

EXTRALEGAL SUPPRESSION OF CIVIL
LIBERTIES IN OKLAHOMA DURING
THE FIRST WORLD WAR
AND ITS CAUSES

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PREFACE

This study is concerned with the extralegal suppression of civil liberties in Oklahoma during the First World War. The primary objective is to discover what caused the repression in Oklahoma, and then, to examine some of the forms that suppression took. The author assumes that during the period under study the speeches of Thomas Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States, and the newspapers of Oklahoma were major factors in forming public opinion in the Sooner State. Therefore, the study closely examines both the pre-war speeches of the President and the headlines and editorials of Oklahoma's newspapers. Among the items explored as possible pre-war causes of patriotic hysteria are the attacks of the President on hyphenated Americans and the fears of Oklahoma's newsmen of German conspiracies. During the war, the study examined the reaction to the "Green Corn Rebellion." In addition, the author investigated the activities of the Oklahoma State Council of Defense and its auxiliaries, the county councils of defense, for their contributions to wartime suppression.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

That civil liberty is one of the most fragile of human rights is nowhere more apparent than in Oklahoma during the First World War. Perhaps the curtailment of civil liberties in time of war is justified by the vital nature of national needs. In Oklahoma, however, legal suppression of civil liberties was accompanied by many instances of mob and vigilante violence. Those persons who opposed either the war or the war effort in Oklahoma, whatever their reasons may have been, were often beaten and tarred and feathered; their property was confiscated; and some were even killed for their opposition.¹ This extralegal suppression of civil liberties, however, was not unique to Oklahoma. It was a nation-wide phenomenon during the First World War which, according to many historians, was caused by the development of a massive wartime patriotic hysteria.

Historians of this hysteria generally describe the causes as a by-product of American entry into the war or as a development during the war. They believe wartime fears of espionage, of spies and of systematic draft evasion fostered suppression. These historians

¹For many examples of this kind of violence see Harlow's Weekly from October, 1917 through November, 1918. Also see Sooners in the War (Oklahoma City, 1919) which is the official report of the Oklahoma State Council of Defense from May, 1917 to January, 1919

also place much of the blame for the development of the hysteria upon George Creel and his Committee on Public Information, which had been created early in the war to convert Americans to the war effort.²

Historians who accept these causes are only partially correct, in the opinion of others, because they fail to observe the crucial years of public opinion formation which occurred prior to the entry of the United States into the war.

H. C. Peterson and Gilbert Fite are the main historians who accept the second viewpoint. These two scholars declare that the patriotic hysteria which occurred during the First World War had its antecedent in the fifty year struggle between economic and social classes which had developed prior to the war. Primarily this conflict occurred between reformers who attacked big business, and trusts and conservatives who supported those institutions. Early in the twentieth century the struggle between these two groups had resulted occasionally in violence, as with the strikes at Cripple Creek, Colorado, and at Lawrence, Massachusetts. Peterson and Fite believe that the conflict gained new life at the outbreak of the First World War: "People of the political right used the war as an excuse to attack people of the left. They did so by accusing leftists of being disloyal."³

² Representative of these views are: Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson: A Brief Biography (Cleveland, 1963), pp. 117-188; Joan M. Jensen, The Price of Vigilance (Chicago, 1968), pp. 27-31; James R. Mock, Censorship: 1917 (Princeton, 1941), pp. 28-30; Frederic L. Paxson, America At War: 1917-1918, Vol. II of American Democracy and the World War (Boston, 1939), pp. 272-277; Foster R. Dulles, Twentieth Century America (Boston, 1945), pp. 213-219; and Harvey Wish, Contemporary America: The National Scene Since 1920; 3rd ed. (New York, 1961), p. 236.

³ H. C. Peterson and Gilbert Fite, Opponents of War: 1917-1918 (Madison, 1957), pp. 44-45.

The struggle between left and right did occur in Oklahoma during the First World War. But this conflict was not the source of the patriotic hysteria. The thesis of this study is that patriotic hysteria in Oklahoma, and the consequent development of extralegal suppression of civil liberties, was the product of a slow, evolutionary process caused by several factors which occurred in the four-year period from 1914 through 1918.

Among these factors were the verbal attacks by President Thomas Woodrow Wilson on American citizens of foreign birth and of foreign parentage. These attacks on so-called hyphenated Americans were amplified by the newspapers of Oklahoma, which used the President's words to support their own editorial opinions. In addition, newspapermen of Oklahoma gave extensive publicity to and became increasingly concerned with what they feared were wide-spread German conspiracies aimed at crippling American industry and subverting the democratic election process. The wartime suppression of civil liberties in Oklahoma also had two other sources. One was a revolt of tenant farmers in the south-central part of the state, known as the "Green Corn Rebellion," which occurred early in the war. The other was the administration of a quasi-legal body, the State Council of Defense, which established local county councils of defense.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in August, 1914, Wilson decided to keep the American people out of the conflict by declaring the United States neutral. Because of the submarine warfare of Germany, however, the President slowly turned towards military preparedness during the summer of 1915, and eventually towards war in April of 1917. Throughout this period the European conflict divided the loyalties of the

American people, and Wilson was trapped between those who desired American intervention on one side or the other. The majority of Americans were pro-British because of the sameness of language and the similarity of British and American institutions. Therefore, since Great Britain was a key member of the Allies, most Americans supported the Allied cause. Wilson, too shared this prejudice because he believed that American history was only an extension of British institutions.⁴

Wilson's sense of American patriotism, however, was more concerned with achieving a unity of American thought and of American action. From this desire for American consensus stemmed the President's subsequent attacks on hyphenated Americans. As an example of Wilson's desire for unity, Josephus Daniels points to a pre-war speech the President made at the dedication of a statue of Commodore John Barry.⁵ In this speech the President declared: "Patriotism is a principle not a mere sentiment. No man can be a true patriot who does not feel himself shot through and through with a deep ardor for what his country stands for, what its existence means, what its purpose is declared to be in history, and its policies." Wilson continued, pointing out that John Barry was an Irishman who had brought his heart with him to America and therefore did not need a hyphen. Furthermore, Wilson declared, "some Americans need hyphens because only a part of them have come over."⁶

⁴ John Morton Blum, Woodrow Wilson and the Politics of Morality (Boston, 1956), p. 95.

⁵ Josephus Daniels, The Wilson Era: Years of Peace, 1910-1917 (Chapel Hill, 1944), p. 468.

⁶ Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., The New Democracy Vol. I, in The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson (New York, 1926), pp. 108-109.

The President's desire for an American consensus remained his basic theme throughout America's approach towards war. He used his verbal abuse of hyphenated Americans at critical points of both policy and politics. His harshest attacks on hyphenated Americans came when he changed his public position from that of neutrality to preparedness, and again, in his campaign for a second term as President of the United States during the summer of 1916.

Wilson's speeches against hyphenated Americans were greatly enhanced by his oratorical ability. Indeed, his ability as a public speaker was his greatest asset. "He could be more intimate and confidential with five thousand people than with one," wrote one observer.⁷ When Wilson arose to speak at a public gathering "his whole manner changed. His face became suddenly alive, his eyes glowed, and as he spoke, his entire body, even his restrained gestures seemed to register the intensity of his emotions. His speech, wholly devoid of flamboyance, instead of rising to oratorical flights, seemed to deepen into a penetrating seriousness."⁸

In addition, Wilson knew how to select exact words to carry the intended impact of his message. He was able to gauge his speeches so that they would not only appeal to the man of reason, but would also arouse the emotions of a crowd.⁹ Commenting on such a speech delivered at Indianapolis in January of 1915, the Tulsa Democrat declared: "the

⁷ Ray Stannard Baker, Facing War, Vol. VI of Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters (Garden City, 1937), p. 265

⁸ Ibid., p. 236.

⁹ Mark Sullivan, Over Here: 1914-1918, Vol. 5 of Our Times: The United States, 1900-1925 (New York, 1933), pp. 274-281.

whole speech will appeal to almost everyone as just what he would say if able to frame in such well chosen language the same thoughts."¹⁰ While the Tulsa Democrat, a Democratic party organ, was admittedly biased, even Wilson's enemies conceded that he was an effective orator. For example, Theodore Roosevelt warned: "[Wilson] is dangerous precisely because he has such adroit shifty elocutionary ability that he deceives large masses of people...."¹¹ The President, however, never visited Oklahoma, and thus his impact on the minds of Oklahomans came through the filtering process of the State's daily and weekly newspapers.

Oklahoma newsmen were caught in such the same dichotomy as Wilson. They desired to avoid involvement in the European War, but experienced the same metamorphosis as the President. They closely followed the President's desire to remain neutral in the latter part of 1914 and the early part of 1915. During this early period Oklahoma newsmen carried on a relatively polite but firm controversy with those who they believed wanted the United States to act unneutrally towards one of the belligerent nations. As the summer of 1915 approached, however, Oklahoma newspapers became increasingly outspoken against German sympathizers.

This change in attitude occurred because of three developments. First, some German-American newspapers became more vociferous in their attacks on Wilson's policies, and the newspapers of Oklahoma responded in kind. Second, Oklahoma newspapermen became increasingly angry over what they considered violations of American neutral rights

¹⁰"A True American," Tulsa Democrat, January 9, 1915, p. 6.

¹¹Quoted in Arthur S. Link, Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace, 1916-1917 Vol. V of Wilson (Princeton, 1965), p. 142.

by the submarine warfare of Germany. Finally, and most important, newsmen of Oklahoma became convinced that there existed a German conspiracy, aided by hyphenated Americans, which was determined to destroy American property and lives by fomenting strikes, blowing up munitions plants and ships, and destroying bridges. Thus, almost as a single voice, newsmen condemned hyphenated Americans. When Wilson made his harshest statements against that class of citizens, newspapers not only provided the President with headlines but also supported him with strong editorial opinions.

Seldom has a strong cause-effect relationship existed in the twentieth century between a newspaper's editorial page and the formation of public opinion. Editorials do, however, indicate the beliefs of the editors, and in most cases, whether consciously or not, editorials indicate how newspapers will report news stories. The manner in which newspapers report the news, especially those stories on the front page, does affect public opinion. A modern scholar of public opinion formation, Leonard W. Doob, illustrates the type of devices used on front pages which are probably most effective in forming public opinion. Among these devices are unusual headlines, boxed stories, accompanying photographs, and story positioning which immediately draws the attention of the reader to the news item the editor most wants him to notice.¹²

Doob's study was made in 1948, but even in that era when numerous other sources of news were available, he still considered newspapers

¹² Leonard W. Doob, Public Opinion and Propaganda (New York, 1948), pp. 440-444.

the major source of news; and thus the most important factor in forming public opinion.¹³ One must assume, then, that in the period from 1914 through 1918, when sources of information were even more limited than in 1948, the influence of newspapers was proportionately greater. In addition, all Oklahoma newspapers consistently used the previously mentioned devices when reporting the attacks of Wilson on hyphenated Americans, and when reporting stories of alleged German espionage activities.

That Oklahoma newspapers were aware of their power during the years of the First World War was evidenced by an editorial which appeared in the Tulsa Daily World just prior to American entry into the war. In this editorial the writer noted that a newspaper "does or should go just a little in advance of public sentiment." While denying that a newspaper can often create a sentiment that does not exist, the author concluded that a newspaper "can direct the course of a sentiment in the forming."¹⁴

Oklahoma newspapers also were instrumental in aiding the formation of public opinion after American entry into the war. Almost from the first editors were unanimous in their support of national wartime policy. One of the reasons for their unanimity was the rebellion of tenant farmers in south-central Oklahoma, known as the "Green Corn Rebellion," which occurred in the early months of the war. Most Oklahoma editors were aware that this rebellion resulted from many years of agrarian discontent rather than of anti-American, anti-draft

¹³ Ibid., pp. 438-439.

¹⁴ "Newspapers as Leaders," Tulsa Daily World, August 1, 1916, p. 4.

movement. Oklahoma editors, however, were greatly embarrassed because persons outside the state used the rebellion to accuse Oklahoma of being a "slacker" state, one which was unwilling to do its patriotic duty. Therefore, Oklahoma newspapers bent to the task of bringing Oklahoma into line with every national wartime policy and each war-fund drive in order to redeem the state's honor.

Newspapermen in Oklahoma also served another function during the war. At the beginning of the conflict an Oklahoma Council of Defense was created by the Governor to administer wartime policies and to coordinate Oklahoma's war effort. The State Council, in turn, appointed county councils of defense to insure that war policies were enforced uniformly at the lowest level. Among those usually appointed to the county councils were the editors of local newspapers. These editors allowed their newspapers to serve as the vehicles for the State Council's war propaganda through columns entitled "We Must Win The War." In addition, newspapers insured that war policy was uniformly enforced by using their columns to print the names of those unwilling to do their part for the war, and by editorializing against those persons the newspapers believed were not putting forth one-hundred percent effort in the war fund drives.

By the latter part of 1917 and the early part of 1918 the combination of pre-war and early-war attacks on those who disagreed with Wilson's policy and America's entry into the war had created an atmosphere of intolerance throughout the Sooner State. This intolerance took the form of the so-called patriotic hysteria. Dissent against national war policies or against various war-fund drives was equated with disloyalty and "pro-Germanism." The result of this massive

war-time hysteria was the extra-legal suppression of civil liberties through either the use of violence or the threat of violence against dissenters. In the following chapters each of those factors mentioned previously, which caused and were components of suppression in Oklahoma, will be examined in some detail.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM NEUTRALITY TO PREPAREDNESS

The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir apparent to the Austrian throne, on June 28, 1914, at Sarajevo occasioned only a passing notice in the American press and caused little apprehension among the people of America.¹ Only a month later, however, the assassination proved but the incubation of a monster which threatened to consume not only all of Europe but the rest of the world as well. As the octopus of war grew its hunger could not be satiated by the men, munitions and money of Europe, and it began to stretch its tentacles towards the New World, clutching at the hearts and loyalties of Europe's long forgotten sons in America.

At the outbreak of the European war most of the American people were mildly pro-British, and thus, if they thought about it at all, tended to favor the Allied cause.² Less numerous, but much more vocal, were some 8 1/4 million German-Americans whose loyalties were uniformly pro-German. There were also 4 1/2 million Irish-Americans who, if not

¹Sullivan, pp. 30-32. Historians disagree about how Americans reacted to the news of the European war. Agreement with Sullivan can be found in Walter Millis, Road To War: America 1914-1917 (Boston, 1935), p. 27. Opposing Sullivan, however, is Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era 1910-1917 (New York, 1954), pp. 145-147.

²Carl Wittke, German-Americans and the World War (Columbus, 1936), p. 6. (25)

pro-German, were at least anti-British and therefore anti-ally.³

President Wilson himself was a product of a background with strong British influences.⁴ But, as President of the United States, Wilson followed the traditional American policy of non-involvement in European conflicts and issued a Declaration of Neutrality on August 4, 1914.⁵ He followed this declaration closely with an appeal to the American people to remain neutral. He pointed out that the people of the United States had been drawn from the very nations at war and that it was only natural for them to take sides. Warning those who sided with any of the belligerents that their favoritism would only lead to division, he declared: "The United States must remain neutral in fact as well as name during these days that are to try men's souls."⁶

Oklahoma had little problem with foreign born citizens, because less than ten percent of its population could be classed as hyphenated Americans.⁷ Consequently, the newspapers of Oklahoma supported the President's declaration of neutrality wholeheartedly. The most vociferous support came in an editorial in the Muskogee Daily Phoenix which

³ Arthur S. Link, The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915, Vol. III of Wilson (Princeton, 1960), pp. 20-23.

⁴ H. C. Peterson, Propaganda for War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-1917 (Norman, 1939), pp. 9-10.

⁵ Baker and Dodd, The New Democracy, Vol. I, pp. 151-156.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 157-158.

⁷ Bureau of the Census, Abstract of the Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 (Washington, 1913), p. 595. Percentage is based on the total population from table one, 1,659,155, and the total number of persons who were foreign born or were the children of at least one parent who was foreign born from table five, 134,128. Also from table five, the number of Oklahomans of German descent was only 41,785.

stated: "Lynch law is a thing that every decent man is bound to condemn. But we do not see that any other treatment would fit the man who should try to mix this country up in the remotest way with the terrible conflict now raging in Europe."⁸

Accompanying this editorial was a cartoon which portrayed a man, with the words "Foreign American" on his back, bent over to read a sign on a fence. The sign was titled "Oath of Allegiance to the U.S." The oath reminded the stooped reader that the foreign American had fore-sworn allegiance to his previous country and was now required to support the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic.⁹

The Tulsa Democrat also pointed out that "within our borders are thousands of foreign born denizens whose passions are aroused and who would like to see this country espouse one side or the other." The Democrat declared that attempts by these persons to compromise the United States would exist as long as the war lasted. The editor concluded that in spite of the feelings of the partisans, the United States must remain neutral.¹⁰

German-Americans also received with enthusiasm Wilson's neutrality proclamation and his later appeal for neutrality.¹¹ Their support soon changed, however, because very early in the war Britain's superior navy

⁸"Lynch for Mischief Makers;" Muskogee Daily Phoenix, August 23, 1914, p. 4-B. ✓

⁹J. H. Cassel, ed. cartoon, "Not to be Forgotten," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, August 23, 1914, p. 4-B. ✓

¹⁰"Keep Cook Folks," Tulsa Democrat, November 30, 1914, p. 4. ✓

¹¹Clifton James Child, The German-Americans in Politics: 1914-1917 (Madison, 1939), pp. 42-43.

gained control of the seas, and thus, American markets were virtually closed to Germany. Conversely, American commerce remained open to the Allies, and America, by way of Canada, became the Allies' main supplier of munitions.

Quite naturally German-Americans believed the refusal of the American government to curtail the traffic in munitions to the Allies was a violation of the country's policy of neutrality. Thus, in the autumn of 1914, German-American newspapers began a ferocious assault on the arms trade, which culminated in January and February of 1915 with an attempt in Congress to achieve a complete arms embargo.¹³ The leaders of the embargo movement in Congress were Representatives Richard Bartholdt of Missouri and Henry Vollmer of Iowa. On December 7, 1915 both introduced almost identical bills in the House of Representatives. These bills would have permitted the President, at his discretion, to stop the exportation of arms. German-Americans rallied behind both bills, but, because of administrative pressure, both were eventually set aside in February of 1915 while still in committee.¹⁴

The demand for an embargo and the efforts to organize German-Americans to support that demand elicited criticism from many American editors, who believed the movement sought to aid Germany by putting its interests above those of the United States.¹⁵ This was also true of Oklahoma newspapers. For example, the Daily Oklahoman attacked

¹²Wittke, pp. 55-56.

¹³Link, The Struggle for Neutrality, pp. 161-163.

¹⁴Child, pp. 48-57.

¹⁵Wittke, p. 64.

Representative Bartholdt, declaring that his efforts were suspicious "because for years and years he has represented in Congress the single purely selfish interests of a certain naturalized foreign element in St. Louis without regard for the welfare or the desire of others." Furthermore, the editor declared that if the embargo movement was successful, instead of being neutral it would greatly benefit German.¹⁶

The Tulsa Democrat declared that the embargo effort was an example of overpartisanship by the citizens of German and Irish descent. In addition, it pointed out that if the embargo movement were to succeed, it would cause American factories to shut down and throw native Americans out of work. All of this would occur, the editor believed, just to benefit one of the belligerents. The editor concluded that for this reason, when Congress considered a new immigration bill, it should "frame a clause forfeiting acquired citizenship for anti-American conduct."¹⁷

The effort of German-Americans to embargo arms shipments was not the only attempt to break the British hold on American commerce. On February 14, 1915, Germany announced that submarine warfare would be used against the British blockade. Furthermore, it declared that in a certain broad zone around the British Isles all British ships would be attacked and warned that neutral ships in that zone might be subject to attack also. This policy of the German government involved the United States and Germany in a great debate over the rules of submarine warfare when a German submarine sank a British ship, the Falaba, which cost the life of an American on board. While Wilson searched for a

¹⁶"Insincerity," Daily Oklahoman, January 9, 1915, p. 6. ✓

¹⁷"Anti-American," Tulsa Democrat, January 14, 1915, p. 4.

policy which would protect American rights and lives under this new form of naval warfare, a new, much more serious incident occurred.¹⁸

On May 7, 1915, a German submarine torpedoed and sank the British liner Lusitania off the coast of Ireland. Of the 1959 passengers and crew on board, 1198 lost their life--including 124 American citizens.¹⁹ This outrage incensed American newspapers. Oklahoma newspapers were no exception. The Muskogee Daily Phoenix declared: "If such things as these pass, what outrages and humiliations shall we wait for? Just as soon as the inquiry can be made President Wilson should call Congress together to deal with an act not only of open war, but of bloody piracy."²⁰

The Tulsa Daily World struck closer to home when it warned Oklahomans that the American people were in a mood for hysteria. It cautioned: "The man or woman just now who seeks to emphasize his or her bias for or against any of the nations now fighting in Europe is doing what is not only very foolish but a menace to the public peace. That man who...seeks to stir up dissention and racial prejudice should be squelched, either by persuasion or by force."²¹

Wilson's reaction was somewhat calmer, as was evident when he delivered a speech to newly naturalized citizens in Philadelphia on May 10, 1915. Discussing the duties and responsibilities of citizenship,

¹⁸Link, The Struggle for Neutrality, pp. 358-367.

¹⁹Ibid., 370-372.

²⁰"War on the United States," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, May 12, 1915, p. 4.

²¹Untitled Editorial, Tulsa Daily World, May 13, 1915, p. 4.

Wilson warned his audience: "You cannot become thorough Americans if you think of yourself in groups. America does not consist of groups. A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American, and the man who goes among you to trade upon your nationality is no worthy son to live under the Stars and Stripes." The President then responded to the growing clamor for war by declaring that America must be the example of peace and that: "There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight."²²

The Lusitania incident and Wilson's decision not to fight produced two different movements among German-Americans. The Tulsa Democrat noted: "All over the country there has been a remarkable rush for naturalization papers lately. It began with the sinking of the Lusitania." The heaviest demand was in New York City, where the county clerk, "reported that 70% of those applying for their first papers were Germans, and most others Austrians." The Democrat concluded that this was evidence that most German-Americans were loyal in spirit.²³

The second movement, however, generated much more publicity and created much more adverse reactions among American newspapers. German-American newspapers attacked Wilson and his subsequent policy. The President in a series of three diplomatic notes to Germany, demanded and finally gained a German promise to abide by a policy of restricted submarine warfare. Meanwhile, German-American newspapers opposed each of the notes, and in addition, attempted to defend the sinking of the

²²Baker and Dodd, The New Democracy, Vol. I, pp. 319, 321.

²³"More Loyal Citizens," Tulsa Democrat, May 27, 1915, p. 4.

Lusitania in every possible way.²⁴

Oklahoma newspapers responded vehemently to the German-American attacks on Wilson's policy. The Muskogee Daily Phoenix generally assaulted German-Americans because of their outcry over Wilson's first note.²⁵ More pointedly, the Daily Oklahoman, responding to the attack of the Illinois Staats-Zeitung on Wilson's third note to Germany, declared: "The Staats-Zeitung has much to be thankful for. Much liberty of speech and action is permitted in 'the land of the free and the home of the brave,' but there is such a thing as a limit to tolerance, and it has just about been reached here." The editor continued to say that the accusations made by the Staats-Zeitung bordered on treason.²⁶

The controversy deteriorated to such a level that the Muskogee Daily Phoenix warned Oklahomans against traitors. The editor noted that the number of people in the United States who were traitors to it was inconceivably small and they were not very stout hearted. It cautioned, however: "Let those lovers of trouble beware. It would be easy for them to raise a spirit that would sweep them from the face of the country they have denied and from the earth which they dishonor."²⁷

The Lusitania incident and the subsequent negotiations also had another drastic effect on American policy. Prior to the sinking of the

²⁴Wittke, pp. 71-78.

²⁵"Citizens of the United States," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, May 15, 1915, p. 4.

²⁶"Patience at Home and Abroad," Daily Oklahoman, July 28, 1915, p. 6.

²⁷"A United People," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, June 15, 1915, p. 4.

Lusitania there had been much agitation for a program of military preparedness. After the Lusitania, the demand for preparedness became much stronger. The rolls of organizations, such as the National Defense League and the Navy League, both proponents of a strong national defense program, were swelled by thousands of new members. Politicians could not ignore this powerful movement for preparedness. Thus, after much soul searching, Wilson reluctantly made the switch to military preparedness in July of 1915. He made his decision because he desired to see the Democratic party remain in power and because he was increasingly frustrated by the lack of success of his notes to Germany on the Lusitania.²⁸

Having made the decision for preparedness, Wilson sought some underlying theme to unite a divided country behind the administration's program. The unifying theme was patriotism, and certain hyphenated Americans would be the antithesis to the theme. On October 11, 1915, expounding on his theme, he addressed the Daughters of the American Revolution at Washington. He pointed out that the great majority of America's citizens who were born in other lands were loyal to the United States. The President described these immigrants as "some of the best stuff in America." He believed he knew where the loyalty of most foreign-born citizens lay, but declared: "I am in a hurry to have a line-up and let the men who are thinking first of other countries stand on one side and all those that are for America first, last and all the time on the other side." Comparing new citizens to college freshmen, Wilson urged the ladies to "haze" the immigrants by having opinions

²⁸Link, The Progressive Era, pp. 178-179.

about them. "That is the sort of discipline we ought now to administer to everybody who is not to the very core of his heart an American. Just have an opinion about him and let him experience the atmospheric effects of that opinion!"²⁹

Oklahoma newspapers approved the President's speech. The Daily Oklahoman declared: "The portion of Wilson's constituency who are unhyphenated Americans will back him to the utmost.... The country is wearied almost unto exhaustion by hyphenization. It is utterly devoid of excuse." While the editor granted the right of each man to his opinion, he pointed out that "when in the midst of a portentous national crisis his individual beliefs assume the form of violently unpatriotic outburst against his country's policy, he then and there becomes a public menace--just that and nothing more."³⁰

The Muskogee Daily Phoenix published an editorial cartoon which portrayed Wilson shaking a three-railed fence. On the middle rail appeared the word "HYPHEN." On the ground on one side of the fence were printed the words "FOREIGN ALLEGIANCE." On the other side were printed the words "AMERICAN ALLEGIANCE." On the top rail of the fence were several foreign looking men who were either falling or about to fall to one side or the other.³¹

Joining Wilson's attack on some hyphenated Americans was Theodore Roosevelt, a long-time advocate of military preparedness. On Octo-

²⁹Baker and Dodd, The New Democracy, Vol. 1, pp. 379-380.

³⁰"The Hyphenated Man," Daily Oklahoman, October 13, 1915, p. 6.

³¹J. H. Cassel, ed. cartoon, "Get Off the Fence," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, October 23, 1915, p. 4.

ber 13, 1915, at Carnegie Hall in New York City he declared to the assembled Knights of Columbus: "The foreign born population of this country must be an Americanized population--no other kind can fight the battles of America, either in war or peace." In addition, he declared: "There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americans."³² The Daily Oklahoman agreed. The editor praised the ex-President for aligning himself with Wilson's scathing denunciation of hyphenization. After reviewing Roosevelt's speech, the editor concluded: "The Oklahoman realizes that foreign born citizens are among the most valuable we have.... But when the test comes, when the crucial moment has arrived, they must be Americans without the hyphen or else they are undesirable citizens."³³

Throughout the summer of 1915 the President formulated his preparedness program, and presented his outline before the Manhattan Club in New York on November 4. After describing his proposals for national defense, the President returned to his appeal for unity, stating:

The only thing within our own borders that has given us grave concern in recent months has been that voices have been raised in America professing to be the voices of Americans which were not indeed American, but which spoke alien sympathies, which came from men who loved other countries better than they loved America, men who were partisans of other causes than that of America and had forgotten that their chief and only allegiance was to the great government under which they live.³⁴

³²"Roosevelt Classes Hyphenated Citizen with Foreigner; Urges Single Allegiance to America." Daily Oklahoman, October 13, 1915, p. 1. Story was boxed and at top center of the front page.

³³"In Which We Agree With Roosevelt," Daily Oklahoman, October 14, 1915, p. 6.

³⁴Baker and Dodd, The New Democracy, Vol. I, p. 390.

He pointed out that these voices came from only a few and that the vast numbers of immigrants had joined their sympathies with America. But, the President also declared: "These men who speak alien sympathies are not their spokesmen but are the spokesmen of small groups whom it is high time that the Nation should call to a reckoning."³⁵ The President would also employ this same unifying theme in his third annual message to Congress the following December.

Oklahoma newsmen followed the President as he switched from strict neutrality to military preparedness and joined Wilson in his condemnation of certain hyphenated Americans. As mentioned previously, part of the reason for the change in attitude of Sooner State newsmen was the support of German-Americans for the embargo against American arms exports. But Oklahoma editors were also outraged because of Germany's submarine warfare and angry at German-Americans for their condemnation of Wilson's attempts to end the German undersea warfare. More important, however, was the growing suspicion among the newsmen of Oklahoma that there was a giant conspiracy of German spies in the United States, aided by German-Americans, which was determined to destroy America's munitions industry.

As early as February of 1915, the Tulsa Democrat reported the destruction of an international bridge between Main and New Brunswick by Werner Horn, who claimed to be a reserve officer in the German army.³⁶ A few months later, after the sinking of the Lusitania, the

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 390-391.

³⁶ "Bridge to Canada Blown Up By German," Tulsa Democrat, February 2, 1915, p. 1. The headline was newspaper-wide and appeared above the title of the paper.

Tulsa Daily World noted that Great Britain was taking repressive measures against persons of German descent. While deploring the violence involved in such measures, the World sympathized with the British and stated: "The German spy system has been so complete and so all-pervading [in Britain] that they hold under suspicion of being a secret enemy all those who by ties of blood or kinship might be expected to sympathize with the fatherland." Prophetically, the editor concluded: "Mob law is deplorable at any time, but in the fever heat of a desperate war we cannot expect people to listen to reason."³⁷

As the summer progressed Oklahoma newsmen became increasingly suspicious that such a spy system also existed in the United States. The Oklahoma News asked the question in blaring headlines, "Is America Hatching Giant Spy Plot Against Allies' Supplies?" Answering its own question, the News pointed to explosions in twenty-five munitions plants as evidence and declared that investigations of these might reveal the Kaiser's underground intrigues.³⁸ The Fairview Leader noted that "since the beginning of the European war there have been munitions explosions and fires of undetermined origin, many of them under suspicious circumstances in government arsenals and plants engaged in war contracts...."³⁹

The Muskogee Daily Phoenix also believed that strikes in munitions plants were part of the conspiracy. The editor declared: "Strikes in

³⁷"Current Comment," Tulsa Daily World, May 15, 1915, p. 4.

³⁸Oklahoma News, September 8, 1915, p. 1. Headline was newspaper-wide.

³⁹"Fires In Many Arms Plants," Fairview Leader, September 9, 1915, p. 3.

munitions plants, although they had for their ostensible object an increase in wages or a diminution of the hours of labor, have been plainly fostered by outside influences, and at least in part financed by outside money. And just as plainly, their success would have meant the achievement of the purpose for which German sympathizers have been working--the cutting off of the supplies which the allies are buying here."⁴⁰

Suspicion of German espionage activities was greatly enhanced by the accidental discovery of two sets of German diplomatic papers. The first of these papers were discovered in a brief-case owned by the German commercial attache Dr. Heinrich Albert. On July 24, 1915, Albert fell asleep on a train in New York City. On awakening he discovered that he had almost slept through his stop, and in rushing for the exit he inadvertently left his briefcase behind. The case was retrieved by a United States government agent who had been following Albert. The contents revealed many secret German activities, including propaganda efforts and the tying up of war munitions. After reading the documents, William G. McAdoo, the Secretary of Treasury, could find no evidence of criminal activity, but he was determined to expose the German plots. Therefore, after extracting a promise that their source would not be divulged, McAdoo turned the contents of the briefcase over to the New York World for publication, which created a tremendous scandal.⁴¹

The next series of papers which came into American hands was taken

⁴⁰"False Friends of Peace," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, September 8, 1915, p. 4. Reprinted from the Philadelphia Public Ledger.

⁴¹Captain Henry Landau, The Enemy Within: The Inside Story of German Sabotage in America (New York, 1937), p. 100.

from James J. Archibald, who had been removed from a ship being searched by the British. Among Archibald's papers the British found several documents from the Austrian ambassador to the United States, Constantine Dumba, which outlined plans for strikes in American munitions plants. The British turned the documents over to the American State Department, and a week later Wilson requested the Austrian government to recall Dumba.⁴²

The Muskogee Daily Phoenix reported the story of the recall of Dumba with newspaper-wide headlines.⁴³ Two days later the Phoenix declared that Germany "Has built and is building up in this country... an organization whose double purpose is to break down all sides of resistance and all powers of resistance if the idea of it should persist." The editor further warned: "Germany proposes to capture us from within, by destroying our industries engaged in the manufacturing of war supplies, by organizing her supporters in this country, and by buying every available man whose sympathies are not on her side."⁴⁴

The Daily Oklahoman tied German-Americans even closer to these suspicions of conspiracy when its front page blared, "GERMAN SYMPATHIZERS THREATEN TO KILL EVERY MAKER OF WAR MUNITIONS IN THE UNITED STATES." The story quoted government sources as saying that every American citizen having commercial contracts with European countries at war had received threats of murder, arson, and other crimes of violence. These

⁴²Ibid., p. 52.

⁴³"U. S. Demands Recall of Austrian Ambassador," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, September 10, 1915, p. 1. Headlines were newspaper-wide.

⁴⁴"What Will We Do About It?" Muskogee Daily Phoenix, September 12, 1915, p. 6-B.

threats were believed to have come from either Germans or German sympathizers.⁴⁵

The suspicion of German espionage activities was finally given substance when Robert Fay, a lieutenant in the German army, was captured in New York and accused along with others of plotting to attach "infernal machines" to the rudders of munitions ships. These bombs were designed to blow up while the vessels were at sea. Fay freely admitted his own guilt, but refused to implicate anyone in the German embassy. He did say that he had informed Franz von Papen, the German military attache, and Karl Boy-Ed, the German naval attache, of his plan but that both had rejected it outright. Both the Daily Oklahoman and the Muskogee Daily Phoenix published the developments of this case on their front pages.⁴⁶

Following closely on the heels of but not related to the Fay case, the United State State Department demanded the recall of both von Papen and Boy-Ed on December 8, 1915. Though there was no evidence and no proof, the request was made because Secretary of State Robert Lansing believed that from the very beginning of the European war both men had stepped outside the bounds of diplomatic practice in various attempts

⁴⁵Daily Oklahoman, September 12, 1915, p. 1. The story was boxed and at the top center of the front page. In addition, the headline itself was boxed and the article bore a picture of Charles Schwab, head of the United States Steel Corporation, who had received several threats.

⁴⁶"German Spies Captured With Bombs In N.Y.," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, October 26, 1915, p. 1. Two Columns; "'I Acted For Germany' Declared Bomb Plotter," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, October 29, 1915, p. 1. Headline appeared over a three-column half-page picture of Robert Fay in the custody of George Barnitz of the New York Police Department; "Agreement with German Officers Admitted by Fay," Daily Oklahoman, October 26, 1915, p. 1; "German Plotters Spend Large Sums," Daily Oklahoman, November 6, 1915, p. 5; and, "Foreign Diplomat May Be Connected With Bomb Plots," Daily Oklahoman, November 16, 1915, p. 1.

to violate the neutrality of the United States.⁴⁷

By mid-summer of 1915 even President Wilson himself had become infected with fears of German plots. Writing to Edward M. House, the President declared: "I am sure that the country is honeycombed with German intrigues and infested with German spies. The evidence of these things are multiplying every day."⁴⁸

The President's suspicion of German intrigues and his decision to use patriotism as a unifying theme to obtain the support of Congress of his preparedness program dovetailed with the fears of Oklahoma newsmen and their growing suspicion of German-Americans. Thus Oklahoma newspapers applauded loudly Wilson's remarks against disloyal Americans made in the President's third annual address to Congress.

In this speech, delivered December 7, 1915, Wilson covered a number of topics. He outlined the necessity for a new spirit of cooperation among the countries of the Western Hemisphere. He also introduced the administration's preparedness program, which included a strengthening of the army, the navy, and the merchant marine. In addition, he discussed ways to collect new revenues in order to pay for the administration's program.

Then, Wilson delivered his attack against those whom he believed

⁴⁷"U. S. Demands the Recall of Attaches of Germany Embassy" Muskogee Daily Phoenix, December 4, 1915, p. 1. Two columns with a half page picture of von Papen and Boy-Ed; and, "America Asks Recall of German Embassy Attaches," Daily Oklahoman, December 4, 1915, p. 1. Two columns. For examples of the activities of von Papen and Boy-Ed, only suspected by the Government at the time of their recall, but later proved, see Landau, pp. 1-71 passim.

⁴⁸Ray Stannard Baker, Neutrality, 1914-1915, Vol. 5 of Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters (Garden City, 1935), p. 372.

to be disloyal. Declaring that he foresaw no difficulty at the present time or in the future with any other country, he stated:

I am sorry to say that the gravest threats against our national peace and safety have been uttered within our own borders. There are citizens I blush to admit, born under other flags but welcomed under our generous naturalization laws to the full freedom and opportunity of America, who have poured the passion 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 policies to the uses of foreign intrigue.⁴⁹

The President pointed out that their numbers were small compared to the vast number of loyal immigrants, but that their small number had disgraced the country and made it necessary to use the process of law so that America "may be purged of their corrupt distemper." Declaring that the United States was without federal statutes to deal with these abuses, the President urged Congress to pass such laws. Laws were needed, he said, because "such creatures of passion, disloyalty, and anarchy must be crushed out. They are not many but they are infinitely malignant, and the hand of our power should close over them at once."⁵⁰

The President spread his condemnation to some native Americans also. He declared: "There are some men among us, and many residents abroad who, though born and bred in the United States and calling themselves Americans, have so forgotten themselves and their honor as citizens as to put their passionate sympathy with one or the other side in the great European conflict above their regard for the peace and dignity of the United States. They also preach and practice

⁴⁹Baker and Dodd, The New Democracy, Vol. I, p. 423.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 424.

disloyalty."⁵¹

The President's attack on hyphenated Americans and on disloyalty amounted to less than a tenth of his entire address, but it overshadowed the rest of his message. In reporting the speech, the Oklahoma News splashed headlines which read, "Purge Nation of Disloyalists' Poisons is President's Warning to 64th Congress: Crush out Creatures Who Seek to Make U. S. a Hotbed of European Passions, Says Wilson on War Sympathizing Conspirators."⁵² The Muskogee Daily Phoenix declared: "Wilson Angrily Denounces Hyphenated Americans; Preparedness Program Greeted Without Applause."⁵³ The Tulsa Daily World presented: "Naturalized Americans Are Branded As Disloyal: To Purge U. S. of Element so Treacherous."⁵⁴ Congress, too, approved the President's attack on hyphenated Americans. The Daily Oklahoman declared that it was the harshest condemnation of hyphenated Americans the President had ever made. Furthermore, the Oklahoman pointed out that, "while the President's outline of the administration's plan for the army and navy passed without a ripple of applause and his references to Pan-Americanism were only punctuated with evidence of approval, republicans and democrats alike joined in an emphatic demonstration at his words of condemnation for those he assailed so unreservedly."⁵⁵

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 424-425.

⁵²Oklahoma News, December 7, 1915, p. 1. Newspaper-wide headlines.

⁵³Muskogee Daily Phoenix, December 8, 1915, p. 1. Four columns.

⁵⁴Tulsa Daily World, December 8, 1915, p. 1. Two columns.

⁵⁵"Wilson Asserts Advanced Pan-Americanism Demands National Defense Program," Daily Oklahoman, December 8, 1915, p. 1.

Over the next few days editorials appeared supporting the President's attack. The Tulsa Daily World declared: This crying evil which has been brought home so forcibly to us of late, the President says must be crushed out, and the citizenship of our great nation will say 'amen' to the President's laudable determination."⁵⁶ The Muskogee Daily Phoenix suggested deporting aliens to the lands from which they came and Americans to the places they supported. The editor believed: "There would soon be less anti-American howling if the American partisans of Germany thought they were to be deported to the land they love."⁵⁷

The Daily Oklahoman declared that the President "voiced the collective sentiment of the United States." Furthermore, the editor stated: "The warning has been sounded in all fairness. He who fails to lend ear is not only a traitor and an ingrate but a fool."⁵⁸ The next day the editor declared that Congress would undoubtedly take steps to remedy the lack of adequate laws. He believed these laws were necessary because: "It is not inconceivable that many of the illegal acts committed by hyphenated depredators within the past several months have been due to the knowledge that it would be hard to hold them upon anything except debatable technicalities and they have taken criminal advantage of a situation which greatly favored their design."⁵⁹

Thus the year 1915 closed with the President and Oklahoma newsmen

⁵⁶"Current Comment," Tulsa Daily World, December 11, 1915, p. 4.

⁵⁷"Deport Them," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, December 15, 1915, p. 4.

⁵⁸"The Presidents Message," Daily Oklahoman, December 9, 1915, p. 6.

⁵⁹"Furnishing the Means," Daily Oklahoman, December 10, 1915, p. 6.

condemning certain hyphenated Americans. Both the President and news-men were anxious to keep the United States out of the European conflict, and both desired to unify American thought and action. In their anxiety to instill within the populace a higher level of patriotism, however, they had succeeded in equating German-American dissent against American policy with disloyalty. In the following years of 1916 and 1917, as the country approached and finally went to war, the attacks on hyphenated Americans would become even harsher. Although no active suppression of German-Americans or German sympathizers occurred in Oklahoma prior to the war, in the process of condemning German-American dissent, all dissent would become identified with disloyalty.

CHAPTER III

PREPAREDNESS TO WAR

Wilson's decision for military preparedness raised tremendous opposition throughout the country, especially among progressives. One of the strands of progressive thought, which had developed in reaction to the Spanish-American war and to "dollar diplomacy" in Latin America, was the belief that wars were caused by the designs of capitalists and arms manufacturers. Therefore, most progressives tended to believe in a pacifist international policy which included international disarmament and a repudiation of war. America, progressives believed, should be a moral example for the rest of the world. Thus, to progressives, Wilson's preparedness program signaled the turning of America into an armed camp. In addition, they believed it would mean the end of reform at home. Consequently, in the ensuing struggle, almost every leader of the progressive movement joined the antipreparedness ranks. Among these leaders was a group of Eastern peace advocates, which included Oswald Garrison Villard, George Foster Peabody, Jane Adams and Lillian D. Wald, who formed such antipreparedness organizations as the League to Limit Arms and the Women's Peace Party.¹

As the opposition to Wilson's policy gained strength, the President decided to make an appeal directly to that portion of the country which

¹Link, Progressive Era, pp. 180-182.

most opposed his preparedness program.² Thus, in late January and early February of 1916, Wilson travelled to New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Chicago, Des Moines, Topeka, Kansas City, and St. Louis. On the trip he appealed to the people of the East and the Middle West to support his program of strengthening the army, the navy, and the merchant marine.³ Though drawing huge audiences wherever he spoke, the President failed to change the minds of Midwesterners, especially those of the rural elements, and opposition to his program remained potent up to the eve of declared war.⁴

Besides progressives, however, preparedness was also opposed by many German-Americans, and it was this element of the anti-preparedness forces which attracted the fire of the Daily Oklahoman. Responding to letters from some of its German-American readers, the Oklahoman pointed out that Germany had always made it a practice to be prepared, and the editor asked: "Why...is it that German-American citizens of the United States are speaking and writing against preparedness on the part of the United States?...If preparedness is good for Germany why is it not good for the United States: Wherein lies the difference? Why this peculiar attitude? Is it inconsistency: Or worse: We wonder."⁵ The Oklahoman also noted that there was much disagreement in Congress as to how the President's program should be designed, but pointed out that the only

²Ibid., p. 185.

³Baker and Dodd, The New Democracy, Vol. II, pp. 1-122.

⁴Link, Progressive Era, pp. 185-186.

⁵"Just Why We Wonder," Daily Oklahoman, December 19, 1915, p. 6-C. See also, "Foolish Question No. 99,999," Daily Oklahoman, March 6, 1916, p. 6.

person entirely opposed to preparedness was Meyer London, a Socialist representative from New York.⁶

German-American opposition to preparedness, however, was not the only problem bothering the newsmen of Oklahoma in early 1916. They continued to find evidence of German conspiracies in the United States. One of the more spectacular incidents once again involved Franz von Papen. Though granted safe conduct by the British after his recall, British officials stopped von Papen and searched his luggage on January second and third. The British wryly commented that safe conduct applied to his person, not to his baggage.⁷ Among his papers were found check stubs which showed payments to various persons in the United States, including Werner Horn. The British gave these papers to the Americans, and their contents were published in the American press. For example, a headline in the Daily Oklahoman read: "Check Stubs Reveal German Military Attache Financed Alleged Bomb Conspirators."⁸ A month later the Oklahoman published another story whose headline read: "Letters Reveal New and Interesting Details of German Activity in the U.S.," even though the story under the headline actually contained little information about German activities in the United States.⁹

Editorial suspicion of wide-spread German conspiracies against

⁶"Socialist Offers Only Opposition To Preparedness," Daily Oklahoman, March 18, 1916, p. 1. Meyer's name was spelled Mayor in the article.

⁷Landau, p. 54.

⁸Daily Oklahoman, January 15, 1916, p. 1. Two columns, top center, boxed.

⁹Daily Oklahoman, February 8, 1916, p. 1. Two columns, top center, boxed.

American lives and property also continued. The Daily Oklahoman noted that when the United States cruiser Washington left New York in early February, Rear Admiral Usher requested police auxiliaries to guard the bridges under which the ship passed because of fears that someone would drop a bomb on it. The Oklahoman also reported that when a short-circuit occurred in the New York subway system, many passengers were afraid that it was a bomb plot. Rather than finding these incidents ludicrous, the editor declared: "In view of repeated 'accidents' to munitions plants in the United States and similar 'accidents' to shipping, it is not remarkable that nervous citizens should wonder just when another terrible 'accident' may involve their lives and safety."¹⁰

Further outraged by letters it had received from a few of its readers the Daily Oklahoman continued its attack the next day. Lumping those German-Americans who wrote letters defending Germany and Germany's policies with the German conspirators, the editor rather bitterly declared:

Here is something that strikes us as weird and somewhat ludicrous. With federal grand juries hotfooting it after German conspirators day in and day out; with the United States suffering from acute and growing uneasiness as to what disaster will next befall; with the President of the United States thundering his disgust and disapprobation of the insidious influences at work in the country under cover of a protecting citizenship; with 'accidents' coming thick and fast; with the example of von Papen and Boy-Ed--with all these things and more the conspirators profess to wonder why there is an anti-German sentiment in this country.¹¹

¹⁰"The Nervousness Of Suspicion," Daily Oklahoman, February 9, 1916, p. 6.

¹¹"Indictment Of The Consuls," Daily Oklahoman, February 10, 1916, p. 6.

Oklahoma newspapers also continued Wilson's theme of "hyphenate" disloyalty. The Muskogee Daily Phoenix printed an editorial cartoon entitled, "Get Out Or Get Under." The drawing pictured Uncle Sam, looking very angry, holding an American flag in his left hand. His right hand was pointed towards three frightened men who bore the label "WAVERING LOYALTY."¹² In addition, the Phoenix attacked the German language press, declaring: "For months they have been villifying not only President Wilson but the people of the United States." The editor warned these newspapers and their supporters that "the time is approaching when it will be necessary to draw the line a little tighter than it has been against the hyphenated persons who have spent the last year or two breathing out threatenings and slaughter."¹³

But while Oklahoma newspapers were continuing their intolerant attacks on their German neighbors, President Wilson found it necessary to soften the comments he made in his address to Congress. On his western tour, while campaigning for his preparedness program, he spoke before what could have been a hostile audience in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Noting that there were many foreign-born persons in the audience, the President was attempting to explain his congressional comments when he declared: "I have not supposed that the men whose voices seemed to show a threat against us represented even the people they claimed to represent." He assured his audience that he believed the men who came to America from foreign lands loved the liberty offered by the United

¹²Muskogee Daily Phoenix, March 3, 1916, p. 6-B. The cartoon was signed by "Stanley."

¹³"Time To Draw The Line," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, April 27, 1916, p. 4.

States and would stand by the "ideals of America."¹⁴

On February 23, 1916, a delegation of Hungarians, led by Alexander Konta of New York City, visited the President. They presented Wilson with resolutions passed by a mass meeting of Hungarians a month previously in New York. The resolutions protested the President's congressional remarks and declared that Hungarians had been slandered by the attacks on their loyalty. Wilson then replied: "I have never myself doubted the feeling that gentlemen such as you have toward America....I have deplored the spirit manifested by some who have misrepresented those for whom they professed to speak and my public protests have been against what they said and against their misrepresentations of what I felt sure was the sentiment of the rank and file of those Americans born on the other side of the water."¹⁵

Finally, the President modified his statement once again while speaking at the opening of the national service school military encampment for young women. In this address Wilson declared: "I never had the slightest doubt of what would happen when America called upon those of her citizens born in other countries to come to the support of her flag." He believed that they would come with cheers and much enthusiasm.¹⁶

¹⁴"Americans Stand Together When Trouble Comes Says President; Pledges To Keep U.S. From War," Daily Oklahoman, February 14, 1916, p. 1. Two columns.

¹⁵"Wilson Has Faith In Foreign Born," Daily Oklahoman, February 24, 1916, p. 4.

¹⁶"National Spirit Aroused By War, Declares Wilson," Daily Oklahoman, May 2, 1916, p. 1. Top Right; and "Hyphen To Vanish In Call To Arms Wilson Declares," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, May 2, 1916, p. 1.

Oklahoma newspapers reported the President's modifications on their front pages. But whatever impact they might have had towards lessening the growing intolerance towards German-Americans was lost; not only was this so because of attacks on and revelations of German conspiracies, but because of the decision of various German-American Alliances to attempt to affect the outcome of the presidential contest of 1916.¹⁷ This unfortunate decision of the Alliances brought with it a new wave of attacks on hyphenated Americans, and hyphenization became a political issue in the campaign itself.

The National German-Alliance had been formed in Philadelphia on October 6, 1901, with Dr. Charles John Hexamer as its president. Its program was primarily aimed at preserving such vestiges of German culture as its language. Its membership was primarily those of German descent, but it had also reached an agreement as early as January 25, 1907, to work with Irish-Americans for the common good of immigrants. Prior to the First World War its only concerted political activity had been against prohibition.¹⁸

After the beginning of the war, however, the Alliance reacted to what it believed to be a pro-Allied press and a pro-Allied President. The Alliance became strong supporters of the German cause and began to lobby in Congress for its own interests, as in the case of the attempt to embargo arms in early 1915. The German-American Alliance also complained that Wilson virtually ignored its numerous petitions on behalf

¹⁷ Author's conclusion derived because while Wilson was modifying his attack, Oklahoma newsmen were increasing theirs.

¹⁸ Child, pp. 2-3, 6-7, 10-21.

of German-American interests.¹⁹ Embittered by their failure to convert either the Congress or the President, various state Alliances began to organize the German-American vote as a weapon in the election of 1916. The state Alliances took this action because they believed that Wilson would seek reelection on the platforms of preparedness and hyphenism. They regarded the President's attacks on hyphenated Americans as a personal affront and a slander on German-American loyalty.²⁰

The Daily Oklahoman considered the movement of the state Alliances into national politics an outrage. Commenting on the proposals of a German-American Alliance in California to "throw the weight of their influence and votes into the scale of the national election in November," the Oklahoman declared: "It has no other meaning than that an element of Germans residing in this country are more closely bound to the fatherland than to the country of which they have obtained adoption, and which divides bread with them. It further signifies that an element of the German population of the United States has not been refined in the melting pot and is offering an innuendo of treason."²¹

Furthermore, the Oklahoman declared "that such a movement could have but one meaning--intimidation of the administration and all men in public life who may hold opinions...different from the notions of such of these hyphenated citizens as regard Germany first and America a poor second as the objective of patriotic sentiment." Observing that such a development could be interpreted in no other way except

¹⁹Ibid., p. 63-65.

²⁰Wittke, pp. 42-43. 87.

²¹"The Sinister Hyphen," Daily Oklahoman, April 10, 1916, p. 4.

"sinister," the editor asked: "Can one doubt that the element embraced in this organization would give both its moral and active support to Germany in the event of a war between the United States and the Empire?"²²

As the nominating conventions drew nearer, both President Wilson, and ex-President Roosevelt entered the fray. In a Memorial Day address at Arlington, Virginia, Wilson returned to his theme of "hyphenism." Once again he pointed out that Americans had been drawn from every nation in the world. Once again he emphasized that most Americans born elsewhere were loyal to the policies of the United States. And, once again he noted that it was easy for immigrants to identify with one of the belligerents, and that he bore no ill feelings even towards the extremists. But he warned these extremists: "I summon them, and I summon them very solemnly not to set their purpose against the purposes of America. America must come first in every purpose we entertain, and every man must count upon being cast out of our confidence, cast out even of our tolerance, who does not submit to that great ruling principle."²³

In the rising heat of the coming election the Daily Oklahoman headlined the President's speech; "Wilson Declares 'Hyphenates' Will Not Be Tolerated."²⁴ Furthermore, both the Daily Oklahoman and the Muskogee Daily Phoenix gave front page coverage to Roosevelt's response to Wilson's Memorial Day speech. Speaking in St. Louis the ex-President

²²"Evidence Accumulating," Daily Oklahoman, April 26, 1916, p. 6.

²³Baker and Dodd, The New Democracy, Vol. II, pp. 192-193.

²⁴Daily Oklahoman, May 31, 1916, p. 1. Top right.

blasted Wilson for using "weasel words." In addition, Roosevelt attacked the German-American Alliance and accused it of "moral treason."²⁵

German-Americans felt trapped. They could not support Wilson, whom they believed unneutral. Neither could they support Roosevelt, who was obviously antagonistic towards German-Americans and an advocate of policies which would in all probability mean war.²⁶ The Republicans, too, were trapped. As Wilson's renomination was almost certain, the Republicans had to find a candidate who could unite all the anti-Wilson forces, including those who were pro-German and those who were pro-Ally. Therefore, the Republicans had to choose a candidate who was identified with neither of the belligerents. The man they selected was Charles Evans Hughes, an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court.²⁷ The Republican platform was equally well balanced. It emphasized "Americanism" and "honest neutrality" while carefully avoiding a denunciation of hyphenated Americans. The nomination of Hughes and the Republican platform also removed German-Americans from their dilemma. Whether he liked it or not Hughes was now the German-American candidate.²⁸

On reporting the nomination of Hughes the Daily Oklahoman printed an unusual page two editorial. It declared that Republicans had

²⁵"Colonel Scores German Alliances," Daily Oklahoman, June 1, 1916, p. 1; and "Cannot Classify American Citizens By Hyphen Says T.R.," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, June 1, 1916, p. 1.

²⁶Child, p. 126.

²⁷Frederic L. Paxson, Pre-War Years: 1913-1917, Vol. I of American Democracy and the World War (Boston, 1936), pp. 337-345.

²⁸Link, Progressive Era, p. 232.

nominated Hughes rather than Roosevelt because of "the powerful influence of hyphenated citizens." Noting that the Republican party had always captured the largest percentage of the hyphenated vote, the editor stated that the Republicans could not ignore this element and thus nominated Hughes who had never opposed Germany in the European war.²⁹ The Muskogee Daily Phoenix noted in headlines that when Hughes accepted the nomination he assailed Wilson's "Americanism" and accused the latter of a weak and vacillating foreign policy.³⁰

Stung by this attack, Wilson decided that the Democratic convention, which was to meet June 14, 1916, should out-"Americanize" the Republicans. Therefore, he issued personal instructions that Americanism should be the keynote of the convention and that the proceedings should be liberally interspersed with such songs as "America," "The Star-Spangled Banner," and "The Red, White, and Blue." Wilson also genuinely regarded foreign influence in America as a menace in itself and was determined to serve notice on the Republicans that any party who appealed for the support of such "disloyal groups" should be condemned. Thus he instructed the managers of the convention to insert a strong "Americanism" plank into the Democratic party platform.³²

In addition, timing his speech to coincide with the opening of the convention on Flag Day, the President delivered his harshest condemna-

²⁹"Editorial," Daily Oklahoman, June 11, 1916, p. 2-A.

³⁰"Hughes Quits Bench And Bitterly Assails Wilson's Americanism," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, June 11, 1916, p. 1. Two columns.

³¹Link, Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace, pp. 42-43.

³²Baker, Facing War, p. 256.

tion of hyphenated Americans. In this address, delivered at the Washington Monument, Wilson declared:

I believe that the vast majority of those men whose lineage is directly derived from the nations now at war are just as loyal to the flag of the United States as any native citizen of this beloved land, but there are some men of that extraction who are not; and they, not only in past months, but at the present time, are doing their best to undermine the influences of the Government of the United States in the interests of matters which are foreign to us and which are not derived from the questions of our own politics.

There is disloyalty active in the United States, and it must be absolutely crushed. It proceeds from a minority, a very small minority. It works underground, but it also shows its ugly head where we can see it; and there are those at this moment who are trying to levy a species of political blackmail, saying, 'Do what we wish in the interest of foreign sentiment or we will wreak our vengeance at the polls.'

That is the sort of thing against which the American Nation will turn with a might and triumph of sentiment which will teach these gentlemen once and for all that loyalty to this flag is the first test of tolerance in the United States.

That is the lesson that I have come to remind you of on this day--no mere sentiment. It runs into your daily life and conversation. Are you going yourselves, individually and collectively, to see to it that no man is tolerated who does not do honor to that flag?³³

The following morning the Tulsa Daily World declared in its headlines: "Disloyalty To Flag Must Stop Wilson Cries; Charges Some Citizens Are Trying To Level Political Blackmail."³⁴ The Daily Oklahoman declared the President's speech to be "a very fine, Americanistic utterance of a patriot unhyphenated." The editor believed that

³³ Baker and Dodd, The New Democracy, Vol. II, pp. 209-210.

³⁴ "Foreign Political Blackmail To Be Borne No Longer," Daily Oklahoman, June 15, 1916, p. 1; and, "Disloyalty To Flag Must Stop Wilson Cries," Tulsa Daily World, June 15, 1916, p. 1.

Wilson spoke for the vast majority of American citizens who were tired of the spectacle that had been going on for the past few months and warned: "When an aggregation of men, admittedly hyphenated and admittedly selfish, propose to take over, so far as they can, the political destinies of a republic in which they are present largely in the guise of guests--well, along about that time something is going to happen." The editor concluded: "As the ruler of the greatest nation on earth [Wilson] issued a clarion warning."³⁵

The issue of Americanism even filtered down into local politics. The Tulsa Daily World, a Republican party organ of Oklahoma, reported that the keynote of the Tulsa County Republican convention would be "Americanism." The county chairman, A. A. Small, told the World's reporter that all delegates to the convention would be asked to wear or carry small American flags. Furthermore, the chairman pointed out that the Tulsa convention hall would be hung liberally with flags.³⁶ In addition, the World carried an editorial which accused the Democrats and Wilson of using Americanism and the disloyalty of a few German-Americans to gain "a few more votes for the Democratic party." The editor declared: "They want us to believe that the Democratic party has a monopoly on patriotism and loyalty and they are not above disturbing the truth to spread this impression."³⁷

It remained, however, for the Daily Oklahoman to strike the lowest

³⁵"Foreign Political Blackmail," Daily Oklahoman, June 16, 1916, p. 6.

³⁶"G. O. P. To Feature Pure Americanism," Tulsa Daily World, June 23, 1916, p. 3.

³⁷"Are Genuine Americans," Tulsa Daily World, June 24, 1916, p. 4.

blow in the state campaign. Referring to troubles the United States was having at that particular time with Mexico, the Oklahoman noted that men all over the country were volunteering their services for the Mexican border, including the Negroes of Oklahoma. The editor then pointed out; "we have noted the example of no German-American body-- those for instance which have frankly entered politics with the concerted plan of defeating Mr. Wilson for the presidency because of his refusal to kowtow to Berlin--in offering its collective service in defense." Using Negroes who had volunteered their services as a counterpoint, the editor declared: "These negroes are hyphenated Americans, to be sure. They are Afro-Americans, and their forefathers were brought here against their will. But they, the lowliest class among our people, are teaching another variety of hyphenates what patriotism means."³⁸

On the national scene hyphenization also became a major issue in the campaign. German-American groups and the majority of the German language press openly supported Hughes. In addition, he talked secretly with the German-financed American Independence Conference to satisfy it of his truly neutral stand. But the Democratic National Committee acquired the records of the meeting and published the details of the German- and Irish-American plot to defeat Wilson.³⁹ Meanwhile, the President had remained virtually silent on the "hyphen" issue, since his outburst on Flag Day, waiting for the right psychological moment to speak out again. When he did so, it was in answer to the president of the American Truth Society, Jeremiah A. O'Leary, a rabid pro-Irish

³⁸"Some Other Hyphenates," Daily Oklahoman, June 26, 1916, p. 4.

³⁹Link, Progressive Era, p. 245-246.

supporter who criticized Wilson and his policy and who had asked why the Irish should vote for Wilson. Wilson answered: "I would feel deeply mortified to have you or anybody like you vote for me. Since you have access to many disloyal Americans and I have not, I will ask you to convey this message to them." Wilson's reply apparently won the approval of most people in the country.⁴⁰

The results of the election, however, demonstrated that the German-American vote had very little effect on the outcome. Early in the contest, Democratic campaigners discovered peace to be the major issue of the election. Thus they emphasized that Wilson had kept the nation out of war. This emphasis aided in splitting the German-American community, who voted very much as they had in the past, with the Democrats even carrying such German-American strongholds as St. Louis and Milwaukee.⁴¹ The election was so close that three days passed before Wilson knew that he had been reelected. The President's plurality was less than 600,000 votes, and a switch of less than 4,000 votes in California would have given the election to Hughes.⁴²

Wilson, however, did not savor his victory long before he was once again involved in the international crisis which was the European war. Near exhaustion, both sides in the conflict decided to use their most desperate weapons to break the deadlock. For Great Britain this meant intensifying its economic warfare through the use of so-called bunkering

⁴⁰ Joseph P. Tumulty, Woodrow Wilson As I Know Him (Garden City, 1921), pp. 312-314.

⁴¹ Wittke, pp. 110-111.

⁴² Millis, pp. 350-353.

agreements. Under this plan the owner of a neutral ship could not buy British coal anywhere in the world unless he submitted to the British Admiralty's policies.⁴³

For Germany the weapon was the intensification of submarine warfare.⁴⁴ Previously the Germans had sunk an unarmed French steamer, the Sussex, on March 24, 1916. Threatening the German government with a break in diplomatic relations, Wilson was able to wrest from the German government on May 4, 1916, a pledge that submarines would sink no more merchant vessels without prior warning and search.⁴⁵ But as the year drew to a close Germany began to nibble at the edges of the pledge.

The President believed that his election had been a mandate for peace. But observing the international situation, Wilson believed that the only way peace could be assured for America would be if he ended the war. With this in mind, he proposed to mediate the conflict in Europe. The Germans agreed to allow Wilson to mediate, but only long enough to get the Allies to the conference table. Once there the Germans believed they could dictate the peace terms, and Wilson was to have no part in the negotiations. Failing to accomplish this, however, on February 1, 1917 the German government announced that submarines would sink without warning all ships, both Allied and neutral, in a broad zone around the British Isles. Believing he had no other choice, Wilson broke diplomatic relations with Germany on February 3, 1917.⁴⁶

⁴³Link, Progressive Era, pp. 252-253.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 254.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 215-217.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 255-268.

The President still hoped to avoid war, but while resisting demands to arm merchant ships, he was stunned by a message from Walter Page, the American Ambassador to Great Britain, which removed all doubts as to Germany's intentions. The British had intercepted a message from the German Foreign Secretary, Alfred Zimmermann, to the German Minister in Mexico. This message proposed that in event of war between the United States and Germany, Mexico should ally itself with Germany in exchange for the territory it lost to the United States in the Mexican War of 1846.⁴⁷

Outraged by this revelation, Wilson then asked Congress for the authority to arm merchant ships. This armed neutrality bill passed the House of Representatives with ease.⁴⁸ But when it went to the Senate a group of diehard Senators, afraid that it would mean war, filibustered against it until the 64th Congress ended.⁴⁹ The President, angered by the Senate's actions, declared: "The Senate of the United States is the only legislative body in the world which cannot act when its majority is ready for action. A little group of willful men, representing no opinion but their own, have rendered the great Government of the United States helpless and contemptible." His remedy was to propose that the Senate change its rules so that such a situation

⁴⁷"German Plot To Combine With Mexico And Japan For War On U.S. Revealed," Tulsa Daily World, March 1, 1917, p. 1. Newspaper-wide headlines.

⁴⁸"House Passes Armed Neutrality Bill: Wilson Confirms German Plot Revelation," Tulsa Daily World, March 2, 1917, p. 1. Newspaper-wide headlines.

⁴⁹Link, Progressive Era, p. 271.

could not occur again.⁵⁰

It made little difference, however, because the President announced on March 9, that he was arming merchant ships and called for a special session of Congress on April 16. In response to Wilson's announcement, on March 18, 1917, German submarines sank three American merchantmen. Those who wanted peace and those who wanted war immediately beleaguered Wilson from all sides. On March 20, he called his cabinet together to receive their counsel, but after receiving it gave no indication of what he would do except to announce the next day that he wanted Congress to meet April second instead of the sixteenth.⁵¹

In the interim Wilson discussed his problems with a trusted friend, Frank I. Cobb of the New York World. In this interview Wilson predicted: "Once lead these people into war and they'll forget there ever was such a thing as tolerance. To fight you must be brutal and ruthless, and the spirit of ruthless brutality will enter into every fibre of our national life, infecting Congress, the courts, the policeman on the beat, the man in the street." In addition, the President did not believe the nation could fight a war and still preserve civil liberties.⁵²

Wilson was correct. Already there were rumblings in Oklahoma. The Fairview Leader warned that it deplored violence, but that "it

⁵⁰ Baker and Dodd, The New Democracy, Vol. II, p. 435.

⁵¹ Link, Progressive Era, pp. 274-276.

⁵² Baker, Facing War, pp. 505-507. Doubts have been raised as to the authenticity of Wilson's remarks during this conversation. See, Jerold S. Auerbach, "Woodrow Wilson's Prediction to Frank Cobb: Words Historians Should Doubt Ever Got Spoken," Journal of American History Vol. 54 (December, 1967), pp. 608-617.

can not be urged too strongly upon those people of German descent or German birth who live in America to take seriously their position. For be it known that if war actually comes and boys from here and there over the country enlist and are sent to the front, the man who has with impunity criticized the government and the officials during time of peace will find his easy going neighbor a very different sort of animal, a different being to deal with."⁵³

A week late the Leader expanded its comments to include dissent from native Americans. The editor declared: "The man, American born or naturalized, who finds himself disloyal in word or action will, in all probability find himself boarding in a camp and the government will be paying the board. We have heard repeatedly stories of certain Germans in Major county who have made threats of what they will do in case war was declared with the old country and the threats made were such as would be adjudged treason a day after war is finally declared."⁵⁴

When the special session of Congress met on April 2, 1917 the President asked for war against Germany. After cataloging the reasons for the war, the President concluded his speech with a reference to German-Americans. He declared:

We shall happily, still have an opportunity to prove that friendship [towards the German people] in our daily attitude and actions towards the millions of men and women of German birth and native sympathy who live amongst us and share our life, and we shall be proud to prove it towards all who are

⁵³"Remove Kaiser's Picture," Fairview Leader, March 22, 1917, p. 1.

⁵⁴"It Might Be Well To Explain," Fairview Leader, March 29, 1917, p. 1.

in fact loyal to their neighbors and to the Government in the hour of test. They are, most of them, as true and loyal Americans as if they had never known any other fealty or allegiance. They will be prompt to stand with us in rebuking and restraining the few who may be of a different mind and purpose. If there should be disloyalty, it will be dealt with with a firm hand of stern repression; but if it lifts its head at all, it will lift it only here and there and without countenance except from a lawless and malignant few.⁵⁵

The Senate passed a resolution of war on April 4, 1917, the House passed the resolution on April 6, 1917, and on the same day the President signed it. The country was at war, not only against Germany, but against American dissenters as well. In Oklahoma the mood for repression of dissent had been created also, but actual suppression of dissenters in the Sooner State awaited the occurrence of one more local incident and the creation of governing bodies through which suppression of civil liberties could be sanctioned.

⁵⁵ Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds. War and Peace, Vol. I, in The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson (New York, 1927), pp. 15-16.

CHAPTER IV

AGENTS OF REPRESSION

The President had declared for war, and almost immediately Oklahoma newsmen responded by declaring their own war on dissent and disloyalty. Their attacks included not only German-Americans, but native dissenters as well. For example, the following song appeared on the front page of the Fairview Leader only three days after the President's war request:

Last night as I lay sleeping
A wonderful dream came to me.
I saw Uncle Sammy weeping
For his children from over the sea.
They had come to him friendless and starving
When from tyrants oppression they fled.
But now they abuse and revile him
Till at last in just anger he said.
(Chorus)
If you don't like your Uncle Sammy
Than go back to your home o'er the sea,
To the land from where you came
Whatever be its name
But don't be ungrateful to me!
If you don't like the stars in Old Glory
If you don't like the Red, White, and Blue
Then don't act like the cur in the story
Don't bite the hand that's feeding you.

. . .

R. H. Wilson, the State Superintendent of Public Schools, suggested that each citizen purchase a copy.¹

¹"Don't Bite The Hand That's Feeding You," Fairview Leader, April 5, 1917, p. 1. The Leader was a tabloid size newspaper, and the song occupied two of the five columns, covered three-fourths the length of the page, and was topped by an American flag. The words to the song were by Thomas Hoier and the music by Jimmie Morgan.

At the corner of Fourth and Boston in Tulsa, Mrs. Nellie Zay of Chicago tried for two hours on April 3 to speak against the war, but was forced to quit because of the jeers and hoots of the crowd.² The Tulsa Daily World responded by declaring, "we are slow to condemn American people of any sort as traitors, but there are many who are giving aid and comfort to our enemies under the plea of liberty of conscience and freedom of speech."³

Nine days after the proclamation of war the Tulsa Daily World pointed out: "Everywhere throughout the country men of foreign births and allegiance are being compelled by judges and by infuriated citizens to kiss the flag, to wear it, and to swear renewed allegiance to it. Why not also watch some of those traitorous Americans and compel them to pay to it the consecrated allegiance which is assumed by virtue of their citizenship?...Watch a lot of such Americans while the aliens are being scrutinized."⁴

The editor of the Muskogee Daily Phoenix demanded that vocal dissent against the war be stopped. He believed that one of the sacrifices of a democracy at war was the freedom of speech, and he believed that traitors should sacrifice as much as patriots. The editor pointed out: "Right here in this city traitorous talk is allowed to go unpunished." He believed the campaign of the pacifist was bad enough, but "a million times worse is the outburst of the

²"Crowd Hoots Woman Anti-War Speaker on Downtown Corner," Tulsa Daily World, April 4, 1917, p. 1.

³"Citizens Of The World," Tulsa Daily World, April 5, 1917, p. 1.

⁴"Everybody's Flag," Tulsa Daily World, April 15, 1917, p. 10. Reprinted from the Kansas City Journal.

confessed foreign sympathizer and traitor. The time has come when his mouth should be stopped."⁵

Meanwhile, on the national scene, the President and Congress struggled for a way to raise a national army. The administration believed a volunteer army could not be raised quickly, and thus turned towards conscription. But a draft was assumed to have pitfalls also. Recalling the violent reaction to conscription during the Civil War, Senator James A. Reed of Missouri predicted that "blood would run in the streets" if Congress passed a conscription act. Congress avoided violence, however, by removing the function of drafting men from the military and placing it with local civilian boards in each community which, in turn, were uniformly controlled from Washington.⁶

In a proclamation on May 18, 1917, the President declared June 5th as the day for all men ages twenty-one through thirty to register for the draft at their local polling places. In the interval Newton D. Baker, the Secretary of War, conducted a massive propaganda campaign so that by registration day little trouble occurred. Most draft age men had come to believe that the war would be a great adventure.⁷

The reaction of Oklahomans was similar. Only a few men failed to register, and the main opposition to registration came from a few Socialists. Socialists circulated petitions which requested Congress to refer the draft to a popular vote. Some local officials construed

⁵"Gag The Traitors," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, April 20, 1917, p. 14.

⁶Daniel R. Beaver, Newton D. Baker and the American War Effort, 1917-1919 (Lincoln, 1966), pp. 30-33.

⁷Sullivan, pp. 298-302.

these petitions as interference with the draft, and arrested a few of the circulators, for example, Charles Oderbeck in Washington county. In addition, J. C. Thurmond of Tushka, a member of the lower house in the previous state legislature, was arrested for delivering a speech against enlistment.⁸

Conscription, however, did not remain peaceful. In the first days of August, 1917, shortly after the actual induction of men into the army began, Oklahoma experienced the so-called "Green Corn Rebellion."⁹ Confined to the counties of Seminole, Hughes, Pontotoc, Pittsburg, and Pottawatomie, the rebellion was primarily an uprising of native American tenant farmers. Poor and chronically in debt, they were little more than peons or serfs. Their ancestors had migrated from the hill country of Arkansas, Tennessee and other Southern states, but when they arrived in Oklahoma all the available land was already occupied, either by Indians or settlers. Forced, then, to become tenant farmers, they translated their lack of an outlet into agrarian discontent.¹⁰

The Democratic party claimed the allegiance of these farmers, but they slowly turned towards socialism as a "gospel of despair." They also joined the Working Class Union which had been organized in Arkansas in 1914. The purposes of this union were vague, but among the goals

⁸ Harlow's Weekly, June 13, 1917, p. 3.

⁹ For the best treatment of this rebellion see Charles C. Bush, "The Green Corn Rebellion" (Unpub. M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1932). Also see Virginia Carrollton Pope, "The Green Corn Rebellion: A Case Study in Newspaper Self-Censorship" (Unpub. M.A. Thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1940).

¹⁰ Bush, pp. 1-5, 7.

advocated were the abolition of rent and interest, government ownership of all utilities, and free public education. To the farmers of Oklahoma, however, the union was more valuable for social gatherings than anything else.¹¹

By 1917 the farmers had received a small measure of the war prosperity. They did not want to go to war for fear that only their wives and children would be left to tend the fields. Largely illiterate, the tenants were little affected by the thunderings and propaganda of the urban press. Instead, the farmers were much more subject to the spoken word, and incendiary speakers could sway them easily.¹²

The International Workers of the World, a radical labor union, was able to take advantage of the tenants' ignorance. Speaking before W. C. U. locals, I. W. W. agitators aroused the resentments of the farmers against the rich, the war, and the draft. The agitators urged resistance to the draft and the overthrow of the national government. But no definite plan was ever agreed on which would co-ordinate all of the locals. The general plan, however, was to destroy several bridges across the Canadian and Little Rivers, to burn a number of towns and then to march on Washington to overthrow the government. During the march they were to subsist on green corn and an occasional barbecued steer taken from the land.¹³

The rebellion began prematurely on August 2, 1917, when a small group of rebels fired on Sheriff Frank Grall and his deputy, J. W.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 6, 9-10.

¹²Ibid., pp. 6, 11; and Pope, pp. 16, 43.

¹³Bush, pp. 13-18.

Cross, who were in search of draft resisters. Posses were formed immediately in the surrounding towns, and, led by Sheriff Robert E. Duncan of Pontotoc, they routed the rebels at "Spears Bluff" on August 3, 1917. Over the next few days the purely civilian army rounded up the stragglers and the rebellion was at an end.¹⁴

This tragic-comic rebellion had great significance for Oklahoma. Harlow's Weekly recognized the causes of the rebellion as ignorance and agrarian discontent.¹⁵ From outside the state, however, attacks were made on the backwardness and the loyalty of Oklahomans.¹⁶ These attacks embarrassed the officials and newsmen of Oklahoma and made them determined to erase this stain from Oklahoma's record. For example, ex-governor Lee Cruce wrote from Arizona volunteering his services as a speaker. In his letter he wrote: "The advertising our state has received by reason of the unpatriotic actions of certain of her citizens makes it more imperative that other citizens exert themselves to the utmost to wipe out the stigma."¹⁷

The rebellion was also used to sell war bonds. During the second Liberty Bond drive the Oklahoma State Council of Defense declared: "This state has been classed in the minds of many as a 'slacker state' Highly colored stories of the so-called draft riots were circulated throughout the East, where thousands believe Oklahoma citizens are withholding their support from the Government. If Oklahoma takes its share of Liberty Bonds by October 27, the news will prove to the world

¹⁵Harlow's Weekly, August 8, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁶Pope, pp. 20-21, 32-34.

¹⁷"We Must Win The War," Fairview Leader, September 13, 1917, p. 4.

that this state is behind the American flag."¹⁸

As late as May, 1918, the rebellion was still a cause of embarrassment. On a visit to New York, Tams Bixby, the editor of the Muskogee Daily Phoenix, was approached by a reporter from the New York Globe who asked about the draft riot in Oklahoma. Disturbed by the question, Bixby related an incident which occurred in Oklahoma two months previously. On March 23, 1918, S. L. Miller, an operative for the Tulsa county council of defense, shot and killed Joe Sring, a waiter in a Tulsa Main Street restaurant. Sring had declared that he hoped all American soldiers who went to France were killed. Miller, who had a son in the draft and three nephews soon to be called, was enraged and shot Sring three times in the region of the heart. After surrendering to police, Miller was released; his action was declared justifiable homicide. This incident, Bixby told the reporter, illustrated how Oklahomans treated traitors.¹⁹

By the time of Bixby's trip, however, he could have referred the reporter, just as readily, to some of the repressive activities of Oklahoma's wartime agencies as more accurate examples of how Oklahomans treated traitors. The first of these agencies, the Oklahoma State Council of Defense, operated under the Council of National Defense. The national council was created by the National Defense Act of August, 1916 and was composed of the Secretaries of War, Navy, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor. It was not fully organized until March 3,

¹⁸"We Must Win The War," Fairview Leader, October 13, 1917, p. 10.

¹⁹"Oklahomans Shoot Traitors on Sight," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, May 5, 1918, p. 3; "Tulsans Loyalty Is 100 Percent," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, March 24, 1918, p. 1; and Harlow's Weekly, April 3, 1918, p. 8.

1917, but four days after the United States entered the war, the council requested the Governors of the states to send representatives to a conference in Washington on May third and fourth to aid in organizing state councils.²⁰

Governor Robert Williams sent J. M. Aydelotte, Chairman of the Board of Affairs, to attend the conference as Oklahoma's representative. On Aydelotte's return, by executive order, the Governor created a committee, consisting of twelve citizens to represent Oklahomans. This committee calling itself the Oklahoma State Council of Defense, organized quickly and was ready for work by May 16. The purposes of the State Council were to aid the National Council and the war effort in any possible way. Among its duties were the support of Liberty Loan drives, War Savings, and Red Cross campaigns. In addition, it was to control food production, conserve essential food stuffs, assist recruiting for the army and navy, and to be used for an agency of propaganda.²¹

Believing that German propaganda had systematically flooded Oklahoma since the outbreak of the European conflict, the State Council produced more than 10,000 columns of its own propaganda which were printed in the state's newspapers under the title "We Must Win The War." The State Council also created the Oklahoma Patriotic Speakers Bureau, which offered speakers for any occasion. In addition, it organized a Loyalty Bureau headed by G. B. Parker of the Oklahoma News. Under this bureau the council "began systematically to hunt out disloyal people,

²⁰O. A. Hilton, "The Oklahoma Council of Defense and the First World War," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XX (March, 1942), p. 19. ✓

²¹Ibid., pp. 20-21.

convert them if possible to do so, and if not possible to make loyal citizens of them to obtain their prosecution."²²

One of the methods of the Loyalty Bureau was to send out blank pledges in which the signer declared his allegiance and agreed to report disloyalty. The pledges were so effective that: "In many districts it would have been almost as much as a man's life was worth to refuse to sign one of those loyalty pledge cards..." The Bureau also requested, through the columns of newspapers, that citizens report disloyalty. "This produced a vast amount of correspondence and resulted in setting right many men who really did not understand the issues of the war, in scaring others into keeping quiet, and in opening the doors of the jails and penitentiaries for quite a number."²³

In addition, the Loyalty Bureau devised a form letter which was sent to a number of citizens throughout the state. These letters informed the recipients.

It has been reported to the Oklahoma State Council of Defense that you have not been entirely loyal to the United States during the past few months. It is reported to us that you have made statements that loyal Americans should not make and that you have hindered rather than helped your country in time of war.

Although these reports have been made to us from authentic sources, we trust they are not correct. It may be that you have made statements which you did not mean, or it may be that you do not realize the seriousness of making statements of this kind.

This is merely a friendly letter to you and a warning that you are being watched. In case no statements of any undesirable nature are made in the future, the matter will

²²Sooners in the War, pp. 8-10. ✓

²³Ibid., p. 10.

probably be dropped. If conditions warrant it, of course the Department of Justice now has the machinery to care for the situation.

We trust you can report to us by return mail that the reports we have received are not true. We shall expect a report from you within 3 days.²⁴

The most repressive agencies, however, were the county councils of defense which were created under the Oklahoma State Council of Defense. On July 3, 1917, a letter was sent to the postmaster in each county seat requesting him to recommend, from the leading men of the county, several names for county committees. The Governor then appointed to each county executive committee the leading banker and lawyer and the most prominent editor. These county committees organized county councils of defense, and by the latter part of August, the councils were operating effectively. The purpose of the county council was to aid the State and National Councils in anyway possible in the war effort.²⁵

In their desire to support the war efforts of the state and the nation, these county councils often became not only the local administrators of war programs, but also acted as courts to try slackers and alleged disloyalists. Harlow's Weekly gave a description of the county councils' court function as follows:

The American Red Cross and war saving stamp funds are the most frequent beneficiaries of these courts. Where federal laws have been plainly violated the county councils of defense secure the preliminary evidence and turn the offender over to federal courts. Where a slacker is encountered or a disloyal citizen makes remarks which do not make him liable to any existing law but which show that he is

²⁴Ibid., pp. 9-10. Minutes of the meeting of January 26, 1918.

²⁵Hilton, pp. 21-23.

not supporting this government in its fight with Germany, then the 'strong-arm squad' or the 'go get 'em' committee, as the informal court of public opinion is sometimes called, proceeds to the home of the delinquent and attempts to set him right without the necessity of a public hearing. If the disloyalist proves defiant he is placed under arrest and taken before the county council of defense, where he is given a full opportunity to be heard. If he is found guilty he is usually dismissed with a fine which he is ordered to pay to some war fund and a warning that if he repeats the offense the state of Oklahoma will prove too small a place for him, as there is no²⁶ room on its soil for anyone who is not 100 percent loyal.

The county councils, however, were not uniform in their administration of justice. For example, in its final report to the State Council the Choctaw county council declared: "Men who refused to support any of the war activities were promptly haled before the committee and given the opportunity to make public declaration of their views and positions, after a public statement had been made by the investigator." Early in the war the Choctaw council left a number of cases to the "verdict of the crowd," and in such cases the council "never had to deal a second time with that individual or community." The council also reported: "In our ministration to disloyalists, pro-Germans and slackers in this region, the application of a few courses of yellow paint, posting of slacker bulletins and spankings administered with a heavy two-handed strap, have been found most expedient and efficacious remedies...."²⁷ One such example was that of the Reverend Charles F. Reece of Soper. Reece had written letters derogatory to the Red Cross. For the offense the Choctaw county council of defense stretched Reece over a barrel and gave him one hundred lashes with a leather belt on

²⁶ Harlow's Weekly, July 17, 1918, p. 12.

²⁷ Sooners in the War, pp. 31-32.

his bare back.²⁸

In Washita county the council of defense closed Cordell Christian College for the duration of the war because a number of former students refused to serve in the army and had been placed in Fort Leavenworth prison.²⁹ In addition, ten masked citizens captured John Aden, gave him a light beating and threw him into an alfalfa field. Aden was a German who ran a merchandise store in Braithwaite and who had loudly protested the council's threat to bar the speaking of German in Washita county.³⁰

In Beckham county, William Madison Hicks, a peace advocate and noted lecturer, was in the custody of officers awaiting trial in May, 1918, for speaking against the third Liberty Loan drive. He was taken from the officers by members of the county council of defense and tarred and feathered.³¹ The council reported that "besides converting a few with religious scruples and a few Redflaggers," after the example of Hicks its difficulties in maintaining loyalty in Beckham county were slight.³²

Besides fines and violence, however, county councils of defense also used economic coercion. The Garvin county council required citizens to sign pledges not "to buy or sell to, or barter, exchange, negotiate or in any manner transact any business with any person who

²⁸Harlow's Weekly, June 1918, p. 9.

²⁹Sooners in the War, pp. 63-64.

³⁰Harlow's Weekly, October 16, 1918, p. 13.

³¹Ibid., April 17, 1918, p. 8.

³²Sooners in the War, pp. 27-28.

refused the mandates of the councils."³³ One such example was that of M. D. Miller. The Garvin county council ordered businesses not to deal with Miller because he refused to buy Liberty Bonds, and because he refused to sign the loyalty pledge.³⁴

The Kingfisher county council of defense had published in local newspapers the names of those persons who were able to buy stamps and bonds but did not. In addition, it requested citizens to boycott their stores and asked banks to refuse to take their deposits.³⁵ Kingfisher's methods were apparently effective because they reported that in the third Liberty Loan drive the names of five persons were published who refused to subscribe, but after the publicity all five purchased the quotas assigned to them.³⁶

In Major county the county council of defense brought H. R. Phelps of Homestead to Fairview after he refused to buy his quota of Liberty Bonds. The council sold his automobile, which he left parked in the street, for \$650, invested the money in Liberty Bonds and war savings stamps, and gave Phelps thirty days to claim the securities, or they would be donated to the Red Cross.³⁷

The most active county council in Oklahoma, however, was the Tulsa county council of defense.³⁸ The Tulsa council believed that the

³³Ibid., p. 38.

³⁴Harlow's Weekly, October 23, 1918, p. 13.

³⁵Ibid., May 22, 1918, p. 11.

³⁶Sooners in the War, p. 43.

³⁷Harlow's Weekly, October 30, 1918, p. 11.

³⁸Sooners in the War, p. 4. Minutes of the meeting of December 29, 1917.

"fine distinction between license and liberty must be pointed out to those who shirk their patriotic duty. Treachery and sedition must be ferreted out and the authors deprived of all power for wrong doing."³⁹

To accomplish this purpose Tulsa county paid a detective to watch sedition and had a paid attorney to prosecute cases and to give advice. The council also had a secret organization throughout the county to watch disloyal persons.⁴⁰

In addition, the Tulsa county council recruited a Home Guard which was used on August 7, 1918, to round up 2,000 men, among whom were a number of slackers. The council organized and equipped a detention camp for persons with venereal disease. It also investigated eighty-four cases of alleged disloyalty. A number of these persons were either interned or sent to insane asylums.⁴¹ The State Council was impressed with Tulsa county's work and advised other counties to use Tulsa as a model. Referring to Tulsa's organization, the State Council declared: "A few men convicted in the Federal courts, a few fined, a few held up to the ridicule of their neighbors, and perhaps a few shot, would mean the absolute stamping out of pro-Germanism in Oklahoma."⁴²

The uneven nature of the administrations of the county councils was partially caused by their operation without support of legal statutes.

³⁹William T. Lampe, compiler, Tulsa County in the World War (Tulsa, 1919), p. 60.

⁴⁰Sooners in the War, p. 4. Minutes of the meeting of December 29, 1917.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 6. Minutes of the meeting of December 29, 1917.

The state legislature had adjourned in March of 1917 and did not reconvene until 1919, after the war was over. Thus the edicts issued by the councils depended only on the temperaments of those who controlled the councils and on what public opinion would allow.⁴³ The Fairview Leader declared that, after all, written law is only the crystalization of public opinion and that this was a time when public opinion itself was the law rather than written law.⁴⁴

The final report from Craig county illustrated the power these conditions gave the county councils. This report declared: "The state and municipal authorities and U. S. officers stood by the council of defense, and when questions were raised by those unfaithful to Uncle Sam they were told that the law was what the county council of defense said it was and that they were expected to follow out such orders as the county council of defense directed them to."⁴⁵ The State Council succinctly summed it up: "The rulings of the State Council and the dictates of the county councils of defense have been the supreme law of the land in Oklahoma since the declaration of war."⁴⁶

The rule by public opinion rather than by statute meant that many acts of violence against dissenters and supposed dissenters went unpunished, and in most cases, uncondemned. A few examples will suffice. In Oklahoma City Dr. Alfred Newiger, a dentist, was called before the defense committee charged with making disloyal statements.

⁴³Lampe, p. 59.

⁴⁴Fairview Leader, September 19, 1918, p. 4.

⁴⁵Sooners in the War, p. 35.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 14.

Newiger professed his loyalty and, as there was no proof, the committee let him go. A mob, however, entered his dental office on Main Street and wrecked it.⁴⁷

In Sulphur the Reverend H. C. Capers, age seventy-two, declared that he would not get his hair cut until Germany won the war. On April 3, 1918, a group of young men entered Capers' room while he was asleep and shaved his head. The report continued: "The minister was then forced to kiss the flag, pledge allegiance to the United States, promise not to speak seditiously again and was shown the shortest route out of town."⁴⁸

In Garvin county fifty drafted men waiting to be sent to training camps assaulted Claude Watson. Watson had just been released on bond on charges of seditious activities. The "embryo soldiers" hired a Negro on the night of April 23, 1918, to whip Watson. Upon completion of the beating the men then applied tar and feathers to Watson's bare back.⁴⁹

At Stuart, in Pittsburg county, a group of young men who had just seen some of their friends off to army training camps escorted a man accused of being pro-German to a lonely spot. Once there, they whipped him, doused his head in a water trough and painted stars and stripes on his bald head. "After the head decoration," reported the source,

⁴⁷Harlow's Weekly, April 3, 1918, p. 9.

⁴⁸"Didn't Want Hair Cut Till Huns Won," Frederick Semi-Weekly Star, April 5, 1918, p. 2.

⁴⁹"Drafted Men Tar And Feather Disloyalist," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, April 23, 1918, p. 1.

"a club was bounced off the victim's head, the bouncer declaring it necessary in order to remind the victim that the flag represented power."⁵⁰

On May 10, 1918, Charles Wagoner, a local miner, was found at three a.m. chained to a telephone pole in the business district of Muskogee. Drinking heavily the previous evening, Wagoner had wished "every damned American soldier was killed." In addition, he had spoken against purchasing Liberty Bonds. He was arrested for his seditious talk, but later that evening, he was taken from authorities, painted red with roofing paint, given fifty lashes, and left chained to the pole.⁵¹

None of the above incidents were condemned by the public press, and these incidents were neither unique nor unusual. Harlow's Weekly declared that there were "privately circulated but well authenticated stories of individuals being assaulted and frequently killed for unpatriotic and violent utterances." The editor declared: "These incidents are not infrequent, but do not reach the public press. Apparently the acts of patriotic citizens who resent such remarks meets with general approval and, at least in some instances, the newspapers do not wish to embarrass them with publicity. A similar feeling seems to prevail among public officers, as so far no one who has assaulted or killed a man for violent utterances has been placed in much danger from the law."

⁵⁰Harlow's Weekly, May 22, 1918, p. 11.

⁵¹"Disloyalist Gets Lashes And Paint," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, May 11, 1918.

Harlow's concluded its discussion by declaring: "Right or wrong, the salient factor is this: The man who is not in complete sympathy with the present action of America at this time speaks such lack of sympathy in Oklahoma at his deadly personal peril."⁵²

⁵²Harlow's Weekly, April 17, 1918, p. 8.

CHAPTER V

PATTERNS AND CONCLUSIONS

As the war progressed and the agents of repression brought to bear the full force of their coercive powers, certain patterns developed in Oklahoma. Among these patterns of repression were attacks on German-Americans and on the German language. Patterns emerged also in the use of threats and violence not only to assure uniformity in contributing to war fund drives but also to rid the state of radicalism. To a certain extent, the newsmen of Oklahoma were responsible for aiding and sustaining these patterns as they developed.

German-Americans were naturally the target for sporadic violence and abuse. For example, O. F. Westbrook and Henry Huffman of Jackson county were beaten, tarred, feathered and ordered to leave the county. Before being driven into the night, they also were made to kiss the flag and swear allegiance to the country.¹ In Henryetta, a man who had boasted of being proud of "the fatherland" was taken from jail, severely lashed and his body painted a bright red.²

Occasionally, German-Americans reacted to the abuse they received, and consequently were treated even more harshly. One case was that of Henry Rheimer, a German farmer at Collinsville in Rogers county.

¹Harlow's Weekly, April 3, 1918, p. 8.

²Ibid., May 15, 1918, p. 5.

Rheimer, who had a son in the army, later declared: "My neighbors have taunted me so much that I cannot help but say things sometimes." On one such occasion, he apparently became so angry he uttered "words which could only be considered disloyal," and in addition, Rheimer tore down an American flag on his farm. For this desecration he was remanded to jail in lieu of \$500 bond. Taken from the police by a mob, he was made to kiss every star on the flag and then hung with an electric light cord. Rheimer was saved from strangling only because the Chief of Police, Charles Miller, pleaded with the mob until they let Rheimer go.³

Oklahoma newsmen helped contribute to the intolerant atmosphere by allowing the columns of their newspapers to be used by patriotic groups. For example, through the pages of the Muskogee Daily Phoenix, the American Defense Society warned Oklahomans: "Every German or Austrian in the United States, unless known by years of association to be absolutely loyal, should be treated as a potential spy." The societies' solution was: "Whenever any suspicious act or disloyal word comes to your notice, communicate at once with the police department or with the local office of the department of justice."⁴

Newspapers also occasionally reported stories of suspicions about certain of Oklahoma's alien citizens. On June 4, 1918, the Muskogee Daily Phoenix reported that Albert Rhose, twelve years old, was heard to make comments favorable to Germany. The Phoenix declared that a twelve-year-old obviously was only repeating things he had heard at

³ Ibid., April 24, 1918, p. 11; and "Mob's Act Laid To Broken Accent," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, May 21, 1918, p. 1.

⁴ "American Defense Society Warning," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, May 18, 1918, p. 4.

home, and pointed out that Rhose lived in the same boarding house with F. H. Mayland and Fritz Cracauer, both of whom were claimed to have had past histories of strong pro-German sympathies.⁵

Two days later, perhaps spurred on by either the story or by a Phoenix editorial which called for the suppression of sedition at home, a mob of three hundred men gathered outside the store operated by Mayland and Cracauer. The mob painted the glass of the storefront yellow, and the two men, who were inside, escaped only because authorities arrested them.⁶

Commenting on the actions of Muskogee's citizens, the Phoenix mildly rebuked the mob, but declared: "In some ways, perhaps yesterday's occurrences have served a good purpose. The laws of the land must be allowed to govern, but those who are charged with administration of the laws must realize that there are limitations upon the patience of the people and that in times like these, red-blooded Americans are in no mood to brook anything that in any way, shape, or form does not measure up fully to the community's standards of loyalty."⁷

Newsmen were also leaders in the movement to rid the state of the German language. Almost from the beginning of the war Oklahoma newspapers attacked the German-American press. One of their major complaints was its use of the German language. For example, referring

⁵"Remarks Dropped By German Youth," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, June 4, 1918, p. 1.

⁶"Mass Of Evidence Is Found Against Two Pro-Germans," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, June 7, 1918, p. 1.

⁷"We Must Not Run Amuck," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, June 7, 1918, p. 4.

to the German-American press in July of 1917; the Muskogee Daily Phoenix declared: "We have never seen the wisdom of encouraging the spread of any other language than our own in this country." The editor reasoned: "We did not compel anybody to come here. The least we have the right to expect from those who do come because they can do better here is to adopt our language with our customs and ideas. When we are at war with a country, above all, the use of that country's language is mockery and a bitter insult."⁸

The following September the Tulsa Daily World continued the assault and declared: "If American citizenship is good enough for our alien-born citizens the language is good enough for them too. We can never hope to be a cohesive people until every incentive to clannish groupings is done away with and we have one language as well as one flag."⁹

In December of 1917 Victor E. Harlow, editor of Harlow's Weekly, learned from the State Superintendent of Public Schools that in certain of Oklahoma's school districts German was used to the exclusion of English. The news incensed Harlow, and he raged: "If it be true in even one school district in the State of Oklahoma, it is a discredit to the state, an evil that must be abated and those guilty of the perpetration should be punished for the traitorous act, for it admits of no other name."¹⁰

⁸"Why Do We Permit Treason," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, July 7, 1917, p. 8.

⁹"Sinister Influence," Tulsa Daily World, August 9, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁰Harlow's Weekly, December 12, 1917, p. 9.

It remained, however, for another Oklahoma newsman to lead the actual movement towards suppressing the language. Ivan Williams, the editor of the Fairview Leader and the secretary of the Major county defense board, was responsible for posting the following signs on the doors of German churches in April of 1918:

GOD ALMIGHTY UNDERSTANDS

THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE

Address HIM only in that Tongue

DO NOT REMOVE THIS CARD¹¹

Williams explained that the signs were posted because the people of Fairview were fed up with the language of their enemy being spoken in their presence. He declared that the attitude of the people was caused by a number of injudicious remarks by the Germans of Major county. But the final blow came, the editor claimed, when two Germans were seen using their native language and passing remarks, in a laughing way, after reading of the deaths of some Americans at the front. Williams declared that it was the older generation of Germans that was most responsible for these crimes, and he advised the elders to "shut up and make way for their younger more loyal" children.¹²

In May of 1918, the Oklahoma State Council of Defense finally acted by sending to twenty-five counties a letter forbidding the use of the German language in all public services and meetings, including Sunday

¹¹Ibid., April 17, 1918, p. 7.

¹²"To The German Speaking People of Major County," Fairview Leader, March 25, 1918, p. 1.

school.¹³ The State Council later claimed, perhaps with some justice, that "the elimination of the German language also had a hearty effect in many communities where loyal citizens in some instances probably would have resorted to mob violence had not the Germans ceased to speak their native languages in their churches and meetings."¹⁴

Still another area where newspapers were probably effective was in Liberty Loan and Red Cross drives. In Oklahoma City the Daily Oklahoman began the first Liberty Loan drive by threatening those persons who were able to but who did not purchase all the bonds they were capable of purchasing with a ride around town in a "slacker wagon." There was no evidence that the slacker wagon was ever employed, but; "Perhaps the threat was sufficient, for the city did raise its quota."¹⁵

While comparative peace reigned in Oklahoma City during the first Liberty Loan drive, at later times and other places in Oklahoma both threats and force were used to obtain the contributions of unwilling persons. For example, in Pawhuska, citizens "took a wealthy carpenter the tar and feathers route." The patriots then took \$1,000 from his belt, donated \$162 to the American Red Cross and spent the rest for "baby bonds." Furthermore, they announced that similar treatment would be accorded all others who were slow in contributing.¹⁶ Another

¹³ Harlow's Weekly, May 29, 1918, p. 13. The counties which received these letters were Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Caddo, Canadian, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Delaware, Ellis, Garfield, Grady, Greer, Harmon, Harper, Kay, Kingfisher, Logan, Major, Noble, Texas, Washita, Woods, and Woodward.

¹⁴ Sooners In The War, p. 10.

¹⁵ Hilton, pp. 32-33.

¹⁶ Harlow's Weekly, June 5, 1918, p. 6.

example was that of J. O. Polan of Enid. Polan was visited by a committee to induce him to buy war savings stamps and Liberty Bonds. After arguing with him without success the committee produced tar and feathers. Polan then begged to be allowed to buy his quota and was permitted to buy a \$500 Liberty Bond and \$200 worth of war savings stamps.¹⁷

Finally, the crusade of the Tulsa Daily World against the I. W. W. might well have been partially responsible for the most famous suppression case which occurred in Oklahoma during the war. This case involved the beating, tarring, and feathering of seventeen members of the I. W. W. on November 9, 1917. The report of the National Civil Liberties Bureau indicated that the incident was caused by the desire of the World to serve the oil industry and by the desire of the oil industry itself to crush out unionism in the oil fields.¹⁸

While these aims may partly explain why the incident occurred, one fact does seem reasonably certain. At least a part of the World's motivation stemmed almost directly from a patriotic reaction to the "Green Corn Rebellion." The editor of the World was convinced of the I. W. W.'s participation in the rebellion, as was evidenced by one of the subheads of its first report of the uprising. The subhead read "Indians, Negroes, I. W. W., Working Class Union Members Make Up Outlaw Mobs."¹⁹

On August 6, 1917, the Tulsa Daily World printed its first two

¹⁷"Sure He Bought," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, June 5, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁸National Civil Liberties Bureau, The "Knights of Liberty" Mob and the I. W. W. Prisoners at Tulsa, Okla. (New York, 1918), pp. 1-16.

¹⁹"Daylight Attack Will Be Made On Defiant Draft Resisters," Tulsa Daily World, August 4, 1917, p. 1.

editorials against the I. W. W. In the first the editor praised the labor unions of Globe, Arizona for having forced the I. W. W. to leave the town. The editor then declared: "[The I. W. W.] and all others like them should be forced to stay out on penalty of execution for treason if they return. Sugar-coat it as you may by prating of labor's rights, the whole move is at bottom an assistant of the Kaiser keeping America from efficient service in the war. They could not complain if death instead of exile were to be their portion."²⁰

In the second editorial on the same page the editor included other participants in the rebellion, such as the "Jones Family" and the Working Class Union with the I. W. W. "The whole bunch of them," declared the editor, "have turned out to be nothing less than emissaries of the enemy seeking to cripple the energies of the nation by an attack from behind."²¹ The next day the editor continued: "We are not presuming to judge of the merits of specific controversies, but we are insisting that drastic measures should be taken to eliminate the I. W. W. element as an enemy of the nation."²²

The rhetoric of the Tulsa Daily World, however, was not translated into action until after other events occurred in Tulsa. On the evening of October 29, 1917, the home of J. Edgar Pew, the vice-president of Carter Oil Company, was partially destroyed by an explosion. In a highly colored news report the World claimed the explosion was a part of an I. W. W. plot that had occurred prematurely. The World believed

²⁰"Unblushing Treason," Tulsa Daily World, August 6, 1917, p. 4.

²¹"The Jones Family," Tulsa Daily World, August 6, 1917, p. 4.

²²"A National Menace," Tulsa Daily World, August 7, 1917, p. 4.

the I. W. W. had planned a massive strike in Texas and Oklahoma on November 1, aimed at disrupting the nation's vital oil industry. In addition, the World declared that the I. W. W. had sent out a printed call for its members to come to Tulsa and "that they have flocked to the city in great numbers...."²³

Sandwiched between the story and a three-column-wide picture of the destroyed Pew residence, but easily seen because of the large type used, was a message addressed to the loyal citizens of Tulsa from the Tulsa county council of defense. This message declared: "For reasons that cannot be publicly stated, it is essential that the Tulsa Home Guard be raised to full strength immediately. This means that 250 able-bodied men of unquestioned courage and loyalty between the ages of 19 and 50 years must offer their services without delay."²⁴ That evening more than 600 men answered the call.²⁵ The next day the World threatened the members of the I. W. W. with death if they tried anything else, and accused the I. W. W. of being German bought and German controlled.²⁶

A week later police raided the I. W. W. headquarters on main street and arrested eleven men for vagrancy.²⁷ Towards the end of their trial the Tulsa Daily World published a strong editorial against anyone,

²³"I. W. W. Plot Breaks Prematurely In Blowing Up Of Pew Residence," Tulsa Daily World, October 30, 1917, p. 1.

²⁴"250 Men Wanted At Once To Complete Home Guard," Tulsa Daily World, October 30, 1917, p. 1.

²⁵Lampe, p. 73.

²⁶"Patience At An End," Tulsa Daily World, p. 4.

²⁷"I. W. W. In Tulsa Raided By Police," Tulsa Daily World, November 6, 1917, p. 1.

the I. W. W. in particular, who would try to decrease the nation's vital oil supply. During this time of war, the World declared, the United States and the Allies needed every drop of oil, and the man who attempted to disrupt the production of the fields "is a traitor and ought to be shot!" The editor declared further: "In the meantime if the I. W. W. or its twin brother, the Oil Workers Union gets busy in your neighborhood kindly take occasion to decrease the supply of hemp. A knowledge of how to tie a knot that will stick might come in handy in a few days." Amplifying the last statement, the editor continued: "The first step in the whipping of Germany is to strangle the I. W.W.s. Kill 'em, just as you would kill any other kind of snake. Don't skotch 'em; kill 'em. And kill 'em dead. It is no time to waste money on trials and continuances and things like that. All that is necessary is the evidence and a firing squad...."²⁸

That evening, after being convicted of vagrancy and assigned jail sentences, which were suspended on the condition that they never return again, the eleven men and six others who had testified for them were removed from jail and loaded into cars to be escorted to the city limits.²⁹ While on the way out of town, however, a group dressed in hoods who called themselves the "Knights of Liberty" took the men from the police. The I. W. W.'s were escorted to a lonely spot, and with the cry of "In the name of the women and children of Belgium" rending the night air, each of the men was whipped, tarred and feathered. The group was then sent into the darkness with a volley of gunfire shot over

²⁸"Get Out The Hemp," Tulsa Daily World," November 9, 1917, p. 4.

²⁹Lampe, pp. 221-222.

their heads.³⁰

Throughout the state, the press gave the action of the mob wide approval.³¹ And in a postscript the Tulsa Daily World declared: "If the persistent and consistent appeal of a certain class of alleged laboring men to violence and class hatred has been met by violence they have themselves to blame. The man who lives by the sword must die by the sword. Class appeals and advocacy of violence inevitably beget hatred and encourage violence undreamed of."³²

The incident at Tulsa was illustrative of the whole problem of suppression in Oklahoma during the First World War. A judgement had been rendered by a court of law. But certain Tulsans were unwilling to accept the punishment as harsh enough, and were determined that the prisoners should receive the punishment commensurate to their alleged crimes. Aroused by rumors spread as fact by their local newspapers, incited into organizing by the dictates of their extralegal ruling body, believing that their actions would aid in purging the community of an unpatriotic element, and aware that their illegal actions would probably go unpunished, the Tulsans chose to step outside the law.

Tulsans, as well as most other persons in Oklahoma, had arrived at this mental position partially because the President of the United States and the editors of their newspapers had told them repeatedly that the enemy was in their midst. The citizens also were taught that

³⁰"I. W. W. Members Flogged, Tarred, And Feathered," Tulsa Daily World, November 10, 1917, p. 1.

³¹The "Knights of Liberty" Mob, pp. 15-16.

³²"The Penalty," Tulsa Daily World, December 12, 1917, p. 4.

dissent against American policy was at best, un-patriotic and un-American, and at worst, disloyal and treasonous. In addition, they were advised repeatedly that this treason must not continue, and that in the event of war, it must be utterly crushed. That Oklahomans believed these things was evidenced by their actions towards dissenters when the catalyst of war was added to the fermenting intolerance.

As mentioned previously, Jerold S. Auerbach questions the validity of Wilson's conversation with Frank I. Cobb, wherein the President warned that civil liberty would be destroyed once the United States entered the war.³³ Whether Auerbach was correct or not, the important point was that, based on his own public pronouncements, the President very easily could have made such a prediction. Not once in his public speeches from August, 1914, through April, 1917, did Wilson ever make a plea for the tolerance of dissenting opinion without coupling it with a condemnation of a sinister few. In addition, the President had used dissenters as foils to gain national consensus for his foreign policy and to gain his own reelection to the Presidency.

The repression which occurred in Oklahoma was also partially the responsibility of the state's newspapers. In their anxiety to guard what they believed were the interests of the nation, they often used scare tactics and sensational headlines. Though the newsmen of Oklahoma occasionally made pleas for tolerance in the pre-war era, more often than not these pleas were also coupled with a condemnation of the insidious few. Their rare entreaties which were not encumbered in this

³³ See Chapter III, Footnote 52.

manner, were evidence themselves of the atmosphere being created.³⁴

One of the problems with both Wilson's speeches and the columns of newspapers was the rhetoric of the period. The English language is occasionally very vague, and emotional words such as "Americanism," "patriotism," "slacker," "disloyalty" and "treason" bear connotations which depend almost solely on the interpretation of the user. Both Wilson and Oklahoma newsmen constantly employed these words in the pre-war period with never a consistent definition of the terms. Consequently, when war finally occurred the populace tried to translate the rhetoric into reality with the previously described results.

Once America entered the war, the forces working towards repression in Oklahoma gained strength. And, one of the keys which unlocked the door through which these forces entered was the "Green Corn Rebellion." The State of Oklahoma was not quite ten years old at the outbreak of the war. Consequently, many of those persons who had pride enough in the territory to lead its drive for statehood were still in positions of *leadership*. The rebellion, and the resulting comments from outside the state, *injured the pride of these local patriots*, and they were determined that Oklahoma would *not experience a similar embarrassment again*.

The agencies of repression, the Oklahoma State Council of Defense

³⁴ Some examples of this type of plea in the newspapers in Oklahoma have already been used. But also see, "Current Comment," Tulsa Daily World, May 19, 1915, p. 1.; "The Vanished Hyphen," Tulsa Democrat, May 27, 1915, p. 4; "German-American, But Patriotic," Daily Oklahoman, August 9, 1915, p. 6; "The Loss Of Two Good Citizens," Daily Oklahoman, November 3, 1915, p. 6; "In All Fairness," Daily Oklahoman, November 10, 1915, p. 6; "A Patriotic Newspaper," Daily Oklahoman, November 22, 1915, p. 4; "Foreign Language Press Loyal," Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 12, 1916, p. 4; and "Loyal American League," Daily Oklahoman, April 20, 1916, p. 6.

and the county councils of defense, were largely peopled by these same leaders, and by those same newsmen who had warned dissenters what would occur should the United States enter the war. Operating without law, these councils determined not only the definitions of patriotism and disloyalty, but also judged specific cases and often administered the punishment for violations.

The wartime suppression of civil liberties in Oklahoma also had an impact on the state's future. Though how much impact has not yet been fully explored, James Arthur Robinson believes that the war-time suppression did lead directly to the post-war passage of criminal syndicalism legislation in Oklahoma.³⁵ James Morton Smith is even more specific. He declares that Oklahoma's criminal syndicalism laws were a direct result of the "Green Corn Rebellion." He points out that Luther Harrison introduced the first of Oklahoma's criminal syndicalism laws in the state senate in 1919. Harrison, editor of the Wewoka Capital-Democrat and chairman of the Seminole county council of defense, rode with one of the posses which put down the rebellion.³⁶ In addition, Smith believes that the suppression of the W. C. U. during the rebellion helped destroy the Socialist party.³⁷ He might well have added the I. W. W. to the list.

Finally, the suppression which occurred in Oklahoma during the

³⁵ James Arthur Robinson, "Loyalty Investigation and Legislation in Oklahoma" (Unpub. M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1955), p. 16.

³⁶ James Morton Smith, "Criminal Syndicalism in Oklahoma: A History of the Law and Its Application" (Unpub. M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1946), pp. 17-18.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

First World War was a comment on the fragile nature of American democracy. Democracy in the United States, at least that portion of democracy which demands the protection of minorities and the right to dissent against the majority, exists not because of custom or belief, but only because of law and the acceptance of the American people of the rule of law. Oklahoma during the First World War is an example of what can happen to American democracy when law disappears and is replaced by the rule of "public opinion."

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