

I Saw Silver Shirts in Action

By Julius Rosenthal

MOR

I saw the American variety of Hitlerism in action in Chicago Monday night.

And I saw the answer of the American people.

That answer was: Fascism shall not pass in the United States.

The local fascists were a unit of 40 members of the Silver Legion of America, an open anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic organization led by William Dudley Pelley with offices in Ashville, N. C.

The answer to their hate-inciting pleas to wipe out the Jews and Catholics in America, assassinate President Roosevelt, and set up a dictatorship of Big Business came from an indignant crowd of 800 Americans in the Portage Park community.

Silver Shirt Field Marshal Roy Zachary, who in a previous Chicago speech said he would kill President Roosevelt if no one else would, knew he was inciting trouble by holding a fascist meeting in open defiance of the anti-Nazi sentiment of the neighborhood.

One of his lieutenants caused a Record photographer and me to spend a night in jail because we were from the Daily Record.

Six-foot, four-inch bouncer Richard Starr and a squad of other strong-arm Silver Shirts were posted at the door of the secret "for-men-only" meeting at 5835 W. Irving Park Blvd.

William Rice, Daily Record photographer, and I tried to gain entrance to the meeting by showing our police press cards. Blustering Starr asked where we were from.

"The Daily Record," I said.

A voice from inside the hall yelled out:

"That's a Communist paper."

Rice answered:

"You got a bum steer there, buddy."

Starr then called Clarence Sutherland, who seemed



ROY ZACHARY

to be the leader of the meeting. Sutherland declared:

"This is strictly an American meeting for white people. Not that I have anything against Jews but they have it against me. Sorry you can't come in. We have paid for this hall and you can't come in."

Meanwhile Zachary, who was the scheduled speaker, walked by accompanied by four husky bodyguards.

The meeting started and the door was shut in our faces.

Rice and I decided to stay awhile in the hope of getting pictures when the meeting was over.

Soon a crowd started gathering around the hall. The assemblage soon numbered about 800 with numerous circles in the lobby of the hall and outside discussing the meeting inside. Word of the fascist nature of the meeting passed swiftly from mouth to mouth.

What appeared to be a spontaneous committee of community citizens made their way to the small hall in the rear of the building, to protest the importing of Zachary to spread fascist doctrines in Portage Park.

Zachary was speaking at the time.

As the group entered the hall, several bulky Silver Shirts rose and moved towards them. A melee started.

The men on the outside hearing a disturbance inside, rushed in and the scuffle spread through the hall.

Rice and I meanwhile had made our way into the hall to watch the effect of the protest.

Both of us had our police cards in our hat bands. When the fight started, we were in the rear of the hall.

One of the Silver Shirt guards of Zachary attempted to smash Rice's camera but an anti-Nazi demonstrator blocked the blow.

The Zachary followers were outnumbered and the battle was over in less than three minutes.

The protestors soon dispersed.

About 15 minutes later two policemen arrived. Rice and I entered the hall with the policemen.

Doorman Starr was in the lobby. Seeing Rice and me, he exclaimed:

"There's the dirty Jew b—— that telephoned the mob."

He rushed at Rice and attempted to slug him but was stopped by one of the police, who declared:

"These fellows are from the press."

After talking to Starr a few moments, the police left.

Meanwhile, a huge crowd gathered around the hall, attracted by the commotion.

Five minutes later two detective squads arrived with

a patrol wagon. They entered the hall and Rice and I followed them, using our police cards.

The chief of the detectives asked Starr what had happened. Starr said the meeting had been attacked by what he called "hoodlums."

The police took Starr out into the crowd. He pointed at five men in the crowd who were brought into the lobby.

Starr then pointed at us and said:

"Them too."

The detectives then pushed us over with the five from the outside crowd. All of us were searched.

Both Rice and I protested that we were from the press but to no avail and we were put in a patrol wagon with the others.

A few minutes later Zachary, Starr, and Sutherland were put in the wagon with us. Two others in the crowd were arrested for booing Zachary as he left the building.

As the "Black Maria" made its way to the Gale Ave. police station, a humorous touch was added: Zachary had to sit on the lap of a Jewish youth, David Foreman, because of lack of room. Zachary was forced to stand when Foreman objected to the fascist in his lap.

When we arrived at the station, Starr started pointing out the various prisoners as people who he saw in the hall.

He pointed to Rice and me and said:

"They're from the Record."

That seemed to be sufficient reason to the police to jail us, book us for disorderly conduct and inciting to riot, fingerprint us, and keep us in a cell all night.

Our protest to Captain Herbert Burns that we were accredited representatives of the press brought no response.