

# AMERICA ENTERS THE WORLD



PageSmith

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 H A D H A D 8 7 6 5 4

**ISBN 0-07-058573-3**

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Smith, Page.

America enters the world.

"Volume seven."

1. United States—Politics and government—1865–1933. 2. Progressivism (United States politics) 3. World War, 1914–1918—United States. I. Title.

E743.S58 1985 973 84-14372

ISBN 0-07-058573-3

*For Frances Rydell,  
with gratitude and affection*

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# Introduction

In the preceding volume I focused particularly on what was called by contemporaries the war between capital and labor, the bitter and bloody struggle between mine and factory owners and their ruthlessly exploited workers. Two other major themes were the effect of Darwinism on traditional American notions about man and his relation to the natural and “transnatural” world and, finally, the emergence of the West as a major factor in American life. There were, of course, numerous other themes and trends, some new and some going back several generations, but these were, in my opinion, subservient to the major developments listed above. In this volume the same three themes continue to dominate. The war between capital and labor becomes, if possible, more bitter and unrelenting than ever. Most thoughtful individuals with social consciences are socialists or anarchists of one denomination or another and continue to anticipate a revolution, hopefully peaceful but probably violent, which will lead to a more just social and economic order.

The Populists, having been absorbed into the Bryan-led Democratic Party, having become Socialists under the leadership of Eugene V. Debs, or, attracted by the dynamic and “Progressive” leadership of

Robert La Follette, having returned to the Republican fold, disappear from the political scene as quickly as they appeared, the most extraordinary political phenomenon in our history, their brief ascendancy leaving historians with a bone they seem never to tire of gnawing.

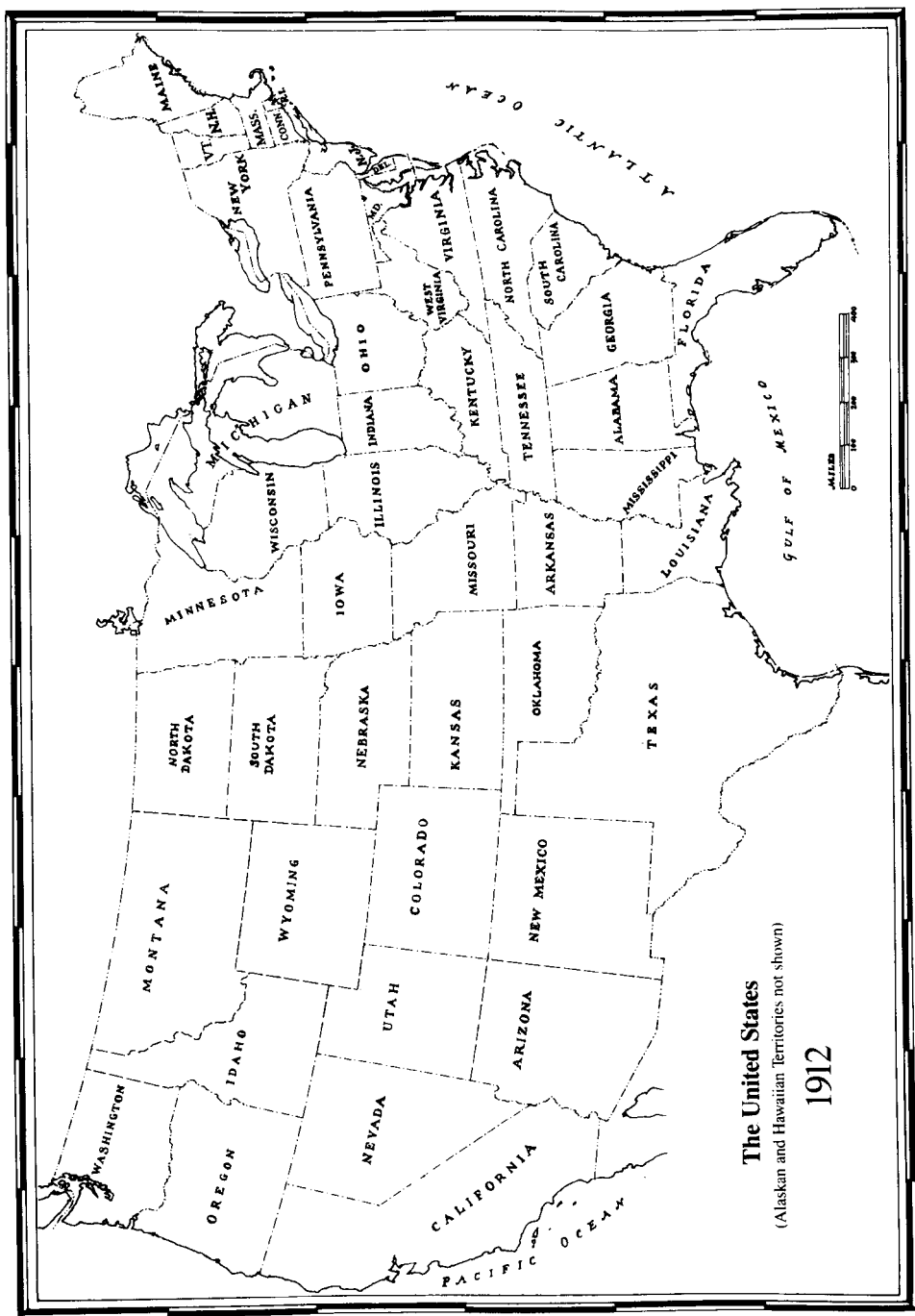
The principal drama of the first decade of the new century involves that brilliant and indefatigable actor Theodore Roosevelt, who gives the intoxicating illusion that he is capable, almost single-handedly, of taming predatory capitalists and militant workers alike while at the same time making the United States a power to be reckoned with in the world of international diplomacy.

Meanwhile, a final vast wave of immigration rounds out, so to speak, the multinational character of the United States and in the process adds substantially to the radicalism and the rancor of the war between capital and labor. Perhaps most important of all in the long run, a new consciousness continues to struggle to be born or, having been born, fights for life and, indeed, for domination. Art becomes a talismanic word for the new consciousness which manifests itself most strikingly in the visual arts.

Finally, the outbreak of the European War, which, with the entry of the United States, becomes the World War, combines with the Russian Revolution to sound the death knell of the old world order and mark the beginning of a new age—or perhaps mark the end of the beginning of that new age ushered in by the American Revolution. In this perspective the American Revolution is simply the beginning of that “age of democratic revolutions” which had in view the “emancipation of a world.” The Russian Revolution, however perverted, and its companion, the Chinese Revolution, mark the end of ideological revolution (though not, of course, the end of revolutionary upheavals in various third world countries) and, at the same time, the end of the utopian expectation—i.e., that there is a particular social/economic/political system that can ensure both justice and freedom. This is not, certainly, clear by the end of the period covered by this volume. The proponents of the Russian Revolution argue that it is still in its infancy and that its horrid tyrannies and “liquidations” are simply the growing pains of the new world order. The true believers, perhaps conscious that it was their last hope, believed more devoutly than ever. But the seed of doubt had been sown, and with it the seeds of that contest for world domination between the United States and the Soviet Union that

was to overshadow every other issue in the second half of the twentieth century.

The story begins simply enough with Theodore Roosevelt, the exuberant “cowboy,” as Mark Hanna called him derisively, ensconced in the White House—“living above the store,” as his wife put it.



The United States  
(Alaskan and Hawaiian Territories not shown)

1912



AMERICA  
ENTERS  
THE  
WORLD

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## A New Hand at the Helm

**T**he man who became the twenty-sixth president of the United States by virtue of an anarchist's bullet had been, as every schoolchild knows, a frail and sickly child who as an adult became the exemplar of masculine strength and energy.

Theodore Roosevelt was convinced that he literally owed his life as well as his robust good health to the loving care of his father. Theodore, Sr., was a model of upper-class noblesse oblige. A large, imposing man, with a hearty laugh and an irrepressible penchant for good works, he helped establish the Newsboys' Lodging House, where several hundred boys were given a bed each night for five cents, the Children's Aid Society, and the New York Orthopedic Dispensary and Hospital for children with diseases of the spine. He was also one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History. It was he who organized the Bureau of Charities to coordinate the activities of all the city's charitable associations. A friend called him "the model of Christian manhood." His precepts were simple, old-fashioned ones: "I always believe in showing affection by doing what will please the one we love, not by talking. . . . I have often thought that unselfishness combined in one word more of the teachings of the Bible than any other in the language." His sister-in-law called him

Greatheart, comparing him to the Puritan warrior in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: "Come now, and follow me, and no hurt shall happen to you from the lions. . . ."

"Take care of your morals first, your health next, and finally your studies," the elder Roosevelt advised the younger Theodore on his departure for Harvard. From there Theodore, or Teedie or Thee, as he was called in the family, wrote: "I do not think there is a fellow in college who has a family that love him as much as you all do me, and I am *sure* that there is no one who has a father who is also his best and most intimate friend as you are mine. . . . I do not find it nearly so hard as I expected not to drink and smoke. . . ."

When the senior Roosevelt died during his eldest son's junior year at Harvard, he was universally eulogized. George William Curtis, alumnus of Brook Farm and editor of *Harper's Weekly*, called him "an American citizen of the best type. . . ." After his father's death Theodore felt that he might go "mad" with grief, reflecting, "I am as much inferior to Father morally and mentally as physically. . . . He did everything for me, and I nothing for him. I remember so well how, years ago, when I was a very weak, asthmatic child, he used to walk up and down with me in his arms. . . ." When his father picked him up, "I could breathe, I could sleep, when he had me in his arms, my father—he got me breath, he got me lungs, strength—life," he told Lincoln Steffens.

If the relationship with his father did more than anything else to shape his character, the role of class—in some ways, of course, inseparable from that of the family—was also crucial. Class gives an assurance that is often not far from arrogance, but as we have seen in numerous other instances, it also commonly frees its members from deference to "mere" wealth. While money was essential to maintain the prerogatives of class, it was vulgar to think and certainly to talk about it. And those who made it by rapacious methods of dubious legality were beneath contempt. So, in addition to the spirit of noblesse oblige that he inherited from his charitably disposed father, Teddy Roosevelt acquired, as naturally as his accent and his clothes, the attitudes of his class toward new wealth, which was, in the main, the wealth that bore most oppressively on the country.

We have already taken note of Roosevelt's infatuation with outdoor life. It was a class attitude in large part, and it was distinct from the earlier Emerson-Thoreau love of nature. It was, rather, an all-out

assault on nature, a constant contest and competition with nature that was related directly to the American male's notion of maleness.

In addition to his passion for outdoor life, Roosevelt had an infinite capacity for play—for romps, as he called them—an impulse plainly derived from his father. On one occasion, when Gifford Pinchot and Grant La Farge arrived at the Governor's Mansion at Albany during Roosevelt's regime, they found the state's chief executive fighting off an attack of hypothetical Indians and helping the children in the house escape by lowering them by a rope from a second-story window. After a discussion of the desirability of applying proper forest management to the state-owned forests of New York, Pinchot and the governor engaged in wrestling and boxing matches.

As an addict of the strenuous life the new President soon incorporated it as a principle of government, devising a kind of survival training for members of his administration and foreign diplomats assigned to Washington. When a newly appointed assistant secretary of state appeared at the White House in a cutaway coat, striped trousers, patent leather shoes, and a handsome silk necktie, Roosevelt took him on one of his famous walks. As they reached the Potomac, after (in Pinchot's words) "sloshing through mud and water for the better part of an hour," the skiff on which the President usually crossed was missing. After a moment's pause Roosevelt removed his hat, put his watches and other valuables in it, replaced it on his head, and waded into the frigid river. Pinchot and the unhappy secretary followed suit, up to their waists and then to their shoulders before they reached the opposite bank.

The President had a "tennis and riding cabinet" made up of athletic young men. Wrestling and boxing were also *de rigueur*. Pinchot, who was seven years Roosevelt's junior, seems to have borne the brunt of the President's strenuousness. He recalled that he often returned home from some jaunt or tussle with "the boss" too tired to eat.

The President learned "'Juido'—as they now seem to call Jiu Jitsu . . ." from a Professor Yamashita. The Japanese naval attaché, Commander Takashita, visited Roosevelt with a young friend, Kitgaki, who was entering the Naval Academy at Annapolis, and the President wrestled with both of them. He was curious about whether an American wrestler could hold his own with a judo master, and he arranged to match a young man named Grant, "the champion middleweight wrestler of the United States," against Yamashita. "Inside of a minute Ya-

mashita had choked Grant, and inside of two minutes more he got an elbow hold on him that would have enabled him to break his arm; so that there was no question that he could have put Grant out," Roosevelt wrote to his son Kermit.

All of which was engaging but also somewhat pathological. The President turned every boxing or wrestling match into a competition and every walk or ride into a race, often a dangerous one. He so frequently seemed to be bent on killing or seriously injuring himself that even his most devoted admirers sensed something demonic in his headlong dash at life. The pathology seemed to spring from an inner doubt, a gnawing lack of confidence, a need to reaffirm daily his fearlessness, his certitude.

Life in the Roosevelt White House was both lively and informal. The liberal journalist Oswald Garrison Villard recalled discussing some important international issue with Roosevelt and Secretary of War Elihu Root at the Roosevelt breakfast table when young Ted appeared, carrying a fierce-looking macaw. When the President saw the bird, he ordered it taken away, whereupon little Alice set up a chant: "Father's afraid, father's afraid, father's afraid, father's afraid." Roosevelt jumped up, took the bird from his son and, "showing his teeth, turned upon his offspring and said: 'Now who's afraid, now who's afraid, now who's afraid?'" Then he resumed his seat, and the conversation continued as though there had never been an interruption.

When journalist Finley Peter Dunne, the famous "Mr. Dooley" and an old friend of the Colonel's, visited the Roosevelts at Sagamore Hill in Oyster Bay, on Long Island, with his young son Philip, Roosevelt instructed the child to hit him in his ample stomach as hard as he could, and when Philip skinned his knuckles on the Colonel's watch chain, Roosevelt carried him off to the bathroom and applied first aid.

Roosevelt was indeed at his most appealing in his relations with children. "I am really touched," he wrote a friend, "at the way in which your children as well as my own treat me as a friend and playmate." He read James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Deerslayer* to his sons Archie and Quentin. He wrote that there had been "skating and sleigh-riding all the week." His letters to his sons were filled with the kind of information important to children. He wrote "Archikins" that he had seen his lizard—"Bill the lizard—your lizard that you brought home from Mount Vernon"—in the honey-suckle. Games, horseback rides, romps, and "scrambles" were enumerated.



When Florence Harriman, a friend of the Roosevelts, dined at the White House, the President made a point of drawing her into conversation about her social work with immigrant children. "What do you think is best," he asked, to "send children to day-nurseries as we do, or ought we to try the German scheme of mothers' pensions?" Before she could answer, Roosevelt's aide, Colonel Archie Butts, came in with a waterproof suit that the President had ordered for his African safari. Harriman recalled that like a small boy with a new toy, Roosevelt gave a whoop of delight, climbed into the new garment, "grabbed a cane, ran up and down the hall shouting, pretending to shoot aides, ushers and any old thing handy, as imaginary lions. He even ran up the stairs and down again testing the suit to see whether he could have free play for his arms and legs."

Harriman wrote: "All the Roosevelts have a delightfully mad enthusiasm for each other and one can't be fond of one of them without presently acquiring a contagious affection for all. . . ."

Roosevelt's most striking quality was his remarkable energy. Hutchins Hapgood, the reformer-journalist, recalled his first impression of Roosevelt as governor of New York State: "He wore a tall black hat and he strode along the platform with the physical power of a landslide. Never before or since have I been so much impressed by the physical impact of a human being." It was, in the last analysis, the energy and its by-product enthusiasm which made the "Colonel" irresistible to most of those who came within the orbit of his remarkable personality. In the words of William Allen White, the Topeka editor, "the squeaking falsetto in which he gently clowning himself was most disarming. . . . When he came into a room, he changed all the relations in the room because . . . all minds and hearts turned to him. . . . I felt the joy and delight of his presence and, knowing his weakness, still gave him my loyalty—the great rumbling, roaring, jocund tornado of a man, all masculine save sometimes a catlike glint, hardly a twinkle, in his merry eyes."

The new journalist Ray Stannard Baker never forgot his first visit with the President. He was ushered into Roosevelt's library. On his desk were a gold miner's pan, a silver dagger, and piles of books. The skins of animals decorated the walls and covered the floors. Roosevelt soon appeared—"robust, hearty, wholesome, like a gust of wind," clad "in knickerbockers, a worn coat, and a disreputable pair of tramping shoes."

The variety of guests to the White House, invariably reported in