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A ONE MAN'S WAR

Theodore Roosevelt's Views of Germany and of German-Americans During the Period of American Neutrality, 1914–1917

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Tässä tutkielmassa tarkastellaan Yhdysvaltojen entisen presidentin Theodore Rooseveltin suhtautumista Saksaan ja amerikansaksalaisiin Yhdysvaltojen puolueettomuuspolitiikan kaudella 1914–1917. Lähtöasetelma oli mielenkiintoinen, sillä ennen ensimmäistä maailmansotaa Roosevelt oli ollut suuri Saksan ihailija, mutta saksalaisten valloitettua Belgian elokuussa 1914 kuitenkin juuri hän kaikkein äänekkäimmin alkoi vaatia Yhdysvalloilta Saksan vastaisia toimia. Historioitsijoiden mukaan Roosevelt alkoi sodan seurauksena peräti vihata saksalaisia.

Tehtävänä oli siis selvittää, miksi Rooseveltistä tuli saksalaisvastainen. Tarkentavat kysymykset määritteli aiheesta kirjoitettu tutkimuskirjallisuus tai paremminkin sen puute: on etsitty vastauksia kysymyksiin, joita muut historioitsijat eivät syystä tai toisesta ole asian tiimoilta edes esittäneet. Millä tavoin Rooseveltin mielipiteet Saksasta muuttuivat ja miksi? Kuinka nopea prosessi hänen kääntymisensä saksalaisvastaiseksi oli? Miten hänen saksalaisvihansa ilmeni? Mikä oli hänen suhteensa amerikansaksalaisiin? Tutkimuksen piirin laajentaminen myös amerikansaksalaisiin oli tarpeen, koska sota heijastui Yhdysvaltoihin sisäisinä levottomuuksina, mikä ei voinut olla vaikuttamatta Rooseveltin näkemyksiin. Hänen Saksaa ja amerikansaksalaisia koskevien näkemystensä välillä oli näin vuorovaikutussuhde.

Primäärilähteinä on käytetty pääasiassa Rooseveltin vuosina 1914–1917 tuottamia tekstejä eli hänen yksityiskirjeenvaihtoaan sekä lukuisia sanoma- ja aikakauslehtiartikkeleitaan. Muilta osin on käytetty hänen vuonna 1913 julkaistua omaelämäkertaansa sekä tutkimuskirjallisuutta. Vahva nojautuminen Rooseveltin omiin kirjoituksiin oli osin aiheen, osin pakon sanelemaa, sillä hänen Saksa-suhdettaan ei ole sotavuosien osalta yksityiskohtaisesti tutkittu. Tämä riippuvuus Rooseveltista pakotti kuitenkin pohtimaan metodia, sillä amerikkalaiset historioitsijat ovat kyseenalaistaneet hänen luotettavuutensa lähteenä. Tässä tutkimuksessa onkin tästä syystä käytetty paljon aikaa Rooseveltin maailmankuvan tutkimiseen ja sitä hahmotetaan lukijalle pala palalta, koska hänen maailmankuvaansa voidaan käyttää hänen sanojensa mittana: jos Rooseveltin osin kiistellytkin väitteet omista teoistaan ja ajatuksistaan olivat täysin sopusoinnussa hänen maailmankuvansa kanssa, oli syytä olettaa hänen puhuneen totta.

Tutkimuksen merkittävin tutkimustulos syntyi sivutuotteena, sillä Rooseveltin sodanaikaisen Saksa-suhteen analysointi asetti hänen ensimmäisten sotakuukausien aikaisen toimintansa yllättäen uuteen valoon. Niinpä seuraavilla sivuilla esitetään vallitsevan käsityksen haastava tulkinta, jossa Rooseveltin katsotaan tuominneen Saksan Belgian valloituksen aikaisemmin, mutta kääntyneen saksalaisvastaiseksi myöhemmin kuin tähän asti on väitetty. Se, kuinka saksalaisvastaiseksi Rooseveltiä haluaa luonnehtia, on pitkälti makuasia, mutta puheet Saksa-vihasta ovat rankasti liioiteltuja, sillä Rooseveltin mielipide Saksasta muuttui puolueettomuuskaudella vähemmän kuin on luultu.

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1. INTRODUCTION

If one would have to name one foreign country that most profoundly made its presence known in Theodore Roosevelt's life and thoughts, then that would have to be Germany: in fact, it is almost stunning how tightly the bigger forces of life entwined their destinies together. Theodore Roosevelt (1858−1919), the twenty-sixth President of the United States (1901−1909), wielded power all over the world simultaneously with Imperial Germany; he clashed with it, co-operated with it and, in the end, faded to dusk together with it. One could even argue that the creation of the modern German empire in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870−1871 was a defining moment in Roosevelt's life. Historian H.W. Brands, for example, sees that it was "arguably the most important event in world politics during Theodore Roosevelt's lifetime," since "Roosevelt would spend much of his presidency coping with the consequences of this crowning − but internationally destabilizing − achievement of the Iron Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck."[1]

Bismarck's creation turned out to be strong, aggressive, and arrogant, to the extent that soon many countries found co-existence with it almost unbearable. In sharp contrast, Roosevelt's relationship with Germany was warm. It had been like that since 1873, when he had spent a summer in Dresden as a boy: to quote Roosevelt, from that time on it would had been "quite impossible" to make him feel that "the Germans were really foreigners."[2] During the decades that followed Roosevelt made many German friends and closely associated with the German-Americans. During Roosevelt's presidency many politicians in the United States, and especially in Europe, were almost hysteric about the German threat, but Roosevelt greeted Germany's growing strength with remarkable ease. As President, he managed to establish and maintain good relations with Germany and even became personal friends with the German Emperor, William II, although serious crises such as the Venezuelan crisis of 1902−1903 and the Moroccan crisis of 1905−1906, both of which could had seriously impaired German-American relations, occurred during his presidency. In brief, it was well-known, at home and abroad, that President Roosevelt's relationship with Germany was one of mutual respect and admiration.

[1] Brands, H.W., *T.R. The Last Romantic*, New York, 1997, p. 39.
[2] Roosevelt, Theodore, *An Autobiography*, New York, 1913, p. 21.

The First World War (1914−1918) broke that friendship, and the focus of this thesis is on this development. A few days into the war, on August 4, 1914, Germany launched an attack on France through Belgium, invading that small neutral country in an obvious violation of the Hague conventions. Nevertheless, this flanking move drew no protest from the U.S. government, but instead President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed total neutrality. The American public, the media, and politicians from both parties flocked to support President Wilson's neutrality policy, but Roosevelt became the most notable exception to the rule as the ex-President soon found himself in profound disagreement with the rest of the nation.

To quote TR-biographer William Henry Harbaugh, Roosevelt's early reactions to the war "elude facile generalization, partly because he said one thing in private and… another thing in public; also, he seems to have reversed himself on some issues as the significance of the war gradually emerged in sharper relief."[3] Indeed, historians have found Roosevelt's first statements about the war confusing and the interpretations therefore vary considerably; patching together from various historical studies, however, it is possible to draw a sketch of the prevailing view.

According to the prevailing scholarly opinion, Roosevelt *did not know how to react* at first. "Unlike the British and many Americans," historian John Milton Cooper, Jr., concludes, "he [TR] did not at once condemn Germany's actions in Belgium."[4] It is widely claimed that for the first couple of months Roosevelt supported Wilson's neutrality policy, but supposedly he soon came to regret his earlier views. He then stepped forth and, for the first time in public on November 8, 1914,[5] denounced Wilson's neutrality policy by taking the position that the United States should intervene in some way on behalf of Belgium − from that day on Roosevelt repeatedly demanded that the United States must drop its neutrality and stand up to Germany. Against this background scholars have felt safe to conclude − and in this they are unanimous − that World War I turned Roosevelt anti-German. Historian Henry Pringle, for example, concludes that the World War "poisoned his [TR's] mind against Germany."[6] Howard K. Beale simply asserts that by 1915−1916 Roosevelt had

[3] Harbaugh, William Henry, *Power & Responsibility. The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt*, New York, 1961, p. 466.
[4] Cooper, John Milton, Jr., *The Warrior and the Priest. Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt*, Cambridge, MA, 1983, p. 277.
[5] Harbaugh, p. 468.
[6] Pringle, Henry F., *Theodore Roosevelt. A Biography*, New York, 1956, p. 203.

come to hate the Germans,[7] whereas Brands is content with remarking that World War I "changed his [TR's] mind about many things German."[8]

This is a study of Theodore Roosevelt's views of Germany and of German-Americans during the period of American neutrality from July 1914 to April 1917: to put it simply, the intention is to find an answer to the question, what happened? *Why did this former friend and admirer of Germany become anti-German and even a German-hater during the war?* On first thought the answer might seem obvious: because Germany invaded another country and to denounce it was the only decent thing to do. Yet the issue at hand was more complicated than that. For instance, why was Roosevelt, who had previously been sympathetic to the Germans, willing to confront Germany over Belgium, when other Americans, including many who were fiercely anti-German, supported neutrality? Also, *if Roosevelt felt so deeply about the German invasion of Belgium, then why did he at first hesitate to condemn it?*

The author of this thesis has no knowledge of the existence of previous published studies on Roosevelt's relationship with and thinking about Germany. This is not surprising, however, for various TR-biographies and studies on Roosevelt's foreign policy − most notably Howard Beale's, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (1956) − have extensively covered his early experiences of the Germans and his later German policy as President. There is also a lot of research on Roosevelt in the World War period. As stated, his early responses to the war have raised a lot of interest: for instance, Henry Pringle's, *Theodore Roosevelt. A Biography* (1931); William Henry Harbaugh's, *Power & Responsibility. The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt* (1961); and John Milton Cooper's, *The Warrior and the Priest. Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (1983), all delve with this problem. In general, Roosevelt's wartime conflict with Wilson over foreign policy has been studied to the utmost, for example by Cooper. And Frederick Luebke, in his, *Bonds of Loyalty. German-Americans and World War I* (1974), examines, among other things, Roosevelt's views of the German-Americans during World War I.

Against this background it is literally amazing how little American historians have written about Roosevelt's views of Germany *during the war*. As stated, the scholars have formed a solid front in declaring that, as a result of the war, Roosevelt became anti-German, but they have left their

[7] Beale, Howard K., *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, Baltimore, 1956, see footnote on p. 408.
[8] Brands, p. 43.

research there: it seems that no one has really felt the need to analyze this radical change. Brands, for example, simply notes that the war changed Roosevelt's mind about many things German, but he does not specify how did Roosevelt's views change − and nor does anyone else in depth. The historians have not even felt it necessary to set a time frame for Roosevelt's transformation from an admirer of Germany to a German-hater; in other words, they have failed to define how rapid was this process that turned him anti-German. Apparently they assume, then, that Roosevelt became anti-German the minute he condemned the German invasion of Belgium − that is, at some point before November 8, 1914.

There would seem to be only one rational explanation for this lack of research on this subject: the historians must have felt that there is nothing to study about as the equation seems so simple. They have taken notice that, first, Germany invaded Belgium and, next, Roosevelt became the loudest advocate of war against Germany in the United States.[9] From this they have drawn the conclusion that the war turned Roosevelt anti-German and have not felt it necessary to go into lengths about it as it would be like stating the obvious.

But the scholars have assumed too much. One of the first things that became obvious in doing this research was that Roosevelt's relationship with Germany, both before and during the war, was complex, unique and one that definitely deserves to be analyzed. Hence, the intention is to answer those questions that other historians have left open. *How did the First World War change Roosevelt's views on Germany? How rapid was the process that turned Roosevelt anti-German? How did his anti-Germanism manifest itself?* In addition, *Roosevelt's views of the German-Americans must be examined*, too, as those views markedly shaped his views of Germany. Since it was in Germany's interest to keep the United States neutral, it was willing to recruit all the help it could get from America's large German-American community in spreading pro-German propaganda in the United States. Naturally, this meddling in the internal affairs of the United States had an effect on Roosevelt's opinion of the German-Americans as well as on his opinion of Germany.

[9] In this thesis it will be many times stated that TR "advocated war against Germany" or "campaigned for war" in 1914−1917, but the reader is advised to keep in mind that this phrasing cuts corners a bit. Though an interventionist, TR avoided making direct calls for war *in public* simply because he understood that it would not sound right. To quote Cooper: "Roosevelt often condemned Germany and lauded the Allies, but he never issued an outright call for intervention, and he sometimes claimed that a tougher stance would keep the United States out of war." See Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 304−305. But the bottom line is that contemporaries very well knew that TR stood for war. In short, he was in favor of armed defense of American rights, which would have either forced Germany to moderate its behavior dramatically or to accept war with the United States.

However, as this thesis was taking shape, its agenda grew more ambitious − and so the task ahead grew more toilsome and swelled out of the bounds of a Master's thesis. *The purpose of this thesis is to show that the prevailing view of Roosevelt's early responses to World War I is not altogether acceptable*. The historians have misinterpreted Roosevelt, because they have failed to understand, or have not looked into, his relationship with Germany. After a careful analysis of that relationship, three conclusions will be made in this thesis: 1) Roosevelt did condemn the German invasion of Belgium (and neutrality policy) practically from the beginning 2) he became anti-German later than historians have thought, and 3) his views of Germany did not change during the neutrality period as drastically as historians have suggested. At first glance it might appear that points 1 and 2 contradict each other and form an equation that is therefore impossible, but a theory will be presented that fully explains the contradiction. Perhaps it should be added that this interpretation is not an attack on individual historians: as stated, the above-presented "prevailing view" has been patched up from the studies of various historians and it probably would be acceptable to none of them as such. Nor will it be claimed that the theory presented here could not be disputed − that depends, among other things, on how one defines "anti-German." The intention is merely to provide a new interpretation which will appreciate the complexity of Roosevelt's relationship with Germany and in so doing will shed new light on Roosevelt's early responses to World War I.

The period under study has been defined to cover the time from the outbreak of World War I on July 28, 1914, to the American entry into the war on April 6, 1917. The original idea was that the research period would cover the whole war all the way to November 1918, but that idea was soon abandoned as wholly incompatible with the length recommendations set for a diploma work. After that the only other thinkable option was to narrow the focus to the neutrality period, which, as a matter of fact, turned out to be a better and a more practical idea than the original one. The outbreak of the war marked the beginning of Roosevelt's long struggle for an American intervention, so to end this study where Americans finally came to see things his way is appropriate as it lays stress on the crucial role that he played.

This study met with many problems of which one of the trickiest was to determine how big of a role should President Woodrow Wilson play in it. The consciousness of the fact that there was a risk of losing focus whenever concentrating on Roosevelt's relationship with Wilson was made all the more tormenting by the knowledge that Wilson's role was nevertheless fundamental. Roosevelt hated Wilson with a passion, and there exists a wide consensus among historians that that hatred in

part determined Roosevelt's views and alleged policy shifts on neutrality and, consequently, on Germany. This view in mind there was no choice but to do a study of motivations by comparing Wilson's German policy with Roosevelt's German policy as it was the only way to find out to what extent their fight was motivated by personal hatreds and to what extent by fundamental disagreements over policy. Wilson's role will be crucial also in the chapter dealing with the German-Americans. Since Wilson in 1915 started to accuse German-Americans of disloyalty much in the same manner as Roosevelt, it will be rewarding to compare their views as it gives the reader insight into Roosevelt's anti-Germanism.

Most of the problems, however, were related to the person under scrutiny, and it is now time to introduce him. Theodore Roosevelt was by birth an aristocrat from New York,[10] who got accustomed to the cosmopolitan way of life already as a child. A whirlwind of energy, he was not only a politician but also a distinguished naturalist, an amateur historian, and a voracious reader, who could discuss a variety of subjects with great expertise. Not exactly your typical bookworm, though, Roosevelt rose to fame as a man of action. As one of the most celebrated heroes of the Spanish-American War of 1898, Roosevelt became a national figure even before he became President, and the Americans have warmly embraced him as a symbol of the nation's vitality ever since.

America's affection for Theodore Roosevelt is easy to understand, starting at his childhood legend: Roosevelt lived strong, but he was born as a weakling. He had been a skinny, near-sighted, and frail boy, who had been forced to spend much of his childhood sick in bed. He suffered from such severe attacks of asthma that his father often carried him in his arms through the night to help him get over the worst. One day his father finally said: "Theodore, you have the mind but you have not the body, and without the help of the body the mind cannot go as far as it should. *You must make your body*."[11] Accordingly, young Theodore started to exercise industriously, made his body strong and robust, overcame his asthma, gained in self-confidence, and simultaneously created a passion for outdoors life, heroism, manly virtues, martial arts, and contact sports. This was the seed of his intense admiration of Germany, for strength, endurance, and determination all became qualities that

[10] The Roosevelt family lived in Manhattan. They were Knickerbockers, descendants of the early Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam. TR's father, Theodore, Sr., was an importer and glass merchant, who became a millionaire already in the age of twelve through a handsome inheritance. TR's mother, Martha Bulloch Roosevelt, was a southern belle from a prominent, wealthy family in Georgia. The Bulloch family, however, had lost its fortune in the Civil War. See Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 5−14; Brands, p. 3−18.
[11] Brands, p. 26.

he most valued in other individuals as well as in other nations.[12] Roosevelt's fascination with power and this dawning obsession with masculinity − especially with its aggressive, militant side − hurled him emotionally close to Imperial Germany.

Turning his back to the privileged life of ease, Roosevelt preferred a life of hardships. As a young man he headed to the West to test his manhood. Instead of looking for mere cheap thrills like many other upper-class youngsters pretending to be cowboys, Roosevelt actually lived the life for a few years, herding cattle and hunting grizzlies.[13] Clearly, then, the ultimate American hero was on the making, and the Roosevelt legend would later prove irresistible not only in America but would arouse great interest in Europe, too.

The people adored Roosevelt throughout his public career. He had a colourful manner of speech and great sense of humour. Even as President he allowed his exuberant personality and boyish charm to shine through. The list of juicy anecdotes is endless. He boxed with his military aides in the Oval Office. Once he entertained his guests by demonstrating his jiu-jitsu techniques on a Swiss diplomat in the middle of a White House dinner, throwing and twisting that poor fellow around. Foreign governments soon learned to send men of physical endurance to Washington as ambassadors, for Roosevelt often took them hiking or riding in Rock Creek or swimming in the Potomac River, and if one could not keep up with the President there was no hope of making it into his inner circle.[14] When visiting in Norway in 1910, Roosevelt got so into his games with little Prince Olaf that he "tossed him in the air, and rolled him on the floor" while the Dowager Empress of Russia watched, having a hard time believing what she was witnessing. "You must always remember," Roosevelt's British friend, Sir Cecil Spring Rice, wrote in 1904, "that the President is about six."[15]

In short, Roosevelt was the whole package. He was born to be President, and the tragedy of his life was that he was not allowed to make it into a life-long profession like his friend the Kaiser. Being the embodiment of a man who enjoyed having and using power, Roosevelt loved every second of his seven and a half years in the White House. The slide towards the so called Imperial Presidency – a process where political power gradually shifted from Congress to the President – was set off by

[12] Cooper, p. 7; Brands, p. 25−28.
[13] Morris, Edmund, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, New York, 1979, p. 272−279.
[14] Beale, p. 10−13.
[15] Pringle, p. 4. Sir Cecil Arthur Spring Rice (1859−1918), England's Ambassador to the United States 1912−1918. He was TR's perhaps closest British friend and even his best-man in his wedding to Alice Lee.

Roosevelt, who stretched the limits of executive power especially in the field of foreign affairs.[16] "He stamped his imprint upon foreign policy," Harbaugh concludes, "with a force exceeded by only a few wartime Presidents and equalled, probably, by no peacetime President."[17]

The power that Roosevelt craved for himself, he also craved for his country: the fundamental desire that guided both his domestic as well as his foreign policy was to make the United States a strong, united nation. In politics he was a left-wing Republican who assumed the leadership of a new generation of socially-minded progressives. A man of the people, he fought for anti-trust legislation and preached for stronger government in order to stop the growing inequalities in the economic conditions of the modern, industrial society, which made big business regard him as a dangerous lefty. On the international arena he became the first American President to act self-consciously as the leader of a great power. Reflecting his desire for stronger governmental involvement in domestic affairs, he also wanted to create a new kind of foreign policy where the United States would play a more active role in the world.[18] Roosevelt's aristocratic background had ensured him a top-of-the-class education, trips overseas, and had helped him to establish an impressive, global network of friends. As a result, he was better equipped for conducting foreign affairs than most of the presidents before him and had a far more sophisticated conception of the world than most of his countrymen.[19] He had a few flaws, which probably prevented him from becoming the best President the United States has ever had, but he was undoubtedly one of the most intelligent ones and definitely the most fascinating one.

So, here was some foretaste of the Roosevelt legend, but with the legend comes the question of veracity. Kathleen Dalton mentions in her, *Theodore Roosevelt. A Strenuous Life* (2002) that Roosevelt "provides any biographer with a special challenge," because he actively helped to create his own legend. She warns that Roosevelt was a skilled politician who carefully cultivated his image: he "enjoyed playing to the crowd" and "shrewdly championed themes that evoked warm responses." He kept his less attractive traits well hidden and, according to Dalton, his family and friends edited or destroyed embarrassing letters, which would had revealed moments of pain, hesitation, self-doubt, and regret. Being a charming personality, Roosevelt was able to persuade

[16] Cooper, *Warrior*, Preface, p. xi.
[17] Harbaugh, p. 183.
[18] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 45, 70; Brands, p. 427−429, 541, 610.
[19] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 5−6.

friends, journalists, and biographers to pass on the heroic version of his life. To quote Dalton: "In their hands he became the ideal father, the greatest president, the American hero for all times."[20]

Roosevelt had also other traits that have eaten his credibility. For starters, he had an enormous ego, like fiercely intelligent people often do. He was a romantic: having a psychological need to see his life in heroic terms, he had a tendency for self-aggrandizement. Finally, Roosevelt's faith in his own moral righteousness was exceptionally strong, enabling him to be blind to the facts whenever the facts implied that he had, in fact, done something immoral. The combined effect of these traits was that Roosevelt was wholly incapable of being self-critical. Then again, later scholars have given him more than his share of criticism: in fact, American historians have abused Roosevelt along the decades so cruelly and unjustly that the case should be taught at universities to history students as a warning example. Starting from the 1930's many historians held that Roosevelt was an outright liar, which provoked them to attack this national icon with such single-mindedness that objectivity got thrown out of the window. Dalton, for example, regrets that "Roosevelt has been repeatedly mauled by historians, ridiculed as a juvenile buffoon, a deeply flawed leader ruled primarily by personal ambition and militaristic bloodlust."[21] It was not until the late 1950's that this unhappy trend gave way to a more balanced era in Roosevelt studies.

Yet the fact remains that Roosevelt's credibility has been widely questioned. This presented quite remarkable problems, since this study, in the absence of other research on the subject, relies heavily on Roosevelt's own writings. The challenge was made all the greater by the fact that that little amount of research that does exist on the subject often contradicts Roosevelt's statements. Many times it was his word against the word of a scholar or a group of scholars, which often left no other choice than to go back to the sources; as a consequence, some parts of this thesis had to be re-written, some parts more than once.

On the other hand, this question of Roosevelt's credibility should not be made into a bigger problem than it is. Everyone cultivates one's image, and it is a standard procedure of every historical study to assess the sources critically − there is no reason to overdo it in this particular case, simply because the person under study is Roosevelt. Instead of succumbing into paranoia, we should keep an open mind and avoid being judgemental. It needs to be remembered that the list of historians

[20] Dalton, Kathleen, *Theodore Roosevelt. A Strenuous Life*, New York, 2002, p. 5−8.
[21] Dalton, p. 9.

who have embarrassed themselves by accusing Roosevelt of lying on false grounds is long. Indeed, it seems that Roosevelt's reputation as a liar has provided historians with a convenient emergency exit, which they have too often taken if their attempts to understand him have otherwise reached a dead-end. We should therefore resist the temptation to take this emergency exit: we should not be willing to proclaim Roosevelt a liar until all the other avenues have been thoroughly checked.

The problem of credibility was dealt with the following method. First, a great deal of effort was put in to study Roosevelt's worldview with the hope of being able to see the world the way he saw it. After getting an idea about his worldview, it was possible to measure the worth of his word by examining how it correlated with his worldview: if his assurances of having done something were totally in accord with his beliefs and with his way of doing things, then there was reason to believe that he was telling the truth. But to establish this correlation was not always enough, however, because some historians have suggested that the very reason why Roosevelt distorted facts was his desire to protect his image as a man of principle who always acted according to his convictions: in other words, he sought to hide from public view those moments of doubt when he had not lived up to his own sermons. So whenever historians accused Roosevelt of doing this, it was necessary to examine whether there was to be found some other possible explanation for his behaviour − if there was, then there was reason to suspect that TR was being sincere after all and that the accusations to the contrary were based on false readings of his worldview.

As stated, this thesis relies heavily on Roosevelt's published works. *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, edited by Elting E. Morison and John M. Blum (8 vol., Cambridge, 1951−1954), deserves to be mentioned first. Its volumes seven and eight, which cover the war years, were the cornerstones of this research, but the six remaining volumes were also leafed through in search for letters containing valuable information on Germany. Equally important were Roosevelt's wartime books, *America and the World War*, published in January 1915, and, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*, published in February 1916. These books were compiled together from articles, which Roosevelt had written during the neutrality period for various newspapers and periodicals, most notably the *Outlook* and the *New York Times*. The list of sources also show six wartime editorials by Roosevelt, which the *New York Times* published during October and November, 1914. They include the first public writings in which Roosevelt wrote about the war *without restraint*, so they proved invaluable when piecing together TR's early responses to the war − and so did Lawrence Abbott's, *Impressions of Theodore Roosevelt* (1919), for Abbott was the editor of the *Outlook*. Another Roosevelt's wartime publication, *The Foes of Our Own Household* (1917), and his wartime

editorials from the Kansas City *Star* were useful in filling some gaps in the author's understanding of Roosevelt's views of German-Americans. Their extensive use was to be avoided, however, since Roosevelt had written those texts after the U.S. declaration of war. And finally, Roosevelt's, *Autobiography* (1913), was very helpful in piecing together his worldview.

This thesis will proceed as follows: Chapter 2 examines Roosevelt's pre-World War relationship with Germany. The focus will be heavily on the Roosevelt presidency, while not forgetting his earlier experiences of Germany from his youth. The latter part of the chapter will introduce Roosevelt's thoughts on his visit to Germany in May 1910. But Chapter 2 also serves another, equally important purpose: it is an introduction to Roosevelt's mind. This is important not only because his worldview will be used in the later chapters as a "lie detector," but also because his way of looking the world was something totally new to most people at the time. In general, the reader is advised to keep in mind that *all* the themes introduced in Chapter 2 will be of importance later when trying to understand the nature of Roosevelt's conflict with Germany and with Wilson during 1914−1917. The reader is also asked to be patient, for the relevance of some of the themes of Chapter 2 will be explained only later in the coming chapters.

In Chapter 3 the focus is on the war's first months from July 1914 to early 1915. The intention is to re-interpret Roosevelt's early responses to World War I by using a fresh approach, but at the same time it will be studied what kind of an effect the war had on Roosevelt's views of Germany during its early stages. This will be done without forgetting the personal side of the story as it will be also examined what happened to Roosevelt's personal relationships with his German and German-American friends following the outbreak of the war.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the period from February 1915 to mid-1916. In the beginning the main interest will be on Germany's submarine warfare and on the sinking of the *Lusitania*, which greatly influenced Roosevelt. Then it will be time to bring in President Wilson by comparing his German policy with Roosevelt's German policy: the purpose of this is to examine to what extent were Roosevelt's attacks on Wilson motivated by personal hatreds and presidential ambitions and to what extent by disagreements over policy. From there on Chapter 4 will be an analysis of Roosevelt's wartime anti-Germanism. Since historians have widely asserted that in 1915−1916 Roosevelt was a German-hater, our mission is to study why did he start to hate Germany and how did that hatred manifest itself.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to the German-American question. Since the German government took advantage of the German-Americans in spreading pro-German propaganda, Roosevelt's reactions to the revelations of Germany's undercover operations in the United States, including German sabotage, will be examined in this chapter. In examining Roosevelt's relations with the German-Americans comparisons will be made between his and President Wilson's views, for this will set Roosevelt's anti-Germanism in its right proportions. After the German-American question has been dealt with, the only thing that remains to be done in Chapter 5 is to cover the period from late 1916 to April 1917 and to introduce the events that finally carried the United States into the war.

2. YEARS OF TRIUMPH: FROM THE WHITE HOUSE TO THE SCHLOSS IN POTSDAM, 1901–1910

During World War I, Theodore Roosevelt, the respected ex-President, was the most persistent critic of President Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy of neutrality and the most influential individual American who advocated war against Germany. To say that Roosevelt's demeanour during those days was not statesmanlike would be an understatement: in fact, his poor behaviour, the patronizing tone of his public denunciations of Wilson, as well as the passion with which he insisted on confronting Germany would almost certainly puzzle anyone unfamiliar with his background.

In order to understand what was going on in Roosevelt's head during the turbulent war years, one must first examine his presidential record. By so doing, it becomes clear that he considered himself the nation's greatest expert in all things related to World War I. To a great extent, the feeling was justified. Roosevelt knew war, he knew Germany, and he knew the international scene intimately. His feelings of omniscience were further enhanced by his consciousness of his own intellect and by his experiences as President. In fact, Roosevelt had realized years ago that the war was coming, and, when it finally came, he was better prepared to face it than most Americans. All these factors together made him the ultimate *besserwisser* during World War I.

A good starting point is to examine how TR got to know war, Germany, and the world. As the main focus of this thesis is in studying how World War I changed Roosevelt's views of Germany and of German-Americans, it is essential first to introduce his experiences of Germany from the time he acted as President. Yet we must go beyond that: Roosevelt had a very special relationship with Germany ever since his childhood and these early experiences had an effect on his future German policy as President.

One striking feature in Roosevelt's way of dealing with other world powers was that he seldom seemed to hesitate. No matter how difficult the challenge facing him, he always seemed to know exactly what to do and why. This is because his overall political outlook was highly consistent and his foreign policy reflected this. TR was on a mission; he knew how he wanted to shape the world and set his clearly defined objectives accordingly. Consequently, to understand Roosevelt, one must

understand his worldview. This being the case, his idea of the hierarchy of races and his views on war, peace and power, have to be introduced, too.

2.1 THE AMERICAN KAISER

2.1.1 Roosevelt's Hierarchy of Races

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Germany was on a steady rise and was fast becoming the most potent military might in the world. Alongside with Germany's growing influence in world politics, German culture had also gained dominance and was widely regarded as superior to other cultures. Americans, too, deeply admired many things German. The prevailing historical theory – the germ theory – traced the origins of America's political institutions to the forests of Germany, where quasi-democratic political forms had been developed among Teutons during the Early Middle Ages.[22] Many of the wealthier American families sent their sons to Europe to study at German universities, acclaimed to be the best in the world. In American universities the German influence went so deep that, later, during World War I, Theodore Roosevelt criticized Charles Eliot, Harvard's president in the 1870's when TR was enrolled in that college, for trying to "Germanize the methods of teaching."[23]

But back in the 1870's Roosevelt was quite pro-German himself. His worldview contained a strong element of Teutonism. He cherished ideas of racial superiority of the Germanic peoples – the Anglo-Saxons and the Teutons – whom he considered as the forefathers of the nineteenth century "English-speaking race."[24] Historian Thomas Dyer finds the racial themes of Nordicism, Anglo-Saxonism and Teutonism heavily represented in Roosevelt's wide-ranging historical production. From the Teutons, Roosevelt argued, the Americans had inherited their fighting qualities and their ability for self-government.[25] He would not have been a true American nationalist, however, had he not believed that the American combined the best racial characteristics of both the Anglo-Saxon and

[22] Dyer, Thomas G., *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race*, Baton Rouge, LA, 1980, p. 45; Turner, Frederick Jackson, *The Frontier in American History/Frederick Jackson Turner*, Tucson, AZ, 1986, Foreword, p. x–xi.
[23] Pringle, p. 19.
[24] Dyer, p. 1.
[25] Dyer, p. 46–47, 52–53. Roosevelt's historical works included *The Naval War of 1812*, *Thomas Hart Benton*, *Gouverneur Morris*, and the four-volume chronicle *The Winning of the West*.

Teutonic pasts. "In whatever form Roosevelt used the term," historian Howard Beale wittingly remarks, "the 'race' to which he belonged was superior to others."[26]

Roosevelt never studied in a German university, but already in 1873, when he was only fourteen-years-old his parents had sent him with two of his siblings to Dresden, where they spent the summer with the Minckwitz family. The Minckwitzs kept the little Roosevelts studying hard; a fact that made Theodore fluent in the German language and acquainted him with German prose and poetry. Roosevelt was especially fascinated by the *Nibelungenlied*, the German classic of mythology, which greatly enhanced the influence of the Teutonic myth to his intellectual development.[27] Roosevelt's affection for German culture proved to be lasting. In Harvard his best subject was German and he attended, for instance, the courses "German Historical Prose" and "Richter, Goethe, and German lyrics."[28] Considering Roosevelt's future role in world politics, however, Dresden's greatest gift to him was that he became familiarized with the German people. In his autobiography, published in 1913, Roosevelt describes what he discovered about the Germans in Dresden:

"Above all, I gained an impression of the German people which I never got over. From that time to this it would have been quite impossible to make me feel that the Germans were really foreigners. The affection, the *Gemütlichkeit*, the capacity for hard work, the sense of duty, the delight in studying literature and science, the pride in the new Germany, the more than kind and friendly interest in three strange children – all these manifestations of the German character and of German family life made a subconscious impression upon me which I did not in the least define at the time, but which is very vivid still forty years later."[29]

Undoubtedly, then, Roosevelt was highly interested in and impressed by German culture. Moreover, he liked, respected, and admired the Germans. Later, TR carried this admiration with him into the White House, and it was certainly one of the factors that made him immune to the world-wide scare of Imperial Germany as he preferred to judge Germany with a calm, objective eye. This was truly remarkable, considering that many of Roosevelt's closest friends and advisors were pathologically suspicious of Germany; including, his political mentor, the Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts; his Secretary of War, Elihu Root; his Secretary of State, John Hay, who sometimes referred to the German Emperor, William II, as "His Awfulness;"[30] strategist Brooks

[26] Beale, p. 27; Dyer, p. 49, 46–47.
[27] Dyer, p. 2–3; Roosevelt in Dresden, see Pringle, p. 15–16.
[28] Brands, p. 63; Dyer, p. 5–6.
[29] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 21.
[30] Pringle, p. 276.

Adams; and, finally, Henry White, a prominent diplomat and his later Ambassador to Italy − all of them more or less anti-German.[31]

Roosevelt's belief in the superiority of the Germanic peoples obviously had racist connotations. Thomas Dyer, in his *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (1980), observes that at the end of the nineteenth century the whole western world was obsessed with the concept of race, and young "Teedie" Roosevelt got his share of the fallout. From early childhood to Harvard, he was bombarded with ideas that stressed the superiority of the white race.[32] Ironically, the very fact that Theodore's caring father saw to it that he would get the best education of the day overdosed him on racist ideas. From this educational background, Roosevelt developed his idea of the hierarchy of races: the world consisted of "civilized" nations and "backward" peoples, and the expansion of the former over the latter would be beneficial for civilization.[33]

When Roosevelt rose to political ascendancy, he became the figurehead of the American expansionists, an influential clique of highly intelligent men that led an unwilling nation to a closer participation in the world-wide imperialistic race.[34] Perhaps their greatest feat was the Spanish-American War of 1898. Already for some time Spain had been in difficulties with the revolutionary outbursts in Cuba, Spain's last foothold in the New World. Roosevelt, at the time the assistant secretary of the navy, and his fellow expansionists saw their chance to "free" Cuba, but their real motives for doing everything in their power to make sure that the war would come lied elsewhere: in territorial expansion, in the opportunity to rid the New World of another European power, and in the strategic importance of the Caribbean. To a great extent the war was nothing else than a well-planned tactical move by the American expansionists; it brought Cuba, Puerto Rico, and, due to a naval manoeuvre designed by Roosevelt himself, the Far East Spanish colony, the Philippines, under American control; the war also cleared the United States' title for Guam, Hawaii, and parts of Samoa.[35]

Roosevelt's adventurous foreign policies infuriated the strong anti-imperialist sentiment in America − even in his own Republican Party many felt that he was violating the country's democratic principles. Moorfield Storey, the president of the Anti-Imperialist League, felt that Roosevelt as

[31] Beale, p. 391−392.
[32] Dyer, p. 5.
[33] Dyer, p. 1−2, 21; Beale, p. 32−33.
[34] Dalton, p. 126; Beale, p. 20−34.
[35] Beale, p. 59−64.

President “left an indelible stain on the honor of my country.”[36] In 1906 the famous novelist Mark Twain, Roosevelt’s sworn critic, denounced him as “far and away the worst President we have ever had.”[37] The episode that cleared the way for the building of the Panama Canal is perhaps the best example of the disregard with which TR treated “backward” people if they dared to resist “civilization.” Since Roosevelt himself ranked the Panama Canal as his greatest foreign policy achievement,[38] it is worthwhile to examine the case.

To link the Pacific to the Atlantic by building a canal across the American Isthmus had been a long-time dream, but a major practical step in turning it into a reality had been taken in 1901, when the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty ended a long quarrel between the United States and England by allotting the Americans with the right to build, control and fortify the canal. After assuming the presidency in 1901, Roosevelt started to push the canal project ahead with his whole weight. The best possible route for the canal, the engineers pointed out, ran through Panama, which was Colombian soil.[39]

Things got complicated, when the Colombian government in August 1903 refused to ratify the already negotiated Hay-Herrán Treaty, which would have authorized the United States to build the canal through Panama for $10 million plus an additional $250,000 a year to Colombia for the next ninety-nine years. The Colombians set their new price at $40 million. Roosevelt got furious over what he regarded as an attempt to blackmail the United States. “I think they would change their constitution if we offered enough,” he expressed his contempt for the Colombians in private. The Americans walked out from the negotiations, yet Roosevelt had no intention of allowing the “Bogota lot of jack rabbits” to bar something that he saw as one of the future highways of civilization.

The quarrel ended most unfortunately for Colombia. The agents of the French New Panama Canal Company, which owned the rights to build the canal, took the initiative and consulted both Roosevelt and the Panamanians. Who proposed and said what, is not quite clear, but in November 1903 a revolution broke out in Panama. Roosevelt right away dispatched warships to isthmian waters to “maintain free and uninterrupted transit,” but in reality the intention was to prevent any Colombian ships from reinforcing the troops in the province of Panama. The result was the

[36] Beale, p. 17. Moorfield Storey (1845−1929), lawyer, publicist, civil rights leader.
[37] Dalton, p. 323.
[38] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 512.
[39] The Panama Canal narrative: Harbaugh, p. 202−211; Mowry, George E., *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America, 1900−1912*, New York, 1958, p. 149−154.

Republic of Panama, whose independence was immediately recognized by the United States. Panama granted the United States the permission to build the canal through its territory for $10 million; Colombia got nothing.

Roosevelt's action in the Panamanian affair raised a lot of criticism to which he was extremely sensitive for the rest of his life. He never admitted that he had done injustice to Colombia. "Of course, anything more preposterous than to question what I have done cannot be imagined," he huffed and puffed in 1914.[40] Quite the opposite, the revolt in Panama was the consequence of Colombia's "corrupt and evil purposes" and "complete governmental incompetency." Looking back in 1915 Roosevelt asserted that "to talk of Colombia as a responsible Power to be dealt with as we would deal with Holland or Belgium or Switzerland or Denmark is a mere absurdity."[41] In other words, TR insisted that he had the right to ignore the wishes of the Colombians to the benefit of the civilized world, because the Colombians were "inferior" people. To quote Harbaugh, this was the measure of Roosevelt's "arrogance toward smaller and less highly developed states, in fact, that in selecting the Panama route he seems not even to have considered treating Colombia as a truly sovereign state."[42]

Yet Roosevelt differed, in a positive sense, from the typical racists of his day. The effects of his imperialism were softened by his highly developed sense of social justice, which affords Harbaugh to argue that his colonial empire was the world's "most progressively governed."[43] Also, he had faith in the individual's ability to develop: he judged separate men as individual human beings, not as members of race.[44] Roosevelt did not like discrimination. For instance, he was not prejudice-free towards blacks, and yet he broke a widely accepted racial etiquette and infuriated the South by having dinner with Booker T. Washington at the White House – so becoming the first President to extend that courtesy to an African-American.[45]

And finally, for Roosevelt the decisive factor in what made a nation "civilized" was not race. He defined civilization in rather technological terms. A "civilized" nation had: 1) manly virtues; 2) the

[40] Dalton, p. 439.
[41] Beale, p. 33.
[42] Harbaugh, p. 202−203, 210.
[43] Harbaugh, p. 186.
[44] Beale, p. 31.
[45] Dalton, p. 215, 125–126; Brands, p. 421–423. Booker T. Washington (1856−1915), educator, author, and one of the leading figures of the African−American community.

ability to defend itself; 3) industrialisation; 4) the ability to provide orderly government; 5) inherited set of political institutions; and 6) respect for free individuals. Hence, it was weakness and lack of order that made a nation "backward." Only this explains how Roosevelt could greatly admire the Japanese when at the same time felt deep contempt for the Chinese. His contempt of the Chinese, who were living under the yoke of several occupying powers, was provoked by their inability to resist foreign invasion and to rule themselves effectively. But TR did not see any reason why the Chinese would not ultimately develop, too: he did not consider any "race" as permanently inferior. He acknowledged that even his "English-speaking race" was superior only as a result of a long process of development during which it had proven its fighting qualities in struggles after struggles.[46]

Whenever American historians examine Roosevelt's imperialism, the tone is rather regretful, because they feel that someone as intelligent as Roosevelt should have known better.[47] All of his greatest foreign policy failures derived from the imperialistic half of his brain. Take his Chinese policy for example; it was his belief in the hierarchy of races that ruined it. Since he was contemptuous of the Chinese, free and independent China was something that he was unable to visualize. So when anti-foreign nationalism raised its head among the Chinese in the beginning of the twentieth century, Roosevelt, instead of embracing it, joined with the forces that tried to suppress it. As a consequence, the United States missed its greatest opportunity of the twentieth century to become China's friend;[48] and why? Because Roosevelt was running a country-club of "civilized" nations, and China was not a member. Countries had to first earn his respect in order to make his club – and none of them had earned it quite like Germany.

[46] Beale, p. 29−33.
[47] A critical summary of TR's imperialism, see Dalton, p. 229−230.
[48] Beale, p. 247−252, 294; Harbaugh, p. 298.

2.1.2 No War, No Peace of Mind

When Theodore Roosevelt arrived in Dresden in 1873, he was still a mere teenaged boy. Just prior to the trip, however, he had started to "build his body" in the fashion his father had instructed him, so one could say that he was just about to discover his masculine side. Roosevelt's father hardly could had picked a more stimulating place for his son to kick-start this process than late nineteenth century Germany, where adoration of manly virtues knew no limits. Without a doubt, the impact on Theodore's psyche was overwhelming, nothing less than a life-changing experience. His admiration for Germany grew deeper. The great German military men and empire builders – Frederick the Great, Kaiser William I, Otto von Bismarck, and Helmuth von Moltke – became his heroes while the young body-builder himself was becoming even more obsessed with physical prowess, fighting virtues, and, finally, war.[49]

Militarism was the thing that Roosevelt and Germany had in common the most, and this shared obsession tied them into an extremely peculiar relationship. If they got eventually separated from each other by war, it was the longing for the manly virtues of war that brought them together in the first place. Later, this was probably the secret of Roosevelt's German policy; perhaps the phrase "it takes one to know one" explains much of its success.

Undeniably, Roosevelt yearned for war. His obsession with manliness contributed to this yearning, but there was also an important psychological reason why Roosevelt, to quote historian John Milton Cooper, Jr., became "the most prominent militarist in American history:"[50] his father had failed to serve in the Civil War. The knowledge of this "failure" in a man he so much admired tormented Roosevelt, as it had tormented his father before him.[51] Roosevelt's writings reveal that this was his sensitive spot. In his autobiography, for example, TR explained why he enlisted to fight in the Spanish-American War as follows: "I had always felt that if there were a serious war I wished to be in a position to explain my children why I did take part in it, and not why I did not take part in it."[52]

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[49] Beale, p. 390.
[50] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 12.
[51] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 12–13; Dalton, p. 171. Theodore, Sr., had wanted to fight in the Union army, but declined for honorable reasons. His wife Martha was from the South and had two brothers fighting in the Confederate army. Theodore, Sr., feared that his fighting her brothers might kill Martha, who was at that time in very frail health.
[52] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 217.

In the 1880's and 1890's Roosevelt was looking for the chance to prove himself in battle so eagerly that he became publicly known as a jingo throughout the United States. Whenever and wherever in the world U.S. interests clashed with the interests of another country, Roosevelt supported taking strong measures, usually meaning military action. Indeed, if Roosevelt liked, for example, the Germans, he had a strange way of showing his affection. In 1889 he hoped that the dispute over Samoa would lead to "a bit of a spar with Germany."[53] In 1895 he was in defence of the Monroe Doctrine[54] advocating war against the British, who were having a diplomatic dispute with Venezuela. Roosevelt was not picky, any enemy would do. When he in 1897 became the assistant secretary of the navy, he had been within the decade favourably inclined toward war, Pringle counts, "with Mexico, Chile, Great Britain, Spain, and all European powers so arrogant as to hold colonies in the western half of the world."[55]

But it was Germany, the worthiest opponent of them all, that Roosevelt wanted to confront the most. While inspecting the U.S.S. *Maine* just weeks prior to the Spanish War, Roosevelt sighed: "I wish there was a chance that the *Maine* was going to be used against some foreign power; by preference Germany – but I am not particular, and I'd take even Spain if nothing better offered."[56] Back in 1898, nothing better offered.

When Roosevelt finally made it to the battlefields of Cuba,[57] the horrors of war left him unshaken and did not diminish his enthusiasm for war. Quite the contrary, he led dashing charges up San Juan Hill in some of the bloodiest battles of the war and, according to Beale, had a "thoroughly good time."[58] Two decades later, just months before his death, Roosevelt confessed that "San Juan was the great day of my life."[59] He even took pleasure of the fact that the casualty list of his regiment was heavy, as it proved that they had been in a tough spot. This reminds one of Mark Twain who

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[53] TR to Cecil Arthur Spring Rice, Apr 14, 1889; *Roosevelt Letters, selected and edited by Elting E. Morison; John M. Blum, 8. vol.*, Cambridge, MA, 1951−1954, vol. 1, p. 157.
[54] The Monroe Doctrine, one of the cornerstones of U.S. foreign policy, announced by President James Monroe in 1823. With the Monroe Doctrine the United States informed that the American continent was no longer open to Old World colonialism and that all efforts in that direction would be considered hostile by the United States.
[55] Pringle, p. 119; Beale, p. 36.
[56] Brands, p. 323.
[57] When the Spanish War erupted, TR left his post as assistant secretary of the navy and put together a peculiar voluntary regiment dubbed "the Rough Riders" − a celebrity regiment, if you may, of cowboys and ranchmen from the west and prominent upper-class youngsters from the east. The war made TR a national hero, which remarkably helped his political career. See Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 38−39; Pringle, p. 122−123.
[58] Beale, p. 36.
[59] Brands, p. 357.

had once remarked that Roosevelt was "clearly insane... and insanest upon war and its supreme glories."[60]

As a matter of fact, even Roosevelt himself acknowledged that he harboured feelings that were improper. Too civilized to openly favour barbarism, he wrestled with his conscience over the fact that he desired war. "If it wasn't wrong I should say that personally I would rather welcome a foreign war!" he exclaimed privately.[61] As a politician with a career to think, Roosevelt needed to find a way to legitimize his lust for war. He had to find a rationale to which he could resort to if his opponents start hurling accusations of militarism at him – later, William Jennings Bryan, the presidential hope of the Democratic Party, did exactly this by insisting that Roosevelt was no more than "a man who loves war."[62]

Bryan was right, Twain was wrong; Roosevelt really did like war, but he was not insane – his conception of war just needed to be updated. In the end of the nineteenth century it was still quite common, world-wide, to extol soldierly virtues as many men had a hopelessly romantic idea of war. Harbaugh concludes that TR, too, "thought of war in terms of man-to-man combat, dashing cavalry charges, and brilliant tactical maneuvers; not of mass carnage, germ-infested prison camps, and endless, stultifying boredom."[63]

But it is almost beside the point whether Roosevelt had an illusory idea of the hardships of war or not: he would have welcomed all hardships anyway. Again using his own transformation from a sickly boy into a sturdy hunter-warrior as an example, Roosevelt had introduced the American public with the idea of "a strenuous life."[64] The idea was of social-Darwinian nature: just like the "English-speaking-race" had become superior by proving itself in struggles after struggles, individual citizens could likewise develop themselves; not by growing flabby in the ease of industrial life, but by keeping up the fighting virtues of the nation by accepting a citizenship of self-sacrifice and service. The assumption was that hardships ennoble human character and that war is the most purifying experience of all. "No triumph of peace," Roosevelt declared in a speech at Naval War College in June 1897, "is quite so great as the supreme triumph of war."[65]

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[60] Dalton, p. 9; Pringle, p. 136.
[61] Brands, p. 289.
[62] Dalton, p. 9.
[63] Harbaugh, p. 98.
[64] Dalton, p. 10.
[65] Harbaugh, p. 97; Beale, p. 39–40; Dalton, p. 166.

For the pacifists Roosevelt had nothing but scorn, and the strong peace movement of his day irked him: he saw it as a sign that the fighting instincts of the Americans were regressing. "The clamor of the peace faction has convinced me that this country needs a war," he wrote to Lodge in 1896.[66] So strong was Roosevelt's contempt that already on the very first page of his autobiography he declares: "Love of peace is common among weak, short-sighted, timid, and lazy persons."[67] "True preachers of peace," TR wrote meaning men like himself, "who strive earnestly to bring nearer the day when peace shall obtain among all peoples, and who really do help forward the cause, are men who never hesitate to choose righteous war when it is the only alternative to unrighteous peace."[68]

So, the ideas of these "peace-at-any-price men" were corruptive right from the onset, since they placed peace above justice: they preferred peace even if instant military action was demanded in order to rectify injustice. Instead of regressing to, what TR viewed as, the mere money-making cowardice of pacifists like big businessman Andrew Carnegie, Roosevelt demanded that the United States would accept its duty in the world: that is, would live up to its potential, take its place among the great powers of the world and join in the fight to rid the world of injustice: only then there could be peace in the true sense of the word.[69] With this concept of 'peace of righteousness' Roosevelt legitimized his militarism. He never dared to announce in public that he liked war or that America in his opinion needs one, but offered war only as an alternative to unrighteous peace and military preparedness as an antidote to war. Pacifism, Roosevelt insisted, invites war, whereas military preparedness averts war.[70]

Roosevelt always considered weakness far more provoking than strength − especially if that weakness was accompanied by contemptible behaviour. Accordingly, he criticised nineteenth century American policymakers for focusing solely on business and for keeping the country weak militarily for decades. He berated the pacifists for disgracing the national honour of the United States by accepting to arbitrate matters, which he considered non-negotiable. He admonished that segment of the American public which "liked to please its own vanity by listening to offensive talk about foreign nations." It all came together, TR warned, to a national policy of "peace with

[66] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 36.
[67] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, Foreword, p. vii.
[68] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 253–254.
[69] Harbaugh, p. 97–99. Andrew Carnegie, a multi-millionaire businessman, a philanthropist, and a pacifist.
[70] Beale, p. 36.

insult,"[71] which invited aggression on the country. A strong military, on the other hand, served as an "insurance against war," since "in the present stage of civilization a proper armament is the surest guarantee of peace – and is the only guarantee that war, if it does come, will not mean irreparable and overwhelming disaster."[72] Holding on to this claim, Roosevelt promoted military preparedness throughout his public life.

Roosevelt's inner battle between the concepts of war and peace had its amusing aspects. On the one hand, his international activism was always partially motivated by what Cooper has called his "personal itch to see military action,"[73] which at times prompted him to play dare with other world powers. On the other hand, he had to make absolutely sure that his policies would not lead to war, because he was out to prove to the annoying pacifists that his policy was the only way to secure peace. Beale describes Roosevelt's inner confusion as follows:

"He would have hesitated to proclaim openly that he liked war. Yet there was something dull and effeminate about peace…. Without consciously desiring it, he thought a little war now and then stimulated admirable qualities in men. Certainly preparation for war did. Though he valued the blessings of peace, he craved the excitements of war. He therefore sought a big navy because it would prevent war, but also because it was such fun to have a big navy."[74]

Indeed, the navy was the apple of Roosevelt's eye. Throughout the 1880's and 1890's he hoped for a war, because a war would have meant getting a bigger navy − better still, a war resulting in a humiliating loss would have meant getting *a really big* navy. Accordingly, TR hoped in 1889 that the Germans would come soon and do it for him: "The burning of New York and a few other seacoast cities would be a good object lesson on the need of an adequate system of coast defences; and I think it would have a good effect on our large German population to force them to an ostentatiously patriotic display of anger against Germany."[75]

So, this was America's most famous man in the year 1900. He was a man of the people, a war hero, the Governor of New York, and in June 1900 the Republican National Convention nominated him to be President William McKinley's running mate for Vice President. Probably the moodiest person of the convention was Mark Hanna, the National Chairman of the Republican Party, who was

[71] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 205−206; Brands, p. 289.
[72] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 204.
[73] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 35.
[74] Beale, p. 36.
[75] Beale, p. 37; Dalton, p. 84; Harbaugh, p. 97.

strongly against Roosevelt's nomination. "Don't any of you realize," Hanna lashed at his henchmen, "that there's only one life between this madman and the Presidency?"[76] Indeed, the prospects did not look promising. By studying the utterances of young Theodore Roosevelt, it would have been easier to imagine for the United States a fate similar to the Kaiser's Germany than to imagine Roosevelt being awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906. Be that as it may, in September 1901 President McKinley was assassinated.

2.1.3 Eliminating the German Threat

Mark Hanna could not have guessed, however, that Theodore Roosevelt was not the same man as President Theodore Roosevelt. This is what made TR a great leader of men: a leading position brought up the best in him. Actions speak louder than words and in Roosevelt's case in particular. It would be a grave mistake to put too much weight on his private outbursts and war-mongering. In order to do Roosevelt justice one must examine how he acted as President, when he had the power to act. By so doing it becomes clear that Roosevelt was reckless and impatient when out of power, but prudent and responsible when in power.

This is not to say that Roosevelt was a cautious executive. Quite the opposite, he had an ambitious agenda, he wanted results, and he was prepared to make aggressive moves in order to get results. He started to build the navy and turned it into an efficient tool of Roosevelt-style diplomacy. The acquisition of the Philippines, the annexation of Hawaii, and the building of the Panama Canal were all part of the plan to make the navy as mobile as possible and to give it a global reach. In his own unstoppable manner Roosevelt was skilfully laying the foundation from which the United States leaped to its present standing in the world. The isolationist Congress did not always approve, but TR did not care. He often did not consult Congress, or simply ignored it, and went on to take actions that were not his to take according to the constitution.[77] It was during the Roosevelt presidency that America went through a monumental change of heart as TR pushed the nation to abandon its traditional foreign policy of isolationism once and for all. It was unheard for an American President to declare: "We have no choice as to whether or not we shall play a great part

[76] Morris, p. 763, 695, 756−757, 768.
[77] Dalton, p. 164–166, 282; Harbaugh, p. 94–95

in the world.... We have to play that part. All that we can decide is whether we shall play it well or ill."[78]

The world had changed. Roosevelt understood the interrelated nature of the modern industrial world, where shifts in the power balance would affect everyone, including the United States. In fact, Roosevelt embodied the new era. Whereas nineteenth century imperialists, in their lust for new resources and market areas, had thought of the world in terms of economic factors, Roosevelt thought of the world in strategic terms. Decades ahead of most Americans, he saw the rise of power politics.[79]

Even Roosevelt's expansionism was strategically motivated. He was not out to conquer the world, but to defend and strengthen the Monroe Doctrine.[80] Up to the end of the nineteenth century the Monroe Doctrine had been relatively safe, thanks to England. The British navy, which ruled the Atlantic and made it almost insuperable for other European powers, had been working for the defences of the Americas, too. And the British themselves did not object to the Monroe Doctrine. By keeping European powers off South America, the United States simultaneously protected the English possessions already established on that continent. But now the might of the British Empire was waning and the world's power balance was shaking as all the other players were moving in to take over the British.[81]

Determined to maintain the world's power balance, Roosevelt saw that the United States had to take a more active role: if it clung to its isolationism instead, it might soon find itself a part of a world which would not be to its taste at all.[82] Showing great talent in the art of prophecy, Roosevelt analyzed the situation. It was his modest opinion that the greatest threat was Russia due to its vast land mass stretching from Asia to Europe. But Russia would not be his generation's problem. In fact, the country had such tremendous internal problems that Roosevelt was anticipating a Russian revolution: "She may put off the day of reckoning but she cannot ultimately avert it.... She will sometime experience a red terror which will make the French Revolution pale."[83] For the time being, Germany and Japan, both militarily strong industrial powers, would form the most

[78] Beale, p. 173.
[79] Beale, p. 253, 449.
[80] Brands, p. 429.
[81] Beale, p. 144–146, 256–257.
[82] Beale, p. 254, 256.
[83] Brands, p. 319.

immediate threat.[84] And Germany was even more dangerous than Japan – just the very things that Roosevelt admired in Germany made it dangerous. The Germans were on the top of his list both in industrial efficiency and in fighting qualities. If some country was arrogant enough to challenge the Monroe Doctrine, it was Imperial Germany. "Germany is the great growing power," Roosevelt observed, "and both her faults and virtues... and her ambitions in extra-European matters are so great, that she may clash with us."[85]

To face down these threats, Roosevelt wanted his foreign policy to stand as the total opposite to the policy of "peace with insult." The outcome was something that he himself described with his famous foreign policy motto, "speak softly but always carry a big stick."[86] The Alaskan boundary dispute with England provides a good example of his Big Stick –diplomacy, and it also clearly shows where in Roosevelt's opinion went the line between arbitrable and non-arbitrable matters.

The Alaskan boundary dispute meant absolutely nothing to the British and only little to the Americans, but it had some importance to the Canadians, who sought to define Alaska's southern boundary between the United States and Canada in a way that would give them passage to the Alaskan gold fields. Accordingly, Canada exerted relentless pressure on the British government so that it would vigorously defend their case against the Americans. In 1902 Roosevelt signalled to the British that the dispute, which had dragged through the 1890's, had to be decided before someone would find gold from the disputed area and things at the frontier would get out of hands. But TR also made it perfectly clear that he would not yield in the matter in any way, because he found the Canadian claim outright ridiculous. "Twenty years ago the Canadian maps showed the lines just as ours did," he snorted.[87]

In fact, the British government and even Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Canada's Prime Minister, agreed that Canada's case was weak, but they were only asking that TR would help them to save face and give them an honourable way out from a difficult position by accepting to arbitration. Arbitration, they insisted, would be beneficial for both: the tribunal would undoubtedly decide the matter in favour of the Americans after which the British and Laurier could legitimately back down and face their constituents with their heads high. Secretary of State John Hay, an Anglophile, urged Roosevelt to

[84] Beale, p. 186, 256–257.
[85] Brands, p. 466, 463–467; Pringle, p. 197.
[86] Beale, p. 38–39, 359, 336–337.
[87] Harbaugh, p. 188.

consent to doing this small favour for the British. The problem was that Roosevelt did not consider the favour small: to him, the territorial integrity and the national honour of the United States were non-negotiable matters. He reasoned that Great Britain would hardly be willing to arbitrate either if he suddenly claimed a part of Nova Scotia belonging to the United States.[88]

TR decided to give the British some stick instead. When George Smalley, the correspondent of the *London Times*, asked him in March 1902 whether it was possible to find some solution to the boundary dispute, Roosevelt assured him that, yes, it was. "I shall send up engineers to run our line as we assert it and I shall send troops to guard and hold it." Taken aback, Smalley asked if such a plan was not "very drastic." "I mean it to be drastic," Roosevelt replied and gave the order to start moving troops to Alaska in the end of the month. [89] Historian Henry Pringle regards TR's threat to use military force in such an insignificant matter as irresponsible, since his insults to British prestige "might have meant war had the issues been less absurd."[90] Eventually, however, Roosevelt did consent to Hay's suggestion of forming a joint tribunal of six "impartial jurists" – with three American members, two Canadian, and one British – which would decide the dispute. Not that Roosevelt left anything to chance. Since he had agreed to the forming of the tribunal only to help the British to save face, he assured them that he would use his troops to draw the line if the tribunal failed to decide the issue in favour of the United States.[91]

Beale and Harbaugh are more appreciative of Roosevelt than Pringle and point out that in the Alaskan matter he was displaying force outwards, but behind the scenes, through his aides, he was speaking softly and communicating to the British how much he valued Anglo-American friendship. Moreover, Roosevelt had consulted his advisors, and even Hay had finally approved the use of the threat as the only way to force a settlement. Beale sees that the two co-operated admirably as "Roosevelt exerted the pressure for settlement and Hay softened the effects wherever he could."[92] Anyway, it worked. The British member of the tribunal, Lord Richard Alverstone, knew what was at stake. He cast his vote for Anglo-American friendship, deciding the dispute 4–2 in favour of the

[88] Beale, p. 111–116.
[89] Beale, p. 114.
[90] Pringle, p. 204.
[91] Beale, p. 116.
[92] Beale, p. 129.

United States. The Americans got what they wanted and the British got rid of a menace; everyone was happy, save the Canadians.[93]

Roosevelt, as President, had got off to a good start. The Alaskan boundary dispute and the quarrel over the Panama Canal, which had been settled a year earlier, had been the last remaining disputes that burdened the Anglo-American relations. By forcing their settlement, Roosevelt laid the ground for the most lasting entente of the twentieth century, the Anglo-American entente. The manner in which Great Britain bowed and swallowed the terms that the American expansionists dictated to it in both of these disputes was proof how much Great Britain wanted America's friendship as it was witnessing how its own empire was evaporating.[94]

Big Stick –diplomacy obviously had its risks. Yet the fact that not even once did Roosevelt kick himself in the leg suggests that the risks were calculated. They had to be, for TR never bluffed. "The only safe rule is to promise little," he observed, "and faithfully to keep every promise."[95] Even during the Alaskan boundary dispute Roosevelt had confided to the German Ambassador, Speck von Sternberg[96] that he really was prepared to use his troops against the British if it were to come to that. The thought of it made at least someone's day; into the margin of von Sternberg's report, next to the sentence where Roosevelt assured his readiness to use force against the British, the German Emperor William II wrote gleefully: "To your health! John Bull will also of course want this to happen!"[97]

Germany, too, understood the value in having a strong ally across the ocean and it had started to compete with England for Roosevelt's friendship. The initiative to begin improving the German-American relations had undoubtedly come from William II himself, for it was widely acknowledged that he greatly admired Roosevelt.[98] In 1901 the Kaiser conferred a medal to Roosevelt.[99] In 1902 the Kaiser's brother, Prince Henry, came to the United States to promote German-American friendship and to claim the Kaiser's yacht, which was being built in an American shipyard. Alice

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[93] Harbaugh, p. 190–191; Beale, p. 117–129. Lord Richard Alverstone (1842−1915), British barrister, politician and judge, Chief Justice 1900−1913.
[94] Chessman, Wallace G., *Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Power*, Boston, 1969, p. 95; Beale, p. 110.
[95] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 537; Beale, p. 38−39, 359, 336−337.
[96] Hermann Speck von Sternberg, a veteran of the Franco-German War, who served as German Ambassador to Washington during the Roosevelt presidency. Von Sternberg was TR's best German friend. See, Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 31.
[97] Beale, p. 130.
[98] Beale, p. 421, 441–442.
[99] Pringle, p. 197–198.

Roosevelt, TR's daughter from his first marriage to Alice Lee, was asked by the German royal family to christen the yacht[100] – certainly it seems that Germany was trying to butter up Roosevelt. But then, apparently assuming that Roosevelt would not mind, Germany erred to stick its nose into the western hemisphere. The Venezuelan crisis of 1902–1903 was Roosevelt's most serious conflict with Germany during his presidency.

The instigator of the crisis was Venezuela's dictator Cipriano Castro, an "unspeakably villainous little monkey"[101] if one takes Roosevelt's word for it. Castro's government had failed to pay its debts to English and German nationals, and they finally asked their governments to collect the bills. After Castro in July 1901 had arrogantly rejected Germany's offer to accept arbitration of its claims in The Hague Tribunal, Great Britain and Germany informed the United States that they might be forced to use coercive measures against Venezuela. Germany, fully aware how jealously the United States guarded the Monroe Doctrine, added that it had no territorial ambitions. Provided no territory was acquired, Roosevelt did not have any objections: "If any South American country misbehaves toward any European country, let the European country spank it."[102]

After Venezuela had ignored several of their ultimatums, England and Germany joined to use naval power against it in December 1902, established a blockade around Venezuela and bombarded its coast. Now, through the United States, Castro urged arbitration; England and Germany agreed to it in principle in late December and asked for Roosevelt to act as arbiter. TR did not wish to get the United States officially entangled with the crisis and advised the disputants to take their quarrel to The Hague instead. While the details of the future arbitration were being worked out, Germany, this time acting alone, again bombarded Venezuela twice in January 1903. Finally, on February 13, the blockade was lifted and the crisis passed. The presence of foreign warships in the Caribbean, bombarding a South American country, had given cause to great indignation in the United States.[103] Other than that, the Venezuelan crisis seemed ordinary and relatively un-sexy, as it hardly seemed to involve anything that would keep the American historians debating for decades.

[100] Brands, p. 520.
[101] Pringle, p. 198.
[102] Beale, p. 396–397, 421; Pringle, p. 198.
[103] Beale, p. 396–398.

But that all changed in August 1916, during World War I. Roosevelt told historian William Roscoe Thayer – who had been persuading TR to tell his side of the matter – that he had threatened Germany with war in December 1902. Roosevelt wrote:

"I speedily became convinced that Germany was the leader… and that England was merely following Germany's lead in rather half hearted fashion.... I also became convinced that Germany intended to seize some Venezuela harbor and turn it into a strongly fortified place of arms... with a view to exercising some measure of control over the future Isthmian Canal.... Germany declined to agree to arbitrate the question at issue between her and Venezuela, and declined to say that she would not take possession of Venezuelan territory, merely saying that such possession would be 'temporary' – which might mean anything. I finally decided that no useful purpose would be served by further delay, and I took action accordingly."[104]

Apparently, then, Germany had not been willing to arbitrate in December 1902. Also, while still assuring Roosevelt that it had no territorial ambitions, it had added that it might be forced to take possession of Venezuelan territory temporarily. Roosevelt, however, did not like the sound of this. According to him, he ordered Admiral George Dewey of the U.S. navy to assemble his battle fleet and instructed that it should be kept in "fighting trim" and "ready to sail at an hour's notice." Next, he summoned the German Ambassador, Theodor von Holleben. As von Holleben still insisted that Germany would not arbitrate, Roosevelt gave the Kaiser an ultimatum: if he were not to receive a word for arbitration from Germany within the next ten days, he would order Dewey to "take his fleet to the Venezuelan coast and see that the German forces did not take possession of any territory." Again according to his own words, Roosevelt further advised von Holleben to glance at the map, as it would "show him that there was no spot in the world where Germany in the event of conflict with the United States would be at greater disadvantage than in the Caribbean sea." This, Roosevelt testified, brought the Kaiser to terms and made him consent to the future arbitration of the dispute.[105]

Had Roosevelt known that, later, years after his death, this testimony would earn him a reputation as a liar he undoubtedly would have gone through greater trouble in verifying it. Indeed, historians set out on a quest to find evidence that would support his story. They studied the official American documents as well as the German archives, but no ultimatum was found. One could imagine that TR would have bragged to his friends how he mopped the floor with the Kaiser, but nothing was found

[104] TR to William Roscoe Thayer, Aug 21, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1102.
[105] TR to Thayer, Aug 21, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1102–1103.

from his private letters either. And finally, the overly friendly relations of the two countries right after the crisis made it almost impossible to believe that they had been at the brink of a war just a little earlier.[106]

The first serious effort to find the truth was made in 1927 by historian Howard Hill in his *Roosevelt and the Caribbean*. He found no ultimatum, but he did find Roosevelt's narrative inaccurate in details. Hill suggested that Roosevelt had coloured his narrative with his "active imagination" and threw a question in the air: "Was the coloring of the account due in part to the intense hostility Roosevelt felt toward Germany during the world-war when he first wrote the story?"[107] A few years later historian Henry Pringle admitted that the sources seemed to provide some basis for TR's story, but nevertheless ended up calling it "prejudiced."[108] Dexter Perkins was less gentle. He called Roosevelt's story a "legend, and nothing more than a legend," and harshly concluded that it must be regarded "as one of the least attractive examples of his extraordinary egotism, and of his vivid and sometimes uncontrolled imagination."[109] Clearly, then, Howard Beale is right in asserting that during the decades that followed World War I, American scholars widely accepted the view that Roosevelt "fabricated the entire incident under the influence of anti-German World War hate."[110]

All of a sudden, Roosevelt's whole credibility fell to pieces and the ramifications to his reputation became serious. The decades preceding the Second World War saw the publishing of several historical works in which Roosevelt was debunked. Whether it was his imperialism, jingoism, or character that was under scrutiny, the tone was overly critical; a trend, which was probably further strengthened by Henry Pringle's Pulitzer Prize character-assassination, *Theodore Roosevelt. A Biography* (1931). It seemed almost as if American scholars had taken offence. If TR had lied about such an important matter as the Venezuelan crisis, what else had he lied about? Beale concludes that TR's testimony of the Venezuelan crisis became the basis for the conviction that "Roosevelt was something of a fraud, that he invented happenings or doctored stories of his part in historic events to enhance his own reputation."[111]

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[106] Brands, p. 467; Beale, p. 407.
[107] Hill, Howard C., *Roosevelt and the Caribbean*, Chicago, 1927, p. 146.
[108] Pringle, p. 199.
[109] Perkins, Dexter, *Hands Off. A History of the Monroe Doctrine*, Boston, 1945, p. 215.
[110] Beale, p. 402.
[111] Beale, p. 402.

And yet Roosevelt had told the truth, as Beale was finally able to prove in 1956.[112] There is no need to prove here what Beale has already proven. Considering the questions this thesis seeks to answer, however, it needs to be stressed that TR's account of the Venezuelan crisis *was not* a fabrication that stemmed from his supposed war-time hatred of Germany. For instance, Roosevelt's letter to Whitelaw Reid, the American Ambassador to Great Britain, proves this beyond a doubt, as it dates already from July 27, 1906. The significant passage of the letter goes as follows:

"I suppose we shall never make public the fact of the vital step in connection with the Venezuela business four years ago, when the English, again with their usual stupidity, permitted themselves to be roped in as an appendage to Germany in the blockade of Venezuela. I finally told the German Ambassador that in my opinion the Kaiser ought to know that unless an agreement for arbitration was reached, American public opinion would soon be at the point where I would have to move Dewey's ships... to observe matters along Venezuela; and that I would have to let it be known publicly that under conditions as they then were I would have to object even to temporary possession of Venezuelan soil by Germany…. This brought him to terms at once."[113]

The quote also explains why there is no trace of the ultimatum in the sources. Roosevelt had set himself ambitious foreign policy objectives; to build the Panama Canal was one; to impress the Monroe Doctrine upon Europe was another; to promote Anglo-American friendship was third. Roosevelt was interested in getting results; in order to get results, he had to deliver ultimatums; in order for the ultimatums to bring results instead of war, *he had to keep them secret* − if they became public, his opponents would either lose face or make war. During the Venezuelan crisis contemporary observers did not even know that the United States was involved, because Roosevelt often used unofficial channels and enjoyed secretive, personal diplomacy in which he took advantage of his international network of trusted friends by using them as envoys − in his dealings with Germany, the middle-man was usually his best German friend Speck von Sternberg. Furthermore, TR had a talent of delivering an ultimatum in an unnoticeable manner. Big Stick – diplomacy required tact, but tact was something that he had. Beale concludes: "When Roosevelt was delivering an ultimatum he could combine firmness with the utmost pleasantness. He could present such an ultimatum to people that were his good friends, as he did to the British leaders in regard to the Alaska boundary, and could do it without interrupting the friendship...."[114]

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[112] Beale's detailed analysis of the Venezuelan crisis in *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, p. 395−432. Beale's book was a ground-breaking study, which rehabilitated TR's reputation as a master of diplomacy; in so doing, it gave a mortal blow to a pre-World War II trend of underrating TR's achievements.
[113] TR to Whitelaw Reid, Jun 27, 1906; *Letters*, vol. 5, p. 319.
[114] Beale, p. 407−408.

Then let us look at the Venezuelan crisis from the German perspective, as it seems that TR had misinterpreted Germany's motives. Beale and Dexter Perkins, for example, are certain that Germany was being sincere when it assured that it had no designs on Venezuelan territory.[115] Beale further suspects that the joint intervention was first proposed by England, but it was quicker to realize the serious consequences that the venture might have for its relations with the United States. It therefore retired to the background and let the Germans to take the blame.[116]

So it would seem that the biggest mistake was made by German Ambassador von Holleben, who had not given Berlin any hint that the public opinion in the United States was boiling. Against this background Beale suggests that Roosevelt's ultimatum came as a terrible shock to the German government, as it had been trying so hard to win Roosevelt's friendship. Beale concludes: "She [Germany] sought and thought she had American approval for each step she took. Had she foreseen what the American reaction was going to be, she would almost certainly have refrained from the venture entirely."[117]

Germany's reactions support Beale's hypothesis. He suspects that Roosevelt delivered his ultimatum on December 8, as von Holleben visited the White House on that day. Two days later, December 10, the German government called in Speck von Sternberg (who had visited Roosevelt in Washington a month earlier) to hear his estimate of TR's intentions. Speck gave it to them: the ultimatum was not a dud, Roosevelt was being serious. Berlin was stunned, and obviously someone had to pay for it. But first, on December 19, Germany informed that it will accept arbitration in principle. Then, von Holleben was recalled on the ground of "ill health." In January 1903 Berlin cabled Washington that von Sternberg would be Germany's new Ambassador to the United States. TR just loved to have his good friends in Washington as ambassador;[118] he cabled Berlin that he was "delighted." The sending of von Sternberg had to be Berlin's attempt to appease Roosevelt, because Speck's status in the diplomatic service did not warrant making him ambassador; in fact, when he arrived in Washington some of his subordinates in the embassy refused to recognize him due to his inferior social status. But TR and "Speckie" set to work nevertheless: closely co-operating they guided their countries out of the crisis during February 1903, handling their public performances and repairing the damage done to the Kaiser's pride so well that, later, historians

[115] Perkins, p. 218; Beale, p. 398.
[116] Beale, p. 397–399.
[117] This and the following paragraph, Beale, p. 419−429.
[118] Chessman, p. 104.

would be unable to find any signs of hostility between the two countries from the period right after Roosevelt's de facto ultimatum.

Of course, one could again accuse Roosevelt of being irresponsible for threatening a strong world power with war. In fact, in the Venezuelan crisis the risk of war was real in the sense that the outcome was less predictable than with the British in Alaska. Germany was the strongest military power of the day and usually regarded with extreme hostility even the smallest insults, real or imaginary, to its prestige. Yet Roosevelt probably knew exactly what he was doing. He had faith in his own skills as a diplomat, he understood that Germany would not destroy its friendly relations with the United States over Venezuela and he was convinced that the Germans would realize that in the Caribbean the U.S. navy could take the Germans down. But the significance of the Venezuelan experience lies in that it further deepened Roosevelt's conviction that Germany respected only strength; this had a far-reaching effect on his views later during World War I. Roosevelt wrote to Oscar Straus in 1906:

"Modern Germany is alert, aggressive, military and industrial. It thinks it is a match for England and France combined in war.... It respects the United States only in so far as it believes that our navy is efficient and that if sufficiently wronged or insulted we would fight. Now I like and respect Germany but I am not blind to the fact that Germany does not reciprocate this feeling. I want us to do everything we can to stay on good terms with Germany, but I would be a fool if I were blind to the fact that Germany will not stay in with us if we betray weakness."[119]

If the risk connected to the Venezuelan crisis was big, the prize was even bigger. The strong stand that Roosevelt took during the crisis impressed the Monroe Doctrine upon Germany.[120] During the remaining years of the Roosevelt presidency – when England and France at the same time were finding themselves constantly at odds with the Germans – Germany would cause the United States no further trouble. In retrospect, this was Roosevelt's greatest foreign policy achievement. He had tamed the most arrogant and head-strongest world power of his time and he had done it without firing a shot or without losing its good will − to the contrary, the Venezuelan crisis cleaned air between the United States and Germany.

[119] TR to Oscar Solomon Straus, Feb 27, 1906; *Letters*, vol. 5, p. 168. Straus was Roosevelt's Secretary of Commerce and Labor from 1906 to 1909.
[120] Beale, p. 431.

Roosevelt was happy – it was nice to make new friends. "The Kaiser has always been as nice as possible to me since [Venezuela] and has helped me in every way, and my relations with him and relations of the two countries have been, I am happy to say, growing more close and friendly."[121]

2.1.4 Postponing the Great War by a Decade

After having threatened England in Alaska and Germany in Venezuela with war within the time span of nine months, Roosevelt was ready to calm down. During his first term, he had gained the United States the place among the great powers of the world to which he thought it was entitled; now, he felt satisfied and abandoned his former aggressiveness. To hear Roosevelt give grounds why he had taken such drastic action against Germany in the Venezuelan crisis, is to realize that the aggressiveness had never been an end in itself: "One reason I so emphatically believe in the Monroe Doctrine is that I wish to prevent any great military power gaining a foothold in this continent with the almost inevitable attendant rivalry between us and it in the matter of armaments, and ultimately of war."[122]

Roosevelt understood that with power comes responsibility. By his second term (1905−1909), his expansionism had been replaced by a growing concern that the accelerating imperialistic race would lead to war between "civilized" nations. His war-mongering had been replaced by a desire to put a stop to the armament race and to see some restrictions placed on the size of navies. His habit of dictating America's will on other countries had been replaced by a desire to create methods for the peaceful arbitration of future disputes.[123] In short, he had reached full maturity as a statesman. The itch to see some military action was still there somewhere underneath, but it was strictly under control.

The world had come to respect him, too. The feat that won Roosevelt international acclaim the most was his successful mediation of the Russo-Japanese War in the Portsmouth Conference of 1905. The odds for patching up a peace had been bad. Russia felt so humiliated by its catastrophic performance in the war against an "inferior race" that it was unwilling to submit to any peace

[121] Beale, p. 431.
[122] TR to Hugo Münsterberg, Aug 8, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 795. Hugo Münsterberg (1863–1916), German-American Harvard Professor of Psychology.

demands that would suggest defeat. Japan, on the other hand, felt itself the undisputed victor of the war and its demands naturally reflected that feeling. Yet miraculously TR managed to bring peace, probably saving, to quote Pope Pius X, "the lives of quarter of a million men."[124] Much to Roosevelt's surprise, his performance earned him the Nobel Peace Prize, making him the first American to win it. The Kaiser wrote in admiration to his cousin, the Russian Czar Nicholas II: "Roosevelt... has made nearly superhuman efforts…. He has really done a great work for your country and the whole world."[125]

The peace process greatly improved Roosevelt's opinion of William II. In fact, TR could not have succeeded in bringing peace without the Kaiser's help, as he was exerting his influence on Nicholas II. After the peace treaty was signed, Roosevelt warmly expressed his gratitude to William, who probably took joy also from the fact that during the same peace process the British had angered Roosevelt by refusing to exert their influence on their ally Japan.[126]

The British were genuinely worried that Roosevelt was getting along with the Kaiser too well.[127] But there was no need to worry. By this time TR and William were communicating with each other on a regular basis and the exchange had acquainted Roosevelt with the Kaiser's extravagant nature. Roosevelt wrote to Lodge: "It always amuses me to find that the English think that I am under the influence of the Kaiser. The heavy witted creatures do not understand that nothing would persuade me to follow the lead or enter into close alliance with a man who is so jumpy, so little capable of continuity of action, and therefore, so little capable of being loyal to his friends or steadfastly hostile to an enemy."[128] He continued on the same subject to Spring Rice: "There is much that I admire about the Kaiser and there is more that I admire about the German people. But the German people are too completely under his rule for me to be able to disassociate them from him; and he himself is altogether too jumpy...."[129]

Roosevelt's lack of trust in the Kaiser explains a lot. True, Roosevelt admired and respected the Germans even more than he did the British or the French, but such matters carried little weight in

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[123] Dalton, p. 288.
[124] Harbaugh, p. 278–282.
[125] Beale, p. 306–307; Dalton p. 286.
[126] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, p. 543; Beale, p. 305; Brands, p. 540.
[127] Beale, p. 437–438.
[128] TR to Henry Cabot Lodge, May 15, 1905; *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884−1918, 2 volumes*, New York, 1925, vol. 2, p. 123.
[129] TR to Spring Rice, May 13, 1905; *Letters*, vol. 4, p. 1177.

his policy considerations, as he was bound to consider what was in the best interests of the United States. Since Germany's foreign policy was in the hands of the Kaiser, Roosevelt could had trusted Germany only to the extent that he trusted him; and as he did not trust him, he considered the two democracies, England and France, as more natural allies to the United States. Yet Roosevelt highly appreciated the good relations he had established with Germany. Hence, he would do everything in his power to prevent England and France from drifting into a conflict with Germany, for if they were to confront Germany, Roosevelt might have to confront Germany. And much to Roosevelt's dismay, Great Britain and France were *always* drifting into a conflict with Germany.

That was the case also in that prelude to the First World War, the Moroccan crisis of 1905–1906. The provocation came from the British and the French, but the Germans were the ones who took matters too far. Berlin assumed a hard line policy and tried to bully France to its knees, but got its own fingers burned instead. Roosevelt's role was critical; in fact, the crisis could have escalated into a world war without his intervention. Again, American historians at first dismissed Roosevelt's later accounts of his part in the crisis as lies, but in 1956 Howard Beale was once again able to prove that Roosevelt had been telling the truth.[130]

In its face the Moroccan crisis was about whether the principle of open door should be maintained in Morocco, guaranteeing everyone an access to its markets. But the seeds of the conflict were in the complex alliances that were pushing Europe towards a large-scale war. France, vengeful over its stinging loss in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, and especially its fiercely anti-German Foreign Minister, Theophile Delcassé, was trying to encircle Germany. In 1904 France managed to take a big step toward that end, when it entered into alliance with England in the Entente Cordiale; as a part of the deal, France gave consent to British control of Egypt and England agreed to French control of Morocco. Germany felt its pride wounded, as it had not been consulted in the matter. In addition, it felt isolated, as France had previously entered into alliance also with Russia.[131]

The German Chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow, saw a dawning chance to humble France and he managed to convince the Kaiser that Morocco was the place for Germany to take a strong stand against the French. Another Franco-German war seemed to be on the making, when the Kaiser on March 31, 1905, gave a defiant speech in Tangier in which he made it unmistakably clear that

[130] Beale, p. 388–389.
[131] Harbaugh, p. 286–287; Beale, p. 355.

Germany would not allow France to close Morocco's open door. The central issue was who should control the police forces in Morocco. France claimed sole right to control it; Germany objected, arguing that the French would use the police to shut out German commerce. The dispute, Germany insisted, must be decided by an international conference, and early in 1905 it had started to seek Roosevelt's support for its position. Germany wanted no territory, von Bülow assured Roosevelt, but it would insist on the open door. Since the United States and Germany jointly supported an open door in China, why not in Morocco, too? Would the President be willing, von Bülow inquired, to issue a protest separately but simultaneously with Germany so that France would have to consent to a conference and the Moroccan matter could be settled peacefully?[132]

What makes this proposal interesting is the fact that it was rather indiscreet: Germany was basically asking that Roosevelt would work together with Germany behind the backs of France and England in order for Germany to get what it wanted. This suggests that, in the light of its greatly improved relations with Roosevelt, Germany assumed that the Kaiser was the one monarch in Europe who controlled TR's sympathies. For instance, when William in 1904 was about to write Roosevelt, von Bülow had advised him that he should take into account that "the President is a great admirer of Your Majesty and would like to rule the world hand in hand with Your Majesty, regarding himself as something in the nature of an American counterpart to Your Majesty."[133] Obviously, Germany was assuming too much.

Roosevelt did not want to get involved. First of all, as he confessed later, he was of the opinion that Germany was acting stupid: he could not understand what Germany thought it would gain by insisting on a conference.[134] He attributed the whole Moroccan mess to William's paranoia. "The Kaiser's pipe dream this week takes the form of Morocco,"[135] he wrote jokingly to his Secretary of War, William Howard Taft. Secondly, TR realized where Germany was going for: he understood that in the final stage he would be asked to play the unrewarding role of a referee. Roosevelt wrote to Taft: "I do not feel that as a Government we should interfere in the Morocco matter. We have

[132] Harbaugh, p. 287−288; Beale, p. 355–358.
[133] Pringle, p. 266.
[134] Beale, p. 386–387, see the footnote on p. 387. TR gave his opinion in 1910 to Hermann von Eckardstein, long-time German chargé in London. In 1905, Eckardstein himself had written to his government and advised it against a conference: "At such a conference England and France would not be isolated, but we and no one except ourselves, would emerge the defeated nation. Not only that. At such a conference nothing else can result but that we will let our isolation be attested officially before the whole world, and that the ring of the coalition forming against us will be closed and sealed."
[135] TR to William Howard Taft, Apr 20, 1905; *Letters*, vol. 4, p. 1161.

other fish to fry and we have no real interest in Morocco. I do not care to take sides between France and Germany in the matter."[136] Accordingly, Roosevelt politely declined. He used the isolationist American public opinion as his excuse and explained to the Kaiser that he would expose himself to the "bitterest attacks" from Congress if he were to engage the country in Morocco.[137]

But Germany kept pushing it. The Kaiser approached Roosevelt several times during the first half of 1905, urging him to persuade France to consent to a conference; otherwise, Germany would be forced to make war on France. Simultaneously, Germany was pressing France even harder. In June 1905 a crisis was reached, when the Sultan of Morocco, with German backing, called the powers to a conference. The French Premier, Pierre Rouvier, tried to soothe Germany by forcing Delcassé to resign a couple of days later.[138] Germany's plan to make France lose face was proceeding smoothly.

Except that Roosevelt's sympathies in the matter were with France, not with Germany − and at this point, TR intervened. He summoned the French Ambassador, Jules Jusserand, his good friend, with whom he could talk frankly and confidentially. Roosevelt reasoned to Jusserand that France, with Russia still tied up in its disastrous war with Japan, could only lose in a war with Germany. He therefore begged France to accept a conference and assured that there was no dishonour involved in so doing. Then he shrewdly added: "What is needed is to give some satisfaction to the immeasurable vanity of William II and it would be wise to help him save face if thereby one can avert a war." The manner in which Roosevelt delivered his plea apparently convinced the French that he was acting in the interest of peace instead of serving German interest, for soon after Paris informed him that it will withdraw its opposition to the conference.[139] Roosevelt cabled the Kaiser with the good news. Then, as planned, he put on the charm, crediting the Kaiser with the diplomatic feat that was actually his own:

"Let me congratulate the Emperor most warmly on his diplomatic success in securing the assent of the French Government to the holding of this conference. I had not believed that the Emperor would be able to secure this assent and to bring about this conference.... I wish again to express my hearty congratulation. It is a diplomatic triumph of the first magnitude."[140]

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[136] TR to Taft, Apr 20, 1905; *Letters*, vol. 4, p. 1161–1162.
[137] Beale, p. 359.
[138] Brands, p. 575–576; Beale, p. 356–366.
[139] Beale, p. 366–367.
[140] TR to Hermann Speck von Sternberg, Jun 23, 1905; *Letters*, vol. 4, p. 1251.

The flattering words fell on fertile ground. Five days later, on June 28, 1905, von Sternberg conveyed a promise from the Kaiser to Roosevelt: "In case during the coming conference differences of opinion should arise between France and Germany, he, in every case, will be ready to back up the decision which you should consider the most fair and the most practical." With his promise, von Sternberg explained, the Kaiser desired to prove to Roosevelt that by assisting Germany he had served peace alone, for Germany had no selfish motives.[141] TR had opened his first deadlock of the Moroccan crisis.

The conference convened at Algeciras in Spain in January 1906. Historically, the United States participated, thus involving itself in what unmistakably seemed like a European affair; this breach of America's political tradition brought a lot of heat on Roosevelt from Congress. Roosevelt himself stayed in the background in Washington. "My sympathies have at bottom been with France and I suppose will continue so," he observed, but "while I want to stand by France, I want at the same time to strive to keep on fairly good terms with Germany."[142] The remark conveys a feeling of slight discontent. Roosevelt was anticipating that he would eventually have to decide the issue in which case he could not help damaging his German relations that he had so carefully cultivated.

At Algeciras the bitter truth gradually started to reveal itself to Germany as it watched how other countries one after another took France's side. By February 1906 the negotiations had jammed − not surprisingly, on the question of who should control the police in Morocco. Eyes started to turn to Roosevelt. The war talk started again, and Russia, for example, was begging TR to mediate. "All the world respects him," Count Alexander von Benckendorff told the American Ambassador George Meyer in St.Petersburg, "and it is well known the German Emperor admires him."[143] In mid-February Roosevelt finally intervened. He introduced the conference with his own four-fold solution. Points 1, 2, and 4 were mindful of Germany's concerns. So was point 3, but only in language; in practice it recognized France's special claim on the most crucial point by giving it the right to control the police in Morocco.

The Kaiser's reply was charmingly polite in a typically German way. William expressed his gratitude for Roosevelt's assistance and for his efforts to preserve peace. He found the proposal excellent – except for point 3, which, with all due respect, seemed to him essentially the plan France

[141] Beale, p. 368. The following paragraphs dealing with the Algeciras Conference, Beale, p. 368−385.
[142] Beale, p. 371.
[143] Beale, p. 377. Von Benckendorff was the Russian Ambassador to Great Britain, 1903−1917.

had been demanding. The Kaiser proceeded to propose a compromise plan that would give the Sultan a free choice of police officers among other nations. Here the negotiations once again got stuck.

On March 7, 1906, Roosevelt delicately started to force his way by sending the Kaiser a clever telegram. First, he most politely assured the Kaiser that even after careful consideration he was unable to bring himself to feel that he "ought to ask France to make further concessions." He sighed that he "would gladly drop the subject," as he had felt from the beginning that he should follow the American tradition and to abstain himself from taking part in the matter. But he reminded the Kaiser that he, at the Kaiser's request, had wanted to do Germany a favour by urging France to consent to a conference and by assuring them of his belief that a "most fair and most practical" solution could be reached. Well, Roosevelt had already presented the conference with the solution he found "most fair and most practical." Then, in a move that caused great embarrassment within the German government, Roosevelt quoted the promise he had received from William through von Sternberg and reminded William that he had committed himself to the decision Roosevelt thought best.[144]

In fact, the Kaiser had never given such promise; von Sternberg, in his desire to bring the two governments closer together, had exceeded his instructions. Upon receiving Roosevelt's telegram, von Bülow on March 12 bitterly reprimanded von Sternberg by saying that "you were in my telegram empowered only to promise that *I* would urge upon His Majesty any proposal of the President, while you have promised unqualified acceptance of this *in the name of His Majesty himself*." Had he been honest, though, von Bülow might have admitted that the mistake was his own. To quote Beale: "It seems obvious that von Bülow, elated because he thought he had won Roosevelt to serving Germany's purposes, had made a promise that, with Roosevelt now supporting France's position at the Conference, it was embarrassing to have made. Von Bülow therefore tried to slip out of this part of his blunder by shifting it unjustly to Speck's shoulders."[145]

All of a sudden, the Kaiser was left with two alternatives – both of them distasteful. Either he would keep "his" promise and face a humiliating defeat at Algeciras or insult the President by publicly repudiating his friend von Sternberg. The Kaiser chose to keep "his" promise, but first he tried to

[144] Beale, p. 377–378.
[145] Beale, p. 379–380.

squirm out of it. Von Bülow and von Sternberg tried to make good of their mistakes and, more vigorously than ever, started selling Roosevelt a compromise plan made by Austria. But it was all in vain. TR had gotten the upper hand and now he only had to stand firm. He tolerated the fruitless debate for a while until on March 16 made it clear that the argument was over. Then, he gave the decisive blow. Should the conference fail, Roosevelt warned von Sternberg, he would have to defend his administration and show the role it had played by publishing all the correspondence between him and "certain powers." This caught Germany's attention. Fully aware of the inappropriateness of some of its letters, Germany immediately became conciliatory. "In looking back over the various important results of German-American co-operation during the past two years," von Bülow cabled Germany's surrender to Roosevelt, "it seems to me, the preservation of the confidence that has existed between Berlin and Washington and the immediate removal of all misunderstandings is more important than the whole Moroccan affair."[146] In other words, Roosevelt had broken deadlock no. 2 and the Moroccan crisis was just about over.

It was time for damage control. After a settlement had been reached at Algeciras, Roosevelt hurried to save the Kaiser's face and sought to convince the world that it was the Kaiser who had secured peace. He wrote to von Sternberg: "Communicate to His Majesty the Kaiser my sincerest felicitation on this epochmaking political success at Algeciras. The policy of His Majesty on the Morocco question has been masterly from the beginning to the end. The Kaiser has accomplished at the Conference, what he wanted to accomplish, and the world must acknowledge deep thanks to him for the result."[147] Speck did his best to ease the blow on his part. Realizing that this time Roosevelt's song of praise was perhaps a bit too thick, he felt compelled to add that, even if the President's congratulatory telegram did not seem to accord with facts, he was nevertheless convinced that the words had come from the President's heart. Of course, the Kaiser was not moronic. Dalton concludes that "despite plenty of flattery and careful diplomacy, TR had revealed that he favored France and Britain in the Moroccan negotiations, and the German leader brooded over it."[148]

Indeed, perhaps the most unfortunate consequence of the Moroccan crisis was its possible effect on the Kaiser's psyche. In October 1908 William gave the *London Daily Telegraph* an interview that was so indiscreet that it infuriated the British and created a crisis within his own government. Just

[146] Beale, p. 384.
[147] Beale, p. 384–385.
[148] Dalton, p. 281.

prior to that William had given a reckless interview to the *New York Times* in which he, among other things, speculated with the possibility of war with England, talked contemptuously of the Japanese and mocked Russia's performance in its war against Japan. Roosevelt saved William by preventing the article from being published; still, the incident greatly shook his faith in the Kaiser.[149]

Historian H.W. Brands observes that William "was often his own worst enemy."[150] He was as good in seeing imaginary enemies as he was in making real ones. He was convinced that England, France, and Russia had already teamed up to destroy him; and now even Roosevelt, the one friend that the Kaiser thought he had, had sided with France and England at Algeciras. He felt hurt, humiliated, isolated, and he alone had the power to unleash the strongest and most efficient war machine in Europe. It was a bad combination – and it only got worse after Theodore Roosevelt left the White House in 1909. The world had lost its only leader who had at least some control over him.

2.2 SENSING SOMETHING IN THE AIR IN GERMANY

2.2.1 "The Germans Did Not Like Me"

After leaving office, Theodore Roosevelt fulfilled one of his lifelong dreams by going big-game hunting to Africa in March 1909. After a full year in Africa, he embarked on a tour of Europe that took him to Germany and nine other countries.[151] The tour became quite a social event in Europe, and Roosevelt and his wife Edith received a very warm welcome indeed. The graciousness of Roosevelt's and Mrs. Roosevelt's manners and his intimate knowledge of European history earned the admiration of their hosts – even English reporters were impressed enough to remark that the

[149] Beale, p. 443−444.
[150] Brands, p. 574.
[151] TR to George Macaulay Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 364. Trevelyan was an English historian to whom TR gave a detailed account of his European tour of 1910 in his letter of October 1911. The letter is tens of pages long and a wonderful report on how TR himself experienced his time in Europe. The countries that TR visited in Europe were, in this order, Italy, Austria-Hungary, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, and England.

former American President did not suffer from "the natural slowness of the American mind."[152] Wheresoever Roosevelt went in Europe, he was met by cheering crowds in the thousands. Roosevelt himself thought that people in Europe felt an interest in and liking for him because, "I symbolized my country, and my country symbolized something that stirred them."[153]

In the public's collective imagination, the climax of the tour was Roosevelt's visit to Germany where he would meet with the German Emperor William II, his friend as well as his Nemesis. Prior to the visit, many concerned world citizens were placing their faith in Roosevelt, hoping that he could silence the war drums of Europe and influence the Kaiser for the benefit of world peace. One of them, pacifist millionaire Andrew Carnegie was by this time constantly approaching Roosevelt with letters. Carnegie was convinced that TR was the one man who could get the Kaiser to recognize the need for disarmament. Roosevelt promised Carnegie to do what he could, although he was unenthusiastic about the idea. He was sure that on this issue he could not influence the Kaiser, who had already dismissed all talks on armament limitations at the second Hague Conference of 1907.[154]

Roosevelt did make a plea for peace during his stop in Norway (where he recalled the Nobel Peace Price) because he really regarded the expenditures of the armament race as ludicrous and thought that war between civilized nations would be an unspeakable calamity. Peace, Roosevelt declared, could be best advanced by the passage of arbitration treaties, the erection of a world court, armament limitations, especially on naval armaments, and the formation of a "League of Peace" by the great powers. In words that were meant to the Kaiser, TR concluded: "The ruler or statesman, who should bring about such a combination would have earned his place in history for all time and his title to the gratitude of all mankind."[155]

Incidentally, the American media somehow found out that Roosevelt planned to talk to the Kaiser about disarmament in Berlin. Carnegie possibly had been un-thoughtful enough to leak the story to the press, "whereupon," Roosevelt wrote, "all the well-meaning and unspeakably foolish busybodies who, partly from sincere interest and partly from fussiness and vanity, like to identify

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[152] Dalton, p. 362.
[153] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 391, 369.
[154] TR to Andrew Carnegie, Oct 16, 1909; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 36–37. See also Morison's footnote on the same pages.
[155] TR to Carnegie, Mar 14, 1909; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 75. The extract from Roosevelt's Nobel Prize address is in Morison's footnote. See also Morison's footnote on p. 55.

themselves with large reforms, and whose identification therewith always does damage to the said reforms, began to write to me and to the papers."[156]

Upon hearing the news, the German Foreign Office got interested. While Roosevelt was in Austria-Hungary, the Austrian Prime Minister, Richard von Bienerth, came to sound out Roosevelt's views on disarmament and whether he was about to raise the subject with the Kaiser. Fully realizing that von Bienerth was running on Berlin's errand, TR replied that he had been told by a European statesman that a war between Germany and England was inevitable. Then he frankly asked whether such a war would be provoked by Germany. Von Bienerth assured that Germany had no intentions of provoking a war but neither was Germany about to allow itself to be at the mercy of any power. As Germany's overseas interests were growing, it felt it necessary to keep on building its fleet. The status quo at seas would leave Germany at an improper disadvantage.[157]

Roosevelt explained to von Bienerth that England considered naval superiority vital to its existence and that any attempts on Germany's part to alter the status quo would force England to keep on building its fleet. He expressed his wish that the German leaders would reconsider whether it was worthwhile to keep on with the build-up, which was the real cause why all the others, too, had to invest ludicrous sums in naval preparedness.

As Roosevelt had expected, von Bienerth reported the discussion to Berlin. He was surprised, however, when two days later German newspapers, in an apparent pre-emptive attempt by the German Foreign Office to water down TR's intentions, published stories that Roosevelt was on his way to Germany to lecture the Kaiser about world peace. The newspapers concluded that they did not believe for a moment that Roosevelt would show such lack of tact that he would take advantage of his friendly personal visit by broaching a subject which would be very distasteful to his host. TR turned these publications to his advantage in a way which once again shows great political skill. First of all, he was actually grateful for the articles, since they gave him the perfect excuse not to push a plan that he, in any case, thought had only a slim chance of success. Secondly, the articles gave Roosevelt the chance to say to the Kaiser exactly what he had wished to say and, on the top of that, to walk away with apologies.

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[156] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 377.
[157] This and the following two paragraphs, TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 376–378.

Roosevelt gave a vivid description of his meeting with the Kaiser in his letter to an English historian George Trevelyan. According to his own words, Roosevelt, upon his arrival in Berlin, assured the Kaiser and Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg that his intention never had been to discuss the matter of disarmament unless the Kaiser specifically expressed his wish to hear his opinion. Then he pointed out to the articles in German newspapers and regretted that he never could have imagined that his private conversation with the Austrian Prime Minister would become public. But now that it did, Roosevelt felt compelled to tell the Kaiser firsthand just what his conversation with von Bienerth had been and proceeded to do so. Bethmann-Hollweg red-facedly eventually told Roosevelt that he had been sorry to see the articles published and had not personally approved it.[158]

William listened to Roosevelt very courteously, but, naturally, did not change his position. The Kaiser replied that he really had no control over the build-up. In question was a vital interest of Germany and the German people would never consent to Germany's failing to keep herself able to enforce her right either at land or sea. At this point, Roosevelt understandably backed down. He reminded that he was not a peace-at-any-price man and he was aware that the Kaiser and the Chancellor were reluctant to discuss the matter: he had just felt that the matter was of such importance that it warranted him to broach the subject.

This question over the status quo of the seas was the inevitable conflict between England and Germany and one of the main causes of World War I. The Americans had their own selfish motives to support the status quo, because British naval supremacy, as has been observed, benefited the United States as well.[159] Then again, Roosevelt sided with England also because Germany had been overly aggressive in its foreign policy under the reign of William II. In his letter to Trevelyan Roosevelt draw a line between the international behaviour of the United States on the one hand and Germany's on the other:

"Those responsible for Germany's policies at the present day are most ardent disciples of, and believers in, Frederick the Great and Bismarck, and not unnaturally have an intense contempt for the mock altruism of so many worthy people who will not face facts.... Having been trained to believe only in loyalty to the national welfare, and in the kind of

[158] This and the following paragraph, TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 378–379.
[159] Beale, p. 144–148, 240–248, 256–257.

international morality characteristic of one pirate among his fellow pirates, they are unable to understand or appreciate the standards of international morality which men like Washington and Lincoln genuinely believed in...."[160]

It is particularly revealing to read Roosevelt's thoughts on his reception in Germany, since he contrasted it with his experiences in other European countries: "Everywhere else I was received... with practically as much enthusiasm as in my own country when I was President. In Germany I was treated with proper civility, all the civility which I had a right to demand and expect; and no more." With the exception of academics, TR noted, the Germans "really did not want to see me." Whereas in other European countries Roosevelt had felt that he was embraced as a symbol of his country, in Germany he sensed hostility towards the United States, its form of government and the American way of life. "The Germans did not like me, and did not like my country; and under the circumstances they behaved entirely correctly, showing me every civility and making no pretense of an enthusiasm which was not present. I do not know quite what the reason of the contrast was; but it was evident that, next to England, America was very unpopular in Germany." TR speculated that perhaps he represented middle class America, an obnoxious industrial and business rival, whereas the socialist lower classes resented the symbol of capitalist America.[161]

Without a doubt, the lack of enthusiasm also reflected Germany's disappointment in Roosevelt, whom it had considered a potential ally. The Germans had learned a bitter lesson at Algeciras. True, Roosevelt really was a friend of Germany, but, due to reasons related to America's self-interest, only after England and France. And since England and France were enemies, from the German perspective Roosevelt's friendship really amounted to nothing.

Roosevelt's description of the German upper classes still carries proof of great admiration for many things German. But compared to his description of the Germans from his childhood visit to Dresden in 1873, this one was deficient in warmth and conveyed a feeling of alienation due to the hostility that the Germans were showing towards the United States:

"The [German] upper classes, stiff, domineering, formal, with the organized army, the organized bureaucracy, the organized industry of their great, highly civilized and admirably administered country behind them, regarded America with a dislike which was all the greater because they could not make it merely contempt. They felt that we were entirely

[160] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 377.
[161] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 390–392.

unorganized, that we had no business to be formidable rivals at all in view of our loose democratic governmental methods, and that it was exasperating to feel that our great territory, great natural resources, and strength of individual initiative enabled us in spite of our manifold shortcomings to be formidable industrial rivals of Germany; and, more incredible still, that thanks to our Navy and our ocean-protected position, we were in military sense wholly independent and slightly defiant...."[162]

While things between Roosevelt and Germany seemed to be getting more complicated, his relationship with England was getting warmer. By this time he had arrived to the conclusion that England and the United States had reached a level of friendship where a war between them was inconceivable.[163] Roosevelt was also warming himself to the French. Though he was of the opinion that the English parliamentary system and French national character was a bad combination, leading to the continuous changing of leaders, during his visit in France he felt that "with these French republicans, who are absorbed in the questions that affect all of us under popular government, I had a sense of kinship that it was impossible to feel with men, however high-minded and well-meaning, whose whole attitude of mind towards these problems was different from mine."[164] Quite obviously, in between the lines there was a reference to the Germans. Roosevelt was making comparisons in his mind between the French republicans and the autocratic Germans and decided it in favour of the French. Clearly, then, Roosevelt had started to view the German upper classes as a whole with the same ambiguity that he had previously attached only to the Kaiser.

[162] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 391.
[163] TR to Alfred Thayer Mahan, Jun 8, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 280. Alfred T. Mahan, a defence intellectual and a history teacher in the Naval War College. He was also one of the leading figures of the American expansionists.
[164] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 380.

2.2.2 An Honorary Guest of the Kaiser

"Of course my chief interest at Berlin was in the Emperor himself,"[165] Roosevelt confessed in his letter to Trevelyan. Indeed, Roosevelt and William II had a mind-boggling relationship. During the Roosevelt presidency the two had been so much in communications that they probably learned to know each other well enough to regard each other a friend – yet Roosevelt's visit to Germany in 1910 was the first time they actually met.[166]

Many people thought that William and Roosevelt were much alike – Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, for example, remarked to Mrs. Roosevelt in Berlin that he saw the resemblance in the two.[167] The shared interest in the martial had resulted in both of them being muscular, similar in body structure and great friends of outdoors life. Both of them were superbly educated and intellectually curious, although Roosevelt was observed to be more open-minded and less self-centred. People who had met them both considered both of them charming. In those days when superficial courteousness made the social etiquette, TR and William often startled people with their unhesitating, no-nonsense approach to people and issues. The British did find one important difference, though, as they mentioned to the American Ambassador Whitelaw Reid that "they both talk unconventionally, but your President always makes good."[168]

Not only did the Kaiser admire Roosevelt, but he also trusted him. TR was his confidante among world leaders, as he sometimes shared with him matters of such national importance that it was almost stunning. Roosevelt, as stated, did not admire nor trust William quite as much. Actually, Roosevelt really did not know how he felt about the Kaiser. In his letters to his American or British friends, he often ridiculed William; yet he did seem genuinely fond of him. Still in 1906 TR had written about William to his friend Henry White that "I admire him, respect him, and like him. I think him a big man, and on the whole a good man." After the Russo-Japanese peace process, Roosevelt felt so guilty that he wrote to Spring-Rice: "In my letters to you I have sometimes spoken

[165] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 394.
[166] Beale, p. 435–436.
[167] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 393.
[168] Beale, p. 441.

sharply of the Kaiser. I want to say now that in these peace negotiations he has acted like a trump."[169]

Many people at the time thought that the Kaiser had Roosevelt under his spell, but, quite the opposite, the fact that the Kaiser looked up to Roosevelt gave TR the upper hand.[170] Whenever there had been a collision of interests in sight during the Roosevelt presidency, it had always been William who backed down. Similarly, Roosevelt in 1910 declined William's invitation to stay with him at the Schloss, because the invitation had not included Mrs. Roosevelt. Most certainly the Emperor would not have tolerated such defiance from anyone else; but coming from Roosevelt, he extended his apologies and included Mrs. Roosevelt in the invitation. This episode inspired TR to boast to Lodge – rather self-importantly (William had not been aware that Edith would meet her husband in Berlin) – that he had been forced to teach the Kaiser some manners.[171] In short, Roosevelt had a hold on the Kaiser. The difference between how Germany treated the United States during the Roosevelt presidency and how it treated it later, during the Wilson presidency, was like between night and day.

Obviously, Roosevelt's visit was a big moment for William personally. He was very courteous. The Kaiser personally showed Roosevelt Potsdam, Sans Souci and he invited Roosevelt to army manoeuvers after which he rode with his guest of honour for five hours discussing various subjects.[172] Lawrence Abbott, the editor of the *Outlook* and a friend who travelled with Roosevelt, wrote later that "everything had been done by the Kaiser to make it evident that he wished to treat Roosevelt with special honour." When William reviewed the army's field manoeuvers together with Roosevelt, he remarked: "Roosevelt, *mein Freund*, I wish to welcome you in the presence of my guards; I ask you to remember that you are the only private citizen who ever reviewed the troops of Germany."[173]

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[169] Beale, p. 443, 437. See also Beale's footnote on p. 436 to learn how willingly the Kaiser shared sensitive matters with TR.
[170] Harbaugh, p. 288.
[171] TR to David Jayne Hill, Mar 24, 1910; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 61–62. David Jayne Hill was the U.S. Ambassador to Berlin. See also TR to Henry Cabot Lodge, Mar 28, 1910; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 64.
[172] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 394–395.
[173] Abbott, Lawrence F., *Impressions of Theodore Roosevelt*, New York, 1920, p. 248–249. Elting Morison names Abbott's book the best published account of Roosevelt's European tour.

Roosevelt enjoyed William's company and found him an able and powerful person. He heartily agreed with the Kaiser on domestic morality and they shared the disgust for the shams and pretence of the international peace advocates. They also shared a couple of laughs on the expense of Russia's Czar, Nicholas II, and found it amusing that a ruler who had fought needless and unsuccessful wars and had "shamefully broken faith with, and prepared for the infamous subjection of, poor little Finland," had presided over the two international peace conferences at The Hague.[174]

Roosevelt was a bit surprised to find out that William was not as powerful a figure in Berlin as was supposed at the time. He noted that "both the men highest in politics and the Administration, and the people at large, took evident pleasure in having him understand that he was not supreme...."[175] In domestic policy the Kaiser had to move very cautiously and did not have much room to manoeuver. TR thought that the consciousness of these shortages in his sovereignty made William restless and drove him to play the part of an all-powerful monarch by divine right in areas of life where it was safer; that is, by being dictatorial towards his wife and the aggressor in international affairs. "In international affairs he at times acts as a bully," Roosevelt observed, "and moreover as a bully who bluffs and then backs down; I would not regard him nor Germany... as a pleasant neighbor."[176]

The two also discussed Germany's exacerbated relations with England. Roosevelt remarked to William that in his opinion a war between Germany and England would be an unspeakable calamity. The Kaiser agreed and thought such a war "unthinkable." The Kaiser went as far as to exclaim, "I ADORE ENGLAND!" which amused Roosevelt enough to make him write it down with capital letters to Trevelyan. William reminded that he had been brought up mostly in England, that he felt partly English and that, next to Germany, he cared for England most. To this Roosevelt expressed satisfaction and concluded with the Kaiser that it would be most desirable for the sake of world peace and progress if Germany, England and the United States could work together. In his letter to Trevelyan Roosevelt assured that he was certain that the Kaiser did not have the conquest or destruction of England in mind.

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[174] This and all the remaining paragraphs in this chapter (unless otherwise mentioned): TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 393–399.
[175] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 393.
[176] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 399.

In TR's opinion the Kaiser's attitude towards England was "a curious mixture of admiration and resentment." Right after William had proclaimed himself basically British, he succumbed into bitter complaints about them. William felt that King Edward, who had passed away just prior to Roosevelt's visit to Germany, had always been intriguing against Germany and hated the Germans. The new king, King George, hated all foreigners, but that was totally acceptable to William as long as he did not hate the Germans more than other foreigners. TR got the impression that the Kaiser, and to a lesser extent the Germans in general, had an inferiority complex. The way how the Emperor felt towards the English reminded him what he had read about the way how the Romans had felt towards the Greek: "a mixture of overbearing pride in their own strength, and of uneasiness as to whether they really are regarded by cultivated and well-bred people as having the social position which they ought to have."[177]

Roosevelt also depicted William as a child-like figure, who was immensely interested in what people thought of him abroad. TR could not understand why the head of the world's greatest military empire was so sensitive to what the English thought of him. What the Kaiser really wanted was respect and recognition, especially from the English. He bitterly complained to Roosevelt that Englishmen of high status never visited Berlin, but went always to Paris or the Mediterranean instead. Roosevelt also wrote in amazement: "The Emperor actually listens to gossip as to what is said of him in London pubs & even to what he is told quite untruthfully that King George says of him."[178]

Finally, TR brought up the naval question and asked the Kaiser whether the world leaders together could find a way to put a stop to the ever-increasing naval expenditures. William did not want to discuss the matter but only replied that Germany was bound to be powerful on the ocean. Remarkably, however, he did agree that the English position over the status quo was understandable: were he an Englishman, the Kaiser said, he, too, would insist on maintaining superiority at sea. But he found it annoying how the English always singled out Germany. The Kaiser had a message that he wanted Roosevelt to communicate to the British:

"He earnestly asked me to say to any of the British leaders whom I had a chance to meet... that he was not hostile to England, and on the contrary admired England and did not believe for a moment that there would be a war between

[177] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 397.
[178] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 396.

England and Germany, that he did not in the least object to the English keeping their Navy supreme above all other navies, but that he did very strongly feel that it was wrong for Englishmen publicly to hold Germany up as the power against whom they were building the navy, because this excited the worst feelings both in England and Germany."[179]

To put it shortly, there were qualities in the Kaiser that never failed to impress Roosevelt, but at the same time there was something unbalanced about him that Roosevelt found very disturbing – and in 1910 the same was true of Roosevelt's sentiment of Germany as well.

Nevertheless, Roosevelt's friendship with Germany survived through his presidency. When he left Berlin in May 1910, his opinion of Germany was essentially the same as when he entered the White House. His worldview carried about a strong element of Teutonism and he ranked the Germans highest in efficiency and in fighting qualities in his hierarchy of races. In short, Germany was the country he admired the most. Politically, however, Roosevelt could not have trusted Germany as long as its foreign policy was in the hands of the Kaiser, and the United States, in general, seemed to have more in common with the two democracies, England and to a lesser extent France.

At home everything was helter-skelter; the Republican Party was in the middle of a crisis. Roosevelt's hand-picked successor, President William Howard Taft, had alienated the progressive segment of the party, causing a severe split in party ranks. TR found himself being wooed to run for president in 1912 and his political aspirations came alive again.[180] After being cheated out of a victory in a scandalous 1912 Republican primary by the pro-capitalist old guard, Roosevelt ran as a third-party candidate for the Progressive Party. He eventually beat Taft and so became the only third-party candidate in U.S. election history to defeat a candidate of either one of the dominant parties.[181] But as the conservatives were badly divided, the Democratic candidate Woodrow Wilson took over the White House – had Roosevelt been elected, Europe's twentieth century history would look very different.

Roosevelt's insight on Germany, with the militant mindset and the experiences he had, was unique. Everybody knew that Germany was dangerous, but only TR found it appealing. The things that Roosevelt most admired in Germany were the very things that made others resent it. He had a direct

[179] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 398.
[180] Dalton, p. 356–357.
[181] The break-up of TR and Taft, Brands, p. 664–668; the Republican primary of 1912, Dalton, p. 377–391; the 1912 presidential elections, see Dalton, p. 401–407.

view to Germany which was neither distorted by prejudice nor blinded by gullibility. He therefore systematically resisted the consult of those around him who sought to demonize Germany and rather faced the Germans with an open mind. His strength of character earned him Germany's respect, which convinced Roosevelt that Germany respects only strength. They had sense of solidarity for each other; Germany was Europe's gifted problem child, Roosevelt was America's. All things considered, it is not a gross overstatement to say that no one knew or understood Wilhelmine Germany quite as well as Roosevelt.

At Berlin in 1910, Roosevelt's concern over the direction that Germany was heading towards was obviously getting stronger. He was troubled by the underdeveloped sense of international morality among Germany's ruling class and he was not pleased with Germany's ideological climate in which he sensed hostility towards the United States and England. It seems as if Roosevelt was on a mental level getting ready to break company with Germany: he knew that a war was coming and that it was to be a war where he must fight Germany.

Roosevelt, if someone, was a well-informed man. In September 1911 he wrote to Lodge that the war can be avoided only if Germany thinks that France and England combined will be able to defeat it. He mentioned that he was personally familiar with the German war plans. This was not an empty boast. He insisted that these plans contemplate "as possible courses of action, flank marches through both Belgium and Switzerland. They are under solemn treaty to respect the territories of both countries, and they have not the slightest thought of paying the least attention to these treaties unless they are threatened with war as the result of their violation."[182]

[182] TR to Lodge, Sep 12, 1911; *Correspondence of TR and Lodge*, vol. 2, p. 409.

3. WORLD GONE CRAZY, 1914–1915

On July 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Three days later, August 1, Germany joined the war in support of its ally Austria-Hungary by declaring war on Russia, an ally of Serbia. On August 3, Germany declared war on France, an ally of Russia, and the day after, August 4, launched its infamous invasion of Belgium. This caused England, who had in the Treaty of London of 1839 guaranteed the rights of Belgium,[183] to declare war on Germany. World War I had started.

Meanwhile in the United States foreign policy was led in a way that bore little, if any, resemblance to Roosevelt's Big Stick –diplomacy. To quote historian Arthur Link, President Woodrow Wilson and his Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, were both "fundamentally missionaries, evangelists, confident that they comprehend peace and well-being of other countries better than the leaders of those countries themselves."[184] At the outbreak of the Great War, as World War I was called at the time, President Wilson therefore wanted the United States to set the world a moral example by having nothing to do with the war whatsoever. In mid-August Wilson gave his famous statement according to which the United States "must be neutral in fact as well as in name" and the Americans must remain "impartial in thought as well as in action."[185]

How did Theodore Roosevelt feel about all this? Gathering from various historical studies, here is the prevailing view of his early reactions to the Great War in broad outline. According to some historians he hesitated at first. Cooper, for example, observes that Roosevelt "had some difficulty... in finding the course he preferred for himself and the United States."[186] It is widely claimed that for the first couple of months Roosevelt supported Wilson's neutrality policy and felt that the war did not require American intervention. By late 1914, however, he had changed his mind. He condemned Germany for violating the rights of Belgium and attacked the administration's neutrality policy, claiming that the Hague conventions obligated the United States to defend Belgium's neutrality. He started to advocate war against Germany and supposedly turned into a German-hater or at least World War I, to quote Brands, "changed his mind about many things German."[187] Apparently the

[183] Dalton, p. 443.
[184] Link, Arthur S., *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910–1917*, New York, 1954, p. 81.
[185] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 273.
[186] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 276.
[187] Brands, p. 43.

historians take it for granted that this change happened almost overnight, since they have not felt it necessary to give a time frame for it; in other words, they usually fail to define how rapid was this process that turned Roosevelt anti-German during World War I.

The conclusion of this thesis is that this prevailing view of Roosevelt's transformation into a German-hater is not altogether acceptable – in addition, the process definitely needs a time frame. Also, as will be shown, some of the reasons that historians have given to Roosevelt's later anti-Germanism are incorrect. The intention is to show that the role that personal hatreds played in TR's wartime views of Germany and of German-Americans have been exaggerated, since it was his *worldview* and his earlier experiences of Germany that forced him to denounce Germany, Wilson, and the supporters of both.

3.1 TRYING TO BE FAIR TO GERMANY

3.1.1 Initial Reactions: Private and Public

On August 1, 1914, the day Germany declared war on Russia, Theodore Roosevelt, as usual, was rather upset by the Wilson administration's foreign policy. The reason for his discontent this time was that Secretary of State Bryan was trying to advance world peace by ratifying all-inclusive arbitration treaties with twenty-nine nations – "with Paraguay and similar world powers,"[188] TR snorted. In these "cooling off" treaties the signatories committed themselves to submitting *all* disputes arising between them to a standing international committee for inquiry. Not all were enthusiastic about the idea; Germany, for example, declined to sign.[189]

To Roosevelt the idea of all-inclusive arbitration treaties seemed preposterous even between thoroughly friendly nations like the United States and Great Britain. In his opinion nations needed to make sure in advance that disputes between them would not escalate into crises. The way to do this was to promise little and to act in good faith and courteously towards the other. But it was

[188] TR to Arthur Hamilton Lee, Sep 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 818. Arthur Hamilton Lee (1868–1947) of Fareham, 1st Viscount, an English politician, a member of the Conservative Party and the House of Commons. During World War I, Lee was military secretary to Prime Minister Lloyd George in 1916 and director-general of food production 1917–1918.
[189] Link, p. 82; TR to Lee, Aug 1, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 790.

totally irresponsible to sign all-inclusive arbitration treaties – to give "reckless promises" that could not be met in a moment of a serious crisis. The United States, for example, should not be willing to arbitrate challenges to the Monroe Doctrine or Japan's right to send immigrants to the United States in unlimited numbers. According to Roosevelt, that would be tantamount to arbitrating "a slap in the face or an insult to one's wife."[190]

Accordingly, Roosevelt wrote to his British friend Arthur Lee: "As I am writing, the whole question of peace and war in Europe trembles in the balance, and at the very moment this is the case… our own special prize idiot, Mr. Bryan, and his ridiculous and insincere chief, Mr. Wilson, are prattling pleasantly about the steps they are taking to procure universal peace by little arbitration treaties which promise impossibilities, and which would not be worth the paper on which they are written in any serious crisis."[191] So at the outbreak of World War I, Roosevelt's first reaction was to privately disparage the professional peace advocates, who, to his disgust, controlled even the White House at this crucial moment in history.

It was a bitter moment for the lifestyle warrior and ex-President, who considered himself the nation's greatest expert in foreign affairs, to become a bystander in the Great War. Wilson stole his war. It was Roosevelt, who felt destined to lead the nation through the turbulent years of 1914–1918. He, who had dedicated much of his presidency to preventing the war. He, who had warned that the armament race would eventually lead to the war. And he, who had foreseen that it would be a war against Germany and, in his unconscious, hidden desires, had hoped for it to come most of his life. Sadly, when the war finally came, it brought with it only an embarrassing ending to a remarkable career, for eventually the bitterness turned Roosevelt, quite frankly, into a rather pathetic figure.

But first Roosevelt made a valiant effort to make the Americans stand up for Belgium's rights. He took the position that the German invasion of Belgium was an act of such gross international injustice that it required American intervention. There has been some debate, however, whether he took this view right away or only afterwards. In his book, *Impressions of Theodore Roosevelt* (1919), Lawrence Abbott introduces an article from the *Outlook* (of which he was the editor), where TR on September 23, 1914, publicly applauded England for declaring war on Germany in defense

[190] Roosevelt, Theodore, *America and the World War*, New York, 1915, p. 222; Roosevelt, Theodore, "The Peace of Righteousness," *New York Times* (NYT), Nov 1, 1914, p. SM1.
[191] TR to Lee, Aug 1, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 790.

of Belgium's neutrality. But when writing about the American response, Roosevelt became much more ambiguous:

"What action our Government can or will take, I know not. It has been announced that no action can be taken that will interfere with our entire neutrality…. Neutrality may be of prime necessity in order to preserve our own interests and maintain peace in so much of the world as is not affected by the war…. But it is a grim comment on the professional pacificist theories as hitherto developed that our duty to preserve the peace for ourselves may necessarily mean the abandonment of all effective effort to secure peace for other unoffending nations which through no fault of their own are dragged into the war."[192]

According to Abbott, Roosevelt was from his request holding back his true feelings about Wilson's response to the invasion (and indeed the last sentence gives just that impression). Abbott had felt that Roosevelt should refrain from publicly criticizing the President in a time of an international crisis and to be less frank in the parts of his article that dealt with the administration's neutrality policy.[193]

Abbott came to regret, however, that Roosevelt's political opponents later used this article to suggest that at the beginning Roosevelt had not felt that the invasion of Belgium required American intervention and that he exacerbated his point only afterwards to be able to attack Wilson. The clear insinuation was that Roosevelt's sincerity in the matter should be questioned and that his change of heart can be explained, for example, by presidential aspirations or by his intense and growing hatred of Wilson. To set straight his mistake, Abbott testified in the *Outlook* in March 1916 that Roosevelt's opinion in the matter had been from the beginning that "righteousness comes before peace, and neutrality between right and wrong is as immoral as in the days of Pontius Pilate." Kansas City *Star* confirmed Abbott's testimony in its editorial of March 31, 1916:

"Colonel Roosevelt spoke in Kansas City, Kansas, on September 21, 1914. To at least one member of the *Star* staff at that time he expressed forcibly his views regarding the duty of the United States towards Belgium and added that he did not know how much longer he was going to be able to keep from speaking out on this subject. A few weeks later he made his first public declaration in criticism of the Administration's attitude."[194]

[192] Abbott, p. 250.
[193] This and the following two paragraphs, Abbott, p. 250–251.
[194] Abbott, p. 252.

Quite surprisingly, then, Kathleen Dalton in her, *Theodore Roosevelt. A Strenuous Life* (2002), in one of the most recent biographies of Roosevelt, even still argues the opposite: "The Great War looked at first to Roosevelt as a 'frightful tragedy' which did not require American intervention.... Even after Germany invaded Belgium and declared that the Treaty of London guaranteeing its neutrality was no more than 'a scrap of paper,' TR supported Wilson's neutrality policy."[195] Patrick Devlin agrees in his, *Too Proud to Fight. Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality* (1974): "There was in 1914 no sentiment at all for intervention. All Americans of both parties, even Theodore Roosevelt, Senator Lodge, and their friends who later became ardent advocates of intervention, approved the proclamation of neutrality."[196] Historians John Milton Cooper, Jr., and Nell Irvin Painter, too, agreed with this assertion.[197] Incidentally, this would make Roosevelt a liar: when he finally came out against Wilson in November 1914, he assured that "from the very outset I felt that the administration was following a wrong course."[198]

There are sources that support Dalton's and Devlin's claim – even TR admitted that much. He confessed in 1917 to Henry Stimson that a month after the outbreak of the war he had written in an article once that the United States had no responsibility for Belgium. He bemoaned, however, that "I did this on Wilson's statement; and I followed it up by the statement that in such case we would never have any responsibility for any nation which was wronged, and that all thoughts of securing peace and justice to small nations were forever at end." But the people, Roosevelt protested, clung to that one sentence of the article "and reduced me to the necessity of saying that I was wrong in following the President for the first sixty days...."[199]

To interpret this, Roosevelt admitted that he had publicly asserted that the United States had no responsibility for Belgium, but, according to his own words, he had in the same occasion also remarked that in such case the United States would never have any responsibility for any nation which was wronged – which would seem to be one way of saying that the German invasion of Belgium in his opinion nevertheless demanded some sort of action from the United States. Moreover, TR also claimed that his statement was based on Wilson's untruthful statement (will be

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[195] Dalton, p. 443.
[196] Devlin, Patrick, *Too Proud to Fight. Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality*, London, 1974, p. 141.
[197] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 276–277, 282; Painter, Nell Irvin, *Standing at Armageddon. The United States, 1877–1919*, New York, 1987, p. 300.
[198] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 250.
[199] TR to Henry Lewis Stimson, Feb 7, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1150–1151. Stimson was federal district attorney for New York.

introduced later) and as soon as the truth revealed itself to him he took the position that the United States must intervene.

So, this really comes down to the question, was Roosevelt lying to Stimson? But there is more: if Dalton and Devlin are correct in claiming that Roosevelt at first supported neutrality, then Abbott and certain members of *Star*'s editorial staff were lying, too. But the biggest problem with Dalton's and Devlin's claim is that it does not make any sense. If Roosevelt supported neutrality in the early fall of 1914, then he broke just about every principle he had ever cherished. In that case he would have chosen "unrighteous peace" over "righteous war." In that case he would have been shirking his duty by escaping into a not-so-strenuous life. In that case the internationalist who had always preached that the United States must participate in world events for which it shares responsibility would have suddenly turned into an isolationist.

Indeed, Roosevelt's private correspondence would not seem to leave much room for debate. Contrary to Dalton and Devlin, it becomes evident that TR really did condemn the invasion of Belgium from the start and would have wanted the United States to take decidedly un-neutral action, although he was not speaking in terms of military intervention in the early stages.

In his letter of August 8, 1914, to the pro-German Hugo Münsterberg, Roosevelt first of all emphasized his impartiality in the matter by promising that he would not be "misled into a rush against Berlin." Then TR wrote, only four days after the invasion, that it would seem that Germany had violated the treaties guaranteeing the neutrality of Luxembourg and Belgium, but he did not yet condemn Germany for a perfectly good reason: "I simply don't know what the facts are and do not feel able to pass a competent judgment upon them."[200] But in his next letter to Münsterberg from October 3 Roosevelt already made his opinion very clear:

"But my dear Münsterberg, there are two or three points that you leave out of calculation…. The more I have studied the case, the more keenly I have felt that there can be no satisfactory peace until Belgium's wrongs are redressed…. The unquestioned fact is that Belgium has been ruined, that wonderful and beautiful old cities have been destroyed, that millions of entirely unoffending plain people have been reduced to the last pitch of misery, because Germany deemed it

[200] TR to Hugo Münsterberg, Aug 8, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 794. Münsterberg was a German-American professor of psychology at Harvard university, who from 1914 until his death in 1916 wrote letters and articles defending the motives and actions of Germany.

to its interest to inflict upon Belgium the greatest wrong one nation can inflict upon another. ...[S]urely we are not to be excused if we do not try to prevent the possibility of the recurrence of such incidents."[201]

Most importantly, TR had strongly suggested already in *August* 22 in his letter to Lee that Wilson's response to the invasion of Belgium was spineless: "I do not know whether I would be acting right [intervene] if I were President or not, but it seems to me that if I were President I should register a very emphatic protest, a protest that would mean something, against the levy of the huge war contributions on Belgium. As regards Belgium, there is not even room for an argument. The Germans, to suit their own purposes, trampled on their solemn obligation to Belgium and on Belgium's rights."[202] This proves that already in August Roosevelt privately supported taking action on behalf of Belgium; now, one only needs to explain the contradiction between his private and public statements in the fall of 1914.

The central issue in Roosevelt's disagreement with the Wilson administration was his claim that the United States had signed the Hague conventions during the Roosevelt presidency and that Wilson was now breaking those treaty obligations by not taking action on behalf of Belgium. Since this Roosevelt's claim was apparently rather controversial, perhaps the best way to approach this is first to look at the disputed treaty. The United States signed the Hague convention concerning "The Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land" on October 18, 1907, and ratified it on November 27, 1909 – just like Roosevelt claimed, giving the exact dates, in his book *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (1916).[203] In this same book TR quoted articles from this convention:

"Article 1 runs: 'The territory of neutral powers is inviolable.' Article 10 states that 'the fact of a neutral power resisting even by force attempts to violate its neutrality cannot be regarded as a hostile act.' Article 7 states that 'a neutral power is not called upon to prevent the export or transport on behalf of one or other of the belligerents of arms, munitions of war or in general of anything which could be of use to an army or a fleet.'"[204]

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[201] TR to Münsterberg, Oct 3, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 823–824.
[202] TR to Lee, Aug 22, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 810.
[203] Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*, p. 153–154; International Committee of Red Cross, *Convention (V) Respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land. The Hague, 18 October 1907*, 2006 [http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/WebSign?ReadForm&id=200&ps=P].
[204] Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*, p. 154. The full text of the convention: The Avalon Project, *Laws of War: Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land (Hague V); October 18, 1907*, Yale Law School, 1998 [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/lawofwar/hague05.htm].

Clearly, then, Germany had broken articles 1 and 10 of this treaty to which the United States had made itself a party. But did the treaty obligate the United States to act on behalf of neutral Belgium? Roosevelt took the position that, yes, under the U.S. Constitution international treaties ratified by Congress become law of the land. "For this reason we should never lightly enter into a treaty," Roosevelt admonished, "and should both observe it, and demand its observance by others when made." He insisted that Germany had broken the "Supreme Law" of the United States and that Wilson had allowed it "without a word of protest."[205] He wrote:

"The United States and all the great powers now at war were parties... to the Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907. As President, acting on behalf of this Government, and in accordance with the unanimous wish of our people, I ordered the signature of the United States to these conventions. Most emphatically I would not have permitted such a farce to have gone through if it had entered my head that this Government would not consider itself bound to do all it could to see that the regulations to which it made itself a party were actually observed when the necessity for their observance arose."[206]

According to Cooper, Roosevelt was wrong. He argues that the Hague conventions did not obligate the United States to uphold Belgium's neutrality and reasons that the isolationist Congress never would have entered into such an international obligation. Referring to the same, above-quoted excerpt, Cooper concludes that this Roosevelt's charge, which he "repeated often during the next four years," was "a wild distortion of facts and a wishful fantasy of mistaken memory." The reason why Roosevelt in this manner distorted facts, Cooper asserts, was his personal jealousy of Wilson. To add weight to his argument, Cooper notes that "the best evidence of the falseness of Roosevelt's allegation that the United States had contracted an obligation to Belgium came from Senator Lodge," who had steered the Hague Conventions through the Senate. Lodge, Cooper insists, "never repeated those charges of betrayal against Wilson."[207] In other words, Cooper introduces as his *best* evidence not something that someone has said, but something that someone *has not said*.

It is not possible in this context to start evaluating the legal aspects of the dispute, but it seems certain that in 1914 at least, when the concept of international law was still something new, the case was not as clear-cut as Cooper suggests. For instance, Wilson biographer Arthur Link does not accuse Roosevelt of distorting facts in the matter and neither does he say that TR was mistaken; he leaves the question open. It is also interesting that, as Roosevelt's claim was getting a lot of

[205] Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*, p. 82.
[206] Roosevelt, "The International Posse Comitatus," *NYT*, Nov 8, 1914, p. SM1.
[207] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 283.

attention, it was at this point that his political opponents destroyed his credibility. "The controversy rather fizzled," Link concludes, "when Norman Hapgood pointed out to Roosevelt's earlier articles in the *Outlook*, August 22 and September 23, 1914," in which Roosevelt – it was claimed – had given his support for Wilson's neutrality policy and had declared that the United States bore no responsibility for Belgium's fate.[208]

In addition, Link contradicts Cooper's best evidence by concluding that not only Senator Henry Cabot Lodge but also Senator Elihu Root and other Republican leaders "later reiterated Roosevelt's charge that Wilson had virtually acquiesced in the German invasion of Belgium by not protesting that violation of the Hague convention."[209] According to Devlin, Lodge and Root had felt from the beginning that Wilson should have at least protested over Belgium, but they did not speak up, because they felt that it was their duty to support the President during an international crisis.[210] Against this background, the following quote from Roosevelt's emotional letter of January 31, 1917, to Joseph B. Morrell is very interesting indeed:

"For the first sixty days, I, like everyone else in the United States, supported President Wilson as the only thing to be done, on the assumption that he was speaking the truth, had examined the facts, and was correct in his statement, that we had no responsibility for what had been done in Belgium.... After sixty days, I came to the conclusion, for various reasons, that Mr. Wilson had not correctly stated the facts. I went over the Hague Conventions myself. I found that contrary to what had been alleged in Washington, they did demand action on our part, and I came out against the President, and in favor of such action. I held this position for the two and a half years that have since elapsed, and a year and a half after, Mr. Root, and I think Mr. Lodge, took the same position. For a year, after taking it, I was pretty lonely, and almost everybody attacked me for not 'standing by the President.' As a matter of fact, if I made any error whatever, it was standing by him just sixty days too long. I have never committed the error since...!"[211]

This quote is the missing piece of the puzzle, which explains the contradiction between Roosevelt's private and public messages in the fall of 1914. His private letters indisputably show that he had felt ever since August that the United States should drop its neutrality and react to the German invasion of Belgium. But since Wilson had declared total neutrality and had stated that the United States bore no responsibility for Belgium, he assented to the President in public, because ex-presidents were expected to do so during an international crisis. TR found it hard, though, and felt tempted to

[208] Link, p. 175. Norman Hapgood was the editor of the *Collier's* magazine.
[209] Link, p. 175.
[210] Devlin, p. 336.
[211] TR to Joseph B. Morrell, Jan 31, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1148–1149. Morrell was a New York merchant and a Republican.

attack Wilson, but his friends (e.g Abbott) tried to prevent him from committing a political suicide by urging him to tone down his articles. Meanwhile TR did some research and arrived at the conclusion that the Hague conventions demanded the United States to take action on behalf of Belgium, so he finally came out and said it. He publicly condemned the German invasion of Belgium and denounced Wilson's neutrality policy – not because he hated or envied Wilson, but because his deepest convictions had made him feel so from the beginning. Roosevelt *was not lying*.

This is not to say that Roosevelt was right in claiming that Wilson was breaking the Hague conventions; the legal side of the case would have to be studied before such a conclusion could be made. Yet it seems possible that Roosevelt's case was actually pretty strong. First of all, his political opponents hurried to destroy his credibility with the *Outlook* articles. Secondly, it seems safe to conclude that Lodge and Root later took the same view, so apparently the leading Republicans were having a legal quarrel with the administration over how binding the Hague conventions were. This, of course, would mean that TR was not distorting facts but instead was acting according to what he believed to be the truth. Also, it is interesting that Wilson never denied the charge, although it must be added that he never commented any of Roosevelt's accusations. "The very extravagance and unrestrained ill feeling of what he is now writing serve to nullify any influence that his utterances could have," Wilson remarked to a friend in December 1914.[212] Roosevelt interpreted Wilson's silence differently. "He never dared answer me," he wrote bitterly in June 1916.[213]

The question why did not Roosevelt make his opinions public until in November 8, 1914,[214] is only important to those who seek to question his sincerity in the matter by failing to recognize that he had denounced neutrality in his private letters already in August 1914. Yet it can be added that there was a simple explanation for the delay. Congressional elections awaited in November 3, 1914, and Roosevelt's fellow progressives had appealed to him so that he would not hurt the party by openly criticizing the President for his wildly popular decision to keep the country out of the war. Roosevelt promised, but added that "after election I should smite the administration with a heavy hand."[215] He faithfully kept both promises, the latter one to the letter.

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[212] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 283.
[213] TR to Thayer, Jun 16, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1064.
[214] Harbaugh, p. 468.
[215] TR to Lodge, Dec 8, 1914; *Correspondence of TR and Lodge*, vol. 2, p. 449; Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 278.

3.1.2 The Fate of Belgium and Germany's War Guilt

The fact that Roosevelt condemned the German invasion of Belgium naturally led him to place himself in the pro-Allied camp. This has prompted historians to suggest that the war marked a drastic change in Roosevelt's view of Germany. One interesting theory has been presented by Howard Beale, and it involves TR's hierarchy of races. Beale asserts that if a "civilized" nation became a threat to U.S. interests, Roosevelt had the ability then to convince himself that the opponent had sank into barbarism, since why would any "civilized" nation want to oppose the ever so righteous America. Beale's conclusion is that in 1914−1918 Germany went through this change of status in TR's mind: "When in World War I he felt America must fight Germany, he had persuaded himself it was not Germany the civilized nation that he had once admired whom we were fighting, but the land of the 'Huns.'"[216]

Behind the argument that World War I made Roosevelt anti-German the underlying idea has been that as a consequence of the war he, supposedly, started to see Imperial Germany for what it truly was. After this, to interpret the idea further and to turn it into a larger theory of Roosevelt's war-time transformation, his moral indignation over Germany's actions as well as his frustration with Wilson's neutrality policy and in his own status as a powerless bystander grew into general intolerance and hatred of Germany and of Wilson. It must be understood that Roosevelt's World War reputation is not very flattering. Some historians seem to feel that during the war Roosevelt sort of lost control and became a reckless fanatic, whose actions and views were guided more by his emotions than by cool judgment. After all, historians believed for decades that Roosevelt had outrageously fabricated his testimony of the Venezuelan crisis in the heat of, what Beale has called, his "anti-German World War hate."[217]

Some historians have raised other, less theoretical reasons to explain what made Roosevelt anti-German. Dalton asserts that the testimony of a Belgian commission, which met Roosevelt on September 27, 1914,[218] and British propaganda about German atrocities in Belgium, angered Roosevelt enough to make him commit himself to fighting Germany. The atrocity stories were

[216] Beale, p. 354.
[217] Beale, p. 402.
[218] Roosevelt, *Letters*, vol. 8, Appendix IV, Chronology, p. 1485.

confirmed to Roosevelt in late 1914, Dalton argues, by his own daughter, Ethel, who, upon her arrival from France, witnessed in vivid details how she had seen refugees returning from Belgium and among them "little boys with their right hands cut off" – allegedly a way of the Germans to make sure that in the future the Belgians would not shoot back.[219] Dalton also mentions that Roosevelt had learned from German leaders that their war plans included the invasion of New York in case the United States decided to join the war. Supposedly, this prompted Roosevelt to regard Germany's war efforts more as aggression than self-defense.[220] Presumably, all these factors contributed to the collapse of Roosevelt's admiration for and turned him into a hater of Germany and its supporters.

This being said, in this chapter the intention is to show that the above-mentioned reasons were secondary in Roosevelt's decision to fight Germany. The principal reasons stemmed from his worldview, which makes his actions seem much more rational than emotional. The role that personal hatreds and prejudice played has been exaggerated by some historians. By examining Roosevelt's private correspondence, newspaper articles and other writings from the period it becomes obvious that the two reasons why Roosevelt could not sympathize with the Central Powers were: 1) the invasion of Belgium and other related violations of the Hague conventions by Germany, and 2) Germany's undemocratic form of government and TR's general distrust in the German upper classes. There was nothing specifically or fanatically anti-German in these views, instead they were based on cool-headed judgments of facts.

In addition, since these views are totally in accord with his pre-World War views, it is also to be concluded that during the early months of the war Roosevelt's opinion of Germany did not change nor did he lose his admiration for Germany. Beale's theory of Germany experiencing a change of status from a "civilized" nation to "Huns" in Roosevelt's mind during World War I is correct, but the shift was gradual and too little attention has been paid to the fact that in the beginning TR's opinion of Germany did not change.

For instance, Roosevelt's book, *America and the World War*, published in January 1915, is a remarkably balanced interpretation of the war's causes and lessons. In it Roosevelt presented the American public with his own, rather sophisticated conception of the causes of the war. He started

[219] Dalton, p. 443–444.
[220] Dalton, p. 443.

by stating that it was not necessary for Americans to assign blame for the war to some one country. Black-and-white simplifications about who unleashed war on who were to be avoided, since the *causes* of the war were complex and traceable down the generations to the immemorial past of Europe.[221] Roosevelt stressed the complexity of the Austro-Serbian relations which resulted in the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne with the horrific consequences known to all: it was almost impossible to determine who was right and who was wrong, Austria-Hungary or Serbia.

Once the war started between Austria and Serbia, TR reasoned, the chain of events became inevitable. Russia had to hurry to Serbia's aid or it would have faced losing its claim to the leadership of all Slav nations. This, in Roosevelt's opinion, really left Germany with no options: "When Russia took part it may well be argued that it was impossible for Germany not to come to the defense of Austria...." Moreover, Germany was in that situation almost forced to strike at France on the western frontier at once before Russia had the time to mobilize its forces; otherwise "disaster would surely have attended her [Germany's] arms."[222]

Instead of pointing fingers at individual countries, TR singled out fear as the real cause of the war. It was fear which made the European powers distrust each other to excess. He urged the Americans to recognize the reality of that fear as well as the justification of its existence. As long as the United States refused to do this, and listened to the ridiculous theories of the pacifists instead, there would be more wars: "The causes of the fear must be removed or, no matter what peace may be patched up today or what new treaties may be negotiated tomorrow, these causes will at some future day bring about the same results, bring about a repetition of this same awful tragedy."[223]

Roosevelt fully acknowledged the awkward position Germany had been in before the war: squeezed in between Russia and France, Germany probably sincerely felt itself threatened. He was therefore reluctant to see the German war effort as aggression. "The power sending the ultimatum and making the attack," he concluded, "may do so merely because it is obvious that the other side is preparing to strike first."[224] The German people believed that they were engaged in a clash between

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[221] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 7, 16.
[222] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 16–18.
[223] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 70–73.
[224] TR to Münsterberg, Aug 8 & Oct 3, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 795, 823; TR to Bernhard Dernburg, Dec 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 860. Dernburg was the former Colonial Secretary for Germany and during World War I a resident of New York.

civilization and barbarism, a fight for life between the Teuton and the Slav. From the German point of view the other Western European powers, France and England, were playing the part of traitors, betraying the cause of Occidental civilization by scheming against the Germans with the Slavs.[225] The people of Germany went to war, Roosevelt assured, "because they believed the war was an absolute necessity, not merely to German well-being but to German national existence:" they feared that Germany was in danger of "destruction and subjugation by France and Russia, perhaps assisted by England."[226]

Obviously, then, Roosevelt did not blame Germany for starting the war, but for the way it was conducting it. No matter how he tried to look at it, Germany was simply incriminating itself with its own action. First of all, the German invasion of Belgium, as well as Wilson's unwillingness to deal with it, offended Roosevelt's sense of international morality. He had gradually come to feel that civilization had reached a point of maturity where the first steps towards the creation of international law in the form of certain basic international treaties was both necessary and possible. As Roosevelt kept attacking the all-inclusive arbitration treaties and various other fatuous plans of the ultra-pacifists, he also outlined his own vision of how to best prevent wars in the future. His vision illustrates that it was his sense of international morality that left him with no other choice than to advocate war against Germany.

In short, Roosevelt outlined the forming of a league of nations (naturally, only "civilized" nations included). Whenever disputes would occur between states – even between non-members – they would be referred to an international tribunal, functioning under the protection of this league. All the countries would have to submit to the resolutions of this tribunal and this would be accepted by all, Roosevelt believed, if only the tribunal did not try to achieve too much: no country, therefore, would be expected to arbitrate, for example, its territorial integrity or vital national interests. But by working together the civilized nations could surely come to certain international agreements, which would, for example, guarantee the rights and neutrality of smaller, well-behaving powers.[227]

Characteristically, Roosevelt's design placed righteousness above peace. As civilization was not even near the point where an international police force could be created, there would be no one to

[225] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 18–19.
[226] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 68–69, 233–234.
[227] Roosevelt, "The International Posse Comitatus," *NYT*, Nov 8, 1914, p. SM1. A brilliant description of TR's vision of an international posse comitatus: Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 104–109.

enforce the tribunal's decrees. Therefore – and this was the most essential point in Roosevelt's plan – the big civilized powers would be obliged to summon together an international posse comitatus whenever the need arises that would use its collective force against "any recalcitrant state, any state that bids defiance to... decrees of an international tribunal."[228] With his vision Roosevelt beat Wilson by two years and became in the fall of 1914 the first important American spokesman to endorse the idea of a league of nations,[229] and he even foresaw the problem which is so topical even today: the failure of the United Nations to act against states that defy the resolutions of the international tribunal.

This is why Roosevelt so strongly insisted on the use of collective force against the violators of international treaties as the key to make the system work. The proper enforcement of treaties would not do away with war completely, but the putting of might behind right would be the only way to minimize the amount of wars and to limit their scope. If international treaties were entered into in good faith and their observance was guaranteed by the international community, it would not be necessary for the world powers to burden themselves with excessive armaments; nor would it be any longer necessary for Germany to be afraid for its existence or to become a source of fear to its neighbors. Naturally, Roosevelt realized the difficulties in setting up this kind of an international system, but he did not consider the idea utopian. Although he understood that this system would not see the light of day in the near future, he had hoped that the Hague conventions had represented the first modest step towards the right direction.[230] Germany with its action and Wilson with his inaction proved, however, that mankind had made no advance in international morality.[231]

This is why Wilson's neutrality policy together with the all-inclusive arbitration treaties was a combination that truly infuriated Roosevelt. Instead of living up to the treaties America had already entered into – to the obligation to defend Belgium – which would be the only road to international peace of righteousness, Wilson just kept making new promises to other nations, apparently with not much more intent to keep them either.[232] And what really irked TR was that Wilson had the full support of the American public in doing so. He wrote in contempt:

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[228] TR to Susan Dexter Dalton Cooley, Dec 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 853. Susan Dexter Dalton (Mrs. Alford Warriner) Cooley.
[229] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 279.
[230] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 124, 237–240.
[231] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 21.
[232] TR to Albert Apponyi, Sep 17, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 820. Count Albert Apponyi (1846–1933), a Hungarian politician whom TR had met on his visit to Austria-Hungary in 1910. TR to Andrew Dickson White, Nov 2, 1914;

"This nation had it in its power to take the first and very practical step in this direction (towards the creation of an international police force) by acting emphatically on behalf of Belgium's neutrality under the Hague conventions. This was the real service it could have rendered to the peace of righteousness. It did not render it, and the pacificists were hysterical in their praise of Wilson for his treachery to the cause of peace by not rendering it."[233]

This suggests that the legal debate whether the Hague conventions required the United States to act on behalf of Belgium was almost beside the point insofar as Roosevelt was concerned. He did not care what the existing law said, he wanted to *make* a law: he wanted the United States to take international morality to a new level and to set a precedent of international law by acting on behalf of Belgium. Besides, Roosevelt had little patience with people who were utterly legalistic. To him, there was right and there was wrong, and the *enforcement* of the right was much more important than the letter of the law. "The technical arguments as to the Hague conventions not requiring us to act," he thundered, "will at once be brushed aside by any man who honestly and in good faith faces the situation. Either the Hague conventions meant something or else they meant nothing. If, in the event of their violation, none of the signatory powers were even to protest, then of course they meant nothing; and it was an act of unspeakable silliness to enter into them."[234]

TR's vision proves that he had given a lot of thought to questions involving international law. Within the framework of his vision, he had no choice but to advocate war against Germany for what it had done – the whole system he had visualized depended on using force against "any recalcitrant state." Against this background it seems odd to suggest that Roosevelt's disapproval of Wilson's neutrality policy was not dictated by his sense of what was right and what was wrong, but instead had a lot to do with his personal hatred of Germany or of Wilson. Yet he did have a hidden agenda – in 1914 the setting up of an international posse comitatus would have meant that *Roosevelt would finally get his chance to fight the Germans*.

There is no reason to belittle how deeply Roosevelt felt about Belgium. When Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg in late 1914 publicly admitted that Germany had in self-defense done injustice to Belgium and promised that the wrongdoing would be rectified "as soon as our military aims have been reached," TR at least appreciated his integrity. But when Bernhard Dernburg, Germany's

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Letters, vol. 7, p. 827–828. White was a trustee of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and had criticised Roosevelt's views on preparedness. TR to Münsterberg, Aug 8, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 795; Abbott, p. 250.
[233] TR to Cooley, Dec 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 853.
[234] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 230.

former Colonial Secretary, wrote in the United States in December 1914 that after the war Belgium will not be included in the German Empire, but will be merely taken in as an economic unit and that Antwerp, and some other cities, will be kept for defense purposes, Roosevelt strongly protested to Dernburg: "If your article means anything, it means that for military and financial purposes Belgium is to be incorporated in the German Empire as the result of the war."[235] Ever more often Roosevelt found himself coming to the conclusion that the word of the German government could not be trusted.

As a result, the Germans became in TR's phraseology a "menace to civilization"[236] and were one step closer to becoming "Huns." In Roosevelt's world there simply was no place for a "civilized" nation that was subjugating other "civilized" nations. He had always felt this way. He therefore expressed a wish in *America and the World War* that the United States would in the future become the safeguard of the existence and independence of smaller, orderly, well-behaving states.[237] Also, he had always privately expressed similar disapproval whenever Russia had been breaking its obligations to Finland and had always pointed out to his British friends that England must undo the injustices it had inflicted in the past on Ireland.[238]

Neither was the invasion of Belgium the only violation that Germany had committed. Roosevelt enumerated, for example in the *New York Times*, that Germany had broken the Hague article forbidding the bombing of undefended towns. Germany had violated the articles forbidding illegal and excessive contributions by levying ransoms from the city of Brussels and from the province of Brabant in Belgium to finance its war. German troops had inflicted collective penalties on Belgian population for the acts of individuals, although the Hague conventions specifically forbade such methods.[239]

As Germany kept disregarding its international obligations, Roosevelt's old, bad inklings of German leadership began to crystallize. He knew the German elite too well to trust them. He was familiar with the ideas that dominated Germany's intellectual life. TR had read, for example,

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[235] TR to Dernburg, Dec 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 859.
[236] TR to Lee, Aug 21, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 800.
[237] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 15.
[238] TR to Trevelyan, Oct 1, 1911; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 395, 366; Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 51; TR to John St. Loe Strachey, Feb 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 900. Strachey was a publisher and editor of the London *Spectator*.
[239] Roosevelt, "The International Posse Comitatus," *NYT*, Nov 8, 1914, p. SM1; Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 113–114.

Friedrich Nietzsche and Heinrich von Treitschke, and had not found the experience pleasant. Accordingly, he wrote that even the sermons of the pacifists are "not worse than the baseness of the men who in a spirit of mean and cringing admiration of brute force gloss over, or justify, or even deify, the exhibition of unscrupulous strength." Roosevelt knew that a good share of the German leaders were followers of these doctrinaires, who had given their blessing to the theory that might is right. As a result, TR regretted, Germany's foreign policy had at times reflected "callous indifference to the rights of weaker nations," and that German efficiency had at times "been exercised in a way that represents a genuine setback to humanity and civilization." Even when Roosevelt had pointed out that an overwhelming majority of the German people went to war out of fear and in self-defense, he had added that some German leaders were doubtless influenced "by worse motives."[240]

Roosevelt had also read books of German military strategists like Friedrich von Bernhardi, the author of *Germany and the Next War* (1911), so he knew that some of the German leaders believed that, when vital national interests were at stake, there was no right or wrong but only the "supreme law of national self-preservation." Roosevelt quoted Bernhardi advising that even in peace time "it will be advisable to attack at the enemy by torpedo and submarine boats, and to inflict upon him unexpected losses.... War upon the enemy's trade must also be conducted as ruthlessly as possible."[241]

Roosevelt stressed repeatedly that the overwhelming majority of Germans did not share Treitschke's contempt for all non-Germans or Bernhardi's idea of international morality. But there were some that did, and, if Germany's national interest would so demand, they would not treat the United States any differently than Belgium: "These men are fundamentally exactly as hostile to America as to all other foreign powers. They look down with contempt upon Americans as well as upon all other foreigners. They regard it as their right to subdue these inferior beings."[242]

Accordingly, Roosevelt dismissed all the claims of his pro-German friends who argued that the United States should not join the Entente Powers just because Germany wanted to retain friendly relations or because it would not, supposedly, threaten U.S. interests in South or Central America

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[240] Roosevelt, *America and the World W*ar, p. 70, 200–201.
[241] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 20–22. Friedrich von Bernhardi (1849–1930), a German military strategist and an ultranationalist.
[242] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 232–233.

after it had beaten its enemies. Roosevelt noted to Dernburg that Germany cannot have it both ways: "When you entirely disregard your solemn agreement in one case, you have no right to expect that any attention whatever will be paid to similar statements in another case."[243]Certainly Germany would challenge the Monroe Doctrine, Roosevelt reasoned, if its national interest so demanded.

It has been now established that the two reasons why Theodore Roosevelt wanted the United States to join the Entente Powers in their fight against Germany were: 1) the invasion of Belgium and other related violations of the Hague conventions by Germany, and 2) Germany's autocratic form of government and his general distrust in the German ruling classes, whose predatory ideas of international morality would drive them, Roosevelt believed, to threaten the United States after the Entente Powers would be beaten.

3.1.3 Judging Germany by Its Conduct

During the early months of the war, Roosevelt made it clear in all of his writings, both private and public, that his condemnation of Germany was because of the invasion of Belgium – he stated so repeatedly, the accurate number of times would probably rise to the hundreds. It is peculiar that despite this fact some historians have been so eager to point out alternative motives for his behavior. It almost seems as if they refuse to take Roosevelt's word for it, but seek to question his sincerity instead. This seems odd especially when some the alternative explanations, introduced earlier in this chapter, do not seem to be that apt.

First of all, it is unlikely that Roosevelt, like Dalton suggests, would had started to see the war as German aggression because of the war plans, which included the invasion of New York, that Germany had made in case of a possible war with the United States. It is true that TR knew these plans down to details. He told Dernburg in a letter that "some of your highest men have spoken to me with entire frankness about such preparations."[244]

[243] TR to Dernburg, Dec 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 859–860.
[244] TR to Dernburg, Dec 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 857–858.

Yet to Roosevelt the plans were inadmissible as evidence. He did not mind them in the least; to the contrary, it was totally natural that they existed. He did not consider the plans in any way offensive nor as proof of ill will towards the United States. They merely proved that the Germans, unlike the Americans, had as a nation the strength to face facts and that the German military staff was living up to their duties to their fatherland. Of course Germany had made war plans if there was even a remote chance of an armed conflict with the United States. It would have been "childish" to object to the existence of these plans and they did not give any ground for complaint or suspicion.[245] "One feature of the admirable preparedness in which Germany and Japan stand so far above all other nations, and especially above our own," he admired, "is their careful consideration of hostilities with all possible antagonists."[246]

It is also doubtful that the alleged atrocities on individuals committed by the German troops in Belgium affected Roosevelt's view of Germans as much as Dalton suggests. As stated, Roosevelt met with the Belgian Commission on Atrocities on September 27, 1914. He expressed his sympathies, heard them, and, for the most part, did not believe them. Roosevelt wrote to the famous English writer Rudyard Kipling, a fellow imperialist and a friend, that he suspected that the commission reports had been exaggerated.[247]

What came to British propaganda about German atrocities, TR always listened to it with healthy skepticism. Whatever his daughter, Ethel, told Roosevelt about one-armed Belgian boys upon her arrival from France in December 1914, Roosevelt's letters from early 1915 suggest that he had not absorbed much of it. Even if TR believed the stories – and frankly he does not seem like the type – it is unlikely that they had an effect on his views since his letters do not reflect moral indignation over the alleged atrocities; in fact, he wrote almost nothing about them and seemed unenthusiastic to pursue the matter. Like Roosevelt had promised Münsterberg, he would "not be misled into a rush against Berlin." He had resisted the mass-paranoia of his anti-German inner circle while he was President and he resisted it still. Roosevelt, for example, wrote to Münsterberg in October 1914 that he regarded "the talk about the Kaiser 'wishing a blood-bath' as preposterous."[248] According to

[245] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 118–119; TR to Dernburg, Dec 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 857–858.
[246] Roosevelt, "The International Posse Comitatus," *NYT*, Nov 8, 1914, p. SM1.
[247] TR to Rudyard Kipling, Nov 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 830. See also Morison's footnote on the same page.
[248] TR to Münsterberg, Oct 3, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 823.

Link, "no person of consequence in the United States took the atrocity stories seriously" until the Bryce Commission in May 1915 published its *Report* on German atrocities in Belgium.[249]

In his writings Roosevelt stated again and again that he is "not concerned with the charges of individual atrocity," because it was not at that point possible "to sift from the charges, countercharges, and denials the exact facts."[250] To his British friends he stressed the importance of providing authentic evidence: what were needed were facts. In another letter to Kipling from November 1914, Roosevelt wrote about the alleged atrocities in Belgium:

"First-class men, personal friends of mine, who have followed German armies in Belgium, have told me that they have never been able to get statements from men who have actually seen the outrages committed or at whose expense they have been committed, not to speak of women and children. What is needed [to reach the world opinion] is authoritative statements, backed by official authority, about these outrages.... There must be something specific and absolutely authentic.... But general or vague or dubiously authentic statements or hearsay will not and ought not to do so."[251]

Obviously, these sentences were not written by a person who had lost his ability to be rational and had been taken over by anti-German hatred. To the contrary, since Roosevelt felt that he must very strongly condemn the German invasion of Belgium, it almost seems that he for this reason tried twice as hard to show all possible fairness towards Germany in all other questions.

Roosevelt, although pragmatic, really was an idealist deep down. He often stressed that the United States' guiding principle in foreign affairs should be fairness towards all and one of his ideals was to "strive to bring about the era when international wrongdoing shall be actively discouraged by civilized nations."[252] The United States could help bring about this era by being fair to each nation, by avoiding taking sides, and by promoting an international world league instead of joining shifty alliances which only helped to bring about the Great War. Hence, TR wanted the Americans to judge each nation only by its conduct. He declared: "We will neither favor nor condemn any other nation except on the ground of its behavior; that we feel as much good-will to the people of Germany or Austria as to the people of England, of France, or of Russia; that we speak for Belgium

[249] Link, p. 147–148. James Bryce (1838–1922), a British historian, statesman and diplomat; also leading members of the Liberal Party; served as England's Ambassador to the United States 1907–1913.
[250] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 25, 113.
[251] TR to Kipling, Nov 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 830–831. Also: TR to Spring Rice, Jan 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 883–884.
[252] TR to Friedrich von Stumm, Dec 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 857. Von Stumm was the director of the political division of the German Foreign Ministry.

only as we could speak for Holland or Switzerland or one of the Scandinavian... nations; and that if the circumstances as regards Belgium had been reversed we would have protested as emphatically against wrong action by England or France as we now protest against wrong action by Germany."[253]

Judging by its conduct, TR felt that Germany had to be stopped. In his opinion it would have been wiser for the United States to join the Allies and help them to beat Germany; better this than to lay idle, to let the Allies lose, and risk facing Germany, or an alliance of Germany and Japan, alone after the war. Again judging by its conduct, TR had speculated to Lee as early as August 1914 that Germany, if eventually beaten, would have to be reduced to international impotence to make sure that it would not become a threat to the world balance of power again. With 'international impotence' Roosevelt meant that the Allies should force Germany to give up its colonies and place restrictions on the size of its navy.[254] On the other hand, to show good faith towards Germany, Roosevelt did not want to go any further. Accordingly, he wrote to Münsterberg that "if the Allies should win and should then wish to dismember Germany and reduce her to impotence, whatever I could do would be done to prevent such a deed."[255]

Here, of course, one is again tempted to denounce Roosevelt as dishonest. First, he had written the English Lee that Germany should be "reduced to international impotence." Then, in his letter to the German-American Münsterberg Roosevelt promised that he would do everything he could to prevent the Allies from "reducing Germany to impotence." Was Roosevelt being two-faced and playing the pro-Germans for fools?

No, it was merely a sign that TR had not lost his cunning. In all likelihood, this was just mannerism of an experienced mediator, who was trying to make both parties feel that they will get what they want and that they will both walk away as winners. To Lee Roosevelt spoke about "reducing the Germans to impotence" and to Münsterberg about "preventing the English from reducing Germany to impotence," but with both phrases he meant exactly the same thing: Germany would have to give up its colonies and restrict the size of its navy, but it would not be dismembered. TR was working both parties to get them used to the idea.

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[253] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 110.
[254] TR to Lee, Aug 21, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 810–812; Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 195–196.
[255] TR to Münsterberg, Oct 3, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 824.

This theory is supported by Roosevelt's statements that suggest that he was genuinely of the opinion that a total smashing of Germany would be a mistake. "It would result," Roosevelt worried, "in the entire western world being speedily forced into a contest against Russia."[256] He was reacting to statements made by English, French and Russian extremists who in their lust for revenge had already demanded that Germany, after being beaten, should be shattered to the condition where it was after the Thirty Years War. Roosevelt wrote to Friedrich von Stumm, director of the political division of Germany's Foreign Ministry:

"I have also stated as emphatically as possible, having in view certain statements made in Russia, France and England, that I should regard any attempt to break up the German Empire or to reduce Germany to the condition in which it was prior to half a century ago as being a calamity to mankind.... If I had my way, I would actively interfere to prevent any one of these calamities. This I suppose would merely make you feel ill will towards me if Germany were victorious; but if she were not victorious and the attempt were made to destroy her, I should as stoutly champion her cause as I would now champion the cause of Belgium."[257]

Roosevelt denounced such designs publicly as well. "As for crushing Germany or crippling her and reducing her to political impotence, such an action would be a disaster to mankind," he wrote in *America and the World War*. "The Germans are not merely brothers; they are largely ourselves. The debt we owe to German blood is great; the debt we owe to German thought and to German example... is even greater. Every generous heart and every far-seeing mind throughout the world should rejoice in the existence of a stable, united, and powerful Germany, too strong to fear aggression and too just to be a source of fear to its neighbors."[258]

As shown, there is no sign of hatred, contempt or even dislike of Germany whatsoever in Roosevelt's writings during the early stages of the war. For some strange reason most American historians have failed to mention that even after the war started in July 1914 there was a considerably long period − almost a year − during which Roosevelt was not hostile to Germany – except that he wanted to make war on Germany, which, of course, to many is hostile enough. British historian Patrick Devlin, on the other hand, seems to recognize this as he concludes that Roosevelt in 1914 "was neither anti-British nor anti-German."[259] Perhaps American historians have simply regarded the matter as a curiosity of only minor importance, since TR nevertheless soon

[256] TR to Münsterberg, Nov 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 826.
[257] TR to von Stumm, Dec 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 857.
[258] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 72.
[259] Devlin, p. 336.

started to advocate war against Germany and eventually did become anti-German. But *it is important*. In fact, this German factor might be the very thing that has led historians to misinterpret TR's early responses to the war.

John Milton Cooper, Jr., seems to be the exception who, in his *The Warrior and the Priest*, does note that during the early months of the war Roosevelt was not anti-German. He observes that TR "took a surprisingly detached attitude toward the European belligerents."[260] But even Cooper, puzzled by Roosevelt's "initial relativism toward the belligerents," ends up drawing the wrong conclusions from the fact as it prompts him to argue that at the beginning Roosevelt did not condemn the German invasion of Belgium. From this erroneous conclusion Cooper arrives to another one by asserting that when TR finally did come out to criticize neutrality he distorted and shifted his earlier stands in envy of Wilson. Cooper supports his argument by quoting, once again, the *Outlook* article of August 22, 1914, in which TR wrote about the Belgian case: "I am not taking sides one way or the other.... When giants are engaged in a death wrestle... they are certain to trample on whoever gets in the way...."[261]

Cooper's theory leaves unexplained, however, that on the very same day, August 22, Roosevelt explicitly condemned the German invasion of Belgium in his already mentioned letter to Lee. The most receptive historian to these apparent contradictions in TR's private and public statements during the early months of the war has been William Henry Harbaugh. He concludes in *Power & Responsibility. The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt* (1956): "Roosevelt's early reactions to the coming of the war to Europe elude facile generalization, partly because he said one thing in private and, out of a commendable sense of propriety, another thing in public...."[262] Indeed, Roosevelt, for example, appended to his above-mentioned letter to Lee a postscript, which ended in his handwritten reminder: "Of course this letter is only for you and Ruth [Mrs. Lee]. I am an ex-President; and my public attitude must be one of entire impartiality – and above all no verbal or paper 'on to Berlin' business."[263]

Those historians who argue that Roosevelt at first supported neutrality have possibly failed to consider the German factor. In other words, TR did not have to be anti-German in order to be able

[260] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 277.
[261] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 277, 280–283.
[262] Harbaugh, p. 466.
[263] TR to Lee, Aug 22, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 812.

to make war on Germany. That Roosevelt was in 1914 willing to use military force against Germany did not make him think any less of the Germans than it made him think less of the British in 1902 in Alaska. Quite the opposite, Germany's ruthless, un-sentimental militarism was the very thing he most admired about it. TR simply had a disagreement with Germany over Belgium. Hence, he would meet the equally brave Germans on the battlefield, where he would settle his disputes with them; then, if still breathing, he would go home and tell his grandchildren great tales of heroism how he fought the Germans, the most admirable of all warriors. His desire to be fair to Germany together with the fact that he at first refrained from publicly criticizing Wilson (the evidentiary value of the *Outlook* articles has therefore been compromised) has led to the mistaken assumption that TR at first supported neutrality.

This theory is supported by the fact that "detachment" is not the right word to describe TR's feelings toward Germany during the early months of the war; "admiration" is more accurate. Roosevelt was in awe of the determination the Germans were displaying as a nation and songs of praise appear frequently in his writings as he felt an almost as dire need to defend Germany as to condemn it. To begin with, TR could not but help admire Germany's performance on the battlefield. Fighting on two frontiers simultaneously, TR applauded, Germany had in the west managed to take the fight to the territory of opponents who outnumbered it two to one in population and were even more superior in natural resources. And Germany did this with only a part of its forces, since it was simultaneously forced to keep large armies engaged with the Russians in the east. There, too, German troops had had major victories. "It could have been done," Roosevelt admired, "only by a masterful people guided by keen intelligence and inspired by an intensely patriotic spirit."[264]

In addition to showing understanding for Germany's motives, Roosevelt also rushed to the defense of his friend William II. "To paint the Kaiser as a devil," he thundered, "merely bent on gratifying a wicked thirst for bloodshed, is an absurdity, and worse than an absurdity. I believe that history will declare that the Kaiser acted in conformity with the feelings of the German people and as he sincerely believed the interests of his people demanded."[265] Roosevelt, who himself had never been able to accept the luxurious ease of life that his social status would had enabled him, paid tribute to the fact that the Kaiser's family showed that "they possess the qualities characteristic of the German people," for every each one of the Kaiser's own sons also went to war "to face every hardship and

[264] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 195.
[265] This and the following paragraph Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 66–67.

danger." Roosevelt also noted with great pleasure that young German men, before heading to the battlefields, married their sweethearts in the tens of thousands, which to Roosevelt symbolized the readiness of the Germans, when needed, to sacrifice everything for their country. These kinds of displays of domestic morality deeply delighted Roosevelt. German bravery inspired him to write:

"Not only is the German organization... highly creditable to Germany, but even more creditable is the spirit lying behind the organization. The men and women of Germany, from the highest to the lowest, have shown a splendid patriotism and abnegation of self. In reading of their attitude, it is impossible not to feel a thrill of admiration for the stern courage and lofty disinterestedness which this great crisis laid bare in the souls of the people. I most earnestly hope that we Americans, if ever the need may arise, will show similar qualities."[266]

In his articles Roosevelt paid similar respect to the courage of the English, the French, and the Russians,[267] but this paled in comparison with his praise of the Germans. The fact that Roosevelt did not seem to blame Germany for the war, did not denounce the Kaiser and, on the top of that, even idolized the German soldier, was too much for some Englishmen and Frenchmen. Roosevelt wrote much amused to Münsterberg, who had several times complained the anti-German nature of TR's articles, that "[y]ou may be amused to know that I have received very violent letters of personal attacks from both Englishmen and Frenchmen on the ground of the pro-German character of my articles!"[268]

The British John St. Loe Strachey, Roosevelt's friend and the powerful editor of the London *Spectator*, had written in his article about Roosevelt's *America and the World War* that Roosevelt "still is, from many points of view, in very strong sympathy with Germany and the Germans." Strachey also regretted that the book was deficient in warmth towards England and concluded "that in our hour of need we should have expected a better understanding." Roosevelt in his polite letter to Strachey protested this assessment by pointing out – rightly – that in his book he had emphatically stated that England was right and that his sympathies were with the Allies. Roosevelt added, however, that he had expected that Englishmen might get sore at him for his desire to be just to Germany. He continued: "I thought it very unwise to indulge in hysterics in the matter. I am trying to look at things as dispassionately as possible. I have more close and warm personal friends

[266] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 66–67.
[267] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 67–69.
[268] TR to Münsterberg, Nov 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 827. See also, Roosevelt, "The International Posse Comitatus," *NYT*, Nov 8, 1914, p. SM1.

in England than anywhere else outside of America; but next to England I have these close and warm personal friends in Germany."[269]

Strachey's confusion illustrates that during the first months of the war TR performed a fascinating balancing act that has confused not only historians, but was misunderstood even by his own friends at the time. To quote Cooper, Roosevelt had to reconcile "conflicting strains of thought and emotion."[270] On the one hand, his sense of international morality and his concern for national security were ordering him to condemn the invasion of Belgium and to dedicate himself to fighting Germany. "I do not and cannot accept and I never shall accept," he wrote in December 1914, "the German theory of international morality as shown by Germany's action towards Belgium."[271]

On the other hand, Roosevelt's intense admiration for the German organization and the German spirit as well as his feeling of togetherness with the Germans made it more complicated than that. Had there been no neutrality policy, TR could have gone to war to fight the Germans and there would have been no time to write pamphlets, but now he faced a dilemma: how could he condemn German militarism without condemning himself? In fact, Roosevelt solved the problem by repeating a familiar pattern; just like at Algeciras, he sided with the Entente on the most crucial point, but defended the Germans in everything else. This dispassionate manner in which Roosevelt reacted to the war has led historians astray to argue that Roosevelt at first did not condemn the German invasion of Belgium and supported Wilson's neutrality policy. But the claim is incredible: Roosevelt's letter of September 1911 to Lodge, introduced in Chapter 2, proves that he had had years of time to think how to respond if Germany were to invade Belgium.

In December 22, 1914, Roosevelt wrote Mrs. Ralph Sanger a letter, which neatly compressed his position. In this letter Roosevelt refused to sign an appeal in which he would had proclaimed himself Anglo-American and a proponent of motherland England's cause. Roosevelt replied that England is not his motherland any more than Germany is his fatherland. An American should treat each nation on its conduct, no matter where his ancestors came from. Roosevelt sent a copy of this refusal letter also to his German-American friend Münsterberg, writing in the end: "At any rate, I try to play fair!"[272] This time it just was not good enough for the Germans.

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[269] TR to Strachey, Feb 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 897–898. See also Morison's footnote on the same pages.
[270] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 277.
[271] TR to Dernburg, Dec 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 860.
[272] TR to Mrs. Ralph Sanger, Dec 22, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 868. Mrs. Sanger was a member of the League of Allies, a relief foundation, which helped countries that were affiliated with the Entente Powers.

3.2 THE PERSONAL TRAGEDY OF LOSING FRIENDS

Shortly after Theodore Roosevelt made his disapproval of the German invasion of Belgium known in the *New York Times* on September 27, 1914, the *Cologne Gazette* in Germany made a vicious attack on Roosevelt's person, characterizing him as an egoistic man, who lacked "a full insight into European affairs." Without a doubt, in an autocratic state a newspaper could have made such a statement only with the approval of the high command, so it must be treated as an announcement that the German government was breaking its ties with Roosevelt. Roosevelt refused to mind much – egoistic as he was, it was rather typical of him to treat his critics as too insignificant to touch him.[273]

But what did the war mean to Roosevelt's personal relationships with his pro-German friends? To confine this thesis only to an examination of TR's relationship with the German government would provide the reader with an incomplete picture that would suggest only an impersonal and detached conflict of ideologies and values. It would downplay the serious effects that the war had on Roosevelt personally. Without bringing in the personal drama, it is impossible to get a taste of the heat and the passion of the war years. Even in the neutral United States the war was for many an all-inclusive experience, which rocked the foundations of their everyday lives and destroyed many things they cherished. This was true especially of those 8.3 million Americans who had either been born in Germany or had one or both parents born in Germany according to the 1910 census.[274]

The German-Americans, with whom Roosevelt had closely associated before the Great War, add another dimension to this thesis. But since their conflict with Roosevelt did not reach its climax until in 1916–1917, the German-American question will be examined more fully later in Chapter 5. In this chapter the focus will be only on Roosevelt's personal relations with individual Germans or German-Americans during the early months of the war.

To provide the reader with some background, it must be noted at this point that for the German-Americans the Great War was nothing short of a nightmare. They had sworn political allegiance to

[273] TR to Spring-Rice, Oct 3, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 821.
[274] O'Connor, Richard, *The German-Americans. An Informal History*, Boston, 1968, p. 377.

the American flag, yet at the same time they still felt an emotional bond to Germany.[275] What should they do if the United States decided to join the Allies and declared war on Germany? Faced with this almost impossible choice, the German-Americans preferred not to choose at all. Accordingly, they became perhaps the loudest champions of American neutrality and fought tooth and nail all those Americans who were trying to reason that the United States should join the war.

Obviously, everything was set for the most profound conflict imaginable between Roosevelt and the German-Americans. Earlier in this chapter it has been observed how Roosevelt, drawing from his experiences of Germany, had carefully and objectively studied the war situation, and it did not take him long to become convinced that the United States had to fight Germany. That TR was capable of judging Germany dispassionately has been established, but it only highlights the fact that it was clearly much harder for him to maintain that same calm with the German-Americans. This reflects the fact that instead of foreigners he was now dealing with his fellow Americans, and the fight was not only about the war. It was a clash of conflicting views of what did it meant to be a good American: consequently, things got more personal and led to a brawl between Roosevelt and some of his German-American friends. In order for us to understand all the issues involved in this gigantic disagreement, it is necessary to glance at the history of Germans in America before we proceed to the war years.

3.2.1 German-Americans: A Brief History

The Germans were the first continental Europeans to settle in America in large numbers, arriving in the seventeenth century a generation or two after the English, the Irish, and the Scots. From the start, they were most welcomed, as they soon impressed their Anglo-Saxon neighbors with their work ethic, honesty, and orderliness. The Americanization of individual Germans, if separated from other Germans, presented little problems. If, on the other hand, grouped together to a German settlement, they became stubbornly independent and their pride in their own culture and language made them resist assimilation – a characteristic that would later become their doom.[276]

[275] O'Connor, p. 377.
[276] O'Connor, p. 5, 20–21.

After the Napoleonic wars the Germans started to pour in. Their number soared already during the 1830's, when over 150,000 Germans migrated to the United States, but that pales in comparison with the 1.7 million Germans that came during the 1850's and 1860's. Mass migration from Germany to the United States was distinctly a mid-nineteenth century phenomenon as a total of five million Germans streamed to the United States between 1840 and 1890.[277] They turned out to be one of capitalist America's best investments ever: the German-Americans have contributed most through their intelligence and plain hard work by making the United States the world leader in agriculture, industry, and science.[278]

The growing amount of Germans in the United States gave birth to German dreams of establishing New Germanies in America by overwhelming a certain area with a large number of German immigrants within a short period of time; this would result, it was hoped, in states that would be German in language, in culture, and in organization. The German-American assertion was that their culture was superior to Anglo-Saxon culture and, therefore, German language, German press, and German education – their *Deutschtum* – in the United States should be preserved. Serious attempts were well under way in Missouri in the 1830's, in Texas in the 1840's and in Wisconsin in the 1850's, but they were made a bit too late, at a time when the United States had already become a nation. But the important consequence of these failed attempts to found geographically and politically exclusive New Germanies was that they strengthened the desire of the German immigrants to remain exclusive *culturally* and *socially*. This choice of separatism started the era of "hyphenated Americans." The term referred to Americans who emphasized their country of origin: instead of being simply Americans, the hyphenated Americans insisted on adding a prefix and a hyphen in front of the word, becoming German-Americans, Irish-Americans and so on.[279]

A particularly important group in German-American history was the so called Forty-Eighters – political exiles, who had fled Germany after the failed revolutions of 1848. Their arrival in the United States occasioned the rise of the Know-Nothings, a violent Nativist movement of the 1850's, which did not stop at nothing to get Congress to pass anti-immigrant legislation. The Forty-Eighters arranged themselves against the Know-Nothings in defense of German-American rights, awakened German-Americans to political consciousness and taught them the value of voting in a bloc. In the

[277] Hawgood, John A., *The Tragedy of German-America. The Germans in the United States of America during the Nineteenth Century – and Aftter*, New York, 1940, p. 57–58, 76–78; O'Connor, p. 67.
[278] Hawgood, p. 22–27, 30–31; O'Connor, p. 5–7.
[279] Hawgood, p. 93–104, 195, 200, 232; O'Connor, p. 67–74.

presidential elections of 1860 German-Americans voted in significant numbers for the abolitionist, anti-Nativist Republican, Abraham Lincoln. To the German-Americans the significance of this lay in that for the first time the heterogeneous German stock – representing different religions and different German states – had become politically united and successfully checked the Nativist movement, which perished as a result of the Civil War. They accomplished this, however, as German-Americans, not as Americans, which further strengthened their desire to herd themselves into what historian John Hawgood has called a "mental reservation known as German-America."[280]

Then, as has been already stated in Chapter 2, adoration of all things German became a fashion among the American elite. "Americans," historian Richard O'Connor concludes, "have always been overimpressed by success,"[281] and Germany, emerging from the Franco-Prussian War strong and united, was the success story of the late nineteenth century. Americans, and especially Roosevelt, wanted to adopt as much of it as possible, which resulted, for example, in the reorganizing of the whole American school system from kindergarten to graduate school after the German model.[282]

The admiration for Germany contributed to the impression that the German-Americans came from a superior stock. A questionnaire sent to state governors, for example, showed that a majority of them preferred German immigrants to all other stocks, including the English. And why not? The French and the Russian-Jews might have distinguished themselves in the arts, but it was men of German extraction like Rockefeller, Chrysler, Studebaker, and Heinz that made things work and flourish in America. One indicator of German-American success was that the annual average income of the German-born was 613$, which was even higher than the average income of the native-born.[283]

Many German-Americans accepted all too eagerly the idea of their own superiority, and they let it show. The large German-language press – in the 1890's there were nearly 800 German-language newspapers in the United States – in particular trumpeted the excellence of the German race. Strongly in the hands of German-America's Teutonized element, the German-American press was of all the foreign-language newspapers by far the most snobbish and the most critical of the American customs. Simultaneously, Anglophilia and resentment of the self-satisfied German stock was gaining momentum among Anglo-Americans. To them nothing came to symbolize the

[280] Luebke, Frederick C., *Bonds of Loyalty. German-Americans and World War I*, Chicago, 1974, p. 32; O'Connor, p. 67–68; Hawgood, p. 21–22, 227–237, 251, 267.
[281] O'Connor, p. 269.
[282] Luebke, p. 58–59; O'Connor, p. 268–269, 274.
[283] O'Connor, p. 269, 366–368; Luebke, p. 65–66.

appalling aspects of German ethnocentrism quite as much as the National German-American Alliance, which sought to "revitalize the German national sentiment" in the United States, but its punch-line, "Germans are a race of rulers," did not help in winning over the hearts and minds of the Americans. Hawgood asserts that two Germanies were born in 1871, Imperial Germany and German-America: "The inhabitants of the one considered themselves as better than all other Europeans and the inhabitants of the other thought that they were better than all other Americans."[284]

Of course, not all German immigrants wanted to become incorporated into German-America. Many chose to become Americans and some of them even tried to warn their fellow Americans of German origin on the dangers of cultural separatism. Nevertheless, of all the Germans that migrated to the United States after the Civil War, German-America absorbed the majority. When World War I broke out, President Wilson wanted the United States to show the world some self-possession also because he was genuinely worried that there would be internal disorder. No one quite knew how much of German and how much of American there was in the mixture that made a German-American, but New York in any case had about 700,000 of them and Chicago about 500,000 – no wonder Wilson was worried.[285]

It cannot be stressed enough, however, that the German-Americans were good citizens and an overwhelming majority of them were politically loyal to the United States. German-America was nothing like a transplanted Imperial Germany. It was a new colonial culture, which was emotionally bonded to the old *Vaterland*, but did not share all the same values. Its aim was to defend and to promote *Deutschtum* in America, to preserve German culture as the unchallenged counter-culture to the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture, and to guide the United States closer to Germany from the Anglo-French orbit. German-America was not aggressive nor propagandist. German-Americans did not wish to force German ways on other Americans – that would have been just another form of Nativism, which they abhorred. In many ways, the German-Americans comprehended the idea of America far better than the oppressive Anglo-Saxons. To the German-Americans, America was a land of freedom and a pluralistic society, where everyone was entitled to the free exercise of their own culture without being called a non-desirable citizen.[286] But they were gravely mistaken.

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[284] Hawgood, p. 265; O'Connor, p. 268–269, 348, 360–361; Luebke, p. 43–45.
[285] Cooper, p. 273, Hawgood, p. 81, 85–87, 257, 267.
[286] Hawgood, 257, 267; Luebke, p. 28, 50–51; O'Connor, p. 275.

3.2.2 Holding on to Pro-German Friends

In her, *Theodore Roosevelt: a Strenuous Life*, Kathleen Dalton raises one more reason hitherto unmentioned to explain the passion with which Roosevelt denounced all pro-Germans during World War I. According to Dalton, it "had a great deal to do with his desire to distance himself from his former closeness to German-American intellectuals and from his earlier praise for the German welfare state."[287]

Yet during the early months of the war Roosevelt most definitely did not distance himself from his German or his German-American friends. Quite the opposite, even to his anti-German British and American friends he still assured his admiration of and his sense of solidarity with Germans. Roosevelt wrote to Arthur Lee in August 1914:

"As for the Germans, I have a very real and sincere liking and respect for them individually. In all essentials they are like ourselves – indeed so far as Americans are concerned they are largely ourselves, for we have immense German strain in our blood, and I for instance number among my ancestors Germans as well as Englishmen, although they are outnumbered by my Dutch and Scotch ancestors. I can honestly say that I have not one particle of feeling except of respect and kindly regard for the German people as such."[288]

During the first year of the war, Roosevelt was engaged in an active correspondence with a number of Germans and German-Americans, including, Hugo Münsterberg, George Viereck, Albert Apponyi (Hungarian), Edmund Robert Otto von Mach, Bernhard Dernburg, and Friedrich von Stumm; all of them pro-German. Roosevelt's willingness to stay with his German-American friends even after July 1914 was understandable knowing his opinion of them: "On the whole, I think that of all the elements that have come here [the United States] during the past century the Germans have on the average represented the highest type."[289]

Roosevelt also openly met with pro-Germans during World War I. In his letter of December 2, 1914, he wrote von Stumm: "Dernburg took dinner with me the other evening and Kuno Meyer takes lunch with me next Sunday." To give grounds for these meetings TR mentioned that he was

[287] Dalton, p. 443–444.
[288] TR to Lee, Aug 21, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 810.
[289] TR to von Mach, Nov 7, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 834.

doing his best "to keep in touch with the German side of the case."[290] Certainly this does not sound like Roosevelt was distancing himself from the pro-Germans. In addition, he defended Münsterberg, when a prospective benefactor had allegedly threatened to cut out of his will a bequest of $10,000,000 to Harvard unless the pro-German Professor Münsterberg was fired. Münsterberg offered his resignation, but Harvard, supported by Roosevelt, requested him to withdraw it. Eventually, Münsterberg did just so. At least in late 1914 Roosevelt's dedication to free speech and his loyalty to his friends were, then, stronger than his fear of getting associated with a German-American.[291]

Not only did Roosevelt try to stay in touch with his pro-German friends, but he also seemed to sincerely regret that he had to alienate them with his opinions. In his letter to von Stumm he wrote that "I wish I could see you both [von Stumm and his wife], although I do not suppose you would care to see me at present."[292] This of course illustrates how World War I signified a great personal loss to Roosevelt. His pro-German friends were deserting him, not the other way around. He, for example, made his case for Belgium in his letter to his Hungarian friend, Albert Apponyi, in March 1915 and ended up by saying: "You will not be satisfied with this letter; but, believe me, I am as staunchly as ever your friend and admirer and the friend and admirer of your people."[293] Hence, it would seem that at least in the beginning of the war it was Roosevelt who tried with every means possible to hold on to these friendships.

Roosevelt also tried to soothe his pro-German friends in many ways. He did everything he could to convince them that he opposed Germany only because of its behavior towards Belgium – he was in no way influenced, he assured, by prejudice. TR stressed that he had reached his decision to oppose Germany by following a principle – judge each country by its conduct – which would in turn make him a stout champion of Germany's cause, if Germany were wronged by France, England, or Russia.[294] To make his German friends feel better, TR reminded that every country had been wrong at some point in their history. He enumerated breaches of international morality committed in the past by England and France. He even made a rare confession of guilt by digging up some dirt from

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[290] TR to von Stumm, Dec 2, 1914; *Letter*s, vol. 7, p. 855. Kuno Meyer, a German professor of Celtic at the University of Liverpool.
[291] TR to Münsterberg, Nov 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 826–827. See Morison's footnote on the same pages.
[292] TR to von Stumm, Dec 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 855.
[293] TR to Apponyi, Mar 5, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 907.
[294] Roosevelt, "The International Posse Comitatus," *NYT*, Nov 8, 1914, p. SM1; TR to von Mach, Nov 7, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 834; TR to von Stumm, Dec 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 855–856.

the past of his own country, admitting that "the United States behaved in this way toward Spain in connection with Florida a century ago." Roosevelt reminded, however, that the Hague conferences were supposed to mark a step forward: the whole idea of them had been to prevent such wrongs from occurring again.[295]

Roosevelt further tried to communicate to his German friends that he honored their convictions. These were deeply patriotic men, he realized, and even if he was of the opinion that it was a citizen's duty to try to make his country behave right, it was also his duty to defend it even when it was wrong. "If I were a German," he confessed, "I should now be fighting for Germany...."[296]

All of this illustrates how strongly Roosevelt felt about Belgium. His convictions forced him to follow a course of action which he knew would destroy many friendships that were dear to him. He had regrets over this, but he did not hesitate. Accordingly, Roosevelt wrote to Rudyard Kipling: "I have a very genuine respect and admiration for the Germans, and I alienate them with great reluctance, and only because I feel that it is my imperative duty to follow the course I am following, with no more regard to their feelings than to its effect upon me personally."[297] Roosevelt frequently admitted as much in public, too. He wrote in *America and the World War*: "It has been a matter of very real regret to me to have speak in the way I have felt obliged to speak as to German wrong-doing in Belgium, because so many of my friends, not only Germans, but Americans of German birth and even Americans of German descent, have felt aggrieved at my position."[298]

[295] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 20–21.
[296] TR to von Stumm, Dec 2, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 856.
[297] TR to Kipling, Nov 4, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 830.
[298] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 232.

3.2.3 Losing Temper with Bad Citizens

To Roosevelt's German-American friends, his assurances of friendship must have seemed grotesque, however, given that Roosevelt at the same time proceeded to take action that deeply offended them. Indeed, TR quickly grew to be very critical of all pro-German Americans, even more critical than of Germany. The difference was that the Germans, although they had become a "menace to civilization," were at least showing great patriotism. Only a fool did not realize, however, that Germany, if victorious, would become a threat to the United States, too. Hence, in TR's opinion all Americans who acted in the interest of Germany – that is, who supported neutrality – were working against the best interests of the United States and were therefore being unpatriotic. Accordingly, Roosevelt asked Münsterberg "frankly between ourselves:"

"Do you not believe that if Germany won in this war, smashed the English Fleet and destroyed the British Empire, within a year or two she would insist upon taking the dominant position in South and Central America...? I believe so. Indeed I know so. For the great Germans with whom I have talked, when once we could talk intimately, accepted this view with a frankness that bordered on the cynical...."[299]

Furthermore, Roosevelt did not like the hyphen.[300] He felt the same way as the Kaiser who had once remarked that he understood who Germans were and who Americans were, but he had no patience of people who claimed themselves German-Americans. To TR it seemed that there should be no German-Americans or Irish-Americans, but only Americans of equal status. This is why he disapproved of discrimination against any racial group in America. This is why he refused to sign an appeal in which he would have announced himself Anglo-American. He stated: "We have a right to ask all of these immigrants and the sons of these immigrants that they become Americans and nothing else; but we have no right to ask that they become transplanted or second-rate Englishmen."[301]

But Roosevelt's biggest objection to the hyphen was that it suggested divided political allegiance, and during the Great War the German-Americans, in his opinion, indisputably demonstrated that

[299] TR to Münsterberg, Oct 3, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 823.
[300] Roosevelt's views on hyphenism will be examined more fully in Chapter 5.
[301] TR to Mrs. Sanger, Dec 22, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 867–868.

they suffered from dual loyalties. TR did not approve of American citizens, who were demanding to put a stop to the trade of contraband (which would benefit Germany) or forming organizations to force the United States into alliance with Germany simply because their own ancestors came from Germany. All Americans should judge other nations only by their conduct and, if they desired to be good citizens, they should regard all international matters "solely from the standpoint of the interest of the United States."[302] Incidentally, during the Great War this meant that every American should sympathize with the Entente Powers.

Obviously, then, the conflict between Roosevelt and the German-Americans was fast becoming irreconcilable. TR could not stand the idea that there were Americans, who were doing everything they could to keep the United States out of the war and to secure an immediate truce, which would leave Belgium a part of the German Empire. Roosevelt could not allow German-Americans to turn the United States into an instrument in the interests of Germany; therefore, he started to deal with them "without gloves."[303]

This explains Roosevelt's harsher attitude towards the German-Americans than towards Germany. If Germany violated the rights of Belgium for reasons related to national self-interest, that was one matter. But if German-Americans desired to create internal disorder and endanger America's vital national interests in order to be loyal to Germany, that was wholly another matter: it was even more objectionable than what the Germans were doing in Belgium.

For this reason, Roosevelt had difficulties in maintaining a dispassionate approach to the German-American question, and German allusions to German-American disloyalty were always guaranteed to provoke a strong reaction from him. When Roosevelt in May 1915 received from his friend a copy of a letter in which a German diplomat made such allusions, he totally lost his temper. Whatever the letter's actual contents, it made his "blood boil" to see how Americans were regarded. The letter's allusions to the huge anti-Allied German-Irish element in the United States made Roosevelt wrote back to his friend that if he was still President he would warn the German diplomat

[302] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 232; TR to Mrs. Sanger, Dec 22, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 867–868; TR to Grey, Jan 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 880.
[303] Roosevelt, *America and the World War*, p. 235; TR to Strachey, Feb 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 897; TR to Lodge, Feb 18, 1915; *Correspondence of TR and Lodge, 1884–1918*, vol. 2, p. 456–457.

that "we would hang any man who raised his little finger to, as he says it, 'put the Union to a dangerous test,' and that I would hang him if he instigated any such movement...."[304]

The emotions were spilling over on the German-American side, too, leading in March 1915 to a brawl between Roosevelt and his German-American friend, George Viereck. Viereck had written Roosevelt a heated letter in which he accused the ex-President of being unfair to Germany and blamed him for his failure to give any attention to the facts produced on the German side of the case. He was referring to the fact that Belgium had inquired from London before the war – as it had felt threatened by Germany – whether it could count on British protection in case of a German attack. The Germans had offered this communication as "evidence" that Belgium was not truly neutral but instead would have allowed England and France to use its territory to attack Germany.

Finally, Viereck demanded to know why TR had not "put in a good word for his friend the Kaiser." The letter included a threat that the Germans would not forget "the attitude of their fair-weather friends on either side of the ocean." Roosevelt's secretary informed Viereck that the tone of the letter had been such that Roosevelt did not wish to answer it. To this Viereck protested that apparently, then, he was not entitled to speak to his old friend frankly.

To this Roosevelt replied and, in turn, spoke frankly. He noted that if Viereck would have bothered to read his book, *America and the World War*, he would have found out that his accusations were groundless. After that Roosevelt dismissed Viereck's "facts" by concluding that the original recognition of guilt by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg had been manly, but the later attempts to justify German action by blackening Belgium were ignoble. Roosevelt concluded: "Apparently you regard it as fair-weather friendship to feel good will toward a nation and yet to condemn that nation when it is guilty of iniquity. Such an attitude on your part is of course unutterably silly; and if not silly, it would be unutterably base."

Most revealing is the last paragraph of the letter in which Roosevelt made it clear that he could accept no divided allegiance by American citizens. "You have made it evident that your whole heart is with the country of your preference, Germany, and not with the country of your adoption, the United States. Under such circumstances you are not a good citizen here. But neither are you a good

[304] TR to John Callan O'Laughlin, May 6, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 921–922. O'Laughlin (1873–1949) was a journalist and the publisher of *The Army and Navy Journal*.

citizen of Germany. You should go home to Germany at once; abandon your American citizenship, if, as I understand, you possess it; and serve in the army, if you are able, or, if not, in any other position in which you can be useful." The exchange of angry letters continued for a few weeks, but in early April Viereck returned Roosevelt's last letter, adding that "it is unfit to be kept in his files." [305] After this, Roosevelt's exchange of letters with German-Americans became rather scarce.

[305] TR to George Sylvester Viereck, Mar 15, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 910–911. Viereck (1884–1962) was a German-American poet, writer, and propagandist. Later, during and after World War II, he raised a lot of controversy in the United States by being a Nazi sympathiser.

4. RETURN OF THE HUNS, 1915–1916

The years 1915–1916 further darkened Theodore Roosevelt's image of the Kaiser's Germany. The war in Europe was growing more brutal and, worst of all, it was spreading, creating internal disorder even in the United States. Since Roosevelt felt that the main responsibility for both of these developments belonged to Germany, he intensified his criticism of the Germans. Despite the sharper tone, however, his basic analysis of Germany did not change. The Germans were still an admirable nation; if the wrongs done to Belgium were redressed and Germany was to go through a regime change, Roosevelt would once again harbour only the friendliest feelings towards Germany.

The same did not apply to that "infernal skunk in the White House,"[306] President Wilson. Despite the increasing amount of violations of the rights of the United States as a neutral power by the belligerents, Wilson kept the country out of the war and proclaimed himself of being "too proud to fight."[307] This signalled to Roosevelt that Wilson either did not have the right stuff in him to meet the situation or then he was trying to secure himself a second term in the White House; either way, he was a dishonest coward and unfit to be President. Indeed, the presidential elections awaited in November 1916, which needs to be kept in mind when trying to track down Roosevelt's motives for his actions during 1915–1916.

On the battlefields of Europe, the Russians, after being badly beaten at Tannenberg in late August 1914, continued to take serious losses from the Germans in the east. Nevertheless, the Russians persisted with their offensive, preventing Germany from detaching troops to the western frontier where reinforcements would had been much needed.[308] In the west, the German drive towards Paris had been stopped in the battle of Marne in September 1914. During the following months, the Germans were forced to a standstill by the French and the British along the whole length of the western frontier. To the great annoyance of the Germans, their offensive had run out of steam just

[306] TR to Kermit Roosevelt, Aug 28, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 963. Kermit was TR's second oldest son.
[307] Painter, p. 301.
[308] Marshall, S.L.A., *World War 1*, New York, 1971, p. 95–103, 155–156.

twenty-five miles outside of Paris. By 1915 both of the warring parties had dug in: the long and numbing trench warfare for which the western frontier became so famous had begun.[309]

General Erich von Falkenhayn, who replaced Helmut von Moltke as the German Army Chief of Staff after the defeat in Marne, understood that the western frontier had become so deadlocked that a decisive breakthrough was for the moment impossible.[310] In this situation the German high command took a calculated risk: they estimated that the Germans were so well trenched in the west that they could hold on to their positions with fewer troops and started detaching divisions to the east. The plan now was to beat Russia with Germany's superior firepower as quickly as possible and then to move all the troops to the west. This turned the tide in the east: by the summer of 1915, the Russians were permanently on retreat.[311]

In the beginning, Roosevelt had given the Central Powers only a slim chance of victory, but he soon admitted that he had underestimated the Germans. As a consequence, in 1915−1916 Roosevelt felt even more strongly than in 1914 that the United States should immediately join the Allies. He was afraid that the German war success, especially with Wilson working behind the scenes to bring about peace, would make the Entente Powers yield to a truce that would leave Belgium under German rule. Roosevelt gave Arthur Lee the following overall analysis of the war situation in June 1916:

"... I most freely admit that two years ago I would have laughed at anyone who had told me that after twenty-two months of such warfare the military and economic vitality of the Central Powers would have been so little impaired as is now the case. There is evidence that they are steadily growing more exhausted in men and resources; and you have more of both to draw on yet in England; and an even greater number of men to draw on in Russia. But at present the Germans are on the whole victorious. The Central Powers have beaten off attacks, and are occupying great stretches of French and Russian territory; not to speak of practically all of Serbia and Belgium. I entirely agree with you that the chief danger is lest the pressure on money, material, blood and nerves may give such strength to the peace element among the Allies, as to bring about a premature and disastrous end to the war; an end which would mean that it would all have to be fought over again in a few years, and perhaps under far more disadvantageous conditions."[312]

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[309] Gilbert, Martin, *The First World War. A Complete History*, New York, 1994, p. 72; King, Jere Clemens, *The First World War*, London, 1972, p. 22; Marshall, p. 123, 135–138.
[310] Marshall, p. 107, 197–199.
[311] Gilbert, p. 179–180; Marshall, p. 212, 214–221.
[312] TR to Lee, Jun 7, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1053.

4.1 RUNNING OUT OF SYMPATHY

4.1.1 The Events Leading to Lusitania

During 1915 all hope of a quick war faded. While the warfare on the European continent continued with fierceness unprecedented in the history of mankind, the war on the seas had grown more intense, too. As far as the United States was concerned, the situation developing on the seas had much more significance.

The war on the seas was about war supplies. As the armies in Europe became deadlocked in their trenches, the importance of supply grew significantly. Both of the warring factions needed munitions for their troops and food both for their troops and their civilian populace. Already in August 1914 a German industrialist Walther Rathenau had pointed out to the General War Department in Berlin that Germany had only a "limited number of months" supply of indispensable war materials such as metals, chemicals, jute, wool, rubber and cotton. To fix this problem, Rathenau volunteered to organize and lead a department for the manufacture and purchase of war materials.[313]

Rathenau and Germany had one really big problem, though: England controlled the seas.[314] When it became apparent that the Great War would not be a short one, Germany found itself in an awkward position. American markets were open to all belligerents – in accordance with the principle of total neutrality – but Germany had great difficulties in getting its deliveries through. British ships patrolled the Atlantic and were effectively seizing shipments on their way to Germany. According to Roosevelt's estimate, even 90 to 95 per cent of the U.S. trade flowed to the Allies[315] – this, Link

[313] Gilbert, p. 39.
[314] Marshall, p. 22, 51.
[315] TR to Edward Grey, Jan 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 879–880; TR to Strachey, Feb 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 898; Marshall, p. 160–161. Sir Edward Grey (1862–1933), British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. To date, Grey is the longest serving Foreign Minister in British history (1892–1895 and 1905–1916).

confirms, "was a natural consequence of the British control of the seas and was in no respect the outcome of American sentiments."[316]

Economically, the United States was the biggest beneficiary of the war – to put it bluntly, the more Europe suffered, the more America prospered.[317] Still, the seizures of neutral American vessels by the British navy in search for contraband hurt U.S. foreign trade considerably, causing friction between Washington and London. Already in December 1914 President Wilson had protested against the British detention of American ships. In addition to it being a violation of the United States' rights, Wilson also disapproved on moral grounds the way how Great Britain used its fleet to strangle Germany's economy. Undeterred, Great Britain placed all goods on its contraband list on February 2, 1915; in other words, the British navy would no longer allow neutral vessels carrying foodstuffs to proceed to Germany.[318]

Other disputes between the United States and Britain surfaced, too. As the Wilson administration wanted to meet the economic needs of the war situation, it sought to pass in Congress a ship purchase bill, which would have allowed it to purchase a governmentally owned and operated shipping line. The only available ships it could purchase, however, were the numerous German ships that were lying in American harbours, hemmed in there by the British navy. Understandably, England was not thrilled about a bill that would have helped Germany financially.

Could these interned German ships, then, be purchased by American citizens or by corporations? A freighter called *Dacia* had been sold to Edward Breitung, a German-American banker, who was acting for the German government and was planning to buy all the German vessels in the United States if the State Department did not intervene in the purchase of *Dacia*. This question of transferring German ships to American registry infuriated England, which threatened to seize all of these ships even if they did sail under the American flag – when *Dacia* finally sailed, however, the British wisely asked for the French to seize it in order to avoid a conflict with the United States.[319]

[316] Link, p. 172.
[317] Gilbert, p. 109; Marshall, p. 160.
[318] King, Chronology, p. x; Link, p. 154; Marshall, p. 161, 209.
[319] Link, p. 152–156.

The sudden deterioration of Anglo-American relations worried Roosevelt. He was afraid that the British government, annoyed by the lack of support and sympathy from the United States, might do something rash that could bring the two nations to a brink of an armed conflict, which would be exactly what Germany wanted. To Roosevelt this catastrophic turn of events seemed possible, for he had absolutely no faith in Wilson's ability to control heated international situations. TR wrote about Wilson that it is often pacifists "who, halting and stumbling and not knowing whither they are going, finally drift helplessly into a war, which they have rendered inevitable, without the slightest idea that they were doing so."[320]

Privately and on his own initiative, Roosevelt decided to mediate. He corresponded with Sir Edward Grey, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and urged the British to be patient with Wilson. He stressed that there was no need for England to molest American vessels, because "our trade, under existing circumstances, is of vastly more service to you and France than to Germany." Roosevelt warned that by taking the advantage of its sea dominance to the limit, Britain might risk it. If agitated strongly enough, Wilson would only have to respond to the strong German-American and pacifist demand of putting a stop to all exportation of contraband and Britain's advantage would be wiped out altogether.[321] "From your standpoint", TR reminded the British conservative journalist, John St. Loe Strachey, "it is infinitely more important that you should continue to get foodstuffs, munitions and the like from America than that you should stop a few cargoes going into Germany."[322]

Meanwhile, Germany was running out of options. Berlin had loudly protested against the single-track supplying of the Allied camp only, claiming a breach of neutrality on America's part, but, in point of law, the claim was unsustainable. The fact that some British ships flew the Stars and Stripes, pretending to be American ships, further decreased Germany's tolerance toward American neutrality.[323] Unable to alter the disadvantageous situation otherwise, Germany resorted to its U-boats and declared that, starting from February 18, 1915, the waters around the British Isles would be considered a combat zone where all ships, including neutral vessels due to the British misuse of

[320] TR to Grey, Jan 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 879.
[321] TR to Grey, Jan 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 876–881.
[322] TR to Strachey, Feb 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 899.
[323] Gilbert, p. 188.

neutral flags, that were bringing food or supplies to England sail at their peril and would be destroyed without it always being possible to warn the crews and passengers.[324]

Since this German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare was the decisive factor that – later, in 1917 – pushed the United States to join the war, it has been generally viewed as Germany's fatal strategic mistake. Yet it needs to be emphasized that the trade in munitions from the United States to Germany's enemies flourished, weakening Germany's odds by the day, and the British blockade, though unable to seal off Germany, was nevertheless working, causing a chronic shortage of war materials and food in Germany. When the United States later joined the war and made the blockade thus complete, more than 750 000 German civilians starved to death according to some estimates. In other words, there was not much else the Germans could have done in 1915; either to launch its submarine warfare or to lose the war.[325] Germany's fatal mistake, after two full years of diplomatic tightrope walking, was to push Wilson over the limit.

Wilson naturally objected to Germany compromising the freedom of the seas as much as he objected to Britain seizing neutral vessels. Right after Germany had declared its submarine blockade, Wilson therefore wrote the German government a note of protest. In this note, hailed as a strong and courageous one by the American media, Wilson warned Germany that the United States would not tolerate unrestrained attacks on neutral American vessels, would hold the Imperial government to "a strict accountability" for illegal destruction of American ships and lives, and would take measures necessary to defend American rights on the seas.[326]

If Wilson was displeased with Germany's methods, Germany was twice as indignant at the United States. The steady flow of munitions from the American factories to the Allies was unacceptable to Berlin. Germany insisted that the U.S. government should declare an arms embargo in order to be truly neutral, and the German Embassy in Washington was financing a political movement in the United States which sought to obtain that end. Also, now there spread an impression among the Germans that the Wilson administration was trying to force Germany to give up its most effective naval weapon, the submarine, without at the same time compelling the British navy to adhere to

[324] Gilbert, p. 127–128; Marshall, p. 160–161.
[325] Gilbert, Introduction, p. xv; Marshall, p. 209–210, 161.
[326] Gilbert, p. 127–128; Link, p. 159–160.

international law. Disputes like these kept the German-American relations strained even during American neutrality.[327]

Roosevelt had no sympathy for these German protestations, as he felt that the United States should help Great Britain. The way TR saw it Wilson had lost his right to protest against subsequent and less important violations by the British the minute he had decided not protest the first and worst violation of the war, the German invasion of Belgium. Roosevelt himself − although he felt that England was acting roughly against neutrals and, naturally, objected to seizures of American vessels by any foreign nation − was inclined to ignore violations by the British navy, since he thought the United States should in no way hamper England's campaign to free Belgium. In his opinion, Wilson was doing almost the opposite.[328] Roosevelt wrote in disbelief to James Bryce, England's former Ambassador to the United States, in March 1915 after the German cruiser, *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, had sunk the American owned vessel *William P. Frye*:

"We are not to protest when Belgium's rights are trampled underfoot by the Germans but are to make our first protest when England interferes with our sending copper to Germany to be used against the English and the Belgians but that we are to keep entirely silent when a German cruiser sinks one of our ships, loaded with wheat, on the ground that wheat is contraband, and to do nothing effective about the German War Zone, but to try to excite popular feeling against the English Government because of its blockade of the North Sea.[329]

Developments at sea, which by March 1915 had driven Germany to attack even neutral merchant vessels, explain why TR became less sympathetic towards German claims. In the beginning, Germany had only "sinned against civilization" by her conduct toward Belgium, but the war was not only about Belgium anymore. During early 1915 America's duty to act became "far stronger," because now the rights of the United States were also directly involved and Roosevelt held Germany responsible.[330]

Roosevelt's reactions to the various violations committed by the belligerents during early 1915 once again underline the importance he attached to the German invasion of Belgium. He judged all the

[327] Link, p. 167. See also footnote no. 52 on the same page.
[328] TR to Grey, Jan 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7. p. 877–881; Roosevelt, "Our Course in the Light of War's Lessons," *NYT*, Nov 29, 1914, p. SM3; Roosevelt, "Theodore Roosevelt on the Danger of Making Unwise Peace Treaties," *NYT*, Oct 4, 1914, p. 33.
[329] TR to Bryce, Mar 31, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 914–915.
[330] Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*, p. 43.

consequent events of the war using the Belgian case as his starting point,[331] which makes his logic easy to follow. Roosevelt did not shift his stands as much as some historians have suggested. His wartime emotional storms and flashy outbursts, some of them quite distasteful, have possibly distracted historians from seeing the consistency and the remarkable clarity of his thoughts. No matter what happened next in the war, Roosevelt always knew how to react. The conflict kept growing more complex, but TR kept it simple.

The same cannot be said of Wilson, who was soon to become overwhelmed by the war and was about to reach a dead-end with his neutrality policy. First, on March 28, 1915, the Great War took its first American victim, when a German submarine torpedoed the cargo-passenger ship *Falaba*. Then, on May 1, a German submarine sank an American merchant ship, *Gulflight*, killing three Americans.[332] Roosevelt supported taking strong measures so as to show Germany that the United States would not tolerate sinkings like these. Already after the sinking of the *Frye*, TR had mentioned in his letter of April 6, 1915, that the United States should have confiscated *Eitel Friedrich*, at that time lying in an American harbour, until Germany paid reparation; no such action was taken by Wilson. But *Frye, Falaba* and the *Gulflight* were only the beginning.

On May 1, 1915 – on the day when the British Cunard liner *Lusitania* set off from New York towards England – New York newspapers published an advertisement placed by the German Embassy in which Americans were warned not to travel on vessels flying the British flag for such vessels were "liable to destruction." Wilson did not react to the warning; Roosevelt did. TR wrote to John Callan O'Laughlin on May 6 that, as President, he would have warned Germany that "if any of our people were sunk on the *Lusitania*, I would confiscate all the German interned ships, beginning with the *Prinz Eitel*." Whether that would have prevented what was about to happen, will be never known.[333]

On May 7, a German submarine, without warning, torpedoed the *Lusitania* – a gigantic passenger ship, which was, however, carrying small arms as cargo. Over a thousand passengers were drowned, among them 128 Americans, including women and children.[334] Colonel Edward House,

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[331] An example of this, see: Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 150–151.
[332] Gilbert, p. 141, 156.
[333] TR to O'Laughlin, May 6, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 921–922.
[334] Dalton, p. 455.

Wilson's closest advisor in matters concerning the war, who was at the time of the sinking in England, wired to Walter Hines Page, the American Ambassador in London that the United States would be at war within a month.[335]

4.1.2 Germany Sinks Itself to Barbarism

According to historian Patrick Devlin, "the sinking of the *Lusitania* was the supreme act of unrestricted warfare." Not only that; in the age of 1915 it was a "barbarity" and a clear "*casus belli* in the sense that no moralist… could deny America's right to go to war."[336]

News of the "murder on the high seas"[337] hit through the American public like a shock wave. Hatred of Germany in America multiplied and public sentiment clearly shifted to favour the Allies, but the reaction was more frightened than vindictive. Suddenly, the war in which Americans most emphatically did not wish to play a part seemed much closer.[338] The question was what had President Wilson meant when he in February 1915 had called the Germans to "a strict accountability" for destruction of American property and lives?

According to Cooper, Wilson wanted to respond to the sinking of the *Lusitania* in a manner which would have carried out the "double wish" of the American public: to make firm demands on Germany without getting the United States embroiled in the war.[339] In his famous speech of May 10, 1915, Wilson explained his attitude by declaring: "There is such a 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."[340] Americans were not sure whether they quite agreed with this

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[335] Marshall, p. 163; Link, p. 162. Edward Mandell House (1858–1938), a Texan millionaire who became Wilson's closest confidant during World War I. House had spent early 1915 in Europe discussing with European leaders plans for peace discussions under Wilson's mediation. See Link, p. 160–162.
[336] Devlin, p. 283–284.
[337] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, Appendix A, p. 351.
[338] Dalton, p. 456; Cooper, p. 288.
[339] Cooper, p. 288.
[340] Dalton, p. 455. Later, when Wilson in December 1916 inquired from the belligerents about the chances of peace and offered his assistance in achieving it, he added the phrase "too proud to fight" in his letters. The belligerents, who had been fighting for more than two years, felt deeply offended by it. See Gilbert, p. 303.

philosophy, but nevertheless most of them, as well as Congress, were with Wilson in that they did not wish to avenge the *Lusitania* by going to war.[341]

Accordingly, Wilson drafted the German government a note in which he demanded that Germany abandon submarine warfare against all unarmed merchantmen. Germany's reply was unsatisfactory. Wilson sent a second note, a stronger one. This was too much for Secretary of State Bryan, who had already found the wording of the first note too harsh; now, he chose to resign rather than sign the second one. Germany again replied evasively. Wilson toned down his third note and insisted merely on an apology, reparations, and a pledge of future good behaviour, but, he ended warning, repetition of the sinkings would be regarded as "deliberately unfriendly" by the United States.[342] Roosevelt was privately asking after the serial number of Wilson's latest note as he had lost count: "But I am inclined to think it is No. 11,765, Series B."[343]

The Germans must have felt relieved. The poorly calculated decision of one of its U-boat captains, which could had had catastrophic consequences for Germany, did not prompt the U.S. government even to sever relations. James W. Gerard, the American Ambassador in Germany, had already given orders to pack but, much to his surprise, Wilson did not recall him in protest. To avoid hostilities with the United States, Germany complied with Wilson's third note and apologised, and the crisis passed.[344]

Roosevelt must have been stomping his feet in rage: 128 Americans were dead, but Wilson did nothing. He saw the sinking of the *Lusitania* as a direct attack against the United States; now, he argued, it was time for the United States to finally abandon its neutrality and to join the Allies. Actually, his whole conceptual image of Germany was drastically changed by the *Lusitania*. In the previous chapter it has been shown that the outbreak of the war did not turn him anti-German as straightforwardly as historians have suggested. He still admired the Germans; he was sceptical of the atrocity stories; he defended the Kaiser against character assassins; and he preferred to stress the complexity of the causes of the war instead of seeing it as German aggression. The *Lusitania*, however, forced Roosevelt to reassess his views. Now, he was done with defending the actions of the Imperial government and the Kaiser.

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[341] Marshall, p. 163; Link, p. 164–165.
[342] Brands, p. 755–756; Cooper, p. 289–290; Link, p. 166–167.
[343] Pringle, p. 409.
[344] Gilbert, p. 157.

Roosevelt came out in public against Germany in May 9, 1915 – two days after the *Lusitania* went to the bottom. He insisted at that point that Germany's attacks on neutral vessels "defy every principle of international law as laid down in innumerable existing treaties." The murderous act against the *Lusitania*, Roosevelt declared, represented "pure piracy" of such brutality that the world had not seen anything like it for centuries. He also expressed his disgust at the German press which had celebrated the slaughter as a great naval victory. Roosevelt concluded: "It [*Lusitania*] was a victory over the defenceless and the unoffending, and its signs and trophies were the bodies of the murdered women and children."[345]

Pondering the legal aspects of the sinkings, TR reminded that Germany had no case. Germany was only acting as if it had a case, since, after torpedoing the *Lusitania*, it had proposed to stop its submarine warfare, provided that the United States will stop its trade in contrabands with the Allies. "Such a proposal is not even entitled to an answer," Roosevelt thundered.[346] He observed that the treaties of 1785, 1799, and 1828 between the United States and Prussia provided that "if one of the contracting parties should be at war with any other power the free intercourse and commerce of the subjects or citizens of the party remaining neutral with the belligerent powers shall not be interrupted." Contradicting these treaties, Germany now outrageously proposed to stop the "practice of murder on the high seas" only if the United States abandoned its trade with the Allies to which it was entitled under the existing treaties. In short, Roosevelt tried to impress on the American public that there was absolutely nothing to negotiate about with Germany. Giving his final justification to the trade in contrabands with the Allies, he stated:

"The manufacture and shipments of arms and ammunition to any belligerent is moral or immoral, according to the use to which the arms and munitions are to be put.... If they are to be used for the redress of those wrongs [suffered by Belgium] and the restoration of Belgium to her deeply-wronged and unoffending people, then it is eminently moral to send them."[347]

Keeping in mind Roosevelt's hierarchy of races, the most interesting remarks of his *Lusitania* statement, however, are the ones that clearly reveal that he had stopped considering Germany a "civilized" nation. For example, in trying to find an equivalent for the ruthless brutality that

[345] This and the following paragraph, Roosevelt, *Fear God*, Appendix A, p. 351–352.
[346] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, Appendix A, p. 355.
[347] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, Appendix A, p. 355. See also p. 164.

Germany had showed, Roosevelt stated that "the Moslem pirates of the Barbary Coast behaved at times in similar fashion, until the *civilized nations* joined in suppressing them."[348]

The unscientific half of Roosevelt's brain can be seen at work also in his private letter of July 2, 1915, in which Roosevelt further described his racial views: "The German stock is a first-class stock. It has deteriorated during the last fifty years under the pressure of the Prussian militaristic Frederick the Great and Bismarck school, just precisely as the admirable American stock in the slave states deteriorated during the half century prior to the Civil War under the pressure of the 'Slavery-a-Divine-Institution' men...."[349] So whereas TR considered it possible for the "backward" people to develop into a "civilized" nation it was likewise possible for a "civilized" nation to regress to barbarism. Beale's theory is absolutely correct: if Roosevelt felt that the United States must fight a "civilized" nation, he then had the ability to convince himself that the opponent had sunk into barbarism – even when the opponents were Americans, as in the American Civil War.

To demote the Germans to barbarians, Roosevelt took advantage of an unhappy parallel that the Kaiser had drawn in one of his speeches by holding up the Huns as an example to his own army. TR declared later in 1917 in the Kansas City *Star*: "We have the authority of the German Kaiser for the use of the word Hun in a descriptive sense, as representing the ideal to which he wished his soldiers in their actions to approximate. It is therefore fair to use the word descriptively as a substitute for the German in this war."[350] Roosevelt used the term for the first time in his *Lusitania* statement of May 9, 1915.

Clearly, then, the sinking of the *Lusitania* completed Imperial Germany's fall from grace in Roosevelt's mind. Germany, once the civilized nation that had most inspired him, had become demoralized during the fifty years that had preceded World War I. First, after Germany had invaded Belgium, TR started to regard Germany as a "menace to civilization." Then, by committing the barbarous act against the *Lusitania*, Germany proved that it had ceased to be a "civilized" nation.

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[348] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, Appendix A, p. 351.
[349] TR to Langdon Warner, Jul 2, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 943. Langdon Warner, archaeologist, husband of Lorraine d'Oremieulx Roosevelt. The *New York Times*, for example, agreed with Roosevelt as it editorialized in 1915 that in forty years the German people had been "transformed from a nation worthy of the world's esteem and admiration into a people who stand apart from other nations, distrusted and feared, disturbers of the peace, a menace to the general security.... Their ideals have been abased and their intellectual development stifled, they have been bred away from the high and noble things of life." See Luebke, p. 85–86.
[350] Roosevelt, Theodore, *Roosevelt in the Kansas City Star. War-time Editorials by Theodore Roosevelt, with an Introduction by Ralph Stout*, Boston & New York, 1921, p. 5.

This meant that Roosevelt could now start treating Germany with the same contempt and disregard that he had sometimes employed with other "backward" nations like Colombia. And this, to an extent, is exactly what Roosevelt did. He, for example, started to refer to the Germans as "Huns," something he would have found totally improper just a month earlier. In short, Theodore Roosevelt had become anti-German.

4.2 CAMPAIGNING FOR WAR, RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT

4.2.1 The Un-Neutral Critic of Mr. Wilson

Germany's decision of February 1915 to launch its submarine warfare added another dimension to Roosevelt's conflict with President Wilson. Up to that point, TR had charged the Wilson administration mainly for its failure to stand up to its treaty obligation to defend Belgium and for its unwillingness to enhance the military preparedness of the country. Now, Roosevelt started to accuse Wilson also of a failure to protect the rights of the United States.

The manner in which Roosevelt verbally abused Wilson during the following years has contributed, more than anything else, to the impression that at the time Roosevelt was not exactly what one could call a balanced person. Even sympathetic TR-biographers freely admit that he was being unreasonable and unfair. William Henry Harbaugh concludes that Roosevelt was "so completely out of sympathy" that he failed to see that "the President's note-writing was more complicated than it appeared" and that he never conceded "the political obstacles under which Wilson labored." The Congress, various political blocs, and the people were so strongly opposed to the war even after the *Lusitania* that Wilson probably could not have taken the country to war even had he wanted to.[351]

Historian Henry Pringle observes that Roosevelt's detestation of Wilson became "almost psychopathic" during the Great War,[352] but this is an exaggeration and, frankly, Pringle's detestation of Roosevelt is not quite normal either. John Milton Cooper, Jr., and H.W. Brands

[351] Harbaugh, p. 478–479.
[352] Pringle, p. 407.

correctly point out that TR, who had always wanted to become a great war-time President like Lincoln,[353] envied Wilson. "This was not petty jealousy," Cooper says, "it was grand jealousy."[354] Certainly one must agree that Roosevelt was not an objective judge of Wilson. Roosevelt's following description of Wilson from his letter to Cecil Spring-Rice is typical:

"Wilson is, I think, a timid man physically. He is certainly a timid man in all that affects sustaining the honor and the national interests of the United States and justice by force of arms. He is also a shifty and rather unscrupulous man. Finally, he is entirely cold-blooded and selfish."[355]

There is no question that TR's behaviour became offensive, but it usually takes two to put up a fight. As it was in the fall of 1914, Roosevelt, who officially still supported the President, had started to speak on behalf of military preparedness, which was a totally legitimate concern considering the dramatically changed international situation. Yet Wilson's response was arrogant, as he laughed the preparedness talk aside as "good mental exercise." When Representative Augustus Gardner, Lodge's son-in-law, in December 1914 echoed Roosevelt's views and tried to force a Congressional investigation into the condition of the country's armed forces, Wilson declared in his Annual Message of December 8 that "we shall not alter our attitude... because some amongst us are nervous or excited," and continued that a change of policy would mean "merely that we had lost our self-possession, that we had been thrown off our balance *by a war with which we had nothing to do, whose causes cannot touch us*, whose very existence affords us opportunities for friendship and disinterested service which should make us ashamed of any thought of hostility or fearful preparation for trouble."[356]

TR was as irritated by the patronizing tone of Wilson's message as he was concerned over its naivety. The important thing is, however, that with his message Wilson staked his political credibility on the hope that the war would be avoided, whereas TR had already prior to that thrown his own political future on the line by declaring himself in support of an intervention. Never the type to shun a good fight, Roosevelt took up the challenge. Everything was set for a magnificent duel between the two most prominent American politicians of the time and the manner in which these two men fought it, to a great extent, define them. The Roosevelt–Wilson conflict over foreign policy during World War I is the bitterest and most fantastic one between two presidents in U.S.

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[353] Brands, p. 765.
[354] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 284.
[355] TR to Spring-Rice, Nov 11, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 841.
[356] Harbaugh, p. 473; Link, p. 177.

history and what makes it especially important to this thesis is the fact that the conflict basically came down to the differences in their German policy.

It seems that in approaching this conflict historians have not laid enough stress on Roosevelt's expertise of Germany; perhaps because they have not regarded it specifically as one over German policy. Yet it can be argued that the key to understanding Roosevelt's conflict with Wilson is to reflect it against his own experiences of Germany from the time he acted as President – by so doing, his behaviour starts to seem much more reasonable.

It must be also remembered that in 1915 Roosevelt wanted from the future one out of two things: 1) he wanted the United States to join the Allies so that he, too, could participate in the fight against the Germans, or 2) if that did not happen, he wanted to become President in the 1916 elections. Brands concludes that Roosevelt was absolutely convinced that he would make a better wartime President than Wilson or any of the Republicans, and historians are unanimous in asserting that he definitely wanted the job.[357] Against this background one must therefore ask, why should had Roosevelt been fair to Wilson? In pointing out the country's intense antiwar sentiment Harbaugh raises a good point, but Roosevelt was not interested in making excuses for Wilson. Besides, Roosevelt often had not had congressional approval for his foreign policy but he had done what he deemed necessary anyway. He expected nothing less of Wilson, and if Wilson was not up to it but accommodated the public instead, then, in TR's opinion, he was the wrong man for the job. National security was at stake.

Cooper and Arthur Link, on the other hand, feel that actually Wilson handled Germany quite skilfully during World War I. Both of them assert that Wilson rather successfully delivered the "double wish" of the American public by upholding American property and lives against Germany's submarine warfare without getting the United States involved in the war. Wilson's diplomacy, a combination of "patience, forbearance, and firmness," as Cooper describes it, resulted in the German pledge, the so called *Arabic* pledge, of September 1, 1915, that Germany would abandon unrestricted submarine warfare against all passenger ships, and in the so called *Sussex*

[357] Brands, p. 764; Harbaugh, p. 485; Dalton, p. 463.

pledge of May 1916 in which Germany accepted to moderate its practices of submarine warfare rather than face a diplomatic break with the United States.[358]

Roosevelt, however, bombarded Wilson with accusations of incompetence in international affairs. The mocking and personal tone of his attacks on the President, though entertaining to later historians, probably alienated even audiences who were sympathetic to his views. His constant references to what he would have done as President led the people to dismiss his remarks as jealous rant of an embittered ex-President.[359] Public opinion about him sank, and TR noticed it. He concluded bitterly in his letter of June 1915: "I have spoken out as strongly and as clearly as possible; and I do not think it has had any effect beyond making people think that I am a truculent and bloodthirsty person, endeavouring futilely to thwart able, dignified, humane Mr. Wilson in his noble plan to bring peace everywhere by excellently written letters sent to persons who care nothing whatever for any letter that is not backed up by force!"[360]

Roosevelt's friends grew anxious watching him destroying his career by forcing a hopelessly unpopular cause on the people, and they begged him to stop slandering Wilson. William Allen White, a journalist and a progressive, advised Roosevelt as early as January 1915: "Your cistern is dry on politics. If I were you I would discuss anything in the world except politics.... Friend Bryan and friend Wilson will not last long at their present rate and I think you will be a lot stronger if you do not have their blood on your hands."[361]

But Roosevelt had reached a martyr-like frenzy that drove him to keep on bashing Wilson. He fully realized the personal consequences of his actions, but he did not care. "Roosevelt had come to savor unpopularity," Brands observes, "it made him feel more principled."[362] Accordingly, he laughed in the face of accusations that his campaign to make war on Germany was driven by presidential ambitions. To him it seemed ludicrous to suggest that he was trying to win the presidency by alienating the majority of the public and since there was not a single politician in the United States "who does not shudder at the mere thought of even following me," the whole argument contained "an element of sheer delight."[363] Indeed, TR's conviction at this point was too strong to allow his

[358] Link, p. 168–169; Cooper, p. 290–291.
[359] Cooper, p. 283.
[360] TR to Lee, Jun 17, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 937.
[361] TR to William Allen White, Jan 4, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, Morison's footnote on p. 871.
[362] Brands, p. 752.
[363] TR to Lee, Sep 2, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 970.

personal ambitions to affect his opinions and he was emotionally too involved to be able to cultivate his image or, to quote Dalton, "champion themes that evoke warm responses." Too much was at stake, and Wilson's foreign policy stood for everything that he had always opposed. He felt humiliated and that the United States was being humiliated.

It was the saddest and loneliest struggle of Roosevelt's life. Ignored and ridiculed, he had health problems and he confessed in his letters to his children that he was living under "a continual nervous strain."[364] From November 1914 to early 1916, Roosevelt's campaign in the United States to make war on Germany was truly a one man's war. He was the only public man of any significant stature in America who dared to question Wilson's neutrality policy.[365] Incredibly, the Republicans, for example, did not find the courage to criticise Wilson's handling of the war until in February 1916.[366]

The fact that he was left alone to bang the war drums confused Roosevelt. Germany had invaded Belgium and had outrageously violated international laws in numerous ways. Germany had launched a sabotage campaign on U.S. soil (this will be dealt with in Chapter 5). Germany had sunk the *Lusitania* and by May 1916 it had sunk thirty-seven unarmed liners, including American.[367] To Roosevelt there was no question that Germany had driven the United States to a position where a declaration of war would had been not only justified but even necessary, and he was stunned that only a handful of Americans had arrived to the same conclusion. Roosevelt wrote to his British friend Arthur Lee in June 1916: "It is almost unbelievable, this attitude of my fellow countrymen toward war and the possibility of war. I have to go over and over and over again such mere truisms that it seems incredible that there can be any need of my repeating them."[368]

Roosevelt was forced to ask himself, what had happened to the fighting qualities of the Americans? Had the admirable, first-class stock that he had in a smug manner ranked highest in his hierarchy of races deteriorated? Were the Americans so interested and involved in mere money-making that they no longer bothered even to fight for their own rights, not to mention for Belgium's rights? Grown fat, lazy, and cowardly in the material ease of life? Certainly Roosevelt held this to be true of the

[364] Dalton, p. 446, 459.
[365] Devlin, p. 336.
[366] TR to Lodge, Jan 26, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, see Morison's footnote p. 1005–1006.
[367] Gilbert, p. 236–237, 292.
[368] TR to Lee, Jun 7, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1056.

pacifists, the sissies, and the greedy capitalists, but of the great majority of Americans he gave the following analysis:

"It consists of good, decent men and women who know very little about international matters.... Deep in their hearts they have a high and fine purpose, which can be aroused by the right kind of appeal. But they are absorbed in their own affairs.... They do not want to leave their business or break into the easy routine of their lives if it can be avoided.... If the President told them... that... the welfare and the good name of the United States... demanded action on their part... they would respond. But they are sincerely glad when he furnishes them with excellent excuses, excellent justifications for nonaction.... These men at the outset felt stunned by the Belgian catastrophe.... If they had been told that it was their duty to act... if the President had led them, they would have followed. But human nature is not very strong and when these men were told by the President that it was their duty to be neutral not only in deed but in thought... they accepted the statement with a gasp of relief.... These Americans get uneasy over the things I say and write. They get angry with me just because they have an uncomfortable feeling that maybe I am right and that action should be taken."[369]

So, Americans simply lacked leadership. What was needed was a "leader of the right type," who would "appeal to the higher qualities" of the American soul. Naturally, Roosevelt was referring to himself, not to Wilson − who, according to him, "earns praise and profit unworthily by using his gift of words to lull well-meaning men to sleep" and by furnishing the public "highsounding phrases with which to cover ignoble failure to perform hard and disagreeable duties."[370] This analysis of the average American was of course easy for Roosevelt to accept, because it enabled him to focus his anger on Wilson.

After the *Lusitania* Roosevelt became even louder. Wilson's remark about being too proud to fight infuriated him and he denounced Wilson, in public, as a coward, "who excuses his cowardice, who tries to cloak it behind lofty words, who perseveres in it, and does not appreciate his own infamy."[371]

But it was Wilson's German policy that really infuriated Roosevelt the most: from the spring of 1915 onwards he concentrated almost solely on criticising Wilson's inability to defend the rights of the United States against the Germans. He reflected Wilson's diplomacy against his own experiences of Germany and felt that Wilson was doing it all wrong. Hence, he declared that the sinking of the *Lusitania* was the outcome of Wilson's failed diplomacy and insisted that Wilson was

[369] TR to Lee, Sep 2, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 968–969.
[370] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 25.
[371] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 187.

inviting destruction by being too soft on Germany.[372] In so declaring TR was acting according to his own belief that Germany respected only strength. He reminded that Germany was led by a ruthless military elite to whom a conciliatory spirit was a sign of weakness – if you give in under pressure, you earn Germany's contempt and it will come back to press you even harder. Accordingly, Roosevelt declared that Wilson "was not to be excused for failure to act when, after he had told the Germans that he would hold them to a strict accountability if they did certain things, they proceeded forthwith to do them."[373]

As an alternative, Roosevelt offered to reintroduce his own foreign policy doctrine: "namely, a policy of treating Germany and all other nations with courtesy and regard and using every endeavor peaceably to adjust differences with them on a basis of mutual good will, fair treatment and justice but also making it evident that we were ready and able to defend our rights and that we would not tolerate repeated and wanton violation of these rights."[374]

In order to avoid trouble with Germany, TR insisted, it needs to be taught the following lesson: to violate U.S. rights is to face serious and immediate consequences. Naturally, it would be advisable to make Germany understand this *before* it proceeds to violate those rights. This is why Roosevelt had written prior to the sinking of the *Lusitania* that he would had warned Germany that he would confiscate all the German interned ships if any Americans were sunk on the *Lusitania*. "It is my deliberate judgment that this," Roosevelt commented in April 1916, "so far from inviting hostilities, would have prevented all the trouble we have had for the last year with Germany."[375] Similarly, Roosevelt advised to take strong action against Germany as a response to the sinking of the *Lusitania* in his statement of May 9, 1915:

"Without 24 hours' delay this country should and could take effective action. It should take possession of all the interned German ships, including the German warships, and hold them as a guarantee that ample satisfaction shall be given us. Furthermore it should declare that in view of Germany's murderous offences against the rights of neutrals all commerce with Germany shall be forthwith forbidden and all commerce of every kind permitted and encouraged with

[372] TR to Archibald Bulloch Roosevelt, May 19, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 922; Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 190. Archibald was the second youngest of TR's four sons.
[373] TR to Albert Bushnell Hart, Jun 1, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 927. Hart was an American historian and TR's classmate from Harvard.
[374] TR to George Walbridge Perkins, Apr 6, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1013–1014. Perkins was a reform-minded businessman, a progressive, and TR's staunch political supporter.
[375] TR to Perkins, Apr 6, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1030–1031.

France, England, Russia, and the rest of the civilized world. I do not believe that the firm assertion of our rights means war, but, in any event, it is well to remember there are things worse than war."[376]

The last sentence of the above-mentioned quote is particularly revealing, for it lays stress on Roosevelt's understanding of the strategic aspects of the war. He realized that Germany could not afford to start hostilities with the United States – as later generations know, Germany did not afford it in 1917 and it afforded it even less in 1915 with Russia still in the war. Hence, the United States, Roosevelt reckoned, would only have to show that it was being serious, and this it could do by confiscating the interned German ships. Then Germany would, in all likelihood, yield to whatever terms the United States dictated. In other words, Wilson possessed the bigger deterrent, which should have given him the whip hand over Germany. But Wilson had played his hand poorly. He had called the Germans to strict accountability, but the Germans had called his bluff – now, Berlin was in command.

This merely illustrates that the biggest problem with Wilson's neutrality policy was that it was based on self-deception. It was not fundamentally about being neutral; it was about keeping the United States out of the war no matter what. A neutral power has rights, but Wilson had intimated to the Germans that, if necessary, he was willing to waive those rights in order to prevent a conflict. Hence, instead of taking a firm stand against Germany in the *Lusitania* matter as Roosevelt advised, Wilson entered into lengthy negotiations that ended in 1916 in the German refusal to pay any reparations for the *Lusitania*.[377]

Arguably, by yielding in the *Lusitania* case Wilson made inevitable the war he so ardently sought to prevent. The apologetic tone of voice that Germany assumed after the sinking of the *Lusitania* did not last long. Soon Berlin came up with new demands on Wilson to put a stop to the trade of contrabands. Already in October 1915 the Kaiser was again venting his anger over America's financial help to England and France on the American Ambassador Gerard and lashed that "America had better look out after this war. I shall stand no nonsense from America after the war."[378]

[376] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* Appendix A, p. 355.
[377] Link, p. 167.
[378] Gilbert, p. 205.

Nor did the sinkings stop. In August 19, 1915, a German submarine torpedoed an unarmed British liner *Arabic* without warning, leaving forty-four passengers dead, including two Americans. TR gave a statement in August 21 saying that it was time to dismiss the German Ambassador and to sever diplomatic relations with Germany – the new Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, and even Wilson's closest aide Colonel House were of the same mind. It was at this point that Germany gave the *Arabic* pledge of September 1 according to which no passenger liners would be sunk until provision had been made for the safety of non-combatants. Wilson settled for this and dropped the case;[379] the dismayed Roosevelt observed that "this Administration cannot be kicked into war."[380]

Roosevelt was convinced that the Germans were playing Wilson for a fool. He suggested that after Germany realized that Wilson was unwilling to back his words with deeds, it decided to take advantage of Wilson's pacifism and started to build and ease pressure on the United States in turn as the situation demanded. "The Germans evidently do not want war," TR concluded after the *Arabic* pledge of September 1915. "Accordingly they amuse Wilson by expressions of rather vague regret and by even vaguer promises about the future; and they will continue to do so just as long as it is to their interest to keep America out of the war."[381]

All things considered, it would seem that Cooper and Link are being too kind to Wilson in their estimate of the success of his German policy, for even the celebrated *Arabic* pledge, regarded as Wilson's diplomatic achievement by Cooper and Link, apparently came with a price-tag on it. On August 23, 1915, the *New York World* had published papers with detailed information about Wilson's secret negotiations with the German Embassy in Washington. According to the documents, Wilson, speaking through a messenger known in the papers as M.P., was about to send England a note regarding the violations committed by the British navy and M.P. promised the Germans that "should it be possible to settle satisfactorily the *Lusitania* case, the President will bind himself to carry the protest against England through to the uttermost."[382] So it would seem that Wilson, desperate to bring the embarrassing *Lusitania* negotiations to a successful end, was bargaining with the German government on England's expense – this, of course, was hardly in line with the idea of total neutrality. When Wilson finally sent England his note, its following passage particularly irked Roosevelt:

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[379] TR to Kermit Roosevelt, Aug 28, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 963; Gilbert, p. 188.
[380] TR to Lee, Sep 2, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 970.
[381] TR to Lee, Sep 2, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 970; Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 124.
[382] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 117–120; TR to Lee, Sep 2, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, see Morison's footnote on p. 967.

"The task of championing the integrity of neutral rights which have received the sanction of the civilized world against the lawless conduct of belligerents, the United States unhesitatingly assumes and to the accomplishment of that task it will devote its energies."[383]

Roosevelt could hardly believe it. He pointed out to the cases of Belgium and the *Lusitania* in which Wilson had not "championed the integrity of neutral rights" and cried out that "it is literally astounding that any human being could have been guilty of the forgetfulness or effrontery of such a statement."[384] TR also disapproved the note, because England's violations against property rights were, in his opinion, in no way comparable to Germany's murders on the high seas and that the "failure to act... when our women and children were murdered made protests against interference with American business profits both offensive and ludicrous."[385] As to the *Arabic* pledge, Roosevelt stubbornly refused to recognize it as Wilson's crown achievement but insisted that Germany had merely made a "make-believe concession" in exchange of a promise of increased pressure on England. "I believe," TR wrote and pointed out to the documents published by the *World* in his letter to Lee, "that Wilson has been indirectly in touch with the German Embassy, and that this yielding or seeming to yield about the *Arabic* is in order to let him take strong action against England."[386]

The truth probably lies somewhere in between. Roosevelt, of course, was at this point too deep in his hatred to admit that Wilson had actually achieved something, but, then again, his observation of a make-believe concession was valid. The Germans having pledged themselves, the next ships were sunk, conveniently, by the Austrians. On November 7, 1915, an Italian ocean liner *Ancona* on its way to New York was torpedoed: 208 passengers were drowned, including twenty-five Americans. Then, on December 30, the Austrians sank the *Persia*, killing over three hundred, among them two Americans of which the one was the United States consul in Aden. John Coolidge, an American diplomat, wrote in his diary three days later: "An American consul on his way to his post at Aden was on aboard, so probably Mr. Lansing will buy a new box of note-paper and set to work." This is exactly what happened: the U.S. government issued protests, found the Austrian reply unsatisfactory, but took the matter no further.[387] Ambassador Gerard wrote from Berlin: "The

[383] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 120.
[384] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 120–121.
[385] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 27, 119.
[386] TR to Lee, Sep 2, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 967, 972; *Roosevelt, Fear God*, p. 118–120.
[387] Gilbert, p. 210, 222.

people here are firmly convinced that we can be slapped, insulted, and murdered with absolute impunity, and refer to our notes as things worse than waste paper."[388]

Roosevelt had had just about enough of Wilson's foreign policy of mere words and "bits of paper." He wrote in February 1916 in *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*: "For three years the United States Government has been engaged in sending notes and diplomatic protests and inquiries and warnings and ultimatums and penultimatums to Germany, to Mexico, to Austria; and not one of these notes really meant or achieved anything."[389] TR reminded that the most elemental duty of the government of a civilized nation is to protect its citizens from murder. Wilson, however, was willing to allow repeated murders to take place in order to be able to provide the great majority of Americans with an illusion of peace.[390] Rather convincingly, Roosevelt wrote in February 1916:

"During the last three years we have been technically at peace. But during those three years more of our citizens have been killed... than were killed during the entire Spanish War. On February 12th it will be a year since the time when we notified Germany that in case any of our citizens were killed, we would hold her to a strict accountability; and during these eleven months the passenger ships sunk by German or Austrian submarines in defiance of our warning have included among others the *Falaba*, *Lusitania*, *Arabic*, *Hesperian*, *Ancona*, *Yasaka*, *Ville de la Ciotat* and *Persia*.... Many hundreds of Americans were among the passengers and a couple of hundred of these, including many women and children, were killed. The total deaths on these ships... amount to between 2,000 and 2,100.... It is over double the number of lives lost by the British navy in Nelson's three great victories, the Battle of Trafalgar, the Battle of the Nile and the Battle of the Baltic, combined.... If any individual finds satisfaction in saying that nevertheless this was 'peace' and not 'war', it is hardly worth while arguing with him; for he dwells in a land of sham and of make-believe."[391]

Then finally, inevitably, the public opinion shifted a notch as Americans began to doubt the wisdom of maintaining neutrality that was not respected by the belligerents. The shift was slow, but once it got on the way there was no stopping it, no matter how the German propagandists tried to spin it. Roosevelt himself sensed the change for the first time in August 1915, when he was giving speeches in California on preparedness. He observed that "while it would not be true to say that there was wild enthusiasm over my speeches, it is true to say that the audiences listened to me in each case for nearly two hours with the utmost attention and with substantial assent; and I have

[388] Pusey, Merlo J., *Charles Evans Hughes*, vol. 1, p. 353.
[389] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 114.
[390] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 32, 110.
[391] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 33–35.

never made speeches from which I have received more response in the way of letters and the like."[392]

In February 1916 Roosevelt estimated to Lodge that he was supported by an appreciable minority of five to fifteen per cent of the people.[393] The amount of work that Roosevelt had done and all the sacrifices he had made to earn that small following defies belief. Even if Roosevelt's ignoble hatred of Wilson did give his war campaign an ugly face, the service he had rendered to his country was nevertheless priceless. To quote Harbaugh: "There was not a preparedness society in the country that did not look to TR for leadership, scarcely a major newspaper that was not moved to discuss editorially the issues he had raised; nor, probably, was there a politician in Washington who was not influenced one way or the other by his searing pronouncements. By 1916 'preparedness' and 'Roosevelt' were virtually synonymous."[394] Indeed, it cannot be stressed enough how ill-prepared the Americans were still in 1915 to face the war that awaited them. Although it was Wilson who eventually led the Americans to the war, Roosevelt did more than anyone else to get them ready.

By examining the Roosevelt–Wilson conflict as one over German policy Roosevelt's behaviour starts to seem, if not acceptable, at least much more reasonable. If contrasted with Roosevelt's German policy – the merits of which were still for the most part unknown to people in 1915–1916 – Wilson's German policy proves itself an utter failure. This was most obvious, of course, to Roosevelt himself, and his fury reflected this fact. It might very well be that Roosevelt's pre-emptive threat would not have stopped the Germans from sinking the *Lusitania* and it might be that he could not had stopped the subsequent sinkings by taking a firm stand in the *Lusitania* case; but TR believed so. He was convinced that he could put a stop to the sinkings. Against this background, Roosevelt regarded every death as a needless one and he held Wilson responsible. If that does not warrant a person − and TR was not just any person − to speak up against the President, then nothing does. The problem with Roosevelt's criticism of Wilson was never in the purport but in the manner in which he presented his case. The strain he was under, added to his contempt of Wilson, unfortunately just did not allow him to be more constructive.

Nevertheless, by 1916 Roosevelt's political star was on the rise again. The Republicans had stepped forth in February to criticise Wilson for his failure to prepare the country's armed forces for the

[392] TR to Lee, Aug 6, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 960.
[393] TR to Lodge, Feb 4, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1013.
[394] Harbaugh, p. 483.

possible war and were finally showing some signs that they intended to fight for it in the presidential elections of November 1916. Should they attack Wilson in the open and boldly challenge his foreign policy with a pro-preparedness campaign, it would be difficult to displace Roosevelt from the candidacy. Roosevelt himself observed in April 1916: "There is a real movement to nominate me, simply because I am the only man who has stood openly against him [Wilson] in a way to show that I meant it."[395]

4.2.2 Everlasting Admiration for Germany

Yet there were many obstacles on Roosevelt's presidential road. He had alienated so large segments of the electorate that it would be difficult for him to beat Wilson. TR even admitted to Lodge in November 1915 that it would be "harmful" for him to be candidate for "the German-Americans, the professional hyphenated Americans of every kind and the whole flapdoodle pacificist and mollycoddle outfit would be against me." Lodge agreed, as did most of the Republican leaders – in fact, some of them were determined to prevent Roosevelt from getting the nomination.[396] "Roosevelt had left his party," historian Merlo J. Pusey observes, "and sown a whirlwind of bitterness."[397]

Under those circumstances, only Germany could have made Roosevelt President. During the first year of the war, Roosevelt chose to stick with his principles and accepted unpopularity by denouncing neutrality policy at the cost of his presidential dreams. Then the *Lusitania* occurred, followed by other sinkings, causing a minor shift in the American public opinion towards Roosevelt. As Germany's behaviour turned ever more brutal, it became evident that the only thing that could make TR President was the very fact that he had stood against Germany from the beginning. To become President, Roosevelt needed Germany, he needed another *Lusitania* or something else of the same magnitude that could make the bulk of the American people support confronting Germany even if it meant war. Meanwhile, Roosevelt needed to wage a pro-preparedness, anti-hyphen campaign perhaps with a heavy anti-German emphasis.

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[395] TR to Frederick Scott Oliver, Apr 7, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1033; TR to Lodge, Jan 26, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, see Morison's footnote on p. 1005–1006. Oliver was a Scottish writer and a polemicist.
[396] TR to Lodge, Nov 27, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 991.
[397] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 315.

Roosevelt made it clear that this was exactly what he intended to do. He appealed to the Republicans so that they would boldly place national duty and honour foremost in their campaign and would "sink or swim" with the issue.[398] If that did not suit the party, then Roosevelt did not want to be a candidate; and unless the Americans would get into a "heroic mood," Roosevelt was not interested in leading them.[399] He wrote to Lodge in February 1916:

"If the country is not determined to put honor and duty ahead of safety, then the people most emphatically do not wish me for President... for I will not take back by one finger's breadth anything I have said during the last eighteen months about national and international duty.... Unless the country is somewhere near a mood of at least half-heroism it would be utterly useless to nominate me. I do not, as a matter of fact, think that there would have been war if I had been President but if, in order to stop the murder of American women and children on the high seas or in Mexico, it had been necessary to go to war, I would have gone to war (in thirty minutes) and if taking the action I would have taken... on behalf of Belgium when Germany invaded Belgium had brought war, I would have accepted war rather than refuse to act as in my judgment the national honor demanded."[400]

Since Roosevelt's chances of winning the presidency at this point depended on whether he could make the Americans understand that they must fight Germany, it is of course extremely important to consider *whether this influenced his views of Germany and whether this was the reason why he intensified his criticism of the Germans*. According to several historians, Roosevelt was by this time a German-hater. Had he really succumbed in less than a year to anti-German hatred and did he now begin to agitate such hatred?

To be able to make such a conclusion, we need to look for 1) sudden, inexplicable changes in his views of Germany, different in kind from the views introduced in Chapter 3, and 2) false, prejudiced, or biased testimonies of Germany, which are not based on facts and as such represent pure anti-German propaganda. Only findings such as these would justify the conclusion that Roosevelt had been taken over by anti-German hatred or allowed his presidential ambitions to influence his opinion of Germany.

It has been already shown that after the sinking of the *Lusitania* Roosevelt ceased to consider the Kaiser's Germany a "civilized" nation. This demotion enabled him to start speaking of Germany in

[398] TR to Lodge, Feb 4, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1013.
[399] TR to Anna Roosevelt Cowles, Feb 3, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1011. Anna was TR's sister.
[400] TR to Lodge, Feb 4, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1013–1014.

terms he would otherwise have found improper, considering that Roosevelt had always preached that the United States should treat all civilized nations courteously and with kindly regard.

Roosevelt's rhetoric did change markedly after the *Lusitania*. The first sign that he was done stressing the complexity of the causes of the war and defending Germany can be found in his letter of June 17, 1915, in which he observed that the "forces of evil" have shown to advantage as compared to the "forces of good" in the Great War.[401] He resorted to biblical concepts of good and evil again in February 1916 in his *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*, where he described Germany's behaviour towards Belgium by concluding that "in all the grim record of the last year this is the overshadowing accomplishment of evil."[402]

Germany, the country that Roosevelt had often held up to the Americans as a model, had been debased by its ruthless elite and served now mainly as a warning example. Referring to a German poem, which glorified the sinking of the *Lusitania*, Roosevelt wrote appalled: "Most certainly we [Americans] should avoid with horror the ruthlessness and brutality and the cynical indifference to international right which the Government of Germany has shown during the past year, and we should shun, as we would shun the plague, the production in this country of a popular psychology like that which in Germany has produced a public opinion that backs the Government in its actions in Belgium, and cheers popular songs which exult in the slaughter of women and children on the high seas."[403]

To prove Germany's "cynical indifference to international right," Roosevelt enumerated the multiple ways in which Germany had violated the Hague conventions.[404] He paid special attention to the article which proved that Germany had no right to sink neutral vessels carrying arms to the Allies as the Hague conventions indisputably vested neutral powers with that right. TR further pointed out that Germany itself had insisted upon this article at the Hague Conference, not least because the Krupp works at Essen were the chief manufacturers of munitions in the world. "In short," TR declared, stressing the hypocrisy of the German government, "Germany has thriven enormously on the sale of arms to belligerents when she was a neutral."[405] This was true, and the

[401] TR to Lee, Jun 17, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 936.
[402] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 150.
[403] TR to Grey, Nov 24, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 984–985. An English translation of the *The Hymn of The Lusitania*: Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 185.
[404] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 153–156.
[405] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 156–159; Dalton, p. 288–289.

confirmation comes from Johann von Bernstorff, who was Germany's Ambassador to the United States during the neutrality period. Historian Henry Landau quotes von Bernstorff writing in his *My Three Years in America*: "Our position with regard to this question [the arms-dealing of the United States] was very unfavorable as we had no legal basis for complaint. The clause of the Hague Convention which permitted such traffic had been included in the second Hague Convention at our own suggestion...."[406]

Then there is the interesting question whether Roosevelt believed or took advantage of the Belgian atrocity stories. In Chapter 3 it has been shown that Roosevelt greeted these stories with suspicion. This changed, to an extent, in May 1915. After the sinking of the *Lusitania*, Roosevelt seemed to become much more willing to believe that Germany's ruthlessness on seas was equalled with similar ruthlessness on land. The same was true of Americans in general. Luebke asserts that after the *Lusitania*, "atrocity charges against Germany seemed more credible, especially when they were confirmed in the report published five days after the sinking by a British investigation headed by James Bryce, the highly respected former ambassador to the United States."[407]

In fact, Roosevelt was convinced that the atrocities were part of Germany's strategy, calculated by the German high command to create such terror among the Belgians and the peace elements of other countries that "all the men of soft nature" would shy away from opposing German militarism. To Roosevelt it seemed that the plan was working: "The Germans have found that their communications in Belgium... have been entirely safe because the Belgians tremble before them.... Moreover, it is this ruthlessness combined with strength which has had most to do with frightening the pacificists here...." This calculated ruthlessness led Roosevelt to brand the Germans with a name that has a distinctly twenty-first century sound to it – terrorists.[408] He declared that "Germany has counted on the effect of terrorism," which included, among other horrors, sinkings of neutral vessels and "the use of poison gas in the trenches."[409] The remark about gas was true, for Germany had attacked the Allied troops at Ypres with poison gas in April 1915; from there on, gas warfare was waged by both sides until the end of the conflict.[410] In short, there was plenty of evidence to

[406] Landau, Henry, *The Enemy Within. The Inside Story of German Sabotage in America. By Captain Henry Landau*, New York, 1937, p. 110–111.
[407] Luebke, p. 131.
[408] TR to Oliver, July 22, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 955.
[409] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 180–183.
[410] Marshall, p. 163–166.

suggest that Germany was grossly violating human rights. Roosevelt wrote in *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*:

"The invasion of Belgium was followed by a policy of terrorism toward the Belgian population, the shooting of men, women and children, the destruction of Dinant and Louvain and many other places; the bombardment of unfortified places, not only by ships and by land forces but by air-craft, resulting in the killing of many hundreds of civilians, men, women and children, in England, France, Belgium and Italy; in the destruction of mighty temples and great monuments of art.... The devastation of Poland and Serbia has been awful beyond description.... Such deeds... have been such as we had hoped would never again occur in civilized warfare."[411]

The Germans, in fact, did commit several crimes against humanity in Belgium; the atrocity stories, though grossly exaggerated, were not without a basis. The basis of the stories were the collective penalties that the German soldiers were called to inflict upon Belgian civilians for the armed resistance of some civilian snipers. But there was more. Marshall writes that "the German campaign through Belgium was sullied by orgiastic frightfulness, a pagan saturnalia of burning and killing. No wonder [Helmut von] Moltke wrote on August 5 [1914]: 'Our advance in Belgium is certainly brutal.'" Gilbert also writes about the mass-executions in Belgium and mentions that the victims included women and children.[412]

Against this background, Roosevelt was justified in telling Americans in *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*: "Remember, there is not the slightest room for honest question either as to the dreadful, the unspeakably hideous, outrages committed on the Belgians, or as to the fact that these outrages were methodically committed by the express command of the German government...." To add weight to his arguments, Roosevelt let the Germans incriminate themselves as he quoted articles from German newspapers which proved beyond doubt that the Belgians were being cruelly handled.[413]

Roosevelt had repeatedly stated that he was only interested in verified facts about the atrocities, and the same was true still in 1915–1916. He wrote in February 1916: "I am not speaking now of the hideous atrocities committed in Belgium and Northern France, as shown in such reports as that of the committee of which Lord Bryce was Chairman. I am not now speaking of the killing of non-

[411] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* p. 380–381.
[412] Marshall, p. 60–61; Gilbert, p. 36, 41–43.
[413] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* p. 133, 151–152.

combatants... by air-craft and sea-craft. I deal only with facts as to which there is no dispute."[414] It would seem to be true that Roosevelt strictly hold himself to the facts. He resisted the temptation to spread anti-German hatred by employing the vivid descriptions of the propagandists; there simply are no such descriptions in his writings. Roosevelt probably felt that the verified facts were enough to incriminate the Germans. Whatever the reason was, he did not use the atrocity propaganda to demonize the Germans.

All things considered, to claim that Roosevelt was a German-hater during the period of American neutrality is a gross exaggeration. The facts forced him to oppose Germany as he was quite simply witnessing how Germany had become an "antithesis to democracy," threatening to overshadow the free world. The way Roosevelt saw it, the Allies were fighting for the fundamental democratic values bequeathed to Americans by George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, and that these "forces of good" did not include the country of Washington and Lincoln, made him feel ashamed of his country. Germany was gleeful, he admonished his countrymen, over America's lack of coherence. He observed that Germany "exults in the fact that in America democracy has shown itself so utterly futile that it has not even dared to speak about wrongdoing committed against others, and has not dared to do more than speak, without acting, when the wrong was done against itself."[415] German autocracy was victorious solely because the democratic nations lacked the unity of purpose of the Germans.

Amazed and impressed by Germany's performance, Roosevelt worried that democracy would not, and did not deserve to, survive unless the world's democracies could match Germany's efficiency. Roosevelt's letter of June 17, 1915, to Lee shows his overwhelming respect for the German organization: "For fifty years Germany has been trained by an intelligent and despotic upper class with an eye single to efficiency of a purely militaristic kind. In both peace and war, in both industrial and military matters the result is astounding."[416] Hence, Americans should learn from Germany's achievements:

"The first step must be preparedness against war. Of course there can be no efficient military preparedness against war without preparedness for social and industrial efficiency in peace. Germany, which is the great model for all other

[414] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 151–152.
[415] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 221–222.
[416] TR to Lee, Jun 17, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 936; Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 180–183.

nations in matters of efficiency, has shown this, and if this democracy is to endure, it must emulate German efficiency – adding thereto the spirit of democratic justice and of international fair play."[417]

In fact, Roosevelt never really ceased to admire Germany despite all of its wrongdoing. To the contrary, if one has to name one nation that Roosevelt had ceased to admire as the result of the war that would be the Americans. The Europeans, who were fighting for the causes they believed in, were the true idealists for Roosevelt. The tragedy of the German people was that they had been simply manipulated to fight for the wrong cause. The following passage from *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* crystallizes Roosevelt's opinion of the Germans:

"I feel not merely respect but admiration for the German people.... I believe that they have permitted themselves to be utterly misled, and have permitted their government to lead them in the present war into a course of conduct which, if persevered in, would make them the permanent enemy of all the free and liberty-loving nations of mankind and of civilization itself. But I believe that sooner or later they will recover their senses and make their government go right. I shall continue to cherish the friendliest feelings toward the Germans individually, and for Germany collectively as soon as Germany collectively comes to her senses."[418]

Every nation loses its way sometimes – even the Americans, who had deserved the condemnation of mankind for practising slavery for many years after others had abandoned it. A century prior to the Great War Roosevelt's sympathies would have been with the Germany of Koerner and Andreas Hofer against Napoleonic France whereas he now stood with the "Belgian and French patriots against the Germany of the Hohenzollerns."[419] As a result of Germany's submarine warfare, of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, of the facts about the atrocities in Belgium, and of German sabotage in the United States – to which we will turn to shortly – Roosevelt no longer wished to defend the Kaiser, the Imperial government, or the German upper classes in any way. They had debased Germany, sunk her to depths where it was impossible for Roosevelt any longer to consider Germany a "civilized" nation. He therefore sharpened his tone against the Germans: in the long run, TR now seemed to believe, the Kaiser's Germany would not settle for anything less than world dominion.

Compared to his views introduced in Chapter 3, however, this unconditional denouncement of the German government seems to be pretty much the *only* change in Roosevelt's image of Germany

[417] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 78.
[418] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 44.
[419] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 44–46.

and of the Germans in 1915–1916. In his writings Roosevelt made a clear distinction between the German governing class and the German people as a whole:

"There are plenty of Americans like myself who immensely admire the efficiency of the Germans in industry and in war, the efficiency with which in this war they have subordinated the whole social and industrial activity of the state to the successful prosecution of the war; and who greatly admire the German people, and regard the German strain as one of the best and strongest strains in our composite American blood; but who feel that the German Government, the German governing class has in this war shown such ruthless and domineering disregard for the rights of others as to demand emphatic and resolute action on our part."[420]

Although Roosevelt took advantage of the atrocity stories in order to mobilize the American public opinion against Germany, he never resorted to using the unverified parts of the atrocity propaganda, which vilified the Germans as bloodthirsty savages. Roosevelt did not believe that the atrocities were the result of wanton savagery, but instead believed that they were part of Germany's strategy to terrorize its potential enemies into paralysis. The fact that Roosevelt did not in this context demonize Germany against his better knowledge suggests that he did not allow his presidential ambitions to corrupt his war campaign. Nor did he stop his public confessions of admiration for German efficiency and for the German people – this was truly remarkable, considering the closeness of the elections.

Roosevelt wanted to add to Germany the "sense of democratic justice and international fair play." This meant that Germany needed to redress the wrongs done to Belgium, to go through a regime change and to create a new, more democratic form of government, and Roosevelt would once again be Germany's friend. While waiting for that day, TR restated in *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* his pledge to Germany of future just treatment: "I shall stand by Germany in the future on any occasion when its conduct permits me so to do. We must not be vindictive, or prone to remember injuries; we need forgiveness, and we must be ready to grant forgiveness."[421]

The assertion that Theodore Roosevelt was a German-hater during 1914–1917 is a misunderstanding that has resulted from wrong readings of his militant mind. Whereas historians have widely discussed that Roosevelt had a curious passion for war, they have failed to emphasize that he was also curiously dispassionate about war in the sense that war did not require him to

[420] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* p. 181–182.
[421] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* p. 46.

develop strong negative feelings such as hatred. To Roosevelt, war was not the end of the world: it was totally natural for him to advocate a war against a country *without* losing his sense of admiration and kindly regard for that country.

In fact, in his letter of June 19, 1916, to James Bryce, Roosevelt wrote that he had been praising German organization and daring so much that his German friends had started to wonder why he was not on Germany's side: "I answer them that my own mother was all of her life a thorough Confederate sympathizer; that my kinsfolk on her side fought in the Confederate service. I am immensely proud of the gallantry and the high devotion to right, as they saw the right, which these men showed. Yet I believe that never in history was there a war in which right was more entirely on one side and wrong on the other than in our Civil War.... Where I can speak in this fashion of my own blood kin, I have the right to speak in similar fashion of the Germans."[422]

As to Roosevelt's presidential aspirations, the Republican National Convention of June 1916 came too soon. His war-mongering and his insulting crusade against a popular President, who had kept the country out of the war, had made the Republicans determined to nominate anyone except Roosevelt.[423] Roosevelt had sensed this as early as January 1916 as he had written bitterly to his sister Anna Roosevelt Cowles: "I am wholly out of sympathy with the currents of public opinion. The Republicans are very little better than the Democrats; Wilson is infinitely more astute than Root, Cabot and the other Republican leaders, and I do not see that their convictions are much deeper than his."[424]

The Republicans turned to the Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes instead, and no one expressed the Republican sentiment more accurately than ex-President William Howard Taft, who wrote to Hughes that it was up to him to "save the party from Roosevelt and the country from Wilson."[425] The Progressives nominated Roosevelt to run on a third party ticket, but he declined to accept, because a third ticket would be "merely a move in the interest of the election of Mr. Wilson." Not surprisingly, Roosevelt gave his support for Hughes in June.[426]

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[422] TR to Bryce, Jun 19, 1916; *Letters* vol. 7, p. 1065–1066.
[423] TR to Lee, Jun 7, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1052.
[424] Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt Cowles, Jan 27, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1007.
[425] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 320.
[426] TR to the Conferees of the Progressive Party, Jun 10, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, Morison's footnote on p. 1062; TR to the Progressive National Committee, Jun 22, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1071.

That the nomination slipped out of his grasp must have been a huge disappointment for Roosevelt. He probably guessed that he would be remembered as a great President, but he also realized that he had just missed a once-in-a-lifetime chance to become a Washington or a Lincoln. Yet Roosevelt took it pretty well. He did not have any regrets, and most certainly he was wholly unable to see how anyone could have done any better under those circumstances. He wrote to his sister Anna: "Well, the country was'n't in heroic mood!"[427]

[427] TR to Roosevelt Cowles, Jun 16, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1063.

5. GERMAN-AMERICA'S FIGHT FOR LIFE

The closer the year 1917 came, the less Theodore Roosevelt paid attention to Germany in his writings. This might sound surprising at first, but it really was not. By mid-1916, Roosevelt had already made his views regarding the war fully known. He had already examined, at length, all the major themes of the war and had drawn his usual lessons from them. And while Germany continued on the same brutal course it had chosen, nothing of the sort that would had forced TR to reassess his views really happened during 1916. Moreover, there was not much to be gained by pointing to Germany's sins anymore, for the majority of Americans already agreed that the right was on the Allied side. The trick was to impress upon them that it was their duty to put a stop to this wrong-doing by making war on Germany.

Accordingly, Roosevelt started to concentrate more on attacking those elements of American society that kept the country neutral. His crusade against what he seemed to consider as the unholy trinity of the capitalist, the pacifist, and the hyphenated American was his contribution to the Great Debate that started to take shape in the United States in the fall of 1915 over American involvement in the war.[428] Once again the manner in which Roosevelt attacked the pro-German hyphenates suggests that he was much less in sympathy with them than with the Germans.

The intense hostility that Roosevelt showed towards the German-Americans has contributed significantly to the impression that he was something of an extremist during World War I. Some scholars have felt justified in accusing him of war-time intolerance and narrow-mindedness, and a wide consensus exists that Roosevelt, as Brands puts it, "had no patience, no tolerance even, for what a later generation would call multiculturalism."[429] This is an opportune occasion to test this claim by examining Roosevelt's views of German-Americans during 1914–1917.

Perhaps the most pressing question is about the extent of Roosevelt's personal, if indirect, responsibility for the persecution that fell upon Americans of German origin following President Wilson's declaration of war in April 1917.[430] Since Roosevelt had prior to these tragic events

[428] O'Connor, p. 392–393.
[429] Brands, p. 762.
[430] O'Connor, p. 377.

campaigned against the German-Americans for more than two years, accusing them of disloyalty, it is necessary to examine whether he agitated for hatred and violence against the German-Americans. There are many questions that need to be asked before his guilt can be determined. For instance, how widely did the German-Americans participate in activities that could be classified as disloyal? Did Roosevelt clearly define what was and who were 'disloyal'? How did his anti-hyphen campaign compare with that of President Wilson, who also spoke strongly against hyphenism? Did TR realize the possible consequences of his actions? And finally, did he do enough to prevent the persecution of the German-Americans?

5.1 SPANKING THE HYPHEN

5.1.1 The German-American Reaction: Real and Imagined

During the period of American neutrality 1914–1917, the First World War was not only about who would prevail in the battles of Europe but at the same time the belligerents were also fighting a propaganda war to win the sympathies of the American people: the mighty armies of the Central Powers and the Entente Powers still deadlocked in the trenches of Europe, it was becoming more obvious with each passing month that the United States would be the factor that would tip the scales.[431]

The position of the Entente Powers was more comfortable in the sense that they already controlled the sympathies of most Americans. This manifested itself in generous financial and material assistance to France and Britain. Germany, on the other hand, was faced with the brutal fact that if the United States were to enter the war, it would side with the Allies. Hence, German propaganda focused on convincing Americans that they should remain neutral. Meanwhile, the Germans would try to do everything in their power to stop, or at least disrupt, trade between the United States and the Allies.[432]

Viewed from Berlin, German-Americans seemed highly useful in achieving both of these goals – von Bernhardi, for example, had counted on their divided loyalty already in 1911 in his book,

[431] Landau, p. 3; O'Connor, p. 383.
[432] Luebke, p. 84–85; O'Connor, p. 383.

Germany and the Next War.[433] "Boldly and openly, with help from Berlin," historian Richard O'Connor asserts, numerous German-American organizations started to propagate "slogans against American involvement in the European war."[434] These organizations included, among others, the National German-American Alliance, the German-American Peace Society, the American Independence Union, and the American Neutrality League, all of them strictly under the leadership of German-America's cultural supremacists.[435] These organizations tried to influence American politicians with more or less veiled threats and reminders of the size of the German-American vote and to spread pro-German propaganda with every means available. The German-American Alliance, for example, bought the New York *Daily Mail & Express* and the Washington *Times*, turning them into mouthpieces of the Central Powers. The propaganda work was usually financed by the German government or by American breweries, mostly in German-American ownership.[436]

In short, the war triggered the whole German-American establishment in motion and there was a lot of fuss, which suggested that the German-Americans stood solid behind the German cause. In reality, however, the German-Americans reacted to the war in many different ways. Historian Frederick Luebke estimates that perhaps even a majority of them were either indifferent to Germany's cause or vigorously opposed it. Especially after the sinking of the *Lusitania* many angered German-Americans immediately went to acquire American citizenship. There are only a few known cases where a German-American actually switched his political loyalty to Germany.[437]

Yet many contemporary observers made the mistake of assuming that the German-American reaction to the war was uniform. Most of the German-American press, for example, uncritically accepted the German version of truth of the causes of the war and was nearly unanimous on all the important issues related to the war, and the American media naturally assumed that they reflect group opinion. German-America's cultural chauvinists did nothing to correct this erroneous assumption, because an image of united German-America with millions of angry voters was exactly what they wanted to convey; on the contrary, they effectively silenced all dissenting voices from within their own ethnic group.[438]

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[433] O'Connor, p. 378–379; Luebke, p. 76–77.
[434] O'Connor, p. 383.
[435] Luebke, p. 91, 98, 110; O'Connor, p. 385–386.
[436] Dalton, p. 462; O'Connor, p. 367, 383–388.
[437] Luebke, p. 88, 101–110, 131–132.
[438] Luebke, p. 88–89; O'Connor, p. 396–397.

When German-American heterogeneity got buried under the monotonous trumpeting of German-America's Teutonized element, the seeds of future destruction were sown. By the fall of 1915 the German-Americans started to find themselves under counter-attack. Demagogic books such as William H. Skaggs' low-browed, *German Conspiracies in America*, started to be published, and in them German-Americans were accused, almost to a man, of being "ungrateful and un-American" and of belonging to an element that could never be assimilated to American society.[439] The American public, collectively conscious of German-America's pomposity and offended by its insensibility in the post-*Lusitania* atmosphere, found it all too easy to believe that the loyalties of their fellow citizens of German descent really belonged to the Kaiser. Provoking statements, such as the one made by the chairman of the German-American Alliance, Charles Joseph Hexamer, that a constitutional monarchy was the only decent form of government, did not improve the situation. According to Luebke, it became a vicious circle in which "the American public was as ready to accept the illusion of German-American unity as the cultural nationalists were to foster it."[440]

But on one issue German-American unity was not an illusion: most German-Americans favoured neutrality (although only a small minority of them actively campaigned for it). Even the most Americanized German-Americans still had a special place in their hearts for Germany, not to mention those who had arrived to the United States only recently. Many German-Americans still had family in Germany, and the idea that in the event of war between the United States and Germany they would be forced to shoot at their brothers and cousins horrified them. Luebke regrets that only a few of those Americans, who considered German-Americans as disloyal unless they drop their support for neutrality, ever stopped to think how much they were asking.[441]

It cannot be stressed enough that from the German-American point of view to support neutrality and to lobby for it, even if the German-Americans had their own personal reasons for doing so, did not seem in any way disloyal to the United States. To the contrary, neutrality made perfect sense. The war in Europe was brutal, and the United States only profited by staying out of it. Furthermore, a majority of the Americans agreed – including the President, who had said that it was their duty to remain neutral. Then, for the love of God, the German-Americans might have asked, what was so disloyal about *them* supporting neutrality? In Roosevelt's opinion, everything.

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[439] O'Connor, p. 392–393; Luebke, p. 140.
[440] Luebke, p. 88, 116; O'Connor, p. 387.
[441] Luebke, p. 157.

5.1.2 Roosevelt's Real Americanism

After Germany invaded Belgium, Theodore Roosevelt took the view that neutrality between right and wrong was immoral and that it was the duty of the United States to intervene on behalf of Belgium. This position alone already placed TR irreversibly at odds with the German-Americans – in addition, he had opposed hyphenism ever since the 1890's.[442] Yet Roosevelt had never shown any particular urge to attack the German-Americans before and he had absolutely nothing against them per se; to the contrary, he greatly admired them. Despite his objection to the hyphen, he had not shown active zero-tolerance toward it until the Great War. So why now?

When the war erupted, Roosevelt was first and foremost opposed to neutrality, but he extended his attack also to the hyphen when he noticed that the hyphenates – mainly the German-Americans and the anti-British Irish-Americans[443] – flocked to support neutrality. From TR's point of view, support for neutrality was a dereliction of *duty* and, since he equalled patriotism to "doing one's duties to his fellows,"[444] an unpatriotic act. Whether this un-patriotism was motivated by love of ease, love of peace, or love of Germany, made no difference to Roosevelt: he opposed the greedy capitalists, the cowardly pacifists, and the disloyal German-Americans with equal fervour. He wrote in *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*:

> "During the past year the activities of our professional pacifists have been exercised almost exclusively on behalf of hideous international iniquity. They have struck hands with those evil enemies of America, the hyphenated Americans, and with the greediest representatives of those Americans whose only god is money. They have sought to make this country take her stand against right that was downtrodden, and in favor of wrong that seemed likely to be successful."[445]

Impartiality should be the American ideal – not neutrality. Roosevelt lectured: "Impartiality does not mean neutrality. Impartial justice consists not in being neutral between right and wrong, but in finding out the right and upholding it, wherever found, against the wrong."[446] Indisputably, Roosevelt insisted, Germany had wronged Belgium and had therefore become a menace to civilization; if victorious, Germany would in the future become a menace to the United States, too.

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[442] Luebke, p. 68.
[443] O'Connor, p. 391, 394.
[444] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 20.
[445] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 138.
[446] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 27.

Now, the German-Americans should as American citizens, whose *duty* it was to judge each country by its conduct and to consider international matters solely from the standpoint of the United States admit this fact and condemn Germany. The fact that many German-Americans had ever since the outbreak of the war done just the opposite by agitating for American neutrality and by defending Germany's cause signalled to Roosevelt that they were either knowingly operating against the United States or allowed their loyalty to Germany to blind them to the interests of the United States. Either way, their action was unacceptable. TR wrote in strong disapproval:

"As for the hyphenated Americans, among the very many lessons taught by the last year has been the lesson that the effort to combine fealty to the flag of an immigrant's natal land with fealty to the flag of his adopted land, in practice means not merely disregard of, but hostility to, the flag of the United States. When two flags are hoisted on the same pole, one is always hoisted undermost. The hyphenated American always hoists the American flag undermost. The German-Americans who call themselves such and who have agitated as such during the past year, have shown that they are not Americans at all, but Germans in America."[447]

Here it is important to note Roosevelt's phrasing. The reference to the "effort to combine fealty" meant that TR did not believe that the German-Americans were consciously disloyal to the United States; instead they suffered of divided allegiance between the United States and Germany, which in 1914−1917, in his opinion, *equalled* to disloyalty to the United States. If not for the First World War, Roosevelt probably never would had felt the need to attack the hyphenates in the manner he did. But there was war, and it was the "lesson taught" by the unique conditions created by the war that the hyphenates were compromising national honour and security with their dual loyalties. Hence, Roosevelt would not tolerate the hyphen any longer: "Citizenship must mean an undivided loyalty to America; there can be no citizenship on the 50–50 basis; there can be no loyalty half to America and half to Germany, or England, or France, or Ireland, or any other country."[448]

Actually, Roosevelt gave the hyphen, which had been in usage for decades, a wholly new meaning: in his usage it automatically referred to dual political loyalties.[449] In other words, whenever Roosevelt said or wrote "German-American," he referred only to those Americans of German origin who he considered disloyal to the United States – to the loyal ones he usually referred as "Americans of German descent/origin/blood." In TR's opinion, then, the hyphen made its carrier

[447] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 139–140.
[448] TR to Stanwood Menken, Jan 10, 1917; *Roosevelt Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1144−1145. Menken was president of a pro-preparedness organization called the National Security League.
[449] Luebke, p. 68−69.

inherently disloyal. His definition might sound overly stern, but the events of 1914–1917 proved that he was not totally wrong. For this reason it is quite unfair to hold any single person or group responsible for what happened to German-America during World War I: the hyphen, quite frankly, had become impossible. The German-Americans simply had to choose to whom their loyalty belonged and whichever side they decided to choose, they only had a future as Americans or as Germans. Neutrality was not an option.

The German-Americans, however, continued to lobby for neutrality, which in turn made Roosevelt willing to resort to stronger language. He condemned the German-Americans for extorting American politicians with their threats of the foreign vote. He opposed them for spreading pro-German propaganda, and for campaigning for neutrality and for an arms embargo. Roosevelt came up with the term "professional German-Americans" with which he meant all those "disloyal" German-Americans who were involved in activities of this sort. He wrote to the Progressive National Committee in June 1916: "I need hardly repeat what I have already said in stern reprobation of this professional German-American element – the element typified by the German-American Alliances and the similar bodies, which have... played not merely an un-American but a thoroughly anti-American part...."[450]

Hence, whenever Roosevelt accused the German-Americans of disloyalty, he actually referred only to that small minority of German-Americans, who were actively campaigning for neutrality and advancing the German cause through the German-American organizations. He employed the term "professional German-Americans" to separate these "disloyal" German-Americans from that great majority of Americans of German descent whose loyalty he never questioned. TR realized that even these loyal German-Americans had their emotional reasons to favour neutrality, but he also believed that if the President would tell them that it was their duty as Americans to fight Germany, they would respond. He wrote: "I believe with all my heart that the action of these sinister, professional German-Americans will be repudiated with angry contempt by the great mass of our fellow citizens who are in whole or in part of German blood – and who are, as I well know, unsurpassed in rugged and whole-souled Americanism by any other citizens of our land."[451] Roosevelt made this distinction dozens of times, often stating his opinion that the German element as a whole

[450] TR to the Progressive National Committee, Jun 22, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1071–1072.
[451] TR to William Purnell Jackson, Jun 6, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1060. Jackson was a businessman and a senator for Maryland in 1912–1914.

represented the most patriotic element in the American society. This proves that he realized that the issue was inflammatory and he did take precautions to prevent things from getting out of hands.

But Roosevelt did not extend the same consideration to the "professional German-Americans" – for them he had no sympathy to spare. Unhesitatingly, he even went as far as to label the hyphenates as the enemy. In fact, they were worse than the enemy: "In the long run we have less to fear from foes without than from foes within; for the former will be formidable only as the latter break our strength."[452] Noting that the leaders of the hyphenated Americans were incidentally leaders also in the anti-preparedness movement, Roosevelt described their campaign as an effort to turn the United States into a "larger Belgium;" that is, "an easy prey for Germany whenever Germany desires to seize it." The next step, which he took without looking back, was to accuse the German-Americans of outright treason:

"These professional German-Americans and Pro-Germans are Anti-American to the core. They play the part of traitors, pure and simple. Once it was true that this country could not endure half free and half slave. Today it is true that it can not endure half American and half foreign. The hyphen is incompatible with patriotism."[453]

Roosevelt made it clear, too, how these "professional German-Americans" should be dealt with. For him, the solution was always simple: the administration should deport them. The hyphenated American "has no place here; and the sooner he returns to the land to which he feels his real heart-allegiance, the better it will be for every good American."[454] That he was in favour of deporting "disloyal" German-Americans becomes obvious also from the following statement: "The larger Americanism demands that we insist that every immigrant who comes here shall become an American citizen and nothing else; if he shows that he still remains at heart more loyal to another land, let him be promptly returned to that land...."[455]

Many historians have found Roosevelt's views too extreme to their taste. In his, *Bonds of Loyalty. German-Americans and World War I,* Frederick Luebke describes Roosevelt's attitude toward the hyphen as "obsessive hatred."[456] Luebke notes that during the war many American politicians assumed a narrow concept of patriotism, and TR, for example, had reached a point where he "raged

[452] Roosevelt, Theodore, *The Foes of Our Own Household,* New York, 1917, Foreword, p. IX.
[453] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* p. 18–19.
[454] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* Appendix B, p. 362.
[455] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* p. 108–109.
[456] Luebke, p. 174.

at anyone whose concept of Americanism differed from his own." In Luebke's view Roosevelt's definition of a hyphenate as an American citizen who subordinates the interests of the United States to the interests of a foreign land meant in practice that "any German-born American citizen who advocated, for example, an embargo on the munitions trade" was a disloyal hyphenate who could be accused of treason. Luebke allows that Roosevelt sought to distinguish "professional German-Americans" from "Americans of German origin," but he sees that distinction as meaningless. Since Roosevelt had not developed a standard for testing whether the policies he favoured were genuinely in the national interest and therefore patriotic, he simply defined what was "disloyal" according to his own taste. Consequently, "anyone who retained ties with German culture could be accused of disloyalty."[457] This assertion places Luebke firmly among those historians who see that Roosevelt spread and fed intolerance during World War I.

Luebke has a point. He is, for instance, absolutely correct in asserting that Roosevelt became increasingly impatient of others trying to define Americanism. As a matter of fact, Roosevelt, seeking to distinguish himself from all the false prophets, often emphasized that he stood for "real Americanism,"[458] which suggests that he considered himself the only person entitled to define what the honour and the interests of the nation demanded. Others, supposedly, had waived that right when they failed to defend the prestige of the United States against German assaults.

Roosevelt's Americanism strove to make the United States a strong, united nation, which would have all its democratic freedoms intact and yet would be capable of showing unity of purpose during an international crisis. Against this vision it becomes understood why Roosevelt was so deeply ashamed of the United States' performance in the Great War under Wilson. A country that tolerated international wrong-doing in silence, broke its treaty obligations, neglected military preparedness, submitted to being kicked, and split into various ethnic and interest groups, all acting according to their own selfish motives, served only as a warning example. Roosevelt wrote in 1916:

"In this great crisis, I am trying to do my duty as a man whom they [the Americans] have trusted in the past, and to justify this trust by leading them aright, and by telling them what it is imperative that they should hear, and by striving to make native-American, Irish-American, German-American, English-American, standpatter or Progressive, Republican and Democrat, all alike, remember that in the last analysis, when it comes to dealing with the safety of the

[457] Luebke, p. 141–142, 127.
[458] Brands, p. 762.

nation, we should act as Americans and nothing else – and prepare in advance, so as to safeguard this republic against foreign attack."[459]

In view of Germany's outstanding performance in the European war, Roosevelt was genuinely worried about America's safety. Democracy would not prevail if the people − the German-Americans, for instance − used their political freedom to compromise national security. If America's "democratic ideal fails," the capitalists, the pacifists, and the hyphenates will be to blame: "For democracy will assuredly go down if it once be shown that it is incompatible with national security," Roosevelt observed. "If a nation cannot protect itself under a democratic form of government, then it will either die or evolve a new form of government."[460] Hence, "there must be preparedness for war," which was the immediate goal of Roosevelt's Americanism. There is no need to look into Roosevelt's preparedness plan any more than to state that he was trying to sell the nation his idea of "preparedness without militarism,"[461] which meant in practice that the United States should have a standing army of a quarter of a million men for emergencies and ample reserves for the needs of defensive warfare provided by a system of universal service after the Swiss model.[462]

Naturally, Roosevelt's Americanism was not confined to a narrow idea of how to best defend the country, but it was also a larger theory of how to best incorporate the immigrant masses into the American society. He outlined three fundamentals that needed to be secured in order to make the United States a nation in the true sense of the word: 1) a common language, English, the language of the Declaration of Independence, 2) increase of the social loyalty of the country to the level of undivided citizenship, and 3) removal of industrial and social unrest by giving social justice to every man.[463]

Each one of these three points was aimed at reducing the separatist tendencies of America's various ethnic groups. Roosevelt saw grave danger in the way German-America's cultural separatists, for example, organized themselves on an ethnic basis. If the English-Americans, Irish-Americans, French-Americans, and Scandinavian-Americans were to do the same, the result would be a

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[459] TR to Gifford Pinchot, Feb 8, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1016−1017. Pinchot was an expert of scientific forestry whom TR had made the chief of the Bureau of Forestry during his presidency.
[460] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 222−223.
[461] Roosevelt, Theodore, "Preparedness Without Militarism," *NYT*, Nov 15, 1914, p. SM5.
[462] TR to Menken, Jan 10, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1145–1146; Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 87−88, 94, 97−98.
[463] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, Appendix B, p. 370−374.

disjointed nation with a loose idea of citizenship that would be incapable of resisting foreign invasion. TR declared his strong disapproval: "We of America form a new nationality. We are by blood, and we ought to be by feeling, akin to but distinct from every nationality of Europe. If our various constituent strains endeavour to keep themselves separate from the rest of their fellow-country men by the use of hyphens, they are doing all in their power to prevent themselves and ourselves from ever becoming a real nationality at all."[464]

To the immigrant stocks Roosevelt's Americanism possibly presented itself as just another attempt to force Anglo-Saxon culture on them and to strip them of the political power that they had gained by applying a weapon called ethnic voting. But Roosevelt was also making a sincere plea for the immigrants not to condemn themselves to second-class citizenship in ghettos, something that sticking to the hyphen and separating from the American society could produce. Roosevelt might have hated the hyphen, but he did not hate the minorities that carried it.[465]

Quite the opposite, Roosevelt's Americanism was an open denouncement of the predatory values of materialist America and gave its blessing to the idea of turning the United States into a welfare society. For America to be efficient in time of war, American society first had to have a "solid basis of civil and social life" to make it efficient in time of peace. There had to be social justice, Roosevelt demanded, or the workers "will not feel that this is the country to which their devotion is due."[466] Ironically, instead of democracies like England and France, the great model for the United States to imitate, in TR's opinion, was Germany. This was the source of Roosevelt's admiration: *he wanted the United States to become Germany* − "adding thereto," as cited earlier, "the spirit of democratic justice and of international fair play." Roosevelt wrote: "There should be social cohesion. We must devise methods by which under our democratic government we shall secure the socialization of industry which autocratic Germany has secured, so that business may be encouraged and yet controlled in the general interest, and the wage-workers guaranteed full justice and their full share of the reward of industry...."[467] This was published in February 1916, so Dalton is obviously wrong in claiming that Roosevelt started to distance himself from his earlier praise for the German welfare society during the war.

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[464] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* p. 146.
[465] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* Appendix B, p. 373.
[466] TR to Menken, Jan 10, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1144−1145; Roosevelt, *Fear God,* Appendix B, p. 365.
[467] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* p. 223−224.

This is also why Roosevelt hoped to establish universal military service. Not only was it an excellent way of organizing the country's defense, but it also met the demand for social justice, since the wealthy could not buy their way out, but would serve side by side with the poor. Most importantly, universal service would be the best possible tool for Americanizing the immigrant. He would be won over from the "foreign communities within our borders, where men are taught to preserve their former national identity instead of entering unreservedly into our own national life" and instead he would "realize that he is a partner in this giant democracy, and has duties to the other partners."[468]

In essence, Roosevelt's Americanism was about promoting the idea that the Americans should place far less emphasis on rights and far greater emphasis on duty, and he expected that the German-Americans, too, would put "devotion to duty before the question of individual rights."[469] Roosevelt did not belong to that group of anti-hyphenates, who, as Luebke put it, never stopped to think how much the German-Americans were going through during the war − to claim so would be to suggest that his attack on the German-Americans was a misunderstanding. To the contrary, Roosevelt heard the "professional German-Americans" loud and well. His conflict with them was too profound to be an accident; if there were any misunderstandings, they were on the German-American side. Of course Roosevelt realized how painful the idea of a war between the United States and Germany was to the German-Americans personally. He realized it, but he simply did not accept it as a justification for their action. He stated laconically:

"Weak-kneed apologists for infamy say that it is 'natural' for American citizens of German origin to favor Germany. This is nonsense, and criminal nonsense to boot. Any American citizen who thus feels should be sent straight back to Germany, where he belongs.... We are... a new and distinct nation, and we are bound always to give our whole-hearted and undivided loyalty to our own flag, and in any international crisis to treat each and every foreign nation purely according to its conduct in that crisis."[470]

Roosevelt would not listen to sentimental babble. Life was strenuous, and during hard times people needed to toughen themselves, to look facts in the face, and to remember their duties. Roosevelt himself lived up to this doctrine, and he expected others to do the same. He therefore demanded that the German-Americans waive their political right to campaign against American participation in the

[468] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 99, 105, Appendix B, p. 370−371; TR to Menken, Jan 10, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1147.
[469] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, Appendix B, p. 364−365.
[470] Roosevelt, *The Foes of Our Own Household*, p. 62−63.

war, because it was their duty as American citizens to put their personal feelings aside and to acknowledge the fact that by campaigning for neutrality they were endangering national security. If the German-Americans did not have the stomach for it, they were guilty of treason and free to leave the country. Admittedly, a pretty demanding idea of citizenship, but that was how Roosevelt was built.

5.1.3 Facing Sabotage

In Roosevelt's opinion the duty of the German-Americans to rid themselves of the hyphen and to denounce Germany became even greater in August 1915, when the Americans learned of the German conspiracies carried out on American soil. Now, there was no reason to speculate any longer whether Germany would become a threat to the United States after the war or not – Germany *already had become* a threat to the United States.

There are two reasons why a detailed analysis of German sabotage is not necessary here. First of all, the sabotage missions were often carried out with such incompetence that in many cases they amounted to nothing. Secondly, the revelations about the sabotage did not change Roosevelt's views drastically – that would had been indeed difficult, considering that he had ceased to regard Germany as a "civilized" nation and had accused the "professional German-Americans" of treason even before the revelations. In contrast, German sabotage had a much greater effect on President Wilson who markedly shifted his policies after the magnitude of Germany's undercover operations had been revealed to him.[471]

The occasional incompetence of the German saboteurs operating in the United States was truly ironic, since Germany, as Henry Landau observes in his book, *The Enemy Within: the Inside Story of German Sabotage in America*, "possessed the largest and most effective secret service organization in Europe."[472] The problem was that Germany did not have its trained spies in the United States: it had expected a short war in which the American front would have only minor importance. By the time Germany realized its mistake, it was too late to ship a great number of

[471] Luebke, p. 143−145.
[472] Landau, p. 3.

spies to the United States, for the British navy had cut the Germans off the world overseas.[473] Under these circumstances Germany would had done wisely by letting it go, considering that the sabotage campaign it unleashed eventually did it more harm than good. But Berlin was determined to disrupt the flow of munitions from the United States to the Allies at any cost and sabotage seemed like a reasonable alternative. Accordingly, the German government made a hazardous decision by assigning the task of creating a spy organization in the United States to its official representatives – that is, to the diplomatic staff of the German Embassy in Washington.[474]

These amateur secret agents set out on their exciting mission like the whirlwind. They forged passports, spread and financed pro-German propaganda, recruited saboteurs, and propagated strikes and created destruction at American munitions plants with great enthusiasm.[475] Landau counts that between January 1915 and April 1917 forty-three American factories were either partially or completely destroyed by a fire or an explosion, causing the United States millions of dollars' worth of damage and the loss of several lives.[476]

Despite the semi-impressive results of the sabotage, it is difficult to understand what the Germans thought they could accomplish with it: it was a bomb that was just waiting to blow up in their own faces. On July 24, 1915, it finally exploded, and woke up Dr. Heinrich Albert, the German Embassy's commercial attaché. He had fallen asleep on an elevated train in New York whereupon a U.S. Secret Service agent stole his brief case. The contents of the brief case revealed the variety of Germany's schemes − from spreading pro-German propaganda in the United States to paralysing the munitions production of the country − and also proved the involvement of the German Embassy in these activities. This Germany's betrayal, when finally exposed by the New York *World* in August 1915, raised great anger in the United States.[477]

There is no evidence that German-Americans participated in the sabotage, but some of them did closely co-operate with the persons who instigated it. O'Connor mentions that the German plotters used the German-American Club of New York as their meeting place and feels that this should had worked as a warning to the German-Americans "of the slippery downward path they were being

[473] Landau, p. 3−4, 7; Luebke, p. 127.
[474] Landau, p. 8−9; O'Connor, p. 400.
[475] O'Connor, p. 401−404.
[476] Landau, p. 36; O'Connor, p. 403−404.
[477] Landau, p. 100−101; Luebke, p. 138−140; O'Connor, p. 401−402.

encouraged to follow."[478] As a matter fact, a counter-reaction was raising its head among those German-Americans who felt that German-America's cultural supremacists were exposing the whole community to accusations of disloyalty. Luebke quotes a German-American complaining in a letter to the editor that the attitudes of many German-Americans were being misrepresented "by the noisy pro-Wilhelmists in league with 'Germany's wonderful and efficient spy system.'"[479]

President Wilson's response to the sabotage was interesting. On the one hand, the administration was willing to believe German Embassy's assurances of innocence and was remarkably slow in gathering evidence against it. Wilson, for example, did not request the recall of Franz von Papen and Carl Boy-Ed, the two attachés in charge of the bombings, until December 1915, and Ambassador von Bernstorff was allowed to remain in his post at Washington all the way to the early 1917.[480] On the other hand, the revelations of the German conspiracies shook Wilson enough to prompt a change in policy: from the fall of 1915 onwards Wilson stood for anti-hyphenism. He declared in his State of the Union message of December 1915:

"There are citizens of the United States... who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life; who have sought to bring the authority and good name of our Government into contempt, to destroy our industries wherever they thought it effective for their vindictive purposes to strike at them, and to debase our politics to the uses of foreign intrigue.[481]

Luebke, who is almost equally critical of Wilson's anti-hyphenism as of Roosevelt's, disapproves of Wilson for making this statement "on the basis of no discernible evidence."[482] But Luebke appreciates the fact that Wilson, in order to prevent the growth of prejudice, never named nor singled out the German-Americans, because he "wanted his condemnation to apply with equal force to his Irish-American detractors."[483] Wilson also counterbalanced his State of the Union message by attacking also the men who advocate American participation in the European war while forgetting that their highest duty as American citizens was to keep the country at peace. In words that were obviously hurled at Roosevelt, Wilson announced that these men were no better than the hyphenates: "They also preach and practice disloyalty. I should not speak of others without also speaking of these and expressing the even deeper humiliation and scorn which every self-possessed

[478] O'Connor, p. 400.
[479] Luebke, p. 127.
[480] Landau, p. 54; Luebke, p. 54.
[481] Roosevelt, *The Foes of Our Own Household*, p. 77.
[482] Luebke, p. 144, 170−171.
[483] Luebke, p. 178.

and thoughtfully patriotic American must feel when he thinks of them and of the discredit they are daily bringing upon us."[484]

In contrast to Wilson, Roosevelt's response to the sabotage was much less dramatic. It needs to be kept in mind that he had closely associated with the German-Americans prior to the war and knew them much better than Wilson; he knew that there was no reason to doubt the patriotism of the great majority of them. So whereas Wilson reacted to the sabotage as if he had been suddenly awakened to some instant threat of a wider German-American conspiracy, Roosevelt kept to his course and continued to attack the professional German-Americans while assuring his faith in the patriotism of the majority of Americans of German descent.

Roosevelt probably resisted accusing the German-Americans of participation in sabotage, because there was no evidence of their involvement. On the other hand, Roosevelt considered it totally irrelevant whether two, twenty, or a thousand German-Americans had participated in the sabotage, for he did accuse the professional German-Americans of being responsible. He wrote in *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* that the Germans, together with those German-Americans whose allegiance was to Germany, had been carrying on "within our border a propaganda of which one of the results has been the partial or entire destruction by fire or dynamite of factory after factory."[485]

The pattern was the same almost every time that TR referred to the sabotage. He could accuse German-Americans of "playing the game of Germany,"[486] or Germans of "encouraging strikes and outrages at American munitions factories through their representatives,"[487] but he did not accuse the German-Americans of committing the acts themselves. That was not important to him; it was much more important to strongly condemn the German-Americans for supporting neutrality, for defending Germany's cause, and for co-operating with the German conspirators *even after* the revelations of the sabotage gave ample evidence that the German agents were creating destruction in the United States. Knowing this, it was incomprehensible to Roosevelt that the German-Americans nevertheless dared to claim that their action was in no way disloyal to the United States. He wrote: "If the Germans and German sympathizers... calling themselves American citizens, were

[484] Roosevelt, *The Foes of Our Own Household*, p. 78−79.
[485] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 115.
[486] Roosevelt, *The Foes of Our Own Household*, p. 77.
[487] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 131.

really genuinely patriotic, they would bend their energies to hunting out of the country the men who have been engaged in this infamous conspiracy....”[488]

German sabotage also provided Roosevelt with yet another opportunity to attack Wilson, and he, of course, enthusiastically seized it. More important than the criticism itself, however, is the light it sheds on how Roosevelt himself, as President, would have dealt with the German-American question. While Wilson in 1916 was campaigning for a second term in the White House with the catch phrase, “safety first,” Roosevelt offered the German conspiracies as proof that this “policy of dishonour” did not even secure the safety it sought: it invited not respect but murder. Roosevelt stated: “Germany and Austria have not only been carrying on war against us on the high seas. They have carried on war against us here in our own land.... This movement [German sabotage] is simply war; a war of assassination instead of open battle; but war nevertheless....”[489] The sabotage as well as the continued existence of the “German-American menace” resulted of that “same feebleness” which had marked Wilson’s German policy abroad.[490]

In his customary style Roosevelt repeated the accusation of Wilson being too soft. Although Wilson clearly objected to what the hyphenates were doing, he nevertheless was not willing to take the necessary measures in order to prevent the pro-Germans from carrying on their activities to which the destroyed factories bore witness. Roosevelt was not impressed: “Summary action of a drastic type would have put a stop to this warfare waged against our people in time of peace; but the Administration has not ventured to act.”[491] In the same context Roosevelt also took the opportunity to express his disgust of the German-American press for glorifying attacks on the United States. He deplored that the *Germania Herald* of Milwaukee, for instance, had written in reference to the destruction of an American munitions factory that “we rejoice from the depths of our heart over the destruction of these murderous machines” – such newspapers, TR concluded “should promptly be excluded from the mails.”[492]

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[488] TR to Richard L. Gorman, Nov 24, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 990. Gorman was the manager of the Majestic Theater in Boston.
[489] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 130–132.
[490] TR to the Progressive National Committee, Jun 22, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1072–1073; Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 79–80.
[491] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 115.
[492] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 130–132, 116.

In Roosevelt's eyes all these unpatriotic displays piled up into a mountain of evidence of German-American disloyalty. He absolutely detested the fact that Wilson none the less never mentioned the word "German-American" in denouncing the hyphenates. Luckily for Wilson, his path did not cross Roosevelt's following his December, 1915, State of the Union message, for TR was really steamed up – no one had ever called him a disloyal citizen before. Still seven months later, in September 1916, he vented his anger in his letter to Herbert Packard by bitterly criticising the manner in which Wilson had branded him as a man just as unpatriotic as the hyphenates. "In other words," TR complained, "he [Wilson] treated the Americans who did their duty by standing up for poor tortured and cruelly wounded Belgium as being as bad as the unspeakable scoundrels who dynamited our factories and murdered our men."[493]

Seeking to ravage Wilson's State of the Union message, Roosevelt charged that Wilson encouraged the pro-Germans to continue their activities by blurring the distinction between right and wrong: "It is axiomatic that to condemn, equally, good and bad actions is completely to destroy all effect of the condemnation of the bad. The net result... was really to... discourage and dishearten the great mass of American citizens of German blood who needed only fearless official leadership in order to make them the most effective of all possible instruments against the disloyal German propaganda."[494]

It is safe to conclude, then, that Roosevelt, as President, would not had tolerated the pro-German displays of the hyphenates, at least not to the extent that Wilson did. Roosevelt could not understand why Wilson spent his time merely complaining about the disloyalty of the hyphenates instead of fixing the problem. TR insisted that "summary action of a drastic type" would have put a stop to the sabotage, which suggests that he would had been ready to resort to strong measures in restoring order. Undoubtedly, he would had shown equal determination in silencing the professional German-Americans by, for instance, "excluding from mails" all newspapers that instigated disloyalty. In Roosevelt's opinion, executive power *was meant to be used*, and his message to Wilson could be put as follows: so there is commotion in German-America, then be a President, go get the trouble-makers, and lock them up.

Whether this recipe that TR put forth as a cure for the German-American problem – to restrict their right to express opinion and to apprehend or deport them if they none the less expressed opinions

[493] TR to Herbert W. Packard, Sep 2, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1111. Packard was a lawyer.
[494] Roosevelt, *The Foes of Our Own Household*, p. 80–82.

that could be classified as disloyal – should be applauded or condemned, is wholly another question. For sure, a society that persecutes its citizens for expressing their opinions during peace-time hardly classifies as a democracy. Yet in Roosevelt's definition Germany *already was* at war with the United States; to him, the fact that the United States was not yet at war with Germany was an unfortunate curiosity solely due to Wilson. Though devoted to democracy, Roosevelt placed it under one condition: a democratic government must be allowed to suspend some of the rights of its citizens during a crisis if by exercising those rights the citizens endanger national security. Democratic governments have often felt it necessary to act in a similar manner during war-time – during the First World War, France and England, for example, rounded up all their German-born citizens to internment camps. Ironically, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, TR's distant cousin, treated the Japanese-Americans during the Second World War along the lines that "Uncle Ted" had outlined during World War I, except that FDR went even further. Whereas TR suggested the detention of only those German-Americans, who were actively advancing Germany's cause, FDR rounded up a total of 112,000 Japanese-Americans in temporary detention centres, although they had not been involved in anything that could be classified as disloyal at all.[495]

Most importantly, Roosevelt argued that with his feebleness Wilson was not making clear to the German-Americans the line between loyalty and disloyalty: the great mass of them "needed only fearless official leadership in order to make them the most effective of all possible instruments against the disloyal German propaganda." Hence, Roosevelt argued that by silencing German-America's cultural supremacists the government could protect the German-Americans, as it would give a boost to the voices of moderation and self-censorship in their midst. This, in turn, might have spared the great majority of German-Americans the hatred that fell upon them after April 1917.

[495] O'Connor, p. 376–377.

5.2 ROLLING OVER GERMAN-AMERICA TO WAR

5.2.1 Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Wilson: Two Looks on Intolerance

By mid-1915 Theodore Roosevelt had become convinced that every honest American in his right mind would see that international justice and America's self-interest alike demanded that the United States abandon its neutrality and join the Allies. The fact that President Woodrow Wilson saw the matter in a different light suggested to Roosevelt that Wilson's motives were insincere. In his private letters Roosevelt made straightforward accusations that Wilson was counting that he could secure the large German-American vote and his re-election by keeping the country neutral. TR stated his suspicions often during the war, for instance, to Cecil Spring-Rice:

"He [Wilson] believes that in the course he has followed he will keep the pacificists with him here at home and placate the German vote and the extreme Irish vote – not the bulk of the Irish vote – which simply wants to harm Britain at any price."[496]

Of course, the purpose of this thesis is not in seeking answers to questions involving Wilson's relations with the German-Americans. Yet it will be rewarding to look into those relations briefly, since Wilson's anti-hyphen campaign serves as a marvellous point of comparison, which sets Roosevelt's anti-hyphen campaign in its right proportions. Also, the manner in which the German-Americans reacted to the respective anti-hyphen campaigns of these two gentlemen was truly interesting. Considering that Roosevelt was much more outspoken and aggressive in denouncing the German-Americans than Wilson, the conclusions that can be made after Wilson's anti-hyphenism has been analysed are quite surprising.

Since Wilson stood for neutrality, one could imagine that German-Americans were his strong supporters. But to the contrary, the relationship was rather unhappy, for German-Americans had a sharply different conception of neutrality than that of the Wilson administration. The main source of friction was the arms exports to the Allies. Wilson held to neutrality as laid down in international law, according to which the U.S. government was not responsible for the commerce in arms and

[496] TR to Spring-Rice, Nov 11, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 841.

munitions which private citizens or corporations might engage in.[497] Since the circumstances created by the British navy, however, so strongly favoured the Allies, German-Americans argued that it was more important to follow the spirit of neutrality rather than the letter of the law. True, international law permitted the trade, but the U.S. government had the right to place restrictions on it: to allow the trade to continue unrestricted would be un-neutral in fact and would invite war as Germany would be forced to try to restrict the trade with force. Hence, German-Americans insisted on absolute neutrality, no assistance of any kind given to either side, and vigorously lobbied for an arms embargo. Incidentally, an arms embargo would have meant that the Central Powers would had won the First World War.[498]

Next, the debate shifted focus to the question of financial loans. The State Department had in August 1914 implicitly banned loans to the belligerents as inconsistent with neutrality. But when the Allied need for war supplies soon exceeded their solvency, Wilson allowed the Allies to start shipping the goods home without paying and reasoned that it was a 'credit' instead of a 'loan' – evidently the Central Powers were supposed to find comfort from his semantics. Later, when the British deficit grew so enormous that the British pound took a serious dive in value, Wilson stepped in to save England by reversing the administration's policy and granting England a loan of a half billion dollars. The policy change was due, Wilson explained, to his realization that it would have been *un-neutral not to admit* the loan: if preventing belligerents from purchasing war goods would be un-neutral, then surely it would be also un-neutral to prevent a loan for those purchases. The German-Americans protested; in their opinion Wilson's policies betrayed his pro-British sympathies.[499]

German-Americans were, of course, absolutely right in sensing that someone in the White House was not being neutral. Despite all the high-sounding phrases he linked to it, Wilson's neutrality was never about being truly impartial. In fact, Wilson was by ancestry and by inclination a strong Anglophile from the South. O'Connor goes as far as to suggest that he merely paid "lip service" to the German-Americans with his declarations of impartiality while at the same time maintained a neutrality, which strongly favoured the Allies.[500]

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[497] Luebke, p. 118.
[498] O'Connor, p. 388–389; Luebke, p. 116–119.
[499] O'Connor, p. 390–391; Luebke, p. 147–149.
[500] O'Connor, p. 388–389.

Against this background it is easy to understand why the German-Americans so strongly resented the claims that by campaigning for neutrality and for an arms embargo they were being unpatriotic. From the German-American point of view, Wilson's concept of neutrality incidentally favoured the Allies, whereas their own concept incidentally favoured Germany. Then, why were they the only ones who were being accused of being disloyal citizens? The German-Americans knew the answer only too well: because the establishment of Anglo-Saxon America was pro-British. Whereas passionate addresses made on behalf of the Allies were never held to be akin to treason, the German-Americans soon found their patriotism questioned by President Wilson himself.[501]

Indeed, when Roosevelt accused Wilson of fishing for the German-American vote, his hatred was blurring his judgment. If it is justified to conclude that Wilson's manoeuvers were, to a considerable extent, motivated by politics – Luebke and Dalton at least claim so – then it can be stated that he went after the much larger native-American vote instead; and he did it by moving towards preparedness and anti-hyphenism, not allowing Roosevelt to capitalize on these issues that were gaining support among the people. All of a sudden, Wilson was all about patriotism and preparedness. "The President insisted, with all the moral authority of his office," Luebke concludes, "that military power was necessary to preserve peace with honor or to defend the cause of righteousness if war should come"[502] – amusingly, one could err to think that Luebke was referring to Roosevelt, not to Wilson. When Wilson won his re-election in November 1916, he did it not only by exploiting his reputation as the man "who kept us out of the war,"[503] but also by helping himself to Roosevelt's platform.

Wilson's dramatic change of heart disgusted Roosevelt and enhanced his image of Wilson as a calculating turncoat. He wrote to Senator Hiram Johnson, former Republican Governor of California: "I entirely agree with what you say about Wilson's conduct being the greatest instance of acted irony we have ever seen in American politics. He has not got a conviction in the world. He does not mind turning back and forth on any subject. If he thought he could get a re-election by declaring for war, he would declare for war; and if he thought he could get it by submitting to being kicked, he would submit to being kicked."[504]

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[501] O'Connor, p. 388–389, 393.
[502] Luebke, p. 159; Dalton, p. 462.
[503] Dalton, p. 472.
[504] TR to Hiram Warren Johnson, Apr 3, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1026.

The closer the elections came, the louder Wilson assured that he was out to erase the hyphen from American life. Luebke observes that Flag Day of June 14, 1916, gave Wilson an "opportunity to dramatize himself as the premier patriot, as the champion of national defense, and as the relentless foe of citizens with divided allegiances."[505] Already in his December, 1915, State of the Union message Wilson had thundered that the disloyal hyphenates "must be crushed out... the hand of our power should close over them at once." [506] On Flag Day, Wilson continued from where he had left off in his State of the Union message: "There is disloyalty in the United States, and it must be absolutely crushed. It proceeds from a minority, a very small minority, but a very active and subtle minority." Wilson ended his speech dramatically – to quote Luebke, "unintentionally encouraging acts of bigotry" – by pointing out to the American flag and asking his audience: "Are you going yourselves, individually and collectively, to see to it that no man is tolerated who does not do honor to that flag?"[507]

Ironically, in his books, articles, and speeches Roosevelt had singled out the "professional German-Americans," had denounced their dual loyalties, and had straightforwardly accused them of treason probably hundreds of times; and yet the above-quoted statements by Wilson seem more volatile than anything that TR had written about the German-Americans. Wilson's phrasing simply seems to possess much more potential for misunderstandings. It was not in Roosevelt's blood to be vague; if he had a problem with the German-Americans, he said so. He had stated multiple times that all Americans who were not singly loyal to the United States should be promptly returned to the countries that control their sympathies: whenever he made this demand, he made it clearly, leaving any room for misunderstandings.

Both O'Connor and Luebke are critical of Wilson's anti-hyphenism. O'Connor deplores that Wilson was unable to contain that hysteric discourse, which was running amok between the pro-Germans and the pro-Allies.[508] Luebke concludes that "when a democracy denies the right of a minority to act politically it is no democracy at all:" since Wilson never defined loyalty, he implied that "political opposition to his administration by immigrant citizens was tantamount to disloyalty."[509] Luebke feels that Roosevelt and Wilson alone cannot be blamed for the intolerance that became the dominating national mood in the United States after 1915, but they "rode its crest

[505] Luebke, p. 169.
[506] Luebke, p. 146.
[507] Luebke, p. 171.
[508] O'Connor, p. 393.
[509] Luebke, p. 171.

and sanctioned it with their moral authority." It became a custom to verbally assault immigrants with divided loyalties, which was "a category sufficiently vague to include any German-American who dissented from majority opinion."[510]

Luebke's, *Bonds of Loyalty. German-Americans and World War I* is a praiseworthy study. Generally speaking, he concentrates on establishing that the accusations of German-American disloyalty during World War I sprang up more from the growing intolerance of the American society than from factual evidence. From this it naturally follows that Luebke tends to criticise persons who fed that intolerance. Accordingly, he is critical of Wilson, but he is even twice as critical of Roosevelt. In fact, Luebke even seems to struggle with taking Roosevelt seriously as he basically depicts him as a bigot.

But as Luebke's main focus is on the German-Americans, he looks at Roosevelt from a very narrow perspective and is content with what meets the eye at first glance: as a consequence, he fails to do Roosevelt justice by misinterpreting his motives and aims. Luebke is, of course, correct in asserting that TR detested the hyphen, but he makes the mistake of assuming that Roosevelt's "obsessive hatred of the hyphen"[511] would have been the driving force of his crusade against the German-Americans. Luebke seems to suggest, then, that Roosevelt was mainly motivated by a dislike of multiculturalism, perhaps even by prejudice of the German-Americans.

If something does not seem to support the idea that Roosevelt was an extremist, Luebke leaves it unmentioned. He does not mention that Roosevelt greatly admired Germany (perhaps he is with those historians who assume that by this time Roosevelt had become a German-hater). Nor does he mention that Roosevelt constantly assured his admiration for Americans of German origin of which the following statement is a good demonstration: "There are not, and never have been, in all our land, better citizens than the great mass of the men and women of German birth or descent...."[512] In *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* Roosevelt expressed his gratitude for the influence the German-Americans had had on the American society:

"The German element has contributed much to our national life, and can yet do much more in music, in literature, in art, in sound constructive citizenship. In the greatest of our national crises, the Civil War, a larger percentage of our citizens

[510] Luebke, p. 143–145.
[511] Luebke, p. 174.
[512] TR to the Progressive National Committee, Jun 22, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1071–1072.

of recent German origin, than of our citizens of old revolutionary stock, proved loyal to the great ideals of union and of liberty. I am myself partly of German blood. I believe that this country has more to learn from Germany than from any other nation – and this as regards fealty to non-utilitarian ideals, no less than as regards the essentials of social and industrial efficiency....[513]

Luebke seems to be of the opinion that Roosevelt should be condemned for accusing the German-Americans of disloyalty, because they did not deserve to become branded as disloyal. Undoubtedly so, but it was more complicated than that. The matter cannot be treated as a mere civil rights issue, wholly detached from the war. Certainly the German-Americans had every right to support neutrality, but there are other issues that need to be considered, too – at least if one cares to understand Roosevelt, who was looking at the bigger picture. One simple question is enough to demonstrate this: had the German-Americans succeeded in establishing an arms embargo or in keeping the United States neutral, what would had been the fate of Belgium? Luebke fails to emphasize that by seeking to prevent the United States from taking action against Germany the German-Americans were playing exactly the part on which von Bernhardi had counted on them playing in his book *Germany and the Next War*. Roosevelt felt that he could not allow it, and, defying Luebke's disapproving tone of voice, obviously did what he did with a great sense of pride and moral duty.

Roosevelt's crusade against the German-Americans was not motivated by hatred or prejudice of Germany or of German-Americans. Nor did he resent the idea of increasing German influence in the American society; in fact, he seems to have been in favour of increasing it *as long as such designs did not disrupt his Americanism*. His anti-hyphen campaign was first and foremost an attack on a group of Americans, who, with their divided allegiances, endangered the safety of the nation *by keeping the country neutral*. The key to understanding why Roosevelt was so angry at the hyphenates during World War I can be found by considering his admiration for the Germans. Everything that has been examined in this thesis suggests that Roosevelt, though not sympathetic to Germany's cause, nevertheless felt that the Germans had a reason to feel proud of the effort they had put in to the war *as a nation* (this assertion alone, if one agrees with it, automatically destroys the case of those historians who argue that TR ceased to admire Germany as a result of the war). Now, Roosevelt demanded that the German-Americans, *as American citizens*, start showing similar national spirit as the Germans by dropping the hyphen and admitting that they must fight the Germans.

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[513] Roosevelt, *Fear God*, p. 41. See also, p. 140.

The best way to demonstrate that Roosevelt's anti-hyphen campaign was not motivated by prejudice is to compare it with Wilson's anti-hyphen campaign. Luebke is mistaken when assuming that Roosevelt's attack on the German-Americans would had been somehow less subtle and warranted than Wilson's. As a matter of fact, Luebke serves as an example of a scholar who puts way too much weight on Roosevelt's fiery behaviour and rhetoric: for Luebke, Roosevelt was "always the jingo" and a man whose "self-righteousness had dulled his political acumen;" in addition, TR was a "constant embarrassment to the Republicans."[514] So whereas Roosevelt's "characteristic lack of moderation"[515] clearly alienates Luebke, simultaneously he seems over-impressed by the fact that Wilson refrained from naming the German-Americans in his anti-hyphen campaign.

O'Connor, on the other hand, argues rather convincingly that Roosevelt actually dealt with the sensitive German-American question much more delicately than Wilson.[516] The big difference was that Wilson was an Anglo-American to his fingertips, and the following war-time writing by a German-American clergyman, introduced by Luebke, shows how much the German-Americans resented the fact:

"If I ever have been sorry for a deed, it is that I helped elect Wilson [in 1912]. I am a born American.... I have been as good an American as ever any of the Wilsons were. Yea a better American, because none of my ancestors raised a hand against the Stars and Stripes, like Wilsons ancestors, but some had an opportunity to fight for it. And to be called an undesirable citizen by a man, who's only boast is, that he is a fine breed Englishman, who feels at home in English surroundings, is indeed strong!"[517]

German-American indignation at Wilson becomes best understood by comparing their views on the important war issues. Wilson supported neutrality; so did the German-Americans. Wilson did not feel that the German invasion of Belgium obligated the United States to protest or to intervene; neither did the German-Americans. Wilson did not feel that the sinking of the *Lusitania* or other similar sinkings required the United States to severe its relations with Germany; neither did the German-Americans. This being the case, Wilson could have based his accusations of German-American disloyalty only on their participation in the German sabotage of which he had no

[514] Luebke, p. 175.
[515] Luebke, p. 144.
[516] O'Connor, p. 393.
[517] Luebke, p. 160.

evidence. In other words, Wilson's attacks on the German-Americans did not have any justification at all: he questioned their patriotism only out of suspicion and prejudice of their origin, which did not happen to be Anglo-Saxon.

Roosevelt at least had a case – whether one agreed with it or not. He emphasized the duties of citizenship and made it clear that he considered the negligence of those duties equally condemnable by the Anglo-Americans or the Native-Americans (or the President!) as by the German-Americans or the Irish-Americans. This allows O'Connor to argue that Roosevelt, although he alienated the German-Americans with his accusations, nevertheless earned their grudging respect with his frankness.[518] By repeatedly affirming his belief in the loyalty and patriotism of the minorities, he did not convey a feeling that the ethnics were being considered second-class citizens. The following extract from *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* demonstrates this:

"There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism. When I refer to hyphenated Americans, I do not refer to naturalized Americans. Some of the very best Americans I have ever known were naturalized Americans, Americans born abroad. But a hyphenated American is not an American at all. This is just as true of the man who puts 'native' before the hyphen as of the man who puts German or Irish or English or French before the hyphen. Our allegiance must be purely to the United States. We must unsparingly condemn any man who holds any other allegiance. But if he is heartily and singly loyal to this Republic, then no matter where he was born, he is just as good an American as any one else."[519]

Also, if Roosevelt was an anti-German bigot, then why did he feel misunderstood? He felt misunderstood, because he considered himself thoroughly friendly to all "loyal" Americans of German descent and seemed even a bit hurt that they portrayed him as their enemy and an extremist. Dismayed, Roosevelt wrote in August 1916 to the Republican presidential candidate, Charles Evans Hughes, that the trouble was "that many good people of foreign birth or parentage are entirely unable to differentiate, and think that I am attacking all of the naturalized voters, or the sons of the foreign-born, when I am only attacking those who endeavour to remain foreigners as well as German-Americans."[520] Roosevelt further vented his frustrations in *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*:

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[518] O'Connor, p. 393–394.
[519] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* Appendix B, p. 361–362. See also, TR to Guy Emerson, May 11, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1040. Emerson was a banker and the secretary of the Theodore Roosevelt Non-Partisan League.
[520] TR to Charles Evans Hughes, Aug 11, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1099.

"It has been a matter of sincere regret to me to part company with so many German friends who believe that I have been unkind to Germany. It has also been a matter of sincere grief to me to find that my position has been misunderstood and misrepresented and resented by many upright fellow-citizens to whom in the past I have been devoted, but who have left their loyalty to Germany, the land from which they themselves or their forefathers came, blind them to their loyalty to the United States and their duty to humanity at large."[521]

In December 1915 Roosevelt's complaint that he was being misunderstood received surprising support. His German-American correspondent, Harvard professor Hugo Münsterberg, who strongly disagreed with Roosevelt's views on the war, stunned everyone by suggesting in a newspaper article that the German-Americans should support Roosevelt for President in 1916. Münsterberg wrote that TR's personality "makes him a pro-German in all that is best in him" and advised his fellow German-Americans that they should keep his insults in perspective and "not stumble over adjectives."[522]

Münsterberg's suggestion reflected the fact that the German-Americans were desperately seeking someone they could support in the upcoming presidential elections. The prospects did not look good. The self-evident Democratic candidate would be Wilson, who had deeply offended them. On the Republican side there was Henry Cabot Lodge and Elihu Root, both of them anti-German. And then there was Roosevelt, who was totally out of the question as he would take the country to war with Germany. So, when Charles Evans Hughes in the spring of 1916 emerged as a potential Republican candidate, the German-American organizations and the German-American press adopted him as their own – in fact, they were so eager to prevent Roosevelt from getting the nomination that they gave their support for Hughes without the slightest idea where he stood on questions related to the war.[523]

Münsterberg, however, seems to have known better. It seems that he was one of the very few who truly understood Roosevelt's relationship with Germany and realized that TR, though the loudest advocate of war against Germany, in reality was sympathetic towards the Germans, much more so than many champions of neutrality. That Münsterberg was willing to support Roosevelt naturally suggests that he realized, as many people at the time did, that it would be only a matter of time when the United States would join the war. Assuming that this was the case, Münsterberg

[521] Roosevelt, *Fear God,* p. 40.
[522] Luebke, p. 161.
[523] Luebke, p. 165–168.

apparently believed, with good reason, that Roosevelt would be the best guarantee that Germany and the German-Americans could get of future fair treatment during and after the war. It is all the more ironic, then, that American media at the time treated Münsterberg's suggestion almost as a joke, whereas Luebke, still capable of seeing Roosevelt only as an extremist, ends up casting the suggestion aside as "Muensterberg's ineptitude." The possibility that Münsterberg knew his friend well does not seem to have even visited Luebke's head as he regards his article only as proof that the German-Americans were willing to consider for the presidency anyone who promised to beat Wilson.[524]

It would be tempting to clear Roosevelt's record of all sins and to declare that his attacks on the German-Americans were due solely to his realization that they, with their dual loyalties, were paralysing the United States just when its muscles would have been most needed in putting a stop to international wrong-doing by Germany. That cannot be done, however, for there is still one more question that needs to be examined – the question of language. Roosevelt wrote in *The Foes of Our Own Household*:

> "The American citizens who traitorously preach such doctrines [defending the German cause] sometimes preach them in the English tongue, sometimes in the German. Those who use the former are the more despicable; but those who use the latter are the more dangerous because the great bulk of their loyal fellow citizens are ignorant of the speech in which they write treason. The events of the last few years have made it evident that in this country we should not only refuse to tolerate a divided allegiance but also that we should insist on one speech. We must have in this country but one flag, the American flag, and for the speech of the people but one language, the English language. It would be not merely a misfortune but a crime to perpetuate differences of language in this country, for it would mean failure on our part to become in reality a nation."[525]

Of all the stands that Roosevelt took during the Great War, this is perhaps the most disappointing one. Why on earth would he want to champion ignorance? He was demanding nothing less than the German-Americans give up their mother's tongue, because their fellow citizens were "ignorant" of the language in which they wrote; if the German-Americans refused to do so but "perpetuated differences of language" instead, they were, in Roosevelt's opinion, guilty of a crime. Evidently it did not matter much that the Germans had *always* been in the United States and that parts of the country had spoken German ever since the Declaration of Independence: Roosevelt had no right to

[524] Luebke, p. 161–162, 165.
[525] Roosevelt, *The Foes of Our Own Household*, p. 72–74.

deny the German-Americans of their right to continue to do so, and the fact that he equalled it to treason was an act of bigotry.

Roosevelt had always seen beauty in simplicity and had a craving for unity. So whereas he was more than willing to introduce German ideals into America's social and industrial life and transplant the German welfare society,[526] he nevertheless wanted to shut the door to German culture, because multiculturalism would pose a threat to his Americanism, which in practice meant Anglicising the immigrant. It probably did not occur to Roosevelt, however, that by adding his language views into the mixture of his wartime anti-hyphenism he corrupted his campaign against the German-Americans, and Luebke was right after all. No matter how hard Roosevelt sought to distinguish Americans of German descent from the professional German-Americans, the distinction was meaningless – everyone who retained ties with German culture indeed could have been accused of disloyalty. When complaining that the German-Americans had misunderstood him, Roosevelt was wasting his breath. The German-Americans understood perfectly well that Roosevelt did not wish for a pluralistic America, where the German-Americans could freely exercise their *Deutschtum*. Roosevelt's wish was soon about to come true, but he would fail to see beauty in it.

5.2.2 Roosevelt's Pyrrhic Victory

In the latter half of the year 1916, Theodore Roosevelt was a bit cranky, to say the least. After being one of the world's most powerful men for seven years, it was tough for him to find that things were not going his way at all. The last couple of years had been hellish. He had lost a lot of friends. The people ignored him, and he had been ridiculed. He had been forced to watch helpless as his country was being kicked around. In June 1916 he had been snubbed by the Republican National Convention, and in November 1916 Wilson was re-elected almost with the smallest possible margin. Without a doubt, Roosevelt was hurting. His letters from the period are rather painful to read as he seemed to be at war with the whole world:

"I despise Wilson; but I despise still more our foolish, foolish people who, partly from ignorance, and partly from sheer timidity, and partly from lack of imagination and of sensitive national feeling, support him."[527]

[526] TR to Münsterberg, Feb 8, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1017.
[527] TR to Anna Roosevelt Cowles, Jul 23, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1094.

TR could have gone to France to lick his wounds. In France he was hailed as a hero, whereas Wilson's name was cursed, and the French were begging him to come over to re-establish America's lost prestige.[528] Roosevelt's ego undoubtedly could have used some pampering, but he wisely declined the invitations. "I can't express any public opinion as to our policy without unreservedly and bitterly assailing Wilson," he explained to Robert Perkins Bass, the governor of New Hampshire, "and I am not willing to publicly assail the American president except in the United States and to my own people."[529]

As a matter of fact, Roosevelt very much desired to go to France, but he was planning to go in as a soldier – for naturally the ex-President, in poor health and almost sixty-years-old, intended to take part in the war personally if only the United States were to join it. Earlier in this chapter it has been argued that the driving force of TR's anti-hyphenism during World War I was first and foremost his intolerance of those elements of the American society that kept the country neutral. Roosevelt's personal desires, which became clearly visible in early 1917, support this hypothesis.

At that point the war had been fought in Europe for more than two years. Everything about the Great War had been so momentous that one could not even mention the Spanish-American War in the same breath. This was the civilized world against *Germany* – the Great Debased, which nevertheless inspired Roosevelt in a way that no other country could as it possessed all the virtues he most admired. TR felt destined to fight the Germans: it would be the greatest trial of strength of his life and the ultimate test for American democracy. Roosevelt was angry at everything with a pulse, *because he was missing action*. Because of all the greedy money-grabbers, spineless cowards, disloyal scoundrels, and worthless creatures, Roosevelt was missing out all the fun he could have had in the muddy trenches of France. He was dead serious. The First World War was to be the crowning achievement of his life-work, and he was ready to do everything he legitimately could to make the United States to declare war on Germany. His motive even for revealing the truth concerning the Venezuelan crisis of 1902–1903 had been in "restoring the self-respect" of the Americans by showing them that under "*proper leadership* the United States can stand up to Germany."[530]

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[528] TR to Spring-Rice, Nov 24, 1915; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 989. Gabriel Hanotaux, France's former Minister for Foreign Affairs and Wilson's outspoken critic, was among those Frenchmen who invited TR to France.
[529] TR to Robert Perkins Bass, Jul 28, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1094.
[530] TR to Thayer, Aug 27, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1107.

But in late 1916 it looked like that there might not be war after all. President Wilson, after a German submarine had torpedoed a French steamer *Sussex* in March 1916, had threatened to sever relations with Germany unless it immediately abandoned its warfare against merchant and passenger ships. His ultimatum reached Berlin at a time when there was a heated debate within the German government over submarine policy. Military and naval leaders were pressing the Kaiser to announce unrestricted submarine warfare, whereas politicians, led by Bethmann-Hollweg, argued against it as it would bring the United States into the war. William agreed with Bethmann-Hollweg; accordingly, Germany gave the *Sussex* pledge on May 4, 1916, announcing that hereafter its submarines would observe the rules of visit and search before sinking merchant vessels. This improved German-American relations considerably.[531]

Cooper is much impressed by the *Sussex* pledge, regarding it as Wilson's diplomatic victory. "He [Wilson] showed the greatest strength and resourcefulness in his dealings with the Germans," Cooper feels.[532] In so concluding, however, Cooper disregards evidence that suggest that not only were the Germans playing Wilson but in addition there would seem to be plenty of reason to question the moral soundness of Wilson's dealings with Germany. For instance, when a German submarine sank six European ships right off the North American coast a month before the elections in October 1916, Wilson hurried to warn German Ambassador von Bernstorff that such action could throw the election to the pro-war Republicans.[533] Indeed, the best explanation for Germany's improved behaviour came from the Kaiser: "[Ambassador] Gerard's utterances had made it clear that Wilson was seeking a ladder for re-election. It was better, then, that we should offer him the ladder of peace than the ladder of war, *which will eventually fall on our heads*."[534] In other words, Germany wanted to re-elect Wilson, because its best chance of winning the war was with him.

Less than two months from Wilson's re-election, on January 8, 1917, the Kaiser finally decided in favour of an all-out submarine campaign, which would go into effect on February 1. German military leaders assured the Kaiser that he had made a wise decision. They were convinced that submarine warfare would bring England to its knees before the Americans would arrive in Europe, because the United States was not even near of being ready to fight.[535] On February 3, the Germans

[531] Link, p. 215–218.
[532] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 291.
[533] Dalton, p. 469.
[534] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 356.
[535] Gilbert, p. 306; Link, p. 263

torpedoed an American cargo ship the *Housatonic*. Ambassador Gerard in Berlin was upset over the sinking, but the newly appointed German Foreign Minister Alfred von Zimmermann advised him to relax: "America will do nothing, for President Wilson is for peace and nothing else. Everything will go on as before." But not this time, not anymore; Wilson announced still on the same day that the United States will break its diplomatic relations with Germany.[536]

As a matter of fact, Zimmermann was making himself a name as he would soon earn his place in history as one of the biggest buffoons of World War I. After Germany had reached its decision to start unrestricted submarine warfare, Zimmermann made a spectacular plan. In mid-January he sent instructions to the German Minister in Mexico City, but the coded message was intercepted by the British, who managed to decypher it on February 19.[537] This was the so called Zimmermann telegram, which was meant for Mexico and said:

"We intend to begin unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor to keep the United States neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support, and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona."[538]

The telegram was made public in the United States on March 1, 1917, raising a wave of anger. To the German-American press the telegram appeared so stupid that they immediately claimed it a pitiful example of British propaganda. They were left embarrassed, however, when the inept Zimmermann two days later admitted in a press conference in Berlin that the message was authentic. What was he thinking? Marshall concludes that it was the "combined impact" of unrestricted submarine warfare and of the Zimmermann telegram that eventually carried the United States into the war.[539]

Following the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Germany on February 3, Roosevelt got so excited that he unleashed his forbidden desires, which he had kept in control for so many years. Between February 2 and March 23, 1917, he sent Wilson's Secretary of War, Newton Baker, altogether four letters in which he volunteered to raise an infantry division and enthusiastically described how he planned to have it ready for "efficient action at the earliest moment, so that it

[536] Gilbert, p. 308; Marshall, p. 268.
[537] Gilbert, p. 308, 312.
[538] Marshall, p. 268.
[539] O'Connor, p. 404–405; Marshall, p. 267–269; Gilbert, p. 312.

could be sent across with the first expeditionary force....” Each time Baker patiently replied to the ex-President and urged patience, noting that Congress had not yet declared war.[540] “But if we were at war,” TR wrote to his old friend, the French Ambassador Jules Jusserand, “I should be profoundly unhappy unless I got into the fighting line.”[541]

This was enthusiasm of an old warrior getting ready for his last battle. Roosevelt had had a good life and he had led it hoping that it would inspire the youth of America and teach them that the only life worth living was the strenuous life, a life of self-sacrifice and duty. Now, his last wish was to set an example in death, too – that would make it perfect. The following rather cute passage is from his letter to William Allen White:

“As for myself, at this time I think I could do this country most good by dying in a reasonably honorable fashion, at the head of my division in the European War. Mind you, I don’t intend to die if it can be legitimately avoided; and I suppose I shall have my hands full in getting to the front at all, with the dreadful creatures we have at Washington.”[542]

Indeed, Roosevelt was getting ahead of things, for Wilson was as determined to keep the country out of the war as he had ever been. He had not meant that the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Germany would be followed by a declaration of war; to the contrary, he had severed relations on the assumption that the shock would make Germany to abandon submarine warfare.[543]

But Germany had other plans, like winning the war. It stepped up its submarine campaign tremendously. Even within the limits of the *Sussex* pledge German submarines had sank on an average about 350,000 tons of Allied shipping per month from October 1916 through January 1917, but in February the number doubled to 781,500 tons, followed by another 500,000 tons sank in March.[544] While Wilson pondered his next step, U.S. army generals were getting confused. The army was not in a condition to fight and they requested permission for starting rapid preparation for war, but were told by the government “to mind their own business.” On February 25, a German submarine sank the Cunard liner *Laconia*, killing four Americans. In mid-March Germany sank four American ships within five days. Still, there was no declaration of war from Wilson. A panic started to spread in the Allied camp: the French and British troops were losing faith in their own

[540] TR to Newton Diehl Baker, Feb 17, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1151. TR’s other letters to Baker; Feb 2, 1917, p. 1149–1150; Mar 19, 1917, p. 1164; and Mar 23, 1917, p. 1166.
[541] TR to Jean Jules Jusserand, Feb 16, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1152.
[542] TR to White, Feb 17, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1153.
[543] Marshall, p. 267–268.
[544] Marshall, p. 274; Link, p. 254.

officers who were getting them slaughtered, Russia's war effort had been paralysed by a revolution, and it seemed almost impossible to get Wilson to declare war.[545]

Roosevelt did not want to jeopardize his chances of getting his division by antagonizing Wilson. During these two months, February and March, 1917, he kept quiet, watched, waited, grew impatient, and, in the end, could hardly contain his rage anymore. "If he [Wilson] does not go to war with Germany," he wrote to Lodge on March 13, "I shall skin him alive."[546] He let out steam also in his letter to Hiram Johnson, the Senator from California:

"He [Wilson] is a very cold & selfish man; a very timid man when it comes to... physical danger, and I don't think he is capable of understanding the emotion of patriotism, or the emotion of real pride in one's country. As for shame, he has none, and if anyone kicks him, he brushes his clothes, and utters some lofty sentence.... But I believe he possesses a merciless vindictiveness and malice toward all who have exposed his mean misconduct. Whether we will really go to war or not, Heaven only knows, and certainly Mr. Wilson doesn't."[547]

By the end of March, however, Wilson was ready to face the inevitable. It must be said that his desire to avoid war and to protect American lives had been sincere, and it took many sleepless nights for him to reach his decision. In his war address of April 2, Wilson finally asked Congress to declare war on Germany, which it did four days later, April 6, 1917. In his address Wilson urged the Americans, twice, to spare their fellow citizens of German descent from hostilities[548] – perhaps he should had said it thrice.

It did not result in whole-sale killing – apparently only one German-American was lynched during the war – but some got tarred and feathered and many more got beaten by angry mobs. The onslaught, however, took the form of something worse than physical violence: it turned out to be a murder of an entire culture. Restrictions were imposed on German-American newspapers of which many were forced to cease publication as a result. Persons reading German-language newspapers in public were verbally abused and spat upon. Promotions were denied to persons bearing German names and anonymous callers pressured business-owners to fire the German-Americans on their payroll. The windows of shops bearing German names were smashed. German city names, street names, park names, and school names were changed. Sauerkraut was converted into liberty

[545] Gilbert, p. 314; Link, p. 269–270, 275.
[546] TR to Lodge, Mar 13, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1162.
[547] TR to Johnson, Feb 17, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1153–1154.
[548] Gilbert, p. 317–318; Link, p. 275–278, 281–282; O'Connor, p. 412; Luebke, p. 208.

cabbage, hamburger into liberty steak, and the frankfurter into the hot dog. Even dachshunds, schnauzers, and German shepherds – temporarily renamed Alsatians – had to take frequent beatings. German music was banned, because it appealed to the emotions and had, in the words of American Defense Society, "power to sway an audience as nothing else can." No one, apparently, was quite as un-American as Beethoven and Bach. German language was under attack. German books were burned and the teaching of German in schools became forbidden by statute in twenty-six states. In South Dakota it was illegal to speak German over the telephone and in assemblies of more than three persons. And just like that, German-America had vanished. Still at the outbreak of the Great War, the German-Americans formed the most solidly established minority group in the United States – today, it is the least noticeable.[549]

For Roosevelt the declaration of war was a moment of vindication. It wiped off his stigma, as he turned almost over night from a disloyal dissenter into a wise and caring father of the nation: once again, he was America's beloved Colonel.[550] Not that his long torment would had been over: the fate of his precious division still hung annoyingly in the air. Secretary of War Baker had not been very co-operative, which really did not leave Roosevelt with any other option. Although he hated the idea, he had to go, hat-in-hand, to meet President Wilson in the White House and to ask him for the permission to raise his division[551] – that was how badly he wanted to fight the Germans.

The interview did not start well – not surprisingly, Wilson's reception was icy. But Roosevelt knew how to get his will through people and not even Wilson was immune to his charm. The President's aides later witnessed that the meeting was cordial and even warm as Roosevelt gradually won Wilson over. TR seemed willing to leave past differences behind. He flattered Wilson by saying that his war message would rank "with the great state papers of Washington and Lincoln" *if only he made it good*. Then he proceeded to ask for the permission to raise his division. "Mr. President, what I have said and thought... is all dust in a windy street, if now we can make your message good," Roosevelt said. "Now, all that I ask is that I be allowed to do all that in me is to help make good this speech of yours...."[552] Roosevelt spiced his plea, Wilson later recalled, by joking that if Wilson only were to grant him the permission to go to France, he would promise not to come back alive.[553]

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[549] Luebke, p. 241–252; O'Connor, p. 412–414.
[550] Harbaugh, p. 498; Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 330.
[551] Brands, p. 780.
[552] TR to O'Laughlin, Apr 13, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1173.
[553] Dalton, p. 476; Harbaugh, p. 500.

By the time Roosevelt was done, Wilson's whole staff was thoroughly taken by him. "Yes, he is a great big boy," even Wilson confessed. "There is a sweetness about him that is very compelling. You can't resist the man." Roosevelt left the White House feeling confident. The U.S. Congress had authorized the use of voluntary troops and applications from people who wanted to fight alongside Roosevelt were pouring in by the thousands. The American public and the media heartily supported giving Roosevelt his division and, most importantly, so did the Allies. There were well-grounded reasons why Roosevelt's request should have been denied but none of them were compelling and they could have been countered with equally well-grounded reasons in his favour.[554] It would be entirely Wilson's call.

"But the division was not to be," Roosevelt's daughter, Alice, wrote in her memoirs, *Crowded Hours*. "It was the bitterest sort of blow for Father…."[555] Georges Clemenceau, the future French Premier, urged Wilson to reconsider. His open letter ended with a plea made on behalf of the soldiers of France to give them "something approaching a miracle" – "send them Roosevelt." But Wilson's decision stood.[556] Historians are not totally in accord whether this was revenge, but later, in another context, Wilson told his aide: "I really think the best way to treat Mr. Roosevelt is to take no notice of him. That breaks his heart and is the best punishment that can be administered." During the public debate that followed, Roosevelt's record in the Spanish-American War was questioned, if not ridiculed, by those politicians who supported the President's decision[557] – if it was revenge, it was perfect.

Roosevelt never really recovered from the blow. Americans set out to fight Imperial Germany with great vigour, but the man who had paved the way for the war was cruelly cast aside and left home to brood: Roosevelt missed his great showdown with Germany due to the man he most despised. During his remaining days, Roosevelt suffered from severe health problems and even complained of being "depressed." His hard luck war had one more nasty surprise in store for him. His son Quentin was killed in the Great War on July 14, 1918. Being perhaps the lesson he needed on the nature of modern war, Roosevelt was grief-stricken.[558]

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[554] Harbaugh, p. 501–503.
[555] Longworth, Alice Roosevelt, *Crowded Hours. Reminescences of Alice Roosevelt Longworth*, New York, 1933, p. 247.
[556] Harbaugh, p. 501–502.
[557] Harbaugh, p. 501–503; Dalton, p. 477.
[558] Gilbert, p. 441; Dalton, p. 480, 503.

He tried to make himself useful by writing articles in support of the Allied cause and in bitter criticism of Wilson's prosecution of the war. Also, he did much more than the administration to protect Americans of German descent from discrimination and persecution[559] – guess Münsterberg's suggestion of supporting him for President had not been that inept after all. The shipping of troops from the United States to Europe really did not get well under way until in the spring of 1918.[560] Roosevelt thought the way in which the war had caught the United States unprepared unforgivable and he admonished his countrymen that Europe had paid a heavy price for it: "For the last three years our foremost duty, to ourselves and to the world, has been to prepare. This duty we have shamefully neglected, and our neglect is responsible for the dragging on of the war, and for the needless sacrifice of myriads of lives."[561]

But Roosevelt did have one source of consolation: Wilson's war message of April 2, 1917, was indisputably Roosevelt's trophy. "His [Wilson's] message bears out all I have said for the past two and a half years," TR wrote in April 13, 1917, "and condemns all he has said and done for those two and a half years."[562] It satisfied Roosevelt to know that he had humbled Wilson by being right on Germany: once again, he had read the minds of the Kaiser, von Tirpitz, Bethmann-Hollweg, and others, correctly. For two and a half years he had advocated confronting Germany on the belief that it respected only strength and he had tried to impress on Wilson that it was pointless to reason with Germany with words that were not backed up by force. What he had done, he had done wholly without malice towards Germany. To the contrary, he knew very well that sometimes one must protect Germany from itself by not allowing it to go too far − he knew this, because he himself was driven by the same ambition. Looking back in 1916, Roosevelt, of course, felt that he had done very well indeed. "For six years," he judged, "I have been I believe emphatically right."[563]

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[559] Dalton, p. 479, 501–502.
[560] Ferrell, Robert H., *Woodrow Wilson and World War I*, New York, 1985, p. 53.
[561] Roosevelt, *Foes of Our Own Household*, p. 31.
[562] TR to O'Laughlin, Apr 13, 1917; *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 1173.
[563] TR to Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, Jul 21, 1916; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 1091. Corinne was TR's younger sister.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Theodore Roosevelt's early responses to World War I have been widely misinterpreted, partly because historians have failed to consider the following possibility: he did not have to be hostile to Germany to be willing to use military force against it. Hence, the conclusion of this thesis is that Roosevelt condemned the German invasion of Belgium and denounced Wilson's neutrality policy *earlier* but became anti-German *later* than historians have suggested. The transformation process that turned him anti-German during World War I advanced according to the following time-line:

When Germany invaded Belgium on August 4, 1914, Roosevelt resented this violation of the Hague conventions from the beginning. Considering the importance of the issues involved, however, he was willing to reserve judgment for a week or two until he got his facts straight. By August 22, at the latest, Roosevelt was ready to condemn the invasion, which he did without reservations in his private letter to Arthur Lee. It needs to be stressed, however, that this does not yet warrant a claim that he had become anti-German; to the contrary, his writings from the period show that he was not. But as he was witnessing how his old suspicions of Germany were starting to crystallize, he did take one step in that direction by acknowledging that Germany had become a "menace to civilization." Perhaps the best way to put it, then, is to say that from August 1914 onwards Roosevelt was *hostile to the German cause*.

It is difficult to state exactly when Roosevelt did come to feel that the United States must fight Germany, but privately he was suggesting already in August 1914 that the United States should have supported Belgium by registering a protest "that would mean something." This must be regarded as his blessing for taking un-neutral action against Germany, even if Roosevelt did not make the point public until November 1914, and even then he left the precise nature of preferred action open. It is clear that once Germany in defiance of several international and bilateral treaties declared unrestricted submarine warfare on February 18, 1915, Roosevelt assumed an unyielding attitude towards illegal sinkings. Had he been President, this would have left Germany with two options: either to give up its submarine warfare or to accept war with the United States.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915, completed Roosevelt's transformation process: it is fair to say that starting from this day he was anti-German in that forever afterwards he

unconditionally denounced the German government. Not only that; due to the sinking Roosevelt also ceased to regard Germany as a "civilized" nation. This demotion allowed Roosevelt to start treating Germany with the disregard that he occasionally showed towards other "backward" nations, and it enabled him to start speaking of Germany in terms that he would had otherwise found improper.

The period from August 1914 to May 1915 was a fascinating phase in Roosevelt's relations with Germany, and his behaviour during this period has defied the comprehension of later scholars. Two peculiarities, in particular, stand out. First of all, there was Roosevelt's schizoid attitude towards Germany. Acting simultaneously as the prosecutor and the defence attorney, Roosevelt was more outspoken in his condemnation of the German invasion of Belgium than any other leading American politician, but at the same time he loudly defended Germany's motives and applauded its war performance. No less confusing were the contradictions of his private and public messages. On August 22, 1914, Roosevelt wrote to Lee: "As regards Belgium, there is not even room for an argument. The Germans, to suit their own purposes, trampled on their solemn obligation to Belgium and on Belgium's rights."[564] But on the very same day he commented the Belgian tragedy in the *Outlook*: "I am not taking sides one way or the other.... When giants are engaged in a death wrestle... they are certain to trample on whoever gets in the way...."[565]

In facing this dilemma, historians, finding it difficult to make sense of the confusion, have taken the easy way out by questioning Roosevelt's sincerity instead – in this sense, reputation follows. Ignoring Roosevelt's own testimonies to the contrary, these scholars have asserted that he, at first, hesitated to condemn the German invasion of Belgium and then supported Wilson's neutrality policy for the first couple of months. By November 1914, however, Roosevelt had supposedly come to regret his earlier views, so he came out in public to demand that the United States take action on behalf of Belgium. The tacit assumption is that he became anti-German at this point. Roosevelt himself assured that he had felt from the beginning that the administration was following the wrong course, but scholars have pointed out to the two *Outlook* articles of August 22 and September 23, 1914, as proof that Roosevelt, in his pathological hatred and envy of Wilson, later distorted his earlier stands on neutrality.

[564] TR to Lee, Aug 22, 1914; *Letters*, vol. 7, p. 810.
[565] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 277.

This prevailing theory is unconvincing for two reasons: 1) it fails to explain why some of Roosevelt's private messages were clearly interventionist in tone, and 2) Roosevelt did not become anti-German until in May 1915. Historians have correctly identified few of the factors that worked their effect on Roosevelt and turned him anti-German during the war, but these factors started to affect him with a delay. The war plans that Germany had made in case of an armed conflict with the United States did not affect Roosevelt's views on Germany, nor did the atrocity stories until after May 1915. Too little attention has been paid to the fact that during the early stages of the war Roosevelt's opinion of Germany did not take a turn to the worse.

An alternative interpretation that fully covers both points 1 and 2 would take account what can be called the *German factor* – Roosevelt's admiration of Germany and of German militarism. In addition, this interpretation works on the assumption that Roosevelt was being sincere and that he acted as his convictions compelled him to act during the early months of the war, whereas the prevailing theory works on the less credible assumption that Roosevelt was distorting facts out envy for Wilson.

Roosevelt really did condemn the German invasion of Belgium from the beginning and denounced Wilson's neutrality policy already during August 1914. He did not make these views known in public, however, until in November 1914 because he felt that he should support the President during an international crisis and because his leadership of the progressives prevented him from speaking up before that month's congressional elections. These two factors alone explain to a great extent the contradictory contents of Roosevelt's private and public messages. Yet there is more.

The supporters of the prevailing theory apparently feel that Roosevelt could not at first have condemned the German invasion of Belgium, since he took a "surprisingly detached attitude towards the belligerents"[566] – in other words, because he was surprisingly sympathetic towards Germany. But these scholars have failed to consider the German factor. Following his visit to Germany in 1910, Roosevelt had remarked that he strongly disagreed with the Kaiser on international morality but shared his disgust for the shams and pretence of the international peace advocates. To translate this into the conditions of 1914, Roosevelt had no moral objections to Germany striking pre-emptively at its enemies, but he did object to Germany doing this through unoffending Belgium. It was simply wrong for Germany to trample on Belgium's rights and to

[566] Cooper, *Warrior*, p. 277.

disregard treaties as scraps of paper, and Roosevelt would gladly have denounced Wilson in public for acquiescing to such wrong-doing had that not been the very thing his friends had asked him not to do. But the *last thing* that this spokesperson for military preparedness would had been willing to do would have been to go on record in the *Outlook* against German militarism per se. Since Roosevelt himself believed that foreign affairs required nations to be both prepared and willing to use military force when necessary, he would not condemn Germany for doing so out of solidarity and could not condemn it without condemning himself.

That Roosevelt followed this logic for six months *even after* he had come out strongly against neutrality policy in November 1914, supports this interpretation. Roosevelt was instinctively repeating a familiar pattern: just like at Algeciras, he gave his full support to the Entente on the most crucial question (Belgium), but defended the Germans on everything else. He preferred to see the German war effort as self-defence, defended the Kaiser against vilifying propaganda, and loudly applauded Germany's performance in the war. The war *enhanced his admiration* for Germany: he was praising Germany to the skies while simultaneously advocated war against it. His most earnest hope was that the Americans would some day show patriotism and unity of purpose in fighting for the right cause similar to what the Germans were showing in fighting for, as he saw it, the wrong cause. To achieve this, Roosevelt sought social cohesion in America by way of social and industrial organization on the German welfare state model.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915 forced Roosevelt to reassess his views. In addition to the *Lusitania*, there were other indicators, too, that the ruthless German elite had debased the "first-class German stock." The *facts* about the atrocities committed in Belgium started to pour in at about the same time. The revelations about German sabotage in August 1915 proved that Germany had waged an ignoble "war of assassination" in the United States. The combined impact of these and other similar breaches of international morality committed by Germany was that Roosevelt was no longer willing to defend the Kaiser nor the German government in any way. Consequently, he resorted to stronger language in criticising the Germans, branding them, for instance, Huns, terrorists, or simply, evil. This did not mean that Roosevelt had become a German-hater. At least in the neutrality period he was no such thing. Roosevelt condemned Germany simply because his worldview and the facts forced him to do so; personal hatreds or presidential ambitions did not play a major role.

Roosevelt's hatred of Wilson, on the other hand, grew to be something extraordinary. Yet by looking their relationship from Roosevelt's perspective, his behaviour starts to seem, if not acceptable, at least more reasonable. Arguably, the world, and Europe in particular, would have been better off in 1914–1917 had these two men switched places. If measured against Roosevelt's German policy of 1901–1909 and his "shadow German policy" of 1914–1917, the flaws of Wilson's German policy become appallingly obvious. In the *Lusitania* case, for example, Wilson seems to have made a double mistake. First, he failed to react to the warning sounded by the German Embassy before the sinking and then he yielded to Germany in the aftermath of the sinking. By so doing, Wilson most likely encouraged Germany to persist in pressing the United States. In retrospect, this really seemed to invite war, and against this background Wilson's stalling and slowness in preparing the country's armed forces during the next two years was unfortunate. The flaws and ramifications of Wilson's German policy were of course most obvious to Roosevelt, and his fury reflected this, making it easier to understand why he was willing to go so far − too far − in his attacks on Wilson. Roosevelt was extremely frustrated – not least because his own expertise on Germany became a wasted commodity during the war.

One could even argue that Roosevelt was the true neutral of the two. He systematically defended neutral rights, whether Belgium's or the United States's. He was not inherently pro-British and anti-German like Wilson. He had reached his decision to oppose Germany by following a principle, judge each country by its conduct, and started to do so wholly without malice towards Germany. His image of Germany did not begin to darken really until Germany started to violate American rights continually.

The striking thing in Roosevelt's relations with the German-Americans during World War I was that he was clearly much less in sympathy with them than with the Germans. The difference was that the Germans were at least showing great devotion to duty, whereas the German-Americans, by contrast, placed their rights above their duties and exercised them in a way that not only made the United States a silent partner in international wrong-doing but also endangered national security. It is important to note, however, that the hyphenated Americans were not the only ones whom Roosevelt accused of being unpatriotic. Unlike in Wilson's case, Roosevelt's attack on German-Americans was not influenced by racial prejudice: instead it was only one part of his larger campaign against those elements of the American society that kept the country neutral. But whereas the pro-neutrality capitalists and the pacifists were guilty of greed and cowardice, the sin of the

German-Americans was their divided allegiance, which, in Roosevelt's opinion, made them a de facto tool of the German government.

Hence, Roosevelt branded as disloyal the way in which the German-Americans organized themselves on an ethnic basis and campaigned for neutrality, lobbied for an arms embargo, and spread pro-German propaganda – not because these policies were in the best interests of the United States, but because they were in the best interests of Germany. Roosevelt held that it was the duty of every American to judge each country by its conduct and to regard all international matters solely from the standpoint of the interests of the United States. If the German-Americans were not capable of facing the fact that it was their duty as American citizens to condemn and perhaps fight Germany they were guilty of treason and should be deported.

But whenever Roosevelt accused the German-Americans of disloyalty, he actually referred – or at least intended to refer – only to that small minority of German-Americans that was actively campaigning for neutrality and spreading pro-German propaganda. He constantly sought to make a distinction between these disloyal "professional German-Americans" and the great mass of "Americans of German descent," whose patriotism he never questioned. Unfortunately, Roosevelt blurred that distinction himself by corrupting his anti-hyphen campaign with his inconsistent language views. In so doing, he suggested that every American of German origin who retained ties with German culture was disloyal to the United States whether sympathetic to the German cause or not. Had Roosevelt really confined his attacks solely on German-America's propagandists, his war-time anti-hyphen campaign could, to an extent, be justified in the name of international justice. That he also started to preach death to German-America, because the German-American dream of a multicultural America threatened his "real Americanism," was indefensible.

It truly was a "one man's war" in which Theodore Roosevelt was engaged during the period of American neutrality. It became one in November 1914, when Roosevelt fearlessly proclaimed himself in favour of an American intervention and for the next two and a half years he fought a lonely battle against a solid public opinion in order to get the Americans to recognize their duty to make war on Germany. Secondly, it was a "one man's war" because of the way in which Roosevelt lived his life. Almost from the cradle to the grave he preferred to see his life as a continuous struggle. Whether the enemy was asthma, corruption, discrimination, a trust, Spain, Wilson, or the hyphen, Roosevelt would fight it and he would spank it with his big stick.

Finally, it was a "one man's war" in that ever since his youth Roosevelt had wanted to fight Germany. The Germans being the nation that he most admired, Roosevelt had always been tickled by a desire to measure himself against them. It started as reckless war-mongering in his youth, continued as a battle of minds with the Kaiser during his presidency, and finally re-emerged in 1917 as an undisguised desire to meet the Germans in battle. This was not hatred. It was a contest between American democracy and German autocracy, and it was about seeing who would prevail, the disciples of Frederick the Great and Bismarck or the disciples of Washington and Lincoln. But whose disciple was Roosevelt really? Though he would have preferred Lincoln, he probably would not have protested loudly the assessment that in many respects he was rather an American version of Otto von Bismarck than an incarnation of Abraham Lincoln.

With the passing of the great adversary, there was no reason for Roosevelt, either, to be around any longer. Imperial Germany, the Germany that Roosevelt had known, ceased to exist on November 11, 1918. And less than two months later, on January 6, 1919, Theodore Roosevelt died, un-heroically, in his sleep.[567]

[567] Cooper, *Breaking the Heart*, p. 43.

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