

THE LINGLE CASE

October 16, 1954

ALMOST ANYONE WILL recall the murder of Jake Lingle, but they may have forgotten how we caught the murderer.

Alfred (Jake) Lingle, a *Chicago Tribune* police reporter, was killed instantly by one shot from a murderer's revolver at 1:20 p. m., June 9, 1930, as he walked in the Randolph Street pedestrian tunnel beneath Michigan Avenue. Within a matter of minutes, *The Tribune* offered a \$25,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the slayer.

I remembered, as I said a few months later, that one should always reply to a sudden attack with an immediate counter-offensive. It seemed then that the choice was war or surrender, battle or the inevitable servitude of cowardice. I did not know the man who was killed, I had no idea of his private affairs, and practically no knowledge of his duties, but I had seen gangland rise from the murder of humble immigrants until it had reached the employe of a newspaper.

If the battle was not waged here and now, it would be waged later under less advantageous circumstances.

On April 3, 1931, ten months after the killing, Leo V. Brothers, a St. Louis hoodlum wanted there for another murder, was convicted by a Cook County jury of Lingle's assassination. His conviction followed an investigation led and largely financed by the *Tribune* which, unlike most inquiries into gang murder, pro-

MEMORANDUM: Publishers' meeting Saturday June 14, 1930.

Present: Tribune, Colonel McCormick, Macfarlane
American, Black and Holmes,
Examiner, Guck; News, Charles Dennis,
Post, Carroll Shaffer and John Torok, business
manager,
Times, Cohen and Finnegan. (Shaffer left early)

Col. McCormick presided. He opened the meeting about 11:20 a.m. by saying that Mr. Guck had telephoned him that Mr. Black had been in New York and had had a talk with W. R. Hearst and that Mr. Black had a message for the publishers from Mr. Hearst. Mr. McCormick said that Mr. Guck had given him the substance of this message over the telephone but he did not care to trust his own memory to repeat it and for that reason he had called this special meeting to hear Mr. Black in person. He asked Mr. Black to take the floor. Mr. Black explained that there had been some misapprehension. He said that he had been in New York for three or four days on other matters and had tried to meet Mr. Hearst but had been unable to do so. Just as he was checking out of his hotel he ran into Mr. Hearst. They had just a few minutes together. Mr. Black said in substance that Mr. Hearst "told me that he agreed with me that my substitute for the resolution which was adopted by the Chicago publishers on the Lingle case was more apropos but he thought as long as the other publishers were agreed on the one that was actually adopted there was no point in making any further objection to it and he thought all the papers ought to stand together in living up to the traditions of the newspaper profession. If Mr. Hearst had any message for the Chicago publishers he didn't

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give it to me. If Mr. Guck has any information to that effect I would like to hear from him."

Mr. Guck then said that he had talked to Mr. Hearst over the long distance telephone and he had gained the impression that Mr. Black was in Col. Knox's room with Mr. Hearst and that Mr. Hearst was going to give his message to Mr. Black in person. Mr. Guck said that he had read to Mr. Hearst the publishers' resolution which was printed, together with Mr. Black's substitute which was not adopted, and Mr. Hearst agreed that Mr. Black's resolution was the better of the two. However, he gave his consent to the publication of the one approved by the other publishers. Mr. Hearst wanted the other publishers to know that he was with them 100 per cent. If local government had fallen down, and it apparently had, there was always the national government to fall back on. Mr. Hearst had two suggestions: (1) That the publishers lay down on the federal authorities here to deport more aliens who were found to be hoodlums and law violators. If present laws were not effective, the publishers ought to get together and take the matter to congress so that the laws could be made effective. (2) If the Chicago police could not handle the situation the publishers ought to call on the governor for martial law.

There was some general discussion on these views of Mr. Hearst. Col. McCormick said that during the Coolidge administration he had gone to the White House and discussed the deportation of hoodlum aliens with President Coolidge. He said that the president had "scolded" him somewhat for looking to the federal government to do a job that was really up to the city and the state. However, Mr. Coolidge agreed to make an investigation

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and shortly thereafter some of the worst-looking, flat-footed detectives or investigators that Col. McCormick had ever seen showed up in Chicago. One of them was an ex-baseball player. They were "terrible", the colonel said, and nothing came of it. The colonel said he did not have much information about the process of martial law and asked Finnegan what he knew about it. Finnegan replied that martial law would likely be called by the governor only by an application of the sheriff of Cook county. The colonel wanted to know if there had been martial law here before and Finnegan reminded him that President Cleveland had sent troops here without the request of Gov. Altgeld during the railroad riots. Guck brought up the point that he thought this was due to the fact that there was a federal injunction to be enforced.

Mr. Black then restated his emphatic objection to the publishers' resolution saying that he thought the publishers had bitten off more than they could chew because their resolution covered a wide field. He doubted the wisdom of making the matter a newspaper question because he didn't think that Lingle was attacked because he was a newspaper man but rather because he was engaged in other activities outside his newspaper calling which put him "on the spot". Black said he was amazed at the widespread gossip there was about this angle of the case in New York. He said he hesitated to discuss Lingle because Lingle was dead and was unable to answer in his own behalf but nevertheless the matter was of such importance to the publishers that he thought it ought to be thoroughly aired and, although he disliked the role much, he felt it incumbent on him to get the matter off his mind and let everybody know just what he was

thinking. Considering the tactics of gangsters, he was of the opinion that the newspapers and the newspapermen of Chicago had not been attacked but that Lingle had strayed away from legitimate newspaper work and had entered the regions of the racketeers and that the gossip in every newspaper office on this point was so general that there must be some basis for the conclusion.

Col. McCormick then explained that Lingle was not close to him or he to Lingle and that until this tragedy occurred he was just another reporter on the Tribune staff; that when he heard of the murder he immediately jumped to the conclusion that Lingle had been killed because of something he had done in a newspaper way although The Tribune at the time was not engaged in any crusade against any particular gangsters; in this belief he had jumped to the decision to offer \$25,000 reward, his first impression having been to make it \$100,000, but he didn't carry out this plan because he thought the \$100,000 would be too sensational and the \$25,000 would suffice. He also had ordered the editorial which appeared the second day after the murder in which The Tribune said that gangland had issued the challenge and The Tribune accepted the challenge feeling that there probably would be other casualties. He would have done the same thing if a driver had been murdered for his collection money. He felt that the other publishers had responded so readily that he wanted to thank them and while telephoning them he had talked to S. E. Thomason of The Times and during that conversation with Mr. Thomason he was told by Mr. Thomason for the first time of the rumors about Lingle and other newspaper men in the city. He said he was amazed but from that minute had gone further into the subject and had learned more.

C - She climbed all over the Colonel for being so partisan to - so she wanted me to cover Emmerson for a while. And Emmerson had me ride in his limousine with him. He was a most uncommunicative kind of fishy guy. I couldn't get anything out of him. I had been with Thompson on a very close basis, you know.

H - Very interesting. I hadn't recalled that the Colonel had intended to support Thompson. Did he finally support him?

C - Well, he had me write an editorial, kind of a weaseling one, both great guys and all that. But he didn't. No, he pulled his punches finally and - well, Thompson didn't have a chance. But he's inscribed down there in the Lobby. Sure, when he was Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court. Haven't you seen that?

H - Yes, but I didn't put two and two together.

C - Sure, that's him.

In late '29 my father was editor of this National Underwriter - a very successful publication - and the manager of it got hold of me and said "You've got to come over here. This thing is going down hill." He said "Your father hasn't brought the right people along. He isn't supervising them and it's getting pretty sloppy." He put it on me pretty heavy, and I felt that I should do it. So I announced that and the Colonel got me in and said, "Very sorry. You're going from big things to little things." And Leon Stoltz tried to dissuade me, too, but anyway that was it.

H - You were here three years in all.

C - It was closer to four - I forget the exact dates.

H - I take it you enjoyed your work at the Tribune.

C - Oh yes, very much.

H - Probably never would have left except for the family situation.

C - Yes.

They had quite a zoo down there when you think of Jake Lingle and -

H - Did you know Jake very well?

C - Pretty well.

H - Did you have any hint that there was anything - that the outcome was going to be like it was?

C - Oh no. He'd come in in the afternoon - or Lee would come in - very frequently he would get Lingle in with him. And apparently he enjoyed Lingle and what they talked about I don't know. But the only real experience I had with him was that when they were widening 22d street they were going to have a story about what this would do to Chinatown. And so they sent Lingle down with me. Well, he knew every rat hole down

there. We'd go down (into) the cellar and there'd be Chinamen playing dominos or whatever it was, he knew them by their first names. A truck would come along with a Racing Form and he knew the driver and would get a copy of the Racing Form. And he wasn't a communicative guy.

H - At a time like that in Chicago obviously every paper had to have its contacts with the underworld.

C - Yes, he undoubtedly had them, I don't know to what extent.

H - Apparently Lee never was - although the other papers tried to imply that the higher-ups were responsible. That never was proved. I mean were involved. That never was proved.

C - I don't think so. I think it was - Lee just probably enjoyed the visiting with him. And then there was George Reedy - one-legged guy, you know.

H - I've heard of him.

C - Yes, he was the father of Reedy that's written a book.

H - Reedy (the son) was in the White House - wasn't he Johnson's P.R. man?

C - Yes, that's right. Sure.

H - What did he do around here - his father?

C - George - I forget - he was a very outspoken kind of noisy guy.

H - He was in the editorial department?

C - Oh yes, he was down there - I forget exactly what he was doing. Had one leg, you know.

H - Was that from the war?

C - I don't know where - or what it was all about.

I had a desk next to Tommy Wren, the labor editor, and Tommy - he'd gotten along pretty good in grammar school but not much farther. A very nice guy, and he'd lean over and say "Lev, how do you spell - - " well, not cat, but you know.

H - Almost that.

C - Almost that. Nice guy. And then there was Shadow Brown.

H - He was still here - although I didn't know him - when I came in 1934. He was still a police reporter - dean of police reporters.

C - He lived way to hell and gone out some place - way out beyond where the L landed, you know. I am trying to think of the guy that - -