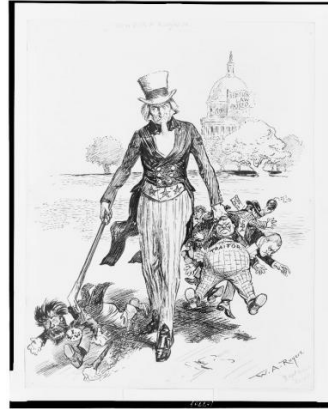


**0. Schenck and Abrams: Free Speech Under Fire**  
**- Story Preface**

1. ESPIONAGE and SEDITION ACTS
2. NOT PROTECTED SPEECH?
3. TO PRISON
4. A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER
5. ABRAMS: MORE CONVICTIONS
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W. A. (William Allen) Rogers created this political cartoon after Congress passed the Sedition Act in 1918. Entitled "Now for a Round-up," the artist shows Uncle Sam (personification of the U.S. federal government) going after "Spy," "Traitor," "IWW," "German money" and "Sinn Fein." His authority to make these arrests is noted on the flag: "Sedition Law Passed." Click on the image to enlarge it. Online, courtesy [Library of Congress](#).

*The most stringent protection  
of free speech  
would not protect a man  
in falsely shouting fire in a theatre  
and causing a panic.;*

Oliver Wendell Holmes  
Schenck v United States  
March 3, 1919

It was a time of extreme turmoil. The world was at war for the first time.

The precipitating event occurred in Bosnia, when a Serb (Gavrilo Princip) assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne (Archduke Ferdinand). Following that June 28, 1914 event, countries (mostly governed by cousins from the same family) lined up on opposite sides and, in a domino effect, the Guns of August erupted on the European continent.

Eight months later, in the spring of 1915, a German U-boat sank the Lusitania, killing thousands of innocent civilians. Germany's warnings, against sea passage in the waters surrounding the British Isles, had gone unheeded.

Meanwhile, as starving Russians grew increasingly upset with their country's involvement in the war, Vladimir Lenin spread the concept of socialism and a "worker's state," based on Marxist thought. He and his Bolshevik comrades engineered Russia's October Revolution of 1917.

Nicholas II, the Russian Tsar earlier forced to abdicate the throne his Romanov family had held for hundreds of years, would soon meet an unspeakable fate. So would his wife and children.

Against this backdrop of fear and uncertainty, the United States Congress passed the Espionage and Sedition Acts of 1917 and 1918 respectively. Free speech in America, guaranteed by the First Amendment to the country's Constitution, would soon be put to the test.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Schenck-and-Abrams-Free-Speech-Under-Fire>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Schenck-and-Abrams-Free-Speech-Under-Fire>

## Vladimir Lenin

Leader of the Bolshevik Revolution, in Russia, Vladimir I. Lenin became the first head of the Soviet Union.

With Russians (including fighting troops initially inspired by their Tsar) exhausted by the demands of World War I, and demonstrations occurring—like the massive Nevsky Prospect gathering in St Petersburg (Petrograd) during July of 1917—Lenin and his comrades were able to persuade enough individuals to follow the Bolshevik political ideology. This led to the "October Revolution" in 1917.

One of the first things which the Bolsheviks did, when they assumed power, was to end Russia's involvement in WWI. No longer would the Tsar ever lead troops or have his soldiers support the status quo (as they did during the February Revolution of 1917). During Lenin's time in power, the Last Tsar—Nicholas II—together with his wife and children—were executed in July of 1918.

Lenin was not quite 54 years old when he had a massive stroke, and died, on the 21st of January, 1924. To this day, his death puzzles doctors, and who he was - as a man - is still somewhat of a mystery.

Very few recordings of Lenin's voice survive. Although he introduced sweeping changes, and those changes caused misery for many people, Lenin was still widely mourned when he died.

Image, described above, online via the Russian State Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Vladimir-Lenin>



## Bolshevik Party Congress, 1919

Image online, courtesy the Russian State Archives.

Also at the New York Public Library, Digital image 51923.

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