7 MEN SENTENCED IN RIGHTS KILLINGS

Two Get 10-Year Maximum in Mississippi Klan Plot Against 3 Slain in '64

By WALTER RUGABER
Special to The New York Times

JACKSON, Miss., Dec. 29—Seven men convicted of taking part in a Ku Klux Klan plot to kill three young civil rights workers in Neshoba County were sentenced today to Federal prison terms ranging from 3 to 10 years.

The stiffest possible jail penalties — 10 years each — were imposed on Sam H. Bowers Jr. of Laurel, identified as Imperial Wizard of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, and Alton Wayne Roberts, a Meridian mobile-home salesman.

Cecil R. Price, 29-year-old chief deputy sheriff of Neshoba County who was a key figure in the 1964 lynchings, received a six-year term. So did Billy Wayne Posey, 30, a Neshoba County service station manager.

Three-year sentences were received by Jimmy Arledge, 30, a Meridian truck driver; Jimmie Snowden, 34, a Meridian laundry truck driver; and Horace Doyle Barnette, 29, a one-time auto parts salesman, now living in Plain Dealing, La.

The seven men had been found guilty by an all-white jury after a two-week trial on conspiracy charges in Meridian last October. The convictions carried a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a $5,000 fine.

No Fines Imposed

The sentences were announced in a crowded Federal courtroom here by United States District Court Judge W. Harold Cox who presided over the Meridian proceeding. No fines were imposed on any of the convicted men.

The Government had charged 18 men with conspiracy in the deaths of Michael H. Schwerner, 24, of New York, a white field worker for the Congress of Racial Equality; Andrew Goodman, 20, of New York, a white college student; and James E. Chaney, 21, of Meridian, a Negro plasterer.

The Meridian jury, while convicting the seven men sentenced today, returned not guilty verdicts on eight others and were unable to reach a decision on the remaining three. One of those acquitted was Sheriff Lawrence A. Rainey of Neshoba County.

Judge Cox specified that the jail terms ordered today were "indeterminate." This, court officials said, meant that the convicted men would be eligible for immediate consideration by

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parole authorities.

But all seven have appealed the convictions to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, and all were released pending a final ruling after they signed their own appearance bonds.

These were increased from $5,000 to $10,000 for Bowers and Roberts, and from $5,000 to $6,000 for Price and Posey. The three others were continued in the $5,000 personal bonds they obtained upon conviction.

Probation Proviso

Judge Cox attached a special provision to the bonds that requires the seven to obtain written permission from their probation officer before leaving the counties in which they live and work.

"I just want to keep you out of devilment," the judge explained in an aside from the bench. He warned each of the men that violation of the bond ruling would carry heavy contempt and statutory penalties.

Bowers, Roberts and Price had been free on bonds with another special provision by Judge Cox that called for revocation in the event of any bombings in southern Mississippi. Three blasts have occurred since, but the bonds were not canceled.

The seven men, who stood in a row before the bench, showed no sign of emotion as the sentences were passed.

Government witnesses said during the Meridian trial that Bowers, also under Federal indictment in the fire-bomb death of a Negro leader in Hattiesburg, had approved in advance the elimination of the three young civil rights workers.

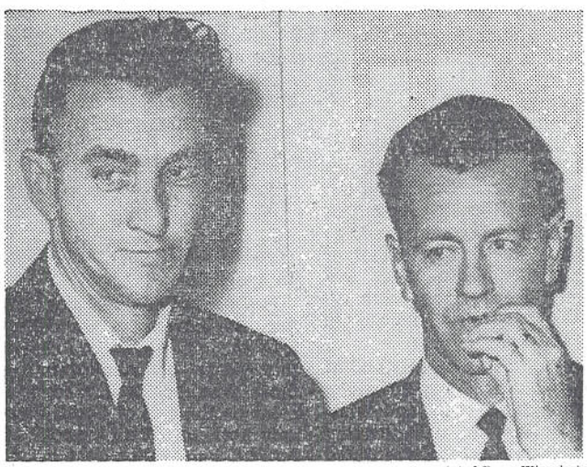
Roberts was placed on the scene of the actual slayings by Federal witnesses, as were the other five men. Price arrested the three youths on June 21, 1964, held them in jail more than six hours, released them, recaptured them after a highway chase, and turned them over to the lynch mob.

Government evidence showed that the three were escorted to a lonely country road in Neshoba County and shot down one-by-one. The bodies were buried elsewhere beneath an earthen dam and were subsequently recovered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Murder is generally not a Federal offense, and the men were prosecuted under an 1870 conspiracy statute. The Mississi authorities have not made charges in the case.

Receive Sentences for Slayings

Sam H. Bowers Jr., identified as Imperial Wizard of Ku Klux Klan, arrives at the Federal Building in Jackson, Miss. Convicted of conspiracy in the 1964 killing of three civil rights workers, he was given a 10-year jail term.



Associated Press Wirephoto

Jimmy Arledge, left, and Jimmy Snowden confer in a hallway in the court building. They were among the seven men convicted. Each received a three-year sentence.