

The bloody West Virginia Mine War of 1920-21: A Battle for Workers' Rights



Thunder In the Mountains: The West Virginia Mine War, 1920–21 by Lon Savage

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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The West Virginia Mine War of 1920-21 was a violent struggle between coal miners and their employers. The war began in May 1920, when miners went on strike to protest low wages and dangerous working conditions. The strike was met with violence from company guards and state militia, and the conflict quickly escalated into a full-scale war.

The Causes of the War

The West Virginia Mine War was the culmination of years of tension between miners and their employers. Miners were paid low wages and worked long hours in dangerous conditions. They were also subject to the arbitrary rule of company bosses, who often fired miners who tried to organize unions.

In 1919, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) began organizing miners in West Virginia. The UMWA demanded higher wages, shorter hours, and safer working conditions. The coal companies refused to negotiate with the union, and the miners went on strike in May 1920.

The Outbreak of Violence

The strike was met with violence from company guards and state militia. Guards fired on miners and their families, and the militia used artillery to shell miners' camps. The violence quickly escalated into a full-scale war.

One of the most notorious incidents of the war was the Matewan Massacre. On May 19, 1920, a group of armed miners and their supporters confronted a group of company guards in the town of Matewan. A shootout ensued, and seven miners and three guards were killed.

The Battle of Blair Mountain

The Battle of Blair Mountain was the largest and bloodiest battle of the West Virginia Mine War. The battle began on August 29, 1921, when a group of miners and their supporters attacked a coal company's camp at Blair Mountain. The battle lasted for five days and resulted in the deaths of dozens of miners and their supporters.

The End of the War

The West Virginia Mine War ended in September 1921, when the miners agreed to a settlement that included a wage increase and a reduction in the workday. However, the miners did not achieve their goal of union recognition.

The Legacy of the War

The West Virginia Mine War was a watershed moment in the history of the American labor movement. The war showed the power of workers to fight for their rights, and it helped to pave the way for the passage of labor laws that protect workers' rights.

The legacy of the West Virginia Mine War continues to shape the way that workers are treated today. The war showed that workers can win victories through collective action, and it inspired workers to continue to fight for their rights.

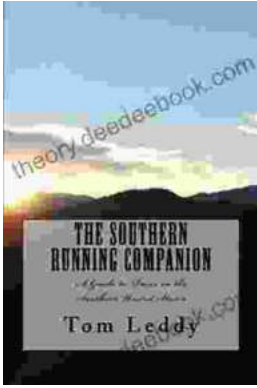


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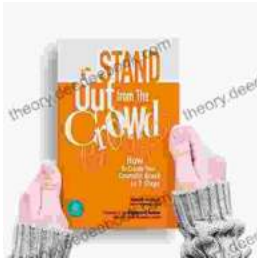
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