

F.B.I. Agent Testifies Panther Told of Shooting Murder Victim

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NEW HAVEN, July 21 — **Lonnie** McLucas admitted last year that he had fired a shot into the body of Alex Rackley in order to make sure that he was dead, an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation testified here today.

Mr. McLucas, the first of eight Black Panthers to stand trial here in connection with the Rackley slaying, was said to have told interrogators in Salt Lake City jail that he had acted on orders from George Sams Jr., who was said to have handed him a .45-caliber pistol that had been used moments before by Warren Kimbro to shoot Rackley.

Sams and Kimbro have both pleaded guilty to second-degree murder. According to the agent, Mr. McLucas said that it was Sams who had stage-managed the torture and execution of the 25-year-old Rackley after denouncing him as an informer.

On the night of the murder Sams turned the victim loose in woods near Middlefield, Conn., with instructions "to be careful" because of "Minutemen in the area," according to the F.B.I. man's notes on the interview with Mr. McLucas.

Order from Higher Up

As Rackley staggered into the woods, the defendant's narration reportedly continued. Sams handed his pistol to Kimbro and said, "Ice him—it's an order from national headquarters."

Mr. McLucas was said to have explained to his interrogators—two New Haven detectives and two F.B.I. agents—that Sams told local Black Panthers that he had been sent here by national headquarters and that he "had more authority than anyone else on the East Coast" in the party.

The interrogation of Mr. McLucas took place on June 8, 1969—18 days after the Rackley murder and two months before the arrest of Sams, who quickly supplied the police with a statement saying that **Dobby G. Seale**, the national chairman of the Black Panthers, had ordered the execution. Mr. Seale is now among those awaiting trial.

Nothing Mr. McLucas was reported to have said in the interrogation implicated Mr. Seale. But neither did he appear to have expressed any doubts about Sams credentials as an agent of the party's national headquarters.

Fears for Life Cited

In fact, the F. B. I. agent, Lynn G. Twede of Salt Lake City, testified that Mr. McLucas had indicated he had "become disenchanted with the party because of the violence" and wanted to quit. But he was afraid to do so because "he had learned too much," the agent quoted him as saying, and feared he might be killed.

Mr. Twede testified that Mr. McLucas said he had been on his way to California at the time of his arrest and had expected to be named a Panther "field director" with "complete authority" over the area between Boston and the Mason-Dixon Line.

If the defendant felt any ambivalence about the party in Salt Lake City, he appears to have reaffirmed his allegiance since then. As he left the courtroom this afternoon, after

hearing his alleged admission read into the record, he gave the party's clenched fist salute to sympathizers in the gallery who replied, "Right On!"

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Referring regularly to notes that he took during the interrogation, Mr. Twede said Mr. McLucas told of having asked "why?" when Sams gave the order for Rackley to be tied up in the basement of Panther headquarters here two days before the murder. The notes did not show that Sams had offered any answer, only that the defendant had bowed to the order.

Torture Is Described

It was Sams also, Mr. McLucas was reported to have said, who ordered that water be boiled and scalded the victim with it when Rackley denied ever having informed on the Panther 21 in New York, who had been arrested the previous month on charges that they had plotted bombings.

Rackley, who was gagged with a towel at the time, managed somehow to signal a kind of confession after the fourth pot of boiling water had been emptied on him, according to the information contained in the agent's notes.

"George said that if anyone didn't like what he did they would get the same treatment," the agent testified, quoting the defendant.

In cross-examination, Mr. McLucas's lawyer, Theodore I. Koskoff, asked Mr. Twede whether he had ever made a report that Mr. McLucas had said that he obeyed the order to make sure Rackley was dead because he feared "that if he failed to do as ordered he would be shot by George Sams."

The agent hesitated and the question had to be read back to him twice before he answered directly, "yes."

Mr. Koskoff used the cross-examination to stress small acts of mercy Mr. McLucas had told of performing—dressing Rackley's wounds, sending out for orange juice for him and cutting his bonds because when his hands started swelling after Sams tied him to a bed.

Testimony Is Debated

The jury was excluded from the courtroom throughout the morning session as Mr. Koskoff argued strenuously on behalf of a motion to suppress Mr. Twede's testimony.

In the course of questioning the F.B.I. man at this stage, defense counsel asked whether any lawyer had been appointed for Mr. McLucas in Salt Lake City when he was arraigned before a United States Commissioner. The agent replied that no lawyer had been named.

Mr. Koskoff then produced documents proving that Mr. Twede was wrong. Subsequent questions demonstrated that the agent had made no effort to contact this lawyer in the two times he went to the jail to question Mr. McLucas.

In both instances, the defendant signed waivers saying he knew his rights and did not need his lawyer. But Mr. Koskoff argued that these were insufficient to make his statements admissible as evidence, because the agent had no right to initiate such conversations at that stage.