

# It Happened in Illinois

By Sasha Small

**I**T all began on January 13, when the American Patriotic Club of Westville, Ill.—the local vigilante outfit—held a meeting in the American Legion Hall.

Among those present—there were about three hundred—was Nathan Yagol, who went up to the speaker after the meeting to tell him that his information on the Soviet Union was not as accurate as it might be.

Yagol left the hall. As he got to the last landing on his way down, vigilante Lawrence Goughran came rushing down after him and without a word hit him so hard he broke his glasses and left a nasty gash over his eye.

After being treated by a doctor, Yagol swore out a complaint against his assailant.

Six days later, Yagol was suddenly summoned to Danville, the county seat, to the office of O. D. Mann, state attorney for Vermillion County. He went. The result of his conversation was arrest without charge. He was held without bail, incommunicado.

The Chicago office of the International Labor Defense, upon receipt of this information, dispatched two members of its legal staff, Max Naiman and Joseph Roth, to Westville. When they arrived, they decided to divide up the job between them, Max Naiman going on to Danville to see Yagol, and Joseph Roth remaining in Westville to represent Yagol's interests at the trial of vigilante Lawrence Goughran.

Naiman was accompanied by three miners—John Sloan and Joe and Frank Suchaczewski. They got to the Danville jail by 8:45 a.m., where they knocked until the jailer opened the door a little way and asked their business. Naiman said he wanted to see his client, Nathan Yagol. The jailer refused.

Naiman asked for the sheriff and the state attorney. Neither was in. When Sheriff Harry George finally did return, Mr. Naiman stated his business, pointing out that his client had come voluntarily to the officials, thinking that they needed more information to prepare the prosecution against Goughran. Moreover, he protested against Yagol's being held without any complaint or warrant. The sheriff admitted the facts, but added that he intended to hold Yagol until he found out everything about him that he wanted to know. Mr. Naiman promptly went down to the clerk's office with the intention of filing a writ of habeas corpus. He learned that there wasn't a single judge in town to sign the papers.

Just as the lawyer and his companions left the jail, a police lieutenant grabbed John Sloan. "What are you doing here? You come with me."

Naiman interfered. "You can't arrest him, not without a warrant."

"I certainly can. I want to question him, and if you resist I'll arrest you too." So

Attorney Naiman and John Sloan went along to the police station. There they met Chief of Police Johnson, to whom Naiman protested the lieutenant's actions.

"Look here," the chief began belligerently, "you know what happened to one of you Chicago civil liberty lawyers a couple of years ago [a vigilante attack sanctioned by the police]. The same is in line for you. That's what you are going to get. I give you five minutes to get out of town."

John Sloan remained in the Danville police station. Naiman rushed to the telegraph office, reported developments to the Chicago I.L.D., grabbed the miners Joe and Frank Suchaczewski, and they left for Westville.

In Westville Naiman decided to go on to the trial, but went to the railroad station first to send a second wire to Chicago. While he was drafting his telegram, a roar from the street shook the building. Everybody dashed to the window. Before them was the spectacle of a cursing mob chasing Joseph Roth, guns plainly visible, fists shaking, oaths, threats....

JOHN SLOAN, released by the Danville police half an hour after Naiman's departure, had reached Westville in time to join Joseph Roth at the Goughran trial. The court room was jammed to overflowing. The corridors were filled with people. Crowds had gathered on the sidewalk outside the building.

The judge, a Republican justice of the peace named Roberts, would not permit Yagol to answer charges. When the defense moved to dismiss the case, the judge immediately ruled that since witnesses did not seem to know whether Goughran had struck Yagol with his right or left hand, the case was dismissed!

The audience began filing out of the courtroom. A miner made his way to Joseph Roth with the news that the vigilantes were organizing outside and that it looked like trouble. The miners then formed a circle around Roth and proceeded to lead him out of the courtroom. They had to force their way down the courthouse steps through a sullen but menacing vigilante mob. After they had gone two blocks the vigilantes attacked. Roth was told to run ahead, while the miners held back the tide. One cry rang out sharply from the mob: "Kill the Communists."

Roth was carried off to a safe hiding place from which he phoned to the state attorney and the sheriff, holding them responsible for the safety of Nathan Yagol, who had been taken back to the Danville jail. The sheriff replied that he could only be responsible for Yagol as long as he was inside the walls of the jail. He added: "Why don't you come to Danville yourself and try to get him?"

Chicago, meanwhile, had rushed reinforce-

ments to its beleaguered I.L.D. attorney in Vermillion County. But they were prevented from seeing Yagol. On the other hand, at about eleven that night, the sheriff decided to release his prisoner; he smuggled Yagol out of jail and carried him across the county line to the town of Milford, where Yagol managed to get a bus and make his way to Chicago.

But that doesn't end the story. On the following Saturday, Sheriff George's deputies arrested four miners without warrant. This brought telegrams of protest, with the result that all but John Sloan were released. That night, the Legion and the American Patriotic Club held meetings, which resulted in a special meeting of the Westville mayor and the Board of Aldermen to revoke permission already given for a citizens' meeting called to protest vigilante actions. The meeting, said their honors, would result "in riot and bloodshed."

Meantime, the Chicago press was filled with reports, editorials, comment on the situation in Westville, the Chicago *Sunday Times* carried an editorial headed *IT CAN'T HAPPEN, EH?*, which roundly denounced the Legion for acting with the vigilantes and advised that the citizens of Vermillion County "who believed in free speech, free assembly—in Americanism—should let their sheriff and his deputies understand that they will not tolerate such actions."

On the night of January 22, the Danville *Commercial News* delivered itself of the following:

While the mixture of races and nationalities in Westville makes it a good place to plant the seeds of Communism, activities of the American Patriotic Club there are doing much to retard it. The methods of blocking efforts of radical agitators by patriotic Westville folk is effective and commendable. Apparently it is the only "language" Communistic organizers can understand.

To make sure that the "language" would not be allowed to weaken, the officials of Vermillion County decided what to do about John Sloan. Originally Sheriff George had said he might be held for inciting to riot. But after the raids, he decided to add Frank Suchaczewski and Ernest Guiliani as well, and that charge has now become: violation of the Illinois criminal syndicalism law.

The three miners are now in jail. Their trial will probably be held the middle of February. Progressives in the state of Illinois are taking vigorous action against the vigilante situation and the frame-up of these men, and in addition are calling for a state-wide conference for repeal of the criminal syndicalism law. The whole case has been brought to the attention of the LaFollette Committee for investigation.



William Gropper



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## Stalin's Letter

THE press has just made the discovery that Joseph Stalin is a Bolshevik, a Communist, an internationalist. The paragraph in Stalin's letter to a Young Communist, published the other day, which furnishes the occasion for this sensation, is the following:

The international proletarian ties of the working class of the U.S.S.R. with the working class of the bourgeois countries must be intensified and strengthened; the political aid of the working class of the bourgeois countries to the working class of our country, and equally every kind of aid of the working class of our country to the working class of the bourgeois countries must be organized; our Red Army, Red Navy, Red Air Fleet, and Osoaviakhim (All-Union Society for Chemical and Air Defense) must be strengthened and consolidated in every way.

Now this may be news to Mr. Ludwig Lore of the *Post*, to Mr. Benjamin Stolberg of the *World-Telegram*, to Mr. Herbert Solow of the *New York Sun*, to Professor Hook and Professor Dewey. It may be news to the arch-"revolutionist" Edmund Wilson, who started out on his revolutionary career with a determination to take Communism away from the Communists. It may be news to Messrs. Fred Beal, Isaac Don Levine, Harold Denny, Max Eastman, and Eugene Lyons. It may be news to the egomaniacal Leon Trotsky, who has been laying claim to a monopoly on revolutionary sentiment and vocabulary. It is not news to Communists who have followed the writings and speeches of Lenin and Stalin, who understood the development in the Soviet Union, and grasped the ABC of revolutionary tactics.

Stalin, speaking for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, has always maintained that while one may proceed to build Socialism in one country, especially a country like the U.S.S.R., so vast and rich in natural resources, the *ultimate* triumph of world Socialism, toward which the building of Socialism in the Soviet Union is an essential step, can be achieved only on an international scale, through the collaboration of the revolutionary proletariat in at least a few of the major

countries. That was the basic principle of the Communist Parties of the world. Stalin made this clear in his letter.

Trotsky, Zinoviev, and others, who later became spies and agents of fascism, denied the possibility of constructing Socialism in our country without a preliminary victory of the Socialist revolution in capitalist countries.

They wanted, in fact, to turn our country backward to the path of bourgeois development, camouflaging their retreat by false references to "victory of the revolution" in other countries. This is what the debate with these people was about. Further progress of development in our country showed that the party was right, and Trotsky and his clique not right.

The emphasis during the last decade on building Socialism in the Soviet Union was not a negation of this basic principle, but the most concrete application of it to a realistically understood objective situation. The basic principles of Communism are unchanging; the tactics of carrying them into life are variable. One of the troubles with most bourgeois commentators on the Soviet Union and its relation to the Communist International is that they confuse principles with tactics, mistaking adaptation of the latter, in keeping with changes in the world situation and the heightened danger of war, for crucial changes in the first.

## Relief—But Not Enough

THE Roosevelt request for another \$250,000,000 for W.P.A. from now till July 1 reflects a considerable though incomplete victory for the Workers' Alliance, the C.I.O., and Labor's Non-Partisan League. This was dramatized when Roosevelt received Workers' Alliance President David Lasser and Secretary-Treasurer Herbert Benjamin on the day of the announcement. For over an hour Lasser and Benjamin explained the need for \$400,000,000 for W.P.A. jobs and \$150,000,000 for relief right now. Roosevelt agreed that if the \$250,000,000 is not enough, more will have to be gotten. His action is in response to the fight put up by people's forces against the Woodrum clause, which Tories sneaked into the current appropriation measure to make money then supplied last the whole fiscal year. Another factor was organized action in the field to cut red tape and quickly exhaust the 350,000 additional jobs made available recently.

The insufficiency of \$250,000,000 is now visible. The C.I.O. seeks \$550,000,000; the United States Conference of Mayors, \$400,000,000. A relief crisis grips Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and the cotton South. The A. F. of L.'s *American Federationist*, describing layoffs "particularly severe in manufacturing and agriculture," finds "a

rate of layoff almost equal to the worst depression winter." Through a sheaf of telegrams, from many states, handed to Roosevelt by the Alliance leaders, runs the refrain "misery" and "acute."

Roosevelt says three million have lost jobs since September. Acting W.P.A. Administrator Williams figures on increasing the rolls to 2,500,000 in March, then tapering off. Lasser and Benjamin believe several hundred thousand more could be hired. Simple arithmetic seems to bear them out. For the \$250,000,000 divided by four (months March through June) and again by sixty-five (dollars it costs per man per month) gives over 900,000 new jobs monthly, instead of the 500,000 Williams seems to have in mind.

## The Crisis Problem Remains

ROOSEVELT's request is the first concrete action against the new recession. It bears out in principle our estimate, several weeks ago, of the healthy Washington outlook for more realistic handling of recession and reform questions.

But what a picayune beginning! As Workers' Alliance leaders told Roosevelt, three million *new* jobless by July 1 will have lost two and one-half billion dollars in wages, or purchasing power; putting \$250,000,000 into the pot replaces just one-tenth of the total.

The administration is planning a substantial attack. Washington is full of talk about a new building program for housing, roads, or both. Here again are points which progressives need to watch out for. There are indications Roosevelt is giving serious consideration to demands from industries for an "annual wage" for relief workers. The idea is increased yearly totals but at reduced hourly rates. The question is, wouldn't this jeopardize hard-won scales of the employed despite Roosevelt's insistence this must not happen?

The Workers' Alliance has proposed a Washington conference next month with the C.I.O., Labor's Non-Partisan League, and other union and progressive forces to take up the whole recession-relief question. Another item on their agenda may be means to execute in practice the paper labor-policies now embraced by New Dealers in Washington, particularly the right to organize. We hope to report fully, later, the story of how policies become reversed in the field, where administration is dominated by military toughies and reactionary machine bosses. There is a striking, untold example of this in Pendergrast's Missouri. It was illustrated recently in Colonel Somervell's New York bailiwick. Officials, particularly