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# Miners' Organizer Lynched by Illinois Mob of "Best People"

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COLLINSVILLE, Ill., April 5 [1918].— The "loyalty committee" is today rejoicing over the "patriotic" deeds it accomplished last night about 1 mile out of the city limits.

Robert J. Prager, a union organizer and leader of the miners' strike in Maryville, Ill., was hanged to a tree after being dragged barefooted through the city streets.

No arrests have been made, although the lynchers were not masked and were said to have been led by prominent citizens.

More than 350 took part and, defying the orders and guns of the police, committed the crime in spite of the denials of the accused man and his repeated pleadings for mercy.

## Had Addressed Strikers.

The only crime the victim was accused of having committed against the community and citizens of the city were alleged remarks of disloyalty, of which even the police acquit him.

The man had returned in the early evening from Maryville, where he spoke to striking miners. The local "loyalty committee" dragged him from his house and made him kiss the American emblem on every flag post.

The police rescued him from the frenzied mob and put him in the City Hall for safekeeping.

A few hours later the crowd stormed the City Hall and sweeping aside a cordon of armed police officers searched the building and dragged Prager from his hiding place.

Throwing him on the floor the bloodthirsty mob made him praise the President. This was repeated every few minutes until the limits of the city were reached.

Here he was bound hand and foot and hanged on the highest tree visible.

## Police Captain Exonerates Him.

Captain of Police Frost made the following statement:

...do not believe Prager was guilty of making disloyal remarks. At least, I have not been able to learn that he made any in Collinsville. There has been considerable labor trouble at Maryville, a mining town near here, and I believe Prager became involved with the union.

While the mob was storming the jail searching for him, Prager wrote his parents in Dresden, Germany, this note:

I must, this fourth day of April, die. Please pray for me, my dear parents. This is my last letter and testament.

A second note, also in German, protested his loyalty. As he was jerked upward on the tree, Prager pleaded he was loyal to this country.

Mayor Siegel declared today he had found no evidence of disloyalty against Prager. The victim had taken out his first papers and applied for full citizenship.



*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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