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Tanner Skym

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Bolshevik Germany: America's Perception to Bolshevism and the Origins of the German Revolution

The final three months of 1917 encountered a new sense of political thought that created a sense of fear among many Americans. Vladimir Lenin with his enthusiastic supporters that consisted of Russian laborers had arisen and overthrew their monarchy, spreading the ideological concepts of Bolshevism not just in the new Soviet Union, but across many countries in Europe. The impact of Bolshevism increased as Americans kept an eye on Europe, afraid that they were next in line to become infected. As problems arose in European countries, journalists predicted revolutions would occur by the Bolsheviks and their ambitions to overthrow their government. Known as the Red Scare, journalists examined pro-Bolshevik propaganda throughout cities in the United States. *Literary Digest* mentioned these “mutterings occurring, that “the red flag has been raised... as the symbol of a political system, not merely in contrast with our own, but in definite antagonism to it” and that meetings occurred “with an attendance of more than ten thousand” glorifying the system of “economic and political tyranny.”¹

As Germany continued to lose battles and hopes, American journalists previewed German's loss of morale and hope for government and anticipated Bolshevism would spread their revolutionary contagion to depose the German government and create new one in its place. William English Walling in *The Daily Missourian* on August 28th, 1917 had foreseen “a revolution at hand in Germany,” that Russian extremists had assumed Germany had become

¹ *Literary Digest*, December 7th, 1918.

“ablazed” with the influence of revolution; Wallings mentioned that “nearly all Russians seem to be convinced that the Germans will surely follow their example and do to the Kaiser what they did to the czar.” He noted that Germany received numerous defeats and as a result “the country may begin to move towards revolution.,” becoming supported by Russian revolutionists.² The message spread through other newspapers in different states, showing a rise in belief that Germany was heading towards the same path as the Russians. *The Washington Times* over a year later in their article on October 9th, 1918, titled “Revolution and Dynamite,” assessed a “rumbling in the streets of Berlin” and foreshadowed a rebellion among the people:

When the Kaiser’s part is done, when his killing is ended, when all the volumes of his murders are complete, another volume will be added, and that will be THE GERMAN REVOLUTION.³

The author continued to discuss how it was on its way, coming “from every corner of Germany, from every family that has been put in mourning, from every miserable creature crippled and starved to satisfy the Kaiser’s insane vanity.” An interesting part of this article was how the author had declared the power of the revolution was “moving onward now in Germany... will not stop,” and then pointed towards “the fate that overtook the Russian Czar when revolution came in Russia will overtake the Kaiser and his brood. Nothing will stop it.”⁴ A few weeks prior to the events beginning the German Revolution, *The Seattle Star* had an article titled “Bolshevism is Gripping Kaiserland,” explained that a “red” revolution was going to ensue in Germany, a Bolshevik revolution planning to erupt among the crowds.⁵ This gives the

² “How to Bring About a German Revolution” *The Daily Missourian*, August 28th, 1917.

³ “Revolution and Dynamite” *The Washington Times*, October 6th, 1918.

⁴ “Revolution and Dynamite” *The Washington Times*, October 6th, 1918.

⁵ “Bolshevism is Gripping Kaiserland” *The Seattle Star*, October 17th, 1918.

Americans the outlook that Bolshevism was spreading into Germany and started their revolution. The newspapers gathered will support this claim as they portray how the Bolsheviks persuaded Americans that Germany was following the Soviet Union's footsteps of revolution. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the ideology of Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution displayed a fear to Americans giving them the perspective that Germany descended into a Bolshevik state because of their revolution in 1918.

I. Russian Revolution Aftershock in Germany

The results of the Russian Revolution, with Lenin and the Bolsheviks overthrowing the Tsar and taking over the Russian government did not only impact American's perspective, but it also created disorder and a sense of precariousness in other parts of Europe. The sense of fear created from this uprising can be traced as early steps towards the Red Scare of 1919 as people were confused over this new government's vision for Russia. Anthony Read describe how the world was collapsing into chaos, in particular the German Empire.

Three great empires, the Habsburg, the Ottoman, and tsarist Russia, had imploded, leaving many of their subject peoples fighting among themselves over nationalism or ideology, or both. In a Germany bitter and bewildered by the sudden collapse of its army barely a month after their newspapers had proclaimed that the war was won, Berlin, Munich, Hamburg and other cities were torn by revolutionary violence. Everywhere, in the lands of both victors and vanquished and in the new states scrabbling for freedom, the relief of peace was overshadowed by a common fear, the dread of the Red Terror from the east: Bolshevism.⁶

⁶ Anthony Read, *The World on Fire: 1919 and the Battle with Bolshevism*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 1.

Read notes that many Western democracies were filled with anxiety as Bolshevism “sprang largely from the fear of the unknown,” many world leaders were unsure of how this ideology would impact their society, if they would end up like the Tsar Nicolas II and be overthrown by the working class. Melvyn Leffler mentioned in his book, *The Specter of Communism*, how these Bolsheviks “appealed to workers everywhere to overthrow their governments,” and that they “believed that their revolution in Russia would be crushed if they did not sue for peace, spark revolution abroad, and consolidate their victory at home.” Leffler also explained that they aimed for “a peace based on the principle of self-determination for peoples everywhere,” and that their “workers’ revolution calls upon the working classes of all countries to revolt.”⁷

One must analyze Germany’s response to the revolutions in Russia to grasp how they reacted to Bolshevism. Christopher Lasch mentioned an excerpt from the New York Evening Post that “With the cause of Russian freedom thrown into the scale there was an instant change of view.” This was true in many countries in Europe, specifically Germany. As Lasch pointed out there was “prospect that the revolution would spread to Germany” and to recognize how and why it influenced German society can give understanding to why Americans believed Bolshevism had caused the Revolution of 1918-1919.⁸

In Germany, the citizens were becoming divided over the war; they searched for ways to end the mass destruction. German Socialism had emerged as a result, having an objective to unify this distraught society. According to *The German Revolution and After* by Heinrich Strobel, after the Bolsheviks achieved victory in Russia, they “aimed at transplanting into

⁷ Melvyn Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 3.

⁸ Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 29.

Germany the methods of Russian Bolshevism,” which as a result, Germany had “three Socialist tendencies,” the Social Democratic Party, the German Socialist Party, and Russian Bolshevism; these three groups were “embodying opinions as to the objects and methods of revolutionary policy quite incompatible one with the other.”⁹ Strobel expressed how there was a rise of Marxist socialism amongst the German Social Democrats, that their goal was to defend the Fatherland “in accordance with the obligations of an international social democracy.”¹⁰

The ideology of Bolshevism created mixed feelings to the German citizens. Ralph Haswell Lutz addressed that “the German attitude toward Bolshevism continued to be one of the persistent problems which concerned both the government and the masses of the nation... Bolshevism attempted to win over the German people to the cause of the soviets.”¹¹ Lutz also disclosed that once Germans had made peace with Russians in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, many German prisoners who were “trained as proselytes of Bolshevism,” had returned to Germany and began a “Bolshevist agitation which undermined the discipline of the Germany army and became one of the fundamental causes of the revolution.”¹²

This infection of Bolshevism among the German society caused a disturbance, yet had inspired the German Socialist Parties, as Lutz pointed out “the German proletariat had been profoundly influenced by the success of the Bolsheviki.” He acknowledged Lenin and his denouncement of democratic programs, as he “attempted to reestablish ‘the true teachings of Marx concerning the State;’” many of these German proletariats believed that Bolshevism was “a remarkable political and social system” as Marxist theories were adapted in this system,

⁹ Heinrich Ströbel & Henry James Stenning, *The German Revolution and After* (London: Jarrolds, Ltd, 1923), 9.

¹⁰ Heinrich Ströbel & Henry James Stenning, *The German Revolution and After*, 12.

¹¹ Ralph Haswell Lutz, *The German Revolution, 1918-1919*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1922). 120.

¹² Ralph Haswell Lutz, *The German Revolution, 1918-1919*, 120.

giving the idea that “its fundamental conception was the socialization of the means of production through the dictatorship of the proletariat.”¹³ The readings of Lenin, Leon Trotzky and Karl Radek were spread in German cities; according to Lutz, “Bolshevism came to be regarded” by the German masses “as a fundamental cause of the German revolution, and perhaps its final goal.”¹⁴

Stephen Miles Bouton, a historian from New York, analyzed how the German people were reacting to the Bolshevik propoganda. He pointed out in *And the Kaiser Abdicates* a Berlin millionaire’s remark on the effect of Bolshevism:

If it comes to a question of choosing between Bolshevism and Allied slavery, I shall become a Bolshevik without hesitation. I would rather see Germany in the possession of Bolshevik Germans than of any bourgeois government wearing chains imposed by our enemies. The Allies dare not intervene in Russia, and I do not [*sic*] believe they would be any less helpless before a Bolshevik Germany.¹⁵

The ideology of Bolshevism had become inspiring across Germany, the Socialist Party came to accept many of the ideas that involved overthrowing the government, as Germans wanted to break free from a bourgeois government. Bouton expressed how the effect of the Bolsheviks appeared in German cities, as he noted that “Bolshevik centers had been organized all over Germany when the revolution came;” the German police had aimed to close these nests as the propoganda spread across cities.¹⁶ The Bolsheviks had aimed their attention toward imperialistic Germany, according to Bouton, as “their missionaries... entered Germany by secret

¹³ Ralph Haswell Lutz, *The German Revolution, 1918-1919*. 121.

¹⁴ Ralph Haswell Lutz, *The German Revolution, 1918-1919*. 122.

¹⁵ S. Miles Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates: the German Revolution, November 1918-August 1919*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 268.

¹⁶ S. Miles Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, 100.

routes and worked with Germans in sympathy with their cause.”¹⁷ This spread of Bolshevik propaganda became one of the main causes for the German Revolution, as their literature had incited “the Germans to institute a reign of terror against the bourgeoisie, to murder the oppressors of the proletariat and to overthrow the government.”¹⁸

II. America’s response to the Bolshevik Uprising in Russia

The concept of Bolshevism and their leaders had negative responses from Americans. Christopher Lasch quoted an excerpt from the St. Louis *Post Dispatch* that “Bolshevik platform has many appealing doctrines,” yet “their leaders have been so intemperate and visionary, have shown themselves so susceptible to reptile German intrigue, have revealed such an inadequate conception of the only means by which the revolutionary gains are to be preserved, that they have forfeited claims to confidence.” He also explained that many American newspapers have expressed the Bolsheviks and their “power for evil,” along with “their ineptitude” and “their unreasoning impatience in rejecting half a loaf as worse than none at all.”¹⁹

Yet American journalists created rumors that Bolshevik leaders, in particular Lenin, were spies sent from Germany to crush Russia’s provisional government. Lasch believed that “if [Lenin] was depicted as a German agent, he was the unwitting tool, not the accomplice, of the Kaiser.”²⁰ To understand America’s response towards the Russian Revolutions, the transformation from a provisional government to a Bolshevik regime, can create a comprehension on how the Germans became involved with spreading Bolshevism; since

¹⁷ S. Miles Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, 97.

¹⁸ S. Miles Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, 99.

¹⁹ Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution*, 58.

²⁰ Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution*, 59.

Americans believed Bolshevism originated from Germany, they felt that Germany's revolution was caused by Bolshevism as well.

The March Revolution in Russia stirred reactions from the United States. According to Leonid I. Strakhovsky in *American Opinion About Russia, 1917-1920*, the abdication of the Russian Tsar and the news of this Provisional Government, "with a broadly democratic platform and an avowed aim of prosecuting the war to a victorious end," had thrilled both the American government and the people.²¹ Some articles, including the *Daily Star Mirror* believed that "the purpose of this rebellion is to crush the rule of all Pro-German officials," they believed that Russian Tsar Nicholas was in collaboration with the Germans and was "hindering Russia's progress in the great war."²² American journalists were very enthusiastic about the arrival of the "New Russia," in an article for the *New York Times*, the U.S. was the first nation that actually recognized this new Government. The U.S. ambassador at the time, David R. Francis was honored to share the news of the United States encountering this new government; he hoped that "the cordial relations existing between the two countries continue to obtain," and that "they prove mutually satisfactory and beneficial." The Russian Foreign Minister, Paul Milukoff had responded elated, hoping "that this great change which has come to Russia will do much to bring them [*sic*] closer together," than they ever been before. He included that they were "proud to be recognized first by a country whose ideals they [*sic*] cherish."²³

Eventually, more news spread as Americans heard of the split between the provisional government and the introduction of the three socialist parties, which had "steadily undermined

²¹ Leonid I. Strakhovsky, *American Opinion About Russia, 1917-1920*, (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 4.

²² "Russia Shaken by Revolution" *The Daily Star Mirror*, March 15th, 1917.

²³ "America First to Recognize the New Russia" *New York Times*, March 23rd, 1917.

the authority of the Provisional Government.”²⁴ Few American newspapers expected another revolution against the government; *Oklahoma City Times* declared Premier Alexander Kerensky to be a dictator of Russia, that a new sinister force threatened to wreck the “New Russia” and in response, he granted “unlimited powers” to the provisional government in hopes of removing the “the enemies of public order” yet there was a fear that a counter-revolution created by the workmen and soldiers. A telegram mentioned in the article had stated to “Let the country [Russia] know the truth. Let it act without mercy. Let it find enough courage to strike those who by their cowardice are destroying Russia and the revolution.”²⁵

Newspapers acknowledged Lenin as a “pro-German” and a “radical socialist leader” the *Evening Star* informed the public that the Russian government planned to arrest him along with his followers, stating that he “probably will be shot if he is convicted as a spy working in the interest of Germany,” or isolated. The article commented on how the provisional government had become “anxious to avoid any accusations of interference with freedom of speech, and that Lenin’s activities were “more dangerous for Russia and her liberty than the German armies,” even declaring that he was “mentally unbalanced.”²⁶ Newspapers were certain Russia was going to fall again, that Lenin had done a lot of harm to the provisional government. The *Ogden Standard* assessed Lenin’s radicalism, how he created “strikes, agrarian disorders, anti-government demonstrations” and mutinies in his effort “to attain political independence.” They also noted how Kerensky had “promised the provisional government he would ‘save Russia and Russian unity by blood and iron if argument and reason, honor, and conscience’ were not sufficient.”²⁷ Some press were pushing for a democracy in Russia, the *Glas Svobode* in Chicago,

²⁴ Leonid I. Strakhovsky, *American Opinion About Russia*, 6.

²⁵ “Premier Kerensky Becomes Dictator of Russia,” *Oklahoma City Times*, July 23rd, 1917.

²⁶ “Russia Plans to Curb Activities of Lenine” *The Evening Star*, July 25th, 1917.

²⁷ “How A Dynasty Was Overthrown” *The Ogden Standard*, August 9th, 1917.

Illinois had stated that “it is self-evident and clear that such a new formation cannot be anything else but a Democratic Republican.” They pointed out how the American government had “extend its helping hand to the Russian nation” and called the US generous in “supporting the Russian provisional government,” therefore they felt American involvement was needed for assisting other countries that lay within Russia.²⁸

The news of Kerensky being overthrown in Russia established a strong sense of fear among the American Press. *The Detroit Times* believed that Russia was “back again where she was last March,” that these Bolsheviks were “extreme radicals who burn at once to make the world a brotherhood” that they were “set against all wars” and “believe in uttermost democracy.” Yet they were persisted that Lenin and Leon Trotsky along with the Bolsheviks overthrew control which “likewise come under previous suspicion as dominated by the Germans” They explained that this fear became established as Bolsheviks had pursued a “crazy scheme of restoring peace” but would open Petrograd to become controlled by the Germans.²⁹ Yet the American press continued to believe that the Bolshevik state was going to collapse quickly at first. *Evening Journal* pointed out that Washington D.C that this “uprising apparently would be ‘short-lived’” and that the Bolsheviks could not endure the Russian army who was retrieved by Kerensky. The article explained that Kerensky had planned to give enough power “to hang themselves” and that he “and the loyal army will be able to sweep aside the revolting elements.”³⁰

²⁸ “Slovenes And King of Serbia” *Glas Svobode*, September 14th, 1917.

²⁹ “Washington Sees Hope for Russia; Cossacks to Secede” *Detroit Times*, November 9th, 1917.

³⁰ “Bolsheviki Government Crumbles, Moscow Garrison with Kerensky Loyalists March Against Lenine” *The Evening Journal*, November 12th, 1917.

As the American Press noticed Russia falling to Bolshevism, they blamed Kerensky's lack of leadership and bad decision-making for the failure of reuniting Russia. The United Press staff correspondent at Petrograd, William G. Shepherd investigated what was occurring in Russia at the time of the Bolshevik overthrow, writing a four-part series located in many newspapers around the world. In the first part, he explained how the Bolshevik uprising "was a crisis that made them lose interest in Russia" as he wrote that many civilians were terrified as Russian soldiers were "lusting for blood," that the results of this Bolshevik revolution and the outcome of the Moscow conference had made "Russia's approach towards success [sic] plainer than ever."³¹ His second part attacked Kerensky, claiming that the fallout of the revolution has "his life hung by a cord" that his "only fault is that he has been willing to die but he has not been willing to kill" as he pointed out that the uprising with many civilians being killed in the street "was a fine instance of Kerensky's bravery." He noted that Kerensky fled the city as Lenin and Trotsky's men went on a killing spree, then returned due to the threat of being arrested, seized Trotsky only to pardon him.³² In his third section, he criticized Kerensky's failure to restore capital punishment by letting "the bloodshedding radicals, Lenin and Trotsky" go free, how he "released every Bolshevik prisoner" and that every Russian soldier had become a Bolshevik if they refused to fight. As he failed to punish the Bolsheviks, Shepherd stressed that this failure "forced Kerensky to his downfall."³³ In the concluding section of his story, he then viewed Kerensky's failure to feed Russian civilians; because the people in these villages were suffering from lack of attention and leadership, they "were willing to agree to any change of government, even to a Bolshevik government, in the desperate hope that they might, in some mysterious way, get [sic]

³¹ William G. Shepherd, "Inside Facts on Russia," *The Daily Star-Mirror*, December 5th, 1917.

³² William G. Shepherd, "Inside Facts on Russia," *The Daily Star-Mirror*, December 6th, 1917.

³³ William G. Shepherd, "Inside Facts on Russia," *The Daily Star-Mirror*, December 7th, 1917.

food and clothes and fuel for the winter.” Shepherd then stated that “Kerensky, with all his talk and his ideals, had not secured for the Russians [*sic*] the necessities of life,” and that he was overthrown by the army for this reason, since the Bolsheviks promised “bread and peace.”³⁴

American newspapers were dissatisfied with how Kerensky had allowed Russia to fall to Lenin and the Bolsheviks. They felt sorry for Russian civilians as they believed the Russian government failed them and allowed these radicals to overthrow their democracy. *New York Times* reminisced the spring of 1917, how “Russia had entered the circles of democracies,” and that “it was a day joyous—a swiftly passing day” yet now “the time passed, the darkness thickened.”³⁵ In the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, journalists had “extend their sympathy to the Russian people who have been victimized and deluded by a gang of fanatical usurpers,” and that if reinstated under a similar Muscovite regime, “will soon be as dangerous as before”³⁶

III. The Road to German Revolution

The response to Bolshevism not only spread in cities, but the battlefield experienced Bolsheviks ideology. Scott Stephenson approached how Bolshevism had affected the warfront, that “in contrast to the Bolsheviks’ direct contact with revolutionary influences, the conditions of combat in the West in 1918 dominated combat soldier’s attention, and circumstances also served to discourage those who would seek to reach the front-line troops with the powerful effect of face-to-face agitation.”³⁷ He proclaimed that men returning from being captured in Russia as a result of them dropping out of the war set “a vivid example of the effect that fraternization could have on German soldiers” that many of these soldiers called these ex-prisoners “Bolsheviks” as

³⁴ William G. Shepherd, “Inside Facts on Russia,” *The Daily Star-Mirror*, December 8th, 1917.

³⁵ Harold Williams, “Russia In Throes of Huge Upheaval,” *New York Times*, December 7th, 1917.

³⁶ “Sympathy For Russia” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 27th, 1917.

³⁷ Scott Stephenson, *The Final Battle: Soldiers of the Western Front and the German Revolution of 1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 31-32.

“the experience in the Russian camps had changed these men” and that “if not converted to pacifism or even revolutionary Bolshevism, they were imbued with a profound hostility to further service.” Stephenson had quoted an excerpt from the 87th Infantry Division that many of these “prisoners of war coming from Russia” were more of a great danger to the army than an increase in strength.”³⁸

This theory of Bolsheviks taking over the German army had been mentioned in American newspapers as well. *The Daily Ardmoreite* explained that Bolsheviks were “circulating in the German lines” and spreading this message in pamphlets given to the German soldiers. In the pamphlet, they also mentioned that the democratic peace promised by Germany were “unconscionable lies” and that they were slaves to the government.³⁹ *Pierre Weekly Free Press* stated that these Bolsheviks had “put Russian national affairs into the advisory hands of German staff officers” as they confessed that they were “allies of the Kaiser” since their efforts consisted of “discourage and defeat opposition to [the Kaiser’s] aims.”⁴⁰ The insights of these journalists theorized that Germany and the Bolsheviks were creating an alliance.

The spring of 1918 had American officials speculating that Bolsheviks were secretly supplying the German army. Merlyn Leffler explained that the “Bolshevik appeals to the war-weary masses of Europe and their clamor for a peace without annexations and indemnities deeply troubled American officials.” The Bolsheviks created peace with Germany in an effort to “prompt the German people to overthrow their government” which persuaded Woodrow Wilson to create “his own vision of a peaceful world order” that would counter the Bolshevik’s attempt

³⁸ Scott Stephenson, *The Final Battle*, 31.

³⁹ “Bolsheviki Tell German Soldiers That Their Masters Are Common Liars,” *The Daily Ardmoreite*, January 3rd, 1918.

⁴⁰ “An Infamous Confession” *Pierre Weekly Free Press*, January 10th, 1918.

in peaceful negotiations.⁴¹ Leffler explained how Wilson became repelled to Lenin and his “willingness to sign a separate peace, trade with the enemy and use German and Austrian prisoners of war” and although he carried assurance that the Bolsheviks would eventually fall, this alliance had given the impression to America “that Bolshevik Russia was willing to cede land and sell critical raw materials and foodstuffs to the enemy.”⁴²

A revolution was sensed by American journalists months prior to the German Revolution. In an article by the New York Tribune, an American family returned from Germany and discussed with the newspaper that a “shortage of food has spread from the civilian population of Germany to the fighting men” and that the mentioning of a revolution among the crowds “are becoming louder and louder.” One of the family members, Miss Olga Wurzburg, described her conversations with the soldiers, that “they freely expressed their growing dissatisfaction” and she explained that unless conditions improved for the soldiers, a revolt was going to occur as the people and the soldiers became “very impatient and their morale generally is deteriorating.” She mentioned that soldiers experienced terrible housing conditions, being fed “gruel and a weak kind of soup,” being paid little while the officers had “the best food, lodging and pay” resulting in urges from their grievances to “join in on a revolution against their masters.” In addition, she explained that citizens’ spirits were kept up by newspaper notices, but they were “gradually losing their effect” as the German newspapers exaggerated their updates.⁴³

⁴¹ Merlyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism*, 7.

⁴² Merlyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism*, 8.

⁴³ “Arrivals from Germany Says Revolt Looms,” *New York Tribune*, June 24th.

The morale among the civilians were slowly falling. As the country failed to better their conditions, the Bolsheviks were supplying them with resources, hoping to encourage a revolution.

American journalists examined this “secret alliance” Germany and the Bolsheviks were having, believing that Germany was involved with the Bolshevik state. *Topeka State Journal* believed that Bolshevism “was formented by Germany” in an effort to vanquish “the Russian people on the battlefield.”⁴⁴ In the *Tulsa Daily World*, there was a report that Germany and the Bolshevik government had “a secret convention regarding the future of Poland” and that they aimed to crush “Polish nationalist aspirations.” They also examined the Cracow newspaper describing this “as ‘a scandalous document showing the treachery of the bolsheviki and the baseness of the Germans.’”⁴⁵

Mark Jones explained that “over the course of 1918 the German political imagination had been increasingly gripped by the rise of Bolshevism and the threat it posed to the territories of the former Russian empire.” He added that newspapers who corresponded in Russia “further radicalized older German understandings of Eastern Europe as an uncivilized and chaotic space;” this illustration along with “the presence of more than 1.4 million prisoners of war from the former Russian Empire inside Germany” gave anxiety among the German population “that a Bolshevik-style revolution could take place there.”⁴⁶ This similar sense of anxiety was also distributed throughout Americans as journalists hypothesized a German-Bolshevik alliance.

⁴⁴ “Asks for Nothing,” *The Topeka State Journal*, June 28th, 1918.

⁴⁵ “Crushing of Poland, Object of Alliance” *Tulsa Daily World*, June 29th, 1918.

⁴⁶ Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-1919* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 9-10.

The discussion of a German-Bolshevik pact concerned many Americans throughout the summer. In the *El Paso Herald*, an article exclaimed that the Bolsheviks were threatening to join Germany if Anglo-Japanese intervention occurred in Russia. The government declared “if the Japanese and English should occupy Russian territory the Soviet government would immediately join Germany.”⁴⁷ *New York Tribune* accused the Bolsheviks were “delivering Russia over to her[Germany] more and more every day.”⁴⁸ *The Washington Times* asserted that “the Bolsheviks are in some kind of agreement with the Germans” and that Germans were helping Bolsheviks “restore the Bolshevik power in southern Russia” in return for wheat. The article then stated that “The Bolshevik and German interests being the same, I see no reason why they should not pool their interests.”⁴⁹

IV. A Bolshevik Revolution?

This sense of fear that Germans had that Bolsheviks were going to start a revolution was distributed among the American society as well. Many American newspapers in the weeks prior to the war had predicted the revolution would eventually occur; the fear of Bolshevism spreading across Europe had increased this prediction. As a result, *American's perspective was that Bolshevism caused of the German Revolution*. When it was rumored that Germany was heading towards the revolution, the newspapers headed in that direction. *The Greeneville Daily Sun* exclaimed that “Unless immediate peace was effected Bolshevik Revolution imminent in Germany” as the noticed the socialists were drawing up plans for a new government. They received the word that “Bolshevism has been located among the industrial classes” and that these “regular socialists were alarmed and have drawn up a form of government which they will seek

⁴⁷ “Bolsheviks Threaten to Join Germany if the Allies Intervene,” *El Paso Herald*, July 10th, 1918.

⁴⁸ “Wilson to Ignore Bolshevik Protest On Murman Drive,” *New York Tribune*, July 17th, 1918.

⁴⁹ “Soviet Holding Power in Russia,” *The Washington Times*, August 18th, 1918.

to establish in the event of the Kaiser's abdication, hoping to head of the anarchy of bolshevism."⁵⁰ *The Daily Gate City* carried the same article, but explained that "the internal situation in the central powers is increasingly serious," that "liberal conservative elements contemplate some action to prevent a Bolshevik movement within the empire."⁵¹

The Kiel Mutiny furthered America's assumption of a Bolshevik Revolution. In an article by the Bossier Banner, there was a discussion of the mutiny being "in progress at Kiel," and the journalist declared that "the crew of the battleship Kaiser mutinied and hoisted the red flag."⁵² *The Evening Missourian* furthered this assumption the next day, when the United Press mentioned that "revolting soldiers and sailors" were capturing more German cities, including Hamburg; they too "waved red flags" according to the journalist.⁵³ The West Virginian had mentioned the same event as the previous articles, titled "Bolshevism in German Navy."⁵⁴ *Evening Public Ledger* examined these strikes, declaring that "'Red' troops have occupied all of the Kiel workshops" and that these "revolutionary troops at Kiel are wearing red cockades and carrying flaming banners." In addition, they mentioned the proclaimed that was declared by the revolutionary leaders:

Comrades: The present days will be remembered in the history of Germany. For the first time political powers is in the hands of the solders. A great work lies before us,

⁵⁰ "Unless Immediate Peace is Effected Bolshevik Revolution Imminent In Germany—Socialists Alarmed and Draw Up New Government" *The Greeneville Daily Sun*, October 17th, 1918.

⁵¹ "Must Have Peace At Once Or Anarchy Grips Empire" *The Daily Gate City*, October 17th, 1918.

⁵² "The European War" *The Bossier Banner*, November 7th, 1918.

⁵³ "Mutiny at Kiel Breaks Into Revolt Throughout Schleswig and Holstein" *The Evening Missourian*, November 7th, 1918.

⁵⁴ "Bolshevism in German Navy" *The West Virginian*, November 7th, 1918.

but in order that its realization and organization be carried out it was necessary to form a council of workmen and soldiers to be responsible for the preservation of order.”⁵⁵

The word “comrades” created a mindset in Americans that these mutineers were Bolsheviks, as comrade was often used as form of address towards fellow communists. The proclamation also focused upon a formation of workmen and soldiers to control order, leading Americans to point towards a Bolshevik uprising, especially since the red terror was spreading across the country. Scott Stephenson explained that these soldiers were “modeled after the Bolshevik soviets” as they occupied “many of the cities of northern Germany and the industrial centers of the Ruhr.”⁵⁶ This model was noticed by American journalists as they investigated the revolts occurring in Germany.

As the German Revolution unraveled in November, American journalists continued to watch the revolution in fear that Bolshevism was going to prevail over the other parties. *New York Tribune* expressed that “Germany let the evil genii of Bolshevism out of the sealed bottle of international socialism. As a military expedient she turned them loose in Russia. Now she must struggle with them at home.”⁵⁷ *Evening Star* showed there was an attempt made by the Kaiser that “it must be Emperor or Bolshevism in Germany” that he tried “to create the impression at home and abroad” and asserted that the German newspaper, the *Vorwaerts*, “paints the situation gloomily” and that it was seen in many hands among German crowds.⁵⁸ A few days later, on Armistice Day, *Evening Star* gave President Woodrow Wilson’s opinion on the Germans prior to the revolution; he noted that the people of Germany were “ready to overthrow their present rulers

⁵⁵ “German Sailors Mutiny: Seize Ships” *Evening Public Ledger*, November 7th, 1918.

⁵⁶ Scott Stephenson, *The Final Battle*, 76.

⁵⁷ William L. McPherson, “Military Comment” *New York Tribune*, November 9th, 1918.

⁵⁸ Bassett Digby, “Concerted Efforts to Retain the Kaiser,” *Evening Star*, November 9th, 1918.

to get peace.” Then they noted the President’s reaction to the revolution occurring and how he was “more worried over the prospect of anarchy in Europe than anything else,” that he was more concerned on “how to manage the situation without forcing bolshevism on Germany, a disease of such contagion that if left unchecked it might spread to neighboring countries.”⁵⁹ *Chicago Daily Tribune* stated that as discussions were occurring between the Socialist and Independent Socialist parties, there was mentioning of German newspapers and how they “rechristened the ‘Red Flag’” as the revolution continued to spread. The article included that there was “recognition of the ‘Spartacus group’ or Bolsheviki, as a distinct Socialist faction” and furthered that the Bolsheviks “represented a small branch of the Independent Socialists” and this recognition had indicated “a growth in the Bolshevik strength” that created “such proportions” which the journalist believed “must be reckoned with.”⁶⁰

Americans journalists viewed the beginning of the German Revolution as another Bolshevik revolution. They expressed a sense that Bolshevism had spread into German masses and influenced them to overturn a democratic society and become more of a Communist state. Even President Woodrow Wilson concurred a similar theory, in an enclosure from Grant Smith, he wrote that President Wilson wanted general elections in Germany and to create a provisional government as it was evident “from all reports that the revolutionary movement was fast falling into the hands of the German Bolsheviki and Quasi-Bolsheviki supporters.”⁶¹ Wilson believed that “the sooner the crisis comes, however, the greater the chance that it will result favorably for the forces of real democracy” and that “only continued reiteration ... would counteract the

⁵⁹ David Lawrence, “Wilson Questions Brought Upheaval,” *Evening Star*, November 11, 1918.

⁶⁰ “Former Kaiser’s Pet Paper Backs ‘Reds’; Germany Socialists Form New Cabinet” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 13th, 1918.

⁶¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, 1918-1919*, ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 194.

Bolshevik poison, which is undoubtedly being incessantly injected into the German masses” as “the Bolshevik leaders recognize in democracy their most dangerous enemy.”⁶²

The theory that the Bolsheviks were supporting this revolution in hopes that Germany would fall under a socialist government continued to step into American journalist’s perception in December 1918. In a few newspapers, there was a declaration of a Bolshevik outbreak “under Dr. Karl Liebknecht’s leadership.”⁶³ *Vernon County Censor* added that Liebknecht was putting in effort “to influence the men returning from the front” and that “his henchmen comprise a small army of Red soldiers who are accused of packing various meetings to secure the majority necessary to push through resolutions and other measures calculated to embarrass the present government.” In addition, the newsletter included his propaganda, which declared that they needed “a government of soldiers and workmen... which will not have to bow down before the entente” and disposing of German imperialism.⁶⁴ A.R. Decker exclaimed in the *Evening Star* that “the German Revolution was prepared in Russia by bolsheviki, whose agents were in Germany a year ago,” that they spread their influence throughout Germany and “started the movement in Kiel November 9th.”⁶⁵ *Greeneville Daily Sun* pointed out that Germans were adopting some of the Bolsheviki System in their government, including a “soviet principle of extensive self-government in local administrative affairs, and they were “planning to dominate a reformed Russia politically.”⁶⁶ *The Seattle Star* examined that the Reds were “marching westward, in the direction of Germany” to assist the German Bolsheviki and that if the Bolsheviks succeeded in

⁶² Woodrow Wilson, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 195.

⁶³ “Germany Now Fears Bolsheviki Outbreak” *The Cordova Daily Times*, December 4th, 1918.

⁶⁴ “Bolsheviki Seize Germany; Ebert’s Rule Overthrown” *Vernon County Censor*, December 4th, 1918.

⁶⁵ A. R. Decker, “Hun Revolt Traced to the Bolsheviki” *Evening Star*, December 10th, 1918.

⁶⁶ J. W. T. Mason, “Germans Adopting Outward Forms of the Bolsheviki System and the Bolsheviki Methods are Now in Operation,” *The Greeneville Daily Sun*, December 11th, 1918.

gaining control of the German government, “war would follow” by France and Britain, which in this case would resume World War I.⁶⁷

The Red Scare had impacted these journalists’ articles, as it had impacted American society in the late 1910s. W. Anthony Gengarely mentioned that “Everywhere... the prevalent assumption was that dissent was disruptive and ought to be silenced” as “undemocratic means... would eventually be justified by the attainment of democratic ends.”⁶⁸ Gengarely added that this Bolshevik ideology had become “a convenient symbol of the foreign revolutionary” which was “a perfect target” for the United States and their “virulent xenophobia and antiradicalism.”⁶⁹ As seen in these newspapers, the Bolshevik ideology was pointed at for starting the German Revolution *because of this symbolism accusation*. Julian F. Jaffe noted that “bolshevism represented a fundamental challenge to the American way of life” and Americans considered “bolshevism as the world’s chief enemy of democracy” and that “no revolution could succeed... unless economic conditions were such that the people had little to lose by a radical change in government.”⁷⁰ In addition, Jaffe quoted New York mayor John F. Hylan that this “display of the Red Flag... seems to be emblematic of unbridled license, an insignia for law breaking and anarchy.”⁷¹ As Bolsheviks and German revolts used the red flag, it gave Americans this perception that Bolshevism became part of the German revolution when they were pushing for a shift in government for the workers and soldiers.

⁶⁷ “Million Terrorists on March Toward Germany’s Frontier,” *The Seattle Star*, December 28th, 1918.

⁶⁸ W. Anthony Gengarely, *Distinguished Dissenters and Opposition to the 1919-1920 Red Scare* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 3.

⁶⁹ W. Anthony Gengarely, *Distinguished Dissenters and Opposition*, 18.

⁷⁰ Julian F. Jaffe, *Crusade Against Radicalism: New York During the Red Scare, 1914-1924* (London: Kennikat Press, 1972), 79.

⁷¹ Julian F. Jaffe, *Crusade Against Radicalism*, 80.

Entering 1919, the American Press were on their heels for Germany and their fight to keep Bolshevism. The thought that Germany would be thrown in anarchy with the spread of Bolshevism startled many American journalists as they continued to inform the American public the status of German government. Edward W. Pickard of the *Yerington Times* exclaimed that the entente nations were “skeptically watching the apparently desperate efforts of the new German government to establish itself.” He also pointed out that it seemed that “the only genuine, sincere advocates of a real revolution in Germany are the bolsheviki” and that under Liebknecht they were struggling to overthrow the German government as “their latest manifestation” was creating this “bloody revolt” in other cities of Germany, such as Berlin.⁷² *New York Times* had an article the same day, comparing the very young German Revolution with the “corresponding age of the Russian Revolution” and stated that “Bolshevism did not appear to be [sic] the terror it has become.” They also claimed that even though Bolsheviks were a minority group, they “had demonstrated by the time the new year arrived the things that could be done by an audacity that stopped at nothing” and now with “the collapse of the Central Powers,” Bolshevism has a “new hope in Germany and Austria-Hungary.” They concluded with “the year 1918 will be memorable for many things, not least among which is the change of this clown at whom the world laughed into a monster that has for its aim... the conquest of the world.”⁷³ Yet some pointed out that Bolshevism in Germany was not as bad as the Russians. In an article from *The Topeka Daily State Journal*, John Graudenz explained that the influence was “in general an intellectual movement with practically no violence as compared with the Russian variety.” He explained that it was “slowly gaining ground” among the Germans as Russians funded the agitators who spent the money “among the workmen and soldiers” and that there was a “growing fear that entente

⁷² Edward W. Pickard, “News Review of Current Events,” *Yerington Times*, January 4th, 1919.

⁷³ “Bolshevism’s Rise In 1918” *The New York Times*, January 4th, 1919.

capitalism intended to exploit Germany,” not to mention the “unemployment and lack of food” continued in German society. Graudenz proclaimed that the unemployed society would be “easily influenced by the Bolsheviki” and that the German Bolsheviks called themselves “Spartacusians” and became “candidates for the national elections.”⁷⁴

V. Conclusion

The November Revolution of 1917 sent a shockwave of Bolshevik fear throughout the world. Many European countries and the United States established a sense of fear as they were afraid this anarchic ideology would overturn their capitalist and democratic structures and initiate a Communist order. The status of Germany entering a Bolshevik Revolution concerned many Americans as they believed that Bolshevism originated from Germany, viewing Vladimir Lenin as a German spy sent by the Kaiser to overthrow the Russian Provisional Government. Once Russia was sent into a state of revolution, the American Press expected that Lenin would backstab the Kaiser and spread Bolshevism into the German society to overthrow the German monarchical government and create a socialist government for the workers. These early examinations of Bolshevism spreading in Germany are traced as the beginning of the Red Scare.

As Germany transitioned into a state of revolution, American journalists exclaimed it was Bolsheviks that started this transition, especially with the mutiny in Kiel and the soldiers holding up red flags, a symbolism for Bolshevism and Communism. Therefore, as Americans read these newspapers, their perception was that Bolshevism had started a revolution in Germany days

⁷⁴ John Graudenz, “Here’s the Real Propaganda for the Bolsheviks,” *The Topeka Daily State Journal*, January 6th, 1919.

before the war had ended. And as the Revolution continued to occur, their main focus was on the German Bolsheviks, the “Spartacusians,” and their effort to take over the German government.

The Spartacus fought against the German government, to secure control and gain followers. According to S. Miles Bouton, they spread terror in the early weeks of January in Berlin and fought against the government troops. Unfortunately for the Spartacus, the troops were able to maintain order, crushing most of the Spartacans. The Spartacus leaders were dispersed with Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg killed, Georg Ledebour arrested, Karl Radek in hiding and Emil Eichhorn escaping the country.⁷⁵ The Spartacans were boasting “that the elections would not be permitted to be held,” yet the government and their attitude “made their boast an empty one.”⁷⁶ The result of the election for delegates had divided between the Majority Socialists having 15 members, the Clericals with 7, Democrats 5, Conservatives 4 and Independent Socialists 3. The Bolsheviks were continually put down in their coup attempts around Germany, yet the cabinet still “feared disorders.”⁷⁷

In America, journalists examined how Germany and the new government was going to conquer Bolshevism. In the *Evening Capital News*, they examined Chancellor Friedrich Ebert’s response to the change in government. Ebert exclaimed that “the Spartacans lost their revolt” but ensured that they must be fed, or an outbreak might occur again. Ebert explained that “the reason they did nothing against Bolshevism at the beginning of the revolution was that the army... was disorganized and useless” but now since the German government has been “rebuilt” they intended “to use every means to suppress Bolshevism” which was “an enemy to society.” In addition, he called Spartacans “sub-normal persons” who were “victims of agitators” that were

⁷⁵ S. Miles Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, 225-36.

⁷⁶ S. Miles Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, 240.

⁷⁷ S. Miles Bouton, *And the Kaiser Abdicates*, 242.

“supplied with Russian gold.”⁷⁸ Although Ebert exclaimed that Bolsheviks were suppressed, American journalists were distrustful on his statement. They continued to observe the Germans and their fight to establish control, wondering when and where Bolshevism would strike again.

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⁷⁸ Frank J. Taylor, “Says Huns To Insist Peace Be Based on 14 Point Plan,” *Evening Capital News*, January 20th, 1919.

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