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**Marx on the Brazos:  
Radicalism Reflected in the Correspondence of  
Maria Boer and the Brandenburg, Texas, Socialists  
in the World War I Era**

While the history of the Rolling Plains in northwest Texas, similar to Plains history in general, usually brings to mind the Plains Indian wars, decimation of buffalo, agricultural development and related ethnic settlement, there is another chapter of Rolling Plains history which hasn't received as much attention which lies at the intersection of ethnicity, class politics, and labor activism, during the World War I/Progressive era. Building upon the strand of nativism which runs throughout the nation's history, anti-German hysteria reached a crescendo in the WWI era as did the labor strife leading up to and following the war as even the casual reader of American history is aware. The related strands of the spread of radical politics in the heartland, the prominence of Germans in that movement and reaction due to nativism, World War I anti-Germanism, dissent to the war, anti-Bolshevik hysteria and Red Scare which followed are well-documented.

As James Green's seminal text, *Grass-Roots Socialism* has shown, the socialist movement had an agrarian wing as well and when combined with the anti-Germanism of the war created a volatile mix for ethnic Germans, agrarian and urban, who were active in the socialist movement. The anti-immigrant fervor of the era as described by John Higham in *Strangers in the Land* thus made for an easy segue to anti-Germanism as the nation neared the war as anti-labor/anti-German hysteria created by the labor strife of that era in which German radicals were prominent, merged.

While the roots of the Socialist Party (SP) and resultant labor strife occurred largely but not exclusively in the industrialized cities of the Midwest and northeast, thanks to SP organizers such as "Red" Tom Hickey and his

mother-in-law, Maria Boer, Laura Payne, and Dan Crider the SP, and resultant strife, found a home in the sparsely populated Rolling Plains, as well.

This article will examine how, through the letters of Maria Boer, anti-socialist class politics combined with the anti-German, “100 percent Americanism” movement of that era in the small, German farm community of Brandenburg in northwest Texas. The result was not only ethnic and class-based violence, reflecting the larger trend nationally, but development of a federal surveillance apparatus trained on anti-war “radical” activists in particular those of German descent. Thanks to the work of Joseph B. Neville, Jr. and Robert Wilson, the surveillance of the Boer/Wolfe family and those within Maria’s orbit has been brought to light, illustrating how pervasive the surveillance was. Her correspondence with 48er Theodor Hielscher, and Clara Zetkin, co-founder of the German Communist Party, and Tom Alter’s work on her colleagues, the Meitzens, in *Toward a Cooperative Commonwealth* also provide an example of how German radicalism extended from the 48ers through the Progressive Era, transcending international boundaries and influencing domestic politics.

Agrarian populist politics gained prominence in the Midwest and elsewhere following the Civil War in reaction to the excesses of monopolistic corporate capitalism in the late 19th century. Texas was no exception as discussed in Gregg Cantrell’s *The People’s Revolt*, among other works. At the same time, Bismarck’s purge of socialists and anarchists resulted in German Marxists and fellow radical political refugees immigrating to the industrialized U.S. cities, who soon played a leading role in the labor movement, development of the SP in 1901, and labor strife of that era.<sup>1</sup> While the urban wing of the labor movement and later of the SP was dominant, it and the agrarian wing were two sides of the same coin. Moreover, the Germans within the movement, agrarian or urban, descended from the same tradition as Tom Alter’s work and the letters of Maria Boer show.

Likewise, whether urban or rural, the same fate befell those Germans who espoused “radical” that is, systemic reforms to counteract dominance of the moneyed class in favor of the workers, be they industrial or agrarian. Their “radical” socialist politics, when combined with their outspoken anti-war views and ethnicity, combined into a combustible brew when the U.S. entered World War I. Like a tap which takes time to turn off, the ill-will generated by the “100-percent American” movement meaning an English language-only society based on WASP values continued for a time after the war. As atheistic freethinkers, as many socialists especially German immigrant socialists were, including the Boer/Wolfe family, also played into the mix as outside the mainstream Anglo culture. Following the bombings of the Red Scare and resultant deprivation of civil liberties in the roundup of radicals,

nativistic restrictive immigration legislation was enacted and the federal surveillance system grew. Beginning just prior to U.S. entry into the war to at first monitor German aliens it soon encompassed those of radical persuasion particularly those of German ethnicity such as Maria Boeer of the small farm community of Brandenburg, in Stonewall County, and those within her circle.<sup>2</sup>

Although not shocked after learning that superpatriot Anglo neighbors burned a shed of Maria's son-in-law, Karl Wolfe, as a warning to stop their outspoken dissent to the war, having grown up hearing from my German elders about their treatment during the war, I was shocked to learn that federal authorities had surveilled Maria as well as those within her circle simply due to their dissent to the war, their ethnicity, and socialist politics. Considering that the small farm community of Brandenburg was far removed from any industrial centers of military importance this seemed bizarre. However, delving into the literature of the era and the mass hysteria prevalent at that time, in combination with the prominence of her correspondents within the SP and the fear of radical politics generally here and abroad, gave me a quite different perspective.

While the better-known educated class of 48ers immigrated for purely political reasons political repression also figured into the equation in addition to economics for a segment of farmers and laborers which included the Boeer/Wolfe family.<sup>3</sup>

Born in 1844 at Wingshausen, Kreis Wittgenstein, on the border of the present states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse, Maria Wolfe immigrated in 1872 to Colorado County, Texas. Considering that she immigrated as a single, young woman she likely followed family and friends who had immigrated earlier to southeast Texas who arranged work for her as a governess. Several freethinker/socialist families she corresponded with who later migrated to Brandenburg from southeast Texas immigrated from the Giessen to Wingshausen area, north of Frankfurt-am-Main.

It was in Weimar, Colorado County that she met and married Wilhelm Boeer in 1875 who had immigrated with his parents and two brothers in 1851 from Langenbielau, near Breslau. Maria and Wilhelm had similar backgrounds in that both of their fathers were artisans as well as farmers with Maria's a saddlemaker and Wilhelm's a blacksmith. Both were also freethinkers, Maria's radically so according to her. She described how Wilhelm's father refused to use his blacksmithing skill to make weapons for the "reactionaries," those who opposed reforms, in the 1848 Revolution and his desire to prevent his sons, who were of military age, from becoming cannon fodder. The elder Boeer's stance and the general unrest which followed the revolt precipitated the family's immigration.

Maria and Wilhelm continued their families' tradition, becoming involved in the local freethinker community while farming, and eventually saved enough money to help her mother, brother, and his family, which included his son Karl Wolfe, to immigrate in 1890. After a short stint in Fayette County, Maria and Wilhelm moved back to Colorado County and sometime after 1890 moved to the Hillje/El Campo area of Wharton County where her brother Wilhelm, a "good socialist," had moved his family.

Wilhelm Boeer died at Hillje in March of 1906 and in line with the freethinker custom of that era was cremated in St. Louis. Soon thereafter Maria and her extended family made the trek to the newly established farm community of Brandenburg, Stonewall County, on the Rolling Plains of northwest Texas. Her son-in-law Karl Wolfe who had married her daughter Louisa in 1903 had moved first buying property and establishing a farm there in 1904 soon after the "colony" as Karl described it, had been established. Maria, her nephew Frederick who lived with her after her brother's death, and four other daughters and their families followed in 1907. Friends from Wingshausen, the Stremmel and Reber families, and the Hamels of Wuerttemberg, had also immigrated to El Campo in the early 1890s, married daughters of Maria and moved with her. Similar to the Boeer/Wolfe family they were also farmer-artisans with Johannes Reber a tailor while August Stremmel worked winters in the steel mills of Solingen tending to his fruit and vegetable crops the rest of the year according to a grandson. The Hamels, of the Heilbronn area, were apparently well-educated or at least well-read as one correspondent referred to the mother of Alfred Hamel who had married Maria's daughter Anna, as "Frau professor Hamel."

One of Maria's five daughters was Clara, who was soon to marry the prominent SP activist "Red" Tom Hickey after the move to Brandenburg. A colleague of the Meitzen family of southeast Texas, the working-class Meitzens immigrated from the Breslau area in 1850 due to the revolt, similar to the Boeer family. The Boeer/Wolfe and Meitzen families thus had much in common eventually co-owning the *Rebel*, a socialist newspaper.

Connecting with her fellow socialists here and abroad Maria became prominent in the socialist parties in the U.S. and Germany via the extensive transnational network of political dissidents which developed due to the large German American radical press in which German socialists and fellow radicals participated.<sup>4</sup> Maria's participation in this network was simply a continuation of the radical tradition she had grown up with in the Frankfurt region as had a number of other Brandenburg socialists. Likewise, so too, had the Meitzen and Boeer families of the Breslau area. Both regions were prominent in the revolt with a large number of democratic and workers' clubs across the German states in which farmer-laborer grievances were a motivating factor

for the revolt.<sup>5</sup>

Not leaving their politics at the port of entry and not finding a democratic utopia, the radical German influence in the U.S. had deep roots in Texas within which the Boer/Wolfe and Meitzen families found a home. As a Civil War era correspondent for Horace Greeley's *New York Daily Tribune* with acolytes corresponding with him and spreading his views in the U.S., Marx kept abreast of the slavery issue, and even considered joining his brother-in-law at the commune of Bettina near the Lateiner community of Sisterdale northwest of San Antonio in the early 1850s. Having a large population of 48ers the Hill Country became a prominent free-soil stronghold in the antebellum period with connections to fellow 48ers and their abolitionist allies in the north.

Keenly interested in the development of the U.S. socialist and labor movements Marx and Engels continued their U.S. correspondence after the war with Engels even visiting Friedrich Sorge, an early socialist leader in the U.S., in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1888. One of Engels' last letters before his death was to the editor of the *New Yorker Volks-Zeitung* (NYVZ) in 1895, the paper which figured prominently in connecting Maria to the transatlantic socialist community.<sup>6</sup> Although arriving some two decades after the 48ers, Maria was nevertheless only once removed from them via Theodor Hielscher as she was to the larger radical community which included Engels via the NYVZ.

A prominent 48er and colleague of Carl Schurz and Adolf Douai in the nascent Republican Party, Hielscher corresponded extensively with Maria. He described his revolutionary association with Schurz's brother-in-law and fellow Silesian Johannes Ronge and with August Siemering as a Berlin classmate. A fellow 48er Siemering had become prominent in Texas as secretary of Sisterdale's *Der freie Verein*, a branch of the *Bund Freier Maenner*, and as editor of the *Freie Presse fuer Texas* which he had established in San Antonio. Wanting a warmer climate Hielscher moved to San Antonio after the Civil War teaching for a time in the German-English School before taking a teaching position at Eagle Pass. Siemering was succeeded as editor of the *Freie Presse* by Robert Hanschke in 1885 who continued Siemering's liberal editorial stance. Hanschke also corresponded with Maria and both were soon caught up in the anti-war, anti-German dragnet when the U.S. entered World War I.<sup>7</sup>

Hielscher never commented to Maria on his relationship with Douai, fellow radical Karl Heinzen, or Friedrich Kapp, all of whom were prominent in antebellum free-soil politics as was Greeley. However, Maria was knowledgeable of the effort of a coalition of 48ers and native abolitionists to create a "Free State of West Texas" and her admiration was evident with

references to Douai and Heinzen throughout her correspondence.<sup>8</sup>

Not only did Maria's correspondence with Hielscher reflect their commitment to freedom of expression, but also their common interest in the life of the mind which she shared with the 48ers who preceded her. He shared with her the praise he received from Goethe's grandson for his poetry and gave a description of the fifteenth-century Hussite Wars as an example of how important religious freedom was. After contributing geological and botanical specimens to the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History he commented on his research which he believed contributed to the work of the renowned naturalist Alexander von Humboldt in his *Kosmos*.<sup>9</sup>

Maria's correspondence with Hielscher and prominent German socialist activists thus represents the continuity of influence German radicals had on Texas and American politics from the 48ers to the anti-war labor activism of World War I. The Boeer/Wolfe family can thus be credited with bringing the tradition of German liberalism and German radical politics to the sparsely populated Rolling Plains. Combined with the native agrarian populism of that era they directly impacted the politics of that region and through Hickey, the Meitzens and the *Rebel*, of the state and nation. In conjunction with their SP colleagues who were agitating for improved industrial working conditions they thus played a role in the SP influencing the politics of the pre-war era.

Living in a farm community far removed from the stimulation and interactions of a city anchored by a university, her papers show a remarkable breadth. While primarily socialist-oriented, her holdings of well over 500 books, letters, pamphlets, and political tracts also span German art, music, and literature. Her correspondence is replete with references to classical German literature as well as the American Founders of the classic liberal tradition such as Paine and Jefferson which she shared with her fellow Germans at Brandenburg in a Sunday afternoon Stammtisch as well as socialist principles. One of her granddaughters, Mina Wolfe Lamb, a graduate of Columbia who spent her career as a professor at Texas Tech University, shared with me that she went to sleep many nights listening to her father, Karl Wolfe, and fellow "Kamerad" Wilhelm Reber—the salutation most frequently used in Maria's letters—discuss German literature, fondly recalling their phrase, "Goethe sagte dass aber Schiller sagte dass."

Works dedicated to her by German and German American socialist/freethinker poets such as Konrad Nies, Friedrich Michel, and Karl August Specht, attest to her prominence in the German socialist community here and abroad and to her broad reading in German literature. Nies, a prominent German American poet, even planned on visiting her on a trip east from California.<sup>10</sup>

Michel, who established the *Deutsch-Amerikanische Friedengesellschaft* gave her a book of his poetry with the inscription, translated, "That which burns

in my heart's deepest depths, have I poured into German word and song. To my dear friend, Maria Boeer....I think of you dearly." With a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Jena, which a generation before gave rise to the "Jena Set" of Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Fichte, Hegel, the Humboldts, et al., and creation of Romanticism, K. August Specht was a prominent leader of the German freethinkers. He established the journal *Menschen-thum* at Gotha and the *Deutscher Freidenkerbund* with prominent socialist leader Wilhelm Liebknecht. He published a lengthy poem eulogizing her husband Wilhelm in *Menschen-thum*, dedicated a play to her, and corresponded frequently with her.

In the vein of arts and letters, her papers also include a postcard from prominent sculptress Elisabet Ney who sculpted portraits of Alexander von Humboldt and Jacob Grimm among others, with a sculpture in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art. She was also within the correspondence circle of Clemens Vonnegut, great-grandfather of Kurt.<sup>11</sup>

While politics and literature form the basis of her correspondence, she was also aware of Darwin's work which supported her freethinker beliefs. Specht was a follower of Darwin as was another mutual acquaintance Theodor Schwarz, who suggested that Maria read the work of Ernst Haeckel. Known as the "German Darwin" for his work on evolution as a professor of biology at the University of Jena, this suggests her reading may have extended even beyond politics, arts and letters.<sup>12</sup>

Her eulogy by the *Neue Volks-Zeitung*, reorganized from the *New Yorker Volks-Zeitung* of New York City, one of the oldest and most prominent German language socialist/Marxist newspapers in the country also attests to her prominence in the radical community. Connecting German radicals here and abroad, the *Volks-Zeitung* emphasized the role of the rank-and-file in the socialist movement through the obituary in which the contributions the deceased made to the movement were lauded.<sup>13</sup>

With the advancement of rail lines to the Rolling Plains and resultant availability of cheap land Brandenburg and its offshoot, New Brandenburg, in Stonewall County and Sagerton, their sister community "across the river" in Haskell County were established in 1904-05. Platting Brandenburg and buying the surrounding property, German immigrant Gustav Reinhold Spielhagen, a prominent San Antonio merchant and real estate developer with business ties in Germany was responsible for a large influx of Germans to Brandenburg from southeast Texas with spillover to its sister communities. Nephew of author Friedrich Spielhagen, the "Dickens of Germany," who had been a Franconia Burschenschaft member with Carl Schurz at the University of Bonn, G. R. Spielhagen was well-known within the German Texan community with his business activities covered by the German and English language presses statewide.<sup>14</sup>



After migrating to Brandenburg Maria became acquainted with Spielhagen and fellow immigrant, Robert Hanschke via his paper, who was still editor of the *Freie Presse fuer Texas* in San Antonio after succeeding Siemering in 1885. Having similar views, Maria and Hanschke began corresponding. Karl Wolfe was acquainted with Spielhagen due to Spielhagen's promotion of his Brandenburg property to his fellow Germans in southeast Texas. Spielhagen was well-known in the community returning to Brandenburg as needed when closing on a property sale and owned the tract adjoining Karl's which Maria's son-in-law Alfred Hamel bought.

The Boeer/Wolfe family quickly became leaders in the local socialist movement with Maria serving as secretary of the Sagerton local she organized in 1908 and Karl establishing annual SP encampments at his farm on the Double Mt. Fork of the Brazos River soon after arrival. It was at the 1909 encampment at Karl's farm that SP organizer and encampment speaker for the region, "Red" Tom Hickey met Clara Boeer, another of Maria's daughters. Marrying her in 1912, Hickey spent a great deal of time at his mother-in-law's home where his wife lived while he was on the road, and at Karl's. As Hickey's colleague, Karl promoted the Party in the area through the local paper, the long since defunct *Sagerton Sun*. In one of the few extant issues of the paper Karl reported on Hickey's speech at his farm for the May 16, 1910, encampment at which he spoke for two hours about the "Frenzied Finances or the Amalgated Copper War" of Standard Oil's manipulation of the stock market at the expense of workers. Karl translated the speech as he did at other encampments for those, like Maria, whose English was minimal, at best.

The commitment of Maria and the Brandenburg socialists to socialist principles was evident in the example of Gottlob Albers. An acquaintance of the Hamels he had immigrated from the same area and after working for several months in St. Louis made contact with Karl, working for a time for him in 1910 before migrating back to Gemmrigheim, near Heilbronn. He kept in touch with "Grossmutter" Maria telling her that he had become a socialist due to his time at Brandenburg. He continued corresponding after the war telling her he had lost several jobs due to his activism, thanked her for copies of the St. Louis *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and described the poverty, horrific inflation, and abysmal working conditions of post-war Germany. Thoroughly radicalized he wished for a socialist liberator to overthrow the capitalists and hoped the masses would arise and "shoot them all like mad dogs" an ominous portent of the strife soon to come.<sup>15</sup>

The influence of the Boeer/Wolfe family in the growth of the SP in the area is evident in the voting returns of Haskell and Stonewall Counties and in neighboring Jones County in which the Farmers' and Laborers' Protective Association (FLPA) was headquartered. An allied agrarian reform organization



with cross-memberships in the area's SP the FLPA would play a key role in the ordeal the Boeer/Wolfe family would endure. In 1906, soon after Karl and Louisa moved to Brandenburg, the SP candidate for governor received 7.2% of the vote in Stonewall County placing him, distantly, in second place behind the Democratic candidate. Although Haskell and Jones Counties recorded no Socialist votes for governor that year Party support rose rapidly in all three counties.

In the 1908 gubernatorial election, the year after Maria's arrival to Brandenburg, the Socialist candidate for governor received 6.5 percent and 7.1 percent in Haskell and Jones Counties respectively, and 12.2 percent in Stonewall County surpassing the third-place Republican candidate by nearly 9 percent. SP support continued to rise in those counties as well as in the state with the Party's 1910 gubernatorial candidate, Reddin Andrews, garnering 26.2 percent of the vote in Stonewall County with Party support in all three counties surpassing the third-place Republican Party candidate. Further evidence of the Party's popularity locally was creation in 1911 of the Brandenburg Socialist Band and inclusion of the November 6, 1911 issue of the *Chicago Daily Socialist* in the cornerstone time capsule of the new Stonewall County courthouse, completed in November of 1911.<sup>16</sup>

Capitalizing on agrarian discontent and earlier populist movements, the SP made considerable strides after establishment of the national party in 1901 and formally in Texas in 1904 reaching its peak nationally in 1912. Reddin Andrews received 8.4 percent of the total that year statewide in the Texas gubernatorial race, more than double from the previous gubernatorial election surpassing the Republican Party making it the second-largest party in the state. Although crushed by Democrat Oscar Colquitt, who won the gubernatorial race in part due to his anti-prohibitionist stance, the SP nevertheless had made great strides in Texas particularly in the Rolling Plains. Andrews received 24.2 percent of the vote for governor in Haskell County in 1912 and Eugene V. Debs, the SP presidential candidate, received 23 percent. Haskell County's support of Andrews even rivalled the 29.5 percent Andrews received in Van Zandt County in northeast Texas, where the state branch of the Party had originated in Texas. Although the Party reached its peak nationally in 1912 the Party continued to grow in Texas until peaking in 1914. The Party continued to grow in the Rolling Plains as well with Haskell, Jones, and Stonewall Counties each recording the highest percentage the Party received in those counties in the 1914 gubernatorial election.

E.R. Meitzen, the 1914 SP gubernatorial candidate, and Hickey's colleague, received 31.3 percent of the vote in Haskell County and 20 percent and 26.6 percent respectively in Jones and Stonewall Counties far and away outdistancing the third-place Republican candidate. Even with war looming



The Brandenburg Socialist Brass Band 1911 at Karl Wolfe's campground on the Double Mt. Fork of the Brazos River. Fourth from left, top row - August Stremmel (with beard.)

Bottom row - beside drum on left in black hat and beard - Karl Wolfe. Johann Vahlenkamp is either immediately beside the drum on the right or at the end of the row on the right. The rest are unidentified.

and patriotic fervor increasing Meitzen still received 21.6 percent of the vote in Haskell County in the 1916 gubernatorial race. This was sizable considering he only received four percent statewide, the lowest the Party had received in a gubernatorial race since its first showing of consequence in 1906 of 1.6 percent. In addition to voting returns, encampments, a band, and time capsules, enthusiasm in Brandenburg was expressed in more personal terms, as well.<sup>17</sup>

One Brandenburg German named a son, born in 1912, after Eugene V. Debs, a co-founder of the Party and colleague of Hickey. Dan Crider, a SP organizer and farmer, who spoke frequently at encampments at Brandenburg and throughout Texas and Oklahoma, went a step beyond. He named a son, Debs Liebknecht Crider, after Eugene Debs and either Karl Liebknecht, prominent German socialist and later co-founder of the German Communist Party (KPD) or his father Wilhelm, co-founder of the German Socialist Party (SPD) who toured U.S. cities in 1886 with one of Marx's daughters. He named another Karl Marx Crider and another Robert Ingersoll Paine Crider. Named after Robert Ingersoll the "Great Agnostic" and freethinking Founding Father Thomas Paine, this alluded to his religious views and the Party's emphasis on reason, shared by Maria and her fellow German freethinkers.<sup>18</sup>

However, another important strand of the agrarian wing of the Party was the fundamentalism of evangelical Christianity, common throughout the south and southern Plains states, which emphasized class-based social justice. The irreligious such as the German freethinker and their Anglo counterparts, and those from the evangelical tradition were both attracted to the Party for its emphasis on social justice and reason. Thus Reddin Andrews, Baptist minister and former president of Baylor and SP candidate for governor in 1910 and 1912 who spoke at a Lueders encampment in Jones County near Brandenburg, shared the stage with his atheist counterparts. The encampment model itself followed in the tradition of the evangelical tent revivals common throughout the south in that era.<sup>19</sup>

In an era when use of public-school facilities for political and religious activity, especially in the countryside, was common Sagerton's Sankt Paulus Lutherisches Gemeinde (renamed as St. Paul's Lutheran Church) used the Brandenburg school for services for its Brandenburg mission, Ebenezer Evangelische Lutherische Kirche. So too, did local SP members some of whom were church members. The Party's state leadership began a "schoolhouse campaign" in 1910 as another way to reach rural areas explaining why a photo was taken of the newly formed Brandenburg Socialist Brass Band of 1911 and supporters at the Brandenburg schoolhouse. The photo was likely organized by Crider who stopped by on his way to encampments in Oklahoma and Kansas in the summer of 1911.<sup>20</sup> Similar to the Baptist minister Reddin Andrews sharing the stage with atheists and inclusion of the *Aspermont Star* in the courthouse cornerstone the photo is an example of how religion, politics, and ethnicity intersected in the pre-war years coalescing around agrarian discontent in the SP in the Rolling Plains.

The Party's rapid ascent in the state from its first encampment in 1904 at Grand Saline in Van Zandt County to its crest in the state in 1914, can be attributed at least in part to the tireless efforts of Crider and Hickey on the encampment circuit, channeling the agrarian discontent into Party locals. Josua Hicks should also be credited on this count as founder and publisher of *The Farmers' Journal* in Abilene, the regional hub. Published from 1904 to 1911 when it merged with the *Rebel*, Hicks converted to socialism from populism, and to freethought, sometime shortly after the Party was established. He continued promoting the Party in local Rolling Plains papers after the merger until his move a few years later to Waco where he continued its promotion as a printer and proofreader until his death.

Crider made several of the Brandenburg encampments and others in the Rolling Plains as well as trips to the Panhandle, Hill Country, and throughout the eastern half of the state from Commerce to Houston.<sup>21</sup> Hicks, Crider, Hickey, Karl, and Maria weren't alone in their activism on the Rolling Plains however, with Maria having an Anglo counterpart in Laura Payne.

Laura Payne played a prominent role in this period for the SP as an organizer and encampment speaker in the Rolling Plains and throughout Texas and Oklahoma. Living in Abilene in 1907-9 her lecture tour included a Jones County encampment and others in the area. During this period she served as a Texas delegate to the Party's national convention and ran twice, unsuccessfully, for congress on the SP ticket making her the first woman to run for congress from Texas and the South. Moving to San Diego in 1909 she joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and became an organizer, speaker, and participant in the IWW's anti-war Free Speech fights on the West Coast where she became acquainted with Emma Goldman.<sup>22</sup>

At the time Crider first spoke at a Brandenburg encampment in 1908 he was living in nearby Eastland which was soon to figure prominently in the federal pursuit of alleged traitors due to their anti-war activism. An early SP candidate for Congress and after moving to Eastland County for State Representative, both unsuccessful, and a state committee member of the SP he spoke again in 1909 at what was listed as a Sagerton encampment but which was likely in Brandenburg as Karl's property straddled the Haskell/Stonewall County line. Following that encampment he wrote to Clara Boer that he would speak again if wanted upon return from an organizational trip to the Panhandle. After organizing a local in nearby Knox County and speaking at communities throughout the Panhandle he organized a local upon return to his home in Rising Star in Eastland County.<sup>23</sup>

In his *Sagerton Sun* article Karl noted that a large number of Anglos attended the May 16, 1910, encampment at his farm along with nearly all the Brandenburg Germans indicating amicable German-Anglo relations in the area. While this was true for those within the SP it was soon to change, however, with the onset of war in Europe for the superpatriot Anglos outside the Party who would soon take their cue from the Wilson Administration.

When the war began those within Maria's circle opposed it but for different reasons with Spielhagen and Hanschke viewing the Allies as the aggressors with the English-language press slanting coverage toward them. Similar to the vast majority of SP members the Boer/Wolfe family opposed the war as benefitting the wealthy at the expense of the workers which became the official position of the SP the day after the U.S. declaration of war. Although opposed for different reasons they were nevertheless bound by their anti-war views and outspoken in opposition.<sup>24</sup>

Spielhagen soon came to the attention of J. Edgar Hoover and the Bureau of Investigation (BOI) which later became the F.B.I., due to his outspoken support of Germany even though he voiced this support prior to U.S. entry into the war. He was prominent in the aid effort organized at the outbreak of the war, roughly two-and-a-half years prior to U.S. entry, by the San Antonio chapter of the National German American Alliance for the devastation

German citizens would soon face.<sup>25</sup>

Robert Hanschke, as editor of *Freie Presse fuer Texas* was also prominent in the aid effort of the Alliance, a cultural organization promoting neutrality, and in the Sons of Hermann Lodge, which hosted a fund raiser for the relief effort at its San Antonio headquarters. As a well-connected merchant Spielhagen, who served as secretary of the San Antonio chapter's aid effort and later as State Warehouse Inspector during the war was also well-known in the Sons of Hermann community. The aid committee also doubled as a "literary bureau" designed to counter "errors and fabrications" in slanted coverage of the war by the English language press. Hanschke, who had been in Berlin for an extended stay when the war broke out in 1914, published in the *Freie Presse* and the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* his admiration for the Fatherland and his contention that Germany was not the aggressor. Both papers also carried a similar editorial by Spielhagen describing the creation of the literary bureau and relief organization.

Sharing Spielhagen's anti-war views Hanschke barely averted indictment for treason via the Espionage Act after U.S. entry into the war. Affiliated with a Mexico City news agency identified by the BOI as an agent of the German government he denied treasonous activity under questioning, and avoided indictment due to the end of the war and the fact that he died soon after while on a trip to Berlin.<sup>26</sup>

Rural northwest Texas at that time, with the Boeer/Wolfe family and fellow Germans in the forefront, were prominent in the agrarian wing of the SP. So, too, was Oklahoma particularly its southern central counties. Bavarian immigrant Oscar Ameringer and Otto Branstetter, of German Jewish descent, were SP organizers based there who were colleagues of Tom Hickey who worked largely out of his wife's home in Brandenburg as an organizer for the Party following his marriage. The Meitzens of Hallettsville, publishers of the SP paper, the *Rebel*, which Hickey reported for and was part owner of which Maria helped establish financially, were also well-known within the Party nationally, as was Hickey. Established in 1911, the *Rebel* became one of the largest SP papers in the country bringing the Meitzens, Hickey, and their circle to national attention within the Party.<sup>27</sup>

Building upon the earlier populist movement which was supported by tenant and small farmers throughout the Plains states in reaction to domination of the agricultural market by corporations and large landowners, the SP emerged in the pre-war years with an agrarian wing which was especially strong in both regions plus other rural areas especially in the Plains. The ideology of anti-war/pro-labor Germans and Anglo farmers of similar views thus found fertile ground in central southern Oklahoma and their neighbors in northwest Texas as the U.S. neared entry into World War I.<sup>28</sup>



Fearing enactment of conscription as the U.S. neared entry into the war would lead to a “rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight” in which the merchant class would benefit at the expense of the workers, resulted in development of the Farmers’ and Laborers’ Protective Association (FLPA) in southern Oklahoma prior to the war. Finding work in southern Oklahoma, G.T. Bryant brought the FLPA back to his home in Lueders in Jones County. With re-location of the headquarters to northwest Texas, local chapters soon spread throughout the region. Stemming from the same populist tradition there were cross-memberships in both the SP and FLPA with the FLPA via Bryant, also having ties to the more militant IWW. Labeled by federal authorities as a subversive organization for its anti-war stance, Will Bergfeld, another ethnic German of Weinert, also near Brandenburg in Haskell County became a leader of the FLPA.<sup>29</sup>

While there was no violence initiated by the FLPA of north central Texas a short-lived armed rebellion did occur in southern Oklahoma in early August following enactment of the Conscription Act in May following the U.S. declaration of war April 6, 1917. Known as the Green Corn Rebellion for the rebels’ plans to live off of corn as they made their way to the federal capitol, which was crushed, it was another in a crescendo of law enforcement sweeps unleashed by a growing fear of armed rebellion and class warfare.<sup>30</sup> The opening salvo in the national disgrace which was to follow occurred in Brandenburg, followed shortly thereafter in Weinert and nearby communities.

On May 17, 1917, Texas Rangers arrested Tom Hickey without warrant in New Brandenburg as he entered the post office, which served both Brandenburgs, as part of a sweep of area anti-war FLPA “radicals.” Two days later Will Bergfeld was arrested at his home in Weinert in the sweep as was G.T. Bryant in Lueders. Although Hickey was not a member of the FLPA his outspoken opposition to the war at SP encampments at Brandenburg and elsewhere and editorials in the *Rebel* made the distinction between the SP and FLPA meaningless. Similar to others who opposed the war all had been under federal surveillance before U.S. entry into the war as had Maria Boer and other SP members and fellow anti-war Germans within her orbit. The sweep resulted in at least one death and fifty-six FLPA members indicted for conspiring to resist conscription via the Selective Service Act, enacted May 18, 1917, one day before the FLPA sweep which netted Bergfeld and Bryant.

The alleged conspiracy took place May 5, 1917, when members met in convention at Cisco, Eastland County to discuss the FLPA response to the conscription bill. The meeting which took place precipitating the charge of conspiracy occurred before the bill became law thus meant no conspiracy was possible since resisting conscription had not yet been made illegal. The judge nevertheless dismissed the motion to quash because the defendants “resisted

the inherent power of government to raise an army.” While Hickey was not indicted and Bergfeld was found innocent in the trial that followed in early September in Abilene, Bryant and two other FLPA officers served some two-and-a-half years in the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas, until exonerated.<sup>31</sup>

Anticipating the tactics of the Stasi, the anti-war fervor generated by the Wilson Administration resulted in a San Antonio neighbor reporting to authorities the “suspicious” activities of Spielhagen including reporting of a suspicious letter to authorities “misplaced” in the wrong mailbox. Reports by postmasters and official censors of Spielhagen’s and Hanschke’s correspondence added to the case files of their and Hickey’s newspaper editorials, public comments, memberships, and business ties. In addition to the arrests of Hickey, Bergfeld, and Bryant, the *Rebel* was effectively suppressed in June of 1917, Spielhagen nearly lost his state job due to his anti-war views and Hanschke was spared the possibility of indictment due to his death. Relying on the Espionage and Sedition Acts which were held constitutional along with other wartime Acts, speech was suppressed and guilt by association was effectively criminalized.<sup>32</sup>

As with any other group there wasn’t a neat line between the minority freethinkers at both Brandenburgs and Sagerton and the majority *Kirchendeutsch* with conversations with elders revealing a mixture of opinions on how to deal with the superpatriots and suppression of their native language in church and in public.

Comparing records and meeting minutes of the Brandenburg Sons of Hermann Lodge and Sagerton churches could have possibly shed more light on the controversy over language and politics and how they intersected. However, other than a local history of the lodge and the charter listing the charter members, the records have been lost with no copy at the state headquarters in San Antonio. The only reference to the controversy in church records other than the language issue described in the history of St. Paul’s, is what appears to possibly be expulsion of a member with his name crossed out and the notation “He a Mason” due to his lodge membership.<sup>33</sup>

Histories of Lutheranism in the modern era and synod histories describe the conflict over Rationalism imported to the U.S. which played out on the Rolling Plains, as well. The synods of both Sagerton Lutheran churches at that time prohibited lodge membership due to its roots in the deism of Rationalism with its universalist orientation considered as anti-Christian, or even atheistic. In the early years burials of lodge and church members at Brandenburg were segregated with lodge burial rites in conjunction with church rites forbidden by both synods of the Sagerton churches for joint members made possible later by a change to the lodge’s charter at the state



level. Even so, prior to this change some early members of St. Paul's are listed as charter lodge members and in a photo of the Brandenburg Socialist Band some members appear to be wearing lodge badges connecting at least some church members with the lodge, freethinkers, and SP simplifying conflation for those so disposed.<sup>34</sup> In an interview of an elder on the other side of the divide who was a child in that era this simplistic conflation became apparent with the remark, "...those Germans... those atheists..."

Although political beliefs can't be concluded from lodge membership alone it is noteworthy that Hilda Franke Kupatt joined the Brandenburg Lodge in 1926, the first woman to do so. This is significant considering this was only six years after the 19th Amendment was enacted granting women's suffrage in an era when women and children were segregated from the men in church, with the further segregation of women with babies at the back in the Sagerton Lutheran churches. While not surprising that the first mixed lodge in Texas was established in cosmopolitan San Antonio near Hill Country freethinker communities the same year women's suffrage was enacted, it is surprising that rural Brandenburg had a mixed lodge shortly thereafter.

While the reason this occurred has been lost it adds to the general tenor of liberalism Maria and her cohort represented in a segment of the area's Germans as the SP reached its peak on the Rolling Plains in the World War I era.<sup>35</sup> Obviously not monolithic as no ethnic group is as to opinions on political issues and even with overlap, there was still a sharp divide between the two communities at that time as to religion, which Maria's letters illustrate abundantly.

In one such letter, using the derogatory term for priest or preacher, *Pfaffe*, she described an incident in which a Lutheran pastor was asked to officiate a funeral for a young freethinker mother who died in childbirth. Explaining that the death occurred soon after arrival in the community with no literature on hand for a freethinker eulogy, the pastor took the occasion to chastise those freethinkers in attendance telling them they would "go to hell" for their atheism causing great distress to those in attendance as would be expected. However, this natural dissension between believers and non-believers was lost on the superpatriots as the anti-war views of the socialists was a contributing factor in the anti-German hostility toward the entirety of the German community which continued for a time even after the war.<sup>36</sup>

German Lutheran churches in nearby Stamford and Albany succumbed soon after the war due to the anti-German sentiment of the World War I era. According to the history of St. Paul's, the "German hating people" in late June of 1918 had ordered cessation of the use of German in services. The church council's appeal was not only denied but resulted in the further restriction that confirmation instruction be in English even as the war neared its end.<sup>37</sup>

This experience must have been especially galling to “Fritz” Diers who kept in close contact with his family in Klein Nethen and Rastede, north of Oldenburg, as did his uncle Christian of Fayette County who had preceded him to Texas. A founding member of Die Deutschen Evangelische Lutherische Zions Gemeinde zu Sagerton and an early arrival to Brandenburg after immigrating in 1896, the family discovered that Fritz had first cousins on both sides of the war who died in the trench warfare of Reims. A correspondent of Maria’s also described the loss of a German American doughboy as a “patriot for the cause” made all the more difficult knowing that he may have killed or been killed by a German cousin.<sup>38</sup>

Of a literary bent, Christian included the account of his nephews’ deaths in his 400-plus page autobiographical memoir of narrative and poetry which found its way to Werner Harms, a relative in Rastede who added an introduction and conclusion and self-published it in 1990, sharing it with relatives here. Christian recounted his wife’s expression of grief of having two nephews die in which one may have been responsible for the other’s death; “*Hier hatten zwei Vetter vielleicht aufeinander geschossen. In Kriegen muessen Muetter viel erdulden.*” Following his wife’s description of the horrors of war she claimed the young were not only crippled physically but also “of the soul with belief in God lost.”

Although divided by belief these freethinker and Lutheran families were nevertheless united in their anti-war sentiment by not only the deaths of their or their friend’s doughboy sons but the possibility their sons killed or were killed by close relatives. The repression they shared stood in stark contrast to a description in Christian’s memoir of a discussion with a shipmate on his voyage to Texas who used a Latin phrase in discussing the 48ers - “ubi libertas ibi patria (where freedom is, there is my homeland.)”<sup>39</sup>

Just shy of five months prior to the Armistice and the effective end of the war, the superpatriot’s demands for cessation of the use of German by St. Paul’s parishioners in church services and in confirmation instruction, reflected the anti-German hostility which continued for a time locally and nationally, after the war. The number of preaching stations and congregations in the Sagerton-Stamford Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) parish dropped from 14 to two from 1910 to 1921 with the number of communicants dropping from 245 to 148.<sup>40</sup>

Likewise, the Stonewall County newspaper, the *Aspermont Star*, continued to spew anti-German vitriol even after Anglos submitted a petition to change New Brandenburg’s name to the more “patriotic” sounding Old Glory on the auspicious date of July 4, 1918. New Brandenburg had arisen just west of Brandenburg when the railroad depot was located there instead of at Brandenburg and soon became the hub of both communities.<sup>41</sup>

While the name change, one of many across the country, has been attributed solely to anti-German hysteria, the radicalism of the Boer/Wolfe family was likely a contributing factor and the spark which ignited the anti-German hysteria which followed. Although no record has been found to substantiate this the timing suggests it. Walter Kamphoefner's work uncovering the political undercurrent of a similar episode, the lynching of Robert Prager in Collinsville, Illinois is instructive.

A Dresden native, Prager was lynched April 5, 1918, ostensibly due to his ethnicity. However, Prager's socialist inclination was also a factor. Further complicating the purely "Anglo versus German" narrative was the fact that the lynch mob's ringleader, Joseph Riegel, and several of his followers were also ethnic Germans in that largely German town. Seizing the opportunity to have his ego stroked, Riegel assumed leadership of the mob which lynched Prager after failing to extract information about a non-existent bomb plot.

Its interesting to note that a similar incident occurred in Brandenburg albeit without the deadly consequence of the Prager episode but demonstrating the absurdity of the mindless hysteria of the superpatriots. After a report to the sheriff that Karl Wolfe was planting bombs on his property, upon investigation the sheriff found that he and the county agricultural extension agent were marking locations for terraces in his field.

As the Prager lynching shows although the war was the impetus for ethnic persecution there were other factors at work which the simplistic solution of renaming towns only glossed over. The folly of such a solution is on full display in the renaming of Germantown, Texas to the more "patriotic" name of Schroeder after its fallen son is apparent if a more "American" name was the goal.<sup>42</sup>

Similar factors also existed in Brandenburg and in Maria's broader circle which defied the simplistic perception that all Germans were of the same opinion as to the war. Just as with the Prager lynching opportunism and opposing political views were also present resulting in fissures which didn't fall along neat ethnic lines.

Thanks to State Senator Ferdinand Weinert, Spielhagen was appointed to the position of State Warehouse Inspector in payment for a political debt as the U.S. entered the war. In response to Spielhagen's outspoken anti-war views and subsequent BOI investigation Weinert agreed to act as an informant for the Bureau's San Antonio office agreeing to provide reports of potentially treasonous "activities on the part of this or any other German."<sup>43</sup>

As a child of German immigrants who had ascended in state politics and business whether his actions were out of a sense of duty or opportunism one can only speculate. However, his actions belie the simplistic notion that all ethnic Germans were of one mind on the war. In a twist, he was responsible

for the rail line through Haskell County in which the community of Weinert was named after him when it was established on the line in 1906. It was there that fellow German Will Bergfeld migrated to soon thereafter and became a leader of the FLPA.<sup>44</sup>

Similar to those involved in the Prager lynching the messiness of the motives of those within Maria's circle is apparent. Maria and Bergfeld opposed the war on political grounds as socialists and labor activists while Spielhagen and Hanschke opposed the war on the basis of ethnicity disputing the Anglo view that Germany was the aggressor. Weinert acted as an informant either out of conviction or possibly opportunism or some combination thereof, while opportunism was the sole motive for Riegel in the lynching of Prager. Thus, the knee-jerk reaction in the renaming of New Brandenburg and Germantown, the likely conflation of radical and German in Brandenburg, similar to Prager's lynching, distilled various motives into a simplistic "us versus them."

The *Aspermont Star* echoed the prevailing sentiment nationally of that era which viewed ethnic Germans, among other groups, as a suspect class unassimilated and therefore un-American, which included supporters of the SP. A *Star* editorial reflected the lack of discernment locally between German and socialist following another encampment shortly after the Wolfe incident warning "...you had better move to the country you are in sympathy with or keep your chops shut." Another editorial followed stating that "...plotters against America should be given a plot of their own, about seven feet long..." further lumping all those who opposed the war or who spoke German as unpatriotic and thus one and the same.<sup>45</sup>

While local lore, a local history, and a thesis on both Brandenburgs reported overwhelming support for the name change among the German community as well as the Anglo, reflected on a historical marker, conversations with German elders revealed dissension by some to the change but general acquiescence to prevent further conflict similar to what Karl Wolfe had experienced. This, when combined with the *Star* editorials and that only Anglo names were on the name change petition, paints a more nuanced version of the event. Regardless, the editorials' conflation of socialist with German, and both as unpatriotic, made the Wolfe family the perfect candidate for the incident which occurred. Ironically, the *Star* editor would have been shocked to know that Aspermont was the Latinized version of the surname of A. L. Rhomberg, the German who founded the town some 30 years earlier whose family had received land from the public domain from railroad construction.<sup>46</sup>

With members of the American Legion, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and remnants of the American Protective League, a war-time citizens' federal auxillary empowered to root out pro-German sympathizers,

now acting on their own accord post-war in the forefront, anti-German hostility actually intensified after the war for some time.<sup>47</sup>

Anti-German fervor soon segued after the war into anti-Bolshevikism with anti-radical hysteria now layered on top of anti-German hysteria due to the prominence of German leftists within the radical movement. Identification with anarchism from the Chicago Haymarket bombing and the short-lived St. Louis commune led by German Marxists a generation before played into the continued vilification of Germans generally as did the reforms enacted due to the Americanization movement.

The puritanism and nativism of the era resulting in Prohibition, a resurgent KKK, deportation of alien radicals, a restrictive immigration quota, and a eugenics movement to “improve” society thus underlay the superpatriots’ actions in their defense of “Americanism” on the Rolling Plains, as elsewhere. My doughboy grandfather, the first surviving native-born member of his family and a recipient of superpatriot action while home on leave, blamed the local anti-German hysteria on the KKK. Considering the Klan violence resulting in murders after the war in southeast Texas over language, the size of the FLPA sweep and related anti-German vitriol in the area the altercations which did occur could have just as easily turned more deadly than they did.

Thus, restrictions on German language education which had begun in the war as a language perceived to promote autocracy increased after the war as did a plethora of related efforts to combat the spread of Communism and “Americanize” immigrants through enforced uniformity of language and thought. Prominent in this effort were the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Klan, and the American Legion, established in 1919 to foster “100 percent Americanism,” promote the “American language,” and to combat the spread of Communism through English-only legislation. Teacher loyalty oaths and “patriotic education” mandates were also promoted thus predating the current culture war over “patriotic” curriculum and calls for loss of tenure for not hewing to orthodoxy by a century.<sup>48</sup>

These “Americanization” efforts impacted American citizens of German descent after the war, along with other groups not yet considered as fully assimilated into American society. Those groups, traditions, and beliefs which fell outside the mainstream WASP culture, those of non-Anglo ethnicity, the lack of English language facility, “radical” political views, the Sunday afternoon Stammtisch, the Jew, Catholic, and irreligious, all were considered as threats in varying degrees, to American values and the Republic.

Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer’s testimony to the Overman Senate subcommittee shortly before the Armistice which was investigating alleged pro-German activities by the Brewers’ Association, and the reports which followed were used to justify continued federal investigation of U.S. citizens suspected of anti-American sympathies, after the war. Reports to the

committee alleged that Germans controlled all Jewish businesses in the U.S. and supplied radicals with weapons. Not only did this play into the age-old anti-Semitic conspiracy of world-wide economic domination but linked Germans and Jews with Bolshevism, via Karl Marx the German Jewish founder of Communism, and its stated aim of world-wide worker control, antithetical to U.S. business interests.

The ambassador to Russia testified that the German government supported the Bolsheviks in their successful overthrow of the Russian government in November of 1917 as did a report by Wilson's propaganda chief George Creel. Adding to the mix was suspected Bolshevik support of labor, fomenting strikes which averaged some 300 a month in the early post-war period. In the greatest strike wave in U.S. history over four million workers went on strike with close to 400 in one month, with labor radicals seizing control of Seattle for nearly a week at the height of the unrest.

This wide-ranging alleged conspiracy between prominent German American businessmen, German American radicals, the German government, and Bolshevik support of labor unrest was discredited as a ploy for political influence.<sup>49</sup> However, it nevertheless helped influence popular opinion to segue from anti-German hysteria based solely on ethnicity to a fear of all things foreign, including German, especially of ideas considered radical. With the war now over the federal Sedition Act, which expanded the reach of the 1917 Espionage Act by criminalizing anti-war speech deemed injurious to the war effort, no longer had standing and was repealed. However, with Palmer's encouragement, by 1921 roughly three years after the war, upwards of 35 state legislatures enacted peacetime sedition laws to curb "anti-American" speech, injurious to American values as defined by the bills' sponsors.<sup>50</sup>

The anarchist bombings which followed on the heels of the war dating from April of 1919 to the bombing of Palmer's home in June of that year resulted in massive surveillance and deprivation of civil liberties of radicals in the Palmer Raids of the Red Scare. Ending in January of 1920 when his overzealous reach was brought to a close over 4000 had been arrested in 23 states often without warrant and due primarily to guilt by association or expression of "anti-American" ideas. Included in this sordid episode was the deportation by December of 1919 of 249 aliens, including Emma Goldman, for profession of ideas which had been criminalized. Although Palmer was discredited for his overzealous response to the anarchist bombings, he may have felt vindicated after the Wall Street anarchist bombing of September 16, 1920, which followed the Red Scare shortly thereafter. The worst case of domestic terrorism until the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the locals who supported his tactics, the roundup of the FLPA, arrest of Hickey, and their attempted burning of Karl Wolfe's farmstead, roughly only three years prior, likely felt vindication as well.<sup>51</sup>



**LUEDERS FIFTH ANNUAL**  
**Socialist**  
**Encampment**  
**AUGUST 8, 9, 10, 11.**

**Bigger And Better Than Ever**

A splendid series of speeches by a grand galaxy of speakers. Among them Reddin Andrews, candidate for Governor of Texas; T. A. Hickey, Mary O. Riely, Wm. D. Haywood, "the undesirable citizen of Colorado."

**Come And Camp With Us**  
Everything for the comfort and amusement of the multitudes will be on the ground,

Last year our Encampment was the largest and most successful in the State. This year it will be still larger. Noted Socialist from all over Texas will be with us. Three speeches each day, every one by a different speaker.

**For . Stand Privileges, address:**  
**W.M.WILLIAMS, M.S.GRAHAM**  
**MANAGERS, LUEDERS, TEXAS**

Lueders Socialist Encampment Poster. Thomas A. Hickey Papers, 1896-1996 and undated, box 2, folder 25, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.



# **BIG ENCAMPMENT**

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**At O'Brien, in Haskell  
County, Aug. 5, 6.**

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**Everybody cordially invited. A large crowd is expected. Plenty of beef, plenty of bread, plenty of refreshments. Good speaking by such speakers as Reddin Andrews, T. A. Hickey, Mother Jones and Bill Haywood. Col. Dick Maple may be at our service. Fine camping ground and plenty of stock water. Come and hear the only live issue discussed. Time will be divided with any representative man who thinks he has something better to offer than Socialism. Remember the date:**

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**AUGUST 5 AND 6**

Farmers Journal  Print, Abilene.

O'Brien Socialist Encampment Poster. Thomas A. Hickey Papers, 1896-1996 and undated, box 2, folder 25, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

The incident which occurred at the Wolfe farm at Brandenburg and to those fellow travelers within the Boer/Wolfe circle thus could be viewed as the opening salvo of the Red Scare, considering it was a federal roundup of radicals, generally acknowledged as one of the worst episodes of the deprivation of civil liberties in U.S. history. Hanschke, Spielhagen, Bergfeld, the Meitzens, and Boer family member Hickey were all under surveillance due to their anti-war and/or radical political views with ethnicity a factor. Likewise, the association of Hickey with Socialist Party leaders Victor Berger, Morris Hillquit, Eugene Debs, and “Big” Bill Haywood, all of whom except Hillquit were convicted under the Espionage Act, was well-known to authorities.<sup>52</sup>

The “Wobblies”—the IWW—led by “Big” Bill Haywood, who had spoken at Socialist Party encampments at O’Brien and Lueders near Brandenburg in Haskell and Jones Counties respectively, was considered especially dangerous. Alleged to be supported by the German government, though no proof was found, the IWW was nevertheless crushed by the Justice Department following a massive raid in early September of 1917, during the FLPA trial in Abilene, roughly three months following Hickey’s arrest.<sup>53</sup>

Hickey and the Meitzens had been on the federal radar for some time considering Hickey was arrested in Brandenburg one day before the Conscription Act was enacted May 18, 1917, and the *Rebel* effectively suppressed a few days before the Espionage Act was enacted June 15, 1917. Following the U.S. declaration of war but before the Espionage Act went into effect, issues of the *Rebel* were withheld for material deemed treasonous. To receive the cheaper second-class postage rate materials had to be mailed regularly. By upholding issues for “review” the *Rebel* among others, lost that rate making distribution via the higher first-class rate prohibitively expensive.

Hickey’s speeches at Socialist Party encampments at Brandenburg and his articles promoting socialism in the local paper, the *Sagerton Sun*, made his views known locally as well as to federal authorities via the *Rebel* and at other encampments. Judging by Spielhagen’s “misplaced” mail experience Hickey’s private correspondence at Brandenburg may have also been “misplaced” with his radical views shared locally in this manner as well. Although famed civil liberties attorney Clarence Darrow, later of Scopes trial fame, Hillquit, and Hickey, travelled to D.C. to argue the illegality of the *Rebel*’s suppression with Postmaster Burleson, it was of no avail.<sup>54</sup> Similar to the arrest of Hickey and the FLPA officers and Goldman’s conviction and subsequent deportation, Hickey’s and the Meitzen’s publication was thus suppressed prior to enactment of the law used for its suppression.

The stature of Hickey’s advocate within the radical movement, Morris Hillquit, and the international events occurring during Hickey’s arrest, the

FLPA sweep, suppression of the *Rebel* and FLPA trial provide perspective for these events placing them within the broader context of the era and the developing anti-radical hysteria.

Active internationally in the socialist movement Hillquit was an acquaintance of Lenin due to participation in a socialist conference in Europe. As a leader of the SP Hillquit successfully opposed Lenin's colleague, Leon Trotsky, who had been living in New York City since January of 1917, in his attempt to have the SP adopt violence in opposing the impending draft and moving the Party in a more militant direction befitting a true revolutionary movement.

Similar to the FLPA's convention which followed in May opposing the impending draft, Hillquit called a meeting of SP members in New York City in March to draft a statement opposing violence as a tactic of draft resistance. Losing the vote opposing the resolution and with the Russian government overthrown a few days later, Trotsky left for Russia to later lead the Red Army following the successful Bolshevik Revolution in November of 1917.

Hickey's arrest, the FLPA sweep and trial, suppression of the *Rebel*, and Green Corn Rebellion, took place from May to September of that year during which up to ten thousand Bolshevik emigrés to New York City returned to Russia. Several hundred held top posts in the new Bolshevik government following the November Bolshevik Revolution creating a link to fellow radicals in New York City. This exodus and linkage received wide coverage nationally and combined with the FLPA sweep and Green Corn Rebellion of the same period helped foment fear of a full-scale domestic radical insurrection.

Sensationalist articles of the FLPA arrests by state and local papers fed the developing frenzy of a violent insurrection. Disregarding any pretense of objectivity following the May 17, 1917 FLPA arrests and several months before the trial in September the *Houston Chronicle* reported May 20 that an "Armed Uprising Against the Draft is Nipped in Bud" followed May 26 with an article entitled "Secrets of Murder Lodge Laid Bare." Not to be outdone the *San Angelo Weekly Standard* reported May 25 that a "Staggering Plot of Conspiracy against the U.S. Discovered" while the *Dallas Morning News* entitled a May 30 article "German Influence at Work in Texas." Articles reported that death lists had been developed of leading citizens in the area by the FLPA, that towns would be dynamited and burned with telegraph lines cut and rail lines destroyed. Articles claimed that the FLPA was financed by the German government with ties to the IWW, also allegedly financed by the German government.<sup>55</sup>

While there was much support for the SP in northwest Texas of both Germans and Anglos, the arrests of Hickey and FLPA members, and the Wolfe incident, shows there was even more support in the region for the

war by anti-German superpatriots who had no qualms in using violence to enforce conformity.

During the time Anglos changed the name of New Brandenburg to Old Glory, a confrontation occurred in Sagerton between Friedrich Franke and friends versus Anglos at the pool hall/dry goods store of August Wolschk which served as the local watering hole for Germans. An accusation was made that Franke, who supplied water to the town might poison it, a common accusation at that time. The result was the beginning of the demise of the thriving town when he shut off the supply, as well as increased tension. It is worth noting that just a few years later it was Friedrich Franke's daughter who was the first woman to join the Brandenburg Lodge. The loss of the lodge records makes connecting politics to the altercation impossible, if in fact the connection existed, and the records commented on it. Nevertheless, a letter of Maria's documents there were charter members of the Lodge who were SP members.<sup>56</sup>

Reminiscent of the Haymarket trial a generation earlier and of the Red Scare, overzealous prosecutors, judges, and federal law enforcement officials had no qualms in depriving citizens of due process protections who expressed unpopular views particularly those of non-Anglo ethnicity. Officials announcing a purported Jewish-Bolshevik-German cabal, for political gain, added to the hysteria and while no evidence has been found that Hickey's association with German-speaking Jews Berger and Hillquit factored into his arrest it does indicate fertile ground for this conspiracy theory.<sup>57</sup> Further research on the small German-Jewish community of Jones County, boyhood home of Democratic Party operative and Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Robert Strauss, whose family migrated to Stamford near Lueders prior to World War I, may shed light on this aspect of the SP/FLPA repression in the area.

The national scope of the anti-war dragnet which the northwest Texas German SP members and their Anglo colleagues were caught up in is the fact that following the arrest of Hickey and FLPA leaders Bergfeld and Bryant in May 1917, Emma Goldman was arrested June 15 in New York City. In September, during the FLPA trial in Abilene, Hickey's colleague "Big" Bill Haywood was also arrested in a nationwide federal sweep of the Wobblies which effectively crushed the IWW. All were charged with obstructing the draft via speeches and publications made illegal by the Conscription Act among other charges with the prosecution attempting to tie support of the German government directly, or indirectly, to Goldman, Haywood, and the FLPA members. Haywood jumped bail and escaped to the Soviet Union where he died.



Likewise, although not charged under the Espionage Act for her radical activities during the war, former Rolling Plains activist Laura Payne was surveilled by the BOI in California. Her activism and a letter she wrote to Lenin in support of his movement not only resulted in her surveillance her poem, "Proletariat" had the dubious distinction of being entered into the record of the Overman Senate Committee.<sup>58</sup>

A German-speaking Russian Jew internationally prominent for her anti-war activism, free speech advocacy, and supporter of anarchism, though by this time she had denounced violence as a political tool, the die was cast for Goldman. She was later denaturalized via a technicality and was deported to the U.S.S.R. via the 1918 Anarchist Exclusion Act essentially for her outspoken opposition to the war but relying on her earlier support of anarchism made illegal by the Act. Just as with the FLPA officers, she was convicted for an action prior to the criminalization of the action, in effect an ex post facto conviction for her and the FLPA officers.

A colleague of prominent German émigré anarchist Johann Most, who also served time for promoting violence in his New York City newspaper *Freiheit*, Maria corresponded with his partner, Helene Minken, another German-speaking Russian Jew, a friend and former roommate of Goldman. Although there is no record that she subscribed to *Freiheit* Maria also corresponded with Georg Bauer, co-editor with Max Baginski of *Freiheit* after Most's death in 1905, continuing after the paper's demise in 1910. As the political climate heated up in apparent anticipation of what was to come Bauer recommended a work on the Haymarket. Also corresponding with the prominent anarchist poet Georg Biedenkapp of New York City and Martin Drescher, assistant editor of Robert Reitzel's *Die Arme Teufel* in Detroit, Maria's correspondence with these prominent anarchists apparently somehow eluded the censors.<sup>59</sup>

As Maria's letters reveal, she was staunchly opposed to the war and of the SPD's support of it as was Clara Zetkin, who wrote her a warm letter in August of 1920 thanking her for her financial help, describing the misery the German Revolution had wrought which followed on the heels of the war. As a major player in the socialist movement Zetkin had been acquainted with Friedrich Engels, co-founded the German Communist Party (KPD) with Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and advised Lenin on the Communist Party's stance on women as a member of the Third International (Comintern.) One can only imagine the Anglo postmaster's shock if he had known that Maria was corresponding with a colleague of Lenin and acquaintance of the co-founder of Communism. Similar to "Big" Bill Haywood, colleague of Hickey who spoke at least twice at SP encampments near Brandenburg, Zetkin was buried at the Kremlin.<sup>60</sup>

Although Hickey's colleague, Eugene Debs, managed to avoid arrest until June of 1918, he too, was charged with violation of the Conscription Act serving time in a federal penitentiary as did FLPA leaders George Bryant and Z. L. Risley of Lueders and Samuel Powell of nearby Anson. Under pressure to pardon those imprisoned due to the wartime repression of dissent and a desire to return to "normalcy" President Harding commuted Debs's term in 1921 and exonerated the FLPA leaders the following year. Similar to Hickey's arrest and the suppression of the *Rebel* the FLPA leaders had been charged with conspiracy prior to the law's enactment making the alleged conspiracy illegal. However, unlike Hickey they served roughly two-and-a-half years in a federal penitentiary at great cost to their families' welfare and their reputations.<sup>61</sup>

Although difficult to believe now, members of the isolated, small German farm community of Brandenburg were the recipients, along with resident German aliens, religious pacifists, dissenters to the war, and German Americans across the country, of Hoover's nascent federal surveillance apparatus which began at this time which continued to grow through the McCarthy era and beyond up to the present day due to 9/11. Building upon the anti-anarchist legislation of the pre-war years the stage was thus set for the surveillance, cataloguing, and repression of radicals of all stripes during and after the war. German Americans, as a suspect class due to the hysteria created by the Wilson Administration, thus have the dubious distinction of being among the first recipients of the massive federal surveillance apparatus culminating in the Patriot Act as another group in a long line of others vilified for their ethnicity and for others, their political views or religious beliefs.

It's not inconceivable that others in the area suffered the same fate, unbeknownst to them, as did Spielhagen, Bergfeld, Hanschke, the Meitzens, Hickey, Bryant, Risley, Powell, and the Boeer/Wolfe family. The prominence of northwest Texas in that era's anti-war Agrarian Socialist movement in which Germans were already under suspicion lends itself to this possibility.<sup>62</sup>

Sadly, while accused of being an anarchist and working to overthrow democracy at home, Maria Boeer's correspondence expressed the opposite. She criticized the German monarchy for its war of aggression and kept abreast of the anti-war movement via the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* and correspondence, and of calls for the abdication of the Kaiser in February of 1917, two months prior to the U.S. declaration of war. Her correspondence also indicates that she supported radical German émigré attempts to foment a revolt against the Kaiser and of creation of a socialist republic in Bavaria. Contributing money for the surreptitious distribution of anti-war pamphlets "by the millions" throughout Bavaria and Germany, the Bavarian Soviet Republic did occur for a short time in the postwar chaos.

She and her correspondents commented at length on the hardships that war inflicted on the German people and opposed it on grounds that it

benefited the rich at the expense of the workers. She was distressed that “...the German people need a Kaiser while the 48ers in Texas who had immigrated to escape the repression of the monarchical system are no longer secure due to anti-German sentiment.”<sup>63</sup> She also decried the U.S. government’s “brutal abuse of power” when the *Rebel* was suppressed to G.A. Hoehn, the influential editor of the socialist St. Louis *Arbeiter-Zeitung*.

A founding member of the SP with Debs, Victor Berger, et al, Hoehn became influential as editor of the St. Louis *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. After immigrating from Bavaria, Hoehn became a journalistic protégé of Paul Grottkau who was co-editor of the *Chicagoer Arbeiter-Zeitung* with August Spies who was later hung for the Haymarket bombing with Albert Parsons. Following the bombing Hoehn became editor of the *Chicagoer Arbeiter-Zeitung* where he became influential in the movement which increased after he established the St. Louis *Arbeiter-Zeitung*.<sup>64</sup>

Maria’s correspondence with Wilhelm Rosenberg also linked her to the German radicals in Chicago which had become prominent as a center of radicalism after the Civil War. Following immigration due to Bismarck’s purge of radicals, throughout the 1880s in Chicago he edited the anarchist paper *Die Fackel* which was the Sunday edition of the *Chicagoer Arbeiter-Zeitung* and led the Socialist Labor Party which later merged with the SP. Parsons translated sections of *Die Fackel* into English for inclusion in his anarchist paper the *Alarm*. Parsons had moved to Chicago in 1873 following connections he had made in the radical German community due to a patronage job from his brother whose state senatorial district included a large German population in Houston’s Third Ward and beyond, as well as from an editorial stint in Austin. After becoming radicalized and acquiring basic German language skills in Texas he soon became prominent in the anarchist movement in Chicago, settling in the radical German community on the northside, and a Haymarket martyr soon thereafter with Spies, et al.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to Zetkin, Maria’s correspondence also linked her to other prominent anti-war socialists in Germany with ties to national political leaders. One such correspondent was Theodor Schwarz of Koenigsberg who described with disgust General Hindenburg’s butchery of retreating Russian soldiers in the 1914 Battle of Tannenberg. His letter implied he was an acquaintance of Hugo Hasse also of Koenigsberg, co-chair of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) with the future first Weimar Republic president Friedrich Ebert.<sup>66</sup>

In an April 4, 1917, letter to New Ulm, MN lawyer and newspaper publisher Albert Steinhauser, Maria concurred with the anti-war sentiment Schwarz had expressed earlier writing “. . . when would the Germans realize the enemy was within their own borders, as it was here in the U.S.?” Written two days prior to the U.S. declaration of war, unbeknownst to her at the time



this sentiment was soon to become personal with the incident at Karl Wolfe's farm as it would for Steinhauser.

Similar to Hickey and the Meitzens he had been under suspicion for his public comments, in particular after he spoke at an anti-war rally a week before Maria's letter which had been followed by creation of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety. Charged with protecting Minnesotans from "treason and subversion" it placed the entire city of New Ulm under surveillance due to its large German population which was outspoken in opposition to the war as seen by a crowd of eight thousand in a town of six thousand at a 7/25/17 anti-war rally. Expressing his view in a speech at the rally that the war was "...a scheme of plutocrats for profit..." Steinhauser was arrested and charged with sedition in September, at the same time of the FLPA trial, following his refusal to disavow his remarks in a Commission hearing.<sup>67</sup>

As these few examples of Maria's correspondence show she was well-connected to the socialist and freethinker community here and abroad. She opposed the German monarchy as the aggressor in the war and of the monarchical system in general as anti-democratic due to its repression of the people and supported its overthrow. She was opposed to the war for its devastation and for benefiting rich capitalists regardless of ethnicity at the expense of workers and supported fully the basic tenet of democracy, that of freedom of expression.

With that said she did praise Johan Most made infamous by his coining of the phrase "propaganda of the deed"—a euphemism for terrorism—in a letter to his surviving partner Helene Minken. Although her praise was for his opposition "... to the mob's striving for dollars which led to war ..." it is still disconcerting to read considering as well-read as she was, she had to of known of his advocacy of violence as a political tool.<sup>68</sup>

Notwithstanding this one blemish the body of her correspondence read to date paints a portrait of an individual opposed to war regardless of the aggressor. She maintained pride in her German *Kultur* while opposed to the Kaiser's repression of the people and indifference to their plight. She valued democratic principles tempered by a desire for restrictions on the unbridled capitalistic excesses of that era regardless of country. She did not advocate violence and had no sympathies for the Kaiser—to the contrary.

However, just a few weeks after Maria's letter to Steinhauser in which she decried German militarism, following federal surveillance the Brandenburg area SP members, German and Anglo, her family and others in her broader circle experienced the full force of the federal government and the hysteria created thereby, due to expression of their political views. Hickey was arrested May 17, 1917, without warrant followed two days later by the FLPA raid

which swept up Bergfeld of Weinert and Bryant of Lueders on charges related to sedition, impeding conscription, and related charges. A mob burned a shed of her daughter's family as a warning following Hickey's return to Brandenburg. Wobbly leader, Hickey colleague, and Brandenburg area encampment speaker, "Big" Bill Haywood was arrested on similar charges as was Emma Goldman, later deported effectively for expression of her radical views, who had shared an apartment with Helene Minken, with whom Maria had corresponded.

Although SP co-founder Eugene Debs eluded arrest until nine months after the FLPA trial, like Bryant and his fellow FLPA leaders of Jones County, he served time in a federal penitentiary until his term was commuted by President Harding along with others from across the nation for the same miscarriage of justice. Following federal surveillance due to their ethnicity and exercise of their right of dissent, Hanschke and Bergfeld narrowly missed federal imprisonment. While Spielhagen avoided financial hardship due to expression of his political views, the Meitzens did not. They were effectively deprived of their property without due process by way of enforcement of an Act prior to its adoption via the loss of sales of the *Rebel*.

As anti-German and anti-socialist hysteria reached full bloom mutually reinforcing one another, New Brandenburg underwent a name change, Sagerton began a swift decline and similar to German-speaking congregations nationwide local Lutheran churches experienced repression by local Anglo superpatriots.

Time heals all wounds and although hostility surfaced again in World War II it wasn't as pronounced. The new hall in Aspermont of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) was named after the first two casualties in the county of World War II, one of whom was a Herttenberger, a grandson of Brandenburg immigrants.<sup>69</sup>

The NYVZ captured the essence of Maria's life-long work on behalf of workers following her death in 1936 at the age of 92. The editor noted in her eulogy that since subscribing to its first edition in 1878 "general" Boer had played a large role in the fight of workers for a free and better world order. True to her freethinker conviction she was cremated as her husband Wilhelm had been.<sup>70</sup>

Drawing a definitive conclusion as to how much of a factor anti-socialist hysteria played in the name change of New Brandenburg in combination with anti-German hysteria, the author can only speculate. Placing the event in the national context of the era in combination with sensationalized area newspaper reports of a suspected anti-war revolt lends itself to that conclusion but so, too, does the anti-German hysteria which was pervasive and swept the country. There is no definitive answer except one, that preventing the

erasure of such events from popular memory, even of a sparsely populated non-descript farm community, is important.

The painting over of the name of the Aspermont VFW, now closed, is a good representation of how memory of local history can be lost, even of events that were a part of a significant episode in the nation's history. Local histories make no mention of the prominence the SP and allied FLPA had in the area in that era even though nationally prominent radical leaders headlined the SP encampments in the area. Nor were the local historians I spoke with aware of the Party's earlier prominence or of the mass FLPA arrest. One would think that at least the mass arrest would figure in local remembrance in some fashion locally, but that is not the case.

In distant Seguin near San Antonio, where Bergfeld migrated from to Weinert, a short-lived run of a play about the FLPA trial written by the son of Bergfeld's granddaughter, Janice Woods Windle, based on her book *Will's War* is the only popular presentation of the mass arrest I have found to date. Nevertheless, apparently the Party and its platform were important to the locals at the time which they wanted to be known in perpetuity with placement of a 1911 issue of the *Chicago Daily Socialist* in the cornerstone of the Stonewall County courthouse. However, that has not happened.

Ironically, or maybe prophetically, while the area's socialist history has been erased, another casualty in the culture war over historical memory, the attitude underlying the name change has not. A recent social media post lauded the change even though it took place over a century ago. Considering the tone, the post likely would have been even more negative if the author had known that Brandenburg had been home to radical German Socialist Party members.

The experience of the Brandenburg socialists and fellow Germans pales in comparison to the lynching of a German American in Illinois for his support of labor, the torture and deaths of pacifist German Russian Mennonites while in federal prison for refusing military service, or of the murders of Germans by Klansmen which took place in Austin Co., Texas, in 1922, stemming from their ethnicity and use of the language. Even the bombing of a Lutheran church and burning of German language textbooks and Bibles during the war, among many other similar sordid events, may register as more egregious.<sup>71</sup>

However, the deprivation of civil liberties due to ethnicity and political views experienced by those within the orbit of the Boeer family, their fellow Anglo socialists, and the German American community as a whole at that time, demonstrates the ever-present fragility of democracy and the ethos of toleration it promotes. As the letters of Maria Boeer attest, she valued the democratic rights she was accused of trying to subvert, worked through the system with fellow activists to right the imbalance which existed then

between workers and the corporate class, worked to avert war, and promoted democracy in Germany.

Similar to other women in the radical movement, other than the most prominent such as Emma Goldman, “Mother” Jones, Rose Pastor Stokes, and Lucy Parsons, Maria’s role in building the SP is largely unknown outside of the scholarly community which specializes in the topic, judging by the handful of books and articles which reference her papers. She helped build the Party through support of her son-in-law Tom Hickey’s work as a national Party organizer and helped fund the creation of the *Rebel* which became one of the largest Socialist Party papers in the nation. She was influential in the Party’s growth in the area through the Party local she founded and creation of a local encampment and support of other area encampments which hosted speakers nationally prominent in the SP and allied labor movements. She became prominent here and abroad due to diligently corresponding with prominent thought leaders in the movement from editors and publishers to politicians, poets, and authors, as well as fellow farmers who will remain in anonymity.

Mari Jo Buhle’s statements in *Women and American Socialism 1870-1920* that the unknown “. . . tens of thousands of rank-and-file women who formed the Socialist women’s movement . . . the forgotten warriors . . . of this hidden history” not only applies to Maria Boer but could also be extended to include the Brandenburg area socialists and Maria’s fellow travelers in her larger circle.<sup>72</sup>

Bound by their outspoken defense of their right of dissent regardless of ethnicity in opposition to the war, their participation in a mass movement in support of systemic political and economic reforms aided adoption of many such reforms which have since been woven into the social fabric and thus taken for granted today but considered unpatriotic at the time as socialistic.

Their participation, at sometimes great cost, also helped strengthen protection of civil liberties by adding to the mass of examples that period provided of how leaders and the body politic as a whole should not respond to a crisis, real or perceived. However, the subsequent Japanese American internment in World War II, Red Scare of the McCarthy era, and similar abuses make for a less than stellar record on this front, to put it mildly.

Likewise, due to the abuses suffered in this era due to political views and ethnicity which Maria and her correspondents decried such as the suppression of the *Rebel*, protection of political speech came to the fore. Whereas the judicial norm of this era judged speech considered as “radical” or “disloyal” as unprotected with scant federal free speech precedent, thanks to prosecutions under the Espionage Act such as that of the FLPA and Hickey’s colleague, Eugene V. Debs, the tide turned, and constitutional precedents began to

be established protecting the right of dissent. The American Civil Liberties Union, a legal defense organization for the protection of civil liberties, was also established then due to the civil liberties abuses which occurred in that era and has been a force in their protection from then to now.<sup>73</sup>

Hickey's arrest without warrant at New Brandenburg and the FLPA roundup in the Rolling Plains marked the start of the tactic of mass federal surveillance of suspect classes and was thus the precursor to the gross abuse of the Palmer Raids precipitating a focus on protection of civil liberties. Nevertheless, the system of federal surveillance grew in Hoover's reign of the FBI continuing through the McCarthy era and the discredited Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) of surveillance of 1960's radicals. The incidents involving those of Maria's circle, now largely forgotten, are nevertheless significant to the history of the Rolling Plains and beyond as another episode on the continuum of the struggle to refine and protect basic democratic rights for all regardless of political views or ethnicity.

Following 9/11, the War on Terrorism, and enactment of the Patriot Act, suspect classes and ethnicity and the issue of the proper boundary of federal surveillance versus protection of civil liberties was once again at the forefront. Just as it was in the World War I era following the arrests of Hickey, conviction of FLPA officers, Debs, and surveillance of Maria's circle due to political views and/or ethnicity, the threat of attack by those considered by some as radical and therefore un-American due to culture, language, values, or political views out of the norm, was once again on the docket.<sup>74</sup>

*Mineral Wells, Texas*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Alter II, *Toward a Cooperative Commonwealth: The Transplanted Roots of Farmer-Labor Radicalism in Texas*, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2022), pp. 73,107-116; Hartmut Keil, "German Working-Class Immigration and the Social Democratic Tradition of Germany," in *German Workers' Culture in the United States 1850 to 1920*, ed. Hartmut Keil (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press,1988), pp.1-23. Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International: Marxism and the American Reform Tradition, 1848-1876*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 45-60, 92-93, 227-229, 237-239; Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Haymarket Conspiracy: Transatlantic Anarchist Networks*, (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2012), pp. 38-39, 44-49, 58-68, 90-99; Joseph Neville, Jr., "Disloyal or Not?: Four Deutschtexaner and the Great War," *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, Vol. 53, (2018), pp. 95-132; Robert Wilson, "The Farmers' and Laborers' Protective Association of America," (Master's Thesis, Baylor University, Waco, TX, 1973), pp. 1-95; For the agrarian socialist movement see James Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943*, (Baton Rouge, LO: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); For the Populist movement see Gregg Cantrell, *The People's Revolt: Texas Populists and the Roots of American Liberalism*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020); For the

nativism of the WWI era see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, (New York City, New York: Atheneum, 1963)

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth Ackerman, Young J. Edgar: Hoover, The Red Scare, and the Assault on Civil Liberties, (New York City, NY: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2007), pp. 63-70; Christopher Finan, *From the Palmer Raids to the Patriot Act: A History of the Fight for Free Speech in America*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2007), pp.1-15; Geoffrey Stone, *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime from the Sedition Act of 1798 to the War on Terrorism*, (New York City, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 2004), pp.136-158.

<sup>3</sup>Alter, *Toward a Cooperative Commonwealth*, pp. 1-36; Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals: The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848-1849* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 3-9.

<sup>4</sup> Alter, *Toward a Cooperative Commonwealth*, pp. 3, 76-77, 130-131; Bruce Cammack, "Texanische Freidenker: Letters of German-Texan Socialists," Lecture, German-Texan Heritage Society Conference, Lubbock, Texas, September 8,1996; Elliott Shore, Ken Fones-Wolf, James Danky, "Introduction," *The German-American Radical Press: The Shaping of a Left Political Culture, 1850-1940*, eds. Elliott Shore, Ken Fones-Wolf, James Danky, (Urbana, ILL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 1-12; Maria Boeer to Luise, 1903-1906, box 2, folder 19, Boeer/Wolf Families 1837-1972 and undated, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; *ibid*, box 2, folders 12 and 44; *ibid*, box 1, folders 11 and 14; Maria Boeer to Dr. Dodel, box 4, folder 3, Arch Lamb Papers, 1878-1976, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

<sup>5</sup>Alter, *Toward a Cooperative Commonwealth*, pp. 18-28; Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals*, pp. 185-197.

<sup>6</sup>Marx, Paul. "Marx, Edgar von Westphalen, and Texas," *Southern Studies Institute*, (Winter 1983), pp.386-400; James Ledbetter, ed., *Dispatches for the New York Tribune: Selected Journalism of Karl Marx*, (London, England: Penguin Group, 2007), pp. ix-xvii; Barry Moreno, "Sorge, Friedrich Adolf," *Encyclopedia of New Jersey*, eds. Maxine Lurie and Marc Mappen, (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2004), p. 757; Alexander Trachtenberg, ed., *Letters to Americans 1848-1895 by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, (New York City, NY: International Publishers, 1953), pp.1-11.

<sup>7</sup>Justine Randers-Pehrson, *Adolf Douai, 1819-1888: The Turbulent Life of a German Forty-Eighter in the Homeland and in the United States*, (New York City, NY: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 185-211, 235-244; Theodore Hielscher to Maria Boeer, 1903-1906, box 2, folder 8, Boeer/Wolf Families 1837-1972 and undated, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Samuel Geiser, "Theodor Hielscher, Early Texan Naturalist," *Field and Laboratory*, Vol. 24 (1956), No. 2, pp. 69-73; Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War*, (Chicago, ILL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 115-116, 216-217, 246-247; Ella Gold Revised by Randolph B. "Mike" Campbell and Brett J. Derbes, "Siemering, August," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 24, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/siemering-august>; Katja Rampelmann, "Infidels, Ethnicity, and Womanhood: Women in the German-American Freethinker Movement," *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, Vol. 39, (2004), pp. 61-76; *Freie Presse für Texas* in The Portal to Texas History. University of North Texas Libraries <https://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/FRPRTX/> accessed August 24, 2023; Ernest Bruncken, *German Political Refugees in the United States During the Period From 1815-860*, (Milwaukee, WI: Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter, 1904), pp. 43-45; Carl Wittke, *Against the Current: The Life of Karl Heinzen*, (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1945), pp.93-95; Rudolph Biesele, "The State Convention of Germans in 1854," *The Southwestern*



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<sup>8</sup>Laura Woods Roper, “Frederick Law Olmsted and the Western Texas Free-Soil Movement,” *The American Historical Review*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, Oct. 1950), pp.58-64; Frank Baron, “Abraham Lincoln and the German Immigrants: Turners and Forty-Eighters,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, Vol. 4, (2012), pp. 21-63, 77-140; Frank Baron, “German Republicans and Radicals in the Struggle for a Slave-Free Kansas: Charles F. Kob and Augustus Bondi,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, Vol. 40, (2005), pp. 3-26; Charles Reitz, “Horace Greeley and the German Forty-Eighters in the Kansas Free State Struggle,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, Vol. 43, (2008), pp. 11-34; Mischa Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists After 1848*, (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), pp. 18-33, 38-70; Carl Wittke, *Against the Current: The Life of Karl Heinzen*, (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press), pp. 85, 90-95, 122, 130, 172-174, 190-191.

<sup>9</sup>Theodore Hielscher to Maria Boeer, 1903-1906, box 2, folder 8, Boeer/Wolf Families 1837-1972 and undated, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

<sup>10</sup>Regine Wieder, “Konrad Nies Rediscovered,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, Vol. 34, (1999), pp. 141-152; Konrad Niess to Maria Boeer, box 2, folder 28, 1837-1972, Boeer/Wolf Families 1837-1972 and undated, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Rampelmann, “Infidels, Ethnicity, and Womanhood,” pp. 61-76.

<sup>11</sup>Cammack, “Texanische Freidenker: Letters of German-Texan Socialists,” Lecture, German-Texan Heritage Society Conference, Lubbock, Texas, September 8, 1996; Friedrich Michel to Maria Boeer, box 2, folder 24, Boeer/Wolf Families 1837-1972 and undated, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Waltraud Roth, Eberhard Specht, Jan Bretschneider, accessed July 25, 2023, <https://www.juraforum.de/lexikon/karl-august-specht>, “Wer ist Karl August Specht? - Herkunft, Leben und Werdegang,” Erstveröffentlichung im Lexikon freien Denkens, Angelika Lenz Verlag 2005; August Specht to Maria Boeer, box 3, folders 141 and 144, Boeer/Wolf Families 1837-1972 and undated, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Ibid, box 2, folder 8; Ibid, box 2, folder 28; August Specht to Maria Boeer, November, 1914, box 4, folder 8, Arch Lamb Papers, 1878-1976, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Ibid, Box 4, folder 3; Andrea Wulf, *Magnificent Rebels: The First Romantics and the Invention of the Self*, (New York City, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022), pp. ix-xi, 3-20; Emily F. Cutrer, “Ney, Elisabet,” Handbook of Texas Online, accessed August 27, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/ney-elisabet>.

<sup>12</sup>Theodore Hielscher to Maria Boeer, 1903-1906, box 4, folder 8, Boeer/Wolf Families 1837-1972 and undated, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Theodore Schwarz to Maria Boeer, November, 20, 1914, and June 9, 1916, box 4, folder 8, Arch Lamb Papers, 1878-1976, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

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