

THAT LIBERTY SHALL NOT PERISH: AMERICAN PROPAGANDA AND THE
POLITICS OF FEAR, 1914-1919

by

ZACHARY CHARLES SMITH

(Under the Direction of John H. Morrow, Jr.)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to provide an understanding of the widespread anxiety, vigilantism, suppression of dissent, and violation of civil liberties that took place in the United States from 1917 to 1919 and argues that it can be found in some Americans' understanding of and reaction to racially-charged propaganda. As the United States inched toward war with Germany in 1915 and after declaring war in April 1917, many propagandists began referencing the allegedly inherent characteristics of Germans as evidence of German American disloyalty and the existence of a vast "Pan-German" plot to undercut or even destroy American democracy. The imagined conspiracy grew to encompass most of the fears that had plagued the Anglo Saxon middle-class since the 1870s – immigrant radicalism, race suicide, the capability of "racially inferior" immigrants to assimilate and self-govern, and the continued deference of African Americans. To many anxious Americans, Germany and German Americans became a very real entity to which these long-held fears could be transferred. American propaganda produced during the First World War, though, was not a cynical ploy to fool the American people into supporting intervention on the side of the Allies. Leading

Americans – politicians, editors, and social elites – were convinced that a global German conspiracy threatened the security of the United States and hoped to enlist the American people in staving off the existential threat they believed racially degenerate Germany allegedly posed. This dissertation paints a unique picture of the United States in the Progressive Era and contributes to literature on the history of emotions, race/ethnicity, progressivism, American culture, war's impact on society, and the First World War in general

INDEX WORDS: Americanization, Anglo-Saxon, assimilation, Bolshevism, Christianity, Committee on Public Information, conspiracy, Council of National Defense, George Creel, Darwinism, degeneration, Department of Justice, espionage, fear, garrison state, German-Americans, Germany, immigration, invasion, Lamarckism, *Lusitania*, masculinity, militarism, Military Intelligence Division, military preparedness, Monroe Doctrine, Prussianism, National Security League, nativism, neurasthenia, paganism, Pan-Germanism, progressivism, propaganda, race, race suicide, racial degeneration, rumor, sabotage, Social Gospel, Teuton, whiteness, Wilhelm II, Woodrow Wilson, Zimmerman Telegram

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DEDICATION

To Curt and Deb

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INTRODUCTION – FEAR, PROPAGANDA, AND DEFINING THE AMERICAN WAR EFFORT

The gray and rainy weather on April 2, 1917, matched the mood of the President. Woodrow Wilson, who had won a second term the previous November under the banner “He Kept Us Out of War,” for days had displayed a foul disposition, repeatedly barking at the White House staff for quiet as he typed the speech that would bring the United States into the First World War and break the over century-long tradition of nonintervention in European politics. When the President finally took his place at the rostrum in front of a joint session of Congress on that dark and damp night, his expression was somber even though he had been greeted with two minutes of continuous and joyous applause. Most in attendance knew what the President would ask of them. The Imperial German Government had planted spies and saboteurs within the nation’s borders. Its submarines (U-boats) had attacked passenger ships, American merchantmen, and naval vessels, resulting in the loss of millions of dollars and hundreds of innocent American lives. It had promised the return of several southwestern states to Mexico in exchange for an invasion of the United States. These acts constituted “nothing less than war against the government and people of the United States,” Wilson told Congress, asking that they formally recognize as fact what they all knew to be true.¹

¹ For an interesting perspective on Wilson’s mood in the days prior to his War Address, see Thomas Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory: America in World War I* (New York: 2003), 5-8, 13. “Must Exert All Our Power,” *New York Times*, April 3, 1917; “An Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” April 2, 1917, in Arthur S. Link, et. al (eds.), *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 69 Vols. (Princeton, NJ: 1980), Vol. XLI, 521. Hereinafter cited as *PWW*.

While by no means a pacifist, the President's unpleasant temper in the days leading up to his address likely reflected his utter disgust for subjecting young American men to the carnage of trench warfare in Europe and the home front to the "spirit of ruthless brutality" that he feared would threaten the integrity of the Constitution.² Wilson's personal aversions, though, raise an important question. If entering the Great War would cause so much damage to the nation's mind, body, and soul, why would he ask Congress to bring the nation into the conflict? Despite his misgivings, Wilson believed he had no choice. Europe, the world, and democracy, he argued in his War Address, were in danger and it was the United States's duty to come to the rescue. Speaking as if American belligerency had already been made official, the President professed that "We are glad...to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy." The nation, then, would selflessly wage war against German autocracy, "without rancour and without selfish object, seeking nothing for ourselves, but what we shall wish to share with all free peoples."³

Despite the enduring impact of the War Address on American understanding of the First World War, Wilson's initial definition of the war effort as an altruistic crusade for democracy did not guide the public discourse as many have assumed. While spreading the benefits of progressive democracy to the world was greatly appealing to some intellectuals, the President's idealism was not likely to move the less educated and more provincial masses whose backs would bear most of the weight of the war. Perhaps

² John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: 2009), 382-384.

³ War Address, April 2, 1917, *PWW*, Vol. XLI, 525.

more importantly, Wilson's address masked his and many middle and upper class Americans' belief that Germany posed a real physical threat to the United States. In the first months of the Great War, Wilson privately expressed fears that a German victory would force the neutral United States to eschew democracy for militarism in order to protect itself from future German aggression. The President confided to the British Ambassador in September 1914 that "If they [Germany] succeed, we shall be forced to take such measures of defense here as would be fatal to our form of Government and American ideals."⁴ Wilson's bad mood, then, may have been the symptom of cognitive dissonance, a subconscious tension between a desire to safeguard the Constitution against untoward hatred and the necessity of combating German militarism in 1917 instead of later.

This dissertation is a study of how fear, more than Wilson's higher idealism, defined the enemy and the United States's relationship to the First World War in the public discourse. It examines American propaganda – both publicly and privately produced – during this period through the lens of Anglo-Saxon American attitudes toward race and foreign peoples. It also attempts to gauge, as much as possible, American reactions to the propaganda's fearful messages. It argues that the hysterical war culture permeating the United States between 1914 and 1918 can be best understood by analyzing how Progressive Era Americans understood ethnic differences and experienced social change. The hysteria, vigilantism, and disregard for civil liberties that defined American belligerency were not a giant leap from the past. Americans and their

⁴ Cecil Arthur Spring Rice to Edward Grey, September 3, 1914, *PWW*, Vol. XXX, 472. Colonel Edward House, Wilson's closest foreign policy advisor throughout the war, recorded in his diary in late August 1914 that the President had disclosed the same attitude to him. *Diary of Colonel House*, August 30, 1914, *ibid.*, 462.

government did not merely lash out at a sudden threat to their nation and livelihood inside and beyond their borders. Instead, long-held prejudices toward presumably racially suspect immigrants and past experiences confronting perceived threats to themselves and the social fabric informed their reaction to the prospect of war and the war emergency itself. Anglo-Saxon apprehension over an alleged conspiracy by the presumably racially corrupt German people that would overwhelm the United States, either through force or intrigue, mirrored their reaction to the decades-long influx of similarly degenerate races of eastern and southern Europe and Asia.

Like their generalized anxiety over the nation's changing demographics, the Anglo-Saxon's specific fear of German domination of the United States – held mostly by the middle and upper classes – was grounded in popular contemporary racial stereotypes. The German (or “Teutonic”) race was inherently stubborn, clannish, aggressive, and efficient. The dominance of Prussian autocracy over the more noble Teutonic races in Europe and its degenerative impact on the German's spiritual and racial composition, many argued, ultimately made the German nation and people aggressive and thus deserving of American fear. Germanophobic propagandists highlighted the image of the “decivilized,” nationalistic, and militaristic German who was incapable of self-control and, thus, self-government. Yet “Prussianized” Germany was not only a menace to democracy abroad, propagandists (including Wilson) maintained and in most cases believed. It also posed a direct existential threat to the United States, its people, its institutions, and its values.

This threat came in the form of an imagined “Pan-German” conspiracy to “Germanize” the world, the United States in particular. The alleged plot, many argued

during the war, began in the 1860s and was comprised of Prussia's wars of expansion and German unification, the organization of German communities in the Americas, espionage and propaganda campaigns by these communities, and, finally, a military invasion of the New World. According to many American propagandists, for Germany the First World War was a means to this Pan-German end. In reality, though, little evidence at the time supported the presupposition that such a conspiracy was afoot. Fears of this sort were fed by stereotypes and placed more weight on German words than their actions toward the United States.⁵ A German victory in the First World War could have resulted in a less business-friendly world for the American economy, but it is unlikely the Kaiser wanted a war in the New World.

Wartime propaganda reflected the tendency of middle and upper class Americans to perceive social problems as more threatening than they were in reality. Propaganda, then, acted as a window into the Progressive Era psyche. Theodore Roosevelt's proclamation in 1912 that the United States was "standing at Armageddon" and "battl[ing] for the Lord" was not mere political rhetoric.⁶ Political and social elites kept alive the nineteenth century fear that the comforts of modern society and the expansion of the white collar class threatened to undermine American masculinity. The drive for women's suffrage added to worries that weak men were forfeiting their natural place atop

⁵ Nancy Mitchell makes a very convincing case that bellicose German language directed toward the United States in the first fifteen years of the century did not match their aims or actions. Her work effectively countered the argument, attributed chiefly to Holger Herwig, that German imperialist rhetoric and contingency war plans against the United States (which Mitchell showed to be unfinished and of little significance to the German brass) suggested Germany had imperial ambitions in the Western Hemisphere and even were prepared to invade the United States to realize them. The policy Germany implemented vis-à-vis the United States and the Americas, Mitchell contended, was decidedly docile, with very limited aims. Nancy Mitchell, *The Danger of Dreams: German and American Imperialism in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1999). Holger H. Herwig, *Politics of Frustration: The United States in German Naval Planning, 1889-1941* (New York: 1976).

⁶ Patricia O'Toole, *When the Trumpets Call: Theodore Roosevelt after the White House*, (New York: 2005), 179. The quote from TR's speech comes from this work, but O'Toole would disagree with my assessment of TR's meaning.

the political and social hierarchy. The immigration of the supposedly backward peoples of Europe and Asia bred concerns about “race suicide” and doubts that these newcomers could or wished to blend into the native culture. Many progressives saw the Americanization of immigrants as critical largely because of the radical political beliefs they were alleged to have brought with them. Revolutionary ideologies, if allowed to spread, threatened to undermine the capitalist order. The culture of deference showed cracks in the South as African Americans, seeking economic opportunity and freedom from the hangman’s noose, migrated to northern industrial centers. This not only contributed to labor shortages in southern agriculture but added to the economic and social strains felt in northern cities. As of 1917, progressivism had failed to cure American society of these ills. The addition of the wartime emergency and the selling of the war as an existential struggle only brought American fear and anxiety to a fever pitch. More importantly, it also made exorcising society’s demons a necessary phase of the war on autocracy. To many anxious Americans, Germany became a very real entity to which their generalized anxieties could be transferred. Consequently, the home front became no different than the endless miles of trenches in Belgium and France – a battle front on which German brutality and militarism had to be defeated and destroyed.

This dissertation will attempt to address two broad questions about the United States during World War I: What did most Americans believe was at stake for them in the war? How did the widely-held pre-war anxieties of a mostly isolationist nation descend into a state of full-fledged hysteria? Historians have only touched on these questions. David Kennedy placed the war within the context of the Progressive Era urge to instill order and morality on their world. According to Kennedy, Americans saw their

role in the war as Wilson did, as one “to make the world safe for democracy.” The war was also a way to define the American character by emphasizing its unique qualities as compared to Europe. Kennedy contended that Americans viewed their role as fighting “against the very idea of Europe and all that Europe historically represented in the American mind: coercive government, irrationality, barbarism, feudalism.” By fighting Europe’s war Americans were both “redress[ing] the balance of the Old World” and “redeem[ing] it.”⁷ This argument, however, presupposes that the majority of Americans dropped their provincialism and traditional apathy toward Europe in April 1917 in favor of a selfless national crusade. The progressive war’s impact on the wartime increase of state power and economic prosperity has also been broadly studied.⁸

In a more recent book, Christopher Capazzola explored how the wartime emphasis on voluntarism and conformity (both generally considered progressive principles) affected politics and social tensions at the local level. He argued that Americans compensated for the federal government’s lack of administrative competence in 1917 by emphasizing volunteerism and patriotic obligation. As the pressures of wartime increased, however, leading local citizens turned to vigilantism and coercion to enforce patriotism, thus forcing the federal government to take a more active role disciplining dissenters. The war to Americans, then, was an opportunity to reshape and

⁷ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: 1980), 42.

⁸ See Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (New York: 1991); Neil A. Wynn, *From Progressivism to Prosperity: World War I and American Society* (New York: 1986); and Robert H. Zieger, *American’s Great War: World War I and the American Experience*, (Lanham, MD: 2000). On the choice of many progressives to gamble reform by supporting the war, see Kennedy, Wynn, Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: 2003); and Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: 1967). Some solid narrative histories of the American home front during World War I are Robert Ferrell, *Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1917-1921* (New York: 1985); Edward Robb Ellis, *Echoes of a Distant Thunder: Life in the United States, 1914-1918* (New York: 1996); and Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*.

reorder their communities.⁹ Although he argues his points well, Capazzola's contention that peer pressure drove war mobilization does not address what made conformity through volunteerism and coercion necessary. Why, for instance, was tarring and feathering a man for not buying Liberty Bonds or lynching another for seditious speech acceptable behavior?

Historians of American propaganda during World War I also have not adequately examined the American wartime mindset. In 1939 H.C. Peterson investigated the influence British publishers and government officials enjoyed among prominent American citizens and publishers from 1914 to 1917. His general claim – that British influence over the American press directly led to American involvement on the Allied side – placed too much emphasis on the persuasive power of British agents and too little on Americans' ability to form opinions on their own. At the same time, Peterson's study, concluded in the isolationist 1930s, presupposes that producers of wartime propaganda were cynical manipulators.¹⁰ Stewart Halsey Ross intended to improve on Peterson's study by also discussing American propaganda during belligerency. Ross focused on the vilification of Germany and Kaiser Wilhelm II in the American press and the CPI. Exaggerated descriptions of German atrocities and misrepresentations of their war aims, he claimed, conditioned the American people to accept intervention in Europe. Ross, though, like Peterson, narrowed his examination mostly to the anti-German print propaganda (mostly posters and editorials) that Anglophile publishers and patriotic organizations in the United States happily printed on behalf of Great Britain. Ross's

⁹ Christopher Capazzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: 2008).

¹⁰ H.C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Norman, OK: 1939).

study also places a considerable amount of weight on the ability of British propagandists and their surrogates in the United States to manipulate American public opinion through the press. At the same time, Ross provides no explanation for why the nature of the supposed German threat incited such widespread anxiety.¹¹

Works on the Committee on Public Information, the federal government's official propaganda agency, also have failed to systematically analyze wartime propaganda and its effectiveness. The two earliest studies of the CPI have focused mostly on the agency's origins and administrative structure. In 1939, James R. Mock and Cedric Larson studied the CPI in the context of the impending war in Europe and the possibility that the United States would be dragged into another general European struggle. They argued that George Creel was the ideal man to run the agency because of his utter distaste for fear-based propaganda that fueled hatred and vigilantism. In short, Mock and Larson claimed that the CPI had a calming influence on American society, which they hoped would repeat itself in the event of another major war.¹² Four decades later, Stephen L. Vaughn primarily focused on the institutional history of the CPI but also spoke to how the liberal progressivism of Creel and his department heads led the agency to rely on voluntary censorship and compliance with Administration policies. Unlike Mock and Larson, Vaughn cites examples of CPI-produced propaganda that did not correspond to Creel's vision, blaming the decentralized nature of the agency for the discrepancy. Vaughn's conclusions implied that CPI propaganda contributed to the manifestation of hatred and

¹¹ Stewart Halsey Ross, *Propaganda for War: How the United States was Conditioned to Fight the Great War of 1914-1918* (Jefferson, NC: 1996).

¹² James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information, 1917-1919* (Princeton, NJ: 1939).

fear, but he does not attempt to explain why it was effective.¹³ The most recent work on the CPI, by Alan Axelrod, mostly focused on Creel and relies almost solely on the chairman's accounts. Axelrod did not consult CPI records at the National Archives nor period newspapers to explain how Creel sold the Great War to the American people.¹⁴

While American propaganda during the Great War deserves greater attention, scholars have studied the effects of fear on Western society for centuries. The seventeenth century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes recognized the potential of fear to establish the moral and political codes of wayward societies and to stimulate individuals to collective action. In short, from fear grew political and moral reawakening. On his tour through the United States in the early nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville noticed what he perceived as a restless insecurity on the part of Americans. This anxiety, he claimed, stemmed from the emergence of democracy and the isolation felt by those crippled by tradition. Universal white manhood suffrage had recently been established and Americans were anxious about the “the impersonal, shapeless authority of the mass” and what that would entail.¹⁵

Contemporary scholars – in the years immediately before and since September 11, 2001 – have looked either to the media or the past to understand the pervasiveness of fear in American culture. In 1999 Barry Glassner argued that manipulation by politicians and the media has bred fearful misperceptions of what is and is not dangerous, thus stripping Americans of their ability to accurately calculate risk. Although Glassner was right to pinpoint the use of the media in exploiting individuals' fear, he made no attempt to place

¹³ Stephen L. Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1980).

¹⁴ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War: The Making of American Propaganda* (New York: 2009).

¹⁵ Corey Robin, *Fear: The History of a Political Idea* (New York: 2004), 28-29.

his argument within a historical context, leaving the question of why media manipulation has become so powerful largely unexplained.¹⁶ Political scientist Corey Robin examined the use of fear for political ends. In his 2004 study, Robin defined “political fear” as “a people’s felt apprehension of some harm to their collective well-being...or the intimidation wielded over men and women by governments or groups.” The difference between political and individual fear, he claimed, is that the political springs from culture or has consequences for the group. Robin perceptively argued that political fear is ultimately a force for unity and renewal. His conclusion, though, took the pessimistic stance that this unity is generated by those in power who induce fear to disguise inequalities and hierarchies within the social system.¹⁷

Historian Joanna Bourke described fear as “the most pervasive emotion in modern society.” Bourke looked at the role individual and social fear played in the everyday life in the Western world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although she did not explain why many of the fears in her study were distinctly “modern,” Bourke illustrated the importance of technology in spreading fear. She argued that before 1914 people feared the gradual degeneration of society far more than military conflict. This changed after World War I when Westerners blamed modernity and innovations in military technology for the meat grinder that was the Western Front. Technology also played a role in the widespread panic that ensued as a result of the 1938 “War of the Worlds” broadcast. More important than the large audience radio provided, Bourke claimed, was the trust Americans placed in the technology – the voices of authority on the radio were

¹⁶ Barry Glassner, *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things* (New York: 1999).

¹⁷ Robin, *Fear*, 2.

expected to be honest and authoritative.¹⁸ What holds Bourke's analysis back, however, is lack of distinction among Western societies. The origins of individual and social fear are based in the culture and history of a particular society. For instance, a massive influx of eastern and southern European immigrants was a leading catalyst for concerns over the degeneration of society and culture in the United States into the 1920s. Great Britain, though, did not experience the same demographic shock.

For the sake of clarity it should be noted that "fear" and "anxiety," while clearly related and often used interchangeably in the popular vernacular, are distinct emotions. Both, obviously, are a subjective response to the perception of threat or danger. But by definition, fear is directed at a specific object or outcome. Anxiety, on the other hand, is less focused and manifests as a generalized sense of dread or foreboding over the possibility that something bad (which is not always clear to the individual) could or will happen at some unforeseen time.¹⁹ While attempting to make this important distinction, this dissertation suggests that fears can grow from anxiety and vice versa. During wartime, for instance, many Americans' generalized concern about the impact of mass immigration on democracy and the Anglo-Saxon race found a specific object – the German-American – on which their anxiety could be directed and thus transformed into fear. At the same time, the specific fear of a postwar German invasion went hand-in-hand with the anxiety over if or when it would happen.

Some scholars who have examined fear and anxiety in the United States in particular have pinpointed a strain of paranoia that has infected American culture for

¹⁸ Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: 2005), ix, 185, 195.

¹⁹ "Anxiety" and "Fear" in Gretchen M. Reevy, *Encyclopedia of Emotion* (Santa Barbara, CA: 2010), Vol. I, 83-85, 265-266 and Arne Öhman, "Fear and Anxiety" in Michael Lewis, Jeanette M. Haviland-Jones, and Lisa Feldman Barrett (eds.), *Handbook of Emotions* (New York: 2008), 3rd ed., 709-729.

centuries. In 1965 Richard Hofstadter coined the phrase “paranoid style,” by which he meant the all too common belief among Americans in great international conspiracies that had been set in motion years before. The conspirators’ destructive designs were invariably carried out by a large yet nearly invisible apparatus, which, of course, was anxiety-inducing for many Americans. At the same time, though, most of the unseen plots were attributed to specific entities, such as the Freemasons or the Illuminati. Hofstadter argued that in such a worldview, which was colored by an application of religious notions of good and evil on secular politics, “a ‘vast’ or ‘gigantic’ conspiracy” was “*the motive force* in historical events.”²⁰

Writing in the wake of Hofstadter’s intellectual splash, David Brion Davis, an expert on the supposed “Slave Power” and abolitionist conspiracies of the early and mid nineteenth century, contended that “the fear of conspiracy is sometimes reasonable.” Psychiatric research has shown that all human behavior and thoughts fall along a continuum of “normal” and “abnormal,” and every individual sometimes behaves and feels in ways that lean toward the peculiar. Mass paranoia, then, is merely the communal articulation of normally abnormal beliefs and actions. Because apprehension over a possible conspiracy is an expression of human nature, Davis posited, “American crusades against subversion have never been the monopoly of a single class or ideology.” Translated to the United States during the Great War, Davis’s argument suggests that fear

²⁰ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: 1965), 29. Emphasis is Hofstadter’s. Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post criticized Hofstadter for applying a clinical term (paranoia) in a non-clinical manner. They define “political paranoia” as an individual’s “perverse” means of forging meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging. *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (New Haven, CT: 1997). According to Kathryn S. Olmstead, the source of American paranoia and conspiracy theories changed from fear of secret private societies to a fear that the federal government itself was the conspirator. This transformation, she argued, began during the First World War. *Real Enemies: Conspiracy Theories and American Democracy, World War I to 9/11* (New York: 2009), 4, 13-43.

of a Pan-German conspiracy captured the imaginations of Americans of all stripes.²¹ Yet while Progressive Era Americans were in fact prone to see plots of all kinds in their midst, fear of the German menace appears to have infected the middle and upper classes far more than the working class, of whom many were likely more concerned about the schemes of his or her employer or far off financiers.

Arthur G. Neal examined the fear and anxiety that results from traumatic events in which a large number of people both observe and respond emotionally. The “national trauma,” though, can be “acute” (like the attack on Pearl Harbor or the assassination of John F. Kennedy) or “chronic” (like the Great Depression). The chronic form of trauma, the kind most fitting to the present study, “builds in intensity with the passing of time” and “grows of out enduring conflicts within a social system and the emergence of a crisis of authority.” What makes an event traumatic, then, is its perceived challenge to the very institutions of society. Because people tend to construct their world based on “assumptions of causality,” Neal contended, the destruction of that assumption by a traumatic event (through the challenging of seemingly static institutions) leads individuals to create new understandings of causality, which leads to the formulation of conspiracy theories and paranoia during times of perceived crisis. Such circumstances, Neal concluded, even capture “those who are usually apathetic and indifferent to national affairs” because of the communal belief that “[t]he social fabric is under attack, and...the consequences appear to be so great that they cannot be ignored.” During time of crisis,

²¹ David Brion Davis (ed.), *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present* (Ithica, NY: 1971), xiv and xvi. Also see Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge, LA: 1970).

“[h]olding an attitude of benign neglect or cynical indifference is not a reasonable option.”²²

Peter N. Stearns’s *American Fear* (2006) is perhaps the best treatment of fear in modern American history. Stearns found the roots of twentieth century fear in the Evangelical revival of the mid-nineteenth century. The “wrath of God” and the Devil were constantly hanging over the heads of Evangelicals. Those living outside of their communities – and even their children within, burdened by original sin – were suspect. This fear of the “menacing and dangerous” outside world was met with an anxiety that “require[ed] an aggressive response in the name of God.” This all-encompassing notion of fear of the wider world, Stearns argued, was passed down through generations and became part of the wider American culture. He cited the first Red Scare and the “War of the Worlds” broadcast as twentieth century manifestations of apocalyptic fear that had become ingrained in American culture in the nineteenth century.²³

Chicken Little-like understandings of the outsider or the outside world, though, were not spread solely by the authoritative air of A. Mitchell Palmer or Orson Welles. The often unstoppable power of the rumor mill can spread cries of impending danger well beyond those in direct contact with the source. Sociologists and social psychologists have made tentative conclusions about the link between anxiety and rumor. Ralph L. Rosnow and Gary A. Fine have argued that anxiety is likely “an incipient mood highly conducive to rumormongering because it increases the intolerance for ambiguity.” And in times of perceived danger, they claimed, communities tend to close ranks in order to combat the threat together. The result is the arousal of a collective attitude about the true

²² Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Extraordinary Events in the American Experience*, 2nd edition, (Armonk, NY: 2005), 8, 10, 14.

²³ Stearns, *American Fear*, 69-71, 171-174.

nature of the supposed threat.²⁴ At the same time, fear-based rumors spread on a national level as well as within individual communities. Basing his argument on the premise that societies constantly confront change, sociologist Tamotsu Shibutani concluded that rumors spread easily through a society because of its inability to understand and adjust to new circumstances. With change comes a readjustment of established collective beliefs, which occurs as individuals compare their newly formed assumptions. Eventually, Shibutani argued, a new understanding replaces the old. In short, the dissemination of rumor is a means by which societies adapt to change and reestablish social controls at times of perceived danger to the existing social order.²⁵ Chapters three through five include numerous examples of anxious Americans passing on often ridiculous rumors to federal investigators telling of secret (or sometimes quite conspicuous) German agents roaming through their neighborhoods. In most cases, the spy is an exaggerated caricature of an already caricatured character, suggesting that grinding propaganda through the rumor mill both widens its audience and enhances its emotional impact.

Social scientists have closely examined propaganda, seeking to understand its uses, abuses, and effectiveness. Sociological, social psychological, and historical studies of propaganda have tended to fall into two categories – those who believe propaganda is inherently dangerous and those who do not. The work that has contributed the most to the now negative connotation of the word “propaganda” was sociologist Harold Lasswell’s *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, first published in 1927. According to Lasswell, wartime propaganda revealed the ease in which the masses could be manipulated “into one amalgamated mass of hate and will and hope.” “Propaganda is

²⁴ Ralph L. Rostow and Gary A. Fine, *Rumor and Gossip: The Social Psychology of Hearsay* (New York: 1976), 24-25, 73.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55; Tamotsu Shibutani, *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* (Indianapolis: 1966).

concerned with the management of opinions and attitudes by the direct manipulation of social suggestion,” making it something to be feared. Its production and reception, however, was inextricably linked to the society and culture in which it sprang. Lasswell argued that remembering “that propagandists are socialized” in the same “body politic” as their audience is crucial to understanding how the practice worked. Social and cultural norms “set limits on potential perception, imagination, and behavior” – or the production and reception of propaganda. In other words, Lasswell argued that the propaganda’s message and its ability to inspire national unity and cooperation were contingent upon “the predispositional patterns present in the political arena.” Yet the most successful propaganda, he concluded, “depend[ed] upon traditional prejudices, objective connections between nations, and the changing level of popular irritability.” All efforts to forge a united front against the enemy would be “for nought [sic.] if there is no favourable juxtaposition of social forces to aid” the propagandist.²⁶

Over twenty-years later, after the Second World War, psychologist Leonard Doob also took a negative view of propaganda despite his contention that his work “suggests that propaganda cannot be easily labeled” and is not necessarily “evil and tricky.” Doob defines propaganda as “an attempt to affect the personalities and to control the behavior of individuals toward ends considered unscientific or of doubtful value in a society at a

²⁶ Harold Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I* (Cambridge, MA: 1971, reprint of 1927 work entitled *Propaganda Technique in the World War*), xv, 9, 192, and 221. Leonard Doob argued that the association of propaganda with harmful manipulation and lies in “Anglo-Saxon society” (as he called it) began in the 1920s with scholars like Lasswell and others who “exposed the lies which the propaganda machines of both sides disseminated throughout World War I.” The present study takes issue with Lasswell’s and Doob’s characterization of wartime propaganda, at least in the American case, as being based in lies and deception. Most wartime propaganda, this study shows, was produced by men and women who believed the message they conveyed. Leonard Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (New York: 1948; 1966 reprint by Archon Books, Hamden, Connecticut), 241-242. For an analysis of the manipulative aspects of wartime propaganda written in the isolationist 1930s, see Charles W. Smith, *Public Opinion in a Democracy* (New York: 1939).

particular time.” Propaganda, Doob claimed, is relative because what is considered “‘bad,’ ‘unjust,’ ‘ugly,’ or ‘unnecessary’” depends on the mores of a particular society. Public opinion, then, forms from a society’s “pre-existing knowledge, attitudes, and drives as well as from mutual stimulation.”²⁷ Randal Marlin stands out as an exception to the scholarship of the past thirty years, agreeing with Lasswell and Doob in 2002 that propaganda (produced for political or commercial reasons) is “an organized attempt...to affect belief or action or inculcate attitudes...in ways that circumvent or suppress an individual’s adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment.” Marlin treated propaganda as potentially dangerous, as a means of coercing people to believe or act in ways that could be detrimental to their personal interests.²⁸

Most recent scholars of propaganda – in war and advertising – have challenged the contention that it is inherently dangerous or harmfully manipulative. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell defined propaganda as a “deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desire intent of the propagandist.” Although granting that propaganda is inherently manipulative, they eschew the idea that most is based solely upon lies and runs contrary to the interests of the audience. Works of propaganda, they argue, fall along a continuum, from “white” (where the information “tends to be accurate”) to “gray” (source may not be identified and accuracy of information is uncertain) to “black” (the “big lie” – the source and information are both false). “Propaganda thus runs the gamut from truth to deception” while remaining “value- and ideology-laden” as well as serving the interests of the propagandist. Jowett and O’Donnell also identified ten crucial points

²⁷ Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda*, iii, 36, and 240.

²⁸ Randal Marlin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion* (Orchard Park, NY: 2002), 22.

one must consider in the proper analysis of propaganda, which the present study found quite useful.²⁹ Concurring with Jowett and O'Donnell, Oliver Thomson rejected definitions of propaganda that ignored the possibility that it was not all planned and deliberate. Propaganda based in truth was just as, if not more, effective, he argued, as that grounded in falsehoods. Thomson also viewed propaganda as existing along a scale, but his measure was based on the emotionality of the material and not the degree of truthfulness. The most emotionally powerful propaganda, he explained, was grounded in fear. Such propaganda, on which this dissertation focuses, can “spin dangers almost out of thin air” but also offered ways in which individuals could be “release[d] from fear.”³⁰

This dissertation takes a view of propaganda more closely associated with Jowett, O'Donnell, and Thomson while attempting to avoid the mistakes of Peterson and Ross. Lasswell and others were no doubt correct to argue that media and politicians (voices of authority) have the power to manipulate the masses to move in almost any direction. This was made clear during the First World War. However, the argument that all or even most propaganda is a cynical play for profit or political gain does not adequately fit the situation in the United States from 1914 to 1918. Wartime propaganda was at times manipulative, with the end goal of establishing a unity of purpose among Americans of all origins. The primary motive behind this manipulation and unity, however, was not to conceal the inequalities within society or garner political or financial benefits for the few, although elements of this were present. Instead, propagandists appear to have employed

²⁹ Those ten points to consider are “(1) the ideology and purpose of the propaganda campaign, (2) the context in which the propaganda occurs, (3) identification of the propagandist, (4) the structure of the propaganda organization, (5) the target audience, (6) medial utilization techniques, (7) special techniques used to maximize effect, (8) audience reaction to various techniques, (9) counterpropaganda, if present, and (10) effects and evaluation.” Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (New York: 1986), 16-20, 154-170.

³⁰ Oliver Thomson, *Easily Led: A History of Propaganda* (Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire, Great Britain: 1999), 2-3, 46-48.

fear mongering in order to enlist the masses in overcoming their own class and racial anxieties.³¹ Many if not most wartime propagandists believed that what they said, wrote, or drew was based in fact.³² Believing that something was genuinely wrong with the Prussianized Teuton and that it explained his bid for world domination and willingness to kill, rape, and maim to achieve it was very common, if not the norm, among middle and upper class Americans. For one, German actions in Belgium and on the high seas seemed to bear this out. At the same time, contemporary understanding of Teutonic and Prussian capabilities (based on pseudoscientific racism) and Lamarckism (belief that environment shapes racial traits) helped explain why the German was dangerous to democracy and, if allowed to set foot on American soil, to American families. Propaganda produced in the United States from 1914 to 1918, then, was meant as a public service, as a way to convince the American people to act for the common good and security of the nation.

While this dissertation offers no new definition of propaganda, it examines the primary instruments of persuasion employed during the Great War – editorials, political cartoons, novels, posters, pamphlets, speeches (published and unpublished), and, to a lesser extent, films.³³ At the same time, because the emphasis is on how propaganda exacerbated preexisting fears, it focuses solely on pro-preparedness, pro-intervention, and

³¹ Kristin Hoganson's work on the political rhetoric of masculinity in the late 1890s has had a significant impact on this dissertation, most notably her attitude toward her sources: "This book takes rhetoric seriously, treating it as something that illuminates motivations, convictions, and calculations of what is politically efficacious." Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: 1998), 11, 14.

³² The most famous example is George Creel's postwar memoir, where he defended the accuracy and legitimacy of the CPI's claims. Creel, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (New York: 1920).

³³ Wartime films do not play a significant role in this study of propaganda because, as historian Leslie Midkiff DeBauche has argued, they simply took too long to make and were thus unable to respond or shape public opinion as effectively as other mediums. *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War I* (Madison, WI: 1997), 38.

pro-war propaganda, which relied far more on fear than anti-war arguments. Most propaganda cited in this study was found in public opinion journals, popular magazines, newspapers, and the material produced by the CPI and private propaganda agencies such as the National Security League (NSL). Works of the press are incredibly relevant to a study of propaganda in the Progressive Era United States because the early twentieth century was an age when newspaper readership was at its peak. Americans were more likely to confront pro-preparedness views in daily, bi-weekly, or even monthly journals and newspapers than through pamphlets or speeches. Public opinion journals, such as *Literary Digest*, *Current Opinion*, and *Review of Reviews*, are particularly important because they relied on newspaper editorials and political cartoons newspapers from all across the country (and sometimes overseas) for their content, making them a valuable source of nationwide editorial opinion.³⁴ Most of the journals and magazines cited in this study were published in New York City, the home of the majority of pro-war and

³⁴ Literary journals and magazines did not dominate the publishing industry. That role belonged to the publishers of inexpensive women's magazines. According to *N.W. Ayer & Sons* – a directory of newspapers and magazines with information for advertisers – in 1915 magazines such as *Ladies' World* (1,104,000), *Gentlewoman* (2,028,000), *McCall's* (1,261,000), and *Cosmopolitan* (1,000,000) were among the most widely circulated publications in the nation. By comparison, many of the publications cited in this study – such as *Current Opinion* (94,000), *Literary Digest* (258,000), *McClure's* (533,805), and *The Outlook* (105,000) – had a much small circulation. Although public apathy toward politics could account for these numbers, the more likely explanation concerns the cost and utility of the publications. For instance, *Current Opinion* cost three dollars per year for only twelve monthly issues. In comparison, *McCall's*, also a monthly, cost fifty cents for a yearly subscription and included recipes, mothering advice, and other useful articles for bored housewives. This trend was consistent across the board. The price of opinion journals implies that middle and upper-middle class men were their target audience. These men were the most likely to vote in elections (universal suffrage did not come until 1920), contribute money to a political party, and generally be active in national politics. In short, the political right and left, through political opinion publications such as these, battled for the affections of this demographic. For another point of comparison, the 1915 circulation figures for the more progressive-minded and less bellicose publications – such as *New Republic* (45,000) and *The Nation* (8,000) were comparable to those frequently cited in this study. *N.W. Ayer & Son's Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: 1915), 648-677. The data on *New Republic*, seen as a mouthpiece of the Wilson Administration, taken from Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois, 1964), 425. On the first occasion in the dissertation that a newspaper, magazine, or journal are cited I will include the circulation data available in *N.W. Ayer & Sons*.

nationalist organizations and whose newspaper editorials and cartoons were syndicated throughout the country

Perhaps more important to this study is the work of the CPI, Department of Educational Propaganda (of the Women's Defense Work Division of the Council of National Defense), and other "patriotic" organizations. The majority of material these agencies produced were pamphlets, of which hundreds of thousands or millions were printed and distributed across the country. Pamphlets were almost always mailed or handed out free of charge and at the request of individual readers. While their distribution was wide, the arguments within wartime pamphlets only reached those capable of and interested in reading them or listening to public recitations of them. Although the CPI, the NSL, and others put a great deal of time and resources into their pamphlets, public speakers reached a more educationally diverse audience and were more effective than written material because they allowed Americans to passively absorb many of the same messages and warnings of the Pan-German menace. In fact, private agencies often printed the transcript of speeches by prominent Americans – such as Theodore Roosevelt – given on the agency's behalf to ensure they reached a wider audience. While the CPI had the infamous Four Minute Men speakers, one of the primary functions of the DEP was to organize speaking campaigns in neglected areas of the country. The records of the DEP contain a number of speeches that had presumably been given during these campaigns.³⁵ The most effective propaganda, though, is often the simplest. Poster art allowed the propagandist to spread his or her message in the simplest of terms and to the widest possible audience with very little effort on the part of the viewer. Posters (and

³⁵ These speeches are marked "Delivered" and often include sections that had been scratched out and notations above lines or in the margins presumably made by the speaker. These records are held at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

political cartoons) depicting decivilized Prussians bearing down on Belgian women or American shores were more than mere calls to action – they also effectively explained the consequences of inaction to the American people. Speakers, authors, editors, and pamphleteers told Americans of the degradations of which the Prussianized German was capable. Posters showed them in ways that young children, illiterate or non-English-speaking adults, and those who could not afford movie tickets could understand.

A quick description of the two leading propaganda arms, the CPI and NSL, is in order. Officially created on April 13, 1917, the CPI comprised the secretaries of War, State, and the Navy but was run by the ambitious, self-promoting, muckraking maestro of hyperbole George Creel. A loyal follower of Wilson (who was extremely active in choosing the content and composition of CPI propaganda), Creel campaigned almost as hard for the President's reelection in 1916 as he did for himself to become head of the CPI.³⁶ Creel, however, was nothing if not a true believer. Seeing the United States as the world's best hope, he believed whole-heartedly in his idol's call to make the world safe for democracy. Yet, for democracy to work in the United States, Creel believed, citizens

³⁶ Creel believed that his work to organize press support and his book *Wilson and the Issues* were integral to the success of the President's reelection campaign. On March 19, 1917, two weeks before Wilson asked Congress to declare war, Creel wrote Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels, himself a former newspaper editor and journalist, that he was "in need of a job" and "if a censor is to be appointed, I want to be it." He suggested that Daniels convince Wilson to create a "Bureau of Publicity," with Creel as chief. Creel argued that such an agency would "drive an outraged public sentiment straight at these scoundrels who see nothing in a country's peril but the chance for political advantage." Creel's campaign to fill the post became more active as he wrote Daniels several times in the first weeks of April. Twice on April 4 Creel wrote Daniels that he had the personal endorsement of Frank Cobb of the *New York World*, Treasury Secretary William McAdoo (Wilson's son-in-law), and a large group of "one hundred writers – all of the best in the country" (most likely the superpatriotic organization of prominent politicians, writers, and artists known as the "Vigilantes"). After the war, Creel and Daniels both claimed that Creel's was the only name considered for the chairmanship of the CPI. Considering Creel's seemingly ceaseless campaign for the job, however, it appears he may have browbeaten Daniels and Wilson into appointing him. Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines*, 17; George Creel to Josephus Daniels, March 19, 1917, Josephus Daniels Papers, Special Correspondence, Reel 47 Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.); Creel to Daniels, March 28, 1917, *ibid.*; Creel to Daniels, April 4, 1917, (two letters), *ibid.*; and Mock and Larson, *Words that Won the War*, 11, 51.

needed to band together, making “every task a common task for a single purpose.” To Creel, then, the CPI was a means by which the government could remake Americans by convincing them to play their proper role in bettering and, during the war, protecting the national community.³⁷

The CPI made a sharp distinction between loyal German-Americans, the presumably dangerous ones who had come after the rise of the German Empire, and the decivilized Teutonic horde in Europe. Many of the CPI’s most important contributors held a strong antipathy toward Germany because of what they saw as the dominance of Prussian militarism in its society and culture since the nation unified in 1871. For example, Guy Stanton Ford, director of the CPI’s Division of Civic and Educational Publications (i.e. pamphlets), noticed a distinct “difference between the German character and the spirit of the American” while studying in Germany at the turn-of-the-century. Germany, he believed, had come to be dominated by the Prussians and the Hohenzollern dynasty, which Ford concluded had taken over the softer and culturally distinct south Germans “by fraud, cunning, and military force.”³⁸ These charges of Prussian underhandedness and cold calculation by a leading member of the CPI reflected the familiar stereotypes many Anglo-Saxon Americans held before and during the war. The persistence of such racial-cultural beliefs within American society as a whole and the CPI in particular had a clear impact on the creation of wartime propaganda and its public digestion.

³⁷ George Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 5.

³⁸ The list of CPI contributors who developed a distaste for Germany and Germans while studying abroad includes authors of several of the committee’s most popular pamphlets. Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines*, 65-71, quote from 66. Although Vaughn implied a distinction between early German immigrants and the presumably “Prussianized” ones existed in the minds of native-born Americans, he does not examine it.

The CPI's primary task was to awaken Americans to the German threat. The Committee hoped to accomplish this by instilling fear. The CPI's 75,000 Four Minute Men orators were instructed to openly exploit wartime anxiety during their brief allotment of time. The January 1918 issue of the *Four Minute Men News* revealed the underlying philosophy of the Four-Minute Men in particular and the unstated policy of the CPI in general.

“Fear, perhaps, is rather an important element to be bred in the civilian population. It is difficult to unite a people by talking only on the highest ethical plane. To fight for an ideal, perhaps, must be coupled with thoughts of self-preservation. So a *truthful* appeal to the fear of men, the recognition of the terrible things that would happen if the German Government were permitted to retain its prestige, may be necessary in order that all people unite in the support of the needed sacrifices.”

The CPI claimed that “An appeal to emotionalism through conviction by statement of facts secures true converts, converts who when once convinced remained convinced.”³⁹

The “truth” the CPI espoused, however, often was based on half-truths and rumors that fit with contemporary beliefs about inherent Teutonic traits and capabilities. Creel's and his underlings' insistence that their facts were true, however, speaks to the degree to which CPI propaganda reflected the fears and anxieties of its creators.

The privately-organized National Security League, on the other hand, relied more heavily on fear mongering. The NSL was the largest and most active private patriotic

³⁹ *Four-Minute Men News*, Edition B (January 1918), 1-2, Entry 63, Box 3, Records of the Committee on Public Information, RG 63, NARA (emphasis mine). Records of the CPI will hereinafter be cited as CPI. In their “General Instructions,” local branches of the Four Minute Men were ordered to rely mostly on “young lawyers and business men,” especially those “with various neighborhood and business contacts, who will be acceptable in appearance and general standing to the audiences.” In other words, the average Four-Minute Man was to be of the local, likely Anglo-Saxon male elite – although a few women, African American, Native American, and foreign language speakers (very few German) were active in the organization. Alfred E. Cornbliss, *War as Advertised: The Four-Minute Men and America's Crusade, 1917-1918* (Philadelphia: 1984), 10, 22-26.

organization in the United States during the war, producing and delivering millions of fear or anxiety inducing pamphlets and speeches across the country. Composed mostly of wealthy businessmen, the NSL constantly warned of the dangers of immigrant disloyalty and the nation's relative military weakness before and after April 1917. Not long after the United States joined the war and their dream of universal liability for conscription came true, the NSL began focusing its attention on cultivating national unity rooted in "100 percent Americanism," which was based on the dominant Anglo-Saxon cultural beliefs and practices.⁴⁰ Like the CPI, however, the argument that individual sacrifice and conformity to a rigid standard of living was necessary to stave off a direct physical threat to the nation provided the main thrust of NSL wartime propaganda. On most occasions, the NSL found prominent American authors, intellectuals, politicians, labor leaders, and ministers to relay their warnings through the graphic depictions of foreign invasion and intrigue. Although the NSL was the most consistently hyperbolic of wartime propaganda agencies, the CPI and the mainstream press did not lag far behind.

The CPI and NSL, though, did not work together closely and rarely shared information. In February 1918, NSL President S. Stanwood Menken wrote to Creel suggesting ways the CPI could reach rural newspapers with articles and editorials. Creel

⁴⁰ Although largely unsuccessful on the legislative front, the NSL encountered little trouble recruiting many of the "who's who" of American business elites to contribute financially to the organization. Contrary to its presidents' (S. Stanwood Menken) assertion in March 1917 that the NSL's funds came mostly from small individual contributors, postwar Congressional hearings on the League's wartime activity revealed that the vast majority came from the likes of Cornelius Vanderbilt, Bernard Baruch (wartime head of the War Industries Board), Henry C. Frick, and Simon Guggenheim, among others. Robert D. Ward, "The Origins and Activities of the National Security League, 1914-1919," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XL (June 1960), 51-65, quotes from 52-53 and John Carver Edwards, *Patriots in Pinstripe: Men of the National Security League* (Washington, DC: 1982).

coolly responded that rural areas were already a focus of the CPI.⁴¹ In response to a letter from Wilson complaining about the work of the American Defense Society (the partisan Republican offshoot of the NSL), Creel replied that he dealt with the NSL in the same way the administration should handle the ADS – by refusing “to recognize either of them in any way.”⁴² Despite the lack of coordination between the most dominant propaganda agencies, the stark similarity in their pro-war and anti-German messages suggest that their arguments reflected the endemic beliefs and concerns of most Americans of their class and ethno-cultural heritage.

In this dissertation examples of wartime propaganda are supplemented by internal correspondence of the CPI and the DEP, these organizations’ instructions to their propagandists, and the personal papers of leading politicians, propagandists, and their associates. The CPI and DEP material provide needed insight into how propaganda campaigns were planned and carried out as well as organizers’ views on what the propaganda should consist of and why a campaign was needed in a particular time and place. The personal papers of men like Wilson, his relevant cabinet secretaries, George Creel, Robert M. McElroy, and Elihu Root reveal a great deal about their thoughts, fears, and prejudices, which are quite significant in establishing what they feared and why they feared it. The relative paranoia and racial nationalism that dominated the way propagandists defined the war effort and the enemy is pervasive in these papers, suggesting the personal attitudes of those who directed, created, and consulted on propaganda were an integral part of the propaganda’s message.

⁴¹ S. Stanwood Menken to George Creel, February 28, 1918 and Creel to Menken, March 4, 1918, Creel Correspondence, entry 1, box 16, Records of the Committee on Public Information, RG 63, National Archives (College Park, MD).

⁴² Woodrow Wilson to George Creel, September 30, 1918 and Creel to Wilson, October 1, 1918, George Creel Papers, box 2, Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.).

The impact of these messages, though, is extremely difficult to assess in an era before public opinion polling. Historian John Milton Cooper, Jr., writing about the influence of isolationist sentiment on Wilson's neutrality policies, attempted to measure the public's pulse through nationwide newspaper editorial opinion, which he largely gleaned from *Literary Digest*.⁴³ Jowett and O'Donnell, though, argued that the dialectic between editorial and public opinion is often weighted too much on the side of the editor to be a genuine expression of public attitudes. To them, surveys, polls, and a close observation of individuals' actions – observing if they adopt the slogans of propaganda or change their behavior – are the clearest means of measuring public opinion and the impact propaganda can have on it.⁴⁴

The present study attempts to measure the impact of wartime propaganda through the methods Jowett and O'Donnell suggested. The wartime investigative reports of the Military Intelligence Division, Department of Justice, and the Bureau of Investigation, along with letters from mostly middle-class Americans to George Creel, Wilson, and others who had a hand in the creation of propaganda suggest that a significant number of Americans took wartime propaganda seriously and literally. These sources show the extent to which Americans – again, mostly middle-class – believed the propaganda messages were true, repeated and passed on those messages to others in their community (thus feeding them into the rumor mill), and acted on the fear and anxiety such messages and ensuing rumors provoked. The wartime Attorney General, Thomas Watt Gregory, and the head of the DOJ's Wartime Emergency Division both claimed that thousands of letters from citizens were sent to their department on a daily basis during the war that

⁴³ John Milton Cooper, Jr., *The Vanity of Power: American Isolationism and the First World War, 1914-1917* (Westport, CT: 1969).

⁴⁴ Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 168.

passed on rumors of illicit spy activity or even the massing of enemy troops in Mexico.⁴⁵

Although the letters and follow-up investigations cited in this study are but a small sampling of what the government received, the sheer volume of correspondence suggests that the fear and anxiety cited in this dissertation was not atypical or uncommon.

This dissertation is divided into six thematic chapters and an epilogue. The first chapter examines the period from the 1870s to 1914 within the context of native-born white Americans' uncomfortable transition to a more diverse and modern society in general and the resulting massive demographic shock in particular. The chapter argues that the Anglo-Saxon racial nationalism – buttressed by contemporary notions of ethnic differences – that was central to American attitudes toward the so-called “new” immigrants of the era was still alive and well when the First World War began. Despite the efforts of progressive reformers, by the time the guns of August began firing in 1914 native-born Americans had yet to assuage their anxiety over the nation's rapid and continuous evolution toward modernization and their fear of increasing racial diversity. This chapter is essential to understanding Americans' wartime fears because it establishes a baseline from which wartime fears and anxieties grew.

Chapter Two focuses on the drive for military preparedness from 1914 to 1917. For proponents of a larger military, the United States' relative military weakness at the start of the Great War highlighted the decline of the Anglo Saxon race's masculine character and virility. The new demands of the modern world, advocates believed, had softened the Anglo Saxon male by removing him from the independent, outdoor experience that once shaped him. Supporters of preparedness, then, attempted to sell the

⁴⁵ See Thomas W. Gregory to Woodrow Wilson, June 14, 1917, *PWW*, Vol. XLII, 510-511 and Jeffrey A. Smith, *War and Press Freedom: The Problem of Prerogative Power* (New York: 1999), 40.

need for a larger military and, consequently, a regeneration of Anglo Saxon manhood during American neutrality as essential to national security against foreign invasion. Elite Anglo Saxon views on race and gender were central to preparedness propaganda. Graphic stories of the humiliation of foreign conquest and Darwinistically-tinged images of strong nations subjugating the weak offered glimpses into the pitfalls of both military unpreparedness and national timidity.

The third chapter argues that many Americans' attitude toward non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants in recent decades and Teutonic racial stereotypes informed propagandists' and other Americans' suspicion of German-American loyalty to the United States during the neutrality period. Between 1914 and 1917 (1915 in particular), actual German spy and saboteur networks were at work in the United States and were guided by the German Embassy in Washington. Although acts of real intrigue were rare, most politicians and propagandists depicted them as part of a Pan-German conspiracy to dominate the United States, a plot in which many German-Americans were believed to be complicit. This chapter hopes to show that common assumptions about German racial traits – clannishness, stubbornness, and efficiency – guided propagandists and Anglo-Saxon Americans' understanding of the German spy threat and apparent immigrant disloyalty. The belief of many Americans that their Teutonic neighbors were likely to have characteristics amenable to espionage was a significant factor in both spreading distrust of the German-American community, creating the assumption that the spy network was incredibly large, and conditioning the American response to the threat of German intrigue after April 1917.

Chapter Four explores the spy and anti-German propaganda created in 1917 and 1918 and its influence on the wartime backlash against allegedly disloyal German-Americans and their alleged sympathizers. This chapter argues that while the concerns that arose over the trustworthiness of German-Americans during neutrality continued to impact American attitudes after the declaration of war, the heightened sense of uncertainty that accompanied war mobilization intensified middle-class Anglo-Saxon sensitivity to the possibility that a Pan-German spy ring may be in their midst. According to propagandists, German spies – which, at this point, most likely did not exist – were attempting to undermine American mobilization and morale in order to lay the groundwork for a future invasion of the United States. The spy threat, then, was sold as a direct threat to the nation, American democracy, and, ultimately, one's family. While long-felt fears of non-Anglo-Saxon dominance of the nation impacted American attitudes toward the imagined German agent, non-violent coercion and violent vigilantism – in the form of the noose, the club, or the citizen-spy – targeting the alleged enemy within mirrored state, federal, and individual responses to previous perceived foreign attempts to undermine Anglo-Saxon democracy.

The fifth chapter examines propaganda warning of the consequences of a German victory in Europe for the United States and Anglo-Saxon democracy. As this chapter argues, politicians' and propagandists' definition of the war as an existential crisis for American democracy, communities, homes, and families (especially wives and daughters) was informed by their own long-held class and race-based fears of foreign racial and/or ideological domination. Politicians and propagandists framed their arguments in a number of ways. Each variety, however, shared two common themes.

The first was the assumption that a Teutonic military invasion and the death of Anglo-Saxon democracy, the final stage of the Pan-German conspiracy for world domination, would inevitably follow a German victory in Europe. In language more closely associated with the Cold War and the War on Terror, anxious Americans maintained that the United States and the Allies must defeat Germany “over there” to avoid having to fight them “over here.” The second theme focused on the supposed racial and moral degeneration of the German race since Prussian dominance of Germany had become solidified in 1871, which acted as a warning as to how an invasion of the United States by the bestial Teutonic horde would look and feel. It seemed logical to many that if the Kaiser and his impulsive, merciless minions were able to spread Prussian decivilization across Europe that they would venture to eliminate democracy in the United States as well. Besides, German spies, saboteurs, and propagandists were already at work spreading disunity and laying the groundwork for invasion.

Chapter Six covers the ways in which the press and ministers across the country portrayed the war as a defense of worldwide Christianity. Although the so-called progressive clergy presented the war as a crusade to defend the earthly manifestation of Christ’s teachings (democracy), the progressive clergy’s sermons and publications often discussed Germany and the war in apocalyptic terms and as a campaign against the Devil’s plan to establish an autocratic world government. Patriotic organizations, the secular press, and ministers of more traditional churches did the same. Such an approach – using Christian rhetoric to mobilize minds and feet – touched on pre-modern sensitivities at a time when United States was transitioning uncomfortably into a more modern society. Christian-based propaganda during neutrality and wartime appears to

have had three aims: to incite “courageous Christianity,” to impose non-Christian or Satanic connotations on German religion, and to depict the Kaiser (mostly through political cartoons) as Satan’s willing subordinate.

Finally, the dissertation will close with an epilogue that will briefly focus on the postwar impact of wartime fears and propaganda before providing a summary of the study’s larger points. The most immediate consequence of wartime propaganda was the transition of Americans’ anxieties from the German menace onto the so-called “American Bolsheviki.” With the German menace eliminated as of November 1918, a still excitable nation sanctioned the federal government’s attempt to combat the imagined widespread influence of a foreign and undemocratic ideology.⁴⁶ At the same time, the warnings and promises put forth in wartime propaganda proved hollow, resulting in the

⁴⁶ The discussion of this transition is not original. William Preston focused on the perception within the federal government and society that radicalism was more closely linked with race than class. Preston emphasized the nativist sentiment that permeated the nation during the late nineteenth century and Progressive Era and argued that the war emergency became an opportunity to release internal tensions against the perceived dangers of undemocratic foreign ideologies. Federal attempts to squash the IWW were a precursor to the postwar deportations of aliens during the January 1920 “Palmer raids.” The IWW had a sizable alien following, was the most radical labor organization of the Progressive Era, and often publicly embraced the Russian Bolsheviks. Due to a revival of nativism in the second decade of the century, the IWW, Preston claimed, was the most feared labor organization in the United States. The methods of protest the IWW employed – massive strikes, industrial sabotage, and calls for social revolution – did more than threaten to rekindle past ethnic and disturbances. Preston maintained that nativism exaggerated the IWW threat, leading middle and upper class Americans to imagine an underlying foreign element working to overthrow the social order. Before the war, but more so during, immigrants dealt with a double burden: foreign birth and fabricated charges of radicalism. *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933* (Urbana: 1994) Works focusing on the rise and fall of the Socialist Party in the United States include David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America: A History* (Chicago: 1955); Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: 1957); James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New York: 1967), and Ernest Freeberg, *Democracy’s Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, the Great War, and the Right to Dissent* (Cambridge, MA: 2008). The definitive work on the IWW is Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: 1969). A recent work on the impact of the Red Scare on African-Americans is Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: 2011).

For a look at how American fear of Bolshevism impacted U.S. foreign policy during the First World War, see David S. Foglesong, *America’s Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920* (Chapel Hill: 1995). The most widely-cited study of the first Red Scare remains Robert K. Murray, *The Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: 1955). A recent popular history by Ann Hagedorn is very successful at capturing the national mood during the Red Scare. *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America, 1919* (New York: 2007).

onset of postwar disillusionment and the recognition that the masses, even in a democracy, could be drawn to whatever cause a skilled propagandist desired. The use and abuse of propaganda and fear of the foreign “other” would continue to haunt the mainstream American discourse into the twenty-first century. The dissertation will end with a reiteration of the importance of race, “whiteness” in particular, on how Americans dealt with modernism and experienced the Great War.

The present study is an attempt to understand the emotional impact of propaganda in wartime while challenging the notion that Americans, when confronted with war or the prospect of it, are uniquely motivated above all by altruism and high ideals. During the Cuban, Philippine, Vietnam, and second Iraq wars, American leaders defined the conflicts in terms of an idealistic mission to free foreign peoples from oppression and to shine the “light” of democracy where it had never shone before. Despite Americans’ historic tendency to believe that their country is burdened with a divine task, each of these wars was or became extremely unpopular. What convinced many Americans to stand behind the Wilson Administration in the First World War was not faith in the “city upon a hill” as much as the belief that Imperial Germany posed a clear and present danger to their family and community. German saboteurs had infiltrated the munitions and shipping industry, ready to set American factories and ships aflame. Spies could be anywhere – inciting strikes, spreading lies about the American war effort, or even persuading African Americans to flee to Mexico where they could join a multiracial invasion force. If the United States and the Allies were unsuccessful on the Western Front, the full weight of the German army would soon descend on American shores, their victory assured by the work of the saboteurs, spies, Bolsheviks, and anti-American

propagandists already in country. These arguments – presented through a variety of mediums – defined the American understanding of the meaning of the First World War. Understanding the propaganda of this era allows us to understand what the war meant to Americans and why the pressure to conform and sacrifice was so intense.

CHAPTER 1 – RACE, ANXIETY, AND THE SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS, 1865-1914

“My country in 1900 is something totally different from my country of 1860.” – Henry Adams, 1900¹

“The scum of creation has been dumped on us. Some of our principal cities are more foreign than American. The most dangerous and corrupting hordes of the Old World have invaded us. The vice and crime which they have planted in our midst are sickening and terrifying.” – Thomas E. Watson, 1912²

“We are unsettled to the very roots of our being,” wrote Walter Lippmann. “We are not used to a complicated civilization, we don’t know how to behave when personal contact and eternal authority have disappeared. There are no precedents to guide us, no wisdom that wasn’t made for a simpler age. We have changed our environment more quickly than we know how to change ourselves.” According to the 25 year-old co-founder and co-editor of the progressive journal *The New Republic*, the modern world had grown beyond the control of traditional institutions and thought, leaving Americans in a general state of anxiety and unable to cope with or comprehend society’s myriad problems and growing complexity. The products of this dissonance – which Lippmann referred to as “bogey” – prevented the creation of rational and reliable alternatives to premodern and now ineffectual notions of politics and morality. “Generally, however, we create the bogeys by pulling the bedclothes over our heads....For in the seclusion and

¹ Neil A. Wynn, *From Progressivism to Prosperity: World War I and American Society* (New York: 1986), 3.

² Richard Hofstadter, *Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: 1955), 82-83

half-light of class tradition and private superstition, in a whispered and hesitant atmosphere, phantoms thrive.”³

Lippmann published *Drift and Mastery* in 1914, the year the empires of Europe began crossing swords across the globe and the United States began its tortuous experience with neutrality. Yet, as this chapter will argue, Lippmann’s words would have been equally relevant and timely had they been written in any of the previous fifty years. This chapter will examine the phantoms that haunted Americans from the end of the Civil War to the eve of the First World War – such as changes in southern race relations, social revolution, the unassimilable immigrant, and “race suicide” – and the failure of progressive reform to alleviate these anxieties. To understand why Americans were afraid of outsiders and, to some degree, each other during the First World War through the postwar Red Scare, it is important to understand how Americans came to view each other and their ever-evolving world. Progressivism, as much as it was a unified ideology, was grounded in fear and anxiety, mostly of the white middle and upper classes. And much of this anxiety was grounded in the Anglo-Saxon middle-class’s perception of itself and its views of the non-white or the semi-white “Other” living at home, abroad, and migrating to American shores.⁴ It is no coincidence that the Progressive Era overlapped with the age of imperialism, when wealthy, white, western peoples – the United States included – sought dominion over the lives and lands of the world’s “savage races” and, at the same time, began to look at each other through a

³ Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery: An Attempt to Diagnose the Current Unrest* (New York: 1914), p. 92, 136.

⁴ Societies have employed the idea of the “Other” over the centuries not only as a means of defining one’s enemies but also defining oneself. As John Dower has stated in the context of racial attitudes in the Pacific Theater in World War II, “many of the idioms of ‘race’ [or “Other”]...are best understood in the larger context of hierarchical and authoritarian thinking,” *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986), x-xi.

similar racial lens.⁵ In short, as this chapter will contend, Gilded Age and Progressive Era racial beliefs were central to the creation of Lippmann's bogeys. Aside from changes in the landscape and technology, the appearance of the "new" immigrants and the relative independence of African Americans were physical reminders that the world was not what it once was. By 1914, native-born Anglo-Saxon Americans still had not gained control of their new modern environment.

Historians of the Progressive Era rarely have agreed on *who* the progressives actually were and what motivated them. To Elizabeth Sanders, the progressives were southern and western congressmen looking to bring about populist and labor reform legislation through less revolutionary means. Most earlier scholars have defined the progressives as mostly urban middle-class whites. In *Age of Reform*, Richard Hofstadter argued that while Populism contributed intellectually to progressivism, traditional middle-class elites disgusted by rampant greed and corruption led the charge for reform. The middle-class, he contended, were motivated by status anxiety, fearing the new industrial capitalism would strip them of their social and political prestige. Similarly, Robert Wiebe's progressives were middle-class state-builders hoping to build and wield a

⁵ Perhaps the most convincing work on how American racism informed the United States's imperial experience is Stuart Creighton Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1898-1903* (New Haven, CT: 1982); The most recent work conflating the American frontier experience – including confrontations with Native Americans – with overseas imperialism is David Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (New York: 2007); Mary Renda provided a focused look at the interplay between race and economics in American imperialism in the latter stages of the imperial age in *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: 2001). Also see Walter LaFabier, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithica, NY: 1963). Works on European imperialism often place the American experience in context. See J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (1902; London: 1948); Heinz Gollwitzer, *Europe in the Age of Imperialism, 1880-1914* [Translated from the German by David Adam and Stanley Baron] (New York: 1969); Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: 1998); Sven Lindqvist, *"Exterminate All the Brutes": One Man's Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and the Origins of European Genocide* [translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate] (New York: 1996); John H. Morrow, Jr., *The Great War: An Imperial History* (New York: 2004), 5-15.

government bureaucracy capable of bringing order to society and preserving the status quo. Richard McCormick also viewed progressives as state-builders, but he argued that their primary drive was the need to tame rapacious capitalism through increased government regulation over the economy. While acknowledging their middle-class status, Daniel T. Rodgers regarded progressives as mere copycats who looked to European states for ways to deal with the political and social effects of industrialization.⁶

Yet progressivism's significance to American history goes well beyond state-building and legislative achievements. Historians of race, class, and culture have made vital contributions to our understanding of the turn-of-the-century United States. Michael McGerr paid scant attention to the political and legislative aspects of progressivism, choosing instead to highlight how the Victorian culture from whence middle-class reformers came guided reformers. The Victorians of the post-Civil War era, he maintained, "became progressives, with new views of the individual, society, gender, and pleasure. To make the world safe for themselves and their children, the progressive middle class sallied forth to reform the nation." Progressives acted to impose Victorian self-discipline on the capitalist and working classes, McGerr argued, not out of a sense of fear or status anxiety. Instead, the Victorian/progressive middle-class hoped to remake society in its own middle-class image because they found their fellow Americans' values and morality to be lacking. Race, McGerr claimed, had little to do with progressive reform. The majority of progressives were "[f]irm believers in white superiority" but "were nonetheless more interested in making the world middle-class than making it

⁶ Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917* (Chicago: 1999); Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: 1967); Richard L. McCormick, "The Discovery that Business Corrupts Politics: A Reappraisal of the Origins of Progressivism," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (April 1981), 247-274; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: 1998).

Anglo-Saxon.”⁷ Yet McGerr neglects to note that middle-class progressives often credited their social status to the maintenance of their superior Anglo-Saxon or “white” racial characteristics.

Other historians have argued that a common sense of secular or religious mission – with its basis in the cultural dominance of Puritan and evangelical Protestant values – was the key element of the progressive impulse. Clyde Griffen maintained that “Progressivism was the sensitive conscience of American Protestantism” at “a time when American idealism was practically synonymous with Protestant idealism and vice versa.” Progressives, according to Griffen, were driven by faith in human redemption.⁸ In a similar vein, Richard Gamble studied how “progressive Christianity” helped transform the American view of its mission at home and in the world. American Protestants’ long-held and uncompromising belief in progress and their nation’s divine mission stood at the heart of progressive Christianity. The United States was the embodiment of Christ’s teachings on earth, progressive Christians and their predecessors believed, and its values and institutions must be spread abroad and strengthened at home. This traditional belief in the nation as a “city upon a hill,” Gamble argued, eventually made American entry into the First World War and Wilsonian internationalism easier for Americans to accept – at least until the League of Nations debacle.⁹ Most recently, Jackson Lears has argued that a “millennialist hope” that Christ would soon return characterized the period. Reformers believed that American society was in desperate need of regenerative reform (a moral

⁷ Michael McGerr *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (New York: 2005), quotes from pages xiv-xv, 192.

⁸ Clyde Griffen, “The Progressive Ethos,” in Stanley Coben and Lorman Ratner (eds). *The Development of an American Culture* (Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: 1970). Quote from page 123.

⁹ Richard M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation* (Wilmington, DE: 2003).

rebirth), Lears maintained, that would reverse the nation's spiritual decline. The Great War turned out to be both the peak and depths of this millennial urge.¹⁰

Nell Irvin Painter described the period from 1877 to 1919 as a time when the American people “traded the fears and struggles of a mostly rural, fundamentally agrarian society for the fears and struggles of one that was largely urban and industrial.” She found the origins of Progressive Era in the middle-class's fear of working-class violence and revolution. “Plain, stark fear,” Painter claimed, “lay at the core of much clamor for reform on the part of the middle and upper classes.” During the period of modernization, “subjective as well as objective realities shaped responses to events, classes, and individuals.” For instance, objectively speaking, workers showed time and again that they were willing to strike or even resort of violence to gain concessions from employers. Yet in the subjective view of the white middle-class, Painter argued, striking workers took the shape of dangerous radicals looking to overthrow civilization. The Progressive Era to Painter, then, was marked by fear and the cognitive dissonance resulting from the intellectual gap between democracy and the desire to maintain the social hierarchy.¹¹

Many of these works have defined the term “progressive” too narrowly. Progressivism was not a “movement” nor was it confined to a particular class or region. Instead, it was a cultural phenomenon. Agrarian politicians and middle-class urban reformers were in fact seeking social order but so were conservative wealthy elites and labor organizations. At the same time, the “order” a particular group sought could be social, economic, racial, or a combination of these. Aside from a vague “search for order,” not one single factor united these disparate groups into a movement. Yet, as this

¹⁰ Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: 2009).

¹¹ Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919* (New York: 1987). Quotes from pages x-xii, xliii.

chapter argues, the interplay between fear and white American racial attitudes drove much of what has been considered “progressive” reform while also informing Americans’ reactions to perceived threats to the Republic during World War I. Forging a society in which different races in some way were segregated and/or forced to conform to a strict Protestant-inspired vision of “Americanism” was a means by which anxious Americans could control the unnerving by-products of modernization.

Victorian notions of Anglo-Saxon superiority, Protestant evangelism, and the cult of domesticity largely dominated American culture in the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth. “The high degree of eventual assimilation of Victorian values by nineteenth-century immigrant groups from virtually every part of Europe, and middle class African Americans,” explained historian Stanley Coben, contributed to the Victorians’ “conscious effort to retain cultural and economic dominance.”¹² That cultural dominance, or moral consensus, was so overwhelming that Victorians and progressives presumed that it was an aspect of human nature. This belief, in turn, bred resentment against individuals who looked, acted, or prayed differently from themselves. Looking back, George Creel, the wartime head of the Committee on Public Information, recalled this confidence in the progressive worldview: “Life presented no soul-tearing problems necessitating a call for psychiatrists, for there were things that decent people did and things they did not do. And all knew what they were.”¹³ Despite Creel’s nostalgic

¹² Stanley Coben, *Rebellion Against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America* (New York: 1991), 27.

¹³ Griffen, “The Progressive Ethos,” 130. The quote is from Creel’s 1947 memoir *Rebel at Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* (New York: 1947). Creel’s depiction of the Progressive Era as a period of self-confidence needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Progressivism was in fact a reaction to problems that required urgent attention and were not as simple as he implied. Creel was a master at propaganda as well as after the fact justifications for his actions as head of the CPI. In 1920 he published a heroic twist on his and the CPI’s role in bringing about victory in the First World War. The book’s ridiculous title, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on*

recollection of progressives' moral certitude, Protestant Victorians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not feel certain what the future held or that their political or cultural dominance would continue.

Beginning during the Civil War, the United States embarked on a period of unprecedented political, economic, and social modernization. The side effects of modernization, though, appeared increasingly menacing to Anglo-Saxon hegemony and, by extension, the Republic. White southerners in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century appear to have been uniquely skilled in the art of creating phantom threats to their social and physical well-being. Fear of society-altering change – in their case, the reversal of the white-black racial hierarchy – had been a centuries-long tradition.¹⁴ Emancipation and the relative trauma of Reconstruction intensified white southerners' alarm at the prospect of "Negro domination" and its imagined political, economic, and sexual consequences because they believed blacks lacked the innate ability to restrain their animalistic urges and govern themselves. Only ignorant outsiders, such as northern Republicans and exploitative carpetbaggers, would hand African-Americans economic and political freedom – just as abolitionists had allegedly attempted in the antebellum period.

Yet with the end of Reconstruction and the reconstitution of Democratic state governments, southern whites again had free rein to protect themselves from the specter of black politics and sexual violence. As younger generations of southern whites and

Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe, tells the reader all he or she has to know about Creel's reliability as a source.

¹⁴ The seminal works on the formation of racism in American history are Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1968) and Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: 1975, 2003 edition), 327-337. A classic work on the fear of "Negro domination" being imposed on the white South from outside the region is Stephen A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (New York, 1970).

blacks came of age after the paternalism and deference of slavery had ended, whites viewed the re-imposition of a strict racial order as critical to the safety of their institutions and families. Southern whites attempted to remove the threat of black political power (either Republican or Populist), first through threats and acts of physical violence against black voters and, later, legal disfranchisement.¹⁵ At the same time, the public act of lynching was the ultimate means of suppressing black men's perceived sexual licentiousness. Calls for protection against "incitement of the evil passion in the vicious" were often loud and public. A Georgia woman proclaimed in 1897 that "if it takes lynching to protect woman's dearest possessions from drunken, raving human beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week if it becomes necessary."¹⁶ It appears as if white Americans, mostly southerners, attempted to do just that. From 1885 to 1907 more Americans were lynched than federal and state governments executed under the law. The number of lynchings in 1892 alone equaled twice the number of legal executions. While the number of southern lynchings per year was on the decline in the first decade of the twentieth century, the percentage of black victims increased from the 1890s (75 to 90 percent).¹⁷

The decrease in lynchings after the turn of the century suggests that moderate and well-to-do southern whites handled their racial fears with a tinge of rationality. To them, the public murder of "uppity" blacks could have negative economic repercussions for the

¹⁵ Edward L. Ayers has argued that, at least in the case of Mississippi, legal disfranchisement was seen as a way to both "purge the black vote" as well as restrain racial violence that could result in the return of direct federal (and Republican) oversight of state elections, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: 1992), 146-149. Also see Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888-1908* (Chapel Hill, NC: 2001) and C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1887-1913* (Baton Rouge, LA: 1951), 321-349.

¹⁶ Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: 1984), 128.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 185

developing New South economy. Not only could racial violence injure the South's reputation and slow outside financial investment, but it also could induce cheap black labor to seek safer and greener pastures in the West or North. Legal segregation promised to keep blacks in their place, slow the embarrassing frequency of lynchings and race riots, and ensure the continued flow of capital into the region.¹⁸ Segregation had been an unspoken aspect of southern society since Reconstruction. Whites and blacks rarely interacted unless absolutely necessary, in "work, commerce, politics, travel." Segregation laws would draw firm boundary lines within these areas and then some.¹⁹

Segregation was thus decidedly "progressive" in that it meant to forge social order while maintaining a semblance of racial peace. Segregation, southern white progressives believed, was good for both races. It protected white southern womanhood from the rapacious "black beast," relieved the white man of his duty to protect her honor and his family through violence, and gave blacks time to develop into capable American citizens. Few were more certain that full separation of the races was an effectively progressive policy than Virginia native Woodrow Wilson. Gary Gerstle has described Wilson as "deeply racist in his thoughts and politics, and apparently he was comfortable with being so." In his multi-volume *History of the American People* published in 1902, Wilson depicted African-Americans as both animal-like and as children incapable of self-control

¹⁸ McGerr, *Fierce Discontent*, 187-188. Stephen Hahn has argued that although the "Great Migration" did not begin in earnest until 1915, black migration out of the rural South and into southern cities, northern cities, and the western plains began in the 1880s largely in response to "the hardships, humiliations, and coercions that black migrants believed whites were determined to inflict on them," *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: 2003), 456-457

¹⁹ Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 136-146. Quote from 136. Also see Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 211-212; Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: 1955); Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*; Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: 1998); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: 1998). For information on the black experience with racism and segregation in the Progressive Era North, see Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1993).

and self-governance. At the same time, he also judged southern whites responsible for ensuring that blacks evolved socially. Segregation, Wilson believed, would allow the South – and the United States at large – to run like a well-oiled machine. “The freedom of the machine,” he said in a speech at the Hampton Institute in 1897, “comes from the perfect adjustment of all its parts.” Separation of the races was a crucial modification that was necessary lest the machine “go to pieces and every part...suffer its separate destruction.” Wilson would apply this metaphor as President, segregating the federal civil service.²⁰

Yet despite Wilson’s and other elite southern whites’ agreement that segregation benefited African-Americans as much, if not more, than whites, fears of the stereotypically bestial black man continued to be a salient factor in how they viewed race. *The Birth of a Nation*, D.W. Griffith’s 1915 film adaptation of Thomas Dixon’s best-selling novel *The Clansman*, epitomized white southerners’ lingering anxiety over “Negro domination.” Although not a supporter of the Ku Klux Klan, Wilson is said to have given the film his full endorsement after its screening in the White House.²¹ As will be discussed in a later chapter, the wartime emergency and German spy hysteria that

²⁰ Gary Gerstle, “Race and Nation in the Thought and Politics of Woodrow Wilson” in John Milton Cooper (ed.) *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 93-123. Quotes from pages 94 and 106.

²¹ John Milton Cooper, Jr., Wilson’s most recent biographer, claimed the President was tricked into allowing the film to be screened in the White House. Dixon, whom Cooper referred to as merely a “fellow student” of Wilson’s at Johns Hopkins, later admitted that he had said nothing to the President about the film’s content, only “that I would show him the birth of a new art.” Yet after the film had ended, Wilson is alleged to have said “It is like writing history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all so terribly true.” It is doubtful Wilson uttered these words, but Dixon and Griffith exploited the publicity of the White House screening and deemed it a “presidential seal of approval,” *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: 2010), 272-273. Arthur Lennig also doubted the Wilson quote, but implied that Wilson and Dixon were more than mere acquaintances by citing Dixon’s dedication of his 1913 novel *The Southerner* to “our first Southern-born President since Lincoln, my friend and college-mate, Woodrow Wilson.” “Myth and Fact: The Reception of ‘The Birth of a Nation,’” *Film History*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2004), 120-122. Quote from page 120.

struck the nation in the early months of American intervention in the First World War exacerbated these fears within the South.

Yet despite the fear-filled drama of the “New” South, perhaps the most anxiety-inducing aspect of post-Civil War modernization in the nation at large was the floodtide of immigration from Asia and southern and eastern Europe. Beginning in the 1870s, the number of Russian, Polish, Czech, Lithuanian, Greek, Italian, Japanese, and Chinese (at least until 1882) immigrants finding their way to American cities and farms grew and eventually overwhelmed that of the more acceptable yet still racially distinctive Germans, Scandinavians, and Irish. Victorians became increasingly anxious about the stability of American institutions and the endurance of Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture. The “new” immigrants appeared far different from those who came in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Those from Europe looked white, but many were poor, dirty, uneducated, Catholic or Jewish, and appeared to have little use for Victorian notions of morality.²² They came from the backward corners of the world that had not, and might never, catch up with the political, technological, or economic advances of the northern European races. They also overwhelmed the nation’s largest industrial centers. By 1900, roughly eighty percent of the populations of New York, Chicago, and Detroit were either foreign born or second generation Americans.²³

²² John Bodnar has shown that the myth that the “new” immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the dregs of European society is not altogether true. Many were of the middling classes. The poorest of the poor could not afford to come and the rich had too much at stake at home to leave. Many who came to the United States at this time were day laborers, farmhands, and miners in the Old World. At the same time, many of these laborers were not born into that position, many being the sons of landowners without a viable tract of land to inherit. Late nineteenth century immigration from eastern Europe even produced a fair number of skilled workers, especially from the industrializing Habsburg province of Bohemia, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington, IN: 1985), 13, 19.

²³ Wynn. *From Progressivism to Prosperity*, 4.

Although many Victorians conceded that most inferior races (except for African-Americans) could eventually progress to a higher state of civilization, they could climb that ladder only so far so fast. For the most part their station in life was considered hereditary and their potential growth limited. This left Victorians concerned about many immigrants' capacity for self-government, as evidenced by their role in corrupt urban machine politics and the radical political ideologies they brought with them from Europe. In other words, the fear was that as rapid industrialization continued to demand inexpensive labor and the number of non-Anglo-Saxons migrating to the United States remained on the rise, potentially the Republic – identified as the product of the Anglo-Saxon race and culture – would cease to exist.²⁴ Alien hordes, the more skittish Anglo-Saxon Protestants believed, were invading the nation. In order to save their institutions, culture, and race, many Victorians looked to bring order to their society by reforming their institutions and Americanizing the “Other.”

American perceptions of the immigrant as a potential enemy of American values and democracy has earned a great deal of attention from scholars. The standard work on American nativism is still John Higham's 1955 treatise *Strangers in the Land*. Higham argued that the American people passed through three nativist traditions prior to 1925. During the first two, covering the colonial and revolutionary period as well as the era from the ratification of the Constitution to the opening of the Civil War, Americans defined themselves based on what they were not and “aimed from the outset to define the nation's enemies rather than its essence.” The period from 1860 to 1925 – of which the vast majority of the book covers – was characterized by a racial nativism based in “the

²⁴ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: 1999), 20-90.

Anglo-Saxon tradition,” which “characterized the in-group directly, the alien forces only by implication.” The nation’s greatness, then, was defined by the institutions and values of the Anglo-Saxon “race.” Yet, as Higham convincingly showed, the popularity of nativism in the period of modernization encountered peaks and valleys depending on economic, intellectual, and political circumstances as well as the confidence which native-born Anglo-Saxons had in their institutions and ability to “Americanize” their new neighbors. At times, anti-Catholicism dominated nativist discourse. At other points, like during the economically tortuous 1890s, nativist thoughts turned toward immigration restriction and scientific racism. Later the chauvinistic and nationalistic mindset of the First World War and Red Scare established the atmosphere in which the immigration of “undesirable” aliens could be cut off almost completely.²⁵

Although Higham’s comprehensive study has mostly stood the test of time, other scholars have either found fault in his argument or focused on aspects of American nativism Higham ignored or left understudied. William Preston, Jr. concentrated on how racial nativism influenced federal legal authorities – that is, the Departments of Justice and Labor – in the first decades of the twentieth century. Preston argued that the federal government’s conflation of immigrants with political radicals highlighted the United States’s hidden anti-democratic traditions. Much of the book centered on federal repression of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), founded in 1905. Regardless of whether the largely immigrant IWW earned its reputation as the most subversive working-class organization the nation had yet encountered, Preston contended, from its founding until its eventual demise “the federal government saw the internal security

²⁵ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1955). Quotes from page 9.

problem largely in terms of the I.W.W. threat.” The federal government chose to combat the racially and politically alien organization with kangaroo courts, imprisonment, forced deportations and by inspiring vigilante violence. In Preston’s view American nativism in the Progressive Era burned red hot at all times.²⁶

Gary Gerstle viewed the disciplining of unseemly and potentially dangerous immigrants in the Progressive Era from a cultural perspective. In *American Crucible*, Gerstle chose to focus on the relationship between what he called “racial” and “civic nationalism” in order to explain how Americans understood the connections between race and immigration. According to Gerstle, Theodore Roosevelt’s conception of race and Americanism shaped the American vision of citizenship during the period and beyond. The “Rooseveltian nation” sought political and social equality for all, irrespective of race or nationality. Yet, at the same time, Americans followed Roosevelt’s lead in requiring immigrants and political radicals to “Americanize” in order to show their suitability for incorporation into the national community. Americanization, in the Rooseveltian sense, could only come through harsh discipline and a complete disavowal of one’s Old World traditions. This discipline could come through the public school system or even the threat of deportation. According to Gerstle, then, Americans acted on their nativism by applying pressure that was more social than physical.²⁷

Dale T. Knobel has taken on Higham directly, claiming that instead of characterizing nativism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a widespread cultural phenomenon, scholars should focus on nativism as an organized movement and on what bound nativists to their cause. According to Knobel, the social benefits of

²⁶ William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933* (Urbana, IL: 1963). Quote from page 5.

²⁷ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: 2001).

belonging to a fraternal society as well as an unyielding defense of republicanism drew men to nativist groups and each other. Surprisingly, though, Knobel puts very little stock in racial nativism. His study, then, takes a narrow view of nativism and seems to divorce it from the social, political, and economic changes taking place around the organizations he studied. At the same time, to use the term “movement” to describe American nativism implies a consistency of values across groups and time periods that Higham and others have effectively shown did not exist.²⁸

Matthew Frye Jacobson provides the most convincing counterpoint to Higham’s conclusions. His is the most complete work on the development of perceived gradations of whiteness in American history and how those differences affected American views of foreigners. Beginning with the 1790 naturalization law that allowed only “free white persons” to become citizens, Jacobson traced the shift in Anglo-Saxon Americans’ assessment of what constituted a “white” person compared to a “non-white” from the earliest days of the Republic to the mid-1960s. Notions of whiteness, he argued, shifted in response to the needs of the labor market and perceptions of immigrants’ biological unfitness for self-government. These two factors resulted in a dialectical tension that was difficult to resolve during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century because industrialization brought “old stock” Americans face to face with people who looked white but whose dress, behavior, and culture appeared almost as alien to Anglo-Saxons as that of Africans or Chinese. Anglo-Saxons attempted to mitigate this by breaking down whiteness into biological gradations. In short, Jacobson argued that the massive influx of new immigrants in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era marked a turn “from the

²⁸ Daniel T. Knobel, *“America for the Americans”: The Nativist Movement in the United States* (New York: 1996).

unquestioned hegemony of a unified race of ‘white persons’ to a contest over political ‘fitness’ among a now fragmented, hierarchically arranged series of distinct ‘white races.’”²⁹

The most obviously alarming means in which the “lesser” white races threatened the Republic in the late nineteenth century was through strikes and radical labor ideologies. As Jacobson has noted, “by its violation of ‘civilized’ standards of conduct...immigrant radicalism offered incontrovertible proof of the immigrants’ troubling racial pedigree.” Radicalism, then, was the ideology of the racially inferior, those who did not have an in-born appreciation for democracy.³⁰ Various forms of radicalism and socialism gained popularity among agricultural and industrial workers throughout most of the country in the late nineteenth century. Yet despite the race-based assumptions of many in the middle and upper classes, most labor radicals did not seek social or political revolution nor were they uniformly foreign-born. While the most successful form of political insurgency in the Gilded Age – Populism – attracted a mostly homogenous group of native-born whites, most European immigrants did not subscribe to radical ideologies. Improved working conditions and wages, workers’ control of capital, and working-class solidarity against employers drew some to socialism, populism, or (for

²⁹ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*. Quote from page 42-43. The earliest studies of whiteness examined its creation as an essential aspect of white supremacy and the oppression of African-Americans. Theodore Allen studied Irish immigrants, arguing that while they were considered racially inferior in Great Britain that was not the case in the United States, where they enjoyed the privileges of American white supremacy, *The Invention of the White Race: Volume One: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (London: 1994). David Roediger claimed that employers compensated white workers for the low wages paid to them in the late nineteenth century by offering them a sense of social and political superiority over their black neighbors and co-workers, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: 1991). According to Grace Elizabeth Hale, the development of mass culture from 1890 to 1940 helped perpetuate the notion of black-white segregation as a national phenomenon. This was done by making blackness “visible” and whiteness “invisible” in American culture, Hale, *Making Whiteness*. Nell Irvin Painter traced the development of whiteness from the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans up to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the United States, *The History of White People* (New York: 2010).

³⁰ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 168.

the most radical) anarchism before and during the Progressive Era. Yet, as historian John Bodnar argued, “Militancy and loyalty to the political and economic goals of workers were not givens” within European immigrant communities.³¹ None of these movements were substantial enough to pose a legitimate threat to Anglo-Saxon rule and democracy. Perception, however, is often more important than reality. As Painter and others have argued, many progressive politicians, motivated by fear of working-class revolution, tried to undercut radical ideologies through labor-friendly federal reforms and anti-trust legislation.³²

But before the era of progressive reform, the Victorian middle-class confronted radicalism with blanket arrests and the use of federal and National Guard troops against strikes. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877, triggered by wage cuts and complaints over working conditions, was one of the earliest instances in which white Victorians expressed existential concerns about their seemingly less-than-white neighbors. The strike began along the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and spread like wildfire from one coast of the United States to the other. Ultimately, the strike temporarily shut down over 75,000 miles of track. More importantly, though, crowds of non-railroad workers supportive of the strikers’ cause took to the streets, blocking the passage of trains, destroying railroad property, looting businesses, and attacking militia and police forces sent to quell their resistance. Battles between strikers and soldiers in Pittsburgh killed twenty-five, while in Chicago as many as fifty died in street fighting. At the same time, while black and white workers in the mid-Atlantic states joined forces against the railroad companies, whites in San Francisco lashed out at the Chinese workers who symbolized to them the wickedness

³¹ Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, 85-116. Quote from page 116.

³² Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, x-xii. Also see Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 195-200, 299-300; Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 178-181.

of the South Pacific Railroad. Over the course of the forty-five day strike, President Rutherford B. Hayes and several governors sent approximately 45,000 militiamen and 2,000 federal troops to break up the strikes and reopen much of the nation's railroads.³³

Despite the fact the strike was a spontaneous and unorganized affair and that most of the strikers and rioters were native-born workers, to middle and upper class elites a subversive foreign element of inferior racial composition threatened American civilization. In late July, John Hay, soon to become Secretary of State, expressed a sense of imminent doom and resignation in a letter to his father-in-law: "Any hour the mob chooses it can destroy any city in the country – that is the simple truth." From the pulpit of his elite Brooklyn church, Henry Ward Beecher harangued labor organizers as foreign and a threat to the Republic: "The trade union, originated under the European system, destroys liberty....I do not say that a dollar a day is enough to support a man and five children if he insists on smoking and drinking beer....But the man who cannot live on bread and water is not fit to live." The religious weekly the *Independent* claimed the "Rioters are worse than mad dogs" and must be dealt with as if they were a revolutionary band of rats or cockroaches:

"If the club of the policeman, knocking out the brains of the rioter, will answer, then well and good; but if it does not promptly meet the exigency, then bullets and bayonets, canister and grape...constitute one remedy and one duty of the hour....Napoleon was right when he said that the way to deal with a mob is to exterminate it."³⁴

³³ Philip S. Foner, *The Great Labor Strike of 1877* (New York: 1977); Robert J. Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America: 1870-1976* (Urbana, IL: 2001), 30-32; Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*. 15-18.

³⁴ Foner, *Great Labor Strike*, 9, 119-120, 192. Matthew Frye Jacobson further discussed Hay's seeming infatuation with the strike. In 1883, Hay published a novel entitled *The Bread-Winners*, which framed the strike as a contest between respectable types and the foreign mob who not only did not share in the prosperity of their betters but also suffered from severe and innate character flaws. *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: 2000), 91-93.

Some equated the actions of the strikers with those of the Native American “savages” the U.S. Army battled on the frontier. The front page headline of the *New York Herald* on July 23 cried out, “INSURRECTION!...The Great Railroad Strike Becomes a Savage War.” When the *Herald* reported four days later that Indians had attacked western settlers, the paper’s editors referred to the incident as “The Red Man’s Strike.”³⁵

The long-term consequence of the railroad strike was that it crystallized in the minds of American elites that working-class movements were un-American and potentially subversive. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* framed the situation as a legitimate red scare. The strikes, it said, were the “nearest approach we have yet had to Communism in America” and government authorities needed to save the country from “the darker horrors of that system.”³⁶ The *New York Tribune* pointed the finger at Germans and Irishmen, among the most acceptable of European immigrants in the Gilded Age: “We have taken into our body politic the refuse of the Paris Commune, incendiaries from Berlin and Tipperary, some hundreds of thousands of European agitators, who are always at war with every form of government thus far known among civilized nations.” The editors of the *New York Herald* claimed the nationwide strike was “instigated by men incapable of understanding our [Anglo-Saxon] ideas and principles.”³⁷ The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 strengthened the Anglo-Saxon hold on “pure” whiteness and “true” civilization. Anarchism and communism, it appeared, were the political ideologies of lesser white races, those without the ingrained ability to understand liberty.

³⁵ Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York: 1985), 484. Slotkin argues that the use of terms such as “savage” or “red” to describe both Indians and strikers was merely metaphorical and a means by which concerned social elites and government officials hoped to convince the American people of the necessity of using force against the strikers. Yet placed in the context of contemporary beliefs about race and whiteness, such comparisons can be taken literally. See Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 166-167.

³⁶ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 32.

³⁷ Quote from Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 31.

Yet as Higham has noted, the 1877 railroad strike did not completely weld fears of radicalism to American nativism. To middle and upper class Victorians in the 1870s, the idea that the working classes could be teeming with revolutionary fervor was a thought as alien as the suspected immigrant radicals themselves. Thus, confidence in Anglo-Saxon culture and the immigrants' ability to conform to its standards remained intact. According to Higham, the incident "which crystallized nationalistic fears of immigrant radicalism" came nine years later in Haymarket Square in Chicago.³⁸ William Preston concurred, calling the Haymarket riot a "historical watershed that sent anarchism into oblivion and raised nativism to new heights."³⁹ Violence began on May 3, 1886, after strikers at the McCormick reaper works attacked replacement workers. City police opened fire, killing or wounding six men. An anarchist group comprised mostly of German immigrants known as the International Working People's Association (IWPA) responded by urging supporters to arm themselves and come to a rally in Haymarket Square the following evening.⁴⁰ As policemen tried to disperse the small crowd, a bomb was thrown at the officers, leading to a lethal shootout. Eight anarchists were convicted on the flimsiest of evidence for organizing the rally and throwing the bomb. The jury sentenced seven to death (only four were executed) and the other to a long prison term.⁴¹

In terms of size and destructiveness, the riot in Haymarket Square was barely a hiccup compared to the nationwide convulsion of 1877. Yet the 1886 riot triggered a

³⁸ Ibid., 31-32. Quote from page 54.

³⁹ Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*, 25.

⁴⁰ Local sections of the IWPA functioned in most of the nation's large cities, such as New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, New Orleans, and even in some western cities and towns. The Chicago branch was the strongest, however, and every year commemorated the 1871 Paris Commune, whose shadow had loomed over the 1877 railroad strikes. Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 47.

⁴¹ Ibid., 47-50; Michael Fellman, *In the Name of God and Country: Reconsidering Terrorism in American History* (New Haven, CT: 2010), 143-185; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 54-56. The most recent work devoted entirely to the Haymarket riot is James R. Green, *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America* (New York: 2006).

wave of nativist and nationalist hysteria in Midwestern and Northeastern cities to a degree to which the 1877 strike could not compare. Vigilante organizations sprang up in various cities – including a group of Civil War veterans calling themselves the Grand Army of the Republic – in order to rid their communities of threatening foreign political ideologies. State and municipal authorities beefed up militia and police units. A group of wealthy Americans donated stretches of land in and around Chicago to the state of Illinois so that a militia base could be erected near the city (eventually Fort Sheridan and the Great Lakes Naval Training Station).⁴²

Why did the Haymarket riot elicit such a drastic response? The incident provided further proof to the Anglo-Saxon elite classes that their new “semi-white” neighbors were a dangerous lot that threatened not only their institutions but their lives as well. After 1886, the 1877 railroad strike appeared as less of an anomaly and more like the beginning of a perilous trend, the source of which could be found in the non-English-speaking or heavily-accented neighborhoods in the nation’s cities and towns. At the same time, explanations and visual depictions of the accused ringleaders in the press suggest that native-born white Americans viewed the foreign anarchists as they did Indians or African-Americans – as racial “Others” who, perhaps due to inborn deficiencies, had yet to acquire an appreciation for Anglo-Saxon notions of liberty and order.

Apocalyptic and racialized descriptions of the anarchistic immigrant cropped up in Chicago and elsewhere in the days, weeks, months, and even years after the riot. Newspapers generally referred to the “new” and now seemingly untrustworthy immigrants as “the very scum and offal of Europe,” “Europe’s human and inhuman

⁴² Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 54, 57; Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 79.

“rubbish,” and their coming as “an invasion of venomous reptiles.”⁴³ The *Chicago Times* described “The enemy forces” as “rag-tag and bob-tail cutthroats of Beelzebub from the Rhine, the Vistula, and the Elbe.” The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* suggested that Americans “whip these Slavic wolves back to the European dens from which they issue, or in some sense exterminate them.” The *New York Times* referred to radical immigrants as diseased, suggesting that “the sovereign remedy” to their ailment was “a Gatling gun” or “hemp [hanging], in judicious doses.”⁴⁴

In February 1886, nearly three months before the riot, *Harper's Weekly* printed a Thomas Nast cartoon depicting the immigrant anarchist as wolf-like, with wild eyes and wild hair dragging a “Bloody Red Flag” across the ground (Figure 1-1). The flag and the man’s animal-like appearance suggest that Nast and his editors saw a clear connection between the anarchist’s racial make-up and the danger of his ideology or, at the very least, assumed their readers would find the relationship real or plausible. In June, a month after the riot, *Harper's* published another Nast illustration of the beastly, subhuman anarchist. This time he held a pistol in one hand, a flag labeled “Anarchist War” in the other, rested a bomb between his feet, and stood upon the American flag, desecrating the sacred symbol of Anglo-Saxon freedom (Figure 1-2). As in the February cartoon, the scraggly anarchist’s eyes have a wild, untamed quality that may imply that the immigrant anarchist did not have full control over his mental faculties.⁴⁵

⁴³ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 55.

⁴⁴ Quotes from Michael Fellman, *In the Name of God and Country*, 144-145, 148.

⁴⁵ Nast cartoons in *Harper's Weekly* reprinted in *Ibid.*, 170-171.



Figure 1-1. Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, February 27, 1886

Other commentators compared the radical immigrant after Haymarket to the Anglo-Saxon race and did not like what they saw in the immediate and distant future. A business journalist considered anarchy “a blood disease” that had never afflicted the Anglo-Saxon. “I am no race worshipper,” he claimed, “but...if the master race of this continent is subordinated to or overrun with the communistic and revolutionary races, it will be in grave danger of social disaster.” Reverend Theodore T. Munger, a leading advocate of evolutionary theology and great admirer of the Anglo-Saxon race, described the values of the anarchist immigrant as diametrically opposed to those of white native-born English speakers. The Haymarket affair, he argued, consisted of “anarchism, lawlessness...labor strikes, and a general violation of personal rights such as the Anglo-Saxon race has not witnessed since the Magna Charta.” The immigrants’ ideology of choice was a “horrible tyranny” that was “wholly of foreign origin” in a freedom-loving,

Anglo-Saxon nation.⁴⁶ Even Civil War hero and Indian fighter William Tecumseh Sherman viewed the Haymarket affair in apocalyptic terms: “There will soon come an armed contest between Capital and Labor. They will oppose each other not with words and arguments, but with shot and shell, gunpowder and cannon. The better classes are tired of the insane howlings of the lower strata, and they mean to stop them.”⁴⁷



Figure 1-2. Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, June 5, 1886

With the Haymarket bombing, the stereotype of the radical, unshaven, bomb-throwing, un-American immigrant became part of the American cultural landscape. Consequently, as the number of immigrants from central, southern, and eastern Europe continued to grow and massive, terrifying strikes persisted through the various depressions of the 1890s, many within the “respectable classes” identified nearly all immigrants and members of the working class with radicalism and social revolution.⁴⁸ But more important in terms of the present study on the wartime fear culture of thirty

⁴⁶ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 138.

⁴⁷ Fellman, *In the Name of God and Country*, 148-149.

⁴⁸ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 34-44.

years later is the fact that, in the case of Haymarket, seven of the eight sentenced to death or imprisonment were German immigrants.⁴⁹ Of the between 723 and 861 anarchists that scholars have identified as living in Chicago at this time, only roughly 175 were native-born English-speakers. The vast majority were Germans joined by other central and eastern Europeans.⁵⁰ These numbers are significant because they reinforced old conservative Anglo-Saxon views that radicalism was a character trait of German immigrants (as well as Russians and Hungarians). Many of the so-called “Forty-Eighters” who fled Germany after the failed revolutions in the mid-nineteenth century settled in the American south and west where some founded the Marxist movement in the United States. As early as the 1850s, native-born Anglo-Saxons saw German radicalism as a legitimate threat to the nation.⁵¹ Seeing that such assumptions carried over to the Haymarket riot over thirty years later, it is not a stretch to argue that the same stereotype informed conservative white Americans’ supposition that German intrigue was behind the perceived rising tide of Bolshevism in the country from 1918 to 1919.

Although the causal connection made between aliens and the growth of radicalism during this time was tenuous at best, perceptions that the two were inseparable solidified in the 1880s. Yet fears of radicalism did not completely undermine old stock Americans’ confidence in their ability to refashion many of the new arrivals into reasonable facsimiles of themselves. In other words, while race was central to how most white Americans viewed the rest of the world’s inhabitants, Progressive Era racial thought left

⁴⁹ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 54. Albert Parsons, from an old American family in Alabama, was the only native-born defendant in the Haymarket case. His country of origin was not enough to save him as he was among those hanged. Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 49.

⁵⁰ Bruce C. Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago’s Anarchists, 1870-1900* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1988), 102-126, cited in Fellman, *In the Name of God and Country*, 150.

⁵¹ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 8-9. Jacobson also spoke to this issue, citing a “tendency among American conservatives and the managerial elite to pin American radicalism on immigrants from Germany, Russian, or Hungary.” Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 86. Also see Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, 105-106.

some wiggle room. As Jacobson has argued, Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did not misunderstand the meaning of the word “race” – instead, they assumed biology could explain *all* of the differences between nations, cultures, and peoples.⁵² This conclusion, however, did not come until the late nineteenth century. Before, generally two schools of thought persisted. One was nationalistic, explaining American greatness as the result of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, the creation of a mixed and clearly superior American race, or both. The other was centered in scientific explanations of differences in physical traits among humans. Most scientists prior to the late nineteenth century, however, did not see races as separate species but as part of a universal mankind whose racial differences were the result of the influence of environmental factors on their evolution. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these two notions of race thinking coalesced as national consciousnesses grew in United States and Europe. Under government and nationalistic pressure, European scientists began studying the different nationalities of the Old World and placing them in neat biologically-determined categories easily identifiable by language, dress, and physical traits. Slowly, what nationalist thought defined as the unique traits of each nation became part of individuals’ racial assumptions about their own people and others.⁵³

In the United States nationalistic and scientific racial philosophies combined in the 1880s and into the 1900s to form a similarly comprehensive (and convoluted) view of racial differences. Aside from the very rare advocate of complete racial equality, perhaps the most commonly held view of race in the United States was the old idea that the

⁵² Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 6.

⁵³ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 133-134.

environment in which one lived could affect his or her racial characteristics and those patterns of behavior could be passed on to future generations. Supporters of this theory, known as Lamarckism, believed that races and species acquired certain biological characteristics while adapting to their surroundings. Like their European counterparts, many Americans, most notably Theodore Roosevelt, conflated race with not only skin color and culture but also language. Each nation and/or race was fashioned out of a distinct set of environmental circumstances that, over the centuries, bound the people together as a distinct race and nation under a common language.⁵⁴ Many reform-minded Americans believed that the behavior and even brain size of foreign white “Others” would self-modify if properly educated and exposed to Protestant Victorian culture.⁵⁵

This would suggest, then, that Lamarckian theory found traction in the United States during this period largely because it upheld the redemptive qualities of the dominant evangelical Protestant ethos. Such thinking was the basis of most urban reform movements. The vast majority of immigrant industrial workers lived in overcrowded, unsanitary, and depressing urban slums. Many proponents of the Social Gospel and Lamarckism believed the instability and strain of living in such conditions precluded assimilation into Victorian culture. How could one match Victorian standards of cleanliness in such filth? How could men’s and women’s separate spheres be maintained in such poverty? How could children – laboring to help sustain the family or left to roam the rough streets – find a way out through education? Was desperation not a viable explanation for rampant prostitution, alcoholism, and criminality in the slums? Many of

⁵⁴ Thomas Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge, LA: 1980), 6, 37-44; Carl N. Degler, *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (New York: 1991), 20-25.

⁵⁵ Richard Weiss, “Racism in the Era of Industrialization,” in Gary B. Nash and Richard Weiss (eds.), *The Great Fear: Race in the Mind of America* (New York: 1970), 135.

the most passionate believers in the power of the urban environment to shape one's biological traits became settlement house workers, temperance crusaders, anti-prostitution campaigners, and muckraking journalists hoping to expose the evils of the slums and bring Victorian values and order to those who needed it the most.

Yet, still, such urban reformers as Jacob Riis, Lillian Wald and Jane Addams wrote of the tenements and the alien slum dwellers as if they existed in a foreign and primitive land. Riis, a Danish immigrant, observed in lower Manhattan that "The one thing you shall vainly ask for in the chief city of America is a distinctly American community." He wrote *How the Other Half Lived* in 1890 in the form of a travelogue, describing the tenement as an exotic and savage environment. He described the inhabitants as being representative of a type, in the manner of a naturalist or the 1890s version of the Crocodile Hunter. For instance, Riis claimed that the Chinese are "by nature as clean as the cat, which he resembles in his traits of cruel cunning, and savage fury when aroused." Likewise, "The Italian is gay, lighthearted and, if his fur is not stroked the wrong way, inoffensive as a child." Wald's description of "the odors that assailed me from every side" and the "past evil-smelling uncovered garbage cans" in the urban slums implied as much about her attitude toward its residents as the environment. Addams lamented many immigrants' childlike dependence on urban machine bosses. "Primitive people, such as the south Italian peasants who live in the Nineteenth Ward," she wrote in 1898, "deep down in their hearts admire nothing so much as the good man [ward boss]." ⁵⁶ Even the most sympathetic of middle-class reformers could not help but see the targets of their compassion through a somewhat racialized lens.

⁵⁶ Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 121-127, 184-185. Quotes from pages 122, 124, 125, 185.

Yet what separated the more sympathetic Americans from those more hostile to the immigrant hoards were assumptions about the speed in which lesser races could assimilate. The more unwelcoming Americans, although believers in Lamarckism and the assimilationist power of Anglo-Saxon culture, were far more pessimistic than urban humanitarian reformers about the ability of many semi-whites and non-whites to properly assimilate culturally and physically. Such individuals saw the development of racial characteristics as an extraordinarily slow process. In 1915, economic reformer John R. Commons expressed a common opinion when he said that “[r]ace differences are established in the very blood and physical constitution. They are most difficult to eradicate, and they yield only to the slow processes of the centuries.” Because of the time it would take to biologically (and, thus, culturally) reprogram the more backward immigrants from Asia and southern and eastern Europe, in the eyes of some Americans any attempt to assimilate them in the short term was doomed to failure.⁵⁷ To many Americans, then, continuing to allow largely unassimilable, racially inferior, and presumably undemocratic aliens to flood the nation’s shores would only exacerbate the nation’s growing social problems.

One solution was to selectively restrict or completely cut off immigration from the more backward corners of the world. The first successful attempt came in 1882 when Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was the culmination of over a decade of violence and political lobbying in California.⁵⁸ Yet it was not until later in that decade

⁵⁷ Weiss, “Race in the Era of Industrialization,” 135.

⁵⁸ The *San Francisco Examiner* in 1880 viewed restriction as the federal government’s racial obligation: “Every country owes its first duty to its own race and citizens....This duty properly observed on this Coast will cause much riddance of the Chinese pest.” Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 79-83. Jacobson also argued that, when it came to anti-Chinese action in the west, perceived racial differences among whites seemed to fade away. Those who would be ostracized or considered of a “lesser” race elsewhere, most notably Irish workers, were considered fully “white” in the Chinese immigration debate and often took part in anti-

and into the next, when fears of immigrant radicalism and anarchism kept many white Americans awake at night, that a more broadly conceived effort at immigration restriction began to take shape. Restriction gained the support of upper, middle, and lower class whites (native-born and some of the “old” immigrant groups) during the late 1880s and beyond. Various “patriotic” societies of concerned citizens and moderate labor unions hoping to separate themselves from the radicals unsuccessfully pressured Congress for tough immigration restriction. The general lack of interest among most Democrats and Republicans, industry’s desire for cheap labor, and Americans’ continued confidence in assimilation kept restriction legislation on the backburner. Even the pro-restriction newspapers, such as the *Philadelphia Press* in 1888 believed that “[t]he strong stomach of American civilization may, and doubtless will, digest and assimilate ultimately this unsavory and repellent throng.”⁵⁹

At the same time, however, expressing confidence in assimilation and believing it could occur quickly enough to prevent damage to the nation were entirely different. The leading advocate for restriction in Congress during the 1890s was Massachusetts Senator, New England Brahmin, and Anglo-Saxon supremacist Henry Cabot Lodge. Lodge’s prescribed method of restriction was the literacy test, which he believed would not curtail the immigration of the more educated and desirable races of western and northern Europe by any significant degree. Literacy tests, he argued would mostly affect the “new” immigrants of the past two decades, “races with which the English-speaking people have never hitherto assimilated, and who are most alien to the great body of the people of the

Chinese violence, protests, and lobbying. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 55, 57, 158-161. Also see Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 18, 25; Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History* (New York: 2003), 130-132, 144; Morton Keller, *Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge: 1977), 156-158.

⁵⁹ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 55-67. Quote from page 63.

United States.”⁶⁰ Lodge’s and his supporters’ belief in the literacy test fit with the prevailing Lamarckian notion that environmental factors determined one’s behavior and biological traits, which in turn would be passed on genetically to ensuing generations. From this point of view, backwardness begets backwardness. Eastern and southern European immigrants were inferior because over the centuries their race did not adequately adjust to the pressures of its environment. Consequently, this meant that their homelands remained underdeveloped, a condition which these races had shown they are not capable of reversing. It was no surprise to Lodge and others, then, that illiteracy was high in southern and eastern Europe. And there was little that Anglo-Saxondom could do to change that. In front of the Senate in 1895, Lodge argued,

“There is a limit to the capacity of any race for assimilating and elevating an inferior race, and when you begin to pour in unlimited numbers people of alien or lower races of less social efficiency and less moral force, you are running the most frightful risk that any people can run. The lowering of a great race means not only its own decline but that of human civilization.”⁶¹

Lodge’s concern about racial degeneration and its cost to civilization are indicative of another racial attitude common during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era – a belief in Social Darwinism and its principle of “the survival of the fittest.” To native-born white Americans and their presumed racial cousins in western Europe, Darwinian

⁶⁰ Quote from Weiss, “Race in the Era of Industrialization, 133. For information on the various restrictionist organizations see Knobel, *America for the Americans*” and McGerr *Fierce Discontent*, 211-214. For more on Lodge’s advocacy for restriction and his relationship with the prominent Immigration Restriction League as well as the IRL’s activities, see Knobel, *America for the Americans*”, 219-223; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 60, 72, 77-82; Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 197-299; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 101-105; Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 52-53. Like Knobel, Degler claims emphatically that racial concerns did not play a significant role in the push for immigration restriction. According to Degler, calls for restriction were based not on race but a “concern for social homogeneity.” Yet at a time when racial (and, by extension, cultural) categorization was the socially and scientifically accepted standard, homogeneity invariably meant a desire for racial uniformity.

⁶¹ Quote from Weiss, “Race in the Era of Industrialization, 134.

natural selection explained who they were, where they had been, where they should go, and what was “wrong” with everyone else. The assumption that the most biologically fit races survived to propagate their germ explained the evolution of human progress. The dominance of the leading white races – mainly the Anglo-Saxons and Teutons – was the result of their in-born and superior ability to manipulate their environment and crush their racial competitors. How else could they have developed the most technologically advanced and wealthiest nations in the world while at the same time forcing countless racial inferiors to bow to their military mastery? Herbert Spencer, the Englishman credited with adapting Darwinian natural law to social and economic life, found a receptive American audience when he said in 1885,

“Not simply do we see that in the competition among individuals of the same kind, survival of the fittest has from the beginning furthered the production of a higher type; but we see that to the unceasing warfare between species is mainly due to both growth and organization. Without universal conflict there would have been no development of the active powers.”⁶²

Richard Hofstadter has described the United States from the 1870s to the early 1900s as “*the Darwinian country*” because of the speed and enthusiasm in which many Americans accepted Darwin’s theory of natural law and Spencer’s social and economic application of the doctrine. The rapid changes taking place in the United States during this period and new and emerging challenges to the status quo inspired many native-born whites to seize upon whatever could validate the current social, economic, and racial

⁶² Quote from Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944; New York: 1959), 86. Also see Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought* (Philadelphia: 1979); Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 10-17, 112-113; Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: 1965), 144-175; Allan Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Cost of the New Scientific Racism* (New York: 1977), 105-107; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 135-136.

hierarchy.⁶³ At the same time, despite the apparent biological determinism of Social Darwinism, it was able to coexist comfortably in most white Americans' minds with Lamarckism and their faith in Protestant redemption because it was based on the theory that races competed for dominance within and survived by adapting to their natural habitat. The confluence of Social Darwinism and Lamarckism, for instance, was the backbone of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier myth, that a unique American race and "character" (in-born love of liberty and independence of thought) was forged from a variety of white races while taming the natural environment and the Native Americans of the "wild" West. The theoretical combination also was used to explain the backwardness of the new immigrant races from Asia and Europe who developed under far less advantageous circumstances compared to the Anglo-Saxon or the Teuton and showed little ability to better their situation.

Along with Turner's "frontier thesis," the mixture of Lamarckism and Social Darwinism also compelled many native-born whites – most if the upsurge in nationalism in 1898 is any indication – to look overseas in order to continue fulfilling the nation's racial Manifest Destiny and prove its superiority to the other white imperial powers. Josiah Strong, a Social Gospel minister asked in 1893, "Is there any room for doubt that this race [Anglo-Saxons], unless devitalized by alcohol and tobacco, is destined to dispossess many weaker races, assimilate others, and mold the remainder, until, in a very true and important sense, it has Anglo-Saxonized mankind?" Eight years prior, in 1885, he argued that soon "the final competition of the races for which the Anglo-Saxon race is

⁶³ As Hofstadter has shown, acceptance of Social Darwinism did not come without some degree of reorientation of existing rationales for the social order. For instance, Americans struggled to find ways in which a belief in the Christian brotherhood of man could coincide with the principle that brutal biological struggle determined a race's economic, social, and international standing. *Social Darwinism*, 85-104. Quote from pages 4-5, emphasis his.

being schooled” was on the horizon. Strong was certain that the racial apocalypse would end well for the Anglo-Saxon United States: “[T]his powerful race will move down upon Mexico, down upon Central and South America, out upon the islands of the sea, over upon Africa and beyond. And can anyone doubt that the result of this competition will be the survival of the fittest?”⁶⁴

Few white English-speaking Americans in the late 1890s would have disagreed with Strong’s assessment because of the crystal clear link between Social Darwinism, Lamarckism, and the confidence American imperialists such as Strong, Roosevelt, and Lodge expressed in the power of the Anglo-Saxon (or in the case of Roosevelt, the “English-speaking”) race to gradually assimilate their “little brown brothers” in the Caribbean and the Philippines.⁶⁵ It also reinforced American fear of the inferior white immigrants continuing to pour into the country. The difference between the nation’s dark-skinned imperial charges and the new European immigrant in the minds of many racially conservative Americans was location. The Filipinos and Cubans were located offshore while southern and eastern European immigrants were living in the nation’s major cities, their mere presence posing a direct danger to Anglo-Saxon supremacy and American democratic institutions. Neither group – the imperial subject or the immigrant – was expected to assimilate or Americanize quickly. By establishing democratic

⁶⁴ Quotes from Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 108. It is important to point out that Strong, like most imperialists subscribing to the idea of the “white man’s burden,” did not view their race’s dominance of their inferiors as a perpetually violent affair. Instead, racial hegemony came in the way of imparting American “civilization” and institutions to the natives in the hopes that one day their race could progress to the same point as (or catch up with) that of the dominant Anglo-Saxons.

⁶⁵ Roosevelt rejected the notion of a superior Anglo-Saxon race because, as Thomas Dyer posited, his Dutch ancestry precluded him from claiming an Anglo-Saxon heritage. Roosevelt preferred the term “English-speaking” races because it implied whites who spoke other European languages “could still gain admission into the group which Roosevelt believed was destined to dominate the world.” Despite the clear inconsistency in his racial views, Dyer continued, every definition Roosevelt employed were generally accepted during his lifetime. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 28-29, 57.

institutions for them (i.e. bringing “civilization”) in their faraway homelands, American imperialists could benevolently assimilate the yellow and brown races by merely sitting back and watching them progress over the generations toward civilization. They could not afford to be so patient with the inferior races within their borders.⁶⁶

Thus, segregation, Social Darwinism, Lamarckism (i.e. Americanization), immigration restriction, or a combination of the three failed to provide a clear understanding of or solution to the perceived racial disorder in the United States. To make matters worse for the more racially skittish, in the first decade of the twentieth century the influx of new immigrants grew exponentially, greatly outpacing that of old immigrants. Between 1901 and 1905, nearly 960,000 migrated from Italy, almost 660,000 from Russia, and over 940,000 from the polygot Austro-Hungarian Empire. By contrast, only 177,000 Germans and 385,000 British and Irish – the presumably more assimilable of Europe’s races – sought residence in the United States during this same period. In 1914, before the start of the First World War greatly curtailed immigration in general, 73.4 percent of all immigrants coming to the United States began their journey in southern and eastern Europe.⁶⁷ Although most Americans at this time were generally optimistic about the course of technological and economic advancements, these numbers were a stark reminder that progress came with seemingly ominous side effects. In many parts of the country, “America” looked less like “America” than it had even a decade

⁶⁶ Jacobson has argued that out of American imperialism grew “a pan-European, pan-white political sensibility” in the United States “that countervailed the otherwise divisive logic of Anglo-Saxon supremacy dominating other arenas of public discourse.” The degree to which Anglo-Saxons and their supposed racial inferiors bonded over the issue, however, is left unexplained. The continued racialization of non-Anglo-Saxons by Anglo-Saxons – and non-Anglo-Saxons’ acknowledgement of their own racial distinctiveness – into the 1900s suggests that the unity to which Jacobson referred was either short-lived or at best shaky. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 207-210. Quote from page 210.

⁶⁷ Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Age of the Titans: The Progressive Era and World War I* (New York: 1988), 147.

before. This development, many believed, posed a threat to not only American institutions but also the Anglo-Saxon or English-speaking race.

White English-speakers were not helping their own cause. Shortly before the invasion of southern and eastern Europeans after the turn of the century, many social and political elites became believers in the concept of “race suicide” and its scientifically-based cousin, eugenics. According to historian Thomas Dyer, “Few social science theories gripped the Western imagination more completely at the turn of the century than the idea of race suicide.” As the term implies, the better races in the United States and Europe risked extinction because of their unwillingness to outbreed the lesser races.⁶⁸ Industrialization and urbanization were changing the face of the family. The Anglo-Saxon’s slow transformation from frontier-taming farmer to prosperous, white collar professional and businessman required fewer children and resulted in a sharp decrease in the size of old stock American families. With this assumption in mind, the massive influx of “new” immigrants after the turn of the century appeared that much more threatening. If these demographic trends continued, many believed, the old stock American race would soon become outnumbered in its own country and eventually underbreed itself out of existence.⁶⁹

Theodore Roosevelt led the charge against racial degeneration, a fear that consumed him from the early 1890s until his death in 1919. Roosevelt’s concern sprang from his views on imperialism and Social Darwinism. He subscribed to Josiah Strong’s

⁶⁸ Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 143.

⁶⁹ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 147; Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1963), 79-81, 161; Gossett, *Race: History of an Idea*, 170-171; Weiss, “Racism in the Era of Industrialization,” 132-134; Chase, *Legacy of Malthus*, 54-56; Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 143-167; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 50, 80-81; Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 25-26.

notion of an imminent racial Armageddon but held out the possibility that old stock American whites could end up on the losing end. Only if a race produced “good breeders as well as good fighters,” he believed, would it “win a great place” among the world’s nations. In 1901, with the frontier “closed” at home and the Anglo-Saxon birthrate declining, then-Vice President Roosevelt claimed that the country faced a “grave cause for anxiety” and that the most pressing matter the nation must confront was “the problem of the diminishing birthrate and all that it implies.” A major source of the problem and anxiety were the “criminal[s] against the race” who held marriage in contempt and had “a heart so cold as to know no passion and a brain so shallow and selfish as to dislike having children.” Consequently, as Dyer argued, Roosevelt (and presumably those of similar mind) “determined the worth of a female as an American citizen by counting her children” and scorned those who preferred luxury to child-rearing. Husbands and wives, then, were both responsible for the potential degeneration and the means by which the English-speaking race could be uplifted.⁷⁰

Fears of racial degeneration stemming from the underbreeding of the old stock and the overwhelming number of new immigrants were directly tied to the increasing popularity of eugenics in the 1900s and 1910s. According to Michael McGerr, “the eugenicists, with their focus on the unborn, were the ultimate exclusionists.”⁷¹ Unlike immigration restriction, which looked to limit or exclude certain racial inferiors from entering the United States, eugenicists hoped to prevent them from entering the world in the first place. The underlying theory behind eugenics was Mendelian inheritance, a

⁷⁰ Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 145, 150, 152-153. Kristin Hoganson effectively, though briefly, ties Roosevelt’s worries over race suicide to another of his concerns – the degeneration of American manhood, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: 1998), 153-154.

⁷¹ McGerr, *Fierce Discontent*, 214.

hypothesis developed by Austrian monk Gregor Mendel in the 1860s and largely ignored by scientists until the turn of the century. According to Mendel, every species – or, in the case of humans, race – held certain characteristics that its surroundings could not alter and were passed through the generations. But, as historian Carl Degler has argued, there was more to eugenics than the acknowledgement that one's biology was inherited. "It also laid an obligation on society to do something about controlling heredity," he argued, "an obligation that usually translated into preventing the reproduction of mentally defective or criminally inclined people."⁷² For example, J.S. Holmes wrote in the September 1914 *Atlantic Monthly* that "The removal of the pollution of human inheritance that comes from the worst one or two per cent of its stock would, in a few generations, go a very long way toward reducing the numbers in our insane asylums, poorhouses, and jails. This much in the way of eugenic reform can easily be accomplished."⁷³ The inclusion of criminals on the list of undesirables implied that eugenicists assumed that not only physical traits but even unlawful behavior were inherited.

Roosevelt tended to concur with the eugenicist agenda. Writing to the Committee to Study and to Report on the Best Practical Means of Cutting Off the Defective Germ-Plasm in the American Population (part of the American Breeders' Association's

⁷² Quote from Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 44. Some have argued that the study of modern genetics began with Mendel's work on inheritance. Allan Chase maintained that eugenic thought was not new at the turn of the century as Francis Galton, credited as the father of eugenics in the 1900s, actually began his work in the 1860s. At the same time, Chase posited, the welding of Social Darwinism to eugenic thought began in the 1870s with Herbert Spencer, *Legacy of Malthus*, 104-108. Also see Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 150-153; Haller, *Eugenics*; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 78-92; Gossett, *Race: History of an Idea*, 155-163; Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: 2003); Harry Bruinius, *Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity* (New York: 2006).

⁷³ J.S. Holmes, "The Decadence of Human Heredity," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1914, Vol. 114, 308. In 1915, *Atlantic Monthly* had a circulation of 32,071. *N.W. Ayer & Son's Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer, 1915), 393.

Eugenics Section) in January 1913, the President said “it is obvious that if in the future racial qualities are to be improved, the improving must be wrought mainly by favoring the fecundity of the worthy types....At present, we do just the reverse. There is no check to the fecundity of those who are subnormal.”⁷⁴ That same month, he also wrote to Charles Benedict Davenport, the most well-known eugenicist in the United States, that “Some day we will realize that the prime duty of the good citizen of the right type is to leave his or her blood behind him in the world, and that we have no business permitting the perpetuation of citizens of the wrong type.”⁷⁵ Several state governments agreed. Indiana was the first state to allow involuntary sterilization. The 1907 law targeted “confirmed criminals, idiots, imbeciles, and rapists.” By 1915, thirteen states had similar laws and by 1930 the number reached thirty.⁷⁶ Eugenics was enough of a mainstream issue that in January 1917 the Social Gospel journal *The Outlook* ran an advertisement for *Good Health* magazine that touted eugenics as a “science that is breeding a new race” and “developing an improved human species.” According to the ad, “12,000 sober-minded business men” apply the healthy and wholesome lessons of eugenics to “the care of health in their lives and business.”⁷⁷

Americans fearful of race suicide and advocates of eugenics shared a common goal with immigration restrictionists – the cleansing of unassimilable racial inferiors from

⁷⁴ Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus*, 15.

⁷⁵ Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 159-160. Roosevelt, though, was not an unabashed eugenicist. Although he found great merit in pushing the best within a race to breed with one another, he also believed that breeding should be unrestricted. Many eugenic scientists, such as Dr. John J. Cronin, with whom Roosevelt had a fierce public debate, argued that an increase in the likelihood of genetic defects directly correlated with the bearing of a large number of children. In other words, the more children a family produced, the more likely one would suffer from some physical defect. The point here is to show that advocates of eugenics were a mixed bag of scientists and social and political elites. Ibid., 155-156.

⁷⁶ Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 45.

⁷⁷ “What Is ‘Eugenics’?” advertisement, *The Outlook*, January 10, 1917, Vol. CXV, 46. In 1915, The Outlook had a weekly circulation of 105,000. N.W. Ayer & Son’s, 668.

the body politic and the imposition of racial homogeneity and order on a dangerously diverse society. In this sense, scientific racism and fears that the superior stock of Americans faced biological disaster had clear “progressive” undertones. Yet although these issues involved improving the superior races and did not always touch on the so-called immigrant problem, the point is that when the nation was forced to confront the First World War in Europe the American people viewed their world and each other largely through a racial lens. The belief that racial difference explained linguistic, cultural, and behavior distinctions gripped the American mind more tightly in 1914 than it had at any previous time. American views on race and whiteness, then, cannot be divorced from the fear of German spies, invasion, and Bolshevism that permeated American society during and after the war.

At the same time, the wide-ranging belief in the efficacy of eugenics and the Mendelian inheritance implied that Lamarckism was losing favor among Americans. This certainly had been the case in the scientific community since the late 1880s when German biologist August Weismann found that severing the tails of generations of mice did not preclude ensuing generations from growing tails themselves. By 1916, Lamarckism was all but dead to academics as the opinions of sociologists and historians slid toward their biologist colleagues. Some even saw the acceptance of Lamarckism as a danger to the racial health of the nation. A sociologist in 1906 argued that “our power of improving the individual by placing him under better conditions is strictly limited,” warning that “an improved environment tends ultimately to degrade the race by causing an increased survival of the unfit.”⁷⁸ An increasing number of commentators and academics fingered the endless boatloads of southern and eastern European immigrants

⁷⁸ Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 22, 92-93. Quote from page 43.

and the mulatto products of mixed black-white relationships as the “unfit” sources of the perceived racial degeneration of the American population.

Beginning in late 1913 and continuing into 1914, the renowned sociologist Edward A. Ross wrote several articles on the subject for the popular *Century Magazine*. Racial decline was not just in the nation’s future, he contended, it was a fact of life in the here and now. “Thoughtful people whose work takes them into the slime at the bottom of our foreignized cities and industrial centers,” Ross claimed, “find decline actually upon us.” The increasing number of “backward immigrants” (and their children) in proportion to the native-born population constituted “a drag on the social progress of the nation that incorporates them.” “By their presence the foreigners necessarily lower the general plane of intelligence, self-restraint, refinement, orderliness, and efficiency.” Naturally, then, “comes an increase of drink and of the crimes from drink.” Ross also added “sexual immorality,” the proliferation of “private diseases,” “uncleanliness,” and “primitive housewifery” that “fill[ed] the cemetery with tiny graves” to the list of immigrant offenses.⁷⁹

Ross characterized these transgressions, however, as biological traits that posed an existential threat to the nation’s racial well-being. If their accents, behavior, dress, or odor did not give them away, the carriers of such injurious qualities were easily identifiable to the trained eye. According to Ross, “the physiognomy of certain groups unmistakably proclaims inferiority of type.” Among some groups of foreigners he had

⁷⁹ Edward Alsworth Ross, “American and Immigrant Blood: A Study of the Social Effects of Immigration,” *Century Magazine*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (December 1913), 225-232. Quotes from 225, 226, and 232. Thomas Dyer credited Ross with coining the phrase “race suicide” and claimed that Ross was one of two scholars (along with Henry Fairfield Osborn of the New York Museum of Natural History) that most influenced Theodore Roosevelt’s racial beliefs. Dyer also characterizes Ross as Lamarkian, which does not seem to mesh with Ross’s fear of the threat race suicide posed to the United States. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 15-16.

seen, “narrow and sloping foreheads were the rule.” At the same time, “shortness and smallness of crania” as well as their noticeable “facial asymmetry” made the “new” immigrant stick out like a sore thumb. Yet for Ross the issue was not as much their generally unsightly appearance as the fact that “this man will beget children in his image – two or three times as many as the American, – and that these children will beget children.” The result would be the race suicide that obsessed Theodore Roosevelt. The declining native birth rate in comparison to that of the new immigrant would cause the average physical attractiveness, size and stature, moral fiber, and natural intelligence of Americans to drop precipitously. “A people that has no moral respect for its ancestors and no more pride of race than this,” Ross concluded, “deserves the extinction that surely awaits it.”⁸⁰

Ross, however, was far from alone in his convictions. The most famous and influential exposition on the “race problem” in the United States was *The Passing of the Great Race* written by Madison Grant in 1916. Although completely unqualified to make such distinctions – he claimed to practice zoology yet was not trained in biology – Grant divided Europe’s races into three groups – Nordics, Alpines, and Mediterraneans. Likely a minority wherever they were located, the Nordic race, he argued, could be found in Scandinavia, northern Germany, England, and the United States. Nordics were the social, political, economic, and, especially, military innovators of world history who currently served as the leaders and aristocracy of the areas listed above. The Alpines, though, were incapable of developing into more than peasants while the Mediterranean

⁸⁰ Edward Alsworth Ross, “Racial Consequences of Immigration,” *Century Magazine*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (February 1914), 615-622. Quotes from pages 615, 616, and 622.

race, although having displayed a creative streak, were less capable physically than their racial counterparts.⁸¹

The problem in the United States, Grant believed, was twofold. First, American Nordics intentionally imported Alpines and Mediterraneans for their relatively cheap labor. Second, too many Americans fell prey to the “melting pot” theory. Grant did not understate his aversion to Lamarckism: “There exists today a widespread and fatuous belief in the power of environment, as well as of education and opportunity to alter heredity...Such beliefs have done much damage in the past and if allowed to go uncontradicted, may do even more serious damage in the future.” Environment allowed a race “to achieve its maximum development,” he argued, “but the limits of that development are fixed” by its biology. Humanitarian progressive reform directed at immigrants, then, was a waste of time. Grant instead prescribed sterilization and euthanasia. A “mistaken regard for” religious doctrine “and a sentimental belief in the sanctity of human life” precluded the “elimination of defective infants and the sterilization of such adults as are themselves of no value to the community.” Emotional and spiritual roadblocks to such extreme yet natural measures left the superior races of the nation open to extinction.

“We Americans must realize that the altruistic ideals which have controlled our social development during the past century and the maudlin sentimentalism that has made America ‘an asylum for the oppressed,’ are sweeping the nation toward a racial abyss. If the Melting Pot is allowed

⁸¹ Scholars studying the race and immigration in the early twentieth century cannot (and have not) ignored Grant’s influence. See Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 155-157; Haller, *Eugenics*, 149-151; Gossett, *Race: History of an Idea*, 353-364; Weiss, “Racism in the Era of Industrialization,” 137-138; Chase, *Legacy of Malthus*, 166-175; Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 48, 51; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 80-83, 85, 88; Matthew Guterl, “‘Absolute Whiteness’: Mudsills and Menaces in the World of Madison Grant,” in Nancy Lusignan Schultz (ed.), *Fear Itself: Enemies Real & Imagined in American Culture* (West Lafayette, IN: 1999), 149-166; Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington, VT: 2009).

to boil without control and we continue to follow our national motto and deliberately blind ourselves to all 'distinctions of race, creed, or color,' the type of native American of Colonial descent will become as extinct as the Athenian of the age of Pericles, and the Viking of the days of Rollo."⁸²

Although it did not reach its peak in popularity until the early 1920s, the pseudo-scientific *The Passing of the Great Race* received immediate notoriety from many noted scholars, scientists, and scientific publications as well as *The Saturday Evening Post*, one of the most widely-read magazines in the United States.⁸³ Yet as popular as Grant's work was and would become, his vitriolic racism and cataclysmic convictions were far from universally accepted. While, as Jacobson argued, practically all white Americans believed that race explained the cultural and linguistic differences between ethnicities and nationalities, many were not strict biological determinists.⁸⁴ But the fact that Ross's and Grant's views were so widely disseminated and accepted as patently true by millions of Americans suggests that the general attitude toward race and immigration in the United States was taking a turn toward the severe in the mid 1910s. This concerned prominent scholars of race. Columbia University anthropologist Franz Boas, for example, was frustrated by most Americans' assumption that nations were divided along

⁸² Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race: Or, The Racial Basis of European History* (1916; New York: 1922), 16, 18-19, 49, 263.

⁸³ Grant's "scientific" proof of a master race appealed to many in Europe as well, most notably Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. Grant's influence was so great in Germany in the 1920s that Hitler actually plagiarized him in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler's closest advisors were enthusiastic supporters of Grant and helped ensure his book was translated into German before the Nazi rise to power. Chase, *Legacy of Malthus*, 168-171; Black, *War Against the Weak*, 273-276. Thomas Gossett explained the relatively slow acceptance of Grant's book as the result of the sharp decline in immigration because of the war in Europe, *Race: History of an Idea*, 363.

⁸⁴ Jacobson noted that although it may seem to us today that the opinions of men like Grant, Lothrop Stoddard, and others had to have existed on the fringes of American society, the reverse is actually true. Although Grant's cold-hearted racism was not universally accepted, his racial views "shared many of the same basic assumptions" as such mainstream figures as Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, W.E.B. DuBois, and Charlotte Perkins Gillman, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 88.

racial lines: “In vain, sober scientific thought has remonstrated against this identification; the idea is too firmly rooted.”⁸⁵

American racial thought remained greatly unsettled at the beginning of the First World War. Despite the mounting popularity of “scientific” racism, white Americans still had not forged a consistent view of race and whiteness. Even though Lamarckian thought was no longer accepted in academic circles, the vehemence of the wartime “100% Americanism” crusade suggests that it remained a central tenet of white American attitudes toward “un-American” immigrants into the war years. At the same time, though, the anti-German campaigns, postwar “red scare,” and 1924 Immigration Act are evidence that Americans had difficulty viewing immigrants who stepped beyond the bounds of appropriately “American” behavior outside their presumed racial characteristics. Many white Americans felt an impulse to protect themselves and their nation from what they saw as a foreign and dangerous element who, because of their biological composition, would never completely share in the Anglo-Saxon Protestant lifestyle of their betters. Although the perceived scourge of foreign spies and Bolsheviks during the war and postwar appeared to come from nowhere, the truth was that white Americans had psychically created and encountered these bogeys on many occasions. Just as they had during the previous fifty years, Americans during the First World War saw misbehaving African-Americans and immigrants as a threat to the Republic and their bad deeds as the result of “foreign” influence that Americanization alone could not combat. With Lamarckism on the wane and scientific racism on the rise, the stakes of the immigrant problem – as Grant, Ross, and others described it – appeared even higher.

⁸⁵ Franz Boas, “The Race-War Myth,” *Everybody’s Magazine*, November 1914, Vol. XXXI, 672. In 1915, *Everybody’s Magazine* had a monthly circulation of 600,000. *N.W. Ayer & Son’s*, 657.

A belief in the redemptive capabilities of progressive reform did not effectively ease society's social and racial tensions. Reformers in Washington and in urban ghettos often succeeded at bringing efficiency to government administration, spreading social justice, and improving public health. But despite laws protecting labor and limiting the once unlimited power of corporations, class and racial fissures – often considered one and the same – still ran through American society. Employers still exploited labor. Workers still went on strike. Most immigrants, especially of the “new” variety, still did not appear any more “American” than they had when they first began disembarking on American shores. Walter Lippmann's argument in 1914 that the American people were adrift in a sea of uncertainty was a tacit admission that progressivism as it stood had failed to bring social order or cohesion. Not only were American institutions behind the curve but Americans' comprehension of their increasingly complex and diverse society was as well. “We are homeless in a jungle of machines and untamed powers that haunt and lure the imagination,” Lippmann said. “Of course, our culture is confused, our thinking spasmodic, and our emotion out of kilter. No mariner ever enters upon a more uncharted sea than does the average human being born into the twentieth century.”⁸⁶ The fear and anxiety in which the American people encountered on their voyage through wartime neutrality and then belligerency confirmed the validity of Lippmann's concerns. The neutrality and wartime experiences facilitated the creation of “bogey” and phantom menaces in the United States.

⁸⁶ Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery*, 111-112.

CHAPTER 2 – ARMING THE NEURASTHENIC NATION: AMERICAN
MANHOOD AND THE CASE FOR MILITARY PREPAREDNESS, 1914-1917

“In actual practice the professional pacifists do not serve good. They serve evil....The men who are the torch carriers of world civilization are those, and only those, who acknowledge the supreme duty of protecting sacred spiritual things when attacked.” – Theodore Roosevelt, Memorial Day, 1916¹

“It is estimated that one million young men become of age in the United States every year, and they constitute a physical and mental asset which should be conserved, in order that we may endure as a nation; but this asset can only be conserved by subjecting our young men to training, military and athletic, that will render them physically fit, not only to be defenders of the Nation in time of need, but to be the fathers of the Nation as your ancestors were before you, as you are today, and as they must be in the future....Bravery is the common heritage of the Anglo-Saxon.” – Major H.S. Howland, 1916²

Hudson Maxim fancied himself a life saver. “War is inevitable,” he declared in his 1915 work, *Defenseless America*. The eyes of the American people and their leaders, the brother of machine-gun mogul Hiram argued, must be opened to the alarmingly weak state of the nation’s armed forces. Maxim hoped his warning about the perils of being unprepared would at least “save the lives of a few of our people – may save a few homes from the torch – may lessen the area of devastation – may, by adding a little power to our resistance, help to get slightly better terms from the conquerors for our liberation.” His

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, “National Preparedness, Military, Industrial, Social: Speech of Theodore Roosevelt at Kansas City, Missouri, on Memorial Day, 1916” (New York: 1916), from Pamphlets in American History, microfiche (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1983), hereinafter cited as PAH.

² H.S. Howland, “Unpreparedness: An Address Recently Delivered before the Members of the Saint Nicholas Club of the City of New York” (New York: 1916), 18, 22, PAH.

pessimism, he claimed, was grounded in his belief that decades of pacifist propaganda and relative economic prosperity had weakened the martial constitution of the nation's manhood and left the United States both psychologically and materially unprepared to defend itself. "It is generally recognized," Maxim claimed, that a man's "body and mind [are] the sum of his own ancestral experiences." Yet "persons fail to recognize that he is also of necessity a warring animal." In a clear nod to Lamarckian racial development, Maxim argued that "the formative influences of the fierce struggle for existence have made him what he is." In short, "the absence of strife would be as fatal to him in the end as would be the absence of food, air, or water." Yet American men could overcome their growing pacifist tendencies and reinvigorate Anglo-Saxon masculinity by supporting military preparedness. "If it is wrong to insure with armaments against invasion of this country, which invasion would mean the violation of our homes, the rape of our wives and daughters and sisters and sweethearts...then it is wrong to be a man, it is wrong to resent dishonor of the home, and all of us who have any manhood in us should be emasculated."³

Maxim's macabre message in *Defenseless America* was translated to the silver screen as the film *The Battle Cry of Peace*, produced by the British-born J. Stuart Blackton. The *New York Times* described the film as "An animated, arresting, and sometimes lurid argument for the immediate and radical improvement of our national defenses." In between the scenes of burning buildings and unspeakable atrocities against man, woman, and child, several authorities on the state of the American military – such as General Leonard Wood, Admiral George Dewey, War Secretary Lindley Garrison, and Maxim himself – expounded on the images, noting the ways in which Americans now

³ Hudson Maxim, *Defenseless America* (New York: 1915), vii, 28-29, and 304.

could avoid such a fate in the future. One of the most significant aspects of *The Battle Cry of Peace*, however, was the thinly veiled allusion to Germany as the nation's primary foe. "Avowedly the invading force is of no particular nationality," the *Times* reported, "But it is difficult to escape the impression that you are expected to recognize the nationality. They are certainly not Portuguese, for instance." The implied identity of the foe also was not lost on many German-Americans, who protested the film's four-week run at the Majestic Theater in Boston.⁴

Why did Maxim and his associates make such a seemingly extreme argument for preparedness and include such a thinly veiled representation of Germany as the likely future enemy? As this chapter will contend, the cataclysmic implications of *Defenseless America* and *The Battle Cry of Peace*, as well as other similar arguments in preparedness propaganda, suggest that the outbreak of the First World War in Europe reinforced and heightened many Americans' long-held social and cultural anxieties. Looking at the most prevalent ways in which advocates sold military preparedness – as a bulwark against foreign conquest and the further degeneration of Anglo-Saxon manhood – this chapter argues that not only did preparedness propaganda reflect the continuing racial anxieties of its creators and proponents, but it was also a key component to the intensification of middle-class fear after the American declaration of war on strong and virile Germany in April 1917.

⁴ "New York Shelled on 'Movie' Screen," *The New York Times*, August 7, 1915. In 1915, the *New York Times* had a daily circulation of 259,673. *N.W. Ayer & Son's Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: 1915), 674. Erika A. Kuhlman examined the gendered language in *Defenseless America* and *The Battle Cry of Peace*. Maxim consistently used such words as "penetrate" and "invade," she argued, to play on the traditional notion that sturdy men must protect helpless women from the ravages of a bestial enemy. The same theme was evident in the film. *Petticoats and White Feathers: Gender Conformity, Race, the Progressive Peace Movement, and the Debate Over War, 1895-1919* (Westport, CT: 1997), 51.

The nation, as many believed it had been at various times over the past five decades, was in grave danger and several of the side effects of economic modernization were at fault. The rationalization of industrial production and business administration had expanded the white collar middle-class, pulling capable Anglo-Saxon men into the office and a life of ease and away from the physical demands of manual work and nature. As men's bodies, hands, and demeanors were softening, the old martial spirit of the frontier was fading and, consequently, the Anglo-Saxon race degenerating. At the same time, many American imperialists and industrialists, just as they had been in the 1890s, viewed the struggle for overseas empire, economic rivalry, and, consequently, the Great War in Europe as a struggle between races as much as nations. In other words, advocates of military preparedness had genuine and long-held racial and social concerns that they believed a larger military and universal military training (UMT) could solve. The bogeys and phantoms of the past and present were central to preparedness propaganda.

Conceptions of race suicide and masculinity were closely intertwined in the minds of many upper and middle-class Americans during the Progressive Era. The future of a race depended not only on adults' breeding habits but also on the man's ability, or willingness, to protect his family and nation from aggressive neighbors. While the generational aspect of race suicide had long-term implications, the consequences of masculine degeneration were always present. Fictitious stories of a humiliating and bloody invasion of the United States by a more virile and prepared power (such as Germany), then, had clear Darwinian undertones. Only the most physically and psychologically strong races – those who maintained the martial spirit – would prove victorious in the global imperial struggle between the races. The coming of the First

World War raised the stakes of that competition, a contest that some believed could sweep up the United States and, if caught unprepared, mark its downfall. Such popular racial thinking informed the message and motives of many preparedness advocates.

Preparedness advocates promised that strengthening the military through UMT would bring discipline to the working-classes, forge immigrant loyalty, and improve the virility of the Anglo-Saxon male. The foremost proponent of UMT was General Leonard Wood, organizer a series of civilian military training camps mostly in the Northeast – the most famous being in Plattsburg, New York. Despite the contention that UMT would discipline the working-class male and Americanize the immigrant, only well-off businessmen, politicians, and Ivy League students were attracted to and had the leisure time to attend camps such as Plattsburg. Apparently not understanding the economic strains such training would cause working-class families, Theodore Roosevelt often bragged that he had sent his sons to train at Plattsburg while also condemning those who did not do the same as un-American and effeminate. In terms of sheer volume of propaganda, no aspect of preparedness garnered as much attention as UMT.⁵

According to proponents of preparedness, failure to confront these social and racial issues through increased military readiness invited national disaster through foreign

⁵ The best account of the origins of the civilian training camps and the effort to organize them is John Garry Clifford, *The Citizen Soldiers: The Plattsburg Training Camp Movement, 1913-1920* (Lexington, KY: 1972). For a focused look at Leonard Wood's role in organizing the camps and his overall attitude toward UMT, see Jack C. Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael, CA: 1978), 184-202. A few (of many) examples of articles and editorials supporting the camps or training in schools include "An Efficiency Expert on Defense," *Review of Reviews*, January 1915, Vol. LI, 48; "The Plattsburg Idea," *New Republic*, Oct. 9, 1915, Vol. 4, 247-249; "National Defense at Plattsburg," *Literary Digest*, August 21, 1915, Vol. LI, 336-338 (on newspaper opinion across the United States); "Compulsory Military Training in Schools and the National Need for Physical Preparedness," *Current Opinion*, August 1916, Vol. LXI, 115-117; "Universal Military Training," *The Outlook*, January 10, 1917, Vol. CXIV, 60-61. In 1915 of the publications cited here were: *Review of Reviews* (175,000 per month), *New Republic* (45,000 per week), *Literary Digest* (258,000 per week), and *Current Opinion* (94,000). N.W. Ayer & Son's, 651, 656, and 664. The data on *New Republic* taken from Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, IL: 1964), 425.

subjugation. What would happen, they wondered, if the United States were faced with a similar test as the warring nations in Europe? Were American men up to the task of defending their families, homes, and communities? Preparedness propaganda attempted to provide answers to these questions with allusions to the decline of Anglo-Saxon masculinity and specter of foreign invasion. Such propaganda hit American eyes and ears at a time when the unsettling side effects of modernization continued to dominate American social and political discourse. This, in turn, made such outlandish claims of an imminent invasion more salient to some and, after the declaration of war in April 1917, acceptable to a significant number of Americans.

Scholars have offered many interpretations of the preparedness campaign. In his quite tilted yet classic work on the United States during the neutrality period, Walter Millis portrayed the preparedness campaign in conspiratorial and Orwellian terms. Aside from giving the Republican Party a foreign policy they could espouse in the 1916 Presidential campaign, the underlying objective behind preparedness “was the new demand of American industrialism for armaments at home, for the opportunities of foreign markets and foreign adventure, for the disciplines of military patriotism to preserve the social structure against its developing internal strains and stiffen it to support the world competitive struggle.” “[W]hile promising to prevent the damage,” Millis claimed, preparedness propaganda “provided the thrill” of militarism and war to adventure-hungry Americans. “There could scarcely be a more perfect combination with which to approach, at such a moment, so emotional a public as our own.”⁶ In his far

⁶ Millis’s opinion of Hudson Maxim and the munitions maker’s motivation for writing *Defenseless America* are thinly veiled: “His simple object was but...’to help Congressional appropriations for defense’ – which could hardly fail to include large sums for high explosives and machine-guns [the Maxim family

more recent work, Alan Dawley also viewed preparedness as a solely self-interested endeavor by conservatives. Preparedness, he contended, was merely one of several “interlocking measures” (along with immigration restriction and Americanization campaigns) that would fulfill conservatives’ nationalistic desires for overseas empire and “social discipline.” Dawley concluded that the drive for preparedness was a central cog in a rising tide of nationalism that occurred during American neutrality.⁷

Several historians who have examined the military preparedness campaign have placed it within the context of progressive reform. According to John Patrick Finnegan, interest in military preparedness began before the opening of the First World War in Europe. Starting in 1912, politicians, retired and active military men, and organized groups of elite citizens united under the banners of order, national efficiency, and individual responsibility with the intention of strengthening the United States armed forces in preparation for potential foreign and domestic conflicts. After 1914, Finnegan argued, the preparedness movement quickly became “a device to make over American society.” Although becoming increasingly popular after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, the rudderless campaign’s lack of political success, Finnegan concluded, stemmed from its inability to focus on a particular foreign policy.⁸

John Whiteclay Chambers also saw preparedness as an attempt to bring order through social engineering by focusing on the Progressive Era conception of citizenship. Proponents of preparedness and UMT sought to “Americanize” the nation, namely

were leading producers of both].”Walter Millis, *Road to War, 1914-1917* (Boston and New York: 1935), 92-94, quotes from pages 93, 94, and 208.

⁷ Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: 2003), 110-111, 115-116.

⁸ John Patrick Finnegan, *Against the Specter of a Dragon: The Campaign for American Military Preparedness, 1914-1917* (Westport, CT: 1974), 3-4.

immigrants and political radicals, through a common thread of self-sacrifice and community. Preparationists foresaw a classless society in which men of all backgrounds would learn to understand one another through shared military experience and patriotism. According to Chambers, UMT was the cornerstone on which the new national community was to be built. To many, then, the preparedness movement and UMT were means of directing the nation's energies away from class conflict and toward an expression of patriotism and national vigor.⁹ Michael Pearlman took a similar approach, arguing that preparedness offered advocates a way to maintain the class status quo while overcoming the divisiveness emanating from Gilded Age economic growth "by morally 'crushing the Economic Man.'"¹⁰

Pro-preparedness propaganda produced before American entry into the war has been studied only sparingly. Studies by H.C. Peterson and Stewart Halsey Ross are the most significant works. Yet both narrow their examination of British propaganda during American neutrality that focused primarily on German brutality in occupied France and Belgium (the so-called "Rape of Belgium"), the Kaiser's supposed bid for world domination, and democracy's fundamental opposition to autocracy – the alliance with Tsarist Russia notwithstanding. At the same time, Peterson only spoke of preparedness propaganda in passing while Ross did not analyze it outside the context of preparedness advocates' Anglophilia, longing to intervene in Europe, and desire for large war contracts.¹¹

⁹ John Whiteclay Chambers, II, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York: 1987), 93-95.

¹⁰ Michael Pearlman, *To Make Democracy Safe for America: Patricians and Preparedness in the Progressive Era* (Urbana, IL: 1984), 1-7, quote from page 6-7.

¹¹ Stewart Halsey Ross, *Propaganda for War: How the United States was Conditioned to Fight the Great War of 1914-1918* (Jefferson, NC: 1996); H.C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Norman, OK: 1939).

Yet despite the hyperbolic nature of much preparedness propaganda, it would be a mistake to assume such rhetoric was merely a cynical attempt to persuade the American people to support the causes of imperialists, bankers, or munitions makers. It is in fact true that many proponents of a larger military through UMT had strategic and economic interests in mind when they lobbied Congress or produced harrowing stories of foreign invasion. Preparedness propagandists also hoped to bring order, discipline, and efficiency to immigrants and the working-classes. British propaganda also informed the opinions of many pro-intervention and pro-preparedness individuals and organizations. This chapter, however, attempts to complicate the present narrative by factoring in the influence advocates' views on race and gender had on their desire for military preparedness, the composition of their propaganda, and the ultimate effectiveness of their message.

To many native-born men of the middle and upper-classes, by the time the First World War began Anglo-Saxon manhood long had been in need of some reinvigorating. Although the Civil War and Emancipation had not resulted in the disavowal of nineteenth-century notions of manliness – political and economic independence as well as a commitment to one's family and community – memories of heroism on the battlefield led it to “bec[o]me less a condition to be cultivated than a goal to be pursued” in the 1880s. According to historian T.J. Jackson Lears, Anglo-Saxon men after the 1880s were expected to seek out regeneration and adventure through “new sites for self-testing, new frontiers.”¹² The conflation of politics and manly honor also appear to have

¹² T.J. Jackson Lears argued that the Civil War was seen as a rebirth for both whites and blacks before the failure of Reconstruction. After 1877, the desire of northern and southern whites to reunite the nation under the banner of Anglo-Saxon wartime heroism not only excluded African-Americans from the national

driven the search for a regenerated manhood. According to Kristin Hoganson, chivalry (“to assume the role of the heroic rescuer to the Cuban damsel or loyal brother to the Cuban knight”) and honor (fight to avenge the sinking of the U.S.S. *Maine*) were significant factors in driving the United States into war against Spain in 1898. The cultural impetus on exhibiting manliness, she posited, suggested to contemporary men that only those who lacked a manly or vigorous disposition would fail to be roused by such an argument.¹³

But even before some men sought out manly honor in Cuba and/or the Philippines, the appeal of Victorian notions of “manhood” had been withering. Gail Bederman has argued that American middle-class men’s conflation of masculinity and racial superiority – clearly evident during the imperial wars of the 1890s – was a means of redefining and reasserting male social dominance. Social, economic, political, and cultural changes had undermined Victorian conceptions of manhood. No longer did the Anglo-Saxon male have exclusive rights to the ballot box. The manpower demands of industry drove more and more men away from entrepreneurial competition. At the same time, the campaign for women’s suffrage, the influx of immigrants, and the massive number of Gilded Age strikes implied middle and upper-class men had lost their ability to wield “manly authority” over their presumed subordinates. Victorian manliness, then, had become soft and “overcivilized.”¹⁴

narrative but also undermined their claims of citizenship and masculinity. *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: 2009), 21-26.

¹³ Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: 1998).

¹⁴ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: 1995), 11-14.

Further evidence that the Victorian man was losing touch with his primitive side was the commonly diagnosed condition neurasthenia. A neurasthenic presented symptoms that today psychologists and psychiatrists likely would attribute to clinical depression – anxiety, lack of ambition, fatigue, and despondency. Bederman described the ailment as a “near epidemic” in the United States in the 1880s “in large part because it so clearly expressed and explained this cultural problem” of presumed overcivilization. According to George M. Beard, the physician who “discovered” neurasthenia, the condition was characterized by “*a lack of nerve force*” that the sufferer exhausted while encountering the trappings of the modern world. “The chief and primary cause of this development and the very rapid increase of nervousness is modern civilization,” Beard argued in 1869. “Civilization is the one constant factor without which there can be little or no nervousness, and under which in its modern form nervousness in its many varieties must arise inevitably.” The overtaking of nerve force, Beard concluded, “scarcely exists among savages or barbarians, or semi-barbarians or partially civilized people.” Neurasthenia, then, was an ailment exclusive to the most advanced races of the world, Anglo-Saxon men in particular.¹⁵

Consequently, Anglo-Saxon middle-class men came to reject the Victorian and apparently increasingly effeminate notion of “manliness” and started crafting a new “masculine” identity based on Anglo-Saxon racial superiority. The Anglo-Saxon male would remain the most advanced specimen on the planet if he retained at least some of

¹⁵ Neurasthenia, though, was not exclusive to men. According to Bederman, women were susceptible to the condition because the overtaking nature of civilization left them less energy to put toward being nurturing mothers. The demands the faced paced competitive world modern civilization and technology placed on men were responsible for their bouts with neurasthenia. Ibid., 14, 85-87, quotes from pages 85 and 86. Also see Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 68-69, 239-248; Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: 2001), 26-30; Tom Lutz, *American Nervousness: An Anecdotal History* (Ithica, NY: 1991), 6-7.

the “barbarian virtues” that defined the less advanced races. Masculine social and political authority during the Progressive Era, then, was centered on the perceived evolutionary progress of the Anglo-Saxon race.¹⁶ The focus of masculine socialization, or decivilization, fell almost exclusively on middle-class Anglo-Saxon boys. The educational psychologist G. Stanley Hall believed that neurasthenia and overcivilization had to be nipped in the bud early for “[t]he child is in the primitive age. The instinct of the savage survives in him.” Male weakness could be avoided and masculinity fostered, Hall argued, if boys were encouraged to cultivate their primal skills and instincts through physical, aggressive activity and temporary yet repeated exposure to outdoor life.¹⁷ Sending boys “back-to-nature,” then, was the application of the Lamarckian theory that human races and animal species inherited traits through interaction with their environment, not a set genetic code.

As the Civil War faded further into the past, interest in the military academy as the proper arena of masculine socialization for schoolboys declined in favor of team sports. Games like rugby and football encouraged physical assertiveness and complete subservience to team objectives. Team sports, then, promised the same benefits as military drill – physical fitness, mental toughness, obedience, self-restraint – without the explicit militarism.¹⁸ The same could be said for outdoor clubs such as the Boy Scouts of

¹⁶ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 1-43. John Pettigrew argued that “de-evolutionary masculinity” spawned from men’s “will to power over women” and an abject fear of appearing weak or effeminate in front of other men. This drive, then, led proponents of enhanced masculinity at the turn-of-the-century to employ “Darwinian biology to classify brutishness as an essential and natural male trait.” *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920* (Baltimore, MD: 2007), quotes from pages 2, 3 and 8.

¹⁷ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 78-120, quote from page 78.

¹⁸ David L. MacLeod, “Socializing American Youth to Be Citizen-Soldiers” in Manfred F. Boemke, Roger Chickering, and Stig Forster (eds.). *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871-1914* (Washington, DC: 1999), 142. Michael C.C. Adams has argued that aggressive and violent team sports were meant as outlets for repressed sexual energy and to separate the sexes both physically and culturally. The ultimate goal of violent sports, he concluded, was to brutalize boys and crush their

America, which instilled barbarian virtues without the aggression of contact sports.

Preparedness advocates Theodore Roosevelt and General Leonard Wood viewed the BSA as a pre-military organization and served as national officers. Roosevelt publicly praised the BSA on the basis that the enhanced character and physical fitness the scouts gained during outdoor BSA activities would “make boys good citizens in time of peace, and incidentally to fit them to become good soldiers in time of war.” The BSA’s national administrators and supporters, however, were a mixed bag. Roosevelt and Wood were in the minority. Although just as interested in the perceived male regenerative qualities of scouting, pacifists like Stanford University President David Starr Jordan and Andrew Carnegie influenced Scout leaders to build character and virtue without resorting to militarist themes. The predominance of less militaristic Scout leaders angered Roosevelt and led Wood to resign his post with the BSA.¹⁹

The benefits of going “back-to-nature,” however, were made most evident in popular literature at the turn-of-the-century. Aside from the famous Westerns by Owen Wister and Zane Grey, of the era’s best-sellers the most explicit on the point of decivilization were Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and Edgar Rice Burroughs’s *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914). In *The Call of the Wild*, London, an outspoken Anglo-Saxon supremacist, chose a dog named Buck as his protagonist. Buck is stolen from his home in California and sold to a man in the extreme northwest where he is forced to work as a sled dog. The experience, although extremely harsh, is a godsend.

individuality in order to make them better soldiers in the future. *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (Bloomington, IN: 1990), 36-45. Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 33-39.

¹⁹ MacLeod, “Socializing American Youth,” 157-161. Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 113-116. Despite his distaste for anything seemingly militaristic, Jordan was a devout Anglo-Saxon supremacist. Bruce White, “War Preparations and Ethnic and Racial Relations in the United States,” in *Anticipating Total War*, 118.

By the end of London's novel, Buck's prolonged exposure to the natural world and distance from the trappings of civilized society has stripped him of any semblance of domestication. Running away into the wilderness, Buck becomes "the dominant primordial beast," physically and emotionally stronger than he had once been. Similarly, Burroughs's Tarzan is not born in the wilderness. Instead he is the orphaned son of British aristocrats who, after their deaths, is found and raised by apes in the African jungle. Yet aside from his immersion in the primeval world of "our fierce, hairy forebears," as Burroughs Darwinistically called the apes, Tarzan also has access to his deceased parents' remaining possessions. The combination of these civilizing influences, his gender, racial composition, and primitive upbringing mold Tarzan into a superhuman figure and king of the apes.²⁰ Although these and similar works of fiction in the early twentieth century clearly overstated the "back-to-nature" case, their general theme mirrored the proposed advantages of military drill and scouting – increased physical vigor and freedom from both vice and middle-class stagnation through an infusion of barbarian virtues.

It would appear that by 1914 many conservative, white, middle and upper-class American men had settled on a formula for masculinity. The only problem, though, was convincing everyone else that the definition was valid and that a nationwide conversion was essential. The opening salvos in Europe and the sudden uncertainty of the imperial status quo added a new sense of urgency to their cause. Placing the socializing of boys through the infusion of barbarian virtues within the context of scientific racism, imperial

²⁰ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, CT: 1967), 156; Roderick Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930* (Chicago: 1970), 140-141; Jeanne Campbell Reesman, *Jack London's Racial Lives: A Critical Biography* (Athens, GA: 2009), 75-86; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 218-221, quote from page 220.

concerns, and the First World War reveals the likely motives of many military preparedness advocates and propagandists. Although generally believers in the traditional republican opposition to standing armies, many conservative proponents of preparedness also viewed their world within the context of racial struggle and competition. Freedom and democracy – Anglo-Saxon creations – would not last if they were not protected from the world’s militaristic, autocratic, and lesser races. For decades men like Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, and Augustus P. Gardner had looked to protect democracy from the racially unfit immigrants in their midst through immigration restriction and eugenics. Now, with Europe ablaze and the war’s ultimate victor uncertain, these same men (among many others, including some women) set out to psychologically prepare the nation for potential external threats and mold Anglo-Saxon men and boys into warriors for democracy.

The majority of Americans’ reactions to the outbreak of war in Europe, however, were a combination of horror and relief. This reinforced the long-held conviction that the moral superiority of American democracy, in comparison to imperial Europe, meant the nation was better off isolated from its politics.²¹ Inspired by the opening of hostilities, the editors of *The Forum* pulled no punches: “[M]en pay the price. They pay it in physical pain that cannot be realized: in ghastliness unparalleled. Faces are sliced off: limbs are blown to dust: bodies are disemboweled: shrieking masses of agony litter the battlefields: the dead alone are untortured. This is the glory of war. God damn all war.”²² Many in official positions thanked their lucky stars for the vast watery expanses

²¹ John Milton Cooper, Jr., *The Vanity of Power: American Isolationism and the First World War, 1914-1917* (Westport, CT: 1970), 19.

²² “Battle, Murder, and Sudden Death,” *The Forum*, September 1914, LII, 468-472, quote from page 468. The foreign correspondent for *Everybody’s Magazine*, Frederick Palmer, described the Great War as being

between the United States and the war. The ambassador to Great Britain wrote “Again and ever I thank heaven for the Atlantic Ocean.” Woodrow Wilson was also grateful for the nation’s distance from Europe but for a different reason. In his annual address to Congress on December 8, 1914, the President warned against hawkishness because such an attitude would suggest to the world “that we had been thrown off our balance by a war with which we have nothing to do, whose causes can not touch us, whose very existence affords us opportunities of friendship and disinterested service which should make us ashamed of any thought of hostility or fearful preparation for trouble.” Democratic Congressman Martin Dies of Texas concurred: “Separated from all the warring nations of the earth by broad oceans...it would seem that God had planted this great people here to work out a shining example of liberty.”²³

According to some preparedness advocates – the vast majority of whom opposed American intervention in 1914 – such idealistic talk was naïve and pacifistic. During the neutrality period, conservative preparedness allies spoke of the American people’s general apathy and their leaders’ naïveté toward the Great War in a similar manner as George M. Beard did middle-class Victorian manhood in 1869. To the most ardent preparationists, pacifism was tantamount to a national “lack of nerve force.” Apathy and

much like the Napoleonic Wars of a century earlier but with far more casualties as a result of new military technologies. Civilization, Palmer concluded, would never be the same. “And the end? The end, when this vast soldiery, worn and spent, think over their experience? They can not be the same men. Europe can not be the same Europe. Civilization can not be the same. The world must awake to some new era – an era for which this was the price paid. And your sympathy goes out to each nation in its efforts to keep that which it holds dear – that which is its own.” Frederick Palmer, “The War-Storm: Is This the Great War?” *Everybody’s Magazine*, September 1914, XXXI, 321-323, quote from page 323. For more examples of the press’s reaction to the opening of hostilities in Europe, also see Dr. Frank Crane, “The Cost,” *Cosmopolitan*, October 1914, LVII, 721; Charles Vale, “The War,” *The Forum*, October 1914, LII, 473-483; “Why Europe Is at War,” “Who Will Win,” and “How the War Affects America,” *Literary Digest*, August 15, 1914, XLIX, 253-257 provides a snapshot of newspaper editorial opinion from around the country. In 1915, *Cosmopolitan* had a circulation of 1,000,000. *N.W. Ayer & Sons* does not provide figures for *The Forum*. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 656.

²³ Cooper, *Vanity of Power*, 19-32, quotes from pages 19, 23, and 24.

an aversion to physical confrontation, they believed, defined the still-overcivilized nation that remained devoid of honor while continuing to be drunk on luxury and ease. Such a mindset not only left the nation physically, psychologically, and morally prostrate, proponents argued, but it also left it susceptible to foreign aggression.

Although most Americans were disgusted by or indifferent to “Europe’s war,” many of those who manipulated the strings of public opinion were not. Key editors, authors, social elites, military officers, and politicians warned that if the United States did not strengthen its military, Teutonic, “Asiatic”, or, despite their ongoing revolution, Mexican hordes could invade and subjugate the nation in the near future. Militaristic Germany was consistently viewed as the most menacing and likely future opponent. The assumption of American officials and editors that Germany had bad intentions for the United States originated in an 1880s dispute over the partitioning of the Samoan islands (which included Great Britain), only to be intensified by an averted naval showdown over the Philippines in 1898. After the turn of the century, Germany appeared to challenge the Monroe Doctrine – a source of security for the United States since the policy’s inception in 1823 – through the use of gunboat diplomacy in Venezuela (also involving Britain, on whose lead Germany followed), settlement and colonization in Brazil and Argentina, and support for the anti-American Mexican general Victoriano Huerta. Although German leaders spoke aggressively about their desire for more overseas colonies, in the Pacific and the Western Hemisphere in particular, their careful actions revealed a more passive course vis-à-vis the United States and the Monroe Doctrine. Most Americans, though, could not see past German rhetoric and contingency war plans were made by the U.S.

Navy.²⁴ More racially-focused Americans likely viewed the Teuton's close racial kinship to the Anglo-Saxon and his policy of universal conscription as evidence of the German's hardiness, a trait the Anglo-Saxon badly needed. For instance, Theodore Roosevelt said in September 1914 that he had "nothing but...praise and admiration" for "a stern, virile and masterful people [Germans], a people entitled to hearty respect for their patriotism and far-seeing self-devotion." Roosevelt changed his tune and began rhetorically bashing Germany a few months later.²⁵ He and many preparedness advocates' respect for Germany's robust disposition and their thinly veiled allusions to Germany as a likely future enemy suggests that previous and current German aggression exacerbated concerns about the softness of Anglo-Saxon men.

Moreover, the widely-accepted view that German imperialism was responsible for the war's eruption (a creation of British propaganda in the United States) also likely added even more urgency to calls for preparedness. After the initial assertions of shock and idealism, many editors and politicians expressed a growing nervousness about the state of the American armed forces. According to the *New York Times*, the feeling "that

²⁴ Germany also drew up contingency plans, but the Army High Command nor the Kaiser paid them much notice. Nancy Mitchell, *The Danger of Dreams: German and American Imperialism in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1999). The Monroe Doctrine was composed in 1823 by then-Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and deemed the Western Hemisphere off limits for European (and later Asian) colonization. While the Monroe Doctrine was an attempt to save Central and South America for the exclusive economic domination of the United States., it was also a means of self-defense. Allowing imperial competitors to hold colonies and maintain naval bases near the United States threatened not only American access to markets and resources – itself a national security issue – but also allowed potential rivals to pose a direct military danger to the mainland. When President James Monroe articulated the new policy in a message to Congress, the country. was a mere eight years removed from concluding the War of 1812 against Great Britain, what many Americans at the time believed had been the second foreign invasion in the nation's short history (the Revolutionary War being the first). While the strategic reasons for the perpetuation of the Doctrine came to include the protection of existing markets and an isthmian canal zone (eventually the Panama Canal), the fear of foreign invasion remained an integral aspect of its enforcement (a nearly impossible task considering the perpetually small American army and navy). The vast Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the relative weakness of its neighbors, and the protection of the friendly British Royal Navy had allowed the United States to enforce the Doctrine with a tiny army and moderate sized navy for decades. The classic study of the Monroe Doctrine is Dexter Perkins, *A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (Boston: 1941).

²⁵ Quoted in Ross, *Propaganda for War*, 173.

the European war is getting nearer to us” was increasing in intensity. By October 1914, the *Times*’s editors already had a sense of who the nation’s real enemy was and would be. Germany’s early victories in Belgium and France had led to “a widespread belief that if Germany wins in the present conflict our cherished Monroe Doctrine may be in peril.” Regardless of which side in the war an individual American supported, the war’s “meaning ha[d] been more strongly impressed on the national mind in the last few weeks.”²⁶

Yet to some the danger was more generalized. George Marvin, writing for *The World’s Work*, used the coming of the Great War to advance the relatively common concern – if the popularity of H.G. Wells’s 1908 novel, *The War in the Air* in the United States is any indication – that the great racial competition would soon come to a decisive conclusion.²⁷ Mimicking Wells’s narrative, Marvin claimed that “[T]he question whether a white or a yellow civilization shall predominate will be decided in America.” The issue would be one of imperialism in its most Darwinian of forms. “The white race has gone as far west as it can in Europe, the yellow race has gone as far east as it can in Asia. The Americas are the meeting ground.” Only foresightedness could keep the nation and its neighbors from becoming the battlefield for racial Armageddon. “If the nations inhabiting these continents are not prepared to defend themselves against all comers,”

²⁶ “Our Military Needs,” *The New York Times*, October 19, 1914. Some other representative examples include “Will the Close of the War Find America Unprepared to Defend Itself?” *Current Opinion*, April 1915, LVIII, 224-227; Joseph Choate, “An Efficiency Expert on National Defense,” *Review of Reviews*, January 1915, LI, 48.

²⁷ Wells’s story is of a fictional world war pitting Asians and white Europeans against one another. The United States, caught in between Europe and Asia, is drawn in when Germany sends an armada of airships to New York City. The United States, which is soon at war with the Asian racial coalition as well, becomes a battleground for all the different alliances to fight their aerial battles. H.G. Wells, *The War in the Air* (New York: 1917, reprint, 1908). Interestingly, soon after its publication, the *New York Times* deemed *The War in the Air* a must-read for children. “There is no doubt...that it is a book which will delight all boys and perhaps a good many girls.” “Books for Boys and Girls,” *New York Times*, December 4, 1908.

Marvin wrote, “they may go the way all weak nations have gone before and their countries pass into the hands of a stronger, more efficient people.”²⁸

General Leonard Wood, who admitted to actively “stirring up interest [in preparedness] among the better classes of men in New York,” also showed his proclivity toward Darwinian thinking in a letter to Hamilton Holt in September 1914. Nations did not go to war over personal tiffs between rulers, he argued. Wars “are brought about by commercial and race influences; and until competition for trade and land, and all questions of race expansion are settled, I do not believe they will pass off the field. Readiness to defend one’s interests tends to preserve the peace.”²⁹ Later in the neutrality period, the *Baltimore American* depicted war as a desperate and dirty Darwinian struggle. “When nation fights nation for existence; when man fights man for the protection of home, wife, and children; when the contest of the survival of the physically and mentally strongest is waged in earnest, the splendor of armed pageants is laid aside.”³⁰

Such concerns were indicative of a building trend in the United States during the neutrality period. Aside from the work of generals and editors of many of the most prominent newspapers and magazines, newly formed “patriotic” organizations played the most significant role in exacerbating concerns about the fearful consequences of masculine, Anglo-Saxon degeneration. On December 1, 1914, the National Security

²⁸ George Marvin, “How Big of an Army Do We Need?” *The World’s Work*, February 1915, Vol. XXIX, 391. In 1915, *The World’s Work* had a circulation of 100,000. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 635.

²⁹ Clifford, *Citizen Soldiers* 38, 48. Writing Roosevelt in 1905, Wood expressed concern about Asian immigration weakening the United States racially, claiming the nation had “enough national weakness and humiliation from the negro to avoid further trouble by the introduction of races with which we [Anglo-Saxons] can never mingle...The introduction of any race with which we cannot intermarry is in my opinion a most horrible mistake.” White, “War Preparations and Ethnic and Racial Relations in the United States,” 104-105.

³⁰ “The United States, Rich, Hated, Defenseless,” *Baltimore American*, January 25, 1916, in John Philip Hill, “National Protection: Policy, Armament and Preparedness” (Baltimore, MD: Monumental Printing Company, 1916), PAH. In 1915, the *Baltimore American* had a circulation of 53,276. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 383.

League (NSL) was born in New York City under the leadership of S. Stanwood Menken – a corporate lawyer from New York – and with the support of many of the wealthiest Americans and such “public spirited” men as Representative Augustus P. Gardner, the publisher George Putnam, former Secretary of State and War Elihu Root, former and future Secretary of War Henry Stimson, and *The Outlook* editor (and Congregationalist pastor) Lyman Abbott. The NSL quickly became the most influential organization touting the social benefits of military preparedness and warning against American military weakness.³¹ According to its constitution, the NSL’s purpose was “to secure co-operation among those who advocate adequate preparedness for defense as a safeguard for national peace, integrity and neutrality, to obtain and spread full information on the subject and to encourage effective legislation and executive action in the state and nation...”³²

The NSL was extremely successful at spreading their message about the pitfalls of unpreparedness. In just its first year in existence, the League had produced dozens of pamphlets (printing over one million copies) and organized over one-hundred preparedness rallies and meetings. Its propaganda also began to focus primarily on the issue of universal military training and all its non-military benefits.³³ Menken spoke for his organization when he argued that preparedness through UMT could act as a cure-all.

³¹ Robert D. Ward, “The Origins and Activities of the National Security League, 1914-1919,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XL (June 1960), 52-53. Also see John Carver Edwards, *Patriots in Pinstripe: Men of the National Security League* (Washington, DC: 1982).

³² “Functions: Constitution and By-Laws for Branches” (New York: 1915?), 7, PAH. As with this particular pamphlet, the date of publication for many other pamphlets in the series are unknown or unclear. When that is the case, I will follow the citation of the University of Georgia library catalog (GIL), which includes a question mark after the year. My best guess is that the estimated publication dates in GIL originated with the series creators, Microfilm Corporation of America. In this particular case, the date of 1915 is most definitely correct. But in several instances the possible publication date offered by GIL is most assuredly incorrect. In those instances, I will cite the pamphlet as GIL designates but in the text will place it in the proper time-context.

³³ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

“I believe in it [UMT] because it will increase the vigor of our race; advance democracy by bringing the classes together in the understanding of comradeship and make for personal efficiency while generally increasing patriotic interest in our government.”

Such an interest was necessary because the nation’s military weakness and its vulnerability to foreign attack, Menken claimed, was the fault of the American people, not the Wilson administration or Congress: “The government of the country, in the ultimate, is always what the people demand...and the failure of the United States to have the proper means for protection is entirely due to the lack of popular recognition of our needs.”³⁴ The propaganda of the NSL and its politically partisan spinoff the American Defense Society (ADS), however, did not go into great detail explaining exactly how military training was supposed to instill discipline, physical strength, and camaraderie while also Americanizing the masses.³⁵ Instead, their primary means of arguing for UMT was to provide cautionary tales of what could happen if the United States remained divided and its men weak.

³⁴ S. Stanwood Menken, “Remarks of S. Stanwood Menken at the Dinner of the Engineer’s Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, February 14, 1916” (New York: 1916), PAH; S. Stanwood Menken, “Speech of S. Stanwood Menken, President of the National Security League at the Organization of the Philadelphia Branch Racquet Club, Thursday July 22, 1915” (New York: 1915), 4, PAH. A systematic breakdown of the NSL’s view of UMT see George R. Conroy, “universal Obligatory Military Training and Service: A Catechism of Twelve Lessons” (New York: 1917?), PAH.

³⁵ The ADS formed in August 1915 on the grounds that Menken and the NSL were too hesitant about publicly criticizing Wilson’s refusal to rearm. Historian Robert D. Ward described the ADS as “in essence the Republican branch of the League [NSL], avowedly anti-Wilson in its campaign for preparedness.” Because of his personal and political objections to Wilson’s presidency, Roosevelt identified more closely with the ADS than the NSL although he actively supported both. Ward, “National Security League,” 54-55, n15. The ADS appears to have been more upfront than the NSL about its feelings toward the dangers a small military posed to the nation. In a 1915 pamphlet that announcing its formation, its organizers asserted that “instances of neglect and unpreparedness should be published, we believe, as a solemn warning to the American people, and something should be done immediately, we further believe, to avoid what all military historians agree is a needless waste of life and property, and still more important, a needless endangering of the future of our republic.” “The American Defense Society, Inc.” (New York: 1915), PAH.

It must be noted, however, that despite the similarities in aims among preparedness organizations – and even advocates in government and the press – nothing resembling a preparedness “movement” existed. Advocates for preparedness came at the issue from a variety of angles. Many liberal progressives, such as John Dewey, Walter Lippmann, Hamilton Holt, and, eventually, Woodrow Wilson in early 1916, supported increased military power because it could strengthen the United States’s position in defining the eventual peace of Europe on American democratic and progressive principles.³⁶ At the same time, some only desired a larger navy to protect American shores, while others rejected UMT on practical grounds but supported “reasonable” increases in the size of the regular army and National Guard. In fact, supporters of UMT were likely a minority.³⁷ Yet the loudest voices – whose messages would ultimately dominate the American social and political landscape during belligerency – sought a stronger, more unified race and nation through democratic militarism.

Beginning in the spring of 1915, declarations that the nation’s unpreparedness threatened its very existence took on a more serious connotation. No event did more to popularize the preparedness campaign, spread its warning against national apathy and emasculation, and damage Germany’s reputation in the United States than the sinking of the British ocean liner the *Lusitania* by a German submarine, or U-boat, on May 7, 1915. Of the 1,198 who perished, 128 were Americans. Suddenly, Europe’s war did not seem so distant. Woodrow Wilson’s immediate response was to declare that “There is such a

³⁶ Clifford, *Citizens Soldiers*, 36-37; Finnegan, *Against the Specter of a Dragon*, 3-4; John A. Thompson, *Reformers and War: American Progressive Publicists and the First World War* (New York: 1987), 127-141; David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: 1980), 49-51.

³⁷ Pearlman, *To Make Democracy Safe for America*, 2; “The March of Events,” *The World’s Work*, November 1915, Vol. XXXI, 32; “For Undefined Preparedness,” letter, *New Republic*, December 25, 1915, Vol. V, 199; H.A. Garfield, “The Attitude of the United States Toward Preparedness: An Address, March 1916 (New York: 1916), PAH; Simeon Stransky, “Smith on Preparedness” (New York: 1916), PAH.

thing as a man being too proud to fight. There is such a thing as a nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that it is right.” Although he retracted the statement the next day (May 10) and sent several relatively stiff notes to Germany warning against future attacks on ships carrying American passengers, Wilson’s words and the American people’s favorable response drew the ire of the most ardent preparedness advocates – many of whom also happened to be Republican political opponents.³⁸ Roosevelt confided to a British friend that “Wilson’s delightful statement...seemed to me to reach the nadir of cowardly infamy.”³⁹ Although publicly he continually heaped praise on the toughness and character of American men, in private, the ex-Rough Rider had no problem implicating the American people in Wilson’s faintheartedness. He wrote to Lodge, “They are cold; they have been educated by this infernal peace propaganda of the last ten years into an attitude of sluggishness and timidity.”⁴⁰ Four days after the *Lusitania* went down, Roosevelt’s confidant General Wood expressed in his diary a similar concern with the American people’s “Rotten spirit

³⁸ John Milton Cooper, Jr., *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, MA: 1983), 269, 289-290, quote from page 269. Cooper lists Henry Cabot Lodge, Augustus P. Gardner, and Elihu Root as representative of Republican opponents of Wilson’s response to Germany. It is also important to point out, however, that none of these men nor Roosevelt or the National Security League made serious public statements suggesting the United States declare war on Germany over the *Lusitania*. Cooper also reported that only six of 1,000 newspaper editors polled favored intervention after the sinking in *Vanity of Power*, 33-35. For more on the American diplomatic and press response to the *Lusitania*’s sinking, also see Diana Preston, *Lusitania: An Epic Tragedy* (New York: 2002), 303, 332-334, 359-360; Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality*, Vol. III (Princeton, NJ: 1960), 372-373; Frederic L. Paxson, *American Democracy and the World War: Pre-War Years, 1913-1917* (New York: 1966; reprint of 1936), 246-260; Thompson, *Reformers and War*, 131-133.

³⁹ T. Roosevelt to Arthur Lee Hamilton, June 17, 1915, *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, Vol. VIII, 938.

⁴⁰ T. Roosevelt to H.C. Lodge, June 15, 1915 in Henry Cabot Lodge and Charles F. Redmond (eds.) *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918*, Vol. II (New York: 1971 [1925]), 459. TR rarely alluded to the nation’s manhood as cowardly in public. In speeches and published writings, Roosevelt limited his charges of timidity mostly to Wilson and the so-called “peace at any price” crowd. What made these types dangerous to the nation, he claimed, was that “[I]t is always possible that these persons may succeed in impressing foreign nations with the belief that they represent our people.” Such a condition would, of course, result in “incredible bloodshed and disaster.” Rarely did he publicly pin such charges on the American people as a whole. Theodore Roosevelt, *America and the Great War* (New York: 1915), 13.

in the Lusitania [sic.] matter” and bemoaned the fact that a “yellow spirit [was] everywhere in spots.”⁴¹ According to Wood, Henry Stimson was “also deeply disgusted with our prevailing yellow streak” and, likely with his tongue firmly implanted in his cheek, considered “giving up his citizenship, if no change comes.”⁴²

Many in the press echoed their sentiments. The American victims on the *Lusitania* and other subsequently sunken ships died, the editors of the *New York Tribune* claimed, because Germany knew the President and his cabinet would not follow his tough talk with manly deeds and neither would the American people demand he do so. “Here in America, under the inspiration of Mr. Wilson’s Administration, the American people are day by day absorbing more and more of the cult of cowardice and the gospel of selfishness.” The President and the American people would rather forsake the honor and dignity for which previous generations of Americans had fought and died than “put to touch its comfort, its prosperity, its glorious peace, which is the peace of cowardice.”⁴³

The sinking of the *Lusitania* called up the long-held and generalized anxieties that characterized the Progressive Era. It was surefire proof that the United States was not as safe as its people liked to believe. “If anything more were needed than the last year of European history to demonstrate the necessity of a proper preparedness,” *The World’s Work* argued, “the rapidity with which the storm cloud gathered out of the wreck of the *Lusitania* should convince us.” It also was surefire proof that Americans did not control their own nation’s destiny. The *Lusitania* “showed plainly again that such dangers rise suddenly and that we alone cannot decide whether there shall be peace or not.” The

⁴¹ Diary, May 11, 1915, The Papers of Leonard Wood, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴² Ibid., November 25, 1915.

⁴³ “Remember the Lusitania!” *New York Tribune*, November 13, 1915, PAH. In 1915, the *New York Tribune* had a circulation of 64,410. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 675.

magazine's editors, like others who supported preparedness or were merely spooked by the *Lusitania* disaster, sought a quick, all-encompassing, and progressive means of alleviating their apprehension.⁴⁴

The prevailing wisdom among preparedness proponents was that an awareness of the potential consequences of Americans' spinelessness would compel the country to accept an increase in military strength as a solution. Preparedness supporters could not persuade Americans to forsake their age-old distrust of standing armies without first establishing the dangers of military impotence.⁴⁵ Propagandists and editors did this by exploiting many native-born Americans' fears of foreigners. Throughout 1915 and 1916, advocates published magazine articles, editorials, cartoons, and books claiming that at some point an unnamed European power – most often implied to be Germany – or even Japan or Mexico would pose an imminent military threat to the United States mainland. The potential effect such propaganda could have on an uninformed American populace even appears to have aroused concern among those more concerned with domestic dangers. In 1916, for instance, Wisconsin Senator Robert LaFollette lamented that “The danger of an attack upon our country has been made to appear very real and very imminent. It has been painted in lurid colors.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ “Preparedness,” *The World's Work*, June 1915, Vol. XXX, 135. For more examples in the newspaper press see “America's Response to Germany's Challenge,” *Literary Digest*, May 22, 1915, Vol. L, 1197-1199. Various public opinion journals and magazines also chimed in, a few examples are “The *Lusitania* Massacre,” *The Outlook*, May 19, 1915, Vol. CX, 103-117; “Editorial Notes,” *The Forum*, June 1915, Vol. LIII, 785-789; David Lawrence, *The True Story of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: 1924), 197-198 includes a poll of newspaper editors on the issue.

⁴⁵ The editors of *The World's Work* took a less common approach, arguing that Americans had “an unnecessary fear of the word ‘militarism.’” The belief that compulsory service was “un-American or contrary to the spirit of a democracy” and that the “feeling that volunteer armies are essentially Anglo-Saxon” were not “founded on historical fact.” The editors cited examples in U.S. history of UMT and, to hammer home the point, mentioned two democracies (France and Switzerland) as well as two Anglo-Saxon countries (Australia and New Zealand) that also followed such a policy. “The March of Events,” *The World's Work*, November 1915, Vol. XXXI, 3.

⁴⁶ Finnegan, *Against the Specter of a Dragon*, 91.

One of the earliest such stories appeared as a serial in *McClure's Magazine* from May to August 1915 and was later published as full-length novel.⁴⁷ In "Conquest of America, 1921" Germany is the chosen enemy. The author (and member of the ADS's Board of Trustees), Cleveland Moffett explained, however, that his choice was random: "The reader can substitute the nation that he most fears, and feel sure that the result would be the same." The color of the enemy's flag, he claimed, was superfluous to the idea that the door to invasion had been left wide open. Yet despite Moffett's contention otherwise, the author's choice of Germany as the intruder likely was no accident. With the American people being inundated with American and British-made propaganda reporting on German atrocities committed against Belgian and French civilians, a fictional account of a German invasion of the United States promised to spark a unique set of emotions in readers and, perhaps consequently, increase sales. Although he probably wrote the story prior to the *Lusitania* tragedy, the fact that *McClure's* published the first installment in May likely enhanced its impact on readers.

The story, told through the perspective of a *London Times* correspondent, begins with the destruction of the Panama Canal in late April 1921 and Germany's official declaration of war the following week. Thousands of German troops, victorious in Europe in 1917, land in New York harbor, meeting very little resistance due to the lack of coastal defenses and a small, poorly deployed navy.⁴⁸ The Germans quickly consolidate

⁴⁷ Cleveland Moffett, *The Conquest of America: A Romance of Disaster and Victory* (New York: 1916). See "The American Defense Society, Inc." (New York: 1915), PAH for complete listing of the ADS's Board of Trustees. From the time its first issue hit newsstands, *McClure's* had been known as a muckraking, tabloid-like magazine that thrived on scandal and exploiting readers' basic emotions. However, *McClure's* also printed stories and editorials that supported progressive reforms and politicians. Harold S. Wilson, *McClure's Magazine and the Muckrakers* (Princeton, NJ: 1970).

⁴⁸ Cleveland Moffett, "Conquest of America, 1921" *McClure's Magazine*, May 1915, Vol. XLV, 9-12, 85, 87, 89, quote from page 11. In 1915, *McClure's* had a circulation of 533,805 per month. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 664. In 1916, the story would be published as a full length book. Cleveland Moffett, *Conquest of*

their beachhead and take control of Manhattan, their prize being the J.P. Morgan & Co. Banking House on Wall Street. Their next target, Boston, is taken with equal ease and burned to the ground.⁴⁹ In the final installment, German General Paul von Hindenburg – the real life commander of German forces on the Eastern Front in Europe in 1915 – splits his armies to the West and South, successfully sacking both Philadelphia and Washington, forcing the federal government to flee to Chicago.⁵⁰ The story, Moffett concluded, was a cautionary tale: “It is America that is attacked; it is America that is unprepared; and we are Americans. What would happen to us?”⁵¹

Reactions to “Conquest of America” were mixed. In a letter to *McClure’s* editor printed in July 1915, C.M. Wanzer, claiming to have first-hand knowledge of the military aircraft industries of the European belligerents, declared that Moffett’s story “could not be more timely or more graphically correct.” Americans were apathetic to potential foreign military threats, which, Wanzer asserted, could turn the country into “a subjugated people long before” it was capable of responding. American indifference resembled that of the Chinese in relation to the aggressive, militarized Japanese. “If we wait until the pinch comes and then try to make preparation,” Wanzer said, the country

America: A Romance of Disaster and Victory (New York: 1916). Moffett was also a member of a select group of authors and poets brought together by preparedness advocates (Theodore Roosevelt being the most prominent) to inspire the nation toward military preparedness and, later, to support the war effort. John Carver Edwards. “America’s Vigilantes and the Great War, 1916-1918,” *Army Quarterly and Defense Journal*, Vol. CVI, No. 3 (July 1976), 277-286.

⁴⁹ Moffett, “Conquest of America, 1921” *McClure’s Magazine*, June 1915, Vol. XLV, 35-38, 90.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Aug. 1915, 35-37, 54-55.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, May 1915, 11. Perhaps more dramatic than the story are the corresponding sketches. In the May edition, covering the initial invasion and conquest of New York City, *McClure’s* printed a sketch of a collapsing Brooklyn Bridge, complete with people, cars, and trucks collapsing into the cool waters below. A sketch of a wrecked skyscraper, with the top fourth of the building falling toward the street, takes up the entire next page. The imagery of destruction was not limited to New York City. In the following installments, *McClure’s* printed images of a burning Richmond, Virginia and German howitzers leveling Philadelphia. The author and his editor meant for the destructive consequences of the nation’s unpreparedness, against Germany or any other well-armed aggressor, to be unmistakable. *Ibid.*, May 1915, 9, 10; *ibid.*, June 1915, 35; *ibid.*, August 1915, 36.

would find itself in the same position as the subjugated “Asiatics.”⁵² Wanzer’s letter reveals a great deal about the effect stories such as “Conquest of America” had on educated, apparently upper-middle class individuals. His experience with the military departments of the European powers implies he once held a prominent position within the U.S. War Department or a private aircraft manufacturer. The benefits of increased spending on the military would definitely benefit his current or former employers. At the same time, his socioeconomic class is evident from his detestation of the masses’ general disinterest in the potential threat unpreparedness posed for the United States, which Wanzer appears to view as very real.

The New Republic, though, predicted that “Conquest of America” would have a profound impact on political discourse, but the direction in which the story would point the national conversation was potentially dangerous.

“Scores of such stories will soon be published. Not all of them will be as flat and feeble as this. Some of them will be exciting to the imagination. The most successful will produce in their readers a panicky feeling, which may communicate itself to Congress, may cause an increase in naval and military appropriations, may be responsible for an addition to our army and a for a few more submarines. These stories, we admit it, may thus do something to make the United States a little less unprepared for war. But they cannot do this much until they have familiarized thousands upon thousands of readers with concrete pictures of German and Japanese invasions, until they have spread fear and suspicion and dislike of these two countries, until they have helped to create that international ill-will without which there would never be war.”⁵³

⁵² C.M. Wanzer, Letter to the Editor, *ibid.*, July 1915, 11.

⁵³ “Editorial Notes,” *The New Republic*, April 24, 1915, Vol. II, 292. The most likely explanation for why *The New Republic* in April could respond to a story in the May edition of *McClure’s* is that *McClure’s* likely issued the following month’s edition during the previous month. In this case, the May 1915 edition of *McClure’s* must have hit newsstands in early to mid-April, thus allowing *The New Republic* the opportunity to read and comment.

Such opinions did not stop J. Barnard Walker. In his novel *America Fallen!*, Germany – chosen as the enemy because its “unity of thought and action provide the strongest contrast” to Americans’ timidity and indifference toward sacrifice – looks to exploit American apathy. With the war in Europe ending on March 1, 1916, the victorious Entente powers demanded a \$15 billion indemnity on the German government. With his army battle-hardened and still intact, the Kaiser concludes that he could wrestle the money from the militarily backward United States while also spreading his overseas empire into the Americas by overthrowing the “curious fiction that has come to be known as the ‘Monroe Doctrine.’” With Britain pledging its neutrality because the U.S. government did not protest the violation of Belgian neutrality and Germany’s “violations of the humanitarian laws of war” there, the United States had to face the coming onslaught alone. While most of the regular army chased bandits on the Mexican border, untrained and undersupplied National Guardsmen met the 200,000 seasoned Teutonic soldiers landing along the East Coast – from Boston, to New York, to Washington. After the landings and occupation of New York City, a distinguished yet naïve American pacifist (unnamed) was shocked that “my friend the Kaiser” would invade a friendly nation and demand such a large sum as ransom. Because of such “pacifist delusion” and “fatuous neglect” of the military, the American people were forced to “‘reap the whirlwind’ of disillusionment and humiliation in a profound national disaster!” In the end, with the German Army occupying everywhere east of the Alleghenies, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff advised the President “to pay this indemnity, and write it off on the National Ledger as the cost of being taught the great national duty of military preparedness.”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ J. Barnard Walker, *America Fallen!: The Sequel to the European War* (New York: 1915), quotes from

Thomas Dixon, former college classmate of Woodrow Wilson and author of the 1905 best-seller *The Clansman*, also hoped to stimulate the American people to support preparedness with a tale of naïve indifference. His 1916 novel *The Fall of a Nation* – a likely attempt to profit off the film *The Birth of a Nation*, the silver screen adaptation of *The Clansman* – chronicles the fictional invasion of the country by the European-based, autocratic, and democracy-hating “Holy Alliance” as well as the humiliation and enslavement the unprepared American people were forced to endure. His book, he claimed, “is not a rehash of the idea of a foreign conquest of America.” Instead, “it is a study of the origin, meaning and destiny of American Democracy.” The nation needed to be regenerated, according to Dixon, and it might take a foreign invasion to make it happen. In order to throw off the shackles of Old Europe, the American people, both native and foreign-born, must find common cause. The lead character, Congressman John Vassar, the son of an Americanized (or Anglo-Saxonized) Polish immigrant, pleads with Congress to prepare for the inevitable confrontation between democracy and tyranny:

“Men of America! I call you from your sleep of fancied safety! The might of kings is knocking at your doors demanding that you give a reason for your existence! If you are worthy to live you will prove it by defending your homes and your flag. If you are not worth saving, your masters will make your children their slaves.”

The children in Dixon’s novel are inspired to defend the nation and its ideals. In a scene that may seem chilling today, an eight-year old Boy Scout declares at a patriotic rally in an immigrant neighborhood that “My only regret is that I have but one life to give for my country.” The children listening to the speech shout “Three cheers for Uncle Sam!”, tear

down the immigrants' Italian flag, and replace it with the Stars and Stripes. But after months of gas attacks, strafing from the skies, and trench warfare, the U.S. government surrenders. The fighting spirit of many Americans, however, is not dashed. Vassar and his beautiful love interest Virginia Holland lead an underground insurgency that ultimately triumphs over the European occupiers. Dixon's book ends with the reconvened Congress – with Vassar as Speaker of the House – finally passing a long-awaited defense bill.⁵⁵

Like Blackton's *Battle Cry of Peace*, *The Fall of a Nation* hit theaters in June 1916. In the film version, the "Imperial Confederation of Europe" – looking suspiciously like the German army – invades the East Coast with the help of Old World immigrants. Anti-war characters intentionally reminiscent of prominent pacifists Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan and Henry Ford were forced to cook for the invaders after welcoming them with flowers. In the end, the Confederation is defeated by the Loyal Legion of American Women's effort to organize an army of citizen soldiers to drive out the invader. Although the women play an active role in seducing all 200,000 Confederation soldiers into leaving their posts – which opens the way for the men to do the real fighting and defeat the unsuspecting foe – it is unclear from descriptions if the women were involved in combat. The *New York Times* claimed that, as a film, *The Fall of a Nation* was "full of thrills." But in criticizing its extreme hyperbole, the reviewer argued that "as propaganda, it is a pity it is so reckless." The film, though, was not

⁵⁵ Thomas Dixon, *The Fall of a Nation* (New York: 1916), 101, 165.

positively received by audiences. Chicago theaters screened the film for only two weeks.⁵⁶

As in Maxim's *Defenseless America*, in each of these fictional accounts of foreign invasion the authors plea for national regeneration through "masculine" principles in the face of do-or-die struggles with more virile nations. In each case, timidity, pacifism, and apathy (all side effects of overcivilization) plague the United States, leaving it physically and emotionally unprepared to combat aggression. The nation, the authors implied, lacked "nerve force." Preparedness advocates suggested that the country was suffering from a neurasthenic-like illness, the symptoms of which could ultimately lead to its downfall and democracy's demise. The authors prescribed remedies to this ailment either by explicitly stating them or through the actions and attitudes of individual characters. The leading protagonists were honorable, vigorous men of action (aside from Vassar's love interest), displaying the traits G. Stanley Hall argued boys could develop through physical exertion and time outdoors. It is no coincidence, for instance, that the Boy Scouts play such a prominent role in Dixon's novel. Masculine shame was also evident in the need for either women or young boys to take the lead in defending the nation. The United States, the authors suggested, desperately need to recapture some of the barbarian virtues its men had lost.

Along with the press, concerned citizens, politicians, and "patriotic" organizations continued the bombardment of doomsday scenarios and offered similar solutions. The NSL in particular was very aggressive in its dissemination of fear-based propaganda. Speeches by prominent Americans and original works by NSL supporters were printed in

⁵⁶ Craig W. Campbell, *Reel America and World War I: A Comprehensive Filmography and History of Motion Pictures in the United States, 1914-1920* (Jefferson, NC: 1985), 41, 161 and "America Is Invaded Again in the Films," *New York Times*, June 7, 1916.

pamphlet form by the thousands. In a speech in Philadelphia in June 1915, NSL headman S. Stanwood Menken, who believed UMT was good for “the race,” also claimed that a foreign invasion could be on the horizon. Without offering a direct source for his warning, Menken argued that “it is certain that, should the United States at any time be attacked on the east, New York, Philadelphia and Boston would be the first objectives of any foe.” In that case, his audience had “a direct, personal and special interest” in preparedness. Menken continued the theme in future speeches – which the NSL also distributed in pamphlet form. Speaking in February 1916 in Pittsburgh, a city less likely to be in the crosshairs of a seaborne invader, Menken warned that the oceans could not protect the United States from a potentially bloody end. He begged Americans to realize “the danger of our natural isolation” and to read up on “the history of good and industrious nations who have ceased to exist, who have committed national suicide thro’ [sic.] lack of preparedness and power.”⁵⁷

Speaking on behalf of the NSL, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Delano Roosevelt employed a metaphor to explain why the nation was in need of male socialization. Every schoolboy “is bound sooner or later, no matter how peaceful his nature, to come to blows with some schoolmate,” the future wartime President argued. In the same way, violent conflict in the international playground would inevitably touch the United States. Like in the schoolyard, international bullies came in all sizes and strengths and one could never know which or how many toughs he may have to take on at a time.

⁵⁷ Menken, “Speech at the Organization of the Philadelphia Branch Racquet Club, July 22, 1915,” (New York: 1915), 6, PAH; Menken, “Remarks at Engineer’s Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, February 14, 1916,” (New York: 1916), PAH. The publisher George Haven Putnam had a similar warning, describing German plans to capture American cities and hold them for ransom, their end goal being the destruction of the democratic Republic and the Monroe Doctrine. “The Defense of the Republic” (New York: 1915), 4. PAH (originally published in *The Outlook*, October 20, 1915, Vol. CXI, 427-431).

War could come “against a little nation or...a powerful nation, or...a combination of nations.” At the same time, “it may come from one direction. It may come from several directions.” If ever challenged by potential tormenters, would “the peaceful boy know how to use his fists...?” Roosevelt concluded that the nation needed to strengthen itself – preferably through universal military training – in order to keep the bullies at bay.⁵⁸

The former U.S. Ambassador to Italy and Russia, George Meyer, fingered democracy itself as a possible reason why the nation was completely unprepared against a foreign attack. “It is possible that we may some day have to consider whether democratic government is capable of looking far enough ahead to furnish us with adequate protection.” Had American democracy “become so self complacent [sic.] that it pays more attention to its rights than to its duties, to its comforts rather than the sacrifices which may be necessary for its well being [sic.] and preservation, can [it] make a stand, if the occasion should require, against a monarchy of autocratic power sustained by a vigorous and intelligent people, whether it comes across the Atlantic or across the Pacific?”⁵⁹ In other words, the individual freedoms guaranteed in a democracy undermined the masculine desire to fight. Roosevelt saw it in the reverse, claiming that timid races are not deserving of democracy: “self-government cannot permanently exist

⁵⁸ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “On Your Own Heads,” from Henry L. Stimson, “The Basis for National Military Training,” (New York: 1917), PAH.

⁵⁹ George v. L. Meyer, “National Defense: An Address Before the Boston Rotary Club, Boston, December 13, 1915 (New York: 1915), 4, PAH. Another former ambassador, this one having been stationed in Ottoman Turkey, agreed. To Oscar Straus, improved national defense was dependent on Americans’ attitude toward their country. “Preparedness is synonymous with security, it is patriotism in action.” A nationalist resurgence, though, needed to come sooner rather than later. In a speech to a February 1916 meeting of the National Security League in New York, Straus warned that “history teaches us that national weakness instead of being a protection has been one of the chief promoters of war.” Preparedness and patriotism were becoming increasingly critical, Straus argued, because “this war has let loose throughout the world the spirit of conquest, the hunger for territory, and the rivalry of domination on land and sea.” The United States could not allow itself to end up on the losing end of such a struggle. Oscar Solomon Straus, “Address of Oscar S. Straus, Former Ambassador to Turkey at the National Security League Meeting at the Century Theater, February 29, 1916” (New York: 1916), 5, 7, PAH.

among people incapable of defense.”⁶⁰ Anglo-Saxon manhood – inherently tied to democratic ideals – had fallen behind the competition, whose governments promoted the “strenuous life” of compulsory military training. According to a columnist for the *Boston Transcript*, democracy itself was not the problem. Instead, the lack of “moral fiber” exhibited by the Wilson administration throughout 1915 had restricted the American urge to back tough talk with the threat of force. “When pity for the victims of aggression does not lead to intervention in behalf of others who are clearly doomed to be the victims of similar aggression...the state which so flagrantly inhibits its best impulses must necessarily suffer the consequences of balked disposition.”⁶¹

Pronouncements that the sky was (or would soon be) falling on the United States appear to have gained enough traction with the American people that companies became comfortable referencing the possibility of personal or national danger from foreign attack as early as 1916. Advertisements exploiting calls for preparedness suggest that warnings of impending disaster and preparedness had become part of everyday American life. In the March edition of *McClure's Magazine*, for example, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company emphasized the need for rapid communication if a far-flung and geographically diverse country like the United States ever faced a sudden national crisis (Figure 2-1). The company, which would later become the global communications giant AT&T, claimed “Only by a quick, simple and unfailing means of intercommunication could our people be instantly united in any cause.” When that cause became clear –

⁶⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, “National Duty and International Ideals: Speech of Theodore Roosevelt Before the Illinois Bar Association at Chicago, April 29th, 1916” (New York: 1916).

⁶¹ Arthur Stanwood Pier, “Some Consequences of Neutrality,” *Boston Transcript*, December 15, 1915, reprinted in pamphlet form (Boston: 1915), PAH. In 1915, the *Boston Transcript* had a circulation of 28,069. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 398. The publisher of many of the pro-preparedness pamphlets in the Pamphlets in American History series were not recorded, yet, for the most part, the original source of the material is explicitly stated.

“whether it be for peace, prosperity, philanthropy or armed protection” – American Telephone and Telegraph would be at the nation’s service, employing a uniquely American innovation to provide “One Policy, One System, Universal Service.”⁶²



Figure 2-1. McClure’s Magazine, March 1916

Concerns about the ultimate fate of the American way of life also could be found in the traditionally isolationist Midwest. Alice French, a member of the pro-preparedness Navy League and a speaker at the Mid-West Conference on Preparedness in Davenport, Iowa, explained that the only means of securing peace was preparing for war. “[T]hose who love peace are like all lovers,” she claimed. “They are willing to fight for their

⁶² *McClure’s Magazine*, March 1916, Vol. XXVI, 67. Note the image of Paul Revere’s famous ride to warn Bostonians about the coming British invasion.

loved one.” French clearly was targeting the men in the audience. If war came to the United States, she argued, “you all know we [women] suffer more than men. Therefore, speaking for the women of the country I beg you not to delay in your preparations.”

French offered universal military training as a means of solving two problems. It would protect American women and give the American male what he needed the most:

“Discipline and team work. He also learns obedience, to honor his country, to love his country, to keep himself clean, and other virtues almost as valuable.” For French, the lessons instilled by military training were little different from those taught at settlement houses in urban immigrant communities. Iowa’s Lieutenant-Governor, though, saw preparedness as an opportunity for men to reassert themselves. “I want to assure you I am not in favor of war,” he professed to his generally isolationist constituency. “I am in favor of men, great, big, red-blooded men, who will fight for the right and their country, if necessary...I like to be a citizen of a country where we have manhood that is willing and able to take care of itself.”⁶³

Feeling the political pressure after the *Lusitania* sinking from political enemies and allies alike, Woodrow Wilson also began marching behind the banner of military preparedness. Wilson’s conversion, according to historian John Patrick Finnegan, was purely political. Military preparedness had become the principal issue for his political opponents, especially Roosevelt and his eventual Republican challenger in the 1916 Presidential election, Charles Evans Hughes. Jumping on the preparedness bandwagon, Finnegan argued, undermined his opponents’ primary criticism and assured Wilson more

⁶³ “Speech of Miss Alice French,” “Speech of Hon. W.L. Harding,” *Mid-West Conference on Preparedness* (Davenport, IA: 1915), 101, 104, and 108, PAH.

control over any future national defense legislation.⁶⁴ Beginning in January 1916, the President began a short tour of mostly Midwestern cities with occasional speeches being delivered from the back of his train.

Newspapers across the United States reprinted snippets of the President's speeches from his pro-preparedness tour of the Midwest. Wilson asked for the American people's support for an increased state of military and naval readiness in the face of a potentially spreading worldwide conflict. In Cleveland, Ohio, the President warned that the American people "cannot afford to postpone this thing [increased preparedness]" because "I do not know what a single day may bring forth." Wilson claimed that he did "not want to leave [the people] with the impression that [he was] thinking of some particular danger."

"I merely want to leave you with this solemn impression that I know that we are daily treading amid the most intricate dangers, and that the dangers that we are treading among are not of our making and are not under our control, and that no man in the United States knows what a single week or a single day or a single hour may bring forth."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Finnegan, *Against the Specter of a Dragon*, 154-155.

⁶⁵ "An Address in Cleveland on Preparedness," January 29, 1916, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, (ed.) Arthur S. Link, (Princeton, NJ: 1981), Vol. XXXVIII, 46. Two more of Wilson's preparedness speeches are also included in this volume of his published papers, both delivered in Pittsburgh on the same day as his Cleveland speech. "An Address in Pittsburgh on Preparedness," *ibid.*, 26-35; "An Address in Pittsburgh to an Overflow Meeting," *ibid.*, 35-41. For snippets of other Wilson addresses from the tour where he referred to the same omnipresent and unseen dangers of which he spoke in Cleveland, see "Effect of the President's Appeals to the People for National Defense," *Current Opinion*, Mar. 1916, Vol. LX, 149b; Rodney Bean, "The President Among the People," *The World's Work*, April 1916, Vol. XXXI, 614; "The President Rousing the Nation for Preparedness," *Literary Digest*, February 19, 1916, Vol. LII, 419-420 provides examples of editorial opinion about the tour among the nation's newspaper editors; John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: 2009), 308-310. Although many progressives applauded Wilson's conversion or mimicked it, many others felt betrayed by the President's seeming turn toward militarism, such as the groups that would create the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM) in 1916. Wilson's advocacy of preparedness and, more importantly, the tremendous number of wartime civil liberties and free speech violations under his watch eventually alienated the progressive left, ultimately costing his party control of Congress and, consequently, ratification of his League of Nations. See Kennedy, *Over Here*, 33-34, 86-92; Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: 1992).

Woodrow Wilson, the man who professed that his nation was “too proud to fight” in spring 1915, had by early 1916 joined the fear-mongering fray. The clear excitement displayed at the Davenport, Iowa, preparedness rally and during Wilson’s tour of the Midwest suggests that pro-preparedness sentiment – and even perhaps some of its ideological underpinnings – were not exclusive to the Northeastern United States.⁶⁶

Despite Wilson’s inclusion in the chorus of Cassandra, his chief antagonist, Theodore Roosevelt, remained the champion of militarist hyperbole. The ex-President consistently bashed those “well-meaning persons” who “sometimes assert that we are too far away from the old world to fear assault or invasion.” New military technology had turned the oceans separating the United States from Europe and Asia into “highway[s] for any power whose ships control it.” When it came to the debate over military preparedness, nothing less than the future of the American way of life was at stake. “The immediate loss would fall on the Atlantic or Pacific coast; but we are all Americans...and the blow to our self-respect and our material well-being would shake our whole country to its foundations.”⁶⁷ In a speech to the Illinois Bar Association in April 1916, Roosevelt declared that one of the nation’s primary duties was “to prepare ourselves so that there might not befall us on an even greater scale such a disaster as befell Belgium.” Preparing American arms and, more importantly, minds was the only means of prevent the deprivation, destruction, and defilement suffered by Belgian civilians, mostly women.

⁶⁶ The Davenport rally and the position reception Wilson received is interesting because in the Midwest, at least in terms of its congressional representation, was the most isolationist region of the country and, generally speaking, wanted no part of the war in Europe. To a large degree this stemmed from the significant number of Midwesterners who were of German ancestry or were first-generation German-Americans. At the same time, every indication is that arguments for increased preparedness were more likely to gain traction in Midwestern cities than in rural areas, where populist mistrust of Northeastern capital and its relation to the federal state still held strong.

Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917* (New York: 1954), 185-186.

⁶⁷ Roosevelt, “National Preparedness,” PAH.

The American people must heed the ex-President's warning against physical and emotional weakness and un-Americanism "or else they will when it is too late learn the lesson from some terrible gospel in which it is written by an alien conqueror in letters of steel and flame."⁶⁸

Roosevelt and many other preparedness advocates also looked to the Far East to find an example of a similarly unprepared nation that had found itself reaping the consequences of its inaction.⁶⁹ "We have been sinking into the position of the China of the Occident," Roosevelt claimed. Over the past several decades, China had "been helpless to keep its own territory from spoliation and its own people from subjugation" by more militarily prepared empires. The ex-President maintained that the Chinese found themselves in such a position because over the centuries they had denied social prominence to its military caste in favor of pacifists. "The vagaries and dreams and blindness of [China's] pacifist leaders and statesmen have paralleled our own."⁷⁰ Elihu Root, the two-time Secretary of State, also saw China as a cautionary tale: "Here we all are, rich, undefended, supine – fair game for anybody who wants national

⁶⁸ Roosevelt, "National Duty and International Ideals." In a similar vein as the ex-President, Dr. William Carter also claimed that the gateway to invasion was wide open and that the "wholesome respect for authority and power" by immigrants and the working-class would slam it shut. Dr. William Carter and Rev. Washington Gladden, "The Necessity of Preparedness" (New York: 1916), PAH. Also see Richard Wayne Parker, "The Common Defense: Speech of Hon. Richard Wayne Parker of New Jersey in the House of Representatives, February 17, 1916" (Washington, D.C.: 1916), PAH.

⁶⁹ Some advocates for military preparedness even looked to the United States's past to find instances where the nation was unprepared to fend off attack. The most common example was the War of 1812, which, although the American forces ultimately fought back the British invaders, led to the destruction of much private property and even parts of Washington, D.C., most notably the burning of the White House. Proponents also cited the Civil War as an instance where the Union's lack of preparedness led to more loss of life and property than was necessary. For example, see "Could Washington Be Burned Now, and American Freedmen Run for Freedom as in 1814?" *Everybody's Magazine*, May 1915, Vol. XXXII, 655-565; Major H.S. Howland, "Unpreparedness" (New York: 1916), 6-7, PAH.

⁷⁰ Roosevelt, "National Duty and International Ideals," PAH.

evolution....Interest and principle will conspire to a treatment of America like the treatment of China.”⁷¹

In particular, preparedness advocates and propagandists were making reference to weak and unarmed China’s surrender to the economic and territorial demands of the militarily powerful Japanese in January 1915. The “Twenty-One Demands” the Japanese imposed on the Chinese attempted to exploit Europe’s preoccupation with war by expanding its sphere of influence in quasi-colonial China. The White House and Congress, though, claimed to care little about Japan’s demands unless it showed signs of using its newfound influence to close the proverbial “open door” to the China market.⁷²

Imperial and military concerns regarding the Pacific were nothing new. Preparedness proponents’ references to China’s predicament spoke equally to their growing apprehension about the rise of Japan in the Pacific as to their concerns over the country’s military unpreparedness. In fact, for many, the issues were intricately intertwined. In the decade prior to the opening of the First World War, the United States and Japan came to the brink of war on two occasions. The first major incident occurred in 1906 over the San Francisco school board’s decision to segregate Japanese students in separate schools from whites. Japan argued that this violated an equal treatment clause in

⁷¹ Elihu Root, “America’s Present Needs: Address of Elihu Root at the Congress of Constructive Patriotism Held Under the Auspices of the National Security League, Washington, DC, January 25, 1917”(New York: 1917), 15, PAH. Roosevelt and Root were far from the only preparedness advocates to compare China’s situation with that of the United States. See Putnam, “Defense of the Republic,” 3, PAH; Menken, “Remarks at Engineer’s Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh”, PAH; Francis J. Oppenheimer, “The Failure of Pacifism,” (New York: 1917), PAH.. One pamphlet from the PAH series (likely published in 1919) reveals how long preparedness propagandists continued to grasp at the example of China. Joseph T. Cashman, “War of Defense is Always Justifiable” (New York: 1917?), PAH. Also see “The Present Prospect of China,” *Review of Reviews*, April 1915, Vol. LI, 473; “Is Japan Aggressor or Protector in China?” *ibid.*, August 1915, Vol. LII, 230-231; “What Must We Do to Provide Adequate Military and Naval Defenses?” *Current Opinion*, July 1915, Vol. LIX, 5-8; and “What Japan Wins from China,” *Literary Digest*, May 22, 1915, Vol. L, 1204-1205, which provide examples of newspaper editors citing China’s unpreparedness as a lesson for the United States.

⁷² Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919* (Cambridge, MA: 1999), 84-116.

an 1894 treaty. The Roosevelt administration and Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan overreacted to the Japanese objections to the law and spoke openly of war. While Roosevelt flexed the nation's muscles by sending the "Great White Fleet" on a public relations tour of the Pacific, Mahan went as far as to warn against the "Japanizing" of the country west of the Rockies through immigration or invasion. Ultimately, the 1906 war scare would result in the War Department drawing up War Plan Orange, which would later guide the United States's war against the Japanese Empire in the 1940s. A similar situation would arise again in 1913, this time over a California law excluding Japanese immigrants from land ownership. Again, Mahan, the nation's leading voice in all matters naval, called for an end to "free Asiatic immigration" which could lead to "Asiatic occupation – Asia colonized in America."⁷³

During the neutrality period, many preparedness supporters also viewed the Pacific as a racial battleground. Nowhere was this more evident than in political cartoons. The prevailing theme in the editorial imagery was of a diminutive yet militaristic Japan that physically dominated an emotionally overwhelmed and physically flabby China. Such representations of unprepared China directly corresponded to a nearly universal belief among preparedness advocates in Social Darwinism and concerns about both race suicide and masculine degeneration. The sizes of the characters in the cartoons tended to correspond to either their country's population or capacity for

⁷³ Sadao Asada, *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States* (Annapolis, MD: 2006), 18-23, quote from page 20. Although not widely read at the time, military theorist Homer Lea's Darwinian treatise on what he saw as an inevitable racial and imperial showdown between Japan and the United States spoke to similar themes as Mahan. Lea too viewed Japanese immigration (and from the backward corners of Europe) as an existential threat to the Republic because it could lead to the mongrelization and, as a result, the weakening of the Anglo-Saxon race. Homer Lea, *The Valor of Ignorance* (New York: 1942, [1909]); Frederic Cople Jaher. *Doubters and Dissenters: Cataclysmic Thought in America, 1885-1918* (Glencoe, IL: 1964), 82-85. John Dower has shown that such racial views of the Japanese remained alive and well into, and was exacerbated by, World War II. *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: 1986).

economic prosperity and military strength. A large population and military might signified a race or nation's virility and natural strength. Popular understandings of race and nationality deemed anything that did not follow this rubric to be perverse and unnatural. Size, then, conveyed strength and weakness in a Darwinian and gendered framework. The most significant characteristic in these cartoons, however, was the placement of "Uncle Sam," the eternal image of the United States. Sam often found himself in the background, observing his or China's destruction or subjugation. The presence of Uncle Sam along with the image of a physically and psychologically weak China, in comparison to a small yet physically powerful and mentally strong Japan, then, likely caught the attention of many American readers.



Figure 2-2. *Newark Evening Star*, from *Current Opinion*, May 1915



Figure 2-3. *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, from *Current Opinion*, June 1915

In spring 1915, the *Newark Evening Star* printed a cartoon that exemplified Japan's response to the U.S. government's criticism of its expanding influence in China. With Uncle Sam watching from a far off island labeled "U.S.," tiny Japan stands relaxed on top of "China's" squishy stomach holding a spear to the larger nation's nose. "Well,

you see it's this way," Japan, in primitive tribal dress, confidently proclaims to a seemingly befuddled or, perhaps, intimidated Sam (Figure 2-2).⁷⁴ Japan, in this instance, was portrayed as a powerful and capable military rival to the United States in the Pacific. At the same time, his outfit and weapon imply Japanese manhood had not become overcivilized nor had it lost touch with its primordial (and, thus, martial) instincts. Although the cartoon did not pose the threat of invasion, the cockiness of Japan, China's position – that of an out of shape and conquered behemoth – and Sam's presence implied a specific warning of the perils of unpreparedness.

The following month (June 1915), *Current Opinion* ran an article discussing the general opinion of the nation's newspaper editors concerning the relationship between China and Japan, which mirrored how much preparedness propaganda characterized the prostrate United States's relationship with potential foreign aggressors. "Whether it be vassalage or merely advice which China must accept at the hands of militant Japan," the article claimed, "most of our papers see her pitifully helpless and suspect the aggressor of unscrupulous ambition." Along with the article, the editors reprinted cartoons that corresponded with the verbal rhetoric. The cartoonist for the *Columbus (Ohio) Evening Dispatch* also depicted the relationship between Japan and China as one of domination and subjugation. The cartoon portrayed a rotund "China" sitting angrily on a porch with his hands cuffed. In the distance, a small Japanese soldier, with bayoneted rifle in hand, walks merrily toward a rowboat on the edge of the ocean. Because of the ambiguous position of the sun on the horizon it is difficult to tell if it is rising or setting, making it unclear where the boat is supposed to take the soldier. The title of the cartoon, "The

⁷⁴ "The Japanese Answer," *Current Opinion*, May 1915, Vol. LVIII, 313. Cartoon reprinted from the *Newark Evening Star*, which had a circulation of 26,093 in 1915. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 603.

Disadvantage of Being Busy, Peaceful, and Unprepared” was a clear warning to the American people and implied that the Japanese soldier might have plans to move on to the next closest unprepared nation: the United States (Figure 2-3).⁷⁵



Figure 2-4. *New York Herald*, from *Current Opinion*, July 1915

⁷⁵ “The Disadvantage of Being Busy, Peaceful and Unprepared,” *Current Opinion*, June 1915, Vol. LVIII, 386. Cartoon reprinted from the *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, which had a circulation of 70,989 in 1915. N.W. Ayer & Sons, 745. Editorial opinion on the threat Japan posed to the United States was somewhat mixed. *Everybody’s Magazine* found the potential origins of friction between the United States and Japan in the American conviction (a reasonable one, the editors claimed) that “the Occident and the Orient should not try to live together and intermarry.” Thus, the continued racial discrimination against Japanese immigrants could provide the spark for war. “Straight Talk with Everybody’s Publishers,” *Everybody’s Magazine*, February 1915, Vol. XXXII, 272. Also see “Menace to the United States in Japan’s Triumph Over China,” *Current Opinion*, June 1915, Vol. LVIII, 386-387 and “The Deeper Preparedness,” *Literary Digest*, July 24, 1915, Vol. LI, 299-300 for newspaper publishers’ opinions; O.K. Davis, “Japan in the China Shop: What the Sons of Nippon Are Up to In the Far East,” *Everybody’s Magazine*, December 1916, Vol. XXXV, 641-655. Some, like *The Forum* and *The World’s Work*, warned against growing Japanese aggression in the Pacific, its allegedly close ties with its fellow autocracy Germany (its wartime enemy), and its plans to invade the United States in California, from Mexico, or take the Panama Canal Zone through Nicaragua. Sigmund Henschen, “What Is Behind the Japanese Peril?” *The Forum*, July 1916, Vol. LVI, 63-78; “Democracy and War,” *The World’s Work*, November 1915, Vol. XXXI, 4, 11; and “The United States and Japan,” *ibid.*, June 1916, Vol. XXXII, 140-142. Later in summer 1916, *The Forum* ran an article countering the notion that Japan the United States were on a collision course toward war. Instead, they were the bulwarks of peace and stability in the Pacific. Jokichi Takamine, “Japan and America Bulwarks of Peace,” *The Forum*, August 1916, Vol. LVI, 223-228. In two articles a year apart, the Review of Reviews also promise that the nation had little to fear from Japan and vice versa. “Japan’s Challenge to England,” *Review of Reviews*, April 1916, Vol. LIII, 456 and “Japan and America,” *ibid.*, April 1917, Vol. LIV, 398-401.

The *New York Herald's* pictorial representation of Japan and China's relationship and its relation to the state of the U.S. military lacks all subtlety. The cartoon also represents China as massive in relation to Japan in size, but the control the Japanese character wields over "China" is unmistakable. As a disgusted Uncle Sam watches from a window, militarized "Japan" (a marching soldier carrying a sword) parades "China" down the road by a leash attached to a nose ring. "China," eyes closed with the white feather of cowardice in his cap, carries a sign around his neck bearing the words "Unpreparedness," "Pacifism," and "Nonresistance" (Figure 2-4).⁷⁶ Again, the physical size of the characters denoted an unnatural relationship, with the unexpectedly strong leading the unfortunately weak. The cartoon's message, though, was anything but subtle: if the United States did not prepare itself militarily and psychologically, its fate would be similar to China's.

Another potential foreign threat, this one closer to home, appeared in early 1916. Beginning in January, Mexican rebels, led by Francisco "Pancho" Villa, began attacking and murdering American civilians in northern Mexico and destroying their and their employers' property.⁷⁷ Henry Stimson fretted over the lack of American force available to hunt down Villa and his bandits. The majority of Americans clamored for a punitive expedition, Stimson claimed, but only 20,000 soldiers were available for such an undertaking. "[U]nder sober calculation," he concluded, "the Mexicans have far more armed men and trained troops available for a punitive expedition into our territory than

⁷⁶ "For Those that Like This Sort of Thing This Is the Sort of Thing They Like," *Current Opinion*, July 1915, Vol. LIX, 6. Cartoon reprinted from the *New York Herald*, which had a circulation of 109,192 in 1915. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 660.

⁷⁷ Mark T. Gilderhus, *Diplomacy and Revolution: U.S.-Mexican Relations Under Wilson and Carranza* (Tucson, AZ: 1977), 33-35.

we into theirs.”⁷⁸ Stimson likely felt partially justified when on night of March 9, Villa’s men ransacked the small town of Columbus, New Mexico, killing over twenty Americans. Within days President Wilson ordered 6,600 U.S. regulars to cross the Rio Grande and find Villa and his followers.⁷⁹ The search proved fruitless through March and April. In May and June, Wilson mobilized 110,000 National Guardsmen to supplement the small and ineffective regular force. The results, however, were the same.⁸⁰

The debacle in Mexico was exactly the kind of national humiliation preparedness advocates could exploit. Pro-preparedness journals and newspapers across the country published scathing editorials and cartoons claiming that the debacle in Mexico was a clear sign of the nation’s unpreparedness. *Current Opinion* printed snippets of newspaper editorials on the subject from throughout the country. Editors directed their ire toward an ineffectual federal government and a disinterested American public. Yet the government’s apathy, the *New York World*, *Charleston (S.C.) News and Courier*, and *Chicago Tribune* reportedly claimed, was the source of the public’s indifference. According to the *World*, the people “have approved the attitude of sneering indifference to military preparedness” displayed in Congress because Congress had turned it into a non-issue. “We have been asleep,” it continued, “dreaming dreams of a happy-go-lucky

⁷⁸ Henry L. Stimson, “Remarks of Henry L. Stimson, Former Secretary of War, at National Security Congress, Under the Auspices of the National Security League, Washington, January 20-22, 1916” (New York: 1916), 4, PAH.

⁷⁹ Barbara Tuchman, *Zimmerman Telegram* (New York: 1958), 94.

⁸⁰ Robert Zieger, *America’s Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (Lanham, MD: 2000), 38; Gilderhus sets the size of the expedition at 4,8000. *Diplomacy and Revolution*, 34-40.

world in which America was the petted Fortunatus to whom no danger would approach.”⁸¹

Mississippi Senator John Sharp Williams expressed a similar sentiment in *Vanity Fair*, portraying the nation as a gaggle of grumpy housewives. “I am not quarreling with you [the American people] because you are not nagging the President about Germany,” he maintained. “[B]ut I *am* quarreling with you because you are nagging him about Mexico when no Mexican governmental offense has been committed, and when you dare not nag him about Germany. You are wise when you do not. *You had better get ready, so that you can support your nagging before you get to nagging anybody who can fight back.*”⁸² Perhaps with images of German atrocities in Belgium on his mind, Theodore Roosevelt grossly exaggerated the gravity of the situation on the border and charged that the American people had “submitted tamely to the murder of our men and the rape of our women” in Mexico. The nation’s “spiritless submission,” so he claimed, had resulted in hundreds of American deaths.⁸³ To a newspaper from the generally pacific plains, the *Omaha World-Herald*, the nation had no excuse for its complacency and embarrassing military impotency:

⁸¹ “Villa’s Raid Secures the Right of Way for National Defense Measures,” *Current Opinion*, May 1916, Vol. LX, 307. For more examples of the press using the failure of the Punitive Expedition as a warning in favor of preparedness, see “Our Unpreparedness Revealed by Villa,” *Literary Digest*, April 1, 1916, Vol. LII, 883-886 and “The Weakness of Our Second Line,” *ibid.*, December 23, 1916, Vol. LIII, 1646-1647 for national newspaper editorial opinion. Also see “Mexico and Preparedness,” *The Outlook*, April 5, 1916, Vol. CXII, 784-786; Howard Wheeler (Managing Editor), “Is It Fair?” *Everybody’s Magazine*, August 1916, Vol. XXXV, 169-171; George Marvin, “Invasion or Intervention,” *The World’s Work*, May 1916, Vol. XXXII, 40-62, especially page 57; “Carranza and the Germans,” *Review of Reviews*, March 1917, Vol. LV, 246 reported that pro-Ally voices in the press were claiming that Germany would likely use Mexico as a springboard for future invasion. The editors of *Review of Reviews*, however, said there was little evidence to support this claim.

⁸² John Sharp Williams, “Germany and Mexico,” *Vanity Fair*, March 1916, Vol. V, 45 and 120. Emphasis in the original. In 1915, *Vanity Fair* had a circulation of 15,000 per month. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 675.

⁸³ Theodore Roosevelt, “National Preparedness: Military, Industrial, Social: Speech of Theodore Roosevelt at Kansas City, Missouri, Memorial Day, 1916,” (New York: 1916), 7-8, PAH.

“Mexico is a third-rate nation on its last legs. As a military power it is a joke. As a power of any kind it is a joke....The United States, on the other hand, with a hundred million people, is the wealthiest country in the world. It is fat and wheezy with plenty....And it is so poorly protected, so little prepared we are to defend our wealth, not to speak of our lives and our liberties, that a burlesque ‘soldier’ like Villa can cross the border on which the mobile portion of our army is massed, burn our towns, kill our people, and hurry back again to safety, while it takes us a week to make ready to go after him!”⁸⁴

The expedition into Mexico brought the army’s inadequacies to the forefront of the public’s attention and Congress, pro-preparedness editors believed, was to blame. Days before Villa’s raid into New Mexico, however, the House Military Affairs Committee released for debate what would be known as the Hay Bill – after Representative James Hay, the bill’s author and an ardent anti-militarist. The bill called for a small and gradual increase of the Regular Army and an expansion and federalization of the National Guard as a second line of defense. Historian John Patrick Finnegan called the legislation “a minimum response to a new national mood.” With Mexico fresh on their minds, President Wilson and Congress increased the size of the U.S. military with the National Defense Act, passed in July 1916. Yet instead of increasing the size of the army to meet the immediate problem in Mexico or the threat of impending war with Germany, the new army was not set to reach its maximum size of 250,000 Regulars and 450,000 Guardsmen until 1921.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ “Villa’s Raid Secures the Right of Way for National Defense Measures,” *Current Opinion*, May 1916, Vol. LX, 307-308.

⁸⁵ Finnegan, *Against the Specter of a Dragon*, 141, 155, quote from page 141.



THE LITTLE ACCELERATOR.
—Harding in the Brooklyn Eagle.

Figure 2-5. *Brooklyn Eagle*, from *Literary Digest*, August 5, 1916

Although the situation in Mexico led Congress to act, the pro-preparedness crowd was disappointed with the end result. Clearly, many preparedness advocates had hoped that the army's blunders in Mexico would bring to light the nation's need for an immediate improvement in the state of its military readiness. After the passing of the National Defense Act, however, preparedness advocates were not willing to credit Wilson with having the foresight to increase the size of the military in order to stave off a potential threat. Perhaps due to their disenchantment over the limited reforms, pro-preparedness publications portrayed the nation as being forced into accepting preparedness by a prostrate yet aggressive Mexico. A fitting example is a cartoon entitled "The Little Accelerator," published in the *Brooklyn Eagle* after the passing of the National Defense Act and reminiscent of the paternalistic pro-imperialism cartoons from the turn-of-the-century. The image depicts a small man in a sombrero (labeled "Mexico") forcing a tall and stout Uncle Sam to march down a road marked "Preparedness" by poking Sam in the calf with the bayonet at the end of his rifle – Sam's

calf being as high as little “Mexico” can reach. At the end of the road lies a smoking munitions factory (Figure 2-5).⁸⁶

In relation to Mexico, Uncle Sam began to assume the position of China vis-à-vis Japan. The absurd difference in size between “Mexico” and Uncle Sam conveys the notion that a non-white country like Mexico should not be capable of forcing the hand of the Anglo-Saxon United States. The analogy appears to be that of a young child wielding full control over a grown adult, perhaps a father-figure. At the same time, the depiction of the presumably weak force-marching the strong likely resonated with readers in a similar manner as cartoons regarding China and Japan may have done. The fact that Wilson, Congress, and an indifferent populace allowed such a relationship to arise, preparedness supporters believed, revealed a dangerous neglect of the military and an unnatural swing in the relationship of dependency the country held with its politically, economically, and racially weaker neighbor.

Although arguments in favor of a larger military and UMT continued into early 1917, the Mexican debacle and the passage of the National Defense Act brought the preparedness debate down from a fever pitch to a simmer, at least until January 31, 1917. On that date the German ambassador announced his government would re-institute its campaign of unrestricted U-boat attacks on all shipping to and from the Allied countries.⁸⁷ The fear of war’s inevitability only deepened upon the revelation of the Zimmerman Telegram – intercepted by British intelligence officers over a week before the resumption of the unrestricted U-boat campaign – by Wilson to the American public on March 1. To Mexico, still embroiled in its own revolution, the note offered restoration

⁸⁶ “The Little Accelerator,” *Literary Digest*, Aug. 5, 1916, Vol. LIII, 289. Cartoon reprinted from the *Brooklyn Eagle*, which had a circulation of 44,227 in 1915. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 623.

⁸⁷ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 5.

of its former territories of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas and a formal alliance if it attacked the United States in the event war erupted between it and Germany. It also requested Mexico contact the Japanese government about opening hostilities with the United States as well.⁸⁸

In the blink of an eye, it seemed, the primary foreign threats about which preparedness advocates and propagandists had warned suddenly were bearing down on the nation. The United States was in danger of being surrounded by enemies all of whom had recently shown to be of a more martial disposition. It appeared that Germany, the transparently random selection of a European enemy in most fictional accounts of invasion, was in fact bent on world domination or, at the very least, supremacy in the Western Hemisphere. The Zimmerman Telegram added weight to the conviction that if Germany were successful in Europe that it would soon seek to eradicate democracy and spread its imperial tentacles westward. At the same time, a scant four years had passed since the last time the United States and Japan had come to the brink of war. The mention of Japan in the telegram likely was no surprise to many Americans. And Mexico (or, more specifically, Villa's bandits) had already, more or less, invaded the United States, offering many an example of the perils of apathy and the loss of masculine, martial instincts. The *Omaha World-Herald* did not mince words when expressing these Darwinistic anxieties. "The German Government stands willing to turn loose upon the United States – our own country – the hordes of alien and inferior civilizations unless we accept and bow to its ukases upon the high seas."⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Reinhard R. Doerries, *Imperial Challenge: Ambassador Count Bernsdorff and German-American Relations, 1908-1917*, translated by Christa D. Shannon (Chapel Hill, NC: 1989), 215, 225-227.

⁸⁹ "How Zimmerman United the U.S." *Literary Digest*, March 17, 1917, Vol. LIV, 689.

Yet in reality, these threats were not likely to harm the United States. The European powers were bleeding each other white and exhausting their resources, Japan's ambitions did not extend outside of Asia, and Mexico continued to reel from revolution. Yet it was this vague possibility of attack that many publishers, social elites, and politicians hoped would elicit a reaction from the American public in favor of preparedness. At the same time, perhaps what made the seeming inevitability of war in March 1917 most jarring to the American people was that race, gender, and fear-based preparedness propaganda had the opposite effect than was intended. Manufacturing and/or facilitating a fear of foreign rivals likely reaffirmed many Americans' belief that the United States was best served staying out of Europe's and even Asia's affairs. Pro-preparedness speeches, editorial rhetoric, and imagery unwittingly foreshadowed what could happen if the nation decided to rock the boat in an already unforgiving international sea.

In the end, however, the effort of preparedness advocates to prepare the nation psychologically to defend itself from external danger was effective in that it nurtured the culture of fear, intolerance, and hysteria that defined the American home front beginning in April 1917. After over two years of hyperbolic cries of imminent doom for democracy, the nation, and the Anglo-Saxon race, the Zimmerman Telegram and the ensuing declaration of war likely had a more profound impact on the American psyche than they would have otherwise. Fear-based preparedness propaganda played off the specter of the foreign boogeyman and warned of the pitfalls of growing soft amid modern comforts, both decades-long concerns for many anxious Americans. For example, Henry Stimson argued after the revelation of the Zimmerman Telegram that the nation's

neurasthenic-like condition was likely due to the “preponderance of modern city life” on the race. “We only know that its influence is enormously against those hardy outdoor virtues of mind and body under which the traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race were crystallized.”⁹⁰ This notion of a foreign, existential threat to the United States took on a more singular image during American belligerency – that of the freedom-hating, autocratic, racially degenerated, and militaristic Teuton (see Chapter 5).

To most advocates of preparedness – even unenthusiastic supporters – war meant competition. It meant empire. And in the early twentieth century few educated men and women considered war and empire outside of the concept of race. Maxim’s belief in the martial development of the races and their drives for resources and expanded living space was also evident in *Defenseless America* and other hypothetical accounts of foreign invasion. Cries that bringing American men “back-to-nature” through UMT was the only cure for the nation’s timidity in the face of danger had clear racial connotations, as did the political cartoons depicting Japan’s dominance of unprepared China. Even Woodrow Wilson, who, despite his advocacy for the National Defense Act, was lukewarm at best to the notion of military preparedness, viewed the coming of war through the lens of race and Darwinian competition. On February 2, 1917, in his last cabinet meeting before severing relations with Germany, the President reportedly asked, “With the terrific slaughter taking place in Europe, if we, also, entered the war, what effect would the depletion of man power have upon the relations of the white and yellow races? Would the yellow races take advantage of it and attempt to subjugate the white races?”⁹¹ Wilson would weigh this and other more pressing questions of war for exactly two more months.

⁹⁰ Henry Stimson, “The Basis for National Military Training,” PAH.

⁹¹ Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 375.

Yet anxieties over the global racial struggle and the effemination of Anglo-Saxon manhood did not necessarily haunt the average white American. Middle and upper-class calls for UMT and the regeneration of the Anglo-Saxon male for the sake of national defense were more reflections of the purveyor's vision of himself and his class than accurate portrayals of the state of American society. Preparedness propaganda, then, was decidedly self-centered. The belief that Anglo-Saxon manhood was in a state of crisis, Gail Bederman has argued, was mostly the domain of the more privileged classes.⁹² The most rabid of preparedness proponents had transferred their own fears of masculine and Darwinian crisis onto the American public and, thus, conscripted the American people to the task of alleviating their personal and class anxieties. Preparedness propaganda attempted to convince Americans that, with the world already set ablaze by the war in Europe, at any moment sparks could land on the United States, spreading the inferno to American homes. American prosperity, communities, and families were in grave danger. The nation needed to be fit, armed, and efficiently organized to stave off attack and potential subjugation by a foreign foe. By turning their concerns about their own shortcomings into an existential crisis for the nation, preparedness advocates had created a national hysteria, a national frenzy that would remain at a fever pitch even after the perceived military crisis had passed.

⁹² Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 11.

CHAPTER 3 – THE HYPHEN AND THE HUN: THE ORIGINS AND
DEVELOPMENT OF WARTIME SPY HYSTERIA, 1914-1917

“I would not be afraid, upon the test of ‘America first,’ to take a census of all foreign-born citizens or the United States, for I know that the vast majority of them came here because they believed in America; and their belief in America has made them better citizens than some people who were born in America....But I am in a hurry for an opportunity to have a line-up and let the men who are thinking first of other countries stand on one side – biblically it should be on the left – and all those that are America first, last, and all the time on the other side.” – Woodrow Wilson, October 11, 1915¹

“[W]e have given them [immigrants] very little in the way of care or education in the duties which went with that freedom and power. We have apparently expected that they would learn the difficult art of self-government by merely breathing our free air without effort on our part and we are beginning to learn our mistake.” – Henry Stimson, 1917²

John B. Stanchfield, a prominent New York lawyer and former gubernatorial and Senatorial candidate, worried that Americans might be paying too much attention to the preparedness debate and not enough on a more pressing issue. In a January 1916 speech sponsored by the National Security League, he argued that Americans were “apt, while providing against the danger of open frontal onslaught, to ignore the peril, at least equally ominous, of surreptitious attack from within.” Heavier armaments, firmer bodies, and calloused hands may stave off a foreign attack from overseas, “but affirmative and

¹ An Address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, October 11, 1915, in Arthur S. Link et al., (eds.), *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (hereinafter *PWW*), 69 Vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966-1994), Vol. XXXV, 50

² Henry L. Stimson, “The Issues of the War” (New York: NSL, 1917), 16-17, Pamphlets in American History (hereinafter cited as PAH).

vigorous measures are essential at all times to checkmate the insidious activities of espionage: for the spy performs his task in times of peace as well as in time of war.”

Like the rampaging aggressors described in fictional accounts of an Old World invasion of the United States, the foreign spy “is part of a thoroughly trained and organized army, that...is preparing for the successful prosecution of a destructive war against us.”³ In short, building weapons and masculine virtue could only go so far in protecting the nation. Because foreign intrigue was potentially a deadlier weapon for an enemy to wield than a rifle or cannon, it would take cunning and vigilance as well.

Although Stanchfield did not explicitly charge a particular foreign power with filling the nation’s towns and cities with spies, there can be little doubt that his words were inspired by the flood of press accounts of real and imagined German spies, propagandists, and their German-American collaborators. His warning of an implosion from the inside out was part of a wider trend that existed alongside the drive for military preparedness and Anglo-Saxon revitalization. This chapter traces how native-born American fears of a German spy conspiracy grew during neutrality and examines why spy and anti-German propaganda likely resonated with a significant number of Americans. The emotional strain of American neutrality not only impacted many Americans’ views of the motives of foreign nations but also those of foreign birth in their midst. With the United States being pulled ever closer toward the European Armageddon, the loyalty of European immigrants and their children culled up as much, if not more, anxiety among white native-born Americans as the prospect of foreign invasion. The nation did not have to watch and wait for an Old World battle fleet to

³ John B. Stanchfield, “Some Suggestions on the Perils of Espionage,” address, January 20, 1916 (New York: NSL, 1916), 3, 4, PAH. Biographical information on Shanchfield found in “John B. Stanchfield, Lawyer, Dies at 66,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1921.

come steaming toward the Atlantic coast. To many, like Stanchfield, the invasion had been underway for decades. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, most native-born Americans had viewed European immigrants with at least a modicum of suspicion, most often questioning their capacity for self-restraint and self-government. With the beginning of the Great War and the United States's entry in April 1917, this concern gained a new intensity. Would the millions upon millions of immigrants from the Old World pledge their loyalty to their adopted nation or claim racial solidarity with their European brethren? What would mass immigrant disloyalty mean for a country vying to maintain its neutrality?

This chapter argues that long-held assumptions about the "Teuton's" racial traits and the propensity of voices of authority – such as politicians and the press – to portray the German spy threat beyond its actual scope was a reflection of long-time anxieties and created an atmosphere in which rumors of the secret agents' ubiquity could thrive. German spies, propagandists, and saboteurs did work behind the scenes in the United States during American neutrality, but they did not lurk around every corner and they were not responsible for every industrial accident, barn fire, or argument favoring strict neutrality. Yet, as this chapter will show, many prominent Americans believed, or assumed others believed, this was the case. Throughout 1915 and into early 1917, politicians and editors pulled the American public in different directions on the issue of immigrant loyalty, expressing their confidence in the fidelity of the foreign-born as well as their own anxieties about non-Anglo-Saxon aliens' ability or willingness to become "true" Americans. Much of what politicians said and editors printed about Teutonic intrigue and German-American cooperation were gross exaggerations. Like much

preparedness and wartime rhetoric warning against an imminent German invasion, propaganda concerning secret German agents portrayed them as an existential threat to the nation and, by extension, every community within the United States. The high degree of paranoia over the influx of Europe's transient working-class lingering from recent decades increased as Europe's war appeared prone to dominate Americans' lives as well.

As the sociologists Rosnow, Fine, and Shibutani have argued, during such times of heightened anxiety (as American neutrality and, later, belligerency proved to be), rumor – regardless if it is operating on the local or national level – often masquerades as truth.⁴ But in order for rumors to take hold the story must be plausible and the source credible. The believability of anti-spy propaganda was furthered because it was grounded in contemporary American racial assumptions. An alleged “Teutonic-American” conspiracy at work within the United States fit nicely into the contemporary conception of the German “race” – organized, efficient, secretive, clannish, docile yet prone to outbursts of violence. The last of these traits were consistently attached to Native Americans, African Americans, or other presumably savage peoples.⁵ Consequently, the more dangerous and familiar the German threat appeared, the greater the impact of the propaganda and the more Americans were prepared to take the intellectual and emotional leaps they would make after the declaration of war (see Chapter 4). At the same time, if studies of Americans' reactions to the 1938 radio

⁴ Ralph L. Rosnow and Gary A. Fine, *Rumor and Gossip: The Social Psychology of Hearsay* (New York: 1976) and Tamotsu Shibutani, *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* (Indianapolis, IN: 1966).

⁵ Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, IL: 1974), 46-48. Although Richard Slotkin's argument that racial nationalism led Americans and propagandists to see and portray the German as savage in 1917-18 is well taken, it does not explain why Germans in particular would have been painted with that brush. Slotkin seems to imply that Americans would have viewed the people of any nation with whom the United States may have been at war – be it Germany or even Britain or France – in the same manner, as bloodthirsty mongoloids. *Lost Battalions: The Great War and the Crisis of American Nationality* (New York: 2005), 215-218.

broadcast of H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* is any indication, the presumed authority behind the rumor adds significantly to its believability and, thus, its power to breed even further anxiety and rumor mongering within a community or nation.⁶

Since the 1880s, many middle and upper-class Americans confronted their anxiety over the growing number of immigrants with urgent calls for the “Americanization” of the foreign-born – one of the central tenets of contemporary urban reform. Yet the fact that the loyalty of millions of “hyphenated” Americans (i.e. German-Americans, Irish-Americans, etc.) remained in doubt by 1914 suggests that, to the native-born, previous efforts at Americanization largely had failed. And in the face of actual German sabotage and intrigue, although not on as large a scale as many assumed, this failure appeared increasingly more ominous and would be even more haunting to many Americans during belligerency. Was it not possible, or likely, that more than just a few unassimilated immigrants from the undemocratic “Teutonic Powers” of Germany and Austria-Hungary were active agents of their mother country? How could one tell who were the loyal immigrants and who were the secret agents? The spy hysteria that permeated the American home front during the First World War revealed the true degree to which native-born Americans continued to fear the foreign-born and to doubt their ability or willingness to fully grasp Anglo-Saxon liberty and live peacefully in a free society.

⁶ According to historian Joanna Bourke, although the 1938 broadcast had a far more immediate impact on many Americans' emotions, both it and anti-spy propaganda during the First World War both grew from well-tilled soil. In both instances the prospect of the United States being involved in a massive world war seemed real if not imminent, thus conditioning the public to react fearfully when an authoritative voice (be it Orson Welles posing as a news broadcaster or a government official on the radio or a Woodrow Wilson speech quoted in a newspaper) announced an immediate danger to the nation. Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (Emeryville, CA: 2006), 165, 185.

The development of the wartime spy hysteria in the United States during the First World War has been studied only sparingly. In the most complete examination of the German-American experience during the First World War, Frederick C. Luebke credited Anglo-Saxon Americans' suspicions of German immigrants (since the end of the Civil War) and German-Americans' ardent wartime support for their motherland with the explosion of anti-German sentiment during the war. Most German-Americans believed their cultural attachment to Germany – its language, literature, and art – did nothing to undermine their loyalty to their adopted homeland. Some even believed that freely upholding their German traditions was actually an expression of Americanism and a celebration of the individual liberties promised in the Constitution. Yet the brashness of the few, Luebke argued, along with the increasing diplomatic tension between Germany and the United States over the years combined to create a nationwide anti-German backlash by an already distrustful Anglo-Saxon populace.⁷ Don Heinrich Tolzmann broadly examined the history of German-Americans, from the earliest colonial settlements to the Cold War. His explanation for anti-German hysteria during the First World War, however, ignores any long-term trends or German acts. Instead, he places the blame solely at the feet of the Wilson Administration but without an explanation as to why this was the case.⁸ La Verne Rippley's study of German immigration also runs the gamut of American history, but her look at the First World War focuses on how the wartime experience united German-Americans and acted as "the catalyst for total assimilation."⁹

⁷ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 48-49.

⁸ Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *The German-American Experience* (Amherst, NY: 2000), 268-294.

⁹ La Vern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: 1976), 180-195. Quote from 180.

At the same time, scholars who have focused generally on the neutrality period have offered varying interpretations of the growth of the German spy menace. Walter Millis pinned the blame for the spy hysteria on the American press – more specifically the fanatically pro-Entente *Providence (R.I.) Journal*. Despite most frenzied Americans' contentions to the contrary, Millis argued, most mysterious industrial explosions and fires of the period were the consequence of an overly rapid expansion of the munitions industry to meet Allied demand.¹⁰ In his various works on Woodrow Wilson and the wartime period, Arthur S. Link viewed German intrigue and propaganda almost primarily in terms of how it impacted Wilson's decision-making and relations between the U.S. and German governments.¹¹ Reinhard R. Doerries focused on how German propaganda and espionage effected relations between the two governments prior to April 1917 as well, but he also attempted to correct the misconception that the U.S. government exaggerated the extent and danger of German intrigue for propaganda purposes. The Wilson Administration had known of German plots since the fall of 1914, Doerries argued, and also received incriminating evidence of spy activity from the British.¹² Yet, as Doerries failed to point out, the administration's knowledge of and often hyperbolic public comments on particular plots may have added more fuel to the fire of hysteria than the intrigues themselves because of the weight of authority placed behind their stories.

The different campaigns to assimilate Germans and other "un-Americanized" immigrants during the Progressive Era have gained much attention from scholars since

¹⁰ Walter Millis, *Road to War: America, 1914-1917* (Boston, MA; New York: 1935).

¹¹ For example, see Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality* (Princeton, NJ: 1960), Vol. III and *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917* (New York: 1954).

¹² Doerries also did not question Britain's motives for passing on spy intelligence to the American authorities. *Imperial Challenge: Ambassador Count Bernsdorff and German-American Relations, 1908-1917*, translated by Christa D. Shannon (Chapel Hill, NC: 1989), 141-190.

John Higham's magisterial 1955 study of nativism. John F. McClymer focused on mostly sympathetic middle-class reformers who, believing the war and anxiety over rapidly changing society would translate into political power for social reform experts, threw their support behind the more coercive and chauvinistic methods of Americanization their philanthropic and government benefactors espoused. McClymer concluded that the racial and cultural exclusivity of the period from 1915 to the passing of the National Origins Act in 1924 was "a coherent era in American politics and society."¹³ Gary Gerstle examined how the interplay between and incapability of what he termed "racial nationalism" and "civic nationalism" impacted campaigns to Americanize the immigrant, concluding that a disciplinary state arose to Americanize the immigrant and homogenize American society.¹⁴ More recently, Christina Ziegler-McPherson has attempted to contradict Gerstle's discipline argument by pointing out the limited funds appropriated to state Americanization agencies and the lack of immigrant participation in such programs. Ziegler-McPherson differentiated between progressive and conservative Americanizers. Progressives, who she claimed held the real power in Americanization, took the somewhat Lamarckian approach of building a "new American race" by altering aliens' social environment, which, by extension, meant altering the behavior of the native-born toward the foreign-born. Conservatives, on the other hand, refused to alter their behavior and denied the United States was (or should be) a "melting pot" of the best and worst races of the world. To them, education, for adults and children, was the best

¹³ John F. McClymer, *War and Welfare: Social Engineering in America, 1890-1925* (Westport, CT: 1981), 74. Also see McClymer's essay "The Federal Government and the Americanization Movement, 1915-1924, *Prologue*, (Spring 1978), 22-41.

¹⁴ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: 2001).

way to assimilate immigrants and minimize the impact their racial inferiority would have on the nation.¹⁵

As the previous chapters have established and the studies of Americanization just mentioned acknowledge, Americans' complicated and often loosely applied conceptions of race were a central aspect of American culture during the Progressive Era. And the racial image of the German in the minds of Anglo-Saxon Americans in the decades prior to 1914 was anything but simple and consistent. For over a century before the war, English and American racial theorists had claimed that both the Anglo-Saxon and the German were descended from the Teutonic Goths that overwhelmed autocratic Rome in the fifth century. Through their enlightened freedom-granting political institutions, however, Anglo-Saxons had proven over time to be the superior of the Teutonic races. This notion of racial difference – and superiority – carried over into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Americans at the turn-of-the-century held various and often contradictory stereotypes of Germans, most of them favorable. Building off the assumption of racial kinship between the Teuton and the Anglo-Saxon, contemporary American thought held that a nationality's culture was an expression of inherent yet environmentally malleable traits. Consequently, the more similar two cultures appeared the more similar the people's race was likely to be. German culture was as similar to that of the Anglo-Saxon (American and British) as any European nationality. Germans, then, were considered among the most assimilable of aliens largely because their presumed industriousness and ingenuity mirrored that of the Anglo-Saxon. At the same time, mid-nineteenth century German immigrants settled mostly on the frontier, which implied at

¹⁵ Christina Ziegler-McPherson, *Americanization in the States: Immigrant Social Welfare Policy, Citizenship, and National Identity in the United States, 1908-1929* (Gainesville, FL: 2009).

the time that many of them had developed a distinctly American character right alongside their Anglo-Saxon cousins. Yet despite a high degree of similarity in cultural and environmentally-based development, the Teutonic-German and Anglo-Saxon races were not without their differences. German immigrants were also seen as inherently authoritarian, snobbish, and clannish, not traits that implied an inclination for voluntary assimilation.¹⁶

Yet German language, culture, and people were seemingly everywhere in significant numbers during the Progressive Era, a reality not lost on many Americans. Despite the ravings against eastern and southern European immigrants by immigration restrictionists, by 1910 Germans comprised the largest alien nationality in the United States by a wide margin. First-generation German immigrants and their children totaled over eight million, which was slightly over a quarter of the entire number of white immigrants in the country. Although most (over 85%) lived in the mid-Atlantic and Midwestern states, only in New England and the mountain regions of the West were Germans not the largest immigrant group. Nor were they bound primarily to cities. While two-thirds lived in urban areas, among European immigrants Germans were the most likely to reside in rural settings. But in several major cities – such as St. Louis, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Chicago, among others – Germans were the largest ethnic group. At the same time, a study of German settlement patterns in the 1880s suggested that Germans were quite willing to integrate into preexisting Anglo-Saxon communities. In reality, then, German-Americans were less clannish than many of the

¹⁶ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: 1955), 9-10; Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 59-67; Tolzmann, *German-American Experience*, 235-237; and Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: 2009), 118.

other nationalities flooding the immigrant neighborhoods of the nation's industrial centers.¹⁷

The highly influential sociologist Edward A. Ross declared in May 1914 that German immigration had an overall positive impact on American society. Physically, the racial mixing of the “strong, but often too stocky for grace” German with the “taller and thinner American” produced “good results in figure.” Socially, the “heavy, slow-moving German blood benefits us [Anglo-Saxons] by counteracting” the characteristic impatience and “overlively ferment” of the native-born American. This “sluggish Teutonic temperament,” Ross argued, was proof that the earlier charges of German political and social radicalism – emanating from the 1877 railroad strike and the Haymarket affair of 1886 – were misplaced. The German’s “respect for authority” along with “his love of order and system” signified his conservatism. The existence of these traits meant it was “the apparent destiny” of German immigrants to “to lose themselves in the American people, and to take the stamp of a culture which is, in origin at least, eighty per cent British.” In short, after continuous immersion in American life, the Teuton could easily develop an appreciation for Anglo-Saxon freedom.¹⁸

Ross, however, also espoused several presumed Teutonic traits that would make the vast German spy conspiracy plausible during the war and that implied German aliens were perhaps not likely to assimilate willingly. For instance, Ross contradicted his earlier statement when he claimed that “[t]he German is hard-headed, and is not easily borne off his feet by the contagion of example.” At the same time, his “relish for details and this passion for thoroughness make him a born investigator” – or perhaps, as wartime

¹⁷ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 29-31.

¹⁸ Edward A. Ross, “The Germans in America,” *Century Magazine*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (May 1914), 98-104. Quotes from 100, 103-104.

propaganda would suggest, an enemy secret agent.¹⁹ In short, even by placing a positive spin on the German's perceived racial traits and kinship to the Anglo-Saxon, Ross reemphasized the foreignness of the Teutonic-American, unwittingly "othering" him as if he were Greek, Russian, or Chinese. Ross's article, published two months before the war erupted in Europe, is indicative of the ambivalence American politicians, editors, and propagandists would express in relation to German-American fidelity during the war. Despite declarations of faith in the assimilability of the Teuton, assumptions of their racial composition left the door open to suspicion.

While many Americans prior to 1914 held no ill will toward their German neighbors, the more racially conscious saw something devious in their presumed traits and the number and distribution of German immigrants across the country. Some native-born Americans assumed that Germans, despite their close biological kinship to the Anglo-Saxons, were slow to Americanize largely because of they were exceptionally organized and devoted to their immigrant communities, both manifestations of racial traits. Although this was the case for many Germans – especially much of the German-language press and those active in clubs organized to celebrate and retain their cultural heritage – the German-American population was also exceptionally diverse in terms of its religious beliefs as well as generational and cultural ties to the fatherland. The wide range of churches, clubs, and newspapers that arose helped communities maintain a uniquely German character and reflected the same diversity found in Germany.²⁰

German-American diversity and intermingling with native-born Americans, however, did not seem to matter. Suspicious Anglo-Saxons tended to assume that the

¹⁹ Ibid., 104.

²⁰ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 33-47.

most chauvinistic German-language newspapers and clubs represented the sentiment of German-Americans as a whole. Not only did these publications and organizations tout German cultural superiority, but they often portrayed the Imperial German Government in a positive light.²¹ This was alarming to some both because it signified at best a divided loyalty among the United States's largest immigrant population and because relations with the German government since the 1880s had been growing steadily more tense as both nations sought or claimed imperial dominion over several of the same areas.²² The combination of intensified German imperialism and the growing number of German-American publications and clubs favoring the Wilhelmine regime was a recipe for further suspicion on the part of native-born Americans and their leaders in the years leading up to the First World War. Many anxious Americans believed that German-American communities, clearly still holding at least partial loyalty to the Kaiser, were German sleeper cells, waiting on instructions from Potsdam or private German imperialist clubs on how they could help further Germany's aims in the Americas.²³ For example, from the moment of its inception in 1901, the German-American Alliance was accused of being a subsidiary of the Pan-German League (founded two years earlier in Germany) or another organization bent on German world empire. American misgivings grew along with the Alliance, which became the largest immigrant organization in the United States – hitting a peak of three million members in 1916.²⁴

²¹ Such publications and groups primarily were started for and by newer German immigrants, those most likely to have a close cultural tie to the relatively new Imperial German Government. *Ibid.*, 45-48.

²² For a more detailed treatment of U.S.-German imperial tensions prior to the war see Chapter 2 and 5.

²³ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 86 and Tolzmann, *German-American Experience*, 248. For more on the Pan-German League, see Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston, MA: 1984).

²⁴ Tolzmann, *German-American Experience*, 260-266 and Rippley, *German-Americans*, 180-181.

The German Ambassador, Count Johann von Bernstorff, saw the potential harm imperialistic rhetoric in Germany could have on American perceptions of his government and his former countrymen. In 1909, Bernstorff blasted “the so-called Pangermanists [sic],” arguing that they had “intentionally or unintentionally misrepresented” the true nature of Germany’s *Weltpolitik*. Armchair imperialists had “not the slightest influence on the Government” and thus did not represent official German policy. Bernstorff maintained that even the German press, who presumably could have profited from the imperialist rhetoric, rejected the Pan-Germans “because they stir up ill feeling abroad against Germany by putting forth questions and aims which are quite beyond the scope of practical politics.”²⁵

Yet distress over German imperial aggression was closely tied to another anxiety permeating the upper classes of American society prior to the start of the war in August 1914. Among the leading inspirations for the wartime spy hysteria was the suspicion that many German-Americans held dual citizenship so as not have to disavow their allegiance to the Kaiser. More specifically, concerned editors and politicians cited the German Delbrück Law, passed by the Reichstag in June 1913, as the source of their suspicion. In Section 25 of the law, a German emigrant’s “Citizenship is not lost by one who before acquiring foreign citizenship has secured on application the written consent of the competent authorities of his home State to retain his citizenship.” In short, the German government actively encouraged dual-citizenship. Despite the fact the Delbrück Law did not apply in the United States at the time (because American naturalization laws required aliens to renounce all other national allegiances), most Americans were not experts on immigration law and thus during the war viewed this as an attempt by Teutonic

²⁵ Doerries, *Imperial Challenge*, 17-18.

imperialists to conscript German-Americans in their Pan-German conspiracy to undermine a chief imperial rival.²⁶ Dual-citizenship, it was presumed, would allow disloyal German voters to steer American elections and, consequently, policies in a direction most suitable for German imperial interests.

Considering contemporary racial thought and native-born white Americans' recent history of pinning responsibility for seemingly existential crises on the foreign-born, it should come as no surprise that the opening of hostilities in Europe and the early onslaught of British-produced anti-German propaganda prompted further doubt among Anglo-Saxons as to the ultimate aims of their Teutonic-American neighbors. Less than three weeks after the war began, Woodrow Wilson counseled the American people to "be impartial in thought as well as in action" and to "put a curb upon our sentiments." Yet the President also acknowledged the likelihood that many residents remained at least partly loyal to their countries of origin and cautioned that such divided loyalty could undermine the presumed American cultural consensus and ultimately the nation's neutrality.

"The people of the United States are drawn from many nations, and chiefly from the nations now at war....Some will wish one nation, others another, to succeed in the momentous struggle. It will be easy to excite passion and difficult to allay it. Those responsible for exciting it will assume a heavy responsibility, responsibility for no less a thing than that the people of the United States, whose love of their country and whose loyalty to its Government should unite them as Americans all, bound in honor and affection to think first of her and her interests, may be divided in camps of hostile opinion, hot against each other, involved in the war itself in impulse and opinion if not in action."²⁷

²⁶ Clara Eve Schieber, *The Transformation of American Sentiment Toward Germany, 1870-1914* (New York: 1923 [1973]), 208.

²⁷ "An Appeal to the American People," August 18, 1914, *PWW*, Vol. XXX, 393-394.

It would appear that Wilson's warning was not meant for those who, like him, were predisposed to rooting for their Anglo-Saxon kinfolk. In the face of British-produced atrocity propaganda on German brutalities in Belgium, maintaining an objective opinion toward the war was no easy task for those Americans who set the parameters for what constituted patriotism or "Americanism."²⁸ For decades native-born Americans had defined "Americanized" or "unhyphenated" immigrants as those capable of and willing to forsake their racial-cultural-linguistic heritage and conform to that of the Anglo-Saxon. That was one of the primary points of progressivism. The opening of the war in Europe added a new yet related standard of Americanism for immigrants to meet – an acceptance of a quite partial definition of impartiality. Impartiality (and, thus, Americanism) in the United States in the three years of neutrality was invariably linked to one's inclination to support, or squelch a personal opposition to, the United States's tightening relationship with Great Britain. Although illegal seizures of American ships, goods, and even mail by the Royal Navy increased tensions between the two countries, Wilson nor the American press responded with the same level of outrage toward the British as they did the Germans' violations of neutrality.²⁹ In short, immigrants who expressed abhorrence toward Germany or held their English-speaking yet accented tongues had shown they had eliminated the hyphen and become a legitimate part of the body politic.

Many German-Americans, especially those who came to the United States in order to escape German autocracy and militarism, chose to follow their adopted

²⁸ See Nicoletta F. Gullace, "Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War," *American Historical Review*, 102, 3, (1997), 714-747.

²⁹ Justus D. Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War: A New History of America's Entry into World War I* (Lexington, KY: 2011), 47-49, 84-85, 123-125, 176-177, 183-187.

government's version of neutrality. This was a fact not lost on much of the American press. *Literary Digest* cited newspapers from across the country expressing confidence in "good" German individuals and newspapers that, although hoping Germany proved victorious in Europe, refused to believe German propaganda or undermine their new nation's relationship with kindred Great Britain. "I believe it would be against my duties as an American citizen," said Dr. Kuno Francke of Harvard, "if I were to take part in a propaganda the purpose of which will be...to force our Government into a hostile attitude toward England." Francke, perhaps purposely, ignored the fact that the Wilson administration's sympathy toward the Allied cause was a matter of choice. Alluding to the British blockade, Francke claimed that because of "circumstances over which the United States has no control," American neutrality "turns out to the advantage of England and to the detriment of Germany." Many key German-American newspapers seconded Francke's sentiment.³⁰ For the time being, most of the mainstream press chose to see these opinions as representative of the German-American population. The *Springfield Republican* proclaimed that "there are no stancher [sic.] or more thorough Americans than those who come to the New World from Germany." The Kaiser's apparent attempt to control German-American sympathies through his former subjects was a pipe dream, said newspapers from Chicago, St. Louis, Baltimore, and other major cities. "The United States is united," proclaimed the *New York Sun*. "Germany must give up the last of her illusions."³¹

At the same time, however, some of these same newspapers also feared German propagandists could make inroads into the German-American community. After

³⁰ "What the German-Americans Are Organizing For," *Literary Digest*, February 13, 1915, Vol. L, 299-301. Also see "German-Americans in Politics," *ibid.*, February 20, 1915, Vol. L, 361.

³¹ "German-American Loyalty," *ibid.*, May 29, 1915, 1262.

German-American leaders in Washington in early February 1915 founded the National German-American League and resolved to lobby Congress for “genuine American neutrality,” newspapers across the nation accused the delegates of trying to forge a neutrality policy favorable to Germany. Much of the mainstream press viewed the NGAL as many had the German-American Alliance, as a force for Pan-Germanism. Such an organization was clearly un-American in that it attempted to tie the United States to autocratic Germany’s interest instead of its own or those of their Anglo-Saxon brethren. Either forgetting or ignoring that American acquiescence to the British blockade of the Central Powers was itself unneutral and limited American commerce, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* called the German-American resolutions “a pro-German plot” while the *New York Sun* claimed the new organization sought “the enlistment of the American people under the flag of Germany.”³²

The mainstream press’s harsh reaction to the National German-American League’s apparent hyphenism may have been influenced by an incident on the U.S.-Canadian border in Maine that took place a few days before the conference. There, on February 2, Werner Horn, a German national and captain in the German reserves, attempted to demolish the Canadian Pacific Railroad bridge. Upon arrest, Horn admitted that unnamed agents made “arrangements” with him and provided on-the-scene support. At the same time, he was also quick to point out that the plot was not an act of war against the United States but Canada, his country’s legitimate enemy.³³ The son of the

³² “What the German-Americans Are Organizing For,” *ibid.*, February 13, 1915, Vol. L, 299.

³³ “German Blows Up Canadian Bridge,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1915. While holding Horn in the county jail, in Machias, Maine, the local sheriff thought it wise to place extra guards in the building apparently because he assumed other German agents in the vicinity may attempt to break the prisoner free. After the war it would become public knowledge that Horn’s mission was part of a larger plot to destroy several bridges to Canada. “Horn Lodged in Jail: Extra Precautions at Machias to Guard Against a Rescue,” *ibid.*, February 6, 1915.

editor of the widely-circulated *New York Staats-Zeitung* helped keep the native-born relatively calm by pointing out that there was “a great difference between Germans here and the German-Americans.” The former had clearly chosen to side with their adopted country while the latter, like Werner Horn, “would undoubtedly” lash out violently if war came with their Fatherland.³⁴

Criticisms of the NGAL aside, through their early expressions of Americanism in a time of increased international tension, the German-American community enjoyed the privileges of being considered honorary Anglo-Saxons – a condition which the First World War showed to be dependent largely on Anglo-Saxon Americans’ sense of the Teuton’s capacity for self-government and their own race’s security.³⁵ The sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915 was a key turning point for German-Americans. Not only was the incident a defining moment diplomatically and in the preparedness debate, but it also signaled the beginning of a rapid deterioration of native-born Americans’ attitudes toward German immigrants. With the war suddenly touching the lives of ordinary and well-known Americans, even if only a few, Germany was further solidified as the primary threat to the Republic and questions of German-American loyalty, along with the military’s readiness to fight, became the day’s most salient national security issue.

The number of stories, editorials, and political cartoons concerning the “hyphen” and the danger of a potentially violent and suspiciously self-isolating foreign element increased significantly after the *Lusitania* disaster. One example of this shift is the spin

³⁴ “If It Comes to War,” *The Outlook*, June 9, 1915, Vol. CX, 307.

³⁵ Matthew Frye Jacobson coined the term “honorary Anglo-Saxon” to describe native-born Americans’ views of Irish and German immigrants and their apparently budding capacity for self-government around the turn of the twentieth century. The phrase, with a slight addendum to its original definition, appears very fitting for this group of aliens at this particular point in history. *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: 2000), 192.

Literary Digest put on German-American reactions to the incident. “‘Entirely justified’ is the verdict that is passed by German-American papers upon the sinking of the *Lusitania*,” it claimed, wrongly implying this was the most common sentiment among the German community. The editors then craftily employed the passive voice when describing their take on American public opinion. “It has been predicted” that if war came between Germany and the United States “American citizens of German blood would be false to their allegiance to the United States and that civil war would ensue.” Only two editorial pledges of loyalty by German-American papers were cited as compared to four celebrating or excusing the sinking.³⁶ A writer in Wisconsin, a state with one of the highest German-American populations in the country, was apprehensive about the insular activities of “Teutonic agents and sympathizers” and saw their work, along with the *Lusitania* sinking, as part of a larger German conspiracy against the United States. Alluding to Teutonic groups like the German-American Alliance, the writer claimed that a closed-door “political meeting that excludes those of other nativity than himself” and directed the attendees “for a certain end is dangerous to the country, particularly, if it is through feeling or sentiment that the work is to be done.”³⁷

Questions of German-American fidelity “have disturbed the peace of mind of Americans with increasing insistency,” *The Outlook* acknowledged in early June. The magazine, though, attempted to allay readers’ fears and put to rest “half-informed popular superstition” that had been spreading with increasing speed. For example, rumors spread

³⁶ The editors also cited two German-American newspapers that professed their disgust with the sinking and two others that pledged loyalty to the United States in the event of war. “Where the German-Americans Stand,” *Literary Digest*, May 22, 1915, Vol. L, 1202. Yet in the next week’s edition, cited above, the editors took a more optimistic view of German-American loyalty, citing positive editorials from across the country. “German-American Loyalty,” *ibid.*, May 29, 1915, 1262. Also see “German-Americans in the Event of War,” *Current Opinion*, June 1915, Vol. LVIII, 384-385.

³⁷ William Risk, “There Is No Peace” (United States: 1915), 4-5, PAH.

that German-Americans had built concrete emplacements near major cities to be used as artillery platforms for an invading German army and that 250,000 German-Americans in New York City, trained by and loyal to the Kaiser's army, would sack the city in the event war came between the United States and Germany. Such gossip was undoubtedly false, the editor claimed, because military officers and prominent German-Americans had maintained that "German-Americans would be loyal to the last man."³⁸

In its first edition since the *Lusitania* incident, the magazine *The World's Work* culled up old concerns about the prospect of German immigrants' complicity in a Pan-German conspiracy within the United States "The European war has revealed one conscious movement which Americans had hitherto only faintly comprehended: an imperial determination to use several million Americans of German origin as positive assets of the German Empire." The editors also conveyed the same ambivalence Edward A. Ross and others expressed when they made a clear distinction between "the mass of decently living Americans of German origin" and "a few noisy newspapers, a few blatant professors, a small collection of curbstone orators" who openly celebrated their loyalty to Germany. These disloyal elements, however, allegedly had been actively cultivating the loyalty of their racial-cultural-linguistic kinfolk in the United States since the Spanish-American War. Disloyal German aliens spread pro-German propaganda among the naïve yet patriotic German-American communities that sold the need to maintain one's Old World language and traditions. Ultimately, their theory went, these Germanized yet still loyal Americans of German descent would act as a large voting bloc that would steer

³⁸ Gregory Morton, "If It Comes to War," *The Outlook*, June 9, 1915, Vol. CX, 307.

American politics in a direction that would benefit Germany in its drive for world domination.³⁹

The *Lusitania* and the Hyphen



Figure 3-1. *New York Times*, from *New York Times Current History*, June 1915⁴⁰

Despite confident pronouncements of German-American loyalty, the implication of a vast German propaganda effort – which in actuality paled in comparison to Britain’s campaign in the United States in terms of scope and success – was that far more Americans of German descent than previously believed were disloyal hyphenates. If the first step of Pan-Germanism, believed to be carried out by national German-American organizations and local clubs, was to preserve German culture in the United States, were not the persistence of German parochial schools and the continued (in some places

³⁹ “Pan-Germanism in the United States,” *The World’s Work*, June 1915, Vol. XXX, 135L-135M.

⁴⁰ “Now It Must Be Either One or the Other,” *New York Times Current History: The European War*, Vol. II (1), June 1915, 524.

primary) use of the German language grounds for suspicion? Had such communities truly erased the “hyphen?” With the *Lusitania* sinking making the prospect of eventual war a very real possibility, American anxiety naturally increased and, thus, so did their mistrust of those who looked, spoke, and acted like the nation’s probable future enemy. In the minds of many Americans, Pan-German imperialism threatened to undermine Anglo-Saxon democracy and the Americanization of the largest foreign-born population in the nation.

Anxiety over German-American loyalty deepened further in August when the *New York World* released documents proving actual German propaganda and sabotage plots in the United States, all of which were conducted under the watchful eye of the Kaiser’s embassy in Washington. The documents, accidentally left behind on a train by the German Commercial Attaché Heinrich Albert and recovered by the Secret Service, included astonishing details of German intrigue, including but not limited to the purchasing of an American munitions plant, the funding of pro-German newspapers, and the financing of several German and Irish immigrant associations.⁴¹ The press response – at least in the Northeast – was fierce. Referring to the evidence of German-financed German-language newspapers and propaganda, the *Springfield (MA) Republican* insisted that “all loyal and true Americans” will be incensed if the German Embassy truly was “financing insolent press campaigns on our own soil.” The *Albany (NY) Argus* called such a campaign “subsidized sedition,” while the *New York Evening Sun* was repulsed by “the double-faced treachery of the crusade engineered by German agents (hiding behind American dupes).” To the *New York Globe* the propaganda was no different than if Germany “had deliberately fired at our flag,” while the *New York Nation* seems to have

⁴¹ Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 554-558.

put the blame for the foreign intrigue on the entire German-American community, denouncing anyone who pandered to them as guilty as well by association. "Woe to the American politician whose name appears on German-American platforms hereafter!...And woe to the newspaper or lecturer that takes the German side. 'How much are you being paid by the Germans?' will be an inevitable question."⁴²

As summer turned into fall and into winter, tales of German secret agents and saboteurs became even more frequent. An American journalist, moonlighting as a courier for the German Embassy, was arrested by authorities in Britain while carrying incriminating documents for the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, Dr. Konstantin Theodor Dumba. The documents revealed a plot to foment strikes in American munitions and steel plants through paid agents, union leaders, and the foreign language press. When the news of the plot hit the press in early September, Dumba unabashedly acknowledged the documents' authenticity. The U.S. government promptly thanked him for his honesty with a one-way ticket back to Vienna.⁴³ In October, authorities nabbed a group of Germans who were planning to destroy railroads and munitions plants in the Northeast. Like Dumba, these agents also came clean about their culpability and even named Franz von Papen and Karl Boy-ed, the German military and naval attachés in Washington, as their primary contacts. In early November the *New York Times* compiled a list of thirteen steamships and nine munitions plants that had suffered from mysterious explosions.

⁴² "Light on German Propaganda, *Literary Digest*, August 28, 1915, Vol. LI, 388. Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 556. The Wilson Administration, however, could do little in this situation or during an earlier discovery that the German Embassy was forging American passports to return German reservists back to Germany. Few laws had been broken and, although they did not appreciate the intriguing, the administration, according to Link, "certainly understood the natural desire of German soldiers to return home, and they were not inclined to blame German envoys for trying to make this possible." In other words, the exposed plots had little immediate bearing on German-U.S. relations at the time. Ibid., 558-559.

⁴³ Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 645-650. "Dr. Dumba's Dismissal," *The World's Work*, October 1915, Vol. XXX, 631; "The Recall of Ambassador Dumba," *Current Opinion*, October 1915, Vol. LIX, 218-219.

According to *Literary Digest*, “some attribute [the blasts] to German agents or to German sympathizers.” Such “disclosures thus far only scratch the surface” of the true magnitude of German intrigue, opined the *New York Herald*. If the plotters’ incrimination of von Papen and Boy-ed could be believed, then “Germany is now waging war within the United States.”⁴⁴ Worse still, the *Boston Transcript* perceptively reflected native-born Americans’ deteriorating opinion of the German-American community. Because of the work of Teutonic propagandists “[w]e are no longer a united people, but one rent in twain on next to the most serious line of cleavage that could be conceived – the racial line.” German-Americans’ failure to fully assimilate, the editors implied, was the fault of secret foreign agents and not the actions (or lack there of) of native-born Americans.⁴⁵

Also in November, the *New York Times* reported that the ringleader of a massive German sabotage ring, Captain Franz Rintelen von Kleist, had been detained in London with a forged American passport. The stack of evidence against Rintelen (reported to be “a warm personal friend of the Kaiser”) and his gang was “mountain high” and “involv[ed] scores of persons, operating as parts of a single, splendidly organized, well-oiled machine.” The “Teutonic conspiracy” Rintelen led included practically every possible means of sabotage – setting fires and dynamite charges in munitions plants, encouraging strikes, planting bombs on Allied cargo ships leaving American ports, and attempting to reinstate the German-friendly dictator Victoriano Huerta in Mexico.

Rintelen, whom the Secret Service had been tailing for months, also had frequent contact

⁴⁴ “German Bomb-Plots in the United States,” *Literary Digest*, November 6, 1915, Vol. LI, 993-994.

⁴⁵ “Bringing the War to the United States,” *ibid.*, November 27, 1915, Vol. LI, 1208. The *New York World* also commented on the revelation of the German Embassy’s dabbling in intrigue, calling the “political conspiracy against the Government and people of the United States” as integral to German war aims “as the operations of armies in the field.” The *World* editorial, though, did not blame German-Americans for the plots, emphasizing that responsibility rested in Berlin alone. “Conspiracy Against the United States,” *New York World*, August 16, 1915. In 1915, the *New York World* had a circulation of 380,056. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 677.

with von Papen and Boy-Ed, further implicating the German Embassy and contributing to the attaches' recall in December.⁴⁶

Anxious and frustrated over the existence of the Rintelen ring and smaller alleged plots, in August Wilson expressed a fear that German agents were everywhere at work. "I am sure that the country is honeycombed with German intrigue and infested with German spies," he confided to his close friend Edward House. "The evidence of these things are [sic.] multiplying every day."⁴⁷ House went on to irresponsibly advise the rattled President that a pro-German insurrection could be imminent. Responding to Wilson's question as to where the rebellion would begin, the colonel (merely an honorary title bestowed upon him by the governor of Texas) replied that German-American sabotage or violence could occur almost anywhere. "Attempts will likely be made to blow up waterworks, electric lights and gas plants, subways and bridges in cities like New York," he claimed. "I do not look for any organized rebellion or outbreak, but merely some degree of frightfulness in order to intimidate the country."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ "Move to Punish Teuton Plotters," *New York Times*, November 22, 1915; Doenecke, *Nothing Less than War*, 131; Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: Confusion and Crises, 1915-1916*, (Princeton, NJ: 1964), Vol. IV, 56-59; and Doerries, *Imperial Challenge*, 167-168, 176-177, 182-183.

⁴⁷ Link, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 563.

⁴⁸ Doerries, *Nothing Less Than War*, 133-134. In a separate letter to Wilson, House claimed the British Ambassador to the United States was one of his sources. "Spring-Rice said the Germans have marked for destruction light-houses, tunnels, and important bridges etc. etc. in this country and that they have men upon every one of our battleships....He also said the German propaganda was financed largely by German-American citizens who did not know how the money they were contributing was being used." It is unclear if Wilson even believed the ambassador would have such specific information, but the letter betrays the wartime leanings of his chief advisor and, because at this time he trusted House implicitly, his own views. E.M. House to W. Wilson, August 2, 1915, *PWW*, Vol. XXXIV, 62. Wilson reportedly said of his relationship with House, "Mr. House is my second personality....His thoughts and mine are one." Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: 1992), 32. The American ambassador to Britain, the Anglophile Walter Hines Page, expressed similar alarm over hyphenates, but he saw the disloyal alien as a threat to Anglo-Saxon supremacy. Writing to an associate in June 1916, Page said "we Americans have got to...hang our Irish agitators and shoot our hyphenates and bring up our children with reverence for English history and in awe of English literature." Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 157.

Although Dumba, von Papen, and Boy-Ed had exited from the scene, stories of the alleged campaign of “frightfulness” (or as we would call it today, terrorism) and pro-German propaganda continued to circulate through the press, the most dramatic being the massive explosion at a munitions depot on Black Tom Island, New Jersey, on July 30, 1916.⁴⁹ The ambivalence that politicians and the press had exhibited toward the German-American continued throughout the onslaught of revelations in late 1915 and early 1916. Their inability to make sense of the small yet active German spy network was at least partly due to the inconsistency between American confidence in the assimilating power of a free society and the assumptions many held about Germans’ ability and willingness to Americanize. One of those hypotheses, it seemed, was misplaced.

Consequently, anxiety over the seemingly ubiquitous German agent, the pro-German propagandist, and German-American loyalty increased. The British Ambassador, Cecil Spring Rice, caught on to this phenomenon, reporting to the Foreign Office on “a great change” in American attitudes toward German-Americans in December 1915. “The continued publications as to German plots and German outrages have gradually aroused public opinion and the excitement appears to be growing.”⁵⁰ The

⁴⁹ See “A Partial Record of Alien Enemy Activities, 1915-1917” (New York: 1917?), PAH, which was prepared from a source that would become renown for its hyperbolic stories – the ardently pro-Ally *Providence Journal*. The initial federal investigation into the explosion on Black Tom – which was said to have blown out windows in Manhattan, left shrapnel in the Statue of Liberty, and caused the ground to quake as far away as Philadelphia and Maryland – concluded that German agents played no part in the destruction. Despite skepticism among the press and many Americans, this remained the official verdict until the Mixed Claims Commission, which handled lawsuits against Germany over wartime damages, decided on June 15, 1939, that agents of the Imperial German Government were in fact guilty of starting the inferno at Black Tom and an explosion at the munitions plant in Kingsland, New Jersey. See Chad Millman, *The Detonators: The Secret Plot to Destroy America and an Epic Hunt for Justice* (New York: 2006), especially 91-96, 270-272; and Henry Landau, *The Enemy Within: The Inside Story of German Sabotage in America* (New York: 1937), which utilized the MCC’s case files but was published before the Commission’s final verdict. For a good yet very brief summary of the German sabotage campaign in the United States prior to the American declaration of war, see Jeffrey T. Richelson, *A Century of Spies: Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (New York: 1995), 27-30.

⁵⁰ Link, *Confusion and Crises*, 59.

President only exacerbated the situation in his annual address to Congress. At first he claimed that the number of foreign saboteurs and propagandists in Americans' midst were "not great as compared with the whole number of those sturdy hosts by which our nation has been enriched in recent generations out of virile foreign stocks." Yet, in the next breath, Wilson sang a much different tune, one which both noted the relative failure of Americanization and reflected his earlier correspondence with House.

I wish that it could be said that only a few men, misled by mistaken sentiments of allegiance to the governments under which they were born, had been guilty of disturbing the self-possession and misrepresenting the temper and principles of the country during these days of terrible war, when it would seem that every man who was truly an American would instinctively make it his duty and his pride to keep the scales of judgment even and prove himself a partisan of no nation but his own. But it cannot. There are some men among us, and many resident abroad who, though born and bred in the United States and calling themselves Americans, have so forgotten themselves and their honor as citizens as to put their passionate sympathy with one or the other side in the great European conflict above their regard for the peace and dignity of the United States. They also preach and practice disloyalty.⁵¹

With these words, Wilson was both implying that immigrant disloyalty was more widespread than it was in reality and also shining a suspicious light directly on the German-American community at large. Wilson's ambivalence here is striking. His quick move from a recognition of racial kinship between the Anglo-Saxon and the Teuton to a declaration that one's Americanism was instinctive suggests the President was alarmed by the failure of many Germans to assimilate. While Wilson clearly believed the Teuton was capable of loyalty, those who were not loyal had not assimilated and, thus, retained

⁵¹ Annual Address on the State of the Union, December 7, 1915, *PWW*, Vol. XXXV, 306-307. For a sampling of national press reaction to the speech, see "The President's Indignant Arraignment of Disloyal Americans," *Current Opinion*, January 1916, Vol. LX, 1.

the traits that separated a German from an Anglo-Saxon. And it was those traits that made the German spy – wherever he or she may be – a danger to the nation.⁵²

Press opinion, and most likely American public opinion at large, mirrored Wilson's hyperbole and equivocation toward the German-American. In an article celebrating the loyalty pledges of two dozen foreign-born New York business and professional men ("most of the names being German"), *Literary Digest* claimed that newspapers across the country expressed "grave misgivings" about the course of foreign-born Americanization. German-American organizations siding with Germany had given the impression that "the process of fusion in the American 'melting pot' seems to have been reversed rather than advanced by the heat of the European conflagration."⁵³ The *New York Tribune* grossly overstated the spy threat. The "country is filled from one end to the other with disorder and with violence, which shows itself with fires, explosions, plotting. Ships that sail from American ports break into flame....Alien fringes of our population are making alien interests the test of their votes cast in our elections and openly boasting of it."⁵⁴

A contributor to *The World's Work* argued that nineteenth-century immigration patterns explained the existence of both ardently loyal and ferociously disloyal German-Americans. The most pro-American came prior to the 1870s and had been born in

⁵² Gary Gerstle has argued that, generally speaking, Wilson believed the nation's greatness was inherently tied to its diversity and ability to blend different ethnicities into one culture. This confidence in the foreign-born, Gerstle maintained, was paired with Wilson's deep desire for cultural homogeneity. Yet Gerstle also seems to let Wilson off the hook for his openly nativist rhetoric during neutrality and wartime, implying his advocacy of 100% Americanism was inspired by his desire for a homogeneous culture and not by his understanding of racial differences among whites. Gary Gerstle, "Race and Nation in the Thought and Politics of Woodrow Wilson" in John Milton Cooper, ed., *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace* (Baltimore, MD: 2008), 93-113.

⁵³ "A 'Swat-the-Hyphen' Movement," *Literary Digest*, October 30, 1915, Vol. L, 943.

⁵⁴ "Remember the Lusitania!" *New York Tribune*, November 13, 1915, PAH. Also see "Atrocities and Asinities," *The World's Work*, December 1915, Vol. XXXI, 128-129.

southern Germany, “those parts of the present empire which, historians and ethnologists tell us, represent the finer and softer side of the German character.” The first batch of German immigrants, however, were not without their problems. According to the writer, many looked to set themselves apart by establishing a nation within a nation, or “a kind of German Quebec,” in Wisconsin. But these Germans were able to overcome their inherent clannishness and “displayed a high grade of Americanism in every regard.” After the birth of the German Empire in 1871, however, a new breed of German immigrant landed on American shores that was so unlike the previous migrants that they “represented almost a different race from those who had come earlier.” The difference was that Prussians likely comprised the majority of the newer German-Americans. They showed themselves to be “hard-headed, practical, enterprising men....Pride characterized these immigrants of the ‘seventies and ‘eighties, just as republican idealism had marked those of the earlier period.” At the same time, the war had exposed the newer Prussianized German-Americans’ inborn stubbornness in that they “still have a certain allegiance to the Fatherland” and, consequently, “presented a more fruitful soil for German agitators.”⁵⁵

Editorial cartoons also questioned the loyalty of the foreign-born in general and the German-American in particular. In the fall, the *Wichita Beacon* not so subtly questioned German-American loyalty by placing a Prussian *pickelhaube* helmet atop a large question mark, while below the clouds of smoke symbolized alleged incidents of German industrial sabotage (Figure 3-2). Alluding to the impact of the Delbrück Law, the *Chicago Daily News* depicted a spy under an American flag tent labeled “citizenship”

⁵⁵ James Middleton, “Are Americans More German Than English?” *The World’s Work*, December 1915, Vol. XXXI, 141-147, quotes from 144, 145, and 146.

surrounded by dynamite and with his eyes set on several large factories (Figure 3-3).⁵⁶

The tent is a clear reference to the suspicion that some German aliens were using the cloak of citizenship as a cover for their dastardly deeds.

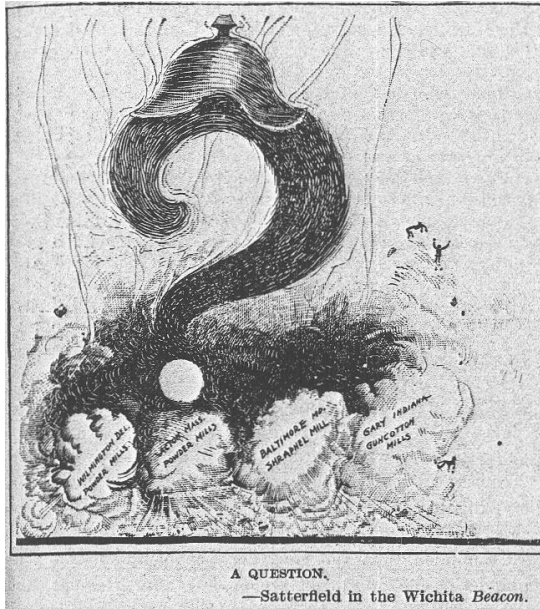


Figure 3-2. *Wichita Beacon*, from *Literary Digest*, October 1915

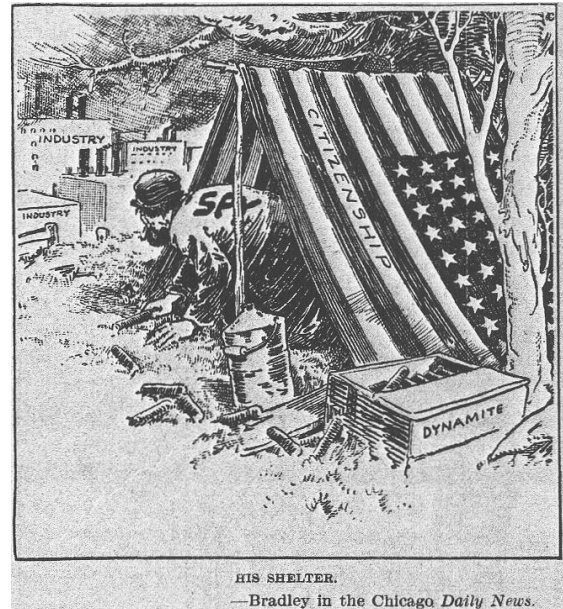


Figure 3-3. *Chicago Daily News*, from *Literary Digest*, October 1915

Anxiety over the existence and extent of German-American disloyalty and a nationwide Pan-German spy plot made the assimilation of the foreign-born – or, more precisely, its failure – an increasingly salient national issue that needed to be corrected. In 1916 Frank Julian Warne, an expert on Americanization, spoke for most Americans when he said, “With startling suddenness the effects flowing out of the war have brought to public attention aspects of immigration that heretofore have been regarded with unruffled complacency....We have found that our forces for assimilating this foreign element have not been working.” It had become clear that “many of these...are not

⁵⁶ Swat-the-Hyphen,” *Literary Digest*, October 30, 1915, Vol. L, 943. Cartoons reprinted from the *Wichita Beacon* and *Chicago Daily News*. In 1915, the *Chicago Daily News* had a circulation of 379,108. *N.W. Ayer & Sons*, 189.

strangers to the hand that stabs in the dark or the lips that betray with a kiss.”⁵⁷ To many Americans, their anxiety over a Teutonic-American conspiracy reflected generalized and long-held suspicions of the foreign-born and added a greater degree of urgency to the drive to Americanize the non-Anglo-Saxon immigrant.

Theodore Roosevelt couched presumed immigrant treachery in nationalistic and Lamarckian tones. “The politico-racial hyphen is moral treason,” the influential ex-President claimed. “We are a new nation, by blood akin to but different from all the nations of Europe.” All immigrants of foreign background “bring something of value to our common national life,” but their Americanness was to be measured by the degree to which they allowed themselves to be stirred into the nation’s racial-cultural melting pot. Tacitly referring to German-Americans, Roosevelt argued that “There is just one way to be a good citizen of the United States, and that is to be an American and nothing else....Any big group of loyal and patriotic Americans will include men of many creeds and many different race strains and birthplaces. But they will not be loyal and patriotic Americans at all unless they are Americans and nothing else.”⁵⁸

Roosevelt shared his belief that conformity could override racial ties and, possibly, characteristics with many prominent editors and progressives. During the neutrality period, concerned Americans offered several solutions to the suddenly urgent

⁵⁷ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 242.

⁵⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, “National Duty and International Ideals: Speech of Theodore Roosevelt Before the Illinois Bar Association at Chicago, April 29th, 1916” (New York: 1916), PAH. Ray Stannard Baker, the muckraking journalist and future member of the pro-war writers’ organization known as the Vigilantes, chastised Roosevelt for employing “the method of the soldier” in his anti-hyphen rhetoric. The Rough Rider’s Americanization strategy of lambasting the immigrant into submission would never breed tolerance “nor ever arrive at more democracy – for at the very basis of democracy lies understanding and mutual confidence; not mutual suspicion and fear.” Interestingly, Baker is one of the few Americans who ever called out Roosevelt on his often hateful speech. It does not appear that Baker ever sent a similar letter to Wilson, whom he admired greatly. R.S. Baker to T. Roosevelt, January 14, 1916, Ray Stannard Baker Papers, Reel 28, General Correspondence, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

and salient issue of the non-Anglo-Saxon immigrant's ability to Americanize.

Interestingly, many commentators diagnosed the problem as originating with native-born Americans, not the aliens themselves. One of those who challenged native-born Americans to take on a more active role in assimilation campaigns was none other than Woodrow Wilson. Immigrants had "c[o]me with all sorts of blood in their veins, all sorts of antecedents behind them, all sorts of traditions in their family and national life." It was up to the American people, he argued, to transform the nation into "a melting pot for all these diversified and contrasted elements" because it was critical "that the mixture that comes out may be purged of its dross" and be purely American.⁵⁹

The American novelist Winston Churchill took a more nuanced approach, lamenting that Anglo-Saxon culture had "gradually become obscured" during the decades-long transition from a mostly rural to "a complex industrial society." The influx of immigrants seeking employment and political freedom, he argued, had led many to believe that the United States was "no longer Anglo-Saxon." The issue, however, was not race suicide as much as it was Anglo-Saxon culture's inability to make Americanization attractive by offering viable solutions to the problems of industrial society. Churchill considered himself "in accord with experience and modern opinion when" he said "that environment is stronger than heredity, and that our immigrants become imbued with our [Anglo-Saxon] racial individualism." Yet prior to 1916, Anglo-Saxon culture had not been opened to modification and, consequently, immigrants were less inclined to follow their example and assimilate.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ "An Address in Charlotte," May 20, 1916, *PWW*, Vol. XXXVII, 81.

⁶⁰ Winston Churchill, "A Plea for the American Tradition," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, January 1916, Vol. CXXXII, 249-256, quotes from 249 and 250. The American author should not be confused with his contemporary in Great Britain, the early wartime Lord of the Admiralty and future Prime Minister Winston

Similarly, Royal Dixon (like Warne, an authority on Americanization) and the editors of *Current Opinion* argued that the American people were in need of an “epic consciousness,” by which Dixon meant “an awareness of...the purpose and splendid future of the country.” By comparison, the “astounding national unity” of the warring home fronts in Europe had revealed deep fissures in American society. The nation, he argued, found itself “divided in allegiance, distracted in national mind and purpose, uneasy of conscience.” Under such circumstances, “Fear replaces a fatuous national pride.” According to Dixon, the key to Americanization was to use schools to teach native-born Americans that, despite racial differences, “men of all races and times have gained and lost and gained” pride in their country. In that sense, the American spirit was not born on “Plymouth Rock but equally as well with Winkelried in the Swiss pass, or the flight of Israel out of Egypt.” The sooner this was realized the sooner the issue of immigrant loyalty would become a thing of the past. Dixon, however, assigned women – seemingly both native and foreign-born – with the task of carrying out his educational Americanization plan in the hopes that their work will permeate through unassimilated families. “To American women: Americanize one immigrant woman. Get one immigrant to become a citizen. Teach one foreign-born mother English. Put one immigrant family on your calling list.”⁶¹

Spencer Churchill. In 1915, Harper’s Monthly had a circulation of 100,000. *N.W. Ayer & Son’s Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer, 1915), 660.

⁶¹ “Americanization and the Lack of a National Epic Consciousness,” *Current Opinion*, September 1916, Vol. LXI, 182-183. Dixon’s call to arms was not out of the ordinary. Just as it had been with the settlement house movement, women were more likely than men to be at the center of an Americanization campaign. Much of this was likely because Americanization was synonymous with nurturing and educating, matters that many tied to women and domesticity. Campaigns to assimilate the immigrant – by tutoring them in American culture and cultivating their English language skills – gave women a voice and a role in politics that did not stray far from traditional gender roles and that few men would perceive as threatening or intrusive. Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 197-198; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order*,

Although not as widely known as Jane Addams or Lillian Wald, Frances Kellor, chairperson of the National Americanization Committee, was the leading activist for a softer Americanization during neutrality and wartime. Kellor argued that attempts to educate the alien masses would be for naught unless the native-born treated them with patience and fairness. The common track of holding poor and/or isolated immigrants responsible for their presumed inability to Americanize was counterproductive. Ethnocentric and disinterested native-born Americans, not the immigrants themselves, were responsible for the filth and depredations of the urban slums and the foreign-born's clannish proclivities. The foreign-born needed to be welcomed, nurtured, and protected from abusive employers, political bosses, and foreign propagandists. The support of many of the foreign-born for the Central Powers on key issues – such as the *Lusitania* sinking and the occupation of Belgium – Kellor argued, highlighted the fact that native-born Americans “ha[ve] neglected, even forgotten, its task of making Americans of the people that have come to its shores.” Kellor maintained that a gentle approach to Americanization would make the United States more secure in the face of potential war. In relation to preparedness, Americanization meant, among other things, “*the abolition of class prejudices and racial hatreds and of the intolerance of the old stock for new stock.*” In other words, preparedness (and, thus, national security) was not possible without the union of all Americans, native and foreign-born, behind a single cause.⁶²

1877-1920 (New York: 1967), 122-123; and Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (New York: 2003) 52-54.

⁶² Frances Kellor, *Straight America: A Call to National Service* (New York: 1916), quote from page 5 and 187 (italics hers); “What is Real Americanism,” *Review of Reviews*, September 1916, Vol. LIV, 326-327; and “Immigration and Straight America,” *The World's Work*, October 1916, Vol. 32, 607, which stated that Kellor's book was “a more effective argument for woman suffrage than the conventional pleas for political equality.” David M. Kennedy places Kellor squarely within the framework of the settlement house movement in *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: 1980), 64, 67, 68. After praising Kellor and the National Americanization Committee for their “humanitarian sympathy,”

The popular fiction author Margaret Sherwood also inserted herself into the debate. Sherwood saw Americanization as an educational and racial issue and suggested that “civilizing” foreign youth by teaching them American and English literature and poetry was the key to lasting Americanization. Unfortunately, because of Americans’ current interest in modernization “Our schools perhaps train more effectively than they civilize.” Passing on the greater aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture to immigrant children would afford even native-born Americans the opportunity to overcome their materialism and re-Americanize. “They [native and foreign-born children] can never be Americans in the truest sense of the word without fuller knowledge of that which is finest and oldest in English race tradition....Possibly in attempting to share it with young aliens we may rewin more of it for ourselves, and learn to know better the genius of the Anglo-Saxon race,” a race which had “carried civilization the farthest, in the matter of securing freedom.” Both the war and an apparent belief in Social Darwinism seem to have inspired Sherwood’s plea. What made the “English race” superior, she argued, was its “power of trained emotion, of emotional control.” The Germans, though the intellectual equals of the Anglo-Saxons, “have managed to train their minds but not their emotions.” Instilling the art of “self-mastery” in “all races” (Germans implied to be the most urgent case) would allow the country to remain strong and would ensure “the Anglo-Saxon tradition” would rightly “prevail over all others.”⁶³

Higham expressed some disappointment in their advocacy of preparedness, which he saw as a clear diversion from their previous path toward assimilation. “The earlier social objectives” of the NAC, he argued, “faded into the background.” *Strangers in the Land*, 243-247, quote from 243.

⁶³ Margaret Sherwood, “Our Immigrant Young and the Anglo-Saxon Ideal,” *The Forum*, September 1916, Vol. LVI, 317-322, quotes from 317, 320, and 321. Max Eastman, the editor of the socialist newspaper *The Masses*, though obviously not a woman, is an example of another voice of progressive racial tolerance in the Americanization debate. Directly challenging many Americans’ concerns that German-Americans might not be inclined toward inclusion in a democratic society, Eastman opined that “It is not to be doubted...that babies of Germany are born with as strong a love of liberty as the babies of Anglo-

The editors of *The World's Work*, on the other hand, appear to have taken continued Anglo-Saxon racial superiority for granted. Advancing the more conservative view, they maintained that some foreign races were simply not capable of Americanizing. "We have had ample proof in the last ten or twelve years that the processes of assimilation have not been thoroughly effective," they lamented. "We have large undigested lumps of foreign-born residents who have not acquired either American ways of living or American ideals of government." The failure of Americanization was a racial and legal issue, not a cultural one as Kellor and Sherwood had argued. Seconding the thoughts of the American missionary Sidney L. Gulick, the editors proposed new immigration restriction legislation that would base limitations on a race's "capacity for genuine Americanization." If members of a certain race or nationality already in the United States showed themselves capable of handling self-government and assimilation, then more of their countrymen would be welcome in the future. Conversely, foreign peoples would be more thoroughly restricted if their American kinfolk did not show the ability to Americanize quickly. Not surprisingly, Gulick assumed the latter category would include southern Europeans and Asians. The downside, however, was that the plan would not restrict the immigration of Germans, a people who have shown the capacity but not always the willingness to Americanize. German "clannishness" – which was evident to such historic Americans as Benjamin Franklin and John Hay – "is a racial tendency and an admirable one, but it constitutes a danger to a country whose progress

Saxondom. They are not of a different race. What we call races, in our loose conversation and journalism, are not races at all, but merely groups of people who live under certain traditional ideas. And the people who live under German ideas have the same native desire to feel free that we have." Max Eastman, "Understanding Germany," *ibid.*, January 1916, Vol. LV, 43. During belligerency, Eastman and others like him – socialist or not – were marginalized and in some cases jailed for their opposition to the war and the homogeneous society propagandists hoped to shape. Also see H. Geo. S., "War or Peace" (U.S.: 1916), PAH.

depends upon the maintenance of homogeneity.” And with Teutonic imperialists trying “everything in their power to make the Germans a political unit here,” the editors concluded, all the nation could do was hope after the war that potential German immigrants would stay put.⁶⁴

Preparedness advocates, who also fretted over future foreign peril, offered what they saw as a viable means of forging national unity and undermining immigrants’ foreign loyalties – universal military training. Taking a similar yet more compulsory stance on Americanization as Kellor, proponents of preparedness viewed unity behind the lines as important as dry powder at the front. General Leonard Wood argued in May 1916 that UMT would quickly assimilate those foreign “racial groups” that “do nothing shoulder to shoulder with the older residents which tends to create that feeling of nationality which must be created if they are to be a dependable and valuable portion of our population.” Military training, then, would awaken the alien male to the preparedness axiom that “the rights of citizenship carries with it equal responsibility for service.”⁶⁵ Looking at the un-American, undisciplined immigrant masses, the Assistant Secretary of War Henry Breckinridge asked, “Is America to be a nation or a second Austria-Hungary, an unblended association of competing races...?” Immigrant organizations that tried to impact American politics – whether they be German, Polish, Irish, or whomever – “are seditious, subversive of the great principle of national unity and must not be tolerated.” Aside from completely cutting off immigration until the

⁶⁴ “The Immigration Question,” *The World’s Work*, August 1916, Vol. XXXII, 374-375. The editors of this mainstream publication appear to have led the way in expressing concerns about the unassimilable immigrants currently within the nation’s borders. They first expressed opposition to the literacy test on the same grounds – that it was not effective in keeping immigrants of poor “quality and character” out of the country – early in the neutrality period. “The Limit of the Melting Pot,” *ibid.*, March 1915, Vol. XXIX, 491-492.

⁶⁵ John Philip Hill, “National Protection: Policy, Armament, and Preparedness,” (Baltimore: 1916), 13, 17, PAH.

“vast horde of foreign-born” had been “fused into a real American race,” Breckinridge offered UMT “as the final solvent of the hyphen.” Making military drill compulsory in public schools would ensure that not only immigrants but native-born American boys would steer clear of the dangers of pacifism and grow into responsible, service-minded citizens.⁶⁶

Although the preparedness issue had been settled largely in the spring with the National Defense Act, relations with Germany had improved, and real life incidents of foreign sabotage and espionage were on the wane, war-based fears continued to play a critical role in American politics as the 1916 election loomed.⁶⁷ Running on his progressive domestic credentials and the slogan “He Kept Us Out of War” (which most associated with the Mexican debacle), Wilson and his supporters intentionally made German-American loyalty and Teutonic subversion a major issue of the campaign. Their denunciations of the so-called “hyphen vote” and allusions to the Republican opponent’s, Charles Evans Hughes, imagined connection to Pan-Germanism likely spread and intensified preexisting anxieties by directing public discourse over foreign threats further

⁶⁶ Henry Breckinridge, “The Solving of the Hyphen,” *The Forum*, November 1916, Vol. LVI, 583, 585. Stories and editorials on UMT as a means to build better citizens and, thus, Americanize immigrant and native-born alike were incredibly common. Some of the hundreds of examples include “Remarks of Henry L. Stimson at the National Security Congress” (New York: 1916), PAH; S. Stanwood Menken, “Remarks of S. Stanwood Menken at the Dinner of the Engineer’s Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, February 14, 1916” (New York: 1916), PAH; “Preparedness versus Militarism,” *The World’s Work*, June 1916, Vol. XXXII, 139; Howard H. Gross, “Universal Military Training,” *The Forum*, March 1917, Vol. LVII, 259-264; “To Make ALL Our Boys Soldiers,” *Literary Digest*, January 6, 1917, Vol. LIV, 4-5; “Compulsory Military Training in Schools and the National Need for Physical Preparedness,” *Current Opinion*, August 1916, Vol. LXI, 115-117; “Fundamentals of Military Training,” *Review of Reviews*, August 1916, Vol. LIV, 210-211; John Dewey, “Universal Service as Education,” *New Republic*, Vol. VI, 309-310; and “Making Americans and Defending America,” *The Outlook*, February 2, 1916, Vol. CXII, 259-263.

⁶⁷ Casting the election as a watershed moment for the American “race,” Secretary of War Newton D. Baker maintained that “the result...seems little less important than the result in November of 1860.” The year 1916 would be remembered as “an epoch in the history of the race” and that “many of us are looking upon it with a feeling of almost religious fervor.” “Speech of Hon. Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, at Waterville, Maine, August 24, 1916,” Newton Diehl Baker Papers, Box 244 (Speeches and Writings), Library of Congress (Washington, DC).

into hyperbole. On Flag Day 1916, Wilson again spoke of both his faith in the “vast majority” of loyal foreign-born Americans and his anxiety over those working “to undermine the influence of the Government of the United States.” Wilson likened the alleged conspiracy to a snake. It “works underground, but it also shows its ugly head where we can see it.” These serpents were “trying to levy a species of blackmail” on the United States and demanded the government “Do what we [disloyal German-Americans] wish in the interest of a foreign sentiment or we will wreak our vengeance at the polls.”⁶⁸ Just as the *New York Globe* predicted in August 1915, during the election Wilson’s advisors and press allies consistently portrayed Hughes as the “Kaiser’s candidate,” the instrument of a vast German conspiracy to control American politics and foreign policy (see Figure 3-4). Unlike Wilson, Hughes did not go out of his way to denounce “un-American” immigrant groups and, despite some embarrassment, openly accepted the support of several prominent (and, probably unbeknownst to him, German-funded) German-American organizations.⁶⁹

German-Americans did not take Wilson’s backhanded expressions of confidence in their loyalty in late 1915 and through the 1916 presidential election sitting down. The President’s words embittered many German-Americans who saw through his pretense of fairness at home and neutrality abroad. In the fall of 1916, before the election, a German-American Lutheran minister in Minnesota wrote, “I am a born American,...I have been as good an American as ever any of the Wilsons were....And to be called an undesirable

⁶⁸ Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (eds.), *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: 1925-1927), Vol. IV, 207.

⁶⁹ Link argues that Hughes’s German-American support in the campaign did not translate into votes. German-American resentment of Wilson’s and Roosevelt’s anti-hyphen vitriol turned many way from the polls. Link, *Wilson and the Progressive Era*, 232, 244-245, 249. For editorial opinion on Hughes’s reliance on immigrant voters and on how immigrants voted, see “Mr. Hughes and the Hyphen,” *Literary Digest*, September 16, 1916, Vol. LIII, 658; “How the Hyphen Voted,” *ibid.*, November 25, 1916, 1394; and “The Candidates and the Hyphenates,” *Current Opinion*, July 1916, Vol. LXI, 5-6.

citizen by a man, who's [sic.] only boast is, that he is a fine breed [sic.] Englishman, who feels at home in English surroundings is indeed strong!" He concluded that Wilson intentionally offended German-Americans "because he hated us, since we had not his English blood in our veins."⁷⁰

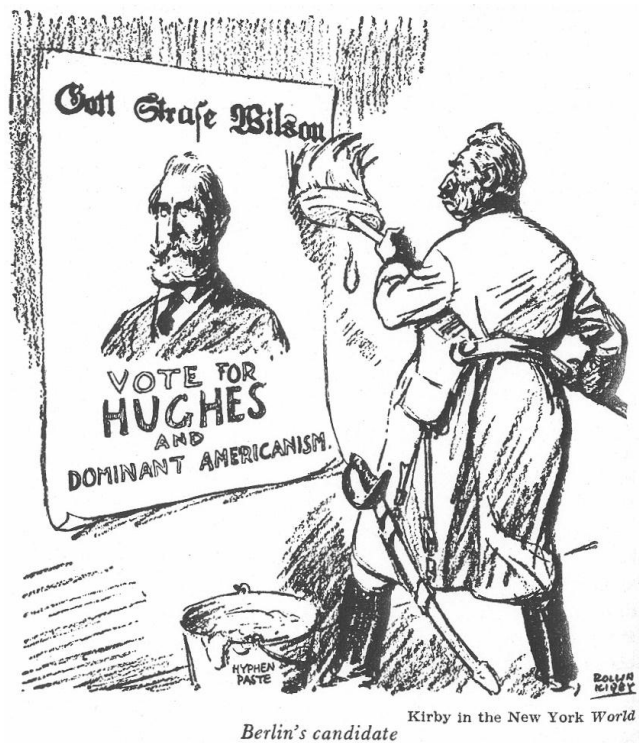


Figure 3-4. From the *New York World*, whose editor, Frank Cobb, was a press ally and personal friend to the President.⁷¹

The minister's charge of racial discrimination may not have been too far off the mark. Although it is difficult if not impossible to measure the impact Wilson's anti-hyphenism and Hughes's uncomfortable embrace of immigrant groups had on the election's outcome, the mere fact that the President and his friends banged the drum loudly and often is itself suggestive of their own attitudes and their assessment of American public opinion. While cynical political calculation was clearly at work,

⁷⁰ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 160.

⁷¹ Reprinted from Link, *Wilson and the Progressive Era*, 246.

Wilson's campaign rhetoric, of which the Flag Day speech was indicative, was not merely fear mongering for votes.⁷² His words and those of his supporters (and even his political enemies, like Roosevelt) were little different from their previous condemnations of disloyalty – the contradictory line that most German-Americans were loyal, many were not, and, consequently, it was often difficult to tell the difference.

Even Democratic portrayals of Hughes as a German sympathizer were not plucked out of thin air. In June, Wilson's Chief of Staff Joseph P. Tumulty, a trusted advisor who had been with Wilson since his days as governor of New Jersey, convinced the President to include in the official Democratic platform a stern repudiation of hyphenism and political parties who would curry the hyphen's favor. The platform stated that the Democratic Party "condemn[s] all alliances and combinations of individuals...of whatever nationality or descent, who agree and conspire together for the purpose of embarrassing or weakening the Government or of improperly influencing or coercing our public representatives in dealing or negotiating with any foreign power." In an attempt to tie Hughes and the Republican Party to Pan-Germanism, the Democrats also "condemn[ed] any political party which in view of the activity of such conspirators, surrenders its integrity or modifies its policy."⁷³ This change to the Democrats' 1916 platform, though, does not seem to have been purely a political ploy. Tumulty privately

⁷² According to Luebke, Wilson was "[e]ager to upstage Roosevelt and Republican warhawks" and operated by the premise that "[i]f 'hyphenates' could be made to appear disloyal, the candidate they supported must be equally undesirable." At the same time, the charges levied in the President's anti-hyphen speeches were not backed by examples of actual espionage but "were based on nothing more substantial than rumor and suspicion." Yet Luebke fails to point out that although many of the stories in the press were exaggerated, much of it was not. Wilson likely based his unkind words from what came across his desk on a fairly regular basis in 1915 and early 1916. His perception of the threat and extent of the intrigue appears to me a far more revealing point of study than critiques of his political motives. Ibid., 169

⁷³ Quote from Joseph P. Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson as I Knew Him* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1924), 191.

reported to Wilson that Hughes's campaign had made a Faustian bargain with the Kaiser, becoming a willing or unwitting participant in Wilhelm's scheme to Germanize the United States.

“An effort is under way to debase our politics through the creation of the German voters in the United States as a power. The instrumentality through which this power is to be exerted is the present candidacy of Judge Hughes. It does not need to be established that Justice Hughes is seeking the support of German-Americans by un-American commitments, in order to prove that what I have said is true. It is a fact not susceptible of being controverted that there is an organized movement among the Teutonic-Americans to deliver their three million or more votes to Mr. Justice Hughes in November.”⁷⁴

Americans' general apprehension over Teutonic clannishness and aggressive German imperialism that had lingered since the 1880s were apparent in Tumulty's words. His charge against Hughes, along with Wilson's confused accusations of German-American disloyalty since the war began, suggest that the President's camp saw the existence of a German-American conspiracy to be, at the very least, a possibility or, at most, an active and existential threat to American democracy. Tumulty's estimate of three million Teutonic votes – equal to the number of members of the German-American Alliance – in Hughes's favor also implies the White House believed German intrigue was rampant throughout more than just a small portion of the German-American population.

At the same time, Wilson's decision to take such an extreme stance in the campaign suggests that he and his political allies assumed many Americans also believed

⁷⁴ Joseph P. Tumulty to Wilson, June 13, 1916, *PWW*, Vol. XXXVII, 219. At the same time, Tumulty could have merely been playing off his boss's known anxieties about the threat Germany did and could pose to the country in order to gain approval for this political tactic. After citing the above-mentioned change to the party platform in his memoirs, Tumulty then discussed how formidable Hughes was as an opponent and how much Wilson admired the judge's work as Governor of New York. Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson as I Knew Him*, 191-192.

an anti-American conspiracy was afoot. In this particular case, however, it appears the President did not emulate national apprehension as much as he created more anxiety and exacerbated what already existed. Despite all the press accounts of Pan-German intrigues, factory explosions, and German spy trials, Americans still appear to have cared little about the war or international affairs. Wilson's rhetoric did not translate into an easy victory at the polls – he won by one of the closest margins in Presidential election history – nor did it lead very many native-born Americans to hysterics or to change their behavior.⁷⁵ In short, anxiety over German-American loyalty and a Teutonic spy conspiracy, as it was with the prospect of foreign attack, increased but did not boil over as a result of the election.

That is not to say Wilson's words, buttressed by the authority of his office, did not have a more long-term impact. With the rash of exploding factories and bridges decreasing in late 1916 and Germany's restriction of its U-boats easing tensions, the world did not look as immediately threatening as it may have in 1915. Press opinion over the merits of an anti-spy bill being debated in Congress in early 1917 reveals that although anxiety was in the air many people were not yet buying into the conspiracy. The pro-Ally *Chicago Tribune* poked fun at those “many worthy Americans” who “need[ed] a cold douche of common sense to restore” their sanity. “A German bartender overhearing an argument on the war,” for example, would not be privy to anything “for which he would be given a pension by the Imperial German Government.” At the same time, the men at a nearby table “are not necessarily emissaries of a foreign foe because

⁷⁵ The election was so close that Wilson won New Hampshire by 52 votes, Hughes won Minnesota by 392, and three others – California, New Mexico, and North Dakota – were too close to call for two days after the election. Hughes then waited two weeks to concede. John Milton Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: 2009), 357-358.

they are consuming Hungarian goulash.” Conversely, the *Washington Evening Star* suggested that German spy rings established by long-ejected Embassy personnel had yet to be flushed out while the *Philadelphia North American* argued “thirty months of ceaseless agitation and intermittent disturbances, ranging from foreign intrigue disguised as pacifism to open violence and terrorism” proved widespread German intrigue was and would continue to be a legitimate danger.⁷⁶

The Zimmerman Telegram, however, was a game-changer for many previously unconverted Americans. Along with proving that Germany was bent on world domination, the note implied that the *North American* was right – that concerns about Teutonic clannishness, sabotage, and espionage were in fact legitimate. Combined, the previous two years of spotty and only rarely confirmed German intrigue, the pro-German sentiments of some (but clearly not a majority) of German-American newspapers, and the details of the telegram looked eerily similar to the Pan-German conspiracy many prominent Americans had feared since the United States’s first run-ins with Imperial Germany in the 1880s and 1890s. If they were not active agents or (at least) sympathetic to their fatherland, why else had the newer, presumably more “Prussianized” German immigrants, living in such tightly knit communities where they prayed, conversed, and taught their children in the Kaiser’s tongue, resisted Americanization and the President’s pro-Allied neutrality? Even more so than the *Lusitania* sinking, the release of the Zimmerman Telegram to the public marked perhaps the most critical “Are you with us or against us?” moment of the entire war.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ “To Make Us Spy-Proof and Bomb-Proof,” *Literary Digest*, March 10, 1917, Vol. LIV, 610-612.

⁷⁷ For press opinion on the domestic fallout of the Zimmerman Telegram, see “How the Zimmerman Telegram United the United States,” *Literary Digest*, March 17, 1917, Vol. LIV, 687-688; “On the ‘Verge of War,’” *The Outlook*, March 7, 1917, Vol. CXV, 406-408; “The Progress of the World,” *Review of*

Although Wilson was careful not to charge the German-American community with disloyalty in his war address to Congress on April 2, 1917 – saying the nation’s fight was only with the German government, not its people – underlying concerns of a Pan-German conspiracy within the United States appear to have influenced his words. While numerous affronts to American honor occurred on the high seas and in diplomatic dispatches, some of the most blatant and shameful acts had taken place within the nation’s borders. “One of the things that has served to convince us that the Prussian autocracy was not and could never be our friend is that from the very outset of the present war it has filled our unsuspecting communities and even our offices of government with spies and set criminal intrigues everywhere afoot.” Not only was the plot nationwide, Wilson claimed, but “it is now evident that its spies were here even before the war began; and it is unhappily not a matter of conjecture but a fact proved in our courts of justice that the intrigues which have more than once come perilously near to disturbing the peace and dislocating the industries of the country have been carried on at the instigation, with the support, and even under the personal direction of official agents of the Imperial Government accredited to the Government of the United States.”⁷⁸ The President’s claim that German spies had been plotting against the United States since before 1914 (of which there was no evidence) and had infiltrated the halls of Congress means that he saw the sabotage, espionage, and propagandizing that had taken place as more than just an attempt to undermine Germany’s enemies in the current war. Instead, he implied it was part of a larger conspiracy that targeted the United States itself. With the weight of the

Reviews, April 1917, Vol. LV, 355-356; “Germany Invites Mexico and Japan to Dismember the U.S.,” *Current Opinion*, April 1917, Vol. LXII, 232-235.

⁷⁸ “An Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” April 2, 1917, *PWW*, Vol. XLI, 524.

moment behind him, Wilson had expressed his belief that the existence of a Pan-German conspiracy was an established fact.

More important than the weight of the moment, however, was the weight of Wilson's office. The assumption that political leaders' have special access to sensitive information pertaining to national security was not a phenomenon new to the national security state of the Cold War era or the twenty-first century War on Terror. Despite the relatively limited size of the federal government coming into the First World War, many Americans appear to have believed that Wilson, his Cabinet, and those in Congress knew the true extent of the German spy network, implying press coverage had only scratched the surface. The *Minneapolis Tribune* quipped that most Americans would assume anyone who would make the claim that 100,000 foreign spies were at work in the United States – as North Carolina Senator Lee Overman had done – was “seeing things” if the assertion had not come from the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, who often received “credible reports from secret service men” and the Department of Justice. A significant number of the secret agents, the editors argued, were likely from the Allied countries and were in the United States to tail the “sinister movements on the part of Teuton ‘sleuths.’”⁷⁹

In *America Entangled*, published in March 1917, John Price Jones cited the President's 1916 Flag Day address as proof that the Kaiser was trying to control American politics through secret agents and his loyal Teutonic-American subjects. “When he [Wilson] made his charge,” Jones wrote, “he had back of him a vast amount of evidence which never has been and never will be made public.” Despite the absence of public “evidence,” though, Jones concluded that the “aim” of the German agents and

⁷⁹ “To Make Us Spy-Proof and Bomb-Proof,” *Literary Digest*, 610.

their willing German-American and pacifist executioners “was to make Congress vote and the President act just as the Emperor of Germany deemed most suitable to the interests of the Fatherland.”⁸⁰ As with Tumulty’s charge that Hughes was an eager tool of German intrigue, for Jones as well as those alarmed by Overman’s claims and other hyperbolic espionage stories, no actual proof was necessary.

Not only were prominent government officials and law enforcement officers the sources behind these accounts, but the antagonists were individuals that many native-born Americans believed were likely to take part in such a conspiracy. Progressive Era racial beliefs about the Teuton were central to hyperbolic claims of nationwide spy activity and German-American disloyalty. The collective American imagination forged an image of the German spy menace based on preexisting stereotypes of the insular, secretive, efficient, and stubborn Teuton – traits that predisposed German immigrants to be disloyal and conspiratorial against their adopted homeland. But now that the nation was at war, politicians’, editors’, and propagandists’ ambivalence toward the trustworthiness of the German-American community would be quickly replaced by claims that German intrigue posed an existential threat to the United States. As public opinion makers ratcheted up the alarmism, in many places locally-grown rumors sprouted from their rhetoric. Consequently, a cycle of anxiety emerged. While the rumor mill churned out more menacing versions of the propagandists’ messages, fearful Americans became even more

⁸⁰ John Price Jones, *America Entangled: The Secret Plotting of German Spies in the United States and the Inside Story of the Sinking of the Lusitania* (New York: 1917), 212, 214. The claims in Jones’s book were broadcast to a very wide audience in “Lusitania Decoyed Into Trap, Book Says,” *New York Times*, March 5, 1917. Considering the frequency with which newspapers in other regions of the United States reprinted articles originating in New York (especially those from the Times), there is a good chance millions of newspaper readers across the nation became familiar with Jones’s groundless, yet probably believable at the time, assertion without having to have read his book.

susceptible to their rhetoric and concluded that it was the responsibility of every loyal citizen to stamp out the Teutonic threat within.

CHAPTER 4 – HUNTING THE HUN AT HOME: SELLING AND COMBATING

THE TEUTONIC SPY CONSPIRACY, 1917-1918

“Protestations of loyalty do not help, for one of the most influential weeklies of New York has said, ‘Beware of the German-American who wraps the Stars and Stripes around his German body.’ ... When one looks at our comic periodicals it would seem that a campaign of ruthless hate against the American of German descent is an eminently desirable thing.” – German-American Professor Hermann S. Ficke, September 1917¹

“No other one cause contributed so much to the oppression of innocent men as the systematic and indiscriminate agitation against what was claimed to be an all-pervasive system of German espionage.” – John Lord O’Brian, head of the War Emergency Division of the Department of Justice, 1919²

In September 1917, Miss A.D. Mitchell of Sarasota, Florida, did her patriotic duty. Enemy agents were at work in her community and it was high time someone put a stop to it, so Mitchell contacted the Military Intelligence Division (MID) about a threat that, if left unchecked, could do great harm to her community.³ The MID quickly dispatched an investigator, T.S. Marshall, to the scene. According to his report, an alleged German conspirator – a man by the name of Bolge – was the manager of a bakery in nearby Osprey. Typically, Bolge and his family received few visitors, but now,

¹ Quoted in “‘Unfair’ Treatment of German-Americans,” *Literary Digest*, September 1, 1917, Vol. LV, 32.

² James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information* (Princeton, NJ: 1939), 15.

³ The Military Intelligence Division was known at the time of this investigation as the Military Intelligence Section, which was originally formed in May 1917. In August 1918, the MIS was replaced by the MID, a new division within the Army General Staff. For the sake of clarity and to stay consistent with the title of the document collection, I will refer to it as the MID throughout. Bruce W. Bidwell, *History of the Military Intelligence Division, Department of the Army General Staff: 1775-1941* (Frederick, MD: 1986), 110, 116-117.

according to Mitchell, “many automobiles stop at the place.” Mitchell conjectured to Marshall “that due to the nature of the shoreline in this neighborhood it is easy for the German families living at intervals along the shore to convey information to each other in rapid order” and word is “that some such systematic arrangement is had among them to keep themselves posted in this way.” Apparently, Bolge was not working alone.

Rumors circulated that Bolge was persuading the African-American employees working under him “to consider the white Americans as their enemy” and promising that “in the event of German supremacy equal wage scales and social equality will prevail.” Also, according to another citizen of Sarasota who also contacted the MID, Bolge made no effort to be inconspicuous. The concerned Sarasotan claimed he had heard through the proverbial grape vine that the enemy agent had been seen wearing German insignia on his clothing, including a badge with an image of both the German Kaiser and the recently deposed Russian Czar, the former being an interesting choice considering the alleged spy’s presumed loyalties to Germany.⁴ The MID and Department of Justice investigated thousands of similar rumors brought to their attention throughout the twenty months of American intervention in the First World War. As in practically all of their investigations, in Sarasota federal agents found no conclusive evidence supporting the rumor that a German conspiracy was afoot in Osprey or Sarasota.

This chapter will examine nervous Americans’ reactions to wartime anti-spy propaganda. Although authorities did not uncover a single German plot or arrest a single spy during wartime, the belief in an active and widespread Teutonic espionage, sabotage,

⁴ “In Re: Bolge, Osprey, Fla. [FL]. German Neutrality,” September 16, 1917, file 10218-20, Reel 1, “Correspondence of the MID, Relating to ‘Negro Subversion,’ 1917-1941,” Records of the Military Intelligence Division, RG 165, National Archives, College Park, MD. Hereinafter citations from these files will be cited as “Negro Subversion,” MID. Citations of National Archives will hereinafter be cited as NARA.

and propaganda network was far more pervasive after the declaration of war in April 1917 than it had been when actual German intrigue had been taking place. Throughout American intervention in the war, native-born Americans exhibited all the fundamental components of what Richard Hofstadter has dubbed the “paranoid style”: a belief in the existence of a long-planned, discretely implemented, and large-scale foreign conspiracy that aimed to undermine democracy.⁵ As this chapter will argue, the impact of such thinking, coupled with a profound anti-immigrant anxiety, impacted how many viewed and responded to the perceived Teutonic conspiracy within their borders, which, to many, the mere fact of war had confirmed.

Propaganda obviously played an integral part in intensifying Americans fears. With the declaration of war, Americans from all over the nation – most seemingly middle-class – were told German spies were anywhere and everywhere, starting fires, listening to one’s conversations, undermining white authority, sabotaging war industries, and riling up unorganized labor. Yet one of the most powerful aspects of the “conspiracy” found in American propaganda was the relative invisibility of the antagonist and the understanding that one might not see the danger coming. The feelings of powerlessness that such a message engendered were palpable, culling up fears of the seemingly ever-expanding presence of non-Anglo-Saxon elements in American society. As in much of the episodic nativist hysteria of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

⁵ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: 1965), 29. Emphasis is Hofstadter’s. Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post criticized Hofstadter for applying a clinical term (paranoia) in a non-clinical manner. They define “political paranoia” as an individual’s “perverse” means of forging meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging. *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (New Haven, CT: 1997). According to Kathryn S. Olmstead, the source of American paranoia and conspiracy theories changed from fear of secret private societies to a fear that the federal government itself was the conspirator. This transformation, she argued, began during the First World War. *Real Enemies: Conspiracy Theories and American Democracy, World War I to 9/11* (New York: 2009), 4, 13-43.

century, during the First World War many Americans chose to take matters into their own hands. Much wartime propaganda reinforced old fears and often encouraged violent behavior while also offering both vigilance and silence as ways in which Americans could combat the indiscernible enemy spy or propagandist. Yet wartime propaganda also helped Americans fill in the empty space by providing general descriptions and images of the Teutonic conspirators and their American allies. Consequently, some Americans lashed out against those who fit the amorphous vision of the evil and conspiratorial agents that for decades had been planning their destruction as well as those Americans who refused to support the war effort. Wartime vigilantism and “coercive voluntarism” were means by which anxious Americans could regain a sense of power and control over the agents of conspiracy and, ultimately, their own fate.⁶

Unlike during the neutrality period, the further permeation of this apprehension from the top down occurred not only because of concerns over the failure of Americanization, assumptions about Teutonic racial traits, and the spate of actual German intrigue that took place during neutrality, although all of these were critical during belligerency as well. The manner in which the war was sold to the American people – as a Darwinian struggle in which German victory could mean the death of Anglo-Saxon democracy and the destruction of their community – intensified the urgency of the moment and the need for individual accounting. The intensification of native-born Americans’ anxiety over their families’ and nation’s future exacerbated the often uncontrollable power of rumor. The transfer of exaggerated tales of the ubiquitous Teutonic spy from the pamphlet, editorial, or poster into the realm of the rumor further

⁶ “Coercive voluntarism” is a phrase coined by Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: 2008).

disseminated the propaganda's message and enhanced its effects. On many occasions during the previous several decades, nervous Americans banded together to stamp out a perceived foreign threat to the social fabric. American involvement in the First World War was no different. As the nation seemed to be under attack from the inside and with many native-born Americans' ever-growing unease overwhelming their ability to tolerate the unfamiliar, their sense of national-, community-, and self-preservation demanded they close ranks against the imagined menace in their midst.

Some Americans responded to this menace with violent vigilantism, which many within the federal government and the press claimed to find abhorrent in one breath and understandable in the next. This violence, officials believed, stemmed from weak federal sedition laws and outlandish rumors planted by German propagandists that were meant to undermine American morale. Yet ironically, despite their accurate understanding that rumor helped create the problem, government and private propagandists appear to have been oblivious to the fact that the hysteria from which the falsehoods grew were often of their own making. The Teutonic spies, saboteurs, and propagandists about which they warned existed only in their own propaganda and in the imaginations of nervous Americans. Such an intellectual leap was not a conscious attempt on the part of American propagandists to deflect blame for contributing to wartime hysterics. Instead, their charge that German agents fed false ideas into the rumor mill fit within contemporary understanding of Teutonic racial tendencies.

The common stance among historians of the Progressive Era has been that native-born Americans' desire for cultural homogeneity drove wartime fear of immigrant disloyalty and of all things German, leading directly to wartime repression and

Americanization campaigns. Their source has invariably been John Higham's classic work on American nativism. Placing wartime nativism within the context of similar instances of native-born fear in the past, Higham described Anglo-Saxon suspicion of the German-American during the Great War as being part of the same "crusading spirit" and "yearning idealism" that had driven domestic reform but had transformed into "the most strenuous nationalism and the most pervasive nativism that the United States had ever known." The chief aim of the ethnocentric nationalists, he concluded, was the cleansing of American society of any and all German influence.⁷ Although such an approach fits well into the general umbrella of "progressivism," the source of that hatred, what drove it, and what allowed it to spread so quickly and violently appears to be far more complex. Historians Frederick Luebke, Richard Slotkin, and Christopher Cappozzola have had the most success complicating this narrative. Luebke described anti-German spy hysteria as the creation of political and social elites who were frustrated with the seeming dearth of pro-war sentiment among the public. These leaders, Luebke maintained, felt as if un-American propagandists – all believed to be foreign or of foreign leanings – had corrupted the public mind, breeding indifference toward the war effort.⁸

More recently, Slotkin has contended that racial beliefs were at the heart of the repression of all things German between April 1917 and the armistice. Slotkin maintained that the popular conception of nationalism – "that national politics and culture were expressions of racial character" – led Anglo-Saxon Americans to describe German brutality and treachery in the same manner they did the nation's traditional non-white

⁷ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1955), 194-197. Quotes from 194 and 195. Also see Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: 2001).

⁸ Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, IL: 1974), 234.

enemies, as unassimilable barbarians and savages. Those who supported the nation's "racial enemy," then, were liable to the same punishments historically meted out to Native Americans and African-Americans.⁹ According to Capozzola, Americans' acceptance of or engagement in the repression of German-Americans and their alleged partners did not have its origins in racial or existential concerns but in the perception that some Americans, both native and foreign-born, were not living up to the unwritten obligations as citizenship.¹⁰ Yet when factoring in the impact of rumors (and their believability) on a community's emotional state and native-born Americans' cultural and racial assumptions about the foreign-born, the reasons why many Americans were willing to not only give of themselves for the war effort but to destroy the property of, injure, or even kill German-Americans and the so-called disloyal appears to have run much deeper than one's anger that another was not pulling his or her weight.

That impetus for communal sacrifice was very real and for many Americans was driven by a strong sense of paranoia and a fear of a hidden foreign conspiracy against their country. Writing to President Wilson in June 1917, Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory revealed the extent to which the fear of spies and saboteurs had overwhelmed Americans. "There have been days when as many as one thousand letters came to my Department purporting to give more or less detailed information as to spies, disloyal citizens and plots to destroy ships, factories, railroad bridges, munitions plants, waterworks, arsenals, etc., etc., etc." Although only a small number contained valuable information, Gregory claimed, it "became necessary to investigate everything called to

⁹ Richard Slotkin, *Lost Battalions: The Great War and the Crisis of American Nationality* (New York: 2005), 215-218. Quote from 215.

¹⁰ Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*.

our attention.”¹¹ John Lord O’Brian, in charge of the Department of Justice’s War Emergency Division, put the number at five thousand letters per day with practically all of the charges being unsubstantiated.¹² If either number is anywhere close to accurate, it would appear that Americans’ fear of a possible Teutonic conspiracy within the nation’s borders was very real and widespread during the war.

The Wilson administration’s propaganda arm, the Committee on Public Information (CPI), did much to facilitate the spread of anxiety and paranoia over the ubiquitous danger of German propaganda, espionage, and sabotage. CPI propaganda, though, also presented specific ways in which nervous Americans could help defend the nation against this threat. In *The German Whisper*, the agency’s associate chairman and progressive reformer Harvey O’Higgins informed readers that they “are now on the firing line.” Germany “is attacking in every community in the United States” with “a gas attack of poisonous lies and rumors and false reports.” Misinformation and the perpetuation of wild rumors, O’Higgins claimed, were at the center of practically every social problem in the United States. Teutonic attempts to undermine “domestic unity” explained everything from “class dissension, religious difference, racial prejudice, and political quarrel.” Apparently knowing just what buttons to push, German intriguers even tried “rattling the dry bones of the yellow peril” on the West Coast and convincing blacks to rise in rebellion in the South. Although in some cases the German propagandist had fallen short in his mission, O’Higgins argued that the overall campaign had not been a

¹¹ Thomas W. Gregory to Woodrow Wilson, June 14, 1917, in Arthur S. Link, et. al (eds.), *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 69 Vols. (Princeton, NJ: 1980), Vol. XLII, p. 510-511. Hereinafter cited as *PWW*. In his diary, Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels succinctly described the discussion of German espionage in a Cabinet meeting: “Talk of spies. Greg – thought hysteria.” *The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels*, July 6, 1917 (Lincoln, NE: 1963), 173.

¹² Jeffrey A. Smith, *War and Press Freedom: The Problem of Prerogative Power* (New York: 1999), 40.

failure. False stories of government misdeeds, soldiers' immoral behavior, excessive war profiteering, and other transgressions had taken hold, breeding apathy or opposition to the war. Perhaps the most important aspect of CPI propaganda was that it often offered citizens suggestions on how they could ward off the often terrifying consequences of unseen German activities. "Mr. Citizen, if one of these German whisperers starts buzzing in your ear," O'Higgins pleaded, "send his name and address to the Department of Justice" or report him or her to the CPI.¹³

Another CPI pamphlet, *The Kaiserite in America: One Hundred and One German Lies*, was in many ways a carbon copy of *The German Whisperer* – perhaps because O'Higgins was likely the author of both. *The Kaiserite in America*, however, was more frank about its purpose. Instead of focusing on the obligatory statement that German spies were at work all over the country, the author started by redefining who constituted a "Kaiserite." The pamphlet begins: "You may have met him....[o]r you have met a man who has just met him – and who still carries about in his conversation the peculiar accent of German propaganda." In short, those who carried or transmitted the lie were "Kaiserites," regardless of his or her race or allegiance. The vast majority of the thirty-nine page pamphlet was filled with the one hundred and one most damaging lies and rumors for which loyal Americans needed to be on the look out and refrain from repeating. These allegedly German-originated falsehoods ranged from the plausible (Lie No. 76, conscripts cannot be sent to France "until the Constitution is amended") to the

¹³ Harvey O'Higgins, *The German Whisper* (Washington, DC: 1918), 3, 8 29, Pamphlets in Red, White, and Blue Series, Entry 41, Box 6, CPI, NARA. According to a historian of the CPI, the progressive O'Higgins saw the war as an opportunity to renew the soul of the nation. To O'Higgins's, no group epitomized this transformation more than the soldiers at the front, who would not tolerate "cowardice, selfishness, and egotism." Soldiers and like-minded progressives, he believed, would lead the nation's regeneration behind Christian principles. Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines*, 25.

completely ridiculous (Lie No. 36, “the United States is soon to begin starving everyone who signed” a food conservation pledge). All who did not recognize and then repeated German-planted rumors, the author maintained, were unintentionally doing the work of the Teutonic propagandist. It was the citizen’s task to act as a counterintelligence officer by “Watch[ing] for them” and communicating all “seditious slanders” to the federal government.¹⁴

Although the CPI printed millions of copies of these and other pamphlets, its posters and public speakers reached a wider audience and were likely more effective than written material because they allowed Americans to passively absorb many of the same messages and warnings of the unseen Pan-German menace. A broadside created by a U.S. Army intelligence officer, for example, told passersby, “Don’t Talk, Spies Are Listening” (Figure 4-1). The Kaiser – with *pickelhaube*, pointed ears, and ten hairy spider legs – had constructed a web “with invisible threads.” Americans could “help to destroy it” if they merely asked themselves “if what you are about to say might help the enemy.” The American Defense Society more narrowly targeted community and business leaders while advocating loyal Americans squelch German spy activity and propaganda by forming voluntary “Vigilance Corps” (Figure 4-2). The poster, with a

¹⁴ The *St. Louis Republic* compiled the one hundred and one lies for the CPI. *The Kaiserite in America: One Hundred and One German Lies* (Washington, DC: 1918), 3, 20, 33, Pamphlets in American History (hereinafter, PAH). Another widely circulated CPI pamphlet entitled *German Plots and Intrigues in the United States during the Period of Our Neutrality* reviewed every incident of German sabotage, intrigue, and propagandizing prior to 1917 – the real and the imagined. The pamphlet, though, was one of the CPI’s weakest attempts at persuasion. Not surprisingly, the author, Earl E. Sperry, does not include incidents of wartime German intrigue. In fact, Sperry admits at the end of the pamphlet that “[a]ll the criminal plots and conspiracies” discussed in the work took place “prior to the summer of 1915.” It seems that the only objective of the pamphlet, published in July 1918, was to remind Americans of the extent of German spy activity during neutrality in order to keep them vigilant during wartime. Sperry does not provide explicit instructions to report alleged enemy spies and propagandists. Earl E. Sperry, *German Plots and Intrigues in the United States during the Period of Our Neutrality* (Washington, DC: 1918), 61, Pamphlets in Red, White, and Blue Series, Entry 41, Box 6, CPI, NARA. Lewis Allen Browne took on the Kaiserite theme again later in the war, referring to the rumors passed on by unsuspecting and loyal Americans as “impropaganda.” Lewis Allen Browne, “Impropaganda,” *The Forum*, August 1918, Vol. LX, 224-235.

silhouetted man in fedora and business suit scanning the city for espionage and disloyalty with a monocular by moonlight, ordered middle-class corps leaders to “Serve at the Front or Serve at Home” by “report[ing] every disloyal person and action in your community” and “help[ing] the authorities suppress the activities of these destructive forces.”¹⁵

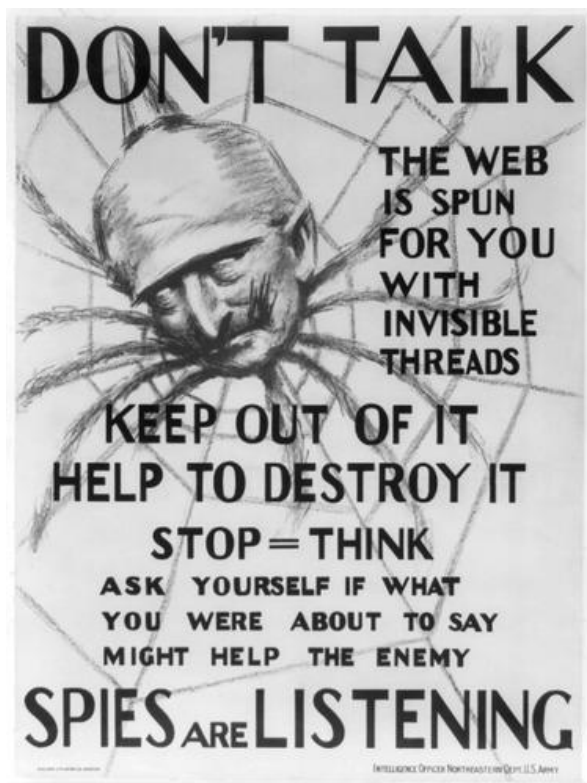


Figure 4-1. “Don’t Talk,” U.S. Army, ca. 1917



Figure 4-2. “Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Victory,” ADS, ca. 1917

CPI anti-spy broadsides, though, often mixed the visual with the textual. One such poster, advertising *The Kaiserite in America*, includes a photograph of three men conversing openly – apparently discussing the latest rumor disguised as news – while ominous shadows (their own) lurch in the background (Figure 4-3). Text covers the remaining four-fifths of the poster, much of it lifted directly from the pamphlet. One exception was a portion instructing onlookers to, when confronted by a Teutonic

¹⁵ Walton H. Rawls, *Wake Up, America!: World War I and the American Poster* (New York: 1988), 133, 135.

propagandist or loose-lipped Anglo-Saxon, “ask him what he really *knows* at first hand.” In such cases, “he becomes vague, non-committal, slippery.” Those who purposely or inadvertently spread German-planted lies were “playing the Kaiser’s game” and, worse yet, were “fighting against this country.”¹⁶



Figure 4-3. “Have You Met This Kaiserite?” CPI, 1917

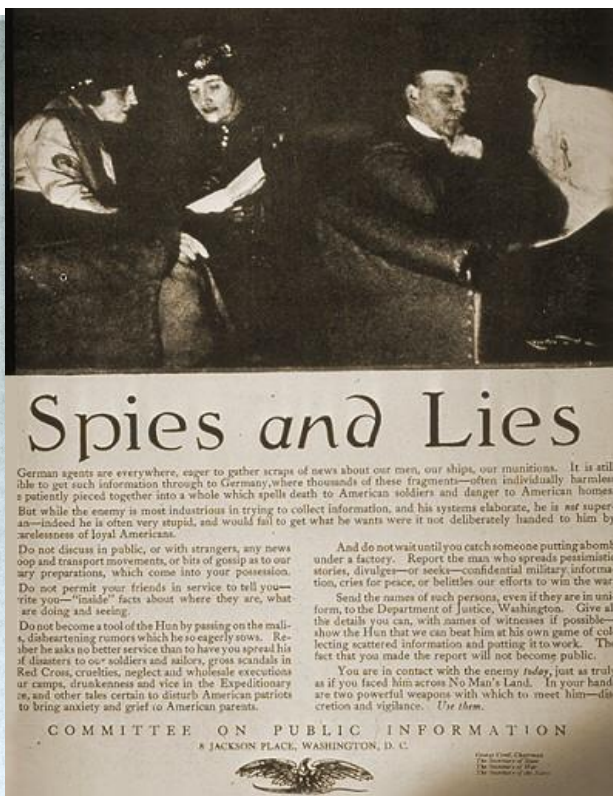


Figure 4-4. “Spies and Lies,” CPI, 1917

Continuing in the same vein, CPI poster “Spies and Lies” (Figure 4-4) claimed that “German agents are everywhere” and they were “eager to gather scraps of news about our men, our ships, our munitions.” Each sliver of information the spies obtained – though “individually harmless” – would be quickly communicated to Berlin and meticulously “pieced together into a whole which spells death to American soldiers and danger to American homes.” The assumption that spies were “everywhere” implied that

¹⁶ Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines*, 80, emphasis on original poster.

any German-American could be a secret agent loyal to the Kaiser – a conceivable scenario to many Anglo-Saxon Americans who believed in the racial stereotype of the clannish, stubborn, and duplicitous Teuton. Yet after depicting the threat as ubiquitous and plausible, the poster offered Americans a means of combating the scourge and protecting their families: keep your mouth shut and report those who do not. Americans were instructed not to pass on sensitive military information, spread “malicious” and “disheartening rumors” denigrating the troops and calling for peace, and were encouraged to report saboteurs and propagandists to the proper authorities. To hammer home the point that German intrigue was an existential threat to one’s family and nation, the poster concluded that “You are in contact with the enemy today, just as truly as if you faced him across No Man’s Land.” Only “discretion and vigilance” could save the American family and soldier.¹⁷

The CPI’s Four Minute Men also played a prominent role in weaving the government’s web of spy propaganda. In August 1918, Four Minute Men Director William McCormick Blair informed his legion of speakers of a new campaign to counter German propaganda which would encourage Americans to respond to every seemingly outlandish rumor with the question, “Where did you get your facts?” Such a question was “[t]he surest possible way to stop the spread of rumors which may well prove to be enemy propaganda.” Participating in this campaign, Blair claimed, offered speakers the chance to “do a great piece of work for the country, second only to the accomplishment of the Secret Service in rounding up pro-German propagandists.” According to the *Four Minute Men Bulletin* in which Blair’s letter appeared, the country’s biggest concern in

¹⁷ “Spies and Lies,” poster, (Washington, DC: 1917). “Spies and Lies” was also printed as an ad in popular magazines, such as *Everybody’s Magazine*, August 1918, Vol. XXXIX, 73.

this task was the “unthinking” person – presumed to be foreign-born – who “makes the task of the propagandist comparatively easy” because they will unwittingly “accept and repeat his rumors.” Preventing these individuals from repeating damaging falsehoods was the Four Minute Men’s primary task in this campaign.¹⁸

The *Bulletin* printed sample speeches building off of the “Where did you get your facts?” paradigm which the speakers could use or guide their own speechwriting. One such speech, entitled “Working for the U.S.A.,” alerted the audience that the Germans’ were targeting “this city” with “poison gas” – the lethal ingredients being “rumors,” “gossip,” and “lies.” If one inhales and then exhales the Teuton’s falsehoods he or she “become[s] a German agent.” Even if “[y]our heart may be American to the core...if your tongue wags loosely it’s a German tongue.” Those with the ability to make out the gas clouds had a responsibility, the speech implied, to squelch the spread of dangerous rumors by asking the ignorant yet patriotic Kaiserite the question at the center of the Four Minute Men’s campaign. If the unintentional enemy agent could not provide an acceptable answer, “he’s likely doing a German job.” The speech concluded by asking the clear-headed citizen to do his or her own detective work. The blowhard should be reported to state or federal authorities if he or she was the source of the rumor. But “if he says another man reported him, report that man” or investigate the lie’s origins on your own.¹⁹ The campaign was not limited to the Four Minute Men. The CPI’s *Bulletin for*

¹⁸ *Four-Minute Men Bulletin*, August 26, 1918, No. 25, entry 62, box 3, CPI, NARA, 1, 2.

¹⁹ “Working for the U.S.A.,” *ibid.*, 8. The CPI regularly printed sample speeches in the *Bulletin*. With no recordings of a Four Minute speech known to exist, these samples offer scholars a rare glimpse into the type of rhetoric commonly employed and a better understanding of how this form of propaganda differed from others.

Cartoonists asked editorial artists “to help nail those German lies” by drawing cartoons that will make the slogan clear to Americans.²⁰

The CPI’s campaign to suppress the spread of German propaganda – especially the notion of the unwittingly disloyal Kaiserite – appears to have had some effect. The Woman’s Committee of the state Council of National Defense in New Hampshire believed that “Many traitorous rumors” had been “started with malicious intent by pro-German influences” that undermined the people’s loyalty and “weaken[ed] the vigor of our nation in fighting for a great ideal.” To resist such propaganda, the Committee asked women’s groups throughout the state to organize local meetings to promote a “Constructive Patriotism” campaign that hoped to “promote obedience to authority,” would eradicate criticism of the war effort, compel volunteerism and thrift, and explain the pitfalls of “Unconscious Treason.”²¹ Leading suffragist and chair of the Council of National Defense’s Department of Educational Propaganda in Washington Carrie Chapman Catt also believed that German propaganda was a menace to the war effort, adding that it had “been spread abroad for many years in our country.” Yet, in a meeting with other women DEP officials, Catt argued “that there is not one single woman here who has not aided German propaganda. Ask yourself if you have not heard some rumor, some gossip without any authority, and have passed it on to somebody else.” If they had,

²⁰ *Bulletin for Cartoonists*, August 24, 1918, No. 11, entry 19, box 1, *ibid.* Also see “Look Out for the German Lie!” July 28, 1918, no. 8, box 1, *ibid.*

²¹ Woman’s Committee, Council of National Defense, New Hampshire Division, Circular, January 12, 1918, box 628, Committee on Women’s Defense Work, Educational Propaganda Department, Records of the Council of National Defense, RG 62, NARA. Hereinafter cited as Women’s Defense Work, CND. The Council of National Defense was established in August 1916 as part of the public push for military preparedness. Generally speaking, the CND’s primary task was to facilitate war mobilization on the state and local levels. This included everything from economic, resource, and industrial mobilization to campaigns for food conservation, Americanization, and volunteerism. William J. Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919* (Westport, CT: 1984).

Catt concluded, they had “been passing in all probability German propaganda without any knowledge of it.” Her solution, though, was not to suppress the part of “the human mind that just delights to pass on the untrue,” but “to employ the natural tendency of the human race to gossip...on the line of truth instead of on the line of lies.”²²

As Catt and the New Hampshire Woman’s Committee suggested, government-produced propaganda emphasized the direct and ubiquitous danger German intrigue supposedly posed to the nation, but it often offered clear and, one could argue, reasonable methods by which Americans could combat the threat. Non-government propagandists in the press, the National Security League, and other organizations and individuals that targeted German-Americans and imaginary spies, however, were less apt to constrain their fears and their desire for an urgent, even harsh, solution. Anxiety and hate-laden pieces by private propagandists on the peril of spies and German *kultur* were often more straightforward in their condemnation of all things German and in their implication that Germany had been secretly invading the United States for at least the past decade.

Such inferences appeared more ominous during American belligerency, as evidenced by a series of articles printed in the popular *Everybody’s Magazine* from late 1917 into spring 1918 on German intrigue and German-American loyalty entitled “Invaded America” and written by the famous investigative journalist Samuel Hopkins Adams. Although “Ninety-nine per cent of [Germans] favored the Fatherland” prior to April 1917, Adams believed the fact that “Germans are a passionately patriotic race” (i.e.

²² Conference Report of the Department of Educational Propaganda, transcript, 1918 (?), box 629, Women’s Defense Work, CND, NARA. Speaking to an audience in Philadelphia in March 1918, the Archbishop of York argued that the spreading of enemy propaganda by word of mouth occurred because women were prone to hysterics during a crisis. When discussing women’s specific wartime responsibilities, the Archbishop warned them of “the danger of over-excitement” and “the danger of gossip” and “the circulation of unfounded and untested rumors.” Cosmo Gordon Lang, “Address on ‘The Duties of Women in Wartime,’” (Philadelphia: 1918), from Pamphlets in American History, microfiche (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1983), hereinafter cited as PAH.

clannish) should not be grounds “for resentment” but “sympathetic comprehension.” With Congress’s declaration of war “the best element of our Teutonic citizenship” had become “truly and unreservedly faithful to the United States.” Yet the propagandists in the German-language press (“the voice of Germany in America”) and German-American societies at the tip of the Kaiser’s invading spear were, apparently, pointed at the less agreeable elements of the German-American community and the more gullible Anglo-Saxons. Their “nation-wide, expert German propaganda ha[d] been in progress for many years,” Adams maintained and had penetrated the English-language press (especially the Hearst papers), had spread discontent among African-Americans, tried to redirect American anger toward their allies, used German votes to pressure politicians, aimed to “Teutoniz[e] our educational system,” and even attempted to spark an armed Teutonic revolution. Although he did not want his essays to “be construed as a broadside directed against all German-Americans,” Adams openly wondered if the indiscretions of German agents (“only a fractional part of what the Secret Service knows”) suggested that “perhaps my country is too tolerant of the alien within its gates.”²³

Not to be outdone, *The World’s Work* also began a series of articles on German spy activity within the United States in February 1918. The first edition – “Germany’s Plots Exposed” by John R. Rathom of the *Providence Journal* – maintained that German propaganda and espionage had been taking place in the country for upwards of three

²³ Samuel Hopkins Adams, “Invaded America,” *Everybody’s Magazine*, December 1917, Vol. XXVII, 9-16, 86, quotes from 9, 10, and 86; and “Invaded America: The Winning Battle in the Middle West,” *ibid.*, February 1918, Vol. XXXVIII, 74-83, quotes from 74. In the later installments Adams levels further charges and criticism toward the presumably disloyal German-Americans and touts enemy alien confinement and Americanization as key elements of U.S. national security. “Invaded America: Making Over the Alien,” *ibid.*, March 1918, Vol. XXXVIII, 55-64. Adams was far from alone in his use of the invasion paradigm when considering the German spy and propagnada menace. Also see “Strengthen Our Weakest Links to Win the War!” (New York: 1917?), PAH. For national newspaper opinion on the question of Hearst’s loyalty late in the war, see “The Trail of German Propaganda in the American Press,” *Current Opinion*, September 1918, Vol. LXV, 139-141.

decades prior to 1914. The article then proceeded to rehash several of the various plots that took place during American neutrality.²⁴ Although Rathom's run as chief contributor to the series ended after one edition – apparently because the *Providence Journal* decided it alone should reap the economic benefits of his hyperbolic tales – *The World's Work* continued to recount pre-April 1917 German intrigue as if it happened the previous day. In March, French Strother, the magazine's managing editor, took over the series and claimed that his aim was “to bring home to the public in a detailed and convincing manner the character of German activities in the United States.” The ensuing articles covered such incidents as Werner Horn's attempt to dynamite bridges in Maine, von Rintelen's smorgasbord of plots, a German plan to foment a Hindu revolution in British India from the United States, and the implication of the German and Austro-Hungarian embassies in such activities.²⁵ While increased circulation and revenue likely provided much of the impetus for the series, it is equally likely that Strother was caught up in the same sense of spy hysteria as many other Americans and, thus, viewed past German activities as clear warnings of what the enemy was willing to do and capable of doing.

At the same time, such allusions to the threat of a long-running Pan-German conspiracy carried over from the previous years and decades often revealed the persistent impact Social Darwinist thought had on Anglo-Saxon culture. Dr. Shailer Mathews, a theologian and subscriber to the Social Gospel writing on behalf of the NSL, provided an interesting example. The primary threat to the United States and the world, Shailer

²⁴ John R. Rathom, “Germany's Plots Exposed,” *The World's Work*, February 1918, Vol. XXXV, 394-415.

²⁵ In the first Stother edition, *The World's Work* promised to reimburse those who subscribed because of the now defunct Rathom series but also offered the new series as a viable reason to keep one's subscription. French Strother, “Fighting Germany's Spies,” March 1918, *ibid.*, 513-528 (quote from 513); *ibid.*, April 1918, 652-669; *ibid.*, May 1918, 78-102; *ibid.*, June 1918, 134-153; *ibid.*, July 1918, 303-317; *ibid.*, August 1918, 393-401; and *ibid.*, September 1918, 542-552.

believed, was Pan-German imperialism. The conspiracy had been in the works “for ten years,” during which time the Kaiser’s regime had “been preparing some day to fight America.” Mathews claimed that the first step in Germany’s preparations was the “build[ing] up in America [of] a community more loyal to herself than to the United States.” Along with the resources allocated for spy activity, the Kaiser spent millions in the United States on “Germanistic societies, alliances and associations” as well as underhanded schemes to brainwash American children by including laudatory words for the Kaiser in grammar school spelling books. Against such a threat, Mathews concluded, the nation was “fight[ing] for self-preservation.”²⁶ The chair of the History Department at the University of Chicago concurred, arguing that “it is probably true today that the policy of unrelenting intrigue is more dangerous to the world than the German armies.” For Anglo-Saxon democracy in particular, espionage was poisonous, “the fetid air of constant conspiracy” that, if matched, could strip the nation of its soul. He asked, “[M]ust we, too, become secretive, vulgarly ambitious, and love darkness better than light” in order to stave off such a threat so alien to the American way of life?²⁷

The authors of the CPI pamphlet *Conquest and Kultur* also claimed that Teutonic propaganda and intrigue were part of a wider Pan-German conspiracy. To ensure the link between enemy intrigue and the continued existence of the United States was not lost, the pamphlet was full of quotes from both influential and obscure Germans in both Germany and the United States on German plans to militarily and culturally colonize Europe and the world. These individuals’ actual influence over German policy, though, was left

²⁶ Shailer Mathews, “Why the United States Is at War” (New York: 1917), 3-4, 7, PAH. Also see Mathews, “Democracy and World Politics,” July 4, 1917, Patriotism Through Education Series, No. 10 (New York: 1917); Earl E. Sperry, “Pan-Germanism: The Chief Causes of the Present War,” *ibid.*, No. 47 (1918); and Sperry, “The Tentacles of the German Octopus in America,” *ibid.*, No. 21 (1918).

²⁷ Andrew C. McLaughlin, “Sixteen Causes of War” (Chicago, IL: 1918), 10-11, PAH.

unclear. The authors cited the statutes of the Pan-German League, central to anti-German conspiracy theories, as proof that the clannish practices of Americans of Teutonic blood and accent were suspect. Its third statute, adopted in May 1903, committed the League to “embracing and uniting all Germans on the globe” by “support[ing] all German national movements” anywhere “Germans have to sustain a struggle in support of Deutschtum.” Several other quotations within the pamphlet, however, imply that the Pan-German League was following, not creating, demand for cultural imperialism. In a letter to a German newspaper written in 1902, a German living in New York expressed confidence in the trajectory of Germanism in the United States. “The Germanization of America has gone ahead too far to be interrupted,” he wrote. Within the next century, “the American people will be conquered,” not by invading armies but “by the victorious German spirit, so that it will present an enormous German Empire.” The next year another Teuton, this one merely a traveler through the country, supposedly sang a similar tune, arguing that all German-Americans were responsible for “see[ing] that the future language spoken in America shall be German.” If they did their duty, he concluded, the “center of German intellectual activity” would move from Germany to the United States “in the remote future.” According to the CPI pamphlet, other Germans, such as the author Klaus Wagner, foresaw bigger things for Pan-Germanism in the Western Hemisphere. “Not only North America, but the whole of America must become a bulwark of Germanic Kultur,” he claimed in his 1906 work *Krieg*. The Americas were destined, he concluded, to become “perhaps the strongest fortress of the Germanic races.”²⁸

²⁸ Wallace Notestein and Elmer E. Stoll (eds.) *Conquest and Kultur: Aims of the Germans in Their Own Words* (Washington, DC: 1917), 87, 96, 101, Pamphlets in Red, White, and Blue Series, box 5, CPI, NARA.

Similarly, Lewis Allen Browne, writing for *The Forum*, explained how the Teuton's inherent clannishness furthered the aims of the Kaiser's Pan-German conspiracy. Browne warned that Pan-Germanism was flourishing in German-American homes, where parents taught their children "that the Kaiser is the supreme personality on earth and that the United States is a foreign country and a sometime colony of the German Empire." "This is not a new policy," Browne continued, arguing that it had "originated in Germany in the days of early Prussianism when those veneered barbarians dreamed of 'Der Tag' [The Day]" when the Kaiser would reign supreme over the United States. The indoctrination of German-American children continued at their German-only parochial schools. Their teachers "were carrying out their orders to teach the second generation" to love the Fatherland and were willing "to risk their positions rather than fail in their 'duty' toward their Kaiser to teach" young Teutons "to hate the United States and to live and work for 'Deutschland uber [sic.] Alles.'"²⁹

Writing on behalf of the Union League Club of Chicago, former newspaper editor Clarence Speed also subscribed to an apparent truth that the war had finally revealed – that a Pan-German imperial conspiracy had been afoot for many years within the United States. The Kaiser had been employing "editors, teachers and preachers...to break down our national unity" in order to weaken American defenses before the inevitable clash of "open warfare" between the countries. The ultimate aim of the conspiracy, he claimed, was the acquisition of any and all land in the Western Hemisphere the Kaiser desired, perhaps even the United States itself. Speed mentioned the infamous 1913 Delbrück Law by name, finding the dual citizenship and double allegiance it fostered to be central to

²⁹ Lewis Allen Browne, "Our Danger – Tomorrow's German-Americans," *The Forum*, May 1918, Vol. LIX, 570-571, 577.

Germany's long-term plans. In the United States, "Industrial plants are blown up, strikes are fomented, bridges are dynamited, and ships sunk in American harbors" by Germans who had sworn allegiance to the United States but "have secretly promised to serve the kaiser [sic]." At the same time, Speed believed that Germans operating under the protection of the Delbrück Law were doing much the same thing in Brazil, Argentina, and elsewhere in the country's backyard, providing further proof that German intrigue needed to be stamped out and quickly.³⁰

Speed's direct references to the danger posed by the Delbrück Law, often only alluded to during neutrality, arose far more often during wartime as an explanation for the German spy and propaganda network as well as the untrustworthiness of the German-American community. "This policy is the basis of the German spy system," the Anti-Saloon League maintained. "It encourages and sanctions treason."³¹ Although he did not mention it by name, Shailer Mathews also concluded that the Delbrück Law buttressed the Kaiser's imperialistic plots in the United States by "giv[ing] this attitude of" dual loyalty "official position" within Germany.³² Concerned the law would give the enemy untold control over American politics through the ballot, Elihu Root privately worried that it was "a plain provision for control of other countries by perjury. I have never observed anything more shameless and brazen than this law" which "exhibits appalling moral degeneracy" on the part of the Germans.³³ Like the Pan-German conspiracy of which it was believed to be part, Anglo-Saxon belief in the stubbornly clannish nature of

³⁰ Clarence L. Speed, "Why We Fight" (Chicago: 1918), 6, PAH.

³¹ "A Disloyal Combination" (Westlake OH: 1918), 10, PAH.

³² Mathews, "Why the United States Is at War," 3. Also see "An American War and an American Victory" (New York: 1918?), 3, PAH.

³³ Elihu Root to Richard D. Harlan, Elihu Root Papers, General Correspondence, Box 136, Library of Congress (hereinafter cited as LOC).

the Delbrück Law resided within the native-born's conception of the inherently insular Teutonic mind and the Kaiser's desire for imperial dominion over the United States and the Americas.

As during neutrality, the German-American Alliance was seen as the oxymoronic embodiment of Teutonic intrigue and double-dealing. According to the *New York World*, the coming of war and the perception that German agents still lingered throughout the nation was final proof that the GAA was a Pan-German front. "[A]s everybody now knows," the *World's* editors claimed, the GAA "has worked unceasingly in behalf of Prussian institutions and interests." The *New York Herald* seconded this assertion, claiming that it remained an un-American institution "even if many of the 3,000,000" members were not aware of its actions.³⁴ As late as August 1918, the *Review of Reviews* reminded readers of that the Pan-German League created the GAA, making it "a branch of the international Pan-Germanist organization controlled by the German Government."³⁵

³⁴ "The 'German-American Alliance,'" *Literary Digest*, March 9, 1918, Vol. LVI, 16. One of the most pervasive myths about the GAA before 1917, especially during the 1916 election, was that it organized German-American voters to support Congressional candidates who manipulated American politics to benefit Germany. These same concerns that German-American voters were undermining American politics arose again in 1918. See "America Votes for Americans!" *Everybody's Magazine*, August 1918, Vol. XXXIX, 4.

³⁵ "Pan-Germanism in America," *Review of Reviews*, August 1918, Vol. LVIII, 208. The Anti-Saloon League went so far as to connect the United States Brewers' Association with the GAA and Pan-German conspiracy. "The most patriotic act that Congress...can do this year," they concluded, was "to abolish the un-American, pro-German, crime-producing, food-wasting, youth-corrupting, home-wrecking, treasonable liquor traffic." "A Disloyal Combination," 18. The Anti-Saloon League was not the only special interest group to exploit wartime culture for political gain. Opponents of prohibition were also quick to use the war emergency to push its agenda. The *Buffalo Inquirer* argued that the Kaiser would be delighted if "this country [were] torn asunder" by the division between the moralistic, teetotaling middle-class and laborers on the issue of alcohol. Interestingly, the *Inquirer's* editors relied upon readers' understanding of the German's conspiratorial nature. "If the Kaiser thought he could foment discontent by keeping prohibition stirred up during the war," they argued, "does anyone doubt that he would do it?" The editors' argument appears even more ridiculous in the concluding line of the editorial: "Germany might be behind the prohibition movement. You can never tell." "Is Prohibition German Propaganda?" *Buffalo Inquirer*, July 13, 1918, PAH.

To some Americans, however, an enemy agent's close ties to the GAA were not a necessary prerequisite to Teutonic plotting. In a speech just outside Chicago, William Mather Lewis, the Executive Secretary of the National Committee of Patriotic and Defense Societies, spoke of the "thousands" of German-Americans "who are doing the bidding of the Imperial German Government." The conspiracy apparently ran deep as some sought to harm the war effort from the inside, including "community leaders" appointed to "war committees" who "have blocked active work" and "certain government employees who have furnished information to the German government." But, Lewis argued, "Do not imagine that the fact that there have been no disasters in this country since war was declared that all German-Americans are loyal – it indicates much more strongly that it suits the German government not to arouse the American people to fury – that the less the seriousness of the war can be brought home to our people the better the kaiser [sic.] be pleased." In other words, the lack of evidence of an active campaign of German intrigue was proof that such a campaign actually existed and that one's Teutonic neighbors could be waiting for further orders from Berlin. The urgency of the moment – for democracy abroad and the safety of the United States – necessitated complete loyalty. "He who is not with the United States today," Lewis concluded, "is against it."³⁶ For the Wilson administration, concrete evidence also was not of great import. In an April 1917 letter sent to the nation's editors that the President carefully edited, Creel stated that "Despite the greatest care on all hands a certain amount of spy

³⁶ William Mather Lewis, "The Declaration of Independence and the World War: An Address Delivered at Highland Park, Illinois, July 4, 1917" (Washington, DC: 1917), 7-8, PAH. William Roscoe Thayer makes the same point in "Patriotism," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, June 1917, Vol. CXXXV, 25-32. The *New York Times* made a similar argument, explaining the lull in munitions plant explosions as the result of a change in German tactics from sabotage to a propaganda campaign that "creat[ed] a false public opinion in favor of laying down our arms and consenting to peace before the objects of the war are attained." "America Infested with German Spies," *Literary Digest*, October 6, 1917, Vol. LV, 9.

communication will, in all probabilities, be maintained” because concrete evidence of their work “is hard to come by.”³⁷



Figure 4-5. *Literary Digest*, November 24, 1917



Figure 4-6. *New York Evening World*, from *Literary Digest*, April 20, 1918.

Editorial cartoonists, though, believed they understood why evidence of the German agent was so difficult to find – they were hiding in plain sight. Pictorial images of the duplicitous German were quite common in the mainstream press, the widely syndicated New York newspapers in particular, and implicitly referenced both German racial stereotypes and the spirit of the Delbrück Law. The enemy alien was often portrayed as generically Teutonic, highlighting the common physical stereotypes and the Teuton’s inborn penchant to betray his bride on behalf of his mother.³⁸ In fall 1917, James Montgomery Flagg, best known for the famous “Uncle Sam Wants You” imitation of a famous British poster, produced a cartoon entitled “Camouflage” for syndication

³⁷ George Creel to the Press of the United States, April 1917, George Creel Papers, box 1, LOC.

³⁸ According to Luebke, the common adage “Germania our mother, Columbia our bride” encapsulated the German-American view of its relationship to both the United States and Germany. Prior to the war, German-Americans saw little that was disloyal in such an attitude. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 48-49.

(Figure 4-5). The short, rotund, bespectacled, pipe-smoking, Bismarckian-mustachioed German waves an American flag out a window for all to see while, in the privacy of his home, holding high a full beer stein and praising his master with a shout of “Hoch [praise] der Kaiser.”³⁹ Teutonic physical and personality stereotypes – based in racial anthropology – were on display in a cartoon printed the following spring by the *New York Evening World* (Figure 4-6). The “Enemy Alien” was a Paul von Hindenburg look-alike with square-head, square jaw, and long flowing mustache. While Uncle Sam watches the war “Over There” out a window, “Over Here” the double-crossing German peers from behind the curtain, ready to stab Sam in the back with his dagger.⁴⁰ Like the posters described above, the portrayal of the enemy in these and similar cartoons did not require much interpretation on the part of literate or illiterate viewer. One’s German-American neighbors, who at least may have had similar facial hair, could very well be hoping for or, worse, actively plotting the nation’s demise.

As during the neutrality period, in wartime many saw Americanization as a critical aspect of the nation’s defense against immigrant disloyalty and German propaganda.⁴¹ The primary Americanization arm of the federal government was Carrie Chapman Catt’s Department of Educational Propaganda (later renamed the Americanization Section), which often worked closely with the Interior Department’s Bureau of Education. The main functions of the DEP, formed in October 1917, were to sell the war to the women of the country through speakers, leaflets, and pamphlets (with

³⁹ “Camouflage,” *Literary Digest*, November 24, 1917, Vol. LV, 16. Flagg produced this cartoon on behalf of the patriotic troop of writers and artists known as the Vigilantes.

⁴⁰ “Over There – Over Here,” *ibid.*, April 20, 1918, Vol. LVII, 17. Germans were regularly depicted as Hindenburg-like in wartime propaganda. That Kaiser was another central figure, but his image most often represented him or his regime, not the German people.

⁴¹ At the same time, another theme that carried over into wartime was the notion that middle-class women were uniquely fit to work as Americanizers of the foreign-born, giving them a way to contribute to the war effort outside of merely conserving food or rearing future soldiers.

the support of the CPI) as well as to forge national unity by constructing Americanization programs to be carried out by state councils of defense. Their campaigns to Americanize the immigrant took several forms, including helping factory owners start their own programs, developing a “war information service” for immigrants, providing American history and civics textbooks to those attempting to naturalize, and organizing Americanization committees at the community level.⁴²

Others working outside the federal government had Americanization plans as well. Frances Kellor’s disappointment in the native-born continued into the war years. Expressing frustration at the failure to Americanize Germans by blaming Americans’ indifference to immigrants in urban slums for the rise of a German spy network, Kellor testily asked in a February 1918 speech whether “Under these conditions, were the ties of the ‘Fatherland’ not more powerful and practical and visible than our own?” The key to Americanization, Kellor argued, was to attack the tendency among the foreign-born (not merely Germans) to clannishly keep with their own kind in separate neighborhoods. “The abolition of class lines and the elimination of immigrant colonies and quarters which perpetuate old-world traditions, customs, habits and ways of thinking” along with the “Disappearance of racial prejudices and of Anglo-Saxon superiority and condescension” would go a long way in bringing the foreign-born to the government’s side.⁴³ University of Wisconsin Dean of Women Lois Kimball Matthews Rosenberry

⁴² Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 129; “Americanization: Report of Conference Between Dr. Wheaton and Miss Pope,” April 12, 1918, box 631, Women’s Defense Work, CND, NARA; Memo “To all State Councils of Defense,” July 19, 1918, *ibid.*; “Organization of Local Communities for Americanization,” no date, box 632, *ibid.*

⁴³ While she was correct that the clannishness so commonly applied to the Teuton was actually a tendency shown by all ethnicities (even Anglo-Saxons), Kellor implied incorrectly that the situation of most German immigrants – settling mostly in the rural Midwest – were no different than eastern and southern Europeans crowding American industrial centers. Frances Kellor, “Neighborhood Americanization” (New York: 1918), 6, PAH.

took a similar approach, chastising white college girls for taking their American citizenship for granted, exhibited by their lack of interest in helping the foreign-born become part of the national community. Those born in lands without “our traditions of self-government...have not comprehended our ideals,” Rosenberry argued. For several decades, she continued, Old World immigrants – Germans included – had “been accepted with a happy-go-lucky fashion, and this same stupidly casual attitude has been taken as regards the southern and eastern European peoples.” With so many in the United States in need of an education in democracy, Rosenberry concluded, “the college women of this country must consecrate and dedicate themselves” to unite all people residing in the United States during the nation’s time of peril.⁴⁴

Not everyone viewed the Americanization of the immigrant masses as predominantly a woman’s task. Some in the professional class pleaded with the CPI to get involved. A Chicago advertising agent advocated the presentation of photographs and film footage of “German war horrors” to the general public by the CPI, claiming it would help convert confused German-Americans to the nation’s cause. German-Americans, who had “been molded in the atmosphere of America” did not see that they and the “native German” who had “been fed on Kultur from the cradle up” were “two different animals,” he argued. Gruesome scenes of German atrocities, though, would make this difference apparent.⁴⁵ A lawyer in San Francisco also expressed faith in German-Americans’ ability to see reason when he proposed that the CPI broaden the message of its most anti-German publications by printing more pamphlets and newspaper

⁴⁴ Lois Kimball Matthews Rosenberry, “The Making of Americans” (U.S.: 1918?), PAH. For a similar opinion, see Winthrop Talbot, “The Faith that Is In Us: A Rallying Cry to Americans,” *The Forum*, November 1917, Vol. LVII, 613-618.

⁴⁵ B. Gamble to G. Creel, November 26, 1917, Creel Correspondence, box 9, folder 254, CPI, NARA

articles as well as creating more posters and films aimed exclusively at a German-American audience. “I have no doubt,” he claimed, that those of German descent “who...are inoculated with the virus of the Prussian Autocracy, if properly educated would become good citizens and be as eager as the rest of us to defeat Prussian militarism, and make the world safe for democracy.” Ultimately, the lawyer concluded, this tactic would also lead to the “destruction of the German spy system.”⁴⁶ Hoping to cast a wider net, an engineer from Chicago suggested that “the detestable methods of Germany could be fully revealed” to the foreign-born if the CPI published a textbook on the different governing styles of the combatants.⁴⁷

Yet the relatively common belief in an underground yet dangerous Pan-German conspiracy against the United States precluded many from showing the necessary sympathy to the potentially disloyal foreign-born. With the actual German intrigue and sabotage from the neutrality period and wartime images of the Teutonic spy and propagandist seared into their minds, middle and upper-class Americans across the country, as well as their leaders, early on began to react to their fears and prejudices. In fact, in the two months between the severing of relations with Germany and the declaration of war, in February and March of 1917, the Department of Justice was already receiving strange reports from Americans claiming that German spies and propagandists had infiltrated or were trying to infiltrate the nation. In late February, the naturalization application of a Hungarian immigrant living in St. Louis was held up because he allegedly wore “cross flags of Germany and Austria-Hungary” and “portraits on his lapel of the Kaiser and of Emperor Franz Joseph.” He also proclaimed he would

⁴⁶ Martin Stevens to G. Creel, February 6, 1918, box 22, folder 34, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ William L. Morris to G. Creel, March 11, 1918, box 17, folder 13, *ibid.*

be “perfectly satisfied” if Germany “invaded and over-r[a]n the United States.”⁴⁸ On March 10 the publisher of the *Elmira* (NY) *Daily Advertiser* wrote the War Department about “a rumor prevalent” in town about the arrest and confinement in the federal prison in Atlanta of a young woman spy and a man presumed to be her father. The woman, who had tried on three separate occasions during the war to enter the country, was rumored to have “had papers of an international nature under a wig on her head.” The superintendent of the Atlanta prison replied that he had no idea to whom the Elmira editor was referring and, besides, Atlanta was a male-only prison.⁴⁹ A day earlier, the chemist L.H. Baekeland, serving on the Navy Consulting Board, informed industrialist Howard E. Coffin, serving on the National Council of Defense in Washington, of an article from the *Columbus* (OH) *Dispatch* claiming that the self-proclaimed nephew of the German Foreign Minister, Gottlieb von Jagow, was attempting to become a naturalized citizen. Other than his stated blood relation to one of the Kaiser’s chief minions, the biggest strike against Jagow the younger’s naturalization was that he lived near Sulfur, Louisiana, where “a few sticks of dynamite judiciously placed in the power plants, both there and at the Freeport, Texas, sulfur mines, might seriously cripple our munitions industry by destroying our source of sulfuric acid, at least temporarily.”⁵⁰ Department of Justice files do not indicate how or even if any of the above cases were resolved. These reports, though, are indicative of how, when Americans’ anxiety level increased sharply with war

⁴⁸ Louis F. Post to Thomas W. Gregory, February 21, 1917, file 184973-1, box 2077, Straight Numerical File, Central Files, Records of the Department of Justice, RG 60, NARA. Hereinafter cited as Numerical File, DOJ

⁴⁹ Elmira Advertiser Association to War Department, March 10, 1917, and F.H. Duehay to Elmira Advertiser Association, March 19, 1917, file 185379, box 2098, *ibid.* In 1915, the Elmira Daily Advertiser had a circulation of 12,055. *N.W. Ayer & Son’s Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia PA: 1915), 633.

⁵⁰ L.H. Baekeland to H.E. Coffin, March 9, 1917 and Josephus Daniels to Thomas W. Gregory, March 19, 1917, file 185382-1, Box 2098, *ibid.*

seeming imminent, the propaganda with which they had been inundated took on a different, more ominous shape after being ground through the rumor mill.

While some anxious officials and citizens began reporting suspicious individuals and bizarre rumors to the government before the declaration of war, other apprehensive middle-class Americans were organizing to crush the imagined enemy espionage and propaganda menace. By far the most prominent (and most dangerous) was the American Protective League (APL). Founded in the early spring of 1917 by Chicago advertiser Albert M. Briggs, the APL was a private, 250,000-man vigilante organization that during wartime worked with the Justice Department to increase the investigatory power of the undermanned Bureau of Investigations. The APL's membership came exclusively from the educated white collar class, with only "the highest type of business and professional men" being recruited "for the highest type of intelligent, aggressive and patriotic work."⁵¹ Like many private middle-class organizations of the time, one of the APL's central motives was to enforce conformation to the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture.⁵² The blessing of federal sanctioning of their actions allowed members to take this enforcement to the extreme. Historian David Kennedy has rightfully referred to the APL as "a rambunctious, unruly *posse comitatus* on an unprecedented national scale," illegally spying on and arresting thousands of native-born and foreign-born Americans suspected of disloyalty, sedition, and draft evasion. The APL's mere existence, Kennedy argued,

⁵¹ Detroit Superintendent to prospective applicant, April 10, 1917, Old German File 5910, reel 320, Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, RG 65, NARA. Hereinafter cited as OGF, FBI. This letter appears to be a cover letter to an application for admittance into the APL or, more likely, to an application sent to select members of the Detroit business community the organization hoped to recruit.

⁵² See Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*.

“testifies to the unusual state of American society in World War I, when fear corrupted usually sober minds.”⁵³

Americans’ lack of sobriety also is evident in the thousands of wartime letters they sent to the DOJ, Military Intelligence Division, and government officials as well as in the investigations of these reports and accusations. Like the prewar examples cited above, on many occasions letter writers’ and investigators’ perceptions of the suspected crimes, enemy agents, and the evidence they encountered closely mirrors descriptions of the German enemy and his often hidden yet nefarious deeds found in conspiracy-laden spy propaganda. One of the more glaring examples of propaganda, long-held prejudices, and rumoring impacting individuals’ actions and perceptions of events was white southerners’ reports of German intrigue among African-Americans. The German spy hysteria was not only indicative of native-born Americans’ general fear of the foreign-born. White southerners’ concern about the black-white racial hierarchy in their region was central to how many perceived the German menace. White southerners who took an ambivalent view of the threat of African-American fidelity, much like the southern President’s toward German-Americans, were likely a minority. The few who were confident in black loyalty believed that German propaganda was too sophisticated for African-Americans to follow. The majority, however, saw southern blacks as they

⁵³ At the same time, the federal government’s recruitment of the APL was also an admission of its limited capabilities in time of potential crisis. Through the APL, the Justice Department “sought to effect drastic measures without itself assuming full formal authority” and, thus, formal responsibility. Kennedy, *Over Here*, 81-83. Also see Harold Hyman, *To Try Men’s Souls: Loyalty Tests in American History* (Berkeley, CA: 1959), 267-315; Joan Jensen, *The Price of Vigilance* (Chicago: 1969); and Emerson Hough, *The Web: A Revelation of Patriotism* (Chicago: 1919)). Wilson was also not a fan of the APL, telling Gregory, “It seems to me that it would be very dangerous to have such an organization operating in the United States, and I wonder if there is any way in which we could stop it.” W. Wilson to T.W. Gregory, June 4, 1917, *PWW*, Vol. XLII, 446. The APL was far from the only volunteer vigilante organization operating during the war. A list of similar “Volunteer Secret Service Organizations” shows fifteen in the southwestern United States alone. Pierson W. Banning, “Hun Hunting at Home” (Los Angeles, CA: 1919), PAH.

always had, as untrustworthy and susceptible to outsiders bent on corrupting or overturning southerners' presumably peaceful (in whites' minds) social situation.⁵⁴

As the investigation of Bolge, the cartoonishly dressed alleged German spy in Sarasota, at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the caricature of the Teutonic sleuth easily slipped into the role formerly played by the northern abolitionist and carpetbagger. Not only were Bolge and other suspected enemy agents working in relative secrecy, as any good spy would. They were also striking where the South was weakest. Like unprotected munitions factories and railroad bridges, southern blacks were presumed to be easy targets. Assuming that blacks' inherent lack of intellect made them susceptible to enemy propaganda, rumors that German agents were fomenting black discontent and that the formation of a joint African-American-German-Mexican-Japanese army was imminent permeated many cities and towns in the wartime South.⁵⁵ At the same time, it is important to point out that white resistance to the war in the rural South was widespread and, ironically, was based on a long-held conspiracy theory. Populist fears of

⁵⁴ Mark Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government during World War I* (Bloomington, IN: 2001), 8-9. In August 1917, the MID subsection on "Negro Subversion" composed a memo on black loyalty that revealed a high degree of sympathy toward the plight of Jim Crow era African-Americans. The most striking aspect of the memo was the author's – most likely Major W.H. Loving, an African-American – open acknowledgment that most of the investigations his section had conducted and would conduct were not based in reality. In fact, the memo acknowledged that segregation laws, poverty, and white racism were at the heart of African-Americans' discontent, not a hidden German propaganda campaign. The memo stated that despite the conspiracy theories floating through the public, "it seems...certain that there are adequate reasons for the unrest and dissatisfaction which is at present manifest throughout twelve millions of Americans of Negro descent, and that no assumption of a special propaganda on the part of pro-German sympathizers is necessary to explain this situation. Careful consultation with responsible leaders of the colored people, who have their hands upon the pulse of the Negro throughout the country, shows no evidence of any concerted pro-German efforts." "Memorandum on the Loyalty of the American Negro in the Present War," August 27, 1917, file 10218-7, reel 1, "Negro Subversion," MID, NARA. Robert Russa Moton, who replaced the late Booker T. Washington as head of the Tuskegee Institute in 1915, tried to make this same point to the segregationist Wilson, but to no avail. Robert Russa Moton to W. Wilson, June 15, 1918, *PWW*, Vol. XLVIII, 323-324. For a comprehensive look at the life of the Military Intelligence Division up to American entry into World War II, see Bidwell, *History of the Military Intelligence Division*.

⁵⁵ Theodore Kornweibel, *"Investigate Everything": Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty during World War I* (Bloomington, IN: 2002), 45.

a corrupt alliance between the federal government and northeastern capital persisted from the late nineteenth century and the greatest wartime Populist fear monger, Tom Watson of Georgia, was a holdover from that time. White opinion on the war in the South, then, was largely divided along class lines.⁵⁶

On April 6, 1917 – the day Congress officially declared war – D.J. Kirton of Cades, South Carolina reported to the Justice Department that “two very suspicious looking parties” were visiting every African-American home in town presumably (according to the black families) selling war insurance. Kirton, though, was not fooled. “I fear there is some mischief or plot in this move,” he wrote. Unfortunately there was only so much he could do “to find out what these, or any other suspicious looking characters might be after.” But because “we country people would be at the mercy of a mob of negroes headed by these Germans,” Kirton believed that “now is the time for us to nip the thing in the bud.” Kirton concluded by asking the federal official what he thought the whites of Cades should do to stave off this threat.⁵⁷ In a similar case in May, whites in Hampton County, South Carolina believed they had literally dodged a bullet as suspected German agents were apparently supplying local blacks with ammunition to be used in an uprising. By the time the federal agent arrived on the scene, however, the local sheriff claimed to have the situation in order, the threat having unexplainably

⁵⁶ Zachary Smith, “Tom Watson and Resistance to Federal War Policies in Georgia during World War I,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 2, (May 2012). Also see Jeanette Keith, *Rich Man's War, Poor Man's Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South during World War I* (Chapel Hill, NC: 2004).

⁵⁷ D.J. Kirton to J.W. Ragsdale, April 6, 1917, OGF 3057, reel 304, FBI, NARA. The BI and the MID received similar reports in the first week of the war from Virginia and Alabama. Unsigned to A.J. Devlin, April 2, 1917, *ibid.* and A. Bruce Bielaski to the Blockton, AL Postmaster, April 2, 1917, *ibid.*; L.O. Thompson, report, July 1, 1917, file 10218-2, reel 1, Negro Subversion, MID, NARA; Ralph H. Daughton, report, January 22, 1918, file 10218-85, and *ibid.*; Major M.D. Wheeler to Branch Babcock, May 8, 1918, file 10218-113, reel 2, *ibid.*

passed. All that is clear is that, at some point, the situation appeared dire enough to call in the federal authorities.⁵⁸

Some southern whites, clearly with the specter of German intrigue and details of the Zimmerman Telegram fresh on their minds, viewed armed black rebellion as part of a larger Teutonic conspiracy to invade the United States. In September 1917, the MID received a report of a spy ring in Yoakum, Texas. An African-American informant explained to an MID agent that “the Germans and these socialists around here...are trying to use the negroes and the Mexicans for their selfish ends.” He had heard “that in Mexico the Mexicans are organized, and that when the soldiers are taken away from the border to go to France, two thousand Mexicans will invade Texas.” To make matters worse, several young African-American men allegedly had been propagandized by a German saloon owner in town. Apparently on a hunch, Yoakum’s police chief professed to have “had occasion to search a great many negro houses.” In each home he claimed to have found “comparatively new” rifles, shot guns, and ammunition. If this story was true, the MID agent concluded, “this is a dangerous condition.”⁵⁹

Concerns about a multiethnic invasion across the Rio Grande also resonated outside Texas. In early April 1917, authorities in Birmingham, Alabama, arrested a black man and a white man on the charge that they planned to incite African-Americans across the South to flee to Mexico. A rumor circulated that the pro-German perpetrators spread their message while acting as Bible salesmen. North of Birmingham, two men alleged to

⁵⁸ Branch Bocock, report, May 11, 1917, OGF 3057, reel 304, FBI, NARA.

⁵⁹“In re AGITATION AMONG NEGROES: Unknown Parties”, September 11, 1917, file 10218-23, Reel 1, “Negro Subversion,” MID, NARA. The BI also investigated the case. See R.L. Barnes, report, “In re: Unknown Party at Yoakum, Texas Trying to Cause Agitation Among the Negroes,” September 4, 1917, OGF 3057, reel 304, FBI. Also see Ruth E. Crevering to Josephus Daniels, August 2, 1917, *ibid.*; B.C. Baldwin, report, September 1917, *ibid.*;

be German were likewise charged with inciting black migration to Mexico. In the predominantly black Mississippi Delta, whites were equally scared. The sheriff of one small town claimed that German spies were recruiting local blacks to join an invasion force in Mexico. The federal investigator on the scene found no reason to believe that local African-Americans were “going to leave the Delta for an army in Mexico. But this kind of rumor is all over Mississippi.” The alleged German agents stirring up such thoughts, he reported, were probably not spies after all – or even German. They were likely labor recruiters from Chicago.⁶⁰

Along with rumors of impending invasion, white southerners also wrote to inform federal authorities of German propaganda that promised better times for African-Americans once Germany gained control of the United States. According to one such report, a German-American shopkeeper in Phoebus, Virginia, was trying to convince his black employees “that they would be much better off under German rule than under present conditions.”⁶¹ A MID agent reported in April 1918 that an African-American doctor in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was told by a German-American baker that there was no reason blacks should fight for the United States because “the Germans would treat the

⁶⁰ Kornweibel, *Investigate Everything*, 41-43. In a similar case, J.P. Cooper, vice president of a Georgia cotton company, wrote the federal government asking to investigate who was “engineering the exodus of negroes from this section” of the state. Alluding to the prospect of German intrigue, Cooper suggested federal agents “check the propaganda that is active in this country, inducing negroes [sic.] to leave on the faith of vague promises, which they do not appear to understand.” “The very vagueness” of the suspicious agents’ promises “appeals to their [African-Americans’] childlike imagination, and numbers of them go.” In all likelihood, this too was a case in which wartime industrial demands in the North necessitated the increased effort to recruit southern black labor. J.P. Cooper to Chief Postoffice Inspector, April 20, 1917, OGF 3057, reel 304, FBI, NARA. Another good example of investigators citing presumed black gullibility, even despite their best efforts to stay loyal is P.D. Gold, Jr., report, January 18, 1918, OGF 112508, reel 494, *ibid.* For more on fears of a black exodus to Mexico for the purpose of returning with arms, see Van Deman to Spencer Roberts, May 17, 1918, file 10218-147, reel 2, Negro Subversion, MID, NARA;

⁶¹ “In Re: German Propaganda Among Negroes, at Old Point, Virginia,” January 22, 1918, file 10218-85, reel 1, *ibid.*

negroes better tha[n] the Americans.”⁶² That same month in Pensacola, Florida, rumors swirled that German intrigue inspired African-American workers in bakeries and ice creameries to mix broken glass into the food. Allegedly, German propaganda spread among the workers claimed that “when the Germans come here they are going to clean up the whites, and establish negroes in their place.” If true, the German propaganda “would have quite an effect upon them, and put them in a state of mind to cooperate to bring this condition about.”⁶³

Although investigations of possible German intrigue among African-Americans was far more common in the South, whites on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts also found much to fear from the black population. A woman in Seattle, Washington, informed the MID that “a friend of hers” was told by the black chef at the Puss ‘n Boots bakery that German agents and had been providing arms and money to “certain negroes in this county” so they could “start a revolution, acting in conjunction with a force of German reservists which would invade the United States from Mexico.” In return for their help overwhelming the United States, the Kaiser’s representative apparently offered African-Americans “a part of the conquered territory.”⁶⁴ A Miss Steers reported a German plot in the works in Harlem, where African-Americans had been purchasing property and furniture at an alarming rate. Her unwelcome neighbors clearly were “acting as agents for German financiers,” her proof being that they held a dinner for a “distinguished German” before his alleged departure for Mexico. To make matters worse, “a family of

⁶² “In Re: Otto Marle, Alien Enemy, Seditious Remarks,” April 6, 1918, file 10218-134, *ibid.* In this same vein, rumors also swirled through southern black communities that if the United States won the war whites would return African-Americans to slavery. Bill Harris, report, January 11, 1918, file 10218-82, *ibid.*; Office of Naval Intelligence to MID, March 11, 1918, file 10218-112, reel 2, *ibid.*

⁶³ “In Re: Glass Found in Food Stuffs,” April 6, 1918, file 10218-123, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Special Employee Beasley, report, “In Re: Chef at “Puss ‘n Boots” Confectionary Co.” July 13, 1917, file 10218-4, *ibid.*

Spaniards” had also moved in nearby, their home acting as a headquarters for the hatching of “some kind of Mexican plot.” The conspiracy unfolding before Steers’s eyes, she reported, was “indicative of the organization methods of German propaganda.”⁶⁵ Similar concerns about the complicity of northern blacks in Teutonic plots arose in Washington, DC, Philadelphia, Detroit, and other major cities on the east and west coasts.⁶⁶

Rumors of German-inspired black insurrection, in the South especially, found its way into the mainstream press, which during wartime was prone to publishing outlandish rumors as facts. In the April 21, 1917 issue of *Literary Digest*, the editors mentioned cases of German propaganda in the South that attempted to “induce negroes to migrate to Mexico.” In an apparent attempt to calm nerves or forge unity through suggestion, the editors claimed the majority of the nation’s newspaper editors believed “the German effort to set the country ablaze with a negro insurrection” was misplaced and that they had “unhesitating confidence in the loyalty of the American negro.”⁶⁷ Samuel Hopkins Adams’s series “Invaded America” in *Everybody’s Magazine* also regurgitated the same rumors that were reported to the DOJ and MID. Adams wrote of “a word-of-mouth

⁶⁵ P.T. Rellihan, report, “Re: Kuhn, Loeb & Co.” July 28, 1917, file 10218-113, *ibid*.

⁶⁶ Office of Naval Intelligence to MID, March 11, 1918, file 10218-112, reel 2, *ibid*. (from Washington, DC, on rumor among blacks that white Americans would re-enslave them if Germany lost the war); Spencer Roberts to Chief of MID, May 22, 1918, file 10218-147, *ibid*. (from Philadelphia, on a Mr. McElrone who works for a “certain Government” and calls himself the “negro liberator”); William Frew to Chief of MID, August 6, 1918, file 10218-200, *ibid*. (from Grosse Pointe, MI – near Detroit – on Michigan and Georgia state Councils of National Defense teaming up to end the circulation of German propaganda among African-Americans in the Detroit and Atlanta areas).

⁶⁷ The alleged confidence of the white editors perhaps grew from the opinions expressed by Robert Moton and several editors of black newspapers that blacks will and should remain loyal to the United States in its time of crisis. Yet, in reality, calls to the flag in the black press was as much a means of self-defense as it was a declaration of black loyalty. This same article, though, also cites two white southern newspapers that show much less faith in southern black loyalty. For instance, while most African-Americans “kn[e]w better” than to place any stake in German victory, the Macon (GA) Telegraph argued that “doubtless there are enough [disgruntled blacks] lending a willing ear” to the Germans “to call for prompt and severe treatment.” “German Plots among Negroes,” *Literary Digest*, April 21, 1917, Vol. LIV, 1153.

propaganda” spreading among southern blacks “with the view to prejudicing them against the war and in favor of Germany.” Strangely, Adams cited the so-called “kadaver [sic.]” rumor – that Germans used the fats from the carcasses of dead soldiers to make soap – as being a tool of “German-American propaganda” targeting blacks.

“[W]andering propagandists” allegedly spread through Missouri a story that after the war the mothers of dead African-American soldiers would launder the family’s clothes with soap made from “*you*, her boy, that was killed!...Imagine the effect upon a ghost-ridden race!”⁶⁸

Many factory and mill owners who viewed their work as critical to the war effort appear to have had a greater tendency to see ghosts – often, in their case, as smoke and flame – than perpetually endangered African-Americans. Many who reported industrial or agricultural fires to the federal government were often quick to assume enemy agents were behind the incident.⁶⁹ In several cases, the fires most likely were set by the owner or a hired arsonist in order to collect insurance money.⁷⁰ The DOJ and MID seem to have been well aware that the legitimacy of many claims of German sabotage were suspect. In an April 1918 letter to Attorney General Gregory, John Lord O’Brian maintained that “It is the consensus opinion” of insurance companies and federal fire investigators “that substantially no fire losses of this [incendiary] character during the past year have been

⁶⁸ Adams, “Invaded America,” *Everybody’s Magazine*, December 1917, 13. Italics in the original. The CPI also applauded African-American loyalty. *The German Whisper*, 11.

⁶⁹ In a significant number of reports, the owner or the investigator suspected labor radicals, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and so-called “Bolsheviki” for industrial sabotage. Those instances will be covered briefly in the epilogue. For now, the focus is on fires and explosions that were pinned on Teutonic agents.

⁷⁰ I only came across one incident in the MID’s Plant Protection Sections where investigators found a desire to commit insurance fraud to be the cause of a fire. In fact, the case was an investigation of an arson ring in Detroit ran by three men on behalf of a woman in Brooklyn, New York. One of the three had been caught and had turned on the other two. Interestingly, the arsonist was quick to argue that none of the plants he and his gang had set ablaze had any pending government war contracts. George Black to Edmund Leigh, May 28, 1918, Reports on Fires, box 1, Plant Protection Section, Records of the Military Intelligence Division, RG 165, NARA. Hereinafter cited as PPS, MID..

caused by enemy activities within the country.” In fact, he believed it was “safe to say that in 97% of the reports of such instances the complaint is unfounded.”⁷¹ But considering the nationwide spy hysteria, it is also safe to assume that many of the parties in these stories, those reporting and investigating, saw the specter of Teutonic conspiracy in the charred remains of the factory or mill. For example, an Indianapolis newspaper reported that a saw mill in Whittaker, Indiana appeared to have been “set afire in a number of places.” If this were true, the MID agent on the scene argued, the evidence had turned to ash. According to the mill owner, the residents of Whittaker were “above suspicion, as they were all Americans.” Yet although they admitted the “sparks from a passing train may have started the fire,” to the mill owner and federal investigator the presence of a suspicious bottle near the site left open the possibility an enemy agent had used “some inflammable [sic.] liquid” to start the blaze. Besides the bottle, though, no solid evidence of pro-German activity could be found.⁷²

In June 1917, the MID received a report of an explosion and fire at a railroad depot in Americus, Georgia, that locals believed had been the work of enemy aliens. After little investigation, the MID agent found there was “No possible connection of [an] alien enemy with this fire or explosion,” concluding the fire was the fault of a drunken freight clerk.⁷³ Not surprisingly, overzealous APL agents were also quick to assume German sabotage explained industrial accidents. An APL man suggested federal authorities investigate a supposedly disloyal German-American for his part in an explosion at a chemical plant in Marquette, Michigan, where he worked as a watchman.

⁷¹ J.L. O'Brian to T.W. Gregory, April 18, 1918, *PWW*, Vol. XLVII, 364-365.

⁷² R.A. Nash, report, “Fire, A.J. Sander Sons, Saw Mill at Whittaker, Ind.,” September 8, 1918, Reports on Fires, box 2, *ibid*.

⁷³ J.F. Trazzare to Military Intelligence – Plant Protection, June 1, 1918, Reports on Fires, box 3, *ibid*.

The German was suspected because he “had acted suspiciously in connection with inquiries he had made about the dates of arrival of certain mechanical apparatus which is in no way connected with his work.” The suspect, the APL agent implied, was likely a German spy. An MID agent, though, endeavored to interview the suspect’s employer, who was “absolutely convinced” the German was “a loyal employee and a loyal citizen.”⁷⁴

In a similar case outside Albany, New York in April, police removed dynamite from an unprotected magazine, the doors of which had been shot at repeatedly by someone desperate to obtain what was behind. The police had questioned many of the enemy aliens in the immediate area – mostly Austrians – and found them to be loyal. The APL investigator on the scene, however, mysteriously claimed to have a list of enemy alien men not known to local authorities and, thus, were unaccounted for. At the time of the report, the APL man had yet to complete his investigation, but his assumption that whoever attempted the break-in was part of a transient or secretive group of possible conspirators speaks volumes.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ James H. Daly, report, “In Re: Herman Shauer (Mrquette [sic.], Mich.), August 2, 1918, Reports on Fires, box 1, *ibid*.

⁷⁵ How the investigator obtained the list of unknown enemy aliens is left unclear. It is also difficult to tell if he ever shared this information with the local police. Roland Ford, report, April 18, 1917, OGF 5910, reel 320, *ibid*. Investigators also were forced to deal with Americans’ fear that the tools of industrial sabotage could end up in the hands of enemy agents. In May 1917, a Michigan man wrote to the APL that while his community had taken the proper steps to protect its coal mining explosives, about a quarter million pounds of dynamite and half a million pounds of black powder were being left unprotected in Terre Haute, Indiana. “Little attention,” he claimed, “is placed upon the significance of this matter.” Although it is unclear why the man would know of the conditions in Terre Haute, his fear that local negligence could result in the explosives ending up in the wrong hands – and that those hands existed and would actively seek out explosives – is evident. Division Superintendent (unnamed) to George H. Murdock, May 26, 1917, OGF 5910, reel 319, FBI, NARA.



The Kaiser's Other Allies

MANY fires of alleged incendiary origin are occurring daily.

Some of them are surely set by firebugs. Others of them are caused by the Kaiser's other allies in America—his allies of no race or creed, his allies of the purely inert physical world.

These other allies of the Kaiser are as dangerous as spies, and their number is legion. Here they take a heavy toll in guns; there they destroy millions of loaves of bread; yonder they ruin tons of clothing and equipment.

They have been here always. Their ravages have cost American industry hundreds of millions of dollars—yes, thousands of millions.

But today these ravages cost more than money. They cost the blood of our manhood, because destroyed supplies here mean useless loss of life "over there."

These vicious Kaiser allies are fire-hazards: the oily rag, the defective wire, the match, the burning cigar, the host of little things that are destroying scores and hundreds of

industries as completely and utterly as if they had been wrecked by shells in Flanders.

No matter what type of automatic-sprinkler system you have, it can be made proof against malicious tampering by alien enemies determined to burn your property. (Firebugs caused losses last year of \$50,000,000 according to the insurance companies.) An electrically controlled automatic system will guard your sprinkler system better than several additional watchmen. We shall be glad to give you full particulars about this "Sprinkler Supervisory Service."

Whether your Grinnell System requires some expenditure on your part or whether it pays its own way by reducing insurance expense 40 to 90 per cent, matters little in the present crisis. Production must not be halted. Get after the Kaiser's Allies before they get you.

Don't theorize—get the figures! Address the General Fire Extinguisher Co., 274 West Exchange St., Providence, R. I.

GRINNELL
AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM
The Factor in Industrial Safety

Figure 4-7. *Literary Digest*, April 27, 1918



GRINNELLS WOULD HAVE SAVED IT © International Film Service

Stamping out Guerrilla Warfare

MANY fires of known or suspected incendiary origin are occurring daily. It is guerrilla warfare. Many great American industries are among the victims—as completely wiped out as if wrecked by shells in Flanders.

Machine-gun Efficiency

There has always been in America a guerrilla warfare of another sort waged against business. It is Nature's insidious trickery reinforced by man's carelessness, called "fire-hazards" by the experts. Twenty-five thousand American businesses have been awake to its depredations. They have armed themselves with the machine guns of fire-protection—the automatic sprinklers.

Fires are so easily started. Your watchmen can't be in all places at once. Just as surely as you have combustibles in your property, just so surely will fires start when Nature gets ready to "strike her match."

Nothing can stop fires from starting, but automatic sprinklers can stop all fires from spreading.

As soon as that first little ribbon of smoke has developed into a sufficient blaze to send a column of heat to the ceiling, the fusible strut in the nearest sprinkler-head will soften and down will come a drenching rain, while the alarm-bell sends out its clamor for help. It is all automatic and instantaneous. If the fire is not entirely put out by the sprinklers when help arrives, it will at least be under control and easily attended to.

The sprinkler-protected enterprises have done and will continue to do their full duty in our industrial mobilization.

In justice to the nation's need, no concern that plays a part in the war can neglect this great standard precaution against interruption of business. It matters little whether the automatic-

sprinkler system costs money or pays its own way by insurance savings, the point is that the wheels of industry positively must not stop one moment until the war is over!

Considering the known efficiency of sprinklers, even incendiarianism is no excuse for suspension of business and inability to fill orders.

Sprinkler-owners: Get a Super-System

Supervisory devices on a sprinkler system make vicious tampering with the system impossible. Sprinkler-protection thus becomes actually infallible even against alien enemies.

An incendiary may move through your plant for weeks, studying to find an opportunity for mischief, but everywhere—in the attic, in the cellar, under the stairs, in the big rooms and in the dark corners—he finds always the little sprinkler-heads on duty, ready and able to balk his plan. He cannot tamper with any part of the system without flashing the news of his machinations to the central supervisory station.

The way the insurance rate drops when you put in sprinklers shows how the chance of interruption by fire practically disappears. A cut of 50 or 90 per cent, in the annual outlay for insurance is the reward the Underwriters will give you if you install this modern protection.

The Grinnell System, the oldest and best known, protecting more property than all other kinds put together, is shop-assembled and comes to your property all cut to measure, ready to be installed without interrupting or embarrassing even your busiest department.

Don't theorize—get the figures! Address the General Fire Extinguisher Co., 209 West Exchange St., Providence, R. I.

Figure 4-8. *Everybody's Magazine* July 1, 1918.

As with the 1916 AT&T preparedness advertisement (see Chapter 2), Grinnell, the makers of automatic sprinkler systems, exploited Americans' real fears of dangerous outsiders. In an ad printed in an April 1918 edition of *Literary Digest*, the Kaiser stands in front of a burning factory (presumably a munitions plant) rubbing his jaw in contemplation of the work of his minions (Figure 4-7). "Many fires of alleged incendiary origin are occurring daily," the ad said matter of factly. While some "are surely set by firebugs [enemy agents]", the Kaiser had "other allies" at work as well who were "as dangerous as spies, and their number is legion." These co-conspirators were the historical causes of factory fires – lit cigars, matches, poor wiring, oil-drenched rags, and

“the host of little things that are destroying scores and hundreds of industries...as if they had been wrecked by shells in Flanders.” The best protectors against all the Kaiser’s secret agents, living or inanimate, was a Grinnell electrical sprinkler system, which would make a factory’s fire protection apparatuses secure “against malicious tampering by alien enemies determined to burn your property.”⁷⁶

In July, *Everybody’s Magazine* printed a similar ad from Grinnell, which purported that the “fires of known or suspected incendiary origin” that were “occurring daily” were tantamount to “guerilla warfare” against American industry (Figure 4-8). Yet such unconventional warfare, in the form of common “fire-hazards,” had always been “waged against business.” This later ad, however, suggested that the larger concern was not a carelessly flung cigarette or an electrical short. While the ad also asserted that Grinnell’s sprinkler systems were tamper-proof, it painted a vivid picture of a saboteur “mov[ing] through your plant for weeks, studying to find an opportunity for mischief” only to find “the little sprinkler-heads on duty.”⁷⁷ The placement of these similar ads in two popular publications suggest an assumption on the part of Grinnell’s executives and the editors that a German conspiracy to commit sabotage was afoot or, at the very least, that many Americans believed this to be the case and their fear could be exploited.

The Grinnell ads merely added to the onslaught of hyperbolic claims of German sabotage in the press and furthered the disconnect between the reality on the ground – that German agents were not at work disrupting industrial mobilization – and the imaginations of many nervous Americans. An interesting contrast between the press accounts and investigators’ reports can be seen in the coverage of a large fire that

⁷⁶ *Literary Digest*, April 27, 1918, , Vol. LVII, 64

⁷⁷ *Everybody’s Magazine*, July 1, 1918, Vol. XXXIX, 81.

engulfed the docks and ships at Port Newark, New Jersey, in late January 1918.

According to the *New York Times*, the federal government reportedly believed the fire added credence to “the widely current report that enemies are again plotting in this country to cripple American war preparation by incendiarism and other forms of violence. This became clear the previous night when” the governor mobilized the state militia at the behest of the federal government to surround the burning facilities.⁷⁸ The Port Newark incident likely came as no surprise to Treasury Secretary William McAdoo, who like so many other Americans appears to have bought into the idea that a German-led conspiracy of espionage and sabotage was still at work. He wrote Wilson about news of “a carefully concerted plot” orchestrated by “pro-German” and “anti-American” elements in the country (interestingly, he singled out Irish-Americans) to destroy every American or British ship “in every port, in every shipyard, and at sea.” He also had a specific date for the event – January 22. “I think you will agree with me,” he told the President, “that no pains should be spared to take extra precautions.”⁷⁹

To the two New York City police investigators on the scene at Port Newark, however, the tiniest precaution could have saved the port from its fiery destruction. The men ascertained that an employee’s failure to put out a small fire, used to dry sand and “was supposed to be extinguished every day at 5 P.M.,” was the likely cause of the blaze. The reason such a small fire overwhelmed so much of the facility was that “the nearest fire alarm signal [was] about a mile away” and there was inadequate water pressure to extinguish the flame. The investigators did admit, though, that “the guarding of this site

⁷⁸ “Port Newark Fire Seen as Part of Wide German Plot,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1918.

⁷⁹ William Gibbs McAdoo to W. Wilson, January 16, 1918, *PWW*, Vol. XLVI, 3-4.

from the water” was inadequate, noting that it was “possible to gain access to some parts of this pier from the water without detection.”⁸⁰

While civilians fretted over the imagined renewal of Germany’s effort to cripple the war effort through sabotage, the fear of a Hun conspiracy from within also reached the Committee on Public Information. An undercover MID agent in San Francisco came across Hendrik Van Loon, a CPI employee who allegedly “possesse[d] violent pro-German tendencies.” For the MID contact for the undercover agent, there was “absolutely no question in [his] mind that” Van Loon was a German propagandist “circulating anti-American propaganda under the guise of ‘public information.’” More specifically, Van Loon – a self-described “Prussian Dutch” – was said to have argued that “The day would come when the entire world would realize Germany’s greatness.” Van Loon, however, was not the only CPI staff member under surveillance. After an in-depth investigation of the CPI’s personnel, requested by Creel, the MID claimed to have cause for suspicion for fourteen of nearly four hundred workers. Creel, though, prepared evidence of his own that he believed contradicted the MID’s charges.⁸¹ According to historian Stephen Vaughn, Creel had good reason to defend his employees as most of the

⁸⁰ Thomas F.J. Cavanagh and William J. McCahill to Commanding Officer, Neutrality Squad, January 28, 1918, Reports on Fires, box 1, PPS, MID, NARA. At the same time, federal investigators also were less likely than the APL’s volunteer spy hunters to conclude that a foreign conspiracy was the source of events. For instance, a lawyer in Fairview, Utah testified to an MID agent that the destruction of a large dam near the town was the work of German saboteurs. The lawyer’s proof was that the giving way of the dam – with the ensuing destruction of crops, coal mines, and several miles of the Denver & Rio Grande railway line – would “result in serious damage to the country.” Thus, it had to be the work of saboteurs. According to the MID agent, though, “no traces of the dam being dynamited was found,” noticing “the concrete had not been shattered, and there were no small pieces of concrete lying around.” Although he concluded that enemy activity was possible, the shabby repairs done to the dam over time and the high water level were the more likely culprits. Leon Bone, report, “In re Destruction of Dam at Fairview, Utah (German Activities),” July, 23, 1917, file 10095-35, Box 2477, General Correspondence, Records of the Military Intelligence Division, RG 165, NARA. Hereinafter Gen. Corr., MID.

⁸¹ Rolin G. Watkins to Chief of Military Intelligence Branch, May 1, 1918; Synopsis of file # P.F. 6590, May 10, 1918; R.H. Van Deman to Nicholas Biddle, May 15, 1918; G. Creel to Marlborough Churchill, July 8, 1918, Creel Correspondence, box 4, folder 110, CPI, NARA.

MID's investigations of CPI personnel, like practically every case they and the DOJ looked into, "were...founded on hearsay."⁸²

With the nation's towns, cities, territories, military, and government seemingly inundated with spies and propagandists, the President, the Department of Justice, and Congress decided they needed to take swift action to protect against Teutonic intrigue. On June 14, 1917, Flag Day, Wilson reiterated his distrust of the German-American community, claiming that the Kaiser's "government has many spokesmen here, in places high and low." Up to this point these agents of intrigue had shown great "discretion" and kept "within the law" while spreading their falsehoods, such as the lie that Europe's war "can touch America with no danger to either her lands or her institutions." Wilson concluded: "Woe be to the man or group of men that seeks to stand in our way in this day of high resolution when every principle we hold dearest is to be vindicated and made secure for the salvation of the nations."⁸³

The next day the spirit of the President's combative language became law when he signed the Espionage Act, which was meant to protect the nation from those guilty of spreading the pro-German rumors and propaganda of which the CPI and press were anxious to warn the American people. More specifically, under the Act it became illegal to "make or convey false reports or false statements" with the intent of obstructing the work of the military, to convince men to shirk military service, and/or try to infect the military with disloyalty. To keep German lies from reaching the eyes and ears of soldiers and civilians alike (and so the Wilson administration could deny having directly censored

⁸² Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines*, 195.

⁸³ Flag Day Address, June 14 1917, *PWW*, Vol. XLII, page 503-504. Wilson's address was published (with explanatory footnotes) and five million copies were distributed to households and school children nationwide. Smith, *War & Press Freedom*, 135.

the press), the Espionage Act also gave the Postmaster General, Albert Sidney Burleson, the authority to deny mailing privileges to any publication that he deemed pro-German.⁸⁴ Burleson described the law to a friend as being “aimed to prevent crimes against our country” and to end “the circulation of other matter containing false and treasonable statements, the intent and effect of all of which is manifestly to create hostility to the government, decrease its efficiency, weaken its military power, lend material aid and comfort to the enemy, and in every way further the cause of Prussianism in our land.”⁸⁵

Federal law enforcement and federal judges across the country agreed with Burleson that the restriction of free expression was a critical aspect of national security against the apparent German threat. Future Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes best articulated the predominant wartime legal opinion when he wrote that “Self-preservation is the first law of national life and the constitution itself provides the necessary powers in order to defend and preserve the United States.” In the same vein, John Lord O’Brian argued that because it was “the right of the nation in time of grave national danger to protect itself against utterances intended to weaken its power of self-defense,” restraints on free speech during wartime were perfectly legal and a perfectly legitimate government action. Oliver Wendell Holmes’s famous 1919 ruling that seditious speech in wartime constituted a “clear and present danger” when it brought “about the substantive evils Congress has a right to prevent” epitomized the difference

⁸⁴ Paul L. Murphy, *World War I and the Origins of Civil Liberties* (New York: 1979), 79-81. John Lord O’Brian claimed that the real purpose of the Espionage Act was not to silence disloyal utterances as much as to keep anti-war propaganda from interfering with the draft. While this was definitely a leading rationale for the legally suppressing dissent, it is clear that that many believed anti-war propaganda originated with the Kaiser’s agents. Geoffrey R. Stone, “Mr. Wilson’s First Amendment” in John Milton Cooper (ed), *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace* (Baltimore, MD: 2008), 203. For the mainstream press’s opinion on Burleson’s wartime powers, see “Mr. Burleson to Rule Press,” *Literary Digest*, October 6, 1917, Vol. XLV, 12.

⁸⁵ A.S. Burleson to M. Bronner, October 22, 1917, Albert Sidney Burleson Papers, Vol. XIX, LOC.

between what was legally protected in wartime as opposed to peacetime.⁸⁶ In the name of national defense, many rabid federal judges conducted kangaroo courts, often haranguing defendants on the importance of Americanism before the trial began and after handing down a sentence. One famous example is that of Judge Henry DeLamar Clayton, Jr., who presided over the 1918 sedition trial of Jacob Abrams and three anarchist accomplices. For two hours during the October sentencing hearing, Clayton, wearing a black armband in honor of a brother who had fallen in France, tore into the defendants for their pro-German and anti-American views and justified their stern sentences under the Espionage Act. Because of the “inherent right of self-defense” provided in the Constitution, he argued, the defendants’ conviction for spreading “their covert German propaganda stuff” had a firm legal basis. Ultimately, laws limiting free speech in wartime were critical if the United States were to defeat the “devilish and artful German Kaiser and his military satraps.”⁸⁷

Victor Berger, the German-born socialist politician and editor of the *Milwaukee Leader*, perhaps saw the writing on the wall for himself and his newspaper. Writing to Burleson in July 1917, Berger took on the argument that the Espionage Act made the nation more secure. “Our country is supposed to be a democracy and a democracy cannot exist without healthy opposition,” he argued. “We find in history that a strong

⁸⁶ Smith, *War Press & Freedom*, 40, 57, and 59; Richard Polenberg, *Fighting Faiths: The Abrams Case, the Supreme Court, and Free Speech* (New York: 1987), 212-213.. For a fine legal history of the Espionage Act see David M. Rabban, *Free Speech in Its Forgotten Years* (New York: 1997), 248-298.

⁸⁷ The mainstream press and many in the legal profession praised Clayton for his diatribe. The *New York Times* said Clayton “deserve[d] the thanks of the city and of the country for the way he conducted the trial” while a New York lawyer claimed Clayton’s speech made his “blood tingle – with pride, with approbation.” Polenberg, *Fighting Faiths*, 142. Another famous example of a judge’s prejudices getting the better of him in an Espionage Act case is the trial of Kate Richards O’Hare, whom the judge sentences to ten years in prison not because of the words she uttered against the draft but because her words showed “what was in her heart.” Kathleen Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens: Women and Subversion during World War I* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), 18-38. Also see Murphy, *Origins of Civil Liberties*, 210-218 and Rabban, *Free Speech in Its Forgotten Years*, 255-279.

opposition was permitted in old Rome (so long as the republic really existed) even during the life and death grapple with Carthage – and our republic is surely not fighting for its existence as Rome fought with ‘Hannibal ante portas.’ As a matter of fact we are not fighting for our existence at all.”⁸⁸ In other words, Berger feared the United States was becoming a veritable Don Quixote, striking at menacing windmills as if they were hulking Teutonic giants in an ultimately self-defeating crusade. In February 1918 Berger was indicted under the Espionage Act only to post bail and run, unsuccessfully but with the support of a significant minority of voters, as the Socialist candidate for Senate from Wisconsin.⁸⁹

In the case of both the legal system and the behavior of fearful, hysteric Americans, Berger’s concern for democracy was not unfounded. Across the United States from the fall of 1917 into the spring of 1918, German-Americans, religious pacifists, supposed pro-Germans and enemy propagandists, and labor radicals faced one of the greatest periods of unrestrained vigilantism in American history. Much of this was thanks in part to the words of national leaders and the mainstream press. Along with Wilson’s implied yet unintended call to violence in his Flag Day address, others like Theodore Roosevelt publicly blew the battle horn, calling Americans loyal to the Anglo-Saxon democratic ideal to strike at the only enemies within the nation’s immediate reach. “The Hun within our gates masquerades in many guises,” the ex-President maintained in

⁸⁸ Victor Berger to A.S. Burleson, July 12, 1917, Burleson Papers, Vol. XIX, LOC.

⁸⁹ Murphy, *Origins of Civil Liberties*, 218-219. In the November 1918 elections, taking place the week before the Armistice, Wisconsinites elected Berger to Congress only to have the House vote to refuse to seat him. In December 1919 he was elected and again the House refused to seat a convicted felon and former war opponent. Only after his third election to Congress, after the fever pitch of war hysteria had subsided, was Berger allowed to serve his home district as its national representative. H.C. Peterson and Gilbert Fite, *Opponents of War, 1917-1918* (Seattle, WA: 1957), 166. For more on Berger’s tortuous experience with hysteric wartime sedition laws, see William H. Thomas, Jr., *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department’s Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* (Madison, WI: 2008), 113-118, 137-140.

October 1917. The Teuton “is our dangerous enemy; and he should be hunted down without mercy.”⁹⁰ Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels proclaimed that Americans should “put the fear of God into the hearts of those who live among us, and fatten upon us, and are not Americans.”⁹¹ The *Washington Post* also wanted to take the fight to the enemy, declaring in an August 1917 editorial that both Wilson and Congress had been “easy-going and generous toward the enemies of the United States.” One of the most glaring mistakes the government had made was assuming “that all enemy aliens in the United States are harmless unless they attract attention by some overt act.” Citing an explosion at the Mare Island shipyard near San Francisco, the editors fingered the DOJ as being inattentive to the real threat posed by the German-American population. The implication of the editorial was that if the government was not up to the task of defending the nation from internal threats then the citizen-protector must take his stand.⁹²

With visions of ubiquitous yet hidden Teutonic plots on their minds and the calls to mercilessly defeat the enemy within echoing in their ears, many fearful Americans sought to do just that by eradicating all things German from the cultural, social, and physical landscape. To many, the “Kaiser’s tongue” was far more menacing to the nation

⁹⁰ Slotkin, *Lost Battalions*, 219. Quote from the October 4, 1917 *New York Sun*. Less popular yet still well-known individuals – particularly by middle-class Americans – also fanned the flames. The banker Otto Kahn, likely viewing disloyalty from less of a racial lens than Roosevelt, argued that those “who, secretly or overtly, tr[y] to thwart the declared will and aim of the Nation in this holy war is a traitor, and a traitor’s fate should be his.” Otto Kahn, “Prussianized Germany: Americans of Foreign Descent and America’s Cause” (New York: 1917), 21, PAH. In a 1918 speech in Wisconsin on behalf of the Liberty Loan, novelist Charles Elbert Whelan called for those who refused to buy their portion be “branded for all time as unworthy [of] the protection of the laws of the country to which they have proven faithless in the time of her need.” Charles Elbert Whelan, “The Liberty Loan: A Stand for God and Humanity, A Test of Patriotism” (Madison, WI: 1918?), 4, PAH.

⁹¹ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 278.

⁹² “Too Easy with the Enemy,” *Washington Post*, August 30, 1917. In a similar vein, a contributor to the *New York Tribune* suggested that all enemy aliens in New York City be interned. “To omit this measure,” the writer concluded, “is not only to hazard the lives of Americans at home and compromise the whole future of our cause, but to stab” the soldiers in France in the back. Frank. H. Simonds, “Act and Act Quickly,” *New York Tribune*, November 1, 1917, PAH.

than the Teutonic-American's inherent secretiveness, clannishness, and duplicity. Across the country, educators, political leaders, and citizens fought against the "Prussianization" of Anglo-Saxon children, alleging that militarism, autocracy, and duplicity were inherent to the German language. According to the California State Board of Education, German was "a language that disseminates the ideals of autocracy, brutality, and hatred," while a politician in Iowa claimed that "ninety percent of all men and women who teach the German language are traitors." By March 1918, the teaching of German had been suspended in 149 schools throughout the country.⁹³ The editor of the *Leipsic (OH) Free Press* sent George Creel an editorial from his newspaper that asked why German needed to be taught anywhere in the entire Western Hemisphere. Since English, Spanish, and Portuguese were the primary languages spoken in this part of the world, the provincial editor figured, "why compel our children to study German when their autocratic and imperialistic teachings and acts are diametrically opposed to ours?"⁹⁴ The National Committee of One Hundred argued that through the Delbrück Law German propaganda had "penetrated" American cities, the press, and, most ominously, education. Citing figures from three cities – Columbus, Ohio, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Philadelphia – the committee argued that the larger amount of money spent on "teaching German language, and literature to Americans" than on "teaching English and citizenship to immigrants" showed German agents had infiltrated the nation's school systems.⁹⁵ If Frances Kellor's

⁹³ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 54; Peterson and Fite, *Opponents of War*, 195-196; Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 250-254.

⁹⁴ George Smith to G. Creel (with clipping), February 7, 1918, Creel Correspondence, box 18, folder 34, CPI, NARA.

⁹⁵ The Committee also claimed that low immigrant enrollment in public schools, as opposed to their enrollment in parochial schools, was "due partly to anti-American [which during the war meant pro-German] propaganda." National Committee of One Hundred, "Germany's 'Peaceful Penetration' of the United States in Population, Language, Education," no date, box 631, Women's Defense Work, CND, NARA.

criticisms of the native-born are any indication, the difference likely can be attributed to Anglo-Saxon indifference to immigrant needs or a belief that education was wasted on presumably lesser races.

In August 1917, the Director of the Geological Laboratory at the University of Michigan and a leading voice in suppression of the German language, William H. Hobbs, wrote to the National Security League about disloyal German-American teachers and professors. His solution was to issue a loyalty pledge that all teachers of German would have to sign to maintain their employment. In one part of the pledge, the teacher was to promise “not to use my opportunities to germanise [sic.] or de-americanise [sic.] my students” through the teaching of the German language.⁹⁶ The Duluth, Minnesota, Board of Education, to much national acclaim adopted a resolution ending the teaching of German in the city’s public schools. Their stated rationale, though, was a clear expression of wartime paranoia about the continuance of a decades-long Pan-German conspiracy, which, in this case, targeted impressionable American youth.

“The German imperial government, by and through the activities of its propaganda for world domination, has insidiously invaded, intrenched [sic.] and entwined its ideals in the public schools of the United States in which there are about 20,000,000 pupils and about 580,000 teachers....Our public schools should be purged of every taint of German idealism and influence, and be made to fill the function for which they were created, and to foster, teach and extend true American ideals and doctrines, and to give special effort toward the attainment of a full

⁹⁶ Hobbs even singled out, though not by name, an “openly hostile” professor on the faculty at UM, claiming he was “generally believed a spy” and the “head of the German kultur movement in the state.” W.H. Hobbs to S. Stanwood Menken, August 22, 1917, Robert M. McElroy Papers, box 1, LOC. Hobbs was able to reach a national audience in April 1918 when *The Outlook* published an article by him on the danger of German parochial schools, which he claimed were bastions of German kultur and a massive roadblock to the Americanization of German children. W.H. Hobbs, “A Pioneer Movement for Americanization,” *The Outlook*, April 24, 1918, Vol. CXVIII, 666. He also was selected to speak at the NSL’s Speaker’s Training Camp in Chautauqua, New York. Hobbs, “The Outlook for Democracy,” July 7, 1917, Patriotism Through Education Series, No. 8 (New York: NSL, 1917).

knowledge and understanding of the English language with all it entails.”⁹⁷

Creel, Wilson’s propaganda chief, was not altogether turned off by cries to suppress the German language. What did bother him, however, was that “There does not seem to be any effort at distinction, the language of allied and neutral countries being put under the ban as well as enemy languages.... There can be no denial of the evil attempted to be cured” by such a movement. Although “English should be the one accepted language, and this must, of necessity, be our goal,” all Creel asked was that the suppression of foreign languages “be confined to enemy languages” for the length of the war.⁹⁸ Apparently Creel was trying to persuade the President, who, to his credit and despite his often harsh rhetoric directed at German-Americans, believed “that opposition to teaching German in our school is childish.”⁹⁹ A more staunch defender of the Anglo-Saxon race, Elihu Root, fell between Creel and Wilson. While he had no objections to the teaching of German in schools, Root asserted that “To be a strong and united nation” the United States “must be a one-language people.” English ought to be the national language, he argued, because American “institutions are inherited from men using that language.” Those who “adapted to the life of this new Country” spoke English, and American liberty was “won by men using that language.” Root concluded that a clear

⁹⁷ Undated document, box 18, folder 34, Creel Correspondence, CPI, NARA. Also in Creel’s CPI correspondence is an unsigned copy of a letter from an unknown superintendent replying to a resident of Kansas City, Missouri, that contained a copy of the Duluth resolution and a promise to apply its provisions to his/her school. That the original request (not found) came from Kansas City in December 1917 suggests that the Duluth resolution was adopted quite broadly, at least across the German-heavy Midwest.

Superintendent to E.J. Orear, January 4, 1918, *ibid.*, box 14, folder 411, *ibid.*

⁹⁸ G. Creel to W. Wilson, August 6, 1918, Creel Papers, box 2, LOC.

⁹⁹ W. Wilson to G. Creel, February 28, 1918, box 3, *ibid.*

understanding of the “spirit and purpose which are the life of the American Democracy” was not possible without knowledge of the language of the Anglo-Saxon.¹⁰⁰

While some leaders of public opinion may have been of two minds, many other Americans’ fears of the power of language to shape individuals also extended to other aspects of German *kultur*. Orchestra and opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera Company, refused to perform the works of great German composers such as Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven. The American Defense Society believed German music “appeals to the emotions” and could easily “sway an audience as nothing else can,” making it “one of the most dangerous forms of German propaganda.” Other symbols of “Germandom” in the United States were targeted. Towns and streets named after famous Germans or cities were changed to more patriotic sounding names. Berlin, Iowa, for example, changed its name to Lincoln while East Germantown, Indiana, became Pershing. German food was no different. Sauerkraut and bratwurst famously became known as “liberty cabbage” and “liberty sausage.” At the same time, statues of once-admired Prussians, such as Bismarck and Frederick the Great, were vandalized and/or removed.¹⁰¹

Considering the popular regard for Lamarckism and the inherent link between biology and language, campaigns to end the teaching and reading of German appear to have been as much about rescuing school children from potential Teutonization as it was about hatred for an enemy or Americanizing immigrants. The underlying theory of the anti-German language crusaders appears to have been that if the language was crushed so

¹⁰⁰ Elihu Root to Lawrence A. Wilkins, May 22, 1918, Root Papers, General Correspondence, box 136, LOC.

¹⁰¹ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 247-250; Meirion and Susan Herries, *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War, 1917-1918* (New York: Random House, 1997), 295. Also see “Fighting the German Propaganda in the United States,” *Current Opinion*, May 1918, Vol. LXIV, 305-306.

would be the culture. Erasing the autocratic and militaristic influence of German *kultur* from American society, then, was of paramount importance for the security of the nation and the Anglo-Saxon race. The same held for the suppression of German music and cuisine. The belief that mere exposure to even the innocuous aspects of German culture could essentially un-Americanize adults and children alike also speaks to a longer trend of Anglo-Saxon helplessness against the continuing tide of Old World races and cultures, an open emotional wound further infected by wartime propaganda.

Aside from suppressing German language and culture, these emotions also manifested as vigilante violence against suspected enemy agents in the community. Mobs punished the assumedly disloyal pro-Germans (many non-Teutons) by forcing them to kiss the American flag, banishing them from towns or even states, tarring and feathering them, selling off their private property to buy Liberty Loans, painting them yellow, parading and/or dragging them through the streets, and, in the most extreme cases, lynching (or attempting to lynch) the accused.¹⁰² The most famous incident of mob hysteria was the lynching of Robert Prager in Collinsville, Illinois, not far from St. Louis. Prager, who had tried to enlist in the Navy but was denied for medical reasons, was a German-born immigrant accused of spreading the gospel of socialism to members of a local miners' union. There is no evidence this occurred or that Prager was anything but loyal – or, at worst, indifferent – to the American cause. Yet on April 4, 1918, after the mayor ordered the local bars closed to keep Prager or any other suspected German agents from riling up workers, the streets filled with men on an alcohol-induced rampage targeting Prager. When they found him they stripped him of his clothes, wrapped him in an American flag, and marched him through the streets. After being rescued by the local

¹⁰² Peterson and Fite, *Opponents of War*, 196-207 and Thomas, *Unsafe for Democracy*, 146-171.

police and placed in jail, the mob broke in, kidnapped him, and left town. Upon finding a tree fitting their needs, the mob asked Prager if he were an agent of the German government and if he had blown up a nearby mine. After absorbing a series of sucker punches and angry tirades, Prager was allowed to write a short letter to his mother and say a prayer before being hung high above the crowd.¹⁰³

The Prager lynching made national headlines with most leading politicians, Roosevelt included, and newspapers denouncing mob violence. Some in the press, though, saw a patriotic silver lining in the lynching. Not surprisingly, the *Washington Post* was one such newspaper, declaring that “In spite of excesses such as lynching,” Prager’s murder was a sign of “a healthful and wholesome awakening” in the traditionally isolationist Midwest. While the editors of *Everybody’s Magazine* found “The lynching of a disloyalist in Illinois” to be “crude and regrettable,” they saw the incident as having a positive impact on the war effort. It was “high time” Americans stopped showering the German-American enemy with love and sympathy. In case the American people forgot, the nation was at war. “Big as is the heart of an American boy,” the editors wrote, “there isn’t room in it for love of a German and the German’s bayonet.”¹⁰⁴ The President, however, did not publicly respond to the Prager incident until July 26.¹⁰⁵ While sympathetic biographers have argued that during the war Wilson

¹⁰³ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents of War*, 202-203. Also see “The First War-Lynching,” *Literary Digest*, April 20, 1918, Vol. XLVII, 16-17; “Is Lynching a Good Way to Fight Germany?” *The Outlook*, April 17, 1918, Vol. CXVIII, 609. Prager’s answers to the mob’s questions were not recorded.

¹⁰⁴ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents of War*, 204; “High Time,” *Everybody’s Magazine*, June 1918, Vol. XXXVIII, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents of War*, 206. To be fair to Wilson, in a speech in Buffalo, New York, to members of the American Federation of Labor in November 1917 he criticized vigilante violence, saying he had “no sympathy with the men who take their punishment into their own hands.” “If our men have not self-control,” he continued, “then they are not capable of that great thing which we call democratic government.” In this particular case, however, Wilson was likely referring to extralegal violence directed

focused so much on his vision for the postwar peace that he was in some ways oblivious to domestic issues, he was also a man who cared greatly about public opinion.¹⁰⁶ When viewing his slow response to mob violence within the context of his belief in the possible existence of a Pan-German conspiracy, evident in his 1916 reelection campaign and several major speeches, Wilson's delayed reaction suggests he likely agreed with the *Post*'s assessment of the situation.

Some of Wilson's key subordinates also appear to have found mob violence not altogether unsatisfactory. Responding to a friend who had commented on the common public criticism that the government was soft on spies, Attorney General Gregory crassly joked that "If you will kindly box up and send me from one to a dozen [spies] I will pay you very handsomely for your trouble. We are looking for them constantly, but it is a little difficult to shoot them until they have been found." Yet Gregory also expressed frustration over the bad press the DOJ had been receiving. Most news stories on German espionage, he claimed, made greatly "exaggerated statements...to the effect that spies are being constantly caught and not prosecuted, or are being paroled or released without trial, or that the Government is taking no adequate steps to discover and prosecute spies and disloyal citizens." The truth was that "Scores of thousands of men are under constant observation throughout the country" and a significant number had been prosecuted under

at members of the IWW that took place in several western mining areas, not German-Americans. "An Address in Buffalo to the American Federation of Labor," November 12, 1917, *PWW*, Vol. XLV, 16.

¹⁰⁶ An example of Wilson's deep concern for public opinion and how it could be manipulated is a letter he wrote to Creel on July 21, asking him about the efficacy of leaking a story on his distaste for mob violence a day or more before issuing his proclamation. It was important for the President that people knew he had, "like all thoughtful people in the country, had become deeply concerned [as if it were a process] about the apparent growth of the mob spirit." W. Wilson to G. Creel, July 21, 1918, Creel Papers, box 2, LOC. Also see John Milton Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: 2009).

the Espionage Act. This, Gregory lamented, was not enough to overcome the hyperbolic tales of German intrigue and sabotage permeating the country.¹⁰⁷

In order to undermine both mob justice and the criticism being leveled at the government, Congress and the Wilson administration amended the Espionage Act on May 16, 1918. Under the new law, known as the Sedition Act, the defendant's words and/or actions, not his or her motive, was all that mattered, making prosecutions for allegedly disloyal rhetoric or actions far easier. Gregory expressed the need for a tougher sedition law soon after Prager's murder by mob. "While the lynching of Prager is to be deplored," he said, "it cannot be condemned. The department of justice [sic.] has repeatedly called upon congress [sic.] for the necessary laws to prevent just such a thing as happened in the Illinois town." Despite his knowledge that most reports of German intrigue were bogus, Gregory was not holding the mob – none of which were prosecuted – responsible for Prager's death. Instead, he was blaming German propaganda, the disloyalty it engendered (assumedly Prager's), and weak federal laws that riled up citizens and prevented the DOJ from protecting the American people from both the

¹⁰⁷ T.U. Taylor to T.W. Gregory, April 10, 1918, and T.W. Gregory to T.U. Taylor, April 15, 1918, Thomas Watt Gregory Papers, box 1, LOC. Also see Gregory's correspondence with Daniels on press coverage of the Walter Spooman case from Norfolk, Virginia. After seeing that the press claimed Spooman kept a German uniform and letters from the former German ambassador Count Bernsdorff in his trunk, Gregory lamented that the DOJ would be criticized yet again for not shooting the accused although there was no evidence supporting the press's outlandish claims. T.W. Gregory to Josephus Daniels, January 16, 1918, Josephus Daniels Papers, Special Correspondence, reel 51, LOC. Bielaski also complained of the same problem to Gregory in January, indicating charges in the press of DOJ lenience toward spies and disloyalty had frustrated the Attorney General and other department higher-ups for quite some time. A.B. Bielaski, "Memorandum for the Attorney General," January 10, 1918, OGF 83627, reel 455, FBI, NARA. John Lord O'Brian offered a seven step solution to reducing mob violence and improving the DOJ's public image on that front. J.L. O'Brian to T.W. Gregory, April 18, 1918, PWW, Vol. XLVII, 363-365. George Creel even had to deal with calls for harsher treatment toward alleged spies and/or any German-Americans who stepped out of line. "100% American" to G. Creel, August 1918, Creel Correspondence, box 16, folder 23, CPI, NARA. Also, while Gregory seemed to be joking about shooting spies, the editors of *The Outlook* did not see this as such a bad idea, citing George Washington's choice to execute a suspected spy who was never able to carry out his plot. Seeking the death penalty and making executions known to, but not carried out in, the public, they claimed, would prevent hysteria and mob violence. "George Washington and German Spies," *The Outlook*, November 28, 1917, Vol. CXVII, 490.

enemy within and their own entirely reasonable fits of rage directed toward pro-German intrigue.¹⁰⁸

Ultimately, the Espionage and Sedition acts – like the attacks on German language and culture, reports of incendiary fires, biracial conspiracies, and oddly dressed German agents – grew directly from the fear of a hidden Teutonic conspiracy within the nation’s borders that threatened the nation’s very existence. Many Americans from all walks of life believed the work of the Kaiser’s propagandists – their harmful lies and underhanded attempts to undermine the Anglo-Saxon delusion of national unity – needed to be stamped out. In a speech to the North Carolina bar Association in 1919, Gregory remarked that the federal government had done just that and had done it well. He proclaimed proudly that he “doubt[ed] if any country has ever been so thoroughly and intelligently policed in the history of the world” as the United States had been during the First World War. The nation contained “about four million un-naturalized alien enemies” in 1917 and “there were many communities in which they constituted a majority of the population, and some in which the German language was almost exclusively spoken.” At the same time, the relative weakness of the army made it difficult “to protect a thousand vital points on our coast, and in the interior” against “at least a substantial part of the 4,000,000 [who] were intensely hostile to our country, and would be glad to take

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, *Unsafe for Democracy*, 155-156; Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 278-279; Kennedy, *Over Here*, 79-81. Although meant to scare German propagandists, radicals, and the disloyal into silence, the Sedition Act also perplexed some loyal Americans who feared doing anything that could in any way be construed as disloyal. For instance, a Baltimore man wrote the DOJ that he feared prosecution because he had included an image of the German flag – along with the flags of the other belligerents – on a war information chart. Citing the Sedition Act’s provision punishing those who “willfully display[ed] the flag of any foreign enemy,” the man wanted to ask the DOJ’s permission before the chart was issued to school children across the nation. H. Gamse to J.L. O’Brian, October 9, 1918, file 185388-40, box 2098, Numerical File, DOJ, NARA. For newspaper calls for a tougher Espionage Act after the Prager lynching, see “Stronger Curb on Enemies at Home,” *Literary Digest*, May 4, 1918, Vol. XLVII, 19 and “‘Enemy Aliens’ and the Spy Problem,” *ibid.*, May 25, 1918, Vol. XLVII, 25, 95. Also see “Is Lynching a Good Way to Fight Germany?” *The Outlook*, April 17, 1918, Vol. CXVIII, 609.

advantage of any favorable opportunity to cripple our resources, impede the organization of our armies and furnish information to our enemies.”¹⁰⁹

Gregory’s braggadocio masked the fact that the Wilson administration actually exercised very little control over the population during the war. It also reflected the widely held wartime belief that German-Americans and their suspected native-born allies were a ticking time bomb awaiting word from Berlin on when to explode. The pens, lips, fists, and imaginations of patriotic Anglo-Saxons ran wild during the war and most of their vitriol was directed at foreigners they presumed were out to destroy their country and way of life. Anglo-Saxon Americans’ attempts to destroy any semblance of Teutonic culture reveal the impact of the common belief that culture and language were manifestations of racial traits. This assumption made seemingly outlandish stories believable to those who created and absorbed the propaganda. It also had guided Anglo-Saxon understanding and fears of the expanding presence of the foreign “other” for decades. As the restrictionists and Americanizers had feared, an unassimilated band of aliens promised to undermine Anglo-Saxon values, culture, and racial development. Germans were believed to be naturally stubborn, efficient, secretive, parochial, and inquisitive, traits that signified their unwillingness – not necessarily their inability – to Americanize and their desire to blindly serve the interests of their Kaiser and Fatherland. Destroying all remnants of German culture in the United States, then, was a way to undercut the Pan-German conspiracy and protect the Anglo-Saxon United States from “Germanization.”

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Watt Gregory, “How the Rear of Our Armies was Guarded during the World War,” 1919, box 26, Gregory Papers, LOC.

At the same time, the widespread perception that a well-planned, well-hidden, and long-executed Teutonic conspiracy was at work was largely the result of an overwhelming and increasingly hyperbolic propaganda campaign, the effects of which were further enhanced as the tales it recited began to be passed via word of mouth. The reports of enemy spies, propagandists, and saboteurs cited above reveal the contrasting realities evident in the United States during the First World War. There was the view from the ground held by the small number of trained sleuths in local and national government who saw the spy menace for what it was – nothing. The view held by the masses, many of their leaders included, were constructed by or reconstructed from their only sources of national news – wildly embellished newspaper articles and anxious warnings from the CPI and private propaganda agencies. Although authorities did not find a single enemy agent working in the United States after the declaration of war, news of German espionage and sabotage during neutrality clearly impacted the public's perception of wartime threats to the nation. Yet many Americans' belief that disaster could strike them and their community, in cities as large as New York or towns as small as Americus, Georgia, suggests that stories of omnipresent Teutonic spies and Pan-German conspiracies had a profound impact and that Americans did view the war against the Hun as a matter of personal and national survival. While the enemy within sought to undermine the mobilization of minds, munitions, and the military at home, many fearful Anglo-Saxons also fretted over how a German victory in Europe could spell victory for Pan-Germanism in the United States.

CHAPTER 5 – BEATING BACK THE HUN: WARTIME FEARS OF FOREIGN SUBJUGATION, 1917-1918

“A victory for Germany – that is, a conclusive victory and a ‘German peace’ – would mean that...the United States would be first a defeated nation and then a conquered nation. It would take orders from Potsdam – promptly. Eventually it would parade at the goose-step. At its head, on horseback, would be not an American President but a German Kaiser.” – Booth Tarkington, 1917¹

“If we had not gone into the war on the occasion which we have; if we had allowed that principle of democracy to be challenged; ...if we had sat by submissive while wrong was enthroned and militarism made the rule of life of the rest of the world outside of the borders of our own republic, the spirit of Washington would have wept as it watched, and the people of the United States would have been called upon in a very short time to exchange the peaceful avocations which have made their civilization great for a civilization armed to the teeth and ready to expect an attack which would not have been long delayed.” – Newton D. Baker, July 4, 1918²

Writing on behalf of the Committee on Public Information in early 1918, Stanford University professor John S.P. Tatlock, attempted to correct a common misconception among Americans about Germany’s aims in the present war. Some Americans, even those who viewed German ideals with disgust, were critically mistaken in thinking that the war in Europe was none of their business and that the vast ocean between the United States and the Old World provided security from foreign attack. In reality, Tatlock

¹ Booth Tarkington, “What the Victory or Defeat of Germany Means to Every American” (New York: National Security League, 1917?), from Pamphlets in American History, microfiche (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1983), hereinafter cited as PAH.

² Newton Diehl Baker, speech, July 4, 1918, Newton Diehl Baker Papers, Speeches and Writings, box 244, Library of Congress (hereinafter cited as LOC).

argued in a pamphlet entitled *Why America Fights Germany*, the Kaiser's domination of its Central European and Turkish allies – along with the lands it had conquered – would give Germany “a vast commercial advantage in peace, and a vast wealth and military and naval advantage in war.” Despite popular belief, such an outcome in Europe was dangerous to the United States because the Kaiser and his generals had been quite open about their hatred for American democracy and plans “for an invasion of America.” Kaiser Wilhelm even went so far as to warn the U.S. Ambassador that “America had better look out after this war.” Tatlock's point was simple: “If democracy is conquered in this war, all free peoples must either submit to Germany's domination, or else give up a part of their democracy in order to resist her.” Individual liberty and opportunity, the basis of a democratic society, would be set aside in order to focus the nation's efforts and resources on its self-defense. The Kaiser's armies – victorious in Europe and buttressed by the resources of his intercontinental empire – would not wait long to land on American shores. Adopting Prussian militarism may be all that could save the United States from complete destruction. To stave off such a future calamity, Tatlock concluded, “We must fight Germany in Europe with help” so “that we may not have to fight her in America without help.”³

According to Tatlock, then, the United States's motivation for joining the fray was entirely selfish. which contradicted the altruistic mission Woodrow Wilson set in his War Address of April 2, 1917. In order to liberate Europe from the outdated traditions of absolutism, militarism, and imperialism, the President argued, the nation must selflessly

³ John S.P. Tatlock, *Why America Fights Germany*, War Information Series, No. 15 (Washington, DC: 1918), 8-9. The U.S. Ambassador in question was James Gerard, who wrote of the alleged meeting with the Kaiser and the Kaiser's warning in *My Four Years in Germany* (London and New York: 1917), 251-253.

help make the world “safe for democracy” and forge a new international system based on the rights of free peoples as opposed to the rights of kings.⁴ Yet Tatlock – working on behalf of the administration in the CPI – offered a more accurate interpretation of Wilson’s rationale for war than the President had that April night. While mostly echoing the War Address, Tatlock, along with many other producers of American propaganda during the First World War (including even Wilson himself), added an additional wrinkle to the President’s initial argument. Saving democracy for the rest of the world would not only bring liberty to oppressed peoples and a more peaceful international order. It would also save the United States itself from the mailed fist of Prussian autocracy. In an attempt to elicit loyalty to the flag, support for the war effort, and exorcise their own insecurities about the fate of Anglo-Saxon democracy, propagandists defined the war as an existential crisis for the United States, thus replacing Wilson’s higher idealism with appeals to the base human drive for self-preservation. It was this message, not Wilson’s call for selfless sacrifice, that dominated the pro-war side of the public discourse. Victory, as propagandists and politicians framed it, meant continued peace and prosperity. Defeat meant insecurity, the destruction of Anglo-Saxon democracy, and, quite possibly, foreign rule.

This chapter will examine American propaganda that framed the First World War as a military struggle for national existence. As this chapter will argue, many who made arguments like Tatlock’s believed what they said. Intervention was necessary, many believed, because a Pan-German conspiracy did, in fact, exist. As with spy propaganda,

⁴ As historian David Kennedy has argued, in warring against Germany the United States was also warring against the past. David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: 1980), 42 and “An Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” April 2, 1917, in Arthur S. Link, et. al (eds.), *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 69 Vols. (Princeton, NJ: 1980), Vol. XLI, 525 (Hereinafter cited as *PWW*).

all evidence pointed to the invasion of the United States as being the final step in the Kaiser's scheme to dominate the world. Prewar German challenges to the Monroe Doctrine, the alleged divided loyalty of German-Americans, the deeply entrenched spy-saboteur-propagandist network, and the Zimmerman Telegram suggested to many that Germany had had something nefarious in the works for some time. Using a style of argument that would prove effective during the Cold War and the War on Terror, American politicians and propagandists declared that in order to prevent an assault by the Prussianized enemy on the mainland the Allies would have to win "over there" in Europe so as to not have to fight them "over here." If Prussianism survived the war intact, the argument went, the United States would have to transform itself from a peace-loving republic into a heavily-armed, less democratic garrison state (similar to what would arise early in the Cold War) in order to fend off an inevitable and massive German attack in the indefinite future.⁵ Both the fulfillment of the Kaiser's supposed Pan-German dreams and the formation of an American garrison state threatened to undermine democracy and individual liberty either through direct assault or the mandated regression of the Anglo-Saxon, through militarism, to the level of the degenerated or decivilized Teuton.

But the primary theme underlining most wartime invasion propaganda was not that Germany posed an immediate threat to the United States as it did to democracy in Europe. On the contrary, the Allies so far had effectively pinned down the Teutonic brute along the hundreds of miles of trenches on the Western Front. Wartime propagandists, then, had to rely heavily on the conditional. Again similar to the Cold

⁵ For works on the growth of the post-World War II national security state, see Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: 2000) and Michael J. Hogan, *Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (New York: 1998).

War era, the word “if” was central to how politicians and propagandist sold the alleged enemy threat. “If” the Allies succumbed in the Old World, the Kaiser’s militarized forces would wreak havoc in the New – just as “if” the Communists dominated Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, or anywhere else outside its present purview it would only be a matter of time before they attacked and overwhelmed the United States.

Such arguments, though, also did not exist in a wartime vacuum. Propagandists’ representations of the meaning of the war to the United States and the nature of the enemy’s intentions were products of contemporary American culture and anxieties, or, more specifically, the American obsession with foreign threats to Anglo-Saxon democracy. At various times in the years leading up to the war, when seemingly dangerous situations arose, many Americans claimed and acted as if the United States was anything but secure. That nervousness continued to emanate from the decades-long process of economic, demographic, and political transformation and manifested from 1917 to 1918 as it had during previous periods of perceived crisis, as a sense that the nation (or race) was under siege and that Anglo-Saxon democracy was being overrun or undermined by foreign races and ideologies. Just as with the dire prophesies of preparedness advocates and many Americans’ reactions to the imagined Teutonic spy network, apprehensive Americans were inclined to view German military designs and actions overseas through the same prism – as part of a foreign conspiracy to undermine the nation and/or the Anglo-Saxon race. Propagandists even couched the Teutonic enemy in terms similar to how many social commentators had described other unwanted foreign visitors in previous decades – as an uncivilized race clutching onto Old World traditions and un-American ideologies, in this case autocracy and militarism, which they

intended to spread to the New World. Yet the European Teuton, whose society had produced such pillars of human refinement as Beethoven and Goethe, had not always been a threat to democracy. According to much wartime propaganda, though, the cousin of the Anglo-Saxon was forced to take a u-turn on the road to progress by the dominance of the racially degenerate Prussians of Eastern Europe. As much wartime propaganda suggested, in true Lamarckian fashion the Teuton had regressed, or decivilized, to the level of his Prussian masters.

Even without the preexisting American preoccupation with foreign races and ideologies, though, Imperial Germany was an easy nation to fear. Upon his ascension to the throne in June 1888, Wilhelm II steered Germany toward *Weltpolitik*, an attempt to acquire overseas colonies for Germany that corresponded to its growing economic and military power. While such a policy shared much in common with the more limited American push for empire in the same period, the pathologically insecure Kaiser and some Pan-German intellectuals and supportive government officials often couched their nation's imperial aims in overly hostile and assertive language. This was only exacerbated by the fact that Berlin desired an economic stake in many of the same overseas markets as Washington. Consequently, although German policy did not always correspond to the rhetoric, aggressive German bluster implied aggressive designs where they did not exist. This understandable misunderstanding of German intentions aroused much anxiety among American officials and the press. While incidents on the high seas involving Samoa in the late 1880s and the Philippines in 1898 did much to heighten tensions between the two countries, American politicians and naval planners were far

more distressed at Germany's apparent designs to undermine the cherished Monroe Doctrine – in the Caribbean, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico in particular.⁶

Germany's actions toward its adversaries in Europe and its repeated slights to American sovereignty since the Great War's first months only made Germany appear more menacing to many Americans and its actions endemic to a set pattern of behavior directed toward a distinct, likely nefarious end. German U-boat captains had sunk passenger ships, killing scores of innocent women and children; the Kaiser's soldiers had run roughshod over "poor little Belgium," burning towns, raping women, bayoneting children, and hanging innocent civilians as warnings against guerilla resistance; a German ship carried arms to anti-American revolutionaries in Mexico; Teutonic ambassadors, propagandists, spies, and saboteurs attempted to undermine American unity and disrupt American commerce; German diplomats offered to divide the United States among two of its non-white rivals, Mexico and Japan; German-American immigrants, most of whom presumably remained loyal to the Kaiser, were setting the stage for Pan-German domination of the United States and the Western Hemisphere by corrupting American politics, spreading un-American ideologies, and teaching the language of autocracy and militarism to schoolchildren. At least, this was how the enemy was described to the public. While both American and British propagandists had a field day exaggerating German cruelty, duplicity, and wickedness of motive, most of the charges were grounded in truth. The German Army often treated civilians in Belgium and

⁶ See Paul M. Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle: A Study in Anglo-German-American Relations, 1878-1900* (Dublin: 1974); Holger H. Herwig, *Politics of Frustration: The United States in German Naval Planning, 1889-1941* (New York: 1976). Nancy Mitchell, *The Danger of Dreams: German and American Imperialism in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: 1999). For a balanced treatment of Wilhelm's imbalance, see Giles McDonogh, *The Last Kaiser: The Life of Wilhelm II* (New York: 2001). It is important to point out, however, that in all these cases with the exception of the Philippines, Germany was not the only nation challenging American hegemony and, the majority of the time, the Kaiser's government passively followed Britain's lead. See Mitchell, cited here.

northern France cruelly while U-boats, intrigue, the Zimmerman Telegram, and Germany's general disrespect for international law and American sovereignty were factors central to anti-German sentiment and the American declaration of war.⁷

Yet while it is clear that during the First World War many Americans believed Germany sought to dominate the world or, at the very least, the Western Hemisphere, scholarly opinion since then has been mixed. In 1961, German historian Fritz Fischer created a firestorm among scholars in Germany and beyond when he argued that a coalition consisting of the Kaiser's government and military, industrialists, bankers, intellectuals, and labor representatives deliberately set the wheels of war in motion in 1914 in order to become a world power by subjugating and exploiting its neighbors.⁸ Those inclined to concur with Fischer's assessment of German aims in Europe, such as Holger Herwig, have cited German imperial bombasts and various war contingency plans both the U.S. and German navies formulated against one another in order to argue that Germany, out a desire for Latin American colonies and, to a lesser extent, jealousy of American economic clout, was ready and willing to invade the United States and/or forcibly terminate the American Monroe Doctrine. Yet the growth of the U.S. Navy and Germany's deteriorating diplomatic position in Europe, Herwig concluded, forced

⁷ See Justus D. Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War: A New History of America's Entry into World War I* (Lexington, KY: 2011) for a complete picture of the origins of the American declaration of war on Germany.

⁸ Fritz Fischer, *German War Aims in the First World War* (New York: 1967, translation of 1961 original). Fischer, however, failed to consider the war aims of the other belligerents and assumed that German aims concocted after the war began (September 1914) were part of a preexisting plan and not the result of a German desire to exploit recent successes on the battlefield. For an English-translation of the famous 1964 critique of Fischer, see Gerhard Ritter, "Anti-Fischer: A New War Guilt Thesis?" in Holger Herwig (ed.), *The Outbreak of World War I: Causes and Consequences* (Boston: 1997), 135-142. Despite continuing the trend of placing the ultimate blame for the war on Germany, one of the most balanced accounts of the war's origins is James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (New York: 1984).

Germany to scuttle its plans in the Western Hemisphere.⁹ Wilson biographer Arthur S. Link appears to have bought the President's and propagandists' argument completely, contending that American financial support of the Allies during neutrality "enhanced the security of the United States" because of the importance of the British Navy (and, thus, the existence of Britain) to American national security. Had the Allies folded financially and left Germany dominant on the Continent, Link concluded, "Americans would have lived in a dangerous world if they had to deal with a militaristic and imperialistic Germany – triumphant, strident, and in effective control of Europe from the English Channel to the Urals."¹⁰ While it was true that the dominance of the Royal Navy in the Atlantic and the Anglo-American rapprochement of the 1890s provided the United States with the security it needed to build its hegemony in the Americas, Link's assumption that Germany would pose a direct challenge to the nation's position was not supported. In fact, it seems far more likely that if anyone could have challenged American dominance in the Americas before or after the Great War in Europe it would have been friendly Britain, not Germany.

By contrast, Nancy Mitchell and Frank Ninkovich have viewed American anxiety over Germany's imperial desires to be unwarranted and the result of American leaders' fear that the international order might alter in ways that undermined the United States' position in the world. Mitchell claimed that Fischer, Herwig, and others made the same mistake as many American and European policymakers in the early twentieth century by

⁹ Herwig, *Politics of Frustration* and Herwig and David Trask, "Naval Operations Plans between Germany and the U.S.A., 1898-1913" in Paul M. Kennedy (ed.) *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880-1914* (London: 1979), 42-60. Also see David Healy, *Drive to Hegemony: The United States in the Caribbean, 1898-1917* (Madison, WI: 1988), 72-76. Healy relies heavily on Herwig's work in his discussion of the German challenge to American imperialism in Latin America.

¹⁰ Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace* (Arlington Heights, IL: 1979), 35-36.

interpreting German words and actions as being far more aggressive than Germany intended. High-level German denunciations of the Monroe Doctrine and low-level intellectual exercises in war planning (which she maintains never had the support of the Kaiser or his High Command) were indeed distressing, but the policy Germany practiced toward the Western Hemisphere was quite deferential, cautious, and limited in scope. This was especially the case in Germany's involvement in a joint venture with Britain and Italy to force the Venezuelan government to pay its European debts, which Mitchell dubbed "the smoking gun" that touched off the misconception of Germany's imperial aims. Fear of unrestrained German aggressiveness in South America, Mitchell concluded, spoke more to American paranoia over its tenuous hold on Great Power status than to German plans for world domination.¹¹

Examining the perception of a German threat to the United States during the First World War as part of the development of the Cold War domino theory, Frank Ninkovich focused solely on the opinions of Woodrow Wilson. Ninkovich posited that Wilson's War Address masked his true concerns about the potential of a German military challenge, which were based on his understanding of the prewar balance of power, the war's likely future tipping of that balance, and which direction he hoped it would tip. Ninkovich contended that Wilson kept private his concerns about the consequences of a German victory in Europe – and, thus, a shift in the power balance toward a militaristic nation – during his attempts to mediate a peace prior to 1917. The eruption of a global

¹¹ Mitchell, *Danger of Dreams*. Mitchell cites German historian Alfred Vagts (1935) as the earliest scholar to examine the military threat Germany posed to the Western Hemisphere and he found that no threat actually existed. Most works on American relations with Latin America at this time, she claims, avoid the question altogether or discuss it in terms of the United States's "protective imperialism" over the region. Ibid., 4-5. In his classic history of the Monroe Doctrine, Dexter Perkins contended that the German government would have publicly recognized the United States's rights under the Monroe Doctrine if it had not been for German public opinion against a German-American rapprochement. Dexter Perkins, *A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (Boston: 1963 [1941]), 223.

conflict and his failure to end the war and maintain American neutrality “meant that the European balance of power as a geographically self-contained and self-regulating mechanism was extinct” and that any nation that controlled Europe “could use its continental resources to build a position of global hegemony perilous to the United States.” As Ninkovich concluded, Wilson’s advocacy of a League of Nations to combat the threat of future disruptions of the balance of power centered on the President’s desire to forge international harmony out of a sense of collective danger.¹²

While Wilson’s concerns about the balance of power and his reasons for declaring war on Germany were legitimate, the premises underlying them were not. Ninkovich gives no clear indication as to why Wilson believed Germany would not be satisfied with dominating Europe and why it would desire to invade the United States in the not so distant future. At the same time, with Germany embroiled in a long multi-front world war in Europe, Asia, and Africa, it did not take a vast intelligence network to see that the war was stretching its people and resources to the limit. This should have convinced Wilson and others that Germany was not likely to invade the United States, and there was no evidence that it had long-term plans to do so either. As Mitchell convincingly argued in the context of the Latin America, Germany showed no real intention of subverting the Monroe Doctrine even though it refused to recognize the United States’s right to uphold the policy. The sense of danger to which both Mitchell and Ninkovich refer, however, influenced the thought processes of more than just the President, some key advisors, and

¹² Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: 1994), 37-68, quote from 47. Ninkovich’s contention, which is well-supported, that Wilson feared the consequences of German domination of Europe’s resources for the nation’s long-term security, mirrors the argument made by Cold War historian Melvyn Leffler in his study of the underlying fears behind the Truman administration’s policy toward the Soviet Union in Europe in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: 1992).

the military. As with the growing spy hysteria from 1914 to 1918, Anglo-Saxon Americans' obsession with the continuing imposition of foreign peoples and influence over the United States likely impacted more Americans than issues of international politics, something in which isolationist-minded citizens showed little interest.

As the previous chapter has indicated, many Americans were concerned about alleged Pan-German plots within the United States, plots meant to weaken the nation's defenses in advance of a German invasion. At the same time, propagandists looked at previous German wars, immigration, and interactions with the United States and its neighbors in the Western Hemisphere backwards, within the context of the present conflict, and found evidence that the German government – even before the current Kaiser ascended to his throne – had been planning for and embarking on its war for world conquest for decades. Not surprisingly, the best summary of the Pan-German conspiracy to overtake the nation through intrigue and force came from a July 1918 speech delivered by CPI chairman George Creel and edited by President Wilson. It deserves to be quoted at length.

“While autocracy exists, democracy must war and the American people today are fighting for their own liberty as well as for the freedom of the world. The world cannot be safe for democracy while an unorganized autocracy – its people as yet believing it victorious – is intrenched [sic] in the centre of Europe, leading 10,000,000 armed men and possessing the resources of 170,000,000 people in the world's central position for all seas and all continents [an area referred to as *Mitteleuropa* by German imperialists]....The cause of our entering the present war, as for every other country at war with the Imperial German Government, is that this autocracy endangers our safety and challenges our freedom. From the day when it attacked our possession of Samoa by the insidious plot which cost the lives of our sailors in 1889, to the present period when it has filled our land with spies, has slain our citizens on land

and sea, and set them at variance by fomenting racial strife, Germany has been our enemy in peace as she is our foe in war. Its fleet threatened the fleet of Admiral Dewey in Manila harbor; it [went] south to set the Monroe Doctrine at naught; it proposed intervention by Europe when we freed Cuba; it laid plans to control Santo Domingo and Venezuela; and it has attempted...to array Mexico and Japan against us while we were still at peace. The full evidence of its murderous plot will appall the American people which welcomed Prince Henry [the Kaiser's younger brother] as a friend. When this people knows all it will find that his visit began the campaign to divide our loyal citizens of German birth and descent so as to render this nation impotent in the defense of its own security and of the democracies of the world. By formal law Germany sought to establish a continuing German citizenship in German immigrants who had become citizens of the United States by naturalization."¹³

With the coming of the Great War, these designs became evident and the charges were repeated seemingly ad nauseum by politicians, private citizens, the CPI, and privately-funded propaganda agencies in order to convince the American people that the conflict was a war for national and personal self-preservation.

As his editing of Creel's speech indicates, Wilson altered course away from his initial call to altruistic sacrifice by placing Germany's war aims in Europe in the context

¹³ George Creel, "An American War and an American Victory," July 29, 1918, George Creel Papers, box 1, LOC. Wilson gave the speech his seal of approval after making what he saw as some necessary changes. "I have taken the liberty of making some alterations in this paper," he informed Creel. "I think you will see in each instance why. As altered, I think it is all right." Woodrow Wilson to George Creel, *ibid.* Theodore G. Soares of the University of Chicago was as explicit as possible on this same idea, writing in February 1918 that "there is a conspiracy," "the conspiracy was on," and that "It was a conspiracy to be Lord of Europe and very much more." Soares, "Fight the Next War Now!" February 22, 1918, *Patriotism Through Education Series*, No. 31 (New York: 1918). Hereinafter cited as PTE). J.G. Phelps Stokes, the father of socialist Rose Pastor Stokes, argued that the Pan-German threat to the United States was one reason why he left the Socialist Party. "We were and are firmly convinced that the Teutonic Governments entered the war for world domination and nothing short of that." After first overwhelming Europe, Germany would then attempt "to extend their sway to South America and elsewhere, and finally so to circumscribe the United States with fleets and armies, so to surround the United States with the menace of their vast military might, that either this country would have to face them single-handed, with all friendly nations destroyed, or else knuckle under and yield to their dictation." Stokes, "Why I Left the Socialist Party," n.d., box 22, Creel Correspondence, entry 1, box 22, CPI, NARA, 2-3. Also see Harry Pratt Judson, *The Threat of German World Politics* (Chicago: 1918).

of a Pan-German threat to the United States. In his 1917 Flag Day address (June 14), Wilson redefined the purpose of the American war effort while revealing his private fear that a German victory in Europe spelled disaster for the nation. The source of Germany's postwar power, he argued, would be their firm hold on Central Europe, Western Asia, and the Middle East (or, *Mitteleuropa*). "The so-called Central Powers" – Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Ottoman Turkey – "are in fact but a single Power" "From Hamburg to the Persian Gulf the net is spread," he asserted, and an Allied defeat guaranteed that autocracy and militarism would continue to reign there and ultimately threaten the world. Wilson concluded that "If they [the Wilhelmine regime] succeed, America will fall within the menace" and the United States, along with the remainder of the freedom-loving world, "must remain armed, as [Germany] will remain, and must make ready for the next step in their aggression."¹⁴

Although Wilson likely was doing a fine job scaring the American people on his own, it was the primary duty of the CPI to relay the President's beliefs to the masses and to explain what they could do to protect themselves and their country. Wilson's definition of the German threat had a decisive impact on CPI propaganda. Along with the personal attention he gave to Creel's speeches, the President also attempted to reach

¹⁴ "A Flag Day Address," June 14, 1917, *PWW*, Vol. XLII, 501-502. Wilson remained consistent on the *Mitteleuropa*/Pan-Germanism point throughout the war. See "An Address in Buffalo to the American Federation of Labor," November 12, 1917, *ibid.*, Vol. XLV, 13; "An Address," April 6, 1918, *ibid.*, Vol. XLVII, 267-270; and Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power*, 52. In a pamphlet containing Wilson's June 1917 Flag Day Address, the CPI asked several university professors to interpret the "true" meaning of the President's words in footnotes to the speech. The crux of their argument was that incidents of sabotage and espionage (along with sinkings by German U-Boats) revealed that "America no longer occupies a position of charmed isolation." The consequences of not destroying the spy network and losing the war in Europe were twofold. Either "the war may be brought within our borders" or the Americans would need to "shoulder a burden of military preparedness in time of peace such as America has never known." *The President's Flag Day Address*, (Washington, DC: 1917), p. 5, 28. The Flag Day pamphlet was one of the most widely circulated CPI pamphlets with a distribution of 6,813,340 copies. James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words That Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information: 1917-1919* (Princeton, NJ: 1939), 171.

the individual propagandists working on his administration's behalf. For example, the CPI printed a letter from Wilson to the thousands of government speakers in a special July 4, 1918, edition of the *Four Minute Men Bulletin*. Mobilizing public opinion was paramount, the President claimed, because human progress was at stake. "[S]uddenly, we are confronted with a menace that endangers everything we have won and everything the world has won." "We find ourselves fighting again for our national existence," he concluded, because Germany "has set out to impose its will upon its neighbors and upon us." According to the bureau's chairman William McCormick Blair, it was the responsibility of the army of orators to act as the President's "personal representatives and spokesmen."¹⁵

Wilson's influence over CPI propaganda was also evident in the pamphlets the committee printed by the millions. While the majority of the pamphlet *How the War Came to America* (first published on June 15, 1917) explained American belligerency in terms of rescuing Europe from autocracy, it opened with an explanation of the origins of the Monroe Doctrine, describing it as a policy of national defense "when this Republic was still struggling for existence" and was too weak to protect "this first great experiment in" democracy from "foreign attack." Later, the author mentioned German intrigue in the United States and throughout the Caribbean and South America as tantamount to a "direct assault upon the Monroe Doctrine" and a "German offensive in the New World, in our own land and among our neighbors." Implying that this was the reason, or at least a major one, behind the government's decision for war, the author maintained that these transgressions were "becoming too serious to be ignored." The fate of the United States and the Americas, though, would be decided in Europe. The nation must fight because a

¹⁵ *Four Minute Men Bulletin*, July 4, 1918, No. 33a, entry 62, box 2, CPI, NARA.

peace on German terms would “leave all Central Europe under German dominance and so build up an Empire which would menace the whole liberal world.”¹⁶

Pan-Germanism, though, also was on the minds of non-state actors around the nation as well. Robert Bridges of Seattle – about as far away from a likely German invasion as one could be in the United States – believed that the entire nation was in danger of a German attack. Despite his city’s distance from the East Coast, he argued that German subjugation would impact Americans across the continent. Bridges cited a book detailing German plans to invade the United States and attain world power status – most likely *Germany and the Next War* (1913) by Freidrich von Bernhardi, widely cited in wartime propaganda – that included a “map of North America” that had written on it “in great bold type the word ‘Germania,’ the ‘A’ covering the capital of our country the ‘G’ being located approximately where Seattle now stands. This has been the dream of German autocracy, and for years and years they had been preparing to bring their dream to an actuality.”¹⁷

Elihu Root, former head of both the State and War Departments, worried that the nation’s neighbors in the Western Hemisphere had yet to awaken to the threat of Pan-Germanism. In March 1918, writing to an American acquaintance in South America, Root said he “wish[ed] Uruguay and Argentina could make up their minds to formally join the list of the nations who are engaged in fighting against the domination of Germany.” Keeping the Americas free and democratic, Root implied, was the

¹⁶ *How the War Came to America*, June 15, 1917, Pamphlets in the Red, White, and Blue Series, Entry 41, box 5, CPI, NARA, pages 1, 10, and 11.

¹⁷ Robert Bridges, “Patriotism and War,” July 4, 1917 (Seattle, WA: 1917), PAH. Also see George Riddle Wallace, “The German Menace to America” November 19, 1917 (Pittsburgh, PA: 1917), PAH. Similarly, Josephus Daniels maintained in April 1918 that German control of the seas after winning in Europe would destroy the American economy and make the nation a German colony. Daniels, “Leadership, Inspiration, and Public Service of the Press,” April 25, 1918, in *The Navy and the Nation: War Addresses by Josephus Daniels* (New York: 1919), 149-150.

responsibility of all the republics because “[i]f Germany wins this war, we shall all be dominated by her, and her domination over other countries is practical and oppressive.” The Germans would rule “in the most cruel and offensive way” because, unlike the peaceful and freedom-loving Americans, “[t]hat is [their] nature and...purpose.” The fight against Pan-German destruction of the Monroe Doctrine would be decided in Europe. “There will be no such thing as national freedom anywhere under the overlordship of Germany,” Root concluded, “unless she is beaten now.”¹⁸

Bridges and Root, however, were not merely regurgitating the beliefs and propaganda issued by Wilson and the CPI. The argument that American intervention was a matter of self-defense against the Pan-German conspiracy began to circulate immediately after the declaration of war from a variety of individuals. Such calls quickly drowned out more idealistic calls to service from Wilson (at least early on) and other progressives.¹⁹ Speaking on April 7, 1917, the day after Congress declared war, Reverend Sartell Prentice of Nyack, New Jersey, cited three grounds for American belligerency. While violations of international law and German atrocities made the list, first and foremost was that the United States was “going to fight for democracy.” Yet, unlike Wilson, Prentice made it clear that defending American freedom was central to this aspect of the mission. “If England fails, if France is beaten to her knees,” he predicted, “it is Democracy – our own Democracy that shall go down.” Prentice argued that the real danger to American democracy (and empire) could come after the war. “If we intend to maintain the Monroe Doctrine, if we mean to defend our own,” he argued,

¹⁸ Elihu Root to B. Lorenzo Hill, March 5, 1918, Elihu Root Papers, General Correspondence, 1916-1918 box 136, LOC.

¹⁹ One great example of progressive idealism in the defining of the war effort is “Morale,” *New Republic*, April 21, 1917, Vol. X, 337-338.

the nation needed universal military training (UMT) now in case it faced “the war-hardened and debt-burdened nations of Europe [the Central Powers]” after the war.²⁰ Speaking in Chicago on April 28 for the National Security League, Theodore Roosevelt placed the American war effort in a similar context while selling the need for UMT and, perhaps, for a “Rough Rider”-led division to be sent immediately to France. Although the nation was now confronting Germany for its “brutal insolence” during neutrality (which he described as a worse insult than “if a ruffian slaps [a man’s] wife’s face”), Roosevelt lamented that the nation owed its “safety at this moment to the British fleet and the French and British armies.” In order to protect the country from suffering Belgium’s fate, the United States needed to send forces to strengthen Allied defenses “primarily for our own sakes.”²¹

This concern that the United States would face a battle-hardened and victorious Germany after the war if it did not intervene now was echoed early on in the press as well. In April 1917, the editors of *The World’s Work* depicted the war as “the final struggle for democracy” after which “the world will have a new birth of freedom or a reincarnation of autocracy.” If Germany’s aim to reverse civilization’s progress by reviving an outmoded system of government proved successful in Europe, the United

²⁰ Sartell Prentice, “What Doest Thou Here, America?” (Nyack, NY: 1917), PAH, 4 and 6. Also from earlier in the war: André Chéradame, “The United States and Pan-Germanism,” (New York: 1917), PAH; “Why We Are at War, Why You Must Help, What You Can Do” (New York: 1917), PAH;

²¹ Theodore Roosevelt, “Speech at the Stock Yards Pavillion [sic.], Chicago, April 28th” (New York: 1917), PAH, 6, 8. Looking at the U.S.’s duty to fight in terms of honor but without the same gender connotation, Edmund G. Lowry in *The World’s Work* agreed with TR that the nation’s future prospects were dim if it did not quickly join the fray in Europe. The U.S. would lose all its international esteem and moral high ground if Britain fought and won the nation’s battle for democracy without American assistance. Edmund G. Lowry, “If Germany Should Win,” *The World’s Work*, April 1917, Vol. XXXIII, 627-629. When he gave this speech, TR was in the midst of lobbying Wilson and the War Department for permission to organize a volunteer division that would sail to Europe and join the fray immediately. Despite support from French commander-in-chief Marshal Joseph Joffre and a face-to-face meeting with the President, TR’s request was denied, relegating him to living out his fantasies of glory and death on battlefield through his two sons, Kermit and Theodore, Jr. Edmund Morris, *Colonel Roosevelt* (New York: 2010), 476-477, 481, 486-487, 489-490, and 492-496.

States would “be left nearly alone to conduct the fight against overwhelming odds.”²² In an early May call to rouse apathetic Americans from their isolationist slumber, the *New York Tribune* warned that if the United States did not send troops, food, and industrial resources to its Allies quickly “the collapse of France and the withdrawal of Italy” along with a possible “crisis in British food supply” could force them into an unfavorable peace with Germany that would allow it “to renew her attack upon civilization.” That renewed attack would inevitably fall on the United States. “[I]f Germany escapes today, the danger for us to-morrow will be beyond present estimation,” the editors predicted. The United States will fall prey to Prussian autocracy “unless we are prepared to fight...for our own existence, calling for our best effort and our ultimate strength.”²³ In terms smacking of Darwinism, the *Kansas City Times* noted, as Wilson and many others would, that “The world has become too small for democracy and autocracy to live in it together and one of them must perish.” If the American people devote themselves fully to this “death grapple there can never be a question” that democracy would come out on top.²⁴

Some of the key members of Wilson’s administration also espoused the idea that a German victory would prove disastrous for democracy and the United States. On the day before the first draft registration, June 4, Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane said in a speech that the nation was engaged in “a war of self-defense.” Claiming solidarity with those nations that had been warring against Germany since 1914, Lane argued that the start of the war was the beginning of a figurative “invasion of the United States by slow, steady, logical steps,” of which the German offensive against Belgium

²² “America in the Battle Line of Democracy,” *The World’s Work*, April 1917, Vol. XXXIII, 581.

²³ “America, Wake Up! Cease Living in a Fool’s Paradise,” *New York Tribune*, May 2, 1917 (New York: 1917), PAH.

²⁴ “What the United States Is Fighting For,” *Current Opinion*, July 1917, Vol. LXIII, 6. Also see “Germany’s Larger Aims and America,” *Review of Reviews*, February 1918, Vol. LVII, 116-117.

was the first. Because of German transgressions in the war against the United States and the democracies of Europe, “[o]ur sympathies evolved into a conviction of self-interest. Our love of fair play ripened into alarm at our own peril.” Yet the methodical “invasion” and American war of self-defense to which he referred were not entirely of a metaphorical nature. If the United States and the Allies lost the war, Lane maintained, “no man will live in America without paying toll to it, in manhood and money.” “[A] defeated and navyless England” (which he referred to as the historic source of “the inherent love of liberty which we call Anglo-Saxon civilization”) could be required to cede Canada to Germany, which would force Americans to “live, as France has lived for over forty years, in haunting terror” of imminent attack.²⁵ Similarly, Robert Lansing, the Secretary of State, claimed that in the war “the future of the United States is at stake.” The secretary was “firmly convinced that the independence of no nation is safe, that the liberty of no individual is sure until” Prussian militarism “has been made harmless and impotent forever.” In other words, the American people must be prepared – and armed – to fight the war to its ultimate conclusion.²⁶

In late May 1917, the CPI began riling up their Four Minute Men with similar stories of impending doom while explaining the importance of convincing Americans to purchase Liberty Bonds. It would take more than “waving flags and singing the Star

²⁵ Lane also suggested that Germany’s progress had been stunted. “Let Germany be feudal if she will,” he declared. “But she must not spread her system over a world that has outgrown it.” Franklin K. Lane, “Why Do We Fight Germany?; A Cabinet Officer States the Truth about the War,” June 4, 1917 (New York: 1917), PAH. Lane repeated the scenario of a German invasion force launching from Canada in a letter to a soldier-in-training in March 1918. F.K. Lane to John Lyon, March 15, 1918, in Anne Wintermute Lane and Louise Herrick Wall (eds.), *The Letters of Franklin K. Lane: Personal and Private*, (New York: 1922), 280. Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis F. Post also argued that Germany’s conquests in Western Europe were mere stepping stones to an invasion of the United States. Post, however, was not speaking figuratively. Post, “Why We Are at War” (New York: 1917?), PAH. Another Cabinet member, Agriculture Secretary David F. Houston, chimed in on the Anglo-Saxon race’s heritage, which he described as their historical struggle against autocracy. “Why We Went to War” (Washington, D.C.: 1918), PAH.

²⁶ Robert Lansing, “A War of Self-Defense,” *Literary Digest*, December 29, 1917, Vol. LV, 33 and 100.

Spangled Banner....to protect our country and our homes,” free Europe from the German jackboot, and “protect Democracy all over the world,” the CPI maintained. The director of the Four Minute Men attempted to sway his speakers – and, consequently, their future audiences – by defining the stakes of the war in the most dire and absolute terms.

“Who is going to win this war? If we are, we must fight to the last dollar, to the last man, and to the last heart beat. Are you going to stand by and suffer defeat? Are you going to look timidly at long processions of conquering troops tramping down our streets? For either we shall walk down the Kaiser’s streets or his soldiers will goose-step along Pennsylvania avenue [sic.] and sign the Treaty of Peace under the dome of our Capitol in Washington, or in the same room where Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.”

The speakers were told to offer the American people a choice. They could “buy Government bonds and get [their] money back with 3 ½ per cent interest” or, if defeated, “pay the Kaiser, not two billions of indemnity, but ten billions...just as the poor Belgians had to pay.”²⁷

Why, though, would any of this have been believable? What made the European German so aggressive, cruel, and greedy for land, money, and power? What made European Germans different from or similar to the Teutonic-Americans, loyal to the Kaiser or the American flag, residing in the United States? Some anthropologists and propagandists believed they had the answers. The Teutons of Europe, according to some influential intellectuals and as depicted in much propaganda, were a race in degeneration.

²⁷ “The Liberty Loan,” May 22, 1917, Entry 62, Box 2, CPI, NARA. In an edition of the *Four Minute Men Bulletin* from the following month, the CPI offered snippets of previously-used speeches to help speakers bring the point of the war home to Americans. In order to help listeners “see the issue clearly,” speakers were instructed to explain that the choice to buy bonds really was a choice between loaning money to the government or paying a large ransom to Germany. In an early manifestation of an argument that would persist until the last days of the war, one portion of a sample speech claimed that “It is much cheaper to fight and pay the expenses of a victorious war, than to become a conquered nation and pay huge indemnities to Germany later.” “The Liberty Loan,” *Four Minute Men Bulletin*, June 9, 1917, No. 3, Entry 62, box 2, CPI, NARA, pages 1 and 3.

The brutality of their actions and the acquisitiveness evident in their quest for global domination were seen as signs that the German race had decivilized beyond the point thought healthy by even the most militaristic advocates of instilling “barbarian virtues” in the United States. Much of this was believed to be the impact of Prussian domination over the more peaceful Teutons of southern and western Germany. Some argued that the predominance of the uncivilized Prussian culture of militarism reduced non-Prussian Teutons to the level of their overlords. For some, this Lamarckian argument explained the brutality with which Germany fought the war and the German people’s complicity in the Kaiser’s aggressive Pan-German conspiracy. In the end, the German’s inherent clannishness, shrewdness, and stubbornness, coupled with the savage nature of the Prussian, made the Prussianized German nation a menace to civilization, and, by extension, democracy, in the United States and the world.²⁸ Considering that racialized views of national differences were central to Progressive Era culture in the United States and abroad, the basis of such arguments likely were clear to many Americans and impacted how they came to view the war and the enemy, both at home and in Europe.

During the war, several well-known professional and amateur scientists, such as the once-respected paleontologist Henry Fairfield Osborn, William S. Sadler, and Madison Grant, posited that “craniology” (or phrenology) – the pseudoscientific theory that head shape and size denoted racial characteristics – held the key to understanding “the Prussian Ferocity in War,” as Osborn called it. Prussians, Osborn maintained, were in no way Teutonic, as evidenced by their rounded skulls, which corresponded to those of the Tartars of Asian Russia and “to the Most Ancient Savages.” “Real” Teutons, which

²⁸ Some propagandists used this same argument to explain why a significant minority of German-Americans, most of whom allegedly immigrated after 1870, remained loyal to the Kaiser and, possibly, helped further his Pan-German cause in the U.S. See Chapters 3 and 4.

Osborn claimed comprised only ten percent of the German population, had long, “gentle” skulls similar to those of other civilized races.²⁹ In a similar vein, Sadler found that the long-headed Nordics (the greatest of the three European races described by Madison Grant) who had once resided in Germany had been replaced almost completely by round-headed and racially degenerate Alpines. What happened to the genuine Teutons is left unclear. Only a small cabal of Nordics (about “ten to twelve percent”) remained in Germany and exerted control over the brutal and highly impressionable Alpines who were committing atrocities on land and sea. This situation would not have been a problem, Sadler suggested, if the long-headed German leadership had chosen to follow their fellow Nordics in their “march toward democracy and liberalization of human thought.” Sadler summed up the war in Europe and the German threat to the world:

“The German conundrum of today is due to the fact that the ten percent Nordic long-headed, ruling class that dominates the Germanic peoples has sacrificed its intelligence, its conscience, and its largely superior culture to its inherent ambition, love of leadership, and dominating tendency to conquer, exploit, and rule – traits not at all new in the Nordic race, but tendencies which have been, in later years, suppressed and held down in behalf of the higher, more noble civilized culture which characterizes the white nations of today.”³⁰

Assuming George Creel “would be interested in having” been made aware of “these facts concerning the present-day German people,” Sadler wrote to the CPI chief offering to send a copy of his work for use in CPI propaganda soon after the book’s publication. According to Sadler, most Americans “didn’t seem to fully realize what we were up against in the present organization and racial constituency of the so-called German

²⁹ Allan Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Cost of the New Scientific Racism* (New York: 1977), 48, 185.

³⁰ William Samuel Sadler, *Long Heads and Round Heads; or, What’s the Matter with Germany* (Chicago: 1918), 60-63, quote from 63.

people,” but he had “found this presentation of the war very helpful” in educating “our troubled and perplexed citizenship...to better understand present problems.” Creel replied several days later, thanking Sadler for his offer and promising to forward Sadler’s materials to the CPI’s pamphlet editor for further use.³¹

Most in the scientific community, however, found such theories repugnant. As historian Allan Chase wry put it, “by 1916, no serious scientific worker” saw craniology as “a measurement of anything other than the size of a person’s hat.” Consequently, any theories based off it, such as Sadler’s or Grant’s, were deemed illegitimate.³² Yet, if Creel’s welcoming response to Sadler’s offer is any indication, the explanation of racial degeneration offered by these and other crackpot pseudoscientists resonated with the American public regardless if they cared about the shape of the enemies’ and their own heads. What else could explain the European German’s regression into barbarism? Many politicians and propagandists explained the evident Teutonic racial decline in Lamarckian terms, as the result of years of exposure to the overwhelming influence of backward Prussian autocracy and militarism over German society.

Evidence that many leading Americans and propagandists viewed the Prussianized German as having degenerated can be found in their stated beliefs that German victory threatened civilization and their often implicitly racial explanations as to why this was the case. Secretary of War Newton Baker, speaking to Civil War veterans, described the United States and the Allies as being at the forefront of progress and the

³¹ William S. Sadler to George Creel, March 18, 1918, and George Creel to William S. Sadler, March 21, 1918, Creel Correspondence, entry 1, box 21, CPI, NARA.

³² Quote from Chase, *Legacy of Malthus*, 185. A reviewer in a prominent scientific journal absolutely eviscerated Sadler’s book, calling it “devoid of merit” and “potentially mischievous” in that could ride the wave of anti-German sentiment “and thereby arouse racial prejudice among the laity.” E.A. Hooton, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 1918, Vol. I, 363-366, quote from 364.

Germans as lagging behind the evolutionary curve. In France the “civilized and free powers of the world” were “facing the last remaining vestige of medievalism, autocracy, and despotism; facing an adversary who has brought back into the art of war the cruelties of the savage which as civilized men we scorned many years ago to use and emulate.”³³ While not citing racial degeneration specifically, Elihu Root privately argued that “during the past fifty years Germany has been demoralized by Prussian influence exerted with the same thoroughness of method which characterizes Prussian military organization.” The Kaiser had made an “incessant appeal to the lower motives for more than a generation” of Germans, which “has debased the standards of life, of morals, of art, of literature.” In short, all that had made the German people great had been stripped of them, Root concluded, leaving them more brutal and less civilized than they had once been.³⁴

The National Security League and the CPI also both explicitly and subtly asserted that the once-great European Teuton had taken an evolutionary step backwards. According to Robert McNutt McElroy, chairman of the NSL’s Committee on Patriotism Through Education, “If Germany wins...we and all other opposing nations, will be ruled arbitrarily from Berlin.” In such an event, the Prussian war lords would degenerate the American people just as they had those of Germany. “We will become inert; supine; in short, slaves and servitors to a revived rule of the Dark Ages.”³⁵ The de-evolution of the gentler, non-Prussian Teutons was central to George S. Hornblower’s argument that

³³ Newton Diehl Baker, “Address of the Secretary of War, Annual Dinner of the Grand Army of the Republic,” February 7, 1918, Baker Papers, Speeches and Writings, box 244, LOC.

³⁴ Elihu Root to Joseph Buffington, September 7, 1918, Root Papers, General Correspondence, box 136, LOC.

³⁵ June 27, 1917, Robert McNutt McElroy Papers, box 20, LOC. McElroy, however, was no racial nationalist. In a July 1917 speech, McElroy argued that calls for Anglo-Saxon unity were counterproductive and mischaracterized what it meant to be American. “The only call which can command the support of the American nation,” he maintained, “is the call to defend a law that is higher than race loyalty, that transcends mere ethnic prejudices.” Robert McNutt McElroy, “The Ideals of Our War,” July 3, 1917, PTE, No. 5 (New York: 1917), 4-5.

the German people fully supported the Kaiser's bid for world empire. Speaking in October 1917 on behalf of the NSL and in support of the Liberty Loan, Hornblower quoted a Bavarian soldier's letter to a friend where he admitted he enjoyed committing atrocities against women. "I did away with four women and seven young girls in five minutes," he allegedly bragged. "The captain had told me to shoot these French sows, but I preferred to run my bayonet through them."³⁶ Another NSL orator, William H. Hobbs, the Germanophobe geologist from the University of Michigan, characterized the war as being "the outcome of a most comprehensive and scientifically organized plot by autocratic rulers to secure through a series of successful wars the domination of the world." When explaining why Pan-Germanism threatened democracy in the United States and Europe, Hobbs turned to ethnic stereotypes and Lamarckism. The German military was strong because of the combination of "advance[s] in technical science...with [the] highly developed and efficient organization of a virile race." At the same time, Hobbs explained the German people's apparent complicity in the Kaiser's imperial scheme by citing his observations as a student in Germany in the late 1880s. It was then when he first recognized "the submissive attitude of the German people and the absolute obedience to the last letter of the law which is continually exacted from them" by the Prussian authorities.³⁷ The President of the Carnegie Institute, Samuel Church, also on behalf of the NSL, quoted Goethe's assessment of the Prussian ("The Prussian is cruel by birth; civilization will make him ferocious") while explaining the German "spirit...to conquer, destroy, ravish and kill everything that is not German." Church concluded that

³⁶ George S. Hornblower, "Some Reasons for Fighting Hard," speech, October 8, 1917, McElroy Papers, box 20, LOC.

³⁷ William H. Hobbs, "The Outlook for Democracy," July 7, 1917, PTE, No. 8 (New York: 1917), 2,3, and 9.

this same “spirit” – implied to be an in-born or acquired trait – existed among much of the German population in the United States and in the German Army.³⁸ While often more restrained than the NSL, the CPI also supported the notion that Prussian dominance over Germany had decivilized the Teutonic race. In *Conquest and Kultur*, Guy Stanton Ford and the popular pamphlet’s editors claimed that Germany was led by a “medievally minded group” of Prussians. According to Ford, author of the pamphlet’s foreword, the Wilhelmine regime and Prussian culture, of which Nietzsche’s influence was central, had forged the German people into a “misshapen image...leering with bloodstained visage over the ruins of civilization.”³⁹ In other words, in both thought and action, the Prussianized German nation appears to have culturally (and, thus, racially) regressed.

Perhaps the most overtly racial or Lamarckian explanation for German aggression and cruelty came from a popular pamphlet written by Elmer Rittenhouse and issued by the Committee for Patriotic Education. In *Know Your Enemy*, Rittenhouse cited most of the same individuals as *Conquest and Kultur*, often doing so, as the CPI had, out of context. According to Rittenhouse, the phrases he included proved that “the Prussianized Germans have two distinct natures; the human and the beast....It is the beast that confronts us now.” The animalistic side of the decivilized Teuton, he argued, was evident in the head shape and facial features of “the idol of the German people, [Paul] von Hindenburg.” Below a portrait of the Prussian Field Marshal, Nietzsche’s famous description of the so-called “blond beast,” and a caption that reads “The Law of the Jungle,” readers were asked to “Study this face.”

³⁸ Samuel Harden Church, “Fighting the Dragon,” n.d., *ibid.*

³⁹ Wallace Notestein and Elmer E. Stoll (eds.) *Conquest and Kultur: Aims of the Germans in Their Own Words* (Washington, DC: 1917), 7.

“Any ‘milk of human kindness’ there? Any tolerance, compassion, sympathy for ‘inferiors,’ or the weak and oppressed? Or do you find arrogance, cunning, hate, cruelty in the cold, fierce glint of the eyes and in the lowering scowl of command? Could you ask for a more striking suggestion of Brute Force and pitiless cruelty – the low dome, the square head, the latent ferocity in the gaze, the bull neck, the powerful, beast-like jowls and mouth? How naturally would the savage slogan of the Blond Beast come hissing from those Jaws.”

Germans’ ruthlessness could also be found in their actions, Rittenhouse contended. “This reversion to barbarism” manifested as more than just “the desire to conquer weak peoples but to deport and to destroy non-combatants in large groups, tribes or nations in order to secure their land and property for colonization.” Prussian belief in and practice of the cruelest form of Darwinism would likely find its way to American shores. “[I]f the enemy wins this war he will dominate our country and ‘frightfulness’ will be our lot if we resist.”⁴⁰

The popular press was not immune to racially-tinged explanations of the war, the threat, and the enemy. Irvin Cobb, writing in the popular *Saturday Evening Post*, argued when referring to reported atrocities in Belgium that the German’s “mental docility” and “his willingness to accept an order unquestionably and mechanically to obey it, may be a virtue, as we reckon racial traits of a people among their virtues.” But “in war this same trait becomes a vice.” For the German-American, he contended, the potentially violent consequences of this tendency were mitigated by his readiness to “readily conform to his physical and metaphysical surroundings here,” which also led his children to

⁴⁰ Elmer Ellsworth Rittenhouse, *Know Your Enemy* (New York: 1918), 2, 5, 6, and 7, PAH. The novelist Robert Herrick stuck a similar note on German racial degeneration in a leaflet written on behalf of the NSL. If Germany achieved even a partial success in Europe, it would continue to menace the world, meaning Prussian militarism “must become the moral law of all the world – the jungle law! In order to survive, we must all accept this law of the jungle.” Robert Herrick, “Jungle Law” (New York: 1917?), PAH.

“amalgamate with our fused and conglomerate stock.” This same Lamarckian phenomenon held true in Germany as well, Cobb claimed. Living “in conformity with the exact and rigorous demands of...Prussianism” had degenerated the European German into a man who “may, at will, be transformed from” a brave and level-headed soldier into a “relentless, ruthless” killer. The degenerative impact of Prussian *kultur* on the German people, Cobb concluded, posed a direct threat to the American home front. “It is that very menace which must confront our people at home in the event that the enemy shall get near enough to our coasts to bombard our shore cities, as undoubtedly he would seek to do; or should he succeed in landing an expeditionary force upon American soil.”⁴¹

Cartoon and poster artists, on the other hand, enjoyed the luxury of expressing ideas of race and civilization in the simplest of terms. Nelson Harding of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, for instance, was very explicit about the decline of the Teutonic race. While lauding the strength of the Allied armies on the Western Front, Harding described what the United States and the Allies were up against in unmistakably racial imagery by depicting a German soldier as a crazed gorilla, in full uniform, struggling to break through a barbed wire fence labeled “Allies Lines” (Figure 5-1).⁴²

⁴¹ Irvin S. Cobb, “Thrice Is He Armed,” *Saturday Evening Post*, April 21, 1917, Vol. CLXXXIX, 137. Although not arguing in as explicit racial terms, Talcott Williams of *Review of Reviews* explained the German drive to world empire as the result of emigration. Prior to 1848, he wrote, Germany had been seen as the most likely nation to lead the European continent toward democracy. Though not citing the circumference of anyone’s skull, he claimed that because of the failed revolutions of that year, “the best of the Teuton blood...left their native lands” for the freedom of the United States, leaving behind, presumably, those with less democratic (and, by implication, less civilized) inclinations. The main point of Williams’s article, though, was to explain the long-planned German imperial conspiracy that, because of the war, had been revealed to the world. Talcott Williams, “How the German Empire Has Menaced Democracy,” *Review of Reviews*, August 1917, Vol. LVI, 162. Also see Charles Wadsworth, “Perils of the United States,” April 13, 1918 (Philadelphia, PA: 1918), PAH, who said in his speech that German evolution had taken a terrifying turn toward “beastly insanity.”

⁴² “They Bend, but Never Break,” *The Outlook*, June 19, 1918, Vol. CXIX, 303.



Figure 5-1. *Brooklyn Eagle*, from *The Outlook*, June 19, 1918

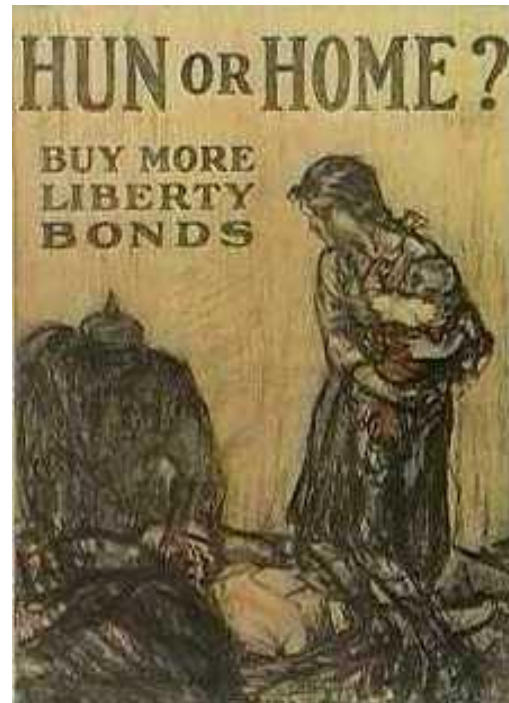


Figure 5-2. Henry Patrick Raleigh, 1918



Figure 5-3. Henry Patrick Raleigh, 1918



Figure 5-4. Ellsworth Young, 1918

The CPI's artists also conveyed the idea that the German soldier had more in common with an ape than the historic Teuton or its Anglo-Saxon relatives. Posters alluding to reported German atrocities in Belgium highlighted the Prussianized German's "misshapen image" and his uncivilized acts, such as rape and the destruction of homes. The "Hun" was commonly depicted as somewhat less than human – often hunched over, with long arms and long hands, similar to a gorilla – or morally depraved. The most famous Belgium-inspired posters appeared in the Liberty Loan drives of 1918. In "Hun or Home?," Henry Patrick Raleigh's referencing of the Germans' primeval behavior required little interpretation (Figure 5-2). His Hun was a silhouette of an ape-like, knuckle-dragging figure, hunched forward and seeming to use his hands to walk, bearing down on a young woman carrying her child. "Halt the Hun," also a 1918 Raleigh creation, played on the same idea by portraying a large ogre-like German (thick body, long hands and arms) standing over another helpless woman and child in front of either their burning home or town (Figure 5-3). In this poster, however, Raleigh offered a physical male contrast to the degenerated Hun, a tall, sturdy, and upright American soldier coming to the woman's rescue. In "Remember Belgium," which may be the most disturbing poster on this theme, Ellsworth Young steered clear of literal animalistic depictions of the German, instead conveying the Hun's bestial nature solely through his actions. The poster depicts a *pickelhaube*-wearing mustachioed German soldier dragging a very young girl away as a burning village silhouettes their image (Figure 5-4).⁴³ The Prussianized German in this case was not only a rapist but an arsonist as well, bent on destroying the home, the primary symbol of civilization and family.

⁴³ Walton Rawls, *Wake Up America!: World War I and the American Poster* (New York: 1988), 10, 210, and 228. From February 1918 to January 1919, *Everybody's Magazine* ran a series on the history

Historian Richard Slotkin has argued that wartime images depicting the German as ape-like resonated with Americans because “they recalled the mythical Negro rapist, whose menace justified the rage of the lynch mob.”⁴⁴ While in some ways fitting, the metaphor seems to end with the idea of rape. The Prussianized Teuton in these posters was also a demolisher of all things civilized, showing disrespect to the home and private property, defining characteristics of human progress. At the same time, the addition of women and young girls as victims was not merely a literal allusion to rape. In wartime propaganda from both sides of the Atlantic, women were often used as symbolic representations of civilization itself – as Columbia, Joan of Arc, the Statue of Liberty, executed British nurse Edith Cavell, the victimized Belgian, sometimes bare-breasted. The sanctity of the home, of womanhood, and of motherhood were central to Victorian notions of civilization and Anglo-Saxon culture. German disregard for the sacred, then, denoted their racial degeneration. In short, the images above are indicative of the general theme of German decivilization and, when placed alongside invasion propaganda, suggested that the apish European German would commit similar atrocities if he invaded the United States. As the atrocity scenes were meant to indicate, the fate of civilization

Germany’s occupation of Belgium, based mostly on British accounts of atrocity stories, most of those being based on rumor. The fact the series ran into the postwar months suggests *Everybody’s* publishers believed the articles were popular, perhaps indicating how well propaganda describing the German’s uncivilized behavior resonated with and invoked fear and disgust from Americans. *Everybody’s Magazine*, February 1918-January 1919, Vols. 38-40. For an up to date scholarly account of German behavior in Belgium and northern France, see John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: 2001).

⁴⁴ Although his point here is well-taken, Slotkin later appears to overstep his evidence by claiming that the intellectual link between blacks’ alleged lack of sexual inhibition (especially in relation to white women) and propaganda imagery of the sub-human German rapist inciting American vigilantism against German-Americans and pro-German Anglo-Saxons. At the same time, the pictorial metaphor of the sub-human beast – be it an ape, gorilla, or wolf – was applied to more than just African-Americans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Irish, Germans, and Italians were also portrayed this way) and just as often denoted presumed racial inferiority in general and not automatic metaphorical comparison with blacks. Richard Slotkin, *Lost Battalions: The Great War and the Crisis of American Nationality* (New York: 2005), 218-219.

and democracy (deemed to be synonymous) hung in the balance and would be decided in the present conflict.

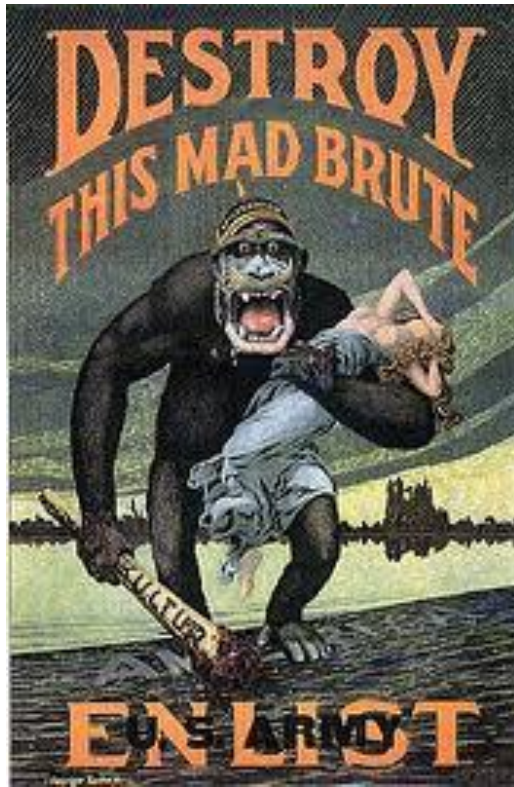


Figure 5-5. H.R. Hopps, 1916



Figure 5-6. Dayton (Ohio) News, from Review of Reviews, July 1917

As with the images of the decivilized Teuton rampaging through Europe, cartoons and posters – many likely plastered on windows and street corners alongside the posters above – were perhaps the most vivid and simple means of conveying the potentially calamitous fate of American civilization and democracy if the Prussian was not kept in Europe. Perhaps the most famous American poster from the First World War era, James Montgomery Flagg’s “Uncle Sam Wants You” notwithstanding, applied this theme before April 1917 for the U.S. Army. In 1916, H.R. Hopps created “Destroy This Mad Brute,” depicting a giant gorilla with a blond mustache and in a *pickelhaube* (labeled “militarism”) brandishing a bloodied club marked “*kultur*” (Figure 5-5). Along with the

obvious allusion to Teutonic racial degeneration, the most significant aspects of the poster are that the wild-eyed, salivating beast carries a bare-chested damsel in distress (denoting his subjugation of civilized culture), that he has left Europe in ruins behind him, and that he is standing on the shore of the United States, suggesting where the brute's next war would take place after he had finished his decimation of Europe.⁴⁵

Hopps's theme of the decivilized Teutonic threat to the United States and civilization was repeated time and again after the United States joined the war. For example, in summer 1917, the *News* of Dayton, Ohio, printed an illustration of a wild-eyed, *pickelhaube*-wearing German – dressed like a caveman while brandishing a club, sword, whip, and flag bearing the black imperial eagle of Germany with the words “Prussian Autocracy” – wading through the ocean toward the United States, with a burning Europe at its back and German bombers flying above (Figure 5-6). The caption (“Win the War on the Other Side or We Shall Have to Fight It on This Side of the Atlantic”) and the conflation of autocracy with primitiveness suggested not only that the once proud German nation had regressed but that its regression caused it to be a direct, existential threat to the United States and its democratic institutions. At the same time, also of note is the mixing of the modern (the planes) with the primitive, which implied that while the Prussianized Teuton had regressed he retained many of the intellectual abilities that allowed him to become civilized in the first place.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Rawls, *Wake Up, America!*, 66 and 67. Other, presumably later, editions of this poster included a caption along the shoreline to the right of the gorilla's foot reading “If this war is not fought to a finish in Europe, it will be on the soil of the United States.” Also, it should be pointed out that the relation between Hopps's gorilla and King Kong appear to have been entirely coincidental. Finally, Flagg's famous poster, despite being created during the First World War, is popularly believed to be a remnant of the Second World War.

⁴⁶ “An Ounce of Prevention Is Worth a Pound of Cure,” *Review of Reviews*, July 1917, Vol. LVI, 5. Such a combination is reminiscent of anti-Japanese propaganda produced in the United States during World War II that depicted the enemy as veritable “supermen,” as John Dower has called them. Representations of the subhuman enemy as mere ape-like would not suffice to explain early Japanese victories over the United

Unlike most political cartoons, practically all posters, even those that did not threaten a Teutonic invasion or the demise of democracy, offered actions Americans could take to win the war and/or stave off national calamity. While Hopps's 1916 work asked men to fend off the "mad brute" by enlisting in the army, the most often requested activity in wartime posters depicting or alluding to invasion was the giving of one's money, more specifically the buying of Liberty Bonds or War Savings Stamps. In 1917, from May to June, broadsides advertising the first Liberty Loan drive did not highlight the enemy's savage nature. Instead, artists emphasized the threat autocracy posed to democracy by making common use of the Statue of Liberty, which would resolutely or nervously tell viewers to purchase a bond "Lest I [liberty, or civilization] Perish" (Figure 5-7). Over time, however, the brutish Hun slowly made his way into the Liberty Loan campaign. For instance, during the second loan drive in October, the uncivilized and bloodthirsty nature of the German was made clear in "The Hun – His Mark," which consisted of a single bloody palm print and the call to "Blot it Out with Liberty Bonds" (Figure 5-8).⁴⁷

Portrayals of the German as a degenerated savage and direct existential threat to the United States, however, did not become a common sight on posters until the third Liberty Loan campaign in April 1918 and the drive to sell War Savings Stamps that same

States. American propaganda, then, began depicting the Japanese as bestial in terms of their aggressiveness yet also capable of effectively yielding the tools of modern warfare to their advantage. Such propaganda suggested to Americans that overcoming such "supermen" would take a herculean effort on their part. John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: 1986), 94-117.

⁴⁷ Rawls, *Wake Up America!*, 199-201, and 207. For clarity's sake, it is important to point out that while most fear-based invasion posters were attached to the Liberty Loan and War Savings Stamp campaigns, not all posters in these drives employed fear to persuade Americans to monetarily support the war. In fact, most did not. Instead, much of it attempted to shame Americans into doing their part or depicted patriotic scenes of Uncle Sam, Columbia, marching soldiers, and Americans (both native and foreign-born) giving out of their love for liberty. See *ibid.*, 195-233. For an example of the press citing the prospect of German brutality coming to American shores, see "The Liberty Loan and Our Allies," *Everybody's Magazine*, October 1918, Vol. XXXIX, 80-81.

year.⁴⁸ Events on the battlefield most likely triggered this shift. After redeploying roughly one million soldiers from the victorious war in Eastern Europe against Russia, the German Army began what was meant to be a series of war-winning offensives on the Western Front in late March. Germany's newfound numerical superiority and the tactical successes of their first attempts to break the Allied line sent waves of alarm through Paris and London and panicky dispatches to Washington begging for American men and resources before it was too late.⁴⁹

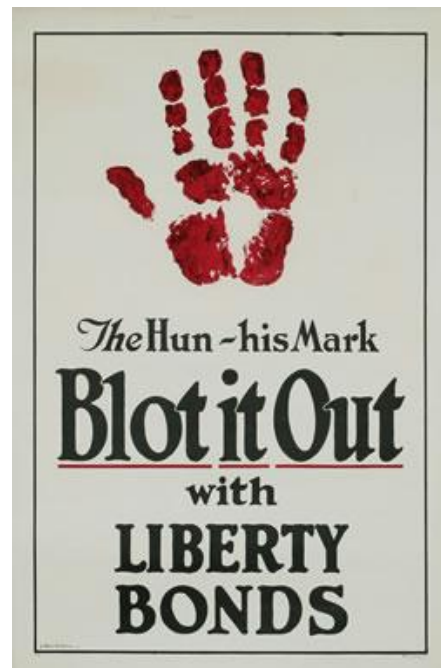
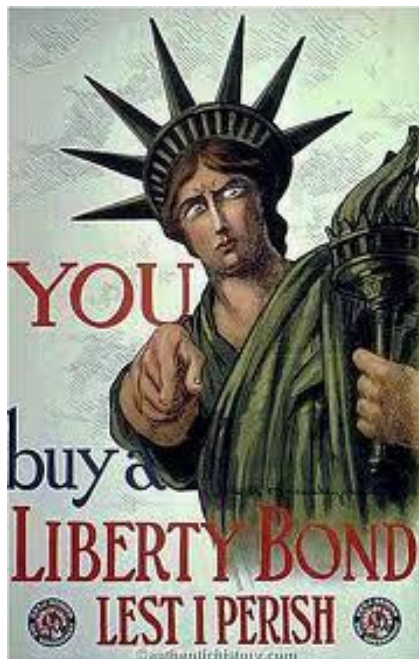


Figure 5-7. G.R. Macauley, 1917 Figure 5-8. J. Allen St. John, 1917

⁴⁸ Ibid., 208-214.

⁴⁹ British Prime Minister David Lloyd George stressed the urgency of the situation to Wilson in his "Crisis Telegram," sent on March 28, 1918, a week after the first shots of the German offensive. Lloyd George claimed it was "impossible to exaggerate the importance of getting American reinforcements across the Atlantic in the shortest possible space of time." The formal British appeal to the United States came two days later: "120,000 infantry...should be embarked and sent to Europe per month between now and the end of July [1918]." Daniel R. Beaver. *Newton D. Baker and the American War Effort, 1917-1919* (Lincoln: 1966), 134. Also see "Are We Too Late?" *The Outlook*, April 3, 1918, Vol. CXVIII, 525-526 and "The Battle that May Decide the War," *Literary Digest*, LVII, 11, 13-15. The *Atlanta Constitution* floated the possibility that the German drive on the Western Front was a precursor to an invasion of Great Britain. "Invasion of England May Be Goal of Teuton Drives on Northern Line," April 2, 1918.

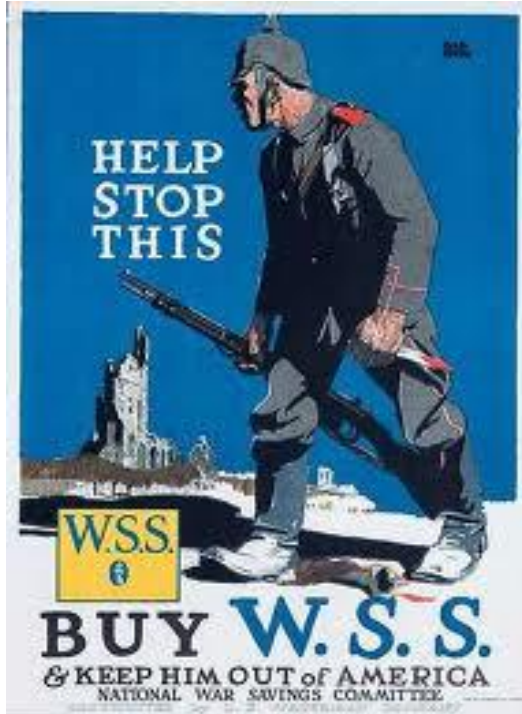


Figure 5-9. Adolph Treidler, 1918



Figure 5-10. Fred Strothmann 1918

The fear that the Allies could lose the war – and anxiety over the consequences of that defeat for the nation – was clearly evident in Liberty Loan and War Saving Stamp poster art produced in 1918. Their messages lacked all subtlety. Reminiscent of Hopps’s “mad brute,” the contribution of artist Adolph Treidler (a very Teutonic-sounding name) to the National War Savings Committee presented the German soldier as apish, with large hands and feet, long arms, and a slightly humped back. In the background stands the ruins of a town and below viewers are asked to “Buy W.S.S. [War Savings Stamps] & Keep Him Out of America” (Figure 5-9). Fred Strothmann took a similar approach in his “Beat Back the Hun” poster, depicting the German soldier as a dark, zombie-like figure wearing a *pickelhaube* with bloody finger tips, bloody bayonet, and bright green eyes staring ominously across the ocean – presumably toward the United States (Figure 5-10). While choosing not to focus on the Teuton’s physical appearance, CPI artist John Norton made it clear what was at stake in the Liberty Loan campaign with his illustration of

blood-soaked German boots, dripping on the poster's title – “Keep These Off the U.S.A” (Figure 5-11).⁵⁰

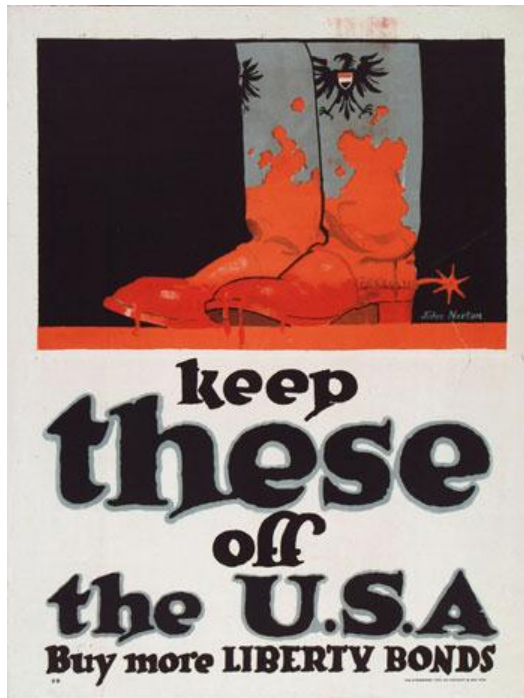


Figure 5-11. John Norton, 1918

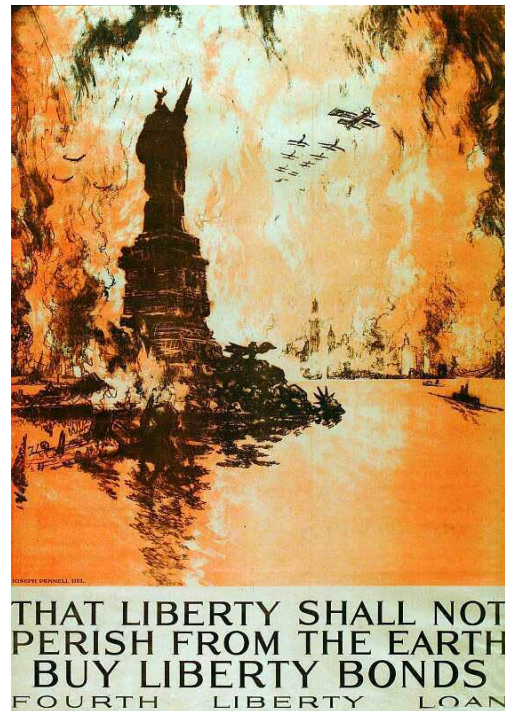


Figure 5-12. Joseph Pennell, 1918

Perhaps no poster more vividly illustrated the look of a possible future war in the United States or better combined the Prussian threat to civilization and the warnings about the consequences of defeat in Europe than Joseph Pennell's “That Liberty Shall Not Perish from the Earth” (Figure 5-12). In Pennell's representation of what would happen if Americans did not purchase Liberty Bonds, New York City is engulfed in bright orange and yellow flames. Bombers, presumably German, fly past each side of a torchless and decapitated Statue of Liberty – its head resting at the base of Ellis Island, which also supports the wreckage of a warship – while enemy ships presumably carrying the invasion force steam toward the inferno. Two million copies were printed.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Rawls, *Wake Up, America!*, 194, 214, and 219

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 226-227. Interestingly, an eagle stands near the base of the statue with its wings spread wide. Pennell's rationale for including the bird is unclear and two conflicting interpretations appear to fit – the

Pennell's poster hit on several key themes of wartime invasion propaganda. German war plans against the United States – insignificant in Germany but publicly known for years – targeted New York City, which was the scene of several fictional invasion accounts during the preparedness debate.⁵² The presence of a victimized Statue of Liberty suggests the possible downfall of civilization and is an allusion to the belief that the war was a great Darwinian struggle between democracy and autocracy. Finally, through this poster Pennell attempted to convey the frequently spouted claim that Americans had to defeat the Teuton in Europe so they would not have to fight him in their own backyard.

Just as important as these themes, however, is the fact that Pennell's broadside was part of the fourth Liberty Loan drive, which took place in September 1918. At this point in the war, the Kaiser's armies had lost all they had gained in the spring offensives, German soldiers were beginning to desert and surrender in droves, and the U.S. Army and Marines were preparing for their fateful assault on German positions in the Argonne

bird could be a silhouette of the American eagle crying in anguish or the black German imperial eagle claiming dominion over the statue and, thus, democracy.

⁵² Considering most of the concern and propaganda about a German invasion originated in New York City, it should come as no surprise that newspaper and magazine articles about the likelihood of a German attack there were quite common. For instance, in April 1917 *Review of Reviews* ran an article arguing that, because the vast majority of the American arms industry was within two-hundred miles of the city, if New York fell to an invading force the rest of the nation would be open to foreign domination. Looking to go back to this well again, the magazine's editor, Albert Shaw, wrote to George Creel a year later asking about the propriety of printing a speculative article about what would happen if New York came under attack by German bombers. Shaw claimed that such a story would "stimulate Americans to greater effort." Apparently Creel gave his blessing, because the next month Shaw published the article, which concluded that "if we cherish the illusion that New York and other coast cities are safe from aerial bombardment, we live in a fool's paradise." Interestingly, on July 2 the *Chicago Tribune* reported that air raid sirens were tested in the Bronx without prior notice to the police or the citizenry, sending many into a brief panic. Although it is difficult to conclude if Shaw's article had much, or any, impact on the false alarm in July or Pennell's choosing a burning Manhattan as the subject of his poster, New York City's central role in all fictional accounts of a German invasion of the East Coast and the published German plans to invade the United States at that point (which, again, were not legitimate plans) likely did much to increase the anxiety of many in the Big Apple. "The Defense of New York," *Review of Reviews*, April 1917, Vol. LV, 418-419; Albert Shaw to George Creel, Creel Correspondence, entry 1, box 21, CPI, NARA; "Can the Germans Bomb New York from the Air?" *Review of Reviews*, May 1918, Vol. LVII, 492-496, quote from 496; "New York Given Air Raid Scare," *Chicago Tribune*, July 2, 1918. On rumors of widespread panic in New York at the mere training of coastal artillery, see "More 'Contemptibles'" (London: 1917), PAH.

forest along the Meuse River.⁵³ It would be understandable, then, for many Americans to perceive the war as being in its final days and the German military threat against the homeland as having passed. Why continue to purchase Liberty Bonds when the nation was no longer in danger? Pennell's obviously over-the-top artwork was an attempt to counteract the growth of apathy among the American people. While it is difficult to gauge the impact any particular poster had on American morale, Pennell's was effective enough that he wrote a short book describing his philosophy behind poster art in general and how he created this particular work. To Pennell, posters, "like the old religious painting, must appeal to the people – the people gorged with comics, and stuffed with movies, and fattened on photographs." The most effective posters, of which he argued there were only a few, were successful "because the subject of those designs...are known to and understood by the people and by all the people – whether they are unlettered or whether they are cultured." The alarming consequences of defeat evident in his poster (which in this case was the cost of not buying Liberty Bonds), he believed, was self-evident.⁵⁴

Propagandists for the National Security League also argued that it was a foregone conclusion that a decivilized and triumphant Germany would attack the United States in the future. As during the preparedness debate, the NSL attempted to help Americans overcome their indifference while also defining the war effort as a struggle for national existence. NSL President S. Stanwood Menken said as much in a letter to Root in September 1917: "I feel that the bringing of knowledge to the people is the most

⁵³ John H. Morrow, Jr., *The Great War: An Imperial History* (New York: 2004), 248-252 and Edward G. Lengel, *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne, 1918* (New York: 2008).

⁵⁴ Joseph Pennell, *Joseph Pennell's Liberty Loan Poster: A Text-Book for Artists and Amateurs, Governments and Teachers and Printers* (Philadelphia and London: 1918), 7.

important thing that can be done in America...and that the people must be made to realize that...victory [is] essential to National life.”⁵⁵ Those who contributed to the propaganda of his organization echoed this sentiment and provided specific explanations as to why Germany threatened the American way of life. For example, the theologian Shailer Mathews spoke at an NSL conference in Chautauqua, New York, about the long-term threat decivilized Germany posed to the nation. “We are not conducting a crusade of democracy to make Germany democratic,” Mathews argued contrary to Wilson’s War Address. Instead, he affirmed Menken’s view that the United States was “fighting for our national life, for the international morality upon which our national life depends, for the preservation of the civilized world.” German brutality in Belgium, Mathews claimed, was a “deliberate attempt...to ruin a nation by” pilfering its food, razing its villages and cathedrals, poisoning its water supply, and treating “women and children” in a manner “beyond description.” The Prussianized Teutons and their allies repeated this formula wherever they marched, he maintained, be it Serbia, Poland, or Armenia. In the event of German victory in the war, “The United States could expect no other treatment.” Like William Hobbs, Mathews argued that the source of such treatment lay in the impact of Prussian rule and racial education on the rest of Germany. Prussian politicians and propagandists imbued in the German people the Darwinian notion “that the weak nation has no business to exist if it gets in the way of a strong nation.” Schoolchildren were taught that “Germans are a superior race” and “that German *Kultur* is the only thing on

⁵⁵ S. Stanwood Menken to Elihu Root, September 13, 1917, Root Papers, General Correspondence, box 136, LOC. While Menken also told Root he felt the American people should also understand the economic and political mistakes of the wartime years in order to prevent repeating the same errors, the tone of those who defined the war in writing and in speeches on the NSL’s behalf suggest that Menken viewed politics and economics as secondary.

the face of the earth.” Such indoctrination had brutalized the German nation, Mathews suggested, and had “made modern Prussianized Germany.”⁵⁶

The ideas put forth by Mathews were tame compared to many leaflets in a series the NSL distributed in 1917. Written by well-known Americans writers and, occasionally, a prominent individual from an Allied country, these flyers explained the impact a German victory in Europe would have on the United States and the world, often in the most hyperbolic terms. Adventure writer Cyrus Townsend Brady, for instance, declared that if Germany won, “A premium would be put on murder; rape would become a praiseworthy action...The inhabitants of the world would be divided into two classes, Germans and all others – Rulers and Ruled.”⁵⁷ Author and well-known dog breeder Albert Payson Terhune believed the “alarmists” were correct in proclaiming that a German victory would mark “the setback of humanity, democracy, civilization, rights of man, etc. But, to America, it would mean infinitely more” because of the nation’s loss of self-respect for not doing enough to save civilization.⁵⁸ The ultimate aims of the Pan-German conspiracy (death of the Monroe Doctrine, the United States, and democracy) was the focus of American novelist Owen Johnson’s contribution. Allied defeat in Europe “Eventually...would mean German colonization of South and Central America, with a final, devastating contest forty years hence between us and the modern legions of a

⁵⁶ Shailer Mathews, “Democracy and World Politics,” July 4, 1917, PTE, No. 10 (New York: 1917), 14-15. Mathews’s was also able to reach a wide audience with his message in the press. Also see from the Chautauqua training camp, McElroy, “The Ideals of Our War,” July 3, 1917, *ibid.*; Hobbs, “The Outlook for Democracy,” *ibid.*; Pomeroy Burton, “Hurry Up, America!” July 2, 1917, *ibid.* No. 11; and Franklin D. Roosevelt, “The Navy and the War,” July 7, 1917, *ibid.*, No. 12. The including of Armenia suggests Mathews was blaming Germany for the Armenian Genocide that took place in the winter of 1915-1916, which was actually an exclusively Turkish operation. For the American press and humanitarian response to the genocide, see Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response* (New York: 2003).

⁵⁷ Cyrus Townsend Brady, “What the Victory or Defeat of Germany Means to Every American” (New York: 1917?), PAH.

⁵⁸ Albert Payson Terhune, *ibid.*

German Caesar.”⁵⁹ Agnes Repplier, though, explicitly linked the Kaiser’s agents of Pan-Germanism in the United States with German decivilization and potential future invasion. If the nation did not “crush the traitors at home, and defeat the enemy abroad,” she contended, “a bitter future awaits us.” Americans, she concluded, could “see in our land the blazing homes, the ravished women, the butchered children, the unutterable shame and horror which mark the wake of a German army of invasion.”⁶⁰

The aim of arguments that the nation would resemble Belgium if the Prussianized German armies invaded was to help Americans imagine how subjugation by an uncivilized foreign enemy would look and feel. Even the slightest understanding of the defilement and humiliation such a fate would bring, propagandists hoped, would awaken the apathetic and disloyal to the war’s stakes and impel them and the loyal to give and give more for the war effort. Claims that atrocities could happen in the United States were likely effective not only because it was believable that such acts could be committed by a decivilized enemy but also because of its focus on the destruction and dishonoring of American women and the family.⁶¹ In sample speeches issued to the Four Minute Men in

⁵⁹ Owen Johnson, *ibid.* Also see James H. Collins, *ibid.*; Granville Fortescue, *ibid.*; Booth Tarkington, *ibid.*; Cosmo Hamilton, *ibid.*; Prince and Princess Pierre Troubetzkoy, *ibid.*; all of which cite similar or identical concerns as those cited in this series.

⁶⁰ Agnes Repplier, “What Does the Victory or Defeat of Germany Mean to the United States?” *ibid.* The slight difference in title with the other pamphlets is of negligible importance in that Repplier was asked to speak to the same point as the other writers and, presumably, their dates of production were close. For similarly hyperbolic propaganda on the spread of German cruelty to the United States and its impact on the American family, see William Mather Lewis, “The Declaration of Independence and the World War: An Address Delivered at Highland Park, Illinois, July 4, 1917” (Washington, DC: 1917), 6, PAH; Edgar Saltus, “What the Victory or Defeat of Germany Means to Every American” (New York: 1917?), PAH; Oscar S. Straus, “National Solidarity and International Duty,” PTE, No. 29 (New York: n.d.); and Agnes Repplier, “It Is No Time for Peace” (New York: 1917?), PAH. Tatlock, on behalf of the CPI, made the same argument in *Why America Fights*.

⁶¹ See Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda and the Home Front* (Lincoln, NE: 2011), especially Chapter 5, “The Hun Is at the Gate: Protecting the Innocents,” 218-261. An illustrative example of danger to one’s family being used to inspire action is a poster by the YMCA asking Americans to give their money so that American soldiers can be made comfortable in the trenches. If Americans did not give to the YMCA, the poster claimed, American homes “will be brought low” like those already made part of “German-enemy territory.” “The Security and Happiness of Your Home Are

early 1918, for example, the CPI instructed its speakers to explain the importance of ship building for the war effort by invoking the danger German invasion posed to the nation's women and girls. "We'll lick them here if we have to," one model speech began, "but maybe it will be your wife or daughter who will suffer before we kill all the Huns." Keeping the nation's women safe and the Germans in Europe where they belonged was only possible if "we get ships, and ships, and more ships, and more ships" to transport men and materials to the American and Allied forces in France. Another speech appealed directly to the women in the audience. "Wives, sweethearts, you don't want any of the things to happen to you that have happened to the women in Belgium and France, do you?" the speakers were instructed to ask. "Then, send your men to build ships so we can finish this war in Europe and not have to defend you from the Huns here."⁶²

The Department of Educational Propaganda, part of the Council of National Defense's Committee on Women's Defense Work, also sent out speakers to drum up support for the war in general and invoke male pride in particular by spreading fearful warnings about the potential fate of American women and children. "If America loses," one DEP speaker declared, "the great evolution of humanity, which has struggled through thousands of years to the point it has reached today, would have to be thrown back to the

Threatened," n.d., entry 1, box 22, Creel Correspondence, CPI, NARA. Historian Kimberly Jensen has studied the role women played in their own defense. Women's rifle clubs, women's auxiliaries of male preparedness groups, and women-only preparedness associations, such as the American Women's League for Self-Defense, formed in various parts of the country from 1915 through the end of the war. Supported by the National Rifle Association, gun manufacturers, and various publications focusing on arms or women's issues – such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Woman Citizen* – these women took up competitive shooting and, some, trained briefly in military camps. Despite the allusion of widespread acceptance, or at least interest, in these activities, Jensen argued that "women-at-arms received little support from the majority of women. Gun manufacturers, she concluded, were likely their most enthusiastic advocates because of the opportunity to exploit a large untapped market. The importance of the wartime "women-at-arms" to national defense or the drive for women's suffrage and equality, then, appears to have been minimal. Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Champaign, IL: 2008), 36-76, and 173.

⁶² *Four Minute Men Bulletin*, January 28, 1918, No. 22, Entry 62, box 2, CPI, NARA, 6.

autocratic rule, which every nation of [the] highest advancement has passed out of into [a] democratic regime long ago.” The German soldiers of autocracy, if landed on American soil, would leave “our homes ablaze, our women ravished, our children butchered,” which comprised “the unutterable horrors which always mark the wake of a German army of invasion!” The speaker concluded with a call to universal sacrifice in this most perilous of times for the country. The United States must “give her all...every drop of her strength unto death” in order to ensure the Kaiser’s forces could not spread their “frightfulness” across the Atlantic.⁶³

While some prominent Americans and propagandists expressed concern about the potential short-term fate of American children, many also focused on how a German victory could impact the long-term development of the nation’s youth – young men in particular. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, characterized the German menace as a threat to the next generation of Americans. He appealed to his audience in a July 1917 speech “to go home not only with the spirit of sacrifice, and of service, but with the spirit of realization of what this war means...in its ultimate end.” That end, to FDR, was clear. “If by any chance the present power of Germany should be left in such a position at the end of the war that it could carry on its policy of before the war [disregard for international law],” he argued, “then, not only will the world not be

⁶³ “What Will America Lose If She Loses the War,” no date, box 629, Committee on Women’s Defense Work, Educational Propaganda Department, Records of the Council of National Defense, RG 62, NARA. Hereinafter cited as Women’s Defense Work, CND. Several of the speeches found in these records, such as the one cited here, clearly were delivered at some time during the war. The author’s edits are still evident and their length – one typed page – suggests they were short in duration. This is clear from the inclusion of *Four Minute Men Bulletins* within these same files that the CPI guided this and similar speeches in the collection. Another illustrative example comes from a sample speech on the Liberty Loan from the Nebraska State Council of Defense. “To save your home from the flames destroying France, your babies from the sword that murdered infants in Poland, your daughters from the hordes that ravished Belgian women even as they fled through the streets, American men are making the supreme sacrifice,” the speech declared. “What sacrifice will you make to help equip these defenders of your country? What will you give up that you may help finance the struggle to save American freedom?” “4-Minute Talk: ‘Your Country Appeals to You!’”, n.d. box 628, *ibid*.

safe for democracy, but the United States will not be safe for us or for our children.” For the man who would bring the United States into the next, greater world war, this was the central point of American belligerency. “[T]hat is the reason why today we must put every ounce of strength into what we are doing,” he concluded. “It is only in that way...that we have made the United States of America safe, a safe republic, a safe democracy for us in our old age, and for our children and grandchildren, and having done that we shall have made the world safe for democracy.”⁶⁴ Secretary of War Newton Baker agreed, saying on July 4, 1917, that “We entered this war to remove from ourselves, our children and our children’s children the menace which threatened to deny us” liberty.⁶⁵

Calls to save the nation’s children through victory came from outside the Wilson administration as well. Novelist Arthur Somers Roche cited the German race’s brutal nature – as evidenced “by his professed beliefs, by his acknowledged deeds” – as dangerous to future generations. Men are judged by these thoughts and actions, he wrote, and “[o]ne judges a race in the same manner.” In a world dominated by Germany, Roche concluded, “it would be impossible for my son to grow up to be the man I want him to be.”⁶⁶ In a similar vein, football legend Walter Camp feared that the brutal “defeat and

⁶⁴ Roosevelt, “The Navy and the War,” 11.

⁶⁵ Newton D. Baker, address, July 4, 1917, Baker Papers, Speeches and Writings, box 244, LOC. Baker was likely thinking of rumors of the German army’s butchery of European children when he composed this speech. A month earlier, on June 5, the day of the first draft registration, he had told an audience in Georgetown that “in Poland there is not now living a single child under 5 years of age.” The Secretary also mentioned the killing of “children as they enter candy shops” in order to drive home the point that the Prussianized German committed “casual, pitiless slaughter of the unoffending and the defenseless.” “United States Will Never Turn Back Until Peace Is Made Secure for the World, Secretary of War Baker Declares,” *The Official Bulletin*, June 7, 1917 (Washington, D.C.: 1917), 7, *ibid.* Baker also wrote to Wilson in August 1918 suggesting the President prepare a proclamation for the September draft registration – when men between the ages of 32 and 45 were to register – that emphasized to the older men that they were fighting not just for national independence but for their children’s future as well. N.D. Baker to Woodrow Wilson, August 14, 1918, *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Arthur Somers Roche, “What German Victory Means to Me” (New York: 1917?), PAH.

subjugation” the nation could suffer from a victorious Germany would “very probably produce a suicidal mania” and racial degeneration among the Anglo-Saxon nation and its children. “Perhaps there are nations and races meant for slavery,” Camp considered, but the American people were not one of them. “Spiritually,” defeat and enslavement would transform “our American Youth from thoroughbred racers...to dreary draft oxen, struggling with a hopeless load.”⁶⁷



Figure 5-13. *St. Louis Republic*, from *Literary Digest*, May 16, 1918

The continued existence of German militarism also threatened to indirectly enslave American boys by forcing the United States to forsake its traditional distaste for standing armies and remain heavily armed in order to avoid or protect the nation from the

⁶⁷ Walter Camp, “What the Victory or Defeat of Germany Means to Every American” (New York: 1917?), PAH.

inevitable postwar German invasion.⁶⁸ Predicting the formation of an American garrison state inherently suggested that the young boys of the nation would be the ones to protect it. A cartoon from the *St. Louis Republic* made this point very explicit. A toddler seems to struggle to hold up a rifle labeled “The Fight for Liberty” while the bayonet at the end of the gun drips blood to the ground. The cartoon’s caption, “Either We Must Win the War, Or –” indicated that the consequences of defeat implied in the image were truly unspeakable (Figure 5-13).⁶⁹ American boys, then, for the sake of national defense would become slaves to the same militarism that had decivilized the European Teuton, a fate the cartoonist hoped the American people would work to avoid. Despite preparedness propaganda’s success in raising concerns about the possibility of foreign invasion, the wartime argument that perpetual military readiness after a German triumph in Europe was anathema to American democratic ideals suggests the case for universal military training had fallen on deaf ears. Ironically, many of the same individuals – such as pro-preparedness editors and members of the NSL – argued that future generations should not be burdened with the weight of national defense and only the defeat of the German Army where it stood could keep one’s children and grandchildren from becoming militarized.

At the same time, the fear that the United States would have to become a garrison state was inherently linked to arguments opposing a peace that would restore the status quo antebellum and many Americans’ belief in the existence of a Pan-German

⁶⁸ While the fate of American children was not an explicit concern, an article in *Current Opinion* (taken from the *New York Times*) provides a good example of the concerns some Americans had about the institution of wartime conscription, which, if the tone of the propaganda lamenting the garrison state is any indication, would not be as burdensome on the nation’s young men as the peacetime readiness that many presumed would follow a German triumph in Europe. “How Far Is America Militaristic?” *Current Opinion*, June 1917, Vol. LXII, 416.

⁶⁹ “Either We Must Win the War, Or –” *Literary Digest*, May 16, 1918, Vol. LVI, 20.

conspiracy. Because Germany would stop at nothing to obtain its global empire, many asserted, stopping short of total victory now would only delay the inevitable. Wilson and others who sought a more stable postwar world order contended that the continued existence of Prussian militarism beyond the conclusion of the war – regardless of the military or economic state in which Germany emerged from the conflict – would mean that a second Great War would be unavoidable. Repeating many of the same themes from his 1917 Flag Day Address, Wilson told a crowd of 15,000 in Baltimore on the one-year anniversary of the American declaration of war that if Germany could consolidate *Mitteleuropa* it would be in a position to dominate and decivilize the world.

“America and all who care or dare stand with her must arm and prepare themselves to contest the mastery of the World, a mastery in which the rights of common men, the rights of women and all who are weak, must for the time being be trodden under foot and disregarded, and the old age-long struggle for freedom and right begin again at its beginning. Everything that America has lived for and loved and grown great to vindicate and bring to a glorious realization will have fallen in utter ruin and the gates of mercy once more pitilessly shut upon mankind!”⁷⁰

Those in Wilson’s Cabinet publicly echoed their boss’s sentiment. Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels told the Alliance for Labor and Democracy that if Germany were to “triumph in Europe,” the American people would have to “inevitably” commit “to defensive preparations that will command every effort in the interest of our military strength.” In this case, the heaviest burden would be placed on the workingman. Every year more “men will have to be withdrawn from peaceful pursuits to fill the army” and

⁷⁰ “An Address,” April 6, 1918, *PWW*, Vol. XLVII, 270. For press reaction to the President’s speech, see “We Accept the Kaiser’s Challenge,” *Literary Digest*, April 20, 1918, Vol. LVII, 15-16.

navy “in order that our coasts may be protected from raid and invasion.”⁷¹ According to Secretary of War Baker, if Germany won the war “then every other nation in the world would either have to be a slave of Germany or an imitator of Germany. We would either have to be weak and subservient to Germany, or else we would have to imitate her military program, and devote the nation to military enterprise to the end that all rights shall be determined by force.”⁷² In a letter to a *New York World* reporter, Interior Secretary Lane expressed a worry that the measures the United States would have to take in order to protect the nation would cause the American people to regress to the level of the savage Teuton. “[T]he war will degrade us....make sheer brutes out of us,” he pessimistically wrote, “because we will have to descend to the methods that the Germans employ.”⁷³

Many of the most ardent opponents of the administration concurred with Wilson and his advisors. Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge warned that “To make peace on the basis of the *status quo ante bellum* simply means that Germany will have a breathing space and the whole horror will come over again, with the chance that we shall

⁷¹ Josephus Daniels, “War Against Junkerism,” February 22, 1918, in *The Navy and the Nation*, 97. Daniels spoke to this concern that future generations would have to remain perpetually armed against the prospect of a German attack on several other occasions. Also see from Daniels, “Patriotism Before Business,” March 29, 1917, *ibid.*, 35. John R. Commons of the AALD also preached about a heavily armed United States being particularly threatening to labor. Addressing both native and foreign-born workers, Commons argued that “German victory” promised to “set labor back permanently.” A triumphant Germany would “take over the British navy,” forcing the U.S. to “have a large permanent standing army and a huge navy to defend ourselves from sudden attack.” But besides being pulled from the factory floor and into the training camp, Commons contended, perpetual armament “means low wages, long hours of labor, suppression of labor unions, repeal of labor legislation” and free speech, “and all the hardships that millions of workingmen have come to America to escape.” John R. Commons, “Why Workingmen Support the War” (New York: 1918?), PAH. Wilson, speaking on Labor Day in 1918, spoke of the war similarly, as a “war of emancipation” that, if lost, would have adverse effects on workers’ rights and wages. Woodrow Wilson, “A Labor Day Address,” September 2, 1918, PWW, Vol. XLIX, 414-415.

⁷² “Statement of Hon. Newton D. Baker,” May 1, 1918, Baker Papers, Speeches and Writings, box 244, LOC. This speech was given in Washington, D.C. to the Conference of Ship Owners and Operators, clearly not a working-class organization.

⁷³ Franklin K. Lane to J. O’H. Cosgrove, December 21, 1917, in *Letters of Franklin K. Lane*, 263. Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston stayed on message as well. See Houston, “Steps to Victory,” December 6, 1917 (New York: 1917), PAH.

not be all united as we are now.” To Lodge, only “peace with victory, complete victory” was “worth having.”⁷⁴ This was also the assertion of the League to Enforce Peace, an association of prominent American political and social elites who sought the establishment of a League of Nations-like international body that would guarantee the collective security of all member states.⁷⁵ According to the head of the LEP and Wilson’s predecessor as President, William Howard Taft, the rationale behind the Allied cause and Wilson’s call to make the world safe for democracy was to ensure that free nations did not have to become garrison states in the future. If German militarism was not defeated, Taft argued, “it will entail on every democratic government the duty of maintaining a similar armament in self-defense.” Perhaps to press the urgency of the moment or to take a stab at many Americans’ previous resistance to military preparedness, Taft pessimistically asserted that it was “more likely” that “the duty will be wholly or partly neglected” in the future. Prussianism, then, must be destroyed now. “(T)he policy of Germany, with her purpose and destiny, will threaten every democracy,” he concluded. “This is the condition which it is the determined purpose of the Allies, as interpreted by President Wilson, to change.”⁷⁶

Pro-war editors sang a similar tune. The editors of the *Charleston (SC) News and Courier*, for instance, feared that American democracy would be destroyed not by a direct German attack after the war but by the lengths the nation would have to go in order to prevent or resist an assault upon the nation’s shores. If the United States and the Allies

⁷⁴ Henry Cabot Lodge, “The War Work of Congress,” *The Forum*, June 1918, Vol. LIX, 686.

⁷⁵ Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: 1992), 56-57 and Ruhl Jacob Bartlett, *The League to Enforce Peace* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1944).

⁷⁶ William Howard Taft, “The Things Against Which We Are Fighting: The Attempt to Conquer and Prussianize the World,” in *A Reference Book for Speakers* (New York: 1918), 18, box 630, Women’s Defense Work, CND, NARA. Taft also spread the League’s message across the border in Canada. Taft, “The Menace of a Premature Peace,” September 26, 1917 (New York: 1917), PAH.

lost the current war, they warned, “the America that we know will disappear” because “[w]e would have to abolish it ourselves for our own safety.” National defense would demand that the country “transform this free democratic America into just such a fantastic militarism as Germany is to-day.”⁷⁷

Everybody's Magazine took a different approach, opting to hammer home the point with a fictional first-person account of the beginning of a second world war twenty years after the premature end of the current conflict. On the first page of “The War of 1938,” the cover story of *Everybody's* September 1918 issue, the editors revealed both the author's intent and their underlying assumption that such a story merely preached to the proverbial choir. “What is written here is not a prophecy; it is not a dream,” the story opens next to a sketch of a disheveled, rifle-toting mother with her two terrified children grasping at her skirt. “It is a thought that even now sears the souls of fathers and mothers everywhere and steels them to the ultimate sacrifice NOW, that they and their grandchildren may not face in 1938 the death and downfall [Eugene P. Lyle, Jr., the author] pictures in this article.” The story begins in the third week of the second Great War as thousands of old men attempt to fend off the invading Hun from trenches near Dover, England. After glumly claiming that the fight in 1938 “was lost in 1918,” the narrator, a man in his seventies, recounts how the Allies were duped at the end of the previous conflict and how their complacency allowed Germany to launch another war from a far more advantageous position. Giving the Pan-German conspiracy – if it had

⁷⁷ “What the United States is Fighting For,” *Current Opinion*, July 1917, Vol. LXIII, 6. For non-government propaganda claiming a premature peace would guaranteed a bigger, less winnable war in the future, also see Thornton W. Burgess, “The Red Flag of Premature Peace” (New York: 1917?), PAH; Francis J. Oppenheimer, “No ‘Made in Germany’ Peace,” *ibid.*; “Formal Announcement of the Position of the American Defense Society” (New York: 1918?), PAH; and Edward Lyell Fox, “The Thing Called Prussianism,” *The Forum*, September 1918, Vol. LIX, 265 and 276.

existed – more credit than it deserved, Lyle wrote that the sudden end of the first war in November 1918 was part of the German master plan. Victorious over Russia but unable to exploit its resources and manpower in time to push to victory on the Western Front, Germany sued for a peace to which the weary Allies were more than happy to agree. While universal disarmament (Germany's idea) was central to the peace, the Allies granted Germany domination over Southeast Europe in exchange for their overseas colonies. This, coupled with Russia's position as an informal vassal state directed from Berlin, allowed the Kaiser's forces (secretly trained in peacetime volunteer "rifle clubs") to strike again in 1938 with an army of over thirty million men supported by the population and resources of *Mitteleuropa* and the entirety of Russia. The final line sums up Lyle's and the editor's message well: "IF we had only seen the thing through in 1918!"⁷⁸

Although to many Americans – politicians, social elites, and pro-war propagandists in particular – Germany posed a real physical threat to the nation, it appeared throughout American intervention that the old isolationist habits of the masses would be hard to break. It was clear to many in the war-selling business that forging unity and inspiring sacrifice in the face of a national emergency would be an uphill climb. For instance, in a set of instructions to speakers in a June 1917 edition of the *Four Minute*

⁷⁸ Eugene P. Lyle, Jr., "The War of 1938," *Everybody's Magazine*, September 1918, Vol. XXXIX, 9-17, 92, quotes from 9 and 42. The emphasis on the word "if" is from the original. To emphasize the point further, this line also appears on the first page of the story above the opening paragraph cited above. Similar yet less colorful calls were sent down from atop ivory tower at major universities across the country. See Andrew C. McLaughlin, "Sixteen Causes of War," (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918), 4, 11, and 12, PAH; *The World's Peril: America's Interest in the War, by the Members of the Faculty of Princeton University* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1917). Most of the leading propagandists of the NSL also called academia (especially history departments) home, such as William Hobbs (University of Michigan), Alfred M. Brooks (Indiana University), Theodore G. Soares (University of Chicago), Earl E. Sperry (Syracuse University), and Thomas F. Moran (Purdue University).

Men Bulletin, the CPI admitted that “The fact that the country is really at war has not as yet come home to the American people. They know it, of course, but they do not feel it.”⁷⁹ The *Brooklyn Eagle*, in a cartoon printed in the early summer of 1917, suggested that Americans did not “feel it” because they assumed the war, like most of the rest of Europe’s previous problems, was a distant concern (Figure 5-14).⁸⁰ Prominent Philadelphia attorney James M. Beck had a different explanation, blaming American apathy on German agents. The “campaign of disloyalty and sedition” on which the Teuton propagandist and his collaborators (William Randolph Hearst was singled out) embarked was “never more active and never more dangerous than at this hour.” “If the great cause...be lost” because morale could not hold, Beck concluded, “then Civilization will become a Hell, in which Germany will sit as Overlord.”⁸¹

In early 1918, the Kansas Council of Defense also lamented “that many of our communities have not had brought home to them the reason why the local community...should mobilize all its forces to win the war.” Their solution to this problem was a speaking campaign that would simplify the war’s meaning for every rural community in the state. The speeches were to be organized around six points: Germany aimed to destroy democracy; it “sought to spread rule of Force and Deception over [the] world;” its “Plan for World Empire included the United States, therefore this community;” the nation was fighting “to Protect this community;” the community was part of the nation and, thus, “must face fearlessly the present war status;” and the

⁷⁹ “The Liberty Loan,” *Four Minute Men Bulletin*, June 9, 1917, No. 3, Entry 62, box 2, CPI, NARA, 1.

⁸⁰ Nelson Harding, “Looking Through the Wrong End,” *Literary Digest*, July 14, 1917, Vol. LV, 8.

⁸¹ James M. Beck, “The Enemy Within Our Gates: An Address Delivered at Carnegie Hall, November 2, 1917, to Protest Against the Spirit of Disloyalty” (New York: ADS, 1917), 1 and 6, PAH. For national newspaper opinion on the question of Hearst’s loyalty late in the war, see “The Trail of German Propaganda in the American Press,” *Current Opinion*, September 1918, Vol. LXV, 139-141.

community could act locally to help fend off the danger. In short, the Kansas CND hoped to overcome rural parochialism by making the war an explicitly local concern.⁸²

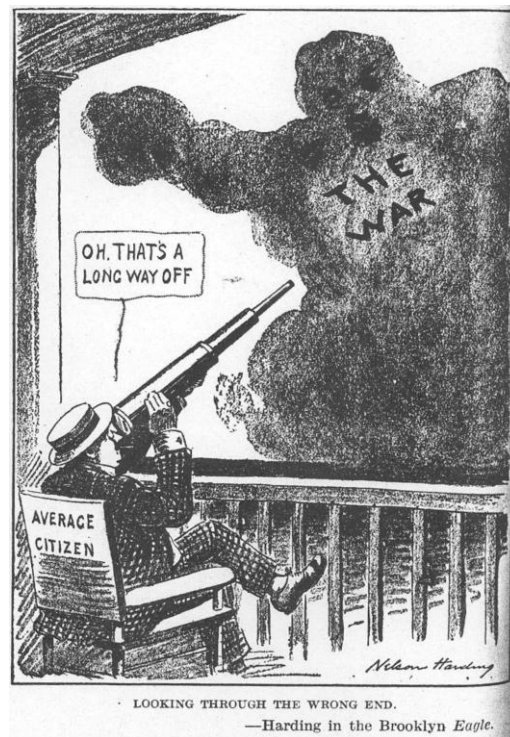


Figure 5-14. *Brooklyn Eagle*, from *Literary Digest*, July 14, 1917

Editors and government officials commiserated on how to reverse the apparent disinterestedness of many Americans throughout the country. Frank Cobb, personal friend of Wilson and editor of the *New York World*, suggested that taking propaganda out of the hands of the government would help overcome apathy and opposition to the war because of “the excellent reason that people are suspicious of government-directed publicity.” From the beginning, he argued, “people wonder if [the government] is not

⁸² A sample speech from the Kansas campaign that hit on all six points was included in CPI files with the original memo. In the process, the speech tapped into nearly all of the most prevalent fear mongering arguments: quoting prominent Germans, recounting the Pan-German conspiracy, demonizing German actions in Belgium, warning about an imminent invasion if the Allies lost, and even going so far as to say that “the free and happy and neighborly community life that you have been enjoying here will be forever extinct” if the Germans “ever become rulers of the world.” Emphasis in text and not both in the original. “Explanatory Note for the Benefit of War Lecturers,” enclosure to “Report of Speaker’s Bureau, Council of Defense and Food Administration for Kansas,” February 2, 1918, entry 82, box 6, General Correspondence Regarding Speakers, CPI, NARA.

suppressing something for the protection of itself.” Indifference, then, “is inevitable.” Cobb maintained that private publicity organizations could be far more effective at fostering pro-war sentiment throughout the nation.⁸³ The editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*, Frederick Dixon, expressed his agreement with Grosvenor Clarkson, head of the Council of National Defense in Washington that squelching German propaganda would solve the apathy problem. “[T]he country is not awake, and this is largely, in my opinion, because of the enormous German element that has impregnated the political outlook very largely with a belief...that Germans, at all events, are no worse than anybody else.” This, Dixon maintained, was a false assumption. The German people had “deliberately adopted and assimilated the policy of “kultur”” because of “the element of domination in the German character.”⁸⁴

Middle and upper class citizens outside of Washington, the press, and propaganda agencies were also alarmed at the seeming lack of interest among many Americans and their ignorance of what was at stake for the country. The presumed provincialism and dimness of the lower classes, it seems, were at the heart of their concern. Francis H. Westin, a U.S. District Attorney in South Carolina, wrote Attorney General Thomas Watt Gregory that the lack of awareness, or interest, in the war among uneducated and insular southerners was alarming. “You have no conception of how ignorant the average man is

⁸³ Frank Cobb to G. Clarkson, September 4, 1917, *ibid.* A reliance on social and economic elites – the implication of Cobb’s desire to involve private patriotic organizations, which were manned by individuals from these classes – was repeated by the well-known novelist Edward Leigh Pell in a letter to Navy Secretary Daniels. The U.S. should follow Britain’s example, he wrote, of “bombard[ing]...the intelligent classes...with tons upon tons of well written, really illuminating pamphlets...that compel attention and tremendously emphasize the message.” Why target only local elites? Because, according to Pell, typically “one man in every neighborhood...directs the neighborhood’s thinking.” In other words, propagandists were wasting their time focusing on the rabble. Edmund Leigh Pell to Josephus Daniels, October 4, 1917, Josephus Daniels Paper, Special Correspondence, reel 47, LOC.

⁸⁴ Frederick Dixon to Grosvenor Clarkson, September 4, 1917, Correspondence of George Creel, Entry 1, box 5, CPI, NARA. By the same token, Dixon believed that the “tendency to servility in the Slave nation” allowed the autocratic Romanov dynasty to thrive for centuries.

of the causes that compel the United States to enter the war,” Westin claimed. “I think it is very necessary,” he concluded, “that the people be educated.”⁸⁵ Relaying the instructions of Carrie Chapman Catt, national chair of the Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense, the head of the state committee in Massachusetts Alice Pearmain issued a circular to members arguing that reaching the unformed or uninterested should begin in the schools. Catt “urge[d] localities to form classes for the study of current topics and the vital questions of the war,” including why the country was at war and “what winning or losing it will mean to this country and to civilization.” These classes, it was hoped, would “do much to counteract” the German and pacifist propaganda pervasive throughout the nation and inspire Americans “to give wholehearted, loyal support to the Government and the cause that MUST BE WON.”⁸⁶ Catt later lamented to her colleagues in the Department of Educational Propaganda that indifference was the result of most propaganda being “too difficult for many of the simple minded people to understand” – “ninety-five percent of our population,” she claimed, “have not gone beyond the eight grade.” While it was clear to the educated classes that if Germany won “the United States would have to pay an indemnity,” Catt asserted that “half the people...can never understand this word [indemnity].” All propaganda issued by the DEP, then, needed to be so simple that “the simplest person can understand.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Francis H. Westin to Thomas W. Gregory, August 6, 1917, Thomas W. Gregory Papers, box 1, LOC.

⁸⁶ Alice Upton Pearmain, Circular No. 2, November 22, 1917, box 628, Women’s Defense Work, CND, NARA. Emphasis in the original. Also see Melvyn Ryder to George Creel, November 5, 1917, entry 1, box 21, Creel Correspondence, CPI, NARA, where Ryder suggested the CPI send volunteer foreign correspondents to Europe to report directly to rural newspapers, which carried practically no news of the war in Europe.

⁸⁷ Conference Report, Department of Educational Propaganda, 1918 (?), box 629, *ibid*.

Similarly, in July 1917, a Chicago architect and member of the Union League Club, Allen Bartlit Pond, wrote the President that he and his cohort saw “that a very large number of people in this country are still puzzled as to why America” entered the conflict in Europe and why soldiers must be sent. At the same time, Pond lamented that the masses were “quite at sea with regard to any obligations resting on America” to combat the “deep rooted ambition of the German ruling class and the resultant effect upon permanent peace for America in a settlement of what seem to the uninitiated to be purely local European matters.” CPI propaganda, he suggested, should be further distributed “throughout the length of the country” and should explain to indifferent citizens why, if premature peace were made, “America cannot, as you have wisely said, hope to keep out of future wars, no matter where started or by what caused.”⁸⁸ In October, businessman and cheerleader for southern industry Richard H. Edmonds wrote President Wilson from Baltimore about the continued “need for a great awakening of many of our people as to the realities of the war and the reasons for the war.” According to Edmonds, “comparatively few” Americans “understood the deliberate plan of Germany, made many years ago, to enrich itself by war at the expense of other countries.” A publicity campaign in rural areas was necessary, he argued, so Americans there would understand “that there is a need for food conservation in order to save the Allies and thus ourselves.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Allen Bartlit Pond to Woodrow Wilson, July 13, 1917, *ibid.*, Vol. XLIII, 168 and 169.

⁸⁹ Richard Hathaway Edmonds to Woodrow Wilson, October 4, 1917, *PWW*, Vol. XLIV, 305 and 306. Wilson replied to Edmonds the next day and perhaps revealed the degree to which he was closed off from the public or blind to its sentiments. “I get widely variant accounts of the matter [apathy and opposition toward the war] from different parts of the country, or rather it would be more correct to say that from most parts of the country I get the report that the people do very distinctly comprehend what the war is about and are thoughtfully back of the administration.” W. Wilson to E.H. Edmonds, October 5, 1917, *ibid.*, 308.

Other middle and upper class citizens also expressed their concern that many of their fellow countrymen did not “get it” and wrote to George Creel and others tied to the CPI with suggestions on how to resolve the issue. While they did not always explicitly indicate why they supported the war and the education of the masses, as with the letters cited above the impact of wartime propaganda on these Americans’ views of the conflict is often evident in the letters’ content and in their urgency. For instance, several letters came into the CPI suggesting that placing photographic evidence of the most vicious German atrocities in newspapers and on posters throughout the country would awaken Americans from their indifference, undermine pro-German propaganda, and possibly convince German-Americans of the justice of the Allied cause. A Cleveland, Ohio man who claimed to have seen photographs and heard lectures by witnesses of German atrocities in Belgium lamented to Creel that “only a comparative few...ha[d] the time or opportunity to “have the chance to hear and see what Prussianism means.” “If Belgian and French children have been mutilated” and “women and old men have been massacred,” he asked rhetorically, “why not show the photographic proofs...to the people[?]”⁹⁰ An employee at the *Baltimore American* likely looking for a scoop wrote to inform Secretary Baker – technically part of the CPI, but the letter was forwarded to Creel – of “an attitude of unsettled, and in some cases aggressive skepticism regarding” stories in the press describing bestial German behavior in Belgium. The writer declared with the utmost confidence that stories “of the cutting off of the hands of Belgian children, and other outrages...have been thoroughly authenticated.” Sharing the

⁹⁰ B. Gamble to George Creel, November 26, 1917, Creel Correspondence, entry 1, box 9, CPI, NARA. Also hoping to convey the brutal nature of the German occupation of Belgium, a Chicago man sent Creel an idea for a political cartoon entitled “Might Is Right” and depicting a tiger or hyena “carrying off a naked dead child or better a woman.” The man thought “it would be very effectual in bringing home to all the horror of the philosophy of might.” J. Fentres (?) to George Creel, March 18, 1918, box 8, *ibid*.

photographic evidence (which, unbeknownst to him, did not actually exist) with the public would quiet the skeptics and “stir every man and woman who saw them...against our barbaric enemies.”⁹¹ Enclosing a clipping from an unknown newspaper as evidence, B. Hart Wright from DeLand, Florida angrily wrote Creel that the CPI had not included “concrete instances” of “young Belgian women or girls hav[ing] had their breasts cut off and the young men with their right hand hacked off” in its pamphlet *German War Practices*. While such actions were likely “sporadic and done without authorization,” Wright argued, they “nevertheless show the individual spirit of the average Hun” and must be made known to the wider public.⁹² Creel, to his credit, at times attempted to correct correspondents’ misconception of German atrocities in Belgium. For instance, in response to a letter from Pennsylvania lawyer Orr Buffington suggesting the CPI import maimed Belgian children and display them in public, Creel asserted that “never as yet have we been able to substantiate the charge that the hands of children have been cut off.” Even Brand Whitlock, U.S. Ambassador to Belgium, “states flatly that he has never yet seen any such case of mutilation.”⁹³ While not explicitly indicating a fear that German invaders would commit the same atrocities in the United States, such letters indicate that British and American propaganda regarding Belgium, which had inundated the United States since 1914, had had a significant impact on some Americans’ view of the enemy abroad as being uncivilized and bestial.

⁹¹ Charles [illegible] to Newton D. Baker, March 4, 1918, *ibid*.

⁹² B. Hart Wright to George Creel, April 4, 1918, box 26, *ibid*. A lawyer from San Francisco was similarly inspired by the CPI’s *German War Practices* as well as *Conquest and Kultur*. Writing to Josephus Daniels, who, like Baker, was technically part of the CPI, the man proposed that the CPI further disseminate the messages in these works to a wider audience through films, posters, and newspapers. This was necessary, he maintained, because even “most of my acquaintances the greater part of whom are men of education and general culture...have never read or heard of these publications.” Martin Stevens to George Creel, February 6, 1918, box 22, *ibid*.

⁹³ George Creel to Orr Buffington, November 7, 1917 and Orr Buffington to Newton D. Baker, October 31, 1917, box 3, *ibid*.

Along with letters expressing concern over Americans' general ignorance and apathy toward the Hun's brutal nature, correspondence also reached Creel and the CPI pressing the need to awaken the majority of Americans to the consequences of losing the war in Europe. One woman echoed Francis Westin's concern about the South. Southerners opposed the war, she argued, because "as a rule, [they] are ignorant" and "do not know the facts." Her solution was a month-long speaking campaign – which she said, due to high illiteracy rates in the South, would be the most effective strategy – conducted by women's organizations "in which the issues of the war should be clearly outlined and the inevitable results if Germany wins should be clearly set before the people."⁹⁴ A lawyer and part-time Four Minute Man from Cleveland, Ohio, suggested there be "No more about making the world safe for democracy, for it goes over the heads of the people we want to reach." A more intense publicity campaign was needed, he argued, because current efforts "d[id] not reach 20% of the American people" while "the Germans are reaching by organized efforts over 80% of the population." Apparently a dutiful reader of his *Four Minute Men Bulletin*, the lawyer concluded that the threats of disloyalty and indifference were of paramount importance because "if this war does not end with a guarantee of security for the Allies we shall have to fight our own battles with Germanism...and every thinking man knows it." It was the unthinking eighty percent that required a conversion.⁹⁵ Frank Cobb was hopeful that the smoking gun that would convert the less informed masses had been found. Writing his friend Woodrow Wilson in August 1917, Cobb inquired about the authenticity of an alleged State Department dispatch "showing that Germany planned to make war against the United States after

⁹⁴ G.H. Mathis to CPI, September 28, 1917, General Correspondence Regarding Speakers, Entry 82, box 4, CPI, NARA.

⁹⁵ Leon B. Bacon to George Creel, March 5, 1918, Creel Correspondence, entry 1, box 1, *ibid*.

crushing France and Great Britain.” Secretary of State Lansing, according to Cobb, had “confirmed...that there had been such a plot.” Assuming the information would be solid gold for propagandists and newspaper editors, because it would prove “a policy of settled hostility to the United States on the part of Germany,” Cobb advised “that it ought to [be] printed as soon as possible.”⁹⁶ Wilson’s reply was disappointing to them both. The Pan-German conspiracy must have been very well hidden as “Unfortunately, there are no documents in the State Department which could be said to establish” the German scheme, Wilson wrote. To the President’s chagrin, “no conclusion, however well founded in inference, can be established by evidence. I wish it could be.”⁹⁷

While some civilians fretted over a future Darwinian war between the United States and autocratic Germany, the fear of a Hun conspiracy was also haunting the military and even their civilian leaders. Assistant Navy Secretary Franklin Delano Roosevelt, apparently concerned that German spies could direct U-boats toward American merchant shipping or, worse, an invading fleet to American shores, wrote to the Attorney General in October 1917 to propose issuing a “Presidential proclamation...ordering the cessation for the duration of the war of all sales or changes of ownership of radio apparatus[es] to private persons...except those who had the express permission of the Navy Department.” Either agreeing with or humoring Roosevelt, Gregory, while acknowledging “that there is a pressing need” to restrict the buying and selling of radios for “our national interests,” argued he had no legal power to enforce such a proclamation if made.⁹⁸ Also concerned that the work of enemy agents could

⁹⁶ Frank Irving Cobb to Woodrow Wilson, August 27, 1917, *PWW*, Vol. XLIV, 74.

⁹⁷ W. Wilson to F.I. Cobb, September 1, 1917, *ibid.*, 118.

⁹⁸ Thomas Watt Gregory to Josephus Daniels, October 31, 1917, *ibid.* Daniels wrote Gregory the following spring on a similar issue. “Numerous reliable reports of suspicious signaling from both the coast and from

result in the loss of American lives, an army Major wrote to Creel about a “Moral Preparedness” campaign to help soften the blow on the home front of the high casualties inevitably to follow the army’s first massive offensive on the Western Front in July 1918. The consequences of allowing Pershing or his officers to “be damned by public opinion as butchers,” he argued, would be continued stalemate, German consolidation of its hold on Russia, “and by January 1920” a peace on German terms. Consequently, the manpower and resources of Russia (“which represents the balance of power in the world”) would provide the Kaiser with “the sure means of beating us all in twenty years hence.” Keeping the American people interested and inspired, he concluded, would be the difference between peace now and a larger war in the future.⁹⁹

Others in the military and the federal investigative branches were also worried that the Kaiser’s agents were getting a head start enacting the Pan-German scheme in the Americas by weakening the nation’s defenses. On March 22, 1917, two weeks before Wilson delivered his War Address, Attorney General Gregory received a letter from Navy Secretary Daniels about an alleged statement by “a certain German relative” of an informant concerning “an invasion of California” – by whom, Germany or Japan, is left unsaid. Gregory replied on April 2, the day of the War Address, to tell Daniels that the “matter is under investigation.”¹⁰⁰ Like white southerners in the first months of the war fearing German spies were organizing a multiracial invasion from Mexico, Daniels’s initial request for inquiry and Gregory’s granting of that request suggests that both likely

the Sea have been received within the last ten days,” he wrote. Most likely, he concluded, the signals were between enemy alien spies and u-boats waiting to pounce on American cargo ships.

⁹⁹ Maj. Stanley Washburn to George Creel, July 23, 1918, Creel Correspondence, entry 1, box 19, CPI, NARA.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Watt. Gregory to Josephus Daniels, April 2, 1917, Daniels Papers, Special Correspondence, reel 51, LOC. Daniels’s initial letter to Gregory is not in either of their personal papers. If it still exists it is likely tucked into one of the thousands of boxes of Department of Justice records kept at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

were anxious about the recently released details of the Zimmerman Telegram and saw a foreign attack as a distinct possibility, not the fanciful creation of fear mongering propagandists.

The possibility that Germans were trying to carry out their Pan-German designs by infiltrating the armed forces troubled high-ranking officials in both the Department of Justice and the Military Intelligence Division from the first month of American belligerency. On April 19, Bureau of Investigations chief A. Bruce Bielaski wrote to the head of the MID, Major Ralph Van Deman, that his agents had heard from “a very reputable source...that the Germans may have endeavored to place throughout our army officers in sympathy with them.” The source did not provide any concrete evidence, however, and Bielaski “believe[d] there was every chance that his suspicions are groundless.” Yet he still felt compelled to inform the MID of the potential problem.¹⁰¹ A more specific and potentially harmful incident occurred in the Pacific Northwest. A Department of Labor inspector reported to the local DOJ agent in Seattle that an “Austrian Count,” who had recently been discharged as an officer in the Canadian Army (where he had posed as an Englishman), had been given detailed descriptions of the coastal defenses at Puget Sound. The alleged “Count” was believed to have convinced a recruiting officer he was interested in enlisting in the Navy, which apparently was all it took for the officer to give specific details as to the location of mines and coastal artillery to the spy.¹⁰² With the German Army fighting desperately on multiple fronts in Europe

¹⁰¹ A.B. Bielaski to Ralph H. Van Deman, April 19, 1917, file 9140-505, box 2028, General Correspondence, box 2037, Records of the Military Intelligence Division, RG 165, NARA (hereinafter cited as Gen. Corr., MID).

¹⁰² John L. Zurbrick to Howard P. Wright, April 14, 1917 (two letters), file 9140-438, *ibid*.

and its navy bottled up in the North Sea, the chances of the Germans using such information – if the Count actually existed – was slim.

A belief in the efficacy of a Pan-German conspiracy to dominate the Western Hemisphere also was evident in federal investigations of suspected German agents in the U.S. military installation at the Panama Canal. In early May 1917, a Bureau of Investigation agent in Boston reported that an Army cook at the canal, Frank Kump, was “in service [of the] German Government” and had “supplied photographs and plans of forts and harbor defenses in New England” while his company was stationed at Portsmouth Harbor. The BI agent surreptitiously “annexed” the photos from the apparently pro-German attorney for whom Kump worked. Van Deman ordered the local MID officer to watch Kump, and report any suspicious activity. After six weeks of investigation, Van Deman reported to Bielaski that Kump was not in Panama nor was he likely to have ever been there. In fact, no one in his alleged company had ever heard of the man and enlistment records showed that no one by the name Frank Kump had enlisted in the past two years.¹⁰³

In August, the MID received a detailed report of a German spy and propaganda ring headquartered in New York City but conspiring in the Canal Zone. The two suspected German agents on the ground in Panama, Wolke and Graffe, were reported to have “a large book” full of photographs of the Canal. Graffe, an alleged “opium fiend,” apparently was not concerned about being caught, openly bragging “that all power works, munition plants, water works and all public buildings in the U.S.” had been set to explode

¹⁰³ Bielaski to R.H. Van Deman, May 7, 1917; Van Deman to Intelligence Officer, May 8, 1917 (two letters); C.B. Treadway, report, May 5, 1917; Van Deman to Bielaski, June 13, 1917 and June 20, 1917, file 9140-470, *ibid.* The BI apparently did not investigate further, leaving the mystery of why the lawyer had photos of the canal defenses unsolved.

while “a strong army” waited “in Mexico ready to rush across the border.” Rumor had it that Graffe said that Mexico was “the German Army headquarters.” The ringleader, an American named Jurist, was believed to “be the trusted agent of the German Government” when it came to “creat[ing] trouble between the U.S. and Latin American countries.” As recently as February, Jurist was reported to have been working to spread Pan-German intrigue in Colombia, Panama, and Guatemala.¹⁰⁴

Another imagined threat to the Northwest, this one in February 1918, involved a story in the *University of Oregon News Bulletin* where a retired British Lieutenant Colonel was reported to have argued that, despite the obvious geographical problems, “it would be altogether possible for a German expedition to invade the Pacific coast.” The officer, head of the military science department at the University, was quoted as saying “that [the German] has had these plans all outlined for years back” and, if domestic strife persisted in Germany, an invasion of the American West Coast would prove a welcome distraction and “create a sentiment in the United States in favor of keeping troops at home.” How could the Kaiser pull off such an operation? “It would be the simplest matter,” the officer claimed, because “something like 400,000 German subjects” lived in “South America, and...could be called at a moment’s notice.” At the same time, “[t]here are a good many Germans in Mexico, also. What’s stopping them from...marching upon Los Angeles?” Organizing home guards, he offered, was a means to prevent such a

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous, report, August 1917, file 9140-859, Gen. Corr., MID, NARA. Secretary War Newton Baker received a letter from an African-American newspaper editor claiming that a German spy had infiltrated the Army and was leaking information to German propagandists who, in turn, tried to persuade black soldiers to desert. The enemy spy’s knowledge of several court-martial cases involving black soldiers was so great, the editor claimed, that there had to be someone in the War Department feeding him information to use as propaganda. B.M. McCay to Newton D. Baker, May 31, 1918, file 10218-174, reel 3, “Correspondence of the MID, Relating to ‘Negro Subversion,’ 1917-1941,” MID, NARA.

catastrophe.¹⁰⁵ Leader's claim that several hundred thousand Germans were in position to invade the United States from South America and Mexico was undoubtedly too high and his assumption that they would dutifully march on the United States when the Kaiser called speaks to the officer's assumption about the German character.¹⁰⁶

Unlike much spy propaganda, most invasion propaganda did not ask Americans to take part in their own defense outside of purchasing Liberty Bonds, conserving food, or working hard in the fields or factories. Yet fear of the secret enemy agent and the conviction that a foreign invader could soon be marching through the town square inspired many Americans to organize themselves into various home defense leagues. In a pamphlet advocating the formation of local leagues, the American Defense Society defined "the primary purpose of each League" as "local defense and protection." Members should not be of military age – which the Selective Service set at 21 to 31 in 1917 – but still needed to "be physically fit, and of sober habits and cool heads" The ADS offered these unflappable pillars of the community a list of a dozen tasks home guardsmen should carry out, including "suppress[ing] local disorders;" guarding important infrastructure and public buildings; "patrol[ing] towns, surrounding country,

¹⁰⁵ "Invasion of Coast Easy, Says Fighter," *University of Oregon News Bulletin*, February 11, 1918, clipping, Creel Correspondence, entry 1, box 14, CPI, NARA. In a letter to the former President of Stanford University (and committed pacifist) David Starr Jordan, the secretary to the University of Oregon's president reported that the *San Francisco Chronicle* had reprinted the *News Bulletin* story after exaggerating the officer's words and meaning. Yet the secretary did confirm that the officer, Lt. Col. John Leader, was "thoroly [sic] convinced that there is a possibility of an attack on the coast as a diversion" to keep American troops from Europe. Karl W. Outhawk to David Starr Jordan, February 28, 1918, *ibid*. Leader also wrote to Jordan, refuting only the claim that he had been with British Intelligence (and thus privy to such information). Yet, in terms of the general message that a German attack on the West Coast could be imminent, Leader "had no fault to find" in the press's telling of his story. Lt. Col. John Leader (ret.) to D. S. Jordan, March 2, 1918, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁶ As Nancy Mitchell has shown, German commercial firms, not the Imperial Government, pushed for further immigration into South America in the late 1890s and, in the case of the Hansa colony in southern Brazil, failed to reach even the 50,000 they desired. The total population of Germans in South American was no where near the 400,000 Leader estimated could invade the West Coast. The case is similar in Mexico, where there was never a drive for German settlement and the German economic footprint was tiny compared to that of the U.S. and Britain. Mitchell, *Danger of Dreams*, 134-135, and 164.

rivers, harbors and sea-coasts;" spying on those of suspicious loyalty; providing arms and uniforms to members (with insignia); ensuring men of military age enlist; "register[ing] motors, vehicles," and other machinery "for home defense and military use;" and "act[ing] as an emergency police body."¹⁰⁷

Although it is unclear how many home defense leagues were organized during the war, the belief that such groups were necessary was widespread enough that advertisers felt free to build off the general sentiment. In November 1917, *Everybody's Magazine* ran an ad for Iver Johnson's Arms & Cycle Works pitching the importance of its product in "Home Defense" (Figure 5-15). In a time when "defense is the issue of the hour in every city, town, and hamlet in America," it was a man's "duty to defend [his family] from the aggression of treacherous foes that prowl the night." The sketch of a soldier carrying the revolver – not a policeman or a husband in civilian clothing – implies that

¹⁰⁷ "The Duties of the Home Defense Leagues" (New York: 1917), PAH. The editors of *The Forum* gave the ADS's call to arms and volunteerism a wider audience when it printed, mostly word for word, sections of the pamphlet in a story on combating spies and disloyalty. "What Constitutes Treason?" *The Forum*, October 1917, Vol. LVIII, 442-443. The NSL also issued calls to Americans to organize local defense leagues. Their proscribed membership did not differ from the ADS's except for that the league "should have, of course, a military man at its head." Yet contrary to the vast majority of its propaganda, the NSL claimed it "d[id] not feel that a genuine military encounter is to be anticipated." The work of the Wilson administration and local authorities as well as the fact that the enemy was an ocean away had "almost entirely destroyed the possibility of an uprising." In that case, "rifles are perhaps not necessary." The point of home defense leagues to the NSL was to encourage Americans to spy on their neighbors. "Too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of the knowledge and investigation of all suspicious circumstance," the pamphlet concluded. "Home Defense Leagues: Suggestions for their Organization" (New York: 1917), PAH. Despite their seeming agreement on why the U.S. was fighting, Creel had little respect for the ADS, calling their brand of propaganda "stupid and even dangerous." The President appeared to fear that the ADS's hyper-exaggerated style would embarrass the country on the international stage, asking Creel in September 1918 if it were "not possible for you to see to it that none of the stuff of this so-called American Defense Society gets out of the country?" Wilson's and Creel's shared dislike for the ADS, however, likely stemmed from their staunch Republican partisanship. George Creel to Newton D. Baker, December 26, 1917, Creel Correspondence, entry 1, box 1, CPI, NARA; G. Creel to Key Pittman, February 21, 1918, box 19, *ibid.*; and Woodrow Wilson to George Creel, September 30, 1918, Creel Papers, box 2, LOC.

the “treacherous foes” who threatened the respectable middle-class neighborhood in the background included more than just the common house thief.¹⁰⁸

HOME DEFENCE

Right now, when defence is the issue of the hour in every city, town, and hamlet in America, is the time for every man to settle the question of complete defence of his home. A man's wife and children look to him for protection. It's his *duty* to defend them from the aggression of treacherous foes that prowl by night.

IVER JOHNSON
Safety Automatic REVOLVER

A friendly Iver Johnson Revolver should be in every home just for the peace of mind and mental comfort it gives. There's a great sense of security in knowing that you have a *safe* revolver handy.

An Iver Johnson Revolver is well adapted for home defence. It is the most dependable, the simplest and quickest to operate, and the safest small arm that you can own. It is so safe that you can drop it, throw it against a wall, or "Hammer the Hammer"—

the cartridge will *not* explode. Only one thing under the sun can make it go off—a pull on the trigger.

It is equipped throughout with unbreakable, permanent tension wire springs and it will give a lifetime of dependable service.

Hammer model with Regular Grip, \$8.00. Hammerless model with Regular Grip, \$8.75. "Perfect" Rubber and "Western" Walnut Grip, extra.

At all hardware and sporting goods stores everywhere.

IVER JOHNSON'S ARMS & CYCLE WORKS
126 River Street, Fitchburg, Mass.
99 Chambers Street, New York 727 Market Street, San Francisco

HAMMER THE HAMMER

Three Iver Johnson Booklets FREE

There are all about Iver Johnson Revolvers, Shotguns, and Cycles. They will be mailed to you free, on a request which includes this ad. A—Firearms, B—Bicycles, C—Motorcycles.

Iver Johnson's "Western" Walnut Grip Revolver with 1-inch barrel shown here on a real man's hip. It has perfect balance and is a first class, absolutely disarming, accessible, 14.50.

Kindly mention Everybody's Magazine in writing to advertisers or visiting your dealer.

Figure 5-15. *Everybody's Magazine*, November 1917

The military and socioeconomic backgrounds of those who wrote many of the letters cited above along with the targeting of the middle and upper classes in the Iver Johnson's ad suggest that fears about an eventual German invasion and a belief in the European Teuton's racial degeneration were mostly the concern of the well-off classes as well as politicians and military officers tasked to consider worst case scenarios. At the same time, considering the vast majority of anti-war opposition came from the rural

¹⁰⁸ *Everybody's Magazine*, November 1917, XXXVII, 79. Magazines that printed such ads were likely to also endorse military schools and academies for boys on their opening pages, several examples being *The Outlook*, *Collier's*, *McClure's*, and *Everybody's*. This suggests that their publishers supported calls for universal military training, that they targeted upper and middle-class readers with the ability to send their son(s) to a high-priced military academy, or both.

South and West as well as the unskilled and semi-skilled working-class, wartime invasion propaganda seems to have had little impact outside of the white middle and upper classes. In fact, most of the propaganda specifically targeting those most prone to oppose the war rarely went down the fear mongering route, instead hoping to fend off strikes and counteract the influence of labor radicalism by focusing primarily on the farmer or the worker doing one's "bit" for the war effort. Propaganda produced for general consumption or for the reading public, however, often placed the war in a "do-or-die" context.

In short, propaganda warning about the possibility of a future German invasion and the savagery that Americans would confront in such an event was a case of the middle and upper classes scaring themselves into backing a war many of them already supported. As with military preparedness propaganda and concerns about the virility of the Anglo-Saxon male, invasion propaganda in 1917-1918 attempted to recruit the working-classes to help exorcise the demons of others. The reason opposition to and indifference toward the war remained relatively high throughout was the traditional and provincial American assumption that the war was too far away to have a major impact on American lives. This was a condition in which those who had the greatest impact on public opinion were aware. To politicians like Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, editors like Frank Cobb and Frederick Dixon, and leading propagandists like George Creel of the CPI and S. Stanwood Menken of the NSL, the mobilization of public opinion was equally if not more important than the mobilization of men and arms.

Wartime invasion propaganda, however, reflected contemporary middle and upper class racial concerns and their general anxiety toward foreign peoples and

influences. To call a people “savage” or “uncivilized” – as most anti-German propaganda did – meant something in the age of imperialism, an era in which imperialists in the United States and Europe couched their colonial ambitions in terms of bringing “civilization” to the “savage” peoples of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Thus, the racial connotations of such words, as well as images of the decivilized Hun, would not have been lost on those Americans, Anglo-Saxon or not, who viewed the world through this context. Even if they did not believe the Teuton had sunk quite to the level of the dark-skinned savage, the message that the German was moving in that direction was clear. A lack of civilization, aside from suggesting a race’s animal-like aggressiveness or docility, also implied an incapacity for self-government. Propagandists described autocracy as the antithesis of democracy, indicating both the lack of racial progress made by the Prussian and the negative implications of his Lamarckian impact on the once civilized Teutons.

At the same time, however, depicting the European Teuton as having been “Prussianized” suggested the German’s degeneration was due to his subjugation by an Eastern European race and ideology. Such a rationale placed the Prussianized Teuton in the same category as the “new” immigrants to which the Anglo-Saxon had grown so averse. It was fear of the racial and cultural impact of Russians, Poles, Greeks, Czechs, and other southern and eastern Europeans that, before the war, spurred concerns about race suicide and the push for immigration restriction. The image of an army of decivilized Teutonic soldiers invading the United States to further an autocratic world conspiracy reflected and tapped into those old fears of virtual foreign subjugation. The

rebranding of the war as a struggle for national existence – as opposed to an altruistic effort to make the world free – had clear racial connotations.

Through every available means of communication propagandists repeated the notion that autocratic foreign subjugation – most often depicted as being perpetrated by a degenerated race of Prussianized Teutons seeking world domination – was the likely consequence of apathy and defeat. The hundreds of editorials written and cartoons drawn, thousands of speeches uttered, millions of pamphlets and posters printed, and dozens of films produced on this subject ensured that message was as ubiquitous as the German spy was believed to be. Its repetition alone is likely responsible for convincing millions of Americans that they should, in fact, register for the draft, conserve food, buy Liberty Bonds, punish those who refused to sacrifice enough or at all, and smoke out the spies and pro-Germans working to undermine the war effort and Anglo-Saxon democracy. Patriotism, the desire for personal gain, moral outrage at alleged German atrocities, and peer pressure obviously were important in motivating much American support for the war effort. Defining the war as one for the preservation of one's nation and community, though, made the struggle against Prussianism intensely personal and was a critical factor in generating the critical mass of support the Wilson administration needed to conduct and help win the Great War. To many Americans, the war was not a means to save democracy abroad but a means of saving Anglo-Saxon democracy for themselves and their children.

CHAPTER 6 – FOR GOTT UND COUNTRY: GERMAN SPIRITUAL

BACKWARDNESS AND THE DEMOCRATIC MILLENNIAL MISSION, 1914-1918

“In paganism the poor serve the rich, the weak serve the strong, the ignorant serve the wise. In the kingdom of God the rich serve the poor, the strong serve the weak, the wise serve the ignorant. This is the divine order; and the Son of God himself illustrates this order by his own life and death. The ideal of autocracy is organized paganism. The ideal of democracy is organized Christianity.” – Lymann Abbott, May 2, 1917¹

“But listen, Gott! it must be qvick, your help to me you zend. Or else I haff to sthop attack und only blay devend; So four und twenty hours I giff to make der Allies run, und put me safe indo mein blace – der middle of der sun... ...Dis ultimatum now, dear Gott, is von of many more – Mein mind is seddled up to clean der whole vorld off der floor; because you vas mein bardner, Gott, an exdra chance is goffen, so help at vonce or else I’ll be der Emperor of Heffen.” – “The Kaiser’s Prayer,” unknown poet, 1918²

“Some have called this war the breakdown of Christianity,” Dr. L.O. Bricker informed his First Christian congregation in Atlanta in early May 1917. These same individuals also “regard the entrance of America, the last great Christian nation, into the conflict as proof of the utter breakdown of Christianity.” What these pessimists failed to realize, Bricker preached, was that war and conflict are central to Christianity. “With the coming of Jesus the good was arrayed against every form of evil,” he explained. Thus, “every man and woman who espouses the call of Christ becomes a soldier” on the side of morality. A month before, the United States had entered a war against a foe that

¹ “The Duty of Christ’s Church To-Day,” *The Outlook*, May 2, 1917, Vol. CXVI, 13.

² “The Kaiser’s Prayer” (U.S.: s.n., 1918?), from Pamphlets in American History, microfiche (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1983), hereinafter cited as PAH.

epitomized the oppression and hypocrisy against which Jesus fought during his time. Accordingly, when Bricker heard of Kaiser Wilhelm or German ministers invoking God's name he could not help but get "the impression that they must mean the devil when they say 'God.' For the only supernatural power that could aid the aims and purposes and bless the monstrous men and deeds of Prussian militarism is the power that I call 'the devil.'"³

According to Bricker, the Great War was a war between good and evil. Although he did not refer to the war as a final showdown or Armageddon, Bricker's postmillennialism worldview was clearly evident in his assertion that war was synonymous with Christianity and that Germany, consciously or not, worshiped Satan. This chapter focuses on propaganda that described the war and the German enemy in religious and mostly postmillennial terms. The eruption of war in 1914 and the United States's entry in 1917 raised deep moral and philosophical questions that propagandists, theologians, and ministers like Bricker attempted to answer. Was the war proof that Christianity had failed or was it outmoded? Or did the Christian nations of Europe fail Christ? At the same time, German U-boat sinkings and atrocities in Belgium and France raised question about German religious beliefs. Were the Kaiser's hordes true Christians, pagans, atheists, or did they worship the devil?

Answers to these questions in propaganda from 1914 to 1918 often were grounded in millennial thought. This chapter argues that nineteenth century evangelical and millennial traditions, which had become part of American mainstream secular culture, mixed with the racial nationalism of the time to determine many Americans' faith-based interpretations of the war in Europe and the German enemy. In many ways,

³ "Germans Seek Help of Devil, Not God, Says Dr. Bricker," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 7, 1917.

the Great War certainly looked like Armageddon or something close to it. The cataclysm in Europe had produced millions of dead bodies. In Belgium and northern France the German army had stripped helpless girls of their innocence and leveled iconic Christian structures. In the Transcaucasus, Turkish Muslims had slaughtered and left for dead roughly one million Christian Armenians. For Dr. L.O. Bricker, from across the Atlantic the demarcation between good and evil in the First World War seemed clear. Yet the United States' millennial mission and its inherent ties to Anglo-Saxon democracy also offered something to secular-minded Americans. Although mainstream publications often cited church newspapers and sermons, popular un-ordained writers and propagandists offered interpretations of the war and the enemy that were steeped in Christian millennialism. Wartime propaganda suggested that Americans who were not ministers or theologians often conceived of the war in similar terms.

To many Christians, if an antichrist-like figure roamed the earth he most likely resided in Germany. While most propaganda claimed German atrocities were caused by the racially degenerative impact of Prussianism on European Teutons, some also portrayed German cruelty as an expression of misplaced or mistaken religious convictions. Yet these conclusions (the racial and the religious) were not mutually exclusive. Ministers and propagandists defined German religion or German Christianity as arrogant, materialistic, and outmoded. The Prussianized Teuton's supposed veneration of war and pagan gods revealed his rejection of Christianity and, thus, progress. At the same time, much propaganda went so far as to argue that the Kaiser and his people unwittingly worshiped and acted on behalf of Satan. This depiction contrasted sharply with that of Anglo-Saxon democracy. The tenets of both democracy and the Social

Gospel – self-government and salvation through service to the national, or spiritual, community – epitomized the teachings of Christ. Unlike the selfish materialism of German religion, Christian democracy was altruistic, as evidenced by American soldiers who gave their lives for humanity just as Christ had.

Although there were exceptions, the majority of propaganda that defined the American war effort in religious terms viewed the American mission as a selfless crusade to defeat the evil and degenerative forces of Prussianism, establish democracy over the world, and usher in the Kingdom of God, which stood in sharp contrast to spy and invasion propaganda. While millennial arguments were a significant part of how the Great War was sold to the American people, they differed fundamentally from the more common stories of impending doom for the United States. Postmillennial propaganda that defined the war as a crusade for Christ, instead of attempting to instill in the American people a fear of a presumably legitimate threat, was meant to overcome their fear or hesitancy to act. According to many ministers and propagandists, the threat to the United States was as much spiritual as physical. The enemy, presumed to be following the direction of Satan or some other false god, was the enemy of Christ and, thus, democracy everywhere. Defining the war as a crusade to spread Christ's vision for the world (democracy) or, possibly, establish His postmillennial rule on earth was meant to mitigate the fear of death and of sending one's father, son, brother, or husband into harm's way. Just as the practical application of the Social Gospel was meant to bring the United States closer to the Kingdom of God, the war against Prussian autocracy was an opportunity to march humanity at-large toward that millennial end. Christian soldiers and those supporting them at home needed to confront the crusade with the same courage

that Christ showed during the crucifixion. With Christ on the side of democracy why should one be afraid?

Two strands of millennial thought persisted among Protestant ministers and theologians as they tried to understand the Great War. Premillennialists – who believed Christ would return before creating His kingdom on earth – viewed the conflict as a presage to a series of the larger conflicts they believed would bring on the millennium. The faithful would be raptured into Heaven while the rest of mankind would be left behind to suffer through the tribulation that would come before the millennium. To premillennialists, Kaiser Wilhelm, although a bad seed, could not be the antichrist because he did not possess the qualities found in prophecy. On the other hand, postmillennialists viewed human progress as steps toward the millennium. Proponents of the Social Gospel were ardent postmillennialists, hoping to forge Christ's kingdom as a presage to His return. Postmillennialists saw the war as an opportunity to fight a righteous war to fulfill Christ's plan.⁴ The common descriptions and depictions of the Germans as un-Christian, the Kaiser as a follower of Satan, and the war as a chance to spread Christian democracy across the world suggests that most religious-based pro-war propaganda fell on the side of postmillennialism.

Religious-based wartime propaganda, though, has received very little attention from scholars. One of the earliest and most widely cited examinations of American religious reaction to the war was Ray H. Abrams's 1933 work *Preachers Present Arms*. Abrams focused on the most militant of Catholic and Protestant clergymen and ministers, such as the revivalist Billy Sunday, and argued that their nationalism often superseded

⁴ Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1925* (New York: 1979), 5-12.

their Christian faith.⁵ Stewart Halsey Ross briefly discussed how the most hyperbolic pro-war ministers' were eager to define the war as "a holy crusade" and paint Germans as devilish. Ross, though, provides little interpretation except to suggest that individuals such as Newell Dwight Hillis, Charles Henry Pankhurst, and Rabbi Stephen Wise became caught up in the war hysteria that intentionally manipulative British and American propagandists created.⁶ Ross appears to have been mostly mimicking the work of Abrams and Harold Lasswell, who, in 1927, contended that the First World War showed that the most effective way to mobilize a nation against an enemy is to paint the antagonist as satanic. "The cult of Satanism," he claimed, "arises and feeds on hate." The enemy's actions must be portrayed in excessively gruesome and terrifying terms so the propagandist could argue realistically that "the Lord is working through us to destroy the Devil." According to Lasswell all wartime sacrifices "should have the blessing of all the holy sentiments," "inconvenient interpretation[s]" of the Bible needed to be silenced, and the explanations of fire-breathing ministers of "how you can follow Jesus and kill your enemies" must be circulated widely.⁷

The work of John F. Piper, Jr., though, suggests Abrams, Ross, and Lasswell may have overstated their cases. Like Abrams, Piper studied the reactions and actions of American Protestant and Catholic churches during the war but found that most clergymen were able to remain free of wartime hysteria. Instead of focusing on the devilishness of the enemy or the pacifism of peace churches, Piper maintained, the majority of churches hoped to help those in need (soldiers especially) and maintain their Christian ministries in

⁵ Ray H. Abrams, *Preachers Present Arms* (New York: 1933).

⁶ Stewart Halsey Ross, *Propaganda for War: How the United States Was Conditioned to Fight the Great War of 1914-1918* (Jefferson, NC: 1996), 189-194.

⁷ Harold Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I* (Cambridge, MA: 1971, reprint of 1927 work entitled *Propaganda Technique in the World War*), 77-101, quotes from 96-97.

the midst of great change.⁸ Scholar Timothy P. Weber also minimized the influence of pro-war crusade-ism when he looked at Protestant and Catholic millennialism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Weber maintained that American premillennialists, in a way, won the argument over the religious definition the First World War in the United States. Their more pessimistic view of the end-times appeared to be coming to pass, Weber claimed, while postmillennialists had to answer for modernity's complicity in the slaughter in Europe (in the form of technological advances in killing). While Weber's contention may have been true from a theological point of view, the vast majority of religion-based propaganda in the mainstream press defined the war as one to spread Christian principles (i.e. democracy) to Europe, indicating that postmillennialists controlled the public debate during the war.⁹ William R. Hutchinson, who studied the same time period as Weber would likely disagree with his contention, but would add that liberal Protestants (those who saw human progress as movement toward God's kingdom on earth) ultimately lost the debate. The war's death toll and the realization that it had not been a "war to end all wars," Hutchinson maintained, pulled the rug out from under modernist Protestantism.¹⁰

Richard M. Gamble focused his work more closely on the ways in which progressive Protestant pastors, theologians, academics, and college presidents defined the conflict in Europe. But instead of focusing on their failures, Gamble tried to understand the enduring impact of modernist Protestantism on the United States's international

⁸ John F. Piper, Jr., *The American Churches in World War I* (Athens, OH: 1985).

⁹ The qualifications for the antichrist, according to premillennialists, was that he be born in former Roman territory, rule a coalition of ten nations, and falsely proclaim he was God, none of which fit Wilhelm II. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 105-127, especially 115.

¹⁰ William R. Hutchinson, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: 1976), 226-256.

responsibilities. Social gospel theory was their underlying ideology. Progressive Christians believed that the war presented the nation with the opportunity to reshape American society and world politics to more closely resemble the vision put forth in the New Testament. Entry into the war, Gamble argued, was a monumental step in the development of the United States into a “Messianic nation,” which ordained itself with the mission of imposing God’s will on a world thirsting for Christianity.¹¹ Although Gamble wrote at length about the ways in which progressive Christians presented the war as a battle between good and evil, he spent very little time explaining why the enemy – most often left unnamed – was considered particularly immoral. In other words, Gamble seems to have implied that the progressive crusaders would have acted similarly if the United States had joined the Central Powers instead of Great Britain and France. At the same time, he also paid scant attention to the ways in which the secular press presented the United States as righteous and its enemy, German militarism, as an unquestionable evil.

A few scholars of American intellectual history have examined the impact of evangelicalism on American culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Richard Hofstadter examined the impact of fundamentalist religion on American culture and concluded that its impact on the First World War era to be the birth of “the one-hundred per cent mentality.” This mindset, he argued, was “totally committed to the full range of the dominant popular fatuities and determined that no one shall have the right to

¹¹ Richard M. Gamble. *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation* (Wilmington, DE: 2003). Other works about the role of religion in the American war effort during the First World War, of which there are very few, have tended to focus on the Social Gospel and its implementation on the home front and in military training camps. The most noteworthy of these studies is Nancy K. Bristow’s study of the YMCA, YWCA, and other Christian organizations that supplied soldiers with moral and hygienic training in cantonment camps in the United States during the war. *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering During the Great War* (New York: 1996).

challenge them.” It also was the result of a “synthesis of fundamentalist religion and fundamentalist Americanism...overlay[ed] by a severe fundamentalist morality.” This religious and nationalistic “militancy,” Hofstadter concluded, grew from fundamentalist Christians’ fear that late nineteenth and early twentieth century modernism was pulling men and women away “from orthodox Christianity.”¹² Yet the dominant attitude of “one-hundred percent Americanism” during the war, which Hofstadter does not discuss directly, was not the purview of fundamentalists alone. Social Gospellers’ calls to expand God’s kingdom through self-sacrifice contributed greatly to the black-and-white wartime culture in that it defined the United States’s cause as divinely ordained. If God was with the United States, who could be against it?

According to Peter N. Stearns, Protestant millennialism played a vital role in the development of a distinctly American experience with fear. While the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century helped alleviate “Christian fear” in Europe, “fear-soaked religion remained current” in the United States. Americans constantly confronted warnings of the end-times “and apocalyptic anticipation.” Stearns maintained that this “both reflected and enhanced the Christian contribution to American fear,” making it an integral part of American culture.¹³ T.J. Jackson Lears also viewed Protestant millennialism as formative to American culture and history, especially the period from the end of the Civil War to the end of the First World War. Americans during this era, inspired by their belief in redemption and their hope that Christ’s return was near, sought to morally and spiritually regenerate the nation in preparation for the Second Coming. Progressive reform of capitalism, the government, and social life, Lears argued, were the vehicles of this

¹² Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: 1963), 118, 119, and 121.

¹³ Peter N. Stearns, *American Fear: The Causes and Consequences of High Anxiety* (New York: 2006), 66-74, quotes from 67 and 71.

regeneration – or “rebirth” – of God’s chosen people. American entry into the First World War, then, was an attempt to morally regenerate or give new life to the world by saving democracy where it reigned and spreading it where it did not.¹⁴

The belief that the United States had been divinely ordained for greatness was nothing new when the First World War began. Since John Winthrop famously declared the New England Puritans to be a “city upon a hill,” the conviction that the English colonies and then the United States had been chosen to recreate the Kingdom of God on earth was an integral aspect of the nation’s political, social, cultural, and geographical development. Yet while the belief that the New World could redeem the world passively through its example has stood the test of time, a more aggressive, or militant, understanding of God’s mission for the nation has run parallel to it. Nearly 150 years after Winthrop’s iconic sermon, God freed the American colonies to become “God’s New Israel,” a model for the world to emulate and the chosen instrument of God’s will on earth. Westward expansion, while mostly propelled by those seeking economic independence, was defined popularly as the Anglo-Saxon’s “Manifest Destiny” to spread Christianity and democracy (the defining qualities of “civilization”) across the untamed continent. Social reformers in the early and mid-nineteenth century also sought moral regeneration, the most notable being the abolitionist movement in the North. According to historian James M. Moorhead, the Civil War and the cleansing of the sin of slavery from the nation’s soul, at least for northern Protestants, indicated “that God had vindicated his elect” and “had made the Republic his indispensable tool for world renovation.” Millennial militarism emanating from the Civil War “was in part a

¹⁴ Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: 2009).

premonition” of what would come in the imperial wars at the turn of the century and American involvement in the First World War.¹⁵

The nation’s divine millennial mission during the First World War was most immediately informed by the rise of the Social Gospel and overseas imperialism. Both of these convictions were cut from the same cloth, being inherently connected to notions of Anglo-Saxon cultural – and thus racial and moral – superiority. To Social Gospel reformers, the downtrodden (especially those in the cities) could be uplifted and the Kingdom of God realized through the dissemination of white middle-class Anglo-Saxon Protestant values throughout the nation. At the same time, the desire to civilize the biologically bereft pagans (and Roman Catholics) of the Caribbean and the Philippines with Protestantism and Christian democracy had been an underlying drive of the imperialist surge since the 1890s as well. Expanding the Social Gospel and the Kingdom of God abroad, however, was inherently tied to masculinity. The Anglo-Saxon supremacist, imperialist, and Social Gospeller Josiah Strong wrote in 1901 that the issue for Anglo-Saxon men was “whether [they] are *man* enough to become a genuine Christian – man enough to give up the meanness of selfishness for the general good.”¹⁶ Such thinking remained prevalent into the era of the Great War. The war to spread democracy and remove a pagan roadblock (Germany) to the realization of the millennium was an opportunity to morally regenerate the United States (its men especially), further

¹⁵ Gamble, *War for Righteousness*, 5-23; Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America’s Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968); Conrad Cherry (ed.), *God’s New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1998), 11; and James M. Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860-1869* (New Haven, CT: 1978), 81.

¹⁶ Clyde Griffen, “The Progressive Ethos,” in Stanley Coben and Lorman Ratner (eds). *The Development of an American Culture* (Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: 1970), 120-149; Hutchinson, *Modernist Impulse*, 164-174; and Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: 2001), quote from page 42.

internationalize the nation's divine calling, and a chance to assert Anglo-Saxon moral superiority in the world.

Europe in 1914, it seemed, needed what many Anglo-Saxon Protestants were selling. Despite the three-thousand mile distance between the United States and the Western Front, the realization that the Great War would be long and costly raised many moral and religious questions, most notably the idea that the failure of Christianity was responsible for what some saw as Armageddon. Those who viewed the war as a godsend, though, chided such pessimistic talk throughout 1914 and 1915. For instance, in December 1914 *The Outlook*, the popular Social Gospel periodical founded by Congregationalist minister Lyman Abbott, described the European crisis as the “failure of nations to practice Christianity in international relations.” The teachings of Christ and the lessons of his service and sacrifice had never been applied to international law. Using the United States's supposedly compassionate dealings with non-white peoples over the last half century as examples, the editors claimed that “Wherever Christianity has been tried it has vindicated its claims not only as the highest law of life but as a working principle.” The war, then, was not indicative of the failure of Christianity but “an awful vindication of a God who has said in countless ways, ‘The wages of sin is death.’”¹⁷ That same month Garet Garrett of the secular *Everybody's Magazine* cited statistics and history to show that the weaknesses of European Christianity could not be blamed for the

¹⁷ “Why Not Try Christianity?” *The Outlook*, December 9, 1914, Vol. CVII, 810. Around this same time, Reverend Randolph H. McKim of the Church of the Epiphany in Washington, D.C., railed against the idea that Christianity had failed the world. McKim revealed his staunchly pro-Allied stance when he argued that it was “the cold mathematical godlessness of militarism that has broken down; it is the brutal and cynical philosophy that ‘Might makes right’ that has failed.” Germans, he concluded, had turned away from Christianity and now worshiped war, which he referred to as “the deification of force.” “Not a Failure, But a Denial of Christianity,” *Literary Digest*, January 9, 1915, Vol. L, 59. For an example of the mainstream press worrying that the Great War really was Armageddon, see “The War as a Presage of the World's End,” *Current Opinion*, February 1917, Vol. LXII, 117.

slaughter. Together, the populations of the six primary belligerents were “97.1 per cent. Christian,” he maintained, and that figure was on the rise. At the same time, Christianity had not stopped aggressive wars from happening in the past. This fact was not a slight to the religion as much as to “errant man” who “during nearly two thousand years” had not “collectively practiced true Christianity.” True Christianity, though, did not mean non-resistance. “[W]ar in a righteous cause,” Garrett was told by a Catholic priest, “was not inconsistent with Christianity”¹⁸ Agnes Repplier, writing for the *Atlantic Monthly* also found professed Christians, not Christianity, to be at fault. Repplier, like Garrett’s priest, drew a stark distinction between imperialism and Christianity. “To prate about the wickedness of war without drawing a clear demarcation between aggressive and defensive warfare,” she claimed in reference to pacifist churches, “is to lose our mental balance, to substitute sentiment for truth.” The sentiment to which she alluded was cowardice.

“The very wrongness of the one [aggressive warfare] implies logically the rightness of the other. And whatever is morally right is in accord with Christianity. To speak loosely of war as unchristian is to ignore not only the Christian right, but the Christian duty, which rests with every nation and with every man to protect that of which nation and men are lawful protectors.”¹⁹

The concept of Christian courage was inherently linked to the drive for military preparedness and became a common theme in pro-Ally publications throughout 1915 and into 1916. Christianity, they asserted, was at its core a militant religion. Christian pacifists based their arguments on the New Testament passage “Resist not evil; but

¹⁸ Garett Garrett, “When Christians Fight, Are They Christians?” *Everybody’s Magazine*, December 1914, Vol. XXXI, 844-845.

¹⁹ Agnes Repplier, “Christianity and War,” *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1915, Vol. CXV, 6-14. “The Challenge of Christianity,” *The Outlook*, July 21, 1915, Vol. CX, 649-650.

whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” This tenet, however, did not apply when malicious forces threatened others. In January 1915, *The Outlook* affirmed that “nothing in this teaching nor in any other teaching of Jesus Christ” justified “the assumption that we are to suffer others to be injured and stand by unresisting.” Jesus displayed “terrible anger” on many occasions in the New Testament, the most revealing being “his attack upon the corruptionists” and the overturning of tables of those who “turned the temple of God into a den of thieves” and stole from and oppressed his followers. Anger and warfare, then, could be virtuous and an expression of love for one’s fellow man. Placed in the context of the war, the editors argued that anger derived from love of peace and hatred of oppression would inspire “Christian heroism.” Those who shirked this duty did so out of “either unintelligence or carelessness or cowardice.”²⁰

According to William Jewett Tucker in the *Atlantic Monthly*, the “mock heroics of militarism” had little to teach the valiant crusaders of Christ. Unlike Prussian militarism, Christianity was “a religion which was born in the supreme act of courage.” Tucker pushed for the end of American neutrality on the basis that peace was “no guaranty [sic.] of righteousness,” the furthering of which was the object of Christianity. Militant Christianity, he argued, was the only means of achieving peace. Only when American peace advocates “pass[ed] into the stage of moral militancy” would the United States “develop its own type of heroism.” In short, only through righteous and

²⁰ “Christianity and the War,” *The Outlook*, January 13, 1915, Vol. CVII, 61-62. For some American Christians, the choice between righteous war and loving thy neighbor was not a black or white issue. See “Christ and Preparedness,” *Literary Digest*, December 11, 1915, Vol. LI, 1356.

courageous war could proper preparedness and permanent peace be achieved.²¹ In October 1915, *The Outlook*'s editors printed an exposé on Christian duty laced with military terminology. Identifying the cross as "the battle-flag of Christianity," the editors presented the religion as one primarily of self-sacrifice: "Christianity is a call to enlist in a long campaign against the forces of sensuality and selfishness in the individual and in the community." For a man or nation to fear such a sacrifice was blasphemous. "The fear of war is not the same as the love of peace," the article concluded, "It may be simply the crime of cowardice on a national scale."²² It was this alleged crime that *The Outlook* and other pro-preparedness publications and ministers hoped to coax the nation out of committing.

A letter to the editor of *McClure's Magazine* implied that at least some Americans endorsed the idea of a militant Christianity and the ending of American neutrality in the name of Christ. The letter's author argued that the mistaken notion within the United States "that the smaller the army and the smaller the navy we possess, the smaller will be the incentive for war" was "a misconception of Christian principles." Kindness and altruism could not "protect this Republic from foreign aggression." Peace would only come once "America ceased crowding the indulgence of Providence." Reiterating the message of pro-war editors, the author concluded that God only helped those who helped themselves, meaning that only through actively pursuing peace through preparedness

²¹ William Jewett Tucker, "The Ethical Challenge of the Times," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1915, Vol. CXV, 800-801.

²² "The Crime of Cowardice," *The Outlook*, October 13, 1915, Vol. CXI, 355-356. Also see, "The Courage of the Christ," *ibid.*, October 6, 1915, 305-307; and Lyman Abbott, "Did Jesus Christ Teach Non-Resistance," *ibid.*, November 10, 1915, 596-597; "Religion in War-Time," *ibid.*, January 19, 1916, Vol. CXII, 129-130. Calls for Christian courage continued after April 1917, but were not as prevalent as during the preparedness debate, 1915 especially. See Francis J. Oppenheimer, "The Failure of Pacifism" (New York: National Security League, 1917), PAH and "What Ye Fight For?: Answer of a Catholic Priest," *ibid.*; and "Why Not?" *The Outlook*, March 6, 1918, Vol. CXVIII, 360.

could the American people feel safe from external threats.²³ This letter, with its warning of foreign invasion, revealed the power of interventionist editorials. Publishers printed articles cautioning against a German attack on the United States in the same issues as Christian-based articles which rarely, if ever, made reference to an impending assault. The writer, it would seem, made the connection between the two on his own.

Much propaganda calling for Christian courage in the face of overwhelming evil was meant as a direct counter to the Christian underpinnings of isolationism and pacifism. Many Americans understood the New Testament as advocating nonviolence and love for one's enemy when confronted with physical violence. Yet several Protestant churches, such as the Society of Friends, the Mennonites, and the Church of the Brethren, renounced all war and maintained that any act that led (directly or indirectly) to the death of another man or woman violated God's Commandment that "Thou Shall Not Kill." This included any form of military service. The beliefs preached in peace churches, which represented a small minority of Christian voices before and during the war, were viewed as enough of a threat to preparedness and then the war effort that they were consistently drowned out by pro-war ministers and propagandists and silenced by wartime legislation against disloyal rhetoric.²⁴

At the same time, Woodrow Wilson's repeated calls for a negotiated peace, even after American intervention, posed a problem for those who viewed the war as a crusade for Christ. Wilson's Presbyterian upbringing informed his opinions on democracy and international decorum as well as his mission to establish "progress, stability, and a moral sense of community among nations." The Presbyterian idea of a covenant between God

²³ Dudley Field Malone, "National Defense," *McClure's Magazine*, March 1916, Vol. XLVI, 19.

²⁴ Piper, *American Churches in World War I*, 11-12.

and His people accounted for his view that the United States enjoyed a special bond with the Almighty. Before April 1917, though, Wilson did not see this relationship as a reason for American involvement in the Great War. The President argued that his country could best serve God and the world by remaining neutral and forging a just peace agreeable to all. Events would prove to Wilson that the Winthrop-like example of peace and brotherhood the United States set would not be enough to protect the nation or redeem the world in its darkest hour. Only after numerous German offenses and affronts to American pride as well as physical threats to the nation did he view neutrality in the name of God and later “peace without victory” as untenable.²⁵

Those offenses and affronts also suggested that something was seriously wrong with Germany. As the previous chapter has shown, Germany’s actions in diplomacy, in Europe, and under the Atlantic – those that led to war with the United States and those that merely destroyed its international reputation – were portrayed and mostly viewed as evidence that the European Teutons had racially degenerated to the stage of their primitive Prussian overlords. From a religious, millennial perspective, this same assumption also suggested that the Kaiser and his people prayed to a different god than their Christian enemies. To many native-born Americans, no race was more fitted for democracy than the naturally freedom-loving Anglo-Saxon. Other advanced races, of course, also were capable of self-government. At the same time, American nationalists, Social Gospellers and premillennialists alike, conceived of democracy as the epitome of Christ’s teaching. Deductively, nations that denied individual liberty could not be truly Christian and, by extension, revealed their cultural (and, thus, racial) backwardness. The

²⁵ Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: 1992), 33.

Prussianized Teutons of Germany, then, were not Christians. If the land of Luther was no longer populated by Christians, who, or what, did they worship?

Answers to this question appeared very early in the war. In January 1915, *Literary Digest* ran a story about a reverend from Washington, D.C. who argued that the coming of the war did not signify the failure of Christianity but the breakdown of the “godlessness of militarism” and “the brutal and cynical philosophy that ‘Might makes right.’” Responsibility for the war, then, lay with the Germans and their denial of Christian values. The perverse version of Christianity apparent in Germany and the aggressive tendencies it invoked could not be allowed to spread. “With good conscience and without violating the principles of the religion of Christ,” the reverend argued, a man could “defend his home and his country from unprovoked attack.”²⁶

The sinking of the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915, though, was just that, an unprovoked attack as well as further proof that German morality had been corrupted. Soon after the disaster, the interventionist press began defining Germany’s spiritual war aims as decidedly militaristic, a counter to the courageous and peace-loving image of Jesus Christ. In the month of the sinking, both *Literary Digest* and *Current Opinion* claimed that, to Germans, the war was a spiritual or religious crusade. *Literary Digest* warned of a “New Spirituality” taking shape in Germany. This spirituality was of a decidedly negative nature, focusing on the destruction of certain attitudes underlying English culture. According to the editors’ source, the London-based *Christian World*, German spiritual doctrine declared “The ideal of eternal peace” for which the Entente powers fought, unlike war, “has no regenerating power, no power of reproducing, no power of giving birth to spiritual forces.” Eternal peace had “no moral meaning,” thus

²⁶ “Not a Failure, But a Denial of Christianity,” *Literary Digest*, Jan. 9, 1915, Vol. L, 59.

making it “a realm of the devil” in the eyes of Germans.²⁷ Although *Literary Digest* was describing German attitudes toward Great Britain, pro-interventionist periodicals were uniformly anglophile and the chief target of Germany’s apparent ire in this case – everlasting peace – was an ideal for which any “patriotic” American, God-fearing would stand. German notions of right and wrong it appeared, had been corrupted.

Current Opinion’s strategy was to quote a pastor from Barmen, Germany, defining his nation’s spirituality. “We are opposing value and worth to mere masses,” he allegedly stated, “strength to mere material; spirit and discipline to mere plan; the trained soldier to the hireling.” Through faith and prayer, the pastor continued, the German people would “hold up the hands of our men in their righteous work.” That righteous work was the destruction of materialism and indolence that the pastor found so evident in British and French culture. In short, God treasured German discipline and blind obedience. To *Current Opinion*’s editors, “for the Christianity of Germany the present war has all the characteristics of a religious crusade.”²⁸

After the declaration of war on April 6, 1917 had offered American men the chance to act on their courageous Christianity and help usher in the millennium, it became increasingly more important to explain exactly what the Christian United States was up against spiritually. Propagandists and ministers stepped up their denunciation of Germany’s brand of religion by portraying the faith and national character of the United States and its allies as being Germany’s binary opposite. As with the editorials regarding Christian courage, propagandists often cited ministers or New Testament Scripture to argue for the holiness of the nation’s millennial mission. To strengthen their case,

²⁷ “Germany’s ‘New Spirituality,’” *ibid.*, May 15, 1915, 1154-1155.

²⁸ “Churches of Germany See the War as a Religious Crusade,” *Current Opinion*, May 1915, Vol. LVIII, 344-345.

propagandists and preachers attempted to clarify the enemy's ties to Satanism or paganism. Some, most notably Billy Sunday, eschewed the argument that the German people were not culpable for their Kaiser's and army's actions, asserting that they were willing and unconditional followers of Wilhelm's pagan teachings. Most, though, welcomed the German people into what would be the postwar Kingdom of God and described them as victims of the Kaiser's hare-brained conception of Christianity and his alliance with Satan.

Descriptions of Germans' evil or misguided religion, though, centered on the Prussianized Teuton's alleged egotism. The German people, propagandists and many preachers argued, believed God had chosen them to dominate the world and create His kingdom on earth. A month after the United States joined the Great War, Irving S. Cobb of the immensely popular *Saturday Evening Post* explained to his readers the true nature of German religion in this context. Having been stuck in Europe in the opening months of the war, Cobb claimed to have had various conversations with German officers and was surprised that he never heard "any one of them, openly invoke[e] the aid of the Creator." The seeming lack of faith in God in the German Army, though, made sense to Cobb when he encountered "civilian Germany," which "was remodeling its conceptions of Deity to be purely and solely a German deity."

"Any Christian race, going to war in what it esteems to be a righteous cause, prays to God to bless its campaigns with victory and to sustain its arms with fortitude. It had remained for this Christian race [Germans] to assume that the God to whom they addressed their petitions was their own peculiar God, and that his Kingdom on Earth was Germany and Germany only; and that his chosen people now and forevermore would be Germans and Germans only."²⁹

²⁹ Irving S. Cobb, "The Prussian Paranoia," *The Saturday Evening Post*, May 5, 1917, Vol. CLXXXIX, 4.

Although he argued that German blasphemy was the result of indoctrination by a regime suffering from an intense fear of being attacked, Cobb's characterization of Prussianized Germany's religious faith also suggests that the German people followed a false god that was using Germany for his own destructive ends.

The Committee on Public Information also found evidence suggesting the German people mistakenly believed they fought God's fight. In *Conquest and Kultur*, the CPI printed hundreds of quotes from supposedly prominent and influential Germans on their nation's war effort. The pamphlet's editor Guy Stanton Ford claimed that the quotes showed that Germany worshipped a "war god to whom they have offered up their reason and their humanity." One example was a University of Berlin philosophy professor, who touched on Germans' belief in their divine mission. "As for us we are truthful, our characteristics are humanity, gentleness, conscientiousness, the virtues of Christ. In a world of wickedness we represent love, and God is with us." A German poet apparently had a different take: "We execute God Almighty's will, and the edicts of His justice we will fulfill...in vengeance upon the ungodly. God calls us to murderous battles, even if worlds should thereby fall to ruins."³⁰

Presbyterian minister John H. Boyd of Portland, Oregon, characterized German religion similarly but supplemented it with a racial critique. Before the United States entered the war, Boyd claimed, it was clear to most Americans "that the real German...carried with him an atmosphere of intense self-esteem." Yet since April 1917

³⁰ Wallace Notestein and Elmer E. Stoll (eds.) *Conquest and Kultur: Aims of the Germans in Their Own Words* (Washington, DC: January 1918), 7, 15, and 17. John S.P. Tatlock, writing for the CPI, charged that Germany's religious egotism proved that "From the Kaiser down, the Germans talk much of God being with them; but it is not the God of the New Testament, nor the God of the Hebrew prophets." Instead, Tatlock concluded, the Germans worshipped war itself, which they believed was "the noblest and holiest expression of human activity." *Why America Fights Germany*, War Information Series, No. 15 (Washington, DC: 1918), 7.

Germany had been “unmasked.” Unlike American or English egotism, which Boyd admitted was a problem in itself, the German variety “strikes deeper” and “carries with it the sense of mission and destiny....that is to be realized by force if need be.” Perhaps because they did not know that the American people had already been chosen for this purpose, the Prussian regime instilled in Germans the belief “that they were the elect nation upon whom God had put the responsibility of” world progress. Because of the success of Prussian brainwashing, Boyd concluded, the Kaiser and nation “ha[d] become a solidified, inseparable mass of purpose,” thus implicating the German people in the Prussian drive for world domination. German religion, then, was decidedly self-centered.³¹

Carl Krusada, writing in the February 1918 issue of *The Forum*, explained German religion as similarly self-centered, primitive, and paganistic while questioning the German people’s relationship with and understanding of Jesus Christ. “Has Christ and His glorious message passed the German, uncomprehended, even unchallenged?” he asked. “To be sure, the German makes the gesture of Christianity, but in his heart has he remained a pagan?” The answer to both questions, not surprisingly, was yes. Teutons and Anglo-Saxons, he explained, view God much differently. “Anglo-Saxon piety” and “the equality in meekness before the Lord” that characterized Christianity in the United States and Britain was lost on the German, whom Krusada continually depicted as religiously backward. According to Krusada, “the Germanic mind in its simple form

³¹ John H. Boyd, “The Unmasking of Germany” (Portland, OR: 1918?), 5-7, 11, PAH. Also see H.C. Hengell, “Americanism vs. Prussianism” (Huntington, IN: 1918), 7-11, PAH. Also see “Germany’s Doctrine Deadly to Us,” *Review of Reviews*, July 1917, Vol. LV, 565-566; George Riddle Wallace, “The German Menace to America” (Pittsburgh, PA: 1917), PAH.

accepts God as semi-anthropomorphic” or as a “superkinsman” who acts as an equal partner instead of master.³²

Arguments that religion in Germany was narcissistic suggested to some that the Kaiser – the brainwasher-in-chief – and his people had fallen under the sway of a false prophet who, posing as the Christian God, directed the Prussianized Teutons toward evil ends. For some, such an understanding appeared to fit with the prophecy that the antichrist would claim to be anointed with God’s spirit and be chosen to do His work by creating the Kingdom of God on earth. Germans’ alleged spiritual egotism and the German army’s and navy’s acts against civilians, though, indicated that the Kaiser and the German people were not worshiping the same god as the Anglo-Saxon. Attempts to characterize the enemy in such a way revealed the propagandists’ astute understanding of how to court American Christians to support the war, many ministers’ belief in prophecies found in the Book of Revelation, and, taken together, the profound impact of millennial evangelicalism on Americans’ understanding of the war.

The argument that German self-centeredness went hand in hand with their misplaced religious faith resounded from propaganda pamphlets, secular mainstream publications, the popular Christian press, and the pulpit. National Security League propagandist Joseph C. Lincoln worried that a German triumph would mean “The gentle Jesus in our churches would be replaced by an idol ‘made in Germany.’” Apparently, Germans were so self-involved that their deity looked just like them. Perhaps revealing his understanding of Prussians as a racial type, Lincoln described the “Prussian god” as

³² Carl Krusada, “There Is No Christ in Germany,” *The Forum*, February 1918, Vol. LIX, 228 and 230.

“sporting an upturned mustache above a von Hindenburg jaw.”³³ Adventure writer Cyrus Townsend Brady, also working for the NSL, believed he knew the ultimate desire of Germany’s false idol. If Germany won, he claimed, “A premium would be put on murder; rape would become a praiseworthy action...and Hell would take the place of Heaven with the so-called German God in Satan’s place.”³⁴ *Current Opinion* claimed that the German God was “not the God of the rest of the world.” Basing part of their arguments on the work of a Danish minister and an English writer, the journal’s editors argued that “Germany...is worshipping a false God – a God of wrath and cruelty, of unbridled egotism.” Germany cannot be allowed back “into the fellowship of the nations,” the editors’ sources claimed, until their “false God” is “dethroned.” The Germans’ character (synonymous at the time with race) was also brought under question by their false religion. *Current Opinion*’s editors called upon a philosophy professor from the University of Wisconsin to psychoanalyze the impact of the German’s mistaken faith. The religion of the false god, he contended, exposed deep psychological issues in the German psyche. “Incipient insanity,” characterized by “delusions of grandeur and the mania of persecution,” was evident in the character of Germans as well as the criminally insane. “The disease,” the professor claimed, “is incurable.”³⁵

³³ Joseph C. Lincoln, “What the Victory or Defeat of Germany Would Mean” (New York: 1917?), PAH. Also see Arthur Somers Roche, “What German Victory Means to Me,” *ibid.*, where the author said he wanted his son “to believe in a generous God, a God who is a Gentleman” instead of being forced to worship the “demonic God” Germany was bound to force upon him if they conquered the United States.

³⁴ Cyrus Townsend Brady, “What the Victory or Defeat of Germany Means to Every American” (New York: 1917?), PAH.

³⁵ The editors also included in this editorial a scathing critique of German religion lifted from the incomparably hyperbolic *Providence Journal*. Working from the premise that man created God to reflect himself just as God created man for the same purpose, the *Journal* editor claimed that “Germany’s God is a reflection of herself – merciless, conscienceless, a blasphemous negation of all that the Christian era has laboriously taught mankind.” “Germany in Need of a New God,” *Current Opinion*, November 1917, Vol. LXIII, 329-330.

Some outside of the political mainstream also believed the Christian democracies had a responsibility to overcome evil and advance the world toward the millennium. Socialist and Rand School founder George D. Herron viewed the war as “an Armageddon on which the entire future of humanity is staked.” Claiming that Germany was the “spiritual seducer of nations,” Herron saw “the progress of German ‘Kultur’” – which he defined as “[t]he Hegelian notion” that might means right and the idea that the state is the embodiment of God’s authority – as being “synonymous with the spiritual destruction of the world.” It was up to the United States to reverse Kultur’s advances. “We are in the midst of a crisis that carries in its issue the world’s fundamental restructuring or its possible dissolution,” Herron concluded. “If ever there was a war between good and evil, it is now.”³⁶

While defining the religious ideology of Kaiser Wilhelm and the German people as self-centered, backward, and potentially evil likely resonated with many Americans, political cartoons further simplified these arguments. Cartoons portrayed the Germany or the Kaiser as blood-thirsty, the pal of Satan or Death, and their religious faith as evil and regressive. In the fall of 1917, for instance, the *Chicago Herald* printed a cartoon entitled “Eye to Eye” that alluded to both the massive slaughter on the Western Front and the German people’s alleged worship of the pagan god of war (Figure 6-1). The artist depicted Uncle Sam, with sword drawn, looking across a body of water (presumably the Atlantic) and into what appears to be a cave. Inside, a large demonic-looking figure carrying a sword and wearing a *pickelhaube* wades through a never-ending sea of dead bodies. The cave and corpses seem to represent the hellscape of mass death the Prussianized German had made of Europe and armed Sam appears to be coming to the

³⁶ “Germany Indicted as the Spiritual Seducer of the Nations,” *ibid.*, June 1917, Vol. LXII, 418-419.

Old World's rescue. Yet the cartoon's caption – "The Dark Ages face to face with the New World" – indicates both the artist's millennial interpretation of the war and the assumption of Germany's spiritual regression.³⁷



—From The Chicago Herald.

Figure 6-1. *Chicago Herald*, from *New York Times Current History*, Oct. 1917



Figure 6-2. *Providence Journal*, from *New York Times Current History*, March 1918

Devilish depictions of the Kaiser and his people were most prevalent, though, after the beginning of Germany's series of massive offensives on the Western Front that nearly won the war for the Central Powers in March 1918. Wilhelm was depicted as the sadistic murderer of the weak, but cartoonists also began rendering him as Satan's willing partner and as an agent of mass death. A cartoon from the *Providence Journal*, entitled "His God," revealed which supernatural being had actually chosen Germany as a partner (Figure 6-2). The Kaiser, in full military dress and holding a bloodied saber, stands over

³⁷ "Eye to Eye," *New York Times Current History*, October 1917, Vol. VII, 174. Cartoon reprinted from the *Chicago Herald*. In 1915, the *Chicago Herald* had a daily circulation of 167,602. *N.W. Ayer & Son's Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer, 1915) 185.

a slain woman and child as Satan, almost twice the size of the brawny Kaiser, points off into the distance and says to Wilhelm, “Forward with God to Fresh Deeds and Fresh Victories!”³⁸ Satan’s size in comparison to the Kaiser denoted the Devil’s authority and superiority in relationship to Wilhelm. The message, of course, was that the Kaiser – and, thus, Germany – followed the guidance of evil. The woman and child are clear reminders of the alleged German affinity for cruelty evident during its “rape” of Belgium and the sinking of the *Lusitania*.



Figure 6-3. *Chicago Herald*, from *New York Times Current History*, April 1918



Figure 6-4. *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, from *New York Times Current History*, August 1918

Depictions of the Kaiser as purveyor of mass death and partner of Satan began appearing in newspapers throughout the Midwest and Northeast at the same time.

Another disturbing image from the *Chicago Herald* depicted the raising of a German war “monument” (Figure 6-3). The monument, though, is a gigantic cross covered with

³⁸ “His God,” *New York Times Current History*, March 1918, Vol. VIII, 569. Cartoon reprinted from the *Providence Journal*.

dozens of faceless and genderless bodies hung as if crucified. The Kaiser, standing proud and tall with the slouching Austrian Emperor to his left and the crouching Ottoman Sultan to his right, watches as his soldiers pull the cross upright in its final resting place in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.³⁹ The placement of the cross in the ocean was most likely a reminder of Germany's transgressions during their submarine campaigns, the *Lusitania* incident in particular. The crucified masses on the cross, however, were the most significant aspect of the cartoon. The artist placed Wilhelm in the position of Pontius Pilate, the man who sentenced Jesus to death nineteen hundred years earlier. By sanctioning the strategy of unrestricted U-boat warfare, the Kaiser was in essence sentencing the innocent victims of his submarines to an unjust and untimely death just as Pilate had Jesus. Placing the Austrian Emperor and the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire next to the Kaiser, in obvious subservience, implicated them in the atrocities as well and spoke to the Kaiser's confusion over which god he actually served.

The German offensives, though terrifying to the United States and the Allies, inflicted the heaviest casualties of the war on both their attackers and defenders, thus giving cartoonists the opportunity to portray the Kaiser as having a penchant for senseless killing. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* printed a rendering of Wilhelm standing on a hillside pointing toward a massive skull – reminiscent of Golgotha, the site of Christ's crucifixion – while barking out the command to "Advance!" (Figure 6-4). In the valley below soldiers of the different nationalities, distinguishable by their helmets, march into the skull's open mouth.⁴⁰ A cartoon from the *New York Evening Mail*, entitled "The

³⁹ "Raising Their Monument," *ibid.*, April 1918, Vol. VIII, 178. Cartoon reprinted from the *Chicago Herald*.

⁴⁰ "Advance!" *ibid.*, July 1918, 171. Cartoon reprinted from the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. In 1915, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* had a daily circulation of 134,671. *N.W. Ayer & Son's*, 534.

Kaiser Invokes a Benediction,” showed Death, skeletal body in black hooded cloak, pouring a large container labeled “arsenic” down a well (Figure 6-5). To his immediate left, the Kaiser, wearing his usual *pickelhaube* but dressed like a clergyman, stands in a calm, trance-like state with his hands positioned as if giving a benediction. The cartoon quotes Wilhelm as praying, “May the Lord bless our arms.”⁴¹ The god to whom he prays, though, was clearly not the Christian God.



Figure 6-5. *New York Evening Mail*, from *The Outlook*, July 1918



Figure 6-6. *Newark News*, from *New York Times Current History*, August 1918

Preaching in July 1918, Congregationalist pastor William E. Barton argued that hating the Kaiser and German autocracy was fine even though “[t]here is no merit or sure proof of patriotism in consigning the Kaiser to hell.” That was because “it is superfluous;

⁴¹ “The Kaiser Invokes a Benediction,” *The Outlook*, August 28, 1918, Vol. CXIX, 647. Cartoon reprinted from the *New York Evening Mail*. In 1915, the *New York Evening Mail* had a circulation of 157,044. *N.W. Ayer & Son's*, 665.

he is in hell now.”⁴² Some cartoonists agreed, continuing to depict the Kaiser alongside Satan, his supposed lord and partner. The *Newark News* printed a cartoon of a joyous encounter between Wilhelm and Satan in summer 1918 (Figure 6-6). Placing his hand on Satan’s shoulder, the bright-eyed and grinning Kaiser presents the front page of a newspaper with the headline quoting him as asking, “What have I not done to preserve the world from these horrors?” Satan, sporting a similar mustache as the Kaiser, finds the quote so hysterically funny that he leans back on his throne of stone and kicks his left leg – resembling that of a goat, his right leg being human – into the air. The rocky floor and dark background gave the impression that the meeting takes place in Hell.⁴³

Perhaps meant as a slight to the Germans’ alleged belief that God was their partner in the war, the *Washington Times* in September 1918 portrayed Satan and Death as the Kaiser’s collaborators and Hell as the meeting place of their “war council” (Figure 6-7). The Kaiser, looking tired and deeply depressed, sits in front of a map holding a quill pen. Flanking his right is Death, whose boney hand points to the spot on the map on which the Kaiser is about to mark. To his left stands Satan, smiling with his pointed tail wagging above the table, looking on with great interest at the newest battle plan. Most significant, though, was the Kaiser’s expression, which exuded not only depression but resignation. The message seems to have been that Wilhelm had become almost zombie-like in his obedience to these dark forces – or that the Kaiser was regretting his infernal alliance with the false prophet.⁴⁴

⁴² William E. Barton, “The Moral Meanings of the World War,” sermon, June 16, 1918 (Oak Park, IL: Men’s Bible Class, First Congregational Church), 17, PAH.

⁴³ “Sardonic Humor,” *New York Times Current History*, August 1918, Vol. VIII, 373. Cartoon reprinted from the *Newark News*. In 1915, the *Newark News* had a circulation of 73,851. *N.W. Ayer & Son’s*, 603.

⁴⁴ “The Kaiser’s War Council,” *ibid.*, September 1918, 570. Cartoon reprinted from the *Washington Times*. In 1915, the *Washington Times* had a circulation of 42,000. *N.W. Ayer & Son’s*, 130.



Figure 6-7. *Washington Times*, from *New York Times Current History*, September 1918

The Devil, though, was not the only false god that propagandists or clergymen argued corrupted German minds. Abbott's *The Outlook* and others often characterized the Germans as backward or uncivilized pagans who worshiped warfare itself as well as long-forgotten Norse gods. According to *The Outlook*, due to a severe flaw in their national character, Germans had no interest in enjoying the benefits of following Christian democracy. Prussianized Teutons' denial of democracy indicated their primitive nature and that they had not advanced, or had yet to advance, to that stage of human progress. "The reverence demanded [by the Kaiser] is for a God who is the ally of the military power," the editors claimed. "[T]he worship is of a God who is by Odin [chief god in Norse paganism], not by Jesus Christ." The United States, then, declared war on "this pagan Power" in order to "maintain for all the humanity" the principles of

democracy and “personal comradeship with the heavenly Father.”⁴⁵ Carl Krusada, while explaining why the German people were not Christians, argued that Teutons accepted the wrathful God of the Old Testament while showing little interest in the divinity of Christ. German indifference to Christ, he explained, was part of the Teutonic heritage. Because of the militarism inherent in this “race of nomadic barbarians...that had considered death on the battlefield the sole key to Walhalla,” Christ’s teachings are seen as less attractive than those of Wotan (Odin, in German). The god(s) of war, then, were who the German people worship and had worshiped for centuries. “It was but natural,” Krusada concluded, “that these lusty barbarians accepted Christ with misgivings, under inward protest.”⁴⁶

At the same time, *The Outlook* characterized Germans’ self-centered and primitive religion reflecting the writings of German (Prussian) philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. The editors claimed that Nietzsche saw a race of “Supermen” as the natural product of evolution. “Supermen will have world control” after they mercilessly allowed the weaker races that could not contribute to society and a new, unchristian code of morality to die off. In reference to his statement that “God is dead,” Nietzsche, according to the editorial, believed the enhanced race would also control the heavens. “As to God, the Superman will replace God” after the weaker race of Christians had been erased from the earth. The destruction of Christianity and the breeding of Supermen, then, was the

⁴⁵ Lyman Abbott, “The Spiritual Meaning of Democracy,” *The Outlook*, April 17, 1918, Vol. CXVIII, 615-616.

⁴⁶ Krusada described Walhalla (or Valhalla) as essentially heaven, ruled over by Wotan, for the most courageous soldiers. Heaven to a German, he suggested, was “To spend the hereafter at the round-table, in company of bearded, battle-scarred warriors, presided over by the mighty Wotan, entertained by recitals of terrific combats, forever feasting on barbecues and vast quantities of mead, forever welcoming new arrivals, mortally wounded warriors picked up from the battle-grounds by the Walkyre.” “There Is No Christ in Germany,” *The Forum*, 230.

aim of the German war effort. “The war of the Huns against civilization,” the article concludes, was “Nietzsche in action.”⁴⁷

In his intensely hyperbolic pamphlet, Elmer Ellsworth Rittenhouse of the Committee for Patriotic Education also argued that Nietzsche’s Darwinian vision of the future guided German religious faith. According to Rittenhouse, who sprinkled quotes by and references to Nietzsche throughout the pamphlet, Germans did not worship a god or even many gods. Instead, they practiced “a religion of war” and worshiped the Darwinian notion of “survival of the ‘fit.’” The “fit” were “of course the Germans, who charge themselves with the duty of eliminating ‘unfit’ nations.” In short, the Germans ultimately worshiped themselves, the “Supermen” of Nietzsche’s work. Self-idolatry, Rittenhouse contended, was at the center of Germany’s bid for world domination and brutal treatment of non-combatants. Such a “reversion to barbarism” was the antithesis to Christianity. “Can you imagine a Christian nation adopting such a fiendish policy, or even countenancing it?”⁴⁸

Although he did not cite German vanity or physical traits, Henry A. Wise Wood, the chairman of the secular Conference Committee on National Preparedness, found German religion to be backward, perhaps proof that the Prussian had not progressed to the point of understanding Christ or that he had regressed to racial and spiritual barbarism. Wise described the war as a struggle “for mastery” between “A civilization

⁴⁷ “Nietzsche’s Religion,” *The Outlook*, Jan. 23, 1918, Vol. CXVIII, 131.

⁴⁸ Elmer Ellsworth Rittenhouse, *Know Your Enemy* (New York: 1918), 6 and 14, PAH. Although Reverend William E. Barton of the First Congregational Church in Oak Park, Illinois did not believe the German people worshiped the words of Nietzsche, he told his flock that it would be dangerous to assume that Nietzsche did not have “an influence far beyond what Germany as a whole has been willing to confess.” If allowed to flourish after the war, Nietzsche’s influence – “His revolt against the Christian faith and morals” and rejection of “all Christian virtues, counting them as weaknesses” – would “drive out all the gentler virtues from human life” and instill a “tyranny of the strong” over the weak. “Our Fight for the Heritage of Humanity,” April 15, 1917 (Oak Park, IL: 1917), 7, PAH.

that is the legitimate outgrowth of Christianity, expressive of kindness, good faith, and democratic tolerance” and “a reincarnation of ancient barbarism...behind a mask of Christ, which has sprung suddenly to the world’s conquest.” Put more simply, “the old morality” (“the barbaric conception of rule by force alone”) was again challenging “the new” (“The spiritual power enthroned by Christ”). Christendom faced a “modern crusade” to disarm the destructive infidel, Wood proclaimed. Wood’s description of the postwar world alluded to both the postmillennial Kingdom of God and perpetuation of the tribulation. Victory, he concluded, meant “humanity will ascend to undreamed-of heights of opportunity and freedom.” Defeat, however, would bring the rule of “soulless scientific barbarism” that “blasphemously feign[ed] the approval of God to palsy a trustful Christendom.”⁴⁹

Few spoke of the Kaiser and Germany’s devilish war aims with as much vitriol and hyperbole – or reached as massive an audience – as the professional baseball player turned revivalist Billy Sunday. Sunday, like most fundamentalist evangelicals, was a premillennialist. According to one biographer, “Sunday likened the Second Coming to the imminent but unpredictable arrival of a ‘Bank Inspector’” because “nothing else does so much to ‘keep us right.’” The time of Christ’s return, though, was not the only disagreement Sunday had with Social Gospellers. Christianity was not about “godless social service nonsense,” he believed, but saving individual souls and a literal interpretation of the Bible. Because of his theology, crusades against alcohol, and his

⁴⁹ Henry A. Wise Wood, “Christ, or the Sword?” (New York: 1918), PAH. Francis J. Oppenheimer of the NSL saw Germany’s belief in a false god as evidence the German race’s progress had been stunted, alleging that the Kaiser’s “court pastor” preached that “Germany is the center of God’s plan for the world.” Oppenheimer’s response to Prussian egotism and misunderstanding of God was to exclaim, “Poor savages! too [sic.] frail for the made sport of thinking.” The day of “universal love and peace of God, he concluded, “will never be while the Lords of Murder and Might darken the earth with shadows from hell.” Francis J. Oppenheimer, “No ‘Made In Germany’ Peace” (New York: NSL, 1918?), PAH.

flamboyant preaching style, Sunday was easily the most popular American religious figure of his time, reaching his peak popularity during a long revival in New York City in April and May of 1917. According to Peter Clark MacFarlane of *Everybody's Magazine*, Sunday drew much larger crowds than Woodrow Wilson or Theodore Roosevelt, arguably the two most prominent individuals in the country.⁵⁰

Like most Midwesterners, the native Iowan had little use for the war prior to April 1917, rarely discussing it in his sermons except to rejoice that the United States was not involved. Yet once war was declared, he instantly began defining the war as one between total goodness and absolute evil. When it came to the war, Billy Sunday, for all intents and purposes, was as much a propagandist as he was a preacher. As with the adherents of the Social Gospel, Sunday viewed the conflict as an opportunity to wage holy war. Yet, for Sunday and his followers, the war was not holy because it would usher in the Kingdom of God. Instead, the war was a chance to prove that the American people were, in fact, God's chosen people and that the United States personified Christ's teaching. Satan was testing the American people's faith, Sunday believed. Despite early pronouncements that the United States was at war with Prussian autocracy and not the German people, for most of the war Sunday offered no redemption to the German nation. "All this talk about not fighting the German people is a lot of bunk," Sunday exhorted in a February 1918 sermon. Not only were they the Devil's minions, they had also rejected Christianity. For Sunday, the war was cut-and-dried: "I tell you it is [Kaiser] Bill against

⁵⁰ William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Billy Sunday Was His Name* (Chicago: 1955), 125-126; Roger A. Bruns, *Preacher: Billy Sunday and Big-Time American Evangelism* (New York: 1992), 130-131; Robert F. Martin, *Hero of the Heartland: Billy Sunday and the Transformation of American Society, 1862-1935* (Bloomington, IN: 2002), 121; Peter Clark MacFarlane, while acknowledging the massive audiences who came to see Sunday, saw the preacher's theology as "absurd" and outdated. "Sunday Salvation," *Everybody's Magazine*, May 1915, Vol. XXXII, 365. For a short yet informative summary of Sunday's theology – except his views on the Second Coming – see Lyle W. Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1991), 70-74.

Woodrow, Germany against America, Hell against Heaven. Germany lost out when she turned from Christ to Krupp and from the Cross of Calvary to the Iron Cross.” Sunday also occasionally revealed a tinge of racial nationalism in his Christian-nationalist invective, once referring to the German people as “weazen-eyed, low-lived, bull-neck, low-down gang of cut-throats of the Kaiser.”⁵¹

Despite his difference with liberal Protestants on the millennium, Billy Sunday is significant because his immense popularity allowed him to share his staunch Christian nationalism with extremely large numbers of Americans. Sunday’s demonization of the Kaiser and the German people, while similar to that of Social Gospel advocates, was much harsher and unforgiving. Those who followed him on the “saw dust trail” likely left his sermons angry and more fearful of German victory than inspired by the chance to serve God to a divine end. Sunday’s stance, though, appears to have fit the national mood during the war more closely than postmillennial calls for a Kingdom of God that left room for the Devil-worshipping enemy.

While preachers and propagandists claimed that German policy was driven by a self-idolizing sense of divine mission, they also made similar claims about the United States’s relationship with God. But unlike the Satanic, self-centered, pagan Prussianized Germans, the civic religion and heavenly calling of the Anglo-Saxon United States was said to be that of the true prophet, Jesus Christ. While explaining the war as a struggle between pure light and pure darkness was a simplified way to sell the war as a necessary conflict, the Anglo-Saxon United States had a long history of professing the nation’s

⁵¹ Sunday went so far as to suggest the Spanish influenza outbreak in 1918 was the work of the Satanic Kaiser. “The whole thing is part of their propaganda,” Sunday railed. The epidemic “started over there in Spain when they scattered germs around....If they can do this to us 3,000 miles away, think of what the bunch would do if they were walking our streets.” Bruns, *Preacher*, 249-250. Quotes from McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday*, 258, 259-260.

divine task. Religious-based propaganda, while often portraying the United States as a nation that chose to follow Christ, also depicted God much as the Germans did, as a staunch ally who had chosen this nation to lead a crusade to remove all obstacles to His kingdom.

Writing in the tradition of the Social Gospel, Henry W. Wright claimed that contrary to the German belief in selfish militarism, American democracy was grounded in sacrifice for others and a “devotion...to social welfare.” Writing in March 1915, Wright believed American faith entailed “real sacrifice...the endurance of pain, privation, and even death itself.” Those who served and died for the sake of the “spiritual community” inherent in a democracy became “the great moral teachers and heroes of the race.” In short, those who sacrificed for American democracy would become national saints and martyrs. Yet democratic crusaders had an ally in their fight for social progress. “The immanence and efficacy of God,” Wright concluded, was the “guiding spirit in social progress” as He “strives and suffers with us in the cause of universal evolution.”⁵² The declaration of war on Germany would allow the God and the Christian United States to facilitate that “evolution” toward His kingdom in Europe and, then, the world.

From the beginning, American intervention was a postmillennial crusade. On the night of April 2, 1917, pastors opened both the Senate and House sessions with prayers that defined the soon to be declared war in millennial terms. In the Senate, the pastor prayed that God give them the “wisdom and grace to...advocate the cause of righteousness...and seek the accomplishment of Thy purpose and the enlargement of Thy kingdom on earth.” The prayer in the House session was similar. Woodrow Wilson touched on the same themes that evening in his War Address. The United States was

⁵² Henry W. Wright, “The Religion of Democracy,” *The Forum*, March 1915, Vol. LIII, 332 and 334.

going to fight “to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power.” The American people would fight “without selfish object” to free those being trampled by the un-Christian forces of Prussian autocracy.

The next day, Treasury Secretary William Gibbs McAdoo wrote his father-in-law President to congratulate him on having “done a great thing nobly!” “I firmly believe it is God’s will,” McAdoo continued, “that America should do its transcendent service for humanity throughout the world and that you are [H]is chosen instrument.” The Social Gospel clearly impacted many senators and representative who voted for war on April 6, Good Friday. Murray Hulbert, a Congressman from New York, for instance, maintained that “Christ gave his life upon the cross that mankind might gain the Kingdom of Heaven, while to-night we shall solemnly decree the sublimest sacrifice ever made by a nation for the salvation of humanity, the institution of world-wide liberty and freedom.”⁵³

The belief that God, in fact had chosen and was allied with the United States was clear to the best-selling novelist Harold Bell Wright. “This, our nation, is a Christian nation,” Wright proclaimed in the February 1918 issue of the widely-circulated *American Magazine*. “We, the people, are a Christian people.” The holy war taking place in Europe was a “world-struggle for the divine rights of humanity” that threatened “the Christian principles of government, to which we owe our very national existence.” Although Wright did not explicitly state that Germany followed Satan or the proddings of a false prophet, he claimed the forces opposed to Christian democracy (the Central

⁵³ Gamble, *War for Righteousness*, 149-154, quotes from 148, 149, and 153. According to William E. Leuchtenberg, the sense that the Great War may be tied to the millennium also infected Wilson’s cabinet and the CPI. For instance, Secretary of Interior Franklin K. Lane claimed the United States and the Allies represented “the world of Christ” while a CPI pamphlet (which Leuchtenberg does not name) called the war “a Crusade not merely to re-win the tomb of Christ [Muslim Turks controlled the Holy Land], but to bring back to earth the rule of right, the peace, goodwill to men and gentleness he taught.” *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32* (Chicago: 1955), 46.

Powers) showed themselves to be “the enemies of humanity” through their bestial acts on land and sea. They carried out their wicked exploits “with the same spirit that nailed the world’s Saviour [sic.] to a guide post where the roads to heaven, earth and hell corner” and were “fighting now to extinguish the fire his [Jesus’s] teaching kindled.” The United States, on the other hand, had been spreading “the gospel of freedom and the divine right of humanity” across the world. Considering that Christ died to free humanity of its sins, it seemed natural that one could “see the man of Galilee in the trenches, shoulder to shoulder with his comrades who have drawn the sword of human liberty.” In the ultimate struggle between Christian democracy and devilish militarism, Wright concluded, “the sword of America is the sword of Christ,” the nation’s brother in arms.⁵⁴

Other ministers and propagandists regularly drew a thick line between humble Christian democracy and the evil and narcissistic religion of the Prussianized Teuton. Novelist Irving Bacheller, for instance, saw the war as both a spiritual and racial struggle. The choice, he argued, was “between two ideals: That of the proud and merciless heart on the one hand, that of the humble and contrite heart on the other; between the Hun and the Anglo-Saxon, between Jesus Christ and the devil.”⁵⁵ A Presbyterian minister in Philadelphia saw the current conflict between democracy and autocracy as “a large factor for the bringing about [of] ‘peace on earth among men of good will.’” It was the duty of the Christian warrior to ensure this progress toward the millennium was not stunted: “[W]oe betide the man or men who seek to establish the doctrine of ‘might over right,’

⁵⁴ Harold Bell Wright, “The Sword of Jesus,” *American Magazine*, February 1918, Vol. LXXXIV, 7,8, and 57. In 1915, *American Magazine* had a circulation of 440,000. N.W. Ayer, 768. Also see “Mobilizing the Churches to Meet the War-Crisis,” *Current Opinion*, June 1917, Vol. LXIII, 417; “Denominationalism in the War,” *Literary Digest*, May 5, 1917, Vol. LIV, 1335-1337.

⁵⁵ Irving Bacheller, “Sense – Common and Preferred,” *The Outlook*, January 2, 1918, Vol. CXVIII, quotes from pages 21 and 22.

tyranny over liberty, and frightfulness over humanity.” Americans must be sympathetic toward German soldiers, though, because they could not be held responsible for their actions. “Let not our soldiers be misled...that they are only fighting ‘flesh and blood’ enemies,” the minister claimed. The rape, pillaging, and plunder were “the works of the *devil in the Germans*.” The real fight, then, was against Satan, who one could “resist with faith and prayer” and not weapons.⁵⁶

Lyman Abbott’s *The Outlook* established a clear dichotomy between Anglo-Saxon and German spirituality in an April 1918 editorial that argued that each nation’s faith directly corresponded to its government. “Democracy” was more than a “mere form of government. It is a religious faith....in a word, it is human brotherhood,” the editors maintained. The four tenets of democracy – religious, industrial, educational, and political liberty – correlated with Scripture and were nowhere to be found in autocratic Germany. In the Kaiser’s kingdom, individual freedoms are squashed, feudalism thrived, education equaled indoctrination, and the religion forced on the German people was “of a God imagined by Odin, not Jesus Christ.” The United States was at war, Abbott concluded, “in order to establish for humanity the right.”⁵⁷ *The Outlook* also cleverly employed the most iconic figures of American democracy and German autocracy to demonstrate the stark difference in each nation’s faith. When a clergyman told Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War that he hoped God was on the side of the Union, Lincoln reportedly replied, “That does not concern me; what concerns me is that we should be on the Lord’s side.” Yet Kaiser Wilhelm, the editors claimed, did not exhibit such humility. In his Christmas 1917 speech to his troops, Wilhelm proclaimed that “The year 1917,

⁵⁶ George Frederick Pentecost, “The Presbyterian Church in the War,” sermon, July 1, 1917 (Philadelphia: 1917), 4 and 8, PAH.

⁵⁷ Abbott, “The Spiritual Meaning of Democracy,” 615-616.

with its great battles, has proved that the German people has in the Lord of Creation above an unconditional and avowed ally on whom it can absolutely rely.” God, the Kaiser mistakenly believed, had chosen Germany, not the other way around. Thus, “The difference between Abraham Lincoln and the Kaiser is the difference between true and false religion, true and false faith.”⁵⁸

The belief that Germany followed a false prophet and that Anglo-Saxon democracy epitomized God’s word suggested to many Americans that the war in Europe could be Armageddon or at least a precursor to it. In an apocalyptic speech for the Liberty Loan in Madison, Wisconsin, the city’s former mayor Charles Elbert Whelan claimed the link between Anglo-Saxon democracy and Christianity was as self-evident a truth as those established in “[t]hat venerable document, the Declaration of Independence.” Since God created Adam, Whelan explained to an audience, “it was His ideal and purpose to make man equal before the law, His law.” But in Europe “the fight for God and Humanity is on” against the un-Christian forces of Germany, whose autocratic government did not acknowledge God’s decree of human equality. “God’s cause: the liberty and equality of the peoples of the earth” was the cause of democracy and the United States in the struggle between good and evil. Making the world safe for democracy, then, would establish God’s law in Europe and pave the way for the millennium.⁵⁹ Pastor David James Burrell of the Collegiate Church in New York also

⁵⁸ Lyman Abbot, “Which?” *The Outlook*, January 2, 1918, Vol. CXVIII, 10. The National Americanization Committee produced an interesting pamphlet making a similar comparison between Lincoln and the Kaiser. The pamphlet includes a letter the Kaiser sent to the bereaved mother of nine dead German soldiers in which Wilhelm thanked her for her sacrifice and included a photograph of himself. Lincoln’s letter to the mother of five Union soldiers killed during the Civil War, however, expressed only empathy, regret, and his condolences. “Why America Is at War: Where Will You Make Your Home?” (New York: 1917?), PAH.

⁵⁹ Charles Elbert Whelan, “The Liberty Loan: A Stand for God and Humanity, A Test of Patriotism” (Madison, WI: 1918?), 1-3, PAH.

viewed the war as a divine opportunity. The conflict, he claimed, will bring “a more serious type of manhood and womanhood a larger patriotism, measured by the brotherhood of man.” Because of the war, “The gates are opening. The roads which Caesar builds for his advancing legions will furnish a highway for the Prince of Peace. Then onward, Christian soldiers, to the Golden Age!”⁶⁰ Philosopher and novelist Edgar Saltus, writing for the NSL, saw the war through a more explicitly millennial lens. Victory over Prussian autocracy, “as every white man hopes,” would ensure “the beasts are crushed back into their sty” and “the joy of Christendom will be such that it may induce the Second Advent.”

As in most wars, peace was the ultimate end for the European nations locked in mortal combat. Yet for the Christian United States, peace was a means to an end. The League to Enforce Peace, who, like Woodrow Wilson, dreamed of a League of Nations to settle the world’s disputes without violence, professed their belief that the end of the Great War could spell the beginning of the millennium. The war must be won “at whatever cost of years or treasure or life,” claimed Charles S. Medbury while speaking at an LEP conference in Philadelphia in May 1918. Victory would allow “the sum total of human interests [to] be advanced, war be beaten out of the world’s life, and a new civilization established in harmony with the pattern shown us on the Mount.” Allied and

⁶⁰ David James Burrell, “Onward, Christian Soldiers, to the Golden Age!” in “Is God in the War?” *The Forum*, December 1917, Vol. LVIII, 675. Similarly, Charles Lewis Slattery, the Rector of Grace Church (also in New York), proclaimed the war a fight to the finish. “The battle for the right shall go on, till God shall lead his soldiers to the complete victory of all that is happy and good, over all that is sorrowful and base.” “It Is Man’s Safety and Glory, to Die, if Need Be, for the Truth,” in *ibid.*, 676. Also see “Bearers of the Message of Christ,” *The Outlook*, December 19, 1917, Vol. CXVII, 635-636.

American soldiers were giving their lives on the Western Front, he concluded, “for the redemption of the world.”⁶¹

Wilson’s postmillennial worldview was also on display at Versailles during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Although making concessions to the French, British, and Italians on most of his “Fourteen Points,” the President would not budge on his desire for a League of Nations, the entity on which “nothing less than the liberation and salvation of the world” depended. On his postwar tour of the Midwest and West to gain support for Senate ratification of the peace treaty and American membership in the League, Wilson regularly characterized the importance of the United States’s and the League’s redemptive and liberating roles in the world. In September 1919 in Oakland, California, he argued,

“When you look into the history not of our free and fortunate continent, happy, but of the rest of the world, you will find that the hand of pitiless power has been upon the shoulders of the great mass of mankind since time began, and that only with that glimmer of light which came at Calvary that first dawn which came with the Christian era, did men begin to wake to the dignity and light of the human soul, and that in spite of professions of Christianity...the great body of our fellow beings have been kept under the will of men who exploited them and did not give them the full right to live and realize the purposes that God had meant them to realize.”⁶²

⁶¹ Charles S. Medbury, “Mobilizing the Mind of America” (New York: League to Enforce Peace, 1918), 12-13, PAH. Also see “Jesus No ‘Peace-At-Any-Price’ Man,” *Current Opinion*, April 1918, Vol. LXIV, 271-272 and Lyman Abbott, “Christ’s League to Enforce Peace,” *The Outlook*, September 26, 1917, Vol. CXVII, 122-123.

⁶² While Wilson’s religious faith was a key factor in his desire and fight for a League of Nations, the President also sought universal peace for practical reasons. As the recent and the next world war would indicate, imperialism and militarism, not just in Germany but in all of Europe, was a problem that needed fixing. Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation*, 213, Wilson quote from 210-211. During the war, the peace conference, and the debate over the treaty’s ratification, the progressive clergy gave Wilson and the League of Nations their full support, seeing it as the fulfillment of the millennial mission on which the United States set out in April 1917. Gamble, *War for Righteousness*, 224-231.

Wilson's tour, though, ultimately failed. The Senate did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles and the United States did not join the League of Nations. With this, the nation's millennial mission, it seemed, had failed. That the Great War was not the "war to end all wars" was apparent before Wilson had returned from Paris. It was clear at the time that the Treaty of Versailles did more to strengthen the forces that brought on the war than to terminate them. For Anglo-Saxon Americans, the world continued to be a scary, dangerous place.

Yet the point of most American millennial propaganda was not to instill fear. It was meant to mitigate it. From the perspective of many ministers and propagandists, Europe, not the United States, faced the prospect of being overrun by German pagans. When preaching, writing, or drawing in a religious context, ministers and propagandists presented the United States as the God-ordained liberator of a spiritually wayward continent and world. The courage Christ exhibited while on earth was the model. Unlike pacifists and the cowardly, Jesus did not back down when danger reared its ugly head. When attacked He stood his ground, forgiving His oppressors for whatever punishment they doled out. At the same time, nothing raised the ire of Jesus more than attacks upon the innocent. Ministers and propagandists challenged the United States to do as the New Testament demanded and imitate the teachings and actions of Christ. Only those who subscribed to the Christian definition of courage would, in the end, achieve victory over evil. Germany, with its religious attachment to militarism, resembled the forces with which Christ fought during his lifetime. To oppose such a force, then, was to crusade in the name of God. In other words, the conflict in Europe did not suggest the failure of Christianity. To postmillennialists, it signified its triumph.

At the same time, the war had taken the lives of millions of soldiers by spring 1917 and, by all accounts, the Prussianized Teutons and their underground agents were a terrifying lot. The effort necessary on the home front to wage this crusade was quite demanding on those too old, too young, too unfit, or too female to serve in the trenches. Defining the war as a righteous cause (the dawning of the millennium) undertaken by a righteous race was a means of overcoming citizens' fear of war or the Germans and their hesitancy to fight, die, save, spend, and work to bring the conflict to a successful conclusion. That is not to suggest that the ministers, politicians, and propagandists who relayed such messages to the public did not believe the Great War could be Armageddon. The Social Gospel vision of spiritual progress and moral uplift were motive forces for men like Lyman Abbott and Woodrow Wilson. At the same time, premillennialists (Billy Sunday in particular) and the secular press also depicted the war as a showdown between light and darkness, absolute good and absolute evil. An apocalyptic understanding of conflict – evident in the Darwinian arguments for preparedness and hysteria over the Pan-German conspiracy – was as much a part of American life and culture in the early twentieth century as the belief in democracy. In the United States, a millennial understanding of the war (pre-, post-, or secular) was practically universal.

Apocalyptic or millennial definitions of the American war effort (or mission) and racialized and Lamarckian conceptions of the enemy often went hand-in-hand. According to wartime propaganda, Germans' religion and understanding of God were backward, more fitting for the barbarians on the ancient European frontier than a well cultivated race. It was not just that the Kaiser and the German people had lost their way spiritually. While some generous ministers and propagandists argued Germans had been

duped into following a false god, the simple fact that they had been fooled or brainwashed implied the overwhelming influence of Prussianism had morally degenerated the Teuton. It was the Prussian Kaiser, after all, who was portrayed as Satan's partner, willing to sacrifice the lives of his people to do the Devil's bidding. Likewise, the theories of the Prussian philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, some propagandists claimed, epitomized the self-idolizing, Machiavellian, and Darwinistic Prussian monarchy and the poor souls it commanded. In other words, the Satanism, paganism, or general worship of warfare believed to be endemic to Prussianized Germany was further proof of their primitive and degenerated state and established them as the enemies of Christ. Yet the United States's role as global messiah was also grounded in racial nationalism. The belief in an inherent connection between Christianity and Anglo-Saxon democracy conditioned many ministers and propagandists to define of the nation's war effort as a holy mission to smite the enemies of God. The United States was the closest manifestation on earth of Christ's teaching, many Americans believed, and for this reason it was the nation's responsibility to lead the fight against the Devil and the final charge toward the millennium.

During the war and despite evidence to the contrary, millions of Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans saw the Great War as a significant step – perhaps the final one – to the Kingdom of God. World progress had reached this point and what looked like the final battle between good and evil could be at hand. Yet everlasting peace was there for the taking in Paris, and the world's leaders had failed to grasp it. Consequently, the perception quickly spread throughout the United States and Europe that those who had perished in the industrialized warfare of the Western Front had done so in vain. The

seeds of the postwar decline of postmillennialism and the Social Gospel in the United States, then, were sowed during the war itself. Social Gospellers had dominated the wartime argument but had been proven wrong. Although not an enthusiastic disciple of social Christianity, the second-generation German-American and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr described the feelings of many American Christians in 1928 when he wrote, “When the war started I was a young man trying to be an optimist without falling into sentimentality. When it ended and the full tragedy of its fratricides had been revealed, I had become a realist trying to save myself from cynicism.” The war, he claimed, had taught him that he could no longer equate the progress of “civilization with the kingdom of God.” It had become clear that “Civilization was not a victory of the human spirit over nature. It was only partly that. It was also the arming of the brute in man.”⁶³ Although the war did not completely dampen the myth that the United States was God’s instrument and the Anglo-Saxon His chosen race, it had shown that progress was not intrinsically positive or constant. The First World War showed that the side effects of modernity – such as the tidal wave of racially suspect immigrants – could be less fearful than progress itself.

⁶³ Reinhold Niebuhr, “What the War Did to My Mind,” *Christian Century*, September 27, 1928, Vol. XLV, 1161 and 1162.

EPILOGUE – THE RISE OF THE RED MENACE AND THE POSTWAR

PRODUCTION OF FEAR

“Side by side march Hindenburg and Lenine, Ludendorff [sic.] and Trotsky, over the torn bodies of republicans. The kaiser [sic.] intends to impose kultur upon the world by force. The Bolsheviki intend to impose communism upon the world by force. They are allies against republicanism. One attacks it from without. The other attacks it from within.” – Chicago Tribune, March 24, 1918¹

“There is a simplicity about hate that makes it peculiarly attractive to a certain type of mind. It makes no demand of the mental processes, it does not require reading or thinking, estimate or analysis, and by reason of its instant removal of every doubt it gives an effect of decision, a sense of well-being.” – George Creel, 1920²

“[V]oice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.” – Hermann Goering, April 18, 1946³

In 1919, the United States had been in grave danger. “Like a prairie-fire, the blaze of revolution was sweeping over every American institution of law and order,” wrote Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in early 1920, after the worst of the storm had passed. It had infiltrated American homes, churches, and schools while “burning up the foundations of society” through a movement “to replace marriage vows with libertine laws.” This revolutionary, immoral, and criminal campaign, Palmer claimed, was the

¹ “Wake Up, America!” *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1918.

² George Creel, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (New York: 1920), 169.

³ Quoted in G.M. Gilbert, *Nuremberg Diary* (New York: 1947), 278-279.

work of a subversive band of aliens, loyal not to the Stars and Stripes but to the banner of a foreign, undemocratic, and degenerate ideology. This menace to Anglo-Saxon democracy was not German militarism. It was Bolshevism or, as Palmer put it, “the creed of any criminal mind.” Like the Pan-German conspiracy, Bolshevism promised to undermine the democratic order. If allowed free reign, Palmer warned, the “criminal aliens” would instill “the horror and terrorism of bolsheviki tyranny” that was wrecking Russia “[i]n the place of the United States Government.” Also like the disloyal German-American propaganda and spy network of wartime, the Bolshevik conspiracy was directed from abroad. Using his connections from his time in New York City, Leon Trotsky could “inaugurate a reign of terror from his throne room in the Kremlin.” Palmer complained that Congress had been “ignoring the seriousness of these vast organizations that were plotting to overthrow the government” by failing to pass adequate sedition laws. The arrests and deportations his Department of Justice had carried out to date had, for the moment, slowed the Bolsheviks’ advances but had not stemmed the “Red” tide completely. It was Palmer’s hope “that American citizens will, themselves, become voluntary agents” for the DOJ, “in a vast organization for mutual defense against the sinister agitation of...aliens, who appear to be either in the pay or under the criminal spell of Trotsky and Lenine.” The nation was in “great need of [a] united effort to stamp it [Bolshevism] out,” Palmer concluded, and the DOJ could not do it alone.⁴

While shades of the wartime hysteria over the ubiquitous German agent were present in Palmer’s warnings and pleas, the specter of the Bolshevik menace was born in the decades prior to the war and was given a sharper outline when sold as yet another

⁴ A. Mitchell Palmer, “The Case Against the ‘Reds,’” *The Forum*, February 1920, Vol. LXIII, 173, 174, 180, 182, and 185.

element of the Pan-German conspiracy during wartime. This epilogue will briefly trace the transition of propagandists' claims that Bolshevism was a cog in the Kaiser's global plot to it being a foreign menace all its own. It will also examine the continuation of native-born Americans' fear of the foreign "other" into the 1920s, the postwar disillusionment propaganda inspired, and the lessons in the production of fear future political leaders took from the American home front during the First World War. The study will conclude with a final explanation of the importance of contemporary racial views on Anglo-Saxons' understanding of their role in the war.

The end of the Great War, as the editors of *Current Opinion* put it, "came swiftly, suddenly, and completely."⁵ With his allies defeated and his armies in full retreat on the Western Front, the Kaiser was forced to abdicate on November 9, 1918 and a new German republic (dominated by socialists) was proclaimed. The fall of the House of Hohenzollern and the war's unexpectedly abrupt conclusion, though, were not greeted with sighs of relief across the United States and few, if any, propagandists took solace in the fact that the nation was now safe from Pan-Germanism. Instead, in the days after the Armistice many editors warned that the death of Prussianism marked the rise of the new, perhaps more menacing world peril of Bolshevism. Not surprisingly, the immediate postwar depictions of Lenin's and Trotsky's Russian regime in the American press were quite similar to descriptions of the dangers of Pan-Germanism. The *New York Globe*, for instance, defined Bolshevism as "antidemocratic and autocratic" while also proclaiming it to be "aggressive" – all words that wartime propagandists routinely used to describe the Kaiser's now defunct regime. Some trusted public voices, like Frank H. Simonds of the

⁵ "The Collapse of Autocracy and the Peril of Bolshevism," *Current Opinion*, December 1918, Vol. LXV, 345.

New York Tribune, even warned of the possibility of renewed war against the alliance of Red Russia and Red Germany. This partnership, Simonds argued, would be buttressed by its own version of the Pan-Germans' *Mitteleuropa*, "extending from the Rhine to the Siberian wastes and including within its limits the 300,000,000 people of Russia, Germany, and Austria."⁶ The dictatorship of the masses, then, could quickly come to dominate the formerly autocratic lands of Europe. In short, although the armistice ended the threat of Pan-Germanism to the United States, the target of American fear quickly and seamlessly transitioned from Prussianism to Bolshevism, a threat equally hostile and undemocratic.

The shift of Americans' emotional energy from the Teuton to the radical Bolshevik, though, began during wartime and was partly the result of the supposedly conspiratorial association of radicals in the United States, Lenin and Trotsky in Russia, and the autocratic German government. American propagandists simultaneously described the Russian Bolsheviks as the Kaiser's pawns, and anti-war American socialists and radical labor as the willing tools of both, thus lumping them all into the paradigm of the Pan-German conspiracy. The conversion from a fear of German militarism to labor radicalism and the propaganda that contributed to it revealed further concerns about the failure of Americanization, political revolution, and perhaps even race suicide. The nationalization of industry and the elimination of private property, many believed, were antithetical to democracy and freedom. This exposed socialists, anarchists, and, most importantly, their largely immigrant following as unwilling or unable to comprehend democracy. The popularity of socialism in Europe and the ethnic diversity of the radical

⁶ "Bolshevism Threatening the World," *Literary Digest*, November 23, 1918, Vol. LIX, 9, 10. With the war over and its job complete, the CPI was silent about the Armistice and the postwar danger of Bolshevism to the United States and the world.

ranks in the United States – which was decidedly non-Anglo-Saxon – spoke to the foreignness of the cause and its adherents while also suggesting that the immigrant masses’ rejection of Americanism threatened both democratic institutions and the capitalist order. Although the Socialist Party of America (SPA) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) had been active for many years before the Great War began, the perception that their actions during wartime generally were helping Germany defeat the United States and the Allies was a significant factor in what made their collaboration with the Pan-German conspiracy believable. In other words, many middle-class native-born Americans understood the presumed results of radicals’ actions (furthering Germany’s imperial ambitions) as being indicative of their intentions.

The charges of radical cooperation with Germany began in the first months of American belligerency. In a June 5, 1917 editorial, the *Chicago Tribune* claimed the link between American socialism and German militarism was clearly evident in how each nation’s socialists viewed the war. “It is a notable thing,” the editors maintained, that the vast majority of German socialists in the Reichstag “have supported the war, while our Socialists have almost uniformly opposed every war measure proposed by the United States.” This was no coincidence. “Americans should remember that Socialism had its birthplace in Germany” and that “German Socialists founded the Socialist movement in America.” That trans-Atlantic relationship, the *Tribune*’s editors concluded, could still be operational. The nation could not afford to “overlook the possibility that [the] Wilhelmstrasse may be operating through subterranean channels to influence the action of American Socialists.”⁷ More immediately pressing was the IWW’s leadership of copper, coal, and lumber strikes in the western United States. Senator Charles Thomas of

⁷ “Our Socialists,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 5, 1917.

Colorado saw in the IWW's (or "Wobblies," as they were commonly known) obstruction of raw material extraction a plot on behalf of the nation's foes. "I have no doubt," he claimed, "that these people are operating at the instance of, or with individual sympathy with, our enemies." The connection was clear, he concluded, because of the presence of Austrian-born workers in the strikes.⁸ According to the *New York Times*, labor radicalism was an inherent aspect of some immigrants' character. Aliens tended to "mistake liberty for the privilege to violate the rights of others....The devilries of the I.W.W. are the extreme examples...of this essentially anarchical temperament."⁹

The SPA's presumed contribution to the German war effort, on the other hand, came in its anti-war stance and subsequent success in the voting booth in the fall of 1917. The American declaration of war exposed a deep division within the SPA between moderates such as John Spargo, Upton Sinclair, and Charles Edward Russell and the more radical wing led by the likes of Eugene V. Debs, Victor Berger, and Morris Hillquit. The moderates hoped that supporting the Wilson administration would bring advances for the Party, labor, and international peace. The radicals, however, saw no merit in supporting a war they believed "ha[d] been caused by commercial and financial rivalry and intrigues of the capitalist interests in the different countries." At a hastily planned Party convention in St. Louis on the day after the war declaration, roughly three-quarters of the over 29,000 party members in attendance voted for a resolution opposing American intervention.¹⁰

⁸ "He Charges I.W.W. Conspire With Foe," *New York World*, June 29, 1917.

⁹ "Churlish Guests," *New York Times*, 10 June, 1917.

¹⁰ David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America: A History* (New York: 1955), 99; James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New York: 1967), 127. Quotes of SPA's Majority Report from Nathan Fine, *Labor and Farmer Parties in the United States, 1828-1928* (New York: 1928), 310.

While the moderates publicly split with the SPA after the convention, the remaining radicals began campaigning for municipal offices across the Midwest and Northeast. In many places big and small – most ominously Chicago and New York City – the SPA pitched its anti-war message and, as a result, saw its share of the municipal electorate skyrocket. In many areas, the SPA enjoyed significant gains despite small immigrant populations.¹¹ Politicians and the press, though, saw the specter of German intrigue and immigrant disloyalty in the 1917 municipal election returns. For example, the *New York Times* blasted Hillquit, a Russian immigrant who finished a surprising third place in the New York City mayoral race, in the days after the election as “The Kaiser’s Servant” and an enemy of democracy. Hillquit’s primary aim in running, the editors claimed, was to help inaugurate a “German Peace” by “destroy[ing] patriotism and help[ing] the enemies of their country, if they have any country but Germany, by trying to destroy thrift, enterprise, progress,” capitalism, and the mobilization of resources for the war effort.¹² The editors of the *Chicago Tribune* pulled no punches, claiming the SPA’s relatively widespread success was due to the sickness and backwardness of the unskilled and mostly immigrant laboring class. Socialists’ appeals to “diseased and disordered minds,” they argued, revealed that socialism and disloyalty were “element[s] which need[ed] watching and handling.”¹³

With so much apparently at stake, local and federal authorities wasted little time cracking down on political radicals. In July 1917, the sheriff and armed citizens in Bisbee, Arizona forcibly evicted members of the IWW and their families because of a

¹¹ Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism*, 174-176.

¹² “Call Morris Hillquit the Kaiser’s Servant,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1917; “Accuse Hillquit as Democracy’s Foe,” *ibid.*, October 29, 1917; “A German Peace and Confiscation,” *ibid.*, November 6, 1917.

¹³ “The Elections,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 8, 1917.

strike at a nearby copper mine. The families were left in the Arizona desert without food, water, or shelter. Two months later, 165 leaders of the IWW were arrested for allegedly interfering with the draft and inciting strikes.¹⁴ At the same time, the federal government employed the Espionage Act to deal with the SPA and its radical associates. The most influential socialist newspapers, such as *The Masses*, the *Milwaukee Leader*, and the *New York Call*, were, like populist papers such as Tom Watson's *Jeffersonian* and the German-language press, denied mailing privileges. The Military Intelligence Division, the American Protective League, and the DOJ stalked, harassed, and arrested such prominent socialists as Rose Pastor Stokes and former and future SPA presidential candidate Eugene Debs for allegedly seditious speeches.¹⁵

The urgency of the fight against radicalism and German militarism took a menacing turn with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in November 1917 (or late October according to the Julian calendar). The potential consequences for the battlefield were alarming to say the least. Just like their interpretation of radical activities within the United States, many Americans saw in the rise of Russian Bolshevism the specter of Pan-Germanism and its relationship with radical labor movements. Because of the release of fifty German divisions from the Eastern Front to the West resulting from a premature peace between Russia and Germany, Lenin and Trotsky were widely believed to be German agents and the new Bolshevik government the Kaiser's puppet. The Treaty of

¹⁴ H.C. Peterson and Gilbert Fite, *Opponents of War, 1917-1918* (Madison, WI: 1957), 53-56, 62-63

¹⁵ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents of War*, 95-101.

Brest-Litovsk, signed in March 1918, then, added fuel to the common belief in the United States and western Europe in a German-Bolshevik collaboration.¹⁶

The American editors and propagandists, however, did not wait until the treaty was signed to charge that radicals in their own country had ties to both Russian Bolshevism and, by extension, German autocracy. A mere two days after the Bolshevik takeover in Moscow, the *New York Times* discussed the connections Trotsky made in the Bronx while living there in exile. Trotsky apparently received a warm welcome, having been given furniture by fellow radicals and even invited to a dinner in his honor by German socialists before he left to exploit the overthrow of the Czar in March 1917. Trotsky's role as "vizier of Lenin," however, coupled with the presumption that Lenin was a paid agent of the Kaiser, intensified concerns that Trotsky was acting on behalf of Germany while in the United States.¹⁷ Trotsky's ties to radicalism in New York City and the similarity between Bolshevism and the tenets of the IWW (dissolution of national borders, worker control over the means of production) was reliable evidence to many that the Pan-German conspiracy had established radical outposts in Moscow and the United States. The CPI also got in on the action. In his 1918 pamphlet *The German Whisper*, Harvey O'Higgins charged that radical socialist leaders in the United States – implied to be those of the SPA and IWW – were "attempting to do the Kaiser's work" in order "to divide the country in a class quarrel that would leave us as helpless to resist the German military autocracy as the Russians are."¹⁸

¹⁶ John H. Morrow, Jr., *The Great War: An Imperial History* (New York: 2004), 237. A very strong and concise history of the Bolshevik Revolution is Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: 1994).

¹⁷ "Trotzsky [sic.] in Exile Lived in Bronx," *New York Times*, November 9, 1917.

¹⁸ Harvey O'Higgins, *The German Whisper* (Washington, DC: 1918), 17, Pamphlets in Red, White, and Blue Series, Entry 41, Box 6, CPI, NARA.



Figure 7-1. *Chicago Tribune*, April 3, 1918

Not surprisingly, this alliance was most clearly expressed in political cartoons. The majority of these cartoons, however, were printed in newspapers from cities where radicalism was believed to be a ticking time bomb – more specifically, Chicago and New York. In 1918, Chicago, site of the Haymarket riot over thirty years prior, saw a marked increase in the socialist electorate in the 1917 municipal elections, was the home of the IWW’s head office, and was where the 165 arrested Wobbly leaders were awaiting trial. In April 1918, the *Chicago Tribune* published a cartoon that depicted the association between American socialists, Russian Bolsheviks, and the Pan-German conspiracy. A socialist supporter of “immediate international peace” walks through a tilled garden labeled “U.S.” while dropping the seeds of sedition, which he carries in a sack around his neck (Figure 7-1). To his left on a wooden fence hangs a picture of the same man doing

the same thing in a garden labeled “Russia,” the only difference being his hat, a banner identifying him as a Bolshevik, and that his bag is marked “Immediate Peace.” Uncle Sam, however, is aware of the plot and is ready to club the socialist agent in the United States with a twenty year prison sentence. The cartoon’s heading – “Sowing the Seeds that ‘Germanate’” – was a clear allusion to the SPA’s and Bolsheviks collusion with the Kaiser.¹⁹



Figure 7-2. *New York World*, from *Review of Reviews*, March 1918



Figure 7-3. *New York World*, September 11, 1918

In New York City, where more native Europeans resided than in most Old World cities and where Trotsky once called home, cartoonist Rollin Kirby of the *New York World* found two very distinct ways to portray Bolshevism’s ties to Germany. In spring 1918, Kirby made the connection obvious to those familiar with the Bolshevik leaders’ photographs in a cartoon entitled “Down with Capitalism!” that depicted the Kaiser walking with his arms linked with Trotsky on his right and Lenin on his left (Figure 7-

¹⁹ “Sowing Seeds that ‘Germanate,’” *Chicago Tribune*, April 3, 1918.

2).²⁰ In September, Kirby created a cartoon in which the meaning would be familiar to a broader audience. With the cartoon, entitled “Cain,” Kirby may or may not have intended to link the racial composition of the Bolshevik to that of the Prussianized German. The central figure shares many characteristics with the depictions of immigrant radicals from the 1880s (see Chapter 1) and the common rendering of the German soldier on the Western Front (Figure 7-3). A large, ogre-ish “Bolsheviki” with disheveled hair, peasants’ clothing, and an insane look in his eye walks away from a burning village, leaving those he murdered with his large bloody dagger scattered behind him.²¹ The figure and the destruction he wrought are unmistakable references to the presumably uncivilized, racially suspect supporters of the Bolshevik cause and implicitly identify it with the primitive, destructive nature of Prussian militarism.

Concerned that native-born Americans were not yet convinced that Bolsheviks in the United States and Russia were in cahoots with Germany, the CPI put the weight of the Wilson administration behind the charges when it released a pamphlet entitled *The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy*, published in the fall of 1918. Edgar Sisson, an associate head of the agency and, for some time, chief of the CPI’s Foreign Section, smuggled several seemingly incriminating documents out of Russia that “show that the present heads of the Bolshevik Government – Lenin and Trotsky and their associates – are German agents.” All that the Bolsheviks had accomplished, the revolution and the treaty with Germany, Sisson maintained, proved that “the present Bolshevik Government is not a Russian government at all but a German government acting solely in the interests of Germany and betraying the Russian people, as it betrays Russia’s natural allies, for the

²⁰ “Down with Capitalism!” *Review of Reviews*, March 1918, Vol. LVII, 257.

²¹ “Cain,” *New York World*, September 11, 1918.

benefit of the Imperial German Government alone.” Certain documents supposedly established that Bolsheviks in Russia worked with German officials “to send ‘agents-agitators, and agents-destructors’ out of Vladivostok” to the United States and other areas in the Pacific region. Sisson claimed that another document revealed Trotsky’s role in forging American passports for German spies, saboteurs, and propagandists. The pamphlet ends with a report from two scholars testifying to the validity of the documents.²² Sisson’s report and the translated documents had a significant impact on Wilson who, after seeing them in May, found American military intervention in the Russian Civil War more appealing. In July, Wilson ordered troops be sent to northern Russia and Siberia to help anti-Bolshevik forces reclaim the country and, hopefully, reopen the Eastern Front against Germany.²³ The release of the documents in pamphlet form was likely a ploy to garner support for a very controversial policy.

The documents, however, were forgeries. This fact was evident to many outside the administration and the CPI at the time and has been proven since. The *New York Evening Post* and the *New Republic* were the most ardent critics of the documents and the CPI’s careless acceptance of their authenticity. George Creel sent scathing letters to Thomas W. Lamont, banker and owner of the *Post*, and the *New Republic*’s editor Herbert Croly. The CPI chairman frankly accused Lamont of employing “a paid agent of Lenin and Trotsky” (by which he meant the editor who questioned the documents’ legitimacy) and operating as a Bolshevik propaganda machine.²⁴ Croly, on the other

²² Stephen L. Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1980), 25 and 26. *The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy* (Washington, DC: 1918), Pamphlets in Red, White, and Blue Series, Entry 41, Box 5, CPI, NARA.

²³ David S. Foglesong, *America’s Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1995), 196, *passim*.

²⁴ George Creel to Thomas W. Lamont, September 27, 1918, Creel Correspondence, box 14, folder 383, CPI, NARA..

hand, did not completely question the genuineness of the documents. Instead he had merely questioned the hasty publication of the documents because, as he argued, forgery had become somewhat of an art form in Russian politics. Claiming to be writing on behalf of “those in high authority,” Creel blasted Croly as disloyal because of his implication “that the honesty of the Government of the United States was seriously to be questioned.”²⁵ Creel’s kneejerk reaction to criticism and their opponents’ recognition that the documents were likely phony indicates the degree to which the wartime hysteria gripped the most powerful propagandists and that others were able to keep a relatively level head despite the wartime atmosphere.

Yet, despite a few examples of even-temperedness, the hysteria that had been whipped up during wartime continued to infect most of the mainstream press and millions of native-born Americans into the postwar years. Practically all claims that labor radicals in the United States and Russia were secret German agents were based in native-born Americans’ hysterical belief in a Pan-German conspiracy and their racial assumptions about southern and eastern European immigrants. Actual proof was nonexistent and, for most, unnecessary. Yet in the case of the so-called Red Scare that rocked the United States throughout 1919 and 1920, finding evidence of the dangers of labor radicalism was not a problem. The record number of strikes in 1919 and the occasional anarchist bombings were clear signs that the laboring class had fallen to the dark side or were well on their way to doing so. But with the war over and the Pan-German menace having passed, native-born Americans – who had yet to come down from their wartime mania – could focus their wrath and, to a lesser extent, their sympathy

²⁵G. Creel to Herbert Croly, October 2, 1918, box 17, folder 10, *ibid.*; and H. Croly to G. Creel, October 4, 1918, *ibid.*

on those unwilling or unable to self-govern. Non-Anglo-Saxon and undemocratic forces, many believed, continued to battle the dominant race for control of the United States. Consequently, suspected radicals – African Americans and immigrants alike – faced vigilante violence, the policeman’s club, hateful judges, and, in some cases, deportation. With the entire population of “new” immigrants under suspicion, Americanization became a greater concern during the Red Scare than it had during the imagined spy menace. States took the lead in organizing drives to assimilate the immigrant by instilling an allegiance to their adopted nation instead of to their socio-economic class in order to thwart the further spread of Bolshevism.²⁶

Yet despite the ramped up efforts at Americanization, the war and the Red Scare had convinced many that the restrictionists’ calls for a racially homogenous society in the 1890s had some validity. In 1924, four years after the Red Scare had passed and “normalcy” had set in, millions of native-born Americans continued to view their world and their society’s problems through the lens of race. That year Congress passed the Johnson-Reed National Origins Act, which severely restricted the influx of aliens from the backward corners of Europe while completely cutting off Asian immigration. The impact was immediate. One-seventh of the total number of southern and eastern European newcomers in 1924 were allowed into the United States in 1925. It was no coincidence that the membership of the Ku Klux Klan, with its “100% Americanism” and penchant for vigilantism, sprang from two thousand to two million from 1920 to 1925.²⁷

²⁶ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1955), 259-260; Ellis W. Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order: A History of the American People and Their Institutions, 1917-1933* (Prospect Heights, IL: 1992), 39-42; Ronald K. Murray, *The Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis, MN: 1955); and Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: 2011).

²⁷ Hawley, *Search for a Modern Order*, 58, 104-105.

The restriction law and reemergence of the Klan grew from Anglo-Saxon Americans' persisting desire to cleanse the nation of biologically limited immigrants, the same racial nationalism and prewar concerns that drove wartime hysteria and the Red Scare. The war against Pan-Germanism and its Bolshevik allies convinced Americans that distance from the deprived races and problems of the wider world was the best way to assure the long-term security of Anglo-Saxon democracy.

At the same time, many Americans were dissatisfied with the final outcome of the war and regretful of the nation's hateful disposition during wartime. Thousands of soldiers returned home maimed, disabled, or never returned at all. Thousands on the home front had been physically harassed, killed, or jailed for their anti-war or alleged pro-German beliefs. At the time, harsh treatment for presumed spies, slackers, and traitors seemed like a necessary evil considering how propagandists defined the Kaiser's Pan-German aims in the Western Hemisphere. The failure to secure an adequate peace in Paris and the Senate's (and the majority of the American people's) rebuke of the League of Nations forced many to question whether the lengths to which the nation went to win were worth the physical and emotional wounds. Writers like John Dos Passos and Walter Lippmann in the United States as well as those in Europe whose prose made it across the Atlantic – such as Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden, and Erich Maria Remarque – gave voice to a generation of intellectuals sickened by the useless slaughter they witnessed in the trenches of Europe and the seemingly uncritical support most on the home front gave the warring governments.²⁸ Americans' disenchantment largely stemmed from the unfulfilled promises and the now clearly misplaced concerns issued in

²⁸ See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: 1977) and Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: 1999), 275-299.

wartime propaganda. Although not all Americans shared in the disillusionment over the war, the retrenchment of isolationism among the majority of the public suggests that being entangled in Europe's politics was not a pleasant experience.²⁹

Creel, as his correspondence with Lamont and Croly suggested, was already feeling the heat of criticism late in the war and began what would be his typical line of defense after the armistice. In one of his letters to Lamont, for example, Creel argued that "the greatest danger now facing the country is the present campaign of hate," a campaign in which he claimed to have no role. "I have always stood for free speech, for free opinion, against chauvinism and against base passions," he explained.³⁰ After the war, the former CPI chief continued telling his side of the story while placing blame for wartime excesses in propaganda on others. In his 1920 memoir of the CPI's wartime activities, Creel contended that wartime hysteria and hatred for the foreigner was not due to government propaganda. "People generally, and the press particularly," were in a frenzy that manifested as "an excited distrust of our foreign population." The fault, he claimed, was with "a percentage of editors and politicians [who] were eager for a campaign of 'hate' at home." Creel argued that he and the CPI, on the other hand, grounded their work in truth: "Our effort was educational and informative throughout, for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of facts."³¹

²⁹ It should be pointed out, however, that despite the return of isolationism or the "normalcy" the Republican Party promised in the 1920s, the United States remained very active in European and world affairs – the Dawes and Young Plans as well as the Washington Naval Conference are just the two most well-known examples. George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: 2008), 436-483.

³⁰ George Creel to Thomas W. Lamont, October 23, 1918, Creel Correspondence, box 14, folder 383, CPI, NARA.

³¹ Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 4-5, 169. Creel had made these thoughts public the year before, saying in an article in *Everybody's Magazine*, "The average newspaper...made for confusion rather than

Although Creel most likely genuinely believed his CPI was the voice of reason and truth, this does not allay the fact that American propaganda during the First World War was a clinic in fear production. Dos Passos and Lippmann discovered what they saw as the end of democracy as it had been known and understood. They argued that men such as Woodrow Wilson, Creel, and the propagandists of the National Security League had shown how easily the masses could be swayed to support a particular political issue without reducing the powers that be to direct coercion. In short, they and others who did not personally experience the trenches felt as if they had been duped. A great example of this postwar resentment of propaganda and its creators is J. Ward Morehouse, one of the most unscrupulous characters in Dos Passos's classic *USA* trilogy, written in the 1930s. In the novels, Morehouse served as a parody of Creel. He is an expert in advertising who advised that a nutritionally deficient breakfast cereal would fly off the shelves if it were sold as part of "a campaign for Americanism."³²

The war and his experience producing propaganda for the U.S. Army forced Lippmann to reassess his critique of modern society, democracy in particular. Lippmann wrote in 1914 that the changes brought on by modernism came too quickly for Americans, their institutions, and their traditions to handle. A rational progressive state, he argued, could bring discipline to society and save the masses from their ignorance.³³ Although he maintained his elitism through the war and beyond, Lippmann revealed a more pessimistic view of society in his 1922 essay *Public Opinion*. For Lippmann, the

clarity; its appeals were to the emotions not to the mind;...it cluttered public discussion with rumors, distortions, false report and hysteria." The CPI tried to forge "a public opinion bed-rocked in *truth* and built high and strong with *facts*." George Creel, "The American Newspaper: What It Is and What It Isn't," *Everybody's Magazine*, April 1919, Vol. L, 41. Emphasis in the original.

³² Quoted in David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: 1980), 91.

³³ Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery: An Attempt to Diagnose the Current Unrest* (New York: 1914)

impact of wartime propaganda on individuals' actions and attitudes exposed the inability or unwillingness of most individuals to formulate a vision of the world based in reason and fact. Instead, people determined causality and the relationship between events solely from "the pictures in their heads." The problem, Lippmann, argued, was that "the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage it." That reconstruction, however, was based only on the information the individual could or wished to access. Wartime propaganda had shown that one's inner "pseudo-environment" could be easily manipulated by those who understood this aspect of human nature and could control access to information. Because of advances in mass communication and the lessons learned from the war, "the manufacture of consent....improved enormously in technic [sic.]." Democracy would never be the same.

"It is no longer possible...to believe in the original dogma of democracy; that the knowledge needed for the management of human affairs comes up spontaneously from the human heart....It has been demonstrated that we cannot rely upon intuition, conscience, or the accidents of casual opinion if we are to deal with the world beyond our reach."³⁴

Despite Lippmann's assumption that political leaders could and would forge consent from the masses, when the United States was drawn into yet another world war in 1941, this time on two sides of the planet, the federal propaganda agency, the Office of War Information, was very careful not to rile up the hysteria that had gotten so out of control in the first war. Having been the Assistant Secretary of the Navy under Wilson

³⁴ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: 1922), 4, 16, and 248-249.

and a regular contributor to the National Security League, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt knew full well the dangers of hate mongering and also had no interest in reshaping American society as propagandists from the First World War desired. Aside from the racialized depictions of the Japanese, the propaganda from the Second World War was markedly different from that of the First. Neither German-Americans nor Italian-Americans were singled out as a race of potential spies and subverts, and immigrant loyalty was championed far more often than it was questioned. Propagandists were more effective at clearing the German people of complicity in their government's crimes in the 1940s than in the late 1910s. At the same time, while ethnic tensions often boiled over, as in the case of the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles, the American people were left few easy targets for their rage as thousands of Japanese-Americans were placed in internment camps far away from public view and reach.³⁵ While Lippmann viewed propaganda from the First World War as a sign of what democracy would become, the Roosevelt administration saw it as an example that should not be followed.

That was not the lesson a certain Munich politician plucked from American and British propaganda. No one appreciated all that the CPI, NSL, and other American and British propagandists achieved during the Great War more than Adolf Hitler. In his political manifesto *Mein Kampf*, which he wrote in 1924 while serving time in prison for attempting to overthrow the Bavarian government, Hitler professed to have “learned enormously from...enemy propaganda” produced during the First World War. The most basic lesson he gleaned was that “The receptivity of the masses is very limited, their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous.” Hitler argued that the

³⁵ Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945* (New Haven, CT: 1978); John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: 1996); and John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: 1996), 134-135.

poor memory of the “slow-moving” masses could be overcome “only after the simplest ideas are repeated thousands of times.” The message, though, should not only be simple. “The art of propaganda lies in understanding the emotional ideas of the great masses and finding, through a psychologically correct form, the way to the attention and thence to the heart of the broad masses.” To Hitler, the portraying of Germans as inhuman and brutal was “[a]s ruthless as it was brilliant.” “[T]he rabid, impudent bias and persistence with which this lie was expressed” was masterful because it “took into account the emotional, always extreme, attitude of the great masses and for this reason was believed.” Such propaganda, he found, worked because it lacked all subtlety. Hitler famously concluded that “in view of the primitive simplicity of their [the masses’] minds, they more easily fall victim to a big lie than to a little one.” Everyone lied about little things, but few could see the capacity for “such monstrous effrontery and infamous misrepresentation in others.”³⁶ The Nazi leader and his underlings employed these lessons in what was perhaps the most successful propaganda campaign in history. Depictions of “Judeo-Bolsheviks” as a subhuman racial “other” who was responsible for all of Germany’s previous and current problems was not far off from the bestial, decivilized Teuton who sought to undermine American industry and morale as a precursor to the nation’s – or Anglo-Saxon race’s – physical destruction.

Fear of the foreign or racial “other” and undemocratic ideologies have continued to play a central role in the United States’s political discourse through the second Red Scare, the struggle for black civil rights, a newer wave of immigration (this time from south of the border), and the War on Terror. Fear production in each of these and other

³⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New York: 1999 [1925]), 176, 180, 183-184, 185, and 231.

cases were very similar to what took place during the First World War. In the 1940s and '50s, Americans were told that foreigners and native-born purveyors of "foreign" ideologies were working underground to undermine the democratic and capitalist order from within under the direction of a foreign power – in this case the Soviet Union. Reactionaries in the 1960s claimed that the African-American bid for legal equality was also an attempt to turn flip racial hierarchy on its head and, perhaps, was a communist plot. In the past several decades, immigration from Mexico has spawned a new wave of "100% Americanism" and nativist backlash from whites throughout the United States.³⁷ Nativist fears of foreign subversion have even been directed at a President, one who happened to be born with dark skin and an alien-sounding name.

In the history of the United States since 1920, fear on the American home front (if it can be called such) during the War on Terror bears the closest resemblance to the American experience during the First World War. Americans were inundated with warnings of impending attacks and descriptions of the terrorists' motives. Islamic terrorists, like German spies and saboteurs before them, could be anywhere. Top officials in the George W. Bush administration warned that another attack such as occurred on September 11, 2001 could happen again at any moment. The nation, they said, must be prepared. And as they had during the First World War, Americans took warnings of unseen and impending foreign attacks seriously. In early 2003, the Department of Homeland Security advised Americans to stock up on duct tape and rolls of plastic sheeting in order to cover their doors and windows in the event of a biological, chemical,

³⁷ See Robert, Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joe McCarthy and the Senate* (Lexington, KY: 1970); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: 2000); and Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: 2004).

or radiological terror attack because “in the first 48 to 72 hours of an emergency, many Americans will likely have to look after themselves.” Within 24 hours of the warning, anxious Americans flocked to hardware stores across the country and bought out supplies of duct tape.³⁸

Local authorities also decided to be vigilant. For example, in 2005 the police chief of a small Maryland town of 1,400 residents convinced Homeland Security to pay for and install surveillance cameras around the town hall. According to the chief, the cameras were necessary because “You can’t ever tell” if terrorists may pass through his sleepy town on their way to their target. Homeland Security installed cameras in bingo parlors throughout Kentucky to protect patrons from terrorists. In Grand Forks, North Dakota, the police used a \$145,000 robot to dismantle a suspected bomb left in a vagrant’s backpack. The “bomb” turned out to be several bricks.³⁹ In both eras, the United States was either at war or confronting the pressures of impending war – in the most recent case in Afghanistan and Iraq. Government agencies and the press depicted the enemy as lurking in the shadows or scheming abroad, prepared to pounce on Americans in their own backyards at any moment. The enemy’s values were presented as the binary opposite of Americans’. Both Kaiser Wilhelm II and Osama bin Laden hated Americans because of their freedom.

Perhaps the most important connection between the First World War and later encounters with fear and fear production was that Americans’ inability to cope emotionally with social change was, at least to some degree, a driving force behind anti-foreign hysteria. It should be obvious to most that change is a constant and that the world

³⁸ Jeanne Meserve, “Duct Tape Sales Rise Amid Terror Fears,” CNN.com, February 11, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/02/11/emergency.supplies/>

³⁹ Peter N. Stearns, *American Fear: The Causes and Consequences of High Anxiety* (New York: 2006), ix.

will continue to shrink. Millions of Americans, however, have not yet made this connection. Nervous whites in the contemporary United States bear a striking resemblance to those from the Progressive Era. Those at the top of American society have continued to dread changes that may threaten their social and economic position. For many, their uncertainty over where they fit into the ever-evolving world was based on an assumption that their potential future loss would come as a result of gains for non-whites or anti-American ideologues, be it through redistribution of wealth or recent increases in immigrant populations (a modern-day fear of race suicide). In short, a significant number of white Americans continue to fear the foreign “other” will undermine or overturn Anglo-Saxon democracy.

Yet such anxieties were more widespread from 1914 to 1918 because of the practically uniform understanding of race and progress among middle and upper class Anglo-Saxons. Although late nineteenth century values were being challenged by a new generation of intellectuals in the first decades of the twentieth century, race remained the primary lens through which most native-born Americans viewed themselves, interpreted the behavior and culture of others, and generally understood their world.⁴⁰ It explained why certain races generally fell in a particular place in the social and economic hierarchy. It explained white Protestant cultural dominance in the United States. It explained the success of American democracy. Most importantly, it explained progress and the perceived upward trajectory of American history. The wonders of the modern world – everything from airplanes to mass production to medical innovations to wireless communication – were created by the more superior white races. While the “backward”

⁴⁰ The classic study of this intellectual rebellion is Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Time* (New York: 1959).

peoples of Asia, southern and eastern Europe, South America, and Africa remained mired in poverty and dependency, the great Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic races had tamed wild frontiers and peoples, discovered sciences and technologies, developed state bureaucracies, and built steel-reinforced buildings that scraped the sky. Yet the continued supremacy of the better races was not guaranteed. Failure to maintain the race's virility or subjugation by an inferior people could undermine the stock of a great white race and reverse the progress of civilization. Many native-born Americans openly feared the former before 1917 and recognized the latter in the Prussianized German agent in the United States and his decivilized comrade in Europe's trenches.

This understanding of progress, race, and whiteness, then, remained central to how Americans on the home front understood and experienced the most modern war the world had yet seen. Few countries at the turn of the century embraced modernism as tightly as the United States. Industries, and, thus, cities, were expanding faster than anyone could have imagined. Reformers hoped to use the power of the state to instill a rational and humanitarian order to society, economics, and politics. New technologies changed the way Americans worked, traveled, communicated, and generally lived their daily lives. Yet, as Walter Lippmann said in 1914, the world was shrinking and the provincial American psyche could not keep up with such rapid change. And the most glaringly negative byproduct of that change was the demographic shock of the "new" immigration. Anti-trust legislation, settlement houses, the telephone, mass production, and the automobile were, for the most part, viewed as beneficial to the nation and evidence of the high evolutionary plain the Anglo-Saxon had reached. The influx of

biologically backward immigrants, ironically, was both the consequence of Anglo-Saxon progress and a threat to their religion, politics, and racial health.

For many Anglo-Saxon Americans the world in 1914 was a racially messy place, where the weaker of the white ethnicities posed as great a threat to Anglo-Saxon hegemony as the black, brown, and yellow races. Stereotypes were the means by which they made sense of it all. The stereotypes they held about themselves and their Teutonic German cousins impacted their concerns about the deterioration of Anglo-Saxon virility during the preparedness debate, the loyalty of German-Americans, the subversiveness of German culture, the capabilities of potential spies and saboteurs, the consequences of defeat in Europe, Prussianized Germans' religious faith, and the United States's position as God's chosen people. The German was clannish, secretive, calculating, acquisitive, and efficient. The Lamarckian impact of Prussianism on many of them added a cold, bestial cruelty to their presumed racial traits. Their allies in the "American Bolsheviki" bore a striking resemblance.⁴¹ At least this is what wartime propaganda claimed and many middle and upper class Anglo-Saxon Americans believed. To them, the Pan-German conspiracy to dominate the globe was as much a threat to Anglo-Saxon hegemony in the United States as it was about the nation's continued existence. For Anglo-Saxon Americans, the Great War was an existential struggle against foreign subjugation.

The First World War, though, was an existential crisis for the United States beyond the physical threat many imagined Germany posed to the Anglo-Saxon race and

⁴¹ The first reference I have found of the term "American Bolsheviki," which referred to both Wobblies and radical socialists, in the press or propaganda was a story in the *Chicago Tribune* reporting on a mass celebration of radicals for the Bolsheviks' successful takeover in Moscow. "Our Own Brand of Bolsheviki Demand Peace!" *Chicago Tribune*, November 26, 1917.

nation. It was also one of those rare moments when Americans were forced to closely examine who they were as a people and a nation. Should the United States solely be an Anglo-Saxon republic, upholding the traditions and culture that originated across the Atlantic? Or had the United States finally transitioned into something new – a country that had blended the best traits from the various ethnicities and nationalities into a body politic where one's abilities and character trumped his or her ethnic background? After not so careful consideration, it seems that most Americans decided that no, the nation had not changed and nor should it. Along with the invasion complex, spy hysteria, charges of disloyalty, and vigilantism of the wartime period, the reemergence of the Ku Klux Klan, the postwar Red Scare, and the 1924 National Origins Act suggested that mainstream Americans – those who bound themselves racially or culturally to Anglo-Saxon democracy – had little interest in allowing others to share in or weaken the Anglo-Saxon Protestant grasp on hegemony. Prior to 1914, the United States was an Anglo-Saxon republic, privileging those believed to be born with an inherent love of liberty as well as those of other races who acted the part. By November 11, 1918, not much had changed in terms of Americans' views of the foreigner. And this, paradoxically, is what makes the First World War significant to twentieth century American history. The war offered the American people an opportunity to strip the foreign boogeyman of his power by embracing, instead of scorning, those aspects of their ever-evolving society that scared them the most. By failing to exorcise those demons, because of an exaggerated fear of foreign subjugation, Anglo-Saxon America ensured that future encounters with foreign phantoms would take on a similarly menacing shape.

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