
The War against German-American Culture: The Removal of German-Language Instruction from the Indianapolis Schools, 1917–1919

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Traditionally, war has been a “religious experience” for this nation; times of conflict have drawn from the American public a level of commitment to the cause that has at times bordered on the fanatical. Such zealotry was certainly apparent during World War I.¹ The United States declaration of war on Germany in April 1917 unleashed an era of what might be termed “superpatriotism,” which led to the opening of a domestic theater of war against German-American culture.² This reaction, described by Carl Wittke as “a violent, hysterical, concerted movement to eradicate everything German from American civilization,”³ manifested itself most clearly in a crusade against the German language, since it was through language that German-Americans in Indiana and elsewhere maintained part of their cultural heritage and “their different philosophy of life.”⁴ Through this “patriotic” war against German-American culture, nativists were able to halt the teaching of the German language in many schools throughout the country.

Although the superpatriots’ cultural warfare was directed at a variety of institutions and organizations, it made sense that one of the primary institutions targeted for battle was the public school. Some Americans believed that public schools were quickly becoming instruments of imperial Germany; Gustavus Ohlinger, a leading American opponent of German culture, warned that German-language schooling was part of a policy of *Kulturpolitik* by which Germany had for years worked to pacify the world’s citizens and to make them obedient to the *Vaterland*. This conspiracy in education was

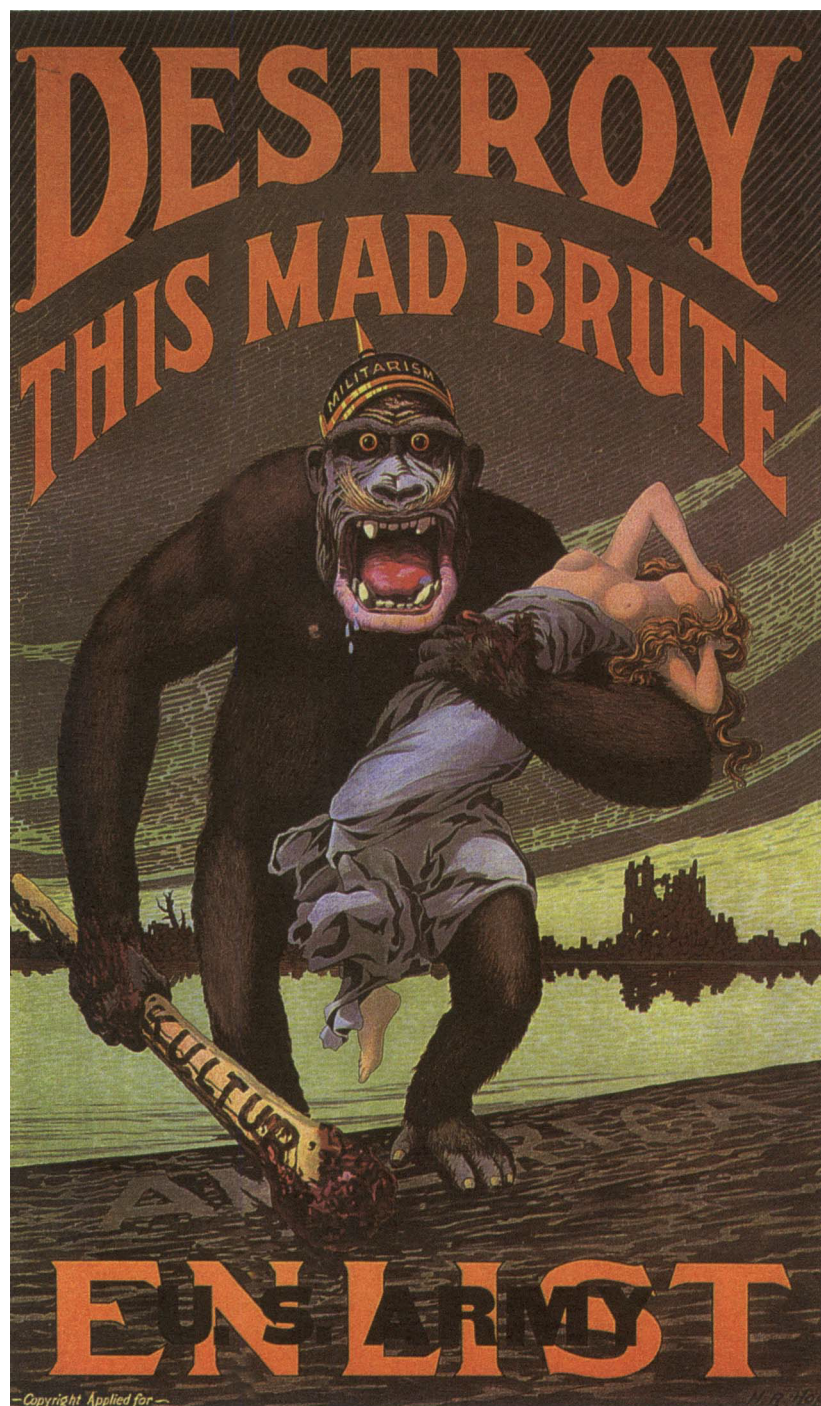
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¹Erik Kirschbaum, *The Eradication of German Culture in the United States: 1917–1918* (Stuttgart, Germany, 1986), 45–46.

²Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, Ill., 1974), 225–59.

³Carl Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War* (Columbus, Ohio, 1936), 163.

⁴George Theodore Probst, *The Germans in Indianapolis, 1840–1918* (Indianapolis, 1989), 140.



U.S. ARMY RECRUITING POSTER
BY H.R. HOPPS, c. 1917

Reproduced from *Persuasive Images: Posters of War and Revolution from the Hoover Institution Archives* (Princeton, N.J., 1992)

far-reaching, according to Ohlinger and other like-minded nativists, such as the western novelist Owen Wister, who warned of the peril of "Prussianized" education.⁵ American scholars who had studied in Germany were said to be supporters of that country's policy, and German-born professors, some hinted, were using their positions to spread pro-German propaganda. More importantly, imperial Germany had loyal supporters in the "Prussianized" German Americans. These were the Germans who had emigrated not seeking religious or political freedom but only economic betterment; politically, nativists believed, they remained loyal to Germany.⁶ These immigrants, Ohlinger suggested, worked through such organizations as the German-American Alliance—the leading German-American organization in the United States—to promote German-language instruction and pro-German textbooks in public schools so that the student's mind would become "so thoroughly saturated with ideas favorable to Germany that it [would be] ready to react to the crudest form of propaganda." If American education became imbued with German culture, Ohlinger feared, "there succumbs the nation."⁷

Schooling was significant in the cultural war for another reason as well. The school system in Germany was believed by some, notably American educators and school officials, to have been a direct cause of the war; that is, the German school had made the Great War possible.⁸ Mary C. C. Bradford, president of the National Education Association (NEA), maintained in 1917 that "the teachings of the German schools . . . led just as inevitably to the present crisis as we know that sunrise follows sunset and night follows day." Central to the German school, as interpreted by American educators, was its emphasis on Nietzsche and his "cruel philosophy." Thomas H. Briggs, professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University, told the members of the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) in 1917 that the war had been "inevitable" because the German school inculcated militarism in its students. According to Briggs, German students repeatedly had to answer "What country is our natural enemy?" with "France," and "What must we do to the natural enemy of our country?" with "Destroy it."⁹ Although the German school had in part caused the war, the American school could do its part by attacking any lingering expressions of German culture among immigrants. Following the advice of the World War I slogan,

⁵Owen Wister, "Forward," in *Their True Faith and Allegiance*, Gustavus Ohlinger (New York, 1916), xii; Ohlinger, *The German Conspiracy in American Education* (New York, [1919?]), 11.

⁶Ohlinger, *Germany Conspiracy*, 10-17, 29-32, 99-100; Wister, "Forward," viii-x; Ohlinger, *Their True Faith*, 25-26, 32-34, 42.

⁷Ohlinger, *German Conspiracy*, 11, 83; Ohlinger, *Their True Faith*, 37-38.

⁸Indiana State Teachers Association, *Proceedings and Papers, 1917*, 43-44, 99-100, 286 (hereafter cited as ISTA, *Proceedings*).

⁹*Ibid.*, 42-43, 99-100, 287-88.

"If you can't fight over there, fight over here," an army of educators, officials, politicians, and concerned citizens fought for what Indiana University's James Woodburn described as a "*united nation—with one people, one government . . . one allegiance, and, let us not be afraid to say, one language.*"¹⁰

This essay examines the campaign to eliminate German-language instruction from Indiana's, and especially Indianapolis's, schools. Before 1917, German-Americans in Indianapolis had a thriving community and played an important role in the city's development, but that role was attacked and undermined after the United States entered the war. Superpatriotism, expressed by hysterical hatred of the German enemy, swept across the country during the war era, creating a demand for the removal of German-language instruction from the schools. That demand was at last met, in Indiana, by passage of the McCray Act in 1919.

In 1917 German-Americans were a sizable and visible segment of the Indiana population. The 1910 census reported that Indiana's population of 2,700,876 included more than a half-million people of "foreign white stock," i.e., either they or at least one of their parents had been born in a foreign country.¹¹ More than half of this group in Indiana listed German ancestry, while another 3.5 percent claimed Austrian heritage. In 1915, a leading German-American Hoosier, William A. Fritsch, estimated that more than half of Indiana's residents were of Teutonic lineage. The state's capital had a similarly large Germanic population. In 1910, statistics for Indianapolis resembled those for the state as a whole: nearly half of Indianapolis's citizens of "foreign birth or foreign parentage" had origins in Germany with another 2.8 percent having Austrian ancestry; taken together, Americans of German and Austrian parentage comprised some 30,938 of Indianapolis's 233,650 residents. The census reports did not reach beyond the second generation, but historian George Theodore Probst has estimated that in 1890 perhaps a third of Indianapolis's residents were of German ancestry.¹² One source reported that the typical German immigrant in the city was "Americanized in a political and economic sense" rather quickly but "maintained his customs and used his mother tongue," although the second generation was less likely to do so.¹³

¹⁰Kirschbaum, *Eradication of German Culture*, 63; ISTA, *Proceedings, 1917*, 350.

¹¹U.S., Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census, 1910: Vol. II, Population*, 518, 543.

¹²*Ibid.*, 519, 543, 546; Frederick Franklin Schrader, *Handbook: Political, Statistical and Sociological for German Americans . . .* (New York, 1916–1917), 98; Albert Bernhardt Faust, *The German Element in the United States with Special Reference to Its Political, Moral, Social, and Educational Influences* (2 vols., Boston, 1909), I, 576–77, 582; Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 90–91; William A. Fritsch, *German Settlers and German Settlements in Indiana* (Evansville, Ind., 1915), 4.

¹³*Indianapolis Turnverein: Seventy-fifth Anniversary, 1851–1926* ([Indianapolis?], [1926?]), 21.



"OVER THERE—OVER HERE!"

New York *Evening Post*, 1918, as reproduced in
Literary Digest, LVII (April 20, 1918), 7.

German-Americans thrived in Indianapolis before the war. They maintained numerous institutions that supported and energized their culture, which many believed was greater than the dominant American culture. German-Americans established German churches, the Indianapolis Maennerchor (Men's Chorus), and a variety of other clubs and societies, including the Indianapolis Turnverein, a social and athletic club. Indianapolis also housed a chapter of the German-American Alliance. Just before the war, an Indianapolis man, Joseph Keller, served as president of the state chapter and first vice president of the national organization.¹⁴ Indianapolis was also the home of several of Indiana's German-language newspapers, including the prominent *Telegraph und Tribüne*, which ran six evenings a week with a circulation of 10,825 in 1915. In the same year, the newspaper's Sunday edition, *Spottvogel*, claimed a circulation of 11,979.¹⁵ In

¹⁴Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 126-34, 140; *Indianapolis Turnverein*, 5; Schrader, *Handbook for German Americans*, 52; Ohlinger, *German Conspiracy*, 59-60.

¹⁵James P. Ziegler, *The German-language Press in Indiana: A Bibliography* (Indianapolis, 1994), 15-19.

addition to their own organizations, residents of Germanic heritage played key roles in local civic institutions as well. Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, for instance, German-Americans in Indianapolis held the offices of mayor, chief of police, and sheriff.¹⁶

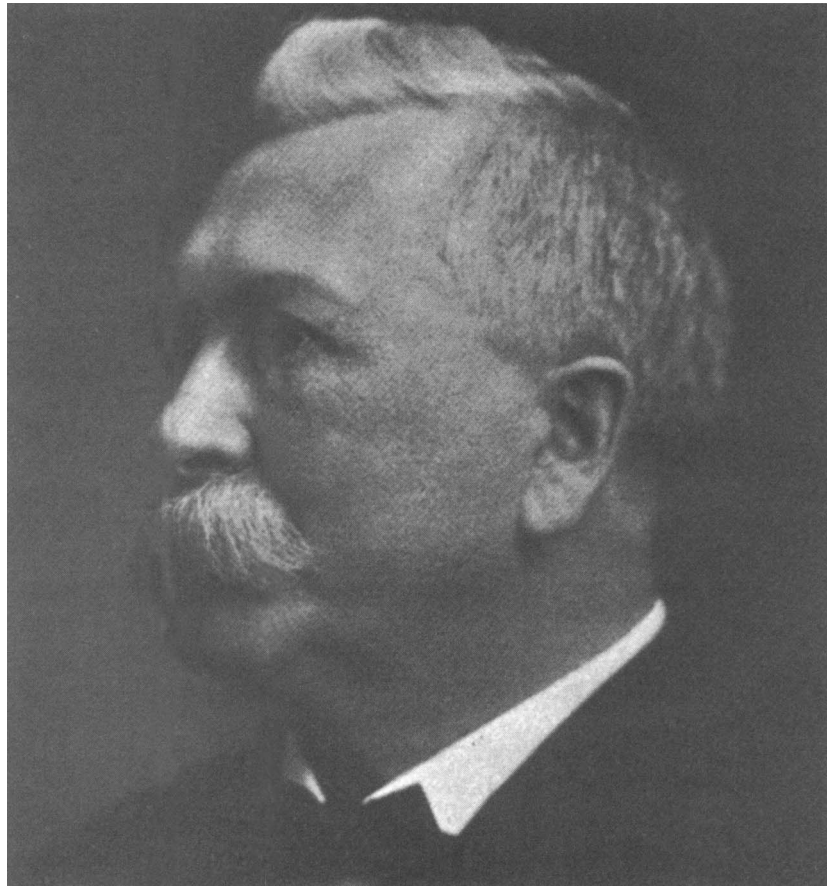
Indianapolis residents of German descent were also involved in another important institution: the school. Clearly, German-Americans exercised a great deal of control over German parochial schools, but they also held key positions in Indianapolis's public schools, among which were seats on the school board. Beginning in the 1860s, for instance, Clemens Vonnegut sat on the Board of School Commissioners for nearly thirty years, and Keller became the president of the board before World War I. German-Americans in Indianapolis were also heavily involved with manual training and physical education in the public schools. Frances Mueller, for example, became the first supervisor of physical education for Indianapolis's public schools, and, beginning in the 1890s, Charles E. Emmerich served as principal of the new Manual Training High School. Moreover, Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) maintained an extensive German-language program before World War I, and the administrators who oversaw the program were also German-Americans. Emmerich was IPS's supervisor of German from 1873 until the early 1890s. Another German-American, Robert Nix, served in that role for sixteen years, until 1910, when Peter Scherer took over the position—the title was upgraded to director of modern languages in 1915—and held it until it was terminated in 1918.¹⁷

It was through the public school, along with the family, parochial schools, and the churches, that the German language was preserved for the generations of German-Americans with no firsthand knowledge of Germany and its language. Beginning in 1869 German-language instruction was required by law to be offered in many of Indiana's public schools. Indiana's Germans hoped the law would attract more immigrants to the state.¹⁸ The law stated that "whenever the parents or guardians of twenty-five or more children in attendance at any school of a township, town or city, shall so demand, it shall be the duty of the School Trustee or Trustees of said township,

¹⁶Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 182-183.

¹⁷*Indianapolis Turnverein*, 17-20; Indianapolis Public Schools, *Annual Report, 1908-1909*, 4 (hereafter cited as IPS, *Annual Report*); Murray A. Dalman, "The Indianapolis Schools: A Brief History," in *Indianapolis Public Schools, 1853-1953* (Indianapolis, 1953), 93-96; Frances H. Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction in the Public Schools of Indianapolis 1869-1919," *Indiana Magazine of History*, L (June, September, December 1954), 119, 257, 357-58, 364-65, 368-69, 374-78; IPS, *Annual Report, 1916*, 2; Frederick K. Gale, *A Biographical Study of Persons for Whom Indianapolis Schools Are Named* (Indianapolis, 1965), see under "Clemens Vonnegut"; Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 101, 140; Ohlinger, *German Conspiracy*, 59-60.

¹⁸*Indianapolis Star*, February 26, 1919; Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction," 124-25.



ROBERT NIX

Reproduced from *Poems*, Vol. I, 2 vols. (Spokane, Wa., 1930), frontispiece

town or city, to procure efficient teachers, and introduce the German language, as a branch of study, into such schools; and the tuition in said schools shall be without charge.”¹⁹ IPS began to experiment with German-language instruction within the city’s heavily German wards even before this legislation had been formally proposed, but after the bill became a law the number of elementary schools offering the language steadily grew. By 1877, there were already ten schools offering German; six years later, sixteen schools provided German-language instruction to more than 2,400 students. Indianapolis’s high school had been teaching German since 1868. In 1907, the practice was fur-

¹⁹Indiana, Superintendent of Public Instruction, *School Laws of Indiana*, (1877) 48-49.

ther encouraged by passage of a state law requiring either Latin or German to be offered to high-school students for foreign-language study.²⁰

German-language instruction was by no means unique to Indiana. In 1839 Ohio had become the first midwestern state to provide for the teaching of German. Kansas enacted its German school law in 1867. In states without foreign-language laws, such as Missouri, some heavily German localities introduced German-language instruction into the public schools; without the backing of legislation, however, these bilingual programs often did not survive into the twentieth century. Nor was German instruction confined to the Midwest. Baltimore's public elementary schools offered German, as did schools in towns as diverse as New Braunfels, Texas, and Carlstadt, New Jersey. In all, more than two hundred public elementary schools in the United States offered German in 1900. In 1917, the U. S. Bureau of Education reported that foreign-language instruction in elementary schools was offered in nineteen of the American cities it surveyed, sixteen of which specifically included German in the curriculum.²¹

The *IPS Annual Reports* give some indication of the prominent role German-language instruction played in Indianapolis's public schools before World War I. During the 1908–1909 school year, for instance, German was offered in the city's two high schools as well as in thirty-eight of its "district" (elementary) schools. At the elementary and secondary levels, fifty teachers conducted 451 classes in German-language instruction, which, in the district schools, translated into daily half-hour lessons.²² The district schools offered a seven-year German program beginning in the second grade, while

²⁰Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction," 122–37, 252, 261, 363; IPS, *Annual Report, 1883*, 28; *ibid.*, 1908–1909, 52–53.

²¹Heinz Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," in *Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups*, Joshua Fishman (London, U.K., 1966), 233–35; La Vern J. Rippley, *The German Americans* (Boston, 1976), 120–22; L. Viereck, "German Instruction in American Schools," in U.S., Commissioner of Education, *Report, 1900–1901* (2 vols., Washington, D.C., 1902), I, 639–40; "Foreign Languages in the Elementary School," *School and Society*, VI, No. 151 (1917), 583; Frederick C. Luebke, "Legal Restrictions on Foreign Languages in the Great Plains States, 1917–1923," in *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*, ed. Luebke, (Urbana, Ill., 1990), 36.

²²In the 1880s and 1890s, IPS students studying German in the upper-elementary grades received language instruction that was similar to the "two-way" bilingual education method sometimes used today. That is, in the "German annexes" mixed classes of both native-English and native-German speakers were taught half of the day's subjects—including U.S. history—in German and the other half in English, enabling the two groups of students to gain proficiency in both languages. The German annexes did not continue into the twentieth century, but when nativists began to call for the elimination of German instruction in 1917, they suggested that the German language was used to sing patriotic songs such as "The Star Spangled Banner," which could suggest that some classes in Indianapolis used German as the language of instruction for nonforeign-language lessons. See IPS, *Annual Report, 1883*, 29–31; Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction," 258–61, 264, 357, 372.

the high schools offered both an advanced course of study, for those who had completed the district program, and a beginning German program for those who had no previous instruction. The second, third, and fourth grades enrolled the largest number of students, but the combined district and secondary programs offered German instruction to nearly 7,500 of the city's 28,342 white students. Most of those enrolled in German programs were neither immigrants nor first-generation German-Americans; no mention is made of second- or third-generation German students.²³

Besides teaching the German language to large numbers of students, IPS, during the 1908–1909 school year, also sought to acquaint students “with Germany, with the nature and customs of the people, and with Germany’s culture and intellectual life.” To achieve that end, teachers in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades taught “German fairy tales and legends”; IPS teachers were even offered advanced study in German legends through the school system. High school students in both the beginning and advanced programs learned about German culture through the works of Friedrich von Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, along with other classic and contemporary examples of German literature.²⁴

In the period preceding America’s entry into the First World War, the mission of the IPS German program was to give students not only language instruction but also a sense of *Kultur*. German was used as the language of instruction in order to develop students’ *Sprachgefuehl* or understanding of spoken German, rather than their translation skills. During these years the German program continued to grow; by 1916, sixty-five instructors (six of whom were substitutes) taught more than 560 German classes containing nearly ten thousand elementary and secondary students.²⁵ A year later the U.S.’s entry into the war introduced a perverse form of patriotism that first threatened and ultimately destroyed German-language instruction throughout the city and state.

While Indianapolis’s large German-American community had succeeded in sustaining a thriving culture before the war, conflict with other elements of the community was not an entirely new phenomenon. Early prohibition agitation had provided one source of tension.²⁶ The German-language education program itself had aroused resentment as early as the 1880s and 1890s, decades marked by nativist campaigns against immigrant education around the country.²⁷ In the mid-1880s, much of the opposition to German instruction in

²³IPS, *Annual Report, 1908–1909*, 28–30, 151–57.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 78–79, 128, 155–57.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 153–55; *ibid.*, 1916, 92, 130–33; Ellis, “Historical Account of German Instruction,” 369–71.

²⁶Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 143.

²⁷For a detailed look at the nativist-led school attacks see Lloyd P. Jorgenson, *The State and the Non-Public School, 1825–1925* (Columbia, Mo., 1987).

the public schools was disguised as fiscal concern; near the end of the decade, the attacks became serious. In 1890 the school board voted to end the German program. The surprise vote was taken when two board members who were supporters of German-language instruction were absent. However, the city's German-language press opposed the decision, and German-Americans organized and took the issue to court. The legality of the German program in the public schools was affirmed by the Indiana Supreme Court in 1891.²⁸

Some scholars have argued that these historic areas of conflict are key to understanding the war against German-American culture that began in 1917. Historian Frederick C. Luebke, warning against a search for simple causes, writes that the war

converted latent tensions into manifest hostility. For this reason, little understanding is gained by identifying scapegoats, either German-American extremists, who allegedly provoked the government to repressive measures, or superpatriots, who by their immoderate rhetoric may have incited Americans to riot.²⁹

But Luebke's statement underestimates both the power of the superpatriots' harangues and the appeal of patriotism itself. Anti-German rhetoric resonated in the American mind during the war era and proved to be quite persuasive. For example, one of historian Erik Kirschbaum's sources noted that "any audience . . . will cheer an attack on the German language more wildly than any other phase of a patriotic address." In addition to anti-German rhetoric, patriotism itself captured the minds of many Americans, particularly the young. Another Kirschbaum source remarked that college students who in the past had shown passion only for football now "gave themselves wholeheartedly to the new master . . . they patrolled the armory, balking imagined plots of enemy spies."³⁰

Although historic areas of conflict undeniably existed between German-Americans and the larger American society, the dominant fanatical patriotism and nativism of the war years manifested themselves on a scale hitherto unseen. These wartime emotions stemmed more from recent events—the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the exaggerated war reports from the British news monopoly, the Zimmermann telegram, and the alarming reports of Franz von Papen's encouragement of sabotage—than they did from any previous tension.³¹ As a postwar writer noted of Indianapolis's German-Americans, only "a few years before these very 'enemies' had been praised highly for their accomplishments and contributions to the cultural life of the city."³²

²⁸Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction," 262-76.

²⁹Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, xiii.

³⁰Kirschbaum, *Eradication of German Culture*, 94, 110.

³¹*Ibid.*, 49-65.

³²*Indianapolis Turnverein*, 21.

As the United States entered the war against Germany and its allies, professional conferences and journals of educators and school officials in Indiana began to reflect the increasingly reactionary mood of American society. Unsurprisingly, patriotic sentiment dominated the 1917 annual meeting of the ISTA. The NEA's Bradford noted the need to "keep alive in our communities and in our schools the old ideals of American life and patriotism." Indiana Senator James E. Watson told the audience that "you school teachers cannot impress these ideals of the American Republic, liberty, equality and fraternity too strongly upon the heart and conscience of the coming generation until they are filled with the holy doctrine."³³

The senator's idea of fraternity did not seem to include the German-Americans. Watson was interrupted with applause when he stated that "there are no real German-Americans today; they all ought to be Americans." His patriotism was clear, but as Briggs noted in a talk otherwise marked by its anti-German sentiment, "patriotism often involves passion and hate and blinds us to reason, [and] may be used to advance the very ideals that we have entered the war to defeat."³⁴

Despite Briggs's caution, a detectable and growing paranoia informed the patriotism of Indiana educators. On November 1, 1917, Professor Woodburn told the history section of the ISTA that "[t]he German rulers and their hired agents in this country . . . have deliberately planned the invasion and partition of our territory . . . [and] have filled our lands with spies."³⁵ In 1919, the *Indianapolis News* assured its readers that, in fact, there had been a plot by some German-Americans to make the United States a "German country."³⁶ Reports of German propaganda caught the attention of Indiana educators during the war.³⁷ In one case, an Indiana school inspector came across a high school textbook that allegedly provided its readers with a favorable description of Germany's kaiser.³⁸

³³ISTA, *Proceedings*, 1917, 43, 290-91.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 105, 282.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 343-44.

³⁶*Indianapolis News*, February 26, 1919. These accusations were not entirely baseless. For example, in the early- and mid-nineteenth century, some German immigrants hoped to concentrate their settlement within the United States in order to form German states that might eventually separate; see Faust, *The German Element*, II, 184-85. But most of the reports of German machinations were grossly distorted; for the German-American response to the allegations of anti-American plots see Schrader, *Handbook for German Americans*, II, 60.

³⁷"How German Propaganda Worked in Respect to a School Text by an Indiana School Man," *Indiana Instructor*, II (May 1918), 32. According to this essay, in 1915 the German-American Alliance attempted to halt the publication of a book by an Indiana University history professor that commented on the war in Europe; the book proved to be offensive to some German-Americans, particularly to professors and teachers of German, presumably because of its anti-German sentiments. After the U.S. entered the war, the professor was called to testify against the Alliance before the U.S. Senate, when it was considering banning the organization.

³⁸"More Evidence of German Propaganda in the Schools," *Indiana Instructor*, II (July 1918), 15.

In 1918 the frenzied atmosphere spread to other German-American institutions. Indianapolis's leading German-language daily, the *Telegraph und Tribüne*, informed its readers throughout May 1918 of increasing pressures against the foreign-language press.³⁹ On May 31, the *Telegraph* abruptly announced that it would cease publication on Monday, June 3, because "a pronounced prejudice has arisen in this country against everything printed or written in the German language, regardless of the fact that the German language newspapers are the means of reaching thousands of persons who are reached in no other way."⁴⁰ The Indianapolis *Turnverein*, reflecting on the war era, stated in 1926 that "in Indianapolis hatred against the citizen of German extraction was artificially stimulated, and irresponsible hot-heads even went so far as to threaten the societies composed of such of their fellow citizens."⁴¹ This hatred of everything German compelled the gymnastic society to change the name of its club hall from *Das Deutsche Haus* to the Athenaeum.⁴² Perhaps the most extreme manifestation of hatred occurred in neighboring Illinois, where in April 1918, a German immigrant was lynched by a nativist mob.⁴³

Concern over German-Americans' loyalty to the U.S. was not entirely unwarranted. Some accusations of un-American activities contained a kernel of truth. Some German-Americans were Socialists, and many others acted out of a sense of loyalty to the *Vaterland*. For example, before the United States declared war, a handful of Germans in Indianapolis sought to join the German army, using *Das Deutsche Haus* as a headquarters. The city's German-language press, in this period, favored the Central Powers over the Allies. Some Americans expressed their suspicion of Germany's Delbrück Law, which allowed emigrants to keep their German citizenship even after being naturalized by another state. However, German-Americans were quick to point out that the dual citizenship law did not apply to German-born Americans, who were citizens of the United States only. Once America entered the war, most of the city's residents of Germanic background were in fact loyal to their new homeland.⁴⁴ In May 1917,

³⁹Indianapolis *Telegraph und Tribüne*, May 8, 11, 17, 23, 1918.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, May 31, 1918.

⁴¹Indianapolis *Turnverein*, 21.

⁴²*Ibid.*; Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 152-53.

⁴³Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 3-10. There was also a lesser-known murder that occurred in Indiana. Shortly after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915, a pastor from Gary was killed by "fantisierten Angloamerikanern" for speaking out in favor of *Deutschtum* (Germanness). See Colin Ross, *Unser Amerika: Der deutsche Anteil an den Vereinigten Staaten* (Leipzig, Germany, 1936), 316; Schrader, *Handbook for German Americans*, 2.

⁴⁴Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 63; Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 147-49, 151-52; Schrader, *Handbook for German Americans*, 22; Ohlinger, *German Conspiracy*, 18-19. While some German-Americans suggested that the Delbrück Law did not apply to U.S. citizens of Germanic origins, legal scholars during the war years were not so certain. David Jayne Hill, for instance, noted that the law certainly did not apply to all German-Americans because it required emigrants to obtain the "written

the *Telegraph und Tribune* ran advertisements for liberty bonds that stated, "Uncle Sam needs your money! He has helped you. Now is the time to help him." A year later, the *Telegraph* was praised by the Liberty Loan campaign for the newspaper's "hearty, unselfish, patriotic co-operation in the publicity work incident to the Third Liberty Loan campaign."⁴⁵

Despite evidence of their loyalty, German-Americans throughout the country—"hyphens" as they were sometimes derogatively called—were accused of everything from starting fires to putting broken glass in food and drink.⁴⁶ Although these accusations proved false, "Germanophobia" continued.⁴⁷ To be German was to be un-American and undemocratic. The history section of the ISTA, for instance, was quick to point out that "[t]he colonies had originally risen against George III, a German, because of his autocratic mood."⁴⁸ Ohlinger suggested that because the German language itself contained "no equivalents for such expressions as 'liberty,' 'pursuit of happiness,' [or] 'the consent of the governed,'" German speakers could never become truly American.⁴⁹

The schools continued to serve as battlefields in this war of ideas. Teachers and administrators became, in Briggs's phrase, the "soldiers of the schools," attempting to counteract foreign notions through the process of Americanization.⁵⁰ The most obvious step in this process was the suppression of the "Hun Language."⁵¹ Woodburn, for instance, hoped for a country in which only English was used. "Let us strive," he said, "to save America from being a polyglot nation—a conglomeration of tongues and nationalities, like a 'polyglot boardinghouse,' as Mr. Roosevelt has put it." The history sec-

consent" of the German government before it would restore their citizenship. He also suggested that the law became void if it was found to have "disturbed" a previously negotiated treaty with another nation. Hill argued that the treaties between the U.S. and Germany remained "undisturbed" by the Delbrück Law, so there was no reason to assume that Germany would not consider some Americans to be German citizens, particularly while at war. The American naturalization process, however, was the primary protection against dual citizenship because it demanded that new citizens renounce their previous citizenship "absolutely and forever." See David Jayne Hill, "Dual Citizenship in the German Imperial and State Citizenship Law," *American Journal of International Law*, XII (April 1918), 357-63.

⁴⁵Indianapolis *Telegraph und Tribune*, May 25, 1917, May 16, 1918 (author's translation).

⁴⁶Wister described German-Americans as the "Kaiser's helpful hyphens." See Ohlinger, *German Conspiracy*, xix.

⁴⁷Kirschbaum, *Eradication of German Culture*, 117-21.

⁴⁸ISTA, *Proceedings*, 1917, 337.

⁴⁹Ohlinger, *German Conspiracy*, 107-108.

⁵⁰ISTA, *Proceedings*, 1919, 104; Kirschbaum, *Eradication of German Culture*, 108. In general, educators around the country did not support the elimination of German-language instruction when the war first began. However, as the mood of the country became more radical regarding German-language instruction, educators revised their positions and often enthusiastically supported the nativist campaigns. See *ibid.*, 96-97, 108-11.

⁵¹Indianapolis *Star*, February 26, 1919; Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 153.

tion of the ISTA discussed this issue at its 1917 meeting. At ISTA's 1919 meeting, University of Washington President Henry Suzzallo announced that his immigrant father, who spoke five languages, wanted his children to hear only English.⁵²

The assault on the IPS German-language program began the month after the declaration of war, when the American Rights Committee complained to the school board that the German language was being used in some German classes to sing patriotic songs such as the "Star Spangled Banner."⁵³ The organization's five hundred members demanded that the practice be investigated and, if confirmed, stopped immediately. On January 29, 1918, the board voted, over the objections of German-American member Theodore Stempf, to end German-language instruction in the city's elementary schools immediately. The board justified the action by stating that "the public schools should teach our boys and girls the principle of one nation, one language, and one flag, and should not assist in perpetuating the language of an alien enemy in our homes and enemy viewpoints in the community." The German teachers were to be reassigned until their contracts ended.⁵⁴

Some high school German classes were still offered, but their enrollment was seriously depleted, a trend that occurred throughout the country. At the beginning of the 1918–1919 school year, for example, only 112 students enrolled in German classes at Indianapolis's Technical High School, down from 1,178 during the 1916–1917 school year. For the most part, only students who had already begun the high schools' German program continued to take German courses; they did so in order to fulfill the foreign-language requirements needed to graduate. The position of director of modern languages was eliminated, but the former director, Scherer, became supervisor of German to oversee the remaining high school program.⁵⁵ Even the high school German textbooks came under attack. Max Walter and Carl A. Krause's text for beginners, used by order of a 1913 state law, was now said to be "pro-German in its tendencies."⁵⁶

In 1918, Germanophobia was in full swing in Indianapolis's public schools. Teachers, who now had loyalty clauses written into their contracts, could be terminated if they spoke out against the U.S. or

⁵²ISTA, *Proceedings*, 1917, 123, 335–36, 350.

⁵³Some educators resisted appeals to patriotism and instead promoted nativist designs by arguing that German instruction was simply not practical for American students because they would not have many opportunities to use the skill. See "Potent Reasons Why German Should Not be Taught in the Public Schools," *Indiana Instructor*, II (October 1917), 3–4. See also Kirschbaum, *Eradication of German Culture*, 106–107.

⁵⁴Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction," 371–75.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 378; Indianapolis *Star*, February 26, 1919; Luebke, "Legal Restrictions," 36.

⁵⁶Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction," 376; IPS, *Annual Report*, 1916, 133.

were found to "inculcate or aid in the support of, or admiration for the . . . Kultur of Germany." The school board, alarmed that IPS's elementary students might be harmed by lingering remnants of *Kultur*, banned one of the poems in the third reader, *Kaiserblumen*, and suggested that the pages on which the poem appeared could be glued together.⁵⁷

In the European theater of war, American troops helped defeat Germany and its allies by November 1918, but in the American theater of war, nativist soldiers believed they had not yet defeated German-American culture.⁵⁸ The Woman's Auxiliary of the Rainbow Regiment Cheer Association, consisting of female relatives of soldiers in the 150th Field Artillery, warned that "the German language in the elementary schools of the state will be a tool in the hands of German propagandists who are seeking to bring about a soft peace with Germany."⁵⁹ IPS had halted much of the German instruction in the city, but a stronger and farther-reaching measure was deemed necessary to stop the "enemy language" in Indianapolis: a statewide law banning German not only from public schools, but from private and parochial elementary schools as well. Supporters of Senate Bill 276, drafted by State Senator Franklin McCray and Lieutenant Governor Edgar D. Bush, reasoned that such a law would eliminate the next generation's need for newspapers and public information printed in a foreign language.⁶⁰

Presented to the Indiana Senate on February 17, 1919, the first two sections of McCray's bill stated that English would be the only lawful language in which to teach subjects in Indiana's public, private, and parochial elementary schools. Section one further stated that "the German language shall not be taught in any of the elementary schools of this state." Another section of the bill included the provision that violators would be fined up to one hundred dollars and/or spend up to six months in jail. In mid-February 1919, a new measure was added to the bill that would repeal other laws that were inconsistent with it, such as the German school law of 1869.⁶¹

Only one senator, from South Bend, voted against the McCray bill. The following day, it was "favorably" reviewed by the house committee on education. The Indianapolis *Star* reported that "because of state-wide interest . . . [the bill] was easily identified by number" when it reached the floor of the house on February 25. The house suspended the constitutional regulation "requiring the bills be read on three separate days" and unanimously passed the bill in a quarter of an

⁵⁷Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction," 375, 377-78.

⁵⁸Luebke, "Legal Restrictions," 42.

⁵⁹Indianapolis *Star*, February 26, 1919.

⁶⁰Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 153; IPS, *Annual Report, 1909*, 154; *ibid.*, 1916, 131; Indianapolis *News*, February 26, 1919; Indianapolis *Star*, February 26, 1919; Indiana, *House Journal* (1919), 519-20.

⁶¹Indiana, *Laws* (1919), 50-51; Indianapolis *Star*, February 26, 1919.

hour.⁶² Shortly afterward, the governor signed the act, and it was taken to the secretary of state. Upon arrival, McCray's legislation became a state law "immediately," because it included a sixth section that stated that "an emergency exists for the immediate taking effect of this act." This process, from the time the bill was read in the house to the time it became a law, took just over an hour and a half.⁶³

Indiana was one of the first states to pass such a law, and its German-Americans understood the mood of the country and adjusted to it. Some became self-conscious about their German ancestry. State Representative Sam Benz, for instance, stated, "I'm a German . . . but you can't make this bill too strong to suit me. Not only do I indorse the exclusion of German, but I would be in favor also of taking out all foreign languages." The Lutheran and Catholic schools in Indianapolis had halted German instruction during the war.⁶⁴ There was no longer a powerful German-language press to rally the protests of German-Americans and to protect German-language instruction as it had done in the nineteenth century; in fact, very few of Indiana's German-language newspapers, particularly secular papers, continued after the war.⁶⁵

However, there were still those few lingering German classes in the high schools of Indianapolis and, presumably, throughout the rest of the state. Even before McCray's legislation was introduced, another bill appeared on the floor of the Indiana State Senate to address the remaining high school German courses. On February 5, 1919, State Senator Glenn Van Auken introduced Senate Bill 208, the purpose of which was to amend the 1907 state law that required German as a foreign-language option in the high schools of Indiana. Perhaps because the weakened high school programs seemed to lawmakers to pose less of a threat than those in the elementary schools, Van Auken's legislation did not have the same urgency as the McCray Bill. Senate Bill 208 was read three times, referred to committees twice, and amended once before passing the senate and moving on to the house.⁶⁶ After nearly a month in the house, the bill passed and was returned to the senate on March 10, 1919.⁶⁷ The amended school law stated that "Latin or any modern foreign language except Ger-

⁶²Indianapolis *Star*, February 26, 1919; Indiana, *House Journal* (1919), 519.

⁶³Indianapolis *Star*, February 26, 1919; Indiana, *Laws* (1919), 51.

⁶⁴Indianapolis *Star*, February 26, 1919. Some parochial schools in Indiana protested against the McCray Bill and other similar types of legislation. For example, although it used English as the language of instruction for academic subjects, one Lutheran church—the First Evangelical Lutheran Immanuel Church of Seymour, Indiana—requested in a letter to the lieutenant governor that religious instruction be excluded from English-only legislation, such as House Bill No. 6, which was pending at the time the letter was written. Indiana, *Senate Journal* (1919), 156.

⁶⁵Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction," 375; Ziegler, *German-language Press*, 1-27.

⁶⁶Indiana, *Laws* (1919), 822-23; Indiana, *Senate Journal* (1919), 245, 969.

⁶⁷Indiana, *House Journal* (1919), 359-60, 828, 835, 1098.

man" was required to be taught in the state's high schools.⁶⁸ IPS's once-flourishing German-language program had come to an end, and German-American culture in the city had been irreparably damaged. Although the bill had eliminated the high school German classes, some German teachers managed to find new subjects to teach. At Shortridge High School, for instance, Louis H. Dirks switched to teaching English.⁶⁹

What happened to Indianapolis's German-language program was not an anomaly. German instruction was severely restricted in many areas throughout the United States and Canada during and after the Great War. Even before the war, laws in Arizona and California, among other states, already mandated English-only schools. In the war era twenty-one states further restricted foreign-language education in the elementary grades, making English the only lawful language of instruction. There was a degree of variation among these restrictive state laws, however. Oklahoma, West Virginia, South Dakota, and Illinois all declared that teaching subjects in a foreign language was illegal in both public and private schools; by contrast, Indiana, as already noted, specifically outlawed the German language from its schools. In New Hampshire, children attending private schools were exempted from the state's mandatory attendance law only if they attended private schools where English was the language of instruction. Minnesota passed a law requiring English for the traditional school subjects and reducing the amount of time for foreign languages to one hour daily.⁷⁰ Nebraska, however, passed what the *Minnesota Law Review* called "the most far reaching legislation" regarding foreign-language instruction. The Nebraska law stated that "[n]o person individually or as a teacher, shall in any private, denominational, parochial or public school teach any subject to any person in any language [other] than the English language," and no foreign-language instruction would be permitted until the high school level.⁷¹

In many ways, the restrictive policies and nativism seen in Indiana and its capital city reflected those in the rest of the country, but, overall, Indianapolis's cultural war was rather mild. Some cities in the United States, for example, eliminated German programs without going through legal channels. Additionally, there were no pub-

⁶⁸Indiana, *Senate Journal* (1919), 823.

⁶⁹Laura Sheerin Gaus, *Shortridge High School, 1864-1981: In Retrospect* (Indianapolis, 1985), 109.

⁷⁰Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War*, 180-81; Jerrold B. Burnell, "The Decline of German Language and Culture in the North American Heartland, 1890-1923" (Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, New York, March 18-21, 1982), 6; Luebke, "Legal Restrictions," 42; Henry J. Fletcher, ed., "Recent Legislation Forbidding Teaching of Foreign Languages in Public Schools," *Minnesota Law Review*, IV (May 1920), 449-50; Rippley, *German Americans*, 124.

⁷¹"Recent Legislation," 450.

lic rallies against Germanic citizens in Indianapolis, as there were in other places, perhaps because the Germans in Indianapolis were not viewed as alien residents. Rather, the German-Americans were a large and integral part of the city's population; they were teachers, doctors, storekeepers, bankers, and laborers, as well as neighbors.⁷² Near the turn of the twentieth century, Stempfel characterized Indianapolis as "a peaceable city," where, at least in earlier decades, nativism "had a hard time taking hold."⁷³ Although many of Indianapolis's citizens were swept up in the patriotic and nativist fervor of the First World War, the tradition of primarily harmonious relations with their German-American neighbors may have held some of the more extreme fanatics at bay.

The American entry into the Great War did not end all aspects of the German-Americans' unique culture. The gymnastic clubs, churches, and the Maennerchor all survived the cultural persecution that occurred in Indianapolis.⁷⁴ German-language instruction, however, never fully recovered; it was still absent from the IPS curriculum in the early 1920s, but it found its way back into the high schools within a decade.⁷⁵ Senator McCray's legislation was eventually undermined when the United States Supreme Court decided in 1923 that the elimination of German from private and parochial schools was unconstitutional. In *Meyer v. Nebraska* and similar cases the court found that knowing, learning, and teaching a foreign language fall under the rights protected by the Fourteenth Amendment.⁷⁶

Probst wrote in the closing section of his *The Germans in Indianapolis, 1840–1918* that "it is absurd to assume that use of a foreign language in an ethnic environment—be it German, Italian, or Polish—somehow makes a person an unpatriotic citizen."⁷⁷ It is perhaps equally absurd to assume that foreign-language instruction for elementary and secondary students undermines the American ideal. Yet in Indiana and other states, during and after World War I, patriotism, hysteria, and, at times, ethnic hatred fueled a campaign that allowed the German language to be seen as a threat rather than as an intellectual benefit.⁷⁸ When Ohlinger argued that France and, especially,

⁷²Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 88–90, 153; Luebke, "Legal Restrictions," 36–42.

⁷³Theodore Stempfel, *Fifty Years of Unrelenting German Aspirations in Indianapolis*, eds. Giles R. Hoyt, Claudia Grossmann, Elfrieda Lang, and Eberhard Reichmann (Indianapolis, 1991), 21.

⁷⁴Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 154.

⁷⁵Indianapolis Public Schools, *Survey Findings: Senior High School Division, Secondary Schools* (Indianapolis, 1934), 21–22; General Education Board, *Public Education in Indiana: Report of the Indiana Education Survey Commission* (New York, 1923), 102.

⁷⁶Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War*, 181–82; Luebke, "Legal Restrictions," 43–47; Rippley, *German Americans*, 125–26.

⁷⁷Probst, *Germans in Indianapolis*, 154.

⁷⁸Ellis, "Historical Account of German Instruction," 375.

England were America's "parent countries," he failed to note that those nations did not eliminate German instruction during the war; presumably, they recognized the value of knowing the language, especially while at war.⁷⁹ In many parts of the United States, the desire for English-only public elementary schools continues today. Activated for different reasons and affecting different groups of people, such sentiment nevertheless attests to the continued tendency of an anxious public to identify in foreign languages the threat of a "different philosophy" upon the American way of life.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Ohlinger, *German Conspiracy*, 113; Kirschbaum, *Eradication of German Culture*, 97-98.

⁸⁰For an interesting discussion of bilingual education and its opponents see David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle, *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud, and the Attack on America's Public Schools* (Reading, Mass., 1995), 202-207.