

The Red Deportations of 1920

The Deportations Delirium of Nineteen-Twenty, by Louis F. Post. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Company. \$1.50.

LOUIS F. POST'S book is a narrative of incidents illustrating a curious and revolting phase of post-war psychology. It is a ringing indictment of both the American government and the American people—the former for acts of heartless oppression, compared with which the Acadian dispersion was a mild-mannered performance, and the latter for the indifference with which the most hideous injustices perpetrated by high officials in perfect contempt of constitutional guarantees were regarded.

One would wish that the story had been told by an historian less open to the charge of advocacy and less subject to suspicion of being mildly tolerant of, if not sympathetic with, the idea of economic and governmental change through violence. But where shall such a writer be found? No one has ever come forward to defend the transactions reviewed, because they admit of no defence, and whosoever by word or act assumes a critical attitude with reference to them becomes at once an object of suspicion as a "red" or a "near-red." In time some lawyer of eminence and standing will dispassionately discuss the procedure and the statute invoked and draw conclusions which a sobered people may accept. But the time is not yet. The eminently respectable member of the profession now passes the episode sub silentio. The American Bar Association, fearful of the waning respect in which the great Constitution of our country is held, has appealed to the people to observe annually "Constitution week" during which, at public assemblies, its provisions may be expounded, its virtues extolled, and the reverence due it restored. Though that great body deplores the attacks made upon the Constitution in public debate, it has remained discreetly silent as to the vastly more sinister assaults by its sworn guardians in connection with the transactions narrated in Mr. Post's book.

The "Sentinels of the Constitution" who have, in a knight-errant spirit, taken up the cudgels in defence of our organic law are equally voiceless concerning the flagrant violations of its letter and spirit of which Mr. Post tells, lending color to the suggestion that they are more concerned about the Constitution as the bulwark of property, as the last resource of the opponents of progress, than they are in the Constitution as the palladium of the liberties of the people.

Briefly, the book records the attempt, through the Secret Service of the Department of Justice, at the mass deportation of aliens charged with being members of an association advocating the overthrow of the government by force. That department held the view that the League of Russian Workers, the Communist party and the Communist Labor party were such associations. It succeeded in securing the acceptance of this view by the Department of Labor to which alone the law entrusted the execution of the deportation statutes, but which, for a time, in the absence of the Secretary, the former dominated. Later, on his return, after the "raids," to which reference will be made, he recalled the ruling classifying the Communist Labor party as among the proscribed organizations.

In these three organizations the Russian element was either exclusive or important, highly so among the alien members—at least a very great proportion of those held for deportation or ordered deported as a result of the raids were of Russian birth.

The Russian revolution, as pointed out by ex-President Wilson, was the outstanding world event of the time. It had its horrors, like the French Revolution, and like it filled with alarm that very considerable number of people the world over who shudder at any policy which questions the sacredness of institutions under which great wealth may be secured and held.

Lurid accounts were published in the press and popular journals of the imminent probability of all Europe being overrun by the Russian iconoclasts, who were to conquer by arms as well as by ideas. Credence was given to such tales in this country as well as abroad even when the industrial system of Russia was in a state of collapse through the dismal failure of the new order, as we were told, and America was feeding her people. The dread that was aroused was adroitly used to discountenance any feeble protest against abuses in our system. The farmers of the Northwest, victimized for years in the disposition of their grain through combinations which controlled legislation, organized the Nonpartisan League, with aims political as well as economic, the former to insure the success of the latter. Immediately invectives were hurled at them. They were called socialists, bolsheviks, anarchists, nihilists and advocates of free-love. The intimation was put out that the entire movement originated in and had its inspiration from Moscow, if it was not under immediate direction from that centre.

The Steel Strike of 1919 was decried and so generally advertised as a covert effort to overthrow the government by force or by the paralysis of industry in accordance with the purposes of the Bolsheviki, that the notion was almost universally entertained until it was exploded by the report of the Inter-Church Movement. The innovators were invariably denounced as unpatriotic, while their baiters proclaimed raucously their own immaculate Americanism.

While the public mind was in this highly fevered state, the bomb explosions of 1919 took place, one of them wrecking the home of Attorney-General Palmer in the City of Washington, and another sadly mutilating a servant of ex-Senator Hardwick of Georgia. Happily a number of infernal machines in their course through the mails, destined to men of prominence, were intercepted through the vigilance of an employee of the Post Office. Suspicion was immediately directed to the Russians who were to any degree sympathetic with the economic policies supposed to be represented by those in control in their native land, particularly as assassination had been a common incident of revolutionary activities in Russia. The efforts of the detective branch of the Department of Justice, euphemistically denominated the Bureau of Investigation, to ferret out the perpetrators of the hideous crimes referred to, including the explosion in Wall Street, had come to naught. At least no prosecutions were ever instituted. The public was demanding action. A resolution was passed by the Senate demanding to know of the Attorney-General what he was doing to save the country from the alien foes it was harboring, and particularly what he was doing to enforce the deportation statutes, notwithstanding, as stated, that that officer had nothing to do with the administration of the acts in question. He replied at length, intensifying the public apprehension, with information concerning the desperate character of the revolutionary societies and the cunning operations of the Bureau of Investigation in ferreting out their activities and purposes and promising appropriate action in due time. It was well known that the Attorney-General

was a candidate for the nomination of his party for President and Mr. Post quite broadly intimates that he saw in the situation an opportunity to get on the front page and perhaps to turn to his political advantage the hysteria that had seized the country. Anyway he had his "undercover men," who had become members of the proscribed organizations, arrange for simultaneous meetings of the various branches throughout the country on the night of January 2, 1920, having in mind the "raiding" of the meeting places. It is denied by the Department that such men were the counterparts of the detestable "agents provocateur," common in Europe, but it must be conceded that their complete success in arranging meetings throughout such a wide area, argues an exceptional influence among those whom their deception brought into the toils.

The springs thus being laid the "raids" took place. Aided by the local police the Secret Service men broke into the halls, arrested everyone present, usually lining them up along a wall with hands up until they were searched, and marched them off to some police station or other place of detention. Meanwhile every scrap of paper was seized, books, records and correspondence. In like manner the homes of officers of the associations were broken into, drawers rifled, a thorough search made for evidence of any kind and everything believed to help in making a case against the prisoner or anyone else carried away. Some pretense was made at times of conducting the search under the authority of a search warrant, but the papers scarcely ever afforded a reasonable ground even for pretense. So the arrests were made under color of warrants theretofore issued by the Department of Labor. But these were held always by an Inspector of the Department who may or may not have been within a hundred miles of the scene of the arrest. These were often issued in flagrant disregard of constitutional and statutory requirements. Usually they were founded on information and belief "affidavits" which were not rarely unverified and often not even signed. The total arrests numbered about 10,000. Obviously many of these were citizens not subject to deportation, many against whom no warrant had been issued, many against whom, though aliens, no prima facie case for deportation could be made even upon the meager showing deemed essential to warrant detention. Many were taken from the quiet of their homes, not a few out of bed at dead of night.

Then the weeding out process began, taking from a few hours to a week, counsel being denied the prisoner. The jails were jammed. No provision had been made for the custody of any such numbers as were arrested and scarcely any for any number. Eight hundred of these unfortunates were crowded for a week in the corridor of the upper floor of the Federal Building in Detroit, where they were without other bed than the floor and no toilet conveniences at all adequate. Several of the victims went insane. Of the 10,000, approximately, (no record was kept) arrested, just about one half were released upon the preliminary hearing though warrants were ultimately issued only against about 3,000, of which number but 556 were ordered deported as being technically or otherwise members of the proscribed organizations. Of these the great majority, upon the undisputed testimony before the Senate Committee, were perfectly harmless individuals, most of whom could not define even in a general way the tenets or principles of the organization of which they, in one way or another, had become members. Many of them were highly respected artisans with families and homes, some of them thrifty enough to have accumulated a little property.

It must be supposed that the expectation was indulged by Attorney-General Palmer that there would be revealed through the arrests and seizures information upon which convictions could be secured of the parties guilty of the bomb outrages or of some plot to overthrow the government by force accompanied by some kind of military preparation, however absurdly inadequate. If so, the raids were in that respect a complete failure. Nothing was uncovered that was or, so far as the subsequent investigation revealed, could be made the basis of an indictment. There may have been among the multitude arrested some, and possibly not a few, criminally disposed or possibly guilty of crime, whose detention or deportation could occasion no regret, though the lawlessness of the procedure to effect that end should be deplored. Of the 128 ordered deported from among the 1,000, more or less, arrested in Detroit, all save eight were paroled upon the recommendation of a local committee of high class lawyers who examined the record in each case. Presumably those held were of the dangerous class to which allusion has been made and it is not unlikely that the proportion of those whose presence was in any sense a menace to the country was not greater in any of the hauls made through the raids.

Of the sum of the misery inflicted upon those in no wise amenable to the law invoked or who were only technically so and perfectly harmless, if not most desirable members of the communities in which they lived and upon the dependents, relatives and friends of such, it is difficult for the casual reader to form any adequate conception. This manifestation of man's inhumanity to man may well awaken our resentment, but the harm done to those who suffered from it is beyond repair and perhaps redress. But the departure from American methods and the contemptuous disregard for constitutional guarantees and the essentials of liberty by which it was characterized cannot be lightly overlooked by any who prize either or desire to see them preserved. In its essence the affair was an attempt to supplant the American system for the detection and punishment of crime by that in vogue in Europe, to transfer the details of government in that regard from the local communities to which, in accordance with American ideals, it has always been interested, to officials in Washington, without direct responsibility to the people for their acts and under the influence of ambition and intrigue such as have scandalized the administration of justice on the Continent.

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The Interior of the Atom

The Structure of the Atom, by E. N. da C. Andrade.
New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

ATOMIC structure is a subject upon which a comprehensive book in English was urgently needed. A translation of Sommerfeld's *Atombau und Spektrallinien* has long been announced, but has not yet appeared (so far as we know). Moreover, it deals with only a part of the subject—doubtless the most important part in recent years, but by no means the whole. Professor Andrade's book is more all-embracing, though possibly a chemist would feel that his side of the study of atoms might have been more emphasized. The mathematical knowledge required is not great—considerably less than in Sommerfeld's book. A certain degree of familiarity with modern physics is presupposed, and the book does not aim at being what is