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American Bolsheviki: The Beginnings of the First Red Scare, 1917 to 1918

Abstract

A consensus has developed among historians that widespread panic consumed the American public and government as many came to fear a Bolshevik coup of the United States government and the undermining of the American way of life beginning in early 1919. Known as the First Red Scare, this period became one of the most well-known episodes of American fear of Communism in US history. With this focus on the events of 1919 to 1920, however, historians of the First Red Scare have often ignored the initial American reaction to the October Revolution in late 1917 and throughout 1918. A study of this earlier period demonstrates that American fear and hatred of Bolshevism emerged immediately after the Bolshevik uprising in Russia. For over a year prior to 1919, the American press, American authorities, and American leaders claimed the American Bolsheviki plotted to seize control of the US. While fear of Bolshevism in American society during the period of 1917 to 1918 did not become as widespread as it did from 1919 to 1920, a study of these early years aids historical understanding of how the First Red Scare developed in American society and challenges widely accepted notions of when the First Red Scare began.



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I transferred to Murray State University in 2013, and while there, I earned a Bachelor of Arts in history and Master of Arts in U.S. history. When I decided I wanted to study public relations, I chose to return to Murray State because of the great memories I had there studying history and am currently a post-baccalaureate student. My research into the First Red Scare began in 2015, when I was a senior looking for an interesting topic for a class writing assignment. Little did I know that twenty-page paper would morph into my graduate thesis. After reading so much about American fear of bolshevism during 1919 and 1920, I began to wonder how Americans reacted to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in late 1917. Moreover, I wanted to know if Americans worried about a possible red uprising in the US in 1918. Answering these queries became my favorite experience in graduate school and helped me grow immensely as a writer and researcher.

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American Bolsheviki: The Beginnings of the First Red Scare, 1917 to 1918

A consensus has developed among historians that widespread panic consumed the American public and government as many came to fear a Bolshevik coup of the United States government and the undermining of the American way of life beginning in early 1919. Known as the First Red Scare, this period became one of the most well-known episodes of American fear of Communism in US history. Americans accused labor protestors, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the Socialist Party of America of being Bolshevik agents. With this focus on the events of 1919 to 1920, however, historians of the First Red Scare have often ignored the initial American reaction to the October Revolution in late 1917 and throughout 1918. A study of this earlier period demonstrates that American fear and hatred of Bolshevism emerged immediately after the Bolshevik coup of the Provisional Government. For over a year prior to 1919, the American press and American leaders claimed the American Bolsheviki plotted to seize control of the US. Moreover, the American media and government labeled anarchists, socialists, and Industrial Workers of the World members as Bolshevik agents and persecuted anyone they felt to be supporting Bolshevism or associating with it. While fear of Bolshevism in American society during the period of 1917 to 1918 did not become as widespread as it did from 1919 to 1920, a study of these early years aids historical understanding of how the First Red Scare developed in American society and possibly even challenges widely accepted notions of when the First Red Scare began.

Prior to the Bolshevik seizure of power, Americans grew fond of the Provisional Government that came into power in Russia during March 1917, following the collapse of the Tsar. On March 22, the US became the first country to recognize the Provisional Government.¹ In his war message to Congress on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson cited the Provisional Government as an example of Russia's natural democratic values and claimed that the rise of this new government in Russia made World War I a battle between democratic and

¹ George F. Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920: Russia Leaves the War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956), 14-15.

autocratic governments.² Likewise, newspapers across the country celebrated the democracy of the Provisional Government as progress towards a more peaceful world and portrayed American and Russian values as similar.³ The influence of the positive reactions from the media and the government helped shape the establishment of the Provisional Government as a national victory to the American people.⁴

Therefore, for most Americans, the Bolshevik coup of the Provisional Government on November 7, 1917, came as a harsh introduction to the Bolshevik Party.⁵ The American press labeled the Bolsheviks as illegitimate usurpers, criminals, and dictators.⁶ In a speech to the American Federation of Labor on November 12, President Wilson vaguely referenced the Bolsheviks as not being representative of the interests of the Russian people and expressed fear that groups in America had developed plots to cause anarchy and lawlessness throughout the country and that their “mob spirit” held sway over parts of the American population.⁷ He also stressed unity between classes and groups of people over class struggle.⁸ Given these statements, Wilson expressed worry for the first time that an event similar to the Bolshevik Revolution might happen in the US.

Newspapers immediately reported on Wilson’s speech to the AFL. The *Brainerd Daily Dispatch* stated that some claimed “German agents” and “American Bolsheviks” plotted to gain

² Woodrow Wilson, “An Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” April 2, 1917, World War I Document Archive, accessed October 28, 2017, https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Wilson's_War_Message_to_Congress.

³ New York Times (New York City, New York), March 23, 1917; San Bernardino County Sun (San Bernardino, California), March 23, 1917; Tennessean (Nashville, Tennessee), March 23, 1917; New York Times, April 3, 1917; Asheville Citizen Times (Asheville, North Carolina), April 3, 1917; Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, California), April 3, 1917; St. Louis Post-Dispatch (St. Louis, Missouri), April, 4, 1917.

⁴ Peter G. Filene, *American Views of Soviet Russia, 1917-1965* (Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1968), 1-2.

⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 64; Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (McGraw-Hill, 1972), 58.

⁶ New York Times, November 8, 1917; Wichita Daily Eagle (Wichita, Kansas), November 8, 1917; Chicago Tribune (Chicago, Illinois), November 9, 1917; New York Times, November 10, 1917; Oregon Daily Journal (Portland, Oregon), November 10, 1917.

⁷ Woodrow Wilson, “An Address in Buffalo to the American Federation of Labor,” in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 45, November 11-January 15, 1918, eds. Arthur S. Link, David W. Hirst, John E. Little, Frederick Aandahl, Manfred F. Boemeke (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 11.

⁸ Wilson, “An Address in Buffalo,” 11.

control of the AFL by ousting the organization's president, Samuel Gompers.⁹ Other newspapers reporting on Wilson's speech and the Bolshevik revolution declared that the American Bolsheviks planned to infect American labor through the Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Party to spread anarchy and terror in American society.¹⁰ The immediate reaction of Wilson and the American press to the October Revolution demonstrated that the worry that Bolshevik agents plotted to use American labor as a vehicle for revolution developed almost instantly following the coup of the Provisional Government in Russia. Likewise, the national press coverage showed that fears of Bolshevik radicalism infiltrating American institutions and causing a Bolshevik revolution in the US spread quickly throughout the country following the October Revolution.

On November 16, Theodore Roosevelt gave further credence to a radical Bolshevik threat lurking within America during a speech he delivered in Princeton, New Jersey. As the primary purpose of the speech, Roosevelt advocated for the US to declare war on Austria and Turkey as part of the fight to safeguard democracy around the world. In listing other threats to democratic governments, Roosevelt also labeled the Bolsheviks the "worst foes of liberty and democracy" and claimed pacifists, German sympathizers, American socialists, and the Industrial Workers of the World wanted to destroy the US in the same way the Bolsheviks decimated "free Russia."¹¹ Additionally, he accused individuals such as Robert La Follette, Morris Hillquit, and Victor Berger of being Bolshevik sympathizers.¹² Roosevelt's speech marked one of the first times following the October Revolution a renowned American political figure directly named groups and people he considered to be involved in the plotting of a socialist revolution in America. Furthermore, his speech received nation-wide coverage in the press. Papers around the country discussed how Colonel Roosevelt attacked the IWW and assailed the "American

⁹ Brainerd Daily Dispatch (Brainerd, Minnesota), November 12, 1917.

¹⁰ Bridgeport Times and Evening Farmer (Bridgeport, Connecticut), November 13, 1917; Ottumwa Semi-Weekly Courier (Ottumwa, Iowa), November 13, 1917.

¹¹ The New York Times, November 17, 1917; York Daily (York, Pennsylvania), November 17, 1917.

¹² The New York Times, November 17, 1917.

Bolsheviki,” a term that was becoming a catch-all for radical activity in the US.¹³ Arguably, at this moment, Roosevelt aided in setting the national tone of the hysteria surrounding Bolshevism in America for the next several years to come.

Following Roosevelt’s speech, the American media portrayed the Socialist Party as one of the most prominent representatives of the American Bolsheviki to the public. The *New York Times* claimed that the Socialist Party and the Bolsheviks in Russia held strong connections to each other and that both of their ideologies possessed Germanic origins and influence. The paper further explained that the socialists acted as a “menace” to America and its war effort due to their pro-German stance.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the *News-Journal* in Mansfield, Ohio, claimed that the American Bolsheviki socialists wanted the US to surrender its independence and become subservient to warmongering Germany.¹⁵ Likewise, the IWW also began to be labeled by the American press as prominently connected with the Bolsheviks.¹⁶

Throughout the first few months of 1918, fear of the American Bolsheviki remained prevalent in the press. During January, a political cartoon titled “A Warning to American Bolshevism” appeared in newspapers across the country.¹⁷ The image represented the American Bolshevik as an unkempt, bearded, and ill-looking man.¹⁸ He wore a coat, and pieces of paper stuck out of his pockets that read “I.W.W.,” “plots,” “anarchy,” “revolution,” and “Bolshevism.”¹⁹ Beside him, a sign warned American Bolsheviks of the US government’s intolerance for any protest or action that might hinder America’s war effort. Through the

¹³ Lincoln-Journal Star (Lincoln, Nebraska), November 17, 1917; Statesman Journal (Salem, Oregon), November 17, 1917; Atlanta Constitution, November 17, 1917; Courier-Journal (Louisville, Kentucky), November 17, 1917; Altoona Times (Altoona, Pennsylvania), November 17, 1917; New York Times, November 7, 1917; Arizona New York Times, November 30, 1917.

¹⁴ Daily Star (Tucson, Arizona), November 17, 1917.

¹⁵ News-Journal (Mansfield, Ohio), November 27, 1917.

¹⁶ The New York Times, December 24, 1917; Evening News (Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania), December 24, 1917.

¹⁷ “A Warning to American Bolshevism,” Asbury Park Press (Asbury Park, New Jersey), January 4, 1918; “A Warning to American Bolshevism,” Lincoln-Journal Star, January 5, 1918; “A Warning to American Bolshevism,” Oshkosh Northwestern (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), January 15, 1918; “A Warning to American Bolshevism,” Arkansas Democrat (Little Rock, Arkansas), January 16, 1918; “A Warning to American Bolshevism,” Arizona Daily Star, January 24, 1918.

¹⁸ “A Warning to American Bolshevism,” Arkansas Democrat, January 16, 1918.

¹⁹ “A Warning to American Bolshevism,” Arkansas Democrat, January 16, 1918.

message of the sign, the cartoon portrayed the American Bolshevik as a criminal conspiring against the US, showing Americans feared the American Bolshevik as a threat to the country's ability to win the war.

²⁰On February 17, the Bolshevik threat seemed more real as the press reported that a disturbance involving over 4,000 Bolshevik sympathizers erupted in Chicago. According to an article by the *Chicago Tribune* titled "Judge Driven from Hall by Bolshevik Din," the group of sympathizers gathered in Douglas Park auditorium to hear Professor George Lomonosoff, President of the Russian mission on ways and communication, speak on ways to offer aid to poor Russians.²¹ A man the paper referred to as Alderman Rodriguez, a renowned Chicago socialist, was supposed to chair the meeting but did not attend. When Judge Harry M. Fischer filled the position of chair in Rodriguez's place, it surprised the crowd, and they shouted "Who are you?," "Where is Rodriguez?" and "down with Fischer" at the judge.²² Fischer ended up leaving the meeting, but Dr. Moses Sahud, a socialist, managed to fill the chair position and calm the crowd. Lomonosoff gave a speech, claiming that the Bolsheviks would soon fall in Russia just as the Tsar and the Provisional Government had before them, further angering the crowd. After Lomonosoff finished speaking, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that an "unidentified anarchist" shouted that Lomonosoff represented the bourgeoisie and not the proletariat of Russia.²³ However, the police forced the heckler to leave.²⁴

While the *Chicago Tribune* described the Bolshevik sympathizers as highly energetic and disruptive audience members, many newspapers reported on this event with great hysteria and sensationalism. The *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* wrote that 4,000 Bolsheviks rioted in the streets of Chicago to silence Lomonosoff and that the city called in the police to put the "mob"

²⁰ "A Warning to American Bolshevism," *Arkansas Democrat*, January 16, 1918; *The Espionage Act of 1917*, Mintz, S., & McNeil, S. (2016). *Digital History*, accessed November 10, 2017, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=3904.

²¹ "Judge Driven from Hall by Bolshevik Din," *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1918; *Washington Post* (Washington, District of Columbia), February 18, 1918.

²² "Judge Driven from Hall," *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1918.

²³ "Judge Driven from Hall," *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1918.

²⁴ "Judge Driven from Hall," *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1918.

down.²⁵ Likewise, the *Nebraska State Journal* called the meeting “a Bolsheviki rough house” and claimed that 4,000 American Bolsheviks led two riots throughout Chicago that police had to use clubs and guns to stop.²⁶ *The Journal Gazette* in Mattoon, Illinois stated that it took 15 police to halt a “mob of 4,000 Trotsky disciples” that started a riot at the meeting concerning Russia.²⁷ Ultimately, the national press coverage and the local reporting describe the same event much differently, with the local press portraying a much less chaotic scene than that of other newspapers across the country.

On March 23, University of Michigan President Harry B. Hutchins continued to stoke fear of Bolshevism as he called on Americans to be alarmed by the presence of the American Bolsheviki throughout the US in a speech he gave at the University of California.²⁸ In his address, titled “The World War and Some of Its By-Products,” Hutchins claimed that the conflict would cause a strong movement “to bring about social and economic revolution.”²⁹ He argued that American Bolsheviki planned to lead this movement for change. Hutchins claimed that the American Bolshevik movement drew their numbers from foreigners who held hostile and hateful feelings for the established government and economic systems in the US. Moreover, Hutchins believed “ignorance” and “evil leadership” shaped the sentiments of this “foreign contingent,” and that they aimed to destroy the stable American government and replace it with anarchy.³⁰ The University of Michigan President also mentioned that many of these foreigners worked in numerous industries throughout the US, allowing them to influence the minds of American workers and shut down production of materials important to the war effort,

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²⁵ “4,000 Bolsheviki Riot in Chicago,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* (Salt Lake City, Utah), February 18, 1918.

²⁶ “Bolsheviki Riot in Chicago,” *Journal Gazette* (Mattoon, Illinois), February 18, 1918.

²⁷ “A Bolsheviki Rough House,” *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln, Nebraska), February 18, 1918

²⁸ “Social and Industrial Revolution Threatens as By-Product of War,” *Santa Ana Register* (Santa Ana, California), March 23, 1918.

²⁹ “Social and Industrial Revolution,” *Santa Ana Register*, March 23, 1918.

³⁰ “Social and Industrial Revolution,” *Santa Ana Register*, March 23, 1918.

³¹ “Social and Industrial Revolution,” *Santa Ana Register*, March 23, 1918.

Furthermore, in facing the threat of the American Bolsheviki, Hutchins argued Americans must adopt a new conception of Americanism and American citizenship.³² Hutchins quoted Theodore Roosevelt, saying that every alien that came to the US needed to learn English and start taking steps to become a citizen within the first few years of their residency.³³ He also proposed internment camps for aliens as another solution to neutralize the foreign threat of the American Bolsheviki.³⁴ Importantly, Hutchins' concerns demonstrate both a hysteric fear of Bolsheviks infiltrating American labor and an emphasis on using Americanism to fight Bolshevism just short of a year before the First Red Scare.³⁵ Also, the press carried his warning to the American people nationwide, helping to make Americans alarmed at the supposed threat of Bolshevism as well.³⁶

On May 15, American panic concerning a Bolshevik revolution spiked once again when police arrested three Russian anarchists in New York City and charged them with plotting to overthrow the US government and bring about a "reign of terror" in America.³⁷ The *New York Times* reported that police thwarted a secretive "nation-wide anarchist plot" purposed to spread Bolshevism across America.³⁸ During the arrest, police seized 30,000 copies of a radical monthly periodical known as *Kololkol*. The *New York Times* claimed that the radicals wrote about plans to rise against the government in this publication and that they planned to send the periodical to cities across the country such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, Detroit, San Francisco,

³² "Social and Industrial Revolution," Santa Ana Register, March 23, 1918; Columbia University, Columbia University Quarterly (Columbia University Press: 1918), Hathi Trust Digital Library, accessed November 12, 2017, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hwxtntn;view=1up;seq=82>, 64.

³³ "Social and Industrial Revolution," Santa Ana Register, March 23, 1918; Columbia University, Columbia University Quarterly, 64.

³⁴ "Social and Industrial Revolution," Santa Ana Register, March 23, 1918.

³⁵ "Social and Industrial Revolution," Santa Ana Register, March 23, 1918.

³⁶ "Social and Industrial Revolution," Santa Ana Register, March 23, 1918; "President Hutchins Warns of American Bolsheviki," Brooklyn Daily Eagle (Brooklyn, New York), March 23, 1918; "'U.S. is in Anarchy Peril,' U. of M. Head," Detroit Free Press, March 24, 1917; "Warns of Anarchy Here, American Bolsheviki Grows," Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, Maryland), March 24, 1918; "Warning Sounded Against the 'American Bolsheviki' by President Hutchins," Cincinnati Enquirer (Cincinnati, Ohio), March 24, 1918.

³⁷ "Anarchists Plot Against America," New York Times, May 15, 1918.

³⁸ "Anarchists Plot Against America," New York Times, May 15, 1918; "Alleged Anarchists Held," New York Times, May 16, 1918; Philadelphia Inquirer, May 15, 1918.

and Boston.³⁹ Moreover, the paper stated the police possessed a list of names of thousands of suspected “sympathizers and supporters” of the New York City anarchist group from across the US.⁴⁰ Additionally, the *New York Times* reported that a Justice Department agent believed the anarchist group arrested in New York City was the “most dangerous group of anarchists” to operate on American soil, and that the agent feared that the radicalizing effects of the group’s propaganda might influence the many Russian workers laboring in US shipyards and factories.⁴¹

Media outlets throughout the country also reported on these arrests. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Natchez Democrat*, the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, and the *Courier-Journal* claimed the three arrested Russians to be “adherents of Lenine and Trotsky” and connected to the IWW.⁴² These papers also warned readers that the anarchist group in New York City worked alongside many other anarchists in numerous other American cities to overthrow the government. Meanwhile, the *Asbury Park Press* praised the police for stopping the anarchists from carrying out their Bolshevik plot.⁴³ The *Washington Post* wrote that the three Bolshevik-affiliated anarchists passed around pamphlets “printed in Russian and conveying instructions as to how to ‘overthrow the government.’”⁴⁴ Ultimately, the treatment of these three Russian anarchists as dangerous revolutionaries capable of and plotting to stage a Bolshevik revolution in the US by the authorities and the national press demonstrated a failure of newspapers and the police to differentiate between anarchists and communists. Moreover, the reaction of the national press specifically provided proof that bouts of hysterical fear of a Bolshevik uprising throughout the United States occurred earlier than 1919.

³⁹ “Anarchists Plot Against America,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1918; “Alleged Anarchists Held,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1918; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 15, 1918.

⁴⁰ “Anarchists Plot Against America,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1918; “Alleged Anarchists Held,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1918; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 15, 1918.

⁴¹ “Anarchists Plot Against America,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1918

⁴² “Russians Arrested on Charge of Plot to Overthrow the U.S.,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 15, 1918; “Arrest 3 Alleged Russian Anarchists,” *Natchez Democrat* (Natchez, Mississippi), May 15, 1918; “Russ Anarchists Under Arrest in New York,” *Reno Gazette-Journal* (Reno, Nevada), May 15, 1918; “Conspiracy to Overthrow Government is Charged,” *Courier-Journal*, May 15, 1918.

⁴³ “Check Anarchist Plot,” *Asbury Park Press*, May 15, 1918.

⁴⁴ “3 Held as Anarchists,” *Washington Post*, May 15, 1918

On November 24, 1918, American fear of Bolshevism would become prevalent again when the Socialist Party of Minnesota and Hennepin County planned to hold a rally at the Gateway Park in Minneapolis. When Sheriff Otto Langum received word of the socialist gathering, he banned the meeting from taking place. Despite Langum's orders, socialists still planned to gather for the rally. Langum responded by asking Governor Joseph A. A. Burnquist for help in stopping the socialists from meeting and Burnquist sent National Guard infantry regiments.⁴⁵ Over 12,000 socialists gathered for the meeting, and the *Star Tribune* wrote that some of the socialists carried signs advocating that the US recognize the new Soviet government in Russia.⁴⁶ However, faced with National Guard units and sheriff deputies, the crowd of socialists dispersed quickly.⁴⁷ The actions of Burnquist and Langum demonstrated the ways red hysteria influenced both local and state political operations following the end of World War I. Even though the US signed an armistice, it did not change the discrimination socialists faced due to their support of the Bolshevik government.

Socialists faced persecution in New York City after the end of the war as well, when on November 19, Mayor John Francis Hylan banned displays of red flags and any unauthorized meetings throughout the city to prevent what he called the "horrors and outrages of unrestricted mobs, which are now causing anxiety in neutral countries abroad."⁴⁸ On November 25, Hylan's ban became the center of controversy, when over 10,000 socialists met at Madison Square Garden for a Socialist Party gathering. Even though Hylan banned red flags, the *New York Times* reported that "there was three to four times as much red on display" at this socialist rally than usual.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ "Crowd Halts Tiny Parade of Socialists," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minnesota), November 25, 1918; "The Proscribed Socialist Rally," *Star Tribune*, November 25, 1918.

⁴⁶ "Crowd Halts Tiny Parade of Socialists," *Star Tribune*, November 25, 1918.

⁴⁷ "The Proscribed Socialist Rally," *Star Tribune*, November 25, 1918.

⁴⁸ "Ban Red Flags in New York," *Jefferson City Post-Tribune* (Jefferson City, Missouri), November 19, 1918; *Wall Street Journal* (New York City, New York), November 20, 1918.

⁴⁹ "Soldiers in Khaki Storm Socialist Meeting in Garden," *New York Times*, November 26, 1918.

However, when soldiers and sailors staying in the city heard word of the socialist gathering, they decided to disrupt the meeting because they saw the socialists to as acting un-American.⁵⁰ According to the *Buffalo Commercial*, when around 1,000 soldiers and sailors gathered outside of Madison Square Garden during the meeting, denunciations of Bolshevism and calls for “loyal Americans” to help stop the socialists came from the crowd of military men and American civilians met their cries with cheers.⁵¹ The soldiers and sailors attempted to enter Madison Square Garden, but a line of police providing security for the socialist meeting stopped them from entering. So, the soldiers and sailors waited outside of the venue until the meeting ended to stage their attack. The police proved to be ineffective in stopping the military crowd, and the sailors and soldiers used fists and clubs against the socialists leaving the meeting. Some socialists fought back, while others ran. Eventually, the situation calmed down as socialists managed to escape the scene by either fleeing on their own or being helped by police.⁵² Despite the anger of the military mob, the violence they caused only resulted in minor injuries. Throughout the night, authorities took nine socialists into custody, charging them with disturbing the peace and attempting to start a riot. However, police did not arrest any of the soldiers or sailors, nor did New York City authorities develop plans to punish them.⁵³

On the night of November 26, the violent attacks on socialists from soldiers and sailors continued in New York City when over 1,000 of them attempted to disrupt a Women’s International League meeting at Palm Garden, a “Bolshevist Rally” according to the *New York Times*.⁵⁴ The soldiers explicitly stated that they came to the meeting to oppose Bolshevism and attack Bolsheviks. While police confronted the crowd of soldiers and sailors for three hours and

⁵⁰ “Soldiers in Khaki Storm Socialist Meeting in Garden,” *New York Times*, November 26, 1918.

⁵¹ “Incensed Troops Attack Socialists,” *Buffalo Commercial* (Buffalo, New York), November 26, 1918.

⁵² “Soldiers in Khaki Storm Socialist Meeting in Garden,” *New York Times*, November 26, 1918; “Men in Service Not Sorry They Beat Up ‘Reds,’” *Ithaca Journal*, November 26, 1918; “Incensed Troops Attack Socialists,” *Buffalo Commercial*, November 26, 1918.

⁵³ *Buffalo Labor Journal* (Buffalo, New York), November 28, 1918.

⁵⁴ “Soldiers and Sailors Again Rush Meeting of Socialists,” *New York Tribune* (New York City, New York), November 27, 1918; “Soldiers Riot at Bolshevist Rally,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1918.

tried to hold them back, the troops eventually broke through the line of police and beat the attendees as they exited the meeting.⁵⁵ Following this night of rioting, the city's Board of Aldermen altered the ban on red flags to include black flags, banners, and signs that symbolized opposition to "organized government," and made violating the ban punishable with a hundred-dollar fine and up to ten days in jail.⁵⁶ While the city did direct the soldiers and sailors to stop rioting, the men in uniform had won, as the city further encroached on the right of assembly of socialists than it had done previously.

Given the events of late 1917 and 1918, 1919 did not mark the beginning of American fears of Bolshevism, but rather came as a continuation of red hysteria. As early as the October Revolution, Americans became paranoid and anxious that the same event could happen on American soil and they became suspicious of groups they believed to be supporters of the Bolsheviks such as the Socialist Party and the IWW, without making distinctions between these groups. Throughout this period, the American press ran sensational stories about these organizations, while American leaders warned of the danger of the American Bolsheviks lurking in their midst. These two sources helped shape American perceptions of Bolshevism, and increasingly created anxious, hateful, and hysteric feelings towards anything or anyone representative of the Bolsheviks or other leftist radical groups in American society. Furthermore, neither the press nor the government made attempts to educate the American public about the differences between Bolsheviks, socialists, IWW members, and anarchists. This lack of differentiation between groups made the American Bolshevik threat appear larger and helped set the tone of American perceptions of Communism for decades to come.

⁵⁵ "Soldiers and Sailors Again Rush Meeting of Socialists," *New York Tribune*, November 27, 1918; "Soldiers Riot at Bolshevik Rally," *New York Times*, November 27, 1918.

⁵⁶ "Red Flag is Barred from City in Bill Passed by Aldermen," *New York Tribune*, November 28, 1918.

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