
Statement of the Experience of George A. Evans, a Former Teacher at the People's House, 133 East 15th Street, Telling of the Brutal Treatment of the Police in the Raid Made There November 7, 1919.†

Document in DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA M-1085, reel 926.

Mr. Evans: I was instructor of an automobile class held in the People's House. I had 3 groups, each consisting of from 15 to 20 men, each group having 2 nights a week, from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm. The automobile class was held in the basement. The rooms up through the house were devoted as classrooms to other studies; English, reading and writing, etc. A number of my friends attended these classes. We also had meetings every Sunday morning at which business talks were given, the advisability of getting more tools, etc. I had a waiting list of about 50 men who wanted to enter the classes.

Miss Owen: Why do not these people go to the Night Schools?

Mr. Evans: Because they need Russians to teach them English — Russians know how to teach Russians. They had a large Assembly Room where they used to meet in a social way... together.

Miss Owen: Were they sympathetic to Bolshevism?

Mr. Evans: I do not know. As far as I know they were not, but questions of this sort were never

discussed there. There was a [rule in] the People's House that all politics were tabooed there.

Dr. Sackin: The People's House was supposed to have sold literature in Russian and English calculated to spread the doctrine of Bolshevism abroad in American. Was that so?

Mr. Evans: There was a newspaper circulated there called *Zemlia i Volia* [*Land and Liberty*].

Dr. Sackin: Was this house ever raided before?

Mr. Evans: Yes. I was instructing my men in the basement. I had about 18 men. Each man was paying \$35.00 for his courses.

Dr. Sackin: In other words, they were technical courses, for which each man paid?

Mr. Evans: Yes, a number of the men who were taking the course had served abroad.

Dr. Sackin: What happened then?

Mr. Evans: Sergeant [James J.] Gegan entered

†- "This statement given a week after the raid at the residence of Dr. David Sackin, 150 West 59th Street, in the presence of Miss Owen, Miss Mitchell, Mr. Kirilcoff, and Dr. Sackin." [Subtitle of original document.]

the basement first, a couple of detectives following. They ordered us all upstairs. One of the students held back a little saying he wanted to get his overcoat and the detective said, "Never mind your overcoat — forget it." I did not know what was coming or what it was all about. We did not see the policemen until we entered the Assembly Room. There were 20 of us plus the men who were taking tea there and spending the evening playing chess, reading papers, etc. We were at once lined up against the wall and searched. Out of the whole group only a pocket knife and a bandana handkerchief were found. In spite of the fact that these handkerchiefs were generally red, this fact seemed to count heavily against the owner.

Silence reigned all over the house while the other rooms were being searched. Suddenly there arose moans and screams in the classrooms upstairs as the result of the blows from the blackjacks used by the police. On all the floors, from which men individually were being hurled down the stairs and pitched into the rooms on the 2nd floor, where other policemen mercilessly clubbed and kicked them down the lower stairs and finally into the big Assembly Rooms. Not one of these men escaped and nearly every one was bleeding profusely. After this cruel treatment they too were lined up. The police then called for 20 volunteers to step out of the line. Not understanding what all this meant these poor victims remained silent. The plainclothesmen then picked the 20 men, clubbed them one by one, kicked them down the stoop into the street, and thus got into the patrol wagons. When these 20 men had gone another 20 were selected, and they went through the same experience, and then another 20, continuing until the whole crowd had been thoroughly beaten up.

A comical incident was that while the blows were being liberally distributed one of the

detectives made this intelligent remark to one of the bleeding victims: "It is all on account of you that we have no sugar."

One of the policemen became so exhausted from swinging his blackjack that he finally smashed a leg off a table and threw it in the [face] of a group of these non-resisting men. During the attack in the Assembly Room, a Jew by the name of Zubovich, weighing about 120 pounds, slim in build, was thrown by the detectives from corner to corner, kicked and punched until he fell unconscious over a kerosene lamp which stood in the corner. We was picked up by someone and came to *<illeg.>*, lying against a mantelpiece and bleeding profusely from the head. One of the detectives called out to another, "Look at that picture," and picking up a dress-suit case threw it at him and the man fainted again. Some of these men had wallets that disappeared. One lost one with \$35.00 — a large amount to this laboring man. Another lost his watch, which he greatly valued.

While in the patrol wagon, on the way to the [Police] Building, one man who escaped disfigurement but received other injuries took the following precaution in order to avoid any possibility of such an occurrence: he insisted upon rubbing his face against the bleeding hand of a fellow [victim], thus covering his own face with blood. When asked why he did this, he replied that the police might think he was already sufficiently injured and would not insist upon inflicting further injuries.

This last patrol wagon was so crowded the police had the wounded men get out and push it.

Dr. Sackin: This is the way we are trying to exterminate fictitious Bolshevism in places where it doesn't exist, and where it really is it is ignored!

• • • • •

The narrator of this story, George A. Evans, was of Russian birth. He had taken out papers and become an American citizen because he loves America so. At the beginning of the War, he volunteered his services and served at the front under fire most of the time. This man was saved from mutilation from this brutal police force only by the fact that he had a soldier's shirt on, and was able, even in his great excitement, to explain a few things in English to the satisfaction of the detectives. There were 10 or 12 other men of American birth also who had served overseas.

The People's House was a meeting place for ordinary social intercourse — tea-drinking, chess-playing, reading, etc. The doors were wide open to any visitor who might choose to go in, but the word "People's" instituted a suspicion against them. It was a place where emigrants from Russia, not knowing English, who earned their living by day...assembled to learn the English language, mechanical sciences as applied to automobile work, electrical technique. This place had been chosen as a butt for attacks. The Romans demanded blood and there it was — for the Detective Bureau — furnished by kindly lambs.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2011. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.