

Introduction

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Carl William Ackerman (1890–1970) was a journalist, corporate public relations executive, author of several books, and for many years, dean of Columbia University School of Journalism. In 1918, as a correspondent of *The New York Times*, he traveled through Siberia, torn by Russian civil war, and was the first foreign journalist who reached Ekaterinburg after the murder of the former tsar, Nicholas Romanov, and his family, and while many uncertainties about their fate still prevailed. After his return to the United States, Ackerman became an ardent propagandist of the “Red Scare,” and even brought to the American public the infamous “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” an anti-Semitic fake that he turned anti-Bolshevik by changing the main words. The book *Trailing the Bolsheviki*, published in 1919, was a result of his Russian travels, and one of the early firsthand accounts of the Russian Civil War read by the Americans.

Ackerman was born on January 16, 1890, in Richmond, Indiana, and after several years spent at Earlham College in his native town he moved to New York City to study at Columbia University, where he was awarded a bachelor of letters degree in 1913.

That same year, Ackerman began his journalism career as a United Press Association correspondent in Albany and Washington, DC. With the beginning of the World War, UPA sent him to Berlin in 1915. The journalist worked for two years in the German capital while the United States was keeping its neutrality. When America finally entered the war, Ackerman left Berlin and published his first book *Germany, the Next Republic?*¹

In 1917, Ackerman worked briefly for *New-York Tribune* and then served as a special correspondent for *The Saturday Evening Post*. For that magazine, he gathered material in Switzerland, Mexico, Spain, and France concerning political events in the years 1917–18. In 1918, Ackerman published his second book *Mexico’s Dilemma*.² While working for the *Post*, Ackerman served simultaneously as a confidential reporter to Edward Mandell House, President Wilson’s adviser, and started an exchange

¹ Carl W. Ackerman, *Germany, the Next Republic?* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1917).

² Carl W. Ackerman, *Mexico’s Dilemma* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918).

of letters that ended only with House's death in 1938. At the end of World War I, Ackerman and House corresponded on such subjects as the League of Nations, press censorship, Russia, and Japan. On July 16, 1919, House wrote Ackerman: "I shall always regret that you were not in Paris during the Peace Conference. You would have been helpful in many directions and I constantly missed your not being here."

In 1917 and 1918, Russian news brought growing concerns and less and less understanding of the chaos that emerged after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas in February 1917, the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks that October, and the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918. Ackerman got an assignment from *The New York Times* in late August and embarked to the Russian Far East, where he spent months, from September to December, getting his correspondences published on the pages of the leading newspaper. Upon his return to the United States, Ackerman turned part of his newspaper articles and his travel notes into a book manuscript that he published in 1919 by Scribner's under the title *Trailing the Bolsheviks: Twelve Thousand Miles with the Allies in Siberia*.

By that time, the journalist had become a fierce proponent of the idea that Bolshevism was a universal force that had already penetrated America. In the fall of 1919, Carl Ackerman toured the US for Philadelphia's *Public Ledger*, writing articles on industrial unrest that he described as the first signs of American Bolshevism. He eventually became one of the leading figures who created the "Red Scare" atmosphere in American society—the fear of the imminent Bolshevik revolt. The newspaper title and lead to one of his articles exposed his main idea: "Industrial 'Bad Spots,' Nest of Bolsheviks, From Coast to Coast. Revolutionary Cancers Infect Many Sections and Produce Serious Situation That Necessitates Labor Conference at Washington. Class-War Propaganda and Un-American Ideas Spread by Unassimilated Radical Aliens. I.W.W.'s 100,000 Paying Members in United States in Touch With Reds Abroad Through Reports Smuggled Into This Country by Sailors."³

It was during that crusade against "Bolshevik hotbeds" in America that Ackerman published a rather unusual text. Its first part appeared in the October 27, 1919, *Public Ledger* issue under the title "Red 'Bible' Counsels Appeal to violence. 'Right Is Might' Is Cardinal Text of Doctrines Expounded in Guidebook of World Revolutionists." The second part was published the next day under the title "Reds Plot to Smash World and Then Rule with Universal Czar." Ackerman insisted that the document he extensively quoted was "the translation of twenty-four protocols written by one of the members of the inner cabinet of the soviet government."⁴ In fact, the text was the infamous anti-Semitic fake "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," but creatively edited

³ *Public Ledger*, October 7, 1919.

⁴ Carl W. Ackerman, "Reds Plot to Smash World and Then Rule With Universal Czar," *Public Ledger*, October 28, 1919.

to change all the mentions of Jews to Bolsheviks.⁵ We do not know whether that was Ackerman's own forgery or if he was just a tool of somebody else's manipulation. His publication cites some anonymous "prominent American diplomat" who presumably passed "the guidebook of the world revolutionaries" to the journalist.⁶ In any way, that publication was one of the first English translations of the "Protocols." The text, however, very well fit Ackerman's mission to fight world Bolshevism on American soil (as he very probably defined his personal political goal in the post-war era).

A series of Ackerman's articles for *Public Ledger* appeared also in the form of a brochure. In the foreword, the editor explained that the journalist traveled for six weeks across the United States and found that "industrial conditions as a whole are fundamentally sound but that the cancer of Bolshevism, transplanted to America by alien agitators and spread by foreign-born labor, is infecting many sections from coast to coast. To meet this peril Mr. Ackerman urges the immediate mobilization of public opinion and vigorous action in defense of American ideas and institutions."⁷

Becoming an anti-Bolshevik crusader did not help Carl Ackerman's journalism career. For about a year he was a chief of *Public Ledger* foreign news service, but in 1922, he abandoned journalism for work in the sphere of corporate public relations. That same year, he and Colonel Edward M. House, who worked with Ackerman at the *Public Ledger*, played some role in the negotiations leading to the creation of the Irish Republic in 1922.

From 1921 to 1927, Carl directed as the president Carl W. Ackerman, Inc., a firm specializing in corporate public relations. During 1927–30, he worked for the Eastman Kodak Company, and in 1930, he published a biography of George Eastman.⁸ Then he worked briefly for General Motors, but in 1931, he was appointed the dean of Columbia's School of Journalism (since 1935, Graduate School of Journalism), the position he held until his retirement in 1956.

During WWII, Ackerman criticized the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administration for restrictions imposed on the media. On October 20, 1942, Ackerman told the fourth accounting institute banquet that American newspapers were being subjected to a "freezing process by our government," and if the forces out to complete the pro-

⁵ *Public Ledger*, October 27, 1919. See also Robert Singerman, "The American Career of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion,'" *American Jewish History* 71, no. 1 (September 1981): 53–54.

⁶ Carl W. Ackerman, "Red 'Bible' Counsels Appeal to Violence: 'Right is Might' Is Cardinal Text of Doctrines Expounded in Guidebook of World Revolutionists," *Public Ledger*, October 27, 1919.

⁷ Articles written for *Public Ledger* syndicate are reprinted in booklet form in Ackerman Papers, box 171.

⁸ Carl W. Ackerman, *George Eastman* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930).

cess succeeded, “we may have freedom of speech but be deprived of the freedom to speak,”⁹ the punch line widely quoted thereafter.

After the war, Ackerman wrote (but never published) a book titled *Eisenhower in Wonderland*, an informal history of Columbia University focusing on the years of Dwight D. Eisenhower’s presidency.¹⁰

Carl W. Ackerman died on October 9, 1970, in New York City.

Travel to Siberia

The idea of travel to Russian Siberia was initially the result of Ackerman’s intensive thinking about the future of the world after the World War. His first touch of the Russian theme took place in his article for *The Saturday Evening Post* “Germany’s Policy in Russia,” written in July and published in August 1918:

Three journeys with the German Armies in Russia when they were commanded by Von Hindenburg furnished me an introduction and insight into the field marshal’s aims and Ludendorff’s methods. . . . The slumbering, silent, suffering masses of Russians are awakening. . . . Who knows and who can tell what a hundred million people want who have passed through the fires of war with Germany and a revolution against the Czar and Russia’s past aristocrats? No one, perhaps, can formulate their hopes and aspirations, but it must be evident to the Allied world that they need counsel and assistance. Germany’s policy has never been to help Russia, but the contrary. The Allied policy, if it is to be formulated with a possibility of success, must be helpful and constructive. There is a crisis developing in Russia with every hour and every day of time. . . . Whatever the United States and the Allies do, their policy must be constructive and certain of success. . . . I do not know whether the Allies should interfere in Siberia, Kola or through Turkey and the Black Sea; but whatever the policy is it must not be one of abandoning Russia when the approaching crisis develops. Whatever plans the United States and the Allies make must also be on a larger scale than Germany is capable of, because Von Hindenburg is again dreaming about Russia, and Ludendorf is planning.¹¹

⁹ Quoted from *The Daily Telegram* (MI), October 21, 1942.

¹⁰ “Recent Acquisitions of the Manuscript Division,” *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 29, no. 4 (October 1972): 334–36.

¹¹ Carl W. Ackerman, “Germany’s Policy in Russia,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, August 17, 1918.

The editor called the text a “good article” and paid the young journalist five hundred dollars.¹² By the time of the article’s publication in the mid-August 1918, the AEF started to disembark in Vladivostok, Russia. Carl Ackerman did not wait long to plan his own participation. He offered his services to *The New York Times*, and by August 30, 1918, his contract with the paper was ready. Ackerman described the conditions in his letter to the managing editor of *The New York Times*, Carr V. Van Anda:

I offer to go to Siberia as special correspondent of *The New York Times* for a period of six calendar months, the date of my sailing to be on September ninth, 1918, or as soon thereafter as possible, and the period of my service to begin on August twenty-sixth, 1918. I am to receive a salary of two hundred dollars (\$200.00) weekly and necessary travelling and living expenses for myself, and such personal expenses as may be imposed upon me by any military expedition to which I may become attached. During this period I agree to write for *The New York Times* only and to take no other employment of any kind.¹³

During the course of his travels from October to December 1918, Ackerman visited Vladivostok, Chita, Irkutsk, Tomsk, Omsk, Cheliabinsk, and Ekaterinburg in Russia and Harbin and Peking in China, and got almost fifty correspondences published in the newspaper, being the major source of the firsthand information about the Russian Civil War for *The New York Times* readers.

It would be wrong to say that Ackerman was well equipped for the Russian journey. Most importantly, he did not speak any Russian. That fact was not a problem for the editor as may be seen from Ackerman’s mention of Van Anda’s “statement in New York that I would not need to know the Russian language to cover the story here.”¹⁴ Most of his knowledge of the vast country he was about to travel was very probably the result of his reading of George Kennan’s *Siberia and the Exile System*, published in 1891, summarizing Kennan’s impressions from the early 1880s. Ackerman’s first telegrams from Vladivostok started with the acknowledgment that “Siberia to most Americans has been a cold, bleak empire for the Czar’s political exiles.”¹⁵

While the journalist traveled a large part of his way with the American Red Cross train, the difficulties he faced in Civil War-torn Russia were still big ones. He wrote to Van Anda from “near Tomsk” informing him that “the further inland [he

¹² Editor to Carl Ackerman, July 13, 1918, Carl W. Ackerman Papers, box 140, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereafter Ackerman Papers).

¹³ Ackerman to C. V. Van Anda, August 30, 1918, Ackerman Papers, box 122.

¹⁴ Ackerman to Van Anda, Harbin, Manchuria, October 28, 1918, Ackerman Papers, box 122.

¹⁵ Carl W. Ackerman, “Hustle in Vladivostok Where Our Soldiers Guard Vast Stores,” *The New York Times*, October 15, 1918.

gets], the more difficult it becomes to send telegrams.”¹⁶ “The dollar which was worth 9.50 in October is worth only 7.40 today and in Omsk and Ekaterinburg I could not exchange dollars for rubles at any banks, Consulates or business houses,” Ackerman reported on December 8. “In order to get back to Vladivostok I had to sell practically all of my civilian clothes in Omsk! Old clothes are worth more than dollars in Russia.”¹⁷

The set of references that Ackerman brought with him to Russia was predetermined with his view of the world struggle between democracy and tyranny, and he witnessed the defeat of the former during his sojourn in Siberia.

In October, Ackerman reported on the establishment of the All-Russian government in Omsk, and seemed to be especially enthusiastic that “all Russia free of bolsheviki now supports all Russian provisional [government] located here [in] Russia’s newest capital.”¹⁸ He interviewed the leader of the government, Nikolai Avksentiev, for the newspaper, and telegraphed his responses to *The New York Times*:

Americans and Allies, by supporting this Government will be aiding that force in Russia which strives for order and democracy. While Russia knows it is the policy of the United States to favor Russian democracy, recognition of this Government will be the best thing America can do to insure stable democracy here and make it impossible for this revolution to end in a military dictatorship, as the French revolution ended with Napoleon.¹⁹

However, that government was soon overthrown by the coup led by Admiral Alexander Kolchak. The American journalist wrote in Ekaterinburg on November 27, 1918:

Notwithstanding that after so many interrupting changes we are accustomed to look on the contemporary Russia as on a state of impossibilities, we must serious think about the change of Omsk, made last week. The official information of Admiral Kolchak from November 18 informs the world, that the All-Russian government does not exist more, and in consequence of this

¹⁶ Ackerman to Carl V. Van Anda, near Tomsk, Siberia, November 6, 1918, Ackerman Papers, box 122.

¹⁷ Ackerman to Van Anda, in Siberia en route from Omsk to Vladivostok, December 4, 1918, Ackerman Papers, box 122.

¹⁸ Ackerman to *The New York Times*, eleventh [November 1918?], copies of dispatches cabled from Siberia to *The New York Times*, Ackerman Papers, box 170.

¹⁹ Carl W. Ackerman, “Five Grand Dukes Slain in a Well by Bolsheviki,” *The New York Times*, November 18, 1918.

begins the government of the Minister-Council, which gave over all power in his hands—to a dictator.²⁰

Ackerman immediately telegraphed Kolchak asking for an interview: “I expect to arrive in Omsk about November Thirtieth ... I beg to ask if I may have the honor of an interview with your excellency which I may telegraph to New York.”²¹ On December 9, 1918, *The New York Times* published Kolchak’s response to Ackerman’s lamentation of the overthrow of the democratic body: “The council does not understand the psychology of the Russian people. The council does not consider the practical side of the situation, but deals in theories.”²²

The reality on the ground ruined the idealistic vision of the Russian Civil War that Ackerman maintained in the first weeks of his journey. In an article published in *The New York Times* on December 23, 1918, he described the situation from this newly acquired point of view:

Divided between East and West, as America was between North and South during the civil war, Russia is today making a new start toward reorganization. Russia’s civil war has reached a period where decisive battles are in preparation between the Bolsheviki in the east and the militarist and monarchist party in the west.... A distressing and disappointing feature is that Russia’s civil war is not a fight for freedom, but a contest for power between anarchy on the one hand and militarism and autocracy on the other.²³

It is worth adding that a year later, the commander of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in Siberia, General William Graves, whom the journalist befriended in Vladivostok, wrote to Ackerman a letter full of disappointment with Kolchak and all the “white forces” in the Russian East:

I talked to a great variety of people ... in the towns between Omsk and Vladivostok. We did not find a single person who said that Kolchak had any popular support. My investigations at Omsk convinced me that Kolchak is simply

²⁰ “Justitia Fundamentum regnorum,” Ekaterinburg, November 27, 1918, Siberia: Notes, Memoranda, Fragments, Ackerman Papers, box 141.

²¹ Ackerman to Kolchak, telegram, undated [November 1918], Ackerman Papers, box 140.

²² Carl W. Ackerman, “Kolchak Decries Siberian Council,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 1918.

²³ Carl W. Ackerman, “Russia Wavers Between Anarchy and the New Siberian Autocracy,” *The New York Times*, December 23, 1918. See also the original manuscript: Ackerman to *The New York Times*, en route to Vladivostok, sixteenth [December 1918], Ackerman Papers, box 170.

a name. His name is being used by the most disreputable lot of scoundrels that has ever gotten an opportunity to exploit a poor, starving, defenseless people. . . . How is one to expect Russia to be rebuilt when in hands of such people. Kalmykoff and Semenoff are still murdering people in great numbers.²⁴

Among other themes that Ackerman studied in Siberia were the Czechoslovak corps and its hopes and positions, the role of the American Expeditionary Force in Siberia, the plans of the Japanese, the role of Russian Cooperative Unions in the future restoration of Russia, and the fate of the former Tsar Nicholas II and his family, who disappeared while in exile in Ekaterinburg.

He felt sympathy to the Czechoslovaks—who he considered the most determined force fighting against Bolshevism—who waited in vain for military help from the Allies. Ackerman copied and sent to the United States many resolutions and complaints made by the Czechoslovaks about the United States' inactivity.

He wrote about Americans of the AEF as "American Siberian exiles," alluding to George Kennan's influential book. (Later, he changed the article title to "Vagabonds of Siberia" but kept the title for the book chapter, and also dedicated the whole book "To the American exiles in Siberia.") In his first correspondences, Ackerman still looked for Russia's place in the future:

Long after this war Russia will be an international problem. The revolution in nineteen hundred and seventeen [has] made Russia almost an uncivilized country . . . the work which the United States and the Allies have undertaken in Russia and Siberia may be expected to be practically endless for we cannot say today how long it may take and we cannot measure our aid by the tick of the clock. Long after this war the Allies will have to be crutches for Russians until they learn, as a nation, to walk again.²⁵

Ackerman at first noticed the friendship between Russians and Americans:

In Vladivostok and Khabarovsk, the two chief cities where our men are encamped, there are numerous evidences of Russian-American friendship from the daily sight of Russian boys riding with a couple of soldiers in charge of an army wagon drawn by two teams of mules to the confession of a Siberian peasant that if any nation is to annex any part of Russia he hoped it would be the United States. We have come to Russia to help her people and we have

²⁴ Graves to Ackerman, Vladivostok, September 23, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 28.

²⁵ The Americans in Siberia, Vladivostok, Siberia, October 21, 1918. Ackerman Papers, box 170. (Articles written to *The New York Times* by Americans in Siberia, and miscellaneous typescripts.)

done what we did not intend to do for we have “conquered” them. And this we have done despite our lack of knowledge of the country, of the language and customs of the people and in the face of an active anti-American propaganda; the suspicions of our older friends and the fear of thousands of Russians that we have ulterior motives.²⁶

Disappointment in the American role grew during the travels. Ackerman used stronger language in his strictly confidential dispatch to Ambassador Morris and Colonel House written in Omsk:

When I observe that so far the United States has done nothing to help Siberia I mean that there are no evidences in Siberia that we have done anything for Russia or for the people.... Peace in Russia cannot be made at a peace conference in Europe. It can only follow the application and execution of a definite and separate Allied or American policy in Russia itself. Whether Russia is to emerge from this Civil War a democratic nation or a theatre of anarchy depends upon what the United States and the Allies do now.²⁷

In his December correspondence to the newspaper, Ackerman lamented:

The United States has done nothing economically for Russia outside of Vladivostok.... Among neither the Cossacks afield nor the Russians does one find a very high opinion of America. I heard no favorable comment during my whole journey, while there was much criticism, which it is, perhaps, not wise to repeat. In Russia we have not made good. Perhaps it is not entirely our fault. The Allies do not agree fundamentally about what should be done.²⁸

Besides writing newspaper articles, Ackerman cabled Colonel House urging the American government to announce a unified position toward Russia, and his opinion reached Secretary of State Robert Lansing in the first days of 1919. However, President Wilson refused to take any public stand.²⁹

Ackerman fell victim to disinformation (due to his poor command of Russian) when he believed and transmitted to readers of *The New York Times* a fake story about

²⁶ The Americans in Siberia, Ackerman Papers, box 170.

²⁷ Ackerman to Ambassador Morris and Colonel House, Siberia, (November) 16, 1918, Memoranda for US Department of State, Ackerman Papers, box 141.

²⁸ Carl W. Ackerman, “Russia Wavers Between Anarchy and the New Siberian Autocracy,” *The New York Times*, December 23, 1918.

²⁹ Carol Willcox Melton, *Between War and Peace: Woodrow Wilson and the American Expeditionary Force in Siberia, 1918–1921* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), 106.

the tsar's family. Ackerman published the first article about the fate of Nicholas II under the title "No Proof of Death of Czar and Family." Upon arrival at Ekaterinburg, the American journalist met with many people in that city, including the engineer Nikolai Ipatiev, the owner of the house where the Romanov family was held. The correspondence, dated November 21 and published on November 28, 1918, underlined that "here at Ekaterinburg ... None possessed proof that the family was executed. ... All the reports of the Czar's execution at Ekaterinburg came from Moscow via Berlin."³⁰ Almost a month later, *The New York Times* published another correspondence from Ackerman, now under the title "Czar's Last Hours Told by Witness. His Plotting for Restoration of Monarchy Discovered by Soviet." This new article featured Parfen Alexeievitch Domnin, the tsar's majordomo, who "remained with his imperial master until the early hours of the morning of July 17, when the Czar was led away by Bolshevik soldiers."³¹ Later, *The New York Times* published the story "How Nicholas Romanoff was Condemned to Death" on the first page.³² Ackerman followed up with the theme of the tsar's fate on February 23, 1919. The title went: "Is the Czar Dead? Six Chances in Ten That He Was Executed by the Bolsheviki—Fate of his Family Also Doubtful."³³ The narration of the last days of Nicholas's life by some "Parfen Domnin" pretending to be the tsar's "majordomo" was, as we know now, fiction that was far from the real circumstances. Moreover, no person with such name or biography ever appeared near the Romanovs. Carl Ackerman seemed to stay intrigued by the fate of the Romanovs long after he returned home. Among his archival files, many magazine clippings from different decades may be found on "princess Anastassia," one of Nicholas's daughters. (In the twentieth century, about thirty people claimed to be "Anastassia"—evidently having miraculously escaped death—but all were proven to be impostors.)

Some of the Ackerman dispatches were factually inaccurate due to the shortage of reliable sources of information in the Civil War-torn country. So, he transmitted an opinion that "despite Germany's agreement [to] withdraw troops from Russia German Generals officers remain commanding Bolshevik armies, Czechoslovak staff here has information from front indicating that General Blucher remains as chief of Bolshevik General staff and that general Eberhardt still commands Bolshevik army

³⁰ Carl W. Ackerman, "No Proof of Death of Czar and Family," *The New York Times*, November 28, 1918.

³¹ Carl W. Ackerman, "Czar's Last Hours Told By Witness," *The New York Times*, December 23, 1918.

³² "How Nicholas Romanoff was Condemned to Death," *The New York Times*, December 29, 1918.

³³ Carl W. Ackerman, "Is the Czar Dead? Six Chances in Ten That He Was Executed by the Bolsheviki—Fate of his Family Also Doubtful," *The New York Times Magazine*, February 23, 1919.

on Samara.”³⁴ He considered the German name of the Red commander—Blücher—the proof of direct German participation in the Civil War. In fact, Vasily Blyukher was a peasant’s son whose grandfather was renamed by his landlord to celebrate the famous Prussian marshal.

And certainly, Ackerman could not even guess who one of his Siberian acquaintances was, to whose opinions he sometimes referred and whose business card he kept among his papers, where he was presented as Zinovy Alekseevich Pechkoff, “Chef des Services d’Information du Haut Commissariat de la Republique Francaise en Siberie.”³⁵ Zinovy Peshkov was an adopted son of a great Russian writer, Maxim Gorky (Peshkov), but also an elder brother of Yakov Sverdlov, the head of the Bolshevik All-Russian Central Executive Committee and, according to Lev Trotsky and some later historians, the person responsible for the decision to murder the tsar’s family.

Book Writing

While Ackerman was still in Siberia (at the very end of 1918), a representative of the Chautauqua system offered him an opportunity to organize a lecture tour during the following summer. General Manager of the Coit-Alber Bureaus Louisa G. Alber expressed her trust that Ackerman “must know the truth about the Russian situation.” She then proceeded with the list of possible questions to discuss:

The newspaper reports that are being published relative to Russia are very conflicting, and the people are curious to know what the truth really is. Just what has the Soviet Government done to the different sections of Russia, and are the Bolsheviki half as bad as they are painted? Is the Bolsheviki Government likely to send an army into Poland and Germany? These are some of the questions the American people are now asking. I hope you can come back and answer them from the platform.³⁶

Ackerman received multiple invitations to speak about Russia in different locations, including Indiana University, Macmillan Publishers, and Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. The interest in Russian affairs was obvious.

The American journalist was tempted to present his work as a continuation of the book written by George Kennan about Siberia. Ackerman met the patriarch of

³⁴ Ackerman to Robinson, November 22, 1918, Ackerman Papers, box 170.

³⁵ Ackerman Papers, box 122.

³⁶ Louisa G. Alber to Ackerman, December 28, 1918, Speeches and Lectures—correspondence concerning, Ackerman Papers, box 165.

Russian Studies in America in early March 1919 and discussed both the Siberian exiles and Russian Bolshevism. Kennan then wrote to Ackerman on March 3, 1919:

It was a great pleasure to meet you at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Williams Saturday night and I learned from you a number of things that I had not previously understood. I enclose three or four articles that I wrote for *The Outlook* in the spring of 1917 almost immediately after the revolution. They have now only historical interest but they show how Bolshevism began in the Workmen's Council of Petrograd, I have written a number of articles on the subject since then.³⁷

On March 14, 1919, George Kennan again wrote to the young journalist promising to lend him some of the books and materials about the current state of Russian affairs.³⁸

Ackerman did not limit his stories to the pages of *The New York Times*. Upon return from Siberia, Ackerman planned also to publish a series of his stories in *The Saturday Evening Post*. He offered a "Schedule of Articles" that included titles with a brief outline of each article.³⁹ The response, however, was negative: "I am afraid that with the copy we are receiving from Captain Roberts we are 'out of the market' for Russian articles for the present at least."⁴⁰

However, Ackerman managed to have at least some of his articles published there. If publishers of his book were not impressed by his theoretical generalizations, he put them in print in newspapers, thus giving start to his anti-Bolshevik crusade.

In the May 10, 1919, issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*, he published an article about Bolsheviks under the title "The New Goblins." He started the text with a statement that the world, since the end of the World War, had turned into kindergarten, "Where all the inhabitants are pupils, whom the statesmen, like teachers, are trying to frighten into goodness with the warning that 'the Bolsheviki will get you if you don't watch out.'" Ackerman described the Bolsheviki as a world phenomenon—he did meet them in Germany and Austria, in Switzerland or Russia:

In Siberia I traveled twelve thousand miles over abandoned trails, and upon my return to the United States I rode from Milwaukee to Chicago in a car of Bolshevik agitators on their way to Ellis Island and deportation! . . . The new goblins travel, spreading their gospel of revolution wherever there is unrest,

³⁷ George Kennan to Ackerman, March 3, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 29.

³⁸ George Kennan to Ackerman, March 14, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 29.

³⁹ Carl Ackerman, Schedule of Articles Suggested for *The Saturday Evening Post*, Ackerman Papers, box 140.

⁴⁰ (Editor, *The Saturday Evening Post*) to Ackerman, April 3, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 140.

discontent, dissatisfaction and disappointment. European Russia is a net of roads and channels of thoughts which the Bolsheviki control. Germany and Austria are in the midst of civil war with them. Siberia was once in their hands and may be again. India, Egypt, Rumania and the Balkans are threatened. In Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, England, Canada and the United States the Bolsheviki are propagandizing.

Goblins are everywhere, and because I have but recently returned to this country from Asiatic Russia everyone I meet asks: "What are the facts about the Bolsheviki?"

The answer is simple and this is it:

... Fundamentally and essentially Bolshevism was a program for the destruction of civilization as it was known in Russia, where there was an autocratic government; where labor had no rights; where there were religious persecutions and pogroms, and where there was neither a local nor a national representative assembly....

The new goblins have left Russia and are on the warpath with propaganda. Bolshevism becomes not a Russian issue alone but a world political and industrial problem. Lenine's object at the Minsk congress was to Bolshevize Russia. To-day he seeks to Bolshevize the world.... Bolshevism has capitalized upon the world's discontent with the object of making everyone who desires readjustments and changes a Bolshevik. So we are informed by the wise statesmen of Europe that unless there is a League of Nations there will be a Union of Bolsheviks. What they mean is that when governments fail nationally Bolshevism succeeds, and that if the governments of the world fail in uniting upon a world constructive peace program then the Bolsheviks will attempt to unite Soviets upon such a plan. Bolshevism succeeds only when governments fail.⁴¹

Ackerman immediately offered Charles Scribner's Sons the opportunity to publish his book *Bolshevism and a League of Nations*, based on his Siberian travels. His title reflected his basic scheme of the world affairs as a great battle between two principles. The response he received (dated March 13, 1919) praised his idea and plan for the book, and he was offered a contract for publication. However, the editors decided:

The present title does not seem to us a good one because it suggests a book that might have been written by a man who had had no first-hand contact with the Bolsheviks;—even by one who had not left this country. It is an academic title in short. We think it should be amended so as to suggest the fact that the author is basing his views upon the very best of first-hand information derived from experience. We think too, that the tendency in the book should

⁴¹ Carl W. Ackerman, "The New Goblins," *The Saturday Evening Post*, May 10, 1919.

be in the direction of giving as much of the experience as possible, as the fact that it has this experience for a basis is one of the great qualities of distinction that the book will have.⁴²

After a discussion and at least two variants of the title being rejected, the editors agreed to a new one: "As to the title, we think *Trailing the Bolsheviks* and the sub-title, *Three Thousand Miles With the Allies in Siberia* are excellent. We think them better than the two latter ones you suggested to Mr. Brownell and we are announcing the book under this title and sub-title now."⁴³

Ackerman asked the Russian Information Bureau in the United States for permission to include the Bolshevik Constitution in his book, and the director A. J. Sack provided the text:

I am sending you here with a copy of the Bolshevik constitution. It was issued in pamphlet form by *The Nation*, and I was glad to get a copy for you. I am glad to hear that you are writing a book on your experiences in Siberia. Your articles in *The New York Times* were extremely valuable. I have watched them with great interest and I feel that, by writing these articles, you have served nobly not only the cause of democratic Russia but the cause of humanity as well.⁴⁴

The agreement with the publisher on the book *Trailing the Bolsheviks* was signed and dated May 27, 1919.⁴⁵ On the stage of proofreading, the editor also asked to make Ackerman's anti-Japanese statements milder: "About the Japanese matter could you do this: apparently these actions of the Japanese were all under a party that is now out of power as you stated; but if you could make this statement more emphatic and pronounced the evidence against the Japanese would have a less alarming character. Every nation has a jingo imperialistic party, actual or potential."⁴⁶ On June 19, 1919, the publisher had already sent a copy of Ackerman's book to the author and to the people he suggested.⁴⁷

At the request of the publisher, Ackerman prepared the list of "selling points" for his book:

⁴² (Editor, Charles Scribner's Sons) to Ackerman, March 13, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 140.

⁴³ (Editor, Charles Scribner's Sons) to Ackerman, March 31, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 140.

⁴⁴ A. J. Sack to Ackerman, April 7, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 139.

⁴⁵ Memorandum of Agreement..., Ackerman Papers, box 140.

⁴⁶ (Editor, Charles Scribner's Sons) to Ackerman, May 29, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 140.

⁴⁷ (Editor, Charles Scribner's Sons) to Ackerman, June 19, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 140.

1. Former President Taft has stated that if a League of Nations is not formed there will be a world Soviet of Bolshevists. This book explains the conflict between Bolshevism and a Union of World Governments.
2. This book is not pro-Bolshevist, anti or neutral but a clear, definite statement of what Bolshevism did to Siberia and what it proposes for the United States and Europe.
3. This book tells the inside story of the failure of the economic program of the Bolshevists who attempted to abolish all private ownership of property.
4. Why the Allies never invaded Russia, or assisted Russia after the Bolshevik revolution is related in this book by the author who was an American correspondent with all the Allied Armies in Siberia.
5. A part of the book contains an account of a vagabond journey twelve thousand miles in Siberia and Manchuria during the past Winter.
6. All the known facts about the mystery surrounding the death of the Tzar and his family are given in this book by the author who spent several weeks in Ekaterinburg, Russia, where Tzar was last imprisoned, making an investigation of his trial and reported execution.
7. The story of the operations of Japanese and American troops in Siberia is given with a narration of the part played by the Jingoists and the successful outcome of diplomatic negotiations in the far East,—the best indication that both Japan and the United States not only wish but intend to have peace in the East.
8. There are more than ten million refugees from European Russia in Siberia and the author describes their life in boxcars, caves and public buildings.
9. This book contains the constitution of the present government of Russia (The Russian Federated Soviet Republic).
10. The Covenant of the League of Nations as adopted in Paris and issued by the Department of State in Washington, is printed in full in the Appendix.
11. The author has been in eighteen countries during the war, from Mexico to Canada; from Belgium to Rumania and from Japan to Siberia and Russia and is author of "Germany, the Next Republic," published in June 1917.
12. An account of the conflict between the Russian Cooperative Unions and the Bolsheviki is given to prove that the Bolshevism as an "industrial democracy" has failed in Russia.
13. The writer contends that during the reconstruction period following the signing of peace in Paris there will be an international conflict between Bolshevism, which seeks to destroy all government, society and industry to build a new world and a Union of World Governments, or a League of nations, which proposes to reorganize and rebuild the world by reform and readjustment.

14. The conflict between these two organizations is essentially a conflict between a revolution of action, which is Bolshevism, and a revolution of opinion, in which a League of Nations will lead. The author's conclusion is that Bolshevism has already been a failure in Russia and Europe and will not succeed in the United States.
15. This is the first book on Bolshevism which describes the failure of the Bolshevik's industrial reconstruction program upon which the Bolsheviks have based their sole argument for world domination.⁴⁸

Ackerman compiled a list of the persons to whom copies of the book should be sent "for advertising purposes." The first in the list was A. J. Sack, director of the Russian Information Bureau in New York City; the second in the list was George Kennan; and the last of the eighteen people was William H. Taft, former US president, whose idea Ackerman used in his description of the book.

An additional list of persons to receive copies of the book that should be charged to the author opened with the names of his Siberian acquaintances: Major General William S. Graves; Lieutenant Colonel O. P. Robinson; Ambassador Roland S. Morris; and continued with Colonel Edward M. House and other people.⁴⁹

Most of the readers of the book did not like the bipolar scheme of world politics that the author considered so important.

One of the first reviewers in *The Sun* asked whether it was possible to get any truth about Russia. His opinion was: "It is difficult to access chaos; it can only be recorded."⁵⁰ A reviewer ridiculed Ackerman's comparison of Bolshevism to the League of Nations, and called Bolshevism just a "usual schism of post-revolutionary time." From a century's distance, we can judge his early understanding of the future fights of the cold war.

A reviewer in *The North American Review* also pointed out:

There is no great mystery about Bolshevism itself ... It is the rule of the under dog. It is a form of anarchy that inevitably springs up after war, and before reconstruction ... That it is not only different from the League of Nations plan, but so strictly opposed to it that the one is the only alternative to the other, is an assumption that Mr. Ackerman frequently states, but never proves.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Carl W. Ackerman, Selling Points for Scribner's Book "Trailing the Bolsheviks," Book: Trailing the Bolsheviks, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 179.

⁴⁹ List of persons to receive copies of "Trailing the Bolsheviks," Book: Trailing the Bolsheviks, 1919, Ackerman Papers, box 179.

⁵⁰ N. P. D., "Some More 'Truth About Russia,'" *The Sun*, July 13, 1919.

⁵¹ *The North American Review*, (February 1920,) 288.

The newspaper reviewer of the book gave credit to Ackerman's description of the conditions in Siberia during the Civil War, but criticized his theories:

The thesis by which he endeavors to bind all his chapters into a compact and united whole is that the world is confronted with the choice between Bolshevism and the League of Nations and that "these two international forces are working today for a new world." In carrying out this thesis he presents his observations in Siberia to show that Bolshevism failed in that country, and also that "the Allies, working as a nucleus of a League of nations, failed." The comparison of the representatives of several nations in Siberia and their attempt at cooperation with the scheme of the League of Nations is so far fetched and so strained that the reader at once begins to fear that Mr. Ackerman's ability to think is not equal to his ability to observe and report.⁵²

Another reviewer concluded:

Ackerman's discussion of the Russian political melee can be disregarded without loss. He is essentially the journalist, to whom the fate of the czar is immeasurably more fascinating than the development of political forms through experiments conducted in a nation of millions of souls.⁵³

Ackerman took offense from the reviewers; in his papers, one can find a letter to the editors of *The New Republic* under the title "Books Half Read," where he responds to a review published in the magazine pointing out that the author had not read half of the book.⁵⁴

Carl W. Ackerman's legacy is quite controversial. On the one hand, he left us with the unique description of Siberia during the Russian Civil War and provided the minutes of his conversations with Russian commanders and politicians, peasants and soldiers, and Russians and Czechs. Ackerman proved to be more insightful even in his predictions: his vision of a divided world would perfectly fit into the realities of the Cold War decades later. On the other hand, with his lack of background knowledge of the language and country he visited, having been interested in philosophy and politics rather than in fact-gathering journalism, Ackerman reported many incorrect facts, transmitted the news that we now would call fake, and even used infamous anti-Semitic sham when it seemed to support his anti-Bolshevik theses. He was an early

⁵² "Notable Books in Brief Review," *The New York Times Book Review*, July 20, 1919.

⁵³ *The Dial* (NY), September 6, 1919.

⁵⁴ "Books Half Read," Ackerman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, container 179.

crusader who influenced the American vision of demonic Russia after the Russian Revolution and helped to maintain its image of a Constitutive Other of America.

Suggested Further Reading

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