"Whatever our language, we have the same flag"

The *Eureka Rundschau*, 1915–1927

Istvan Gombocz

Despite their sparse population, South Dakota and its neighbors produced an impressive number of daily and weekly German-language newspapers from 1850 to 1950. Roughly 130 of these publications circulated in Minnesota, a total that only Iowa, with 150 dailies and weeklies, surpassed. Following the waves of immigration induced by the Land Grant Act of 1862, the number of German American publications increased dramatically in Dakota Territory and subsequently in North and South Dakota. While the German communities of North Dakota supported a total of forty periodicals, those in South Dakota produced as many as twenty-five newspapers over the span of eighty years.[1]

Early in the twentieth century, South Dakota's McPherson County and the city of Eureka provided particularly favorable demographic and linguistic preconditions for sustaining modern German-language newspapers. According to the U.S. Census of 1910, McPherson County had a particularly high share of German-speaking residents. Out of the total population of 6,791 inhabitants, 4,858 individuals identified themselves as German nationals.[2] An overwhelming majority of Eureka's first- and second-generation Germans, however, did not emigrate from imperial Germany. Instead, they came from regions of the Russian Empire, especially Bessarabia, Crimea, and the Ukranian province of Odessa, also known as Kherson.[3] Not surprisingly, the local German

1. Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, *Deutsch-Amerikanische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften, 1732–1955, Geschichte und Bibliographie* (Heidelberg, Ger.: Quell & Meyer, 1961), pp. 420–26, 608–11.

2. U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States* (1910), 3:685.

3. *Dakota Freie Presse*, 8 July 1909, 11 Nov. 1924; Rex C. Myers, "An Immigrant Heritage: South Dakota's Foreign-Born in the Era of Assimilation," *South Dakota History* 19 (Summer 1989): 137; G. Richard Sallet, *Russian-German Settlements in the United States* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1974), p. 24; George Rath, *The Black Sea Germans in the Dakotas* (Sioux Falls, S.Dak.: Pine Hill Press, 1967), p. 105; Anthony H. Richter, "A Heritage of Faith: Religion and the German Settlers of South Dakota," *South Dakota History* 21 (Summer 1991): 155.

Residents of Eureka, a South Dakota community with a significant immigrant population, gather for a Fourth of July celebration in this undated photograph from the early twentieth century.

population followed the national and international developments leading up to World War I with increasing interest and concern. Thus, they would welcome a modern German-language newspaper that devoted equal attention to regional and global events. In response to this need, in the summer of 1915, Gustave Mauser, a native of Hoffnungsthal in Kherson, and Otto H. Froh, an immigrant from Hamburg, Germany, founded a new German weekly titled the *Eureka Rundschau* (Review).

Throughout its run, which ended in 1927, the *Rundschau* served the classic mission of ethnic newspapers. This task entailed preserving the subscribers' German identity, offering reports on international developments, maintaining contacts with their Russian homeland, and facilitating the readers' integration into modern American society. Examining the *Rundschau* provides an overview of daily life in Eureka and reveals how this German-language newspaper covered the developments of the First World War and the years after. In this unstable and complex era, the *Rundschau* promoted a dual German American

identity that helped readers make sense of their cultures and loyalties. In order to continue production, the newspaper had to deftly navigate increased suspicion and xenophobia of Germans.

Scholarly inquiries into German newspapers in South Dakota so far have been limited to the *Dakota Freie Presse*. This weekly newspaper maintained a circulation well beyond the Dakotas, however. Published between 1874 and 1952, the *Freie Presse* was based in Yankton, Aberdeen, and, eventually, New Ulm, Minnesota. In a study published in 1992, La Vern Rippley focused on Friedrich Wilhelm Sallet, the long-time editor of that newspaper, with an emphasis on the anti-German hysteria he and the outlet experienced during and after World War I.[4] In 1980, Anthony Richter rightly noted that, although the history of the

4. La Vern J. Rippley, "F. W. Sallet and the *Dakota Freie Presse*," *North Dakota History* 59 (Fall 1992): 2–21.

Large numbers of Germans from Russia, like those pictured here in Eureka in 1898, immigrated to the United States and settled in the Dakotas.

German-language press had received substantial attention, its place in the Dakotas, "which formed one of the few large language islands of the United States," was neglected.[5] Despite his focus on this subject, Richter failed to mention the *Rundschau*. In his comprehensive study of Russian-German settlements in the United States, Richard Sallet offered only a brief summary of the *Rundschau*'s history.[6] Johann Bollinger and Janice Huber Stangl reprinted and published letters from the *Eureka Rundschau* that came from the settlement of Marienberg and its neighbors in the Odessa region. These communications offer valuable insight into the daily lives of Germans in their homeland during World War I and then in the early Soviet Union under Stalin.[7] Stangl later compiled another collection of letters written by Germans from the Soviet Union and printed in the *Rundschau* that further detailed the hardship that this group experienced during the regime's forced collectivization efforts in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[8] Although overlooked, the *Rundschau* also provides invaluable information about the lives of Germans from Russia who settled in South Dakota in the early twentieth century.

In the outlet's first issue on 3 June 1915, Froh and Mauser identified themselves as the sole owners of this new business, operating without help from other investors. In their mission statement, they promised to advocate for the interests of German immigrants from southern Russia "without disregarding their status as American citizens."[9] They also clearly indicated that their publication would not seek any affiliations with political organizations and would mainly concentrate on events of interest in Eureka and the homeland in Russia.[10] The editorial office was located in the Warner print shop in Eureka. Subscription for the first month was free and then assessed at $1.50 per year before being

5. Richter, "'Gebt ihr den Vorzug': The German-Language Press in North and South Dakota," *South Dakota History* 10 (Summer 1980): 189.

6. Sallet, *Russian-German Settlements in the United States*, p. 94.

7. Johann Bollinger and Janice Huber Stangl, *Marienberg: Fate of a Village* (Fargo: North Dakota State University Libraries, 2000).

8. Janice Huber Stangl, comp., *Collectivization in the Soviet Union: German Letters to America, 1927–1932* (Fargo: North Dakota State University Libraries, 2013).

9. *Eureka Rundschau*, 3 June 1915. The author translated all quotations from the *Rundschau* in this study.

10. Ibid.

Three unknown men stand outside the German bank in Eureka in this photograph. Small businesses such as this one frequently advertised in the *Rundschau*.

raised to $2.00 in 1918. Printed in regular Gothic font and supplemented with ample cartoons and caricatures, the *Rundschau* was visually appealing to its readers. Shortly after its founding, nearly five thousand people subscribed to the newspaper.[11] Although the *Rundschau* had a substantial base of supporters, other German-language outlets had larger readerships. For example, the *Dakota Freie Press* had thirteen thousand subscribers, while the *Neue Deutsche Presse* of Aberdeen had eleven thousand.[12]

This significant circulation number allowed the *Rundschau* to survive for twelve years without the support of any major local companies. Leading establishments, such as the Knickerbocker Hotel and the Great Plains Bank, showed no interest in advertising in the *Rundschau*. Only a select few Eureka businesses, such as the Eureka elevator, the

11. Stangl and Stangl, *Collectivization in the Soviet Union*, p. 1.

12. Darrel Richard Sawyer, "Anti-German Sentiment in South Dakota during World War I" (master's thesis, University of South Dakota, 1975), pp. 65, 86; Carl Frederick Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (1957; reprint ed., Whitefish, Mont.: Literary Licensing, 2012), p. 242.

Mehlhaff butchery, and Merkel locksmith, became regular advertisers in the newspaper. For the most part, the publication generated revenue from smaller businesses. Its advertisers included German doctors, dentists, lawyers, and educational institutions, such as the Aberdeen Business College, among others. Unlike national companies that could pay for influential, professionally designed advertisements, these local and regional advertisers promoted their products on the right margins of the pages in small font that did little to grab the readers' attention. Here and there, the advertisements showed the increasing presence of English words like "bargain" and "to offer."[13]

Updates from Black Sea Germans both at home and abroad supplemented local news stories. With such broad coverage, the *Rundschau* reached an audience well beyond South Dakota, with readers all over the United States and in Europe. The newspaper's network of contributing correspondents ranged from the Dakotas to their neighboring states, even extending to California, Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, and Oklahoma, as well as Germany and South America. Messages of an average length of two to three sentences provided updates on various events of familial, professional, cultural, political, and religious natures. Short letters to the editor offering overwhelmingly positive feedback about the paper's news coverage attested to the popularity of the *Rundschau* with the Germans from Russia all over the United States, providing encouragement to the editors and their subscribers.[14]

The newspaper included a diverse mix of local and international stories. One loyal reader from Ellendale, North Dakota, for instance, sought advice on fuel efficiency for his recently purchased automobile. Another subscriber in Hosmer, South Dakota, praised the updated information that Mauser and Froh included from the German settlements in Russia and identified those sections as the first ones he read upon receiving an issue. Similarly, in 1915, a subscriber in an unidentified location in Germany submitted good news on the local harvest. In the same issue, a reader from Großaspach, Württemberg, encouraged his fellow Germans in South Dakota to maintain their German identity and praised the *Rundschau* for its efforts to that effect. In 1925, Johann

13. *Eureka Rundschau*, 29 July 1915.
14. Ibid., 15 July, 2 Aug., 14 Oct. 1915, 25 Dec. 1918, 30 July 1925.

Mützel from Argentina saw it fit to provide weather updates to his compatriots residing thousands of miles away.

The *Rundschau* portrayed the residents of both the town and county as being citizens proud of their ethnic heritage. Yet, there was little news on German cultural events taking place in Eureka. In Froh's view, in order to preserve ethnic identity at the local and regional levels, local German groups needed greater cooperation with the state chapter of the National German-American Alliance or Deutsch-Amerikanischer Staatsverband. The reactivation of Eureka's own German Society, known as Lokalverein (local association), would have been a necessary first step, but there was little interest in such a renewal.[15] Conrad Kornmann, president of the state chapter of the National German-American Alliance and editor of the Sioux Falls-based *Deutscher Herold,* noted this disinterest. He lamented in a guest contribution written in reply to Froh's comments that many of the gatherings in South Dakota's German communities, especially among Germans from Russia, seldom went beyond "dancing, beer-drinking, and noisy entertainment."[16] He asserted that those activities contributed to the stereotype of the habitually drunk Central European immigrant. Despite Kornmann's concern, the reason for lacking cultural engagement beyond entertainment was not indifference or apathy, let alone "German intellectual sluggishness."[17] Rather, he argued, it came down to the restraint that family-centered Black Sea Germans traditionally showed in regard to social and cultural institutions prior to their emigration to the United States.[18] Secluded in villages populated exclusively by German farmers, they saw neither the need nor had the opportunity to organize ethnic interest groups. Their reticence towards this action did not change after arriving in South Dakota.

The community church acted as the primary social organization for Germans from Russia. Two-thirds of Russian German immigrants in the United States belonged to Protestant churches, one-fourth of them were affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, and a minuscule portion belonged to a mixture of smaller denominations.[19] After new-

15. Ibid., 3 June 1915.
16. Ibid., 10 June 1915.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Richter, "A Heritage of Faith," p. 156.

This German Lutheran church, along with other churches in Eureka, provided a major source of community for Germans from Russia.

comers arrived in the United States, Christianity served as a force of cohesion while also offering them a fresh spiritual start. The chance for a new beginning arose because many Black Sea German Protestants came to the United States without a permanent or official confessional affiliation. As C. G. Eisenberg points out, in their settlements in Russia, German Protestants practiced a unified form of Protestantism that blurred the lines between the Lutheran, Reformed, and Congregational denominations with distinctive "pietistic-emotional dispositions."[20] At first, they looked at the established Protestant churches in America with suspicion and practiced their faith primarily in informal sessions with "loud extemporaneous praying" with the help of hymnals brought along from Russia.[21] Missionaries from the Evangelical-Lutheran Synod of Iowa, as well as the Reformed Church, succeeded in bringing many of these immigrants back to the churches of their ancestors in

20. C. G. Eisenberg, *History of the First Dakota-District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa and Other States* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), p. 141.

21. Ibid., p. 139.

southwestern Germany. At times, these missionaries influenced them to choose a new denomination.[22]

The *Rundschau's* editors consistently refrained from endorsing any denominations. Along with announcing worship schedules, they dutifully reported festivities of Eureka's religious life, such as the dedication of church buildings. By the early twentieth century, Lutheran churches in McPherson County included Eureka's Zion Lutheran Church as well as the Hoffnungsthal, Hoffnungsfeld, Sankt Petri, Frieden, and Trinity congregations. The German Congregational Church in Eureka and its six surrounding member churches, along with the German Reformed Church, brought further religious diversity to the region.[23]

Not surprisingly, impending prohibition laws did not and could not escape the *Rundschau*'s attention. Although the initiatives that led to

22. Rath, *Black Sea Germans in the Dakotas*, p. 131.

23. *Eureka Rundschau*, 9 Feb. 1922, 14 Oct. 1926; *Eureka, South Dakota 1887–1987: The Second Fifty Years* (Eureka: Central Book Committee, 1987), p. 128; S.Dak. Federal Writers Project, ed., *Eureka 1887–1937* (Eureka: Golden Jubilee Organization, 1937), pp. 199, 203.

While the *Rundschau* and other German-language newspapers opposed prohibition, the temperance movement attracted strong support throughout South Dakota, as seen in this undated photograph of a temperance rally in Miller.

prohibition at the state and national levels did not show blatant anti-German bias, the editors strongly opposed them. Mauser and Froh certainly did not believe that the prohibition of alcohol would curtail substance abuse or prevent illegal production. When South Dakotans prepared to vote on statewide prohibition in 1916, the *Rundschau* encouraged participation in the "South Dakota Local Option League" and asked its readers to vote against the referendum.[24] When prohibition passed at the state level and subsequently at the national level in 1919, however, they accepted the results in a laconic way.[25] Since Froh and Mauser were determined to be good citizens, they encouraged adherence to the law. At times, they sought to address the inconvenience prohibition placed on some of their readers by using simple-minded humor, as was the case in the doggerel verses of the "Brewer's Sorrow":

> Calculating quietly, how long it will take
> That we drink water instead of foamy beer
> Yes, we drink water, just like the ox and the steer. . . .
> That's how the noblest of all trades is ruined
> I wish all the yes-men got the flute. . .[26]

Overall, the *Rundschau*'s insights into daily life in the Eureka area convey the impression of a tranquil rural community with law-abiding citizens occupied, for the most part, with agricultural production. Immediately after the newspaper's founding, however, developments related to World War I, which held implications for both Germany and Russia, overshadowed local events. During the war, many German-language newspapers, including the *Rundschau*, experienced increases in size, content, and circulation numbers.[27] It is likely that demand for news of the conflict generated these greater subscription numbers.

In its war coverage, the *Rundschau* had neither the means nor the desire to compete with the breadth and depth provided by the state's English language newspapers, including the *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, the *Aberdeen Daily American*, and the *Rapid City Daily Journal*. With a gap of three to four days between issues, readers of the *Rundschau* received

24. *Eureka Rundschau*, 12 Oct. 1916.
25. Ibid., 22 Jan. 1919.
26. Ibid., 21 May 1919.
27. Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, p. 245.

an overview of the combat operations on all the major fronts. Since hiring its own war correspondents was clearly beyond its means, the *Rundschau* relied on various telegraphic sources and newspapers in Germany, Russia, and the United States. Evenly divided into three columns on the front pages with the title "Kriegs-Uebersicht" ("War Overview"), the reports on the conflict offered a combination of detailed accounts of the combat situations and critical commentary. This arrangement meant a clear separation between factual information and opinion was not always possible.

Initially, Mauser and Froh did not hesitate to side with Germany and its allies, Austria-Hungary and Italy, known as the Central Powers. Similar to many other German American newspaper editors nationwide, they expressed cautious optimism regarding the war's outcome.[28] When the *Rundschau* launched in the summer of 1915, the situation in Europe still promised a triumphant result for Germany and its allies. Throughout that summer, German and Austro-Hungarian forces had successful offensives in modern-day Poland and the German Navy terrorized shipping lanes and opposing vessels.[29] To support their optimistic stance, the editors occasionally published material that their readers submitted. One subscriber from Sutton, Nebraska, for instance, sent in a folksy limerick bragging about Germany's success:

Mackensen and Hindenburg
Thrash all the Russians
As done by all the German fathers
They tan the Russians' hide
As stated in old German recipes.
Warsaw they brought to fall
There is Victory everywhere
The French get one in the eye
Along with the British beggars
Mr. Wilson, keep this in mind![30]

As Mauser and Froh noted, one year after the conflict began, Germany and Austria-Hungary possessed stable military, industrial, and,

28. Ibid., p. 237; Richter, "'Gebt ihr den Vorzug,'" p. 202.
29. *Eureka Rundschau*, 1, 8 July, 12 Aug. 1915.
30. Ibid., 26 Aug. 1915.

most importantly, agricultural sectors. Additionally, their populations were willing and able to endure the sacrifices necessary for the ongoing confrontation. Newspapers juxtaposed these demonstrations of high morale in the Central Power nations to reports of alleged cowardice in Russia, France, and Great Britain, known as the Triple Entente, where the war lost even the moderate amount of public support that it had initially enjoyed. On 29 July 1915, the editors commented with unmistakable sarcasm, "What fanatic hatred and senseless arrogance were able to accomplish, was indeed accomplished in order to win over a population indifferent to the cause of the war and to transfer it into a flush of victory." While most people had anticipated an easy victory for Russia, France, and Great Britain, the situation at that point highlighted that "the worthy comrades of the Entente gave up their dreams of easy victory."[31]

In the first two years of the war, the newspaper's editors consistently maintained that the United States entering the conflict would serve neither American nor German interests. In fact, Mauser and Froh argued strongly against such a move. They followed declarations or promises of neutrality from American officials with particular attention and responded with unequivocal praise. Politicians' statements that included pacifistic inclinations and beliefs, such as those made by former Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, were interpreted as indications that the U.S. government would exhaust all possibilities of diplomacy before making the considerable human and material sacrifices that military intervention would demand.[32] Conversely, speeches of a confrontational nature, such as Theodore Roosevelt's addresses in favor of American interference and President Woodrow Wilson's infamous misgivings about "hyphenated" Americans, were condemned as acts of counterproductive and irresponsible provocation.[33]

Although the *Rundschau* did not endorse a candidate during the 1916 presidential campaign, the editors clearly disagreed with Wilson and his negative views on immigrant groups who preserved their ethnic identities. Froh and Mauser, like most members of immigrant communities, believed that ethnic pride and American patriotism were not

31. Ibid., 29 July 1915.
32. Ibid., 11 Nov. 1915.
33. Ibid., 2 Sept., 18 Nov. 1915.

Mauser and Froh objected to President Woodrow Wilson's anti-immigrant rhetoric.

mutually exclusive.[34] Following Wilson's inauguration, they reprinted German essayist Carl Biberfeld's 1916 poem "To Wilson." Mediocre in its imagery yet passionate in its tone, the six-stanza poem assured the president that the traditional German virtue of loyalty would guide German immigrants on their way to becoming trustworthy American citizens. "Mr. President!" Biberfeld declared:

> What a German ever says, he keeps it!
> And whatever ruler he selects,
> And whatever land he swears himself to.
> An oath remains an oath to him—he will not break it![35]

While retaining support for German immigrants maintaining their ethnic identity, the *Rundschau* gradually shifted away from its vehement support for the Central Powers as the war progressed. Its reports and

34. Hans Vogt, "Division and Reunion: Woodrow Wilson, Immigration, and the Myth of American Unity," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13 (Spring 1994): 24–50.

35. *Eureka Rundschau*, 20 Jan. 1916.

commentaries concerning the Great War had no discernible turning point. Instead, the editors steadily transitioned to careful, skeptical, and peaceable positions. Regardless of temporary advances and setbacks on the different fronts, the newspaper demonstrated an increased concern about exhaustion both in Germany's military forces and civilian population. By early 1917, the pro-German and pro-Austro-Hungarian tone of the publication's updates and editorials gave way to worrisome reflections on the war that offered compassion for the suffering inflicted on all parties.[36]

According to historian Carl Wittke, the American "declaration of war against Germany left the German-language press in an extremely embarrassing situation" because of its previous opposition to American involvement.[37] The editors of the *Rundschau*, however, were well prepared for America's entry in 1917 and reacted to it in a realistic and prudent way with national interest and peace in mind. Froh and Mauser adjusted their stance on the war as soon as the United States became a belligerent. Unlike Friedrich Sallet, who was arrested and tried in 1917 just for possessing memorabilia supporting German emperor Wilhelm II, Mauser and Froh did nothing suspicious, as either journalists or private citizens, to invite the attention of the authorities.[38]

With a full understanding of what the U.S. military's entry into the war meant, they placed their concern for Germany and Austria-Hungary aside, accepting their adopted nation's engagement as an inescapable reality. Readers distrustful of German Americans may have interpreted the ceremonious printing of the German translation of the "Star Spangled Banner" by Baltimore journalist Eduard F. Leyh as a complaisant or perhaps desperate assurance of loyalty. Yet, the editorial statement with the title "Where we stand"—reprinted regularly for the rest of the war—left little doubt about the publication's unconditional support for U.S. forces.[39] Given the magnitude of this event and in anticipation of governmental scrutiny, for the first time in its history the *Rundschau* printed a proclamation of loyalty in English. "We are citizens of a republic and know no other allegiance," it read. "America is our country,

36. Ibid., 4 Jan. 1917.
37. Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, p. 262.
38. Sawyer, "Anti-German Sentiment," p. 71.
39. *Eureka Rundschau*, 25 Apr.1917.

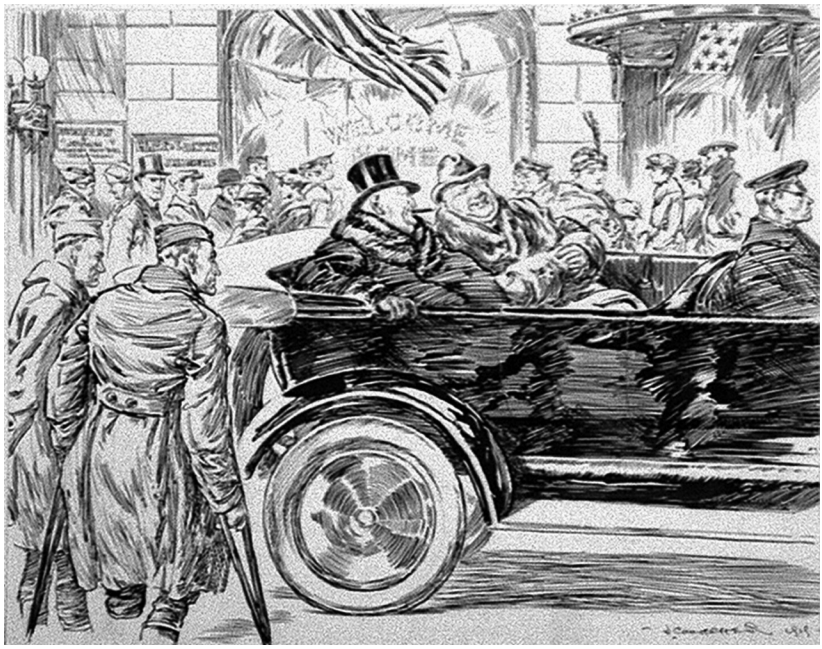
and any disaster to America would be our disaster." Although speaking a different language and maintaining their ethnic identity, the editors ensured that "there is but one loyalty in our hearts." Additionally, they believed that for Germans, "the victory of American ideals" in the Great War would mean "the realization of the hopes and dreams of the revolution of 1848. America, now and forever!"[40]

Through the conclusion of the conflict, the newspaper continued to offer detailed chronicles of battles and well-informed analyses of various operations. After the United States entered the war, tones of heroic praise common in the first years of the confrontation gave way to skepticism regarding the purpose and moral justification of the war with hopes for its quick conclusion.[41]

In anticipation of the forthcoming victory of the U.S. forces and their allies, the editors assessed the increased global role that the United States would likely assume after the ceasefire. They called for a strong financial and political commitment in the interest of lasting peace and underscored possible business opportunities in the postwar reconstruction projects.[42] The collapse of the German forces in France in the fall of 1918, Wilhelm's abdication on 9 November, and, above all, the armistice on 11 November resulted in a noticeable sense of relief. Declarations of support for the U.S. war effort notwithstanding, the *Rundschau* repeatedly reminded its readers not to abandon their heritage and pride as ethnic Germans. Thus, Mauser and Froh advocated a dual German American identity as the only feasible model for cultural survival in the tense postwar era.[43]

In their reporting on the conflict, Mauser and Froh had moved from sharing declarations of solidarity with the Central Powers to expressing explicit support for the United States and its allies.[44] Although largely dependent on outside sources and personal accounts, the *Rundschau* successfully achieved its goal of providing updated information on the war in Europe to readers who lacked military expertise but were concerned for German, Austrian, and, subsequently, American sol-

40. Ibid., 9 Jan. 1918.
41. Ibid., 6 June 1917.
42. Ibid., 2 Sept. 1917.
43. Ibid., 19 Sept. 1917.
44. Ibid., 22, 29, July 1915, 2 Mar. 1916, 4, 9, Jan. 1917.



The *Rundschau*'s editors disparaged war profiteers for prioritizing money over soldiers' lives, as did this 1919 cartoon from *Life*.

diers. Unlike South Dakota's major daily newspapers, the *Rundschau* did not have the resources to print detailed maps of military maneuvers. In the quantity and quality of its coverage, the newspaper compared quite favorably with other English-language weeklies whose war-related reports focused mainly on local demonstrations of patriotism, fundraising efforts, and food conservation campaigns.[45]

In determining the moral and political responsibility for the outbreak of and devastation caused by the war, Froh and Mauser assumed careful and restrained positions. Solving the riddle of the grievances, provocations, diplomatic miscommunications, and military misjudgments that preceded the conflict was clearly outside their competence. Apart from occasional remarks concerning Great Britain's alleged desire for world hegemony, the editors, unlike other periodicals in the state, did not lay blame on a single nation for triggering or perpetuating

45. *Dakota Republican* (Vermillion, S.Dak.), 26 Apr., 24 May 1917; *Hot Springs (S.Dak.) Weekly Star*, 6 July 1917.

the war.[46] They consistently identified and raised moral objections to profiteering and what they considered unethical and harmful business practices. They condemned international arms sales in satirical sketches that pointed out the hypocrisy displayed by affluent businessmen, as one not particularly witty joke printed in the paper illustrates. "After having checked the latest shipments to Europe," it read, "a war supplier piously summons his butler: 'Great, let's move now to our morning devotion and pray for peace.'"[47] On the other hand, the editors applauded businesses that showed restraint. For instance, they praised a number of North Dakota farmers who decided not to sell their breeding horses to Great Britain for military purposes, considering it a selfless act.[48]

In their reports and commentaries on the Treaty of Versailles, the editors showed a clear understanding of its long-term consequences. As early as June 1919, shortly before its signing, they noted with great concern that "a peace of hatred," which they argued the winners sought to impose, would not advance understanding and stability among nations. Instead, it would deprive Europe of its chance for a fresh start based on common interests and values.[49] Later on, the *Rundschau* reported on the negative effects of the treaty, pointing out how it caused political and economic chaos in Germany's Weimar Republic, including the Beer Hall Putsch, an attempted coup in November 1923 that led to the arrest of Adolf Hitler and other early members of the Nazi Party.[50]

During and after the First World War, leading English-language newspapers in South Dakota increasingly demonstrated their aversion to the German Empire, including its army commanders, frontline soldiers, and civilians. By questioning Germany's rank as a civilized nation by using the terms "Teutons" and "Huns" regularly in reference to the German armed forces, those publications played a major role in developing an anti-German atmosphere across the region. Sarcastic references to the resignation of Wilhelm II, celebratory descriptions of the immense financial losses that Austria-Hungary and Germany suffered,

46. Christopher M. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper, 2014); *Eureka Rundschau*, 16 May 1917; *Aberdeen Daily American*, 26 Nov. 1918.

47. *Eureka Rundschau*, 30 Sept. 1915.

48. Ibid., 1 July 1915.

49. Ibid., 18 June 1919.

50. Ibid., 22 Nov. 1923.

Many German Americans criticized the Treaty of Versailles, which set the terms of peace following World War I, for treating Germany harshly. Photojournalist Helen Johns Kirtland captured this image of a committee of representatives from allied nations examining documents related to the treaty in 1919.

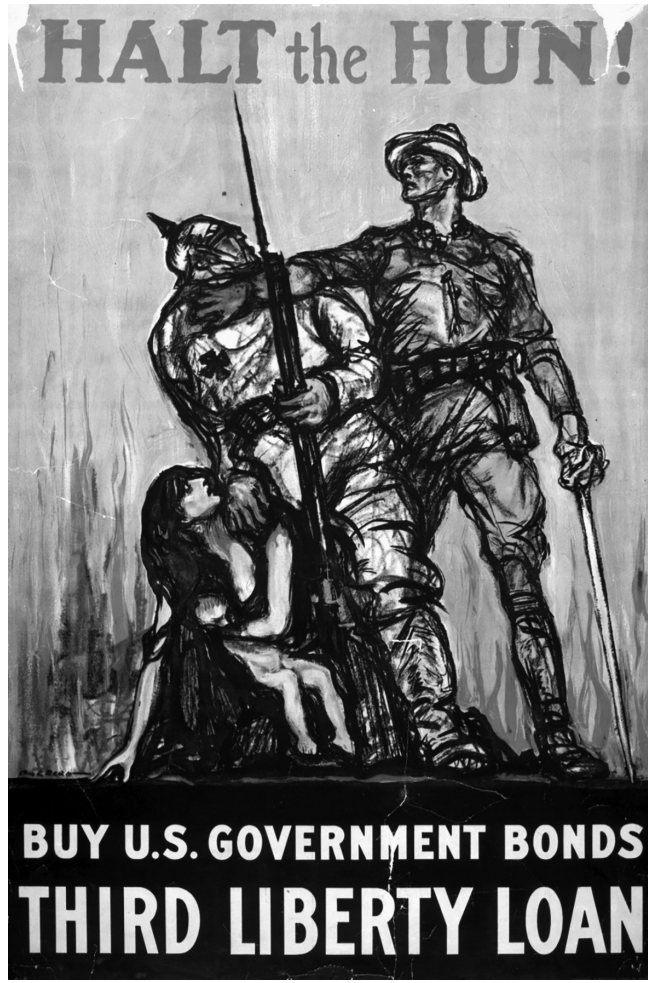
and reports on anticipated domestic unrest in Germany all signaled a biased and malicious journalistic style. These newspapers eventually did not object to inciting hatred against the local ethnic German population and their culture.[51]

Sadly, this anti-German hysteria took a heavy toll on large segments of South Dakota's German population, particularly in Hutchinson and Yankton counties. In those areas, Germans faced mistreatment ranging from anti-German riots to book burnings, imprisonment, humiliation, and torture. The brutalities reached their low point when two conscientious Hutterite objectors, brothers Joseph and Michael Hofer, died as the result of continuous physical abuse in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in

51. *Aberdeen Daily American,* 17 Oct., 9, 11 Nov. 1918; *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, 4, 21, 27 Apr. 1917, 7 May 1918.

1918. Afterward, the press in Hutchinson County barely took notice of the Hofer brothers' deaths and avoided attracting unwelcome attention from local or federal authorities. Similarly, the *Rundschau*'s coverage of anti-German measures in South Dakota was limited to scattered brief reports on the prosecution of Hutterite and Mennonite pacifists.[52]

52. Merle Funk, "The Failure of Boosterism: Conscience, Coercion and Reluctant Compliance in Hutchinson County, South Dakota, 1910–1929," (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1994), pp. 8, 186; Sawyer, "Anti-German Sentiment," p. 13; Duane C. S. Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains: The Persecution of Hutterites during the Great War* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); *Eureka Rundschau*, 22 Aug., 1917.



Federal war propaganda, such as this poster, which depicted Germans as barbaric "Huns," inflamed anti-German sentiment in the United States.

Three reasons laid behind the *Rundschau*'s restraint. First, in their mission statement, Froh and Mauser promised that they would avoid political overtones. Second, they spared no effort to escape the fate of other German journalists in the state who were imprisoned under ludicrous pretenses. Any support or inkling of admiration for the German regime could result in arrest and imprisonment. When the Espionage Act of 1917 required that foreign-language newspapers present their war-related news items for approval to the local postmasters, who usually only spoke and read English, the *Rundschau* fully complied and never criticized this absurd bureaucratic regulation created under the pretext of enhancing national security. Froh and Mauser witnessed the possible implications of violating the new laws. One fellow journalist, Conrad Kornmann, the editor of the *Deutscher Herold* of Sioux Falls, expressed his worries about the wellbeing of the local German community in a private letter to Friedrich Sallet. Considered an act of disloyalty and insubordination to the United States, his actions resulted in a prison sentence at Fort Leavenworth.[53]

Third, and most importantly, McPherson County did not have a significant Anabaptist population that objected to military service on religious grounds. Other counties with German majorities that also had large Anabaptist populations experienced higher levels of harassment and violence. In contrast, pacifist groups or views had little influence in McPherson County and residents did not raise public objections to the American entry into the war. Slightly over 10 percent of the county's total population in 1917, or 723 men, enlisted when the United States joined the conflict, which was consistent with enlistment numbers of other counties. Additionally, citizens of Eureka and McPherson County, with encouragement from the local German press, often purchased Liberty Bonds. Like other South Dakota communities, the city of Eureka staged parades in support of U.S. forces.[54] By projecting outward displays of patriotism, German communities in McPherson County avoided the

53. *Eureka Rundschau,* 3 June 1915; La Vern J. Rippley, "Conrad Kornmann, German-Language Editor: A Case Study of Anti-German Enthusiasm during World War I," *South Dakota History* 27 (Fall 1997): 107–32.

54. Sawyer, "Anti-German Sentiment," p. 9; Merle Funk, "Failure of Boosterism," p. 30; Joseph Mills Hanson, *South Dakota in the World War 1917–1919* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society, 1940), p. 51; *Eureka Rundschau,* 9 Jan., 11 Sept. 1918; Myers, "An Immigrant Heritage," p. 144.

During World War I, possible violence and imprisonment prevented Mauser and Froh from speaking out against anti-German stereotypes, such as those present in this 1918 cartoon from the *New York Herald* that depicted Germany as an unsightly gorilla attacking a Red Cross nurse.

discrimination that others experienced. In the light of these realities, it is regrettable yet understandable that the county's residents never expressed solidarity with victims of ethnic or religious discrimination elsewhere in South Dakota.

Their reticence notwithstanding, Mauser and Froh followed the statewide campaign against the use of the German language with par-

ticular concern. In the long run, limitations imposed on the language would have jeopardized the existence of the German press in South Dakota. Between 1916 and 1922, South Dakota's English-language newspapers, including those in heavily German populated areas, overlooked these threats to the German language.[55] While the English-language press ignored these attacks, the state, according to historian Donald W. Grebin, "accomplished more than any other state of the Union in the effort to Americanize its inhabitants by insisting on a uniformity of speech."[56] These measures ranged from eliminating German from the curricula of public schools to the prohibition of its use in all public meetings, including sermons. Although aware of possible retribution, in response, the editors abandoned their principle of eschewing political controversies. The fight against the German language in schools in particular and society in general alarmed Mauser and Froh to such a degree that they decided to take a stand.

Witnessing these actions, Mauser and Froh voiced their concerns about the native language of its readers. In its mission to protect the German language in South Dakota, the *Rundschau* identified a highly qualified and respected ally for local German speakers in Robert Lincoln Slagle, the president of the University of South Dakota between 1914 and 1929. During the war, in February 1918, the South Dakota Council of Defense passed a resolution that called for the elimination of German from the curricula of all South Dakota schools, including colleges and universities, to protect "the best interest of the nation in this time of war with the German government."[57] Slagle, a native of Hanover, Pennsylvania, believed that this resolution posed a serious threat to academic freedom and would deprive students of a valuable educational opportunity. Alarmed by the Council of Defense's unfavorable decision, Slagle sought help from Philander Priestly Claxton, the U.S. Commissioner of Education and a staunch advocate of the German language. In his letter, Slagle asked Claxton for a declaration of support "for [Ger-

55. Sawyer, "Anti-German Sentiment," p. 94.

56. Donald W. Grebin, "The South Dakota Council of Defense" (master's thesis: University of South Dakota, 1967), p. 33.

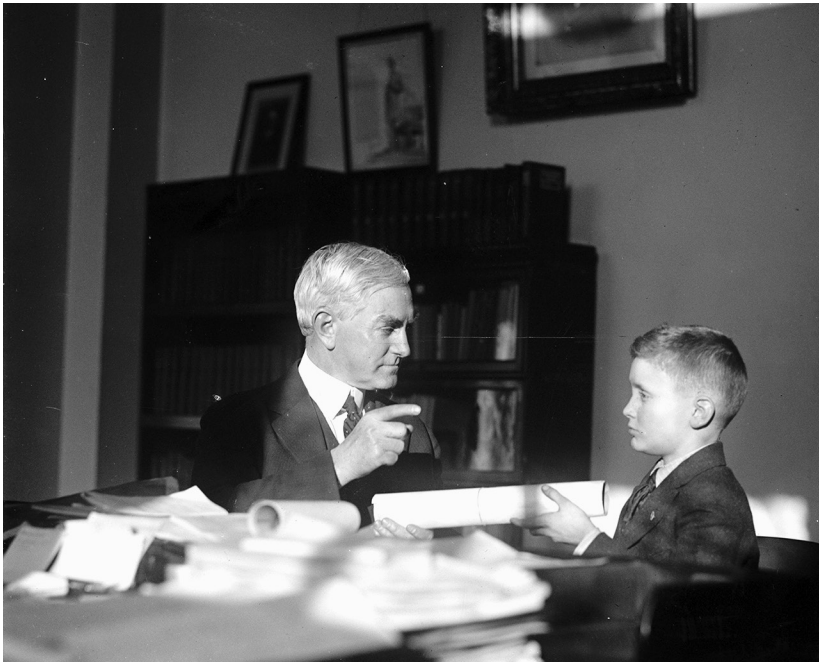
57. *Report of the South Dakota State Council of Defense* (Pierre: Council of Defense, 1920), p. 51.

man] use in a public manner."[58] Claxton's response was first published in the journal *School and Society*, then in the *Rundschau* on 3 April 1918 in both English and German.[59] It sent a message of wisdom and moderation to the zealous legislators in Pierre. "I must say that I cannot agree with those who would eliminate German from the high schools and colleges of the United States," Claxton declared. Noting that the United States was "at war with the imperial government of Germany, and not with the German language," Claxton argued that the "cultural value" of German was "too great for us to lose out of our life. . . . The fewer hatreds and antagonisms that get themselves embodied in institutions and policies the better it will be for us when the days of peace return."[60]

58. Slagle to Claxton, 26 Feb. 1918, Correspondence, Nov. 1917–Apr. 1918, Box 10, Robert Lincoln Slagle Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University Libraries, University of South Dakota, Vermillion.

59. *School and Society*, 30 Mar. 1918, p. 374.

60. *Eureka Rundschau*, 3 Apr. 1918.



Philander Priestly Claxton, photographed here during his tenure as U.S. Commissioner of Education, defended the instruction of the German language in schools.

Inspired by their academic allies, Froh and Mauser maintained in their editorials that the suppression of foreign languages and cultures would not serve the interests of a nation built on pluralism and diversity, and clearly violated the principle of *e pluribus unum*. Germans, they observed, emigrated to the region not as beggars, but as farmers with valuable skills and experience. They certainly could not be held responsible for the Austro-German involvement in the war and deserved recognition for supporting the United States once it entered the conflict. Additionally, maintaining and learning languages, the editors argued, brought cultural, economic, and political advantages. Froh and Mauser once asked, "*Could anybody kindly tell us what 'specifically American' means*?" In their minds, an "American is what we as naturalized citizens *make from our country*," justifying the existence of "everything that's good and noble," no matter the origin. They included language as the most important feature, writing that, "characteristics of nations will be best protected and preserved through language." After the war, Mauser and Froh argued, nations would rely on cooperation. They believed that attacking German would isolate the United States, questioning, "Should we be the ones to look stupid in communication with other peoples, because we only speak one language?"[61]

Despite their clear advocacy of the German language, Froh and Mauser escaped retribution. In the years following World War I, tensions over the presence of German language and culture subsided, opening the door for more protection. In 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court, citing the Fourteenth Amendment, declared the banning of German unconstitutional. These favorable developments notwithstanding, the *Rundschau* and other German-language newspapers in the region were only able to delay, but not avert, the slow demise of the German press in the United States. According to the 1920 Census, South Dakota had 28,109 individuals born in a German-speaking country. An additional 56,294 people were children of two parents born in a German-speaking country and claimed German as their native language. McPherson County retained a high population of German immigrants and people of German descent, with 12 people born in Austria, 111 in Germany, and 1,455 in Russia, as well as 3,249 other individuals with foreign parentage.[62]

61. Ibid., 2 Apr. 1919. Italics in original.

62. Meyer vs. State of Nebraska 262 U.S. 390 (1923), https://uscivilliberties.org/cases/41

In the decade since the previous census, there was little change in the German-speaking population, although these residents were aging and assimilating. According to historian Rex C. Myers, 99 percent of South Dakota's Germans from Russia arrived before 1914. As those original settlers aged, their descendants would be the ones to "maintain cultural values and customs; not all did."[63] Although its subscription number dwindled to two thousand, the *Rundschau* survived for nearly an entire decade following the First World War.[64] After a number of newspapers went out of business in 1918 and the *Dakota Freie Presse* moved to New Ulm in 1925, the *Rundschau* was the only remaining German-language newspaper in South Dakota. In its last decade, the newspaper provided extended coverage of Soviet Russia, expanded its sections on culture, and offered brief, sensationalist news reports from all over the United States to maintain its remaining readership.

Some forty years after the first wave of emigration to United States, Russia, with nearly one million ethnic German residents, was regularly referred to as the "old home country."[65] Consequently, the *Rundschau* bestowed a great deal of attention on the political and economic changes taking place in Russia. Initially, Mauser and Froh did not entirely object to the October Revolution of 1917—when Bolshevik Communists under Vladimir Lenin overthrew Russia's provisional government—because of the educational and economic reforms the new regime promised and partially implemented. As the Communist regime gradually stabilized, however, Froh and Mauser rapidly abandoned their illusions of any improvements in the living conditions of the Soviet population generally and the German residents there particularly. The new government established discriminatory measures affecting education, the use of German, and religious practices, as well as restrictions on family-based agricultural production. These actions put increased pressure on the German communities and threats of deportations to Siberia outlined an even darker future. Gruesome details of the execution of the deposed Czar Nicholas II and his family left no doubt about

38-meyer-v-nebraska-262-us-390-1923.html, accessed 30 Sept. 2020; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (1920), 3:948, 953, 996.

63. Myers, "An Immigrant Heritage," p. 143.

64. Rath, *Black Sea Germans in the Dakotas,* p. 340.

65. *Eureka Rundschau*, 10 Feb. 1917.

Initially, Mauser and Froh saw some potential in the Russian Revolution. A group of revolutionary soldiers posed for this photograph in St. Petersburg in 1917.

the new regime's ruthless nature. According to a study on the Communist Party that appeared in the *Rundschau*, blue-collar workers only had a 10 percent share in its membership compared to the 90 percent held by various *apparatchiks* (bureaucrats) and career politicians. This discrepancy clearly indicated that improving the living conditions of the working class was not the most important item on the Bolsheviks' agenda.[66]

Contrary to larger German American newspapers, the *Rundschau* did not have the means to organize large-scale charitable actions for the benefit of at-risk ethnic Germans in Russia.[67] Yet, it rendered an indispensable service by printing numerous personal letters sent from the home country during the Great War and then during the early years of the Soviet Union. Between 1922 and 1926, living conditions in the new nation unmistakably turned for the worse and, at the time, the Soviet censorship was not yet equipped to withhold all correspondence addressed to the West.

66. Ibid., 9 Sept. 1920.
67. Rippley, "Sallet and the *Dakota Freie Presse*," p. 17.

Numerous letters from the new Soviet Union provided shocking details of the hardship Germans endured in the early days of Stalin's regime. They faced droughts, extremely cold winters, inflation alongside low wheat prices, the closing of schools and churches, material confiscations, and even imprisonment. Cash gifts sent from the Dakotas to relatives and friends still in the Soviet Union only provided temporary relief. In their notes of appreciation published in the *Rundschau*, the recipients repeatedly emphasized that the people who took the risky but rewarding step of emigrating to the United States were extremely fortunate. One father of a family of ten offered a glimpse of the desperate struggle for existence of Germans who remained in the Soviet Union, "I have one horse and two cows left," he recorded. "For a cow or a horse, they give two puds [measurement] of flour. But how long can this last for a family of ten?" His family had gone a month without bread and consumed only what he called "water soup with some flour in it." He was writing, he noted, with "tears in my eyes and with a broken heart, because it's not easy for me to beg for help, but hunger leaves me with no choice."[68]

To encourage people of German descent to maintain their cultural identity, the newspaper provided several examples of other German minorities that successfully withstood pressure to assimilate. Friedrich Müller-Langenthal, a clergyman from the Transylvania region of Romania, authored a series that the *Rundschau* published summarizing the exemplary cultural achievements of the Transylvanian Saxons, a German minority in Eastern Europe. These settlers preserved their ethnic identity for eight hundred years through their work ethic, technological skills, efficient school system, support from the Lutheran Church, and close ties to the German Empire. A report on South Tyrol, a territory awarded to Italy after the First World War, paid tribute to the heroic cultural battle the local Austrian population waged against the Italian authorities, whose measures against teaching German, even in private homes, ranged from confiscating and burning textbooks to fining and physically abusing tutors.[69]

Almost immediately after World War I concluded, Mauser and Froh devoted significantly more space and attention to articles on a wide

68. *Eureka Rundschau*, 4 May 1922.
69. Ibid., 28 Feb., 6 Mar., 10 Apr. 1924, 24 June 1927.

array of cultural topics, including the death of the expressionist poet Richard Dehmel, the career of the actor August Kotzebue, and the music of Felix Mendelssohn.[70] Such pieces undoubtedly held high value in terms of skilled literary criticism, but they did not, and could not, capture the attention of an audience in need of concise news and engaging entertainment. The members of the predominantly agricultural communities in and around Eureka might have derived some educational benefit from travel reports about scenic regions in Germany, but probably found little value in accounts of the recreational effect of Alpine skiing and ice skating and the drum language of the jungle residents of Cameroon.[71]

In its last years of existence, the *Rundschau* conspicuously increased its coverage of sensationalist stories and criminal cases that occurred in areas far away from northeastern South Dakota. In February 1926, for example, the *Rundschau* covered the actions of a mentally disturbed resident of Springfield, Missouri, who killed two police officers and barricaded himself in his home. The same month it reported that members of the Ku Klux Klan in Tampa, Florida, set a cross on fire in the front yard of an African American businessman. Later that year, the outlet described how a convicted murderer in Butte, Montana, was incapacitated by tear gas after having assaulted the prison wardens prior to his execution. Almost two weeks later, they published an article on an orchestra conductor who was sentenced to death by electrocution after having murdered his mistress when she refused to join him in his return to Germany.[72] Mauser and Froh possibly included these dramatic episodes in order to spark readers' interest.

Ultimately, reduced revenues driven by decreasing circulation numbers, increasing paper prices and postal rates, and the rapid assimilation of its German-speaking audience forced Froh and Mauser to raise the cover price to $2.50. This price was noticeably above the average subscription rate of $2.00 that weeklies typically charged in the United States. Eventually, the editors merged the *Rundschau* with the *Northwest Blade*, an English-language periodical based in Winona, Minnesota. In

70. Ibid., 16 July 1919, 2 Sept. 1920.
71. Ibid., 21 May 1919, 17 Mar. 1927.
72. Ibid., 21 Oct. 1925, 11. Feb., 14 Oct. 1926.

1927, the business partnership between Froh and Mauser ended. While Froh continued with the *Northwest Blade*, Mauser explored the market in Bismarck, North Dakota, publishing the weekly *Das Nordlicht*, which initially contained a limited section on Eureka. In 1926, the National Weeklies, a midwestern newspaper syndicate, purchased the *Nordlicht*, along with other newspapers, and renamed them the *Dakota Rundschau*. These developments reflected nationwide trends that saw a 50 percent decline in German-language newspapers and their circulation numbers.[73]

Written in flawless German with a minimal amount of English and supplemented by ample illustrations, the *Rundschau* successfully provided its readers in McPherson County, as well as throughout South Dakota and its neighbors more generally, with updated information on local, national, and international developments. In an era of prolonged international crisis, the newspaper offered moral support and encouragement to members of the regional German community and paved their way to a dual identity. The *Rundschau* was a pillar in the community, helping readers aid their endangered relatives in the Soviet Union and advocating for the preservation of the German language. It was also an example for how German Americans could navigate their complex identities during a time of rising xenophobia. Just like the *Rundschau*, readers could be loyal Americans while maintaining their German heritage. In the early twentieth century, ethnic newspapers like the *Rundschau* were important resources for German immigrants. Today, they are valuable resources for historians examining German immigration in the Dakotas.

73. Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), pp. 625, 632, 729; Rath, *Black Sea Germans in the Dakotas*, p. 340; Arndt and Olson, *Deutsch-Amerikanische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften*, p. 422.

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On the cover: Based out of Black Hills Teachers College (now Black Hills State University) in Spearfish, the cadets of the Ninety-Third U.S. Army Air Forces College Training Detachment learned to fly using the single-engine aircrafts seen in this photograph taken at Black Hills Airport during the 1943–1944 school year.