champion the individual in his new reconciliation with the State, will not echo some of the ideas of the passing day.

No picture of the man would be complete without final comment on the sustention of Mr. Nagel's powers until the end. To those who knew him, he stood almost as a denial of such a thing as declining age. During the ninth decade of his life there was no perceptible diminution of his mental powers and no change in his regular habits. Nor did he wish the deference and attentions that his age commanded. When on a zero night he went forth by auto to make a speech in a neighboring city, the act of an associate in following to assure against breakdown occasioned by weather was respected for its kindness, but reproved for its presumption.

Those final years were characterized by an unabated interest in affairs, as poignant and as full of hopefulness as that of a young man at the beginning of the adventure. When the precursor of his last illness had come and he was confined at home, a court proceeding was in progress which had evoked his interest. On the last full day of his consciousness, unwilling to await his newspaper, he called for a verbal report. He was and is a figure unyielding to time.

CHARLES NAGEL IN PUBLIC LIFE

RAYMOND F. HOWES†

Newspaper headlines must have revived painful memories for Charles Nagel in the last months of his life; for his career as a public servant reached its climax not while he was Secretary of Commerce and Labor in the Cabinet of President Taft but when the United States was involved in the First World War. The record of his actions and public utterances during those years is a bright chapter in the history of Americanism. But it is also, because of the close parallel between that period and the present, a significant commentary on the relation of the American people to conflicts abroad that may be pondered with profit today.

More than twenty years ago, in the fever heat of popular emotion, Mr. Nagel was saying many of the things recently

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spread across the front pages in the words of Bennett Clark and other champions of American neutrality. His reward then was ostracism, followed, in 1918, by the threat of being haled before a Senate committee appointed to investigate German propaganda in the United States. But Mr. Nagel never took the witness stand. To summon a man who had been the adviser of President Theodore Roosevelt, a member of the Cabinet of President Taft, and a possible candidate for the Vice Presidency in 1916, called for more temerity than Senate committees in those days possessed. They contented themselves with disclosing that before America's entrance into the war Mr. Nagel had written a series of articles for the *American Leader* which one witness considered pro-German, and that his name appeared on a mysterious list in the files of the Department of Justice, purporting to be the German Government's enumeration of Americans friendly to the German cause.

The true indictment against Charles Nagel was that he had never denied his German parentage, had never disavowed his genuine affection for the German people, had persistently challenged the allegation that Germany should bear the sole guilt for the war, had denied that German soldiers were naturally more brutal than the soldiers of the Allies, and had argued, up to the very day of America's declaration of war, that there existed no cause sufficient to justify such a step. To the vast majority of the public, as to the Senate committee, the inference was plain.

In 1913 Ambassador Walter Hines Page told the people of England that "despite the fusion of races and the great contributions of other nations to her 100 millions of people and to her incalculable wealth, the United States is yet English-led and English-ruled." That idea, widely believed in this country, formed the basis of all subsequent British propaganda in the United States. Mr. Nagel denied its validity. In January, 1917, he told the Congress of Constructive Patriotism,

> We must remember that we have been put together as no nation on earth has ever been. No part of our people is a conquered people, compelled to adjust themselves to the conqueror. Our people are here by invitation, and the problem is how we, an amalgamated people as we are, can really rise to the high test of our democratic institutions. * * *
>
> It is not a new problem. In the great debate between Douglas and Lincoln the same question was raised, and Lin-

> coln said that we forget that we are a new people; that when the Declaration of Independence was written all the people who are represented here now were not here, but when those people, the Dutch, the Jew, the Swede, the German, the Irishman, the Scotchman, and others came over and read the Declaration of Independence, they had a right to feel that they were blood of the blood and bone of the bone of the men who had written that declaration. * * * The patriotism of an American citizen is not to be judged by section or ancestry.

This was not his first appeal for national solidarity, nor was it to be his last. But he was fighting in a lost cause. Blatant sowers of discord ruled the very conference at which he spoke. Elihu Root declared, during a bitter attack on Germany, "I am grateful with all my heart to those men who are fighting in the trenches in France and Belgium and Russia and Italy and the Balkans today for the liberty and peace of my children's children." His speech brought the audience to their feet cheering time and again. When a German sympathizer, at a later session, denounced Root's address as an unneutral attempt to make the conference a pro-Ally meeting, he was hissed, shouted down, and interrupted by a motion for adjournment. Mr. Nagel said,

> I think the most necessary and the absolutely essential asset of the United States is a united people for preparedness. * * * What little influence I have has been exerted to admonish people that, whatever they may think or say, they must keep both feet upon the platform of the United States.

He received only respectful attention.

The World War brought a crisis to every American citizen of German descent. For Charles Nagel the crisis was magnified because he was a recognized leader of opinion, a man eminent in the law and powerful in politics. His path would be followed by thousands of others. Like them, he had three choices. He could adopt an English name and become a rabid partisan of the Allies; he could renounce his allegiance to America and become a blind partisan of Germany; or, without disavowing his ancestry, he could try to keep a tolerant and impartial attitude toward all foreign nations and to advance the interests of the United States. The first way led to safety, the second to a satisfying martyrdom, the third to misunderstanding and distrust. He chose the third, not after deliberation, but at once, because his convictions allowed no other course.

He had learned both tolerance and courage from his father, a German physician who came to America in the 1840's to escape Prussian tyranny. Charles, born in Texas in 1849, was fourteen years old when he fled with his father to Missouri. More than fifty years later he outlined the story, which is given at length in his recent book:

> My people lived in the South during the early period of the Civil War. In my boyhood I was called a "Dutchman," in contempt, by those who did not know how honorable a name it is. We came north practically as refugees; and no admonition ever given me by my father had greater influence upon my life than the advice never to entertain a feeling of resentment for the South. Having lost everything as a Union man, my father confirmed his advice to me by voting for Tilden and for Cleveland.

The Reconstruction period found the son a disciple of Carl Schurz, voting with the Liberal Republicans for the return of the franchise to ex-Confederates and for a general policy of conciliation toward the South. Meanwhile he attended high school and the St. Louis Law School (now the Washington University School of Law), and then spent a year at the University of Berlin, where, under the influence of Rudolf Gneist, he formed a strong admiration for English law and government. Returning to practice law in St. Louis, he found time to continue the study of history and political science. Pictures of Burke, Erskine, Pitt, Washington, Hamilton, and Lincoln took their places on his walls as their writings went into his shelves.

In time, as he advanced in his profession, increased his knowledge, and found opportunities to express his ideas, Charles Nagel became a leader, especially among those who, like himself, traced their ancestry to Germany. Never an impassioned orator of Southern tradition, he won conviction by extensive information, clear reasoning, utter frankness, and a style which reflected his study of Lincoln and Burke. He was then, as later, tall, keen-eyed, with a modest, even gentle manner which on occasion turned to quiet firmness. Theodore Roosevelt once called him a "parlor politician," and in a sense he was. He never directly sought political office and, though nominally a Republican, always reserved and frequently asserted the right to vote against the party's candidate. Yet he was sent to the Missouri Legislature in 1881, became president of the Council of St. Louis in

1893, and entered the Cabinet in 1909, after having won first the delegation to the Republican convention and then the state for William Howard Taft.

As Secretary of Commerce and Labor, one of his most important duties was to administer the immigration law. For four years, in the face of hostile criticism and even direct charges that he had violated his oath of office, he rendered what he believed to be essential justice, regardless of legal technicalities. When Congress sought to impose a literacy test, he disapproved it, because, he said,

> The ability to read and write a foreign language, aided by your foreign press in this country, tends to perpetuate the spirit of colonization longer than when a sound mind and body comes in without the ability to read and write and is forced of necessity to resort to our own language.

Complete assimilation for national unity was his basic desire then, as always. In 1915 he could tell the German University League with complete candor that though he had never hesitated to join societies that were "calculated to keep alive traditions, sweet customs, language, or song" of Germany, he had never become a member of any German organization savoring of political activity.

> I not only have not joined them, but I have been at pains in practically every instance to state my reason for refusing to do so. * * * Giving due credit to the courage of men who called into life separate organizations, I must, for my part, insist that I regard their course as unwise, because it tends to accentuate national distinctions in the United States. A good cause must be won by the approval of an impartial people; and, to that end, open-mindedness and national loyalty are absolutely essential.

Many a good cause was supported by Mr. Nagel during his term in the Cabinet, though not all won the approval of the people. He continued his fight against over-legislation, removed politics from the Census Bureau by installing a trained expert as director, originated the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, acted as chairman of the commission which settled the fur-seal controversy, advocated lower tariffs, fought for an American merchant marine, brought about better relations between government and business, reorganized the Light House Service, urged the improvement of internal water-ways, and is-

sued a report exposing the evils of the two-shift system in steel mills. But always in the back of his mind, no matter what problem he tried to solve, was the question of national unity. The plea for racial solidarity crept into his speeches on commerce, on industry, on politics, and on the law. His philosophy of American government was fully developed at the outbreak of the war.

The war caught him in Germany. He had planned a tour through England, Germany, and Italy as relaxation after his four strenuous years in Washington. But instead of finding rest he plunged into the most exhausting struggle of his life. When he arrived home, after a few weeks in Germany and Switzerland, he soon learned that the German cable had been cut and that Britain, with a monopoly of European news, had begun to prejudice American opinion against the Central Powers. Here was a call to action which Mr. Nagel could not evade. In November he began a series of articles for the *American Leader*, a paper published by the American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers.

He lost no time in coming to the point. The first article said:

> The tacit assumption that ours is a distinctly English country, and that we are therefore at liberty to indulge presumptions in favor of Great Britain is no longer safe, because such an assumption does not comport with the facts. True, our institutions are essentially English in origin, but by this time nearly all advanced nations have accepted similar fundamental principles of government, and the mere question of their origin with us has ceased to have much importance. Furthermore, there are other avenues of progress quite as important as social happiness and success, for which we are under even greater obligation to other countries. And, in any event, the real development of our political institutions is possible with our composite people only so long as we keep open the door for legitimate influence from every quarter. * * *
>
> Obviously, therefore, neutrality cannot mean indifference. The greatest war of the world, upon whose outcome the trend of civilization must depend for years to come, cannot be regarded as a mere game, to condemn without inquiry, or to judge with one eye on our baseball score. * * * With respect to a conflict of so much moment it is the duty of every American citizen, on the one hand, to repress prejudice, but, on the other, to have an opinion and to form and to express that opinion with as much impartiality and intelligence as he can command.

Granting that the American people really wanted the truth, they found increasing difficulty, as the war progressed, in obtaining it. News about Germany, filtered through London, became a tale of atrocities. Mr. Nagel was one of the few Americans who, because of wide reading in history, thorough understanding of international law, and intimate knowledge of the European situation at the beginning of the war, could supply information denied the newspapers. He tried, at various public meetings in St. Louis, to impart this information and was rebuffed. On one dramatic occasion the chairman of a meeting called to protest against deportations of civilians refused to let him discuss the deportation of Germans by Russia, and forced him to remain quiet while speech after speech was made condemning Germany's actions in Belgium. Finally he turned, in January, 1915, to the *St. Louis Deutsche Gesellschaft* and delivered the most comprehensive speech of his career.

That speech, read today for the first time, might be taken for the work of a revisionist historian. Many questions of vital significance had been raised in the first half year of the war, and Mr. Nagel discussed them all. He declared that under international law citizens of the United States had an undoubted right to sell arms and ammunition to belligerents, even though the practice worked to the advantage of the Allies and to the disadvantage of the Central Powers; and that the United States, by the same token, could rightfully buy merchant ships from Germany, despite any disadvantage to England. He contended further that the American government had been lax in enforcing the right of American citizens to ship material not recognized as contraband to neutral ports. He argued, with an impressive array of historical facts, that the Central Powers were not solely responsible for the war; and, drawing from the statements of responsible Frenchmen and Englishmen, proved that France and England had made elaborate plans to violate the neutrality of Belgium long before Germany's advance.

He discussed minor newspaper reports.

> We read about the mines in the North Sea, and they are invariably called "German mines." Has anybody ever identified one? I read in a German paper the other day that the Dutch Government picked up one hundred mines, and that it was semi-officially announced that eighty of them were English and twenty French. I do not know whether this is

> true or not, and neither do you, but it should enter into the discussion, and should at least raise our doubts before we accept so plain a charge. * * *
>
> Then there was the tale that the Kaiser had one hundred socialists shot. We know now that the socialists who fell were at the front. * * *
>
> And so about the attacks upon the coast. * * * Let us remember that the first attack on an undefended coast was made by the British ship *Pegasus*, while the coast of England is at least defended; and the first aerial raid was made upon unfortified Düsseldorf in Germany.

He talked of atrocities.

> We know that there are atrocities in all wars, and that there are bad people in all countries. But, upon reflection, the American mind will hardly accept that the German soldier—at least a product of a schooling system and of a system of labor and work—is more brutal than an army that is composed of English, French, Belgians, Russians, Japanese, Hindus, and Turcos. * * * As investigations are made by Americans, and even by Englishmen, these accusations fall to the ground.

He concluded:

> The truth is that the peoples of Germany and England are so closely related that this conflict should never have been. * * *
>
> And we? Our part may be that of ultimate peacemaker. If that be so, the first condition is an attitude of public and private neutrality. But neutrality does not mean mere acquiescence. It means absolute impartiality between belligerents, and firm insistence upon our own rights.

As time went on, Mr. Nagel saw his dream of a united people steadily fading. American citizens, in ever-increasing numbers, were becoming bitter partisans. One reason, he believed, was the lack of definite information about the attitude of the Government on questions of international importance. He expressed this opinion in the *American Leader* of February 25, 1915. An even stronger reason was that the manufacture of munitions for the use of the Allies had grown enormously. In another article, printed on April 15, he urged the abolition of the traffic in arms, not because American citizens had no right to engage in it but because in exercising that right they were creating a dangerous sentiment at home.

> The citizenship of this nation is closely related to the belligerents on the other side. With many that relationship

> is recent and correspondingly intimate. Conditions of that kind no government can or should disregard. * * * Let us be neutral; let us be citizens of the United States by all means. But is it fair, or in any event, is it wise to expect well-nigh half the people of this nation to stand by while related people are mowed down with weapons of our manufacture, paid for with bank balances largely of their making and saving—all heralded in the name of neutrality and in the guise of humanity? It is time to take account of things and conditions. Technically our attitude is neutral. In effect it is felt to be partisan. Sentiment is profoundly stirred; and sentiment once aroused is not readily controlled by argument or guided by reason. There may be a day of reckoning, and the time to prepare for it is now.

It was a strong statement, but not an exaggeration. If it had come from a statesman of British extraction, it would have been considered a sane and timely warning; coming from Mr. Nagel, it was called a pro-German threat. When the *Lusitania* was sunk a month later, the utterly false rumor was circulated that Mr. Nagel had publicly said of the Americans who lost their lives, "It served them right and will soon show them that we mean business." And by November the *Providence Journal* had uncovered an alleged plot by Count von Bernstorff and a group of wealthy German-Americans to nominate him for the Vice Presidency on the Republican ticket.

> For some months past, [said that newspaper] Mr. Nagel has been one of the most outspoken and bitter of pro-German enthusiasts. * * * Mr. Nagel has not only identified himself with the German cause in a number of public speeches recently, but it is understood that he is not personally indifferent to certain phases of the propaganda work in this country.

Mr. Nagel had delivered two important speeches in October, to which the *Journal* doubtless referred. One was at the St. Louis War Relief Bazaar. In it he said,

> The consequences of a world war we cannot escape. Its progress and its outcome must affect us. Impressions and convictions we cannot suppress. But whatever form opinion or sympathy may take, one restraint must be heeded, because it sets the test of our patriotism. Citizens may place charity's tribute upon the altar of their faith in the people of their forefathers. They may support the ideals of their ancestors as a contribution to the success of the United States. But they may not transfer the conflicts of other na-

> tions into our country. Our problem and our cause are our own. Allegiance for better or for worse, without equivocation or reserve, belongs now and forever to our nation and to our flag.

The other speech, given before the German University League in New York on October 30, is one of the notable utterances of the war. Once more he made the same plea:

> I ask you not to become partisans in the discussions of foreign issues; but to preserve open minds, relying that the truth is the most powerful argument to be brought to the support of any cause. Do not identify yourselves in this country with any particular nation. Do not speak of Anglo-Americans, German-Americans, Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans, or other similar distinctions. * * * Do not permit yourselves to be segregated. Stand upon the platform of the United States as Americans.

If the *Providence Journal* thought it could silence Mr. Nagel by intimidation, it was mistaken. In speech after speech he continued to discuss every phase of the war, combating every new manifestation of British propaganda. He deplored the furor over German spies, asking why similar publicity was not given to spies of the other side; he suggested that amid all the excitement about alleged German conspiracies someone should investigate American manufacturers of Allied ammunition; and he exposed the attempt by pro-Ally politicians to revive American resentment against the invasion of Belgium and German atrocities. The motive for this Allied propaganda, he shrewdly divined, was to bring the United States into the war not so much to fight as to stand committed, after the conflict, to measures of vengeance against the Central Powers.

Hence the only important result of the *Providence Journal's* great exposé was that in June, 1916, when Mr. Nagel's friends had a *bona fide* campaign to nominate him for Vice President well under way, he discouraged the movement on the ground that his nomination would cause ill feeling by provoking discussions of race and ancestry.

> Mr. Nagel's friends [reported the *New York Times*] say he had been working for a year and a half to keep the hyphen out of politics, and that he had been criticized by some of his pro-German friends for preaching the doctrine that American citizens should bear an undivided allegiance to their own country.

The criticism of his pro-German friends gathered strength as he added to his personal campaign for national unity a series of pleas for preparedness—not military preparedness alone, but complete mobilization of the country's resources. It reached something like fury when, immediately after America's declaration of war, he said,

> This is no time to throw stones. This is the time for united effort. Wounds have been wrought that will not be healed by the mere use of plaster, but this is no time to show them. Time enough for their treatment after the war. Then I, for one, shall trust that my patriotism may be tested by something more worthy and self-respecting than renunciation of my ancestry; and then I shall say, as I say now to those who may doubt or hesitate: There is but one allegiance; this is our country; bitter duty well performed may prove to be the highest test of loyalty.

Nor did the fury decrease when, asked if he approved a plan to give citizens of German and Austrian origin the option not to serve in the American army, he replied that he did not.

> It is unthinkable [he declared] that after our country has decided to settle a foreign controversy by the test of the sword, any citizen should still be permitted to stand upon his individual opinion.

He exemplified this doctrine by accepting membership on important committees of the Chamber of Commerce which helped the Federal Government to organize American industry for the prosecution of the war.

Any interested reader can, by reading more of Mr. Nagel's speeches and writings, printed in a limited edition by 350 of his friends in 1931 through G. P. Putnam's Sons, follow him through the reign of propaganda and terror instituted by the Creel Press Bureau and the office of Attorney General Palmer during and after the War, through the discussion of the Treaty of Versailles, and the campaign to raise money to feed starving German children. As chairman of the Central Commission for this $3,000,000 campaign, he undertook not only to raise the money, but also to stamp out hatred and misunderstanding.

In 1923 Mr. Nagel could tell his relief committee in St. Louis, "We have a reunited people in our city such as, I must say, I had not dared to dream of at this time."

It was true. The cloud was rising. Within a year President