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THE LETTERS OF  
*Theodore Roosevelt*

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THE LETTERS OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT

VOLUME VIII

*The Days of Armageddon*

1914—1919

*The Service He Can Render,  
continued*

September 1914—June 1916

## SYMBOLS

- ( ) Single angle brackets indicate material crossed out but decipherable.
- « » French quotation marks indicate editorial interpretations of illegible words.
- [ ] Square brackets indicate editorial interpolations.
- . . . Three dots indicate a missing word.
- . . . . Four dots indicate two or more missing words.
- 0 A superior zero placed after the manuscript source indicates that the entire letter is in Roosevelt's handwriting.
- A, B, C, . . . A small capital, A, B, C, etc., placed after a letter number indicates that that letter was acquired and inserted after the original manuscript had gone to press.

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Oyster Bay, September 4, 1914

*Dear Arthur:* I cannot refrain from sending you a line of affection and sympathy in these terrible and trying hours. It is very difficult to gain a clear idea of what has happened. It seems, however, to have been shown that the British Army has fought admirably. There is no use of my commenting in any way on the military situation, because it will doubtless have changed completely by the time you receive this. The attitude of the English people seems to be on the whole admirable. I have been greatly impressed by everything that Kitchener has said and done. He is indeed a strong man. I have also been immensely pleased with all that Lord Roberts has done.<sup>1</sup> How completely this war seems to have justified his teachings for the past few years! I was particularly pleased at his severe comment on people who persist in making a fetish of sports and pastimes in this moment of the nation's need. Of course you have some creatures who represent types with which we over here are only too familiar — the unhung traitor Keir Hardie, the blue-rumped ape Bernard Shaw, and the assemblage of clever and venomous but essentially foolish and physically timid creatures of the type of the editors of the *Nation*.

If it is any comfort to you to know that there are others who in minor degree have cause for suffering, we on this side of the water can give you that comfort. With all your suffering you are playing a heroic part, and whatever Germany's successes or failures on the continent, England is as certain to win now as she was to win against Napoleon a century ago if only she will be true to herself; and so far she has given every proof that she intends to be true to herself. On this side of the water at the moment there is no opportunity for the display of heroic qualities, and not the slightest indication that there will be a desire to display them if the need arose. Wilson

<sup>1</sup> Lord Roberts in the decade before the First World War had devoted himself to the cause of national service — that is, compulsory military training. Approving of Haldane's army reforms, he nevertheless believed they were insufficient to prepare a force to deal with the conditions of modern warfare. In the few years immediately preceding the war he tried to rouse public opinion in support of more drastic changes in army recruitment and training. With the coming of the war he joined at Asquith's request the first war council which determined the destination of the original British Expeditionary Force. Early in November he was appointed at the age of eighty-two the colonel-in-chief of a force dispatched from India into France. Leaving England on the eleventh of November to "hearten the men of the country which had been so long his military home," he died three days later at Saint-Omer on active service. "Three hundred miles of cannon spoke / When the master gunner died."

and Bryan leave the navy scattered, and slightly but steadily deteriorating because not assembled for maneuvers. They have passed a procession of idiotic universal arbitration treaties with Paraguay and similar world powers, and all the apostles of the utterly inane scream joyfully that this shows that the United States does not need any battleships, and that if Europe had only had these treaties there never would have been any war! One curious feature of the professional pacifists, the peace-at-any-price men, is that in the crisis they always tend to support the apostles of brutal violence. Most of them now have a sneaking admiration for Germany. I think this admiration proceeds primarily from fear, for the great bulk of them are physically timid men, and at bottom are only concerned in covering their own abjectness with high-sounding phrases. Therefore their tendency is to lick the hand which they fear may strike them, and to confine their assaults upon honest men who fight for right.

It seems to me that Edward Grey has borne himself peculiarly well in these trying and difficult times. He showed clearly that he was a statesman of the Timoleon and John Hampden, the Washington and Lincoln school; that nothing could persuade him to do wrong to any other nation, weak or strong, or to be a party to such wrongdoing; but that on the other hand, no menace of danger could make him shrink from insisting upon right being done in return; and he has not hesitated to draw the sword rather than submit to wrongdoing.

Give my dearest love to Ruth, and remember me to any friend who you think would care to have such remembrance from me. *Faithfully yours*

5917 · TO WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

*Roosevelt Mss.*

Oyster Bay, September 14, 1914

*Dear White:* Oh Lord, I wish you could be in my place for a little while! I am speaking literally, not figuratively, when I say that there are certainly a dozen states, each of which has demanded that I spend so much time with it this fall that I could not devote very much time to all the other states combined. Here in New York the situation was that we could not get anybody to run on the Progressive ticket whom we were willing to support, until I gave my solemn pledge to give practically all of October to the ticket. I do not expect that we shall do very well in New York, but when it became evident that there was no element worth considering in the Republican Party which would join with us in a fight against the Republican machine, the only alternative was to get as good a ticket as possible and make the fight; and that could not be done if I did not give the pledge I did.

I have told them to wire you that I will give you two speeches in Kansas.

My dear fellow, it is not because I am disagreeable that I refuse to do more. I appreciate absolutely all you say about Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Colorado, Louisiana and California, but I have done the best I could with letters in both places.<sup>1</sup> In California Hiram Johnson and Heney are entirely satisfied with what I did, and I think Costigan, Casement and Dodge<sup>2</sup> are satisfied also about Colorado. You have forgotten Pennsylvania, which I can assure you hasn't any idea that there is anything for me to go anywhere else and is genuinely indignant at my not spending practically the entire time there. There are, moreover, three or four states, Iowa, Michigan and Nebraska, for instance, where the appeal to have me go is specifically on the ground that they do not expect to win but have made such a gallant fight that I have no business not to help them out.

Well, I hope I shall see you soon. *Faithfully yours*

5918 • TO ALBERT APPONYI

*Roosevelt Mss.*

New York, September 17, 1914

*My dear Count Apponyi:* Your letter without date has just been received together with the very interesting article that you sent me. I am not able to secure its insertion into any magazine unless the *Outlook* will accept it. I am no longer a member of the *Outlook* staff or connected with it save as a contributor but I have at once forwarded the article to them and have advised them to publish it. I earnestly hope they will do so.

I am interested in what you say as to this case not being arbitrable nor fit to be submitted to an international inquiry. My dear Count Apponyi, I have felt so out of sympathy with much of the pacifist movement precisely because its leaders insisted that all cases were arbitrable and that all cases could be submitted to an international inquiry. At this moment our own Governmental authorities are committing an act of folly which is saved from being a crime against the nation only because it is so unspeakably foolish in promising to arbitrate every matter whether or not it is fit to be submitted to international inquiry. Such an attitude is either consciously or unconsciously

<sup>1</sup> Roosevelt spoke in 1914 in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, and Louisiana and also in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Maine, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. To the Progressive candidates in other states, including California and Colorado, he sent public letters of endorsement.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel D. Casement, Costigan's campaign manager, and Clarence Phelps Dodge, publisher of the *Colorado Springs Gazette*, a Progressive candidate for Congress in 1912, and chairman of the Progressive State Committee.

hypocritical and insincere, for it is a promise to do what certainly would not be done.

I have been inexpressibly saddened by this war. I have no question that you state with absolute correctness the deep and sincere conviction of the Hungarians, Austrians and Germans. I do not think that you realize that the Russians, French and English feel just as sincerely on the other side. Moreover, there is one nation as to whose wrongs in the present contest there can be no question whatever, in my judgment. That is Belgium. If treaties are ever to amount to anything, if any respect is ever to be paid to pledged and plighted faith, then some efficient way must be designed for preventing the recurrence of the kind of thing that has happened to Belgium and, moreover, Belgium's wrongs must be redressed.

I can do little but reiterate the deep sadness I feel. It is my good fortune to number among my personal friends Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Hungarians and Austrians, and while I cannot say that I have any friends in Russia, there are Russians whom I know only slightly but whom I esteem and respect. All of these men are in substance precisely like my American friends. I regard them and esteem them for the same reasons that I regard and esteem my American friends and it is indeed to me lamentable to see what is happening.

Pray present my regards to the Countess and my other friends. *Very sincerely yours*

5919 · TO HENRY E. COONLEY ·

*Roosevelt Mss.*

Kansas City, Missouri, September 21, 1914

*My dear Mr. Coonley:*<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that everything I have ever written and the things I am about to write exactly bear out the plank which Mr. Robins, I understand with you, helped to draw and had adopted in your Illinois platform, when you declared in favor of the three-battleship policy until such time as the great powers of the world can be federated so as to secure an international court with international police behind it; so that, in other words, we may be able to put force behind righteousness.<sup>2</sup>

I stand unalterably for the power and the duty of this nation to defend its own rights with its own strong hand, while at the same time I stand no less strongly for the principle that it is our duty to try to bring about the day when arbitration shall be substituted for war as the normal method of solving international disputes; and when real steps towards disarmament can be taken as a consequence of putting the armed strength of civilization behind the sincere purpose of united civilization to work for international justice. *Sincerely yours*

<sup>1</sup> Henry E. Coonley, a Chicago Progressive.

<sup>2</sup> The Wilson Administration until 1916 supported the old Roosevelt program of two new battleships a year.

Oyster Bay, October 2, 1914

*Dear Sally:*<sup>1</sup> I am more than pleased at your letter. It was the first notice I had that we were supposed to stay with you. Now, Sara, I am very doubtful, from Franklin's standpoint, whether it is wise that we do so and I have communicated with Teddy to this effect. I shall be in the middle of a tour in which I am attacking the Administration and I think it might well be an error, from Franklin's standpoint, if we stayed with you. If it were only not during the campaign there is literally no place where I would rather go. And, of course, if the matter has been made public, it may be better to go anyhow.

I hope you understand, dear Sally, that it is the exact truth to say that I am only thinking of Franklin's interest. *Faithfully yours*

Oyster Bay, October 3, 1914

*Dear Cecil:* I have received your letters. I am glad you liked the *Outlook* article and the others.<sup>1</sup> I see the *Cologne Gazette* has attacked me.<sup>2</sup> With this I am pleased, because, while I wished to be scrupulously fair and not in the least bitter toward Germany, I yet wished to make my position as clear as a bell. As a matter of fact, it has been very hard for me to keep myself in. If I had been President, I should have acted on the thirtieth or thirty-first of July, as head of a signatory power of the Hague treaties, calling attention to the guaranty of Belgium's neutrality and saying that I accepted the treaties as imposing a serious obligation which I expected not only the United States but all other neutral nations to join in enforcing. Of course I would not have made such a statement unless I was willing to back it up. I believe that if I had been President the American people would have followed me. But whether I am mistaken or not as regards this, I am certain that the majority are now following Wilson. Only a limited number of people could or ought to be expected to make up their minds for themselves in a crisis like this; and they tend, and ought to tend, to support the President in such a crisis. It would be worse than folly for me to clamor now about what ought to be

<sup>1</sup> Sara Delano Roosevelt, wife of James, mother of Franklin.

<sup>2</sup> Roosevelt had begun the series of articles which, slightly changed, he later published as *America and the World War* (New York, 1915; Nat. Ed. XVIII). These articles he wrote for newspaper distribution by the Wheeler Syndicate or for the *Outlook*, *Everybody's*, and the *Independent*.

<sup>3</sup> After the appearance of Roosevelt's first war article in the *New York Times* of September 27, the *Cologne Gazette* attacked him as a man "never gifted with modesty," lacking "a full insight into European affairs." "When anybody is in office," the editorial concluded, "other people have respect for the fact, and foreigners are treated in accordance with the prestige which they enjoy at home. That was why Roosevelt was formerly treated with special respect in Germany. At the last Presidential election he lost all his prestige."

done or ought to have been done, when it would be mere clamor and nothing else.

The above is only for yourself. It is a freer expression of opinion than I have permitted myself in any letter hitherto.

Of course, I only acted in the Japanese-Russian affair when I had received explicit assurances, verbally from the Russians and in writing from the Japanese, that my action would be welcome; and three or four months of talk and negotiation had preceded this action on my part.

As for the people who clamor for peace now, I shall take the opportunity of reminding them that there were in the northern United States in 1864 several hundred thousand men who in the loudest terms declared their extreme devotion to peace and that these to a man voted against Abraham Lincoln; and if in that year England and France had joined, as certain of their public men wished them to join, in offering mediation so as to bring about "peace," we should have treated it as an unfriendly act.

I believe that you will put the war through. I am glad the opinion of our country is on your side. It is perfectly possible that Russia may in its turn become a great military danger in the future, but it is also possible that this war may see the dawn of the reaction against militarism and that Russia may tend to grow more civilized and more liberal. At any rate there is no question as to where the interests of civilization lie at this moment.<sup>3</sup> Faithfully  
yours

5922 · TO HUGO MÜNSTERBERG

Roosevelt Mss.

Personal

Oyster Bay, October 3, 1914

*My dear Professor Münsterberg:* I have received your very interesting book<sup>1</sup> and it impresses me very much. But, my dear Münsterberg, there are two or three points that you leave out of calculation. The first and most essential is that when a nation faces immediate death or humiliation because of the deed of another nation, it cannot look to the future with lofty philosophy, see the possible resulting good of its own ruin, and disregard the moral question of the moment. I firmly believe that in 1812 it was an essential thing to overthrow Napoleonic France. I feel that the German movement against France and the English resistance to France represented the struggle for light. (Let me remind you that Russia, that Asia, as you call it, was then on the side of Germany and that Germany could have done nothing without Russia and would have acted inexcusably if she had remained under France's yoke because it could be truthfully said that France represented far more enlightenment than Russia.) At that time the United States made war on England and by just so much gave comfort and strength to the Napoleonic side in the

<sup>3</sup> Roosevelt wrote similar letters to Edward Grey and to Rudyard Kipling, endorsing the articles he had sent Spring Rice.

<sup>1</sup> Münsterberg's *The War and America* (New York, 1914).

European struggle. Yet the action of the United States was absolutely necessary. My criticism of the United States in 1812 is heavy but it is not because she went to war with England; it is because she did not prepare effectively in advance for the war and wage it effectively; and indeed, as far as I am concerned, I think she ought to have declared war on both France and England.

Now, this is the exact case with Belgium today. The more I have studied the case, the more keenly I have felt that there can be no satisfactory peace until Belgium's wrongs are redressed and until there is some kind of effective guaranty against the repetition of them as against her and others. I do not for a moment believe that the predominant German motive in this war was aggression. I regard the talk about the Kaiser "wishing a blood-bath" as preposterous. I am sure that nine tenths of the German people have acted primarily from fear—from an honorable fear, just as you phrase it, that German civilization would be wiped out if they did not strike their foes. But, my dear Münsterberg, there was a ten per cent remainder, including the bulk of the men high up, who have for fifty years cultivated a theory in international matters quite as aggressive, quite as regardless of the rights of others and of all questions of international morality, as that which the French and to an only less extent the English had cultivated in the preceding seventy years. This country was strongly anti-English for a generation after the Civil War, because of the attitude of England and (also France) during the Civil War. But you probably do not realize the deep impression made upon this country by the attitude of Germany toward us in the Spanish War, especially in connection with Admiral Diederichs at Manila, and also by the attitude of Germany in South America.

Now, not for publication, but frankly between ourselves, do you not believe that if Germany won in this war, smashed the English Fleet and destroyed the British Empire, within a year or two she would insist upon taking the dominant position in South and Central America and upon treating the United States precisely as she treated Japan when she joined with Russia and France against Japan twenty years ago and took Kiaochow as her share? I believe so. Indeed I know so. For the great Germans with whom I have talked, when once we could talk intimately, accepted this view with a frankness that bordered on the cynical; just exactly as the big Russians with whom I have talked took the view that international morality had no place where Russian interests were concerned.

I am under no illusions as to any friendship for the United States that England or France may entertain. It would be worthless to us in any crisis unless it was greatly to the interest of France and England to support us. But it does seem to me that England had to act as she did when Belgium was invaded; and that as regards Belgium there are no two sides to the question.

I am not much interested in trying to get at the truth about the alleged outrages on individuals. The unquestioned fact is that Belgium has been

ruined, that wonderful and beautiful old cities have been destroyed, that millions of entirely unoffending plain people have been reduced to the last pitch of misery, because Germany deemed it to its interest to inflict upon Belgium the greatest wrong one nation can inflict upon another. I grant you that Germany sincerely believed that this was necessary to her own existence; but surely we are not to be excused if we do not try to prevent the possibility of the recurrence of such incidents.

What the outcome of this war may be no human being can tell. At the moment it looks as if both sides might hammer themselves into a state of absolute exhaustion. If the allies should win and should then wish to dismember Germany and reduce her to impotence, whatever I could do would be done to prevent such a deed. I would regard it as a frightful calamity to civilization; and if Austria falls to pieces, I very earnestly hope that the German portion and all the other portions that are willing will join the Germanic body — the German Empire. But most emphatically I hope that ample reparation will be made to Belgium and that an effectual guarantee against the repetition of such wrongs as those that she has suffered will be arranged.

Now, as to the Russian. You speak very bitterly of him, and indeed of the Slav as a whole. I freely admit that the Russian is backward. They have a long way to go, those Russians, before they leave far enough behind them the days of Tartar dominion and the days when Tartar dominion was only overthrown through the upgrowth of a government such as that of Ivan the Terrible. The attitude of the Russian toward the Finn, the Caucasian, the Pole, the Jew and the Slavonian German in the past has too often been an evil attitude. But I think that liberal ideas are gaining in Russia. The gain is slow but on the whole it seems to me that it is evident. I do not believe the Russian will become an Asiatic. I think he will in the long run be the most effective means of preventing a recrudescence of Asiatic rule over Europe. Down at bottom, my dear Münsterberg, the Russian is just about like you or like me. The Englishman thinks of the German as an alien by race and innate disposition. I know better, for I have some English and some German blood in me, not to speak of other strains. In exactly the same way I find that here in America the descendants of the Slavonic immigrants become men precisely like ourselves. Surely in the end we can aim for a better understanding between German, Englishman and Slav; and such an understanding must be based on justice and no one of them must feel for the others either fear or contempt.

You will not misunderstand me. I am not an ultrapacificist. I regard the Wilson-Bryan attitude of trusting to fantastic peace treaties, to impossible promises, to all kinds of scraps of paper without any backing in efficient force, as abhorrent. It is infinitely better for a nation and for the world to have the Frederick the Great and Bismarck tradition as regards foreign policy than to have the Bryan or Bryan-Wilson attitude as a permanent national attitude, for the Bryan-Wilson attitude is one that would Chinify the coun-



try and would reduce us to the impotence of Spain when it was under the leadership of Godoy — “The Prince of Peace,” as he was officially entitled. A milk-and-water righteousness unbacked by force is to the full as wicked as and even more mischievous than force divorced from righteousness. But surely there is a goal different from either toward which we can strive. Surely we can strive for an international peace of justice, based on ability to guard ourselves from injustice, and determination not to do injustice to others, a peace in which some step shall have been taken toward putting international force behind an international desire to secure at least a reasonable approximation toward justice and fair play. *Sincerely yours*

5923 · TO GIFFORD PINCHOT

*Gifford Pinchot Mss.*

Telegram

Toledo, Ohio, October 18, 1914

You make it very hard for me. This is not personal matter. I am under extreme difficulties trying to do justice all around. I understood distinctly that I was to make but three speeches a day in Penna and am gravely concerned at schedule, but New York people feel and I think rightly that I must get to city three or four hours before I make my three speeches that night.<sup>1</sup> Under your plan I cannot possibly know situation in advance. Four o'clock is the very latest which will enable me to do any kind of justice to the speeches in New York. I understood when I saw Mr. Gifford that the New York City people were satisfied. I think that they feel it would be a serious jeopardy to campaign if I do not have some hours to go over situation before I make my first speech. I am exceedingly sorry.

5924 · TO HUGO MÜNSTERBERG

*Roosevelt Mss.*

Oyster Bay, November 2, 1914

*My dear Professor Münsterberg:* I am immensely pleased and immensely interested with your letter. I do not agree with you about Belgium. I believe that this country should have emphatically interfered, at least to the extent of protest, as to the violation of the Hague Conventions in regard to Belgium. But I would no less emphatically have made it evident in advance that if what you fear and believe had proved to be true, that is, if Belgium, England and France had been proposing to act in conjunction against Germany through Belgium, that the United States would with equal emphasis,

<sup>1</sup> Pinchot had made the last and probably the most exasperating of the many demands of Progressive candidates for Roosevelt's time. For several weeks New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia Progressive leaders, each determined at all costs to serve his own state, had wrangled about the ex-President's speaking schedule for the end of October. Pinchot and Lewis had arranged precisely the kind of back-platform stumping tour of Pennsylvania that Roosevelt wished to avoid. Now Pinchot, asserting that never before had he asked Roosevelt for anything “personal,” begged Roosevelt to remain three hours longer in Pennsylvania on October 29 than Roosevelt, for the reasons explained in this telegram, intended to.