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# **Radical Activities — Buffalo Socialists:**

## **Report of a Meeting of Jewish Socialists in Buffalo, NY**

### **Attended by an Undercover Informant of the**

### **US Dept. of Justice's Bureau of Investigation,**

### **January 11, 1920.**

Report of Special Agent in Charge M.F. Blackmon, Jan. 26, 1920.  
DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA collection M-1085, reel 938, document 335432.

*Report Made By:* M.F. Blackmon  
*Place Where Made:* Buffalo, NY  
*Date When Made:* Jan. 26, 1920  
*Period for When Made:* Jan. 12, 1920

*Title of Case and Offence Charged*  
*or Nature of Matter Under Investigation:*

#### **Radical Activities — Buffalo Socialists**

*Statement of Operations, Evidence Collected, Names*  
*and Addresses of Persons Interviews, Places Visited, Etc.:*

At Buffalo, NY

The following is a report from an informant who attended a meeting of the Jewish Local of the Socialist Party in this city on January 11th, 1920:

I went to 382 Jefferson Street at 2:30 pm on Sunday, January 11th, 1920 and there I met Giacchomo Battistoni. The hall was not yet open and I waited outside with Battistoni in his car and before long a Jew by the name of Goldstein came along and stopped to talk with us. He was evidently also waiting for the hall to be opened and while we waited there he and Battistoni talked together regarding bail for one of the Communists by the name of [Fred] Schuman.

After a short time the people began to arrive and the meeting was opened at 3 o'clock, by Goldstein, who appeared to be the president [organizer] of the local [branch]. He said, "Comrades, I want to speak to you today regarding the 5 members of the Socialist Party who have been elected to the Legislature in Albany and who the government will not allow to take

their places.

"I also want to tell you about some leaflets that we have had printed and which we want everyone who is present here today to help distribute. We have 30,000 of them so you can give away as many as you like — put them in the hotels, in the public buildings, in the railroad and trolley car stations, every place where they will be conspicuous. They are leaflets condemning the recent raids on the Communists' headquarters all over the country and the arresting of our brothers who are members of the Communist Party. You can even give them to the policemen if you want to because there is nothing in the leaflet for which you can be arrested. The government has done something wrong and now we are going to show them what we are going to do.

"As soon as these circulars are well distributed, we are going to send a telegram through the Workman's Circle, protesting against the action of the government, and tell them that it is not right to do as they have done in the recent raids. Of course we know why they have raided these places and arrested these people — the government is afraid. They know that the Socialists love the Red Flag only. They know that we are waiting for the right time to come and then we will lick them properly. That is why they are trying to get some of the leaders out of the country. Of course, we are not sure whether or not the government has evidence against any of these people, but if they have they should give them a trial. The only thing that we can do is each of us take as many of these leaflets as we can dispose of and distribute them in the most conspicuous places we know of and then elect a committee to go to the next meeting of the Workman's Circle and explain our plan to them and make arrangements for the sending of a telegram to the government, protesting against the action of the Legislature."

At this time one of the men present who is a Jew

and a member of the Workman's Circle arose and said, "If you appoint your committee, I shall be glad to introduce them to the Workman's Circle."

After this time, I asked one of the Jews who sat near me, what the Workman's Circle was and he explained that it was an organization similar in its object to the Union of Russian Workers but that its membership was principally if not entirely Jewish.† He said that the local branch held its meetings at the same address as the Jewish branch of the Socialist Party and usually they met on Wednesday evening. He said, "They are men who love the red flag more than anything else. As a matter of fact they are more anarchist than anything else."

After this plans for a smoker, which was to be given by the Jewish and Italian branches of the Socialist Party, was discussed and later Goldstein, the president, said, "Brothers, let us get down to business now. Last Sunday I attended a meeting of the Socialist Party officers of Buffalo—" He went on then to explain the plan of taxing each member \$5.00 every 3 months to defray the expenses of the party in this city, and the members present accepted the plan and pledged themselves to pay the tax.

Then he said, "Brothers, there is another thing I want to call your attention to. One of our members who is a good Socialist is taking up a collection to help the families of our brothers who have been deported and also for the families of some of the Communist brothers who have been arrested and are now in jail and unable to get bail. He is going to take up a collection at this meeting and I want you to be as generous as possible. It makes [no difference] whether or not you are a Syndicalist, a Communist, a Socialist, or a member of the Workman's Circle — you should do what you can for the families of these men who have fought for our cause and who have in some cases been deported because of their activities. We never know when our turn is coming, we may all be arrested before tomorrow night on a similar charge.

"I also want to call your attention to the fact that if you can see your way clear to do it, any of you who knows a member of the Communist Party who is in jail and can not get bail, should help that person out. Do not bail out as many men, however, as your funds will permit. Be careful to save enough so that in case you, yourself, are arrested you will be able to give bail. I just want to tell you that in case any of you are

able to help out in the bailing of any of the Communists, if you will call at the Communist headquarters, one of the men, Kellerman (formerly reported Cunningham) will be there and will be glad to help you in making arrangements."

At this Giacchomo Battistoni spoke up and said that he had already helped bail out some of the Communists, mentioning in particular the name of Schuman. He further said that he had received a communication from headquarters commenting on the raids that have recently been conducted in this and other cities and which were referred to as violations of the law, in that no one had a right to break into a man's home and search it. But, he added, let them go ahead and do what they like — but someday we will show these capitalists and the government just how much we will stand and how we intend to stop such actions."

After this Goldstein warned the members present against carrying any radical literature around in their pockets, or having any evidence of their connection with a radical organization in their homes. He told them that it was best to burn all of these things, in case their homes should be searched sometime.

Giacchomo Battistoni stated that he had been advised that there is going to be a Socialist convention in New York City sometime in May and added, "Of course, I do not know whether or not I shall be elected a delegate, but I am going whether or not I am elected, if I am not a delegate I shall pay my own way."

Regarding the Workman's Circle, the president of the club said that he did not know very much as he was not a member but he stated that he knew they all loved the red flag.

After this the collection was taken up for the families of the Communists and those who have already been deported. Each person present contributed either 50¢ or \$1.00.

After this the meeting was closed, and I left the meeting place at about 5:30 pm.

There were about 40 persons present at the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

*M.F. Blackmon,  
Special Agent in Charge.*

†- This is imprecise. The Union of Russian Workers was an anarchist political organization that maintained social clubs and conducted educational programs as part of its mission. From the fall of 1919, the Union of Russian Workers had been subject to the most severe degree of repression from federal and state authorities due to its active publication and propagation of anarchist doctrine (Most, Bakunin, Kropotkin, etc.). The Workman's Circle was a socialist-oriented Jewish (Yiddish language) fraternal and benefit society.

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.*

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