



WAS WORLD WAR ONE PROPAGANDA THE BIRTH OF SPIN?

Audio slideshow transcript: A crisis of morale in 1917

Narrated by Neil Oliver

December 1916. Well-wishers queue outside the House of Commons to catch a glimpse of the new Prime Minister, David Lloyd George. But all around England, queues are starting to form for a very different reason.

[Newspaper caption: SERIOUS FOOD SHORTAGE]

The first few months of 1917 brought a series of worrying developments for Lloyd George and his government.

In February, German UBoats began a campaign of unrestricted warfare, in an attempt to starve Britain into submission.

In between March and May, workers in factories up and down Britain began a series of walk-outs. When ministers investigated the causes, they found a working class sick of conscription and high food prices. There were rumblings of a general strike.

There were also increasing calls for an end to the fighting.

The news from Overseas was also alarming. The French army was growing increasingly weary of unsuccessful offensives. In May and June, 30,000 men were involved in mutinies on the Western Front.

But one thing worried Lloyd George more than anything - the threat of revolution.

Russia had suffered devastating losses in the early years of the war. At home, the economy was crumbling. In February 1917, workers turned out on the street demanding bread. Riots soon followed. Eventually the Tsar was forced to abdicate. It was clear that a government could only push a war-weary population so far.

There were calls for Britain to follow suit.

For Lloyd George, it was clear that the fight to keep up morale on the home front was key to winning the war. The government would have to act.

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