acquainted, as this is the outfit that plays a very important role in all strike-breaking combinations. The Industrial Squad fits into this like a head into a body.

The law permits picketing, it permits organizing, but just try and do it and you will find your pickets arrested under all kinds of subterfuges, restrictions will be imposed, the pickets will be clubbed or even gassed, as in Passaic. Injunctions or no injunctions, law or no law, the employers in control of the local and state or federal government will find a way to do it brutally and thoroughly enough by indirect terrorization and if necessary, laws are passed or injunctions issued for the purpose. Quite often they do the job even without these formalities. The usual procedure in important strikes in big cities is in many places different from methods used in smaller localities.

Let us give a brief illustration of what takes place. When a strike is brewing in any trade in New York the employers' association thru its law department gets in touch with certain detective agencies and the police captain of the territory. These detective agencies have their connections with organized professional bands of gangsters, who for the proper amount are ready to do all kinds of jobs on the pickets, the mildest being a plain ordinary beating. Stabbing, breaking arms, nose, jaw, or fingers have their extra prices. To break a workers'

neck, smash his skull, or murder him, are specialties priced accordingly. Quite often the bosses' association is in direct touch with the gangs, without any intermediaries. Here is how a job is done.

The police having been properly instructed by "higher ups" and for special consideration given the cop on the beat, the eyes of the law enforcers look the other way or take a walk. Gangsters in automobiles come upon the scene, bounce on the pickets, slash, stab and leave them laying there bloody. Quite often such jobs are made one after the other. The gang in machines disappear as quickly as they come. Sometimes in the dark of night and quite often in open daylight and even in the most congested parts of the city, such jobs are done. If the pickets are not enough intimidated by this and if they still insist, there is the injunction, like in the last cloakmakers' strike, with wholesale arrests and open suppression of picketing by uniformed police. Arrests, fines, etc. do a great deal to empty the union's treasury.

All this used to be done in the past in an unsystematical, accidental and inefficient way. Moreover, the unions under reactionary leadership used to hire professional underworld gangsters to counteract the terrorizing tactics of the bosses. Quite often the bosses' gangsters were bought by the union or vice versa. In many cases on record the gangsters took pay from both sides. A regulator had to be put on this business. Particularly so with the rise of militant unionism the underworld arm of the bosses had to be systematized and made more reliable. Hence our bourgeois city fathers created this new institution, the Industrial Squad.

Big strapping fellows, comparable only to cossacks, with murky animal faces, guerillas in human form, some of them formerly union officials, other shady underworld characters, sluggers, former experienced patrolmen—this is the outfit. They are familiar with the underworld and know the leading gangsters that sometimes work for the union's side, "the Frenchies," "little Augies," "Jack Noys," etc.

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and they know how the game is played. Lately this bunch of plug uglies was amalgamated with another gang of cutthroats, called the Bomb Squad.

This also was a post-war innovation, created for the purpose of harrassing the political labor movement. The Industrial Squad employs a lawyer who handles their business and there surely is plenty of graft. Here is how it works. The squad has its cars to the ground on any organization drive or strike that is about to happen. Connections are made with the employers' association and any employer who want police protection are recommended to this squad. If the employers are wise then an adequate financial contribution will do a great deal to get the proper "service."

Here is what is meant by "proper service." This is one of the cases that became notorious during the last strike of New York subway motormen. The Interborough Rapid Transit Company decided to terrorize the strikers in order thus to perhaps crush the strike. Hence one bright day as the strikers, many of whom are good fighting Irishmen, were leaving their strike hall, they were pounced upon by the sluggers of this big traction company, lead by the Industrial Squad. The strikers were black-jacked right and left, kicked and stabbed, and one had to be carried away in an ambulance with a broken skull. Uniformed police were standing by in case the striking motormen should get the upper hand, ready to use their clubs on them. The strikers, however, who had just held a peaceful meeting, were taken so completely by surprise that they hardly resisted and in a jiffy several of them were laying around in the gutter wounded by the blows of these legalized sluggers. Those who put up a resistance were picked out and finally arrested. Needless to say the gunmen of the company were not caught.

Suppose the Industrial Squad had not been in existence? The company sluggers, if they had dared to do a job like this, would not have had such nicely arranged police protection and leadership. The motormen might have put up a good fight and the police might have even made some "mistakes" and arrested the real offenders. A whole number of things might have gone wrong. In fact, as it was, it was a badly put up job.

The usual method of procedure is that the Industrial Squad organizes, protects and in many ways leads the activities of the gunmen and sluggers of the employers and having command of the uniformed police in this work gives them virtually a free hand to do as they please against the union's pickets, organizers or special committees. The Industrial Squad sees to it that the union's special committee carries no weapons of any kind, while the bosses' gunmen are free to carry guns, knives, black-



jacks, etc. If any member of the union committee puts up a fight, he or she is promptly arrested and sentences are handed out as in the Rosalsky cases, with the bosses' gunmen escaping, and even if caught red-handed and a formal arrest must be made for appearance sake, the gunman is gotten out with very little trouble to himself.

The reader may have been wondering up till now what this article has to do with the title. And will perhaps be surprised to be told that all the machinery of "law" and the underworld thus described, plus the employers' associations, who are all solid with Sigman and Company, these are the real backbone and represent Sigman's strength against the lefts. All this machinery of the employers is at the disposal and is being actively utilized by Sigman and Company against the left wing. We should remember that originally the Industrial Squad was created during the post-war open shop drive to fight the unions. But since nowadays the only unions who do put up a fight against the employers for improvement of conditions for the workers are unions led by the left wing, the Industrial Squad appears to be a creation for their special benefit.

The first entry of the Industrial Squad against the left wing was about two years ago, when A. Beckerman, manager of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Joint Board of New York, or rather the Industrial Squad in his name prevented the left wing from holding mass meetings. A meeting they busted up in Cooper Union is the most outstanding illustration. Their method is to search any left wing

who looks like a fighter for weapons, but the gangsters, led by Jack Noy could have carried machine guns under their overcoats without the Industrial Squad noticing it. It is thus that Beckerman for a while became the tin Mussolini in the needle trades, for which honor Sigman is now the candidate.

In the present struggle between the left and right in the needle trades if a worker is discharged for opposition to Sigman and a scab takes his place, this scab is taken down to the union office during work hours by the union's picket committee. Sigman just calls up the Industrial Squad and the detectives rush up the Joint Board offices and take the scab down and reinstate him in the shop as if they were Sigman's business agents.

If there are any pickets in front of that shop next day they run the risk of being beaten up by Sigman's gangsters under the supervision of the Industrial Squad. This is the face of "socialism" in the trade unions in New York nowadays. Indeed workers by this time need not be surprised at Sigman and Company using the tools of the enemies of labor against the militant local unions that would dare to challenge his rule. Anyone who knows of his treacherous activities during the strike will look upon these methods as the logical outcome of a completely degenerated trade union bureaucracy.

It is no wonder, of course, that the employers who control these tools and use them against the labor movement take full advantage of the situation, and the agreement that was fought out in one of the bitterest strikes in the needle industry is not being observed by the employers. Workers are being discharged, overtime pay is not being paid, workers are speeded, and the situation in the shops is pretty much as if there was no agreement. Sigman, of course, is getting the services of the Industrial Squad and the underworld from the bosses, not to maintain unionism but to destroy it. Rule or ruin is Sigman's motto. He is getting this help for delivering these workers to his class enemies on the economic and political field.

It is the employers' associations and Tammany Hall that will be the masters of the needle trades unions, if Sigman and Matthew Woll wins. To get to that point, however, is a long, long way off in the needle trades, even after the exhaustion of a 5-months strike. Needle workers cannot thus be brow beaten for any length of time. Injunctions and court orders and Industrial Squads will not impose Sigman's leadership upon these workers and before this fight is through there will not only be a complete defeat for the Sigman type of leadership, but we will be so much nearer to a powerful Labor Party movement in New York that will make it possible to uproot Industrial Squads, injunctions and all these practices with which the labor bureaucracy in cooperation with the gangsters attempts to control the trade unions of New York.