
**Red Headquarters Are Raided Here;
Revolt Plan Bared:
Bomb Squad and Federal Agents Seize
Literature Calling for May Day Revolution:
Two Found in Apartment:
Documents Indicate They are High Officials of Russia's Third International:
Third Arrested in Theatre:
Is Delegate to "Underground Convention" — Papers
Show Moscow Directed Conspiracy Here.**

Unsigned report in *The New York Times*, v. 102, whole no. 23,107 (April 30, 1921), pp. 1, 3.

Detectives and agents of the Department of Justice under Charles J. Scully, head of the Radical Squad of the Department of Justice, and Detective Sergeant James J. Gegan, head of the Bomb Squad, shortly before last midnight arrested Abraham Jakira, 32 years old, of 170 Bleecker Street, and Israel Amter, alias Julius Farber, 40 years old, of 205 Brook Avenue, the Bronx, in Jakira's apartment and seized data of the various Communist parties in this country, which Scully and Gegan declared would lead to wholesale arrests of radicals throughout the United States on charges of criminal anarchy.

A few minutes after Jakira and Amter were arrested, several agents of the Department of Justice appeared with a man [Edward Lindgren] who said he was John Edward Siebert, 41 years old, a printer, living at 2656 East 27th Street, Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, who was arrested in a motion picture theatre in Sheepshead Bay shortly after 10 o'clock on a charge of criminal anarchy.

The man and his wife arrived from Pittsburgh at 6 o'clock† and Federal agents trailed the couple to

Sheepshead Bay. A satchel checked by Siebert at the Pennsylvania Station revealed that he came here to attend the secret convention of the "Underground Party," or violent faction of the United Communist Party, which is to be held tomorrow.‡

Revolt Plot Dictated by Moscow.

When the men were arrested in the apartment of Mrs. Helen Ware, on the 5th floor of the Bleecker Street house, the detectives also uncovered three loaded magazine pistols and bundles of circulars similar to those which had been distributed at different points of the city by communists, calling for the overthrow of the government on May Day, tomorrow.

Scully and Gegan said the arrests were the most important made since the organization of the Communist Party in this country during the war. They asserted that among the data seized in three trunks in the apartment they found communications from Moscow revealing that the men were high officials of the American branch of the Third International, with

†- Reporter error: Bureau of Investigation reports clearly indicated that Lindgren's wife did not make the trip to or from Pittsburgh.

‡- Equation of the "underground party" with "violent faction" is, of course, patently absurd. The United Communist Party and the Communist Party of America amalgamated in a Joint Unity Convention held at Woodstock, New York, May 15-28, 1921. It seems extremely likely that the Bureau of Investigation's raid on the National Headquarters of the UCP was a fortuitous accident; their belief seems to have been that they were tracking an important national organizer from Pittsburgh to the site of a national convention in New York.

headquarters in Moscow.

These communications were alleged to show a movement by the Bolshevist government to interfere with and overthrow the government of the United States.

Detectives Use Pistols.

The arrest of the men followed plans developed by the officials of the local bureau of the Department of Justice in cooperation with the detectives of the Bomb Squad during the last four weeks. It was not expected, however, that the arrests would be productive of such good results.

The detectives and government agents held up the men with pistols after they had surprised them in one of five rooms in the apartment, which the prisoners said were used by "The Writers' Club."

When Jakira and Amter were taken to Police Headquarters in a patrol wagon, the former admitted that although he came here from Russia 9 years ago, he never had attempted to be naturalized, while Amter said he was a waiter and a journalist, and admitted he was arrested on a disorderly conduct charge and sentenced to two days in the Tombs [jail] in connection with a radical disturbance during the war. Amter described himself as a musician and a translator of German.

The detectives said Mrs. Ware was the daughter of Mrs. Ella Reeve Bloor, the national organizer of the United Communist Party in the country.† She is the mother of 5 children, who were found in the apartment by the raiders. She was not arrested.

Siebert [Lindgren] Arrest Important.

Scully said the arrest of Siebert [Lindgren] was a very important one. He said the man was known in this city and in Pittsburgh under the aliases of James Flynn and John Landy, and that he had a union printers' card in his pocket made out under the latter name.

Federal agents had been watching Siebert's [Lindgren's] movements in Pittsburgh for three weeks, Scully said, and when it was learned that he was coming to this city to attend the secret convention of the

"Underground Party" of the United Communist Party, several agents were assigned to trail him.

The agents saw Siebert [Lindgren] check his handbag and a small typewriter in the baggage room of the Pennsylvania Station, and three hours later when he and his wife entered the motion picture theatre in Sheepshead Bay they communicated with Chief Flynn, who ordered them to arrest the man and seize his luggage.

Scully explained that Siebert was known to be one of the "intellectuals" of the United Communist Party and that the government secret service had obtained information that he frequently carried important documents regarding proposed radical movements in the country.

Siebert [Lindgren] was allowed to accompany his wife home, and then he was taken in an automobile to the Pennsylvania Station, where the agents seized the handbag and the typewriter. Examination of the handbag revealed several bundles of documents and literature which, the agents said this morning, justified them in locking him up on a charge of violating the state law designed to prevent criminal anarchy.

Propaganda Plan Revealed.

Among the documents was a typewritten resolution, which Siebert [Lindgren] was alleged to have admitted that he intended to introduce at the secret convention tomorrow [*sic.*, May 15]. Scully would only make public an excerpt from the resolution, which read as follows:

Whereas, The Underground organization of the United Communist Party has reached a degree of development that warrants an extension of Communist activities on a broader scale than is possible with the exclusively secret organization of the Central Executive Committee.

Resolved, To create a national Legal propaganda organization which, under the control of the United Communist Party, will enable us to reach greater masses of the workers with the Communist propaganda and agitation. The name of the organization shall be the Workers' League of America. The program of the Workers' League of America shall consist of a concise digest of the program of the United Communist Party, except that it shall make no direct declaration in regard to armed insurrection, leaving propaganda of this nature to the Underground party.

†- It is doubtful that Ella Reeve Bloor held this particular title in the UCP.

Siebert [Lindgren] was questioned for hours at Police Headquarters by Detective Sergeant Gegan and Scully. They would not reveal the results of the examination, however. They said Siebert [Lindgren] knew he had been under surveillance for some time, but thought he had eluded the Federal agents when he left Pittsburgh.

When being questioned he said he was a friend of Eugene Debs, and at one point in the examination said: "Debs is a man. He isn't afraid to speak out his feelings on public questions. You fellows do all your work in an underhanded way. We don't resort to such tactics."

One of the inquisitors then was reported to have asked him why the secret convention was called of the United Communist Party, but he would not answer the question.

Jakira and Amter were locked up on charges of criminal anarchy, and squads of detectives immediately were sent throughout the city in automobiles to round up other members of the radical groups with whom Jakira and Amter were found to be affiliated. The detectives said they believed the arrests had circumvented a plot to cause disturbance in this city on Sunday [May Day].

Detectives Gather Near Apartment.

Shortly after 11 o'clock, groups of detectives and Department of Justice agents met near the Bleecker Street house where Detectives Serge and Gegan and Chief Scully assigned them to posts on roofs, in the yard, and in the hallways leading to Mrs. Ware's apartment.†

Gegan and Scully, with a dozen detectives, then

crept up to the door, and without warning crashed into the apartment.‡ They said they found Jakira and Amter in one of two rooms which Mrs. Ware said the men had hired from her three months ago. When the leaders of the raiding party ordered them to throw up their hands, they said, both men made a move toward the drawer of a desk in a corner of the room.

Half of the raiding party jumped between the men and the desk while Gegan and Scully grappled with the men.§ Investigation of the drawer revealed the presence of three fully loaded magazine pistols there. Jakira and Amter were then handcuffed, and the detectives and Department of Justice agents then began a systematic investigation of the apartment.

One group of detectives uncovered three trunks in an adjoining room and upon forcing them open they disclosed documents, manifestos, the constitution and bylaws, and other paraphernalia of the Party of America, the Communist Party of America, and the Young Communist Party.Δ

Minutes of Meetings Found.

The trunks also contained the minutes of hundreds of meetings of the three communist parties in this city, as well as the names and addresses of officers of the branches of all three parties throughout the United States and Canada.ß

Communications from these officials to officials of the parties to the communist parties of this city were of such a radical nature, the leaders of the raiding party said, that wholesale arrests of these men would follow on charges of conspiring to overthrow the government by force.

Other communications, they said, revealed that

†- There is no corroborating evidence of any officers or agents having been posted on rooftops in any of the various Bureau of Investigation agent reports of the raid on UCP headquarters. Melodramatic ad-libbing by the unnamed reporter is very probable.

‡- While Special Agent in Charge Charles J. Scully was in charge of the Bureau of Investigation agents involved in the raid and in contact with them periodically by telephone, he was not on the scene, contrary to the colorful reportage here. In addition to crashing in without warning, the detectives and agents crashed in without warrants, it should be noted.

§- This melodramatic scene of gun grabbing and grappling never happened.

Δ- The headquarters raided was that of the United Communist Party of America, which was in the process of constructing a youth section called the Young Communist League. The only documents present from the old Communist Party of America was material in the nature of interparty communications.

ß- Based on documents preserved in the Bureau of Investigation's investigative files by the National Archives and Records Administration (collection M-1085, reels 939 and 940), there were minutes of *a couple dozen* meetings of the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party seized, as well as extensive subscription lists to party publications. While this information was doubtlessly of great use to the secret police apparatus, there seems to have been no master list of party members taken.

Jakira, Amter, and other officers of the radical movements in this country were in constant communication with the headquarters of the Third International in Moscow and that movements for interference with the operation of the government of the United States were being dictated by the Bolshevik government.

One of the trunks, Gegan and Scully said, was filled with maps of the United States containing statistics of the strength of the various revolutionary groups here. These maps revealed the total membership of the groups in every city and community of any size throughout the United States, and disclosed that more than 95 percent of the members of the radical organizations were foreigners.†

Russians, Poles, and Italians were found to be in the majority in the membership of the Red organizations with which Jakira and Amter were affiliated with, Gegan and Scully said, and statistics revealed that in the mining districts of Pennsylvania and West Virginia, as well as in several other states east of Chicago, the percentage of radicals in those districts was very high.‡

A noticeable thing in connection with the statistics, the officers said, was the fact that a great many of the members of the branches of the radical organizations in those communities were illiterates.§ The

statistics also revealed a surprisingly large number of Negroes listed as radicals.Δ

Sergeant Gegan said detectives and agents of the Department of Justice for more than a year had been trailing Jakira and Amter in the hope of obtaining data concerning the Red organizations.β They said they learned more than a month ago that many leading radicals frequently met in Mrs. Ware's apartment, and that they were told the apartment was used as headquarters for radical propaganda movements.

Letter from Martin's Attorney.

When the prisoners [Amter and Jakira] arrived at Police Headquarters they refused to say anything about themselves at first, except to give their names and addresses. But when detectives and government agents arrived an hour later with the trunks and documents found in the apartment, the men became a little more communicative.

Amter was asked about a letter of introduction found in a secret compartment in a closet and which was signed by Charles Recht, attorney for Ludwig C.A.K. Martens, Soviet "ambassador" to this country before his deportation several months ago.

†- Alas for future historians of the early American Communist movement, there was no such universal list of the UCP's membership down to group level. As for the reporter's assertion that 95% of the UCP were "foreigners," this statement clouds the real difference between *citizenship* and *language* for starters, and understates the number of English-speaking UCP members in the second place. According to a document seized in the raid, 121 of the UCP's 673 primary party units (18%) were English-speaking. [NARA M-1085, reel 940, case 202600-1775, doc. 501; arithmetic corrected. This data serves as the basis for a downloadable document, "United Communist Party — 'Groups' According to Language: As of December 1920," available from www.marxisthistory.org].

‡- Actually, the three largest language groups of the UCP in descending order of size were the South Slavic (Croatian and Slovenian), Russian, and English. There were only 34 of 673 primary party units (5%) that used the Polish language and just 2 of 673 that spoke Italian. Similarly wrong is the representation of the geographic concentration of the UCP, which was clustered around the cities of Chicago and New York — not in the mining districts. See *Ibid*.

§- There is no data whatsoever on this topic in the seized UCP files or in any UCP files anywhere of which the editor is aware. One doubts that police officials who did not know which languages were spoken by the UCP or where party members were predominantly clustered would be working from a sound factual basis in making this sort of unsubstantiated assertion. To the contrary, one would anticipate a somewhat higher level of literacy among communist workers relative to the non-party members of their social cohort.

Δ- This entire discussion on the demographics of the UCP is more interesting as a monologue on the bogeys of the day — frightening groups of radical Russians, Poles, Italians, Negroes, miners plotting bloody insurrection — than it is an effort to impart knowledge gained from newly-seized documents. In reality there were almost no black members of the UCP; blacks were an ethnic contingent roughly comparable in size to the Italian-speaking section of that organization. Conversely, there was no great "Croatian Menace" in the popular imagination, and police officials neither observed nor commented upon this demographic reality of the UCP.

β- This is more melodramatic silliness dreamed up by the reporter. Amter and Jakira were taken almost accidentally because Jakira met Lindgren (who was under close surveillance) on the street and took a package from him. A Bureau of Investigation agent trailed Jakira back to UCP National Headquarters, located in an apartment rented by Helen Ware. The location was staked out, "suspicious people" were observed coming and going, the "Bomb Squad" was called in, and a warrantless raid conducted. The Bureau of Investigation did not have the power of arrest until 1934, which is why early operations such as this were always conducted in conjunction with regular law enforcement authorities.

The letter was dated April 16, 1921, and was addressed to “Ganetski-Fuerstenberg, Hotel Bellevue, Riga, Latvia, Comrade Ilyin Aznetsky, Libau, Latvia, or whom it may concern.” It read: “This will introduce to you Comrade Julius Farber, who is known to us, and in whose behalf we solicit your kind consideration.”

The letter also contained a photograph and a description of Amter, which Gegan said was minutely accurate. The letter of introduction and the photograph and description were vised by John J. Kalmin, Latvian Consul in this city.

Amter then admitted that he intended to go to Russia under the name of Farber and explained that he feared to use his own name lest the Soviet investigation officials would refuse to admit him to Russia. He added that the scheme for his departure was abandoned a few days after he received the letter from Recht.

Letters Tell of Secret Convention.

The detectives and agents of the Department of Justice spent hours at Police Headquarters in examining the literature and shortly after 1 o'clock this morning [April 30, 1921] came across a batch of correspondence from branches of the various communist organizations revealing the activities of their members in fomenting strikes throughout this country and Canada during and since the war.

They also found communications revealing that in a few days there was to be a secret convention in this city of the leaders of the radical movements. Names of many of the Red leaders were obtained through these

communications.

In connection with the strike activities of the radical organizations, Sergeant Gegan said they found other forms of statistics revealing the number of radicals that participated in these strikes and annotations revealing the degree of success or failure that met the efforts of the radical leaders. It also was disclosed that many of the leaders in these strikes were members of the Communist Party, and were formerly connected with the Socialist Party.

German Connections Revealed.

Gegan and the government agents were said to have obtained information in the last week which was expected to break the back of the radical movements in America. Through the documents and communications seized in last night's raid, it was said, the government would be in a position to disorganize every group and branch of the various ultra-radical movements.

Bundles of documents found in the three trunks and in closets and secret hiding places in chairs and other articles of furniture were said to have revealed the connection of the communist movement in this country with several radical organizations now operating in Germany. Neither Gegan nor Scully would say anything about these communications, most of which were written in German. It was understood that Amter translated these communications and was the medium in this country through which the intercourse with the German radicals was maintained.†

†- The fictional melodrama of this section seems self-evident. No secret relations with German revolutionary organizations appear in the Bureau of Investigation files of seized documents previously mentioned, nor are there any accounts of secret compartments or documents hidden in furniture in any of the various detailed reports filed by BoI agents involved in the operation.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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