

klansmen attack mao memorial

Shotgun carrying Klansmen attacked a Mao Tsetung memorial meeting sponsored by the October League at Prairie Fire Bookstore in Houston on Saturday, Sept. 18. Members of the security committee, in defending those attending the meeting, shot and seriously wounded one Klansman. A protest demonstration was held Monday against the grand jury investigating the shootings. The district attorney has asked the grand jury to bring attempted murder charges against those who defended themselves against the Klan attack.

Seven memorial meeting participants have been subpoenaed to appear before the grand jury and a joint statement by three states: "The Houston Police Department has done nothing to see action is taken against the Klansmen who attacked the meeting. The district attorney has more than enough information to bring indictments for this fascist attack. Instead, they are using the grand jury to gather information on the progressive movement in Houston. We will not participate in this type of witch-hunt and are therefore refusing to testify." Frank Converse of the United Klans of America and Scott Nelson of Fiery Knights have publically bragged that there are many policemen who are members of the Klan. Those refusing to testify face possible jail sentences.

Prairie Fire Bookstore has received scores of support messages for their defense against the Klan attack from organizations and individuals in Houston and two rallies in support. They have also received over twenty telegrams from around the country, and letters have been sent to Houston Mayor Fred Hofienz protesting the prosecution of the participants.

The incident began when two Klansmen tried to enter the store and were forced to leave. Shortly after their departure, two carloads of armed Klansmen arrived. As they rushed the store one Klansman heaved a 20-lb. rock through the front window, spraying shattered glass throughout the store. He was then shot and wounded. Faced with this resistance, the other KKK members fled leaving their wounded brother on the ground.

Police arrived on the scene only after the Klan had hastened safely away. They trained their guns on the memorial participants, lined them up against the wall and threatened mass arrests. Only three participants were arrested, they were questioned and released later that same Saturday.

On Tuesday, Prairie Fire Bookstore called a press conference to read some of the telegrams and allow representatives from the October League, US-China People's Friendship Ass'n., the Houston Gary Tyler Defense Committee, and others to make statements.

The representative from the Gary Tyler Defense Committee said, "The time is now that we can prove why we can't depend on the protectors and servers, for we have no money. Only the rich are protected and served.

The president of the Nacogdoches branch of the NAACP wrote in his telegram that "the cowardly attack on the bookstore cannot go unchallenged by peace and justice loving people in Texas."

The Southern Conference Educational Fund sent a telegram expressing solidarity with the bookstore and "all those who defended themselves against the vicious armed attack by the Ku Klux Klan.

The attack on the memorial service for Mao Tsetung," the telegram continued, "is one more page in the Klan's long record of violent attacks on the Black freedom movement, against labor and against anyone who is for progress.

"We firmly support the courageous self-defense of the people at the bookstore. This action undoubtedly saved the lives of several people in attendance."

In a TV interview Tom West, the Klansman who threw the rock through the window, said the only thing he regreted about the Klan attack was that they "didn't slaughter them all."

Refusing to be intimidated, a representative from Prairie Fire said "We'll be prepared. We will continue to defend ourselves."

(SCEF)

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