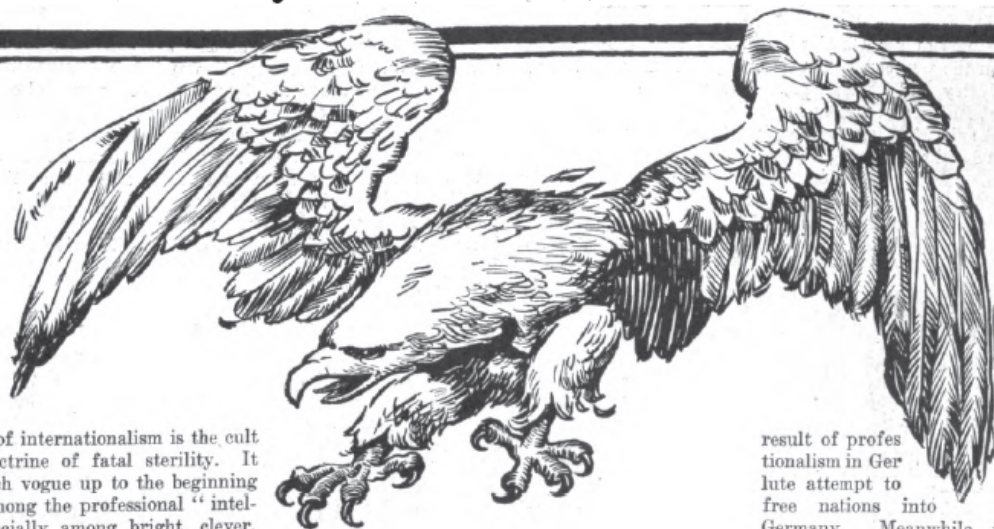


# Don't Spread Patriotism Too Thin

## By Theodore Roosevelt



**T**HE cult of internationalism is the cult of a doctrine of fatal sterility. It had much vogue up to the beginning of this war, among the professional "intellectuals," especially among bright, clever, young college men of superficial cultivation. It was of real damage to these, and therefore it, to a certain extent, damaged the country; for it inevitably emasculates its sincere votaries, and therefore deprives their country of whatever aid they could otherwise give in the effort to build a vigorous civilization, based, as every civilization worth calling such must be, on a spirit of intense nationalism.

The damage done, because of the way internationalism destroys the creative fiber of the intellectuals, is chiefly of negative character. It deprives the nation of a growth force which ought to be a valuable asset. But it works in positively mischievous fashion among the powerful sinister men who are not sincere devotees of the cult, but who use it as a cloak behind which they war on all civilization, or else deliberately adopt a pretense of belief in it in order to weaken other nations and make them an easier prey. The Russian bolshevists embody the first of these attitudes. The German socialists embody the second. In the United States the I. W. W. and all anarchists of that stamp take essentially the position of the Russian bolshevists; while the American socialist party, which is a mere annex of Germany, follows the lead of the German socialists.

There are a few high-minded socialists in America who have refused to bow the knee to Baal, who denounce the German socialists, and uphold the great war for human freedom against Germany. But they are very, very few. They have been contemptuously thrust aside by the Socialist Party organization. Under the actual conditions their continued assertion of their belief in "internationalism" has a merely pathetic significance.

**T**HE great majority of the socialist, bolshevist, and other big organizations which before and during the war have most loudly declared their allegiance to "internationalism," have during the last four years sinned against international fair dealing and justice more heavily than any other groups of men in the world, save only the Prussianized people of Germany and the rulers of Turkey. If internationalism means anything it means insisting upon justice between nations and condemning wrong done by one nation to another. But the German socialists, who had loudly preached "internationalism," have eagerly supported the German autocracy in its course of international robbery and murder, and have cynically announced that they only preached pacifism to other nations in order to make them the easier victims of German militarism, the socialist David announcing in the Reichstag: "Germany must squeeze her enemies with a pair of pincers, the military pincer and the pacifist pincer. The German armies must continue to fight vigorously while the German socialists encourage, and stimulate pacifism among Germany's enemies." This was the real

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result of professional internationalism in Germany—a resolute attempt to convert all free nations into the vassals of Germany. Meanwhile in America, in France, in England, and in Italy, either the majority or else a large minority of the avowed "international" socialists, was putting a premium on Germany's crimes against international justice by refusing to condemn them, by clamoring against war with Germany, and by clamoring for a peace which would leave Germany unpunished. Then in Russia the extreme professional internationalists, the bolshevists, got control. They instantly betrayed the cause of international right and justice, behaving with a venal contempt of decency which makes the Holy Alliance of the sovereigns who overthrew Napoleon seem respectable by comparison. They greedily sold themselves and their country for German gold, they aided the German propaganda, they deserted their allies the free nations, they tore Russia in pieces, they butchered their fellow countrymen by tens of thousands. They have done all in their power to fasten the German yoke on the whole world; and they have done it in the name of "internationalism!"

**T**HIS is what happened in actual practice as soon as the "international" parties began to apply the "internationalism" they had so vehemently preached. The visionaries and enthusiasts among the internationalist leaders have been merely the tools of two sets of evil beings; the brutish creatures who wished to destroy all government, and especially all good government, because they are themselves fit only for the slime of the pit and hate the light and all who dwell in the light; and the astute sordid creatures who serve their own self-interest by serving Germany, whether for downright pay or for other considerations, and who find that the easiest way to render such service is to weaken their own countries, and to debase civilization, by breaking down the spirit of patriotism and nationalism under pretense of supporting internationalism.

When these are the fruits of applied internationalism, how is it possible for any high-minded man, of reasonably good mind and reasonably sound training, to be misled by the false and diseased philosophy which has produced them? Internationalism seems an alluring pose to many a clever young college fellow. But it is a pose which if persevered in means that the man loses all power of aiding in the development of a really vigorous, and therefore a really national, civilization.

**F**UNDAMENTALLY, as the world now is, promiscuity in patriotism is as unwholesome as promiscuity in domestic relations. The best world-citizen is the man who is first and foremost a good citizen of his own country. Within our national limits I distrust any man who is as fond of a stranger as he is of his own

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family; and in international matters I even more keenly distrust the man who cares for other nations as much as for his own. I do not trust persons whose affections are so diffuse. There are men who look upon their wives or mothers or countries, and upon other women and other countries, with the same tepid equality of emotion. I do not regard these men as noble or broad-minded. I regard them as rotten.

This great war has offered the supreme test of the only kind of internationalism worth talking about, the internationalism which implies power and courage and disinterested willingness to sacrifice much in order to put down international wrong and establish international right. When the emergency test was thus applied the professional internationalists showed themselves a sorry crew. The really powerful men of intrigue and action who professed to the doctrine have been the efficient and evil tools of German autocracy, militarism and international tyranny. The milk and water intellectuals who prattled about the doctrine have been the timid and inefficient tools of the same foul masters.

**T**HE great war for international right and justice has been carried on by the men who were nationalists first, patriots first, Frenchmen or Englishmen or Italians or Americans first; and who were able to serve humanity at large precisely because they possessed the soul qualities which made them proudly devoted to their own nations, and proud to fight for their devotion. At this moment the menace of a peace which will consecrate German wrongdoing comes mainly from men who profess a wordy internationalism. It is the ardent nationalists, the ardent patriots of the United States and of the free countries of Western Europe, who are too proud not to fight to the end for Belgium and Serbia and all the small well-behaved nations who are primarily threatened by the German horror.

The cultivated American, the college-bred American, the American intellectual who professes the creed of

internationalism has turned down the path that leads to moral emasculation. He has given adhesion to those half-truths that are the most destructive of falsehood; and these half-truths eat out the moral fiber of mankind as plague germs eat out the healthy tissue of the physical body. He practices a philosophy dear to those who think idly, dear to those who live rapidly, dear to those whose hearts are both cold and feeble.

This war, into which we helplessly drifted without preparation, and in which for the first year and a quarter we have done so lamentably ill, nevertheless may mean the moral salvation of our people. It has lifted us out of the stew of sordid materialism, flavored with sham sentimentality. It has brought us face to face with the eternal verities which were manfully faced by our fathers in the days of Lincoln, by our forefathers in the days of Washington. It has taught us again to realize the worth of the great basic virtues, the fundamental virtues of manhood and womanhood, which enabled Washington and Lincoln and the men of Valley Forge and the men of Gettysburg to build and to maintain this Republic as the hope of the free nations of mankind. Those men were not internationalists. They were Americans. That is why we are proud to be their fellow countrymen. That is why they have been an inspiration to the best men of all other nations.

There is no limit to the greatness of the future before America, before our beloved land. But we can realize it only if we are Americans, if we are nationalists, with all the fervor of our hearts and all the wisdom of our brains. We can serve the world at all only if we serve America first and best. We must work along our own national lines in every field of achievement. We must feel in the very marrow of our being that our loyalty is due only to America, and that it is not diluted by loyalty for any other nation or all other nations on the face of the earth. Only thus shall we fit ourselves really to serve other nations, to refuse ourselves to wrong them, and to refuse to let them do wrong or suffer wrong.