



# Labor, Loyalty, and Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners & World War I

*Carl R. Weinberg*

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## **Labor, Loyalty, and Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners & World War I** Carl R. Weinberg

On April 5, 1918, as American troops fought German forces on the Western Front, German American coal miner Robert Prager was hanged from a tree outside Collinsville, Illinois, having been accused of disloyal utterances about the United States and chased out of town by a mob. In *Labor, Loyalty, and Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners and World War I*, Carl R. Weinberg offers a new perspective on the Prager lynching and confronts the widely accepted belief among labor historians that workers benefited from demonstrating loyalty to the nation.

The first published study of wartime strikes in southwestern Illinois is a powerful look at a group of people whose labor was essential to the war economy but whose instincts for class solidarity spawned a rebellion against mine owners both during and after the war. At the same time, their patriotism wreaked violent working-class disunity that crested in the brutal murder of an immigrant worker. Weinberg argues that the heightened patriotism of the Prager lynching masked deep class tensions within the mining communities of southwestern Illinois that exploded after the Great War ended.

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