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Stars, stripes, and swastikas : the American Turners and national identity, 1935-1945

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STARS, STRIPES, AND SWASTIKAS: THE AMERICAN TURNERS AND

NATIONAL IDENTITY, 1935-1945

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Amy Rekward

University of Northern Iowa

July 2015

ABSTRACT

Although German Americans were unable to completely recover from the
discrimination endured during World War I, the American Turners proved to be a
resilient group. Despite the insistence of some scholars that the German-American
community in the United States lost the battle for cultural pluralism, from 1935 to 1945,
the American Turners continued to craft and foster a unique Turner identity. Composed
of what members perceived to be the best aspects of their German and American
identities, the Turner identity allowed American Turners to both valorize their German
heritage and present themselves as devoted Americans. My research into the *American
Turner Topics* newsletter and the World War II era correspondence of the American
Turner National Executive Committee reveals that the utilization of the English and
German languages in addition to political participation were key elements in the
preservation of the Turner identity.

Until the end of World War II, the American Turners actively used language and
politics to establish a unique Turner identity. However, the outbreak of war in Europe
had a profound effect on the organization. Still able to recall the horrific anti-German
sentiment of World War I, the American Turners sought to avoid a similar situation as the
entry of the United States into World War II proved imminent. By 1938, Turner
correspondence and articles in *American Turner Topics* began promoting
Americanization to deemphasize their German ties. The process of Americanization,
undertaken by the American Turners from 1938-1945, resulted in the transformation of
the Turner identity. This study traces the transformation of the American Turner

organization from a bastion of cultural pluralism to a fully Americanized institution

through the efforts of members to equate Turnerism with Americanism.

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This Study by: Amy Rekward

Entitled: Stars, Stripes, and Swastikas: The American Turners and National Identity, 1935-1945

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts

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INTRODUCTION

The American Turners possess a long, rich history steeped in patriotic ideals. Founded against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), the early German Turners became swept up in the national fervor spreading across Europe. The Turner movement was founded by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, a staunch advocate for German nationalism and physical fitness. Born in Lanz on August 11, 1778, Jahn studied theology and philology at the University of Greifswald. He accepted a position as a gymnasium teacher in Berlin and held his first *Turnen* (gymnastics) class in 1811 at Hasenheide Park in Berlin; it is reported that 500 boys participated.[1] In 1872, Berliners commemorated the event with the construction of the *Jahndenkmal* monument, which remains to this day.

Early on in his career, Jahn decided to use his gymnastic training to improve the lives of German youth who had become demoralized as a result of the Napoleonic Wars. A fervent German nationalist, he vigorously opposed Napoleon's actions and encroachment upon the German states. A contributor to *American Turner Topics* noted that upon learning of Germany's defeat at Jena, Jahn – only 28 years old at the time – woke up to find his hair had turned gray over night from grief.[2] Fueled with patriotic fervor, Jahn recognized that a war of national liberation against France was imminent. In addition to improving the prospects of young Germans, Jahn dedicated himself to "creating the raw materials for an army of liberation."[3] Drilling in the *Turnplatz* – an

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[1] "Father Jahn, the Hero of Turner History," *American Turner Topics* (October 1936): 3.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

open field for the practice of physical education – Jahn and his students prepared to answer the call for a volunteer militia issued by King Frederick William III of Prussia. The eventual defeat of Napoleon was a victory for Turnerism.

Though essential in freeing Germany from the vestiges of Napoleonic rule, Turners and their fellow nationalists were persecuted for their beliefs. Cries for national unification and pan-Germanism frightened German aristocrats who retaliated by imprisoning supporters of liberty, including Jahn. Frustration over these events culminated in the 1848 German Revolution, which, much to the chagrin of Turners, did not introduce democratic reforms. Although Jahn remained in Germany until his death on October 15, 1852, many Turners and other liberal-leaning Germans fled to the United States where they would be free to embrace democratic ideals. They are now recognized as the "Forty-Eighters".

Moving to the United States, the "Forty-Eighters" settled in what is referred to as the "German Triangle." With the three main points in Cincinnati, Ohio; Saint Paul, Minnesota; and Saint Louis, Missouri, German immigrants settled in and around much of the American Midwest. The German-American Heritage Center located in Davenport, Iowa, cites Chicago, Illinois; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, Indiana; and Davenport, Iowa as major hubs of German settlement. The desire to populate the quickly expanding American frontier prompted the publication of guides to promote Midwestern living. For example, Ensign, Thaver, and Co.'s "Travellers' Guide through the States of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin," published in 1851, provided newcomers with railroad, canal, stage, and steamboat routes

as well as an updated map to assist in their journey. Publications like "Travellers' Guide" and "Iowa: The Home for Immigrants," were published, ". . . in English, German, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish languages offering 'useful information with regard to the state for the benefit of immigrants and others.'"[4]

Once German immigrants arrived at their destination, they tended to settle among members of their own ethnic group. An ethnic group, or *ethnie*, is defined by Anthony D. Smith as, "a named human community connected to a homeland, possessing common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites."[5] The formation of ethnically German neighborhoods, or "little Germanies," was attractive to German immigrants. Ethnic neighborhoods offered a sense of solidarity and safety as German settlers were surrounded by others who shared, "a common national origin, experiences, language, and culture."[6]

Following in Jahn's footsteps, the "Forty-Eighters" began establishing *Turnvereine* (Turner Associations) in America to celebrate and keep their cultural heritage alive. *Turnvereine* popped up throughout the continental United States organizing gymnastic societies in their wake. Generally, the Cincinnati *Turngemeinde* is credited with being the first "successful" *Turnverein* to originate, but this has been

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[4] Stephen J. Frese, Divided by a Common Language: The Babel Proclamation and its Influence in Iowa History," *The History Teacher* 39, 1 (November 2005): 61.
[5] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (New York: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2001), 13.
[6] Gerhard Grytz, "'Triple Identity': The Evolution of a German Jewish Arizonian Ethnic Identity in Arizona Territory," *The Journal of American Ethnic History* 26 (Fall 2006): 21.

contested.[7] For example, in *The American Turner Movement: A History from its Beginnings to 2000*, Annette R. Hofmann recognizes the achievements Cincinnati *Turngemeinde*, but presents the Kentucky-based Louisville Turners' 100th anniversary commemorative publication, which cites their founding date as July 25, 1848.[8] It is plausible that *Turnvereine* were created in conjunction with the arrival of the "Forty-Eighters" as early German immigrants sought outlets for group solidarity and assistance in growing accustomed to a new country. Despite this discrepancy, it can be agreed upon that the parent organization of *Turnvereine*, the Socialistic *Turnerbund* of North America, was officially created in 1850 with the assistance of delegates from Boston, New York, Brooklyn, and Baltimore.[9]

Following the formation of the national organization, the American Turners became a haven for German immigrants. German Americans found *Turnvereine* to be safe, open-minded places where they could freely embrace *Deutschtum*, or Germanness, and experience *Gemütlichkeit* – a situation or atmosphere which induces a cheerful mood. Though public expressions of *Deutschtum* were permitted prior to World War I, even the earliest German immigrants faced nativist opposition. Groups such as the Know-Nothings, which formed in 1845, worked to defend the United States from what they considered undemocratic principles. Individuals displaying loyalty or cultural

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[7] Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, "American Turner Records, 1853-2004: Historical Note," Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/special/collections/german-american/mss030 (accessed December 2, 2014).

[8] Annette R. Hofmann, *The American Turner Movement: A History from its Beginnings to 2000* (Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center, 2010), 72-75.

[9] "American Turners Historical Sketch," *Turner Topics*, October 1944, 3; Annette R. Hofmann, "Americanization as the End of an Ethnic Sport Organization? The American Turners at the Close of the 1990s," *European Journal for Sport and Society* 4, 1 (2007): 10.

attachments to any country other than the United States were viewed with increasing suspicion. This fact was exacerbated by the outbreak of World War I, with Germany as the primary aggressor. Not directly involved in the conflict until 1917, the American populace focused their outrage towards German Americans. Although many German Americans responded by rapidly assimilating to American society to avoid persecution, some continued to embrace *Deutschtum* albeit in more internalized and private ways.

Heavily reliant upon German social and cultural traditions, the American Turners uniquely overcame nativist obstacles. Despite its German origin, the American Turners were loyal American citizens. Even before their relocation to the United States, the Turners held democratic principles in high regard. Evidenced in the organization's fundamental principles developed by Jahn, the Turners fought for liberty, freedom, justice, and democracy. Adhering to cultural pluralism, the American Turners successfully balanced their German and American identities. From 1935 to 1945, the American Turners were able to successfully retain their unique Turner identity that both valorized their German heritage and presented them as devoted Americans. Still able to recall the intense anti-German sentiment of World War I, the American Turners fought vigorously to prove their loyalty to the United States. While working to prevent a similar situation from occurring during World War II, the American Turners also made significant efforts towards retaining the German elements of the organization. Ultimately, as the American Turners discovered, maintenance of dual identities would not be possible. For the organization to survive another world war, a program of Americanization needed to be implemented.

Historians belonging to various schools of thought have produced many intriguing studies that delve into aspects of the American Turners' transformation from a German-American organization to an Americanized institution. A resurgence of interest in German-American history in the 1990s resulted in a wide variety of works on the subject. In "Phantom Landscapes of Colonization: Germans in the Making of Pluralist America," author Kathleen Niels Conzen explores the impact German Americans have had in America and addresses the issue of "contributions" in immigration history. Conzen defines her concept of "phantom landscapes" as the continuing existence of German American pasts in American life. The contributions of German Americans in the United States have exerted influence and shaped what it means to be an American today. Heartland values, interest in local politics, and the idea of personal liberty are, Conzen believes, "Three central tenets of what it is to be an American, and perhaps exactly those key notions that inform the concern of those who lament and those who celebrate Americanization, may have sprung from the interaction that became (German) America."[10]

Although the contributions of German Americans continuously disappear and reemerge throughout history, their consequences need to be examined and described by historians. Inspired by the disappearing signs of German culture in the United States, Russell A. Kazal uses the experience of German Americans in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to address the complex nature of identity. Kazal argues that, ". . . in the

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[10] Kathleen Niels Conzen, "Phantom Landscapes of Colonization: Germans in the Making of Pluralist America," in *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation Between Two Cultures, 1800-2000*, edited by Frank Trommler and Elliott Shore, 7-21 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 4.

first third of the twentieth century, many German Philadelphians, especially the children of immigrants, retreated from a 'German-American' identity and instead crafted new multiple identities keyed to particular understandings of race, religion, mass culture, and the American nation."[11] Although this work as a whole is integral to German-American historians, Kazal's focus on German social organizations and the division between old and new immigrants are of primary importance to my research.

German-American associational life survived World War I, but did not emerge unscathed. Making reference to Philadelphia's Germania *Turn Verein*, Kazal contends that German-American organizations were hit particularly hard in terms of membership. Not wanting to encounter further discrimination, German Americans shied away from public expression of their Germanness. As Kazal writes, "The remnants of Philadelphia's Vereinswesen [associational world], then, found themselves contending with the legacy of the anti-German panic through and beyond the 1920s. Their struggle with that legacy would constitute one factor in the reshaping of identities."[12]

The legacy of anti-German sentiment led many German Americans to discontinue balancing their dual identities. During the interwar years, nativist pressures became racial in nature. New immigrants from Eastern Europe became less desirable than old-stock Nordic immigrants. Believing whiteness to be intrinsic to Americanness, second- and third-generation German Americans eagerly dropped their German identity. Although considered the "most assimiable of all groups," German Americans were not

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[11] Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 6.
[12] Ibid., 212.

immune to nativist pressures.[13] Following World War I, German Americans continued to

be criticized for their maintenance of dual identities. Second- and third-generation

German Americans' reconstruction of their identities, Kazal believes, ". . . throw[s] light

on the workings of assimilation, the intertwined fates of pluralism and American

nationalism, and the changing nature of white identity in the twentieth century."[14]

Complementing Kazal's study, Peter C. Weber of the Indiana University Center

on Philanthropy explores the reshaping of German-American identity following World

War I. Inflaming existing ethnic, religious, and economic conflicts within the United

States, World War I was viewed by progressives as a force that, ". . . would tighten social

bonds and create a commonality of mind."[15] For the creation of an American culture to

be successful, ethnic groups living in the United States needed to assimilate. Therefore,

the efforts of German Americans to maintain dual identities were viewed as opposition to

Americanism. Weber uses the Indianapolis *Sozialer Turnverein* as a case study to support

his opinion that, ". . . German-American associational life lost the battle not for survival

but for pluralism."[16]

Already weakened by the rampant anti-German sentiment of World War I, the

Sozialer Turnverein and the national American Turner organization, "gave up

controversial political and cultural battles in order to survive."[17] Despite the end of the

war, the American Turners were still under attack from prohibition crusaders and nativist

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[13] Kazal, 261.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Peter C. Weber, "Ethnic Identity During War: The Case of German American Societies During World War I," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 43, 185 (September 2012): 186.

[16] Ibid., 199.

[17] Ibid.

groups. However, Weber insists that the loyalty of the American Turners should not have been in question. The principles of the American Turners, ". . . stated as the Union's task the defense not only of the German character and the German tradition, but also of the democratic system."[18] To calm opponents and assure the survival of the organization, Weber believes the American Turners gave up any attempt to retain cultural pluralism by the end of World War I.

The experience of German Americans in World War II has been largely ignored by historians. Most seem content with Weber's assessment that German Americans and their organizations became fully Americanized at the end of World War I. However, Timothy Holian in *The German-Americans and World War II: An Ethnic Experience* shows that this was not always the case. In an extension of his doctoral dissertation, Holian aspires to correct inaccurate representations of the German-American experience and inspire further research. He describes the German-American experience as a damaging process; ". . . the German-American community endured during the World War II era, from a prewar position of respect and honor following recovery from the traumatic experience of World War I, to having loyalties questioned . . . to attaining enemy alien status upon American entry into World War II in 1941."[19]

Although Holian recognizes the contrasting elements between the experiences of Japanese and German Americans – approximately 10,000 German Americans were interned compared to 110,000 Japanese Americans – he is critical of scholars who

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[18] Weber, 199.
[19] Timothy Holian, *The German-Americans and World War II: An Ethnic Experience* (Manhattan: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 1998), 171.

attempt to eliminate the aspect of German-American internment from history. Holian remarks, "There are those who would deny historical fact and reality, but existing documentation unquestionably shows that select German legal resident aliens and German Americans born in the United States, were victims of a war-engendered anti-German sentiment."[20]

While works concentrating solely on the World War II experience of German Americans are limited, much can be surmised through the works of historians that discuss the complicated situation other ethnic communities in the United States faced during World War II. The authors comprising this school of thought focus primarily upon Japanese Americans and Italian Americans. Individuals belonging to these ethnic groups faced the worst hostilities during World War II as they shared a common heritage with countries belonging to the Axis Powers. In "National Security and Ethnicity: Contrasting Views during WWII," historian Lorraine M. Lees argues that the inability of the Roosevelt Administration to establish a coherent policy towards America's ethnic population allowed nativist fears to run rampant. However, Lees maintains that despite overwhelming hostilities towards ethnic Americans, groups including the Foreign Nationalities Branch, led by Dewitt Clinton Poole, and the American Jewish Committee took great pains, as Adolf Berle stated, ". . . to forget differences and get together as Americans or intending Americans."[21]

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[20] Holian, xii.
[21] Lorraine M. Lees, "National Security and Ethnicity: Contrasting Views during World War II," *Diplomatic History* 11, 2 (April 1987): 123.

In a similar fashion, Richard Steele examines the methods of American organizations to promote the inclusion and fair treatment of ethnic minorities. Through mediums such as radio and foreign language newspapers, these organizations promoted, ". . . American values, including the freedom to be different."[22] In addition to supporting the ethical treatment of ethnic groups, American-Jewish organizations and the Council for Democracy worked to counter national and foreign Nazi-oriented propaganda through educational means.

Despite the well-meant intentions of the groups identified by Lees and Steele, ethnic minorities still faced incredible obstacles while residing in wartime America. Robert MacDougall describes the treatment of ethnic minorities in his article "Red, Brown, and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy in the 1940s and 1950s." MacDougall asserts that, ". . . the principally racial threat to perceived purity and security of the United States gave way to an ideological one."[23] In contrast to the dehumanizing characteristics applied to the Japanese, the German people were granted a degree of humanity. The, "more benign face of racism," attributed to Japanese and German Americans would more or less disappear at the war's end, only to be used against the Russians in the oncoming red scare.[24]

Facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles, America's ethnic communities, including the American Turners, were forced to reconsider their maintenance of dual identities. Two options were available for ethnic minorities to adhere to: assimilation

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[22] Richard Steele, "The War on Intolerance: The Reformulation of American Nationalism," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 9, 1 (Fall 1989): 21-22.
[23] Robert MacDougall, "Red, Brown and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy in the 1940s and 1950s," *Journal of Popular Culture* 32, 4 (Spring 1999), 60.
[24] Ibid., 66.

and cultural pluralism. Identified by Rudolph J. Vecoli, assimilation promotes the

sentiment of "100 percent Americanism" that originated during World War I. On the

other hand, adherents of cultural pluralism share philosopher Horace Kallen's view of

America as a, ". . . great republic consisting of a federation or commonwealth of

nationalities."[25] Although both approaches have been utilized in the United States,

racism is still prevalent, as is cultural heterogeneity. This fact supports Vecoli's

argument that the United States has combined cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity to

create a unique American identity.

      A strong supporter of the American version of assimilation, Peter D. Salins hopes

to remedy the misconceptions surrounding assimilation through his research presented in

Assimilation, American Style. The son of German immigrants, Salins offers a unique

perspective of the process of assimilation as he experienced it firsthand. Contrary to

what ethnocentrists and nativists believe Salins counters that assimilation has been,

"uniquely effective . . . in reconciling national unity with ethnic diversity."[26]

Assimilation, American style only requires immigrants to accept three precepts: English

is the national language, take pride in American identity while accepting democratic

principles, and base their lives upon the Protestant ethic. Immigrants that accept English

as the national language, take pride in American identity while accepting democratic

principles, and base their lives upon the Protestant ethic are effectively assimilated.[27] In

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[25] Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of American Identity," *The History Teacher* 30 (November 1996): 20.

[26] Peter D. Salins, *Assimilation, American Style* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), x.

[27] Ibid., 6.

Salins' opinion, cultural heritage and bilingualism may continue to be embraced as long as immigrants accept their American identity.

Unlike the Melting Pot theory, popularized by Israel Zangwill's 1908 play, the American style of assimilation does not require immigrants to shed their ethnic identities. For Americanized assimilation to take place, effort on the part of immigrants and "natives" is required. By according each other legitimacy, natives and immigrants work together to form an American identity. Although Salins sugarcoats America's toleration of cultural differences, his efforts to fix misconceptions of assimilation are strong. The attacks on Americanized assimilation, Salins believes has led to the recent rise in anti-immigration feelings. For Salins, the promotion of bilingualism in schools and affirmative action are exacerbating matters. Such policies, in his mind, are promoting multiculturalism which leads to ethnic conflict. In turn, multiculturalism is erasing the common attributes shared by Americans promoted in the American process of assimilation.

The global influence of the United States, or Americanization, is defined by Mel van Elteren as a multifaceted process harboring far reaching effects. While some scholars refer to Americanization as a "catchphrase" and favor the elimination of the term, van Elteren argues that Americanization still has value.[28] Regarding the phenomenon as the transmission of American economic and cultural factors, he suggests that Americanization is now a matter of international concern. Appearing as early as

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[28] Mel van Elteren, *Americanism and Americanization: A Critical History of Domestic and Global Influence* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company Publishers, Inc., 2006), 1.

1797 in the correspondence of Thomas Jefferson, the concept of Americanization originated in tandem with the nation.[29] Since then, the consequences of Americanization have been felt within and outside of the nation's borders. Van Elteren begins his work with a discussion of Americanization in Europe. However, for the purposes of this study, his research into the pressures of Americanization on ethnic groups in the United States is critical.

The creation of a distinct "American" identity was a way for American revolutionaries to differentiate themselves from the English and Native Americans. Following this example, "'Americanization' in the United States originates from a context of domestic pressures towards a consensual society and shared cultural-political identity."[30] As the nation progressed, so too did the desire of Americans to create a national identity, which resulted in repressive, nativist behavior. Immigrants to the United States were required to replace their cultural heritage and conform to American society. To attain the American ideal, immigrants were pressured to assimilate and, "give up their names, native languages, cultural traits, and any political views that were at odds with U.S. patriotic loyalty."[31] Evidenced in the treatment of German Americans during World War I, the pressures of Americanization caused ethnic groups to reevaluate their subscription to dual identities. Eventually, as was the case of the American Turners, ethnic groups began to hide their cultural heritage and embrace Americanization.

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[29] Van Eltern, 50.
[30] Ibid., 51.
[31] Ibid., 57.

To counter the assimilationist perspective of past historians and nationalists, Conzen, Vecoli, David A. Gerber, Ewa Mora Wska, and George E. Pozzetta present the current state of immigration historiography asserting that immigrant groups have shown a "determined resistance" to Americanization. Seeking to reconcile dual identities, "ethnic Americans" are constantly recreating and/or reinventing their identity. This process is termed by the authors as the invention of ethnicity. "In our view, ethnicity is not a 'collective fiction,'" they write, "but rather a process of construction or invention which incorporates, adapts, and amplifies preexisting communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories. That is, it is grounded in real life context and social experience."[32]

The dynamic nature of ethnicity is influenced equally by both ethnic minorities and the dominant cultural group. In the post-Revolutionary period, Americans were seeking ways to differentiate themselves from England and unite the nation. Originally defined in ideological terms, American nationality, once challenged by the growing presence of ethnic groups began to be characterized by ethnicity. The process of ethnicization is influenced by several factors including: the pressure exerted by the dominant group, generational transition, pattern of settlement, ethnic leadership, and ethnic consciousness all contribute to the varying concept of ethnicity.[33] Influenced by the preceding factors, the American Turners exhibited the dynamic nature of ethnicity in both their adherence to and transformation of the Turner identity. It is the purpose of this

[32] Kathleen Niels Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa MoraWska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the USA," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, 1 (Fall 1992): 4-5.
[33] Ibid., 12-16.

study to trace the transformation of the American Turner organization from a bastion of cultural pluralism to a fully Americanized institution through the efforts of members to equate Turnerism with Americanism. My research into the *American Turner Topics* newsletter and the World War II era correspondence of the American Turner National Executive Committee reveals that members' use of the German and English languages in addition to active political participation were key elements for the creation and retention of the Turner identity.

The first chapter examines the American Turners selective use of language to create and maintain their dual identities. Beginning with a look at how the German language was viewed with reproach during World War I, the chapter delves into the American Turners' utilization of the language of the Enlightenment to prove their loyalty to the United States. However, the German language still played a critical role in the day-to-day activities of the American Turners. This is evidenced in members' use of '*Gut Heil*,' the official Turner greeting, and the organizational name, the American *Turnerbund*, which was utilized from 1926-1938. Ultimately, the use of '*Gut Heil*' and *Turnerbund* proved problematic for the American Turners as both resulted in a negative association with Nazi Germany and the German-American Bund. To fix this situation the American Turners elected to implement English substitutes so that the organization's true purpose could be realized.

The second chapter focuses on how the political participation and opinions of American Turners assisted in the retention of a Turner identity. Although the organization itself was engaged in limited political involvement, members were free and

encouraged to be active constituents and promote Turnerism in the process. Socialist by nature, the American Turners were advocates of the separation of church and state, labor reform, the abolition of slavery, and women's rights. Like their predecessors, the American Turners of 1935-1945, were equally concerned with preserving peace and the rights of the individual. Vehemently anti-war the American Turners scorned militarism and its presence in the United States. In addition, the American Turners decried the presence of the mass mind, which involved the tendency of individuals to rely on the decisions of others. But both phenomena could be overcome through Turnerism and its promotion of open-mindedness and tolerance. However, not all American Turners favored Turnerism as a solution. Pro-Nazi Turners believed Adolf Hitler possessed the solution for America's problems. The attempts of Nazi sympathizing Turners to "Nazify" the American Turners were successfully thwarted by the National Executive Committee; however, their efforts did contribute to the eventual Americanization of the organization.

The increasing presence of pro-Nazi German Americans and the ultimate entry of the United States into World War II prompted all German Americans to reconsider their preservation of dual identities. This shift in priorities became evident by 1938 as contributors to *American Turner Topics* began issuing articles promoting the implementation of a modern, Americanized program. The desire of the American Turners to equate Turnerism with Americanism is explored in the third chapter. For most Turners, Americanization appeared to be inevitable, but some remained unconvinced that the transformation of the Turner identity was necessary. However, the events of June

1939 would change their minds. On June 16, 1939, the Detroit *Sozialer Turnverein* received a letter from the German Consulate that contained the German government's "Notice Regarding German Citizens Living in Other Countries Becoming Subject to Compulsory Service." Outraged that the Nazis would try to recruit American Turner members, Vice President Arthur A. Kuecken responded with a letter condemning the notice. Although Kuecken's response garnered positive publicity for the American Turners, some members thought the letter should have been ignored due to its political implications. A brief debate ensued, but ultimately members realized the need for cooperation in trying times.

Following the German conscription ordeal, *American Turner Topics* experienced a surge of articles concerning Americanization. American Turner members continued to reassert the Americanness of the organization, but soon realized that actions would speak louder than words. Through the allocation of physical education for draftees and monetary donations to the American Red Cross, the organization proved their loyalty and patriotism to the United States. Despite the positive effects garnered from the American Turner support for the Allied war effort, the stagnant state of the organization remained. To save the organization, the American Turners looked to Theodore A. Gross of the Illinois District.

Published several times in *American Turner Topics*, Gross' plan to prolong the life of the American Turners involved Americanizing elements of the organization. Although he recognized that Districts with heavy concentrations of German immigrants would need to continue to utilize the German language and customs, Gross advocated the

translation of common Turner expressions, names, mottoes, folklore, songs, and greetings. Agreeing with Gross' plans to Americanize the organization, the American Turner National Executive Committee held their first Round Table Conference in 1944. The Conference resulted in the adoption of English as the official language of the organization while later gatherings held in 1946 and 1947 worked to increase and diversify membership. No longer suspected of disloyalty, the organization was free to continue in their promotion of sound minds in sound bodies.

CHAPTER 1

LANGUAGE AND THE CREATION OF A TURNER IDENTITY

World War I was a decisive turning point in German-American history. The extreme anti-German sentiment of the era hastened the Americanization process for German Americans and their organizations. Many German-American historians including Peter C. Weber believe that German-American organizations lost any hope of retaining their Germanness following World War I. Weber writes, "From this perspective, German-American associational life lost the battle not for survival but for pluralism."[34] However, World War I did not mark the immediate defeat of cultural pluralism as some scholars suggest. From 1935 to 1945, American Turners strove to maintain cultural pluralism within their *Turnvereine* before ultimately embarking on a process of Americanization at the end of World War II. My research into the *American Turner Topics* newsletter and the World War II era correspondence of the American Turner National Executive Committee reveals the effort of American Turners to establish a unique Turner identity by balancing what they perceived to be the best aspects of their German and American identities. To achieve a Turner identity the use of language that both valorized their German heritage and presented them as devoted Americans was of upmost importance.

Influenced by anti-German propaganda dispersed by Great Britain and the sinking of the British passenger liner Lusitania by a German U-boat, the American entrance into World War I on April 6, 1917, helped to trigger a period of "100 percent Americanism"

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[34] Peter C. Weber, "Ethnic Identity During War: The Case of German American Societies During World War I," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 43, 185 (2014): 199.

that prevailed throughout the war. Labeled the "Lusitania effect" by Weber, the

sentiment of "100 percent Americanism" instigated rampant persecution of America's

ethnic communities, including German Americans.[35] German-American organizations

and individuals experienced severe discrimination for embracing their German identity.

Opposition to all things German spread wildly throughout the country. Displayed in a

variety of ways, anti-German sentiment began at the grassroots level. German businesses

were boycotted, and German words received patriotic substitutes. For example,

sauerkraut became "liberty cabbage"; dachshunds became "liberty dogs." Legislative

measures were enacted at both the state and federal levels that supported acts of

discrimination against German Americans. Passed by Congress in June 1917, the

Trading with the Enemy Act restricted trade with any country at war with the United

States. In addition, the Act also permitted the censorship of any type of communication

that could pass directly or indirectly to enemies or their allies.[36] Covered under the

Trading with the Enemy Act were foreign language newspapers, which at the time, were

vital to the lives of America's ethnic communities.[37]

In Nebraska, a region densely populated with Americans of German descent, a

number of German-language newspapers existed during World War I. Although read

intently by German-American audiences, the Nebraska State Council of Defense

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[35] Richard W. Steele, "The War on Intolerance: The Reformulation of American Nationalism, 1939-1941," *Journal of American Ethnic History.* Vol. 9, No. 1 (Fall 1989): 9.

[36] Legal Information Institute, "Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917," Cornell University Law School Legal http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode50a/usc_sup_05_50_10_sq1_20_sq1.html (accessed January 19, 2015).

[37] Upon their arrival in the United States, German immigrants created foreign language newspapers to connect the burgeoning German community. The existence of German-language newspapers strengthened the bonds of the German American community. However, as the United States' entry into World War I became imminent, German-language newspapers were violently criticized for their, "alleged promulgation of anti-American propaganda" (*Beatrice Daily Sun*, August 18, 1918).

vigorously condemned the dissemination of the German language. In an article published

in the *Beatrice Daily Sun* notifying the community of the Council's condemnation of

German-language newspapers, a representative declared, "The German language press

must undergo a strict censorship if not actual suppression during the duration of the

war."[38] This sentiment, shared by many Americans, was echoed in Lewis Allen

Browne's article "Our Danger – Tomorrow's German-Americans." Hoping to prevent

second-generation German Americans from succumbing to the alleged anti-American

feelings of their ancestors, Browne insisted that German-language newspapers only

worsened the second generation's chances for assimilation. He stated, "Such German-

language papers as these are an inspiration to German parents teaching their children to

become un-American."[39] The concern for the potential disloyalty of German-American

children quickly expanded into a fear of what exposure to German *Kultur* and language

could exert on American schoolchildren.

As anti-German sentiment made its way into American school systems, the

question of whether or not to continue teaching the German language and history in

school became a hotly contested subject. Though some educators readily admitted that

bilingualism created more well-rounded students, the majority of Americans shared the

opinion of Rear-Admiral Caspar F. Goodrich. Goodrich wrote, "At all costs, we must

preserve our boys and girls from such poison. If we continue to teach German in our

public schools, we must either tell the truth and so foster a dreadful, diabolical sentiment,

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[38] *Beatrice Daily Sun*, August 18, 1918.
[39] Lewis Allen Browne, "Our Danger – Tomorrow's German-Americans," *The Forum* (May 1918): 571.

or we must lie and picture the Germans as they are not. There is no escape except by dropping German altogether from our school programme."[40] And drop it they did.

On Monday, May 13, 1918, the Board of Education in Davenport, Iowa, voted to drop German instruction from its grade and high schools. The news, "greeted with applause and enthusiasm," from students led to a ceremonial burning of German textbooks where, ". . . about 50 of the lower classmen who had been studying German gathered . . . and piling their books in a heap saw them go up in a blaze. None of those present spared a single German book and the job was done clean."[41] Similar situations occurred throughout the country. Cities including Des Moines, Iowa, formed committees which were charged with removing pro-German passages from schoolbooks.[42] Those caught circulating or possessing pro-German texts faced possible arrest by federal authorities.[43]

Blatant disregard for the rights of German Americans took place on a large scale and were supported by legislation like the Babel Proclamation. Issued by Iowa Governor William Harding on May 14, 1918, the Babel Proclamation outlawed conversation in public places, on trains, and over the telephone in any language but English. Strictly enforced by law enforcement and neighborhood watchdogs, Nancy Derr notes that the Babel Proclamation is one of the most extreme bans on foreign languages enforced in the

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[40] Caspar F. Goodrich, "Shall We Teach German in Our Public Schools?," *Outlook* 119, 192 (May 1918), 196-197.

[41] "German Dropped from School," *The Black Hawk*, May 17, 1918; "Burn German Books," *The Black Hawk*, May 17, 1918.

[42] "Purify German School Books," *Roland Record*, August 30, 1917, 6.

[43] "Use German Books," *Lime Springs Sun-Herald*, September 6, 1917, 7.

United States. [44] Until the American entry into World War I, German Americans were permitted to balance German and American identities as they deemed fit. However, as M.J. Bonn states, "Just when they [German Americans] were beginning to be proud of their native country, they had to denounce it; for the time being, the process of voluntary assimilation that they had cheerfully, nay eagerly, undergone halted. Their loyalty, which had been spontaneous, became strained when it was made compulsory."[45] Complete recovery from the discrimination endured by German Americans during World War I would not be possible. However, the American Turners proved to be a resilient group. *Turnvereine* throughout the nation discovered ways to balance what they believed to be the best aspects of their German and American identities through the use of the German and English languages to craft a distinct Turner identity.

Though inspired by the principles created by *Turnvater* (Father of the Turner Movement) Frederick Jahn, the American Turners evolved into a much different organization than Jahn would have imagined. As early as 1872, American Turners recognized the inherent differences between Turnerism in Germany and the United States. In *A Brief History of the American Turnerbund*, author Henry Metzner cites a passage from the 1872 Annual Report of the National Executive Committee, "The Turners of America have nothing in common with the Turners of the old fatherland, except the system of physical training. Of our endeavors for reform in political, religious, and social fields, of the struggle against corruption and slavery in all forms, the Turners in Germany know nothing, although this has been the object and the inspiration of our

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[44] Nancy Derr. "The Babel Proclamation," *The Palimpsest* 60, 4 (July/August 1979): 100-101.
[45] Moritz J. Bonn, *Wandering Scholar* (New York: Day, 1948), 77.

Turnerbund."[46] Turners in Germany, Metzner reported, no longer placed emphasis on pursuing Turner principles in everyday life. Just as the failed 1848 attempt at revolution faded, so too did the German Turners' motivation to enact social and political reforms. Metzner admits; however, that the German Turners gymnastic talents continually surpassed those of American Turners at international *Turnfests*.[47]

Keenly aware that they were heading in a different direction even before World War I, the American Turners sought to make their fellow Americans aware of their purpose as an organization. Defining the American Turners as, ". . . a federation of gymnastic societies of the United States of America," the American Turners declared themselves to be, ". . . organized for the purpose of furthering physical education and disseminating rational opinions and ideas, the realization of which, according to scientific knowledge and experience may be assumed to advance the physical, moral, intellectual and material welfare of mankind."[48] The practice of *Turnen*, a term coined by Jahn meaning gymnastics, played a major part in the American Turners' mission. However, as evidenced by the Turner mission, social causes came to the fore of the organization. Turner participation in the Civil War on the side of the Union and their devotion to the abolitionist cause are significant examples of the American Turners' efforts to improve social conditions in the United States. As the organization continued to grow, the American Turners clung to their vision of a social democracy. An ideal that Turners believed could be accomplished with the assistance of physical exercise.

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[46] Henry Metzner, *A Brief History of the American Turnerbund*, trans. Theodore Stempfel, Jr. (Pittsburgh: National Executive Committee of the American Turnerbund, 1924), 28.
[47] Ibid., 30-31.
[48] Ibid., 54.

To spread the Turner message and connect the expanding number of *Turnvereine* throughout the nation, the American Turners established the *Amerikanische Turnzeitung* (American Turner Newspaper). The dispersal of the first official organ of the American Turners began in 1851.[49] First published in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the newspaper was printed exclusively in German. This ended in 1918, when articles began appearing sporadically in English. It is extremely likely that the attitude of "100 percent Americanism" flourishing in the United States played an important role in the Turners' decision to implement English. However, English did not become the official language of the *Amerikanische Turnzeitung* until the 1930s.[50]

In 1936, the National Executive Committee of the American Turners began issuing the English language *American Turner Topics* newsletter. The source for all Turner news and events, *American Turner Topics* contains articles on subjects including history and philosophy, activities occurring at the national and local levels, obituaries of Turner members, and creative works. Although widely circulated, *American Turner Topics* did not officially replace the *Amerikanische Turnzeitung* until 1943 when the newspaper ceased publication. Owner of *Amerikanische Turnzeitung*, Albert Steinhauser of New Ulm, Minnesota, cited financial reasons for suspending the publication; however, an article in *American Turner Topics* calling attention to the paper's fate suspected the influence of nativist pressures. The author stated, "With the advent of another World War and a natural prejudice against German publications hope of future success was

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[49] Metzner., 9.
[50] Annette R. Hofmann, *Turnen and Sport: Transatlantic Transfers* (Münster,Germany: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2004), 23.

doubly thwarted."[51] Despite the blow to the organization, the Turners continued to voice

their opinions in *American Turner Topics*.

Through modes of communication like the *Amerikanische Turnzeitung* and

American Turner Topics, the American Turners clearly proclaimed their intention to, ". . .

sell Turnerism to the American people, not for our gain or aggrandizement or vain glory,

but so that our country may again become in truth the land of the free and the brave."[52]

Aware of the growing hostilities in Europe and possible entry of the United States into

the conflict, the American Turners of 1935-1945 did all in their power to avoid further

persecution of German Americans. As evidenced by the preceding quotation, Turners

actively utilized the language of the Enlightenment invoking reason, liberty, and justice

to prove their patriotism to the United States. Attractive to the American populace, these

terms conjured positive images of the American Turners at a time when Germany was

again being portrayed as the enemy of democracy. Turners in leadership positions from

1935 to 1945, still able to recall the atrocities faced by German Americans during World

War I, took care to use language that would entice the American populace yet still hold

true to the fundamental principles of Turnerism.

Regarded as required reading for American Turner members, the organization's

fundamental principles adapted *Turnvater* Jahn's teachings for an American audience.

Periodically, contributors to *American Turner Topics* realized the need to reassert the

principles for members to recall the true purpose of the American Turners. Presented in

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[51] "'American Turner' and 'Freidenker' Suspend Publication," *American Turner Topics* (March 1943): 5.
[52] "Over 400 at Banquet for Diamond Jubilee of Davenport Turners," *The Davenport Democrat and Leader*, November 14, 1927, 1-2.

the May 1938 issue of *American Turner Topics*, the fundamental principles of the American Turners are as follows, "Liberty, against all oppression; Tolerance, against all fanaticism; Reason, against all superstition, and Justice, against all exploitation. Free speech, free press, free assembly for the discussion of all questions, so that men and women may think unfettered and order their lives by the dictates of their conscience."[53] Inspired by the teachings of *Turnvater* Jahn there is evidence of the revolutionary fervor that motivated the original Turners who wished to shake the chains of tyranny experienced under Napoleonic rule. An understanding of the Turner organization's history allowed members to appreciate the need for equality in all aspects of life. The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the Turners believed should be inherent rights for all people. It was no coincidence that the principles of the American Turners echoed the language used in the founding documents of the United States.

Escaping from the failed 1848 Revolution the first American Turners found inspiration in the promises of freedom and democracy expounded in the Constitution and Declaration of Independence. Since their initial arrival in the United States, the American Turners had been present for multiple historic events: the Civil War, abolition of slavery, Prohibition, and World War I. Turner participation in these events and many others allowed members, as American citizens, to have a hand in directing American society. Referencing the connection between the founding documents and Turner principles, a contributor to the December 1937 issue of *American Turner Topics* explained that the American Turners belonged to, ". . . an age when our [Turner]

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[53] "Milwaukee Takes a Stand," *American Turner Topics* (May 1938): 4.

principles, interwoven with the principles in the Constitution of the United States and in

the Declaration of Independence, will be broadened out to make this world truly safe for

democracy and justice!"[54] Parallels between the fundamental principles of the American

Turners and the founding documents of the United States include: justice, liberty,

welfare, equality, unalienable rights, and freedom of press, speech, assembly, and

religion. However, most important to the American Turners was the concept of liberty.

From 1936-1945, multiple articles appear in *American Turner Topics* which detail

the American Turners' attachment to liberty. The definition of liberty, its role in

Turnerism, and the role Turners could play in the promotion of liberty in the United

States became important points of discussion among American Turners. For members,

liberty conveyed the Turner ideal. In an article aptly titled "Liberty," Turner Robert A.

Maybach defined liberty as, "the state of being exempt from the domination of other or

from restricting circumstances."[55] In a similar fashion, another contributor to *American*

Turner Topics explained the Turners' understanding of liberty as, ". . . not merely of the

body, but liberty of the mind – the freedom to live our own lives, not to be tied to the

apron-strings of a paternalistic government, but to live our own lives according to our

own intellect and according to our own conscience."[56] The Turner interpretation of

liberty repeated the sentiment of Jahn and the founding Turners, but also expressed the

American Turners' official position concerning the growing hostilities in Europe.

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[54] "The American Turners After 90 Years," *American Turner Topics* (December 1937): 2.
[55] Robert A. Maybach, "Liberty," *American Turner Topics* (December 1939): 4.
[56] "The American Turners After 90 Years," *American Turner Topics* (December 1937): 1.

By the mid-1930s, events in Germany were increasingly broadcasted in America. The violent persecution of non-Aryans – Jews, Slavs, homosexuals, gypsies, etc. – horrified and enraged many Americans. Aware of the growing global hostilities towards Germany, German Americans throughout the United States understood that any attempt to maintain biculturalism had the potential to repeat the events of World War I. Forced to rid themselves of what little was left of the hyphen, German Americans made sure to assert their loyalty and patriotism to the United States. The American Turners took great strides to divorce their organization, ". . . from anything which might suggest any foreign connections."[57]

To successfully disassociate themselves from the events unfolding in Germany, the American Turners once again relied upon language. Up until this point, the similarities between Turner principles and the founding documents of the United States had been the saving grace of the American Turners. Due to past success with this method, the American Turners continually published articles in *American Turner Topics* reiterating their fundamental principles. However, these statements only reached subscribers of *American Turner Topics*, a majority of which were already Turner members and supporters. Realizing action needed to take place on a larger scale the Turners began brainstorming ways to assure the American public that, "All our Turners, being American citizens, have no interest in what is happening over in Europe, excepting

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[57] Important Notice, November 7, 1938, Box 18, Folder 25, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

an ardent friendly hope that those governments may approximate closer to the ideals set forth so finely in our Fundamental Principles."[58]

Despite this assurance the Turners' Germanic roots and cultural attachments to Germany, as the author noted, imply that, "All Turners have a high regard for the German language, for German literature, and especially for the Turners of Germany."[59] Keeping this in mind, American Turners carefully selected what they perceived to be the best parts of their German heritage while constructing their Turner identity. Regarding German Americans as, "heirs of German culture in this country," German-American educator and historian Kuno Francke, writing in 1926, provided an overview of the positive aspects of German character. He wrote, "That which is best and most valuable in German character . . . consists in independence of personality, in depth of conviction, in freedom from prejudice, in earnestness of intellectual effort, in breadth of view, in spiritual striving, in just appreciation of cultural values."[60] As a German American, Francke's conclusions are not without bias; however, his list includes many of the values found in the fundamental principles and beliefs of the American Turners. Careful to display the best aspects of their dual identities, the American Turners employed two significant methods: clearly defining their use of German terms and changing the name of their organization.

The German language played a critical role in the day-to-day activities of the American Turners. In his history of the Turner Movement, Metzner notes that although the English language was gaining in use at social gatherings, "the official language

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[58] "Avoid All Dissension," *American Turner Topics* (January 1937): 2.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Kuno Francke, "German Character and the German-American," in *German After-War Problems* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927): 93.

continued to be German at all formal meetings of the Turners."[61] By 1935, English

almost completely overshadowed the American Turners' use of German. The editors of

Amerikanische Turnzeitung and *American Turner Topics* adopted English as the official

language of their publications and with few exceptions, the correspondence of the

National Executive Committee was written in English. This is largely due to the growing

number of second-generation German Americans composing the membership of the

American Turners. Metzner identifies second-generation German Americans as a

significant factor in the growing use of English among the American Turners. He writes,

"The chief factor in this process of transformation, which manifested its slow but

irresistible progress in all the German clubs and societies, was the maturing youth. The

English language . . . came so much easier to this new generation."[62] However, the

American Turners were not completely willing to forgo their use of German. A

prominent example of this fact is evidenced in the Turners' continued utilization of the

official Turner greeting, '*Gut Heil*' and their attempts to defend and clearly define the

greeting.

"'*Gut Heil*!' What a wealth of meaning there is in this Turner greeting!'"[63] This

statement was made by Turner Alban Wolff in his essay "The Meaning of '*Gut Heil*!'"

which won second prize for essays in the mental contests section held at the 1936

Cleveland *Turnfest*. The award speaks to Wolff's writing ability, but also the high value

Turners place upon their history and German origin. From 1936-1945, two articles

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[61] Metzner, 27.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Alban Wolff, "The Meaning of 'Gut Heil!,'" *American Turner Topics* (October 1936): 7.

appeared in *American Turner Topics* that discussed the meaning and importance of '*Gut Heil*' directly. The earliest, published in the October 1936 issue, is Wolff's essay. The second, "The Origin and Definition of '*Gut Heil*,'" published in the March 1942 issue, is written by Robert E. Hermann, a member of the *Turnverein Eiche* in Chicago, Illinois. Both men show great pride in Turnerism through their invocation of Turner principles throughout their works, but given that Hermann wrote his article following the entry of the United States into World War II his contains more of an emphasis on the American qualities of the organization.

To quote Hermann, "All origins are lost in mystery."[64] This becomes quite evident as Wolff and Hermann attempt to reconstruct the history of '*Gut Heil*'. While Wolff insisted Turner Otto Heubner [or Haeubner] (1812-1893) introduced '*Gut Heil*' to the Turner vocabulary, Hermann contended that it was not Heubner, but Turner Gustav Finke, a city councilman of Plauen, Saxonia, that deserves the credit. Hermann cited a letter written by Heubner in which he asserted that Finke was the first to utilize '*Gut Heil*' in 1840 at the dedication of Plauen's first public Turning establishment; however, '*Gut Heil*' is present in multiple German folk songs from the tenth century. Turner Finke's introduction of '*Gut Heil*' was well-received by all in attendance, including Heubner and Jahn.[65] Despite the disagreement over how the official Turner greeting originated, the attitude of both men's articles reflects the following statement made by Wolff,

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[64] Robert E. Hermann, "The Origin and Definition of '*Gut Heil*,'" *American Turner Topics* (March 1942): 4.

[65] Hermann, *American Turner Topics* (March 1942): 4.

> What a wonderful asset it is for a Turner to incorporate all the meaning of '*Gut Heil*' in his or her person or personality – that is, to be always of good cheer, happy, fit and well in body and mind. It is the equilibrium and harmony between body and soul, the significant and characteristic qualities expressed in the words '*Gut Heil*,' which are the result of the Turners' rational mental and physical education received in the folds of the *Turnverein*.[66]

Whatever the origins of '*Gut Heil*', it is obvious the greeting held a special place in the hearts of all Turners. The definition of the greeting, which both men clearly proclaimed, adds to and parallels the qualities of "good" German characteristics developed by Francke. Literally translated as "good health," definitions of the greeting have evolved over time. While '*Gut*' has retained the same meaning, '*Heil*' can be used to mean, "hale, fresh, brisk, healthy, sound, hearty, happy, safe, whole, unweakened, or unimpaired," all of which relate to the fundamental Turner principles.[67] Depending on the circumstance, '*Gut Heil*' takes on various meanings. A variety of situations and events are listed in each article, which permit the use of the official greeting. A hearty '*Gut Heil*' with the accent on '*Heil*' is appropriate in the following situations: when welcoming fellow Turners, accepting a new candidate into the *Turnverein*, honoring those who have advanced the cause of Turnerism, promoting comradeship at social gatherings, receiving a visiting Turner, parting farewell, signing letters and official records, and honoring a deceased Turner.[68]

Although well-intended, the Turners' use of '*Gut Heil*' proved problematic as the United States' entry into World War II loomed. The level of xenophobia reached during World War II was nowhere as drastic as that experienced by German Americans

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[66] Wolff, *American Turner Topics* (October 1936): 7.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Wolff, 7; Hermann, 4.

in World War I. However, in times of conflict, the national allegiance of the "other" is brought into question. Overt use of the German language made German Americans likely targets of nativist Americans. The connection between American Turners and Germany was intensified by the use of the German language among members. The primary issue with the Turner's use of '*Gut Heil*' during World War II is tied to the use of '*Heil*' as, "the national patriotic exclamation of the German people."[69]

Utilized prior to Adolf Hitler's ascension to power, '*Heil*' quickly became synonymous with the Nazi leader's implementation of '*Heil* Hitler'. The "Hitler Greeting," as historian Ian Kershaw labels it, had been used by Party members as early as 1923, but was written into law on July 13, 1933, following a directive made by Reich Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick.[70] Use of the salute was intended to proclaim support for the National Socialist Party and its cause, but ultimately for Hitler who became Chancellor of Germany six months prior. "The 'German Greeting', as it was now styled, was both propaganda and coercion: anyone not wishing to be seen as a political outsider, with all the consequences which might follow, was ready to offer at least a half-hearted '*Heil* Hitler'; and the sea of outstretched arms at every big rally provided an impressive outward witness to the professed unity of Leader and People."[71] It is not clear whether the use of '*Gut* Heil' caused significant problems for World War II era Turners. Correspondence between the members of the National Executive Committee (1938-1942) suggests if there were problems, they were not worth mentioning. Although

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[69] Wolff, 7.
[70] Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 60.
[71] Ibid.

some Turners continued to sign their letters with '*Gut Heil*' the majority signed-off with an alternate, mainly "With Turner Greetings".[72]

Facing the predicament of maintaining dual identities, German Americans often experienced the pressure to assimilate to the American way of life. Opponents of biculturalism take the position, Jeffrey E. Mirel explains, "that immigrants need to divest themselves of almost every cultural trait they brought from the Old World and firmly embrace the culture of the New."[73] Such opinions led German Americans to make *Deutschtum*, or Germanness, more of an internalized, private occurrence. For example, the American Turners maintained the practice of using '*Gut Heil*' primarily in the company of other Turner members. While surrounded by their fellow German Americans, Turners felt relatively safe to embrace their German identity. Therefore, '*Gut Heil*' did not prove intensely problematic. A discreet change to "With Turner Greetings" sufficed. However, the Turners were not as lucky with the name of their organization.

Established in 1850, the Socialistic *Turnerbund* of North America, the umbrella organization of American *Turnvereine*, went through many name changes during its history. Anti-German sentiment during World War I compelled the organization to transition from the *Nord-Amerikanischer Turnerbund* – an undated name change – to The American Gymnastic Union. The interwar period, 1919-1933, granted German Americans a reprieve from the discriminatory practices directed towards them in World War I. In response, the Turners deemed it appropriate to cast away The American

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[72] World War II Issues, 1938-1942, Box 18, Folders 39-48, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

[73] Jeffrey E. Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 25.

Gymnastic Union label. From 1926-1938, the Turners were known as the American

Turnerbund, a name that reflected the organization's dual identities.

The English translation of the German word '*Bund*' varies, but for the purpose of

the American Turners, '*Bund*' simply meant an association, alliance, or league. As Harry

W. Kumpf, former president of the West New York Turner District and member of the

Buffalo *Turn Verein*, wrote in the December 1945 issue of *American Turner Topics*,

"Yes, at one time we called our American Turners '*Turner Bund*.' The word itself means

nothing else but a federation of societies."[74] Despite Kumpf's insistence, Turner use of

'*Bund*' became awkward as far-right leaning, Nazi-sympathizing organizations began

appearing in the United States. Most problematic for the American *Turnerbund* was the

Amerikadeutscher Bund or German-American Bund. Despite the completely different

stances of the two organizations, making distinctions between the similar names of the

organizations was a difficult task for many Americans.

As Hitler rose to prominence in Germany, individuals and groups that supported

Nazi ideology believed National Socialist principles would best serve the interests of the

United States. When World War II began, Nazi sympathizers in the United States

clamored for a German victory. To assure the success of Hitler's war aims, fascist

elements in America formed organizations like the German-American Bund, successor to

the Friends of New Germany, which diminished in 1935. The Bund was, Leland V. Bell

writes, ". . . the most significant of all American Nazi groups. The Bund reached its high

point of power in the mid-1930s, when it tried to Nazify the German-American

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[74] Harry W. Kumpf, "Turner Cassidy vs. Turner Seibel," *American Turner Topics* (December 1945): 4.

community, and until America's entrance into World War II it was the most publicized extreme right-wing organization in the United States."[75] The emergence of the German-American Bund and other groups, the Silver Shirts, for example, that sought to undermine America's democratic system was attractive to many far-right adherents; however, despite their potential destructiveness pro-Nazi groups in the United States failed to achieve the stronghold they desired.

As Bosworth suggests, some Americans with German ancestry were actively involved in organizations, including the German-American Bund. Sympathetic German language newspapers and domestic radio shows promoted Nazi ideals to the American populace. Gerd Horten states, "To be sure, such overt support dwindled after the outbreak of the war. But contemporary observers routinely estimated that between 10 and 15 percent of German Americans and Italian Americans were strong supporters of fascist regimes in Europe at the turn of the decade."[76] Historian Paul R. Milton concurs with Horten concerning the close cultural ties German Americans shared with Nazi Germany. He writes, ". . . because of the declaration of war between the United States and the Third Reich they [German Americans] were confronted with a much more pressing question than that of blood: loyalty to the country in which their children were being raised or to the one in which they themselves were born."[77] The high profile nature of the German-American Bund led to confusion with the American *Turnerbund*.

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[75] Leland V. Bell, *In Hitler's Shadow: The Anatomy of American Nazism* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1973), 3.

[76] Gerd Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda during World War II* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003), 71.

[77] Joseph Bornstein and Paul Milton, *Action Against the Enemy's Mind* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1942), 210.

Unfortunately, the reiteration of Turner principles did not bring about the solution to the '*Bund*' controversy. Not wanting to be associated with the German-American Bund, the National Executive Committee embarked on what proved to be a conflict-ridden process to change the name of the organization.

Following the resolution passed at the 37th Annual Convention of the American *Turnerbund* in Detroit, Michigan, held in July 1938, the National Executive Committee formed a Referendum Committee to organize a nation-wide vote to decide the fate of the organizational name. The amount of work required to collect votes from each *Turnverein* and tabulate the final results required a period of three months. The editorial staff of *American Turner Topics*, emphasizing that they were not trying to sway the vote in anyway, echoed the sentiment expressed in the Referendum Committee's notice by stating, "By all means, be sure your decision is one of the head, not of the heart. If the change is made, we want it to last for a long time, and vice versa. We can't keep on changing it – it has been changed enough times already. Let us decide once and for all what we are going to call ourselves, and then abide by our decision."[78]

Like all controversial decisions, two sides emerged in the pending American *Turnerbund* referendum debate. The situation provoked intense debate among Turners, often pitting members of the same *Turnverein* against one another. Both sides consisted of a diverse group of people. Those in favor of becoming the American Turners typically belonged to local *Turnvereine* that had already assumed less problematic organizational names. As the Referendum Committee remarked, "Many Societies in other cities have

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[78] "Change of Name," *American Turner Topics* (August 1938): 2.

already changed their name to Turners as for instance, Louisville Turners, Toledo

Turners, Philadelphia Turners, Ft. Wayne Turners, South Side Turners (Indianapolis),

Schiller Turners (Boston), etc."[79]

Wishing to disassociate the Turners from Nazi Germany, Turners supporting the

name change elected to eliminate possible confusion of the Turners with the German-

American Bund.[80] To fix this incorrect association, the Milwaukee *Turnverein* passed a

resolution on April 7, 1938. The resolution reiterated the principles of the American

Turnerbund and denounced the Nazi-esque acts of the German-American Bund. First

and foremost, the resolution summarized the fundamental Turner principles emphasizing

liberty, tolerance, reason, and justice. To further distance the Turners from the German-

American Bund, the Milwaukee *Turnverein* continued, "Whereas, these doctrines are

completely antagonistic to the ideals upon which the Turner movement rests . . .

Milwaukee most vigorously condemns the subversive doctrines and activities of the

American-German *Volksbund*."[81]

Fearful that the '*Bund*' portion of *Turnerbund* would disgrace the Turner's in the

sight of the American public, those in favor of the name change often cited the need to

foster a positive image of the Turners. To Conrad Gaum, a Trenton Turner delegate, the

switch to American Turners would be attractive to members of the American public

unfamiliar with the purpose of the Turner organization. Gaum explained, "The American

public prefers short terms, which can be easily understood, and what could be more

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[79] Important Notice, November 7, 1938, Box 18, Folder 25, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

desirable, as the plain safe and sane 'American Turners!'"[82] In addition, dropping '*Bund*'

would not require the Turners to surrender their German identity. The word 'Turner'

would remain, which Gaum described as a, "strictly German word . . . which is known all

over the world by every intelligent person interested in gymnastics and athletics."[83]

Although supporters made the case for the implementation of a more

Americanized organizational name, not all Turners were in favor of the change. Turners

wishing to remain the American *Turnerbund* developed a list of reasons as varied and

thought out as those in favor of changing the name. A summarization of the arguments in

favor of keeping American *Turnerbund*, provided by the Referendum Committee cites

membership retention and the changing nature of opinions as the main arguments.

Individuals against the change believed nativist fears would soon subside as they

eventually did following World War I making the name change unnecessary. Regarding

the name change debate as, "ill-advised and untimely," those against the change were not

as fearful of the inability to attract new members as they were for retaining current

members. Opponents of the name change responded to the question of membership with

the following statement, "It has been claimed that the suffix '*Bund*' acts as a deterrent to

increasing the membership of the *Turnerbund*, but we are not suffering so much from a

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[82] Two Turners Present Their Viewpoints on the Proposed Change of Name, October 1938, Box 18, Folder 25, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.
[83] Ibid.

lack of increasing our membership, as we do from not being able to inculcate fully, a conception of our ideals and principles among members."[84]

Both sides in the debate had valid points regarding membership in the American *Turnerbund*. Membership rates were in a state of steady decline following World War I, but this issue would not be fully addressed until the Round Table Conferences of 1944, 1946, and 1947. Though it is likely the World War I German-American experience contributed to the decline in membership, Annette R. Hofmann, in her analysis of the Round Table Conferences, finds that the American Turners were unable to retain members because the organization, "served purposes which differed from those of previous generations."[85] To successfully combat plummeting membership the American Turners needed to embark on an in depth process of Americanization that would ultimately take effect after World War II.

Current membership numbers of the American *Turnerbund*, opponents of the change believed, would continue to dwindle due to the proposed referendum. Referring to the '*Bund*' controversy as "bug-a-boo," Richard Turnt of the Pittsburgh *Turnverein* wrote, "This is not a trivial matter that we are called upon to decide! What effect will its adoption have in maintaining harmony among our societies and prevent a possible division in our ranks?"[86] Turnt pondered whether the National Executive Committee is

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[84] Important Notice, November 7, 1938, Box 18, Folder 25, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

[85] Annette R. Hofmann, *The American Turner Movement: A History from its Beginnings to 2000* (IUPUI Max Kade German-American Center, 2010), 181.

[86] Two Turners Present Their Viewpoints on the Proposed Change of Name, October 1938, Box 18, Folder 25, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

more concerned with attracting new members than with maintaining the fundamental Turner principles. Supporters of keeping American *Turnerbund* espoused the belief that strict adherence to Turner principles and ideals would solve the '*Bund*' issue and therefore a change of name would not be required. Turnt and his supporters believed the negative connotation derived from the word '*Bund*' would pass, just like the anti-German sentiment of World War I. He remarked, "Existing political opinions are of a transitory nature. They do not warrant the necessity of a change in name."[87]

Although not all opposed to the name change were sympathetic to the Nazi agenda, those who were made their opinions known. In a letter to American Turner President Carl Weideman on December 5, 1940, Gus Bachman of the Oakland, California *Turn Verein* described the present "unhealthy" situation of the Pacific District *Turnvereine* and recalled the Nazi element present during the name change debate. In addition to financial hardships, *Turnvereine* including the Oakland *Turn Verein* had members sympathetic to the Nazi cause. Due to the activities of these members the Oakland community viewed the Turners in a negative light. Incorrect association of the American *Turnerbund* with the German-American Bund led to, "aversion by the neighbors and also brought warnings of the police department."[88] To remedy the situation the Oakland *Turn Verein* elected to oust the Nazi-sympathizers from their midst, as not to conflict with the majority opinion.

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[87] Two Turners Present Their Viewpoints on the Proposed Change of Name, October 1938, Box 18, Folder 25, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

[88] Gus Bachmann to Carl Weideman, February 3, 1939, Box 18, Folder 29, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

However, the problem facing the Oakland Turners proved to be the close proximity of an unnamed German-American singing group whose members were able to negatively influence some Turners. In 1940, Regional Member Frank P. Soen described to National Secretary Emil L. Pletz, the Pacific situation, "Among these singers are men who still object to the American Turners dropping the "*Bund*" from our name, and, I suspect that, like other coastal cities, there is an element among them whose loyalty is to a country other than the U.S.A."[89] Nazi sympathizing Turners shared similar opinions with Turners opposed to the name change. Of the same mindset, in this regard, they echoed the sentiments of the resolution adopted by the Passaic *Turn Verein* in New Jersey on October 27, 1938,

> Resolved that we notify the American *Turnerbund*, that we are unanimously opposed to the resolution to change the name of our national organization, and that we consider it a serious mistake to bring the question up at this time. If this resolution is carried, we are faced with the loss of a considerable part of our membership, which may prove to be of serious consequence to our society and to our relation with the American *Turnerbund*. We believe that the underlying motives for bringing up this proposal are of a political nature which have no place in our organization.[90]

Both sides in the name change debate used language to support their cause. Ironically, those in favor and those against changing the name of the American *Turnerbund* invoked similar phrases and ideas only to manipulate them to support their own ends. For both sides, retention of their German identity was a primary goal. Supporters of becoming the American Turners believed retaining the Turner portion of

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[89] Frank P. Soen to Emil L. Pletz, December 5, 1940, Box 18, Folder 39, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.
[90] F.W. Schuetze to The American Turnerbund National Executive Committee, October 31, 1938, Box 18, Folder 25, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

Turnerbund would be enough to signify the German aspects of the organization. On the other hand, opponents had no qualms about retaining '*Bund*' as it simply implied the Turners' associational status. In addition, the promotion of Turner principles was important to each side's argument. Since the fundamental Turner principles originated in Germany, advocates of *Turnerbund* avidly used references to liberty, justice, and reason to achieve their desired outcome. The relation between Turner principles and the ideology expounded in the Constitution and Declaration of Independence granted Turners an appearance of loyalty to the United States, which was the primary goal of supporters of the name change. Despite the presence of valid arguments on each side of the debate, only one side could claim victory.

Following the tabulation of the final results, the American *Turnerbund* officially became the American Turners on December 15, 1938. The result of the referendum, an overwhelming 4,733 to 1,476, reflected that the majority of voting Turners were in favor of the name change. Although urged to vote on this vital matter, thirty societies did not report any votes, while two *Turnvereine*, the Sacramento *Turnverein* and Aurora *Turnverein*, did not include the number of votes cast, a move contrary to organization's by-laws. A complete tabulation of votes provided in the January 1939 issue of *American Turner Topics* reveals the total number of votes as 6,209, which represented only one-third of the entire Turner organization. [91] Of the ninety-seven *Turnvereine* that participated in the vote, there were only twenty-nine instances where the majority was opposed to changing the name. Although these instances occur in each of the eighteen

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[91] "Referendum Results in Change of Official Name to 'American Turners,'" *American Turner Topics* (January 1939): 3.

Turner Districts – New York, Indiana, New England, Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin, St.

Louis, Upper Mississippi, Pittsburgh, Ohio, Middle Atlantic, Western New York,

Kansas-Missouri, Lake Erie, Southern California, Rocky Mountain, New Jersey, and

Pacific – nine occurred out of the fifteen participating New England District *Turnvereine*.

Another prominent example is the New York District, where four of the five participating

Turnvereine opposed the change.

The overwhelming opposition present in the New England and New York

Districts can be explained. As Germans immigrated to the United States they settled into

neighborhoods with their fellow countrymen. Willi Paul Adams describes this

phenomenon as "chain migration." He explains, "The path taken by an individual often

turned out to be but a link in a growing chain that bound the Old Homeland to the new

target region."[92] Favoring both rural and city life, many German immigrants found New

York and New England fitting for their purposes. Waterways abounded as did

employment opportunities. Growing German populations in these locales supported

Gaum's assertion that, "*Turnvereine* in New York, Philadelphia etc., always profit more

by getting new German Members."[93] Had the referendum vote gone the other way,

Turnvereine in the New York and New England Districts would have been guaranteed to

continue attracting new German immigrants as members. As the next chapter will

explore in more detail, *Turnvereine* on the East Coast experienced higher numbers of

members harboring Nazi sympathies.

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[92] Willi Paul Adams, Lavern J. Rippley, and Eberhard Reichmann, *The German-American: An Ethnic Experience*, (Indianapols: Max Kade German-American Center, 1993), 9.
[93] Two Turners Present Their Viewpoints on the Proposed Change of Name, October 1938, Box 18, Folder 25, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

Despite the disappointment of some Turners, President Weideman and proponents of the name change believed the transition was, ". . . something that had to be done eventually."[94] Once implemented, all entities of the American Turners were required to obtain the new American Turner seal in addition to stationary and advertising, which had been updated to feature the new logo. Like the Turner name, the logo has undergone many changes. Following the switch to American Turners, the logo was designed with "American Turners" written prominently around the edge of the circular logo. The change of "American *Turnerbund*" to "American Turners" was the only significant change of the logo. Inside the circle an image of a discus thrower is surrounded with the Turner motto "Sound Mind in a Sound Body." Referencing the purpose and goals of the Turners, "Sound Mind in a Sound Body," the Milwaukee Turners explain, "expresses their [Turners'] holistic vision for realizing human potential through the harmonious integration of intellectual and physical development."[95]

Although the American Turners evolved into a different organization than their counterparts in Germany, the organizations' mottos articulate similar purposes. "*Frisch, Frei, Froelich, Fromm*" is the motto of the German Turners. Translating to "Free, Cheerful, Intelligent, Dependable or Good," the German motto shares a similar meaning to "Sound Mind in a Sound Body" that is explored in the March 1941 issue of *American Turner Topics*. Trying to attract new members, the contributor urged that being a part of the Turners, ". . . does not mean merely muscular work of great skill, but that it also

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[94] Carl Weideman, "Your President's Column," *American Turner Topics* (January 1939): 3.
[95] Turner Hall and the Milwaukee Turners, "History of the Milwaukee Turners," Milwaukee Turners, http://www.milwaukeeturners.org/about/history-of-milwaukee-turners (accessed January 26, 2015).

means mental, social and moral training and education."[96] Instead, the Turners believed

physical activity is just one way to transform oneself into a better citizen. Through

physical exercise the body and in turn the mind are stimulated. An active mind engaged

in critical thinking and analysis will more readily embrace Turnerism, which following

the name change debacle would need, as President Weideman wrote, ". . . the fullest

support in order that our principles and beliefs can be extended throughout our

country."[97]

Following the violent backlash against German Americans during World War I,

the ability of German Americans to actively embrace the German portion of their dual

identity in the post-war period was severely limited. Opponents of biculturalism fought

viciously to eradicate America's foreign element by advocating complete assimilation.

The most vocal opponent of German American biculturalism was former President

Theodore Roosevelt. An advocate of the melting pot theory, Roosevelt believed, "The

men of German blood who have tried to be both German and Americans are no

Americans at all, but traitors to America and tools and servants of Germany against

America."[98] Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut explore the nativist pressures

exerted upon immigrant populations in the United States. Identifying Roosevelt's stance

as a political variant of anti-bilingualism, the authors explain that Roosevelt, ". . . saw the

continuing use of foreign languages as somehow un-American."[99] As bilingualism and

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[96] "Frisch, Frei, Froehlich, Fromm," *American Turner Topics* (March 1941): 12.
[97] Weideman, *American Turner Topics* (January 1939): 3.
[98] "Roosevelt Calls War Mismanaged," *The New York Times*, March 29, 1918, 4.
[99] Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (University of California Press, 2006), 209.

biculturalism were painted in a negative light, German Americans were forced to privatize *Deutschtum* to placate the nativist fears of the American public.

German-American individuals and organizations throughout the country suppressed their ties to German cultural heritage and as Peter C. Weber believes, "lost the battle not for survival but for pluralism."[100] However, from 1935 to 1945, the American Turners continued to embrace their dual identities by creating their own unique Turner identity. To accomplish this, Turners selected what they perceived to be the best aspects of their American and German identities, which are listed in the fundamental Turner principles, "Liberty, against all oppression; Tolerance, against all fanaticism; Reason, against all superstition, and Justice, against all exploitation. Free speech, free press, free assembly for the discussion of all questions, so that men and women may think unfettered and order their lives by the dictates of their conscience."[101] In the construction of their Turner identity, American Turners chose to utilize language that both valorized their German heritage and presented them as devoted Americans.

The American Turners' use of patriotic language and terms associated with the Enlightenment did not happen by accident. Fleeing from the failed 1848 Revolution, Turners shared the American penchant for reason, justice, freedom, and liberty. From 1935 to 1945, the parallels between the founding documents of the United States and the Turner principles allowed members to assert their loyalty and patriotism to the United States. Adherence to these concepts also allowed American Turners to embrace their German heritage, albeit in a subtle way, as the Turner principles originated in Germany.

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[100] Weber, "Ethnic Identity During War," 199.
[101] "Milwaukee Takes a Stand," *American Turner Topics* (May 1938): 4.

American Turners held their principles in the highest regard; however, of upmost importance was the concept of liberty. Turner insistence on this point clearly articulated the American Turners' stance on the fascist policies taking hold in Europe. Believing that all people should be free, the American Turners implemented additional methods to avoid connection between their organization and Nazi Germany.

The American Turners use of the German language allowed members to maintain a measure of ethnic solidarity. Primarily, "*Gut Heil*," the official Turner greeting, and the inclusion of German elements in the organization's name aided in the identification of the Turners as German Americans. The society, perhaps a bit biased, treasured the language known for its umlauts and mile-long words. In the December 1936 issue of *American Turner Topics*, the article "The Value of German" displays the Turner affinity for the German language. Believing all should take advantage of the benefits of bilingualism, the author wrote, ". . . the most profitable of all modern languages is German."[102] Although attached to the German language, American Turners realized outright expression of *Deutschtum* could reinstate the discriminatory practices conducted against German speakers during World War I.

Rather than create another period of tension during World War II, American Turners opted to transform their Turner identity by Americanizing elements of their organization. The Turners' switch from '*Gut Heil'* to "With Turner Greetings" and American *Turnerbund* to American Turners clearly articulated the American Turners' stance and distinguished the organization from Nazi Germany and the German-American

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[102] "The Value of German," *American Turner Topics* (December 1936): 5.

Bund. As the name change debate shows, not all Turners approved of the

Americanization of the organization. Both sides advocated the retention of their German

identity and Turner principles and used similar words and phrases to support their views.

Ultimately, Americanized changes were being accepted and implemented by 1938, most

notably, the change of the official Turner greeting and organizational name. In response

to the increasing presence of pro-Nazi members and the ultimate entry of the United

States into World War II, these actions revealed that by 1938, the American Turners were

reconsidering their preservation of dual identities. Although a majority of members

accepted these changes, some American Turners feared complete assimilation. Writing

in March 1942, Robert E. Hermann urges against the complete abandonment of German

in *Turnvereine*. He stated,

> In the world crisis we are now going through it is very easy for us to drop words
> in our Turner vocabulary that have German origin, words that many of us Turners
> have assimilated. It is, therefore, doubly important to know that these fine words,
> '*Gut Heil*', were proposed and supported by Turners who believed in the
> principles of freedom and equality, justice and humanity, reason and tolerance.[103]

> Language, according to Mary C. Waters, ". . . is one of the cultural attributes that

has the strongest effect in maintaining solidarity and integration in the ethnic group."[104]

The American Turners' careful selection of language served to maintain their German

heritage while simultaneously asserting their loyalty to the United States. Despite the

insistence of scholars that World War I marked the end of cultural pluralism for German

Americans, the American Turners' maintenance of the German language during World

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[103] Hermann, *American Turner Topics* (March 1942): 4.
[104] Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (University of California Press, 1990), 116.

War II reveals one of their final attempts to balance dual identities before ultimately

embarking on a process of Americanization at the War's end. In addition to the use of

language that both honored their German heritage and displayed their loyalty to the

United States, the American Turners maintained a measure of their unique identity

through their critiques of American society. Often published as editorials and articles in

American Turner Topics, these critiques were also reflected in the often clandestine

activities of Nazi-sympathizing Turners.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICS AND THE RETENTION OF A TURNER IDENTITY

Holding firm to their fundamental principles, the American Turners dedicated

themselves to the betterment of self and society. The Turner principles and the American

Turner motto "Sound Mind in a Sound Body" identified the American Turners as a

fitness-based organization with a strong commitment to social reform. Through the

advocacy of liberty, tolerance, reason, justice, and freedom the American Turners echoed

the sentiment set forth in the founding documents of the United States. However, unlike

the founding fathers, the American Turners sought to promote the shared values of the

United States and Turnerism through alternative, non-governmental methods. Adopting a

policy of limited political involvement, the American Turners believed Turnerism to be a

cure for societal ills.

A contributor to *American Turner Topics* explained, "The American *Turnerbund*

is not a political organization." However, this did not mean members could not engage in

politics, he continued, ". . . Turners can serve the country in any party. But they can

serve it best if they will study our principles and embody them in their political

program."[105] The American Turner policy of limited political involvement applied only

to the organization as a whole. Members were free and encouraged to be active

constituents in government while upholding Turner principles. Through political

participation American Turner members continued to create and foster a unique Turner

identity. Following the fundamental Turner principles the American Turners of 1935-

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[105] "Turners in Politics," *American Turner Topics* (October 1936): 4.

1945 supported political platforms that paralleled the mission of their organization.

Favoring socialist causes the American Turners often faced accusations of anti-

Americanism. However, the American Turners remained dedicated to the improvement

of American society through the promotion of political ideologies that simultaneously

exhibited the best aspects of their German and American identities.

At the first American Turner convention held at the Philadelphia *Turngemeinde*

on October 4 and 5, 1850, it became evident that political partisanship could be a

detriment to the success of the organization. Henry Metzner recalled, "Many differences

of opinion came to light at this first meeting, particularly on political questions, for one

party wished to make the promotion of Socialism one of the main functions of the

organization, while the other faction advocated that the *Turnverein* should confine itself

solely to physical training."[106] Until World War I, the American Turners were heavily

engaged in the political debates of the day. As believers in democracy as well as, "social

institutions and legal enactments that [would] secure to every worker the fruits of his toil

and safeguard his life," it can be inferred that the American Turners favored the concept

of social democracy.[107] From 1936 to 1945, articles featuring political commentary and

Turner opinions on social issues appear throughout *American Turner Topics*. Although

not a political organization, the political involvement of members reveals the attempts of

American Turners to pursue their unique Turner identity, while promoting Turnerism as a

solution to perceived social problems.

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[106] Henry Metzner, *A Brief History of the American Turnerbund*, trans. Theodore Stempfel, Jr. (Pittsburgh: National Executive Committee of the American Turnerbund, 1924), 9.

[107] Michael Newman describes social democracy as a political ideology that favors parliamentary democracy, a universal welfare state, and collective bargaining schemes that work together within the framework of a capitalist economy (2005, 37-38, 47-83).

Early Turner leadership adopted a left-leaning stance on social and economic

issues establishing a connection between the organization and socialism. By 1850, a

segment of American Turners wished to make the promotion of socialism the primary

goal of the organization. Although unsuccessful, socialism remained at the center of

Turner activities. Socialism is an economic and social system characterized by

cooperation in all facets of life. Through its application, class distinctions are eliminated.

Public enterprises facilitate the means of production in socialist economic systems and

individuals are compensated based upon their individual contributions. Socialist societies

tend to promotion secularism; however, freedom of religion is tolerated.[108]

The American Turners understood socialism as a political ideology that, ". . . aims

to remove the pernicious antagonism between labor and capital. It [socialism] endeavors

to effect a reconciliation between these two, and to establish a peace by which the rights

of the former are fully protected against the encroachments of the latter."[109] This

definition reveals a concern for the status of workers and labor in the United States.

Central to their platform, the American Turners vigorously advocated for labor reform.

An early example of Turner involvement in the labor movement occurred in New York.

According to Eric L. Pumroy and Katja Rampelmann, "The New York *Turnverein . . .*

was active in support of the 1850s tailors' strike and affiliated with the *Amerikanische

Arbeiterbund* [American workers' union] in its call for reform of working conditions in

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[108] Michael Newman, *Socialism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 47-83.
[109] Ibid., 26.

1853."[110] The amount of Turner involvement in the labor movement depended upon the location and membership of *Turnvereine*. In a booming industrial center such as New York, labor reform may have played a larger role than in the Grundy and Tacoma County *Turnverein* in Reinbeck, Iowa, where a majority of members resided in rural communities. Either way, the involvement of American Turners in the labor movement lasted well into the 20th century.

The presence of socialism in the American Turner organization was not limited to economic matters. Emphasizing liberty and freedom in their fundamental principles, American Turners attached themselves to initiatives to combat, at times literally, social inequalities. As the Civil War loomed on the horizon, members of the American Turners were prepared to answer the Union's call for soldiers. Supporters of the Republican Party's anti-slavery platform, American Turners raced to volunteer for military service. The American Turners' aptitude for health and fitness aided members in the battlefield. Pumroy and Rampelmann reveal that although the majority of Turners fought on the side of the Union, there were *Turnvereine* that sided with the Confederacy. Located in New Orleans and Houston these societies were definitely part of the minority as the majority of American Turners advocated the equality of all people regardless of race or gender.

The progressive ideals fostered in *Turnvereine* throughout the United States operated in tandem with hot button issues taking hold in the United States. Though no one can be ahead of their time, many issues tackled by the early American Turners would resurface for later generations of Americans to grapple with. Metzner writes, "It will be

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[110] Eric L. Pumroy and Katja Rampelmann, *Research Guide to the Turner Movement in the United States* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), xviii.

observed that a great number of the reforms advocated by the Turners in their manifestos some fifty odd years ago anticipated the political issues that have come to the foreground at the present day."[111] Specifically, Metzner is referring to the Women's Rights Movement (1848-1920) and the American Turners early attempts to promote equality of the sexes.

By the 1850s, *Turnvereine* were offering gymnasium programs for young girls, but it was not until the 1870s that programs were created specifically for women.[112] Female participation in the American Turners was severely curtailed until the official creation of Ladies' Auxiliaries in 1868. According to Annette R. Hofmann, "The auxiliaries provided women with an opportunity to affirm their identity and to find acceptance. With the expansion of their activities, women were able to gain some independence and self-confidence."[113] Positively enriching the lives of German-American women, Ladies' Auxiliaries allowed members to cultivate and preserve their German identity; however, auxiliaries were purely an American phenomenon. German women, it seems, were content supporting the Turners in unofficial ways and did not form auxiliary groups. With no German model to rely upon, members of the Ladies' Auxiliaries modeled their societies after women's social organizations in the United States. [114] In doing so, Ladies' Auxiliary members were exposed to elements of American culture and opportunities for assimilation not provided to their husbands and sons.

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[111] Metzner, *A Brief History of the American Turnerbund*, 27.
[112] Annette R. Hofmann, *The American Turner Movement: A History from its Beginnings to 2000* (IUPUI Max Kade German-American Center, 2010), 156.
[113] Ibid., 159.
[114] Ibid.

Inspired by their efforts to include women in Turner activities, the American Turners issued a manifesto in 1871 suggesting women and men should be allowed equal participation in politics and that "the power of the ballot should be conferred upon the latter."[115] Unfortunately, this clause proved too progressive for the majority of American Turner members at this time and was withdrawn in May 1872 at the Turner convention in Louisville, Kentucky. Although progressive in their attempts to achieve equality of the sexes, the attitude of many male members reflected the rampant affinity for patriarchal supremacy in American and German society. Ultimately, women remained subordinate to their male counterparts and were not able to be officially admitted to *Turnvereine* until 1992, following a motion made by former American Turner president Ed Colton.[116]

Finally, the socialist ideology of the American Turners can be seen in the secular nature of the organization. Though tolerant of religion, the American Turners were firm believers in the separation of church and state. Closely aligned with the Freethinkers, a humanist organization engaged in secular activism, the American Turners embraced the anti-clerical stance transplanted from Germany to the United States by the Forty-Eighters. As Metzner stated, "In matters of religion and conscience we [American Turners] demand freedom in the broadest sense. We strive for the dissemination of a philosophy based on knowledge of natural forces and their effects."[117] Perceiving rationalism, science, and history as the foundation of the Turner movement, American Turners maintained a close relationship with the Freethinkers and honored famous advocates of

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[115] Metzner, 27.
[116] Hofmann, 186.
[117] Metzner, 54.

free thought including Thomas Paine and Abraham Lincoln. The American Turners and Freethinkers worked cooperatively to preserve the separation of church and state, especially in American schools.

Although American Turners were widely criticized for their refusal to observe temperance and Sabbath Day laws, which they viewed as attacks on their German heritage, the organization received the most criticism from their efforts to remove religion from school curriculum. The American Turners' subscription to secular principles facilitated much protest, especially in Midwestern communities where individuals based their lives upon the Protestant ethic. Hofmann shares the reaction of Reverend H.C. Tilton of Appleton, Wisconsin, to Turner support for free schools. A vehement critic of Turner principles, Tilton accuses the American Turners of not being fully assimilated due to the similarities between current Turner principles and the beliefs of the Forty-Eighters. Hofmann states, "[Turner] support of free schools demonstrated their 'anti-American spirit,' which he [Tilton] labeled 'Turnerism versus Christian-Americanism.'"[118] Unable to accept that secularists were not opposed to the right of individuals to engage in religion, Tilton equated the secular principles of the American Turners with anti-Americanism. Tilton's adverse reaction shows how the American Turners' commitment to socialism was not always readily accepted in the United States.

The political participation of early American Turners began to lessen as World War I approached. Nativist pressures produced by the sentiment of "100 percent Americanism" persuaded German Americans to curb their progressive inclinations. Not

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[118] Hofmann, 119.

wanting to worsen their situation, American Turners muted their vocal support for socialist endeavors. Misunderstanding the position of progressive, socialist organizations during World War I, nativists believed socialists, especially German-American socialists, could be detrimental to the American war effort. In actuality, historian William Preston Jr., remarks, "The majority of progressives were prowar. For them the horror of fighting and its domestic consequences fell before the idealism of Wilson, their infatuation with national honor, and the promise of international reform. The Socialist party gave its principles to Marx and the majority of its leadership to Wilson."[119] Despite this stance, *Turnvereine* throughout the country were increasingly under scrutiny from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. For example, American entry into the conflict led to an investigation of *Turnverein* activities in Hartford, Connecticut. However, when suspicious looking crates were inspected, investigators found that it was not weapons, but beer that was being brought into the Turner hall. [120] Instigated during a period of intense anti-German sentiment, such acts were not uncommon. Therefore, American Turners had every right to be cautious. Contrary to the desire of nativists, World War I did not fully silence or prevent the future political involvement of the American Turners.

From 1935 to 1945, members of the American Turners remained outspoken on many social and political issues. Some members chose to exercise their political inclinations by serving in various capacities of federal, state, and local governments. Bernhard M. Jacobsen a member of the Clinton, Iowa, *Turnverein* immigrated to the

[119] William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 89.
[120] Pumroy and Rampelmann, *Research Guide to the Turner Movement in the United* States, xxiv.

United States in 1876 from Tönder, Germany. Though he began as a sawmill assistant,

Jacobsen soon elevated his position in society. A member of the Democratic Party,

Jacobsen campaigned for a seat in the 1930 United States Congress and successfully

defeated Republican incumbent F. Dickinson Letts. Until his death on June 30, 1936,

Jacobsen represented Iowa's second congressional district in the United States House of

Representatives; his son William S. Jacobsen assumed the seat and remained there until

1942.[121] Attributing the success of both representatives to their acceptance of Turner

principles, a contributor to the August 1936 issue of *American Turner Topics* wrote, "A

member of Congress who died a few months ago – B.M. Jacobsen of Clinton, Iowa, -

always ran on the Turner platform and was always reelected. If more Congressmen

studied our platform, there'd be less need to beware of propaganda."[122]

However, not all American Turners chose to exercise their political rights in this

way. Many chose to express their political opinions in a more privatized manner.

Spanning the years 1936-1945, numerous articles appear in *American Turner Topics* that

shed light on the political opinions of the American Turners and their stances on popular

issues. The articles are in no way inclusive of the political opinions of *all* Turner

members; however, their common themes and dissemination in *American Turner Topics*

prove that the views exhibited in the articles were widely held in the American Turner

community. The large-scale political engagement of early American Turners decreased

dramatically following the entry of the United States in World War I. However,

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[121] "Jacobsen, Bernhard Martin," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-Present [online], http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=J000038 (accessed February 7, 2015).
[122] "Watch Propaganda," *American Turner Topics* (August 1936): 2.

American Turner members, "continued to take issue with the cultural and political conditions in American society." [123] Not afraid to be critical, contributors to *American Turner Topics* offered critiques of the United States government and its handling of American societal problems. Two themes appear to be central concerns for the American Turners: militarism and the mass mind. Fearing the negative consequences of both phenomena, the American Turners believed Turnerism provided the solution.

Horrified by the destruction wrought in World War I, American Turners worked fervently to dissuade any action that could bring future military entanglements. Defining militarism as, ". . . the great menace of the world," a contributor to the September 1936 issue of *American Turner Topics* refers to the increasing hostilities that led to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).[124] Lauding the efforts of Spanish liberals to enact progressive reforms, the author condemned Spain's decision to retain a large standing army during peacetime. Retaining an army of roughly 235,000 soldiers put the government at a great disadvantage after the Nationalists staged a coup and took control of the military. Hoping the situation in Spain would, "serve as a horrible example," the author appeared to be warning that a similar situation could occur in the United States if the government did not take immediate action.

For members of the German-American community the possibility of American military involvement in the growing European conflict was a grave concern. With Germany as the primary aggressor, many feared a resurgence of anti-German sentiment. Not wanting the discrimination enacted upon German Americans during World War I to

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[123] Hofmann, 115.
[124] "A Lesson from Spain," *American Turner Topics* (September 1936): 4.

be repeated, the American Turners took a firm stance against militarism in the United

States. In an effort to prevent American military intervention, the American Turners

reiterated their fundamental principles with a special emphasis on their opposition to

militarism. Though not pacifists, the American Turners clearly proclaimed the

organization's abhorrence of war in their fundamental principles,

> And we favor the settlement of international disputes by judicial procedure. We
> hold that every war, except, defense against invasion, is a crime against the laws
> of nations, and should be outlawed by every nation; that overgrown military and
> naval establishments are a menace to our own liberties and the peace of the world;
> and that the power of conscription is a dangerous device of tyranny. Therefore,
> we favor progressive disarmament, international arbitration treaties and tribunals,
> the abandonment of all selfish discriminations and historic hatreds, leading to the
> ultimate fraternal federation of the World.[125]

The American Turners were not alone in their desire to outlaw acts of war.

Though formulated by *Turnvater* Jahn in the nineteenth century, this aspect of the

Turner's fundamental principles became a topic of conversation among the global

community during the 1920s. To achieve this end, the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 was

introduced. The brainchild of French Minister of Foreign Affairs Aristide Briand, the

Kellogg-Briand Pact was designed to outlaw wars of aggression in an effort to prevent

another world war. During World War I, France was hit particularly hard by the German

Army. As a result, the French were still wary of their neighbor despite the

demilitarization stipulations inflicted upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. To gain

support for the peace pact, Briand hoped to create a bilateral agreement with the United

States. However, President Calvin Coolidge and Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg

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[125] "Required Reading . . . Fundamental Principles of the American Turners," *American Turner Topics* (September 1942): 4.

were not thrilled about signing an agreement which could insinuate American

intervention in the event of an attack on France.   Instead, the two nations invited all

countries to sign. This solution was well-received and gained significant global support.

Ultimately, the Kellogg-Briand Pact involved two main clauses: outlawing war as a

matter of national policy and relying on peaceful means to settle international disputes.[126]

When compared to the fundamental principles of the American Turners, the

Kellogg-Briand Pact seemingly reiterated the Turner's stance on war and enforced their

principles on a global scale. Unfortunately, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was unable to be

implemented effectively. Due to the Great Depression and the growing presence of

European war mongers, the Pact failed to prevent World War II. Unwilling to be

discouraged, the American Turners continued their fight against militarism and

demanded, ". . . no war without a vote of the people, and no military draft for service

outside our borders."[127] However, despite their demands, American Turner members

required a better understanding of militarism, its history, and effect on society to

effectively combat the phenomenon.

Former president of the American Turners and Editor-in-Chief of *American*

Turner Topics, George Seibel was prepared to fill this need. To address the issue of

militarism Seibel issued an editorial in the April 1938 issue of *American Turner Topics*.

Entitled "Why We Fall for Militarism and Breakfast Foods," Seibel explores how

militarism gained a foothold in the United States. Crediting the Prussian state with

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[126] Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964), 28-30.

[127] "Twenty Years After," *American Turner Topics* (April 1937): 4.

popularizing militarism, Seibel believed the modern form "is largely an outgrowth of the Great War."[128] World War I spawned a generation of men who had experienced the power of the uniform. Officers and subordinates alike became power-hungry warriors willing to go above and beyond their duties to obtain higher status. Seibel explained, ". . . a uniform will make almost any ninny a favorite in feminine eyes. Since then it is hard to keep a certain type of male animal from joining various organizations that will enable him to strut about in khaki and puttees. If he can get a gun and a bayonet . . . so much the better."[129]

In addition to the favorable reception from women, militarism was encouraged by two other factors. First, the formation of army cliques in the United States created and promoted militarism. Longing to distinguish themselves, these individuals were constantly on the lookout for enemies to engage in battle. Contrary to the fundamental Turner principles, army cliques disliked peace. Had the American Turners been successful in securing the implementation of their principles – outlawing wars of aggression and settling international disputes through peaceful means – army cliques would have disappeared, requiring members to find other ways to fill their time. As Seibel stated, ". . . if a peaceful spirit were to prevail they [army cliques] would have to go back to work on the farm, or at something else that is useful and more or less laborious."[130] To avoid the monotony of peacetime, army cliques relied upon wartime manufacturers to foster militarism.

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[128] George Seibel, "Why We Fall for Militarism and Breakfast Foods," *American Turner Topics* (April 1938): 3.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

Of primary concern to Seibel were corporations that could easily transition to wartime manufacturing to meet the needs of the United States military. When World War I broke out in Europe, the economy of the United States was in recession. However, the period of American neutrality ultimately provided the boost the economy so desperately needed. Hugh Rockoff of the National Bureau of Economic Research writes, "The long period of U.S. neutrality made the ultimate conversion of the economy to a wartime basis easier than it otherwise would have been."[131] European demand for wartime goods – firearms, munitions, food – caused the American economy to vastly improve. The eventual entry of the United States into the conflict continued this period of prosperity as manufacturers transitioned from producing civilian to war products. The creation of additional jobs to meet wartime demands helped to drop the unemployment rate from 7.9% to 1.4%.[132] Despite the positive implications garnered from wartime manufacturing, Seibel criticizes the militaristic attitude of manufacturers. In his opinion, "All these people are after business." Placing wartime orders with American manufacturers was, ". . . simply an indirect way of bribing them to support the next war, whenever that may come."[133]

To combat the evils of militarism Seibel posited a relationship between militarism and breakfast foods. The popularity of both phenomena, he revealed, could be diminished by strict adherence to Turnerism. When speaking of "breakfast foods" Seibel is referring to the rising popularity of unhealthy, ready-to-eat breakfast options produced

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[131] Hugh Rockoff, "Until It's Over, Over There: The U.S. Economy in World War I," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 10580: 5, [database on-line]; available from http://www.nber.org/papers/w10580.pdf
[132] Ibid., 6-7.
[133] Seibel, "Why We Fall for Militarism and Breakfast Foods," 3.

for busy Americans. He declared, "America is flooded with all kinds of health foods, the chief distinction of which is that they cost twice as much as healthier foods."[134] Making specific reference to sugary, prepackaged oatmeal, Seibel declares that Turnerism can help Americans make better, healthier breakfast choices. The key to solving the American preference for unhealthy eating requires joining the American Turners and participating in physical training courses to achieve, "the harmonious education of body and mind."[135]

In addition, Turnerism offered an effective antidote to the consequences of militarism. Adherence to Turnerism and its principles were again at the core of this solution. However, the ancient practice of militarism would not disappear with just the implementation of regular exercise and a healthy diet. National, if not global, acceptance of the philosophy of the American Turners was required. Seibel explained, "The idea of Father Jahn, hailed as a modern gospel, was the development of the individual, not to become an assassin, but to develop his health and strength to a point where he could effectively resist oppression. 'A sound mind in a sound body' is the concise formula of this philosophy."[136] Turnerism was described as an effective outlet for the energies of the American people. In particular, it would help army clique members avoid the destructiveness of militarism. While militarism fostered subordination and blind obedience, Turnerism promoted equality and cooperation. Compiling a persuasive case against militarism, the American Turners continued to promote Turnerism in the hopes of

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[134] Seibel, "Why We Fall for Militarism and Breakfast Foods," 3.
[135] "Lest We Forget!," *American Turner Topics* (August 1939): 5.
[136] Seibel, "Why We Fall for Militarism and Breakfast Foods," 3.

preventing future wars. Despite their best efforts, the American Turner position on war

proved too progressive as World War II began. As the war drew to a close, Seibel once

again found it pertinent to restate the desires of the American Turners. In an open letter

to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Seibel wrote,

> We do not want Military Training. We do not want Prussianism. We do not want
> goose-stepping, bayonet drill, hand grenade practice. We do not want uniforms
> and parades. We do not want a rash of tin colonels and pompous generals. We
> do not want drums and fifes, cannon and tanks, medals and monuments. We want
> peace, damn-it – Peace! Let's spell it for the radio audience: P-E-A-C-E.[137]

In addition to condemning the overwhelming emphasis on militarism in the

United States, contributors to *American Turners Topics* from 1936 to 1945, were highly

critical of the growing presence of the mass mind. The American Turners, as reflected in

their principles, thought highly of the individual and the inherent rights provided to every

American citizen. Endowed with the ability to think and speak freely, Americans were

largely free to question the decisions of the nation and state. Believing that, "Man's

highest function is to think," the American Turners regretted the growing trend of

dependent, mass-minded Americans.[138] Through popular culture, the rise of

consumerism, and technological advances many Americans stopped thinking

independently and followed the decisions of their peers blindly. Referring to this

phenomenon as the mass mind, an *American Turner Topics* contributor described

followers of the mass mind as craving, ". . . emotional excitement. It [the mass mind]

craves thrills, high situations, oratory. It [the mass mind] demands the stripping of all

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[137] Seibel, "Open Letter to the President," *American Turner Topics* (December 1944): 5.
[138] F.P. Zeidler, "The Reason for Our Existence," *American Turner Topics* (February 1945): 8.

repressions and the end of everyday boredom. It [the mass mind] demands the end of all

sanity and order and free play to the senses."[139] Reflecting Seibel's description of army

clique behavior, the concept of the mass mind originated from individuals' desire to bring

excitement into their daily lives.

From 1935 to 1945, the mass mind challenged American society. Referencing the

pandemonium triggered by Frank Sinatra and the excitement exhibited by fans at sporting

events, a contributor revealed that the mass mind was not only present during

amusements. He wrote, "Everywhere about us are evidences of the mass mind in action.

Hundreds of Southerners disport with ghoulish glee at the lynch murder of a Negro."[140]

Published in January 1945, "The Mass Mind" was written at a time when the horrors of

the Holocaust were being revealed in Germany. The ability of the Nazi Party to

manipulate the hearts and minds of the German people exhibited the negative

consequences produced by the mass mind. Through successful implementation of the

"Hitler Myth," – the propaganda image-building process studied by historian Ian

Kershaw – Adolf Hitler was able to implement policies promoting his ideological goals

of *Lebensraum* and anti-Semitism. According to Kershaw, without the perpetuation and

large-scale public acceptance of the Hitler myth, "Hitler's massive personal popularity

and the high level of plebiscitary acclamation which the regime could repeatedly call

upon . . . is unthinkable."[141] Whether through voluntary or involuntary means the

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[139] "The Mass Mind," *American Turner Topics* (January 1945): 2.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.

majority of the German population acquiesced to Hitler's demands allowing for the systematic elimination of 11 million people, 6 million of whom were of the Jewish faith.

Although the contributor never made a specific reference to Nazi Germany's crimes against humanity, he does explore the ability of the state to manipulate the mass mind. He wrote, "All leaders of the people recognize the peculiarity in people; and he is most successful who can capitalize on the mass mind. The mass mind, in order to satisfy itself will plunge into war and death because the boredom of peace cannot satisfy a people who crave action."[142]

The Nazi Party's emphasis on the significance of the masses and their malleability was contrary to the principles of American Turners. Without the elements of liberty, freedom, and justice, the supremacy of the individual had no chance of survival in the German state. Paramount to the American Turners were the inherent rights provided to American citizens by the Constitution and Bill of Rights. To protect these rights, the American Turners looked to the state. Adhering to the belief that, ". . . the state itself is but a medium to serve and not to rule," the American Turners viewed the state as a temporary stage in the evolution of the United States.[143] Through the promotion of Turnerism and socialist ideology the American Turners hoped to eventually curb the excesses of government and establish a limited government closely aligned to the Turners' ideal of a social democracy.

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[142] "The Mass Mind," *American Turner Topics* (January 1945): 2.
[143] Zeidler, "The Reason for Our Existence," (February 1945): 8; C.A. Neutzel, "Is Our Democratic Form of Government Endangered by Our Present Political Situation?," *American Turner Topics* (December 1941): 7.

However, recent trends in the United States, primarily executive decisions such as President Roosevelt's "court packing" plan, had the potential to inhibit the attempts of American Turners to reassert the importance of the individual in American society. Perceiving the government's increasing involvement in the lives of Americans as an attempt to elevate the position of the state from its intended subordinate status in order to dominate the masses, the American Turners protested the efforts of government officials to encourage the existence of the mass mind. Roosevelt's attempt to "pack" the Supreme Court in his favor caused one *American Turner Topics* contributor to insinuate that the President was attempting to establish a dictatorship.[144] Eager to stop increased federal control the American Turners set out to cure America's problems. To prevent the possibility of a dictatorship taking hold in the United States, the American Turners realized the need to eliminate, or at least lessen the impact of the mass mind. Combating the pervasive nature of the mass mind would not be a simple task, but with Turnerism anything was possible.

Comparable to their solution for militarism, the American Turners believed Turnerism was the cure for the mass mind. The gradual acceptance of Turnerism by the American public would provide the opportunity to solve the political and social ills facing the nation. Through the application of the American Turner motto "Sound Mind in a Sound Body," a nation of healthy, content Americans would revive the supremacy of the individual and become a model for the global community to emulate. The plan for achieving this Turner utopia was explained by F.P. Zeidler, a member of the Milwaukee

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[144] "Those 'Nine Old Men,'" *American Turner Topics* (June 1937): 4.

Turners, in the February 1945 issue of *American Turner Topics*. In his article, "The Reason for Our Existence," Zeidler outlined the Turner solution for the mass mind by reasserting the fundamental principles of Turnerism. Before revealing the antidote, he provided an example of the mass mind's limitations. Recalling his attendance at a banquet Zeidler explained the audience's attempt to sing the National Anthem. Making their way through the first verse without difficulty, the rest proved much more difficult. He writes, "A few people started to go along with him with 'da-de-dum,' but they soon gave it up and the leader and one or two females finished the verse."[145] In this scenario, the attempt of the attendees to rely upon each other to finish the song ended in failure. Through this example Zeidler tries to prove that the mass mind is not a reliable tool. It is all well and good to be able to rely upon others, but ultimately individuals must be able to trust in their own abilities. Acceptance of the principles of the American Turners was one way for individuals to build self-confidence and become less reliant upon the masses.

For Turner Donald Patthoff of Toledo, Ohio, getting rid of the mass mind was simple. According to Patthoff, "The answer is obvious. It is never too late to commence exercising and playing the Turner way. For personal preparedness, join the gym classes – now!"[146] However, joining the American Turner organization was only the first step. Adherence to and the implementation of the Turner philosophy was a lifelong task that required determination and persistence. The carefully crafted steps outlined by Zeidler involved the cooperation of members and *Turnvereine* leadership. "First," Zeidler stated, the American Turners promoted the individual, "by teaching him that his body and his

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[145] Zeidler, 8.
[146] "Speaking of Preparedness!," *American Turner Topics* (May 1939): 2.

mind are not two separate things like a house and its furniture, but are rather a unified whole."[147] Conforming to the American Turner motto "Sound Mind in a Sound Body," the first step required *Turnvereine* leaders to follow a curriculum that could positively transform the body and mind. American Turner members must likewise receive Turner philosophy with an open mind and be willing to enforce it in their daily lives.

Turnvereine were able to assist members in this process. It was the duty of societies to, ". . . promote intellectual growth and moral character through special schools, instructive lectures, and stimulative debates."[148] By providing access to thought provoking seminars and conferences *Turnvereine* encouraged American Turner members to become critical thinkers, which would, in turn, assist members in questioning the actions and decisions of the masses. The Turner emphasis on individualism did not necessitate that members become isolated and cut themselves off from the rest of society. If anything, the American Turners encouraged members to participate in societal debates and discussions. As a contributor in the December 1936 issue of *American Turner Topics* wrote, "You can never learn anything from people who think the same as you do."[149] The American Turners promoted tolerance in all facets of life. Though a secular society, the American Turners coexisted peacefully with religious groups in their communities. Just one example of the organization's tolerant nature, the American Turners treasured the debates originating from interactions with individuals and groups

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[147] Zeidler, 8.
[148] Ibid.
[149] "That Word 'Tolerance,'" *American Turner Topics* (October 1936): 4.

harboring opposing views.   Central to the success of democracy, discussion was integral

to the Turner solution for the mass mind.

Discussion was promoted by the American Turners not only among individuals

but with the state as well. Despite the assertion of the American Turners that the state

was a temporary entity, they understood that to fully eradicate the mass mind the state

would need to play an important role. To regain the supremacy of the individual, the

American Turners protested for the release of many government-owned institutions to the

public. Dealing primarily with welfare, labor, and natural resources, the demands of the

American Turners were, ". . . designed to create the well rounded man, conscious of his

duties toward others and happy in the pursuit of his livelihood and his recreation."[150] For

the American Turners, public control and ownership were ideals. Until the time came

when the Turner model was fully embraced, the American Turners were content to work

with the state to guarantee that individuals received every opportunity exercise their

rights to stave off the mass mind.

Presence of the mass mind, Zeidler believed, had triggered World War II. He

wrote, "The world is at war today because the basic tenets contained herein, as to the

rights and duties of individuals and the groups of individuals, have been overrun by

special interests who believe in the enslavement of man."[151] The primary cause of World

War II was Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939; however, Zeidler's opinion was not

totally off-point. Hitler's uncanny ability to appeal to the German masses secured his

dictatorship and aided him in implementing his goals for the Third Reich. An important

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[150] Zeidler, 9.
[151] Ibid., 8.

example of the mass mind in action, the situation in Nazi Germany was something the American Turners feared and fought to avoid in the United States. By working to restore the supremacy of the individual in the United States through the promotion of Turnerism, the American Turners hoped to preserve democracy and establish a limited state where the majority of power remained with the individual. The American Turners believed, "Unless we revert to the traditional American way of life and institutions and improve our system of exchange so that hunger and poverty in times of plenty may be avoided so as to make our citizens healthy and contented, American Democracy as our forefathers conceived it is menaced, if not doomed."[152] Though the majority of American Turner members adhered to this belief, there existed a small segment of American Turners and *Turnvereine* that believed Nazism, not Turnerism, was the answer for America's problems.

Attempts on behalf of the Nazi Party to infiltrate the United States began as early as 1924. The Teutonia Association founded on October 12, 1924, by German immigrants Friedrich (Fritz) Gissibl and his brother Peter, Alfred Ex, and Frank von Friedersdorff is often cited by historians as the first American organization to advocate for the cause of National Socialism.[153] Growing alongside the German Nazi Party, it was not until the 1930s that the American public began to notice the potential destructiveness of Nazi-sympathizing organizations. Posing what William Leuchtenburg refers to as the "fascist challenge," American Nazi organizations never achieved the notoriety of their German

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[152] C.A. Neutzel, "Is Our Democratic Form of Government Endangered by Our Present Political Situation?," *American Turner Topics* (December 1941): 7.

[153] Several scholars cite the Teutonia Association as the first American organization to publicly advocate for the cause of National Socialism (Bell, 1973; Canedy, 1990; Diamond, 1974; Schonbach, 1985).

counterparts.[154] This failure is due in large part to the German origins of the American

Nazi movement and American aversion to Nazi ideology. As scholar Leland V. Bell

writes, "In the nation's past, political movements identified with a foreign country have

captured attention but never gained wide support, for in the public eye they have been too

closely linked with the country of their origin."[155] Modeling their organizations on

German Nazism, organizations like the German-American Bund never stood a chance of

transforming the political or social nature of the United States, but this did not stop them

from trying.

Nazi-sympathizing organizations in the United States reached their zenith in the

1930s. Aided by the Great Depression membership in the Teutonia Association and

German-American Bund skyrocketed as disenchanted Americans searched for a sense of

security. Historian Sander A. Diamond notes that when corporations like Ford Motor

Company curtailed operations many of the first employees to lose their jobs, ". . . were

the last who were hired, who in many cases were already despondent German

immigrants."[156] Searching for a scapegoat on whom to blame their troubles, these

individuals found common ground with the Nazi Party's anti-Semitic stance. To attract

more adherents the Nazi Party created the *Auslandsorganisation* (Foreign Organization)

which studied the presence of *Deutschum* and reception of Nazi ideology in foreign

countries. Believing the German-American element in the United States would adhere to,

"the assumption that blood was stronger than citizenship," the Nazi Party focused their

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[154] William Edward Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 275-298.

[155] Bell, *In Hitler's Shadow: The Anatomy of American Nazism*, 125.

[156] Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States, 1924-1941*, 94.

efforts on German-American organizations like the American Turners to further their cause.

Throughout the history of the American Turner organization members had simultaneously embraced their German and American identities. Emphasizing the best qualities of their dual identities, the American Turners created and fostered a unique Turner identity. At times, the refusal of the American Turners to conform to the dominant culture resulted in accusations of anti-Americanism. From 1935 to1945, the presence of Nazi-sympathizing organizations in the United State elevated the tendency of Americans to view German-American organizations with scorn. Although the ideology of the Nazi Party was contrary to the fundamental principles of the American Turners, the German origin and elements of the organization did not foster trust from the American public. Aware of their reception the American Turners took great strides to disassociate their organization from Nazi Germany. As discussed in Chapter 1, American Turners worked to clearly define their use of the German language and went so far as to change the name of the organization from American *Turnerbund* to the American Turners in 1938. These measures helped repair the reputation of the American Turners in the eyes of the American public; however, the participation of American Turner members in Nazi-sympathizing organizations threatened to undo the efforts of the majority of American Turners.

Concern for the pro-Nazi activities of American Turner members appeared by 1938, in the correspondence of the National Executive Committee. Some of the references consist of minor "anti-American" activities. For example, from 1938 to 1939,

a series of letters were circulated among American Turner leadership and the Union Hill

Turn-Verein in New Jersey, regarding the society's opposition to dropping the "*Bund*"

portion of the American *Turnerbund*. However, the pro-Nazi activities of the Union Hill

Turn-Verein and other societies throughout the United States escalated, requiring the

intervention of the federal government. High profile scenarios of this nature typically

involved the actions of a few individuals not entire *Turnvereine*. For instance, the arrest

of 48 enemy aliens in the United States included Bernard Kettman, Secretary of the

Union Hill *Turn-Verein*. While being rounded up for transport to Ellis Island, New York,

to appear in front of the Alien Board, Kettman reportedly declared, "I was born a German

and I will die a German. It is tough luck that I am in America."[157] A recent immigrant to

the United States, Kettman arrived in 1925, and settled in Union City, New Jersey, where

he was employed as a barber. The sentiment expressed by Kettman was not unusual for

recent German immigrants. By no means were all German immigrants arriving in the

1920s and 1930s believers in National Socialism. However, as Diamond explains, the

small fraction that were, ". . . regarded America as a temporary home for new arrivals

from Germany, a refuge from the Weimar Republic. They hoped to return to Germany

upon Hitler's advent to power and share the fruits of victory"[158] While biding their time

in the United States, Nazi sympathizing German Americans joined German-American

cultural organizations like the American Turners to garner more supporters.

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[157] "Nab 48 Aliens in Hudson, Bergen; Openly Admit Germany Allegiance," *The Hudson Dispatch*, August 28, 1942, Box 18, Folder 48, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.
[158] Diamond, 96.

Three significant cases appear in the correspondence of the American Turner National Executive Committee that display the efforts of pro-Nazi German Americans to win Turner support for the Nazi cause. Attributing such acts to "German bull-headedness," Seibel notified American Turner President Carl Weideman of the attempt of several San Diego Turners to display the flag of Nazi Germany in the Turner hall.[159] Featuring a swastika, the logo of the Nazi Party, the flag and the ideology it symbolized were contrary to the principles of the American Turners. Threatening to associate the American Turners with Nazi Germany, a similar situation occurred in 1939, at the Philadelphia *Turngemeinde* in Pennsylvania. Writing to President Weideman on February 4, 1939, Turner Charles G. Daum recalled the incident, "Three women came along and asked for the Nazi Flag and I said that 'we do not have it, we only recognize the stars and stripes' and then one of the women made a very insulting remark. No doubt she was the wife of a Bear and many Bears think Germany comes first and we must try to correct them. I said to the women, 'this is an American Institution.'"[160] The term Bears or Bären, is utilized by Turners to signify older male members, who in this case, favored tradition and the German origin of the American Turners.

The final and perhaps most blatant attempt of pro-Nazi American Turner members to foster a relationship between the American Turners and Nazi Germany occurred in New York. On May 12, 1940, the German-American Athletic League

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[159] George Seibel to Carl Weideman, January 18, 1938, Box 18, Folder 45, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.
[160] Charles G. Daum to Carl Weideman, February 4, 1939, Box 18, Folder 45, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

(G.A.A.L.) sponsored the *Deutscher Turn und Sporttag* (German Gymnastic and Sport

Day) at Randall's Island, New York. The event garnered much interest from the

surrounding community for the displays of athletic prowess and the event organizer's

ulterior motives. Eugene T.W. Rieflin, president of the G.A.A.L. and the German-

American Olympic Association, was the primary sponsor of the event. Rumored to be a

Gestapo chief, Rieflin's negative reputation and connection with the German-American

Bund concerned the American Turner National Executive Committee who cautioned all

members to remain unaffiliated with his organizations.[161] However, this warning did not

stop the New York and *Deutsch-Amerikanischer Turnvereine* from participating in the

Deutscher Turn und Sporttag.

Though complementary of the American Turners' admiration for physical fitness,

the Nazi ideology promoted by Rieflin made *Turnvereine* association with the G.A.A.L.

problematic. Aware of the American Turner's disapproval of his organization, Rieflin

enforced subtle tactics to convince local *Turnvereine* to join the G.A.A.L. Frank P. Soen,

Regional Director of the Jersey City American Turners, explained Rieflin's methods,

"Usually they [G.A.A.L. members] approach an individual member of a *Turn Verein* who

is known for his Nazi leanings. He in turn influences as many of the members of his

society as possible and then when the subject is brought before the society meeting there

is such a demand for it that the officers, (usually not knowing what's behind it) agree and

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[161] Frank P. Soen to Emil L. Pletz, March 29, 1941, Box 18, Folder 405, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

the society pays five dollars and becomes a member of the G.A. Athletic League."[162]

Through covert methods Rieflin convinced the New York and *Deutscher-Amerikanischer Turnvereiene* to participate in the *Deutscher Turn und Sporttag*. Their participation, as the National Executive Committee feared, gained national attention for German American acceptance of Nazi symbols and ideology.

A photograph taken at the 1940 *Deutscher Turn und Sporttag* shows participants parading in front of the crowd of spectators. Included in President Weideman's letter to Otto P. Mueller, President of the New York District, the photograph focuses on two men carrying flags. Of course, the American flag is prominently displayed, but so too is the Nazi flag. That the Nazi flag was even considered for display was contradictory to the principles of the American Turners and the United States. In addition to the flag, Turner members were witnessed giving the Nazi salute and several Turner participants proudly displayed swastikas on their American Turner uniforms.[163] Recalling the fiasco, Soen stated, "Dr. Stroelin appears in the photograph in his political uniform with a Swastika on his left sleeve. Eberhard Noller, carried the Swastika (he refuses to take part in any Turner competition unless he has a small Swastika on his gym shirt. He claims it was given to him by Hitler)."[164] The actions of all Nazi sympathizing members were egregiously out-of-line with the Americanized stance adopted by the American Turners

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[162] Frank P. Soen to Emil L. Pletz, June 3, 1941, Box 18, Folder 40, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

[163] Herman Müller to Carl Weideman, June 26, 1940, Box 18, Folder 40, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

[164] Frank P. Soen to Emil L. Pletz, March 14, 1941, Box 18, Folder 40, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

during World War II.   Wary that any solution they chose to implement could threaten to dismantle the eastern districts of the American Turners, the National Executive Committee faced a difficult task, which could not be solved by Turnerism alone.

The experience of the original Turners in Germany had a profound influence on the political involvement and opinions of later members. Evidenced in the American Turners socialist leanings, the organization's efforts to promote freedom, equality, liberty, and justice in the United States reflected the fundamental Turner principles. Although the political involvement of the American Turners was severely curtailed due to the anti-German sentiment of World War I, the organization refused to be silenced. The American Turners believed Turnerism had the potential to remedy the political and social problems pervading American society. As Turner Walter Palm of Milwaukee declared, "The Turners, if they will, can be the real leaders in solving the problems of the nation. And we must tell the people what our philosophy is and how its application to the various problems in the nation, state and local governments will solve them."[165] Heeding Palm's advice, the American Turners continuously promoted their fundamental principles in *American Turner Topics*. Contributors to the newsletter addressed an array of hot button issues, which they attempted to solve through the implementation of Turnerism.

Like the early American Turners who advocated for labor reform, the abolition of slavery, and women's rights, the American Turners of 1935-1945, were passionate advocates of peace and preserving the rights of the individual. Both Turner passions came under attack during this period. The promotion of the interrelated concepts of

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[165] Walter Palm, "Is the Turner Movement Doomed?," *American Turner Topics* (March 1940): 9-10.

militarism and the mass mind in the United States was perceived by the American

Turners as destroying the fundamental values of the nation. Militarism fostered a breed

of man constantly in search of conflict. Inevitably leading to the formation of army

cliques, militarism was in direct violation of Turner principles. Decrying acts of war, the

American Turners shared the sentiment espoused in the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Desiring to

outlaw war and settle international disputes through peaceful means, the American

Turners endorsed Turnerism as an alternative option for Americans attracted to

militarism. Turnerism provided the group dynamic of army cliques, but instead of

promoting destruction and subordination Turnerism emphasized equality and

cooperation. Acceptance and implementation of Turnerism by Americans would

produce, ". . . new ethics, a finer outlook, strong and healthy bodies and more refined and

intelligent minds." [166]

Through participation in local *Turnvereine* activities, members could improve

their physique and minds. However, the presence of the mass mind was inhibiting the

ability of Americans to think independently. The concept of the mass mind, as presented

in *American Turner Topics*, described the tendency of individuals to rely on the decisions

of others, or to become one of the masses. One of the most horrific examples of the mass

mind occurred in Nazi Germany. Resulting in the systematic elimination of 11 million

innocent people, the Holocaust and Adolf Hitler's dictatorship were two things the

American Turners fought vigorously to prevent in the United States. Once again, the

American Turner solution was based upon Turnerism. Through seminars, lectures, and

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[166] Palm, 10.

stimulating debates, members of the American Turners – not including pro-Nazi Turners – became open-minded, free-thinking, tolerant individuals. Maintenance of these qualities made American Turners less susceptible to the mass mind.

However, not all members believed in the Turner solution. A few individuals and *Turnvereine* throughout the United States believed Hitler's ideology was the solution for America's problems. Pro-Nazi American Turner members emphasized their German identity although many elements had been warped by the Nazi Party. The attempts of Nazi sympathizing members to implement Nazi ideology in the American Turners were fortunately thwarted by the National Executive Committee. By 1938, the increasing presence of pro-Nazi members and ultimately the entry of the United States into World War II prompted all German Americans to reconsider their preservation of dual identities. Though the American Turners had been successful in their creation of a unique Turner identity, World War II revealed the need to transform how the organization was perceived. The National Executive Committee, supported by the majority of members, decided that if the American Turner organization was to survive another war the Turners would need to continue their overt expressions of Turner loyalty to the United States. Ultimately, the American Turners embarked on a process of Americanization, and transformed their unique Turner identity to prove that, "Turnerism is Americanism."[167]

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[167] Julius Boenisch, "Cleveland, Ohio," *American Turner Topics* (April 1943): 11.

CHAPTER 3

AMERICANIZATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF A TURNER IDENTITY

As American intervention in World War II drew near, a fear of fifth column movements in the United States pervaded the nation. Unable to counter the negative connotations surrounding Americans of German extraction, the American Turners implemented a program of Americanization. Intended to calm these fears, the American Turners' efforts also worked to modernize and prolong the life of the organization. The process of Americanization, as defined by social scientist Mel van Elteren was "multifaceted" in its emphasis on cultural, economic, and political factors.[168] Occurring on American soil, the domestic Americanization of the American Turners involved, ". . . the disappearance of the external differences upon which so much race-prejudice often feeds."[169] Despite acquiescing to demands for Americanization, the American Turners adhered to and defined a form of Americanism that supported and protected their pursuit of a "Sound Mind in a Sound Body" in addition to transforming the Turner identity.

Prior to 1935, German Americans had already begun to redefine their ethnic identities through the process of assimilation. Stressing conformity to the American way of life, assimilation, American philosopher and cultural pluralist Horace M. Kallen (1882-1974) stated, "appears to signify the adoption of the American variety of English speech, American clothes and manners, the American attitude in politics."[170] Historically receptive to the process of assimilation, most German Americans readily adopted the

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[168] Mel van Elteren, *Americanism and Americanization: A Critical History of Domestic and Global Influence*, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company Publishers, Inc., 2006), 102.
[169] Horace Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), 79.
[170] Ibid.

attributes listed by Kallen. Their readiness to conform to American values and traditions prompted historian Russell A. Kazal to credit German Americans as the "most assimiable of all groups."[171] However, the attempt of German Americans to preserve elements of *Deutschtum*, or Germanness, resulted in the group's ethnic hyphenation. The ability of ethnic groups to maintain dual identities became a matter of reproach, as evidenced by the treatment of German Americans during World War I. As the United States moved towards involvement in World War II, the American Turners realized the need to Americanize and reassert their loyalty to the United States even if this meant rejecting elements of *Deutschtum*, which up to this point had been a fundamental aspect of their unique American Turner identity.

A period of intense support for the concepts of American exceptionalism and ethnocentrism – promoting alleged American superiority – began in the twentieth century and would continue unabated throughout World War I. Immigrants, whether naturalized citizens or recent arrivals, were increasingly suspected of disloyalty if they did not blatantly brandish their patriotism. For German Americans, balancing their dual identities had become a way of life. In addition to living amongst their own *ethnie*, German Americans subscribed to *Deutschtum* in a multitude of different ways, which made adherence to the sentiment of "100 percent Americanism" a hardship. Emphasis on the German language and the establishment of German schools, businesses, and churches were easily accomplished because the presence of such needs in German communities allowed German Americans to stave off elements of assimilation. As Willi Paul Adams

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[171] Kallen, 261.

writes, "When a cross-section of basic needs can be supplied within an ethnic community, the need to assimilate in order to survive is less urgent."[172]

Prior to 1914, Kallen identified immigration to the United States as being, ". . . more than welcomed as an economic boon."[173] However, the outbreak of World War I intensified the ethnic consciousness of Americans. Immigration, thus the growing presence of hyphenated Americans, became increasingly "scrutinized as a eugenic menace."[174] The most extreme example of American opposition to the pervasiveness of dual identities can be seen in the drastic change in the status of German Americans during World War I. Though already in effect, the Americanization movement gained momentum as anti-German propaganda from Great Britain infiltrated American airwaves and publications. Depicting Germans as bloodthirsty Huns, anti-German propaganda influenced how Americans viewed and treated German Americans. In addition, the pro-German segments of German-American communities, some of which were more than willing to return and fight on behalf of Germany, fueled the growing anti-German sentiment, which exploded upon the entry of the United States into World War I.

As addressed in Chapter 1, the German language, whether verbal or written was opposed and censored through unofficial and legislative means. The disappearance of German-language newspapers and school curriculum was supported by state and federal government officials as evidenced by the Babel Proclamation and the Trading with the Enemy Act. Opposition to all things German led to large-scale discrimination. Acts of

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[172] Willi Paul Adams, *The German-American: An Ethnic Experience*, trans. Lavern J. Rippley and Eberhard Reichmann (Indianapols: Max Kade German-American Center, 1993), 16, 22-23.
[173] Kallen, 24.
[174] Ibid.

violence against German Americans escalated to the point that "patriotic murders" were not uncommon.[175] A prominent case is the murder of German American Robert Prager, a coal miner from Collinsville, Indiana. Prager was lynched by a mob on April 5, 1918, for exhibiting socialist beliefs. Twelve men were indicted for the murder, but due to rampant anti-German sentiment, the accused were declared innocent.[176] The pervasiveness of anti-German sentiment increased the German American inclination for assimilation.

Supported by organized labor, politicians, educators, and social organizations, the Americanization movement during World War I stressed "100 percent Americanism." During this period immigrants to the United States were expected to abandon all of their previous held loyalties and adapt to American values, in order to become "100 percent Americans." Scholar Peter D. Salins describes this process as assimilation, American style. To be welcomed into American society immigrants were required to "accept English as the national language, take pride in their American identity and believe in America's liberal democratic and egalitarian principles, and live by what is commonly referred to as the Protestant ethic."[177] Although Salins describes this process as "highly effective," ethnic groups in the United States were frequently attacked for their attempts to preserve elements of their native cultures. Any semblance of foreignism quickly became associated with anti-Americanism by Anglo-Americans.

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[175] Brian Lloyd, "Liberty Philosophy: Nationalism and the Making of American Pragmatism," *Science and Society* 73, 4 (October 2009): 499.

[176] Frederick C. Lubeke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 5-10.

[177] Peter D. Salins, *Assimilation, American Style* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 6.

As the dominant ethnoculture in the United States, Anglo-Americans were in the position to define what it meant to be American.[178] Emphasizing the elements of Americanism identified by Salins, individuals and groups with Anglo-American ancestry used their leverage to pressure immigrants to participate in the Americanization process. To promote the Americanization of the foreign born, cities throughout the United States formed organizations like the Cleveland Americanization Committee, based in Ohio. The Cleveland Americanization Committee defined Americanization as, "the co-operative process by means of which 'many peoples' in our city and in America become 'One Nation' united in language, work, home ties, and citizenship, with one flag above all flags, and only one allegiance to that flag."[179] Such groups consisted of individuals that developed initiatives to assist immigrants in the Americanization process. In addition to offering English language and naturalization courses, members of the Committee found the public school system to be an excellent vehicle for the promotion of "100 percent Americanism."

The utilization of public schools to promote assimilation was not a new concept; however, reliance upon the educational system increased during World War I. As early as 1837, educators including Horace Mann of Massachusetts advocated that children be educated not only in reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also Americanism. The implementation of compulsory school attendance mandated the presence of all, including the children of immigrants. Through exposure to standardized courses in civics,

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[178] Kathleen Niels Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa MoraWska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the USA," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, 1 (Fall 1992): 5.
[179] Van Elteren, 60.

citizenship, and American history first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants learned how to become loyal American citizens. Despite being an advocate of cultural pluralism, which emphasizes the right of individuals to maintain and develop their cultural heritage, Kallen concurred that through the American public school system immigrants learned how to become Americans. Referring to the presence of Americanism in popular culture, he wrote, "He [the prospective American] learns to want to be like them [Americans]."[180]

Whether influenced by the public school system or motivated to assimilate to avoid acts of discrimination, German Americans begrudgingly "swatted the hyphen" in order to become "'typical' Americans."[181] Although German-American associational life survived World War I, the anti-German sentiment created by the conflict left many organizations, including the American Turners in disarray. While explaining the experience of Philadelphia's *Germania Turn Verein*, Kazal contends that German-American organizations were hit particularly hard in terms of membership. Not wanting to encounter further discrimination, German Americans largely shied away from public expressions of *Deutschtum*. As Kazal asserts, "The remnants of Philadelphia's *Vereinswesen* [associational world], then, found themselves contending with the legacy of the anti-German panic through and beyond the 1920s. Their struggle with that legacy

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[180] Kallen, 96.

[181] Kallen elaborates on the origin and dynamic nature of the "typical" American. He explains, "The patriotic sentiment, the appreciation of national character, was concentrated in the word 'democracy,' and in democracy the United States was still felt to be the nonpareil among nations, the paragon and avatar of a state of literally free and equal citizens, or at least, if not equal in fact, equal in opportunity for every man to become the same as his betters. The traits of these betters were envisaged as the traits of the essential American, and personified as Uncle Sam. The current leaders of the community were accepted as variants of him, and each in turn . . . was hailed as the 'typical' American (1924, 127).

would constitute . . . the reshaping of identities."[182] From 1919-1945, memories of persecution would greatly influence the direction of the American Turners. The legacy of anti-German sentiment directly affected the decision to Americanize the organization as the entry of the United States into World War II became imminent.

Americanization did not become a topic of discussion in the *American Turner Topics* newsletter until the June 1938 issue.[183] Up until this point, the American Turners had found the reassertion of their fundamental principles emphasizing liberty, justice, freedom, and democracy to be an effective impediment to accusations of disloyalty. Emphasizing that American Turners had always been loyal to the United States and supportive of its democratic society, a contributor to the May 1938 issue declared, "[Turnerism] is better than military training and healthier than health foods. It will breed the muscle of true Democracy."[184] By voicing and practicing the principles of Turnerism on a regular basis, the American Turners were able to successfully foster a unique identity that encompassed the positive attributes of members' German and American identities. During the interwar years, attempts to retain the American Turner identity can be seen in the American Turners' continued, but selective use of the German language and the political involvement and opinions of individual members. Immensely proud of their German heritage, members of the American Turners were enjoying the ability to once again maintain dual identities despite limitations on public displays of *Deutschtum*. Speaking at the installation of the new National Executive Committee on September 18,

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[182] Kazal, 212.
[183] Mark P. Roberts, "Something for Turners to Think About," *American Turner Topics* (June 1938): 8.
[184] "Voicing the True Turner Ideals," *American Turner Topics* (May 1938): 4.

1937, recently elected President Carl Weideman remarked, ". . . we are coming back into our own, we are coming back into the time when it is going to be a matter of pride to be a German, when some of us who have shirked our duty in the past will be proud to stand up and tell all of the heritage, the cultural contributions, of the Germans."[185]

However, President Weideman's positive outlook marked the last attempt of the American Turners to actively promote *Deutschtum* outside of the organization. Increasing German hostilities in the European theater particularly *Kristallnacht* or the Night of Broken Glass, cast an increasingly negative shadow on Germany, which extended, by default, to German Americans. By June 1938, contributors to *American Turner Topics* began to recommend a renewed emphasis on the American aspects of the organization, thus indicating the shift of the American Turners from a German-American organization to a strictly American institution. Mark P. Roberts of the Detroit Social *Turnverein* wholeheartedly supported the elimination of all elements of *Deutschtum* from the American Turners. While contemplating the reasons for declining membership rates, which he believed were due in part to the World Wars, the Great Depression, immigration restrictions, death of original members, and the failure of youth to take up the cause of Turnerism, Roberts suggested that the implementation of Americanization could revive the dying organization. "If we are sincere about the Turner movement we should be willing to make considerable sacrifice to see it preserved," he continued,

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[185] "Weideman's Response," *American Turner Topics* (October 1937): 3.

"many believe the process of disintegration can be reversed if the societies adopt a program of modernization and thorough Americanization."[186]

Throughout his article, Roberts maintained that the existence of the American Turners had remained under the radar of most Americans. When it did surface during times of conflict, it was, "because an alien tongue was used, in many societies exclusively, the Turners became known as an alien group."[187] His opinion that the American Turners must reevaluate their maintenance of *Deutschtum* supports Kazal's assertion that the legacy of the anti-German sentiment of World War I plagued German Americans long after the conflict came to an end. To challenge the misconception of the American Turners as an "alien" organization, Roberts advocated marketing the American Turners directly to members of the American public, regardless of German heritage.

Such an act, if implemented, would expand not only the American Turners' membership numbers but also their understanding of cultural pluralism. Instead of concerning themselves solely with issues surrounding ethnic hyphenation, the American Turners would attract members from diverse cultural backgrounds and renew their efforts to promote cultural pluralism in American society. For the American Turners to survive World War II, Roberts also believed a modernized program needed to be implemented. He suggested, "We should modernize our buildings and our programs so young people will be attracted to our ranks. We should also make the Turnvereins the defenders of democratic institutions and the leaders of liberalism and progressive thought."[188]

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[186] Roberts, "Something for American Turners to Think About," *American Turner Topics* (June 1938): 8.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.

Published two months prior to the American Turner name change debate,

Roberts' point of view reflected the majority opinion of American Turner members.

Dropping the "*Bund*" portion of American *Turnerbund* was the first step taken towards

the Americanization of the organization. Following the name change, articles stressing

the loyalty and patriotism of the American Turners began consistently appearing in

American Turner Topics. In October 1938, only one year after expressing his excitement

to proclaim the Germanness of the American Turners, President Weideman declared, ". . .

we are officially connected with no other country whatsoever. We are distinctly an

American movement still supporting the fundamental principles."[189] Gravely concerned

about the decreasing membership of the organization, Weideman echoes Roberts' desire

to elevate the status of the American Turners. Declaring the American Turners a strictly

American organization, President Weideman emphasized the need to once again "count

noses."[190] From the content of his message, there is no doubt that President Weideman

saw modernization and Americanization in the future of the American Turners. Both

processes would prolong the life of the organization and attract a wider array of potential

American Turner members.

By 1938, the Americanization of the American Turner organization seemed

inevitable, although some members still decried the organization's elimination of German

elements, primarily language. The events of July 1939, however, would win over most of

the holdouts. On June 16, 1939, the Detroit *Sozialer Turnverein* received a letter

addressed to President Weideman from the German Consulate in Detroit, Michigan. At

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[189] Carl Weideman, "Your President's Column," *American Turner Topics* (October 1938): 3.
[190] Ibid.

the time, President Weideman was absent, so the letter came into the possession of

American Turner Vice President Arthur A. Kuecken. The envelope contained Germany's

"Notice Regarding German Citizens Living in Other Countries Becoming Subject to

Compulsory Service." Issued to all citizens of the Third Reich born in 1920, the notice

was specifically aimed towards German nationals living abroad. The order required all to

report and register for military service in the Germany Army. A contributor to the July

1939 issue of *American Turner Topics* divulged that the American Turner National

Executive Committee's initial reaction to the order was to ignore it; however, ". . . mature

deliberation seemed to indicate that such might be misconstrued to mean silent assent."[191]

To avoid such a situation, Kuecken responded on June 23, 1939. He proclaimed,

> It is apparent from your letter that you have not carefully read, or else have failed to understand the Principles and Statutes of the American Turners (formerly known as the American *Turnerbund*).
>
> For your information I quote from the Principles and Statutes as published in 1931: "Candidates for admission . . . must be of good character, and must either be citizens of the United States or must have taken the necessary steps to become citizens."
>
> To the best of our knowledge and belief this condition is thoroughly understood and recognized by all Turners and Turner membership committees, in every Turner Society in the country.
>
> Moreover, attendance at Turnervereins is strictly limited to members except on special occasions.
>
> As a result of this policy the Turner societies are by and large known to be strictly American organizations, which is exactly what the Turner membership desires.
>
> It would, therefore, be quite inconsistent for any Turner society to post the command ordering Reich citizens born in the year 1920, and now resident in this country, to register for active military and labor service on or before July 15th or become subject to the several penalties provided for failure to comply, as outlined in the Penal Code Book.

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[191] "American Turners Scorn German Conscription Order," *American Turner Topics* (July 1939): 5.

> To mention it in a meeting would be even more out of order.
> We must therefore decline your request.[192]

A return receipt, delivered on June 23 notified the American Turners that the German Consulate received Kuecken's reply. Having not received a response by June 27, the American Turners decided it would be in the organization's best interest to publicize the matter. Bringing the conscription ordeal into public view may seem reckless given the unfavorable publicity the American Turners received during their short-lived, misconceived association with the German-American Bund, but publicizing the situation actually worked to the American Turners' advantage. Newspaper space given to the American Turners forced the hand of the German Consulate. German representative Fritz von Alpen wrote to Turner Kuecken on June 30, apologizing for the mailing. Von Alpen apparently referred to the conscription order as, "an 'unfortunate error.'"[193] Overjoyed with their victory over Nazism, the American Turners were able to breathe a sigh of relief. Summarizing the situation, a contributor to *American Turner Topics* concluded, "Nevertheless, the incident and its accompanying reverberations resulted in what is probably the greatest and most favorable publicity the American Turner movement has yet received. Newspaper space given to the true principles of the American Turners could not have been purchased at any price."[194]

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[192] Arthur A. Kuecken to the German Consulate, June 23, 1939, Box 18, Folder 41 American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. In accordance with the Reich Penal Code Book (*Reichsstrafgesetzbuches*) anyone failing to comply with the order of conscription faced a fine of 150 *Reichmark* or arrest (Kuecken to The Detroit Free Press, June 28, 1939, Box 18, Folder 41).

[193] "American Turners Scorn German Conscription Order," *American Turner Topics* (July 1939): 5.

[194] Ibid.

As seemed to be the case with the American Turners during this period, 1935-

1945, peace and contentment within the organization did not last long.   Despite the

positive reception of Kuecken's response to the German consulate received from the

American public, not all Turner members were supportive. Of course, Nazi sympathizing

Turners would have preferred the American Turner National Executive Committee to

endorse the German conscription order. [195] However, several loyal American members

did not approve of the official response. Writing in the July 1939 issue of *American

Turner Topics*, the editorial staff recognized their receipt of two letters to the editor

criticizing the National Executive Committee's response to and publication of the

conscription order. Although these individuals seemed to be among the minority of

American Turners, the editors believed addressing the letters would vindicate Kuecken's

actions. Their article entitled "Personalities" summarized the charges brought against

Kuecken, "The accusations were based on the fact that Mr. Kuecken happens to be an

advertising man by profession, and as such had intimate contacts with the newspapers

which would enable him to get this personal publicity."[196]

However, letters of opposition sent to the National Executive Committee and

editor of *American Turner Topics* during the months of September and October 1939,

presented substantial and credible claims against Kuecken's response and the attempts of

the editorial staff to vindicate his actions. William Linnes, a member of the Los Angeles

Turnverein, proposed that the American Turners should have completely ignored the

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[195] It is unclear exactly how many German nationals living abroad answered Germany's conscription order. However, the correspondence of the American Turner National Executive Committee cites that by 1936, only 2 individuals from the United States had returned to Germany (Kuecken to The Detroit Free Press, June 28, 1939, Box 18, Folder 41).

[196] "Personalities," *American Turner Topics* (July 1939): 2.

order, which, "should have been consigned to the waste paper basket."[197] Like many

others in opposition to the official response, Linnes assumed the fundamental principles

were universal knowledge. However, as Turner Roberts explained in June 1938, the

existence of the American Turners had largely been ignored by the American public,

except in times of conflict.[198] Simply assuming universal awareness of Turner principles

could no longer be a viable option.

In addition to claims of personal aggrandizement on Kuecken's behalf and

assertions that the order should have been ignored, the most credible argument of

opponents dealt with the political nature of the situation. Writing to Kuecken on

September 26, 1939, Frank H. Foster Jr. the acting secretary of the Toledo Turners,

professed that the Toledo Executive Committee had decided to "drop the matter" in the

name of "unity and harmony."[199] Before they dropped the matter entirely, Foster

explained why the official response to the conscription order was detrimental to the

organization. He wrote, "It was this sincere and conscientious belief in and devotion to

the doctrines of true American Turnerism that prompted us to submit to the governing

body . . . a formal protest against what we honestly believe to be action of a political

nature."[200]

Although not explicitly stated in the fundamental principles, the American

Turners were not a political organization. Individual members were free and encouraged

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[197] William Linnes, "The Mail Bag: 'Order' Publicity," *American Turner Topics* (September 1939): 2, 7.
[198] Roberts, *American Turner Topics* (June 1938).
[199] Frank H. Foster Jr. to Arthur Kuecken, September 26, 1939, Box 18, Folder 41, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.
[200] Ibid.

to cultivate their Turner identities through political participation but the larger organization shied away from direct participation. Because of this, Kuecken's opponents were vehemently against what they perceived to be the political nature of the official response. G.O. Goller of the Detroit Turners described the political elements of the response, "What did this publicity consist of: to ridicule the representative of a foreign government (playing politics, which I heard is contrary to Turnerism). Warning German citizens . . . to disobey the orders of the government to whose nationality he still belongs."[201] Kuecken's perceived challenge of the German government and nationals may have been out of line in regards to apolitical nature of the American Turners. However, taking a stance against Nazism and asserting the loyalty of the organization to the United States was the primary purpose of the National Executive Committee. The claims of opponents that the "cheap publicity" garnered by the situation was a detriment to national support of the organization were unfounded and largely an overreaction.[202] The official response of the American Turners to the German conscription order did not make national headlines, and was hardly front page news.[203] More pressing matters, such as an impending global war took precedence.

Realizing the need for cooperation during this uncertain time, the argument over Kuecken's response did not last terribly long. The German conscription order fiasco, however, strengthened the American Turners' commitment to Americanization. This

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[201] G.O. Goller, "In the Mail Bag," American Turner Topics (October 1939): 2.

[202] Ibid., 8.

[203] See Arthur A. Kuecken to The Detroit Free Press, June 28, 1939, Box 18, Folder 41, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. Only one letter is present in the collection of National Executive Committee correspondence indicating the publication of the American Turners' official response. From this letter it can be inferred that most of the publicity gained from this ordeal was from a local Detroit audience.

commitment is evidenced in the resurgence of articles in *American Turner Topics* and

correspondence of the National Executive Committee with Americanization as a central

theme. The bulk of writings dating from 1939 to 1945, address the Americanization issue

through three methods: assertions of loyalty, donations of tangible aid to the Allied war

effort, and the planning and eventual implementation of an Americanized program.

Before the in-depth planning for the process of Americanization could begin, the

American Turners continued to utilize *American Turner Topics* as the voice of their

organization. Through the newsletter, members repeatedly expressed their thoughts on

Americanization. Following the German conscription order debacle, members of the

American Turners were increasingly receptive to Americanization. With American

participation in World War II approaching, to be seen as anything other than loyal

Americans was something the American Turners actively worked to avoid. By

expressing their opinions through the written word contributors hoped to disseminate the

values of the American Turners to a national audience. Their primary purpose was to

equate Turnerism with Americanism.

        To accomplish this, contributors to *American Turner Topics* from 1939 to 1945,

found it pertinent to address the foreign origin and elements of the organization. Van

Elteren explains, "World War II revived a unifying Americanism that was on the brink of

extinction. The war evoked xenophobia and uniformity, but also the democratic values

of the Popular Front."[204] During the war the large scale internment of Japanese

Americans and the confiscation of their property proved that the United States was not

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[204] Van Elteren, 81.

above reinstituting harsh restrictions on citizenship rights and immigration laws. German Americans were also interned, but to a much smaller extent than Japanese Americans.[205] Ethnic groups in the United States with cultural connections to the Axis powers faced a critical decision regarding identity. Would they continue to balance dual identities and face persecution or begin to reshape their identities?

German Americans belong to a category of immigrants that Kazal labels "old stock." Including immigrant groups from northwestern European countries, individuals identifying as "old stock" tend to have Nordic origins. For these groups reformulating their identities was a much easier process than it was for more recent arrivals from Eastern Europe. Through the manipulation of race and nationalism, German Americans, mostly second-generation immigrants, developed a "'white ethnic' identity." Kazal defines this concept as, ". . . an identity whose bearers retained some sense of ethnic identification but also shared with other European 'ethnics' an overarching self-perception as white, working class, and usually, Catholic."[206] Having learned from their experiences with discrimination during World War I, German Americans increasingly concealed their ethnic identity to decrease levels of suspicion. Recalling his experience in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, during the 1940s, German American Joseph Guninger explains, ". . . there was such a great emphasis placed on being an American, being a

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[205] See Timothy Holian, *The German-Americans and World War II: An Ethnic Experience* (Manhattan: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 1998). The author describes the situation of over 10,000 German Americans who were interned as enemies of the nation and placed, like Japanese-Americans, in internment camps.
[206] Kazal, 247.

good American, being a patriotic American, speaking English – all of those things took precedence over maintaining the fact that you were of a certain heritage."[207]

Fearing a reprisal of anti-German sentiment contributors to *American Turner Topics* were careful to clearly proclaim the organization's loyalty and patriotism even if it meant eliminating elements of *Deutschtum* from the American Turner program. The positive response of American Turners to the Americanization of their organization is best represented in Frank P. Soen's article "You're an American! Be Proud of It." Featured in the January 1940 issue, Soen concentrated his efforts on critiquing American consumption patterns and production quality; however, he began by declaring, "Whether native born or naturalized you are an American."[208] President Weideman reinforced Soen's position while addressing the New Jersey District *Turnvereine* on June 6, 1940. He added, "It [the American Turners] is American in every sense of the word."[209] However, proclamations of loyalty could not change the fact that Americans utilizing ethnic hyphenation were being viewed with increasing suspicion as tensions heightened in the United States.[210]

Exhibiting both their German and American identities, German American use of the hyphen did not sit well with many Americans, but cultural pluralists, like Kallen, viewed the hyphen as a positive element in American society. For Kallen, the hyphen

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[207] Kazal, 247.

[208] Frank P. Soen, "You're an American! Be Proud of It," *American Turner Topics* (January 1940): 3.

[209] Soen, "President Weideman Addresses New Jersey District Societies," *American Turner Topics* (July 1940): 10.

[210] Kallen explains that, "Hyphenation as such is a fact which permeates all levels of life. A man is at once a son and a husband, a brother and a friend, a man of affairs and a student, a citizen of the state and a member of a church, one in an ethnic and social group and the citizen of a nation." Although hyphenation will result in one identity outweighing the other, Kallen maintains, "it is absurd to lose sight of the truth that the hyphen unites very much more than it separates." Ethnic hyphenation emphasizes race, origin, and character (1924, 63).

connected the United States and the native country of immigrants, thus contributing to the diversity that made the United States great. He wrote, "The union which the hyphen designates is the new content of the ancestral ideal of Union, and it lies in the background of the national history of the United States."[211] Whether or not contributors to *American Turner Topics* were privy to Kallen's theory, presented in *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (1924), they too saw the benefits of a culturally diverse society but could not always agree on how to achieve and maintain cultural pluralism within their organization. In the November 1942 issue, the author of "Americanism of the Foreign Born" called for the end of discrimination against ethnic Americans. To make his case, the contributor referred to the rapid assimilation of the American Turners' German ancestors, "They quickly renounced allegiance to their native lands when they took the oath of citizenship here in America."[212] Implying that identity in America is acquired, not inherited the author asserted that not all hyphenated Americans are traitors; in reality most were exceedingly loyal. Subscription to the hyphen only served to preserve the cultural heritage of America's ethnic groups.

Contributors to *American Turner Topics* argued that the union between the United States and Germany, established by the hyphenated identity of German Americans, had positive repercussions in America. The elements of German cultural heritage transplanted by German immigrants to America had far reaching effects on American society. As the author of "Americanism of the Foreign Born" stated, "It is impossible to overrate their contribution toward the development and growth of this, their adopted

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[211] Kallen, 64.
[212] "Americanism of the Foreign Born," *American Turner Topics* (November 1942): 2.

land."[213] Through their cultural heritage, Americans of German extraction enriched the

cultural landscape of the United States. Noting the cultural contributions of German

immigrants, Albert M. Keim listed, "science, technology, industry, banking, farming and

scholarship . . . kindergartens, Christmas trees, hot dogs, and beer,"[214] in addition to the

Turner Movement as important German influences in America. However, Keim made

sure to differentiate between the cultural and political heritage of German immigrants.

Only wanting to bestow America with the best Germanic traditions immigrants

crossed the Atlantic, ". . . to help to build up a new race, and a new culture."[215] Fleeing

political persecution in Germany, the first Turners to arrive on American soil already

possessed a love for freedom and democracy. Later generations of American Turners

continued to promote Turner principles which share significant similarities with the

American penchant for liberty, tolerance, and freedom. Contrary to American social and

political values, Nazism was therefore in opposition with Turnerism. As Kuecken's

response to the German consulate revealed, the American Turners refused to associate

with or endorse the policies of the German government. As Keim wrote, "Germans in

America may still love Germany but most of them deplore the excesses of Adolf

Hitler."[216] Although the writings of contributors clearly elaborated the stance of the

American Turner organization, actions would be more effective than words to prove the

American nature of the organization.

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[213] "Americanism of the Foreign Born," *American Turner Topics* (November 1942): 2.

[214] Albert M. Keim, "Germans in America Are Most Loyal Americans," American Turner Topics (May 1940): 9. This article was taken from *Life* by permission of Andrew Heiskell, Assistant General Manager of *Life* and re-written by Al. M. Keim. The original article may be found here: "Germans in America Are Most Loyal Americans," *Life* 7, 22 (November 27, 1939): 68-75.

[215] Conrad Gaum, "Turners," *American Turner Topics* (July/August 1944): 4.

[216] Keim, "Germans in America Are Most Loyal Americans," American Turner Topics (May 1940): 10.

With the nation at war, the American Turner National Executive Committee found it necessary to reevaluate the purpose of the organization. During wartime, it was decided that national and local organizations must be wholly committed to the support of the Allied war effort. Declaring that, "We now have a new purpose – to serve Uncle Sam. And we will not fail," members of the American Turners enthusiastically began contributing to the American National Defense Program.[217] By 1941, national and local *Turnvereine* were regularly donating money and time to the war effort. To praise donors and encourage further support the editors of *American Turner Topics* regularly published updates on the generosity of American Turners. A unique way the American Turners supported the war effort was through the allocation of physical education. In this way, the organization invoked the original purpose of the Turner Movement as a fitness-based social organization.

Already in possession of state-of-the-art gyms and fitness equipment *Turnvereine* throughout the country opened their doors to American draftees. To meet the needs of prospective soldiers, the American Turners modified their physical fitness program. Draftees were exposed to conditioning exercises and light tactics – mass calisthenics, rope climbing, jumping, wall scaling, vaulting, marching, running – and games, all of which were free of charge. Participation in the physical fitness classes offered by the American Turners, members claimed, had the potential to cut American basic training time in half. A member of the Buffalo *Turnvereine* stated, "If youth is physically fit when called by the government it will give our country and unconquerable citizen body a

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[217] "The Philadelphia Turner's Bulletin," *American Turner Topics* (April 1941): 10.

manhood composed of really potential soldiers and sailors who would require instead of one year of necessary training to make a soldier, no more than six months of specific training to take the field as an army."[218]   Whether or not large-scale draftee participation in the American Turner fitness program could have made much of an impact on United States Army regulations, the willingness of *Turnvereine* to offer free programming for draftees was one way to shed light on the patriotism of the organization.

In addition to offering programs to prepare draftees for battle, the American Turners donated money and resources to publicly display that the German American members of the organization were doing their part to secure the defeat of the Axis powers. From 1943 to 1945, the American Turners appear to have formed a partnership with the American Red Cross. The primary recipient of Turner donations, the American Red Cross had immediately jumped into action following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. In the April 1943 issue of *American Turner Topics*, the editorial staff issued an article entitled "Angels" to applaud the valiant efforts of American Red Cross volunteers, which amounted to 2,977 by July 1942.[219] The editorial staff called attention to the many ways members could become involved with the Red Cross including blood drives and monetary donations. They also revealed that the National Executive Committee was preparing to, "raise funds for the purchase of mobile equipment," for a chapter of the American Red Cross.[220]

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[218] Buffalo Turner, "American Turners and the National Defense," *American Turner Topics* (May 1941): 8.
[219] "Angels," *American Turner Topics* (April 1943): 2.
[220] Ibid.

Successful in their efforts, President Weideman and representatives of the American Turners were able to present Mrs. Satler of the El Paso, Texas Red Cross Chapter the keys to a mobile canteen unit.[221] This particular mobile canteen unit would serve soldiers stationed in El Paso. The two-day ceremony was held on October 23 and 24, 1943, in Detroit, Michigan, and Toledo and Cleveland, Ohio. The author of the article summarizing the events did his best to emphasize that the American Turners were doing their part to contribute to the Allied war effort. Three days later, on October 27, the American Red Cross received the largest American Turner monetary contribution to date. The Moline Turners, based in Illinois, raised a total of $1,000 as a part of the American Turner Red Cross Campaign.[222] Through such altruistic gestures the American Turners proved their loyalty and commitment to the United States.

However, it cannot be denied that the time and energy the American Turners devoted to supporting the war effort did not have some self-serving benefits. For instance, while presenting the United Service Organizations (U.S.O.) with a $100 Turner donation on June 18, 1941, President Weideman was able to address the audience and reaffirm that Turnerism was indeed Americanism. Referencing the scrutiny of Americans of German extraction, Weideman stated, "Americans of German descent are just as loyal to the land of their adoption as their fellow Americans of any other descent. I may say even more loyal than others, because they have been under fire and their

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[221] "First Mobile Canteen Unit is Presented to American Red Cross," *American Turner Topics* (November 1943): 3.

[222] "Largest Single Donation Made By Moline Turners," American Turner Topics (November 1943): 3.

loyalty has been under suspicion."[223] The public nature of the American Turners'

contributions to the United States war effort granted members a platform to transform the

organization's image. Though the actions of the American Turners were no doubt

sincere, their generosity was reciprocated through the positive public relations they

created.

Once the American Turners had demonstrated their loyalty to the United States

through oral and written assertions and donations to the Allied war effort, it was time for

the organization, as a whole, to undergo a process of Americanization. As mentioned

previously, the topic of Americanization had appeared in issues of *American Turner*

Topics as early as 1938; however, it was not until the 1940s that contributors began to

recommend courses for the American Turners to explore. Since the culmination of

World War I, the American Turners had been experiencing hard times. Plummeting

membership rates affected the organization socially and economically. By 1937, the

American Turner National Executive Committee was $20,000 in debt and only retained

$250 in cash.[224] Both membership rates and economic hardships had so demoralized the

national organization that leaders did not know if the American Turners would survive

the end of World War II. Writing in March 1940, Walter Palm, secretary of the

Turnverein Milwaukee, asked, "Have we reached the bottom and will we again climb to

the heights that our movement really is entitled to?"[225]   But like their experience in

World War I, the American Turners proved to be a resilient group. Through the valiant

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[223] "President Weideman Presents $100 Turner Donation to U.S.O.," American Turner Topics (July 1941):
5.
[224] "American Turners Round Table Conference," *American Turner Topics* (May 1944): 8.
[225] Walter Palm, "Is the Turner Movement Doomed," *American Turner Topics* (March 1940): 9.

efforts of the National Executive Committee and local *Turnvereine*, the American Turners would live on.

Although many wanted a say in the direction of the organization, one Turner in particular proved to be highly influential in the Americanization process. A representative of the Illinois District, Theodore A. Gross composed four articles for dissemination in *American Turner Topics* that outlined what he believed to be the most efficient and effective program of Americanization. As we shall see, his recommendations were taken very seriously by the National Executive Committee. In March 1940, Gross issued his first plan in the form of "The Future of the Turners in America." Referencing the question plaguing local *Turnvereine*, he stated, "But there does seem to be some question as to the necessity of further effort and struggle for existence now that most of our aims and purposes have been attained."[226] The goals he referred to included the establishment of physical education curriculum in the American school system and implementation of economic and social policies – welfare programs and labor reforms – favored by the American Turners.

Despite the successful implementation of Turner goals, the stagnant situation of the American Turners showed no signs of improvement. Admitting that no one factor could be blamed for the dilapidated state of the organization, Gross identified seven influential factors: rigid gymnastics programs, German language use or lack thereof, poorly equipped gymnasiums, high levels of alcohol consumption, insufficient staff members, the interests of individual societies, and the presence of similar organizations.

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[226] Theo. A. Gross, "The Future of the Turners in America," *American Turner Topics* (March 1940): 3.

Although the list is quite lengthy there was still hope. Through cooperation and

determination, Gross believed the American Turners could revive. To save the

organization, the National Executive Committee and local *Turnvereine* would be required

to work together towards common goals. Believing that, "Success must be *national* in

scope to be worthwhile and lasting," Gross outlined four areas that all Turners would

need to improve.[227]

The publicity, membership, programs, and objectives of the American Turners all

required a major overhaul. In terms of publicity, Gross admitted that the organization

had been doing a fairly good job. The use of *American Turner Topics* as the voice of the

organization proved to be very successful, but improvements could be made. Inclusion

of a space for local *Turnvereine* news and activities was highly recommended. In

addition he recommended that *Turnvereine* hire a publicity director who would be in

charge of gaining publicity for the American Turners in publications other than their own.

To increase membership rates, membership drives promoting rewards such as buttons,

free dues for a year, and banquets should be undertaken "on a city or district wide

basis."[228] A two-part series, "The Future of the Turners in America" continues in May

1940. In the second-half of the article Gross focused on his solutions for American

Turner programming and objectives.

Programs offered by the American Turners could be divided into three categories:

physical, cultural, and social. In Gross' opinion, the physical fitness classes offered were

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[227] Gross, "The Future of the Turners in America," *American Turner Topics* (March 1940): 3.
[228] Ibid., 4.

satisfactory and required no "radical changes."[229] The cultural and social programming,

however, were another matter. To entice new and retain current members, cultural and

educational events like lectures, debates, dramatics, and film screenings needed to be

offered on a regular basis. Social programs offered by local *Turnvereine* often came into

conflict with the District and National societies in terms of duplication of themes and

dates. Gross explained, "More all-district affairs and fewer conflicting society affairs

would be better and more profitable."[230] Finally, he listed his suggestions for improving

the aims and purposes of the American Turners. Of course the fundamental Turner

principles must be retained; however, he admitted that similar principles had been

adopted by other organizations. To remain relevant the American Turners were required

to devise new objectives.[231]

Although Gross' suggestions would vastly modernize the organization, ultimately

the American Turners would need to present themselves as an American institution.

Describing the American Turners' path towards Americanization as a "precarious

situation," he was well aware of the difficulties the organization would be faced with if a

process of modernization was undertaken that did not Americanize Turner customs. He

elaborated, "If we are to progress or even survive we must on every occasion stress our

'Americanism.'"[232] To embark on this process, the American Turners would need to

address their use of the German language and high levels of German-American members.

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[229] Gross, "The Future of the Turners in America," *American Turner Topics* (May 1940): 7.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.; Gross' eight suggestions include: the promotion of exercise for health, protection of physical education programs against political exploitation, promotion Turnerism among American youth, establishment of cultural programs, creation of clubs for adults and children, promotion of family and individual social life, preservation of democracy, and protection of voter laws (May 1940, 7).
[232] Ibid., 8.

In order to avoid misconceptions regarding the loyalty of the organization, the American

Turners specifically discussed the possibility of translating common Turner expressions,

names, mottoes, folklore, songs, and greetings into the English language. Providing

English translations of popular Turner songs like "*Turner Auf Zum Streite*" [Turner onto

Battle], Gross noted, had the potential to attract a broader segment of the American

public.[233]

Included in the American Turner's goal to increase membership rates was the

concept of diversity. Traditionally a German-American organization, the statutes of the

American Turners did not bar any other nationalities or races from becoming members.[234]

The increasing disinterest of German-American membership prompted Gross to declare,

"We can no longer depend upon our own racial group alone for support. We must also

make our physical, mental, and social programs attractive to all, regardless of race or

nationality."[235] Diversification of the American Turners began in the early 1920s as

Prohibition made the availability of alcohol almost non-existent. The Philadelphia-based

Germania Turn Verein studied by Kazal gained a large amount of non-German members

during the interwar years because of its ability to obtain and serve alcohol.[236] No longer

strictly German-oriented the American Turners would be able to reach a wider audience

and therefore be more likely to gain widespread acceptance and implementation of

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[233] "38th Annual Convention of the American Turners," *American Turner Topics* (July 1940): 5; See
Annette R. Hofmann, *The American Turner Movement: A History from its Beginnings to 2000* (IUPUI Max
Kade German-American Center, 2010), 125-131. An analysis of the role of music played in the history of
the American Turner Movement is provided by the author.
[234] The 1931 Principles and Statutes of the American Turners hold that, "Candidates for admission . . . must
be of good character, and must either be citizens of the United States or must have taken the necessary
steps to become citizens" (Kuecken to German Consulate, June 23, 1939).
[235] Gross, "The New Horizon: What Lies Ahead for the American Turners," *American Turner Topics* (May
1943): 3.
[236] Kazal, 203-205.

Turner principles. As Gross stated, "*Would it not be better to have them* [other

nationalities] *with us* and enjoy these Turner customs?"[237]

Apparently the National Executive Committee agreed. On January 22 and 23,

1944, the National Executive Committee held a Round Table Conference in Detroit,

Michigan, to discuss the future of the organization. Representatives from each of the 18

Turner Districts were present. After an introduction from Marshall F. Troester, President

of the Detroit Turners, President Weideman stated the purpose for the conference, "We

have a hard job to keep the Turner movement together, and our purpose is to see if we

can do something to build it stronger and larger."[238] Addressing concerns of accusations

of disloyalty, membership retention, and finances, President Weideman opened the floor

to Turners who had prepared papers for the conference. First to present was Edward L.

Hohenstein a regional member of the Southwest Turners' Society of the St. Louis

District. Entitled "Have the Turners Outlived Their Usefulness," Hohenstein's

presentation traced the rich history of the organization and its impact on the United

States. Although many of the American Turners' original goals had been implemented, if

the organization continued, ". . . to build up the bodies and the morale of our people,"

Hohenstein believed the American Turners, ". . . will have proved our right to existence

and usefulness."[239]

Finding Hohenstein's paper similar to his own, Gross suggested that he present

next. Unanimous acceptance of this motion allowed Gross to present his proposal for a

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[237] Gross, "A Post War-Program for American Turners," *American Turner Topics* (December 1943): 4,
italics in original.
[238] "American Turners Round Table Conference," *American Turner Topics* (May 1944): 9.
[239] Ibid., 10.

post-war program. It seems that he had just adapted his article "A Post War-Program for American Turners," published in December 1943 issue of *American Turner Topics*, for a presentation format. Outlining the need to reevaluate the organization's purpose and the need to Americanize Turner customs, he summarized the points he had made in earlier *American Turner Topics* articles. Although willing to admit that Americans could find the offerings of the American Turners' physical, cultural, and social programs in other organizations, he declared, "America needs Turnerism!"[240] The Americanization of the organization transformed the primary purpose of the American Turners from a fitness-based social organization, to an all-American institution dedicated to preserving the elements of democracy through a combination of education and fitness.

The 1944 Round Table Conference was the first in a series of three gatherings that initiated the transformation of the American Turner organization. Taking Gross' suggestions to heart, the National Executive Committee came to believe that, "We can become American Turners without losing these wonderful customs and traditions that were so dear to the founders of our institution and which are so dear to we of German birth or descent. We need only to make them understandable to all in the modern American way."[241] By translating common German words and phrases utilized in American Turner activities the organization would be more likely to gain a diverse group of new members. In turn, diversification of membership would exemplify the American Turners' newfound understanding of cultural pluralism and negate accusations of Nazism. At the 1944 Round Table Conference, American Turner leadership realized that

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[240] "Round Table Conference," *American Turner Topics* (June 1944): 11.
[241] Gross, *American Turner Topics* (May 1940): 8.

total elimination of *Deutschtum* from the organization was unnecessary. The positive elements of their German heritage that composed the American Turner identity could remain largely intact as they supported and were supported by Americanization.

The implementation of an increased per capita tax, promotion of membership drives with a special emphasis on younger generations, and free trial weeks for prospective members became primary goals for the organization.[242] In addition, conference attendees unanimously agreed to embark on a program of Americanization that would prove Turners thought of themselves as Americans first, not hyphenated German Americans. Adoption of English as the organization's official language required the translation of Turner concepts and rituals. However, some *Turnvereine*, primarily on the East Coast, continued to use the German language in their programming. Higher concentrations of German immigrants in this area required members to have some knowledge of German, which was permitted by the National Executive Committee.

Later conferences, held in 1946 and 1947, focused primarily on the athletic component of the organization.[243] According to Annette R. Hofmann, the goals of the 1946 and 1947 conferences largely concerned making the physical fitness programs of the American Turners attractive to people of all ages and abilities and, ". . . the shortage of *Turnlehrer* (gymnastic teachers) and assistant trainers."[244] To diversify Turner

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[242] Annette R. Hofmann, *The American Turner Movement: A History from its Beginnings to 2000* (IUPUI Max Kade German-American Center, 2010), 182.

[243] Although Hofmann states that the second American Turner Round Table Conference occurred in 1945, the March 1946 issue of *American Turner Topics* provides the following dates for the conference: January 18, 19, and 20, 1946, which was held in Detroit, Michigan (Hofmann, 2010; *American Turner Topics*, March 1946). The third Round Table Conference was held February 14, 15, and 16, 1947, in Detroit (*American Turner Topics*, March 1947).

[244] Hofmann, 182.

membership, conference attendees suggested an "Everybody-Contest" in order, "to avoid specialization in artistic gymnastics."[245] As changes were introduced, the outlook for the American Turners became much more optimistic. The return of members that had been serving overseas and the revival of German immigration following World War II greatly increased membership numbers on national and local levels.

By 1948, Eric L. Pumroy and Katja Rampelmann state, "the American Turners adopted a new set of principles, one that had abandoned calls for specific social reforms in favor of general statements supporting liberty and equality and emphasizing the athletic, cultural and social programs of the Turners."[246] Through the implementation of an Americanized program, the American Turners transformed their unique Turner identity that balanced positive elements of their German and American identities. Luckily for American Turner members, the positive elements of their German cultural identity were so easily adapted to the American way of life that they remained largely intact. The Americanization of the American Turner program made it nationally known that, "members of the American Turner organization recognize only the Stars and Stripes."[247]

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[245] Hofmann, 182.

[246]Eric L. Pumroy and Katja Rampelmann, *Research Guide to the Turner Movement in the United States* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), xxvi.

[247] Soen, "President Weideman Addresses New Jersey District Societies," *American Turner Topics* (July 1940): 10.

CONCLUSION

The transition of the American Turner organization from a bastion of cultural pluralism to a fully Americanized institution resulted in the transformation of the Turner program. Incapable of emerging unscathed from the anti-German sentiment of World War I, the American Turners nevertheless retained elements of their German cultural heritage through the creation of a unique Turner identity. From 1935 to 1945 the American Turners embraced a Turner identity which simultaneously valorized their German heritage and presented Turners as devoted Americans. Through the use of the German and English languages and active involvement in American politics, the American Turners were able to successfully preserve their Turner identity. While the German language was utilized in American Turner meetings, rituals, songs, and greetings, the use of the language of the Enlightenment in the fundamental principles of the American Turners echoed the sentiment of the founding documents of the United States including the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

With the American Turners' love for liberty, justice, democracy, and equality expounded in the organization's fundamental principles and frequently cited in *American Turner Topics*, members could not fathom that the American Turners would ever be considered un-American. Although socialist in nature, the political opinions of the American Turners never deviated from the concrete political foundations of the United States. The American Turners' devotion to liberty and democracy were exemplified in their quest to abolish slavery, obtain equal rights for women, limit the extent of governmental control, and eliminate militarism and the mass mind. Despite their

vigorous promotion of Turner principles international events had other plans for the future of the American Turners.

The success of the Nazi Party in Germany and the eventual outbreak of World War II in Europe complicated matters for the American Turners. From 1926 to 1938, the American Turner organization was known as the American *Turnerbund*. The American Turners' inclusion of the word '*Bund*' caused the American public to assume that the organization was associated with the German-American Bund, thus Nazi Germany. Able to recall the often violent attacks on German Americans exhibiting *Deutschtum*, which was instigated by the attitude of "100 percent Americanism" during World War I, American Turner leadership realized action was required to prevent a similar situation from occurring. With Germany again playing the role of primary aggressor, public perception of *Deutschtum* was again viewed with disdain. Although not nearly as severe as the anti-German sentiment of World War I, the World War II German-American experience solidified the end of the organization's ability to retain cultural pluralism. By 1938, the American Turners were taking steps towards the Americanization of their program to transform their Turner identity.

After a period of intense debate, the American *Turnerbund* officially became the American Turners on December 15, 1938. By Americanizing the name of the organization, the American Turners hoped to eliminate any misconceived connections between themselves and Nazi ideology. In a similar fashion, the American Turners discontinued the use of '*Gut Heil*,' the official Turner greeting, for a less threatening "With Turner Greetings." Although these changes would prolong the life of the

American Turners, not all members supported Americanization. Adherents of cultural

pluralism, members opposed to Americanization were, for the most part, loyal

Americans. However, a segment of American Turners existed that believed Nazism, not

Turnerism was the cure for American political and social ills. Though never successful

in their efforts, pro-Nazi Turners and the German order of conscription received on June

16, 1939, ultimately prompted the American Turner National Executive Committee to

begin discussing the full Americanization of the organization.

From 1938 to 1945, a barrage of articles appear in *American Turner Topics* that

advocate for the Americanization and modernization of the American Turners. Theodore

A. Gross, a member of the Illinois District, developed an Americanized program that was

accepted at the 1944 National Executive Committee's Round Table Conference.

Following Gross' outline, the American Turners recognized English as the official

language of the organization, which in turn required the translation of Turner songs,

mottoes, greetings, and rituals. Through Americanization the American Turners expected

to receive an influx of diverse members. Although the American Turners experienced a

significant growth in membership in the postwar years – the total Turner membership

exceeded 25,000 individuals – Annette R. Hofmann reveals that this growth spurt was

due to the large number of German immigrants arriving in the United States from 1950 to

1959.[248]

In the postwar period, the American Turners refocused their energy towards the

physical, educational, and social aspects of their organization. However, one last ditch

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[248] Annette R. Hofmann, *The American Turner Movement: A History from its Beginnings to 2000*
(Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center, 2010), 181.

effort was made at the 1946 Round Table Conference to solve America's political and social problems through the promotion of Turnerism. The National Executive Committee adopted four statutes calling for, "the support of health through physical fitness, the requirement for military service only in war times and not as a duty in peace time, an international peace, worldwide disarmament, the creation of a 'world court' and a 'world police' that would monitor the enactment of the laws of the United Nations ," and finally, "the creation of a law that would require all lobbyists to register and keep records of all income and expenses."[249] Though well-intended it does not seem that the American Turners made significant strides to fulfill these goals. Influenced in part by the McCarthy Era (1950-1956), "Their [the American Turners'] former political objectives, which included upholding the German Revolution ideals," as Hofmann states, "were no longer mentioned in the Turner statutes."[250]

Despite surviving two world wars, the American Turners were unable to regain the prominent position they once held. Following the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki where thirteen American Turner gymnasts represented the United States, a combination of financial hardships and plummeting membership rates began to plague both the national organization and local *Turnvereine*.[251] By 2000, the total number of American Turner members dropped to an all time low of 12,000 while 55 *Turnvereine* still exist as of 2015.[252] Though current membership numbers continue to dwindle, the historic

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[249] Hofmann, 180.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid., 183.
[252] Hofmann; "Districts and Societies," The American Turners, http://www.americanturners.com/Districts (accessed March 16, 2015).

resilience of the American Turners suggests that the organization can and will continue to

thrive.

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