

Only the war could have established the fact that living in the same country does not mold the various nationalities into one nation. They are a gathering of peoples in the family of one nation. . . . America is now learning its most important lesson: That it is not at all necessary for liberty, security, and prosperity of America to fuse all the nationalities here to a point where they will lose their identity entirely. On the contrary, it is much better that they should treasure dearly the inheritance which they brought with them from the old world—their language, their songs, and the beautiful traditions of their past.

—“The Fire Beneath the Melting Pot,” *Daily Jewish Courier*, June 5, 1918

CHAPTER 1

“In the Family of One Nation”

The Complexities of Ethnic Patriotism during the Great War

America in 1917 was a nation in the throws of wartime mobilization. This went far beyond mustering in men for the military forces. The initial unpopular nature of the war, the threat of draft resistance, and the diversity of the United States transformed World War I into a “war for the American Mind.”¹ In its attempt to sell the war, the United States government implemented a national propaganda campaign that utilized new mass-media communications. The dark side of this effort was the encouragement of a society that manifested itself in mistrust and suspicion. The nation’s immigrants were particularly targeted. Many scholars have examined the oppressive nature of the American home front during World War I, noting the superpatriotic atmosphere that led to mass hysteria. Their

works tell of immigrants falling victims to harsh Americanization efforts designed to strip them of their native culture and loyalties. Some argue that ethnic displays of loyalty were forced upon immigrants with stinging assimilation policies by reigning nativists. However, for far too long historians have lumped together very different ethnic experiences. Although there is no denying the oppression of immigrants or the power of Americanization during the war, ethnic groups should not be viewed simply as isolated and powerless victims cowering to a barrage of nativist bullets. The story of ethnic patriotism during the Great War is complex. In many ways, ethnic loyalty was influenced as much by their own leaders as by government-sponsored demands for conformity.

Even before the United States declared war, many ethnic groups organized in an attempt to influence America's foreign policy or to draw attention to the plight of their war-torn homelands. While some pushed for the strict neutrality of the United States, others sought American involvement in the European conflict. The German and Irish communities in particular joined forces to try and keep the United States out of the war and attempted to use ethnic political power to force the nation into abiding by international laws of neutrality. For immigrants from southern and eastern Europe (Czechs, Slovaks, Jews, Poles, and others), the American entrance into the war offered the hope of independence for their homelands. Ethnic demonstrations of patriotism were complex and often utilized the "language of Americanism." But many times these expressions entwined symbols and rhetoric of American patriotism with ethnic cultural pride and homeland-liberation agendas. Therefore, "ordinary people" redesigned the patriotic culture of America as they, in John Bodnar's words, "acknowledge[d] the idea of loyalty in commemorative events and agreed to defend the symbol of the nation but often use[d] commemoration to redefine that symbol."²

American German and Irish community leaders worked diligently to keep the United States out of the First World War and pressured the government to maintain strict neutrality. Americans of German descent represented one of the oldest and largest ethnic groups in the United States and one of the best organized and politically powerful. German immigration began in the seventeenth century and steadily continued well into the 1900s. Although considered "Americanized" by the turn of the century, many of the nation's German Americans lived in ethnic enclaves and preserved cultural traditions along with their native language. It would be inaccurate to portray the entire German American community as unified in their politics, religion, and culture or even in their response to the First World War. Nor can

it be assumed that the opinion of national German American organizations absolutely reflected the belief of all their constituents. But the power and influence of ethnic leadership cannot be ignored, and their actions reveal a great deal of solidarity in their response to U.S. diplomatic policies prior to the American entrance into the First World War.³

The National German-American Alliance, incorporated in 1907 as an educational society, included in its goals the preservation of the German language, literature, and culture in the United States, and the organization actively encouraged German immigrants to become naturalized U.S. citizens. As early as 1914, the National German-American Alliance numbered over two million members in forty states. Eventually, it would become the most influential of all the German American organizations and the largest of all similar alliances in the United States. News from the "old country" remained important, and in the early years of the European conflict, subscriptions to German American newspapers and journals increased dramatically.⁴

As the war continued, a number of ethnic groups became increasingly concerned with the possibility of America entering the fighting on the side of the Allies. In response, the National German-American Alliance and ethnic journalists, through speeches, rallies, demonstrations, resolutions, and newspaper editorials, became energetic lobbyists and powerful proponents of strict American neutrality. Many of the nation's cities with large German American populations protested against British violations of international law. German societies responded with fury to Great Britain's refusal to honor German Americans' passports, expressed great condemnation when British sailors removed German American citizens from ships, and vigorously questioned why the United States did not respond with outrage to the British "raiding" of American merchantmen. The National Alliance also sent international-law experts to Washington to object to the shipping of United States munitions and equipment to the Allies and to note the inequity of loans that clearly favored Great Britain. The National German-American Alliance continued to pressure for strict American neutrality and sent a number of resolutions to both the U.S. House and Senate (including 150,000 telegrams). German-Irish coalitions for peace and neutrality demonstrated in major cities throughout the United States.⁵

Editorials in the German American press argued that British violations of international laws had pushed Germany into adopting aggressive responses such as submarine warfare. After concluding that the British government dominated American war news through an active propaganda

campaign, the German American press responded in an attempt to balance the war coverage by providing news from Germany and reprinting official statements from German leaders. Some of the more radical papers predicted a Central Powers victory over British forces.⁶

The pinnacle of German American political pressure came with their powerful campaign against the reelection of President Wilson. Ethnic leaders established the National Organization of German Newspaper Publishers and called for a mass meeting in Chicago to organize an ethnic voting block against Wilson. The editors put their support behind Associate Justice Charles Evans Hughes, the former governor of New York and the Republican presidential candidate. However, in the end, the German American community did not vote in a solid block. Some clung to their traditional Democratic loyalties, some threw their support toward the charismatic Theodore Roosevelt, while others voted for a more radical candidate. Hughes lost by a narrow margin.⁷

Once the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Germany in early 1917, most German American organizations and newspapers tabled their protests but made a last emotional plea for neutrality. Within a few months, the United States and Germany tumbled into war. With jingoism on the rise and ethnic Americans facing harassment and even violence, the majority of German American organizations made the decision to keep a low profile for the remainder of the war; membership in the National Alliance declined rapidly. The National German-American Alliance withdrew from politics after the U.S. Congress began an investigation of the organization. By April, 1918, members of the alliance voted to dissolve their organization and subsequently transferred their remaining treasury to the Red Cross.⁸

While many German American newspapers continued to report on the freedom campaign in Ireland, most limited their war protest to the reprinting of quotations from respectable mainstream English-language papers opposed to the end of neutrality. The *Philadelphia Gazette-Democrat* began publishing all its news and editorials in English, ending a forty-year tradition of the exclusive use of the German language. This action, according to the papers, was a voluntary act to "best serve the interests of the United States." The newspaper did retain the German language in some sections, with the self-proclaimed "result" of spreading American "government aims and activities" to the subscribers who could not read English. The *Gazette-Democrat* also donated free advertising space for the Liberty Loan campaign and produced a patriotic booklet, *Liberty is Alive!!*, which expounded the good deeds of the paper.⁹

Despite these efforts to demonstrate “absolute loyalty,” circulation in German American newspapers dropped and advertisers began to distance themselves. Eventually, subscriptions would decline by almost 50 percent of pre-1917 numbers.¹⁰ Some German American newspapers chose not to take a patriotic course of action. The *Milwaukee Seebote* continued to blame Britain for causing the war, and the *Cincinnati Freie Presse* pushed the envelope by publishing articles on the German war effort alongside articles on American efforts. Some stopped their presses for the duration of the war. Others such as the *Philadelphia Tageblatt* were shut down by the federal government, caught up in the emotional turmoil of the day, for alleged violations of the Espionage Acts of 1917, which authorized the postmaster general, Albert Sidney Burleson, to refuse material “advocating treason, insurrection, or forcible resistance to any law of the United States.” Burleson defined these acts loosely in order to shut down ethnic newspapers and crush radical dissent. Only a minority of German American organizations continued to openly oppose America’s policies after the country entered the fighting. Once war was declared, many German Americans served in the U.S. Army (see chapter 2).¹¹

Similar to the German American community, Irish Americans worked industriously to keep the United States out of the war and protested violations of neutrality that obviously favored the British government. Many Irish American leaders resented British imperial policies and worked to free their homeland from oppressive colonial rule. Millions of immigrants came to the United States from Ireland beginning in the early nineteenth century to flee poverty and starvation. They were met with harsh nativism and claims that Catholicism threatened American institutions and undermined democracy. But by the late nineteenth century, many Irish Americans had made substantial inroads into the country’s political and economic structure, although most remained barred from total acceptance into the Protestant society by anti-Catholic prejudices. For Irish Americans, the onset of the First World War brought a resurgence of the question of Irish nationalism and a reluctance to accept Britain as an American ally. It also created an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States and break the last barriers of nativism. But the war divided the Irish Americans and fragmented the opinions of radicals, moderates, and Roman Catholic Church leaders.¹²

Prior to the First World War, moderate mainstream Irish Americans, led by Catholic religious leaders, had moved away from the radical notions of Irish nationalism. In an effort to gain “respectability,” these leaders advo-

cated temperance, called for boycotting plays and shows that caricatured Irish Catholics, applauded the social moiré of the time, and tied Catholic religious virtues to American patriotism and citizenship. They also tended to support Home Rule of Ireland over the more radical position of complete independence. As the American claim of World War I neutrality increasingly gave way to British support, the Irish American community struggled to respond.¹³

While many Irish Americans were unified in their resentment of British power and their call for the strict neutrality of the United States government, the community split apart over other issues of importance. As early as January, 1907, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the National German-American Alliance met in Philadelphia "to oppose a widening current of Anglo-Saxon internationalism" and adamantly protest "an alliance of any kind, secret or otherwise, with any foreign power on the part of the government of the United States."¹⁴ The meeting resulted in the union of a number of Irish-German leagues, formed to ensure United States neutrality, to pressure for American endorsement of Ireland's freedom, and to fight British propaganda infiltrating the American press. Joseph McLaughlin, president of the Hibernians, backed the Irish-German pact. Other Irish nationalists rallied around similar issues with varying intensity, including the radical secret society, the Clan-na-Gael. Likewise, the more radical Irish American newspapers such as the *Irish World*, *Gaelic-America*, *Irish Nation*, and the *Freeman's Journal* published pro-German articles and editorials in an effort to balance pro-British influences.¹⁵

Pressure applied by Irish nationalists eventually led to a crucial and heated interchange between President Wilson and Jeremiah O'Leary, the founder of the American Truth Society. The society, a national organization with a mission to counteract British propaganda and combat the Anglo-Saxon influences felt to be deeply rooted in the country, sent a telegram to President Wilson registering disapproval of America's "pro-British policies." O'Leary called Wilson's domination over Congress a "dictatorship," accused the president of leniency toward the British Empire, and strongly opposed Wilson's approval of war loans and ammunition supplies for Great Britain. Finally, O'Leary warned Wilson that these positions would become burning issues in the coming election. Wilson's response was short and to the point. "Your telegram received. I would feel deeply mortified to have you or anybody like you vote for me. Since you have access to many disloyal Americans and I have not, I will ask you to convey this message to them, signed Woodrow Wilson." O'Leary was so outraged by Wilson's response that he

issued a twenty-three-page public statement of defense and sent several telegrams to the president. In his statement, O'Leary provided "evidence" of his loyalty to the United States, including his service in the 69th New York Irish Regiment during the Civil War.¹⁶

Other Irish American nationalists such as the National Trustee for the Friends of Irish Freedom, the Clan-na-Gael, and the Irish Progressive League pressured the president and Congress to recognize Ireland's freedom and demanded that Great Britain do likewise. The groups sent a number of delegates to Washington, D.C., for the "Great Irish Meeting." That gathering, held on April 13, 1918, was also intended to remind the administration that the "Irish are heart and soul with President Wilson for the principle of self-determination."¹⁷

Although far less radical, the Catholic press and mainstream Irish newspapers also pushed for the strict neutrality of the United States and objected to British violation of international law and its domination of the war coverage in the American press. The Catholic publications supported Ireland's home rule and attempted to provide a balanced coverage of the war by including "news favorable to the Central Powers." But Catholic leaders James Cardinal Gibbons and Archbishop John Ireland objected to the radicals' attack on the U.S. government, fearful that it would exasperate anti-Catholic nativism and slow up the acceptance of Irish Americans. Throughout their campaign, mainstream Irish Catholics such as the Irish dominated Knights of Labor consistently promoted loyalty to the United States organized around the principles of American patriotism. Once the nation entered the war, much of the Irish American community, although obviously uneasy about America's alliance with Great Britain, unified in the "chorus of unbridled patriotism."¹⁸

The U.S. Declaration of War on April 6, 1917, dashed the hopes of the German American and Irish American communities. While these groups failed to successfully affect American foreign policy, their efforts were important, nonetheless. Ethnic editors, lawyers, and political leaders used their skills in an attempt to force the United States to stay the course of neutrality. These two groups organized and sometimes joined forces to try to achieve goals tied directly with their ethnicity and homeland politics.

In the early years of the war, American political leaders and the general public agreed to stay out of the European conflict. Pres. Woodrow Wilson even ran for reelection in 1916 with a campaign that promised to keep the nation out of war. But as the conflict progressed, many political, economic, and military factors made the issue of intervention more complex, and the

United States soon found itself at war. Faced with deeply divided public opinion concerning America’s involvement in Europe, Wilson created an official propaganda agency, the Committee on Public Information (CPI). The CPI hired an impressive group of writers, photographers, historians, and entertainers to “sell” the war to the public. In addition, the United States attorney general, Thomas W. Gregory, worked with local nativist groups and empowered them with the mission of uncovering “disloyal” Americans. One of the largest of these citizen-detective groups, the American Protective League (APL), had over 250,000 members. Other such organizations included the American Defense Society, the Boy Spies of America, and the National Security League. Members of these groups watched over neighbors, colleagues, and strangers; broke into homes; opened private mail; slandered innocent people; and physically assaulted and arrested alleged “disloyal” Americans. The leagues also focused on foreign-born groups. “[W]rapped in the mantle of patriotism, extremist groups such as the American Protection League and the Sedition Slammers threaten to whip out political dissent and nonconforming behavior. Acting as self-appointed vigilantes and espousing 100% Americans, these groups persecuted so-called hyphenated Americans.”¹⁹

In a high-pitched, emotionally charged campaign, the Committee on Public Information exploited and ignited strong feelings of nativism, xenophobia, jingoism, and superpatriotism, and war hysteria soon gripped the nation. National, state, and local nativist organizations pressured immigrants for total conformity. *The Meaning of America*, one of the booklets produced by the CPI, provided instructions and speaking suggestions to the Division of Four-Minute Men, a group of over 75,000 volunteers who provided short patriotic speeches to movie-theater audiences and social clubs throughout the United States, and included specific information on how to talk to foreign-born groups. It directed speakers to persuade immigrants to speak “the English language . . . salute the flag . . . cultivate patriotism in [their] children . . . [and learn the] words of [The] Star Spangled Banner.” The agency contended that some of the nation’s immigrants “expected too much from the land of liberty,” and therefore, it was CPI’s goal to remind America’s ethnic groups of their duty to the United States.²⁰ In addition, CPI produced thirty different propaganda bulletins and distributed over 75 million copies in various languages. They also reprinted President Wilson’s “A Tribute to the Foreign Born,” which revealed his increasing anxiety over America’s ethnic diversity and the divided opinion of the immigrant communities over the war. Wilson claimed to be in “a hurry for

an opportunity to have a line-up and let the men who are thinking first of other countries stand on one side, and all those that are for America first, last, and all the time on the other side.”²¹ Immigrants from enemy states (people known as “enemy aliens”) were expected to register their names with the government.

Postmaster General Burleson instigated a personal crusade against alleged war dissenters and justified his actions with the espionage laws. Burleson frequently overstepped his delegated authority by cutting off the second-class mailing privileges for many ethnic presses without due cause, an action that subsequently bankrupted the papers that could not afford to use first-class mail. He also indirectly censored ethnic publishers by forcing them to submit English translations of all articles (prior to publication) that referred to the war. These actions fostered a fear among foreign-language presses of a shutdown for what might be construed as “disloyal” materials. Moreover, the delay in publication crippled many papers that could not bear the added expense.²²

In order to help raise money to pay for the war, the government initiated the Liberty Loan campaign. This drive capitalized on the superpatriotic fever of the day and quickly tied the purchase of war bonds with a demonstration of loyalty. Liberty Loan posters that draped the cities also promoted conformity. One poster read: “Are you 100% American? Prove It! Buy U.S. Government Bonds.” Liberty Bond advertisements, written in various languages, made extensive use of patriotic and emotional symbols such as the Statue of Liberty, the American Flag, and Ellis Island. One popular theme was to remind immigrants of their arrival in America and the reasons why they came. Heading one poster that pictured immigrants on the deck of a ship steaming past the Statue of Liberty was the message: “Remember Your First Thrill of American Liberty—YOUR DUTY—Buy United States Government Bonds.”²³

Specific ethnic groups became key targets for harassment, particularly German American communities. Hamburgers, sauerkraut, and German measles became liberty sandwiches, liberty cabbage, and liberty measles. School boards instructed students to cut out all references of Germany from their textbooks and canceled German language classes. Officials in many of the cities forbade the playing of Bach and Beethoven in public orchestras, and German art was removed from some city museums. For many German Americans, war hysteria resulted in violence and even death. Throughout the United States, nativists called upon foreign-born citizens to prove their allegiance to America.

The late nineteenth century marked the largest flow of immigrants into America. Most of the nation's "newcomers" arrived from southern and eastern Europe, where they fled from political, economic, or religious turmoil in their homelands. Like many other immigrant groups throughout American history, they tended to live in ethnic enclaves where they could speak their own language, eat ethnic foods, read news of their homelands in ethnic newspapers, and find support in ethnic fraternal and social organizations. Immigrants continued to retain important parts of their native ways, but they also adopted key elements of the dominant American culture.

During World War I, ethnic communities actively demonstrated their loyalty to the United States with resolutions, parades, and fundraisers that were wrapped in American symbolism and steeped in patriotic language. However, it is too simplistic to view these acts of loyalty as purely a response to a harsh nativism that forced immigrants to conform in their expressions of loyalty. This is especially true when one considers that these patriotic demonstrations were often fused with messages of ethnic cultural pride and were frequently connected to issues of homeland independence. Therefore, immigrants not only clearly expressed loyalty to the United States but also "liberally employed the rhetoric and imagery of American patriotism . . . and used the iconography of '100% Americanism' to obtain their own ethnic community goals."²⁴

In May, 1918, a committee representing many of America's foreign-born groups sent a petition to President Wilson "announcing plans for a great demonstration on the Fourth (of July) of loyalty to the United States and the cause for which it is fighting and asking the entire country to join with them." Wilson responded with "heartfelt appreciation" and encouraged nationwide "Independence Day" celebrations designed to show unity, loyalty, and patriotism, and many cities responded by hosting "Americanization Day" events. The *New York Herald* reported that all over the nation, foreign-born Americans planned Fourth of July celebrations with parades, mass meetings, pageants, and speeches. The New York multiethnic celebration resulted in a coalition of twenty-two nationalities and a petition addressed to Wilson with a declaration of their loyalty: "Let us on July 4, 1918, celebrate the birth of a new—a greater spirit of democracy—by whose influence we hope and believe, what the signers of the Declaration of Independence dreamed of for themselves and their fellow countrymen shall be fulfilled for all mankind."²⁵

Another Fourth of July broadside, printed in Philadelphia and designed to copy the Declaration of Independence, expressed the loyalty of twenty-

four different ethnic groups. In the declaration, the groups “pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to support the United States.” Delegates from the different immigrant groups signed the document, including representatives from the Armenian, Assyrian, Belgian, Chinese, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, French, Greek, German, Hungarian, Italian, Jewish, Latvian (Lettish), Lithuanian, Bohemian-Moravian, Slavish, Carpatho-Russian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Romanian, and Ukrainian communities. The Bohemian National Alliance and the Slovak League distributed a written declaration representing forty-eight ethnic groups entitled “The Solemn Declaration of the Czechoslovak People to the Republic of the United States of America and Its Great President Woodrow Wilson.” The declaration expressed their great respect for the American people and their leaders, emphasized the urgent need to make the world “safe for Democracy,” and declared a “solemn pledge” of loyalty to America. Earlier patriotic events included a June, 1918, New York City parade that lasted twelve hours and included representatives from the Italian, Hungarian, and Czechoslovak national councils as well as “Jugo-Slav” organizations. The festivities included the “League of Foreign-Born Citizens,” consisting of 1,000 men and women from twenty-one different nations who declared their intentions to become U.S. citizens in a united attack against “Kaiserism.”²⁶

Many demonstrations of immigrant loyalty entwined ethnic pride and homeland agendas with the language of democracy and national symbols such as the American flag, Uncle Sam, and Independence Hall. About sixty Slovene immigrants in Rock Springs, Wyoming, participated in a Fourth of July parade to express their loyalty to their new country, carrying both the American flag and the flag of their homeland. The marchers, some dressed in native costumes, also displayed a large sign that read, “Your Allies the Jugo-Slavs.”²⁷ Many immigrant groups also participated in Indianapolis’s Fourth of July parade. “Following units of city police, military bands, Boy Scouts, and the Daughters of the American Revolution carrying American flags, immigrants marched in native costumes and rode on floats as they presented themselves to the dominant society.” The design of an Italian American float showcased children waving American flags with a “caricature of the ‘Queen of Italy.’” Romanian immigrants in the same parade featured both “Uncle Sam” and the flag of their homeland. Over 350 Slovenians demonstrated their loyalty by marching in the Indianapolis parade. A group of Slovene American women dressed in ethnic costumes held a sign that answered Wilson’s request: “We Are For America First, Last and All the Time.”²⁸

Sometimes, the words of ethnic leaders mirrored the "language of Americanism" used by leading nativists.²⁹ The Czech National Alliance suggested that parents "tear the obnoxious pages" of the "Kaiser Story" from their children's schoolbooks. The Czech National Alliance and the Polish National Alliance collected the "ripped" pages to send to the various school boards in protest. The Bohemian newspaper *Denni Hlasatel*, which called for immigrants to become naturalized citizens and celebrated the loyalty of "Czechs, Slovaks, Jugo-slavs, Poles, and other Slavonic nations," blamed American Germans and the German American press for the "antagonism shown toward the immigrants and . . . the attempts made to Americanize them instantly." Many ethnic leaders also joined in the Liberty Loan Crusade in the Foreign Language Division. Community leaders organized Liberty Loan parades, and editors recounted emotional war stories to elicit contributions. An editorial promoting the Third Liberty Loan noted, "Czech-Americans have never forgotten their motherland, and yet they have always shown that they are good citizens of this country who can be relied on in the critical days of war as well as in times of peace."³⁰

While German and Irish immigrants expressed concern over the United States joining the Great War, other ethnic groups encouraged American involvement in the conflict. For those from southern and eastern Europe, the defeat of the Central Powers became directly tied to their dream of independence for their homelands. Many of these ethnic groups used American patriotic symbols and language in their efforts to show loyalty to their new country and to regain nation-state recognition of their native lands. Others hoped to create new nations out of the rubble of the war.

Even before the United States entered the conflict, the Czech and Slovak communities in America supported a war against the Austro-Hungarian Empire—an empire that had long strangled their ethnic groups. Over 1.5 million immigrants lived in the Czech and Slovak enclaves of America. As early as 1914, Czechs in New York created the American Committee for the Liberation of the Czech People. That same year, Czech ethnic leaders joined with the American National Council, the Czech Press Bureau, and other Czech organizations in a unified effort to free their homeland. Czech Sokols and the National Mutual Aid Organization soon joined in the cause. The Slovak League, organized in 1915, worked with the Slovak-American press, Slovak Sokols, and Slovak Catholic and evangelical groups to gain support for an independent Czechoslovakia. By October, 1915, many of these Czech and Slovak organizations united into the Czechoslovak (Bohemian) National Alliance. The alliance was headquartered in Chicago but had branches in

other major cities including New York; Cleveland; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Boston; and Omaha, Nebraska, and it grew rapidly to include over 80,000 members in nearly 350 branches throughout the United States. The alliance worked to rally public support for the cause of Czechoslovakian independence through lectures, pamphlets, leaflets, and newspaper articles that educated people to the plight of European Czechs and Slovaks.³¹

The Slav Press Bureau, established by the Bohemian National Alliance and the Slovak League of America, kept the Allied war cause in front of the immigrant public years before the Committee on Public Information began its propaganda campaign. In January, 1917, the Czech Catholic community joined in the call for independence when they unified into the National League of Czech Catholics. Ethnic newspapers and literature worked to keep the public informed. The Slav Press Bureau sent out anti-German and anti-Austrian articles to the American press two or three times each week. The *Bohemian Review* recalled, "on the very day when Austrian cannons were first fired against Serbia, Bohemians in Chicago organized a relief fund which in a few months collected nearly \$20,000." Similar fundraisers took place in New York City, Cleveland, Omaha, Chicago, and Cedar Rapids that together collected over \$320,000. Ethnic organizations sold arts and crafts at Bohemian bazaars and "Allied Bazaars" and solicited donations throughout the United States to raise money for the independence of their homelands. Czech and Slovak artists designed buttons, stamps, badges, postcards, posters, and maps, which were sold to raise funds for the fight for independence. Estimates put donations from American ethnic communities "into the millions."³²

Once the United States declared war, ethnic leaders saw their peoples' participation in the fighting as a way of demonstrating loyalty to their adopted country and bringing "liberation and independence" to their homeland. An April, 1917, article in Chicago's *Denni Hlasatel* summed it up best: "We live in America as free citizens[, and] we enjoy here freedom of speech and of the press. . . . It was the people from the lower class and the middle class who have benefited considerably by the conditions in the new country. . . . The immigrant should constantly keep all this in mind, especially now that his new homeland is at war. . . . If America with the Allies annihilates Germany, it will have done away with our deadliest enemy, and advanced us nearer to the fulfillment of our sacred dream, the rescue of our motherland and the nation of our ancestors from the paws that have been on them in bondage for centuries."³³

Ethnic leaders carefully incorporated American symbols and rhetoric

with their homeland agendas. The *Bohemian Review* noted that the Czechs and Slovaks were "acting consistently with the Declaration of Independence, which maintains that governments are instituted among men to secure the right to life, liberty and happiness, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed." The *Review* concluded, "the Czechoslovaks were worthy heirs to the American Revolution."³⁴ The Czech National Alliance in Chicago compared President Wilson with Abraham Lincoln when it discussed the struggle for freedom of the Czech and Slovak peoples: "Just as Abraham Lincoln's voice called for a government of the people, your voice is imparting strength to millions of subjugated men and women who are, however, determined to protect their ancient, inalienable rights. . . . As Americans of Czech descent, we doubly feel the power in your decision. . . . We rejoice over America's entrance into the war, for we know that . . . it means help to the Czechoslovak people in their unequal struggle against the tyrants."³⁵

Immediately after the United States entered the conflict, ethnic leaders called for members of their community to enlist in the armed forces and later supported the national draft. Czech and Slovak women gathered together to knit sweaters and other warm clothing for soldiers fighting in Europe. These ethnic sewing "bees" later joined the American Red Cross efforts as auxiliary groups. As early as April 8, 1917, the Bohemian National Alliance addressed members through some fifty ethnic newspapers: "We want to impress upon all members of the Bohemian National Alliance the duties which war lays upon all citizens of the country. Above all, it is your duty to fight for the land you made your own, to which most of you swore allegiance, the land which is dedicated to the eternal principles of justice and rule by the people."³⁶

Czech and Slovak leaders mixed the symbols and rhetoric of American patriotism with cultural pride in their efforts to recruit immigrant soldiers for the American Army. This was done both to express loyalty and to achieve ethnic community goals. The Czech and Slovak leaders promoted voluntary service in the U.S. Army and Navy through social and fraternal organizations. Sokols hosted gatherings and mass meetings at which "all the societies, associations, and clubs [were] urged to work diligently, taking the names of all men willing to enlist." Recruitment rallies featured pictures of life in the army, military equipment, and patriotic Czech, Slovak, and American songs. Ethnic leaders from various organizations (the Bohemian National Alliance, the Czech and Slovak Sokols, the Czech Protestants, and the Czech National Alliance, the Union of Czech Ladies, and the Sisterhood

of Aid Societies) worked with recruiting officers from the American military to provide immigrant soldiers with inspirational speeches. The Czech National Alliance, the National Alliance of Czech Catholics, and the Slovak League also held meetings with a “twofold” purpose: first, “to demonstrate our irreconcilable opposition to the Government of Austria; and second, to proclaim our loyalty to America, which has declared war on decayed Austria.” As the Bureau of the Czech National Alliance of Catholics put it: “In this critical time, when we feel compelled to draw the sword for the defense of human rights and the liberation of the oppressed peoples by autocratic governments, our duty stands out clearly to us. . . . Our place is under the Star Spangled Banner, the symbol of equality and liberty. . . . Let us show that we have grasped the meaning of duty and intend to hasten to the colors to increase the number of those willing to lay down their lives for the country.”³⁷

From April to June, 1917, ethnic newspaper articles listed the names of immigrants who volunteered in the United States military. Some recorded the gradual emptying of the Sokol gymnastic societies as members answered the call of their nation. Other articles boasted that the “so-called ‘hyphenated Americans,’ that is Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, Croats and others of Slavonic blood. . . . [offered] his services, and perhaps his life, to his new homeland.” The editor of the *Denni Hlasatel* claimed that information from the recruiting office and the War Department indicated that “more than two-thirds of the volunteers hailed from the strata of the immigrant populace.”³⁸

Once the national draft was implemented in June, the Bohemian press reminded Czechs and Slovaks to register with the U.S. Selective Service Board and continued to tie the war effort to independence of the homeland. “Thousands of Czech families will soon have to part with their sons. We feel the painful throb in a mother’s heart, . . . but her son is going to fight for a cause dear to Czechs and Americans alike.” Parades featured Czechs and Slovaks in “Uncle Sam’s Army” such as the Chicago march that ended at the Sokol Havlicek-Tyrs Hall to the sound of “The Star Spangled Banner.”³⁹

By November, 1917, the United States expanded the conflict with Germany by declaring war on that nation’s partner, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This action also “technically” excluded noncitizen Czechs and Slovaks from serving in the army since they had been born in the empire. Not surprisingly, this brought resentment from the ethnic groups who had long called for the defeat of the Central Powers and had worked diligently for its demise. Various Czech and Slovak groups rallied to demonstrate continued support for the war, and leaders worked to have the “technical enemy alien”

status removed from noncitizen members of their community. While the situation was being straightened out, Czech and Slovak organizations in America began to raise money and recruit for the Czechoslovak Legion to serve with the French Army.⁴⁰

The founder of the Czechoslovak Legion, Thomas G. Masaryk, was a former member of the Vienna Parliament and a professor of philosophy at Prague's Charles University; he would later become the first president of Czechoslovakia. With the outbreak of World War I, Masaryk decided the time was right to fight for the independence of the Czech and Slovak peoples and to break the bondage of Austro-Hungarian control. On May 30, 1917, the Czech Coalition sent a resolution to the Austrian Parliament asking for "home rule" and emphasizing "the principles of self-determination for a democratic Czech State united with the Slovaks."⁴¹

Edvard Benes, a former student of Masaryk at Charles University and lecturer in a Prague college, and Dr. Milan Rastislav Stefanik, a Slovakian scientist and son of a Lutheran pastor, assisted with Czech enlistments. Stefanik became the vice president of the Czechoslovak National Council, the official recruiting organization for the Czechoslovak Legion. In the fall of 1917, Stefanik spent a few weeks in the United States to raise funds and lay a "firm foundation" for recruitment of nondeclarant immigrants for the Czechoslovak Legion. Even though France did not officially approve of the legion until December, 1917, Count de Montal, a French Army aviation colonel and military attaché in Washington D.C., accompanied Stefanik. The United States did not officially sanction recruiting for the Czechoslovak Legion until the spring of 1918, but according to newspaper accounts, the government had given its consent for raising funds and early recruitment the previous October.⁴²

On October 14, 1917, Chicago's Sokol Havlicek-Tyrs auditorium was crowded with the largest group ever assembled in the hall. The stage was set with the flags of the Allied countries, photographs of thirty-two members of Havlicek-Tyrs already fighting in Europe (probably with the Canadian Brigade), and a memorial to another member, Anton Nedelka, who was killed fighting in France. Dr. Ludwig J. Fisher, president of the Czech National Alliance, introduced Dr. Stefanik and Colonel de Montal, both of whom wore French uniforms. According to a newspaper account of the meeting, Stefanik's "chest glittered with four medals which he had won by his daring exploits in the French Army." Stefanik announced his goals: rally support for Czechoslovak independence, raise funding for the Czech and Slovak cause, and enlist Slavs from the United States. The speaker pleaded

with Czech and Slovak women not to “place obstacles” in front of volunteers. The responsibility for this liberation, he said, “rests upon the soldiers of the Slavs in America.” Fisher followed with his own address, in which he predicted that Czechoslovak forces “should become an efficient cog in the gigantic wheel of the international struggle and work for the Allies. . . . It is up to every Czechoslovak who is not burdened with care for his family to prove that his patriotism is honest and sincere.” Fisher ended his dramatic speech by announcing his willingness to “give his life for the old motherland” and his service to the Czechoslovak Army. Colonel de Montal noted the common ideals of the French, Czechs, and Slovaks. After the program ended, the speakers headed to a Pilsen Brewery Park pavilion to address a large “Czechoslovak” Catholic crowd. A representative of the Czech National Alliance stayed behind to organize the volunteers, one hundred men who stepped forward. To ensure that soldiers could return to the United States after the war, community leaders pushed for immigration laws that would allow foreign-born soldiers to be repatriated.⁴³

Czech and Slovak Americans who helped in the recruiting efforts carefully selected images that express both loyalty to their adopted country and pride for their ethnicity. For example, at a farewell to legion volunteers in November, 1917, performers dressed in ethnic costumes and sang the Czech National Alliance battle song, “Vyzva” (“The Call”) while standing before a replica of the Statue of Liberty. A singer performed the Czech national anthem, and “an apotheosis of Slovak volunteers serving in the various Allied armies, and also of Slovak girls rendering homage before a Statue of Liberty, closed the memorable evening to the strains of the ‘March of the Czechoslovak Army.’”⁴⁴

The situation became even more complex with the declaration of war between the United States and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, especially when the U.S. Selective Service Board started to record all noncitizen immigrants born in the empire as “enemy aliens.” Czech and Slovak leaders urged the government to remove this status so their men could continue to serve in the United States military. As Congress and military leaders discussed the situation, recruitment for the Czechoslovak forced in France continued.⁴⁵

In the spring of 1918, Masaryk traveled to the United States in the hope of securing recognition for his country’s independence, raising funds for the legion, and securing volunteers from the Czech and Slovak enclaves. Stefanik accompanied him. They recruited in New York, Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D.C., but Masaryk and Stefanik particularly targeted Chicago because the city had the largest Czech popu-

lation outside of Prague. Czech leaders, "well-known" businessmen, professors, editors, physicians, and leaders from American Czech and Slovak organizations helped in the recruiting efforts. According to Masaryk, Chicago greeted him with open arms, and thousands of people lined the streets in national costumes, waving flags with the Czech and Slovak "colours."⁴⁶

In June, 1918, a huge crowd shouted "*Na Zdar!*" (to success!) as they welcomed the leader to Pilsen Park in Chicago. The Czech Catholic Alliance and the Slovak League called the Czechoslovak Army "the crowning of our national patriotic efforts."⁴⁷ Most of the recruiting drives clearly combined American patriotism with ethnic pride. In a moving speech, Lieutenant Horvat, a Slovakian clergyman serving in the Legion, told the audience, "There are no differences in the Czechoslovak Army. Czech and Slovaks stand as equals, and shoulder to shoulder, with one aim—to humble the age-old common enemy. . . . You in America know what liberty means. We want to build the independent Czechoslovak State upon the same principles."⁴⁸

The Chicago Military Committee for the Czechoslovak Army recruited in the Midwest. The committee asked its "ladies" and the area businessmen to provide a send-off reception for fifty volunteers from Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Illinois and asked the Czechoslovakian public to "appear in large numbers to give our boys our last greeting." At a send-off for forty Czech volunteers in August, 1918, performers sang "The Star Spangled Banner" along with "old country" Czech songs. The Workmen's Chorus sang "Kdo Jste Bozi Bojovnici" ("Soldiers of the Lord") followed by the American anthem. Guest speakers included First Lieutenant Holy of the Czechoslovak Army and Dr. Knapp, editor of the *Chicago Journal*. In an emotional speech in September, 1918, Masaryk told new Czech and Slovak recruits: "We are now fighting on all battle-fronts. Our blood is being shed with the blood of American soldiers as well as with the blood of the other allied soldiers. Out of this mixture of bloodshed . . . there will be, we hope, a brotherhood of allied nations."⁴⁹

Recruiters also circulated colorful enlistment posters and postcards in Czech and Slovak. The postcards depicted soldiers in action with catchy slogans: "Fall in rank! Brothers join your brothers here! All ye who bear the name of Slovak!"; "Fatherland, oh Fatherland! To conquer or die!"; "Seize arms and join our ranks, all ye of Czechoslovak birth!"; "The country calls! Prepare to act." Recruiting also took place in ethnic newspapers that called the Czechoslovak Army of France "crusaders of modern times" and encouraged noncitizen immigrants to do "their duty to serve the old homeland."⁵⁰

The Czechoslovak National Council called on physicians and nurses to volunteer with Czechoslovak forces in Siberia. The council required applicants to have knowledge of the Czech and Slovak languages. The Czechoslovak Aid Committee also raised funds for the legion and raised enough money to purchase an ambulance for shipment to Vladivostok through the American Red Cross. Fund raising for the Czechoslovak national cause continued throughout the war and netted hundreds of thousands of dollars.⁵¹

When the United States officially recognized the independent Czechoslovak state in September, 1918, ethnic communities rejoiced in their success, and Czechs and Slovaks were taken off the enemy alien list and once again allowed to serve in the U.S. Army. To celebrate, Czech and Slovak communities in Chicago held a "gigantic parade" to express "joy over President Wilson's declaration . . . and testify to their gratitude and loyalty to the United States Government." Community organizers requested that servicemen from their areas be furloughed from Camp Grant and the Great Lakes Naval Training Station to honor the occasion. Ethnic leader and Congressman Adolph J. Sabath telegraphed the commanders of the two camps, and the soldiers and sailors soon joined the celebratory parade. Some 17,000 soldiers at Camp Dodge, Iowa, ended their independence parade with a special formation symbolizing the Statue of Liberty as the regimental bands played patriotic music.⁵²

Recruiting for the Czechoslovak Legion lost its momentum after Congress recognized Czechoslovakia's independence and declared the new country an ally. Masaryk understood the desire of most Czech and Slovak Americans to enlist in the army of their adopted country, although he did not give up trying to recruit immigrants into the French Army. In the end, the Czechoslovak Legion in France consisted of over 15,000 soldiers including about 3,000 volunteers from America's ethnic enclaves.⁵³

With the end of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late eighteenth century, Poland experienced a long period of occupation. By 1772 Prussia, Russia, and Austria began to divide the country. Poles revolted many times during the century, but although boundaries and politics changed, they remained under foreign imperial control. As political oppression mounted in the late nineteenth century, almost one million emigrants left for the United States. Once in America, many remained intensely interested in the freedom of their homeland. Polish patriotic societies even trained young recruits for the eventual day when they would return and Poland would be independent.⁵⁴

To ensure that the fight for freedom would continue, these patriotic soci-

eties conducted military training programs so they would be ready to defend their homeland when the opportunity arose. A number of patriotic fraternal organizations including the Polish Falcon Alliance, The Polish National Alliance, the Polish Youth Alliance, and the Polish Military Alliance worked toward the restoration of Poland's independence.⁵⁵

The First World War brought a renewed interest in the old country. Similar to American Czechs and Slovaks, Polish Americans also hoped that the Great War would lead to the independence of their homeland. Their leaders organized a number of fundraisers designed to assist this cause. Polish patriot and famed pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski and his wife headed many of the fund-raising activities. At most of these events, Poles sold flags of their native country and "Polish Refugee Dolls" to raise money for the Polish Committee for Emergency Aid. As the situation in Poland worsened, the Polish American community sharply stepped up its efforts through such groups as the Polish Central Relief Committee (PCRC) and the Polish National Council. President Wilson assisted these efforts when he dedicated January 1, 1916, to the Poland war-relief effort. The American Red Cross also worked hard to bring food into the devastated country. Once America's entrance into the war became certain, Polish Americans expressed their loyalty through resolutions, parades, Liberty Loan campaigns, and fundraisers. Over 138,000 of them served in the American Army.⁵⁶

Many immigrants not subject to the American draft chose to support the development of the Polish Legion. The Polish Falcons met in a special meeting in Pittsburgh in April, 1917, where 187 delegates discussed recruiting an army to fight with the French to free Poland. Despite the connection with the French government, the Polish American community concluded that "the Polish army [was] to be considered as an appendage to the regular United States army; its flag should be the Stars and Stripes, only the regimental banners ought to display national Polish colors in order to make the nationality of the fighters more obvious to their kin on the opposite side."⁵⁷

In June, 1917, Polish leaders in Pittsburgh began a preliminary search for officers for the legion. Qualified candidates had to be between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, be physically fit, have a basic knowledge of mathematics, be of good character, and speak and write both Polish and English. Each officer also had to supply his own uniform, rifle, and bayonet. The response was so great that by July 5 the Pittsburgh Falcons announced that no further candidates would be accepted. Excitement over the legion grew in other Polish communities throughout the United States. Polish leaders Dr. Teofil A. Starzynski, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, C. W. Sypniewski,

Dr. Adam Wolcyrz, J. Sierocinski, W. Sulewski, F. Boguszewski, and many other prominent Polish doctors, lawyers, and leaders formulated plans for training their fellow immigrants.⁵⁸

The only thing that remained was to convince the United States government to officially recognize the legion, and Polish American leaders put pressure on Pres. Woodrow Wilson to approve of their army. They were joined in June, 1917, by the French government, which presented a decree calling for the creation of the Polish Army of France. The British government also helped when they agreed to open up its Canadian training camps to the Polish American recruits. The U.S. State Department and War Department discussed the possibility of creating a separate Polish legion attached to the American Army and considered officially recognizing the nation-state of Poland. But due to the political complications of Poland's independence, the United States took no immediate action. Growing impatient, some Polish Americans joined the Canadian Army. After initial training, the soldiers were sent to the "Polish Division" of the French Army.⁵⁹

By September, 1917, the U.S. government announced that recruitment of the "Polish Army in America" could begin: "The War Department has been advised that no individual of Polish nationality resident in the United States who is in any way subject to the draft will be accepted as a recruit by this military commission. Having in mind the attitude of this Government toward a united and independent Poland, the War Department is glad to announce that it is entirely in accord with the proposed plans of this military commission."⁶⁰

Recruitment almost ended when the U.S. Fuel Administrator, Harry G. Garfield, expressed concern over the possibility of losing too many Polish American miners in the coal fields. Garfield supporters argued that Poland, controlled by German forces, was technically an enemy of the United States and sought to stop development of the Polish Legion. Secretary of War Baker quickly put an end to these obstructions and recruitment in the legion continued. "Thus the stage was set for the long anticipated organization of [an] American contingent of the Polish Army in France."⁶¹

Polish enclaves organized "citizen committees" to promote recruitment and raise money for the American Polish units. The Polish Roman Catholic Church, Ladies Auxiliaries, and other Polish organizations also solicited support for the cause. Polish leaders set up recruiting offices in Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Wilkes-Barre (Pennsylvania), New York City, and Boston. Mass rallies drew attention to the legion, complete with Polish folk songs and music from Polish military bands. Movie

theaters in ethnic neighborhoods showed films of the legion training in their Niagara camp, and recruiting officers spoke at various community functions. Approximately 20,000 Polish American volunteers served with the Polish Army in France. When they enlisted, new Polish American legionnaires signed a statement of dual loyalty: "I, the undersigned, declaring my readiness to fight for a united, free and independent Poland and for the honor of the Star-spangled Banner of the United States."⁶²

Many Jewish Americans connected the American war effort with the freedom of European Jews and the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and also actively served in the American Army. Eventually, over 250,000 Jews served in the United States military. In early April, 1917, Rabbi Buchler of New York led a movement to enlist Austro-Hungarian Jews in the U.S. Army and Navy. He planned a mass movement as an "initial step in a whirlwind recruiting campaign among men of foreign birth."⁶³ Prominent Jewish leaders organized the American League of Jewish Patriots in April, 1917. The League's committee members included Samuel Untermeyer (president) and Joel Slomin (secretary) along with a number of Jewish editors: Judge Aaron J. Levy (from *The Warheit*), Leo Moissies (from *The Day*), Peter Viernick (from *The Jewish Morning Journal*), Leo Kamaki (from *The Jewish Daily News*), William Edlin (from *The Day*), Louis Miller (representing Jewish weeklies published in Yiddish), and Herman Bernstein (representing Jewish weeklies published in English). The committee announced that its purpose was to encourage enlistment of Jewish men into the army of the United States. The committee organized offices throughout New York City from which Jewish men and women would aid in registering Jews into the American military. Jewish American leaders even tied their war effort to "Americanization" issues and concluded that only the "un-Americanized Jew" would fear the war, since they would inadvertently connect the American draft with the Russian draft: "When the Jew becomes Americanized, however, he then becomes entirely different. Then he understands that the Constitution of the United States gives all citizens of the country equal rights, and that this country affords every inhabitant equal opportunity. Then he who originally was a 'slacker' is among the first to volunteer, and on the field of battle he is the renowned hero."⁶⁴

But concern over the homeland issue continued. Many editorials treasured the Old World traditions but expressed their love and patriotism for America and "prayed" for a "victory of the American ideal of liberty and democracy over the evil powers of autocracy." American Jewish newspapers express dual loyalty—that is, pride in fighting for both America and the

Jewish cause. The subtitle of one Chicago newspaper, the *Sunday Jewish Courier*, read: “Help America to Victory! Help the Jewish People to Victory!” The article went on: “If America wins, every Jew throughout the world wins—he will have won a new status in life, the respect and esteem which he deserves as the son of an ancient people with great classical traditions. . . . The moment has also arrived for us Jews in America to prove that we love America, that we are thankful to America, and that we love our own people, and wish to make them free and happy.”⁶⁵

Jewish American Zionist leaders also worked diligently to raise funds to help their European brothers. Philadelphia-area Jews raised money at various patriotic events such as the Opera House fundraiser, which received pledges for over \$200,000 to aid Jewish war victims. At a conference in March, 1918, New York Jewish leaders raised \$50,000 toward the community’s goal of \$1,000,000 for the “restoration of Palestine” to the Jewish people.⁶⁶

Similar to the Czechs, Slovaks, and Poles, Jews also organized a foreign legion. The development of the Jewish Legion resulted from the persistence of a young Russian Jewish journalist, Vladimir Jabotinsky. Prior to the war, Jabotinsky served as chief editor in Constantinople for four different Zionist newspapers. In 1914 he became a correspondent with the *Russian Monitor*. His on-going assignment was to report on the “mood and sentiments” of the war rather than the actual fighting, and he traveled to England, France, Norway, Sweden, Egypt, Algiers, and Morocco. In his memoirs Jabotinsky reported that his trip to Britain was to determine the truth behind “the biting quip,” then popular in Russia, that “the British Lion [was] prepared to fight to the last drop of Russian blood.” But it was in France where Jabotinsky turned from a “mere observer” into a war activist after he read that Turkey had joined the Center Powers: “Turkey’s move transformed me in one short morning into a fanatical believer in war until victory; Turkey’s move made this ‘my war.’”⁶⁷

The young Zionists realized that the only hope of restoring Palestine was in the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. The answer seemed simple: the formation of a Jewish military force to help the Allies destroy the Turks and ultimately free Palestine, which would become a Jewish homeland. The idea of a legion became even more crucial when the Turks began to clamp down on Jewish settlers. However, British politics, military strategy, and Jewish Zionism complicated this simple answer, and it would take four years of struggle before the Jewish Legion came into existence. After a long and difficult journey through a political maze, Jabotinsky finally got the attention of

British war secretary Lord Derby. When he met with Derby, Jabotinsky's friend Joseph Trumpeldor, captain of the Jewish Mule Corps attached to the British Army, accompanied him. When asked by Derby if the two men could promise enough Jewish soldiers to form a regiment, Trumpeldor replied: "If it is to be just a regiment of Jews—perhaps. If it will be a regiment for the Palestine front—certainly. If, together with its formation, there will appear a government pronouncement in favor of Zionism—overwhelmingly." Lord Derby "smiled charmingly and said, 'I am but a War Secretary.'"⁶⁸

Shortly after the meeting, the War Department announced the formation of the Jewish Legion to fight in Palestine. Soon thereafter in November, 1917, the British minister for foreign affairs, A. J. Balfour, announced what became known as the Balfour Declaration, a promise by Britain to open up Palestine as a Jewish homeland.

Major recruitment efforts soon followed. Hebrew signs welcomed young men in the London enlistment office. The British signed up Jews in both Palestine and the United States. Recruiters reported a "spontaneous movement among the young Jewish Colonists [living in Palestine] . . . who felt it to be their duty to share in the task of liberating their home from the hated Turk." Recruiters noted that efforts were helped by the Balfour Declaration. In fact, several hundred Jewish soldiers serving in the British military requested transfer into the legion.⁶⁹

Recruiters headed to the United States, where they hoped to convince American Jews to join the legion. The American government made it clear that only Jews ineligible for the U.S. Army could serve with the British Army in Palestine. National Jewish leaders in America demanded four conditions for Britain's legion recruitment: "That the units had to be sent to the eastern front for active service in Palestine; that they be integrated in the British army as Jewish units under Jewish commanders; that they employ Jewish national emblems and symbols for their identification, such as the Jewish flag; [and] that the language of command be Hebrew."⁷⁰

Jabotinsky traveled to America to help with these efforts. Recruiting offices sprang up in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, and other American cities. Maj. C. Brooman White directed the operation with the help of the British-Canadian Recruiting Mission and two British officers, Capt. T. C. Dolthin and Col. J. S. Dennis. They were assisted by the Zionist Organization of the United States, which greeted the Jewish Legion "enthusiastically."⁷¹

By February, American recruitment for the Jewish Legion of Palestine was well underway. Over 200 young Jews, wearing the Star of David, were honored at a New York restaurant on February 25, 1918. A few days later,

another group of 150 newly recruited New York Jews listened to a welcome speech by Prof. William Bradley Otis, who equated service in the Jewish Legion to a “religious movement greater than the Crusades.” Some recruiting efforts were quite dramatic. In March the British tank “Britannia,” commanded by a Captain Haigh, drove through the streets of New York “seeking recruits.” Roman Freulich heard about the legion from a young British soldier standing in Union Square making an “impassioned appeal for volunteers to fight the Turks and free Palestine, the ancient Jewish homeland.” Freulich was drawn to the young speaker since he was wearing the Star of David on his uniform. Legionnaire William Braiterman recalled another recruiting method. A group of volunteers in Baltimore, Maryland, would stand on the sidewalk of a busy intersection and sing Hebrew songs. After catching the attention of passers-by, the soldiers would hand out recruiting literature in both Yiddish and English. They would also stand on a “soap box” and speak to the audience about creating a Jewish homeland. The speakers would “appeal to the listeners to join the Jewish Legion and fight in a Jewish Army, under a Jewish Flag, with Jewish officers, and with Hebrew commands. An article in the June 5, 1918, *Daily Jewish Courier* noted that the men fighting “under the British flag in Palestine . . . still cling with their souls to Jewish hopes and Jewish traditions.” The newspaper observed, “In helping America to win—and win fast—we are not only doing our duty as citizens, not only expressing our appreciation to the country which accepted us when we were running away from the enemy, and which has given us freedom and a thousand opportunities to develop our strength, but we are also helping ourselves as Jews; we help the Jewish people to obtain their old homeland and become a nation equal to other nations.”⁷²

Jewish Americans who joined the legion came from different socioeconomic backgrounds of both native-born and foreign-born Jewish communities. Some spoke Hebrew or Yiddish, others English. Their occupations were various and included “shop workers, artisans, storekeepers, professionals, students, white-collar workers, teachers, and writers.” Many recruits were “ardent Zionists,” while others were seeking adventure or escaping problems. The Zionist Labor Party also helped recruit from within their ranks. The British government later learned that a number of soldiers had lied about their age in order to serve, and others were too old to be drafted into the U.S. Army. Zionist organizations “wined and dined” the legionnaires and gave them gifts of warm clothing and various foodstuff. Zionist leaders hosted a number of “send-off dinners” for Jewish American recruits at their Zionist Lunch Club at the New York Hotel Imperial.⁷³

Carrying the Jewish flag, the first group of 150 recruits paraded down Fifth Avenue to the sounds of a military band. Thousands of supporters turned out to celebrate the event. American Zionists leaders Dr. Shmarya Levin and Louis Lipsky spoke to the young men, and Levin closed his remarks with, "go and take the country and never give it back." Reuben Brainin, the well-known Jewish writer, accompanied his two sons, Joseph and Moses, on the train ride to their training camp. Brainin told his sons he wished he were young enough to serve with them and spoke to the group of recruits. "Boys, listen to me: it is better that you die in the Land of Israel, than that you should return into Exile."⁷⁴

Within a few weeks, another squad, this time with 350 Jews from New York, Philadelphia, and Cleveland, marched through the Bronx after being sworn in to the British Army. Several thousand people cheered them as they paraded by wearing David's "shield" (the Star of David). Jewish legionnaires from Chicago, Baltimore, Syracuse, Newark, and small towns in Connecticut and New Jersey soon joined other Jewish Americans to fight for Palestine. "At the railroad stations, there were speeches, pats on the back from the elders, and kisses from the ladies, many of whom cried."⁷⁵

To thank the Americans for their help, Lord Reading, the British ambassador, sent a telegram to Major White welcoming the "new contingent of the Jewish battalion" and said he felt "sure they [would] contribute worthily on the field of battle to the cause of democracy and liberty throughout the world." To ensure that Jewish soldiers enlisting in foreign legions could return to America, Congressman Adolph J. Sabath worked on a repatriation bill, which passed in June, 1918. The British and Jewish recruiting team told American Jews they could either come back to the United States or stay in the Holy Land to "make new homes for themselves in the ancient land of their fathers."⁷⁶

Eventually, the Jewish Legion would boast 10,000 Jewish soldiers, of whom about 5,000 came from the United States. Legionnaire William Braiterman explained: "Some felt that we were not expressing our full allegiance and our appreciation to America for their kindness to us . . . that we should enlist in the American Army. Some were afraid that we would risk our American citizenship, but America was big enough and strong enough not to miss a mere 5,000 American Jewish volunteers, many of whom were not yet citizens or too young for the draft."⁷⁷

The American Jewish women's organization, Hadassah, sent over thirty doctors, some nurses, and medicine to help build the "Jewish State." American Jewish women also organized the Red Magen David to give aid to the

Jewish Legion in Palestine. From their headquarters in New York City, volunteers raised money through Yiddish theaters and publications. The women also established sewing and knitting bees during which they made warm clothing for the soldiers. Red Magen David volunteers “cared for the families of the Jewish Legion volunteers and otherwise provided services to the Jewish soldiers, akin to Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., or Salvation Army.”⁷⁸

The end of the First World War did not result in a Jewish homeland in Palestine as so many had hoped—it would take another world war and continued bloodshed afterward. However, in the conclusion of his memoirs, Vladimir Jabotinsky ends with a stirring message for all the Jewish legionnaires who served in Palestine: “Far away, in your home, you will one day read glorious news, of a free Jewish life in a free Jewish country—of factories and universities, of farms and theaters, perhaps of M.P.’s and Ministers. Then you will lose yourself in thought, and the paper will slip from your fingers; and there will come to your mind a picture of the Jordan Valley, of the desert by Raffa, of the hill of Ephraim by Abuein. Then you shall stand up, walk to the mirror, and look yourself proudly in the face. Jump to ‘attention,’ and salute yourself—for ’tis you who have made it.”⁷⁹

In July, 1917, the American ambassador in Rome forwarded a request from the “Armenia Independents” committee. This group of Armenians, seeking the independence of their homeland, asked the United States to organize a legion of Armenians from that nation, Greece, Egypt, and the Aegean Islands to fight with Allied forces. Four months later in a related matter, the British Embassy in Rome expressed concern about the troops in northern Persia and the Caucasus front, concluding that the Armenians were the only ethnic group with a commitment to help the Allies. The British diplomats requested that the United States work with Russia to send Armenian recruits into the Russia Army to fight in the region. The British also suggested that American officers and American money would help in this mission. However, these did not convince the U.S. War Department to create an Armenian Legion, and the secretary of war, Newton D. Baker, expressed his regret that the United States would be unable to send munitions or army officers.⁸⁰

In December Britain tried again, this time with a letter from Lord Bryce suggesting that the United States government send American officers to help “organize and drill the Armenians so that they might be able to defend the Christian populations against an advance by the Turks or an uprising of the Tartars in the eastern region of Trans-Caucasia.”⁸¹ Lord Bryce understood that Armenian immigrants in America wanted to fight against

the Turks, and he noted that many Armenians had already begun to enlist in the American Army. The War College Division recommended that the chief of staff deny the request since the United States was not officially at war with Turkey. The division also noted that Armenian officers were needed in the United States Army, and that the Armenian American population was too small to support a large enough force to accomplish this military action. For the second time, the War Department concluded that an Armenian legion was "impracticable."

In October, 1917, Judge Joseph Buffington of the United States District Court in Pittsburgh joined forces with the Russian counsel to inquire about the establishment of a "Russian Legion" made up of Russian immigrants in America. They suggested that this unit be attached to the French Army. Secretary of War Baker noted that a creation of such a force had to have congressional approval and would take away some ten thousand Russian laborers needed in the Pittsburgh area. Baker also reminded Judge Buffington that the United States was in the process of training Russian American soldiers to fight in the U.S. Army. As with the proposed Armenian Legion, this all-Russian force never gained United States support.⁸²

Other ethnic groups also fought diligently for the freedom of their homelands. Many with roots in Central Europe published pamphlets, conducted meetings, and held public fundraisers for the benefit of their war-torn homelands or to elicit support for their independence. American Serb, Croat, and Slovene communities pressured the U.S. government to help establish a democratic state in the Balkans. The Philadelphia Committee for Armenian Relief gathered contributions throughout the city, and the Slavs met at Independence Hall in a symbolic gesture to declare the independence of southeastern Europe. The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief conducted a national fundraiser in an effort to help three million destitute countrymen. America's Allies Co-operative Committee (an alliance of English, French, Italian, Belgian, Serbian, and Polish war relief committees) raised funds to help the "suffering Allies."⁸³

The Lithuanian newspaper *Lietuva* applauded the "thousands of Lithuanian-American Youth" who served in the United States Army despite the neutral status of Lithuania. The paper reported on their "enthusiastic participation" in the Liberty Loan campaigns and Red Cross drives, noting: "in America, Lithuanians are loyal to all the American ideals and acknowledge them as their own. Overseas, they cannot be neutral because the Germans hold Lithuania by the force of arms." As with other ethnic groups in America, Lithuanians sought recognition of the independence of their

homeland. In May, 1918, Wilson informed a “delegation of the Lithuanian-American Council that he was in full sympathy with Lithuania’s efforts for independence.” Norway’s declaration of neutrality during the Great War left many Norwegian American communities “eager” to express their loyalty to America. These commemorations were “as much a demonstration of an ethnic group’s loyalty to the United States as it was a continued celebration of ancestors and ethnic pride.”⁸⁴

During the Great War, ethnic patriotism in America was complex. Despite an organized and harshly poignant conformity campaign, ethnic groups did not simply give up their ethnicity and assimilate to the “official culture” of the dominant society, nor did they blindly demonstrate their loyalty under nativist threat. Instead, immigrants utilized patriotic rhetoric and imagery employed by both reigning nativists and the government propaganda machine to prove their own loyalty and make their ethnicity acceptable. However, they also used the language of patriotism to achieve their own international goals and express ethnic pride.

Prior to the United States entry into the war, German and Irish immigrants attempted to pressure the government to keep America out of the conflict and actively promoted a course of strict neutrality. Other immigrants advocated American participation in the war. World War I provided American Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Jewish immigrants an opportunity to fight for the independence of their homeland from the bondage of the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Turkish Empires. They did so through their service in the United States military, through ethnic community war-relief fundraisers, and through ethnic legions assigned to Allied armies. Ultimately, immigrants did not simply learn to “speak the English language, . . . salute the flag,” and learn the words of “The Star Spangled Banner” as nativists suggested, but instead they learned to redefine the patriotic culture of the United States as they honored their adopted country and fought for their homelands.⁸⁵