1919 Pittsburgh: The Iron Grip on the Steel Industry

Instructor's Manual

An RTTP Micro Game by Hii, Nicholas; O'Leary, Conor; Peters, Jenna; Vicente, Vitor;

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(1) Instructor Preparation

As the Instructor, it is critical to be familiar with the historical background that the players are given. This will prove to be important in certain situations that require your judgment. We advise that you read all the sources in the Game Book, and those provided at the end of this document. If you want to further your knowledge, we advise going through the Bibliography section of the Instructor's Manual, and reading those sources.

(1.1) Required Materials

- Name Tags for all players.
- Two, regular, six-sided dice.
- A timer/phone/computer/clock.
- One copy of each of the attached sources per player + one for yourself (or simply print the IM with the Sources attached).
- Computer with an internet connection + some way of presenting a PowerPoint.
- Connecting cables/gadgets to project images in class.

(1.2) Background Music

During each round, play these on loop at low volume, to gain some atmosphere.

- Round #1 https://youtu.be/PHBJNN-M Mo
- Round #2 https://youtu.be/L5oNESifgpk
- Round #3 https://youtu.be/vPfJBwipL3Q

(2) Instructor's Character

Name: Jay G. Brown

Allegiance: Indeterminate

Role Context

You're the President of the Shingles Workers of America (ISWUA). You were previously

a delegate for the AFL, before moving to the ISWUA, one of the most powerful Unions of the

Pacific Midwest. You've come to Pittsburgh to assist the organization of the Strike, but will

remain an independent character. Your role is to guide the meetings, give out crucial information,

and assure that the game keeps going.

Motivations

Although in reality, your character was a clear Pro-Striker, having accompanied Mother

Jones to Pittsburgh, for the sake of the game, we will be having you play as a neutral character.

You share the concerns of both sides, and just want to make sure that the community manages to

organize, regardless of whether they decide to strike or not.

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(3) Game Organization

1919 PITTSBURGH

STEEL STRIKE

A few days before the Game begins, make sure to distribute both the Gamebook and Role Sheets to students. We'd advise giving William Foster, Mother Jones, Albert D. Jones Jr., and Roger Clark to students who are more comfortable with public speaking.

Set up the room so the chairs are in a semicircle. In the middle of the semi-circle, set up two rows of chairs facing each other, with one side having 5 chairs, and another having 3. These will be for the factions, with the indeterminate seating around the semicircle.

Setup the Board with a list of Players organized by Factions. Also, write the current date and location of the Round. Proceed to introduce yourself briefly.

Set the mood by describing the current situation in Pittsburgh, and emphasize what the National Committee is here to do.

Give both William Foster and Roger Clark a minute each to make opening remarks.

Let the Players walk around and chat to each other.

Once 15 minutes have passed, call the Players to order, distribute the Ballot #1 attachment to all Union Members, and tally the votes. Make sure to write down the final results on the Board.

IN 1919, A GENERAL STEEL STRIKE OCCURRED IN PITTSBURGH, THIS GAME WILL GO THROUGH SOME OF THE EVENTS THAT OCCURRED AT THE TIME, YOU, AS THE INSTRUCTOR, WILL HAVE TO INTERVENE AT SEVERAL POINTS. A TIMELINE OF YOUR DUTIES CAN BE SEEN BELOW.

PRE-GAME

As the Instructor, your duties will begin even before the Game does!

ROUND #1 BEGINNING

BACKGROUND - Round #1 takes place on May 25th, at the Labor Temple in Pittsburgh.

Members of the National Committee come together to vote on whether or not to pass a Resolution.

- Before you proceed to do anything in Round #2, make sure to announce that the resolution has been sent to E. H. Gary, and you are awaiting a response.
- Begin the Round by announcing that a set
 of bombings have occurred in between
 Rounds, reading out the attached
 Announcement #1. Follow this by distributing
 the Plain Words Source attached below.
- You should also then announce that violent news have reached Pittsburgh from Chicago, and proceed to distribute the Strikebreaker is Fatally Stabbed by White Mob Source attached below.
 - At this point, you should also trigger both the Spanish Flu and Jail Mechanics.
- Once that is done, call upon all members
 for an open Q&A. Allowing Indeterminates
 and faction members to question each
 other in front of everyone.
- Once about 10 minutes have passed, finish the Jail Mechanic, distribute the Ballot #2 Source, and tally the votes. Make sure to write down the final results on the Board.

ROUND #2 BEGINNING

BACKGROUND – Round #2 takes place on July 20th, at the Labor Temple in Pittsburgh. This time people have gather to vote on whether there will be a strike.

Begin the Round by concluding the Spanish
Flu Mechanic as described below.
Furthermore, at this point, you should trigger
the Firing Mechanic as described below.

ROUND #3A/B BEGINNING

BACKGROUND - Round #3a takes place on September 15th, in the streets of Pittsburgh. Round #3a will occur if no Strike was called, while Round #3b will occur if a Strike was agreed upon. Irrespectively of this, Both sides must now put in their last-ditch efforts to achieve, or maintain, Victory.

ROUND #3A

If in Round #1 the Resolution was passed, then proceed by making Announcement #3 as attached below, else wise, nothing needs to be announced.

ROUND#3B

You should now Distribute the Request by President Wilson to Postpone the Strike source attached below.

At this point, you should allow Players to get up, and freely chat with other Players. This part should take at most, 15 minutes. If you happen to have extra time, allow both William Foster and Roger Clark to make closing remarks.

Once that is done, distribute the Ballot #3
attachment, to only the workers in the
crowd. Then retrieve the ballots, tally the
votes, and enact the IWW/Federal Agente
Mechanic.

DEBRIEF

Once the Game has ended, you should debrief with your students. This debrief has two objectives. Firstly, learn how the students felt playing the game, and if they have any feedback on gameplay mechanics. Secondly, and rather more importantly, this debrief will allow you to talk to them about the history of the moment, including some of the Counterfactuals that occurred while they played.

(3.2) Spanish Flu Mechanic

Between Rounds #1 and #2, depending on the outcome of the round, the Instructor will roll a pair of six-sided dice to determine whether or not someone will be infected by the Spanish Flu. If the Resolution passes, the Instructor should roll the die on William Foster, otherwise, the Instructor should roll the die on Roger Clark. Results of the roll should be determined as follows (based on the sum of the numbers):

- X = 2: Member Dies.
- $2 < X \le 10$: Member Falls Sick, misses next round.
- X > 10: Member is alright.

After Round #2, if the Member has Fallen Sick, but has not died, the Instructor should roll the dice again. Results of the roll should be determined as follows (based on the sum of the numbers):

- X = 2: Member Dies.
- 2 < X < 12: Member Improves, can play final round.
- X = 12: Member Stays Sick, misses the final round.

(3.3) Jail Mechanic

At the beginning of Round #2 after you announce the bombings and distribute the materials, announce that Walter Loan, Edward Johnson, and Louis M. Walsh are under arrest as suspects in the bombings, and hand out the *Pittsburgh Press* frontpage photograph for the players to see (see (5.7) Front Page of the *Pittsburgh Press*, June 1919 attached below). They must sit out the Q&A portion of the round, but remind them they can and should chat amongst one another.

Just before the distribution of the Ballots in Round #2, announce that the IWW members have been cleared of suspicion and are free from jail. All three should be allowed to vote then.

(3.4) IWW vs. Federal Agent Mechanic

Walter Loan and Edward Johnson are two members of the IWW. Louis M. Walsh is posing as a member of the IWW, but is actually a Federal Agent. The IWW members are aware that there are other IWW members, although they do not know how many. They are also aware of a possible infiltrator. The Federal Agent is aware of the exact number of IWW members.

At the end of Round #3, both the IWW members must write the names of all those they think are a part of the IWW on the Ballot, under Extra Details. If both IWW members **only identify themselves and the other member** then you should announce that the IWW infiltration attempt failed. A Federal Agent named Louis Walsh has been discovered, and has now fled Pittsburgh. You may attribute an extra vote to the side the two IWW members vote for. If any of the two IWW members identify the Federal Agent, or fail to identify the other member, should announce that the IWW has been infiltrated by a Federal Agent, and two IWW Members (Walter Loan and Edward Johnson), have been arrested under suspicion of conspiring with Communist Revolutionaries. Both of the IWW member's votes must be discarded.

(3.4) Firing Mechanic

It was quite common at the time for workers to be fired by mill owners if they decided to go on Strike. As such, in this game, this might also occur. If on Round #2 Robert O'Donnell votes **in favor** of the Strike, in Round #3 (a/b) you should make Announcement #2, which will state that he has lost his job, and provide Charles Strophel with the message to deliver to Robert O'Donnell that is attached to the Sources document below.

(4) Game Debrief

The game that was just played attempted to recreate some of the most crucial moments of the 1919 Steel Strike. However, not everything that happened in the game happened in history, and some elements were added or removed for the sake of making the game fair and fun. As such, and because the whole point of this exercise is to help students learn about history a more unorthodox manner, we must now go over what exactly happened in Pittsburgh in 1919.

On September 22nd, 1919, a strike was called via the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers, an association made up of 24 different American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions.¹ This strike, just as others before it, also turned violent as it was brutally put down by employers bringing on deputy sheriffs to suppress the protests, infringing workers' rights in several ways, such as banning the right of assembly.² As stated in the Pittsburgh Press, workers were being denied "the rights of free speech and peaceful assembly".³ Furthermore, the Steel Mill owners brought tens of thousands of black workers from the south to act as strikebreakers. This led racial influence violence⁴, as the unions did little to gain the support of black workers, which made them feel neglected.⁵ These racial issues were further inflamed in 1919 as the Red Summer progressed.

Further issues plagued the 1919 Steel Strike. Heavy concerns with the Spanish Flu, which killed between 4500 and 600 people⁶. The shadow of the Communist Revolution in Russia also caused some workers to be wary of Eastern European immigrants that lived in Pittsburgh, a feeling that was heavily utilized by the upper-classes to spread fear and miss information, using a rhetoric that marked all socialists, and socialist sympathizers, as radicals.⁷

¹Witwer, David. "Commemorating the 1919 Steel Strike An Interview with John Czelen." Edited by Linda Shopes and Linda A. Ries. Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies 86 (2019). https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.bu.edu/article/733960.

² Brown, Cliff. Racial Conflicts and Violence in the Labor Market: Roots in the 1919 Steel Strike. New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 1998

³ Ibid, 107.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Laura Malt Schneiderman | Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. "Stricken." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Interactive. Accessed April 23, 2022.

https://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/flu-1918/#:~:text=The%201918%20influenza%20epidemic,%2C%20and%20May%2031%2C%201919.

⁷ Murray, Robert K. "Communism and the Great Steel Strike of 1919." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 38, no. 3 (December 1951): 445–66. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1889031.pdf.

(4.1) Counterfactuals to Present Post-Game

- 1) In round three, students will attempt to either continue or thwart the coming strike. If the anti-strike students succeed, the ending would be counterfactual. Historically, the strike began on September 22nd, and the attempts to thwart it failed.
- 2) In round one, the National Committee Meeting passed the resolution the students will be voting on. If the students end up voting against the resolution, this would be counterfactual.⁸
- 3) Throughout the game, black steel workers will have a chance to speak up, and against, those who suppressed them. Historically, this hardly ever happened, and if a black steel worker had ever spoken up like that, they would likely be a victim of a lynching, or other racist act. Racism was a serious and wide-spread problem in 1919 Pittsburgh (as it was in the rest of the United States). For obvious reasons, we did not include any game elements that would lead to such outcomes, as it seemed too brutal and unnecessary.

(4.2) Mechanics to present Post-Game

Once the game is over, you should also explain the IWW/Federal Agent mechanic to the players, revealing who the IWWs and who the Federal Agent were. Make sure to stress how it influenced the vote, and how it reflects the reality that some workers in Pittsburgh lived, where a mere thought about sympathizing with Socialist ideas could land them in jail.⁹

⁸ William Z. Foster, *The Great Steel Strike and Its Lessons*. B. W. Huebsch Publishers, New York, 1920.

⁹ There is a really interesting episode about this described by Mother Jones in her Autobiography.

(5) Announcements

Below you will find a few announcements that you will be required to make during the gameplay:

- (5.1) Announcement #1 Bombings & Effects
- (5.2) Announcement #2 People being Fired
- (5.3) Announcement #3 No answer from Gary

(5.1) Announcement #1 - Bombings & Effects

"On June 2nd, eight cities across the country were attacked. Capitalist figures and US officials were the targets of bombings. The attacks resulted in three deaths: An innocent woman, a night watchman, and one of the bombers. These words were left at the scene of the bombings as a message to the 'capitalistic class'..."

(5.2) Announcement #2 - People being Fired

"As workers all across Pittsburgh voted either in favor or against the strike efforts, mill owners have begun purging their mills of those whom they call "radicals," several hundred workers have been fired, including Robert O'Donnell."

(5.3) Announcement #3 - No answer from Gary

"It has now been almost 4 months since the National Committee sent a letter to E. H. Gary with their demands. This letter has remained unanswered. Gary's silence can only mean one thing, that he will not negotiate with us."

(6) Sources

Below you will find a few sources that should be printed and ready to distribute to the players according to the instructions above. Here is the indexed list:

- (6.1) Plain Words
- (6.2) Strike Call by the National Committee
- (6.3) Ballot #1
- (6.4) Ballot #2
- (6.5) Ballot #3
- (6.6) Front Page of the Pittsburgh Press, June 1919
- (6.7) Charles Strophel's Message to Robert O'Donnell
- (6.8) Strikebreaker is Fatally Stabbed by White Mob

Should be noted that the Ballots below were heavily influenced by the actual Ballot distributed at the Workers Conference at the Labor Temple in 1919.¹⁰

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¹⁰ Foster, William Z. Great Steel Strike and Its Lessons. Good Press, 2019.

(6.1) Plain Words

No liberty do you accept but yours; the working people also have a right to freedom, and their rights, our own rights, we have set our minds to protect at any price.

We are not many, perhaps more than you dream of, though but are all determined to fight to the last, till a man remains buried in your Bastilles, till a hostage of the working class is left to the tortures of your police system, and will never rest until your fall is complete, and the laboring masses have taken possession of all that rightly belongs to them.

There will be bloodshed; we will not dodge; there will have to be murder: we will kill, because it is necessary; there will have to be destruction; we will destroy to rid the world of your tyrannical institutions.

We are ready to do anything and everything to suppress the capitalist class; just as you are doing anything and everything to suppress the proletarian revolution.¹¹

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¹¹ "Anarchist Papers Found at Bomb Scenes", *The Pittsburgh Press*, June 3, 1919.

(6.2) Strike Call by the National Committee

STRIKE SEPTEMBER 22, 1919

The workers in the iron and steel mills and blast furnaces, not working under union agreements, are requested not to go to work on September 22, and to refuse to resume their employment until such time as the demands of the organizations have been conceded by the steel corporations.

The union committees have tried to arrange conferences with the heads of the steel companies in order that they might present our legitimate demands for the right of collective bargaining, higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions. But the employers have steadfastly refused to meet them. It therefore becomes our duty to support the committees' claims, in accordance with the practically unanimous strike vote, by refusing to work in the mills on or after September 22, until such time as our just demands have been granted. And in our stoppage of work let there be no violence. The American Federation of Labor has won all its great progress by peaceful and legal methods.

IRON AND STEEL WORKERS! A historic decision confronts us. If we will but stand together now like men our demands will soon be granted and a golden era of prosperity will open for us in the steel industry. But if we falter and fail to act this great effort will be lost, and we will sink back into a miserable and hopeless serfdom. The welfare of our wives and children is at stake. Now is the time to insist upon our rights as human beings.

STOP WORK SEPTEMBER 22

National Committee

for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers¹².

¹² National Committee for organizing Iron and Steel Workers, Strike call to Steel Workers, September 10th, 1919, in *The Great Steel Strike and its Lessons*, 95.

Character Name:
BALLOT
IRON & STEEL WORKERS
The Union Committees are now seeking to get higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions from steel companies. Are you willing to back them up to the extent of stopping work should companies refuse to concede these demands?
A szakszervezeti bizottságok most magasabb béreket, rövidebb munkaidőt és jobb munkakörülményeket kívánnak elérni az acélipari vállalatoktól. Hajlandó-e támogatni őket a munka leállításának mértékéig, ha a vállalatok nem hajlandók engedni ezeknek a követeléseknek?
I comitati sindacali stanno ora cercando di ottenere salari più alti, orari più brevi e migliori condizioni di lavoro dalle aziende siderurgiche. Siete disposti a sostenerli al punto da interrompere il lavoro se le aziende rifiutano di accettare queste richieste?
Komitety związkowe dążą teraz do uzyskania wyższych płac, krótszych godzin pracy i lepszych warunków pracy od firm stalowych. Czy jesteś gotów wesprzeć je w zakresie zaprzestania pracy, jeśli firmy odmówią uznania tych żądań?
Odborové výbory sa teraz snažia získať od oceliarskych spoločností vyššie mzdy, kratší pracovný čas a lepšie pracovné podmienky. Ste ochotní podporiť ich v rozsahu zastavenia práce, ak by spoločnosti odmietli pripustiť tieto požiadavky?
Hinahangad na ngayon ng Union Committees na makakuha ng mas mataas na sahod, mas maikling oras at mas magandang kondisyon sa pagtatrabaho mula sa mga kumpanya ng bakal. Handa ka bang i- back up ang mga ito sa lawak ng pagpapahinto sa trabaho kung tatanggihan ng mga kumpanya ang mga kahilingang ito?
VOTE YES OR NO. Mark X in square indicating how you vote
YES NO
National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers WM. Z. Foster, Secy-Treas. 303 Magee Bldg., Pittsburgh, PA.

Character Name:
BALLOT
IRON & STEEL WORKERS
The Union Committees are now seeking to get higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions from steel companies. Are you willing to back them up to the extent of stopping work should companies refuse to concede these demands?
A szakszervezeti bizottságok most arra törekszenek, hogy magasabb béreket, rövidebb munkaidőt és jobb munkakörülményeket szerezzenek az acélipari vállalatoktól. Hajlandó-e támogatni őket a munka leállításának mértékéig, ha a vállalatok nem hajlandók engedni ezeknek a követeléseknek?
I comitati sindacali stanno ora cercando di ottenere salari più alti, orari più brevi e migliori condizioni di lavoro dalle aziende siderurgiche. Siete disposti a sostenerli al punto da interrompere il lavoro se le aziende rifiutano di accettare queste richieste?
Komitety związkowe starają się teraz uzyskać wyższe płace, krótsze godziny pracy i lepsze warunki pracy od firm stalowych. Czy jesteś gotów wesprzeć je w zakresie zaprzestania pracy, jeśli firmy odmówią uznania tych żądań?
Odborové výbory sa teraz snažia získať od oceliarskych spoločností vyššie mzdy, kratší pracovný čas a lepšie pracovné podmienky. Ste ochotní podporiť ich v rozsahu zastavenia práce, ak by spoločnosti odmietli pripustiť tieto požiadavky?
Hinahangad na ngayon ng Union Committees na makakuha ng mas mataas na sahod, mas maikling oras, at mas magandang kondisyon sa pagtatrabaho mula sa mga kumpanya ng bakal. Handa ka bang i- back up ang mga ito sa lawak ng pagpapahinto sa trabaho kung tatanggihan ng mga kumpanya ang mga kahilingang ito?
VOTE YES OR NO. Mark X in square indicating how you vote
YES NO
National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers WM. Z. Foster, Secy-Treas. 303 Magee Bldg., Pittsburgh, PA.

Character Name:
BALLOT
IRON & STEEL WORKERS
The Union Committees are now seeking to get higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions from steel companies. Are you willing to back them up to the extent of stopping work should companies refuse to concede these demands?
A szakszervezeti bizottságok most arra törekszenek, hogy magasabb béreket, rövidebb munkaidőt és jobb munkakörülményeket szerezzenek az acélipari vállalatoktól. Hajlandó-e támogatni őket a munka leállításának mértékéig, ha a vállalatok nem hajlandók engedni ezeknek a követeléseknek?
I comitati sindacali stanno ora cercando di ottenere salari più alti, orari più brevi e migliori condizioni di lavoro dalle aziende siderurgiche. Siete disposti a sostenerli a punto da interrompere il lavoro se le aziende rifiutano di accettare queste richieste?
Komitety związkowe starają się teraz uzyskać wyższe płace, krótsze godziny pracy i lepsze warunki pracy od firm stalowych. Czy jesteś gotów wesprzeć je w zakresie zaprzestania pracy, jeśli firmy odmówią uznania tych żądań?
Odborové výbory sa teraz snažia získať od oceliarskych spoločností vyššie mzdy, kratší pracovný čas a lepšie pracovné podmienky. Ste ochotní podporiť ich v rozsahu zastavenia práce, ak by spoločnosti odmietli pripustiť tieto požiadavky?
Hinahangad na ngayon ng Union Committees na makakuha ng mas mataas na sahod, mas maikling oras, at mas magandang kondisyon sa pagtatrabaho mula sa mga kumpanya ng bakal. Handa ka bang i back up ang mga ito sa lawak ng pagpapahinto sa trabaho kung tatanggihan ng mga kumpanya ang mg kahilingang ito?
VOTE YES OR NO. Mark X in square indicating how you vote
YES NO
Extra Details:
National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers WM. Z. Foster, Secy-Treas. 303 Magee Bldg., Pittsburgh, PA.

(6.6) Front Page of the Pittsburgh Press, June 1919



From the front page of *The Pittsburgh Press*, June 4, 1919, showing June 2nd bomb fragments and, clockwise from top left, suspects Edward Johnson, Louis M. Walsh, and Walter Loan.¹³

¹³ Mccormick, Charles H.. "Part 2. The Red Scare and After, 1919-1921." *Seeing Reds : Federal Surveillance of Radicals in the Pittsburgh Mill District, 1917-1921.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998. Accessed April 19, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.

(6.7) Charles Strophel's Message to Robert O'Donnell

FOR CHARLES STROPHEL'S EYES ONLY

Privately conduct a meeting with **Robert O'Donnell**, the steel worker who was subsequently fired for suspected pro-strike sentiments and involvement. Inform him that, because of his unemployment, a paying job similar to his previous one is being offered to him at your place of work, the Birmingham Mills, by your superior, Mr. Thomson. Robert O'Donnell must understand, however, that taking the job opportunity comes with a prerequisite. If he is to **accept** the job offer, he <u>must</u> **vote "no"** in Round 3. However, if he is to **deny the job offer**, he <u>must</u> **vote "yes"** in Round 3. Robert O'Donnell is required to give you an answer, accepting or denying the job offer, by the end of Round 3 and <u>before</u> the voting period begins.

(Be sure Robert O'Donnell fully understands the instructions before he accepts or denies the job offer.)

(6.8) Strikebreaker is Fatally Stabbed by White Mob

Negroes Pursued by White Mobs and One Is Fatally Stabbed

Chicago, July 31 - Presence of 6,000 troops and a downpour of rain brought about improved conditions in Chicago's "black belt" today, where race riots since Monday claimed thirty-two lives and resulted in scores being wounded and much property damage. Two deaths from wounds were reported today.

So greatly improved were conditions that the city council deferred Mayor Thompson's plea for 2,000 additional police. Reports received at the council chamber indicated the militia had the situation well in hand. Both whites and negroes received the troops as peace makers. Incipient rioting and disorders were reported throughout the day, but none was of as serious a nature as those of the preceding days. The most serious rioting occurred at the stock yards, where white workmen attacked negroes who reported for work. The negroes were pursued through "Packingtown" by a mob of whites. One negro was fatally stabbed before the soldiers arrived. 14

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¹⁴ "Negroes Pursued by White Mobs and One Is Fatally Stabbed." *The Washington Herald.* July 31st, 1919. https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83045433/1919-08-01/ed-1/?sp=1&r=-0.595,-0.227,1.543,1.304,0