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# IWW and Russian People's House Raided: Men are Clubbed Without Mercy; 52 Held for Exile:

Officials Shroud Brutal Plots in Mystery —  
One Talks of "Plot" for "Revolution" Today —  
Caminetti Issued Warrants — Many of the Victims Released.

[events of Nov. 7, 1919]

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Police, plainclothesmen, and Federal agents, under the joint direction of the Department of Justice and the Army Intelligence Division, swooped down upon the Russian People's House, at 133 East 15th Street, in one of the most brutal raids ever witnessed in the city at 8:45 o'clock last night. Chief William J. Flynn of the United States Secret Service was in charge.

Clubs and, according to some of the victims, blackjacks were used without mercy. Nearly 100 prisoners, including 8 women, were rushed down to the Department of Justice office, in the Park Row Building, in police patrols. Much material, including literature, account books, and other accessories, was taken downtown in United States Army motor cars.

The prisoners were taken to the 14th floor, where they were cross-examined, and nearly one-half were released. Officials refused to give any information to reporters, declaring nothing would be given out until this morning. One official, who would not allow his name to be used, told the newspapermen that 36 warrants had been issued by the United States Commissioner of Immigration A.A. Caminetti.

He said similar raids had been planned in various parts of the country to take place simultaneously. A "plot" by "anarchists and revolutionists" was back of the raid, he said, and the warrants had been issued to catch "ringleaders." Leaflets calling for a revolution had been distributed by means of throwing bunches from rooftops and allowing the wind to carry them away,

he declared, but he did not produce a copy of the leaflets. The "revolution" was ordered for today in the leaflets, he said.

**Fifty men and 2 of the women were taken to police headquarters later, on warrants calling for their deportation as "undesirable aliens." All the prisoners, including those released, were fingerprinted and photographed, it was learned.**

This is the 4th time the police have descended upon the Russian People's House and assaulted the men and women whom, by chance, they had found there.

A witness of the event said that he saw one of the Russians trying to rush out of the building, his face and clothing covered with blood. Agonized cries were heard.

One who was close to the scene while the raiders were covering themselves with the blood of men and women against whom no crime had been charged heard heavy thuds as of clubs descending on human flesh.

All who attempted to escape were driven back into the building, and none but officers were permitted to enter. Two *Call* reporters who attempted to gather the facts of the assault were threatened with arrest if they did not leave at once. One policeman on the stoop of the building shouted to the crowd that had collected outside: "If there's a soldier among you, get after them!"

**Beaten with Blackjacks.**

Two hundred men and women were in the meeting room of the building when the police from the East 22nd Street precinct, Department of Justice, and Bomb Squad operatives, with probably a sprinkling of Lusk Committee agents, descended upon them. They had been gathered together to attend a business meeting of the Federation of Unions of Russian Workers.

They were beaten, not only with clubs, but with blackjacks. After the police and other guardians of law had their fill of clubbing and blackjacking, they crowded the Russians together in the back of the hall and cross-examined them. Then they bandaged the heads of those who had suffered more than others, but even the bandages were heavily bloodstained.

Meanwhile, patrol wagons which had been stationed in the neighborhood came clanging up and were filled as fast as they appeared with the Russians who had been beaten up. Most of them had their heads bandaged.

They were thrown down steps of the stoop without ceremony. One of them moaned loudly and the crowd outside mimicked him. The crowd was not permitted to approach too closely and a *Call* reporter was unable to see what marks had been made by the clubs of the police on the faces of the assaulted men and women.

The Russians were shoved into the patrol wagons without mercy and were packed into it like cattle. No less than 15 patrol wagons were packed with human beings. Bundles of literature were also carted away.

The crowd that was standing outside was, largely, a middle-class crowd. Some of them chuckled with delight. Three middle-aged women who seemed to have the marks of education and refinement laughed with delight. A *Call* reporter asked some of those in the crowd, including workmen, what had happened. "Bolsheviki" answered one. "They were seditious," answered a rather old man.

They used the words "seditious," "Bolsheviki," "anarchist" as if that was sufficient explanation for the merciless beating of men and women.

Ostentatious mystery and a great deal of bustle prevailed at the Park Row Building where the patrol wagons discharged their battered freight. Reporters were absolutely taboo, and it was announced that noth-

ing would be given out until this morning, by orders of Chief Flynn of the United States Secret Service.

The prisoners, most of whom bore visible evidence of the brutality to which they had been subjected, were rushed up to the 14th floor, where United States Commissioner Wallace has his office. Newspapermen who attempted to glean the reason for the raid, the charges under which the prisoners were held, and who was responsible for the raid, were brusquely told to get out.

"It's a government affair," they were told. "Nothing will be given out until tomorrow morning. Chief Flynn has given these instructions, and you'll have to get out." They got out.

Shortly after the arrival of the patrol wagons, batches of men began to be released. It was learned from one of them that the first question put to the crowd of prisoners when they were lined up on the 14th floor was: "How many of you men have been in the army?"

Fully a dozen stepped forward and they were told to go. The rest were being slowly put through the mill of examination and cross-examination and released in rapid order. The whole affair, from the standpoint of the bustling, busy, and mysteriously important government agents discovering any violation of law had taken on the aspect of one grand fizzle before very long.

Following the patrols several cargoes of "documents" — filing cases containing the names of students in the various Americanization classes conducted by the Russian People's House, in English, arithmetic, civics, etc., bookkeepers' ledgers, pads of blank writing paper, typewritten instruction sheets for teachers and students, and other material that a school would naturally yield up to the zealous efforts of Chief Flynn's headhunters.

**Wind Scatters Loot.**

As one of the detectives waddled into the corridor of the Park Row Building, his arms loaded with a heterogeneous collection of loot, a sudden gust of wind surged around him, scattering part of his precious find. Among the trophies he had been bearing tenderly was a quantity of bathroom tissue, which went whirling around the corridor.

The detective, breathing heavily, hopped around

after the flying sheets with great energy. He did not stop until he had retrieved every one of the flimsy papers. It was a fine expression of official zeal and sagacity in preventing the loss of what in the eyes of the Department of Justice probably is conclusive evidence of a plot "agin the government."

Jacob Uden, 34, a Russian, of 26 East 2nd Street, was one of those beaten and arrested. He enlisted in the United States Army on August 6, 1918; served at Camp Sheridan and Camp Upton until December 23, when he was given an honorable discharge, with a character of "very good."

### **Shows Discharge Papers.**

He was a member of Company 3, Development Battalion, Camp Upton, on his discharge. He exhibited his discharge papers after his release, with a bitter smile.

"I went into the People's House and sat down," said Uden, who is a laborer, in broken English. "There were 50 of us in the room, on the ground floor. We were waiting for our classes to be ready.

**"Some detectives came in, and they pushed us up against the end of the room. I asked one why he was pushing me, and he lifted up his leg and**

**kicked me in the stomach. Then another one hit me in the head with a club. Others were hit. Everybody was hit. There was blood. I saw it, and when they pushed us together close, like in the subway, I got some on my face."**

### **Service Man Released.**

"Then they took us down here. Upstairs, they asked us who had been in the army, and I said I had, and they let me go."

From the others who were released it was learned that only the most perfunctory questions were asked of them. Age, nationality, citizenship, occupation, etc., seemed to be all the officials responsible for the assault cared to be interested in. No specific alleged violation of any law on the statute books figured in the examination.

"It's as if someone high up had said to himself, 'Well, things are kind of dull tonight; guess I'll go out and break a few heads,'" said one of the released men, who declined to give his name. "Nothing has been done, no crime committed. We were attending classes, some of us; others reading newspapers, smoking, and talking. Then — the Cossacks!

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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