Sacramento

The Marauders

Ten years ago movie theaters around the country were showing "The Wild Ones," a disturbing film about a band of young motorcyclists who invade and terrorize a small town. A New York Times review called the film, which starred Marlon Brando as one of the ruffians, "an ugly, debauched and frightening view of a small but . . . menacing element of modern youth."

The ugly, frightening view has been a recurring reality in California during the last few years. Gangs of cycle-mounted hoodlums with names such as Hell's Angels, Stray Satans and Iron Horsemen have roamed the highways committing crimes ranging from car theft to assault and rape.

Last week California's Attorney General, Thomas C. Lynch, released a detailed report on the state's motorcycle hoodlums. The report depicts the gangs' activities as consisting mainly of drinking, sex and crime—particularly group terrorism, the pattern of which is fairly constant. Mounted hoodlums in groups ranging from a dozen to a hundred or more, often accompanied by their girl friends ("sheep"), make a "run" on a small town and "bust it up."

Such a "run" was made on Portersville, a town near Los Angeles, on Labor Day weekend in 1963. A large band of ruffians took over the center of the town, blocking traffic and pawing women in the halted cars. Six men entered a bar, beat an old man and tried to abduct a barmaid.

The Attorney General's report, which cites many instances of such depradations, is part of a major effort to surmount some of the problems encountered by law officers in their efforts to curb the motorcycle gangs. One problem is the hit-and-run tactics of the terrorists, which make identification and apprehension difficult. Another is that the hoodlums usually intimidate witnesses, threatening them with beatings or worse if they tell what they saw.

When he issued the report last week Attorney General Lynch announced plans for closer cooperation between state and local police on the matter. He also urged "increased firmness" in prosecuting offenders, better protection of witnesses, and fuller awareness among law enforcement officials of "the threat that members of the group pose to the peace of this state."

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