



# FATHER HAAS

and the

## MINNEAPOLIS TRUCKERS' STRIKE of 1934

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*THE MINNEAPOLIS truckers' strike of 1934 is a landmark in the labor history not only of Minnesota but of the United States. As such, it continues to command the attention of historians as well as writers for the popular media. On May 18, 1959, for example, Life launched a three-part series on the nation's biggest union, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, with an article whose "A Background of Violence" section included a blowup of the classic "baseball bat" photograph taken during the 1934 strike. The Minneapolis local, said the magazine, "set a pattern for future Teamster organization."*

*Then in late December, 1969, the 1934 strike was in the news again when the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) met at the University of Minnesota. The YSA members sought to commemorate the strike thirty-five years after by marching to the scene of violence in the old market district. They were not permitted to march that far, but the episode prompted the Minneapolis Tribune to publish a background story on the strike.*

*Vincent R. Dunne, one of the leaders of the 1934 strike, made his last public appearance at the YSA convention. He died on February 18, 1970, and the strike was again mentioned in his obituaries.*

*Of all accounts, old or new, this article is thought to be the first to center on the role of Father Francis J. Haas, a leader in settlement of the strike. Apparently Father Blantz has been the first to use the extensive Haas Papers in the archives of the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. — Ed.*

FATHER Francis J. Haas, a seminary professor of ethics and economics, was one of the New Deal's best known and most successful labor mediators in the turbulent 1930s. Born in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1889, he was ordained a Catholic priest in 1913. He received a doctorate in sociology in 1922 from the Catholic University of America, studying under such liberal Catholic social thinkers as John A. Ryan, William Kerby, and John O'Grady. In 1931, after several years on the faculty of St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Father Haas was appointed director of the National Catholic School of Social Service, a graduate

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school of social work for Catholic young women, in Washington, D.C.

In June, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt named Father Haas to the Labor Advisory Board of the National Recovery Administration. Four months later he joined William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, and John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, as a labor representative on the National Labor Board headed by Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York.<sup>1</sup> By the time this board gave way to the more powerful National Labor Relations Board in June, 1934, Father Haas had been instrumental in mediating or arbitrating more than 125 industrial disputes. That month the *Milwaukee Journal* called him one of the Department of Labor's "chief conciliators," and to the *Northwestern Chronicle*, a Catholic weekly, he was "the ace of federal peacemakers." Consequently, when the violent strike by truckers erupted in Minneapolis in that summer of 1934, it was not surprising that Washington officials assigned Father Haas, a Midwesterner and an experienced mediator, as chief federal conciliator.<sup>2</sup>

To many observers, the Minneapolis strike was much more than a labor dispute; it approached class warfare.<sup>3</sup> Thirty years before, a small group of bankers and business executives had organized the Citizens' Alliance — "a mysterious organization with no known membership but immense power and resources," according to one reporter — primarily to preserve free-

<sup>1</sup> The National Labor Board of August 5, 1933, was composed of labor representatives Leo Wolman, Green, and Lewis, along with industrial representatives Gerard Swope, Walter Teagle, and Louis Kirstein. Senator Wagner was public representative as well as chairman. Father Haas and Major George Berry were added to the board on October 6, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> *Milwaukee Journal*, June 28, 1934; *Northwestern Chronicle*, September 8, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Among the most useful published accounts of the strike are: George H. Mayer, *The Political Career of Floyd B. Olson*, 184-222 (Minneapolis, 1951); Charles Rumford Walker, *American City*, 79-183 (New York, 1937); Sam Romer, "Five Minutes That Changed the Face of Minneapolis," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, July 19, 1964, p. 10A; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal*, 387-389 (Boston, 1958); Eric Sevareid, *Not So Wild a Dream*, 58 (New York, 1946); Herbert Solow, "War in Minneapolis," in *Nation*, 139:160 (August 8, 1934); Selden Rodman, "A Letter from Minnesota," in *New Republic*, 80:10-12 (August 15, 1934); Anne Ross, "Minnesota Sets Some Precedents," in *New Republic*, 80:121-123 (September 12, 1934); William F. Dunne and Morris Childs, *Permanent Counter-Revolution: The Role of the Trotskyites in the Minneapolis Strikes* (New York, 1934); "Twin Cities," in *Fortune*, April, 1936, p. 112; and "Unionism Wins in Minneapolis," in *Nation*, 139:274 (September 5, 1934).

*A CLASSIC PICTURE* of violence during a strike is this frequently reproduced photograph of truckers and citizens' deputies battling with bats and clubs on May 21, 1934, in the Minneapolis produce market area. The deputy downed at left was clubbed to death.



dom of individual bargaining and the open shop throughout the city. Over the next couple of decades the Alliance established its own employment agency, set up its own craft schools (to obviate the need for union training), and reportedly hired its own corps of industrial spies. The organization's anti-union policies were remarkably successful. When wages across the country increased 11 per cent in the 1920s, they rose only 2 per cent in Minneapolis; for several years the Alliance was able to force the open shop even on the powerful American Federation of Labor building trades; and in 1934 the Alliance could boast that it had defeated every major strike in the city since the end of World War I. Minneapolis in the early 1930s was known across the nation as a "one hundred per cent open-shop town" and "the worst scab town in the Northwest."<sup>4</sup>

IN THE MINNEAPOLIS labor movement, however, the Citizens' Alliance found a worthy opponent. Railroad workers, mill hands, and immigrant day laborers joined the Industrial Workers of the World, the Non-partisan League, and the Farmer-Labor party in efforts to better their lot. Socialism seemed particularly attractive to the Scandinavian peoples of the upper Middle West — the Finnish Federation was allied with the Socialist party as early as 1904 — and in Minnesota Socialism seemed more radical than elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> When the Socialist party split after World War I, the Minnesota branch followed the Third International, and when Communism itself divided in 1928, the Minnesota party joined the Trotskyites on the left. Many leaders of the American Federation of Labor in Min-

<sup>4</sup> Solow, in *Nation*, August 8, 1934, p. 161 (first quote); Walker, *American City*, 83–86 (last two quotes), 87, 185–193. See also Mayer, *Olson*, 184; Romer, in *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 19, 1964; Schlesinger, *New Deal*, 386.

<sup>5</sup> *The American Labor Year Book*, 1916, 94–150 (New York, 1916) gives an indication of the strength of the Socialist movement in Minnesota in the years before World War I. See also Robert F. Hoxie, "The Rising Tide of Socialism: A Study," in *Journal of Political Economy*, 19:609–631 (October, 1911), and Walker, *American City*, 46–58.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Ross, "Labor Unity in Minneapolis," in *New Republic*, 79:284–286 (July 25, 1934); Dunne and Childs, *Permanent Counter-Revolution*, 3–7; Walker, *American City*, 46–58, 90, 160; Severeid, *Not So Wild a Dream*, 57; Philip Taft, *Organized Labor in American History*, 445 (New York, 1964); Maurice Goldbloom and others, *Strikes Under the New Deal*, 55 (New York, n.d.); Mayer, *Olson*, 17–56, 187, 203–205; and Herbert Lefkowitz, "Olson: Radical and Proud of It," in *Review of Reviews*, May, 1935, p. 36 (quote).

<sup>7</sup> Mayer, *Olson*, 189 (first quote); Schlesinger, *New Deal*, 386 (second quote).

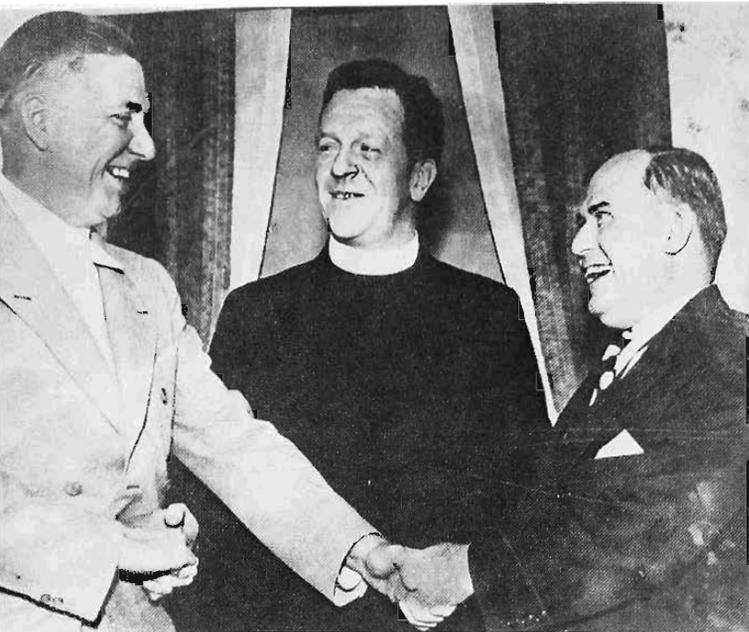


*CLASS HATRED* boiled to the surface in the old market area as strikers routed the citizens' army on May 21 in what truckers later took to calling the "Battle of Deputies Run."

neapolis — Farrell Dobbs, William S. Brown, Carl Skoglund, and Vincent, Grant, and Miles Dunne — had Socialist, and in some cases Trotskyite, sympathies. When Floyd B. Olson of the Farmer-Labor party captured the governorship in the early 1930s, insisting "I am not a Liberal, but what I want to be — a radical," thousands of discontented mill and factory workers were determined to redress the wrongs of nearly half a century and overturn the power of the Citizens' Alliance.<sup>6</sup>

The coming of the New Deal and the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933 drew the battle lines tighter. The Citizens' Alliance refused to relax its opposition to organized labor, despite the collective bargaining guarantees of the act's Section 7a. The only difficulty with the president's Recovery Act, Charles L. Pillsbury, Munsingwear Company executive, suggested, was that "labor leaders have interpreted it to mean that collective bargaining can come only through belonging to a union." Alliance leader Albert W. Strong added: "I can conceive of dealing with a conservative and responsible labor leader, but certainly not with any of the AF of L leaders in Minneapolis."<sup>7</sup>

But Section 7a and the economic upswing of late 1933 had given the workers greater confidence, too. In February, 1934, the newly organized Local 574 of the General Drivers and Helpers Union called a strike



*MEDIATION LEADERS* Father Huas and E. H. Dunnigan (right) shared handshakes and smiles with Governor Floyd B. Olson after the truckers' strike was settled on August 21, 1934.

against Minneapolis coal dealers. Caught by surprise in the middle of a harsh Minnesota winter, the companies capitulated to the union's demands.<sup>8</sup> By April 1 the union numbered over two thousand members and felt strong enough to threaten all the city's trucking interests with a general strike. To the employers' bargaining committee on April 30 the union leaders presented their demands — union recognition, seniority rights, and higher wages — and when these were rejected, they called a strike for May 15. This first city-wide strike lasted eleven days and was both violent and successful. Pickets halted all commercial trucks and common carriers except those transporting ice, milk, and coal. From large factories to corner groceries, all business was hurt. The city was closed "as tight as a bull's eye in fly-time," the strikers boasted. "They had the town tied up tight," the sheriff later admitted. "Not a truck could move in Minneapolis."<sup>9</sup>

On May 19 local officials recruited and deputized a citizens' army to help convoy trucks through the city, and two days later the new "recruits" clashed with strikers in what became known as the "Battle of Deputies Run." Business executives with badges were no match for truck drivers with baseball bats. Before local police could intervene, two deputies were killed and scores from both sides were injured. Class hatred had boiled to the surface in Minneapolis.

On May 21 the Regional Labor Board in St. Paul

assumed jurisdiction over the case, a federal mediator was rushed in from Washington, and after five days of almost around-the-clock negotiations a compromise was finally reached on May 26. By the terms of the agreement the strike was to be called off at once, all strikers were to be reinstated without discrimination, hours of work were to be regulated by NRA code provisions, arbitration machinery was established to determine wage rates in case joint negotiations did not bring agreement, and Local 574 was recognized as bargaining agent wherever it commanded a majority of the workers. Although the war was far from over, the union had clearly won the first battle.<sup>10</sup>

The compromise of May 26, however, had been possible only because one of the main points in dispute was left unsettled. Leaders of Local 574 had claimed jurisdiction over all "inside workers" (primarily warehouse employees) besides their truck drivers and helpers, but the companies would not agree. The Regional Labor Board's consent order of May 31 was intentionally vague: "The term 'employees' as used herein shall include truck drivers and helpers, and such other persons

<sup>8</sup> For the February strike, see Mayer, *Olson*, 188, and Walker, *American City*, 90.

<sup>9</sup> For the first quote, see Solow, in *Nation*, August 8, 1934, p. 160, and Schlesinger, *New Deal*, 387. The second quote is from Walker, *American City*, 98. For the May strike, see Walker's account on pages 93–128; Mayer, *Olson*, 192–201; and Dunne and Childs, *Permanent Counter-Revolution*.

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, May 27, 1934, p. 25.

*MILITARY RULE* prompted this cartoon in the August 5 Minneapolis Tribune.

### *The Governor Can't Let Go*

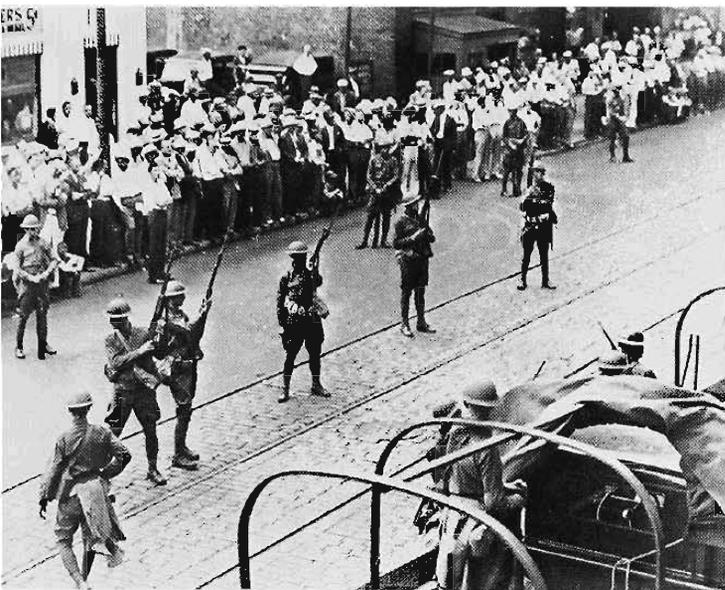


as are ordinarily engaged in trucking operations of the business or the individual employer.”<sup>11</sup> Union leaders immediately requested an official interpretation of this agreement, and on July 7 the Regional Labor Board declared that, although inside workers did not fall within the union’s jurisdiction, the board “recommends that all workers of the firms involved who were on strike should be dealt with on the bases as are provided in the consent order of May 31.” The industry of course found the recommendation unacceptable, and the union voted to strike again on July 16. A day later Lloyd Garrison, chairman of the newly constituted National Labor Relations Board, asked Father Haas to fly to

Minneapolis to take charge of the government’s mediation efforts.<sup>12</sup>

FATHER HAAS arrived in Minneapolis early on July 18 and spent the rest of the first day conferring with Federal Conciliator Eugene H. Dunnigan who had been helping with negotiations since late June. On the following day Haas submitted the first of many compromise proposals to each side. According to this proposal, all strikers would be reinstated and minimum wages of fifty-five cents an hour for drivers and forty-five cents for helpers and inside workers would be established for one year. The strategy behind this suggestion was obvious. Haas realized that the Employers’ Advisory Committee and the union bargainers were still hopelessly deadlocked on the question of the union’s jurisdiction over the inside workers, and he therefore wanted to bypass that central issue. If the parties could agree on temporary wage rates, collective bargaining could be delayed a full year and with it the determination of the proper representation of the inside workers. The employers, however, rejected the proposal, insisting that it already implied union jurisdiction over the inside workers. Representation was clearly the crucial issue. “Father Haas and I believe,” Dunnigan wrote that evening, “that just as soon as we have the question of representation smoothed out, we won’t experience difficulty in bringing both sides into agreement.”<sup>13</sup>

By Friday morning, July 20, Father Haas was confident of an early agreement. “I am sanguine that we are going to settle this strike without much more delay,” he had remarked after Thursday’s conferences, and negotiations the following morning progressed well.<sup>14</sup> This optimistic mood was suddenly shattered that afternoon when violence broke out. A crowd of pickets and bystanders had been milling around in the 90-degree-plus heat of summer, when shortly after noon a delivery truck, convoyed by approximately twenty police cars, began to make its way toward one of the local retail stores. The strikers had earlier permitted a truck carrying hospital supplies to pass unmolested, but this second truck, transferring fresh vegetables, was obviously not heading toward the hospital. As the truck approached Third Street, ten or more pickets in an open truck moved to intercept it. They were followed by other strikers on foot and a crowd of onlookers. After a brief scuffle the more than fifty policemen opened fire on the unarmed pickets. In an unequal battle that lasted only a few minutes, two strikers were killed and more than sixty wounded. The workers insisted that this “Battle of Bloody Friday” had been a deliberate trap and that the police had opened fire without provoca-



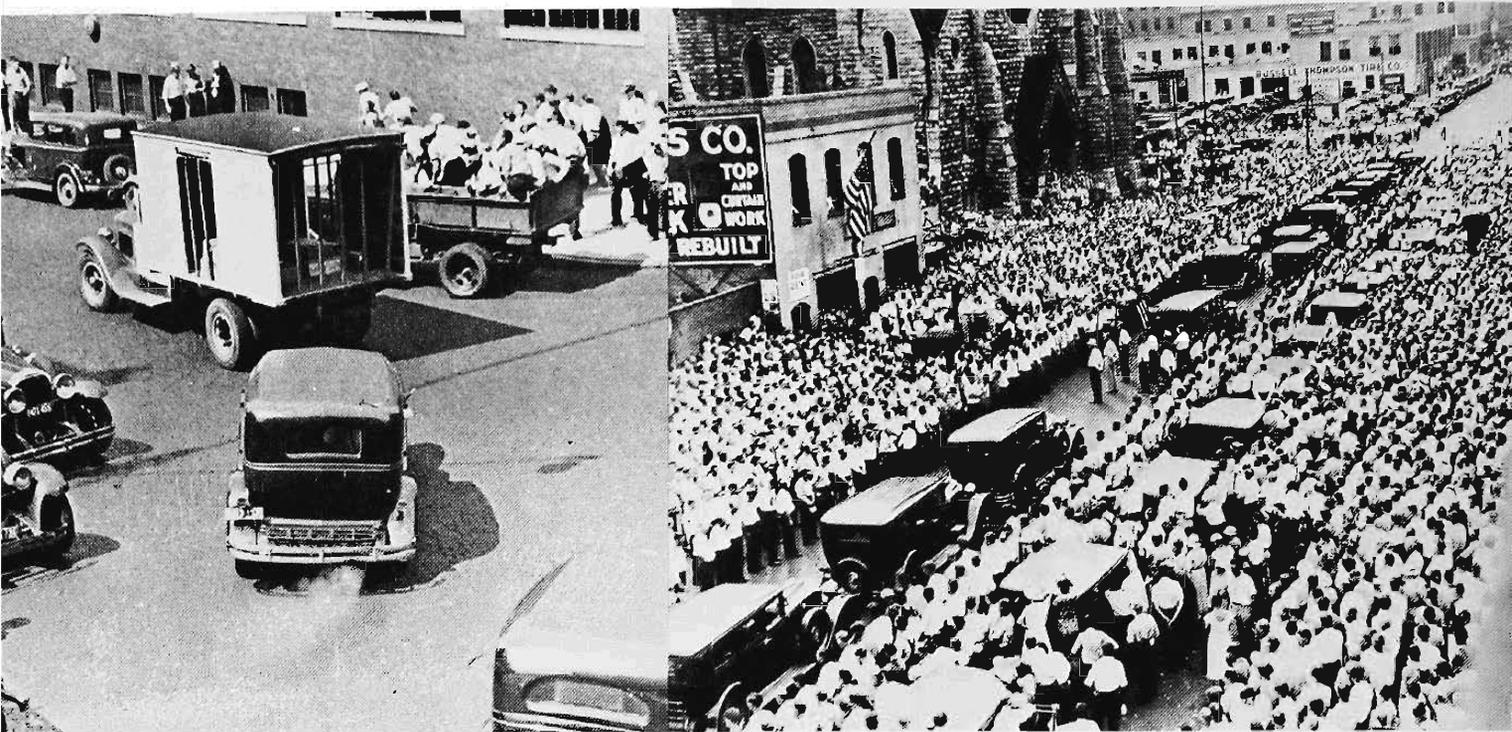
*MARTIAL LAW in Minneapolis during the 1934 strike meant the presence of National Guardsmen. These kept people back after a raid on union headquarters.*

<sup>11</sup> “Docket No. 77; Minneapolis General Drivers and Helpers Union Local No. 574 v. Minneapolis Employers of Truck Drivers and Helpers.” A copy of this order is in the large Haas collection (hereafter cited as Haas Papers) in the archives of the Catholic University of America.

<sup>12</sup> E. H. Dunnigan, “Preliminary Report of Commissioner of Conciliation, July 7, 1934,” in records of the National Labor Relations Board, Case No. 38 (new series), National Archives Record Group (hereafter cited NARG) 25. With the expiration of the National Labor Board in late June, Father Haas remained in Washington as an adviser to the new National Labor Relations Board.

<sup>13</sup> A copy of the proposal, dated July 19, 1934, is in the Haas Papers, as is Employers’ Advisory Council to Haas, July 20, 1934; Dunnigan to Hugh Kerwin, director of conciliation, July 19, 1934 (quote), NARG 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, July 19, 1934, p. 1. *The Washington Star* of July 21, 1934, declared that “hardly an hour before the outbreak, Rev. Francis Haas . . . had expressed optimism over the outlook for settlement.”



POLICE in cars convoyed a truck on July 20, 1934, when pickets in an open truck intercepted it. Police opened fire.

THE FUNERAL of Henry B. Ness, one of the pickets killed in the "Battle of Bloody Friday," drew thousands of workers, shown in front of strike headquarters.

tion. Others blamed the union leadership, insisting that union headquarters had been informed of the convoy and had ordered the unsuspecting workers into the area in a deliberate effort to provoke the shooting. Whatever the explanation, the police's assertion that they had fired only in self-defense was largely discredited when it was revealed later that forty-eight of the wounded had been shot in the back.<sup>15</sup>

To Father Haas the incident was both disheartening and inexcusable. On the day after his arrival in Minneapolis he had asked Chief of Police Michael J. Johannes to maintain a truce and to desist from convoying trucks during the early stages of the negotiations. The priest insisted that this assurance had been given. He noted in his diary, however, that the employers had met with Johannes that same evening and, by emphasizing "liberty of the streets," had convinced him to furnish the convoy on Friday.<sup>16</sup>

"We were progressing nicely," Father Haas recalled later. "It was because of the negotiations that we asked the chief not to convoy any trucks. He promised us he would not. We got an awfully bad setback as a result of Friday's violence. Aside from the tragedy, developments definitely have postponed any attempts for immediate settlement." Governor Olson concurred. "I dislike to become involved in a dispute with a public

official," he asserted, "but there is no question but that Mr. Johannes . . . promised Father Haas and me that he would not convoy any trucks until Saturday evening." After this outbreak of violence, Commissioner Dunnigan urged a declaration of martial law, but Olson and Father Haas both felt that negotiations could continue more calmly under a voluntary truce.<sup>17</sup>

The negotiations had undoubtedly suffered "an awfully bad setback." Union officials were discredited in the eyes of those who believed that the incident had been deliberately provoked in order to precipitate open class warfare. The employers, confident of the sympathies of Mayor A. G. ("Buzz") Bainbridge and Johannes, renewed their determination to break the strike and, if possible, Local 574 with it. The workers themselves were no less determined. Soup kitchens

<sup>15</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, July 21, 1934, p. 1; *Organizer*, July 21, 1934, p. 1; Meridel Le Sueur, "What Happens in a Strike," in *American Mercury*, 33:329-335 (November, 1934); Mayer, *Olson*, 207-211; Romer, in *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 19, 1964; and Walker, *American City*, 155-183.

<sup>16</sup> Haas Diary (quote), July 19, 1934, Haas Papers. See also Walker, *American City*, 169.

<sup>17</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, July 21 (Haas quote), July 22, p. 2 (Olson quote), 1934; "Memorandum," July 20, 1934, NARG 25.

were opened for the pickets, farmers donated produce to feed strikers and their families, and "women's auxiliaries" were set up to care for the wounded. On the night of the shooting union leaders organized a march on city hall and many embittered workers threatened to lynch both the mayor and the chief of police. Alarmed citizens across the country feared that Minneapolis was on the brink of civil war.<sup>18</sup>

Although the atmosphere was clearly not conducive to calm negotiations, Father Haas met with the employer representatives on the day following the shooting. The companies indicated a willingness to reinstate some of the strikers and to recognize the union's jurisdiction over inside workers in twenty-two of the more than one hundred fifty firms involved. On the other issues, however, they would not compromise: they refused to admit the union's jurisdiction over the other companies' warehouse employees, and they insisted that the wage dispute be submitted to the Regional Labor Board in St. Paul for arbitration.<sup>19</sup> The workers by this time had repudiated any intervention by the Regional Labor Board because they felt its official interpretation of the earlier agreement on July 7 had favored the employers. On July 23 Father Haas and Dunnigan suggested a compromise settlement calling for arbitration of wages and secret elections to determine employee representation, but the union rejected the first provision and the employers turned down the second.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Meridel Le Sueur, *North Star Country*, 289-297 (New York, 1945); Mayer, *Olson*, 210; Solow, in *Nation*, August 8, 1934; Lefkowitz, in *Review of Reviews*, May, 1935, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> Haas Diary, July 21, 1934, Haas Papers. A "Summary" of events (hereafter referred to as Summary), drafted by Haas, Dunnigan, and P. A. Donoghue of the NLRB on August 28, 1934, is in NARC 25.

<sup>20</sup> A copy of the proposal, dated July 23, 1934, is in the Haas Papers. The same envelope contains replies of the Employers' Committee and of President Brown of Local 574. See also *Organizer*, July 24, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Haas Diary, July 23-25, 1934, Haas Papers. The same collection includes a copy of the Haas-Dunnigan plan, which also is spelled out in *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 26, 1934, p. 1, and *Minneapolis Journal*, July 26, 1934, p. 2. See also Mayer, *Olson*, 211.

<sup>22</sup> Brown's reply is in the Haas Papers. It is dated July 26, 1934, and consequently union members may have known when they voted that the employers had already rejected the plan. See also *Organizer*, July 26, 1934, p. 1. Haas' remark is from his Diary, July 26, 1934, also in the Haas Papers.

<sup>23</sup> Letters of Haas and Dunnigan to the Employers' Committee and the committee's reply, all dated July 27, 1934, are in the Haas Papers. The employers' quote is from the *Minneapolis Journal*, July 26, 1934, p. 2.

WITH NEGOTIATIONS thus completely deadlocked, stronger measures seemed necessary. The two mediators, consequently, broke off discussions and, with the assistance of Olson and Bainbridge, began to draft a new proposal which the governor promised to support with the full authority of his office. This "Haas-Dunnigan plan" was submitted to each party at noon on July 25. According to its provisions the strike was to be called off immediately, all workers were to be reinstated, union elections were to be conducted by the Regional Labor Board, negotiations on wages and hours were to be undertaken as soon as employee representation was determined, and, if no agreement was reached, wage levels were to be established by a five-man board of arbitration. Wages, however, could not be set below minimums of 52½ cents an hour for drivers and 42½ cents an hour for other workers. Lloyd Garrison of the National Labor Relations Board in Washington had at first opposed this minimum wage provision, but Olson had insisted and Garrison finally agreed. Olson accompanied the release of this Haas-Dunnigan plan with the announcement that, unless both sides accepted the proposal by noon the following day, he would declare martial law and permit trucks to move throughout the city only with special military licenses.<sup>21</sup>

The governor hoped his threat of martial law would prompt the employers to accept the Haas-Dunnigan proposal since trucks could no longer be convoyed by local police sympathetic to the companies. As expected, President William S. Brown of Local 574 immediately notified the mediators that "by overwhelming majority in a secret ballot Local Union 574 accepts your proposal of July 25, 1934, to settle the strike." The governor's strategy failed, however, when the Employers' Committee accepted the plan only with modifications — elimination of the minimum wage clause and the provision to rehire all strikers. These modifications, Haas insisted, "nullified their acceptance."<sup>22</sup> Haas continued to meet with the employers to urge their agreement to the proposal without reservations, but to no avail. The Haas-Dunnigan plan, the employers claimed, would leave "the issue and the methods of the present strike wide open for repetition in the future." Therefore, in keeping with his earlier announcement, Olson on July 26 placed the city under martial law.<sup>23</sup>

Very little progress was made during the next ten days. On July 30 the two mediators submitted an amended version of the Haas-Dunnigan plan to the disputing parties, but once again the employers rejected it. Just before dawn on August 1 the National Guard raided union headquarters at 215 Eighth Street South, allegedly because pickets had assembled in violation of martial law. Fifty-five union members, includ-

ing leaders William Brown and Vincent and Miles Dunne, were imprisoned in a temporary military stockade at the state fairgrounds.<sup>24</sup>

On the following day the Employers' Advisory Committee submitted its own terms to Father Haas and Dunnigan: minimum wages of fifty cents an hour for drivers and forty cents for helpers, the reinstatement of strikers not involved in the violence of July 20, and secret elections to determine jurisdiction over the inside workers. Father Haas suggested certain revisions more favorable to the workers, and when the committee declined these the union rejected the whole proposal.<sup>25</sup> On August 3, under severe criticism for the recent attack on union headquarters, the National Guard raided the offices of the Citizens' Alliance in the Builders' Exchange. The Alliance had apparently been forewarned, however, and few incriminating documents were discovered. Olson later announced what most observers already knew or suspected: "The evidence seized corroborates my charge that the Citizens' Alliance dominates and controls the Employers' Advisory Committee, and that it maintains . . . stool pigeons . . . in . . . labor unions."<sup>26</sup>

On Sunday, August 5, Olson played his final card. He announced that, effective that midnight, no trucks would be permitted on city streets except those owned or operated by employers subscribing to the Haas-Dunnigan plan of July 25. The governor took this step partly to recapture the waning support of the workers. Under military permits issued since July 26, city trucking had returned to 65 per cent of prestrike volume, and union leaders vehemently accused the governor of thus using the National Guard to aid the employers. The Farmer-Labor administration, William Brown declared, was "the best strike-breaking force our union has ever gone up against."<sup>27</sup> Neither Father Haas nor Dunnigan had recommended this further step by the governor. "Olson intended putting his order into effect midnight last Friday," Dunnigan wrote on Monday, "but Haas and I persuaded him not to do so. We made the same effort Sunday night but he declined to yield." The mediators were not discouraged, however. "Haas and I worked on case from nine o'clock Sunday morning until three o'clock Monday morning," Dunnigan continued on August 6, "and it now begins to look as though our efforts to bring about a settlement is [sic] in sight." After eighteen hours of conferences, the commissioner's meaning was clearer than his syntax.<sup>28</sup>

The following ten days were undoubtedly the most difficult of the whole strike for Father Haas. In an attempt to nullify Olson's directive of August 5, the Employers' Committee petitioned the U.S. District Court the following day for an injunction to force the gov-

ernor to suspend martial law. Father Haas feared the worst. "If it is granted," he wrote a friend in Washington, "I dread to think of the violence and bloodshed that will follow." Olson argued the case personally on August 9, insisting that the employers' rights had not been abridged and warning the judges of the violence that would be unleashed if the troops were removed. After five days marked by uncertainty and almost no progress in strike negotiations, the court, on August 11, decided in favor of the governor, although the judges criticized him for his handling of the situation.<sup>29</sup>

On August 13, two days after the federal injunction was denied, Father Haas took the very controversial step of bypassing the union negotiators and presenting an employer proposal directly to a rank-and-file Strike Committee of One Hundred. The workers not only rejected the companies' plan, chiefly for its clause denying union jurisdiction over all inside workers, but also bitterly criticized Haas' conduct. "All my life I have been a follower of the Church," one worker declared, "and I say it's a crying shame when a man wearing the cloth of the Church as you do stands up before his brother workers and attempts to swindle them into acceptance of such a sell-out as you are giving us." The strikers' bulletin, the *Organizer*, declared that the mediators "thought they could put over the rotten settlement if they got a chance at the rank-and-file." Herbert Solow, in a letter to the *Nation* six weeks later, stated that Haas had first tried "to put something over on the strikers," and then ". . . a moral and almost physical wreck, withdrew his endorsement of the scheme he had urged the strikers to adopt."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> A copy of the amended proposal and the employers' reply, a letter from Joseph R. Cochran of the Employers' Committee to Haas, dated July 31, 1934, are in the Haas Papers. For accounts of the raid, see the Haas Diary for August 1, 1934; Walker, *American City*, 207; *Organizer*, August 1, 1934; *Minneapolis Tribune*, August 1, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Cochran to Haas, August 2; Haas to Cochran, August 2; Cochran to Haas, August 3; and Haas to Cochran, August 5, 1934, all in Haas Papers.

<sup>26</sup> Walker, *American City*, 212 (quote); Mayer, *Olson*, 217; *Minneapolis Tribune*, August 4, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Olson to Adjutant General Ellard A. Walsh, executive order no. 7, August 5, 1934, copy in Haas Papers; *Organizer*, August 1, 1934, p. 2 (Brown quote).

<sup>28</sup> Dunnigan to Hugh Kerwin, August 6, 1934, in records of the U.S. Conciliation Service, Case No. 176/1539, NARG 280; Haas Diary, August 5-7, 1934, Haas Papers.

<sup>29</sup> Haas to Agnes Regan, August 6, 1934 (quote), Haas Papers; Mayer, *Olson*, 217-219.

<sup>30</sup> Walker, *American City*, 218 (first quote); *Organizer*, August 14, 1934, p. 1; *Nation*, 139:352 (September 26, 1934). A copy of the employer proposal is in NARG 25. It also is in *Minneapolis Journal*, August 14, 1934, p. 1.

SUCH CRITICISM seems unjustified. Even after four weeks of negotiations the Employers' Committee still refused to meet jointly with the union officials, and consequently all communication between the two was carried on through the federal mediators. By this time Father Haas may have been willing to bypass the negotiators on both sides in an almost desperate effort to break the deadlock. The *Organizer*, moreover, although critical of Father Haas' appeal to the rank and file, carefully noted that he had not given the employers' plan his endorsement, but this point was apparently overlooked by other critics.<sup>31</sup> Finally, Father Haas' diary indicates that he agreed to this step only on recommendation of Reconstruction Finance Corporation officials who by this time were beginning to play a decisive role in the strike negotiations. Father Haas agreed to bypass the union negotiators and appeal to the rank-and-file committee only because he was bypassing the Employers' Committee also and was appealing, with RFC co-operation, directly to the leaders of the Citizens' Alliance.<sup>32</sup>

The federal mediators had been in contact with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation since late July. On July 26 Father Haas had notified Washington that "the Citizens' Alliance dominates the employers by the threat of cutting off bank credit." Many of the Alliance leaders were bank executives who had little personal interest in the trucking dispute but who were determined to see the union defeated and the open shop preserved in Minneapolis. The same bank executives, a member of the NLRB staff reported to Father Haas

on July 28, were indebted to the RFC for more than \$25,000,000, and the mediators immediately sought ways to bring the influence of the RFC into the negotiations.<sup>33</sup> On August 8 President Roosevelt visited Rochester, Minnesota, to take part in ceremonies honoring Doctors William and Charles Mayo, and Olson discussed the Minneapolis situation there with the president. Roosevelt immediately contacted Jesse Jones of the RFC, and Jones then telephoned Father Haas.<sup>34</sup> Jones revealed that at least part of that multimillion-dollar loan might be recalled from Minneapolis because the collateral on which it was based had shrunk in value since the strike began, and he suggested that Father Haas meet with the bank executives that afternoon. The priest realized that the negotiations could now turn very unpleasant and he advocated extreme caution and secrecy. "Suggest no news release giving details in present status of controversy," he wired the NLRB as talks with the RFC began.<sup>35</sup>

In the week following Roosevelt's visit to Minnesota, Father Haas kept in daily telephone contact with Jones in Washington and with local RFC officials in Minneapolis. All this time the employers' position was becoming more and more difficult. On August 11 the District Court in St. Paul denied their request for an injunction, and two days later the rank-and-file committee angrily rejected the settlement proposal they offered through Father Haas. As leading Minneapolis bankers—the chief financiers of the employers' resis-

*CHIEF OF POLICE Michael Johannes was determined to keep trucks moving regardless of picketing.*

<sup>31</sup> *Organizer*, August 14, 1934, p. 1. During the meeting with the Strike Committee of One Hundred, this paper pointed out, Father Haas "was pale as a ghost and sweating." For further criticism of the priest, see Walker, *American City*, 217, and Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step*, 30 (New York, 1964). John W. Edelman of the American Federation of Hosiery Workers defended Father Haas against Solow's criticism in *Nation*, 139:271 (September 5, 1934): "We have found this priest a real liberal on economic issues and one of the last men in this country who would attempt to trick or deceive a group of labor unionists. . . . I, for one, resent this sort of loosely worded and unsupported attack on one of the few persons in this country who are willing to make real sacrifices of time and effort in the cause of peace in industry."

<sup>32</sup> Haas Diary, August 11, 1934, Haas Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Memorandum, July 26, 1934, NARC 25; NLRB to Haas, July 28, 1934, Haas Papers; Haas Diary, July 26 to August 8, 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Haas Diary, August 8, 1934; a memorandum of a member of the NLRB staff, August 8, 1934, summarizing telephone conversation with Haas, NARC 25; Mayer, *Olson*, 218.

<sup>35</sup> Haas to NLRB, August 7, 1934, NARC 25.



tance — became more concerned over the safety of their government loans, members of the Employers' Committee began searching for an acceptable compromise. On August 15 they notified Father Haas that they were willing to permit employee elections in all 166 firms if the National Labor Relations Board in Washington would recommend them. Union leaders immediately agreed to this proposal, and Father Haas requested the NLRB that evening to send a special representative to Minneapolis to conduct the elections. The strike's first major breakthrough had occurred.<sup>30</sup>

Father Haas, convinced that union elections alone could not solve the dispute, continued to work behind the scenes with Jones to reach a full settlement. On August 16, the day P. A. Donoghue of the NLRB left Washington to conduct the Minneapolis elections, Father Haas had a particularly stormy session with several leading bankers of the Citizens' Alliance. Jones had suggested that he "knock their heads together," and apparently he did. One bank executive, according to Father Haas' notes, was "furious." He heatedly denounced the "politics in this thing," threatened to call a mass meeting of citizens to demand the recall of "you two," and then slammed the receiver with a "Damn!"<sup>37</sup>

Disagreeable as such sessions were, however, they were bringing the controversy closer to a settlement. At 6:00 P.M. on August 18 Father Haas again spoke with Jones by telephone, and Jones immediately contacted Albert Strong, the "prime force in the Citizens' Alliance." At 9:00 A.M. Strong phoned the NLRB's Donoghue and asked for a conference the following day. When Donoghue met with Strong and the Employers' Committee on August 19, the employers finally agreed to rehire all strikers without discrimination and to accept arbitration of wages above basic minimums demanded by the union. That evening Donoghue and Father Haas worked until long past midnight drafting the final agreement, and on August 20 the union accepted it by an overwhelming vote. The companies agreed to the proposal by a vote of 155 to 3 the following day. After thirty-six days of violence and controversy, peace was finally restored.<sup>38</sup>

The final agreement, in the words of Olson, was "practically an acceptance of the Haas-Dunnigan proposal." The strike was to be called off immediately, all strikers were to be reinstated in order of seniority, elections were to be conducted in all firms by the Regional Labor Board, and collective bargaining was to begin as soon as representatives were chosen. The agreement differed from the Haas-Dunnigan plan only on the question of wages. Both plans provided for arbitration of wages if no agreement could be reached

through collective bargaining, but the final settlement established minimum wages of fifty cents an hour for drivers and forty cents for others, while the Haas-Dunnigan plan had provided minimums 2½ cents higher.<sup>39</sup>

Reaction to the strike settlement was generally favorable. The *Organizer* of August 22 ran a one-word main headline: "VICTORY!" Union leader Vincent Dunne considered the settlement "substantially what we have fought for and bled for since the beginning of the strike." His brother Grant agreed: "We did not get all we thought we ought to have, but the union is recognized, it is now well established and — what is better — the machinery of arbitration is established whereby disputes ought to be settled without trouble." Although the employers themselves declined to comment, the conservative *Minneapolis Journal* called the agreement "a fair compromise." "There is, in fact," the paper added, "very little difference between the final settlement and the employers' proposal of July 25, nine days after the strike began." (This was not quite accurate since on July 25 the employers had rejected any minimum wage provisions as well as the reinstatement of strikers involved in the earlier violence and union elections in many of the 166 firms.) The feelings of the rank and file were indicated by a twelve-hour celebration that broke out as soon as the final agreement was announced.<sup>40</sup>

Father Haas could be justly proud of his part in the settlement. The strike had lasted thirty-six days and had cost the city an estimated \$50,000,000. Bank clearings during the strike were down \$3,000,000 a day, approximately \$5,000,000 was lost in wages, and the maintenance of the National Guard had cost the taxpayers over \$300,000.<sup>41</sup> The violence that erupted left four persons dead and scores injured.

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<sup>30</sup> Cochran to Haas, August 15, 1934, Haas Papers; Haas Diary, August 15, 1934; Memorandum, August 14, 1934, NARG 25.

<sup>31</sup> Haas Diary, August 16, 1934.

<sup>32</sup> "Twin Cities," in *Fortune*, April, 1936, p. 112 (quote about Strong); Haas Diary, August 18–19, 1934; *Minneapolis Journal*, August 22, 1934, p. 1; *Minneapolis Tribune*, August 22, 1934, p. 1. Both newspapers for that date include a chronology of the strike, and there is an outline of events from July 8 to August 22, 1934, in the Haas Papers.

<sup>33</sup> *St. Paul Dispatch*, August 22, 1934, p. 4 (Olson quote); *Minneapolis Journal*, August 22, 1934, p. 1; *Minneapolis Tribune*, August 22, p. 1, and August 23, p. 1, 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Walker, *American City*, 218 (Vincent Dunne quote); *Minneapolis Journal*, August 22, p. 2 (Grant Dunne quote), August 23, p. 14, 1934.

<sup>35</sup> *St. Paul Dispatch*, August 22, 1934, p. 1; *Minneapolis Journal*, August 22, 1934, p. 1.

Perhaps Father Haas had done more than help settle a strike and restore order to a city after five weeks of bitter industrial dispute. To him a strike was not necessarily evil, not simply something to settle. "A strike is like an operation," he frequently remarked. "Of course it is not a good thing in itself. But when there is a diseased condition in an industry a strike may be necessary. The refusal of an employer to deal

with a union, low wages and long hours are diseases in an industry. Very often the strike is the only way to remove these evils, and under these conditions it is wholly justified."<sup>42</sup>

Minneapolis in 1934 was undoubtedly afflicted by serious disease. For more than fifty years the city's economy had been dominated by a small aristocracy of bankers and industrialists. The rights of workers had been denied, collective bargaining had been a sham, wage and hour standards were among the lowest in the country, and the city seethed with class hatred. In the violent strike of 1934 the city's deep-rooted disease was brought into the open, and in the settlement of August 21 the first steps of relief were provided. Reasonable standards of wages and hours were established, grievance machinery was set up, and the right of collective bargaining was explicitly recognized. Even more important, the power of the Citizens' Alliance was broken, the nonunion shop was overthrown, and the right of workers to organize unions of their own choice was guaranteed. Minneapolis never again had a strike as violent, nor did it need one. The strike settlement that August left the city healthier than it had been for decades, and major credit for this agreement was due to the patience, perseverance, and mediation skill of Father Haas.<sup>43</sup>

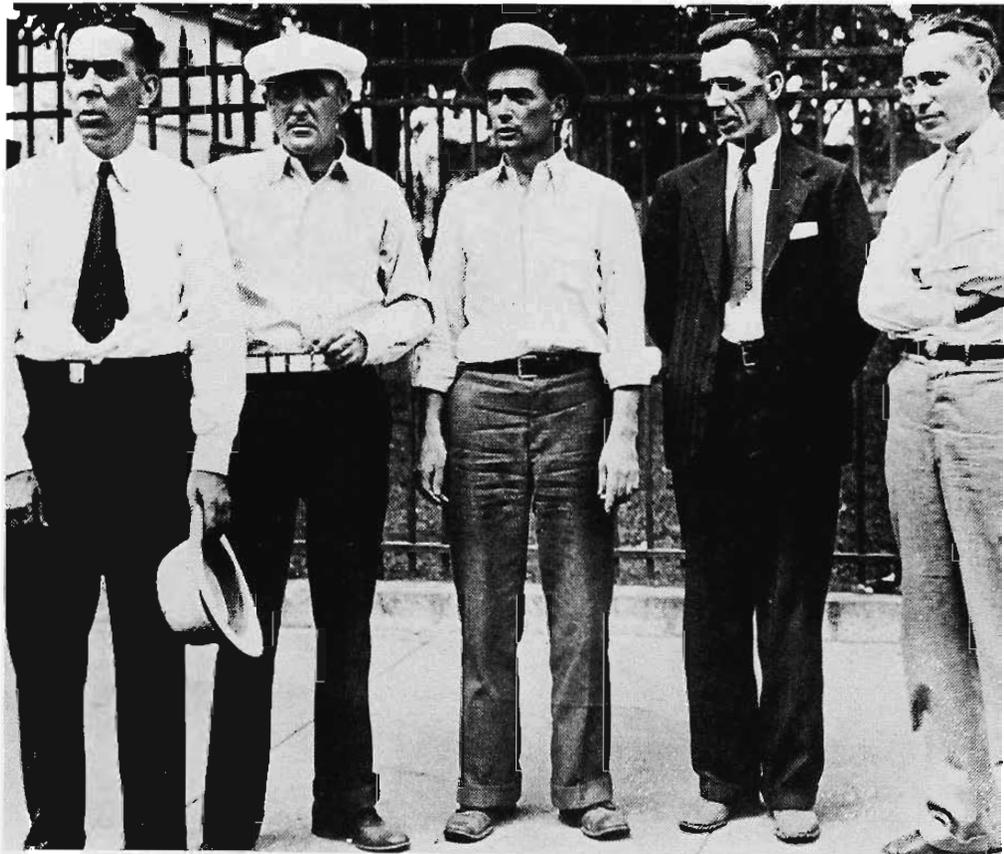
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<sup>42</sup> Quoted in the *Toledo Catholic Chronicle*, July 23, 1937, from a clipping in the Haas Papers. See also Haas, *Rights and Wrongs in Industry*, 30 (New York, 1933) and *The American Labor Movement*, 23 (New York, 1937).

<sup>43</sup> Father Haas returned to Minneapolis in 1937 to help settle the strike of 700 workers of the Minneapolis General Electric Company. In all, he was credited with taking part in the settlement of more than 1,500 strikes. In October, 1943, he resigned as chairman of the government's Fair Employment Practices Committee and the next month was installed as bishop of the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Roman Catholic diocese. He died August 29, 1953. E. H. Dunmigan, his colleague in mediating the 1934 strike, suffered a stroke in October, 1934, and died the following December.

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*PRISONERS* for some 24 hours in a military stockade at the state fairgrounds were the three union leaders in center — William Brown, Miles Dunne, and Vincent Dunne. A third Dunne brother, Grant (left), and the union's attorney, Albert Goldman (right) of Chicago, Illinois, met the trio at the time of their release.





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