
Shiplacoff is Indicted with John Reed for Bronx Speech: Socialist Assemblyman Who is Candidate for Congress and Famed Writer Charged with Violation of Espionage Act — What Offending Words Were [event of Sept. 23, 1918]

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Indictments charging Assemblyman Abraham I. Shiplacoff and John Reed, one of the editors of *The Masses*, with violating the Espionage Act were returned yesterday by the Federal grand jury. Each indictment contains 3 counts, and if the defendants are found guilty they will face a maximum penalty of 60 years in the Federal penitentiary.

The charges are that Shiplacoff and Reed willfully and feloniously uttered and published disloyal, scurrilous, and abusive language about the military and naval forces of the United States at a meeting held under the auspices of the Socialist Party of the Bronx in the Hunt's Point Palace on September 13th [1918]. This meeting was attended by about 3,000 persons, among whom were many of Russian birth and extraction. Assistant United States Attorney Earl Barnes, who has charge of the prosecution, also attended the meeting.

Quotes Shiplacoff's Speech.

The part of the speech of Shiplacoff which caused the grand jury to take action was that which referred to the operation of the United States forces guarding Vladivostok, Siberia, for the purpose of safeguarding the country to the rear of the Czecho-Slovaks. The indictment quotes the Assemblyman as follows:

And I call particularly tonight upon the young men and women who have had the good fortune of being born in this country, who have had the good fortune of attending the public schools of this country, who have had the good fortune

of getting even a smattering of the history of this country, to put themselves for one moment in the position of those people about whom this meeting is held tonight. Let us for a moment imagine that during the struggle of America against the autocracy of England in 1776, let us imagine for one moment that any other European country or American country had come and tried to interfere in our effort to straighten out matters for ourselves in the best way our forefathers in this country knew how.

You will remember with what bitter feelings your teachers have tried to plant in you a sort of hatred toward the Hessians, those soldiers who came from the other side, hired to do the work of King George III against the American colonists, and those were only the ragtag off the people; they were the hired murderers who came to do the bidding of King George III — think how much better the Russian people of today have a right to feel against the people who in the name of democracy, in the name of everything that seems sacred, come there to hand out the same dose to Russia today that was handed out by the Hessians to the American Republic.

Calls Allied Troops Brigands.

The indictment against Reed charges that at the same meeting in a speech, when referring to the occupation of Vladivostok, he thus expressed himself:

This intervention that I am talking to you about is here not allowed to be spoken about in any way other than the government wants it to be spoken about, but in every other country in the world — in France, in Italy — this intervention is characterized very boldly as a direct adventure of brigands. In the issue of August 6th [1918], the Manchester Guardian, the greatest Liberal newspaper in England, if not in the world — not a Socialist paper, a paper of the liberal bourgeoisie — characterized this intervention in Russia as absolutely nothing but an adventure to recover for the French banks the interest on the national debt.

Asserts Law Was Violated.

The indictment further complains and states that at the time Reed made the above quoted remarks the United States was at war with the German Imperial government and that the statements constituted a violation of the Espionage Act.

Reed at the time he gave utterance to the allegedly disloyal remarks was out on \$2,500 bail, on a charge of violating the Selective Service Act in the publication of *The Masses*. He was taken in custody the day after the Bronx meeting [Sept. 14, 1918] and was released on an additional bond of \$5,000 for a hearing before Commissioner Hitchcock, which proceeding has been superseded by the filing of the indictment.

Shiplacoff, who has twice served in the Assembly, is at present a candidate for Congress from the Bronx on the Socialist ticket. He was notified by Mr. Barnes last night [Sept. 23, 1918] to appear this morning in the criminal branch of the Federal District Court for pleading to the indictment.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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