



RALPH RAICO THE WORLD AT WAR

TRANSCRIBED AND ANNOTATED BY EDWARD W. FULLER

The World at War

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The World at War

Ralph Raico

**Transcribed and Annotated
by Edward W. Fuller**

MISESINSTITUTE
AUBURN, ALABAMA

War is harmful, not only to the conquered but to the conqueror. Society has arisen out of the works of peace; the essence of society is peacemaking. Peace and not war is the father of all things. Only economic action has created the wealth around us; labor, not the profession of arms, brings happiness. Peace builds, war destroys.

—Ludwig von Mises
Socialism

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Foreword

The twentieth century was a century of war, which means it was also a century of tragedy. The full extent of this tragedy, however, is often hidden by the popular narratives of the world wars that continue to be pushed in the West, especially among Americans.

But many aspects of the tragedy are also taught far and wide. When it comes to the Second World War, we Americans hear often and repeatedly of the crimes of the German National Socialists and the Empire of Japan. In contrast, the Americans and their allies, we are told, were the irreproachable good guys, fighting only in defense of themselves and others.

As for the First World War, we nowadays receive only the vaguest outline of the conflict. When some explanation is given, we are assured that the Americans and their allies were devoted to fighting for democracy, the League of Nations, and only very good things.

The reality, of course, is considerably less neat and tidy. But a more honest telling of history is not necessarily easy to find, and it's difficult to know where to begin.

For decades, an excellent place to begin has been Ralph Raico's masterful three-hour lecture "The World at War." This lecture is an introduction to a far more even-handed interpretation of the world wars that reveals how intrigue, despotism, and war crimes were employed by all the great powers involved in these tragic conflicts that defined the twentieth century.

In telling this story, Raico also introduces his audience to many facts and concepts about diplomacy, international law, and understanding the world through the eyes of our opponents. No true understanding of any war can be gained without all of this. Moreover, Raico illustrates for us the cost of war not just in human lives but in terms of our wealth and our liberties. As Raico shows, the alleged good-guy regimes in these conflicts—including the American regime—did not refrain from using wars as an excuse to destroy the freedoms of their own citizens. Ultimately, we learn how the world wars were made so much more tragic by the fact that so many of their grim excesses and crimes—including those of the “good guys”—were both avoidable and unnecessary.

I hasten to add that Raico’s work here is not merely some immoderate effort to be contrarian or theatrical. This lecture reflects the serious work of a working historian. Raico brings to the fore important facts that have often been conveniently ignored or suppressed, and that change the narrative in crucial ways. At the same time, Raico also offers an open-minded analysis of the sources. By presenting countless critical facts, Raico helps us understand the realities of modern warfare in ways that philosophers, economists, and theorists cannot. This is, in short, revisionist history at its best.

Until now, however, Raico’s lecture has suffered from an important defect: it has been available only as a video or an audio recording of the original presentation. This means there have been no footnotes or references available to facilitate investigation of Raico’s sources. There has been no searchable text that scholars can easily quote and cite in their own work.

By transcribing and carefully annotating this lecture, Edward Fuller has fixed this defect and given new life to Raico’s lecture. In the pages of this book, we find a thorough inventory of Raico’s references, as well as carefully placed footnotes linking each of Raico’s assertions to his original sources. In addition, Fuller supplements this lecture with numerous substantive notes that provide additional context and supporting material that expand the scope and utility of Raico’s original lecture. Indeed, Fuller’s original research and commentary have transformed this text into something far more than a transcription. It is, essentially, a text accompanied by what in the past was sometimes called a gloss—a helpful and often extensive explanation of a text.

As the executive editor at the Mises Institute, I am delighted to see this book published. Fuller's work here is reflective of Raico's own methods in which he employed a broad and balanced treatment of historical sources. Moreover, Fuller's commentary supports Raico's tireless work of interpreting history through the lenses of radical laissez-faire, libertarianism, and "classical" liberalism. Never sacrificing his rigor as a historian, Raico committed himself to the defense of freedom and peace. This book is a valuable addition to that work.

Ryan McMaken
Denver, Colorado
September 2024

Introduction

Ralph Raico's lecture "The World at War" is a masterpiece. Given over three hours at a morning session of the Cato Institute Summer Seminar on June 1, 1983, it remains perhaps the best available introduction to the classical-liberal interpretation of the world wars.¹ Unfortunately, Raico never published anything quite like this lecture. While many of the ideas in it appear in his writings, none of his publications weaves them all together in the same way that the lecture does. Given its brilliance and breadth, it is appropriate to enshrine "The World at War" in print.

Ralph Raico was one of the greatest classical-liberal historians of all time. He was blessed with intellectual genius, but beyond that his economic lens, which he sharpened under the tutelage of Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, and Murray Rothbard, gave him a priceless advantage over other historians. Raico was living proof of Mises's central thesis in *Theory and History*—namely, that the master historian must understand sound economic theory.

Raico was born in Italian Harlem on October 23, 1936. Soon thereafter his parents moved the family to the Bronx, which Raico thought was one of the greatest things they ever did for him. He believed that the vibrant culture of the Bronx was an essential factor in his personal

¹This lecture showcases Raico's humor and humanity and is well worth watching. The video recording is available on the Cato Institute's website at <https://www.libertarianism.org/media/video-collection/world-war>.

and intellectual development. Many of his extended family members stayed in Harlem, and he felt the neighborhood's cultural environment at the time stunted their development.

Within the broader cultural environment, the political culture of the Bronx had a significant impact on the young Raico. Although his family tended to be conservative, he was surrounded by leftist ideas whenever he exited the family apartment. Most of his neighbors in his apartment building were leftists, and a few were avowed socialists. His teachers at school generally espoused leftist ideology. This politicized environment forced Raico to start thinking about politics at an early age, and this early grappling with politics eventually led him to study economics, philosophy, and history.

Raico's early political views presaged his lifelong commitment to independent thought. Rather than supporting the Democrats like nearly everyone else around him, the young Raico supported the Republicans. He was an avid reader of the William Randolph Hearst publication *New York Journal-American*, a conservative newspaper opposed to socialism and the New Deal. While it reveals a lifelong opposition to socialism, his affinity for this newspaper suggests that Raico circa 1950 had not yet arrived at classical liberalism. The *Journal-American* pushed for an aggressive American foreign policy, while noninterventionism is a hallmark of classical liberalism. So when did Raico become a full-blown classical liberal in his political views?

In 1952, when Raico was a student at the Bronx High School of Science, New York City's leading public school, Senator Robert A. Taft ran for president. Taft was an advocate of limited government who opposed socialism and the New Deal; unlike other Republicans, however, he was a noninterventionist regarding foreign policy. Raico's interest in Taft led him to start reading the *Chicago Tribune* rather than the *Journal-American*. Robert R. McCormick, a staunch noninterventionist, was the publisher and editor of the *Chicago Tribune* at this time. Together, Taft and McCormick converted the young Raico to noninterventionism. Raico became a classical liberal in terms of politics when he was fifteen years old.

In addition to shaping his foreign policy views, the 1952 Taft campaign led to Raico's crucial friendship with a fellow student at Bronx Science named George Reisman. While this friendship was critical on many levels, one key consequence of it was that Raico's interest in eco-

nomics grew. Before meeting Reisman, he had already read *The Road to Serfdom* by the Austrian Friedrich Hayek and *Economics in One Lesson* by Henry Hazlitt, so some interest in economics was already evident. But Reisman's obsession with economics led Raico to discover the 1922 book *Socialism* by Ludwig von Mises. Reisman then introduced Raico to Mises's writings on economics, and the teenagers read Mises's 1949 treatise *Human Action* together in the second half of 1952. The mature Raico considered *Human Action* the greatest book in the history of the social sciences.

The Austrian Mises fled Nazi-occupied Europe in July 1940 and lived the rest of his life in New York City. In the winter of 1952–53, Raico and Reisman read in *The Freeman*, the magazine of the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE)—the first libertarian think tank—that Mises lived in apartment 12E at 777 West End Avenue on the Upper West Side. Posing as salesmen for *The Freeman*, the two paid a visit to the seventy-one-year-old economist. Mises answered the door, but the two were devastated when he quickly closed it on them. Some weeks later, Raico wrote a letter to the conservative magazine *USA* which included comments on consumer sovereignty. *USA* published the letter, and it came to the attention of FEE. FEE arranged for Raico and Reisman to visit their headquarters in Irvington, New York, where they met Leonard Read, Henry Hazlitt, Bettina Bien Greaves, and F. A. “Baldy” Harper. Ivan Bierly of FEE was impressed with the two teenagers and asked Mises if he would meet with them. Mises agreed.

Raico and Reisman spent several hours with Mises in his apartment office on February 23, 1953. The teenagers seemed content to discuss things like the national debt and utilitarianism, but Mises was looking to the future. He counseled them to focus on economics rather than politics. The emphasis on economics was so important to Mises that he invited them to attend his weekly economics seminar at the New York University Graduate School of Business. This invitation was a defining moment for Raico, as the people and ideas he encountered in the Mises seminar from 1953 to 1959 shaped the rest of his life.

The Mises seminar at NYU ran from 1945 to 1969. Notable participants included Paul Cantor, Lawrence Fertig, Percy and Bettina Bien Greaves, Henry Hazlitt, Israel Kirzner, and Hans Senholtz. Ayn Rand and Howard Buffett (Warren Buffet's father) made appearances. Other than Mises himself, however, Murray Rothbard was the chief

figure in the story of the Mises seminar at NYU. A decade older than Raico, Rothbard had been attending the seminar since summer 1949. Raico met Rothbard at his very first session of the seminar in the spring semester of 1953, and they went for coffee after the session. He was immediately captivated by Rothbard's personality and libertarianism. This meeting was the start of a lifelong friendship, and Rothbard became Raico's other great intellectual influence.

Raico entered the City College of New York in fall 1953. Staying in New York City for college was a wise decision, for he could keep learning from Mises and Rothbard while earning his undergraduate degree. Furthermore, it allowed him to meet Ayn Rand. On July 10–11 and July 17–18, 1954, Raico spent all night in Rand's apartment listening to her debate philosophy. He didn't find these evenings enjoyable, so he did not meet with Rand again until after *Atlas Shrugged* was published on October 10, 1957. Raico got an advance copy of the book in September 1957 and devoured it in just five days. In October, he attended an all-night talk by Rand on *Atlas Shrugged*; the book and her talk convinced Raico to take courses in philosophy. As they were prone to do, Rand and her circle excommunicated Rothbard and Raico in summer 1958, but despite the bitter breakup, Raico remembered Rand as one of the most brilliant people he ever met.

In addition to learning at the feet of Mises, Raico spent his college years studying European languages. Mises knew seven languages, and he advised that a complete scholar must know multiple languages. Following this advice, Raico learned German, Italian, and French. His courses in German paid off almost immediately, for in summer 1956, the William Volker Fund, a libertarian-oriented charitable foundation, gave Raico a grant to translate Mises's 1927 classic *Liberalismus* into English. The translation was published in 1962, and it has been in print ever since. Raico considered *Liberalism* the book by which all other works on classical liberalism must be judged. He felt his translation of *Liberalism* was one of his greatest achievements, as it made this pivotal work accessible to the English-speaking world. In the decades that followed, Raico used his knowledge of European languages to conduct groundbreaking research on the history of European liberalism.

Raico left New York in fall 1959 for graduate school in Chicago. Recognizing Raico's brilliance, Mises had sent a letter of recommendation to his former student Friedrich Hayek at the University of Chicago,

and Raico was admitted to the PhD program at Chicago's Committee on Social Thought, a unique, interdisciplinary program in which most of the teaching is done by tutorial. Students learn mostly by spending time in one-on-one tutoring sessions with their supervisors rather than by attending lectures. Hayek was Raico's supervisor, which meant that Raico had access to one of the twentieth century's most famous classical-liberal economists throughout the 1960s.

However, Raico found that Hayek was not terribly interested in teaching. Mises loved to teach and took a personal interest in his students, often going to a café with students after seminar sessions to continue the discussion. By contrast, Hayek admitted to Raico that he taught only to pay the bills. Though Hayek was always polite and helpful when needed, and they remained friends until Hayek passed away in 1992, Raico found his intellectual experience with Mises and Rothbard in New York more stimulating than his experience with Hayek in Chicago.

As in New York, Raico's extracurricular activities in Chicago were as important as his formal coursework. Through these extracurricular activities, he got to know many major figures at the University of Chicago, including Milton Friedman and George Stigler. Raico founded an academic journal called *New Individualist Review* with Ronald Hamowy. The first issue was published in April 1961, and the journal continued publishing articles until winter 1968. Raico served as editor-in-chief from 1961 to 1966. The contributors to the journal read like a who's-who list of free-market economists: Alchian, Brunner, Demsetz, Friedman, Hayek, Hazlitt, Kirzner, Mises, Röpke, Rothbard, and Stigler. Friedman said in 1981 of *New Individualist Review*, "This student venture, despite its narrow base and its limited resources, set an intellectual standard that has not yet, I believe, been matched by any of the more recent publications in the same philosophical tradition." Also in 1981, the Liberty Fund published a single-volume collection of *New Individualist Review*.

In 1961, Raico moved to Paris as an exchange student at the University of Paris. This experience was vital, for this was when Raico became absorbed with the history of European liberalism. He determined that the significance of British liberalism was overrated while that of French liberalism was underrated. He became particularly interested in the French-Swiss thinker Benjamin Constant, whose liberalism he deemed

purser than Adam Smith's. In time Raico concluded that Constant was the greatest classical liberal of the nineteenth century. He decided to write his PhD dissertation on Constant, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Lord Acton.

Naturally, Raico travelled throughout Europe during his time in Paris. His trips to Germany were perhaps the most consequential. He visited East Berlin in December 1961 and saw firsthand the hard reality of life in a socialist society. As he passed back through Checkpoint Charlie, he bravely invited an East German soldier to sneak across the border with him, saying, "Komm mit" (Come along). The soldier replied, "Kann nicht" (I can't). Raico reported the miserable conditions of East Berlin in *New Individualist Review*. The upshot of Raico's trips to Germany was his study of the forgotten German liberals of the nineteenth century, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Eugen Richter, and John-Prince Smith. Raico's later work on German liberalism was instrumental in overthrowing the received view that Germany had no classical-liberal tradition.

Raico became a junior member of the Mont Pelerin Society in 1964. He met many of the world's leading classical liberals through the society, including Benjamin Rogge, who in 1960 played a central role in the founding of the Liberty Fund, a nonprofit foundation promoting libertarian views. Rogge was an economics professor at Wabash College in Indiana and arranged a position for Raico at the college. In 1964, Raico moved to Crawfordsville, Indiana, to start his first teaching job. He was highly impressed with the quality of the students at Wabash, but life in a small town did not suit him. He left Wabash for Buffalo State College in 1967.

Raico completed his dissertation in 1970 under the title "The Place of Religion in the Liberal Philosophy of Constant, Tocqueville, and Lord Acton." Although Raico was not religious, the central thesis of his dissertation, contra Enlightenment figures like Voltaire, is that Christianity is compatible with classical liberalism. While he does not argue that a classical liberal must be a Christian, Raico uses Constant (a Protestant) and Tocqueville and Lord Acton (Catholics) to illustrate that some of history's best classical liberals have been Christian. With Hayek at the head of the dissertation committee, Raico earned a PhD in philosophy from the University of Chicago in 1970.

Raico taught European history at Buffalo State College from 1967 to 2006. He stayed under the radar for the most part, understanding that his classical-liberal views would not be popular at a state college. His strategy of keeping a low profile worked: in addition to teaching the core course on European history, he was allowed by the department to occasionally teach nonstandard courses on subjects like war and imperialism. Although his colleagues considered him a highly effective teacher (his gift for lecturing is evident in this transcript), his enduring work was not carried out in connection with Buffalo State College.

Raico was involved with virtually every significant free market journal and think tank of the last half century. After *New Individualist Review* closed in late 1968, he helped Rothbard with the *Libertarian Forum* and the *Journal of Libertarian Studies*. Rothbard was one of the founders of the Cato Institute in January 1977, and Raico was made vice president of the new think tank. Raico took a leave of absence from Buffalo State College and moved to Northern California to work at Cato. He was editor of the review section of Cato's main publication, *Inquiry* magazine, from 1977 to 1984. He moved back to Buffalo after the Cato Institute expelled Rothbard in March 1981. Raico stayed out of the dispute and remained associated with Cato and the classical-liberal Institute of Humane Studies until the early 1990s. Robert Higgs approached Raico in 1995 when the Independent Institute was planning to launch the *Independent Review*, and Raico became an associate editor.

Although he cherished his work with the above-named organizations, Raico had a special place in his heart for the Ludwig von Mises Institute. Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr. founded the Mises Institute in October 1982 with the support of Ludwig's widow Margit von Mises, Hayek, Hazlitt, and Rothbard. Raico served as a faculty member and senior fellow from the institute's founding until his death on December 13, 2016. He gave many classic lectures at the Mises Institute over the decades, including "Classical-Liberal Roots of Marxist Class Analysis" in October 1988, "Rethinking Churchill" in May 1994, "Harry Truman and the Imperial Presidency" in October 1998, and "World War I: A Failure of State Elites" in July 2005. He gave an epic ten-lecture seminar titled "History: The Struggle for Liberty" at the Mises Institute in June 2004. These lectures and more are available in various formats on the Mises Institute's website. On top of hosting many of his memorable

lectures, the Mises Institute published his most important books: *The Place of Religion in the Liberal Philosophy of Constant, Tocqueville, and Lord Acton* (his PhD dissertation; 2010); *Great Wars and Great Leaders: A Libertarian Rebuttal* (2010); and *Classical Liberalism and the Austrian School* (2012).

Publishing this print version of the “The World at War” is yet another way the Mises Institute is advancing Ralph Raico’s remarkable legacy. The transcriber is grateful to the Mises Institute’s staff, faculty, and donors for making this publication possible. Daniella F. Bassi, Dr. David Gordon, Christina Nichols, Professor Timothy D. Terrell, and Judy Thommesen deserve special mention. This project was a team effort, and they transformed a rudimentary transcription into a polished product. Finally, the transcriber thanks Danielle Spence for carefully auditing the transcription. The transcriber alone is responsible for any remaining errors.

There is no perfect approach to transcribing a lecture like “The World at War.” Transcribing a lecture requires making many decisions; different transcribers would make different decisions and thereby produce different transcriptions. A minimalist approach to transcribing “The World at War” was taken: The text has been modified to omit some filler words and false starts and to fix incomplete sentences. Inessential comments on the surroundings have been omitted or modified for clarity. There are a few instances of more substantial modifications to clarify meaning; in these places bracketed clarifications have been added to the text. Bracketed clarifications and glosses in quotes that Raico read during the lecture are Raico’s own additions. The lecture has also been subdivided into chapters for readability, with questions that Raico answered during the lecture included as well.

Most noticeably, the transcriber has added footnotes and citations to the transcription. Raico always provided extensive footnotes in his published writings, so it is reasonable to believe that he would footnote “The World at War” if he were alive to publish the lecture himself. Lest readers think the transcriber’s footnotes verge on pedantry, it seems appropriate to explain the approach taken. In the lecture, likely to minimize controversy, Raico tends to rely on mainstream sources such as George Kennan rather than on libertarians such as his friend Murray Rothbard. This approach is adopted in the footnotes. As much historical research has been done in the decades since Raico gave the lecture,

the transcriber also cites more recent sources to show that the lecture is by no means outdated, even forty years after it was delivered. The many publications Raico refers to in the lecture are cited by the transcriber in the text and listed separately in the References section as well.

The great classical-liberal historian Lord Acton had ambitions to write an epic history of liberty. Unfortunately, he passed away before he could produce such a work. Ralph Raico was his generation's greatest historian of classical liberalism, and many hoped that he would produce the history of liberty envisioned by Lord Acton. Sadly, time slipped away. In addition to reading his published writings, however, future generations can access Raico's brilliant mind through his recorded lectures; and it is hoped that this print version of "The World at War" inspires classical liberals today and in the future.

Chapter 1

The Decline of Classical Liberalism

My topic this morning is going to be Europe and the world in the twentieth century—the great century of statism. I am going to start by discussing the First World War. The First World War, historians increasingly recognize, was a watershed and *the* great watershed of twentieth-century history.¹

What came out of the First World War was, first of all, the establishment of communism in a great power: Russia. It's extremely doubtful that Lenin and his few thousand Bolsheviks could ever have come to power in Russia except for the dislocations and chaos produced by a losing war on the part of the czarist government. Also out of the First World War came Fascism in Italy and the fascist movement throughout Europe.² Because of the vindictive peace treaty, after a little more than a

¹George F. Kennan writes, “Thus I came to see the First World War as I think many reasonably thoughtful people have learned to see it, as the great seminal catastrophe of this century—the event which . . . lay at the heart of the failure and decline of this Western civilization” (1979, 3–4). David Fromkin states, “In searching for the origins of any of the great issues that have faced the world during the twentieth century, or that confront it today, it is remarkable how often we come back to the Great War. . . . It was indeed the seminal event of modern times” (2004, 6–8).

²Niall Ferguson writes, “It was ultimately because of the war that [Hitler and Lenin] were able to rise to establish barbaric despotisms which perpetrated still more mass murder” (1998, 460). Fromkin agrees: “The Great War gave birth to terrible forces that would plague the rest of the century. . . . Bolshevism was only the first of such war-born furies, followed in years to come by fascism and

decade, the Nazis came to power in Germany. And with them the seeds of World War II are also to be found in the First World War.³

More generally and abstractly, throughout the world there came state planning on an unprecedented scale.⁴ By 1900, we already witness the twilight and decline and lingering death of classical liberalism in the Atlantic world. Liberalism had been in decline since around 1870, if we take the date proposed by the British legal historian Dicey.⁵ By the 1890s a British liberal politician could say, “We are all socialists now.”⁶

One of the things that had aided in the demise of liberalism was the rise in the 1880s of the welfare state. This was the idea of the German statesman Otto von Bismarck.⁷ It is interesting that people don’t consider the origins of the welfare state a little more closely. Bismarck, after all, was a militarist, an authoritarian, a man who distrusted liberalism and parliamentary government, and initiated and pioneered the welfare state.⁸

Nazism” (2004, 6). Also see Overy (2004, xxxvi) and MacMillan (2014, 14).

³John Keegan writes, “The Second World War was the continuation of the First, and indeed it is inexplicable except in terms of the rancours and instabilities left by the earlier conflict” (1999, 423). As Richard Overy observes, “The First World War, and the violence that preceded and followed it, profoundly influenced the world of the 1920s and 1930s, supporting the contention that little is to be gained by separating the two giant conflicts. Both can be seen as stages of a second Thirty Years War” (2022, xii). Also see Taylor (1977, 41) and Fromkin (2004, 7).

⁴Overy writes, “The First World War prompted the first (limited) efforts to manage whole societies and organize their economy and culture” (2004, 636).

⁵A. V. Dicey (1835–1922) popularized the concept of the rule of law.

⁶The British statesman William Harcourt (1827–1904) coined the phrase “We are all socialists now.”

⁷Otto von Bismarck (1815–98) was the prime minister of Prussia from 1862 to 1890. He founded the German Empire on January 18, 1871, after the Franco-Prussian War, and he served as chancellor from 1871 to 1890.

⁸Jonathan Steinberg writes, “The state system of social security gave Germany the first modern social welfare safety net in the world. . . . [It was] a significant achievement and entirely Bismarck’s doing” (2011, 417). Steinberg admits, “[Bismarck] transmitted an authoritarian, Prussian, semi-absolute monarchy with its cult of force and reverence for the absolute ruler to the twentieth century. Hitler fished it out” (2011, 27). Raico would report that Mises considered Bismarck the

It's as if the time had come in the history of economic development where there was a possibility that the average person, and the average working person, could finally become independent, self-reliant, the master of his own fate, because of the progress of industrial capitalism. And it was at that point that Bismarck reattached the masses to the state through welfare legislation and again made them reliant on the state for pensions: pensioners of the state, people who are going to be tied to the state through gratitude for all the benefits the state gave them. Do you see that? That could have been a different development, but the welfare state came in there to reattach the masses of people to the government in gratitude for these benefits.

Bismarck was aided along these lines by the rise in Germany of academics called "socialists of the chair."⁹ That is, they weren't socialists like the Marxist socialists in the street. They were very prominent professors. As a matter of fact, they were anti-Marxists, but they did preach the kind of socialism and pro-state ideology that was preached in the United States: the need for centralization, the need for state control in the economy. These ideas are spreading throughout the Western world.

And there are some significant dates in the first decade or so of the century as far as the leadership of the international liberal movement goes. In 1902, Lord Acton dies.¹⁰ In 1903, Herbert Spencer dies. One of his last essays had been an attack on the imperialist British effort in the Boer War. Herbert Spencer says, "All my life I was a British patriot, in the sense that England was the home of many individual liberties. It was the home of the respect for the industrious, enterprising middle class. But my British patriotism died in the imperialist Boer War."¹¹

worst disaster of the nineteenth century for classical liberalism. See Mises (1990, 186, 228; 2005a, xiv) for more on Bismarck.

⁹Prominent "socialists of the chair" (*Kathedersozialisten*) included Adolph Wagner (1835–1917), Gustav Schmoller (1838–1917), and, later, Werner Sombart (1863–1941). See King (2003) and Ryan (2012, 878–910) for more on non-Marxist socialism and the Socialists of the Chair.

¹⁰Lord John Acton (1834–1902) was a classical-liberal historian. He is best known for the saying "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Acton 1949, 364).

¹¹Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was considered the greatest intellectual of the

In 1906, the last great German liberal, Eugen Richter, dies.¹² He had voted against von Tirpitz's naval buildup in the last two years in the Reichstag. In one of his last speeches, he says, "If we let the banner of liberalism fall, we who are the last, then who will take it up again?" There was to be nobody who would take it up again. What is to happen in the next decades in Germany to Richter's beloved German people (and *by* Richter's beloved German people) is a true tragedy. It's not anything that a classical liberal at the time could have imagined—the decades to come in this awful twentieth century.

In 1910, William Graham Sumner dies. One of his last acts had been, a decade before, to attack the Spanish-American War and the American annexation of the Philippines,¹³ the least-known war in American history—the war we waged for three or four years against the Philippine people in order to subdue them to American rule.

In 1912, Gustave de Molinari—the great Belgian-French economist and the dean of the classical liberal school of French economists in his time—dies also.¹⁴ Around this time, one of the last liberals who is left, the Italian Pareto, says, "Everyone is a socialist. They are either revolutionary socialists or they're nationalist and protectionist socialists. But there is no one who believes in the free society in Europe anymore."¹⁵

Victorian era. He writes that the Boer War was "a war by which Great Britain has been discredited in every way" (1914, 246).

¹²Eugen Richter (1838–1906) was the leading advocate of classical liberalism in the German Reichstag.

¹³On January 16, 1899, William Graham Sumner (1840–1910), an American clergyman, social scientist, and classical liberal, delivered a speech called "The Conquest of the United States by Spain," in which he declares, "We have beaten Spain in a military conflict, but we are submitting to be conquered by her on the field of ideas and policies. Expansionism and imperialism are nothing but the old philosophies of national prosperity which have brought Spain to where she is now" (1899, 3).

¹⁴Gustave de Molinari (1819–1912) was the heir of the French laissez-faire school founded by Frédéric Bastiat (1801–50).

¹⁵Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923) wrote on April 10, 1898, "Nowadays everyone is a socialist" (1898, 188). The British economist Alfred Marshall (1842–1924) declared, "Every economist of the present generation is a Socialist" (quoted in MacGregor 1949, 69).

Chapter 2

Capitalist Imperialism?

This is the period of the growth of imperialism, the famous rebirth of imperialism after a kind of lull in the middle of the nineteenth century, actually largely caused by classical liberal ideas and values. After around 1880, imperialism becomes not only an important movement again, it becomes a frenzy—especially as we approach the end of the century and the first years of the twentieth century.¹

There are a number of reasons for this rebirth of imperialism—you understand what is involved, especially the scramble for Africa, as it's called—a number of reasons for this. One is that Europe begins to drift back and then [move] gradually more and more quickly towards protectionism.² The era of pretty much universal free trade is a very, very short one—just about in the middle of the century. In 1879, Bismarck, and the new, great, unified German Reich, decides to go over to a protective

¹Stephen Kotkin writes, “Between 1876 and 1915, gigantic swaths of the world’s territory had changed hands, usually violently” (2014, 151). As Overy notes, “Colonial issues were a vital catalyst for what proved to be the key decisions that shaped the coming of war in 1914” (2022, 8–9).

²Paul Bairoch writes, “The period 1879–1892 saw a gradual return to protectionism in Europe. . . . These years [1892–1914] can undoubtedly be described as a period of increased protectionism in Continental Europe. . . . [A]ll the large countries (except the United Kingdom) had very protective trade policies in 1913” (1995, 25). See Bairoch (1995, 40) for a useful table on tariff rates from 1875 to 1913.

tariff.³ In the years that follow, France, which had always been tempted to do so, had been a classical country of protectionism, does the same,⁴ [and] Russia, Austria-Hungary, and other countries.

Now, you understand that with a regime of protectionism, this makes imperialism much more likely. If there is universal free trade, then it doesn't really make very much of a difference who owns a particular colony, in the sense of who has military or political sovereignty over it.⁵ If we have a regime of universal free trade, then it doesn't really make much of a difference whether Britain owns Jamaica or France owns Jamaica or Jamaica is independent, because the Jamaicans will buy goods in the cheapest market and they will sell goods in the dearest market, regardless of the nationality of the suppliers and the buyers. So the imperialist country only has the expense of keeping up the government, exercising political jurisdiction, having the military garrison there, and so on. There is no economic advantage to any major group in the home country.

With protectionism it's different, and you can force some captive area in Africa to buy from you rather than from someone else. This does help certain elite groups in the home market. So with the growth of protectionism, there's a concomitant growth of imperialism.⁶

Another element that's involved, a political element of the time, is the fact that France had been defeated in the war of 1871, which led to the unification of Germany and created this great, unified German Reich right in the middle of Europe.⁷ Overseas expansion was a way

³This was the German tariff of 1879. There were also the German tariffs of 1885, 1887, and 1902.

⁴There were the French tariffs of 1881, 1885, 1887, and 1892 (the Méline tariff).

⁵Mises writes, "If free trade prevails, it is quite a matter of indifference whether the nearest seaports are administered by [one nation's officials] or other officials. Imperialism needs seaports because it needs naval stations and because it wants to wage economic wars. It needs them not to use them but to exclude others from them" (2006, 78).

⁶Mises writes, "The philosophy of protectionism is a philosophy of war" (1998, 683). He explains, "[Wars] are the outgrowth of the various governments' interference with business, of trade and migration and discrimination [protection] against foreign labor, foreign products, and foreign capital" (1998, 680–81).

⁷The North German Confederation defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War.

for the French to reestablish their pride. They had been defeated by the Germans. They were no longer the premier nation on the continent of Europe, but after all, they had the Foreign Legion in Algeria, they had a navy in Indochina, they were taking big chunks of Africa. The French were one of the leaders of imperialism at the time.⁸

Now, as far as imperialism goes, there's a famous movement at around 1900 that's important in the history of thought that seeks to link imperialism very closely with capitalism. This includes a number of Marxist authors, and also an important British so-called liberal (he [J. A. Hobson] called himself a liberal at this time; it's an indication of how far liberalism had come). The German, Hilferding (1981), writes a book called *Finance Capital*. The Polish Marxist Rosa Luxemburg (1951) the same. The most famous is the book that Lenin (1939) himself writes in 1917: *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Around 1902, a British radical—that is, not Marxist, but radical—named J. A. Hobson (1902) writes *Imperialism: A Study*.⁹ And this is all an attempt to debit imperialism to the account of capitalism.

And it's interesting, in the history of thought, the circumstances into which this comes up. Joseph Schumpeter was a great economist, a great social philosopher. He wrote a book called *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* after the Second World War. He makes a very interesting statement. He says, "Capitalism stands trial before judges who already have the sentence of death in their pocket[s]" (Schumpeter 1992, 144).¹⁰ And what I take that to mean, as he explains, is

France declared war against Prussia on July 16, 1870, and invaded on August 2. German forces captured Paris on January 28, 1871. On May 10, defeated France signed the Treaty of Frankfurt, officially ending the Franco-Prussian War. The Franco-Prussian War led to the unification of Germany.

⁸As MacMillan writes, important elements in the French government "saw France's national revival lying in part in the acquisition of colonies" (2013, 149). In 1913, France's home territory was 193,000 square miles, while its colonial territory was about four million square miles (Broadberry and Harrison 2005, 7). Thus Kotkin notes, "France had amassed a global empire 20 times its size" (2014, 151).

⁹Hobson aligned himself with "practicable socialism" and "progressive socialism" (Hobson 1910, 414, 421). Also see Townshend (1994, 36, 41) on Hobson's socialism.

¹⁰Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) continues, "They are going to pass it, whatever

that regardless of the charge that's made against capitalism, the time comes when capitalism (let's say the market, basically) is acquitted of that charge, [and] a new charge will be brought up—and an indefinite number of charges until the guilty verdict is reached, and the sentence of death is pronounced.

Around 1900, it had become obvious that the Marxists' predictions about the market were not coming true. It was not the case that the middle class was disappearing, that total monopoly was coming into existence. It was not the case that the business cycle had reached the point of collapse of the capitalist system. Above all, it was not the case that the workers were getting poorer and poorer.¹¹ That's what Marx and Engels had said in the 1840s; they never changed their view. But by 1900, you simply could not deny the evidence of your senses. The working class in capitalist societies was becoming richer and richer.¹²

So that set of accusations and charges against capitalism has to be put aside. The revisionists, as they were called, in Germany and in other places, led by the moderate Marxist Bernstein, say, "We cannot use these charges against capitalism anymore, unfortunately."¹³ All right.

the defense they may hear; the only success victorious defense can possibly produce is a change in the indictment" (1992, 144).

¹¹Karl Marx (1818–83) and Friedrich Engels (1820–95) assert in the *Communist Manifesto*, "The modern laborer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper" (1988, 221). Marx reaffirms in *Das Kapital*, "Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolize all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation" (1909, 836).

¹²Mises writes, "The essential point in the teachings of all socialist authors, and especially in the teachings of Marx, is the doctrine that capitalism results in a progressive pauperization of the working masses. With regard to the capitalistic countries the fallacy of this theorem can hardly be ignored" (1998, 861). He observes, "In capitalistic countries the standard of living of the wage earners has improved in an unprecedented and undreamt-of way since the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* and the first volume of *Das Kapital*," and "The Marxian prediction of the masses' progressive impoverishment has been spectacularly disproved by the facts" (2005b, 79, 225).

¹³Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) was the founder of revisionist socialism in Germany. He writes in his work *Evolutionary Socialism*: "The number of members of

But the sentence of death is still there. You have to have some charge to give the sentence, to justify the sentence.

And the new charge then arose. Capitalism may not be responsible for the collapse of the economy, or cartelization, or the poverty of the working class (which are not real facts). But it is responsible for a new horror and evil called imperialism. So this charge of imperialism then takes the place of the older, discredited charges, with always this same psychological background, which is that there's no way this defendant is going to get off the hook, whatever charge we have to bring up.

When I was a kid it was “the affluent society.” That's before “the war on poverty” was discovered. It was not only the affluent society, it was the contemptible taste of American consumers in preferring tail fins on their cars. This was the message of John Kenneth Galbraith in those days.¹⁴ All of these awful things are supposed to prove something rotten and decadent about capitalism.

Now, according to these theorists, what was responsible for imperialist expansion was the need of capitalist economies to place investments overseas—the need, because of the falling rate of profit, to find areas in the Third World that would bring profitable investment. So this capital flow was supposed to bring the capitalists there. Once the capitalists are there, the capitalists look around and say, “It's better if our own government, our own system of laws, will work together with the politicians and force them to take over this area.”

Now, since these theories were developed, between 1900 and 1917, let's say, historians—that is, not theorists or polemicists like, of course, Lenin—but actual historians have been at work on this thesis to try to test it. (I've actually done some work—in fact I teach a course—on theories of imperialism.) The fact of the matter is that when it comes to testing this thesis by actual empirical work, the thesis collapses at every point.

the possessing classes is today not smaller but larger. The enormous increase of social wealth is not accompanied by a decreasing number of large capitalists but by an increasing number of capitalists of all degrees” (1961, xxv).

¹⁴John Kenneth Galbraith (1908–2006) was a Keynesian economist who wrote *The Affluent Society* (1958). Later, in *Economics and the Public Purpose*, Galbraith repeatedly calls for “New Socialism” (1975, 213, 266, 268).

I can refer you to the works of D. K. Fieldhouse, for instance, a British economist. *The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism* (Fieldhouse 1966) is his book. An older book, in the [thirties], Eugene Staley (1935), *[War] and the Private Investor*. There are specific books for specific countries. As far as France goes, the French historian Henri Brunschwig (1966). And a very nice little book has recently been published last year by Oxford University Press that very neatly summarizes many of these issues. It's a translation from a German historian named Baumgart, and it's called *Imperialism*—a nice, short treatment, really, summarizing many of the findings (Baumgart 1982).

What conclusion did these historians come to? First of all, it is impossible, it's inconceivable, to explain the imperialism of many of the imperialist powers at the time through the need for overseas capital investment, because these countries were net capital importers. There was no such thing as a capital glut in Russia—if not the chief imperialist country of the time, certainly one of the most important imperialist countries of the time. Russia was an enormous importer of capital, especially from Western Europe.

No capital glut in Japan, which had become an imperialist power. No capital glut in Italy. Italy became an imperialist power at the time. These things have a sort of division of labor about them, the Italians around 1900 specializing in the collection of deserts [*laughter*]. Why deserts? Well, they must know it in Rome. But Eritrea, Somalia, and Libya.¹⁵

There was very little capital for export in Germany. As a matter of fact, when the time came for the Germans to get the concession from the Ottoman government to build the railroad to Baghdad, there wasn't enough free German capital for export available; they had to call in French capitalists also. The United States, by the way, at the time was a net capital importer also—still, by 1900.

Then, of the countries which did export capital, where did that capital go? To these Third World areas? By no means. French capital went almost exclusively to southwest and southern Europe, to the Balkans,

¹⁵Italy controlled Eritrea from 1890 to 1941, Somalia from 1889 to 1941, and Libya from 1890 to 1943.

and very largely (maybe about 40 percent of it) to Russia.¹⁶ Not to any area that they are taking over imperialistically, but to these other areas. British capital, for instance, went to the old empire—that is, Canada, India, Australia, and so on. To the United States. To Argentina. But again, not to these areas which were being taken over imperialistically at the time.¹⁷

So there is really no connection between this alleged need to place capital and imperialist expansion.¹⁸

¹⁶MacMillan writes, “What helped to make Russia receptive to the idea of an alliance was that France could provide what it badly needed: capital. . . . By 1900 France was by far the biggest foreign investor in Russia. . . . In 1914 the railway lines along which Russian armies moved to their frontiers had been largely built with French money” (2013, 146). See Brunschwig (1966) on the exportation of French capital.

¹⁷See Davis and Huttenback (1986) on British flows of capital.

¹⁸As Jim Powell summarizes,

Socialists blamed imperialism on capitalism. Yet conquerors pillaged the earth for centuries before anyone ever heard of free markets. . . . Countries without much investment capital, like Russia and Italy, eagerly pursued imperial glory. Germany exported capital only after it had established an overseas empire. Once colonies were acquired, European investments still flowed not to the colonies but to other prosperous countries—established markets. French investors, for instance, concentrated their efforts in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Argentina. Similarly, European countries continued to conduct an estimated three-quarters of their trade with one another. . . . As a financial proposition, most colonies were losers. (2005, 30–31)

Chapter 3

Statism and Imperialism

In fact, the question of imperialism at this time is much more complicated. Occasionally, it is the case that some capitalists will go to the government and say, “We would like you to take over this area. We need to expand in this area.” This was the case, for instance, in connection with some German expansion in the Pacific, which was encouraged by the shipping lines in Hamburg. But by and large, this was not an important factor in connection with the new imperialism of 1880 on.

The question really is complicated. The factors involved vary from case to case. In the case of British West Africa, it is largely an attempt by the British to take over territories because the French are expanding. And the French, once they take over some territory, do establish a protectionist system. The British rely on free trade, but the British preemptively take over so they’re not excluded by French protectionism. That’s West Africa.

When it comes to East Africa—Kenya, Uganda, and so on—the main reason is strategic, as Robinson and Gallagher (1961) show in their book on Africa and the Victorians. Strategic: the defense of the Sudan, which is necessary for the defense of Egypt, which is necessary for the defense of the Suez Canal and the routes to India.¹ The Suez Canal itself, by the way: the British took it over and occupied Egypt in

¹Overy writes, “Much of the argument for empire in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the decade before the First World War was based on strategic necessity” (2022, 8).

1882 not primarily for economic reasons whatsoever, as Disraeli himself said, but for strategic reasons.² The Suez Canal was going to be used to quickly shuttle troops between the British army in India and the European theater, whenever it was necessary. The Sepoy Mutiny had only been about [twenty-five] years before.³ There might be a mutiny in India, you want to shuttle troops there or bring them to the European theater to block Russia, or whatever.

So strategic and military reasons were involved, but not capitalism in any form. And certainly not the free market—certainly not free market capitalists (really by definition), but not even state capitalists to any large extent, in this period of imperialism. It was the old “reasons of state,” as they say. Military reasons, strategic reasons, reasons of prestige—reasons of loving the idea of a strong state.⁴

This is the period of public education. In every little schoolhouse in Europe—and now in America at this time, not before, I learned recently—you had the flag of your country. (Before the end of the nineteenth century, the American flag was not typically displayed in public schoolhouses.) But in every country you had the flag of your country, you had a map of the world with various areas of the world colored in the same color as your own country, which is so beautiful, it almost makes it makes you want to cry. That Italy should own a million square miles of desert in the north, a half a million square miles of desert in

²The British took control of Egypt after the Anglo-Egyptian War of 1882. The British formally occupied Egypt until 1922 but exercised control there until 1956. Fromkin writes, “Egypt, with its vital Suez Canal, was one of the key strategic positions on Britain’s road to India” (2001, 421).

³The Indian Rebellion of 1857, sometimes called the First War of Independence, was a widespread and unsuccessful mutiny aimed at overthrowing British rule in India. The British Raj, the name for direct British rule over India from 1858 to 1947, emerged after the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Between fifteen and thirty million Indians died in famines during the British Raj (Kotkin 2014, 64; Wilson 2016, 318). The British government’s mismanagement of India, not crop failures, caused these famines (Chandavarkar 1990, 39–40). See Wilson (2016) for a critical overview of the British Raj.

⁴MacMillan admits, “Imperialism came increasingly to be seen as a measure of a nation’s power and vitality” (2014, 252).

the east: the time will come when deserts are going to be very rare, and Italy will have the world by the throat [*laughter*].

So through the public school systems, which are expanding in every country, through conscription, which brings people into the army for a few years and indoctrinates them, this idea of the grandeur, a necessary grandeur of imperialist expansion, is spread to the mass of people. It is something which the people take up really as actively as the politicians do.

But the chief pushers of the specific acts of imperialism, according to the historical record, are the military leaders, the civilian politicians, the special nationalist groups which are set up in Germany. The Navy League has over a million members by the time of the First World War.⁵ These are people in every walk of life who for sentimental, emotional, nationalist reasons push the imperialism of their own country.

These imperialist rivalries create hostilities and antipathies among the powers, especially when the imperialism is something that expands, occurs, in Europe itself. You understand it is not only overseas that you can set up colonies, but by expansion in Europe. And any kind of attempted expansion in Europe is infinitely more dangerous at this time than in Africa, or the Pacific, or East Asia. This imperialism by 1914 has been going on for three and a half decades or more. Everybody is used to it. Everybody, almost, endorses it.

⁵The German Navy League (Deutscher Flottenverein) was founded in 1898 to promote the expansion of the German Navy. It was a powerful lobby group that played a significant role in shaping German naval policy in the years leading up to World War I. See note 52 on the significance of German naval policy before 1914.

Chapter 4

The Alliance System

Another important thing that exists on the eve of war in 1914, and really what immediately brings about the world war, is the alliance system of the European powers. The European powers have engaged in collective security now for a number of decades. Bismarck is thrown out of office by the new kaiser, Wilhelm II, in 1890,¹ but by the time he leaves, he has created a number of alliances in order to preserve the status quo, which he thinks is to the benefit of Germany. Germany has an alliance, called the Triple Alliance, with Austria-Hungary. This is an old country that is destroyed by the First World War, called Austria-Hungary. It is ruled by the Habsburg family, which is the most famous name in the history of Europe (I think that is a nice thing to have, the most famous name in the history of Europe). It is composed of a number of different small nationalities. So Bismarck has an alliance with Austria-Hungary and with Italy called the Triple Alliance.² He has on the side an alliance with Russia.³

The whole aim is to isolate France to prevent the French from somehow starting up trouble in order to gain back their lost provinces

¹Wilhelm II became kaiser on June 15, 1888, and Bismarck was dismissed on March 15, 1890. Kotkin describes the young kaiser as “arrogant and insecure” (2014, 139).

²The Dual Alliance was signed by Germany and Austria-Hungary on October 7, 1879. Italy joined on May 20, 1882, to create the Triple Alliance.

³The Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia was signed on June 18, 1887.

of Alsace and Lorraine. In 1871, when the unified Germany comes into existence, the Germans take away from France one and a half provinces, called Alsace—that is a whole province with the capital of Strasbourg—and part of Lorraine with the town of Metz. This is an intense humiliation to the French.⁴

Bismarck says, “Look, it will take them a long time to forget this. In the meantime, let’s make it so that they can’t cause any trouble by isolating them from any possible allies.” The British, at this time engaged in splendid isolation, would not be involved in any alliances on the continent. So Bismarck has done what he wanted to do. He has alliances with [Austria-Hungary and Italy], separately with Russia; England is minding its own business; and France is not in a position by itself to attack Germany.

Once Bismarck is dismissed, things start to change very quickly. The new kaiser and his advisors decide that it is impossible to come to terms both with Austria-Hungary and with Russia, and they choose Austria-Hungary as ultimately the more dependable country. And they say, “Look, there is no chance that France is going to ally with Russia.” France is the only great republic in Europe; it is a democratic country. Russia is an absolutism.⁵ To give you an example of how ludicrous it is in Russia at this time: it is against the law to play the “Marseillaise” in public, because the “Marseillaise” is a revolutionary song. So they say, “There is no chance these two countries are going to ally. Let’s go with Austria-Hungary as the more dependable, Germanic power.”

So in 1890, the treaty with Russia is permitted to lapse.⁶ Two years later, the Russians and the French sign an alliance, and very quickly it becomes a military alliance.⁷ And Bismarck, in his last years, sees the

⁴Christopher Clark writes, “The [German] annexation of Alsace-Lorraine—strongly advocated by the military and reluctantly accepted by German chancellor Otto von Bismarck—imposed a lasting burden on Franco-German relations. Alsace-Lorraine became the holy grail of the French cult of *revanche*, providing the focus for successive waves of chauvinist agitation” (2012, 124).

⁵Kotkin describes Russia at this time as a “viscous, archaic autocracy” (2014, 172). Sean McMeekin notes that, given Russian absolutism, “conservative-authoritarian Germany . . . should have been [Russia’s] natural ally” (2017, 56).

⁶The German-Russian Reinsurance Treaty lapsed on June 18, 1890.

⁷The French and Russians entered a political agreement on August 27, 1891. They

nightmare beginning to materialize. What he always considered the nightmare was the possibility of a two-front war with Germany in the middle:⁸ on this side [*gestures toward France on map*] the second-best army in the world, and on this side [*gestures toward Russia on map*] by far the largest army in the world.⁹

This alliance system intensifies as we approach 1914. More and more, each group considers itself a separate and hostile camp. After the turn of the century, after around 1900, a very, very bright and very ambitious and very aggressive French foreign minister named Delcassé brings about a brilliant coup.¹⁰ And that is not an alliance, but the “Understanding”—the “Entente”—with England. Not a formal binding alliance as the French-Russian alliance is, but an understanding that increasingly, as time goes on, brings the two countries closer and closer together and their leaders closer and closer together. This Entente comes into existence in 1904.¹¹

So you have Germany still with its rather weak allies to the south. But France now becomes a hinge that has an alliance with Russia and an understanding with England. In 1907, the French want to bring their

agreed on the terms of the Franco-Russian military treaty on August 17, 1892, and the military treaty was ratified in January 1894. According to this treaty, a partial mobilization by any member of the Triple Alliance—Germany, Austria-Hungary, or Italy—would trigger a total mobilization by France and Russia. See Fay (1928, 1:120), Kennan (1984, 251), and Meyer (2006, 46).

⁸Bismarck considered an Anglo-Russian alliance joined by France as “more dangerous for Germany than any other she might have to face” (quoted in Albertini 1952, 189).

⁹In 1914, the German army consisted of 4.5 million men (including reserves). By comparison, the Russian and French armies consisted of 6 million and 4 million men, respectively. See Gilbert (1994, 37) and Meyer (2016, 12).

¹⁰Théophile Delcassé (1852–1923) was the French foreign minister from 1898 to 1905. MacMillan writes that he worked in “pursuit of empire,” and that “as early as the mid-1880s, Delcassé had wanted a better understanding with Britain. More, he had an even grander scheme: to bring about what eventually became the Triple Entente between France, Russia and Britain” (2013, 150). As Laurence Lafore observes, “The French record [of Delcassé] in these years, regarded from the standpoint of technical diplomatic skill, is dazzlingly brilliant. Nothing seemed more unlikely than an Anglo-Russian entente” (1997, 134).

¹¹The Anglo-French Entente of April 8, 1904.

two friends together, and England and Russia come to an agreement about all outstanding colonial problems.¹² They begin to grow closer and closer together. By 1914, what you have is an alliance system composed of the Triple Alliance in the middle of Europe, and what comes to be known as the Triple Entente, with France, England, and Russia.

If we had a map of the world [here] and not simply a map of Europe, this would appear to you, I think, much more dramatically. Because what you see on the map of the world is Europe, of course, as a very small peninsula jutting out of the vast mass of Asia. What you see is Germany as about the size of a thumb [*points out thumb-sized Germany on map of Europe and the Middle East*]. If this were a map of the world, Germany would be the size of a thumbnail. What does the world look like from the German point of view? One quarter of the globe is colored pink [*gestures toward pink Great Britain on map*]: that is the British Empire on which the sun never sets. It includes whole continents like Australia. The next largest empire is the French. Then on the eastern side of Germany, what? Russia. The Russian Empire, stretching from the German border to the Sea of Japan, going through eleven time zones, one-sixth of the land surface of the globe. Things look rather frightening from the German point of view, actually. This creates a tension, a suspicion in Germany that is going to be very dangerous when the last days of July come about in 1914.

By the way, this is something we should keep in mind. Take a similar example in our own time: What does the world look like from the Soviet point of view, if we had a map of the world? Well, the Soviet Union is in the position that the United States would be if on our northern border we had not Canada (and the sweet Canadian people), but China. And if on our southern border we had not Mexico, but the nations of NATO assembled, led by Germany. And if Cuba were not Cuba, but Japan. That is the position the Soviet Union feels itself to be in. Do you understand what I am saying? The position we would be in if we had China on one border, NATO led by Germany on another, and instead of this little island of Cuba, Japan were there. That is the position of encirclement which the Soviet Union finds itself in.

¹²The Anglo-Russian Convention was signed on August 31, 1907.

I am not saying this justifies anything. But we ought to understand the psychology of people who are in a position to make very dangerous decisions. We ought to understand how things look to them, from their point of view. After 1907, the world looks like an extremely dangerous place to the Germans. There is a sense of encirclement that comes about.¹³

Also what has been going on is an armaments race. Now, most of the people in this room were born (I think virtually all of you) into a world where an armaments race was a normal part of life. That is, of course, every year you build more and more in the way of ships and planes and tanks and so on in order to forestall some enemy. This was not the case in the liberal nineteenth century. Armaments budgets kept going down and down and down through most of the century, unless there was some war in the offing, some war for the national unification, let's say.

But with the collapse of liberalism and the growth of imperialism and militarism, the nations of the world begin to engage in very threatening arms races. Every country wants to build a huge, oceangoing navy. And the British want to maintain their standard of a navy equal to that of the next two largest navies put together. You can see that that will tend to get out of control, that sort of arms race.¹⁴ Conscription has been introduced into every European country except Britain. And we have mass standing armies and enormous reserves of trained soldiers, people who have been through the conscript system and are ready there to be called back to the colors.

The armaments budgets just keep getting larger and larger. Every country thinks every other country is spending more than they are, is

¹³Ferguson writes, "German fears of encirclement seem less like paranoia than realism" (1998, 68).

¹⁴Alfred von Tirpitz (1849–1930) was the key figure in the naval race between Germany and Britain in the years before the First World War. He built the German navy into the second largest in the world. In reality, the naval race was over by 1912 and, at just half the size of the British Royal Navy, the German navy was never a real threat to Britain: "Britain was winning the naval arms race hands down and enjoyed unchallenged superiority" (Clark 2012, 319). Still, it is widely argued that the German naval buildup, orchestrated by Tirpitz, helped drive the British into the Entente with France and Russia (Kotkin 2014, 140).

frightened of every new development, every new change in the design of a rifle. These great standing armies are there already, or latently there, ready to be brought into existence in a few days.

Chapter 5

The Outbreak of the First World War

In other words, as the years pass approaching 1914, Europe is on a hair trigger—a hair trigger. Anything could start the armies moving. But nobody believes that, because Europe has been through a number of crises and has survived them all.

There are the crises over Morocco.¹ Morocco is this Arab country in northwest Africa which the French want to take over. The Germans say, “Look, there is not that much territory left in the world. You can’t simply take it over.” The French say, “Okay, we will give you something.” But conferences are necessary in 1909 and 1911, and it seems there is some chance of going to war. But the crises are defused. Then afterwards, everybody breathes a sigh of relief: “We did not go to war at that time. It would be so crazy to go to war, so crazy to go to war. It is not likely to happen at all.”

There is a crisis over Bosnia. (If you think Bosnia sounds funny, especially if I say Bosnia and Herzegovina, those are the sort of places that wars start over. Nablus and Hebron. The West Bank. Places that no one ever heard of. Nicaragua. Places no one has ever heard of or really cared that much about. Things going on there, and governments involving themselves there in a way that, when the time comes, they

¹The First Moroccan Crisis of 1905 was resolved at the Algeiras Conference with the Algeiras Act of April 7, 1906. The Franco-German agreement of February 8, 1909, followed. The Second Moroccan Crisis ended with the Franco-German agreement of November 4, 1911.

cannot any longer extricate themselves.) The people back home had no idea that the world is going to go to war because of a terrorist attack in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Nobody on January 1, 1914, would have been able to say that.

But there is a crisis over Bosnia in 1908. Austria-Hungary and Russia get together and make a secret agreement:² Austria, which has occupied Bosnia, will now formally annex it. The Russians will tear up part of the treaty which limits their exit from the straits in Constantinople, so there will be a *quid pro quo*. The Austrians take over Bosnia.³ The Russians, however, are faced by England, who says, “No, no, no. We may be friendly with you, but remember, this is a very touchy thing to us. You are getting into the eastern Mediterranean that way. So you be good boys, and adhere to the treaty.” The Russians go to Austria and say, “In that case, you cannot take over Bosnia, because there is no *quid pro quo* anymore.” And the Austrians say, “Well, we have taken it over. We have annexed it.” The Russians say, “Well, give it up.” The Austrians say, “Go talk to Germany about this.”⁴ The Russians, who had just gotten out of the Japanese war and were in bad military shape, say, “I see, I see” [*laughter*]. But they promise themselves, “Never again. This is the last time we are going to back down.”

Just as in 1962, when the superior American nuclear strength forced the Russians to back down over the Cuban Missile Crisis. When the final negotiations were made between the American and Russian negotiators of the withdrawal of the Russian missiles and the dismantling of American missiles in Turkey, the Russians made it a point to express to the Americans, “This is the last time. You humiliated us, you forced us to back down. We will now proceed to an enormous military buildup, which will make us the equal of you in strategic nuclear weapons.” The Russians did that through the 1960s and 1970s, as you know it.⁵

²This secret agreement was the Buchlau agreement of September 16, 1908.

³Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina on October 6, 1908.

⁴See Clark (2012, 85–86), MacMillan (2013, 393–410), McMeekin (2013, 4), and Kotkin (2014, 142).

⁵The Soviet Union had 3,346 nuclear warheads at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. The Soviet Union had amassed 35,130 nuclear warheads by the time Raico gave this lecture in 1983. For context, the U.S. had 25,540 nuclear warheads in 1962 and 23,305 in 1983. In 2015, Russia and the U.S. each had

In 1911, the process begins of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This is known as Turkey or the Turkish Empire, but also the Ottoman Empire after the kind of Turks who had taken it over, the Ottoman Turks. They had at one time exercised rule over an enormous part of the Balkans and also North Africa. The Turkish rule is falling to pieces. It is at this time that the Italians take Libya. And the small states in the Balkans all get together and attack Turkey, and each take some little area of Turkey in the Balkans.⁶

This is dangerous. Any gun that is fired in anger by a government in Europe is very, very dangerous. The fact that a war is going on in the Balkans makes everybody very nervous. There is a second war when all the other small Balkan states jump on Bulgaria, who they think has taken too much from Turkey.⁷ And that is already in 1913. So armies are fighting on European soil. In 1912, at the time of the First Balkan War, as a matter of fact, the Austrians mobilize their forces, thinking that Serbia (which is a protégé of Russia) was getting too much territory, and was going to infringe on Austrian interests; and the Russians began to countermobilize. Cooler heads prevailed, and that was called off.

But the public at large is really mistaken when it thinks that these crises have been weathered and, therefore, any crisis that comes about in the future will be weathered: “Sure, there are all these armaments, there is this alliance system, there is this hatred, there is this suspicion. But nobody is going to be crazy enough to bring about war.”⁸

about 7,000 nuclear warheads in inventory. See Kristensen and McKinzie (2015, 565) for these figures. See Sherwin (2020) on the Cuban Missile Crisis.

⁶The First Balkan War began on October 12, 1912, when Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria attacked Turkey. The First Balkan War ended with the signing of the Treaty of London on May 30, 1913.

⁷The Second Balkan War began on June 29, 1913, when Bulgaria attacked Serbia and Greece. The Second Balkan war ended with the Treaty of Bucharest, signed on August 10, 1913.

⁸MacMillan writes, “The coming of war took most Europeans by surprise and their initial reaction was disbelief and shock. They had grown used to peace” (2013, xxiii). She continues, “Europe’s very success in surviving those earlier crises paradoxically led to a dangerous complacency in the summer of 1914 that, yet again, solutions would be found at the last moment and the peace would be maintained” (2013, 605).

In June of 1914, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary and his wife, Franz Ferdinand and Sophie, are assassinated by a Serb terrorist in Sarajevo.⁹ They are assassinated by Princip, a Serb student who had come from Belgrade for that purpose and became a national hero in Serbia when they learned what had happened.¹⁰ It was the thing that ignited the First World War: the nationalism of the Serbs.

The Serbian idea is to use this independent country of Serbia, which has its own king, to form the nucleus of a great confederation and monarchy of the South Slavic people—the Serbs, the Croats, and the Slovenes. They said, “The Italians did it in the last century. The Germans did it in the last century. We are going to do it.”

But in order to bring about this confederation of the South Slavs (*South Slav* in their language is “Yugoslav”), unfortunately from the point of view of the European peace, one of the great powers must be destroyed. They can only do what they want by bringing about the demise of Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary is a collection of small states.¹¹ If they lose the South Slavs, the Czechs are going to want to leave, the Poles are going to want to leave, the Romanians will take over this area here [*gestures toward map*], and that will be the end of Austria-Hungary.¹² You have, then, a very typical political nationalist conflict.

⁹The Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1863–1914) was assassinated on June 28, 1914. For detailed accounts of the chaotic assassination, see Clark (2012, 367–76), Mac-Millan (2013, 511–39), and McMeekin (2013, 1–20).

¹⁰Gavrilo Princip (1894–1918) assassinated the archduke. Princip was a Bosnian Serb who opposed Austro-Hungarian rule of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1912, Princip joined the Black Hand, a Serbian terrorist group founded on March 3, 1911. The Black Hand “wanted Serbia to rule all the lands in which Serbs lived” (Fromkin 2004, 124). The Black Hand sent Princip, Nedeljko Čabrinović, and Trifko Grabež to Sarajevo to assassinate the archduke. Also see notes 67 and 68.

¹¹Kotkin notes, “Of Austria-Hungary’s eleven major nations, only five were more or less exclusively within the realm; in the case of the other six, a majority lived outside the empire’s boundaries” (2014, 143).

¹²Clark writes, “The unification programme committed the Serbian polity . . . to a long struggle with the two great land empires, the Ottoman and the Austrian, whose dominions encroached on the Greater Serbia of the nationalist imagination” (2012, 22).

The Serbs, in a sense, are just as justified as the Italians had been in the nineteenth century to create their country of the Yugoslavia. On the other hand, it requires the destruction of Austria-Hungary. And you can understand that great powers do not sit around and allow themselves to be destroyed. This, then, was the culmination of much agitation and harassment of Austria-Hungary by the Serbs attempting to raise up the Slavic people in the south of their country.

Austria-Hungary says, “Okay, this will be it. This is it, Serbia. You’ve had your last chance.” They give Serbia an ultimatum.¹³ An ultimatum is presented to Serbia couched in terms such that the Serbs will have to reject it. It says, for instance, “You will allow us to send our police into Serbia to conduct the investigation, and they will have full police powers.” No sovereign state can permit that.¹⁴

The Austrians, however, felt they had to do that because they had reason to suppose that this wasn’t a random terrorist attack. In fact, it was not, as we find out afterwards. The plan to assassinate the archduke was made up by the head of Serbian military intelligence.¹⁵ It was

¹³The Austro-Hungarian ultimatum was delivered on July 23, 1914. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914.

¹⁴Gerald Meyer writes, “[Austria-Hungary’s ultimatum] included ten demands. At least half were entirely reasonable. A few, however, were susceptible to being interpreted as requiring Serbia to compromise its sovereignty. The most objectionable called for direct Austrian involvement in Serbia’s handling of the assassination investigation and related internal matters. Its rejection was, in practical terms, nearly inevitable” (Meyer 2006, 35). MacMillan reports that nearly all of the Austro-Hungarian officials responsible for drafting the ultimatum agreed that “the demands contained in the ultimatum should be designed so that Serbia would have to refuse them, thus giving Austria-Hungary grounds for war” (2013, 530–31).

¹⁵Sean McMeekin writes, “There is a basic consensus now about Serbian complicity in Sarajevo” (2011, 42). Dragutin Dimitrijević (1876–1917)—or Apis—was the head of Serbian military intelligence. The Black Hand was the terrorist group responsible for the assassination, and Apis “founded the Black Hand” (MacMillan 2013, 515). According to Clark, “Apis was the principal architect behind the plot” and “the real author of the conspiracy. . . . The weapons themselves were of Serbian make; the revolvers were manufactured under Serbian licence and the recovered bombs hailed from the Serbian state armoury at Kragujevac” (2012, 48). In a 1917 deposition, Apis reported that Russian government officials helped

known—it was not endorsed or planned for—but it was known to the Serbian cabinet itself, including the prime minister, who did not inform Austria that “the heir to your throne is about to be blown up.”¹⁶ In other words, the Austrians in a sense were justified in saying, “We are never going to come to the truth of this unless we send our own people into Serbia to have an investigation. Otherwise, there will be a cover-up.”

But the ultimatum is one that would publicly humiliate Serbia as a nation. When the Russian foreign minister gets a copy of it by telegraph from Belgrade, he looks at it and says, “C’est la guerre européenne! (It is the European war.) This is the war that we have feared.”¹⁷

Now, the question of the responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War is one which has been discussed by many historians. There are practically libraries filled with works. One of the most recent historians who has gotten a following is a German historian named Fritz Fischer,¹⁸ who is sort of going back on the established consensus and now maintaining that it was, in fact, Germany that was responsible primarily for the war. Now, I admire that spirit tremendously. I think all historians

finance the plot to assassinate the archduke: “I received money for this from [Victor] Artamonov” (quoted in MacKenzie 1989, 130). On potential Russian involvement in the assassination, see Albertini (1953, 86), Clark (2012, 411–12), and McMeekin (2011, 41; 2013, 50–51).

¹⁶The prime minister of Serbia was Nicolas Pašić (1845–1926). He was a Serbian nationalist who wanted an independent nation of South Slavic peoples (Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes). MacMillan acknowledges that the Serbian government was involved in the assassination and that Pašić was aware of the plot: “Princip and two others, along with their weapons and capsules of cyanide with which to commit suicide after they had done their deed, were smuggled across the border from Serbia into Bosnia with the connivance of sympathetic Serbian officials. Pašić got wind of what was up but was either unable or unwilling to do anything” (2013, 515).

¹⁷The Russian foreign minister was Sergei Sazonov (1860–1927). He was adamant that the Russians must support Serbia in any conflict with Austria-Hungary (Fay 1928, 2:325; Albertini 1952, 486; MacMillan 2013, 552). McMeekin assigns Sazonov much responsibility for the outbreak of the war (2011, 238–39; 2013, 395–99).

¹⁸Fritz Fischer’s 1961 work was *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (Grab for world power). Also see Fischer (1967, 1975); Geiss (1967, 1976); and Langdon (1991) for more on the Fischerite viewpoint.

should look for any evidence that concludes that it was their own country that was responsible for a particular war. It's a wonderful spirit [*laughter*].

However, I think, with all due respect, his enthusiasm has gotten away with him. What he really does establish is that, once the war starts, the German government (including the German chancellor) engage in imperialistic visions. They want to take over parts of Belgium, have ports on the English Channel, and so on and so on. This says nothing about the outbreak of the war and the reasons for the outbreak of the war. And most of all, he only studies Germany. He only studies what is happening in Berlin and, to a smaller extent, in Vienna, and not what is happening in Saint Petersburg and in Paris and in other capitals.

This famous question of war guilt, I think, is one where the older consensus—not the consensus of the wartime itself, but the consensus that developed after 1918—is the correct one. All of the powers share responsibility for the war.¹⁹ And none of the powers really wanted war rather than anything else for imperialist expansion. To the degree that they were willing to go to war, it was because they were frightened. They were frightened of waiting, of the other one getting in first.

The Germans, you understand, have a contingency plan to deal with the real-world situation, which is that they are faced with two powerful armies, and they are right in the middle. [In] the early years of the twentieth century, the head of the German general staff, a man named Schlieffen, comes up with a plan for dealing with this.²⁰

¹⁹Sidney Bradshaw Fay writes in 1928, "All the European countries in a greater or less degree, were responsible. . . . The responsibility for the War is a divided responsibility" (1928, 2:549). In 1952, a committee of French and German historians concluded: "The documents do not permit any attributing, to any government or nation, a premeditated desire for European war in 1914" (quoted in Remak 1995, 131). More recently, Christopher Clark writes: "The outbreak of war in 1914 is not an Agatha Christie drama at the end of which we will discover the culprit standing over a corpse in the conservatory with a smoking pistol. There is no smoking gun in this story; or, rather, there is one in the hands of every major character. Viewed in this light, the outbreak of war was a tragedy, not a crime" (2012, 561). MacMillan agrees: "The Great War was nobody's fault or everybody's" (2013, xxx).

²⁰Alfred von Schlieffen (1833–1913) was chief of staff of the German army from 1891 to 1906.

You know that the map of Europe in 1914 constitutes a board game. Has anybody ever seen the game Diplomacy, played Diplomacy? This is the board, and each player is a great power. Now, let me present this to you as a military contingency. You are the head or member of the German general staff, and this theoretical problem is posed to you: in the event of war simultaneously with France and Russia, how will you deploy your forces? How would you deploy the German army in the event of a war with France and Russia simultaneously?

Right, you don't get rid of Russia in one fell swoop. As Marshal Montgomery said one time, "The first rule of warfare is never invade Russia" [*laughter*].²¹ But if you have to, don't count on a quick victory. Therefore, in order to get rid of one of their opponents, the German plan, the Schlieffen Plan, was a quick march into France. They were not to use the route of 1870 but this time, in order to maximize the speed, go through the plain of north Belgium, sweep through, cut off Paris from the channel ports, circle Paris and the major French forces there, and force a French capitulation.²²

In the meantime, the Russians, they thought, would take a long, long time mobilizing through their vast empire.²³ And the relatively small German force could hold them temporarily. They would meet the oncoming Russian army between Berlin and the border, and hold them until the defeat of France. And then the bulk of the German army will be shuttled—taking advantage of the central position—shuttled across the great German railroad system to the Eastern Front and meet the Russians east of Berlin. This was the only way they felt that Germany could be saved.

²¹On May 30, 1962, British field marshal Bernard Montgomery (1887–1976) gave a speech in the House of Lords and declared: "Rule 1, on page 1 of the book of war, is: 'Do not march on Moscow.' . . . [Rule 2] is: 'Do not go fighting with your land armies in China'" (quoted in Knowles 2001, 528).

²²On the Schlieffen Plan, see Gilbert (1994, 28–29), Keegan (1999, 31), Meyer (2006, 93–98), and MacMillan (2013, 315).

²³Meyer writes, "Schlieffen had good reason [in 1905] to assume that Russia might be unable to put an effective army into the field at all, never mind speedily. By 1914 the situation had changed. . . . French capital was financing a radical improvement of the Russian rail system in ways directly threatening to Germany" (2006, 93). Also see Stone (1975, 18, 40) and Strachan (2003, 44–45).

Because what's the alternative? You divide the German army in half. Half the German army is inferior to the French army. The other half (if you would only take half the German army) is inferior to the Russian army. In 1914, the French standing army was the same size as Germany's, because of their three-year enlistment rather than two-year enlistment and using just everybody for the army.²⁴

So this is the contingency plan for (the Germans think) the only possible salvation of the Reich. The Serbians very politely declined to accept the Austrian ultimatum, and Austria begins to mobilize against Serbia to get rid of this particular little thorn in our side.²⁵

Serbia, however, has a big friend, a very big friend. As a Slavic power, as a Russian protégé in the Balkans, it knows it can count on Russian help. And in the last few days of July, crucial decisions are being made in Saint Petersburg and in Berlin. The key decision, as far as the Russians go, is the Russian decision to order general mobilization.²⁶ The Russians lie about this when the Germans say, "We have received reports of your mobilization."²⁷ The Russian say, "No, nothing to it. Some of the guys like to get together and sort of . . . march" [*laughter*].

²⁴See note 47 for the relative sizes of the French and German armies in 1914.

²⁵Austria-Hungary shelled the Serbian capital of Belgrade on July 29, 1914.

²⁶Russia officially ordered partial mobilization on July 28, 1914, the day Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and ordered general mobilization on July 30. On July 31, Germany sent Russia an ultimatum demanding she stop all preparations for war against Germany and Austria-Hungary within twelve hours. Russia did not comply, and Germany declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914.

²⁷The Russians and French knew "mobilization meant war" (McMeekin 2013, 398–99). McMeekin writes, "Russia began secretly mobilizing its armed forces on 25 July 1914 . . . when both Ambassador Pourtalès and Germany's military attaché, Major Eggeling, confronted Sazonov on the night of 26 July with reports that several Russian army corps have been sent towards the western border in accordance with a mobilization directive, and Sazonov guaranteed the one, and gave his word of honor to the other, that no such mobilization order had been issued, the Germans had reason to believe that he was lying through his teeth" (2011, 63–64). Also see Fay (1928, 1:120, 2:323–25, 2:555), Turner (1970, 101), Meyer (2006, 46), and MacMillan (2013, 553).

Do you understand why the Russian mobilization is such a threat to Germany? It makes the Schlieffen Plan impossible because once the Russian army is mobilized on the German border, there is no way that the German army can be withdrawn for the defeat of France, because the Russians will simply flow into the vacuum. The Schlieffen Plan depends on the very slow mobilization of Russian forces.²⁸ So the mobilization of Russian forces begins to panic the Germans.

The kaiser sends a letter to his cousin, the czar. They are both grandsons of Queen Victoria. He says, “Nicky, Nicky, what is this?” [*laughter*]. Seriously, he was very insightful. He says, “Are we going to go to war? Who knows what this war is going to lead to? Who knows where we’ll be at the end of this war?”²⁹ Wilhelm II is going to be in exile in Holland, his throne taken away from him. Nicholas and his family are going to be slaughtered in a shed by the Communists.³⁰

Nicholas II is a man of indecision (much like Louis XVI at the time of the French Revolution), convinced by the last person he talks to. He rescinds general mobilization only to order it again when the generals and admirals come back and say, “Please, we have to do this. This is our only hope, our only chance.”

And in Berlin, when they hear that the Russians are mobilizing, the generals and admirals come to the kaiser and say, “Unless we go ahead with our plan, we are no longer responsible for the security of the Reich.” In the same way that the admirals and generals would come to the president of the United States at a certain point and say, “The computer reading of the data being fed into it indicate a 78 percent chance

²⁸Meyer writes, “The [Schlieffen] plan continued to have one unchanging thesis at its center: speed was everything. Anything that slowed the Germans down, anything that might allow Russia to get into a war before France had been taken out, was regarded as likely to be fatal” (2006, 81).

²⁹The correspondence between the kaiser and the czar from July 29, 1914, to August 1, 1914, came to be called the “Willy-Nicky” telegrams. On July 29, 1914, Willy begged Nicky “to remain a spectator of the Austro-Serbian conflict without involving Europe in the most horrible war she has ever witnessed” (quoted in Neiberg 2006, 47). See Neiberg (2006, 46–49) for all the telegrams.

³⁰The Bolsheviks brutally executed Nicholas II; his wife, Alexandra; and their five children on the night of July 16–17, 1918. See Figes (1998, 640), McMeekin (2017, 261), and Beevor (2022, 216).

of a Soviet missile attack, and this is changing moment by moment. It is now 79.2. There's an 82 percent chance that the data that we see there indicates a Soviet missile attack. Mr. President, we have to do something about it," and the civilian who is in charge of the American state is in the hands of the admirals and the generals—the kaiser was in the hands of his military people.³¹

A German ultimatum is sent to the French government, beginning with an inquiry: "What is your attitude in the event of a war between Germany and Russia? Will you guarantee to remain neutral? And if you say yes, would you kindly hand over the following French forts to be garrisoned by the German army, including Verdun, which controls Paris?"³² The French just say, "Je ne sais pas. C'est possible" [*laughter*]. Germany declares war on France and a few hours later on Russia.³³ The Great European War has begun.

There is the question of where Britain will stand in all of this. Through the Entente, the British government has grown closer and closer to the French, although the British people don't know anything about this. For instance, in 1912, the British say, "In the event of any war between Germany and France, the British navy will guard the French channel ports so that the French navy can concentrate on the Mediterranean against Italy and Austria if they are Germany's partners."³⁴ An

³¹As Kotkin notes, Nicholas II and Wilhelm II "knew next to nothing of strategy and tactics" (2014, 159).

³²The German ultimatum to France on August 1, 1914, gave France eighteen hours to promise she would remain neutral. As a pledge of neutrality, France was required to surrender the fortresses of Verdun and Toul to Germany. See MacMillan (2013, 575).

³³Germany declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914, while the German declaration of war on France came on August 3, 1914.

³⁴McMeekin explains, "[British foreign minister Edward] Grey himself had personally worked out a secret naval agreement in 1912 with France's ambassador to London, Paul Cambon, under which the French navy would 'cover' the Mediterranean, leaving France's northern and western coastlines undefended against Germany—with the understanding that the British fleet, covering the Channel, would defend them on France's behalf by interdicting the German navy" (2013, 72–73). Also see Ferguson (1998, 67), Clark (2012, 212), and MacMillan (2013, 317).

enormous moral commitment and, in fact, military commitment. This is not known to the public.³⁵

So the British government has a problem: “France is being attacked. It may be the Schlieffen Plan is going to win. The Germans will dominate the continent or France will be knocked out. And we have a moral obligation. The French believe that we are going to come to their aid. How will we get into this war?”

The Germans solve their problem for them, because the Schlieffen Plan calls for the German army to go through Belgium, which is neutral according to an old treaty signed by the major European powers.³⁶ In England, the Asquith government (this is the prime minister at the time) is debating whether to get into this war. There are people who are on the war side like Winston Churchill and Lloyd George. Finally, led by Edward Grey, the [British foreign] minister, they decide to go to war.³⁷

One of the ministers in the Asquith cabinet is old John Morley³⁸—distinguished, revered, old gentleman by this time; famous British

³⁵Ferguson writes, “From the outset, the majority of Cabinet members (to say nothing of Parliament) had been kept in ignorance of the discussions with the French” (1998, 76). He continues, “Britain’s decision to intervene was the result of secret planning by her generals and diplomats, which dated back to late 1905. Formally, Britain had no ‘continental commitment’ to France; this was repeatedly stated by [foreign minister Edward] Grey and other ministers in parliament and the press between 1907 and 1914” (1998, 443). Also see Ferguson (1998, 62–64) and Meyer (2006, 128–29) on Britain’s early planning for war against Germany.

³⁶The Treaty of London was signed on April 19, 1839. With this treaty, Britain, France, Russia, the German Confederation, Austria, and the Netherlands agreed that Belgium would be a perpetually independent and neutral state. Also see note 123.

³⁷Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914. But Grey and the British government had decided years earlier that Britain would intervene in any war between France and Germany: “At a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence convened on 23 August 1911, it was agreed that should a Franco-German war break out, Britain would mount a rapid continental intervention, including the transshipment of a British Expeditionary Force” (Clark 2012, 211). Grey was intensely anti-German (Ferguson 1998, 68, 72; Clark 2012, 160, 203, 209).

³⁸John Morley (1838–1923) favored a formal British declaration of neutrality. He resigned on August 2, 1914, after the British government agreed to mobilize its

man of letters; a classical liberal; the biographer of William Gladstone and Richard Cobden (he wrote a great biography of Cobden); a writer of biographies of Burke and the French encyclopedists; an eminent man—and he performs the last act of English liberalism. When the cabinet decides to go to war, he resigns in bitter protest. He says, “This war is going to be the end of the world we knew of the nineteenth century.” And indeed, in many ways, it was.

As George Kennan—perhaps you know, the eminent and respected American diplomat and historian—says about the First World War: If we look back and think to ourselves that the world went to war (even if you believe what the Entente said) to stop the kaiser from dominating Europe, and we think of what followed the kaiser—if we could have back that world of 1918 with the kaiser and the conservative German elite (efficient, dynamic, basically respectful of the foundations of Western civilization), this dynamic and conservative German elite in charge of Germany; if we think of what followed that—a Germany divided between the Nazis and then the Communists—there are very few people who wouldn’t say, “Let’s have back the kaiser. Long live the kaiser, long live the kaiser.”³⁹

navy and protect Belgian neutrality. See Ferguson (1998, 160–61), Clark (2012, 543), and McMeekin (2013, 402).

³⁹See Kennan (1960, 9, 330) for the details of this paraphrase. Ferguson (1998, 457–62) suggests that a Europe dominated by the kaiser would have approximated the modern European Union.

Chapter 6

The First World War

Now, the character of this war is very difficult to communicate. On the Western Front, by the way, in case you were wondering, the Schlieffen Plan doesn't work. The German army is stopped at the Marne, and that's where they stay for four years.¹ On the Western Front, the front does not move more than about thirty kilometers either way over the next four years. It is horrendous. What happens on the Western Front is captured to a small extent in the novel by Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. It is a very good novel and captures the experience of a German soldier. But this was the same for either side.

It was trench warfare. Altogether in the war, who knows, some ten million to twelve million people died.² People experienced things both in

¹The First Battle of the Marne was fought from September 6 to 12, 1914, only thirty miles outside Paris. The French and British won the battle and halted the German advance into France. After the battle, the war on the Western Front turned into a four-year stalemate of trench warfare. For more on the First Battle of the Marne as the end of the Schlieffen Plan, see Gilbert (1994, 72), Keegan (1999, 120), and Meyer (2006, 169, 184).

²Clark writes, "The [First World War] mobilized 65 million troops, claimed three empires, 20 million military and civilian deaths, and 21 million wounded" (2012, xxi). According to Meyer,

Something on the order of 9.5 million men were dead: four million from the Central Powers, almost a million more than that on the Allies' side. Among them were 1.8 million Russians, nearly 1.4 million French, eight hundred thousand Turks, seven hundred twenty-three thousand British, five hundred seventy-eight thousand Italians, and one hundred

combat and back home (understanding what was happening) that dazed them, that stunned them. It is almost as if for a few generations, the peoples of Europe had been increased, sort of like a flock of sheep by their shepherds. Through industrialization, through the spread of liberal ideas and institutions, through the decrease of infant mortality, the raising of standards of living, the population of Europe was enormously greater than it had ever been before. And now, the time came to slaughter some part of the sheep for the purposes of the ones who were in control.

There was no way of expressing the horror of some of the battles. At Verdun, in 1916 (as I said, the fortress that controls the approaches to Paris), 275,000 Frenchmen died and 250,000 Germans. At the Battle of the Somme, similar figures for the British and the Germans. Passchendaele. All these horrible, horrible places.³

By 1917, some people are beginning to say, “This war will go on forever.” People—one sees this in their diaries—record funny dreams along these lines: “There is no reason for this war ever to end. The new generation will come and they will be put into uniforms and sent into the trenches and sent into wild, massive, murderous attacks. It will just go on forever.”

Human nature began to tire. There are mutinies in the French army put down brutally.⁴ At Caporetto, when the Austrians and Germans

fourteen thousand Americans. (Romania and Serbia each lost more than twice as many men as the United States.) The tally was two million dead for Germany, one million for Austria-Hungary. . . . These numbers do not include the more than fifteen million men wounded, or the nearly nine million who had become prisoners of war. Nor do they include the numberless millions of civilians who had died in every imaginable way. (2006, 609)

Gilbert (1994, 541) and Ferguson (1998, 295) provide useful tables on casualties and deaths by country. Also see Keegan (1999, 423), Fromkin (2004, 5), Clark (2012, xxi), Kotkin (2014, 149–50, 312), and Hanson (2017, 463).

³Keegan (1999, 285, 298–99, 368) reports the following figures: the Battle of Verdun: 200,000 French killed and 200,000 Germans killed; the Battle of the Somme: 600,000 Germans killed, 194,451 French killed, and 419,654 British killed; the Battle of Passchendaele: 70,000 British killed and 70,000 Germans killed.

⁴See Gilbert (1994, 333–34), Keegan (1999, 322), and (Meyer 2006, 466–67) on the French mutinies.

attack, the Italian front collapses.⁵ These people, dragged out of their villages and from their farms, especially from the south—the Neapolitans and the Sicilians and the Calabrians—they think that people in Rome are foreigners: “What are they doing up here in the north? Who are these people? And fighting for what? King Umberto is not a member of my family. He has his own family. Why are we fighting here?” So in Caporetto in 1917, the Italian army simply deserts. I only learned recently from Denis Mack Smith’s (1982) biography of Mussolini that in order to reestablish order, thousands of them were executed. Thousands of them were executed—by the Italian army, of course.⁶

Let me just mention that all of the governments involved here are cynical to an extreme, are callous to an extreme, but the Italian government, perhaps more than others. Because, in 1914, Italy does not go to war. It waits.⁷ In 1915, the Italian politicians begin to shop around: “Who will give us the best deal for entering this war?” They say to the countries who are supposed to be their allies, Austria and Germany, “How about giving us Trieste and South Tyrol?” And Austria says, “That’s my territory! What are you talking about? That is not something that we can give as part of the spoils of war!”⁸ The Italians go to

⁵The Battle of Caporetto began on October 24 on the Italian front. As Hew Strachan reports, “Italian losses totaled almost 700,000, of whom only 40,000 were killed and wounded; 280,000 had been captured, many of them as intact units, and about 350,000 had deserted” (2003, 257).

⁶Denis Mack Smith writes, “Many Italian soldiers were unenthusiastic about and even actively opposed to the war. . . . The defeat at Caporetto was an immense and unexpected shock. . . . [Marshal Luigi] Cadorna unfairly blamed the defeat on his men’s cowardice and thousands were executed” (1982, 29–30). Also see Keegan (1999, 349).

⁷MacMillan writes, “When the war broke out, Italy was allied to its old enemy Austria-Hungary and to Germany. Under the terms of the Triple Alliance, however, Italy was only obliged to defend its allies if they were attacked first. The Italians used the fact that Austria-Hungary had declared war on Serbia as reason to remain neutral” (2001, 282).

⁸Martin Gilbert writes, “Italy was looking for the best territorial inducement to enter the war. On April 8 [1915] she offered to join on the side of the Central Powers if Austria would cede to Italy the Trentino, the Dalmatian Islands, and the towns of Gorizia and Gradisca on the Isonzo river, and recognise Italian ‘primacy’ in Albania. A week later, Austria declined these terms” (1994, 142).

the British and French, and the British and French say, “Sure, you can have Trieste and South Tyrol [*laughter*]. Not only that, when the time comes and we carve up the Ottoman Empire, you’ll get a nice colony over here.”⁹

By the way, these are the secret treaties of 1915, where the Entente powers in the classical imperialist manner divide up the spoils that will come to them once the war is over.¹⁰ The Russians, for instance, are to gain Constantinople and the straits, which means control of the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean.¹¹ Talk about things snowballing and having consequences. When the czar is overthrown in 1917, a moderate and democratic government comes to power, as you probably know, led by Kerensky.¹² This government refuses the one condition that the Russian peoples demand of their new government, which is peace.

A friend of mine happened to teach at Stanford many years ago—Stanford University. (This is in the late sixties. Stanford is a very fine

⁹The secret Treaty of London was signed April 26, 1915. MacMillan writes, “During the war the European Allies, always willing to give away territory that was not theirs, promised the completion of Italy’s national dream, as the popular slogan in Italy had it, from Trento to Trieste. . . . But in 1915, when the Treaty of London was drawn up, the British and the French threw in more” (2013, 283). Also see note 165 on the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

¹⁰Meyer writes, “There was going to be a global land rush when the war ended, but only if the Entente won. Meanwhile these arrangements had to be kept secret. If made known, they would not fit at all comfortably with the Entente’s depiction of itself as a confederation of free peoples fighting for civilization, justice, and the rights of small nations everywhere” (2016, 70).

¹¹Fromkin writes, “On 4 March 1915 the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Sazanov, sent a secret circular telegram to London and Paris conveying a message from Czar Nicholas II, demanding that the Allies turn over Constantinople and the straits—and also adjacent territories—to Russia” (2001, 137). Clark describes Constantinople as “the strategic apple of Russia’s eye,” and notes that “France and Britain sought to bind St Petersburg to the wartime coalition by promising Constantinople and the Turkish Straits to Russia” (2012, 126, 251). Also see note 105.

¹²Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970) was head of the Russian Provisional Government from July 1917 to the Bolshevik takeover on November 7, 1917. Meyer (2006, 440) describes Kerensky as a “young democratic socialist” who was willing to use “terrorist methods” to depose the czar.

university.) My friend taught Western civilization. There happened to be at that time, at the Hoover Institution, in residence, Alexander Kerensky. My friend happens to be (his name is Ron) somewhat pushy, coming from New York and all [*laughter*].¹³ He gives a call to the Hoover Institution. Kerensky says, “Sure, I will come over and address your class of Stanford freshmen.” He addresses the class of Stanford freshmen on the Russian Revolution. Okay, what happened? My friend had lunch with him afterwards, and said to him, “Why didn’t you make peace? You were in power. Why didn’t you make peace? Lenin would never have gained control.” Kerensky said, “We could not do that. It would have been a betrayal of our valiant allies.”

[But] countries on occasion betray allies for their own interests. The [real] reason is the secret treaties. They had to stay in the war in order to get what they had been promised, which was what the czars had been aiming at for generations. They would not only have the Black Sea as a total haven and free port for the Russian navy, they would have access to the Mediterranean.¹⁴ Once they got that, once the war was over, then that great imperialist expansion and victory would solidify their position with the Russian people. So for that, they remained in the war and were beaten by Lenin.¹⁵

To get back to the point I was making, the Italians get the best deal from the Entente powers, and callously and cynically go to war. The war will cost nine hundred thousand Italian dead for the sake of the expansion of Italian political power.

¹³Ronald Hamowy (1937–2012) taught at Stanford University.

¹⁴Orlando Figes writes, “The occupation of Constantinople and the control of the Dardanelles, through which half her foreign trade passed, had been Russia’s main imperial ambition since the time of Peter the Great” (1998, 247). According to McMeekin, “For Russia . . . the war of 1914 was always principally about the Ottoman inheritance: about Constantinople and the Straits” (2011, 232–33).

¹⁵Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) and the Bolsheviks took power on November 7, 1917. See Figes (1998), McMeekin (2017), and Beevor (2022) for detailed accounts of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

Chapter 7

America Goes to War

Now, how does the U.S. enter this war? For a while, there had been the growth of American meddling in other parts of the world. We went through a stage of actual territorial imperialism—of the expansion of American territory, the acquisition of colonies. This had to do with the war against Spain in 1898.

The war against Spain is one of our less heroic wars. By the time the war was declared by Congress, the Spaniards had agreed to all American conditions for getting out of Cuba.¹ This fact was not communicated by President McKinley to Congress. So we got into war and from this war received Puerto Rico and basically a protectorate over Cuba.² The imperialists took advantage of the jingoism and nationalism of the time finally to annex the Hawaiian Islands.³ And we became an Asian power through the annexation of the Philippines.

¹Kennan agrees: “The Spanish government was coming around very rapidly in those early days of April, 1898, to the sort of attitude and action we had been demanding of them. . . . Our government, to the accompaniment of great congressional and popular acclaim, inaugurated hostilities against another country in a situation of which it can only be said that the possibilities of settlement by measures short of war had by no means been exhausted” (1951, 11).

²The Treaty of Paris, signed on December 10, 1898, ended the Spanish-American War. The United States gained control of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam from Spain. Cuba became a U.S. protectorate.

³The United States annexed Hawaii with the Newlands Resolution of July 7, 1898.

The war, to a large extent, and the acquisition of the Philippines, totally, are the work of an imperialist cabal: an imperialist group in Washington led by Undersecretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, and including Brooks Adams (the famous writer), Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, and a man named Alfred Thayer Mahan (an admiral in the U.S. Navy). Let me just quote, since I can't give the evidence here, from Kennan also, who—please, you must understand—certainly does not believe in any kind of Bilderberger conspiracy controlling American foreign policy or conspiracies at all. He is a very mainstream man as far as that goes. And he says on the taking of the Philippines in 1898: “It looks very much as though, in this case, the action of the United States government had been determined primarily on the basis of a very able [and] quiet intrigue by a few strategically placed persons in Washington, an intrigue which received absolution, forgiveness, and a public blessing by virtue of war hysteria (Kennan 1951, 14).”⁴ I cannot imagine that that's the sort of thing that you were ever taught about the Spanish-American War or the acquisition of the Philippines.

The war against the Philippines is our first war against Asians, by the way. And since it is a guerrilla war, it is a very dirty war and waged in totally racist terms.⁵ This was our first great war after the Civil War, so it brought north and south together against the substitute for the Indians, or substitute for blacks—these Asian people. Afterwards, by the way, even Theodore Roosevelt regrets having taken over the Philippines. But nonetheless, we are stuck there. The Philippines are right off

⁴The Philippines were the centerpiece of U.S. imperialist strategy—the “large policy”—advanced by Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, John Hay, Elihu Root, and Alfred Thayer Mahan. Warren Zimmerman writes, “A ‘large policy’ . . . meant control of the Caribbean and parts of the Pacific; seizure of strategic islands like Cuba, Hawaii, and the Philippines; and even the incorporation of Canada” (2002, 185). See Zimmerman (2002) for a full account of how Roosevelt, Lodge, Hay, Root, and Mahan transformed the U.S. into an imperialist power with the large policy.

⁵Valentino (2004, 83) estimates that one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand Filipinos died during the war. He acknowledges that “terror was a common tactic of U.S. forces in the 1899–1902 counterinsurgency campaign in the Philippines” (2004, 201).

the coast of China and just south of Japan. We are now an Asian power; we are the major Pacific power by far.

Well, in 1912, the Progressives—the Wilsonian Progressives—take over the White House. Wilson right away gets involved in Mexico, in really a comic opera incident at Veracruz over an alleged insult to the American flag.⁶ Wilson is certainly a very strange man, I think in many ways overestimated. A book on this whole issue of American policy at this time—the Spanish-American War—and especially on the policy of Woodrow Wilson, a very good and readable book, came out a few years ago, by an author named Walter Karp, called *The Politics of War* (1979). He deals with this rather complex subject in a very understandable and accessible way.

Something that's certainly true and obvious is that Wilson thought a lot of himself and never conceived that he could be wrong on any issue. H. L. Mencken, the libertarian critic and writer, said of Woodrow Wilson, that his belief was that he was the obvious candidate for the "first vacancy in the Trinity" (Mencken 1990, 112) [*laughter*].⁷

The son of a Presbyterian minister, himself in a sense a Presbyterian minister become politician, he was adamant, never admitting the slightest possibility of mistake. When war breaks out in 1914, the American people are largely interested, concerned, worried to an extent. But in no sense do they believe America's interests are involved here: "Thank God for the oceans. Thank God that we don't have the constant meddling in the affairs of other people—this alliance system. Because of a terrorist attack in a town in a country no one ever heard of, everybody is now at war. The system of entangling alliances—well, thank God we do not have anything like that."

⁶The Tampico Affair occurred on April 9, 1914. On April 18, Woodrow Wilson issued an ultimatum to General Victoriano Huerta (1850–1916) to apologize and salute the American flag with a twenty-one gun salute. Huerta refused, and Wilson ordered a U.S. invasion of Veracruz, Mexico, on April 21. The U.S. occupied Veracruz until November 23, 1914. Berg admits, "Ridding Mexico of its dictator [Huerta], of course, had been the subtext all along" (2013, 324). See Fleming (2003, 11–12) and Meyer (2016, 97–98) for overviews of the Tampico Affair.

⁷Wilson declared, "Remember that God ordained that I should be the next President of the United States. Neither you nor any other mortal or mortals could have prevented it" (quoted in Berg 2013, 252). Also see Freud and Bullitt (1967, 147).

The American elite, however—especially in Washington but all across, really, the upper Eastern Seaboard, the area of the country which, in those days, counted solely in terms of determining foreign policy, the elite that lives from Washington through the corridor up to Boston and especially centered in New York City—the American elite was totally pro-British. A few weeks after the war begins, the representatives of the house of Morgan, of the banking house of J. P. Morgan, go to the British government and say, “We want to be your supplier. Among other things, we are totally on your side in this awful war caused by the German barbarians.”⁸

So this pro-British attitude is one of the reasons that war is finally going to come. There is a sentimental and emotional attitude on the part of the American governing elite, basically themselves of British stock. Naturally, America is made up of a lot of people, but—how shall I put it?—the Irish, for instance, don’t count very much at this time in terms of determining American foreign policy. The governing elite is Anglo-Saxon.⁹ There is the question of the Morgan loans and the loans of the other New York banks to the British government, especially, but also to France. This establishes another tie between the two countries.¹⁰

⁸Meyer writes, “Morgan and Company was appointed U.S. purchasing agent for Britain and would become France’s agent as well. Over the next four years it would broker fully half of all Entente purchases in the United States” (2016, 43).

⁹Carroll Quigley writes, “There does exist, and has existed for a generation, an international Anglophile network” (1974, 950). See Quigley (1981) for a full treatment.

¹⁰Adam Tooze writes,

By the end of 1916, American investors had wagered two billion dollars on an Entente victory. The vehicle for this transatlantic operation, once London took charge in 1915, was a single private bank, the dominant Wall Street house of J. P. Morgan, which had deep historic ties to the City of London. This was a business operation for sure. But it was coupled on the part of Morgan with an unabashedly anti-German, pro-Entente stance. . . . Through the private business contacts of J. P. Morgan, supported by the business and political elite of the American Northeast, the Entente was carrying out a mobilization of a large part of the US economy. (2014, 38)

Ferguson states, “By the beginning of 1917, J. P. Morgan was so committed to Britain . . . it was Morgan as much as Britain which was bailed out in 1917” (1998, 329).

Some part of public opinion at least is turned against the Germans by a brilliantly clever use of war propaganda. This is the account of the Belgian atrocities, so called.¹¹ As the German army sweeps into Belgium, the American press begins to be filled with stories of just awful things—unspeakable things—that the Germans are doing. Crucifying and raping nuns. The German national sport seems to be not soccer or what they call football, but taking babies and throwing them on the points of bayonets.

This is very strange stuff. After all, in America at this time, one knows many Germans. The Germans are one of the largest ethnic groups in America. Nobody ever said that they were the wittiest people in the world [*laughter*]. Nobody ever said that German food was particularly delicate [*laughter*], the famous thing about German food being that you have a nice German meal and, seventy-two hours later, you are hungry all over again [*laughter*].

On the other hand, this is a far cry from saying that they are maybe a little coarse in their sense of humor and in their choice of food to say that they do this for fun, all these awful atrocities. Really, when all is said and done, it's a very unpleasant thing that happens in regard to German-Americans at this time.

Tom Sowell in his great book, *Ethnic America*—a very interesting, fascinating book about many of the major ethnic groups in America—tells about the Germans' contributions to American culture. One interesting thing I learned from Sowell is that the Germans invented the American Sunday—that is, Sunday as a day of rest (see Sowell 1981, 43–68). Before then, it had been the Puritan Sunday: everybody quietly mumbling passages of the Bible silently to themselves, or else going to the saloon, getting drunk, and picking up girls afterwards.

The Germans invented the American Sunday, which was a family together, having fun. You go to the beer garden, not to get sloppy drunk, but to be mirthful, cheer up. There is the oompah band there. The whole family is there. There are the *Sportsvereine*, the sports associations getting together and having exhibits of various kinds. And you have a lot of fun together. The great influx of the German immigrants in the 1840s, 1850s, changed this part of American culture towards this

¹¹See Meyer (2016, 171–80) for an overview of the so-called Belgian atrocities.

more distinctively American family-type Sunday. This was not really a contemptible group which came to our country. Now, their cousins and relatives in Germany have been held up as monsters. And when the time comes, they are going to really get it over here in America.

What is the story of the Belgian atrocities? The story of the Belgian atrocities is that they were faked. They were fabricated. They were phony.¹² The pictures were photographed in particular buildings which are known in Paris. The stage sets were designed by designers for the Parisian opera. The stories were made up out of the whole cloth and spread by British propaganda as another weapon in the war—especially in the war for the minds of the neutral countries. But this turns a good deal of public opinion against the Germans.

History is very unpleasantly ironical, sometimes. Very cruelly ironical, more than we can imagine. In 1942, reports began to filter out of Eastern Europe about a German policy of actually gassing Jews. The first people who heard about this said, “Here we go again. Here is the old story of the Belgian atrocities, some other stories spread by propaganda. Nothing to it.” So that no attempt, for instance, was made to even bomb the railroads going to Auschwitz. The people felt that they had been taken in 1914. So in the Second World War, from 1942 on, when much worse things are being done by the Germans, for a long time, nobody was willing to believe it.¹³

¹²A common retort is that the German army killed 5,500 Belgians in the first two weeks of the war. Thus Ferguson writes, “Although the Entente press wildly exaggerated what went on in Belgium, there is no question that the German army did commit ‘atrocities’ there in 1914” (1998, 246). Classical liberals denounce all aggression against person and property, including the German army’s aggression against these 5,500 Belgians. At the same time, a classical liberal must be in favor of a free press. The stories of the Belgian atrocities were not mere exaggerations created by a free Entente press. Rather, they were state-sponsored propaganda originating from official government sources like Wellington House in Britain and the Bureau de la Presse in France. A classical liberal must condemn government propaganda designed to manipulate public opinion. This was the case with respect to the Belgian atrocities. Thus, a classical liberal must criticize the Entente governments for inventing atrocity stories to manipulate public opinion at home and abroad. Also see note 120.

¹³Overly writes, “Jewish persecution and extermination did not elicit from the Western Allies a response equal to the horrors of the Holocaust. . . . The atroc-

Q and A

Question: You were talking earlier about imperialism. I went and saw the movie *Gandhi*. I don't know how accurate it was, but it seemed that there was a lot of capitalistic interest in the way that the British ran India. Could you comment on whether or not that is accurate?

Raico: Whether there was or not, first of all, would not be an answer to why the world goes in for an orgy of imperialist expansion after 1880, because India was part of the old empire. So that does not explain why Africa's split up, why the South Pacific is split up, why people are now looking at the old corrupt empires like Turkey and Persia, China, and eyeing them to be split up. You understand? That does not explain this new imperialist expansion.

India, as a matter of fact, was run pretty much on a mercantilist basis, and that was with a lot of government control, a lot of government ownership, and some support for Indian capitalists. That's true. That's true. As I say, it's a complex issue—and in different parts of the British Empire and certainly in different parts of the empires of other countries, which makes it a lot more complicated—that you have different factors at work as to why some territory was taken over or why it was maintained.

Question: The depiction in that movie was that the British kind of plundered and really abused the Indian population.

Raico: A small proportion, a very small number of the British from the eighteenth century on, when they are involving themselves in India in a big way, make fortunes out of India. Sure. But India, of course, is a very, very poor country. The British are making a lot more money out of America at this time. As the Americans, of course, are making out of Britain. It's not that the British are exploiting America, but with the trade to America, with the placing of investments in America, the British are making a fortune.

Question: In the light of the enormous atrocities committed by the Germans in World War II, does that give you pause and make you think maybe some of those stories from World War I were true? Could they have suddenly changed character from world war to—

ity stories in the West were treated with caution after the experience of the First World War" (2022, 628).

Raico: There's no reason I have to speculate on this. The stories aren't true. The evidence on which the stories were based, for instance, Lord Bryce's report, turn out to be fabrications. Lord Bryce himself virtually admitted it after the war.¹⁴

Question: There is hard evidence on that, then?

Raico: Yes. There's a book by a man named Peterson (1939): *Propaganda for War*, a classic book that came out after the First World War, and that would be an example. A book by a British man, Arthur Ponsonby (1942), along the same lines.¹⁵ But I can't imagine what has been suggested by that. That because, under a totalitarian, insanely racist regime, the Germans commit atrocities of an awful scale, therefore, under a relatively mild authoritarian regime, a monarchy, they would be committing analogous atrocities. I don't see any reason to suppose something like that.

Question: That means there was a tremendous change in a relatively short period of time. We are talking about twenty years or twenty-five.

Raico: I can't imagine anyone in America in 1914 who would have greeted with joy the destruction of a Japanese city and the death of a hundred thousand people. You ask anybody in America. You ask Theodore Roosevelt himself! That old sissy probably would faint. You ask anybody, "Would you will the total annihilation of a Japanese city?" "What are you talking about? Are you crazy? What do you mean annihilation of a city? What are we, Tamerlane? What are we, Genghis Khan?"

Question: I was not quite certain how England got . . . [inaudible]? Because the Germans went into Belgium? Then where did their troops first enter the continent? In Belgium or in France or . . .?

¹⁴Specifically, Bryce admitted that he could not provide any documentation for the atrocities in his report: "After the war, historians who sought to examine the documentation for Bryce's stories were told that the files had mysteriously disappeared. This blatant evasion has prompted most historians to dismiss 99 percent of Bryce's atrocities as fabrications" (Fleming 2003, 54). Also see Meyer (2016, 178).

¹⁵Also see Read (1941).

Raico: Literally, the first troops? I'm not sure. But the British took the left flank on the Western front, and the French took the center and the right flank. When the Americans came in, they were more on the right flank.

How they came into the war: Edward Grey goes to the House of Commons and says, "Our honor is involved here. Belgium has been invaded. We are a guarantor of Belgian neutrality, and we have to go to the defense in Belgium because England always goes to the defense of small countries."¹⁶ Somebody says, "What about Ireland?" Grey says, "Arrest that man" [*laughter*].

No, but wars never really just occur like that, a country not even being invaded. England could have said, "All that the treaty of 1839 meant is that we committed *ourselves* not to attack Belgium. It didn't mean that we have to go to war with any country that does."¹⁷ What was involved was a fear of Germany, a fear of German predominance on the continent.¹⁸ And also something which is very hard to talk

¹⁶Grey delivered his famous speech to the House of Commons on August 3, 1914. Clark describes the speech as "the most successful speech of Grey's political career" (2012, 544). Grey declared, "We have great and vital interests in the independence—and integrity is the least part of the independence—of Belgium. . . . The smaller States in that region of Europe ask but one thing; their one desire is that they should be left alone and independent. . . . If in this war which is before Europe the neutrality of one of those countries is violated, if the troops of one of the combatants violate its neutrality and no action be taken to resent it, at the end of war, whatever the integrity may be, the independence will be gone" (1915, 11–12).

¹⁷Strachan writes, "Legally Britain was under no obligation to act" (2003, 48). According to Ferguson, "the Foreign Office view in 1905 had been that the 1839 treaty did not bind Britain to uphold Belgium's neutrality," and "if Germany had not violated it in 1914, then Britain would have" (1998, 161–62, 443).

¹⁸As Meyer explains,

London had long based its foreign policy on maintenance of a balance of power on the continent, its aim being to ensure that no country or alliance could become dominant enough to threaten British security. Throughout all the generations when France was the most powerful nation in Europe, it was also, almost automatically, Britain's enemy. After the fall of Napoleon, when Russia rose for a time to preeminence, relations between it and Britain became so badly strained that in the 1850s

about, but which is the worst possible thing. And that is that for years the war with Germany was considered the inevitable war. It was going to come sooner or later. Just as from the 1920s on in the Navy Department in Washington, the war with Japan is the inevitable war. Just as, who knows, there are people who think that the war with Russia is the inevitable war. That sense that there's nothing we can do about it, it's going to come sooner or later, might as well take the best opportunity, seize the best opportunity to wage the war.

Question: [Inaudible question about Japan and Germany not wanting the United States to ally with Britain in the First World War]

Raico: Well, the sabotage never really amounted to very much, because it was very inept, and the great mass of Germans and Austrians and Hungarians and so on in America never had anything to do with it. I'll talk a little later about how we got into the war because I've sort of split it off and I haven't talked about the problem of submarine warfare. The Germans underestimated American power. In fact, American power decides who wins the war. Not only economic power, but even the military power towards the end. It is because of American involvement that the war does not turn out to be a stalemate, but is decisively won by the Entente powers.¹⁹

Question: Russia was partially mobilized prior to the war, and that's what instigated Germany's declaration of war simultaneously against Russia and France. What was Russia doing while Germany was in France? Didn't they have the power to sweep across Germany?

the two went to war against each other in the Crimea—with France now on Britain's side. Prussia had often been England's ally, but after 1870 the emergence of the German Empire and the corresponding decline of France changed that too. Suddenly the Germans, who for centuries had been too fragmented and backward to threaten anyone, appeared to have become the leading threat to an evenly divided and therefore (from the British perspective) safe Europe. (2006, 127–28)

Also see Turner (1970, 5), Clark (2012, 136, 546), and MacMillan (2013, 36, 116, 375, 556).

¹⁹Tooze agrees: "There was only one power in 1916 that could truly transform the balance of the war, the United States. Whether in economic, military or political terms, its stance was decisive" (2014, 34).

Raico: The Russians enter into East Prussia, and the Russian army is defeated at a battle called Tannenberg. The German field marshal is named Paul von Hindenburg, and Hindenburg becomes a German national hero for having stopped the Russians at Tannenberg.²⁰



I want to say a few words about America's entry into the war. The issue that was involved was the rights of neutrals, and especially on the high seas. As soon as the war breaks out, both sides begin violating the traditionally understood rules of naval warfare. The British, for instance, set up a blockade of the German North Sea ports, which is not legal in international law, because it wasn't a close-in blockade. It was largely carried out by mines scattered in the area. It was agreed by most international law experts that this was an imperfect blockade.²¹ And besides, the British put on the list of contraband items which had never appeared before, including food.²² Sending of food and even neutral ships to Germany was interdicted by the British.

The Germans, in response, began to exploit their weapon of submarine warfare, and this became a problem. The submarines cannot really obey the cruiser rules of warfare, which involve—in the case of a merchant ship carrying contraband—the stopping of the ship, the loading of the passengers and crew onto your own ship, and then the sinking, if necessary, of the ship carrying contraband. A submarine was simply too small to carry passengers or even the crew of an enemy merchant ship carrying contraband.

²⁰On the Battle of Tannenberg, see Gilbert (1994, 49–50), Keegan (1999, 149–50), and Meyer (2006, 152–53).

²¹Meyer notes that the British naval blockade “was of dubious legality at best. . . . March 1915 brought the blanket mining of great expanses of the North Sea, all of which London declared to be a war zone. Ships attempting to traverse the North Sea were declared subject to interception. . . . These measures, too, were outside the law” (2016, 41). Also see Tansill (1963, 135–87), Gilbert (1994, 102), Strachan (2003, 214), Meyer (2006, 250), and Tooze (2014, 34).

²²Meyer writes, “Conditional contraband included food, clothing, fuel, and other things. . . . Food was conspicuous among the additions. This was a radical departure from precedent, a flouting of the law as then understood by all seafaring nations” (2016, 39–40). Also see Strachan (2003, 214).

Early on, just at the beginning of 1915, the Germans capture British orders from the British Admiralty which instruct British merchant ships, when they sight a submarine, to turn around and to ram the submarine. So it becomes increasingly problematical for the Germans to even attempt to obey the old rules of surfacing, warning the ship, and so on, because the very act of surfacing might bring about the destruction of the submarine. In those days a submarine was a fairly fragile thing, so most merchant ships, if they turned around and attempted to ram the submarine, had a military advantage—even a merchant ship.²³ This becomes more and more of a problem.

In May of 1915, the problem is enormously exacerbated because the Germans sink the most famous ship in the world: the *Lusitania*.²⁴ It is a British ship (Cunard Line), but it is carrying Americans and also not only contraband, but munitions of war.²⁵ The *Lusitania* had violated American law by shipping munitions out of New York Harbor on the way to Liverpool. But in any case, the fact of the death of so many people horrifies some portion of American public opinion.

The Wilson administration now takes the position which will ultimately lead to war: the German government is to be held strictly accountable—strictly accountable—for the death of any Americans on the high seas regardless of circumstances.²⁶

²³Meyer writes, “First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill ordered British merchant ships to try to escape when they sighted U-boats, and to ram the boats when escape was impossible. He warned that any captains who failed to comply would be prosecuted” (2016, 65). Meyer also notes, “Submarines, when on the surface, were easily destroyed by gunfire or run down and rammed. With their tiny crews, they had no spare men to put aboard captured vessels, and they were too cramped to take even a handful of prisoners on board” (2016, 62–63).

²⁴A German submarine torpedoed the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. The German submarine killed 1,198 people, including 128 Americans. See Larson (2015) for a full treatment of the *Lusitania* incident. See Gilbert (1994, 157–58) for a brief overview.

²⁵Erik Larson writes, “Aboard, according to the manifest, were 4,200 cases of Remington rifle ammunition, amounting to 170 tons [4.2 million pounds]” (2015, 183). Also see Ferguson (1998, 247), Fleming (2003, 55), and Meyer (2016, 99).

²⁶As Meyer writes, “[Wilson] insisted that American citizens had the right to travel in safety wherever they wished, even on the ships of nations at war, even when those ships were transporting war materiel, even in declared war zones. . . . [This

The Germans say, “Well, let’s see if we can live with this, as long as you are willing to put pressure on the British to have them modify their violations of international law. They are placing food on the list of contraband materials, which has never been done before. The British, as you know, take your merchant ships off the high seas on the way to Rotterdam, because they say anything that goes to Rotterdam is going to go to Germany. So they take American ships off the high seas. The British have put cotton on the list of contraband, confiscating these materials.²⁷ They interfere with letters going to the continent, because they think there is military intelligence possibly involved. The British are imposing in many ways on Americans. So, if you hold them responsible, we will behave ourselves as far as submarines go.”²⁸

This was not to be the case. The attitude of the Americans towards British violations of neutral rights [was] quite different.²⁹ One reason is the American ambassador to London, Walter Hines Page, was an extreme Anglophile.³⁰ One time, for instance, he gets a message from the State Department saying, “Tell the British they have to stop inter-

policy] now committed the president to taking action in the event of submarine attacks involving American travelers” (2016, 63–64). Meyer also observes, “Ultimately, the interpretation that the president put on the laws of the sea would become the chute down which the United States slid into war with Germany” (2016, 38). Also see Fleming (2003, 70).

²⁷See Fleming (2003, 71–72) and Meyer (2016, 42).

²⁸Meyer writes, “Germany expected, in a word, reciprocity. In return for yielding to what they believed to be unjustified demands, the Germans expected—and could hardly have been more explicit about expecting—that the United States would use its influence to end or at least alter the blockade” (2016, 137). Also see Fleming (2003, 34).

²⁹Robert Lansing (1864–1928) was the U.S. secretary of state from 1915 to 1920. He writes, “In dealing with the British Government there was always in my mind the conviction that we would ultimately become an ally of Great Britain. . . . We would presumably wish to adopt some of the policies and practices, which the British adopted. . . . Everything was submerged in verbosity. It was done with deliberate purpose. It insured the continuance of the controversies and left the questions unsettled, which was necessary in order to leave this country free to act and even act illegally when it entered the war” (1935, 128).

³⁰Walter Hines Page (1855–1918) was U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom during the First World War.

fering with American mail shipments to neutral ports.” The American ambassador goes to the British foreign minister, Edward Grey, and says, “Look at the message I have just got from Washington. Let’s get together and try to answer this.”³¹ This was his attitude. The British were never held to the same standard as the Germans.³²

At home, Theodore Roosevelt, who in previous years had been a great friend of the kaiser’s and a great admirer of Germany, now says, “We have to get into this war right away.”³³ Besides that, there’s a campaign for preparedness, for building up the American army, the American navy, drilling American citizens in combat techniques. There is a kind of hysteria, really, that travels over the country, considering that there is, at this time, certainly no chance, no chance of some kind of immediate threat to the United States.

People like Roosevelt and Wilson began talking in a very unfortunate way. Wilson says, for instance, “In America, we have too many hyphenated Americans”—of course, he meant German-Americans, Irish-Americans—“and these people are not totally loyal to our country.”³⁴ Already, scapegoats are being looked for and public opinion is being roused.

³¹According to Fleming, “The Anglophile tilt of Wilson’s cabinet skewed in England’s favor. [American] protests against the British blockade, particularly England’s refusal to allow U.S. foodstuffs into Germany, which [Americans] found especially reprehensible, were muted by Wilson’s ambassador to London, Walter Hines Page, who totally identified with the British cause. . . . [Hines Page] regularly presented [American] protests to Foreign Secretary Grey with dismissive comments. During one of his presentations, Page said: ‘I have now read the dispatch but I do not agree with it; let us consider how it should be answered’” (2003, 69–70). Also see Meyer (2016, 59).

³²Meyer notes that Wilson engaged in “two and a half years of not-really-neutral neutrality” (2016, 164). As Michael Kazin says, “Contrary to his public rhetoric, Woodrow Wilson’s private sympathies were never truly in doubt. Anglophilia ran through the president’s blood and his intellect” (2017, 22).

³³Tooze reports, “The reaction of Americans of Teddy Roosevelt’s stripe to this spectacle of European mobilization was not one of superiority, but of awed admiration. . . . For Roosevelt, if America was to vindicate its emergence as a legitimate great power, it must prove itself in the same struggle, by throwing its weight behind the Entente” (2014, 43). Also see Fleming (2003, 28) and Meyer (2016, 236).

³⁴See Fleming (2003, 65) and Meyer (2016, 156) on Wilson’s condemnation of

This diplomatic negotiation, the exchange of memos, goes on for the next few years. In January of 1917—the Americans not having been able to budge the British in the least on any British violation of American rights, the British blockade intensifying, the Germans really feeling hunger in a very literal sense, especially the people on the home front³⁵—the kaiser is persuaded by his admirals and generals to begin unrestricted submarine warfare around the British Isles.³⁶

The American position by this time had solidified, had become a totally rigid one. And when all is said and done, when you go through all of the back-and-forth memoranda and notes and principles established, the United States went to war against Germany in 1917 for the right of Americans to travel in armed, belligerent merchant ships carrying munitions through war zones. Wilson's position was that even in that case, the Germans simply had no right to attack the ship as long as there are Americans on the ship. Shall I repeat that? Armed, belligerent—that is to say, English—armed, English merchant ships carrying munitions could not be fired upon by the Germans as long as there were American citizens on board. It was for the right of Americans to go into the war zone on such vessels that we finally went to war.³⁷

Most Americans didn't see this as a burning reason for war. Senator La Follette, for instance, of Wisconsin said, "Why don't we go to war for the right of Americans who want to travel on the French railroads

"hyphenates." See note 173 on Wilson's racism.

³⁵Gilbert (1994, xv, 540–41) reports that 750,000 German civilians died as a result of the blockade. Fleming describes the blockade as "the worst atrocity of the war" (2003, 34, 471). The Allies maintained the blockade during the Paris Peace Conference to force the Germans to sign the treaty. See Gilbert (1994, 511), Keegan (1999, 420), and Meyer (2006, 612–13).

³⁶On February 1, 1917, Germany announced that it would resume unrestricted submarine warfare in zones around the British Isles and enemy ports in the Mediterranean. Fleming writes, "Had Germany violated a promise not to resume unrestricted submarine warfare, as Woodrow Wilson had claimed? The answer was no" (2003, 34). Also see Meyer (2006, 170, 226–27).

³⁷As Fleming writes, "What was not subject to debate, or should not have been, was Wilson's claim that Americans had the right to travel in safety on the ships of a nation at war. From the standpoint of law, there was nothing to debate: no such right existed or ever had" (2003, 65). Also see Meyer (2016, 101).

through the battle lines? Okay? [*laughter*]. Some American wants to get from Paris to Brussels, wants to go through the trenches by railroad, and we'll send an American expeditionary force over there to enforce that right. Why not?"³⁸

Finally, in April of 1917, Wilson goes to Congress and asks for his declaration of war. He puts it in inimitable Wilsonian terms: "We are fighting for the right of small nations to exist. We are fighting so that Liberty will not perish from this Earth."³⁹ And on and on and on. And America now assumes its role as a responsible world power.

The effects of this war on the home front cannot be exaggerated in terms of the growth of state power. This is the case in all the belligerents. In Germany, for instance, by the end of the war, the government, and even the general staff, has virtual, total control of the German economy. The Germans call this *Kriegssozialismus*. This is war socialism—war (*Kriegs*) socialism (*sozialismus*). War socialism: the effective control of the German economy by the government and the German army (and by the way, that's the model that Lenin uses, when he takes power in Russia a few months later, to organize the new Soviet economy—this German model).⁴⁰

But in every country, state power increases enormously. In the United States, the best example is a War Industries Board, which

³⁸Robert La Follette (1855–1925) was a central figure in the antiwar movement in the United States during the First World War. See Meyer (2016, 194–99) for a useful overview of La Follette.

³⁹According to Wilson, the purpose of U.S. involvement was "to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German people included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. . . . [We fight] for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world at last free" (quoted in Berg 2013, 437).

⁴⁰On Lenin and war socialism, see Service (2000, 246) and Valentino (2004, 101). Lenin's Soviet economy produced a massive famine: "Upward of 35 million people suffered intense hunger. . . . An estimated 5 to 7 million people lost their lives between 1921 and 1923 from starvation and related diseases, amounting to 50,000 deaths per week" (Kotkin 2014, 447). Also see Valentino (2004, 102) and Kiernan (2007, 490–91) on Lenin's deadly policies.

achieves temporary dictatorial control over the American economy in terms of prices, allocation of scarce supplies, and so on. The railroads are nationalized for the duration of the war.⁴¹ Afterwards, the government is going to give up many of these powers. But when the Depression comes, and when these older Progressives and new New Dealers come to Washington in 1933, many had experience during the First World War with running various parts of the American economy. The germ, the core, of the New Deal was there already.

As far as civil liberties go, the American front, experiences—well, leaving aside the incarceration of Japanese-Americans in 1942—it was worse than it was in the Second World War.⁴² A man who had gotten a million votes for a president in 1912, the head of the Socialist Party, Eugene Debs, is thrown into prison under the Espionage Act because he says, “We are fighting this war on behalf of the bankers.”⁴³ Wilson, who as we all know is a saint and a man of total personal integrity, even after the war is over refuses to pardon him. This is the bitter and vindictive nature of that man. It took Warren Harding to say, “Ah, come on, what difference does it make? Get Debs out of prison. This is absurd.” But Wilson, until the day he got out of office, would never pardon him.

There was the attack on the German-Americans, which has no counterpart, really, in the Second World War, except for the public evacuation of the much smaller group of Japanese-Americans. This was the sort of thing that is almost too silly for words, as you may know: In various cities, the symphony orchestras helped the war effort

⁴¹See Higgs (1987, 123–58) for a detailed treatment of the wartime economy and the growth of government in the United States during the First World War.

⁴²Meyer writes, “[Wilson] enshrined himself as an international icon, one of history’s great champions of liberty, while mounting the most savage attack on individual rights in American history before or since” (2016, xv). See Meyer (2016, 274–91) for an overview of the U.S. government’s attack on liberty during the war.

⁴³Eugene V. Debs (1855–1926) was the founder of the Socialist Party of America. On June 15, 1918, Debs gave a speech in Canton, Ohio, in which he criticized Wilson’s crackdown on opponents of the war. On June 29, 1918, he was charged with ten violations of the Espionage Act and the Sedition Act. In September, he was convicted and sentenced to ten years in federal prison. President Warren G. Harding commuted Debs’s sentence in December 1923. See Fleming (2003, 247) and Meyer (2016, 429–40) on the Debs affair.

by prohibiting playing of any German music for the duration of the war. Speaking of German in public was prohibited in Iowa. School systems, one after the other, valiantly threw German out of the syllabus. The hamburger was renamed the Salisbury steak [*laughter*]. It's true.

Well, you see, the hysteria was justified. They had a problem. This is the first time they were sending an American expeditionary force across the seas to Europe. And they did not know how the American people were going to react. So the people who had gotten us into the war, and were managing the war, were rather nervous. In a way, there was a tremendous amount of overreaction involved.

Chapter 8

The Paris Peace Conference

Well, finally the war comes to an end in November of 1918.¹ People couldn't believe it. The people who lived in the north of France, who had heard the guns every moment, virtually every moment for four years—they couldn't believe that they had stopped.

The Allies get together in Paris—the victors—to sign the peace treaty. The conference takes place in Paris,² and for each one of the defeated nations, the treaty is signed at a separate, great French palace. The most important one was the treaty with Germany signed in the Palace of Versailles, so it's called the Versailles Peace Treaty.³ The treaty with Hungary is signed at the Palace of Trianon, with Austria at Saint-Germain, and with Bulgaria and Turkey at other palaces.⁴ So these treaties go by these names, you see, but the most important one being with Germany, sometimes the whole settlement is called the Treaty of Versailles.

[A new Europe] emerges from the Europe that existed before the First World War. The most important new difference is the coming into

¹The armistice that ended the First World War went into effect on November 11, 1918.

²The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 was held in Paris from January to June. Mac-Millan (2001) is the standard account of the conference.

³The Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919.

⁴The Treaty of Trianon was signed on June 4, 1920. The Treaty of Saint-Germain was signed on September 10, 1919.

existence of a number of small successor states, as they are called, from Finland all the way down to Yugoslavia. Notice, by the way, that the Serb terrorists who assassinated the archduke get what they want. They get what they want. There is this new Yugoslavia that comes into existence.⁵

Austria-Hungary is gotten rid of as something obsolete, archaic. And these wonderful statesmen—some conservatives say that it's only the government that can be farseeing. Does the name George Will mean anything to you, for instance? He says this, but it's a conservative idea: "You see, individuals are just out for their own self-interest. They are shortsighted. Only governments can see in the long run"—well, among other things, at Paris they destroyed Austria-Hungary, and made it into an agglomeration of small states. What happens to these small states?

Well, since Germany is defeated in 1918, since Russia is in a civil war, for a little time these states manage. They are able to keep their independence. Just as soon as the natural equilibrium comes about in Europe again—you have a strong Germany and a strong Russia—these states inevitably fall under the control either of Germany or of Russia. So that there is an argument to be made that this old Austria-Hungary at least gave these states, all put together, a certain amount of clout and power in the center of Europe. But that's not to be thought of. They are done away with.

Every territory that can be taken away from Germany is. Although President Wilson announces a policy of self-determination of nations, this is not used in the case of the Germans.⁶ A big Poland comes into existence, which was just about two-thirds Polish.⁷ There are Ukraini-

⁵See MacMillan (2001, 109–24) on the creation of Yugoslavia. Although the Serb terrorists got what they wanted, 15 percent of the Serbian population perished during the war (Keegan 1999, 7).

⁶MacMillan reports that Germany lost "13 percent of its territory and 10 percent of its population" (2001, 465). Kotkin writes, "[The treaties] enshrined self-determination and the nation while promoting territorial revisionism: Versailles and its sister treaties approved the award to 60 million people of states of their own, while making another 25 million into national minorities. . . . Self-determination did not apply to any of the colonial peoples under the British and French empires, both of which expanded" (2014, 316).

⁷Poland had ceased to exist in 1795 and was recreated in the aftermath of the First World War. See MacMillan (2001, 207–28) on the recreation of Poland.

ans over here and many Germans over here [*gestures toward map*]. And the Poles are given a corridor to the sea.⁸

A German city—a totally German city called Danzig (today called Gdansk)—is taken away from Germany and made into a small little country of its own. The Germans say, “Hey, wait a minute! What’s happening here? What happened to self-determination of nations? Why don’t we allow the people of Danzig to say what country they want to belong to?” And the Allies say, “No, because Poland needs a port on the Baltic, and we can’t have Danzig in the hands of Germany. The Poles have to control its foreign policy. There is an independent little country.” A territory here [*gestures toward map*] in the Silesia is given to Poland.

Czechoslovakia comes into existence.⁹ Czechoslovakia (Czechs and Slovaks): six and a half million Czechs, two and a half million Slovaks, three and a half million Germans in the Sudetenland. This territory over here [*gestures toward Sudetenland on map*] is solidly German, and the Germans say, “Why don’t we allow these Sudeten Germans to become part of Germany—the principle of self-determination of nations?” “No, because Czechoslovakia needs the Sudetenland for superior strategic position, with the Sudeten Mountains and the Erzgebirge. If we give the Sudetenland to Germany, the Germans will be on the other side of the mountains. Strategic reasons dictate that they be made part of Czechoslovakia.”

The same thing happens with South Tyrol, where the Italians are given German territory to take them to the Brenner Pass. Austria becomes a little rump country, with the big bloated capital of Vienna: two and a half million people and about five million in the rest of the country. The Austrians say, “What if we joined together with Germany? Might as well, now. The Habsburg days are over.” The treaties say there is never to be any association between Austria and Germany, regardless of what the people there want.¹⁰

⁸See MacMillan (2001, 217) on the Polish Corridor.

⁹See MacMillan (2001, 229–42) on the creation of Czechoslovakia.

¹⁰See MacMillan (2001, 250–52) on the Allies’ forbidding any union between Germany and Austria.

German colonies are taken away,¹¹ and the Germans are effectively disarmed. The German army is to be limited to one hundred thousand men. Do you know how many cops it takes to more or less keep controlled anarchy in New York City? Twenty-five thousand. The whole German army is to be a hundred thousand, which is less than the army of Lithuania. In other words, Germany is effectively disarmed: no military aircraft; no submarines; strictly limited number of surface ships.¹² The Germans are also forced to sign Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, which says, “We admit that we were solely responsible for this war.”¹³ Unprecedented in history, where the defeated power is required to admit its guilt for having started the war.

Then the question of reparations. The idea of reparations is accepted by the Allies. The Germans say, “How much should we pay?” And the French say, “Well, you just start sending things” [*laughter*]. Keynes (1971) has a very good book on this: *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. It’s one of his best books, really.¹⁴ Some people are talking in terms of \$100 billion. (We are talking about an age when \$100 billion was money.) Finally, the reparations figure is put at \$32 billion. But the reparations problem plagues Europe until 1933.¹⁵

¹¹See MacMillan (2001, 98) on Germany’s colonies.

¹²See MacMillan (2001, 176) on the military clauses of the treaty.

¹³Article 231 reads: “The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies” (quoted in Overy 2016, 107).

¹⁴In the years after Raico’s lecture, scholars learned that Keynes codrafted Article 231 with Allen W. Dulles. Keynes’s biographer writes, “[Keynes] touched on Article 231 on the Treaty, the ‘war guilt’ clause, which he had drafted with Dulles, remarking on its draftsmanship and its expediency but playing down its long-term importance” (Moggridge 1992, 331). Actually, in *The Economics of the Peace*, Keynes boldly praised his own “virtuosity in draftsmanship” (1971, 96). See Fuller and Whitten (2017) for a critical assessment of Keynes’s role in the war and the peace conference.

¹⁵Reparations effectively came to an end at the Lausanne Conference, held from June 16 to July 9, 1932. MacMillan writes, “The final figure was set in London in 1921 at 132 billion gold marks (about £6.6 billion or \$33 billion). . . . In the final reckoning, Germany may have paid about 22 billion gold marks (£1.1 billion,

You have the attempted French hegemony over the continent. Germany is to be kept down by the excision of territories, by reparations, by the military restrictions on the German military forces. Beyond that, the French enter into alliances with the new states: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania. These are supposed to somehow counterbalance Germany on the east, to play the role that Russia had. Russia no longer can play the role since it is a Communist country.

The Ottoman Empire, by the way, is divided up.¹⁶ This is one of the things that disillusioned poor President Wilson, who, some people have suggested, then at the Paris Peace Conference has his usual retreat into illness—getting sick, getting the flu, and then finally a stroke—because things are not working out the way he imagined. Hardly at all. Keynes says of Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference: “He reminded me”—Keynes was there—“of nothing so much as a virgin in a brothel, valiantly calling for lemonade” [*laughter*].¹⁷ Wilson was out of his element somewhat, really. The British and French divide up the Ottoman Empire. The French get Syria and Lebanon, the British get Iraq and Palestine.¹⁸

\$4.5 billion) in the whole period between 1918 and 1932” (2001, 480). See Gomes (2010) for an extended treatment of German reparations.

¹⁶The British and French had carved up the Middle East during the war with the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 (Fromkin 2001, 188–93; MacMillan 2001, 383–84). As McMeekin stresses, the Russians were also involved: “Sykes and Picot played second and third fiddle, respectively, to a Russian foreign minister, Sergei Sazonov, who was the real driving force behind the carve-up of the Ottoman Empire” (2015, xviii). McMeekin suggests referring to the agreement as the Sazonov-Sykes-Picot Agreement but admits that “Sykes and Picot had already come to a tentative bilateral understanding before” (2015, 287–88). Specifically, the British and French had created the initial agreement by January 3, 1916, while the Russians played a significant role in the final agreement ratified on May 16.

¹⁷This is a paraphrase of Keynes’s opinion of Wilson. Keynes writes, “[Wilson] had no plan, no scheme, no constructive ideas whatever for clothing with the flesh of life the commandments which he had thundered from the White House” (1971, 27).

¹⁸MacMillan acknowledges that “for the Arab Middle East, the peace settlements were the old nineteenth-century imperialism” (2001, 381). See Fromkin (2001), MacMillan (2001, 347–455), and McMeekin (2015) for detailed studies of how the British and French used the war to take control of the Middle East in the classical imperialist manner.

By the way, one small sideline on the First World War. It was such a total war that the both sides wanted to get every possible ounce of support they could. From the British point of view, it was unfortunate that many influential Jewish individuals in Central Europe, and Jewish firms, were supporting the Central powers—were supporting Germany. The reason for that was that they were much better treated by the Germans, and especially by Austria-Hungary, than Jews in Russia were, for instance. Czarist Russia was the great anti-Semitic power.¹⁹ It was the czarist Russian secret police that fabricated the famous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a famous forgery attempting to prove that the Jews were trying to take over the world.²⁰

Well, to counteract this, the British Rothschild addresses a letter to the British foreign office inquiring as to the British attitude on a certain question, and a member of the British Foreign Office named Arthur Balfour sends back a letter saying, “It is the policy of the British government to support the creation of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine.”²¹ By the way, the Balfour declaration also says, “. . . with the rights of the present inhabitants to be respected.”

This is how things were done in the age of imperialism. Who owned Palestine when this British commitment was made? The Turks. So the British were going on record as supporting the handing over of a certain part of Turkish territory as a Jewish national homeland—the beginning, then, of the commitment of the British government to the

¹⁹Orlando Figes writes, “During the 1880s, at a time when both the German and the Austrian Empires were beginning to dismantle their legal restrictions on the Jews, the tsarist regime was continuing to add to its own cumbersome structure of institutionalized anti-Semitism. The last two tsars were vocal anti-Semites” (1998, 81). Also see Meyer (2006, 372) and Hanson (2017, 475).

²⁰*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was published in Russia in 1903. The pamphlet is a forgery created by the Okhrana, or secret Russian police. See Kotkin (2014, 100), McMeekin (2017, 21), and Overy (2022, 600).

²¹The Balfour Declaration was published on November 2, 1917. McMeekin agrees that the Balfour Declaration was designed to foster Jewish support for the Entente at the expense of Germany: “A growing number of British leaders became convinced in 1916–17 that an endorsement of Zionism by His Majesty’s Government could have a material impact on the world war by winning over world Jewry to the Entente side” (2011, 203). See MacMillan (2001, 410–26) for a full treatment of the Balfour Declaration.

ideals of political Zionism. And there is just no end to the problems created by that act of imperialism.

The world then, after 1919, when the conference takes place, seems to be pretty much under British and French control. The high point of British and French imperialism is reached—the greatest extent of the British and French Empires. And then they set up the League of Nations. Why was the League of Nations set up? As you know, the League of Nations was set up for all good things. There is not a good thing that the League of Nations was not set up for, right? [*laughter*].

There is another way of looking at this, which is this: Once the treaties of Paris are signed, what do we have in the world? We have established British and French world hegemony—British and French control of the world (with the possible assistance of the United States, if the U.S. is interested). But Germany has been demolished. Russia is involved in turmoil—it's not going to be a problem for a long time. The British and French have come to the apogee of their empires.²² And now, let us freeze that for all time. Let us set up an international organization with all the power of all the international community behind it, which says that any crossing of any boundary is an act of aggression which is to be answered by the whole world community. And what have you got then? You have, locked in for all time, British and French control of the world. That's, as I say, an alternative view of what the League of Nations amounted to.²³

²²Overly writes, "Both empires [British and French] reached their fullest extent in the 1920s" (2016, 8). With the First World War, British territory expanded 2.7 million square miles to a total of 13.9 million. French territory expanded 800,000 square miles to a total of 4.9 million. This means the combined expansion of the British and French empires was 3.5 million square miles. For context, the continental United States is 3.1 million square miles.

²³As Mises recognized in 1927, the League of Nations was designed for "the preservation of the status quo" (2005a, 114). Overly writes, "The Great War had made the major global empires, British and French, achieve a territorial peak. Their global power, backed by the League of Nations and the rhetoric of internationalism, was used to restrain other states from further imperialism, while at the same time it allowed both states to exploit their status as 'nation-empires' to the full" (2022, 19–20). As Susan Pedersen (2015, 29, 191) observes, Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations shows that the league was an instrument of imperialism. Article 22 reads:

Wilson said this was the war to make the world safe for democracy. One small point: At Paris in 1919 at the conference, the Japanese delegate is there. Japan had been on the victorious side. He says, “Now that the whole world community is here, why don’t we take a stand? Why don’t we say it is the sense of this meeting and of the powers represented here that all human races are equal and should be equal in rights?” And this, of course, is vetoed by the British and French: “The idea of going on record for racial equality—of course not.” They control hundreds and hundreds of millions of people of the darker races, and there’s no question of the possibility of proclaiming racial equality there.²⁴

[The 1919 peace negotiations are] unlike what happens in 1815 in Vienna, when again all the powers meet for the Congress of Vienna for European peace²⁵—back then, the French are brought in (France had been the power that lost under Napoleon)—the new French government is brought in, takes part in the negotiations, agrees finally to the settlement, because the old philosophy had been “We had a war. Sure, of course we had a war. But we still have to live on the same continent with the power that was defeated.” Not in 1919—in 1919, the Germans

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant. The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations. (quoted in Pedersen 2015, 408)

²⁴MacMillan writes, “The failure to get the racial equality clause was an important factor in the interwar years in turning Japan away from cooperation with the West and toward more aggressively nationalistic policies” (2001, 321). Berg admits, “Wilson’s thoughts, words, and actions were, nonetheless, indubitably racist” (2013, 157).

²⁵Leonard Gomes notes, “Unlike some other nineteenth-century peace negotiations (Vienna 1815, Paris 1856, Berlin 1878) where all involved parties took part in the negotiations with equal rights (and sometimes ‘as friends,’ said Metternich of the Congress of Vienna), Versailles was not a full ‘Congress’—a meeting with the ex-enemies. There were no direct negotiations with the Germans” (2010, 32).

are kept out. Once the whole Treaty of Versailles is arranged, the German delegates are brought in and shown it.²⁶ The Germans say, “We cannot possibly accept this.” The French say, “Don’t you remember that you surrendered, that the German army has been dispersed? The French army has not. Either you sign or we’ll invade.” And the Germans reluctantly sign.

When the German leader Erzberger goes back to Berlin, he is assassinated. That is, the man who signed the Treaty of Versailles is assassinated by German nationalists.²⁷ The point is: German public opinion does not feel (as, for instance, the French did in 1815) that somehow they had lost and this was a just enough peace treaty. The Germans are totally averse to it, and can only be kept to the treaty in the next few years by force.²⁸

²⁶MacMillan tactfully acknowledges that the Treaty of Versailles was a dictated treaty: “As the months went by, what had been a preliminary conference imperceptibly became the real thing. In a break with diplomatic precedent that infuriated the Germans, their representatives were eventually summoned to France to receive their treaty in its final form” (2001, xxviii). Also see MacMillan (2001, 480).

²⁷Matthias Erzberger (1875–1921) was the German representative who signed the armistice on November 11, 1918. He supported the Treaty of Versailles, but he did not sign it. Hermann Müller and Johannes Bell signed the treaty on behalf of Germany. Erzberger was assassinated on August 26, 1921. See Gilbert (1994, 530) and MacMillan (2001, 478).

²⁸Hitler declared in January 1941, “My programme was to abolish the Treaty of Versailles. . . . Again and again I wrote these words—the Abolition of the Treaty of Versailles” (quoted in Bullock 1964, 315).

Chapter 9

New Deal Foreign Policy

Well, what I want to do now is get to the setting for New Deal foreign policy, and how America finally does get onto the world stage in a very big way indeed. The New Deal, of course, begins in 1933. That is the official New Deal—Roosevelt’s New Deal—in 1933, March, the coming to Washington of Roosevelt and his administration. Roosevelt’s secretary of state is Cordell Hull.¹

Q and A

Question: Did the Soviets just willingly give up that part of Russia that was part of Russia beforehand?

Raico: Hardly, hardly. Lenin’s attitude was that some of the subject nationalities in Russia should be permitted to become free. But in a number of cases, the Soviets fought bitter wars, for instance against the Finns. And the Finns, finally, were able to establish their independence.² And above all, against the Poles. There was a bitter war

¹Cordell Hull (1871–1955) was the U.S. secretary of state from 1933 to 1944, the longest tenure in U.S. history. Hull declared, “The truth is universally recognized that trade between nations is the greatest peacemaker and civiliser within human experience” (quoted in Overy 2016, 23–24).

²Finland declared independence from Russia on December 6, 1917, and the Finnish Civil War erupted in January 1918 between the pro-independence Whites and the pro-socialist Reds. The Whites won the civil war in May 1918, and Finland became an independent state. Approximately forty thousand soldiers died in the war (Beevor 2022, 155). Finland’s independence was recognized at the Paris Peace

in 1919–1920 between Poland and the new Soviet government. Finally—it went back and forth, the Soviets had their own problems—in 1921, they decide to make the border at the armistice line.³



Now, as far as the New Deal and New Deal foreign policy go, Cordell Hull goes down in the history books (you may know) as being a free trader, a believer in free trade. He is a crusty, old Tennessee free trader. By the way, it is a principle: distrust any politician who's called crusty [*laughter*]. It's an attempt to make them lovable. The fact of the matter is, of course, that he was not a free trader in any libertarian sense. He was a free trader in the sense of what could be called free trade imperialism—that is, the political and military force of the government is used in order to establish a free trade situation.

The classic example is in regard to China, and keeping the “Open Door” in China.⁴ That is, China is to be kept open to all commercial

Conference in the spring of 1919 (MacMillan 2001, 222). The Soviets tried but failed to retake Finland in the Winter War of 1939–40 (McMeekin 2021).

³The Polish-Soviet War of 1919–20 began in February 1919 over disputed territory in Ukraine and Belarus. Poland experienced early success, and the Poles entered Kiev on May 7, 1920. Then the Soviets turned the war and nearly captured Warsaw in August 1920. The Poles defeated the Soviets outside Warsaw in the “Miracle on the Vistula” on August 16, 1920. The Soviets were forced to retreat back to Russia, and Poland was saved from Soviet occupation. On October 12, 1920, the Soviets signed an armistice at Riga that set Poland's border 125 miles east of the Curzon Line proposed at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. With Poland's borders redrawn at the Treaty of Riga of March 18, 1921, nearly five million Ukrainians and Belarusians found themselves living inside the newly established Polish territory. Perhaps one hundred thousand soldiers perished in the war (Kotkin 2014, 378–79). The treaty poisoned Soviet-Polish relations in the interwar period, and the Soviets took revenge by invading Poland on September 17, 1939. See MacMillan (2001, 226–28) for an overview of the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–20. See note 192 on Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939.

⁴In 1899, U.S. Secretary of State John Hay appealed to all nations to maintain open trade with China. Tooze writes, “The true logic of American power was articulated between 1899 and 1902 in the three ‘Notes’ in which Secretary of State John Hay first outlined the so-called ‘Open Door’ policy. As the basis for a new international order these ‘Notes’ proposed one deceptively simple but

nations. It's a policy of the United States government not to permit any nation to establish control over China and to keep out the goods of other nations (or to keep out the commercial transactions of other nations). In order to carry out this policy, however, naturally you need, or you can need, an enormous amount of American government, political, and military force applied.

The true principle of free trade—as I understand it, and as the free traders of the nineteenth century understood it—is that there is to be *no* government involvement of whatever kind. We're not to have forced trading.⁵ For instance, under the British in the nineteenth century under Palmerston, there was forced trading. The British government went to war with the empire of China to force the Chinese emperor to permit the importation of opium.⁶

And Cobden and Bright bitterly attack that.⁷ They said, “That is not free trade to use armies and navies to force open a market. Free trade occurs when it's voluntary on both sides and when the government keeps out of the matter.” As Cobden wrote, “Affairs of trade, like matters of conscience, change their very nature if touched . . . by violence”—That's important, isn't it? In the same way as religious faith is something different if violence comes into the picture, so is trade something different as soon as violence comes into the picture—“for as faith, if forced, would no longer be religion, but hypocrisy, so commerce becomes robbery if coerced by warlike armaments” (1903, 1:236).

far-reaching principle: equality of access for goods and capital” (2014, 15). Also see note 190.

⁵Mises writes, “Liberalism aims to open all doors to trade. But it in no way desires to compel people to buy or sell” (1981, 208). As Tooze observes, “The Open Door was not an appeal for free trade” (2014, 15).

⁶The First Opium War (1839–42) was fought between Britain and China. The Second Opium War (1856–60) was fought by Britain and France against China. The Opium Wars were fought to forcibly open China to foreign trade. William Gladstone said of the Opium War, “A war more unjust in its origin, a war more calculated in its progress to cover this country with disgrace, I do not know and I have not read of” (quoted in Platt 2019, 399).

⁷Richard Cobden (1804–65) and John Bright (1811–89) both served in the British Parliament. They became renowned for their passionate advocacy of free trade and a peaceful foreign policy.

This is the ultimate problem and seed of corruption, I think, in the New Deal foreign policy because more than ever before in American history, the *full* power of the American government was to be used to carve out markets for American trade in the world. President Roosevelt himself said in 1934, "Our government must continue to cooperate with our foreign traders if foreign markets are to be maintained in the face of many obstacles which have grown up in recent years against our foreign trade" (Roosevelt 1938, 81).⁸ And where did they imagine these obstacles would be most of the problem? It would be in the Far East. Keep in mind, America was going through the worst depression in our history. Many people thought this depression could be solved or alleviated if we had access to the markets of the Far East.

This is the old delusion of the China market, going back deep into the nineteenth century: For all the goods America could produce, we could always sell them in China, because there were so many people in China. All you have to do is have the Chinese buy maybe a square inch of cloth each, and we would be selling them trillions of yards of cloth, because there are so many Chinese. There's no end to it. Or a couple of drops of oil from Standard Oil. Just a couple of drops of oil to the lamps of China, and there would be no problem. American industry, the oil industry, and so on would be in terrific shape.

The delusion of the China trade. Even today, to this very day, there is the idea that somehow trade with Communist China is going to be an enormous and important part of our economy in years to come. The fact of the matter, of course, is that China is enormously poor, and not only poor but more xenophobic, more wary of strangers and strange ways, than other countries are. The China market never materializes.

But the China market is the cornerstone of the economic policy of the New Deal in the 1930s. It's what sets the stage with the confrontation with Japan. In 1935, Cordell Hull forwarded to Roosevelt a long State Department memo which stated, "As our own population becomes more and more dense, as the struggle for existence in this

⁸This is a paraphrase of various comments Franklin D. Roosevelt made throughout early 1934 while campaigning for the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act (RTAA). This act gave Roosevelt the authority to make tariff-reduction agreements with foreign countries without congressional approval. The RTAA was signed into law on June 12, 1934. See Irwin (1998) for more on the RTAA.

country becomes more and more intense, as we feel increasingly the need of foreign markets, our definite concern for open markets will be more widely felt among our people and our desire for an insistence upon the free opportunity to trade with the peoples of the Far East will be intensified. For in that region, lie the great potential markets of the future” (quoted in Gardner 1976, 144).

This is the conclusion come to by the American secretary of state to solve our problems in terms of prosperity at home, to finding of some markets for our factories and so on: they would have to be in the Far East. Well, this created a very definite problem, because starting in the early 1930s, Japan undertakes a policy of imperialistic expansion. The problem from the Japanese point of view is this.

In 1929, the stock market crashes in New York. This is a kind of symbol of the onset of the Great Depression. And one thing that happens throughout the world, in the course of the Great Depression, is that countries begin to contract themselves into their own shells. There is a drift towards autarky, towards protectionism, towards every country being self-sufficient. You know under Hoover, the worst tariff in American history comes into existence: the Smoot-Hawley Tariff.⁹ In 1932, the British Empire goes over to protectionism—Britain, which had been the home of free trade.¹⁰

Well, this creates problems for every country. For Japan, it posed a threat of catastrophe. The Japanese are, at this time, seventy or eighty million people living on a group of islands which all together have an

⁹The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of June 17, 1930, levied an average tariff of approximately 60 percent to over twenty thousand goods. As Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz write, the Smoot-Hawley Act “raised the tariff to the highest level up to that time in U.S. history” (1993, 342n52). Also see Bairoch (1995, 5).

¹⁰The British agreed on the system of Imperial Preference at the British Empire Economic Conference, held from July 21 to August 18, 1932. Overy notes, “In June 1930, the United States introduced the Hawley–Smoot Tariff, cutting off the American market from foreign imports; in November 1931, after a long political debate, Britain abandoned liberal trade and imposed a range of tariffs, followed in August 1932 by an Imperial Preference system to give privileged access to empire imports; in France the Kircher tariffs reduced duty on colonial products at the expense of the wider world. The crisis provoked the creation of special trading and currency blocs, for the dollar, for sterling and for the franc” (2022, 27).

area about equal to that of California, also mostly rocky with almost no natural resources. How is this people to survive in a protectionist world? A top-level decision is arrived at by the military and political and business leaders of Japan: Japan will have to carve out a market for itself. And where is this market to be found? Across the sea in China.

In 1931, the Japanese invade Manchuria.¹¹ And already, American policy sets its face against Japanese expansion. A man named Henry Stimson is secretary of state at this time under Hoover, and he wants to impose economic sanctions on Japan. Hoover, of course, as a Quaker says, “No, that’s too much. Economic sanctions will lead to war. We will just make it clear to them that we don’t approve of what they are doing and see what happens then.”

Nonetheless, the Japanese go ahead with the occupation of Manchuria. As the 1930s go on, Manchuria itself becomes not large enough,¹² and the Japanese think to themselves, “Well, what we’re going to do is we’re going to turn China into our India. The British imperialists have always said that India is the chief gem in the British imperial crown, that India has made England what it is today: a world power. Well, we’ll have our own India. There’s nothing written in the stars that says that the British should have been the rulers of India. It happened because the British wanted to do it. We will do the same with China.”¹³

¹¹The Japanese invaded Manchuria on September 18, 1931. The so-called Mukden Incident was the pretext for the invasion. Antony Beevor writes, “In September 1931, the Japanese military created the Mukden Incident, in which they blew up a railway to justify their seizure of the whole of Manchuria” (2012, 7). Also see Overy (2022, 32) on the Mukden Incident.

¹²The Second Sino-Japanese War started on July 7, 1937. After taking Beijing and Shanghai, the Japanese captured the Chinese capital on December 13 in the Rape of Nanking: “In December 1937, Japanese troops descended on the city of Nanking in an orgy of rape, murder, and mutilation that ultimately left between 200,000 and 350,000 people dead” (Valentino 2004, 89). See Beevor (2012, 59–61) and Overy (2022, 772, 813–14) for shocking accounts of the Rape of Nanking.

¹³As Overy writes, “In 1934, in violation of international agreements to preserve an ‘Open Door’ policy in China (to allow open and equal access to Chinese markets), the Japanese government announced the Amau Doctrine, a warning to other powers to regard China as Japan’s sphere of influence and to abandon trade with the Chinese” (2016, 14). On Japan’s violation of the Open Door policy in China, see Miller (1991, 22–25), Dallek (1995, 193), and Overy (2022, 41).

Where the Japanese take over, in Manchuria and then after 1937 in northern China, they do establish a protectionist regime to keep out other economic interests, and particularly the Americans. The leader of the Chinese government at this time is a dictator named Chiang Kai-shek, by the way.¹⁴ He had been a Chinese warlord and made his way to the top.

The Japanese, by the way—their attitude is “Well, of course, what do the Americans have to complain about? They have practically a continent to themselves. They have three and a half million square miles of their own country. They have enormous natural resources. They have the greatest single free trade area in the world within the American boundaries. And where the Americans do take over, for instance in the Philippines, they set up protectionist measures against other countries. Look, we have to live. We have to survive. And there is after all the British Empire; there’s the French Empire; the Dutch control Indonesia; there are vast empires in the world. Japan is a poor country. And in the world as it is today, we have to expand or die.”

¹⁴Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) ruled mainland China from 1928 until Mao Zedong’s takeover on October 1, 1949. Valentino (2004, 83) estimates that Chiang Kai-shek’s fascist government caused the deaths of ten million Chinese. Valentino (2004, 75) estimates that Mao’s Communist government caused the deaths of forty-six million Chinese.

Chapter 10

FDR's Drive for War

After the war begins in Europe in 1939, with the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the division of Poland, the German war against the Allies in the West,¹ in 1940, the Japanese—as we will see, by September 1940, the American policy is very clear; it is a policy that is directed against Germany, that fears Germany expansion and also Japanese expansion—in September of 1940, the Japanese enter into an alliance with Germany and with Italy called the Tripartite Pact.²

This is really very bad from the Japanese point of view, because what it leads Americans to think is that Japan and Germany and also Italy are involved in some vast plan and design to divide up the world. In fact, what the Tripartite Pact said was that the other allies would come to the defense of the country which is attacked by the United States. Not that this was an aggressive plan: they were perfectly willing to go on doing what they were doing—Japan in China, Germany in Europe—as long as the United States was kept out of it.

¹The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (also called the Hitler-Stalin Pact) was a nonaggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Signed on August 23, 1939, it was a de facto alliance between the two powers. The pact also secretly partitioned Polish territory between Germany and the Soviet Union (Overy 2016, 77). Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, and Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3. The Soviet Union invaded Poland on September 17, yet the British and French did not declare war on the Soviet Union. See McMeekin (2021, 121–22) on this instance of British and French hypocrisy.

²The Tripartite Pact was signed on September 27, 1940.

But the fact that the Japanese do enter now into this formal alliance with Germany frightens the Americans and creates a great deal of distrust in the Roosevelt administration. There is no doubt that the Roosevelt administration set its mind against German expansion from the very beginning—no doubt about that whatsoever, now that the documents are out. And very soon after the German advance in the West takes place, after the fall of France in June of 1940, President Roosevelt in Washington—he has not any of the qualms that Wilson had during the First World War; he is totally committed in his own mind, this is clear enough—begins the program of assistance to the enemies of Germany and Japan throughout the world.³

In September of 1940, for instance, there is the destroyers deal, whereby the United States gives fifty “old destroyers.” It is always put in terms of “old destroyers,” as if they were about to sink. Well, they were good enough for the British to want them—that is, they were seaworthy. Fifty of these are given over in return for the British giving us bases along the North American coast: Bermuda and up in Canada and so on.⁴ This is already an act of war. According to international law, a neutral country simply may not give things like destroyers to a country which is at war, to be used against its enemies.⁵

³Benn Steil writes, “With no congressional authority, FDR committed the United States both to aiding Germany’s and Italy’s opponents and to preparing his own country for war. Using highly questionable legal pretexts contrived by Treasury lawyers, the administration proceeded immediately by flying 150 war planes to Canada. . . . The administration then raided the depleted U.S. arsenals for 500,000 rifles, 80,000 machine guns, 130,000,000 rounds of ammunition, 900 75-mm guns, 1,000,000 shells, and some bombs and TNT—again, with dubious legal authority—and shipped them to Britain” (2013, 101). Also see Kennedy (1999, 449).

⁴The destroyers-for-bases deal was signed on September 2, 1940. Jean Edward Smith writes, “The United States agreed to deliver the fifty destroyers in parcels of eight to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where British crews would be waiting to take possession. In return, Great Britain would provide the United States with ninety-nine-year leases to bases in Newfoundland, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Antigua, Saint Lucia, Trinidad, and British Guiana—a total of eight” (2007, 471). Also see Kennedy (1999, 460) and Brands (2008, 562–63) on the deal. See Hanson (2017, 169) on the functionality of the ships.

⁵Overly notes, “military aid raised important legal and constitutional issues in a nation still not at war” (2022, 549). Indeed, “Roosevelt brooded that he ‘might

This is even more the case for Lend-Lease, which comes into effect in early 1941.⁶ What Lend-Lease involves is a blank check by Congress of *X* amount of money each year to the president to be used as the president sees fit in assisting nations of the world which happened to find themselves at war.⁷ Lend-lease is used, first of all and most of all, for England in its fight against Germany, then for Chiang Kai-shek against Japan; and then, after June of 1941, Lend-Lease is given to Russia.⁸

Besides the Lend-Lease Act of 1941, that year sees a series of accelerating acts-of-war incidents in the North Atlantic. This is totally different from 1914. Hitler had learned at least that much: the United States was not to be provoked into this war through naval incidents. In that case, then, it was the United States that would have to create the incidents.⁹

get impeached' if he proceeded with the transfer" (Kennedy 1999, 460). On the illegality of the destroyers-for-bases deal, see Bailey and Ryan (1979, 88), Dallek (1995, 545–46), and Victor (2007, 151–52).

⁶Overy writes that Lend-Lease "meant war in all but name" (2022, 551). Also see Bailey and Ryan (1979, 109) and McMeekin (2021, 663).

⁷H. W. Brands admits, "Not without reason had critics of the bill called it a blank check" (2008, 589). Overy notes, "Roosevelt would enjoy the right to decide which nations qualified for Lend-Lease, what products they would be allowed to have, and on what scale, all without reference to Congress. Executive discretion on this scale was unprecedented" (2022, 551).

⁸Publically, the Soviets downplayed the significance of Lend-Lease. But Nikita Khrushchev wrote, "I would like to tell about some remarks Stalin made and repeated several times when we were 'discussing freely' among ourselves. He stated bluntly that if the United States had not helped us, we would not have won the war. If we had had to fight Nazi Germany one on one, we could not have stood up against Germany's pressure, and we would have lost the war. . . . When I listened to his remarks, I was fully in agreement with him, and today I am even more so" (Khrushchev 2004, 638–39). McMeekin (2021) details Soviet dependence on Lend-Lease from the U.S. See Overy (2022, 564–65) for a brief overview.

⁹Overy writes, "Hitler had wanted to avoid war with the United States" (2022, 17). Brands admits, "Roosevelt's reasoning caused him to try to provoke a war in the Atlantic" (2008, 612). See Kennedy (1999, 498–99) on Hitler's orders to avoid naval incidents with the U.S.

There is the example, for instance, of the destroyer, the USS *Greer*.¹⁰ In September of 1941, Roosevelt goes on the air (on the radio in those days) and says to the people: "I tell you the blunt fact that the German submarine involved in the incident fired first upon this American destroyer without warning and with deliberate design to sink her."¹¹ The facts of the matter, as were known to Roosevelt at the time, were quite different. You might look this up, for instance, in a standard reference book which came out a few years ago by Robert Dallek (1995) (a supporter of Roosevelt, professor of history at UCLA) called [*Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945*].¹² The facts were quite different.

The Americans and British at that time were working together militarily in the North Atlantic. The American destroyer, the *Greer*, spotted the German submarine and began, as per orders, broadcasting over the open air the location of the German submarine to be picked up by any British surface ship or aircraft in the area. A British plane comes over and, together, the American destroyer and the British plane track the submarine for hours. Depth charges are dropped by the British aircraft. After a number of hours, the German submarine turns and fires a torpedo at the *Greer*, which misses.¹³ The Navy Department report, as Dallek shows, which was already in Roosevelt's hands, said that there is no reason to believe the Germans were aware of the nationality of the destroyer. What is it? It was one of Roosevelt's famous half-truths.¹⁴ You can find this in the chapter on "The Road to War" in Dallek's book.

It was on the basis of this incident, and a couple of incidents that followed later, that Roosevelt declared his policy from September 1941

¹⁰The *Greer* Incident occurred on September 4, 1941.

¹¹See Dallek (1995, 287), Kennedy (1999, 497), and Victor (2007, 183) for the text of Roosevelt's speech on the *Greer* Incident.

¹²Dallek notes "the distortions in the President's account of the *Greer* episode" (1995, 288).

¹³See Kennedy (1999, 497) and Victor (2007, 183) for the details of the *Greer* Incident. Kennedy admits "Roosevelt's duplicity concerning the *Greer*" (1999, 498).

¹⁴Brands writes, "Roosevelt declined to mention this utterly unneutral, presumptively illegal collaboration, just as he declined to share the conclusion of an internal U.S. navy study that the German submarine commander quite possibly thought he was firing on a British ship" (2008, 610).

on: it was American policy to “shoot on sight” any Italian or German vessels in the North Atlantic.¹⁵ What Roosevelt was doing was looking for his incident that would force us into the war.

There is a debate that goes on in America at this time over whether—nobody really knows the facts of what is going on in Roosevelt’s mind and what he is doing behind the scenes; some suspect—the debate is, Should America get into this war? On the one side are the interventionists, with their headquarters in the East, especially in New York. Really, the old establishment of the days of World War I is active all over again. They have the important papers on their side. They have Hollywood. They have the Luce publications—Henry Luce, his publications—*Time*, *Life*, *Fortune*, and so on.

The opposite camp are the noninterventionists, which as you know have gone down in the history books with the delightful name of “isolationists.” That sounds really nice and suggests a very open-minded person, doesn’t it? These isolationists, otherwise known as noninterventionists, have their base among smaller businessmen and more in the middle class than in the upper or the working class, geographically in the Midwest, headquartered intellectually in Chicago—and if you want to pinpoint it, Colonel Robert McCormick’s office at the top of the Tribune Tower.¹⁶ But, totally outclassed socially and economically in terms of any kind of influence, they lose the debate, although, in early December of 1941, still 80 percent of the American people favored staying out of the war unless we were attacked.¹⁷

¹⁵Brands admits, “The new approach amounted to a naval war against Germany—ordered by the president, on his authority alone,” and “During the late summer and autumn of 1941 . . . Roosevelt [had] launch[ed] his undeclared war in the Atlantic” (2008, 611, 623). Also see Dallek (1995, 288), Kennedy (1999, 489, 499), and Victor (2007, 179).

¹⁶Robert R. McCormick (1880–1955) was the sole publisher and editor of the *Chicago Tribune* from 1925 to 1955. He was a staunch opponent of FDR, the New Deal, and American interventionism. The Tribune Tower was widely considered the most beautiful office building in the world, and McCormick ran the *Chicago Tribune* from his office on the top floor. See Smith (1997) for a biography of McCormick.

¹⁷According to a September 1941 Gallup Poll, 88 percent of Americans agreed with the noninterventionist position. For comments on this and other contempo-

Well, we *are* attacked. We are attacked at Pearl Harbor.

Pearl Harbor is one of those cases where something happens that directs the attention of the American public to foreign policy in a way that they can't avoid thinking about it. You have to admit that's a pretty spectacular and rather urgent way of forcing people to think about foreign policy—as the Iranian hostage crisis was. In the same way, for the first time, Americans are now paying attention to foreign policy. And they say, “Wow, there are such crazy people in the world. Here we are just minding our own business. We were on a picnic when the thing happened. And here these crazy people want to attack us. Well, go figure human nature. Americans are the most peaceful, sweetest, most generous people in the world, people who love their children [*laughter*], basically good guys. And here are these awful people now attacking us.”

Well, as you know, in the case of the Iranian hostage crisis, there was a whole history that the American people were unaware of. For twenty-five years, the Americans had supported in every way a government which they had imposed on the Iranians: the government of the shah. After the 1950s, the American CIA overthrew the nationalist government of Mosaddegh in Iran.¹⁸ They supported then the shah's government, made him our ally in that area, and set up the shah's secret police (the SAVAK) with CIA expertise. For some reason, there were groups in Iran which held this against us; and when they could humiliate us, when they could seize our embassy, when they could permit pictures to be taken of the American flag being used to transport trash out to the garbage pail, they did it to get back.

The Japanese attack us on December 7, 1941—not because they are totally insane, not because they had nothing better to do that day. They attack us because of what had happened in the months preceding.¹⁹ The Japanese, whatever you might want to say about them—And during the Second World War, there was almost everything said about them. There are not too many people [here] who are old enough to realize the

aneous polls, see Brands (2008, 669), Steil (2013, 99), and Overy (2022, 74, 551).

¹⁸See Kinzer (2003) for a full account of U.S. intervention in Iran.

¹⁹See Miller (2007) for a detailed account of how the U.S. provoked Japan with economic warfare. See Overy (2022, 171) for a brief overview.

degree of race hatred that was institutionalized and permitted against the Japanese in that war. Much worse than against the Germans.²⁰

The Japanese, whatever you want to say about them, are not really stupid. They don't willingly take on a country as powerful as the United States.²¹ In 1941, when the United States enters the war, American GNP is equal to that of Britain, Germany, Russia, and Japan put together. Japan produces 15 percent of the U.S. GNP in 1941.²² And the Japanese, really, are not stupid. Why did they do this? They felt that the alternative was too humiliating. American policy was that the Japanese, in expanding into China and then further down into Southeast Asia, trying to take over Indochina from the weak French Vichy government—this East Asian empire of theirs was going to cut America off from too much of the world market. And besides, they were being very bad people.

With Cordell Hull again, and with Stimson and Roosevelt, you have again that Woodrow Wilson-type hectoring, nagging, noodging type of approach to foreign policy: "You're very bad people. You do bad things. What do you mean, being aggressive and trying to create a world empire at this time in history?" The Japanese say, "Well, we came too late, unfortunately, but that's the way it is. The British, French, and others have their empires." The Americans say, "It's not permissible, not permissible." The situation gets worse and worse after the Tripartite Pact—the United States is very suspicious of Japan—and then as 1941 goes on.

²⁰Overy notes, "The American public and American forces shared the exterminatory vision of the Japanese enemy. . . . [There was] extreme racial prejudice expressed by the Allied media" (2022, 795).

²¹As Overy writes, "Japan's leaders understood that war with the United States was far from ideal" (2022, 173). He continues, "Few Japanese leaders seem to have actively favoured war with the United States and the British Empire. The decision was taken with a fatalistic acceptance that fighting was preferable to humiliation and dishonour" (2022, 170). Also see Kennedy (1999, 517), Beevor (2012, 248), and Hanson (2017, 410–11, 437–38).

²²Japanese gross domestic product (GDP) was 17.9 percent of U.S. GDP in 1941. By the end of the war, Japanese GDP was only 9.8 percent of U.S. GDP. Shockingly, Japanese GDP was only 23.3 percent of U.S. military spending by the end of the war. See Harrison (1998, 10, 21) for these statistics.

The immediate cause of the attack on Pearl Harbor was the freezing of Japanese assets and the subsequent petroleum embargo against Japan in the summer of 1941.²³ As a last ditch appeal, the Japanese say, “Let’s get together. We will send Prince Konoye, the Japanese prime minister, anywhere you want: Hawaii, San Francisco—even on American soil to discuss these issues.”²⁴ The Americans say, “Well, that sounds interesting. First of all, you have to get out of China.”²⁵ The Japanese say, “This is unheard of, the idea that the issue to be discussed will be settled beforehand.”

²³On July 26, 1941, President Roosevelt froze Japanese assets with Executive Order No. 8832. This effectively bankrupted Japan overnight: “The most devastating American action against Japan was the financial freeze. Money mattered. . . . The United States stood in the extraordinary position of controlling nearly all the world’s negotiable money resources. It applied its extraordinary power to ‘bankrupt’ Japan” (Miller 2007, 1). Also see note 218.

²⁴Fumimaro Konoye (1891–1945) was the prime minister of Japan from June 1937 to January 1939 and from July 1940 to October 1941. Smith admits that “[Konoye] desperately sought to prevent war. . . . Konoye pressed [the Americans] for a personal meeting with FDR, perhaps in Hawaii” (2007, 519). For more on Konoye’s efforts, see Toland (1970, 120) and Brands (2008, 699). For more general statements on the Japanese attempts to avoid war, see Toland (1970, 188), Victor (2007, 15), and Hotta (2013, 178–204).

²⁵According to Smith, “[The Americans] insisted that prior to any summit meeting Japan announce its intention to withdraw from the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy [and] agree to remove its troops from China” (2007, 521). Steil (2013, 56) reports that the U.S. ultimatum to Japan over China was part of Operation Snow, executed by a Soviet spy in the U.S. Treasury named Harry Dexter White. On November 17, 1941, White drafted a memo for Roosevelt and his staff titled “An Approach to the Problem of Eliminating Tension with Japan and Insuring Defeat of Germany.” White’s memo demanded that Japan withdraw all forces from China and Indochina, and this demand was incorporated in Hull’s Ten-Point Note of November 26. Furthermore, “Secretary of War Henry Stimson doubted the Japanese would cooperate” and thought that “these demands were unrealistic; the Japanese would never accept them” (Steil 2013, 55, 57). As Steil writes, “That White was the author of the key ultimatum demands is beyond dispute. That the Japanese government made the decision to move forward with the Pearl Harbor strike after receiving the ultimatum is also beyond dispute” (2013, 55). See McMeekin (2021, 251–64) for a detailed account of Operation Snow.

What country—I mean, I’m not saying that the Japanese were justified in China. By no means. By no means. And they were particularly brutal in an awful kind of way in China²⁶—but what other empire in history has ever voluntarily withdrawn from hundreds of thousands of square miles and control of tens and hundreds of millions of people? No country has ever done that. We could just as easily have demanded that the English get out of India or else we would attack England. It is simply not the way things are done among great powers. But this American moralistic tone prevailed.

The Japanese are getting more and more desperate. The oil embargo, of course, means that a time bomb is ticking away. The reserves of the Japanese Imperial Navy are being depleted day by day.²⁷ The oil embargo is also one on the part of Britain and the Netherlands against Japan. You understand, other countries do not think that the world was made so that the United States lays down the law whenever it wants. The Japanese are not going to permit their navy to be stranded, to be grounded, without petroleum. Before the reserves are exhausted, they will make a move. And they do at Pearl Harbor.

Those battleships at Pearl Harbor: Battleship Row. Again, great foresight on the part of a government agency. Do you know that the battleships were lined up one after the other? It looks nice [*laughter*].

²⁶The Japanese military killed at least twelve million Chinese civilians during their occupation of China (Hanson 2017, 487). Overy writes, “Japanese treatment of Chinese civilians in punitive expeditions was extreme. . . . Japanese soldiers not only chose to vent their frustration, brutal conditioning and permanent anxieties on civilians in their path, but often did so with calculated and grotesque sadism” (2022, 787). See Beevor (2012, 619, 780) and Overy (2022, 771–73) for startling accounts of Japanese brutality.

²⁷In mid-1940, the Roosevelt administration started waging economic warfare on Japan with economic sanctions. Roosevelt signed the Export Control Act on July 2, 1940, but U.S. oil still flowed into Japan with this limited embargo. The U.S. oil embargo of August 1, 1941, effectively cut off the Japanese oil supply. Overy notes that the U.S. was waging an “undeclared war” against Japan and that “the strangling effects of embargo forced [the Japanese] to embrace solutions that they would rationally have avoided” (2022, 288, 290). Moreover, Miller (2007, 248) shows that Roosevelt lied to Americans about the reason for the oil embargo. See Miller (2007) for a detailed account of the crushing economic war the U.S. government waged against Japan before the war.

It suggests great power. It sure does. Those ships go into history along with the other great mystery ships.²⁸

The USS *Maine* mysteriously blown up in Havana Harbor, edging the United States, giving a big push to the war against Spain.²⁹ Or the ships in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964—the destroyers allegedly fired upon by North Vietnamese torpedo boats, providing the reason for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which was the legal base, such as it was, for the Vietnamese war.³⁰ Other ships. The *Lusitania*, not an American ship but playing a role in American history, was carrying six million rounds of ammunition, at least. What was it doing in submarine-infested waters out in the open that way, a target for German submarines?³¹

²⁸During the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, eight battleships (*Arizona, California, Maryland, Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia*) received the brunt of the damage. In the attack, 2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 were injured. As Overy notes, “Roosevelt was relieved of the problem of persuading a divided American public to join the war” (2022, 175).

²⁹Some 266 Americans were killed when the USS *Maine* exploded on February 15, 1898, in Havana Harbor. Kennan writes, “As for the ‘Maine,’ there has never been any evidence that the Spanish government had anything to do with the sinking of the vessel” (1951, 10). Although it was an accident, President William McKinley allowed the American people to believe it was the Spanish. See Rickover (1976, 91) and Victor (2007, 295–96).

³⁰On August 2, 1964, the USS *Maddox* had a confrontation with three North Vietnamese torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. The U.S. government claimed there was another confrontation on August 4. The incidents led to Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, the legal basis U.S. military operations in Vietnam. Max Hastings acknowledges that the *Maddox* fired first: “At 1505G, and absolutely contrary to the administration’s later claims that the Communists fired first, *Maddox*’s 5-inch guns loosed three warning rounds, then began to shoot in earnest at the boats” (2018, 216). Moreover, Hastings acknowledges that the incident on August 4 never occurred: “No ‘second attack’ took place. . . . Thereafter, it was almost inevitable that the administration should lie and lie again, to conceal the multiple blunders and deceptions perpetrated to justify air strikes on North Vietnam” (2018, 220).

³¹Patrick H. Beesly was a British naval officer who specialized in espionage operations during the First World War. He had always denied any conspiracy surrounding the sinking of the *Lusitania*. But he admitted late in life: “I would prefer to attribute this failure to negligence, even gross negligence, rather [than] to a conspiracy deliberately to endanger the ship. . . . [O]n the basis of the considerable volume of information which is now available, I am reluctantly compelled to state,

The USS *Liberty*, the American spy ship destroyed by the Israelis in 1967³²—what was the real story there?

Well, those ships in Pearl Harbor are another, you might say, of the phantom ships or the mystery ships. The reason it's a mystery only came out after the war. President Roosevelt, of course, in his inimitable way, goes to Congress and says, "We were totally surprised by this dastardly attack." There was a revisionist historian named Charles Tansill, who used to tell his classes at Georgetown, "President Roosevelt went to Yalta and came back and told the American people he had made no concessions to Stalin. So the dying Roosevelt finished as he had lived: with a lie on his lips." This is a man for whom deception was a way of life, this Roosevelt.

To give you an example from the author I mentioned before, Dallek, talking about Roosevelt's policy in staging incidents in the North Atlantic and so on: "In the light of the national unwillingness to face up fully to the international dangers confronting the country"—you see, this is an apologist for Roosevelt—"it is difficult to fault Roosevelt for building a consensus by devious means" (Dallek 1995, 289).³³ In other words, by lying about it.

He told the people that we had been totally surprised at Pearl Harbor. That wasn't true. The main reason it wasn't true is that we had broken the Japanese diplomatic code,³⁴ and we were privy to the mes-

that on balance, the most likely explanation is that there was indeed a plot, however imperfect, to endanger the *Lusitania*, in order to involve the United States in the war" (quoted in Larson 2015, 324).

³²The Israeli military attacked the USS *Liberty* on June 8, 1967. Thirty-four Americans died, and 171 were wounded. American and Israeli investigators determined the attack was an accident. Joan Mellen argues, "The attack on the USS *Liberty* was a collaboration between the United States and Israel. . . . Lyndon Johnson sacrificed American men to serve his own political ends" (2018, 337).

³³Similarly, Victor defends Roosevelt's deception: "History has recorded many, many rulers' manipulations of their people into war. . . . Presidents James Polk, Abraham Lincoln, William McKinley, and Woodrow Wilson did it before Roosevelt; and others have done it after him. . . . Rulers ordinarily rule by conspiracy. We accept that foreign rulers do it, but deny it in our own" (2007, viii–iv). Also see note 233.

³⁴All experts agree that Roosevelt and other U.S. policymakers were reading Japa-

sages sent from Tokyo to the consulate in Honolulu, to the Japanese embassy in Washington, to the Japanese consulate in Hong Kong, and so on. We intercepted their messages, and we could translate them and read them. You might ask yourself, what more do you have to *have* to be aware of an impending attack of that magnitude? Do you have to be there right in the room where they are talking about it? Do you have to actually be there?

The whole issue of Pearl Harbor is still one which is very murky, very obscure, and books keep coming out all the time. A couple of years ago, two books came out, one on either side. The pro-Roosevelt one was Prange (1981): pro-Roosevelt in the sense that the story as given out by the administration—that they were totally surprised by the attack—this story is maintained. The opposite, that the Roosevelt administration had culpable knowledge of the impending attack, is presented by the popular historian John Toland (1982) in a book called *Infamy*.³⁵

There were a number of investigations, and I think it is still impossible to say exactly what happened. What we do know is that the messages that were deciphered and translated and known to the administration—the Japanese messages to the embassy in Washington—become increasingly frantic as November goes on.

We know that on November 25, Secretary of War Stimson—By the way, Stimson, the man who had been secretary of state under Hoover, is now brought into the administration as the secretary of war. And as Tansill said, nobody ever deserved the name more. Stimson, by the way, is a Republican. This is the beginning of the bipartisan foreign policy. Whatever American foreign policy is, is supported by all good

nese diplomatic communications—code-named MAGIC—before Pearl Harbor (Brands 2008, 619–20; Beevor 2012, 247; Overly 2022, 172, 499). Stinnett (2000) and Victor (2007) argue that, in addition to the diplomatic code, U.S. codebreakers could read the Japanese naval code before Pearl Harbor. However, the mainstream view is that U.S. codebreakers could not fully read the Japanese naval code until early 1942 (Overly 2022, 506–7).

³⁵More recently, Stinnett (2000) and Victor (2007) maintain that the Roosevelt administration had culpable knowledge of the impending Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Americans, whether they are Republicans or Democrats. It's another part of Roosevelt's very clever politicking in this.

On November 25, Stimson wrote in his diary about a meeting at the White House: "There the President . . . brought up the event that we were likely to be attacked"—this is November 25—"perhaps (as soon as) next Monday. For the Japanese are notorious for making an attack without warning. . . . The question was what we should do. *The question was how we should maneuver them into . . . firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves*" (U.S. Congress 1946, 177; emphasis in original).³⁶

Just to give you an idea, on December 1, messages are intercepted to various diplomatic outposts from Tokyo, ordering them to begin burning documents and codebooks.³⁷ On the night of December 6, Saturday night (this is all in the record of the Pearl Harbor investigations), a message is intercepted to the Japanese embassy in Washington saying, from Tokyo, "We are starting to send you a thirteen-part message. Wait until you have the whole thing, then deliver it to the State Department exactly at 1:00 p.m. tomorrow, Sunday." A messenger comes over from the decoding agency, right to the White House. President Roosevelt is there with his friend, Harry Hopkins, and looks over the message and turns to Hopkins and says, according to the naval officer who is a messenger, "This means war."³⁸

Well, this means war. And what do the leaders of the American government do that night knowing that war is going to come the next day? President Roosevelt plays with his stamp collection. The head of naval operations, Admiral Stark, goes to the theater. The head of the army, George Marshall, doesn't know what he did that night. And it's

³⁶Brands writes, "Stimson's diary would provoke great controversy after the war, when this portion of it was published as part of an investigation into the events leading to American intervention. Given that the Japanese attack Roosevelt predicted did come—at Pearl Harbor—Stimson's account lent credence to charges that Roosevelt deliberately sacrificed the American force there to the Japanese" (2008, 623). Also see Victor (2007, viii, 257).

³⁷See Stinnett (2000, 112–13).

³⁸See Kennedy (1999, 515), Brands (2008, 3), and Beevor (2012, 247).

the same all across the board.³⁹ You see, this is the sort of thing that keeps suspicions about Pearl Harbor alive. This is very, very strange stuff.

The next morning, people are going to their offices. George Marshall, the head of the army, goes horseback riding, by the way. He doesn't get in to his office until about eleven thirty. For weeks they have suspected that war might break out any day. He doesn't get to his office until eleven thirty. It occurs to him—this is, it occurs to someone over at the Navy Department, except at the Navy Department they say, "We're not going to do anything about that. It doesn't really matter, it's a coincidence"—it occurs to him that one o'clock Washington time is dawn in Hawaii; and he's going to send a message to General Short, who is the head of the army in the Hawaiian Islands. Instead of using the scrambled telephone on his desk, he sends the message by commercial telegraph, by Western Union.⁴⁰ The message is received while Pearl Harbor is burning.

Now, was Roosevelt somehow planning to use Pearl Harbor as a way to get us into the war? I don't think there is any way of answering that definitively. But that Roosevelt, by that time, very much *wanted* to get us into the war, there is no doubt anymore. That old argument—that Roosevelt was sincere when he said, "I am in favor of peace. We have to stay out of this war. There is no one who wants peace more than I do"—that argument is finished. Roosevelt lied about that, and he deceived the American people.⁴¹

The British documents were released. One relevant set of documents was released on January 1, 1972. I am quoting from the *New York Times* account "War-Entry Plans Laid to Roosevelt: Britain Releases Her Data on Talks with Churchill":

Formerly top secret British Government papers made public today said that President Franklin D. Roosevelt told Prime Minister Winston Churchill in August, 1941,

³⁹On the activities of Washington's senior military brass the night before the attack, see Stinnett (2000, 230) and Victor (2007, 280–81).

⁴⁰See Stinnett (2000, 228) and Victor (2007, 285–87).

⁴¹Today, even sympathetic commentators like Brands confess that "Roosevelt had wanted war with Germany . . . and he expected it" (2008, 633).

that he was looking for an incident to justify opening hostilities against Nazi Germany. . . . On Aug. 19 Churchill reported to the War Cabinet in London on other aspects of the [Atlantic Charter] meeting that were not made public. . . . “He [Roosevelt] obviously was determined that they should come in. If he were to put the issue of peace and war to Congress, they would debate it for months . . . The President had said he would wage war but not declare it and that he would become more and more provocative. If the Germans did not like it, they could attack American forces. . . . Everything was to be done to force an incident.” (Associated Press, January 2, 1972)

From the minutes of the British Cabinet. So when people say, “Oh, they are just a bunch of old Roosevelt haters,” there is a very special reason why this man is particularly hated in American history. And it comes with the sort of unforgiving hatred that you feel for somebody who has used you, and lied to you, and violated you, who has had you do things according to his will, against your own will, by manipulating and deceiving you. And that’s what he did in connection with the Second World War.⁴²

⁴²Roosevelt is often described as a Machiavellian. For example, the admiring Smith notes that Roosevelt exercised “Machiavellian cunning, and crafty deception” (2007, xiii). Similarly, the defensive Victor (2007, vii, 61, 257) describes Roosevelt as a Machiavellian several times. Others are more critical: “Roosevelt was good at politics, the more Machiavellian the better. . . . He had an uncanny intuition of what the American people would tolerate, and how to push programs and objectives through guile, deception, and stealth that they would not have otherwise embraced if fully apprised” (Hanson 2017, 422).

Chapter 11

Evaluating the Second World War

Time is getting very short. We are not going to be able to get into the epic of this war in as much detail as I had thought. It is a great war.¹ It is, we are told again and again, the last good war—good not necessarily in terms of its consequences, which have brought about the destruction of any possibility of a balance of power in Europe and East Asia by the total destruction of Japanese military forces. According to the constitution we forced on the Japanese, they are not permitted to have armed forces. Very typical of the mentality of the time, the idea that somehow circumstances never change, time can be frozen. The idea that perhaps the Japanese might at some time *require* armed forces did not occur to the American policy makers.

The West Germany that exists today is one-half the size of Bismarck's Reich, because of the division with East Germany and also because all of these territories were taken away from Germany after the Second World War. Poland was moved west. That was one of the things that was done at Yalta. They decided to move Poland west [*laughter*]. They did that by giving this territory to Russia, and the Poles took over East Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia.²

¹Victor Davis Hanson writes, "The noun and adjectives World War II are synonymous with mass death as never before envisioned. . . . Perhaps a figure of sixty to sixty-five million killed is the most likely guess" (2017, 463).

²The Yalta Conference was held on February 4–11, 1945. At Yalta, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin made preliminary agreements on how Germany and Eastern Europe would be reorganized after the war. It was agreed that the Polish east-

The Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia: the Czechs finally solved the German question that had been created with Czechoslovakia in 1919. They simply expelled three and a half million Germans. This is an aspect of the Second World War, by the way, which is not much discussed—and that is, the expulsion of seventeen million Germans from totally German areas in 1944 and 1945. That was one of the episodes at the end of the war. Something like two and a half million Germans still unaccounted for. Clearly enough, many, many of them died in the course of the expulsion.³

Well, the last good war—the problem, the main problem with this idea of the last good war is that one of our allies was Joseph Stalin.⁴ I wonder how long people can keep compartmentalized in their minds on the one hand, last good war, great heroic alliance with Britain and Russia; on the other hand, in another compartment of their minds, what we have learned from people like Solzhenitsyn (1973) in his book on the Gulag archipelago. What was the nature of this regime with which we allied ourselves and which we supported?⁵

ern border would follow the Curzon Line, meaning the Soviet Union would receive some of Poland's eastern territory. For its loss of territory in the east, Poland would be compensated with territory in the west from Germany. At the Potsdam Conference, from July 17 to August 2, the Allies determined that Poland's western border would follow the Oder-Neisse Line. In effect, Poland was moved west. See Overy (2022, 837) for details.

³Valentino (2004, 77, 192) estimates that perhaps 2.3 million ethnic Germans died after being expelled from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Also see Hanson (2017, 491) and Overy (2022, 831).

⁴It is generally accepted that Stalin's government caused the deaths of 20 million people in the Soviet Union (Valentino 2004, 75; Naimark 2010, 11, 77). Rudolph J. Rummel (1994, 8, 83) estimates that Stalin's government caused the deaths of 42.7 million people in the Soviet Union, plus the deaths of 6.9 million foreign civilians. In later lectures, Raico criticized Rummel's estimate as being far too high.

⁵Anne Applebaum observes,

We have, at present, a firm conviction that the Second World War was a wholly just war, and few want that conviction shaken. We remember D-Day, the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, the children welcoming American GIs with cheers on the streets. No one wants to be told that there was another, darker side to Allied victory, or that the camps of Stalin, our ally, expanded just as the camps of Hitler, our enemy, were

By the way, here is another insight on Roosevelt, also from Dallek's book. Roosevelt, after Russia is attacked by Germany in June of 1941, has to convince the American people that we should send Lend-Lease to Russia. There is a good deal of anticommunism in those days, especially among American Catholics. So, according to Dallek, Roosevelt "told a press conference on September 30 that Article 124 of the Russian Constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience: 'Freedom equally to use propaganda against religion,' he said, 'which is essentially what is the rule in this country, only we don't quite put it the same way'" (1995, 297).

Roosevelt, like Wilson, was not a man with great intellectual scope. What he was trying to do, in some unbelievably dumb way, was convince the Americans that there was freedom of religion in Russia. Therefore, it was okay to send them Lend-Lease. And he actually said that this article of the Stalinist constitution which guaranteed freedom of religion was pretty much the same as the American First Amendment. That's maybe the nadir of misunderstanding.⁶

What was the nature of this regime of Stalin's? It was an authoritarian, totalitarian dictatorship from the moment that the Bolsheviks had taken over in 1917.⁷ The history of the Soviet secret police is so notorious that every few years they have to change their name, change their initials, from Cheka to GPU to OGPU to NKVD to MVD into today the KGB. Robert Conquest (1968), the British historian, has a book

liberated. To admit that . . . the Western Allies might have helped others commit crimes against humanity would undermine the moral clarity of our memories of that era. No one wants to think that we defeated one mass murderer with the help of another. (2003, xxi–xxii)

For similar remarks, see Beevor (2012, 780–81), Hanson (2017, 527), McMeekin (2021, 662–63), and Overy (2022, 610).

⁶Robert Service notes that Stalin waged "vicious campaigns against religion. . . . Religion was to be stamped out" (2005, 301). See Overy (2004, 269–78) for an overview of Stalin's religious persecutions.

⁷As Service writes, "Lenin justified dictatorship and terror," and "Violence, dictatorship and terror were methods [Stalin] and fellow party veterans took to be normal" (2000, 10; 2005, 344). Roosevelt admitted on February 11, 1940, "The Soviet Union, as everybody who has the courage to face the fact knows, is run by a dictatorship as absolute as any other dictatorship in the world" (quoted in Kennedy 1999, 483).

called *The Great Terror*. And you can read this, of course, in Solzhenitsyn (1973) also: *The Gulag Archipelago*.⁸ What was the character of this regime? This was a regime which, in the period of the collectivization of agriculture after 1928, caused—through the famines that came about and through actual warfare waged on the peasantry, which refused to give up the land—caused an unknown number of deaths, probably in the range of four to six million.⁹

There came the purge of the Communist Party itself in the middle of the 1930s, the great show trials and the purge of the party in which, according to Conquest, there were seven million arrests, and one out of every ten people arrested was shot.¹⁰ Now, no libertarian has anything but the deepest disgust for the regime of filth and total denigration and destruction of the human personality set up by Hitler and his Nazis.¹¹ However, the analogous German purge, known as the Night of the Long Knives, which occurs in June of 1934, costs about two hundred lives.¹²

What's happening behind the Iron Curtain in Russia, nobody knows about. The greatest number of lives, of course, were lost in con-

⁸Along with Solzhenitsyn (1973), Applebaum (2003) is a standard work on the Gulag system. See Naimark (2010) for a shorter treatment of Stalin's murderous regime. Rummel (1990) is worth noting, yet Raico urged caution with this author's statistics. See Applebaum (2011) for an anthology of personal accounts from Gulag victims.

⁹Kotkin writes, "Collectivization involved the arrest, execution, internal deportation, or incarceration of 4 to 5 million peasants; the effective enslavement of another 100 million" (2017, 131). It is generally agreed that Stalin's collectivization caused the deaths of four to five million people. See Applebaum (2003, 47), Overy (2004, 42), Valentino (2004, 110), Service (2005, 312), Kiernan (2007, 501), Naimark (2010, 131), and McMeekin (2021, 27).

¹⁰Kotkin (2017, 305) reports 681,692 executions during Stalin's Great Terror of 1937–38. Also see Overy (2004, 194–95), Service (2005, 356), Kiernan (2007, 510), and Naimark (2010, 111).

¹¹It is well known that the Nazis murdered six million Jews. The regime also caused the deaths of fifteen million more European civilians during its drive east for living space (*Lebensraum*). See Valentino (2004, 81), Beevor (2012, 781), and Hanson (2017, 471, 485, 489, 498).

¹²The Night of the Long Knives began on June 30, 1934. It was a purge of the Nazi Party by Hitler. Ian Kershaw writes, "Some estimates put the total number killed at 150–200 persons" (2008, 313).

nection with the Gulag itself: the system of slave labor camps that Solzhenitsyn compares to islands, an archipelago, strung out along the great sea of the Soviet Union.¹³

These concentration camps took all comers—masses and masses of people in successive waves.¹⁴ At first, of course, czarists and Mensheviks. [Then] Russian anarchists are sent to these labor camps. Orthodox priests. Then the kulaks. Ukrainian peasantry and the peasantry in other parts of the Soviet Union. Then the members of the Communist Party itself when it was being purged. Then, when Russia starts expanding into Eastern Europe, Polish prisoners of war, many of whom were murdered at Katyn Forest.¹⁵ Then, when it takes over the Baltic states, the Lithuanian and Estonian and Latvian middle classes are transported en masse into the camp system. Then German prisoners of war, Japanese, Hungarians, whoever is fighting on the Russian front. At times, when they need labor in the camps to build the Baltic–White Sea canal, they will go into movie theaters in Moscow, put on

¹³The Gulag was a massive network of labor camps stretching across the entire Soviet Union. “Gulag” is an acronym from the Russian *Glavnoe Upravlenie Ispravitel’no-trudovyykh Lagerei* (Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps). Lenin started laying the foundation for the Gulag system almost immediately after the Bolshevik takeover in 1917, and there were over 350 camps by the time he died in 1924. However, the Gulag system was Stalin’s system, and he made it central to the Soviet economy. The system expanded rapidly and continuously after it was officially established by Stalin in April 1930, and reached its height in the early 1950s. Most of the Gulag system was quickly dismantled after Stalin died in 1953. Valentino writes, “Between 12 and 19 million people probably passed through the camps from 1934 to 1947. Millions were killed or died from exposure, malnutrition, and exhaustion” (2004, 36). Also see Applebaum (2003, 578–81) and Overy (2004, 613).

¹⁴As Rummel writes, “We have witnessed in the Soviet Union a true egalitarian social cleansing and flushing: no group or class escaped” (1994, 80).

¹⁵In March and April 1940, the Soviet NKVD massacred twenty-two thousand Polish army officers, civil servants, and intellectuals held as prisoners of war. The bodies were dumped in the Katyn Forest. In April 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill covered up the Katyn Forest Massacre to protect Stalin. See McMeekin (2021, 151–52, 443–50) for a detailed account of the massacre and cover-up. See Hanson (2017, 525), Kotkin (2017, 745), and Overy (2022, 617) for brief overviews.

the lights, arrest everyone there, put them into trucks, and send them to the camps.

This is a system of camps all across the Soviet Union. Vorkuta is out on the Pacific in Siberia, across from Japan. There was the notorious Kolyma; it is a system of camps in itself covering an area four times the size of France, in which, according to Conquest (1979, 15–16), probably around three million people died.¹⁶ This is the nature of our ally.

And I ask you to imagine, as a hypothetical, a photograph taken in the course of the Second World War. And what it shows is three allies and friends partying (wherever, some international meeting of heads of states). They are partying, toasting each other. You have Franklin Roosevelt, and you have Winston Churchill, and you have Adolf Hitler. Does that sound repulsive? Well, you had exactly that photograph. Except it wasn't Hitler; it was Stalin.¹⁷

Winston Churchill, in his endless hypocrisy, goes so far at Tehran as to give Stalin a crusader's sword—a sword which had been in the possession of the British crown.¹⁸ It seems to me—it's a very big thing to come to a conclusion about—but this puts into doubt, this at least raises the question of, the moral character of this war.

¹⁶Applebaum writes, "In the same way that Auschwitz has become, in popular memory, the camp which symbolizes all other Nazi camps, so too has the word 'Kolyma' come to signify the greatest hardships of the Gulag" (2003, 84). See Overy (2004, 593–634) for a detailed comparison of German and Soviet camps.

¹⁷Applebaum notes, "There are many, many photographs of Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt all together, all smiling" (2003, xxiii). For such photographs, see the photo inserts in Kennedy (1999, 652–53), Smith (2007, 524–25), Brands (2008, 428–29), and McMeekin (2021, 432–33). For similar photographs of Stalin, Churchill, and Truman, see the photo inserts in Kennedy (1999, 652–53) and Hanson (2017, 390–91).

¹⁸Churchill presented the sword to Stalin on November 29, 1943, at the Tehran Conference. Today, it is known as the Sword of Stalingrad. Churchill wrote to Stalin in 1947, "Your life is not only precious to your country, which you saved, but to the friendship between Soviet Russia and the English-speaking world" (quoted in Roberts 2006, 373). By this time, Stalin had already caused the deaths of perhaps eighteen million people in the Soviet Union.

The war, of course, is even further compromised by the way it is conducted.¹⁹ In the nineteenth century, the classical liberals and the atmosphere of classical liberalism led to an attempt to define rules of warfare, to put limits even on the violence of warfare. In the course of the Second World War, this is given up. The only place it's not, really, is in the African war, which is one reason that becomes a sort of favorite war for a lot of people, in North Africa, because it's more of a gentlemanly war. It's more of a war where the rules are respected.

There are no rules respected on the Eastern front, on either side. As soon as the war breaks out in the Pacific, there are no rules of warfare respected. Very few prisoners are taken, any ship is sunk on sight. And you know something of the German destruction of civilians in Europe, especially of European Jewry. But all of the states committed acts of great horror. Not only the German state, not only the Russian state.²⁰

The British state, which says to itself, "We cannot afford the losses of our troops that we suffered in the First World War. We don't have the men anymore. We will reduce Germany to surrender through incessant terror bombing of its cities." And about seven hundred thousand German civilians are killed from the air—the deliberate target of British policy—that is, it was a policy of killing civilians in order to terrorize the Germans and to break their will.²¹ The classic example is the

¹⁹As Gilbert writes, "More than [sixty] million soldiers and civilians perished, many in circumstances of prolonged and horrifying cruelty" (1989, 1). Also see note 234.

²⁰Barton Bernstein writes, "While the worst atrocities were perpetrated by the Axis, all the major nation-states sliced away at the moral code—often to the applause of their leaders and citizens alike. By 1945 there were few moral restraints left in what had become virtually a total war" (1995, 151).

²¹Hanson writes, "Perhaps nearly two million European and Asian civilians perished from strategic bombing raids, at least half of them women and children" (2017, 67). On March 28, 1945, Churchill admitted that the Allies were terror bombing German civilians. Moreover, he admitted that the Allies were not honest about their bombing objectives: "It seems to me that the moment has come when the question of bombing German cities for the sake of increasing the terror, though under other pretexts, should be reviewed" (quoted in Grayling 2006, 73). As A. C. Grayling (2006, 188–89) and Overy (2013, 214) show, the British consistently lied that they were attacking military targets and not helpless civilians. For further details on bombing casualties, see Valentino (2004, 70, 85), Hanson (2017, 482, 489, 492), and Overy (2022, 586, 593, 678, 790).

destruction of Hamburg in 1943, when it was discovered that a combination of certain weather conditions and the intense bombardment created something new called a “firestorm.”²²

And then in February of 1945, when Germany was already defeated, the destruction of Dresden.²³ It was the first human city that was taken out. Dresden had not been bombed in the whole course of the war, because there was nothing in Dresden.²⁴ There’s a good book by an uneven historian named David Irving (1963) called *The Destruction of Dresden*. This is, I think, one of his better books. Probably around 135,000 people were killed. It was, you understand, four nights and three days of bombing. And when the neutral countries of Europe woke

²²The destruction of Hamburg—called Operation Gomorrah—began on July 24, 1943. Gilbert writes,

A lethal predominance of incendiary bombs in the 2,326 tons of bombs dropped, combined with a warm night with low humidity, and a fire fighting service which had not recovered from its efforts four days earlier, led to a new phenomenon in the history of aerial warfare, described by the Hamburg Fire Department that night in the single word: “firestorm”. . . . At the centre of the firestorm, a hurricane style wind was created which uprooted trees. Flames, driven by the wind, burned out eight square miles of the city during an eight hour inferno. By morning, more than forty-two thousand German civilians were dead. This was more than the total British civilian deaths for the whole of the Blitz. (1989, 447–48)

For detailed accounts of Operation Gomorrah, see Grayling (2006, 16–20, 81–87) and Overy (2013, 135–48, 259–62).

²³The bombing of Dresden took place from February 13 to 15, 1945. The number of people who died in the bombing of Dresden is still a matter of debate. Shortly after the war, the Soviet Union announced twenty-five thousand deaths. However, many historians believe that the actual number is much higher, perhaps as many as one hundred thousand. Gilbert writes, “In all, 39,773 officially identified dead were found in the city and registered, most of them burned to death. At least twenty thousand more bodies were buried beneath the ruins, or incinerated beyond recognition, even as bodies” (1989, 641). See Overy (2013, 214–17) for a detailed treatment of the bombing of Dresden.

²⁴Grayling writes, “Dresden was a city of great beauty, one of the cultural treasures of Europe, and its immolation came at a time and in circumstances which many have found hard to justify” (2006, 89). Overy agrees: “[Dresden] contained no major industries linked to the directive” (2013, 210).

up the next day, I'm talking about in Zurich, in Stockholm, Madrid—Americans had never heard of Dresden. Why should they have? But it's as if we woke up one day, and we found out that a particularly beautiful American city, let us say San Francisco or Boston, had ceased to exist—there was a thrill of horror that went through Europe.

The war is capped by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A now-classic book on the subject is by the historian Martin Sherwin (1975), also in paperback: *A World Destroyed*.²⁵ The reasons for the bombing, and the reasons why the bombings were not really necessary—you know it's an endless argument one way or the other.²⁶ But it's clear, I think, enough that the Japanese would have surrendered. Not unconditionally as had been demanded: they wanted certain conditions. One condition is that they didn't want the emperor to be put on trial as a war criminal and hanged in front of his palace. Before that would happen, yes, the Japanese race would commit suicide. But that they were open to negotiations and certain conditions is clear.²⁷

By the way, it's now that the Americans begin to go a little wacky with their air power. A little wacky. After the bombing of Hiroshima, the Japanese are given two days (it takes time to bring a war machine to a halt), and then Nagasaki is destroyed. (I don't want to be too bathetic about it, but Nagasaki is, in opera, the home of Cio-Cio-San in *Madame Butterfly*; and that's where she waits for her American officer to appear from over the horizon.)

And then Truman said, "Enough." Let us at least give that crusty, beloved old Truman that much. Enough. He had, of course, destroyed

²⁵A more recent classic work on the atomic bombings is *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*, by Gar Alperovitz (1995). Also see Bird and Lifschultz (1998) for a collection of useful articles.

²⁶Seven of eight U.S. five-star officers from the Second World War thought the atomic bombing of Japan was unnecessary: Henry Arnold, Dwight Eisenhower, William Halsey Jr., Ernest King, William Leahy, Douglas MacArthur, and Chester Nimitz (Alperovitz 1995). See Fuller (2023) for an economic case against the atomic bombing of Japan.

²⁷Alperovitz writes, "It is known that a debate occurred within the U.S. government over whether to allow Japan to keep its Emperor—and that long before the atomic bomb was used, many officials believed a clearly expressed decision to do so would be likely to produce a surrender" (1995, xiii).

two Japanese cities rather than negotiate.²⁸ The American air force general in the Pacific on the spot at Tinian, Curtis LeMay, wanted to use a third bomb. Can anyone guess what city he wanted have as a target for the third atomic bomb? Tokyo.²⁹ Right. I'm saying there's something happening now with the American military. I am not a communist. Okay? I have never been a communist. The closest I ever came to being a communist, I was a Republican [*laughter*].

But our leaders and our military leaders are really to be judged on the same basis as others. This has come out in Fred Kaplan's (1983) new book, *The Wizards of Armageddon*. I think, according to the notes, he must have gotten it from Robert McNamara himself. When McNamara becomes secretary of defense in 1961 under the Kennedy administration, naturally he says, "Show me all the plans you have." The SAC (that's Strategic Air Command) general, Tom Power, the head of SAC, shows him the contingency plans in the event of war with Russia and China (China is still an ally of Russia at this time). McNamara is aghast. They call for the death in the first few days of 285 million Russians and Chinese through massive indiscriminate nuclear bombing of Eurasia.³⁰

²⁸On August 10, 1945, Truman gave orders to "stop all atomic bombing" (quoted in Alperovitz 1995, 417). However, several hours before he learned of the surrender, Truman informed the British that he had "no alternative but to order an atomic bomb to be dropped on Tokyo" (quoted in Maddox 1995, 143).

²⁹During the war, U.S. Army Air Force general Curtis E. LeMay (1906–90) was in charge of the force responsible for bombing Japan. Along with LeMay, Army Air Force generals Carl D. Spaatz and Nathan F. Twining recommended that a third atomic bomb be dropped on Tokyo (Maddox 1995, 143). Although he did not oppose them, LeMay did not think the atomic bombings were necessary to win the war (Alperovitz 1995, 336). In 1948, LeMay became head of U.S. Strategic Air Command. He rose to become a dominant force in the entire military establishment by shaping nuclear weapons policy. During the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, LeMay led the war hawk coalition that urged President John F. Kennedy to attack Cuba (Kaplan 2020, 68–69). Curtis "Bombs Away" LeMay was the inspiration for atomic war hawk Jack D. Ripper in the movie *Dr. Strangelove* (Beever 2012, 447).

³⁰Daniel Ellsberg was a nuclear war planner in the early 1960s, and he reported the contents of a document prepared for President Kennedy by the Joint Chiefs of Staff during spring 1961: "The total death toll as calculated by the Joint Chiefs, from a U.S. first strike aimed at the Soviet Union, its Warsaw Pact satellites, and

And they call for the obliteration of Albania [*laughter*]. There happens to be a radar defense installation there. And the SAC general says to McNamara (and this is really annoys McNamara), with a sort of smirk, “I hope you don’t have any friends or relations in Albania, because we are going to have to wipe it out.”³¹ I tell you this in all honesty: something like that, those contingency plans, would have not necessarily deterred, but they would have embarrassed Hitler and Himmler.

China, would be roughly six hundred million dead. A hundred Holocausts” (Ellsberg 2017, 3). Even if their first strike was most successful, U.S. planners estimated that at least twenty million Americans and one hundred million Europeans would be killed in the Soviet counterstrike (Ellsberg 2017, 137–38; Kaplan 2020, 85).

³¹General Tom Power quipped at a private presentation on SIOP-62 during December 1960: “I just hope none of you have any relatives in Albania, because they have a radar station there that is right on our flight path, and we take it out” (quoted Ellsberg 2017, 101). Power recycled this joke when he briefed Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara on SIOP-62 in Omaha during February 1962. Power said with a chuckle to McNamara, “I hope you don’t have any friends or relations in Albania, because we’re going to have to wipe it out” (quoted in Kaplan 2020, 34). According to Kaplan, “McNamara fumed with contempt” (2020, 35).

Chapter 12

Lessons for the Future

Well, there's many other things we could talk about. Let me just say this. Why do we have this emphasis, or at least in these few lectures, on war and America's wars in the twentieth century? The reason is this: because the fact of the matter is nothing has increased the power of the American state through its history, and especially in the twentieth century, as warfare.

Let me quote from a very good book called *The Governmental Habit* by Professor Jonathan Hughes of Northwestern: "National emergency became the catchall justification for extension of federal power into the private economy" (1991, 131). This is a pattern in American history, he says: "The heady experience of the war power . . . was diluted by the willingness to tolerate a residual of expanded power in Washington" (1991, 128). That is, once the war is over, the euphoria dissipates, but it doesn't totally dissipate. Some residual of that power that was accumulated remains: "The legitimacy of federal control becomes an accepted part of economic life. What was once considered an extraordinary imposition of federal power, say, automatic payroll deduction of the income tax, now becomes normal" (1991, 187).

He also shows that in every American war, especially in the twentieth century, there is an enormous jump in governmental expenditures. Once the war is over, that retracts, but it never retracts to what it was before. After Vietnam, it didn't even retract at all. Bruce Porter (1980), in an article in the *Public Interest* a number of years ago, does the same kind of analysis for the number of government functionaries

and employees. With every war it increases enormously.¹ At the end of the war, it never goes back to what it was before. It retracts somewhat, and you have that added accumulation because of the war.²

So the growth of federal power, and the growth of government power in general, has been linked with warfare. The creation of intelligence surveillance bureaucracies, whose abuses are well known, is something totally connected with warfare.

Finally, what I think the experience of warfare and the twentieth century shows is that the Founding Fathers were right. The kind of limited-government republic that they were setting up here—where the emphasis was on the individual, his rights, and pursuit of happiness—is incompatible with empire and with unceasing war and preparation for war. That's why Jefferson and Washington warned us against entangling alliances, warned us against the lure of honor and glory in a military sense. We've gone that road against their advice, and against the tradition of over a hundred years.

What we have now was totally predictable: an empire that spans the globe; an executive of unbelievable power, as against even the other branches of government; public debt of, what is it now, \$1.2 trillion (it will be \$2 trillion of public debt by the time Reagan leaves office);³ the government everywhere; people accustomed to the government being

¹Porter writes, "The principal cause of the expansion of the United States government has been the nation's involvement in four foreign wars in the 20th century. . . . Following the wartime expansion of the bureaucracy, a 'ratchet' effect comes into play and the bureaucracy retains much of its growth despite postwar layoffs" (1980, 56).

²Robert Higgs wrote the classic work *Crisis and Leviathan* on this "ratchet effect": "Several commonly employed indexes of the size of government display a ratchet movement during the twentieth century: government grew suddenly much bigger with the onset of each great crisis; after the crisis it receded but usually not to the precrisis level or even to a level that would have been reached had the precrisis rate of growth persisted instead of being displaced by the events of the crisis. . . . [G]reat crisis produced not only a temporarily bigger government but a permanently bigger government" (1987, 59). See Higgs (2012) for a short treatment of the ratchet effect.

³The U.S. government debt surpassed \$30 trillion in 2022.

everywhere; a republic really quite different from the one that was envisioned at the beginning.

And also, we have a world where the single most important question is nuclear war. This, I think, is the reason why, here at Cato, we emphasize to an extent foreign policy. Because believe me, nuclear war is a problem so great that it even dwarfs questions of how high the Dow will go or at what price you should start buying gold again.

I hope I have cast some light on some of these questions. Thank you [applause].

Q and A

Question: I just want to ask you: LeMay, the one who wanted to drop the third bomb, was he the one who was the running mate of George Wallace?

Raico: Yes.

Student: Jeez! [laughter].

Raico: Wallace was in political trouble. The only other one who would accept the vice presidential nomination under him was a Birmingham police dog [laughter].

Question: If the proper position for us to take would be to perhaps withdraw forces from around the world and put ourselves in a position to defend only ourselves and not have entangling alliances, what do you think would be the proper position in the event that we are doing free trade with another country and there is investment in that country by Americans in free trade and someone expropriates what they have over there?

Raico: Well, what the classic position was—even of imperialist governments, till late in the nineteenth century, even of the American government—that whoever invests overseas invests at his own risk.

Question: Okay, what is the difference, then, between that position and the position of investing on the East Coast versus the West Coast? What makes, in a libertarian point of view, now you are isolating us to strictly American. And what is the philosophical difference between that and saying, “Well, you invested on the West Coast, and they took it away from you, and that is not a good reason for violently taking it back.”

Raico: I don't even know what you mean. The federal government is not going to be required to somehow assure investments against expropriation in New York State. That's done by the laws of the State of New York. There's no need for the federal government to go in and threaten New York State against expropriating some American company. That doesn't really arise.

But the real problem is that once this principle of guaranteeing American property throughout the world (or whatever property) is put into effect, it's a recipe for endless American involvement. Historically speaking, it's a very good reason to expect that some kind of military action is going to have to be taken.

This doesn't mean that there's not going to be foreign investment. The opposite. Some Marxist regimes, of course, are going to confiscate property. But you can see what's happening in many parts of the world: developing countries in order to attract property (for instance, Sri Lanka, Ceylon, is the greatest example) make every effort to reassure investors, and investors will invest there, depending on their business climate. Most often, they'll invest where the legal system is assured. There wouldn't have to be any reason to send American forces to defend them. Like Canada, Japan, Western Europe, and so on. You see, I think that if the Rockefellers want to invest in South America, they should not use the U.S. Marines as their private Pinkerton guards. Let them take the risks.

Question: Do you think we should maintain embassies in countries during times of peace?

Raico: Now, you know, I don't even think—from the government's point of view—embassies are necessary in the present electronic age. And Ron Paul, the noninterventionist congressman from Texas, has made this point. Electronically, with the technology and so on, you don't have to have an entourage of a hundred people there having lunch together all the time [*laughter*]. It can be done much more efficiently.

Question: [Inaudible question about Roosevelt and an American alliance with the Soviet Union after the Second World War]

Raico: Well, I don't know. Is . . . [inaudible] here? I will have to chat with him about that. Roosevelt's policy was anticolonial in that he wanted as much as possible in the future to have England and France divested of their empires, precisely so they would also have open-

door policies towards American manufactured goods and American industry.⁴

He was very close to Churchill. And as a matter of fact, as far as the atom bomb goes, his policy, as Sherwin (1975, 85) points out, was that England was to be brought in as a full partner, not the Soviet Union.⁵ And England and the United States could . . . [inaudible] the bomb then to set up some kind of Anglo-American order of peace throughout the world.

He didn't understand the full power of the bomb, it was towards the very end of his life, and so on. But it was really more of an alliance with England to keep the peace than with the Soviet Union. And not the UN, by the way. The UN was going to be simply another tool in the hands of the superpowers to order the whole world. This was not a Wilsonian belief in some kind of world community of nations and democracy within those nations.

Question: Can you describe any evidence from our recent history that would indicate that a libertarian attempt to set up a limited government would in fact succeed in staying limited?

Raico: Would succeed in what?

Question: In staying limited? One of the problems seems to be an attempt was made to start a limited government and it eventually escalated, probably due . . . [inaudible]. Is there any evidence that you can cite that we've learned from that experience?

Raico: Well, the experience is still going on, isn't it? That is, involvement in world affairs in the political and military sense continues to aid

⁴See Steil (2013) for a detailed account of how the U.S. used Lend-Lease as a weapon to dismantle the British Empire.

⁵The Anglo-American atomic partnership was formalized at the Quebec Conference on August 19, 1943. That day, the U.S. and U.K. governments agreed, "First, that we will never use this [atomic] agency against each other. Secondly, that we will not use it against third parties without each other's consent. Thirdly, that we will not either of us communicate any information about Tube Alloys [atomic bombs] to third parties except by mutual consent" (quoted in Sherwin 1975, 85). In accordance with the second part of the Quebec agreement, the U.S. government sought the consent of the U.K. government before the atomic bombing of Japan: "At the July 4, 1945 Combined Policy Committee meeting this was done and Britain officially agreed to using the atomic bomb against Japan" (Alperovitz 1995, 174).

the growth of the American government. An interesting fact is that Caspar Weinberger's five-year defense budget (by the way, you know they changed the name of the Department of War to the Department of Defense just around the time Orwell was writing 1984).⁶ The five-year budget of the Defense Department is equal to the assets of all companies whose stocks are traded on the New York Stock Exchange. So this is a rather large accumulation of power in only one branch of the government, the Pentagon. Now, whether people have learned from this experience and there's a revulsion against it? No, the experience is still going on. If there is a revulsion against it, it is happening among us, and among a few other people.

Question: [Inaudible question about the Coolidge administration]

Raico: Well, Coolidge is noted in diplomatic history for practicing dollar diplomacy and the use of limited American military forces to keep South American, Central American, and Caribbean countries in line. It is around this time, for instance, that Nicaragua is occupied by the American marines. The Americans forgot that. The Nicaraguans didn't.⁷

Question: A good section of American political thought—what we would call the leftists or the left wing of the Democratic Party—share revulsion for large military budgets and so forth, but they are out-and-out statist. Now, how do they come to arrive at this same answer?

Raico: None of those people have principle against foreign commitments or American entanglements almost anywhere in the world. What's involved there is a technical debate over particular weapons systems, very often. And these liberal Democrats at least have enough

⁶Caspar Weinberger (1917–2006) was the U.S. secretary of defense from 1981 to 1987. He was the architect of the so-called Reagan defense buildup.

⁷The Banana Wars were a series of U.S. military interventions and occupations in various Latin American and Caribbean countries from approximately 1898 to 1934. The U.S. conducted multiple interventions in Nicaragua during this period, with the most significant being the second Nicaragua intervention from 1926 to 1933. In that intervention, Calvin Coolidge sent the U.S. marines to Nicaragua to support the government of President Adolfo Díaz and protect American economic interests. U.S. marines occupied Nicaragua for nearly seven years. See Langley (2002) for more on the Banana Wars.

sanity to think that there is \$5 billion worth of waste in a \$280 billion Defense Department budget.

The Reagan administration's position is there is not a single penny they can spare, because they have a budget that the generals and admirals form for \$280 billion. And you can't take a dime away from there without endangering American security. So the Democrats want to pare that a little bit, get rid of particular weapons systems. But nothing like the kind of radical rethinking of American foreign policy that libertarians believe. So that of all the defense analysts on the various sides, the only one I think which has really thought these things out is a libertarian defense analyst, namely Earl Ravenal.⁸ He has really thought out ways of saving substantial amounts of money by changing American policy, and not simply getting rid of one weapons system or another. Now, I would strongly recommend his works to you. You are probably familiar with them to an extent anyway.

Question: I think we're all free trade advocates here, but something puzzles me: Do you think that free trade in armaments would be consistent with that?

Raico: You mean by private firms?

Student: If El Salvador can pay for it, should they be able to arm themselves to the teeth by the war manufactures in the United States?

Raico: What is the alternative? There are certainly going to be groups in the world where we would say they should be able to get arms to help themselves, right? I take it no one here would particularly want to have an embargo on arms to the Afghan mujahideen—the freedom fighters—right? There is no reason to suppose the American government can select the good and the bad guys in the world. They've certainly been wrong in the past, so that I see no alternative, really, to an open arms market. But the arms market would be a much, much smaller one than exists now, because now the credits come from the enormous resources of the U.S. government [*applause*].

⁸Earl C. Ravenal (1931–2019) was a professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. Ravenal (1973) is his most influential article. Ravenal (1991) is his most influential book.

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