

THE GERMAN LANGUAGE NEWSPRESS IN PENNSYLVANIA DURING WORLD WAR I

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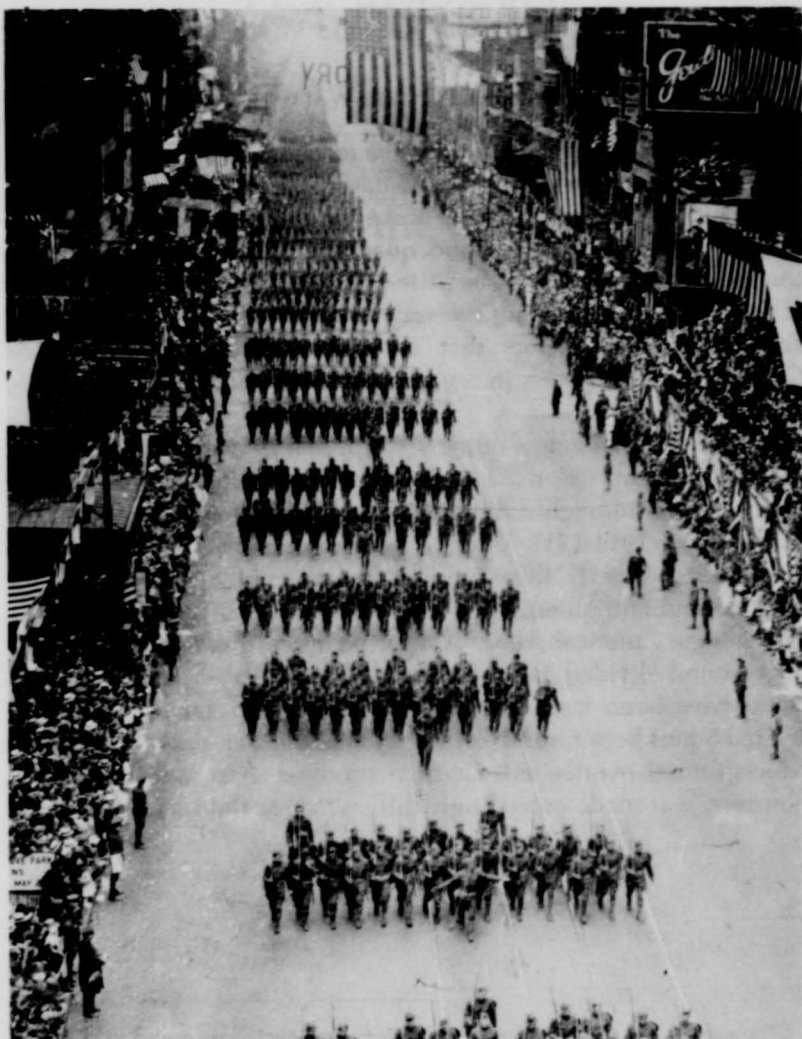
THE German language newspaper of Pennsylvania enjoyed wide popularity from early colonial days until World War I, when it practically disappeared in the wake of anti-German reaction. Although several descriptive and quasi-statistical studies have been conducted, there seems to be little evidence of a systematic analysis of this ethnic press during the war.¹ The purpose of this study is to delineate several factors that entered into the reaction of the German-American press in reporting information directly related to World War I.

The German language newspapers of Pennsylvania, both those of the Pennsylvania Germans and those of the later German immigrants, were thoroughly American and loyal.² However, during the war years of 1914-1917, prior to the entrance of the United States into World War I, these newspapers generally expounded pro-German and anti-allied sentiment, which stood in sharp contrast to the average American view. It must be asked if citizens of German background divided their loyalty and whether these newspapers could have been instruments for German propaganda. When the United States became actively engaged in the war, only those papers which turned overtly anti-German survived. A sustained survival, however, was made exceedingly difficult since the suspicions of the

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¹Homer Tope Rosenberger, *The Pennsylvania Germans* (Lancaster, 1966); Carl Wittke, *The German Language Press in America* (Lexington, 1957); Alfred L. Shoemaker, "German Newspapers of the Coal Region," *The Pennsylvania Dutchman*, V (March 15, 1954), 10; Clyde William Park, "The Strategic Retreat of the German Language Press," *The North American Review*, (May, 1918), 207.

²See Ralph Wood, ed., *The Pennsylvania Germans* (Princeton, 1942), 131-164.



WORLD WAR I PARADE IN PHILADELPHIA

*Courtesy of Pennsylvania War History Collection,
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission*

non-German speaking population toward everything German had reached hysterical proportions.³

Pride in America and especially in that which German-Americans had contributed to the development of this country was a characteristic tradition of the German-American newspress. In the July 31, 1907, edition of the *Friedens-Bote* of Allentown, one of the most famous of Pennsylvania's German language newspapers, a lengthy article appeared on the first page entitled "Die Deutschen in Amerika" with the subtitle "Und was das Land ihnen verdankt." It traced the influence of German-Americans from the period of colonization to the twentieth century and attempted to solicit admiration for the German-American heritage. However, a tendency appeared to exist among many Americans to equate uniformity of language and customs with patriotism; a distrust of things not cloaked in the English language seemed prevalent.

³The major difficulty encountered during the research for this study has been the apparent loss of all copies of some newspapers and the loss of various copies of others. Existing bibliographies have been extensively consulted, only to discover that they at times contain inaccuracies or are no longer valid for information, particularly with reference to the availability of particular papers. Especially helpful are the following: Karl J. R. Arndt, May E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals* (Heidelberg, Germany, 1961); Winifred Gregory, ed., *American Newspapers, 1921-1936* (New York, 1937); Firm Ayer, N. W. *Ayer and Son's Directory of Newspapers* (Philadelphia, 1880-to date); Ruth Salisbury, *Pennsylvania Newspapers* (Pittsburgh, 1969).

An attempt has been undertaken to consult the following newspapers: *Der Friedens-Bote* (Allentown), 1812-1932. No copies can be located after 1916. Circulation in 1916 was 2,750; greatest circulation according to Arndt was 11,316 in 1931. *Unabhängiger Republikaner* (Allentown), 1810-1916. Circulation in 1915 was 480; greatest circulation was 2,800 in 1870. *Weltbote* (Allentown), 1854-1916. Circulation in 1916 was 7,000; greatest circulation was 23,000 in 1886. *Bucks County Express* (Doylestown), 1827-1918. Only one copy from the year 1876 is available. Circulation in 1915 was 1,300; greatest circulation was 2,400 in 1885. *Pennsylvanische Staats-Zeitung* (Harrisburg), 1843-1916. Circulation in 1915 was 2,000; greatest circulation was 4,167 in 1890. Arndt lists copies available in Dauphin County Historical Society, however, this historical society has no copies and no knowledge that any editions exist anywhere. *Kutztown Journal*, 1870-1919. Circulation in 1915 was 800; greatest circulation was 2,600 in 1892. No copies from the twentieth century are known to exist. *Philadelphia Abend-Post*, 1865-1918. No copies for the war years could be located. *Der Demokrat* (Philadelphia), 1839-1918. No copies for the war years could be located. Circulation in 1915 was 14,000; greatest circulation was 17,500 in 1895. *Philadelphia Gazette-Democrat*, 1890-1954. No copies for the war years could be located. *Philadelphia Staats-Gazette* is its weekly edition; *Philadelphia*

By 1917 Americans harbored the fear that German-Americans would be loyal to Germany, subverting all American efforts. Two anecdotes suggest that such suspicions were widespread. One tells of Provost General Crowder sending a message to Governor Martin G. Brumbaugh of Pennsylvania in 1917 asking if it would be necessary to send federal troops into the state to suppress the Pennsylvania Germans. Another relates an incident in an army camp in the Middle West in 1917 where an officer heard a Pennsylvanian singing "Heili Heilo" and promptly had the suspected spy transferred from his company.⁴

Although loyal to America, Pennsylvania's German language newspress strove to alter the negative picture of Germany held by many in this country and felt it imperative to foster greater

Sontage-Gazette its Sunday one. Circulation in 1915 was 35,000; highest circulation occurred in 1935 at 50,160. *Philadelphia Herald*, 1894-1942. No copies for the war years could be located. Circulation in 1942 was 10,000; no figures available for the war years. *Philadelphia Sonntags-Journal*, 1876-1917. No copies for the war years could be located. *Philadelphia Tageblatt*, 1877-1944. *Wochenblatt des Philadelphia Tageblatt* was the weekly edition; *Philadelphia Sonntagsblatt* the Sunday edition. Circulation in 1920 was 17,500; largest circulation was 41,000 in 1900. *Pittsburgh Beobachter*, 1880-1923. No copies for the war years could be located. *Der Sonntagsbote* (Pittsburgh), 1878-1942. Only one copy for the war years could be located. *Volksblatt und Freiheitsfreund* (Pittsburgh), 1859-1942. *Pittsburgher Volksblatt* is the weekly edition; *Sonntagsblatt des Pittsburgher Volksblatt* is the Sunday edition. Circulation in 1918 was 19,000; largest circulation was 38,857 in 1933. *Jefferson Democrat von Schuylkill County* (Pottsville), 1855-1918. Circulation in 1910 was 1,000; greatest circulation was 2,350 in 1893. No copies after 1876 are known to exist. *Reading Adler*, 1796-1913. Although the *Adler* halted publication one year before the First World War began, it seems imperative to view the reaction of this paper to the growing tensions in Europe at the time. It was one of the most influential Pennsylvania German newspapers. Circulation in 1910 was 4,500; greatest circulation was 5,500 in 1858. *Scranton Journal*, 1902-1919. Circulation in 1910 was 1,500; greatest circulation was 1,875 in 1902. No copies are known to exist. *Scranton Wochenblatt*, 1865-1918. Circulation in 1918 was 1,200; greatest circulation was 1,250 in 1910. *Der Demokratische Wächter und Luzerne und Columbia County Anzeiger*, 1842-1931. Circulation in 1915 was 2,750; greatest circulation was between 1925 and 1928 at 3,800. Arndt lists no dates available after 1886. However, the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre, has various editions printed during World War I. *Luzerne County Express*, 1882-1919. Greatest circulation was 6,500 in 1915. No copies are known to exist for the war years. *Der Unions Freund* (York), 1815-1916. No figures of circulation are known. Only one copy of 1815 extant.

⁴Wood, ed., *Pennsylvania Germans*, 234-235.

journalistic fairness. Initially it reprimanded the English language press for a supposed lack of objectivity in reporting European events.⁵ In addition, France, Russia, and later England were accused of pursuing chauvinistic policies for their own advantage while Germany and Austria worked to pacify Europe and bring about a fair peace. The *Reading Adler*, which ceased publication more than a year before hostilities commenced and which claimed to have been the oldest German language newspaper in the United States, exemplified this program. Regarding the turmoil on the Balkan Peninsula before 1914, the *Adler* enthusiastically reported the establishment of Albanian autonomy, viewing this triumph of German diplomacy as indicative of the Central Power's desire for peace. The *Adler* further claimed the danger to peace in Europe lay in the unrest created by the southern Slavs, enjoying staunch Russian support, in the Habsburg Empire.

The reaction of German language newspapers to the war can be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase was prior to the active entrance of the United States into the conflagration. The second came after the formal declaration of hostilities between the United States and the Central Powers.

During the initial phase German language papers tried to show that Germany did not want war and that she was the victim of the political encirclement practiced by England, France, and Russia. The *Friedens-Bote* consistently presented a Germany merely striving to defend herself against ambitious territorial and economic encroachment while seeking to avoid war and trying to establish a just peace. On October 23, 1915, the *Unabhängiger Republikaner* published the article "Vom grossen Friedrich" (About Fredrick the Great) with the subtitle "War der sieben jährige Krieg ein Angriffs-krieg?" (Was the Seven Years War a war of aggression?). This article discussed Thomas Mann's essay of 1915, *Friedrich und die Grosse Koalition*, suggesting Germany's position was similar to Prussia's in 1757 and concluded that to avoid destruction, Germany must defend herself. The *Scranton Wochenblatt* presented a scholarly defense of

⁵*Friedens-Bote*, August 25, 1914, in "Die Mission der Deutschamerikanischen Presse," believed its duty lay, in contrast to the Anglo-American press, in being objective. *Weltbote*, September 8, 1914, in "Zur Aufklärung," emphasized that German-Americans must explain Germany's plight to their fellow Americans.

Germany's war efforts entitled "Weshalb Deutschland den Weltkrieg führen muss" (Why Germany must fight the World War), by a visiting German professor in California.⁶

The assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand was reported by the entire German-American press. Although the *Friedens-Bote* carried only one short article, the *Weltbote*, in an article entitled "Die Bluttat von Sarajevo," suggested that responsibility lay in the political intrigues perpetrated through the years against Austria by the Panslavic movement, directly supported by Russia. Austria's right to self-defense and to the curtailment of an internally destructive Panslavism was staunchly defended. Austria's goal, it was claimed, lay in a localization of hostilities between herself and Serbia, consequently her demands upon Serbia were justified to insure her political and territorial integrity. In contrast, Russia appeared desirous of broadening the conflict into a general European conflagration for her own benefit. The *Unabhängiger Republikaner*, in a more sensational vein, ran two columns discussing the events of Sarajevo in detail. It printed early news of the war between Austria and Serbia, emphasizing Germany's diplomatic maneuvers to attain peace. Curiously enough, the newspaper relegated war news to the fourth page of its eight-page format. Since international news had formerly appeared in general on pages one and two, this would indicate a tendency to minimize the international scene in order to remain decidedly more local in scope.

Although the German language press was generally more concerned with local affairs than with national or international matters, numerous papers dealt with events beyond the community level.⁷ The *Philadelphia Tageblatt* demonstrated extensive national and international concern. Considered politically independent during the war, its orientation for many years had been overtly prolabor and often socialistic. Its standard proclaimed: "Offizielles Organ der Vereinigten Deutschen Gewerkschaften" (Official Organ of the United German Labor Unions). This policy influenced its

⁶"Der Krieg der Kriege," *Weltbote*, February 16, 1915. A lecture by Friedrich Naumann was printed to show how the war was England's attempt to maintain her leadership in world affairs.

⁷Phyllis Keller, "German-America and the First World War" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1969), 111.

views toward Germany, especially in discussing that country's political situation just prior to World War I. Attacks against German political conservatism and militarism, especially Tirpitz's naval program, were extensive. The coverage given international news by this paper was probably as encompassing as that of a good English language newspaper of the day. Concern with the upheavals on the Balkan Peninsula occupied more space than in any other German language paper and bore witness to a strong scepticism about those events. For example, criticism was leveled against the diplomatic solution forced upon Albania because it created a possibility of further unrest.

Initially the *Tageblatt's* coverage of the assassination remained objective; then it began to censure what it called the outlived political system of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A fear of Russia and of the Czar's supposed reactionary policies was, however, strong enough during the summer of 1914 to allow for the *Tageblatt's* marked sympathy with the Central Powers.⁸

The praise given Austria in its attempt to localize hostilities was understandable in the light of this anti-Russian tone. Emperor William II was praised for his endeavors to pacify Europe. Optimism and hope still characterized the paper's reporting in July, 1914, but great despondency became apparent when even the Social Democrats in the Reichstag voted for the German government's mobilization budget. More objectivity prevailed in the *Tageblatt* than in its sister papers, even in regard to reports of German military losses, an item strikingly missing in most other German-American newspapers of Pennsylvania.

A fear of Russia was expressed in the *Volksblatt und Freiheitsfreund* of Pittsburgh. This paper not only blamed Russia for the general tension in Europe but even criticized her for not protecting her art treasures. News about the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, although objectively reported, soon became fused with attacks

⁸An anti-Russian attitude is clear in editions during the summer of 1914. Articles from Austrian newspapers were published which point out that Russia was the real danger in Europe. Russia was shown to have a large espionage ring in Germany and to harbor ambitious designs against Austria-Hungary. Great jubilation occurred over any news of worker's strikes in Russia. When hostilities broke out, Russia was accused of bearing the greatest responsibility.

against Russia and reflected the editors' jubilation over the deed.

A strong pro-American orientation prevailed in the *Volksblatt und Freiheitsfreund*,⁹ while little substantial pro-German sentiment existed in this newspaper before 1914. News of local German-American clubs and organizations constituted a major part of its coverage. Dissemination of this type of information had long been a function of the foreign language press in the United States. In fact, even the relations between this country and Mexico received considerably more coverage than anything in the European theater prior to World War I.

The *Scranton Wochenblatt* showed a striking lack of interest in the international scene before the war. It reported events of general interest from various German provinces and seldom alluded to political controversies. Its response to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand differed from its sister newspapers. The *Wochenblatt* expressed deep personal sympathy for Emperor Franz Joseph over his loss and avoided discussing the political implications of the act. The rapid march of events, however, altered this apolitical tone by the late summer of 1914. The *Scranton* weekly now, too, pursued editorial and news policies considerably more political in nature.

During the early war years most of these publications reported military events from a similar perspective. The *Friedens-Bote* and the *Weltbote* were on the whole objective; however, an underlying tone of triumph was apparent in news of military victories by the Central Powers.¹⁰ The *Unabhängiger Republikaner* at first pursued greater objectivity with essentially neutral headlines: "Krieg erklärt," "Der Fall von Lüttich bestätigt," "In Brüssel eingerückt," "Die Deutschen vor Paris" (War declared, The fall of Liège confirmed, Entry into Brussels, Germans outside of Paris). However, that paper also soon became engulfed with enthusiasm. It printed

⁹See particularly the July 4, 1914, edition which carried a large picture portraying Americanism. Interest in daily American life was exhibited in reporting baseball results.

¹⁰"Überall siegreich," *Weltbote*, October 29, 1914. One complete page is devoted to German victories. Photos of allied troops were not printed, rather only of German and Austrian troops, a practice which continued into 1917. Issues of November 17, 1914, "Glänzende Erfolge," and January 12, 1915, "Günstiger Stand," provide examples of this attitude.

poems such as "An die Deutschen" (September 15, 1914) by Elisabeth Mesch:

Die Grösse Deutschlands, nimmer wird sie schwinden
Und unseres Kaisers Hand ist schuldlos rein.
(Germany's greatness, never will it disappear
And our Kaiser's hand is innocently pure.)

"Der schönste Tod" (July 13, 1915) by Hanns Edgar Zapp praised the heroic sacrifice for the fatherland and also illustrated the paper's more militant orientation.

The significance of the battle of the Marne, which took place during these early months of the war and which was so decisive in determining the final outcome, seems to have been missed by these papers.

An event causing great furor among the allies and calling forth strong anti-German sentiment in this country was the sinking of the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. The reaction of the German-American newpress was almost unanimous. The *Weltbote* and the *Friedens-Bote* responded with "Lusitania versenkt" and reported objectively the 1,198 deaths, 119 Americans among them. The subtitle, a tacit defense of Germany, read "Viele Munitionen an Bord. Passagiere vor Abfahrt gewarnt" Since the ship allegedly carried war supplies, it was argued that Germany rightfully regarded her as a war-ship. Because the administration in Washington was initially quite composed about the matter, this view even seemed to have official support.

The reaction of the *Tageblatt* was curious. As a daily it risked printing news of events before all facts had been obtained, a danger its weekly compatriots avoided. At first it reported no lives had been lost in the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Great weight was laid upon the advertisement carried by all major American newspapers of the warnings not to travel on this ship because it was an English munitions transport and could, therefore, be torpedoed. Its second news story was even stranger. In reports of the submarine which sank the ship, a meticulous avoidance of any mention of Germany ensued.

The *Volksblatt und Freiheitsfreund* followed the same trend of thought and additionally furnished a detailed description of the munitions supply the ship was carrying to England. Blame for the catastrophe was laid upon England's doorstep since she insisted on camouflaging munitions ships as passenger vessels. The *Weltbote*, in

contrast, questioned the justification for Germany's action but continued to support the Central Powers. It indicted England's breach of international law and morality in her mining of the North Sea and her blockade of Germany, actions considered barbaric because they kept needed medical and food supplies from reaching the civilian population.

Theodore Roosevelt, known for his hostile attitude toward Germany, spoke of piracy in the *Lusitania* matter. Noting Roosevelt's remarks, the *Friedens-Bote* replied in Germany's defense "Wo sind die Piraten?" (Where are the Pirates?). The *Unabhängiger Republikaner* emphasized Germany's benevolence and called attention to her promise to pay for any damages done to neutral ships in the future.¹¹

German-American papers were unanimous in discussing Italy's declaration of war upon Austria on May 23, 1915 (it was not until August 29, 1916, that Italy formally declared war on Germany). The *Scranton Wochenblatt* noted: "Italiens Kriegserklärung gilt als Verrätere!" (Italy's Declaration of War is an act of treason); both the *Tageblatt* and the *Volksblatt und Freiheitsfreund* referred similarly to Italy's action as treason in light of her treaty with Austria. The *Friedens-Bote* supported Austria, particularly because of her willingness to relinquish to Italy all territories under Austrian rule which she, Italy, claimed: "Das sind Zugeständnisse ganz ungeheuerlicher Natur und Tragweite" (These are concessions of an unbelievable type and extent). It blamed the Italian government but exhibited sympathy for the Italian people who, it maintained, most definitely did not want this war.

Hardly a change in the general perspective toward the conflagration can be discerned in the period from the summer of 1915 until active intervention by the United States. Reports of German victories were voluminous, especially descriptions of her successful submarine warfare. The press lacked comprehension of the dangerous consequences unrestricted submarine warfare would finally incur, namely to drive the United States into active military support for the allies.

¹¹A postscript to the *Lusitania* controversy appeared in the *Unabhängiger Republikaner*, on November 2, 1915, where a report was made of the British navy seizing a United States ship off the coast of Scotland. This incident demonstrated, the paper claimed, England's complete disregard for the rights of neutrals.

Even to those most sympathetic to the German cause, it was evident that the official sympathies of the United States lay with the allies. Therefore, as the war progressed, the pro-German minority concentrated its energy on the attainment of American nonalignment. The *Weltbote* published an article "Neutralität" on February 29, 1916, which praised the forthrightness of Sweden and condemned the United States for moral weakness because this country openly supported the British war effort. Such a policy, it believed, was a blatant violation of American neutrality.¹²

American industry would have been willing to sell merchandise to either side, and as a neutral this would have been legal. In practice, though, the situation was beneficial only to England because she controlled the seas. The German language press attempted to prove America was earning blood money from this trade and also becoming financially more dependent upon England. Clearly, it maintained, this was evidence of President Wilson's "unneutral neutrality."

The major propaganda campaign launched by these newspapers through April, 1917, concentrated upon presenting a positive image of Germany, the Kaiser, and the German people. When hostilities flared up in 1914, the *Friedens-Bote* printed an extensive article entitled "Kaiser an sein Volk" (The Emperor speaks to his people) and the *Weltbote* offered "Der Kaiser." Both pictured William II as an extremely humane monarch, proclaiming great support for him among the German people, and intimating, consequently, that Germany was in fact democratically oriented. Abraham Lincoln's praise for his soldiers of German background was discussed in the *Weltbote* article "Seine getreuen Deutschen" (His loyal Germans) to underscore Lincoln's esteem for German-Americans. Therefore, it continued, if German-Americans had always been patriotic citizens in the past, as Lincoln maintained, then their present belief in neutrality and isolationism must also be true patriotism. An illogical argument indeed, but one which illustrated the fear of being

¹²"Noch mehr Neutralität," *Scranton Wochenblatt*, January 6, 1916. This article argued that the United States claim to being neutral was a farce since it so strongly supported England with supplies.

branded un-American, a fear which many German-Americans harbored.¹³

These newspapers also drew upon individuals in American history of German background to counteract allied propaganda which pictured the Germans as barbaric huns. The *Volksblatt und Freiheitsfreund* wrote extensively about General von Steuben and brave German soldiers who helped free America from English bondage. Other German-Americans who were deeply committed to American values, such as Carl Schurz and Melchoir Adam Pastorius, were widely heralded.

The *Unabhängiger Republikaner* printed the article "Keine Barbaren" to unmask as lies reports that severe atrocities had been committed by German soldiers. The paper, instead, cited a high level of morality among German troops. The *Scranton Wochenblatt*, in its article "Englische Bestien" (English Beasts), suggested that the English acted barbarically.

The propaganda battle by the German-American newspress against Russia and the Czar had begun before the war while the one against England was new. Characteristic of the latter campaign was, for example, the August 23, 1914, edition of the *Sonntagsblatt* (Sunday edition of the *Tageblatt*) which carried a lengthy article identifying the so-called English national character with selfishness; equating England's rule of the seas with piracy; and branding English rule of Ireland as barbaric.

Other reports attacked the English desire to crush permanently Germany's economic system. An element of humor even occurred in this campaign, something seldom found, when English political leaders were called "Staatsmännlein" (a German diminutive form for the word statesman.) Consistent reference to English propaganda against Germany as that same old song ran rampant. Extensive coverage centered upon England's supposed attempt to force smaller nations into trading with her or actually into war against Germany. English search and seizure of American ships and American mail on the high seas received severe criticism as a gross

¹³Keller, "German-America," 37ff. The suspicions of German-Americans were by no means unfounded as this dissertation vividly demonstrates. It shows how repression was exercised by the government and how private citizens employed vigilante justice to deal with an ethnic minority.

violation of American neutrality.

British propaganda achieved major success in the United States through claims that Germany had acted both illegally and barbarically in the invasion of Belgium. The German language press questioned the sincerity of Belgium neutrality since, it maintained, that country had secret agreements with France. In the autumn of 1916 the German plan for a free Poland and Germany's guarantee of the continued existence of that state were widely heralded as indicative of German benevolence and as proof of her desires for a just peace that would protect the integrity of all concerned.

Obviously such appeals made in the German language would, in general, reach only German-Americans; in order to arouse broad sympathy they had to be directed toward a wider public. In such a campaign the *Scranton Wochenblatt* initiated advertisements in English such as: "Before you pass judgement on Germany, learn what German Culture means. The literature of Germany since Goethe is unsurpassed and perhaps unequalled by that of any other country." The newspaper offered English translations of German literary works for sale.

By April of 1917 when the United States entered the war, the *Weltbote* and the *Unabhängiger Republikaner* had already ceased publication; others had or would soon suffer a similar fate: the *Bucks County Express* (Doylestown) 1918; the *Pennsylvanische Staats-Zeitung* (Harrisburg) 1916; the *Kutztown Journal* 1919; the *Jefferson Demokrat von Schuylkill County* (Pottsville) 1918; the *Scranton Journal* 1919; the *Scranton Wochenblatt* 1918; the *Luzerne County Express* (Wilkes-Barre) 1918; and *Der Unions Freund* (York) 1916. Only a few German language papers survived the onslaught of anti-German sentiment.

Reaction of the German language newspress to American intervention in 1917 was awkward to say the least. The response of the *Scranton Wochenblatt*, typical of the shock and dismay experienced among many German-Americans, illustrated the mental gymnastics necessary to alter a former policy which seemed at least sympathetic to the German cause. The declaration of war, objectively reported, became coupled with an editorializing spirit which expressed deep regret over this event since it could only mean the continuation of hostilities and a more difficult peace settlement. This German language paper said that no one doubted the loyalty of Americans of German background. German-Americans, however, could best serve

the land of their origin during the coming events when they remained silent. He who could not hold his tongue would have brought the consequences upon himself. Similar warnings to German-Americans continued with appeals to nonnaturalized Germans: "Also: den Gesetzen gehorchen und Maulhalten" (Obey the laws and keep quiet).

The *Pittsburgh Volksblatt und Freiheitsfreund* consistently carried a short note on page one in English, "To our Readers, Carriers and Agents," which declared itself a loyal American newspaper trying to explain American policy to many loyal citizens of the German tongue. Also in its lead article appeared "An American Newspaper standing for American Ideals and Principles" and "The Organ of Thousands of Loyal Citizens of German Tongue."

Numerous articles tried to prove beyond any doubt that German-Americans were patriotic to the American cause. A widely-employed analogy referred to a man who left his mother to live with his new wife; his loyalties would be with his wife, yet he could still understand his mother.

What better way to prove its Americanism than to endorse adamantly the Liberty Bond drive and the liberty parades.¹⁴ The *Wilkes-Barre Wächter* resolutely ran such articles as "Amerikaner deutscher Abkunft werden in Massen erwartet" (Masses of Americans of German background awaited) for the liberty parade. English headlines in 1918 even appeared: "As an American Citizen it is Your Duty to Buy Liberty Bonds"; "Buy War Stamps when School Children call upon you next Week"; "The Fourth Liberty Loan Campaign opens next Friday. Join the Parade."

The *Volksblatt und Freiheitsfreund* went to extremes in trying to exhibit its Americanism. This commenced by carrying news of the Liberty Bond drive, viewed as a patriotic undertaking in which all Americans should partake. Soon large political caricatures accompanied these advertisements: a bloody dog with the German emblem attacking a mother and child; a huge monster (Germany)

¹⁴A. D. Graef, in *Pennsylvania Germans*, 234, notes that Hamburg, Berks County, Pennsylvania, was the first town in the U.S. to exceed its quota of Liberty Bonds in 1917, which he proposes intimates the strong patriotism of Pennsylvania Germans. The observation is probably correct, yet it is also possible that the German community had to visibly demonstrate to its neighbors that it was indeed not pro-German.

destroying everything in its path. The *Tageblatt* remained more sober and printed only advertisements and announcements for Liberty Bond drives, especially those sponsored by the Committee of Americans of German birth or ancestry.

A marked distinction in news accounts of the war appeared after the entrance of the United States. A multiplicity of photos of American war preparation and American soldiers now replaced those of German troops. However, a mild defense of Germany could still be detected during 1918, especially when she seemed to desire peace in Europe and employ policies directed toward attaining an equitable settlement. The *Tageblatt* of Philadelphia became most pronounced in these sentiments. This was politically possible since it had supported the worker's movement and had been known before the war for its severe criticism of the German government. Continued reports appeared describing the advantageous German military position and suggesting that neither side could achieve a solution through arms. The prerequisites for negotiations suggested by Lloyd George came in for major criticism while those proposed by Germany were compared to Wilson's principles of self-determination, freedom of the seas, disarmament, and a league of nations. It was consequently suggested that German proposals could well form the basis for a peace conference. The *Scranton Wochenblatt* also took pains to demonstrate that Germany's plans for peace were considerably more reasonable than England's, especially since Germany was prepared to make reparations for any damage inflicted upon Belgium.¹⁵

Since the United States had ostensibly gone to war for the protection of democracy, the so-called liberal-democratic tendency in Prussia and in Germany received wide coverage in German language papers. Various reports noted that the famous German historian Delbrück openly criticized the German government and its policies toward the war in word and print in the summer of 1918. The intimation could not be avoided that even in the United States such freedom of expression was missing because all the foreign language newspapers were censored by the act of October, 1917. Numerous

¹⁵In fact, the *Scranton Wochenblatt* reported, Germany was prepared to discuss peace terms on the basis of Wilson's principles, but England and France would not accept them.

German-Americans were even publicly insulted and ostracized for their criticism of this country's policies. Americans of German background had suffered major indignities since Wilson began the campaign against hyphenated Americans in 1915. German language papers viewed such attacks as a major insult since not one case of disloyalty had ever been proven against German-Americans. Carl Wittke goes so far as to claim that the effects of the war upon the German element in America "Was responsible for the most difficult and humiliating experience which any immigrant group has ever had in the long history of American immigration, with the possible exception of the Japanese-Americans in World War II."¹⁶

Similar to most of its sister newspapers, the *Scranton Wochenblatt* also found it difficult to continue publication; the edition of August 29, 1918, was its last and carried an epitaph which might well stand for Pennsylvania's German-American newspress in general: No newspaper can exist without sufficient advertisements. Since it seems that a movement is underway to destroy German newspapers by withholding advertisements from them, no betterment can be awaited as long as the present conditions exist. Everything German is viewed with suspicion; however, I hope that in the not too distant future justice will once again reign and things German will be respected.

The *Wächter* endeavored to survive by referring to itself not as a paper for German-Americans but by announcing in its headlines: "Eine Zeitung in deutscher Sprache für sprachkundige Amerikaner" (A newspaper in the German language for Americans proficient in languages). The few newspapers which successfully withstood the anti-German wave, as the *Tageblatt* of Philadelphia and the *Volksblatt und Freiheitsfreund* of Pittsburgh, could do so because of their recognized Americanism and their more advantageous location in major urban centers.

The German language newspress tended in the early years of the war to accept views similar to those held by the government in Berlin. This seemed to indicate support for the Central Powers. Yet such support directed itself essentially toward the preservation of neutrality on the part of the United States government; in retrospect it is rather clear that America was not at all impartial. The influence

¹⁶Wittke, *German Language*, 235.

of this press, although attempting to reach the American public, was, to be sure, limited to German-Americans. It never really influenced general American views, even when various German-American papers began printing sections of war news in English. From the outset of hostilities American public opinion and the American press were clearly sympathetic to the cause of the allies. Countless attempts failed to disprove the notion that the allies were fighting in the defense of liberal democracy and that the Central Powers sought the preservation of autocratic militarism. Americans refused to accept the idea that Germany was more democratic than commonly believed or that the Kaiser was a beloved democrat. The great enthusiasm permeating the German-American press during the earlier war years, in part a consequence of the stunning German victories on all fronts, abetted the myth that these newspapers functioned as an organ for and were controlled by Germany.

The decline of the German language newspress began at the end of the nineteenth century. The process of Americanization among German-Americans was indeed rapid, and the majority of them turned to English language papers. The outbreak of the war renewed interest among German-Americans in these publications, perhaps to gain a more objective understanding of events than that offered by English language counterparts which were usually pro-British. In 1914 the circulation of German language newspapers in the United States was approximately 780,000; 950,000 in 1917; and 250,000 in 1920.

The darkest hour for these journalistic efforts occurred when the United States actively entered the war and a wave of anti-Germanism swept the country. These papers were suspect even when they supported the American cause. Consequently, advertising fell off sharply as did circulation. The legislation of 1917 which required translations of the papers to be filed and permits for publication to be secured added heavily to the publisher's burdens. Under such conditions most of these newspapers could no longer sustain themselves. The events of World War I brought about the critical situation from which the German-American newspress never recovered.