
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

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Notes for a Speech

(1917-18)

Notes For a Speech

0083

OUR PERIL

FROM
GERMANY'S AGGRESSIVE GROWTH
and
WHY SHE WANTS PEACE NOW

PRESIDENT WILSON in his Message to Russia spoke thus of the accomplishment of Berlin in the present war:

"Government after government has by its (Berlin's) influence, without open conquest of its territory, been linked together in a net of intrigue directed against nothing less than the peace and liberty of the world. The meshes of that intrigue must be broken, but cannot be broken unless wrongs already done are undone; and adequate measures must be taken to prevent it from ever being rewoven or repeated."

Thus he told the new Russian Republic why all the Allied Democracies must stand together and carry on the war until a just and effective end shall have been put to the aggressive schemes of Germany as dictated by an autocratic and militaristic Prussia.

The following maps and text expose her record and plan.

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Historical Text by Harry E. Barnes

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I. THE ORIGINS OF PRUSSIA.

When in 1415 the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg sold the Electorate of Brandenburg—a war-widened border mark on the Oder river somewhat larger than the State of Vermont—to the likeless inconspicuous House of Hohenzollern, he little realized that he was taking the first step towards bringing into being a political organization which, just five centuries later, would have reduced the remnants of his Empire to a state of vassalage and would be contending with a fair prospect of success for the domination of the civilized world. During all of this long period of Prussian expansion it has been uniformly and consistently maintained that a Hohenzollern is accountable for his acts to God alone, and that considerations of private morality have no bearing upon the policy and actions of a state.

The first conspicuous additions to the Hohenzollern holdings came in 1618 and 1619, when, through fortunate family alliances, they obtained control of the duchy of Cleves and Mark (which were formally awarded to Prussia in 1666), and of the Silesian duchy of East Prussia, a lot of the King of Poland. Thus, in 1618, the Hohenzollern family was linked up with the destiny of Prussia.

II. THE FIRST ERA OF PRUSSIAN EXPANSION, 1640-1815.

The task of the Hohenzollern Prussia development begins with Frederick William the Great Elector (1640-85), who is one of the half dozen great figures in the history of Prussian expansion. Coarse, brutal, unscrupulous and treacherous, but swift energetic and sagacious, the Great Elector, by skillful intrigues and double-faced diplomacy rather than by war, obtained full sovereignty over East Prussia; made secure Prussian control of Pomerania, and added Halberstadt, Minden and Magdeburg; and brought his somewhat scattered domains under the centralized control of his officials at Berlin. He introduced the typical Prussian policy of building up an effective military organization, and, by encouraging the settlement of refugees (Huguenots), he brought economic prosperity to Prussia.

In 1701 the head of the Hohenzollern house was able to induce the Emperor Leopold to allow him to assume the royal title in return for aid against Spain, and the Hohenzollerns accordingly became Kings of Prussia.

The most important Prussian ruler was Frederick William I (1713-40), a true Hohenzollern of the most vigorous type, who held that a potent disposition was the ideal form of government, and who aimed that an efficient state has for its primary purpose the supporting of a large and active army. He continued the work of the Great Elector and perfected the two most typical Prussian institutions, by making Germany the best distributed fighting machine in Europe, and by establishing the extremely efficient centralized Prussian bureaucracy.

Frederick William added little to Prussian territory, but he handed down to his more famous son, Frederick the Great (1740-86), the highly organized political and military system which enabled the latter to extend the Prussian dominions more than any other ruler to the time of Bismarck. A self-confessed Machiavellian, Frederick's foreign policy was speedily indicated, when, in the first year of his reign, he trepanned up the extremely famous priest of a very ancient family claim, summarily invaded the realms of the youthful and helpless Maria Theresa, the Queen of



Austria, and seized the province of Silesia. A few years later he acquired Friedland on the North Sea. In 1763 practically all of Continental Europe united against Frederick, but for the aid of England, the Prussian military despatch, which already had begun to threaten the peace of Europe, might have been brought to an early and salutary end. With English support Frederick was able to fight his enemies to a draw and to establish the Hohenzollerns as the heirs of the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons. In 1772, Frederick, in conjunction with Russia and Austria, participated in that most shameful international larceny—the first partition of Poland. By selecting as his share of the booty the district of West Prussia, he was able to link it up with Brandenburg and East Prussia into a compact geographical unity.

Frederick William II (1762-97), the successor of Frederick the Great, by two more equally disgraceful partitions of Poland, secured Vienna and the adjoining districts and was thus able to mend out the gap between Prussia proper and Silesia.

III. THE ORIGIN OF A PRUSSIANIZED GERMAN EMPIRE, 1815-1871.

The task of the Hohenzollerns from 1815 to 1871 was clearly marked out, namely, to create a Prussianized German Empire.

Between 1818 and 1842 the first phase of this policy was facilitated by the *Zollverein* or customs union which brought the coveted territory into an economic alliance with Prussia. From 1842 to 1867 Prussia was busy with diplomatic intrigues and aggressive measures which were designed to convert her economic domination into political sovereignty.

The first step in this procedure was to regenerate the Prussian army, which had failed to perform any particularly glorious exploits since Leipzig and Waterloo. This was accomplished through the efforts of Wilhelm I, aided by the able but autocratic and reactionary statesman and military experts, von Roon, von Moltke, and Bismarck. The latter—a true "Junker"—was the most sinister genius in European politics in the Nineteenth Century. Though one of the most astute political leaders in history, he was, after Metetrilich, the bitterest enemy of democracy in his time, and was a more thoroughgoing exponent of Machiavellian diplomacy than Frederick the Great. For more than a quarter of a century he applied all of his truly terrific energy to making Prussia supreme in Germany through his famous policy of "blood and iron."

After having perfected Prussia's military preparations, Bismarck cast about for a pretext to induce a war with Austria in order that the latter might be humiliated and disposed from her predominant position in Germany through his famous policy of "blood and iron."

The next task was to make Prussia supreme in a unified, autocratic



and militaristic German Empire. To accomplish this purpose Bismarck recognized that another foreign war would be necessary in order to add the South German states to the Prussianized North German Confederation. Stirring up a false fear of France in the South German states, Bismarck was able to obtain their military alliance with Prussia. It was now essential to bring about a common war with a foreign country so that this military alliance might be transformed into a first political union. Carefully calculating its effect upon French sentiment, Bismarck secretly urged the Hohenzollern prince Leopold to accept the offer of the vacant Spanish throne. Through the storm of indignation which arose in France over this act, Bismarck, by the distortion of a telegram from the Prussian king, and aided unwittingly by the hot-headed and fair-haired French foreign minister, the Duke of Gramont, and the Parisian war party, was able to induce France to make war on Prussia.

Prussia's elaborate military preparations, which had been in steady progress, made easy a humiliating defeat of France, and the continuation of this brilliant success was sufficient to give rise to the German Empire in which Prussia was supreme in policy, military strength and constitutional arrangements. A crushing indemnity had upon France, and the seizure of the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, left an open sore in European politics. This would furnish a possible basis for another European war, which Bismarck foresaw might be indispensable to the next move in Prussian policy to make the German Empire supreme in Europe.

IV. THE PRUSSIANIZATION OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE, 1871-1914.

The ambition for European supremacy furnishes the key to Prussian internal policies and diplomatic intrigues since 1871, as truly as the ambition for a German preponderance explains Prussian politics from 1815-1871.

Hardly had the new imperial system been thoroughly organized when its bureaucracy was used to crush the growing liberal party of Social Democrats. This was done by inducing the autocratic German government to adopt the chief reform policies of the Social Democrats and thus take away the very ground from beneath their feet, and by retaining the semi-feudal system of representation which excluded them from their legitimate share in the government.

Such was the condition of the German Empire in 1888 when there came to the throne of Prussia and hence to the head of the German Empire, Wilhelm II, a Hohenzollern who seemed to combine all the typical characteristics of his family. He preserved the paternalistic divine-right theory of government of Frederick William I, though himself unassessed of the versatile genius of Frederick the Great, and maintained the energy and aggressive military policies of his grandfather, Bismarck's policy of "blood and iron" was fully adopted as the program of "I, God, and the Army."

The new Emperor, while at first posing as a social reformer, was an even more sincere enemy of the party of Social Democrats than Bismarck, and allied himself to the "Junker" class, the mortal enemies of Berlin and the sworn devotees of autocracy, militarism and Pan-Germanism. All phases of German policy and administration were directed to the achievement and preservation of autocratic, irresponsible government and increased military power.



To make this policy of Germany, there issued from systematic campaign of Clio in the history of Pan-philosophy expounded by a Christian, "might makes right" nationalistic doctrines of the of the Nineteenth Century, supreme instrument of war point the universal super Prussia and her God-favored Such a state of mind Prussia, through diplomatic tion of the culture and its semi-feudal condition to its in less than half a century established stock people of is really an upstart in into aggressive, arrogant, and

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Harsh was the condition of the German Empire in 1898 when there came to the throne of Prussia and hence to the head of the German Empire, William II, a Hohenzollern who seemed to combine all the typical characteristics of his family. He preserved the paternalistic divine-right theory of government of Frederick William I, thought himself possessor of the versatile genius of Frederick the Great, and maintained the energy and aggressive military policies of his grandfather, Bismarck's policy of "blood and iron" was fully adopted as the program of "I, God, and the Army."

The new Emperor, while at first posing as a social reformer, was an even more bitter enemy of the party of Social Democracy than Bismarck, and allied himself to the "Junker" class, the mortal enemies of liberalism and the sworn destroyers of democracy and Social Democracy in Germany. All phases of German policy and administration were directed to the advancement and preservation of autocratic irresponsible government and increased military power.



To make this policy an integral part of the popular sentiment of Germany, there issued from the center of Junkerdom at Berlin the most systematic campaign of Chauvinism, militarism and imperialist education in the history of Europe. This was based on the pseudo-Darwinian philosophy expounded by writers like Bernhardi on the anti-social, anti-Christian, "might makes right" philosophy of Nietzsche, and on the crude materialistic doctrines of the great German philosophers and historians of the Nineteenth Century. It was all designed to glorify war as the supreme instrument of national development and to emphasize at every point the universal superiority of the German peoples when led by Prussia and her God-gifted ruler.

Such a state of mind is identifiable only when one understands that Prussia, through diplomatic intrigues, military aggression and the institution of the culture and industry of other peoples, had passed from a semi-feudal condition to the head of a great national and industrial state in less than half a century. This, instead of representing an old and established stock people or "Urvolk," as Fichte had maintained, Prussia is really an upstart in international society and brings with her all the aggressiveness, arrogance, pride and bad manners of the parvenu.

The William II, with all his bigotry and militarism was a pacifist as compared with the extreme Pan-Germanic Junker party which allied itself to the semi-imperial Crown Prince and dominated the Prussian General Staff. This party, which controlled the Emperor's actions in July, 1914, and his diplomacy during most of the previous decade, loyalty and frequently proclaimed Germany's fitness and desire to rule the world.

To carry out this colossal ambition to dominate the planet, Prussianized Germany secured the subordination of Austria to her plans, and obtained by intrigues with the Balkan states and Turkey concessions for a direct line of communication from Hamburg to Baghdad, thus opening the way to the East. The colonial empire in Africa was strengthened, and spheres of influence were developed in South America and the Far East.

By 1915 Germany began to be impatient to "feel out" her growing power and to discover whether the other European nations entertained a healthy respect for her strength and destiny. No less than five serious international crises were forced upon Europe by German policy between



1905 and 1914, any one of which might have precipitated a European war if the other nations had not backed down before Germany's high-handed conduct. France was belittled in regard to Morocco in 1905-6, in 1908, and again in 1911. Russian weakness after the war with Japan was exploited by Prussia through a tariff war and the encouragement of Austria to seize Bosnia and Herzegovina and thus to violate the Treaty of Berlin with the same impunity that Prussia later displayed in violating neutral territory and treaties in 1914. Again, in the Balkan war of 1912-13, Austria was supported that further bullying of Serbia which led to the extreme anti-Austrian feeling in Serbia that resulted in the murder of the Austrian Crown Prince in 1914.

V. THE PRUSSIAN WAR OF 1914.

In view of the Prussian attempts at diplomatic bullying just enumerated, it did not auger well for the peace of Europe, when in 1914 Germany planned greatly to increase her already enormous armaments. However, it is not difficult to understand this belated attitude. Russia had lately resented the Prussian insults in 1908 and 1912-13 and had set herself to go through a military reorganization that she alone might seriously challenge the military supremacy of Prussia in a few years. The Social Democrats were attaining such strength and confidence that the representatives of the semi-feudal Prussian autocracy knew well that their days were numbered unless some great crisis, such as a European war, could bring a temporary check to the growing stream of liberalism. Again, the Pan-Germans who had rallied around the Crown Prince were confident, domineering and aggressive. Finally, the great army and its officers were chafing under its long inactivity. It was little wonder, then, that Prussian Junkerdom eagerly availed itself of the opportunity of 1914 to make the final test of the power of the political system it had been building up for more than half a century.

The immediate events which led to the outbreak of the war in July, 1914, are too well-known to need repetition. Germany's arrogant support of the atrocious demands of Austria upon Serbia; her belittling and sinister ultimatum to Russia, which this time refused to be "bluffed" as in 1905 and 1912-13; her brazen rejection of diplomatic overtures; and her reckless and cynical violation of treaties, neutral territory, and international law are now among the indisputable facts of history.



Though foiled in its attempt to effect a speedy conquest of Western Europe, the Prussian military machine has achieved almost complete success in its Eastern campaign. The whole of that vast and coveted territory from Hungary to Persia has been brought under the complete control of Berlin. *Were Germany to make peace by retreating to the Rhine in the West, she would have won a military and territorial victory compared with which the military exploits of Frederick the Great and Bismarck pale into insignificance. She has more than tripled her territory and brought under Prussian domination since 1914 a population greater than that of the United States.* The following table showing the situation at the beginning of 1917 will demonstrate that the previous statement is by no means an exaggeration:

1. <i>The Moslems.</i>	
Prussians	40,000,000
2. <i>Usual Peoples.</i>	
South and Austrian Germans	35,000,000
Magyars	10,000,000
Bulgars	5,000,000
Turks	4,000,000
50,000,000	
3. <i>Enslaved Peoples.</i>	
French	2,000,000
Belgians	7,500,000
Austrians, Lithuanians	3,500,000
Danes	300,000
Poles, Lithuanians	20,000,000
Ruthenians	3,500,000
Czechs	8,500,000
Yugo-Slavs	11,000,000
Romanians	8,000,000
Italians	800,000
Armenians	2,000,000
Levantine	2,000,000
Osman Greeks	2,000,000
Africans	8,000,000
82,000,000	
4. Total under Prussian Domination 1917	176,000,000



These figures, taken in conjunction with the all the territory inhabited by these peoples, convey a tremendous task to which the United States has to effort to liberate Germany and the world from the sin Junkerdom. It also gives an effective answer that Prussia is already beaten.

It is plain that it will require great military and intelligent diplomacy to detach the South German from their alliance with Prussian Junkerdom, to Social Democrats from their Godly fatal alliance, and to liberate the alien races now ensnared.

That the "Berlin philosophy" is not yet repented from the closing words of the bitter diatribe now written by Prof. Eduard Meyer, Germany's greatest former exchange professor in the United States, are the three fundamental institutions to which she is to fulfill her destiny in the world, namely: (a) nation; our economic organization; and lastly, a *crucifix* placed wholly beyond the influence of no independent to act, that it may be free to combat forces of which the nation is capable. For the Nation we had every reason to be grateful when she found us fully prepared, while every day that the renewed evidence of its efficiency."

When the greatest Prussian historian speaks it must realize that Prussia must be beaten down by she can again be treated as a liberalized modern na-

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