

# The History of the Twentieth Century

## Episode 141

### “The Cossacks Are Not Coming”

#### Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

*As on August 1, 1914, so also now on the verge of a fourth year of war, the words of the speech from the throne still hold: “We are not impelled by the lust of conquest.”*

*Germany took up arms in defense of her freedom, her independence, and the integrity of her soil. The Reichstag strives for a peace of understanding and a lasting reconciliation of peoples. Any violations of territory, and political, economic, and financial persecutions are incompatible with such a peace.*

Resolution adopted by the German Reichstag on July 19, 1917.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 141. The Cossacks Are Not Coming.

The February Revolution in Russia might at first have been regarded as the answer to Germany’s prayers. For three and a half years, Germany has been mired in just the sort of two-front war its military and diplomatic leaders had spent decades of planning and effort to avoid. Now the revolution in Imperial Russia that the German leadership dreamed of but dared not hope for has finally come.

Well, that’s helpful, but it isn’t the solution to all of Germany’s problems. First of all, the foreign minister of the new Provisional Government in Petrograd, Pavel Miliukov, has been swearing up and down that the new government stands by its alliance commitments to France and Britain, so much so that some in the German government speculated that the February Revolution had been orchestrated by the British to prevent Emperor Nikolai from pursuing a separate peace.

On the other hand, it was very apparent that this position was not popular in Russia, particularly among the socialists and the working classes, not to mention the rank and file soldiery. The Petrograd Garrison, which had played a key role in the Revolution, was demanding they not be sent to the front, which tells you something. No matter how brave a face the Provisional Government puts on it, it is clear even in Berlin that the war is unpopular, and you might wonder how long this *ad hoc* government can hold back the tide of popular will. Some Germans might even wonder if there was anything they could do to help push the Russian government in the right direction, toward peace.

Apart from this problem, the timing of the Revolution was like a cheesy sitcom. You know what I mean? Someone says, "There's no way Harold would ever quit his job!" Cue Harold to walk in and announce "I just quit my job!" Cue laugh track. Only in this case, the Germans restarted unrestricted submarine warfare after everyone specifically considered whether Russia might be close to revolution and agreed that she wasn't. Just a few weeks later, Harold walked in and said, "The Russians just had a revolution!" Cue laugh track.

It seldom gets the attention it deserves, but as I noted back in episode 138, the British had just about run out of credit in the US to use to buy food and supplies. Then came unrestricted submarine warfare, the Zimmerman Telegram, and America was in the war and the US government was extending new loans to the Allies. You can't help but wonder: if the Germans had just held off just a little while longer on the unrestricted submarine warfare, long enough for the February Revolution to begin and for American banks to stop writing loans to the British government...what might have happened then?

Alas for Germany, that didn't happen. We are where we are, and it's too late to take back unrestricted submarine warfare. Part of the logic behind that decision was that the German Army lacked the strength to pull off an offensive on either front in 1917. The Battle of Jutland proved that the High Seas Fleet wasn't going to win the war, so a U-boat offensive was about the only option left. And the first few months of the offensive went pretty well, so there's even some grounds for hope.

But hold on a second, you might say. If Russia had a revolution and her provisional government is shaky and the war is clearly unpopular, isn't this exactly the time to strike? One sharp blow might bring the whole of Russia crashing down into chaos. That's a reasonable argument, but Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who are now pretty much calling all the shots in Germany, considered the situation and came to exactly the opposite conclusion. Right now, the Russians are fighting among themselves, politically speaking at least, and some on the socialist left are explicitly calling for an end to the war. Hindenburg and Ludendorff feared that a German offensive might be just the thing to draw the squabbling Russian political factions back together into union against the foreign threat.

Another point to consider is the internal German political situation. The revolution in Russia was a mixed blessing. It weakened Russia, yes, but might it also spread to Germany? Remember that Germany is just now coming out of the awful Turnip Winter. Spring has come and the weather is warmer, but it's going to take until harvest time, August at the earliest, before German civilians can expect real relief from the severe food rationing. Inequitable distribution was also still a problem. Ordinary people were restricted to 1,500 calories per day, while the restaurant at the exclusive Hotel Adlon in Berlin was still serving up haute cuisine to anyone who could afford it. When it was a meatless day, the Adlon's menu might feature duck *confite*. The American war correspondent H.L. Menken was sending home dispatches talking up the excellent martinis available there right up until the moment the US entered the war.

And then there are the costs of the fighting. By the spring of 1917, Germany has suffered one million soldiers killed, and a further three million wounded, missing, or captured. And since I mentioned Britain's difficulties in getting credit in the United States, I suppose I should say a few words about Germany's economic position. The total value of all German bank notes in circulation at the beginning of the war was about three billion marks. Today it is thirteen billion, more than a fourfold increase. Germany's total public debt is north of a hundred billion marks, and since Germany lacks access to most of the world's credit markets, that debt is mostly due to patriotic German citizens who have invested their life savings in the future of Imperial Germany. And the war is costing the German government an additional three billion marks every month, most of which is being financed by additional borrowing. Obviously, this can't go on forever.

Finally, the change in government in Petrograd significantly affected attitudes toward the war in Germany. Think all the way back to the July Crisis and remember that it was a Russian mobilization that triggered German entry into the developing war. Think back to episode 87, when the cry, "The Cossacks are coming!" froze the blood of Germans as far away as the Rhine. Well, here we are in 1917, the Russian Emperor has been overthrown, a new government is rapidly liberalizing Russia, Russian soldiers are fighting hundreds of miles deep into their own territory, and the Cossacks are most definitely *not* coming. So what's left to be afraid of?

This attitude was certainly prevalent among German socialists. The SPD, the German socialist party, is the largest party in the Reichstag. They approved spending for the war only reluctantly, and surely the image of Russian soldiers swarming across Germany at the behest of one of the most autocratic and retrograde regimes in Europe had something to do with their willingness to bend their socialist principles a little. Certainly it was not fear of Britain or France, both of which have socialist ministers in their governments. Now the new Russian government also has socialist ministers. Russia even has the Petrograd Soviet calling the shots behind the scenes. It is now *Germany* that's looking like the most autocratic and retrograde regime in Europe. Shouldn't socialists, um, be doing something about that?

Some socialists already have. As the war dragged on, more and more members of the SPD balked at approving more and more war spending. They began to vote no, in defiance of the SPD

leadership and they were expelled from the party for it. These more radical socialists formed the Independent Social Democratic Party, the USPD, and the Spartakusbund, or Spartacus League, named in honor of the slave who led a revolt against the Roman Empire almost two thousand years ago. The Spartacus League represented the most radical of the radicals; they were about an eyelash away from being full-bore Bolsheviks. After the February Revolution, even the more moderate socialists, and even some centrist liberals, are beginning to come around. If neither Russia nor Germany has the means or the will to keep up the fight, if both countries want to be modern liberal democracies, what need is there to keep fighting each other?

[music: Strauss, *Wiener Blut*]

The year 1917 had opened with the sight of a new Emperor on the throne in Vienna, for the first time in, well, longer than practically anyone could remember, the 29-year old Kaiser Karl. The political situation was even worse in Austria than in Germany. Turnip Winter had been bad here, too, the costs of the war astronomical, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire's ethnic strains worse than ever, as opposition to the war easily slid over into opposition to the Habsburgs, which was just a short hop away from nationalism and calls for the Empire's minority communities to bust out of the "Prison of Nations" and become independent.

The new Emperor took personal command of the Austrian military, eased General Conrad out of power, and appointed a new foreign minister, Baron von Czernin, who came from a Bohemian noble family. The old foreign minister had been forced to resign after the German government demanded he be let go. He kept talking about peace, which irritated Hindenburg and Ludendorff no end, but his replacement, Czernin, was just as convinced of the need for a peace agreement. So was the Emperor, for that matter. If it wasn't clear before the February Revolution, it was clear now that if the war went on much longer, it would be the end of the Austrian Empire. At a meeting of the crown council on January 12, Czernin said as much to the Emperor and his ministers. It was no longer a question of making territorial demands as a condition of peace. If the Empire emerged from this war still holding on to everything it held when it began, we should all consider that a "win."

There was one other member of Kaiser Karl's inner circle who was outspoken about the need for a peace agreement. That was the Kaiserin, the Empress Zita. Zita and Karl had been married for six years and they seem to have had a very close relationship. The Emperor typically telephoned her several times a day whenever they were apart, which they often were, because of the war.

Zita was a daughter of the last Duke of Parma, before Parma had become incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy, episode 22. The Duke of Parma had been just eleven years old when he was deposed, but his family was enormously wealthy. He grew to manhood and sired 24 children in all, 12 each from two different wives. Most of this brood married into royal houses across Europe, as had Zita herself. Zita had six full brothers. When the Great War began, four of them enlisted in the Austrian Army, and the other two enlisted in the Belgian Army, apparently

because the army of the Third Republic didn't make any special accommodations for unlanded aristocratic offspring.

But Empress Zita and her husband saw here an opportunity to try some of that old-fashioned royal-to-royal diplomacy. She wrote to her brother Sixtus, one of those brothers fighting with the Belgian Army, and invited him to come to Vienna via neutral Switzerland to discuss a peace agreement.

Sixtus consulted with the French government and arrived in Vienna with a list of French peace demands: the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France, full independence for Belgium and Serbia within their pre-war borders, and Russian control of the Dardanelles. On March 24, the Emperor gave Sixtus a letter to carry back to Paris, in which he endorsed Belgian and Serbian independence, including offering Serbia access to the Adriatic, provided only that Serbia would suppress its anti-Austrian radicals, and he promised support for what he called France's "just claims" to Alsace-Lorraine.

This sounded pretty good to the British and French cabinets, both of which expressed a willingness to negotiate a separate peace with Austria. The French foreign ministry even toyed with a proposal to sever the Catholic regions of Germany and annex them to Austria as part of a comprehensive peace settlement, and presumably as a way to reward Austria for bringing her German ally to the negotiating table.

For a while there, it looked like these old-fashioned royal-to-royal diplomatic talks were going to bear fruit, but it was not to be. Entanglements within the two opposing alliances undermined the possibility of a separate peace. On the Allied side, the Italians were not willing to let go of their own territorial demands. Britain and France had promised Italy that it would get the lands it claimed—in the Tyrolean Alps, the city of Trieste, and along the Dalmatian coast—in exchange for entering the war. Italy meant to hold her allies to that promise. But this was further than the Austrian Emperor was willing to go. His counteroffer, that Austria would concede a portion of Italy's Alpine claim in exchange for some territorial concessions elsewhere, was rejected by the Italians. On April 14, the Italian foreign minister, Sidney Sonnino, met with the British and French prime ministers and held them to the agreement. David Lloyd George offered Italy the Ottoman province of Smyrna, on the Aegean coast, next to the Italian-controlled islands of Rhodes and the Dodecanese, but Sonnino dismissed the offer. The Risorgimento was about redeeming *Italia irredenta*, the unredeemed Italy, places where ethnic Italians lived outside the borders of the Kingdom. It wasn't about Italy gobbling down whatever unwanted scraps were tossed her way, as if she were the family dog, scrounging under the kitchen table.

Lloyd George felt tempted to cut the deal with Austria anyway, with or without Italian approval, but that was a step Alexandre Ribot was not willing to take. If Britain and France publicly renege on their promises to Italy, what would the Serbians and Romanians make of that? For

that matter, what would the Russians make of that? They might soon find themselves in an alliance of two.

Over on the Austrian side of the negotiating table, Kaiser Karl was also balking. The British and French had read his peace proposal as an offer to do a separate peace agreement with the Allies and leave the Germans in the lurch. But he had never offered to go that far. He'd only said he would make a separate peace *if Germany refused a just and equitable peace agreement*. There is a world of difference between these two offers. What Karl was offering was to use his influence to encourage Germany to come to the table and participate in drawing up a settlement agreeable to all the parties. Only if Germany unreasonably refused an agreement would Austria then consider moving forward without her.

That was quite different from what the Entente leaders were envisioning, so these talks went nowhere. The Allies, and particularly Lloyd George, rejected peace talks with Germany entirely. Lloyd George was holding out for victory over Germany on the battlefield.

Not that the Austrians didn't try to get Germany into peace talks. During the month of March 1917, Austrian foreign minister Czernin met with the German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethman-Hollweg several times to discuss potential peace settlements, but these discussions also failed. Throughout the war, the German Chancellor had always been the voice of pessimism. He was not hopeful about Germany's chances of a military victory. He believed Germany must accept some kinds of losses. He doubted there was any hope of getting the African colonies back, for example. But it's hard to say what he really thought, because Bethman-Hollweg also believed it was poor negotiating strategy to lay out your position in advance. So his position always was that he was open to negotiation, but he got cagey when asked for specifics.

The Chancellor also understood the rising power of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who still believed in the military solution. They had the Kaiser's ear, and Wilhelm always responded more favorably to the duo's spinning out of grand plans for expanding the German Empire than to talk of sitting down with the enemy and hammering out a peace deal that might involve Germany making painful concessions.

Kaiser Karl even took a crack at swaying his brother Emperor himself. On April 12, the two kaisers met personally and Karl read Wilhelm a memorandum prepared by Czernin that predicted that if the war went on into another winter, neither Empire would survive. Both would dissolve into revolution, just as Russia had done. Wilhelm didn't buy it. He scoffed at the notion there could be revolution in Germany.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff always offered more optimistic scenarios, and at this particular moment, in the spring of 1917, they were downright giddy. The U-boat campaign appeared to be working and they took the February Revolution as a sign Russia was about to exit the war. In their view, now was not the time to be making concessions. Their idea of a reasonable peace agreement looked like this: In the east, a rump Polish state dominated by Germany and German

annexation of the Baltic regions of Lithuania and Courland. In the West, Germany annexes Luxembourg and additional French territory, including those iron-ore producing border regions she overlooked in 1870. Belgium must also be annexed, or at the very least disarmed, with German soldiers occupying the fortress at Liège, German U-boat bases on the Belgian coast, and Germany granted military transit rights through Belgian territory.

Bethman-Hollweg dismissed these grandiose terms as “fantasies,” but that hardly endeared him to the military commanders, let alone to the Kaiser. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were reaching the conclusion that the chancellor had to go.

They weren't the only ones coming to that conclusion. In February 1917, a group of prominent political figures from Germany's conservative parties met at the Hotel Adlon in Berlin to hear from Matthias Erzberger. Yes, that's the same Hotel Adlon where the martinis are ice cold, the duck *confite* is superb, and there is never sawdust in the breadsticks. The proposal under consideration was to dump Bethman-Hollweg and install Paul von Hindenburg as the German Chancellor.

A little background on Matthias Erzberger is in order here, I think. Erzberger was 41 years old. He was a devout Catholic who had worked as a teacher and a journalist before entering politics. He was first elected to the Reichstag in 1903, fourteen years ago, and has held a seat there ever since. He was a leader of the German Center Party, which was a predominately Catholic party, so much so that English-language sources usually refer to it as the “Catholic Center Party.” It had originally been formed to defend the rights of the Catholic minority in Germany and was ostensibly a centrist party, as the name implies, although “center-right” might be a better description. At 91 seats, it was the second-largest political party in the Reichstag, after the Social Democratic Party.

In his career in the Reichstag, Erzberger had been a supporter of the German military and the naval build-up—he was on the Reichstag's military affairs committee—and when the war began, he had been properly patriotic. As a leader of a Catholic political party, he was naturally involved in German relations with the Vatican and with Catholic nations like Italy. Erzberger had worked with former Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow during the failed attempt to keep Italy neutral that I talked about back in episode 101.

Erzberger was also one of Bethman-Hollweg's staunchest supporters in the Reichstag, backing him against the endless carping of the SPD, so it's a little surprising to find him at the Hotel Adlon maneuvering to get rid of the chancellor, although less surprising is that he's attacking Bethmann-Hollweg from the right. Erzberger had been one of those German leaders like Hindenburg spinning out lengthy wish-lists of concessions for Germany to demand from the Allies as the price of peace. Bethman-Hollweg was getting squishy on the war, and that was too much for the conservatives in the Reichstag, and their allies in the German business and

industrial communities and in the military, who agreed at this meeting to begin a campaign to oust the chancellor.

One of their tools was the military censorship office. German newspapers were subject to wartime censorship, by military censors who ultimately answered to Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and so it was a simple matter to have the military censors undermine Bettmann-Hollweg by the simple technique of approving newspaper stories and editorials critical of the chancellor, while killing pieces that supported him.

On April 8, Easter Sunday, the Kaiser gave his annual Easter address to the Empire, and in this year's address he pledged to reform the Prussian local election system after the war. Prussian elections were held under a system where voters were divided into three classes based on how much tax they paid, which effectively guaranteed conservative control and locked the socialist SPD out of power. Bettmann-Hollweg was behind this reform initiative. It was meant as an olive branch to the left, but it did the chancellor more harm than good. Hindenburg and Ludendorff hated the idea, and they hated that it had been run behind their backs to the Kaiser, while the socialists were preoccupied with splitting into more radical factions over the question of ending the war. Electoral reform was too vague and remote a project to attract the support of the SPD.

But meanwhile, something must have happened to Matthias Erzberger, because by April he had gone from the hard-line bitter-ender who found the chancellor too squishy to a newly minted champion of peace. It isn't clear exactly what changed Erzberger's mind, but there were two things that happened in April that might explain it. One was the Erzberger received a copy of that memo from the Austrian foreign minister, the one that predicted revolution in Austria and Germany both if the war lasted until next winter.

The other was the peace initiative of the papal nuncio to Bavaria, Eugenio Pacelli. Pacelli—who twenty-two years from now is going to become Pope Pius XII, by the way—Pacelli arrived in Munich, also in April, as the newly-appointed nuncio to the court of King Ludwig III of Bavaria, Bavaria being the largest Catholic kingdom within the German Empire. This kinda, sorta makes Pacelli the papal ambassador to Germany, although not officially. But he came bearing another peace proposal from Pope Benedict XV. Nothing came of this proposal either, alas. Bettmann-Hollweg gave Pacelli a favorable reply, but Hindenburg and Ludendorff opposed it, and the Allies regarded it with suspicion, for they saw Pope Benedict as biased in favor of the Central Powers.

But the point is, around the time of the memo and the papal peace initiative, Erzberger saw the light suddenly and became a peace advocate himself. He traveled to Stockholm with the chancellor's blessing to meet with the Russian journalist Iosef Kolishko for an informal peace discussion. The two hammered out a rough agreement, but again, Hindenburg and Ludendorff went ballistic when they found out about it, and for his part, when Kolishko returned to Petrograd, he was greeted with accusations that he was a German agent.



[music:

Meanwhile, during all these peace discussions, the U-boat campaign continued on. In February, 1917, the U-boats sank 301 ships, totaling over 500,000 tons. In March, 379 ships were sunk, totaling just under 700,000 tons. Remember that the Germans calculate they can starve Britain if they can sink 600,000 tons a month for six months. In April, 474 ships were sunk, totaling close to 900,000 tons. Hence all the optimism we saw in April. May saw a decrease, though, to 386 ships and 600,000 tons, though still enough to starve the British. June was similar: 386 ships sunk, totaling a little over 700,000 tons. But in July the numbers began to dip. Just 286 ships sunk, totaling less than 600,000 tons.

The British were learning. They began organizing merchant ships into convoys. This, and other anti-submarine operations, including prevailing upon the Japanese to send a squadron of cruisers and destroyers into the Mediterranean to help hunt for U-boats there, was reducing the losses. In April, Ludendorff had been confidently predicting that Britain would be running out of food by July. But July came and there was no indication that the British will was beginning to flag. The ambitious Hindenburg-Ludendorff plan to bring the entire German economy under military command had failed to meet its lofty production goals, and there were stirrings of unrest, even mutiny, in the German Navy. Admiral von Capelle, Tirpitz's successor as naval minister, met with a Reichstag committee to discuss the progress of the U-boat war and told the members that while there was "no grounds for doubting the military results of submarine warfare," the nation nevertheless "must remain prepared for a lengthy war."

No one was surprised when the SPD got upset, but then the once-hawkish Center Party leader Matthias Erzberger gave a downbeat speech in which he went over the U-boat statistics in some detail and concluded that the submarine campaign was failing. He went on to say, with surprising frankness, that the U-boat campaign had been Germany's last chance to win an outright military victory, that it was now becoming clear that had failed, and thus there was now no choice left but to negotiate.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff couldn't believe what these weak civilian politicians were saying now, but the Social Democratic Party members were delighted. The SPD, the Center Party and the National Liberal Party, the three largest parties in the Reichstag, collectively representing about 60% of the seats in the national legislature, came together and passed a resolution on July 19 calling for a peace based on the principles of no annexations and no indemnities. This is the resolution I quoted from at the top of the episode.

It was a stunning development. The German Reichstag is now speaking in the same vocabulary as the Bolsheviks in Russia, and incidentally, a vocabulary not so distant from Woodrow Wilson's in the United States.

To Hindenburg and Ludendorff, this was the last straw. The military could no longer work with Bethman-Hollweg, whom they blamed for the Reichstag's insubordinate resolution. The

chancellor had to go, and if he didn't, they would resign and most of the German military command would follow suit, or so they told the Kaiser. Wilhelm was understandably unhappy over being blackmailed by his top generals once again. He wrote, "[T]his kind of behavior on the part of Prussian generals had never been heard of in the history of Prussia." He called Hindenburg and Ludendorff and Bethmann-Hollweg to meet together with him to discuss the situation.

But the meeting never took place, because Bethmann-Hollweg resigned first. He had had enough. But who should replace him? Both Erzberger and Hindenburg expressed a wish to see former chancellor Bernhard von Bülow return to the position, but von Bülow had too many enemies, including the Kaiser himself, who still blamed von Bülow for the embarrassment the Kaiser had suffered over that *Daily Telegraph* interview all the way back in 1908. Some argued for Johann von Bernstorff, the man who had handled the difficult job of German ambassador to the US about as well as anyone could have asked, now recently returned to Germany after the American declaration of war. But Hindenburg and Ludendorff also opposed this suggestion. They still held a grudge over Bernstorff's outspoken opposition to restarting the U-boat campaign. They likewise opposed giving the job to the now-retired Admiral von Tirpitz. Bethmann-Hollweg himself had recommended the prime minister of Bavaria, Georg von Hertling, but von Hertling was too astute to take a position that amounted to walking into a lion's den and so he pleaded advanced age and poor health. And so the appointment fell to Georg Michaelis.

*Who?* You would be forgiven for asking. The Kaiser didn't know who he was either. He was an undersecretary in the commerce ministry in charge of food distribution. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were happy with the choice, because the new chancellor wouldn't have nearly enough political support to stand against them. Michaelis himself was as surprised as anyone by the offer. A religious man, he consulted his prayer book, which offered him this wisdom for the day, from the book of Joshua: "Do not fear or be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, will be with you in everything you do." Michaelis took this as a sign and accepted the appointment.

He assumed the leaders of the Reichstag had agreed to his appointment, but he was wrong about that. They had not even been consulted. And Michaelis was unaware of the controversy concerning the Reichstag peace resolution. He would become the first commoner to be appointed first minister in the history of Prussia and Imperial Germany. He would also be the last. And I doubt you'll be surprised if I tell you, spoiler alert, that he's not going to be around very long.

But that is a story for another episode. We'll have to stop there for today. Thanks to all of you for listening, and I'd like to thank Carol for making a donation, and thanks to Justin for being a patron of the podcast. I have to say that during the Christmas season I received a number of donations and quite a few emails and messages of encouragement, and I am grateful for every one of them. Thank you so much.

And I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we turn to the Western Hemisphere. The United States has entered the war, but what comes next? Also, a survey of the other American nations that have joined the war, from Brazil to Canada. Lafayette, We Are Here, next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. Just days after the Reichstag's peace resolution and the installation of Michaelis as Chancellor, on August 2, 1917, sailors from the dreadnought battleship SMS *Prinzregent Luitpold* and other ships of the High Seas Fleet at Wilhelmshaven went on strike to protest their poor food and working conditions. Some of the striking sailors marched through the town demanding an end to the war. The sailors were persuaded to return to their ships. One of the ringleaders was executed and a few others drew lengthy prison sentences in response to this brief mutiny.

As one of the convicted sailors, Willy Weber, put it, "Nobody wanted a revolution; we just wanted to be treated more like human beings." Nonetheless, Hindenburg and Ludendorff and most German military leaders blamed the incident on, in Ludendorff's words, "the deliberate agitation of certain revolutionary elements who are unscrupulously exploiting these hardships to provoke discontent...in every possible way."

[music: Closing Theme]