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## Speech by Harry Winitsky, Executive Secretary of the Communist Party of New York: Delivered at a Meeting Held at 175 E Broadway, NYC, December 22, 1919.

As published in the stenographic record of his trial. Copy in the Comintern Archive: f. 515, op. 1, d. 76.

Comrades,

Some time ago when we were in the Socialist Party and we were confronted with the situation that we are confronted with tonight, we would get up on the platform and plead and shout for justice and mercy. Democracy. In fact we became so bagged that you could not tell the difference between some of our speakers and some of the speakers of the Lusk Committee (*laughter*). That is a fact. But those times have changed. We are not going to shout democracy; we are not going to shout justice; we are not going to complain about the raids of the Lusk Committee, we are not going to worry about the fact that some of our comrades are indicted and that many more will be indicted; we are not going to be excited that we have had a raid and we will have more raids upon our Headquarters. We expect that thing and if we were not raided by the Lusk Committee we would be very much surprised (*laughter*), because that movement which calls itself a Revolutionary movement, which exists in a capitalistic country and meets with the approval of the capitalistic country, is a disgrace to the name Revolutionary movement. (*applause*). And so when I say that I mean that that movement

which has the approval of Mr. Lusk and his gang, that movement is a disgrace to the working class, and we judge that by the actions of the Lusk Committee.

When the Lusk Committee on November 8th made a wholesale raid on the branches of the Communist Party in New York City, they actually being human beings, made mistakes like all the rest of us, and by "accident," purely an accident, raided the 4th



Assembly District rooms of the Socialist Party, and when Mr. Stevenson† and Mr. Lusk found out they had committed this terrible crime, Mr. Lusk had a conference, and Archibald Stevenson sent a letter to Samuel Orr, the [Socialist] Assemblyman of the District, apologizing for the terrible mistake they had made (*laughter*). Not only did he apologize but even stated in his letter that he was willing to make good for the damage they had done. Ye Gods! What

a Revolutionary movement! (*laughter*). And when our friend, Mr. Stevenson, gave a lecture here on the East Side a short time ago, he even said "My friend, Sam-

† Archibald E. Stevenson, Associate Counsel for the Lusk Committee and editor of its massive 4 volume report published in 1920.

uel Orr,” and “the Socialist Party is a respectable Party, the Communists are Bolshevik.” (*laughter*).

Terrible people. They wear long beards and carry bombs in their beards (*laughter*), hand grenades in each hand, and a dagger between their teeth like the vendetti in Italy, and I remember, when we came to the Bastille, the “Waldorf Astoria,” the Tombs [New York City central jail], when we came in there we were brought up to our cells, the keeper looked at us and said “What are you here for? Criminality?”

“Criminality, no, Criminal Anarchy.”

“What is that?” (*laughter*).

“Oh, we are Bolsheviks.”

“Oh, Bolsheviks.” (*laughter*).

And he took another look at us and walked all around us.

“Where is your beard?” (*laughter and applause*), and he began to examine us, he wanted to see whether we had clean necks, he wanted to see whether we had washed within the last two years; and finally he said, “Well, I don’t know, you don’t look so dangerous.” (*laughter*).

Then he began to search us and went through our pockets and did not find any bombs, any knives, guns, machine guns, airplanes, submarines (*laughter*); he could not understand the thing. And when he locked us in our cells, I suppose he went back to his desk and began to read the *New York Times* and the *New York World* again. It was there, we had bombs in our pockets, and he could not find it, so he went back and took us out of our cell again and started to question us again and look us over and make sure he had not overlooked a machine gun in one pocket and some tank in the other pocket. That is the Lusk Committee. How do you expect us to get excited over the matter? The more I think of it the more stupendous a joke it becomes.

You cannot blame Mr. Lusk. Mr. Lusk has ambitions, and when a man has ambitions he will do anything. Lusk intends to become Governor, and if he has to sent twenty or thirty comrades to jail if he can become Governor he is going to do it.

The Lusk Committee received about fifty thousand dollars in appropriations,† and ye Gods, they have

to do some work for that money. You cannot live in the best hotel in the City of New York, you cannot ride in the best machines, you cannot eat the best of food and produce no results, and so they stage a spectacular raid. They did a wonderful feat; they hired 700 detectives on the payroll of the Lusk Committee and they locked up 37 wild-eyed Bolsheviks, and after they got through examining us they kept 21 altogether, including Ruthenberg and Ferguson, from Chicago. Wonderful raid. And my friend, Mr. Lusk, in order to prove that he is a real killer, a murderer of Bolshevism, has gone to Europe to study Bolshevism. If I had known that I would have given him a recommendation to see somebody in Russia who could give him some information about the subject, our good friend Vandervelde, in Belgium, a good Socialist, who is trying his hand at killing freedom, just like the Stevensons and Bergers‡ in the United States, and if he had gone there he would have learned a whole lot.

Comrades, let us forget the Lusk Committee for a while. It is a waste of time anyway. They know no better. If they had twice as much brains they would be half-witted, some of them.

Comrades, we may joke about this and about that, but we are confronted with a very serious problem in this country today. For some time there has been a general unrest in the country. That began to manifest itself when the first real gigantic strike broke out, the steel workers [1919], and as soon as they found a leader [William Z. Foster] who was not at all super-radical but who, either because he really wanted to be a decent and a clean and an honest leader or because he had brains enough to see that the workers would not submit any more, when he began to lead the strike in a somewhat decent fashion, our plutocratic press came out and called him “Syndicalist,” and “Bolshevik,” a “Christ Killer,” everything under the sun, and when that tactic did not succeed and when they saw that they could not suppress the strike, they resorted to the old Tsarist methods, machine guns and troops. And they had a wonderful party in Pittsburgh and other cities, McKeysport. They would raid the halls out there and would not permit the strikers to hold meetings. And then, when the workers went on and

† The Lusk Commission was actually established with an appropriation of \$30,000. See page 1 of the Lusk Report, entitled *Revolutionary Radicalism: Its History Purpose and Tactics...* (4 vols.). (Albany, NY: J.B. Lyon Co., 1920).

‡ Reference here is to Samuel Berger, a Deputy District-Attorney who was a leading figure on the staff of the Lusk Committee.

in spite of oppression kept on working and carried on the strike and the picketing, and when one young woman in spite of the police kept her work up, one of the superintendents of a steel mill with a few thugs and gangsters brutally assaulted the woman in an open street, in the presence of thousands of workers, and crushed the woman's skull and killed her; and when the case came to trial and the autopsy was held, the verdict was "accidental."

Peculiar thing how all these workers are killed accidentally. Just like the Lusk Committee when they find bombs accidentally in place where they were not five minutes before these honorable gentlemen come in.

When these methods proved futile and the workers were starving, as they are today, and the union began to have soup-kitchens and compartments where the people could come (the strikers) and get food, they suddenly began to think of the health of the poor strikers, the Board of Health began to condemn one kitchen after another because it was unclean, and then when they found a kitchen was so clean they could not condemn it, then they began to figure out that no more than four strikers could walk in at a time to get a meal, because if there were more than four it would be a conspiracy to overthrow the United States Government (*laughter*). Four poor illiterate Polacks or Swedes, or the ordinary workers there, coming together, men who were half-starved, men who had been working for years in this country and who came here with the idea they were going to work in a free country, great big brawny men who had come here with the flush of youth on their cheeks, great powerful men willing to give up everything because they thought they were in the land of the free, where workers could live like human beings, these men, who had sacrificed everything, these broken spirits, these men when there was no more strength in their shattered bodies and souls, these poor men, if there were more than four in a room, being accused of conspiracy to overthrow organized government.

And today, in spite of all the oppression of the Government, in spite of the brutal assaults and the thousands of deaths in the steel districts, in spite of the brutal assaults and the injunction in the miners' strike, in spite of the fact that even the leaders of the Union are trying to sell out the workers, yes, in spite

of all that, the men are out 100% and the men are going to stay out and the men are going to strike (*applause*).

The conditions in this country are growing more revolutionary every day. I do not say that the Revolution will come tomorrow or even over (*sic.*) tomorrow, but I know one thing: that it is a lot nearer than some of us expect; it is a lot nearer than my good friends of the Lusk Committee expect, and though my friend Lusk may soon become Governor, and a few of his other political henchmen and gangsters might find good soft berths, it would not be for very long. The workers are beginning to find them out. The workers are beginning to realize what they are up against, and it would not be very long before the jobs of Mr. Lusk and Mr. Berger and Mr. Stevenson — it would not be a long time before these thugs of capitalism, before these plutocrats, before these hirelings of the prostitute press, will do a decent job, will do a job and work like a man for their living instead of betraying their own class. It would not be very long before these people, instead of sitting here in this hall and trying to spy upon their own class will be out on the streets selling newspapers like their kind should (*applause*).

Yes, every time I come into the Court two or three of these polished gentlemen usually flock around me and begin taking a sudden interest in my welfare (*laughter*), and they begin asking me how I feel: "Oh, how do you feel today? Are you feeling all right?"

"Fine."

"Glad to hear it. How are things? I am sorry you lost your job, how are you getting along? Are you feeling good? Everything all right?"

"Fine."

Suddenly they begin to have a great love for us, and when I begin to think of this business somehow or other that little fable comes to my mind, about the snake which froze on the ground and a man picked it up, pitied it, and wound it around his body to warm it and then the snake just crushed the life out of him. And when I begin to think how these gentlemen begin to pity us and how sympathetic they become to us, I realize that they can no more be trusted than the snake or the rat who turns on its master (*applause*).

It may not be very complimentary, but it is well meant, I assure you.

There is not great love between these people and

myself. We are in a separate class from them and we are not at all ashamed to admit it, but when I say that we are in a separate class, it does not mean that we are the working class and that they are the capitalist class. The capitalist class has no love for me and I have no love for them, but I have still less love for this type, which is neither here nor there. The “lickspittle,” the type of man who will sell his family, the man who will sell himself for what? A few paltry dollars.

The time will come when these men will not be standing outside the cell bars looking at us on the inside, but we will be on the outside looking in at them (*applause*).

These people think they are having a good time now, when they stand down at the Battery and see the famous Soviet Ark leaving with 249 of our comrades.

I have nothing in common with Emma Goldman or Berkman or their principles. They are anarchists; we are communists. We have nothing in common with them. We not only are not anarchists, but we are absolutely opposed to anarchy. We, the Communist Party, are the legal party. The Communist Party is a political organization, a true and representative revolutionary organization of the workers in this country.

And though we have nothing in common with the anarchists, we are heart and soul with them in their fight against the plutocracy in this country.

I tell you it is a joke when you think the United States Government thinks that it is going to stop the revolutionary trend here by taking 249 men — 246 men and 3 little innocent women, and sending them out of this country.

When Russia in its darkest days would never take a man away from his family and send him to Siberia without allowing him to bid his family “good-bye” and I understand that even in Russia a man was permitted to take his family to Siberia if he so desired. Yet in free America they are shoved on board a boat and they are taken back where? To the land of their birth? Taken back to Soviet Russia? I guess not. They have promised to send them back to Soviet Russia. But we know what the promise of this class means. We know what it means when they say they have given the Captain sealed orders as to what port to land them at. We know what they mean when they say that these people will be landed at a certain port from whence they will be

able to escape to freedom. When they say that they mean that these men and women will be landed right into the clutches of Kolchak and Denikin, it means that these men and women will be led brutally like lambs to the slaughter, to be killed. But do not worry, my friends of the Lusk Committee. You may take these 249 men and women and lead them to their death. You may be preparing another boat to take more of our comrades and do the same thing with them. You may pass some more of your laws in Congress to take American citizens and send them to the Guam Islands for life because they may be obnoxious. But the time will come when we, the obnoxious citizens, will be the ruling class in America and you, the respectable citizens, will be the obnoxious (*applause*).

The papers in a very nice manner, in a very cynical way, tried to describe how the anarchists and Bolsheviks got on board the vessel and how two or three attempted to cry out “Long Live the Revolution!” and they were so disheartened that they failed.

I want to tell you, gentlemen, that these 249 of our comrades were not disheartened. They were not at all sorry to go back to Russia. Not only were these 249 not sorry, but if you would only lift the blockade, there would be a few millions who would go back (*applause*), (*continued applause*).

In reading over the press reports in our papers we come across some very nice articles. Terrible Bolsheviks are killing hundreds of Americans, good American troops. They are killing hundreds of French troops, hundreds of Japanese troops, and our American press waxes angry at the fact that these terrible Bolsheviks are killing these people.

When our comrades were arraigned before Magistrate McAdoo, McAdoo was so angry that he asked our lawyer, “Who are these Bolsheviks? Are they not the ones that killed 111 of our American boys?” (*laughter*). Of course, the lawyer said, “I do not know, I was not there.” (*laughter*).

But assuming for the sake of argument, gentlemen, that 111 American boys were killed in Siberia, I am not glad of it, but I want to ask one question: What are these troops of democracy, of the Fourteen Points and of the League of Nations and of Self-Determination of small nations doing in Siberia? (*laughter*). What has happened to Mr. Wilson’s Fourteen Points? A short while ago we had the Big Four of the League of Na-

tions — Clemenceau, Orlando, Lloyd George, and Wilson. I think that the new Big Four that we are having now is Wilson, Kolchak, Yudenich, and Denikin. Big Four no. 1 and Big Four no. 2 have signed their death warrant in France. Big Four no. 1 and Big Four no. 2, well — better not say it (*applause*).

I do not know whether you people read *The Liberator*, but I saw a very interesting cartoon there a few months ago: The Big Four signing the peace treaty and the spirit of Lenin hovering over the top. The little picture portrays the real situation. That little picture shows you the Big Four — who the Big Four will be. It will not be Wilson and Orlando and Lloyd George and Clemenceau. It will not be Governor Hughes or Governor Smith or Mayor Hylan or Mr. Hearst. It will be our comrades who fight valiantly in the front lines of the revolutionary movement; it will be those men and women who have been presented by you people, it will be those men and women who stand today in the foreground of the revolutionary struggle, it will be those men and women who today form the vanguard of the revolutionary masses throughout the world, the masses that have swept aside capitalism in Russia, the masses that are sweeping aside capitalism in Germany, the masses that will in a short while be the revolutionary vanguard of the United States as well (*applause*).

Comrades, the Communist Party has no plea to make. We do not ask justice from the Lusk Committee. We do not expect any from them. We expect no justice from the capitalist class. We recognize that we are a separate and distinct class. We recognize that there can be no justice as long as two classes exist in a capitalist country. We recognize that there must be and will be a dictatorship and it is up to us to choose whether we want the dictatorship of the capitalist class or whether we want the dictatorship of the working class, and that will be the choice of the good American working people, and until that time, until the American workers become class conscious and throw off the yoke of capitalism, until that time that the workers in this country realize that they cannot bring about a revolution by standing and shouting on street corners, until that time that the workers realize that they must destroy capitalism and establish a Soviet, until then there will be no freedom for the working class (*applause*).

Comrades, the hour is getting late and we have other speakers. I have been asked to make a special plea to you. Comrade Ruthenberg, the National Secretary of the Communist Party, was supposed to be here tonight. Since we have not got enough money to get him out on bail he is now in the Tombs. Comrade Ruthenberg and Comrade Ferguson both are in the Tombs, under \$15,000 bail. I do not think it necessary for me to go into a long plea for any assistance for these people.

Though it is true, as I have said before, that we expect no justice from the capitalist class, still we recognize that there are certain rights which we have, and we are going to fight every inch of the way to maintain the rights that we have, and it is for that reason that we ask you for your assistance tonight.

Comrade Ruthenberg and Comrade Ferguson must be gotten out of jail. There is a much better place for them than in jail. They are better outside than inside.

I guess most of you remember very recently that Comrade Ruthenberg was on trial for murder in Cleveland. He had committed a terrible crime, he had led a demonstration on May 1st [1919], and when a couple of gangsters and thugs, in the uniform of police, shot down a number of workers they conveniently found guns in the pockets of workmen; and they accused Comrade Ruthenberg of murder.

But the capitalist class sometimes oversteps itself, and when it accused him of murder it put its foot in a trap it could not get out of, and today Comrade Ruthenberg is free of murder but indicted in New York for Criminal Anarchy.

Now, there are many more cases that will be coming up, and we have 22 comrades in New York, indicted today and who are out on bail and who will have to soon face trial, and it is for these comrades I ask your assistance.

Is there any Comrade here, any man or woman, who will give \$20 to the Defense Fund to help these people? (**A voice: I will.**). Is there anyone else who will give \$10 to help defend our comrades in jail? Is there anyone else who will give \$10? Is there anyone else? Anybody who will give \$5? Is there anyone who will give \$5? Anyone here who will give \$5? Here are two here. I wish the stenographer of the Department of Justice will keep count of the money we get. Is there

any more? Any more five dollar bills? One over here. Thank you. Are there any more five dollar bills? Are there any more five dollar bills? Let us get through with this collection and go on with the rest of the meeting. Are there any more? Are there any more five dollar bills? How about the balcony? How about the gallery? How is the air up there? Are there any more five dollar bills? Are there any more five dollar bills? Is there anyone who will give two, three, four, or a dollar? Let us get through with this thing. How about two dollar bills? Get the two dollar bills out. Everybody. Let us get through with this, comrades. Start in, everybody, dig into your pockets. Let us get through with this as soon as we can, comrades. Come ahead, comrades. Any more? Come on now. Are there any more dollar bills? Let us get through with the collections and go on with the meeting. Will the hats pass around now and get all the change you can get. Just empty your pockets out and put in all the change you have. Are all the committees through now?

Comrades, before I give way to the next speaker, I want to remind you of one or two things. Do not imagine because you contribute money to the defense of our comrades who have been arrested, do not imagine because you give money to bail them out, that you have done your share of the work. If you are willing to contribute money do not forget that there are others who are willing to contribute their freedom. Do not imagine that you are you are doing your share of the work by merely giving money, and if you are sincere in what you are doing, if you are sincere when you contribute money to this organization, even anything at all, it means that you are with us heart and soul, because I can not conceive of any man or woman contributing to any organization he does not agree with.

If you are in accord with the Communist Party, if you believe in the Communist program, if you believe that the Communist Party is the only revolutionary movement in this country, if you believe that the workers must organize to achieve their freedom, if you believe that the workers cannot achieve their freedom by waiting until God wishes freedom onto them or until your bosses desire to give it to you, it is your duty to line up with the workers and join the Communist Party. It is your duty to study our literature. It is your duty to become a messenger of the Communist Party. It is your duty to become one of the great army of revolutionists in this country, a man or woman who is willing to go out among the workers and spread the gospel of truth. It is your duty, workingmen and women, to go into your factory and shop and distribute the literature of the Communist Party. It is your duty to stand by the Communist Party in this fight, in its struggle against the capitalist system. The Communist Party does not promise you any Heaven on earth. We do not promise you cheap milk or cheap funeral grounds. We do not promise you cheap beer like our friend [Victor] Berger did in Wisconsin. The only promise we hold out to the working class is a standing invitation to join your workers and stand shoulder to shoulder in the rise of the revolutionary movement, and fight against the capitalist class. The only inducement we hold out to you is that you remain true to your class, that you remain a class-conscious workingman, and that you unite with us to emulate the example set to us by our comrades and brothers to destroy capitalism not only in Russia, not only in Europe, but throughout the world, and to establish a Soviet Government and Soviet League of Nations (*applause*).

*Edited with Notes by Tim Davenport.*

*Second Edition, August 2005 — Inserts Winitsky's April 1920 police mug shot.*

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