

James Campbell

## George Stuart Fullerton and *The Truth about the German Nation*

I would like to tell you a story about the American philosopher and psychologist, George Stuart Fullerton. The story begins, as good stories often do, with a suicide. The *New York Times* of 24 March 1925 contains an article entitled: "DR. G. S. FULLERTON COMMITS SUICIDE: Health Broken in German Prison Camp, He Hangs Himself in Poughkeepsie." The unsigned piece includes a good deal of information about this tragic event and its background. "A chronic and despairing sufferer from ill health, contracted through a long internment in German prison camps in the World War, Professor George Stuart Fullerton, former Professor of Philosophy at Columbia, 66 years old, committed suicide this morning [March 23] by hanging himself in a clothes closet of his home." After a brief description of the method that Fullerton had employed – involving some clothesline and a closet door hook – the account discusses his deteriorated mental condition. "Professor Fullerton's poor health caused him to express the desire to die and he had seldom been left alone." On this occasion, his wife had left the house only briefly to develop plans for "a trip South for the professor's health"; but, when she returned home, she found his body.

After praising Fullerton's philosophical writings – the *Times* called him "one of the most significant and important contributors of recent years" – the account points especially to the fact that "his works are charged with an eagerness and a desire to promote amity among the peoples of the earth." This trait, however, seems to have landed him in trouble with the German authorities, because "[s]hortly after the outbreak of the World War in Germany Professor Fullerton was among the first to point out the difference between that country and the militarism by which it was ruled. He held that the German people, as such, were a peaceful folk and victims of a system which they espoused against their inherent impulses." The *Times* notes that "[t]hese doctrines, especially dangerous at that time and place, caused his internment in a German prison camp where he suffered severe hardship and starvation for more than four years." After his release, the account continues, Fullerton returned to America "too ill to teach, except for short intervals," and eventually his depression resulted in his suicide.<sup>1</sup>

In a parallel account beginning on the front page of the *New York Herald Tribune* of the same date, we read that Fullerton "[d]espondent over chronic illness dating back to his confinement from 1917 to 1918 in a German internment camp . . . hanged himself this morning in the closet of his study in his home." In this account, the particulars of the sad event that transpired in Poughkeepsie are a bit different; but the underlying cause is roughly the same. The main difference is that Austria is now implicated as well. "When the United States declared war on Germany and Austria he was arrested and lodged in an Austrian internment camp, later being transferred to Germany." The *Herald Tribune* continues, "[t]he poor food, insanitary accommodations and confinement broke his

health and he was returned to this country an invalid when peace was signed.<sup>2</sup> These accounts, and others,<sup>3</sup> while unanimous about Fullerton's internment and abuse and their long-term negative consequences, offer us little indication of why Fullerton was in Germany at the outbreak of the War, or any further specifics about his presumed internment.

## II

Fullerton's story thus ends tragically. The facts of his early life, however, while unusual, offer no hint about what was later to occur. George Stuart Fullerton was born to Presbyterian missionary parents in Fatehgahr, India, on 18 August 1859. His father, Rev. Robert Stewart Fullerton died soon thereafter and his mother, Martha White Fullerton, returned with her six children to the United States in 1860. At the age of fifteen Fullerton contracted polio, and he walked with a severe limp for the rest of his life.

Fullerton received the A.B. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1879. After a brief period of study at the Princeton Theological Seminary (1879-80), he received the B.D. degree from the Yale Divinity School in 1883. He was ordained an Episcopal priest three years later. Fullerton began his academic career teaching philosophy and psychology at Pennsylvania in 1883, and was named four years later to be the first holder of the Adam Seybert Chair of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy, a position that he held from 1887 to 1903. During his years in this chair, in addition to his classroom work, he served in a number of administrator posts: Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy (1889-90), Dean of the College (1894-96), and Vice-Provost (1894-98). Fullerton was also a prolific writer during these years at Pennsylvania. His books include: *The Conception of the Infinite, and the Solution of the Mathematical Antinomies: A Study in Psychological Analysis* (1887); *A Plain Argument for God* (1890); *On Sameness and Identity: Being a Contribution to the Foundations of a Theory of Knowledge* (1891); *The Philosophy of Spinoza, as Contained in the First, Second, and Fifth Parts of the "Ethics"* (1894); and *On Spinozistic Immortality* (1899). Among the honors that Fullerton received during his time at Pennsylvania include being elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society in 1890, receiving two honorary doctorates from Muhlenberg College (Ph.D. in 1892, and LL.D. in 1900), and being elected the fifth president of the recently founded American Psychological Association in 1895.

Fullerton's relationship with Germany begins to develop only after the death of his first wife, Rebekah Daingerfield Smith, in 1892. Five years later, he married Julia Winslow Dickerson. The second Mrs. Fullerton seems to have had health problems and found living in Europe – especially in Germany – to be more to her liking. Beginning in 1897, the Fullertons resided whenever they could in the Munich area. During the years 1898-1900, they spent an extended period of eighteen months in Germany; and, to continue living there as much as possible, Fullerton resigned from the Seybert Chair at Pennsylvania in 1903 and took a position as "research professor" at Columbia University. The position required only a limited commitment of lecturing on Fullerton's part – by design only one semester every other academic year – although his semesters at Columbia may have only been Fall 1905/6, Spring 1909, and Spring 1912.<sup>4</sup>

While living primarily in Munich, Fullerton continued his research efforts, publishing: *A System of Metaphysics* (1904); *An Introduction to Philosophy* (1906); and

*The World We Live In: or, Philosophy and Life in the Light of Modern Thought* (1912). He also developed some connections with the University of Munich, the specifics of which will be discussed below. During the Winter Semester of October 1913 to February 1914, Fullerton served as Columbia's exchange professor to Austria. This position found him lecturing primarily at the University of Vienna, but also at the universities in Graz, Innsbruck, Krakow, and Lemberg (now: Lviv). One of these series of lectures was on higher education in America, later published as *Die amerikanischen Hochschulen*.<sup>5</sup> For his services to Austrian education, Fullerton was appointed "Honorarprofessor" at the University of Vienna by Kaiser Franz Josef in 1914. When the War began in August 1914, the Fullertons were again living in the Munich area.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps it will be useful here to summarize my story so far. Fullerton, a highly regarded university professor who had dedicated himself to working for international understanding, finds himself accidentally caught up in the First World War. These facts seem uncontested. At this point, with no further evidence until the suicide itself, the story continues in a more speculative mode. Fullerton, as an enemy alien, is cruelly thrown into prison where, because of barbaric treatment by the Central Powers, his health is destroyed. When the pieces of his life are assembled in this way, we get the story of a tragic figure who is unable to work and eventually kills himself. This story did not ring true to me, however, when I compared it with another piece of Fullerton's life that is not yet part of the story. This piece was his 1915 volume, *The Truth about the German Nation*, or to use its American title, *Germany of To-day*, that I had examined during the course of another project.<sup>7</sup>

### III

*Germany of To-day*, published in America in 1915, was dedicated "[t]o those who desire a mutual understanding among civilized nations and who work for the cause of international conciliation." In this volume, Fullerton offers "a collection of facts that may easily be verified by anyone who has access to a public library." His stance is as one whose family "has been American as long as there has been an American nation"; he intends this volume to overcome misconceptions "among my countrymen" by offering them "a just conception of the political and social constitution of the German nation and of the spirit with which it is penetrated." Fullerton's ultimate hope was to improve mutual understanding between the two countries, and to counteract the effects of British propaganda. As he continues: "United Germany is a young and vigorous nation. So is the United States of America. The better the two understand one another, the better for both."<sup>8</sup>

In *Germany of To-day*, the chapters discuss the general nature of the German empire—which Fullerton calls "The United States of Germany"—the political situation of German citizens, the German education system, militarism and imperialism, and future possibilities. We can consider these themes in order. Politically, he writes, Germany was combination of "twenty-two states, three free towns [Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck], and the imperial territory of Alsace-Lorraine [Elsaß-Lothringen]. There are four kingdoms, six grand duchies, five duchies, and seven principalities." In spite of Germany's monarchical and hereditary government, Fullerton tries hard to suggest some similarities between Germany and the United States. Discounting "the fact that the chief executive of the German nation is an emperor, inheriting his title, and the fact that the

same individual is king of Prussia," Fullerton suggests that an unthinking interpretation of these facts has "caused in the United States a wide-spread misconception, even among well-informed people, as to the imperial office." He maintains, however, that the correct understanding of the situation is the more modest one that "the German Emperor is virtually the president of the confederation of the German States."<sup>9</sup>

With regard to the German citizens, Fullerton continues that they were not being crushed under some presumably oppressive 'Prussian' system, but were in fact living lives that were quite similar to those of Americans. As he writes, "the average German does not appear to be more restlessly discontented than the average American, who is usually agitating for reforms of some sort . . ." While he points to some obvious dissimilarities between the situations in Germany and America – for example, "the political rights of the Germans are not identical with ours" – Fullerton also suggests that the Germans were certainly no worse off than were the Americans. Modifying somewhat Lincoln's formulation, he writes of Germany that "a government, which the average American would not be inclined to describe as *of* the people and *by* the people, may, nevertheless, be most emphatically a government *for* the people . . ." Especially with regard to social legislation, Fullerton writes that he finds the German system to be preferable; while the involvement of the government in citizens' lives was greater in Germany, this was not necessarily an evil. As he writes, "although the German is very thoroughly governed, he is governed in his own interests."<sup>10</sup>

Turning to education, Fullerton writes that "[i]t is education that has made Germany what it is, and Germany knows it." Part of his interest in education is content-oriented, discussing the mastery of the data that science was yielding about the nature of the world, and part of it is in what is more properly understood as socialization. "The German is trained to discipline from his earliest years," Fullerton writes. "He learns when young to obey, and this discipline is capped later by his [two] years of military service." The German is taught that he has a place, that he is a part of something larger than himself. "All are taught to obey; all have their burdens to bear. The German belongs to the state and he is educated to believe that he owes something to the state and that the state owes him a good deal." Fullerton recognizes that all of this consideration of the centrality of the national state might raise for some Americans the issue of militarism; but, for him, "the standing army of Germany is no more and no less than a school. The officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, correspond to the teachers." Fullerton emphasized that what is gained in military service is not the technical skills of soldiering so much as the general social benefits of "discipline, orderly habits, cleanliness and prompt obedience . . ." Moreover, he maintains that if America faced the geopolitical realities that Germany faced, Americans would quickly come to appreciate the value of having a standing army themselves.<sup>11</sup>

Fullerton's final two themes are imperialism and post-War reconstruction. He admits that the term 'empire' has a negative sound in American ears, especially when it means "the control exercised by a nation over peoples which cannot properly be regarded as belonging to it and truly sharing in its national life." Using this definition he maintains, however, that the great imperialist country was not Germany but Great Britain, followed closely by France and Russia. The German empire was a different sort of empire, not like that of the British. Germany consisted of "a homogeneous people, having the same blood, the same speech and much the same traditions." In this, Germany was like the United States: "both nations represent confederations of

civilized states which naturally belong together; and . . . certain dependencies remote from [their] own shores," and neither has been "compelled to seize the lands of foreign peoples." Another similarity between the United States and Germany was that neither accepted the map as configured prior to its birth. "Did we accept the *status quo* when we dispossessed the Indians?" he asks. "Did we bow down before the principle when we published our Declaration of Independence in 1776?" The Americans had expanded to fill the continent and, more recently, to move overseas; the Germans were simply doing what the Americans had already done.<sup>12</sup>

In both cases the *status quo* was upset; but, in itself, this is not wrong. "The *status quo* makes for peace," Fullerton grants under normal circumstances; "but, if conditions change beyond a certain point, the peace may reveal itself as a frozen immobility which nations with life in them will reject as intolerable." Such nations, which he further describes as "developing nations, civilized nations whose growth in wealth and power signifies a contribution to the total wealth of the world and to the richness of its civilization," must be allowed to expand even if their expansion destabilizes the current situation. As he puts it, "such nations should have a place made for them . . ." Germany's possible expansion had been prevented, however, because Great Britain had the most to lose in any such change and because its naval power controlled the oceans. Fullerton maintains that this clash between Germany's legitimate rights of expansion and Britain's selfish policies had led to the War; and, when it ends, some "flexible system of international organization that growth may take place unaccompanied by convulsions and the rupture of the system" will have to be instituted. Fullerton believed that Americans and Germans, if they "work together in harmony for the welfare of the whole family of nations" and do "not fall, through blindness, into useless and harmful conflict," could make this new international system easier to attain. His message to his fellow Americans in 1915, therefore, was that they should resist the pressures of British propaganda and stay out of the War.<sup>13</sup>

#### IV

We can now return to the story of Fullerton's suicide. It might be better to say that two very different stories have emerged. In the first, Fullerton was the victim of cruel Germany; in the second, he was the defender of heroic, or at least misunderstood, Germany. In the first, he winds up suffering for years in an internment camp; in the second, he writes a volume that presents a very flattering version of the background to the War entitled: *The Truth about the German Nation*. Clearly, these two stories do not mesh at all; but what could be done to integrate them? The first story involves a great deal of speculation about what happened to Fullerton after the War broke out, and especially after the Americans entered the War in April, 1917. Was there some way to move beyond this speculation? Were there any records that detailed Fullerton's wartime years in Germany. Fortunately, I was recently able to spend a year teaching in Munich where, working in various archives,<sup>14</sup> I uncovered a number of materials that helped me integrate these two stories.

We can begin with a consideration of the place that Fullerton held in the intellectual community in Munich before the War. Working with papers in the archives of the University of Munich, I was able to recover what might be called 'the honorary professor episode' of December 1908 to July 1909. In late 1908, Fullerton was put forward as a

candidate for an honorary professorship by the Munich Philosophy Department. In a pair of letters to the Philosophical Faculty, the chair of philosophy, Theodor Lipps, praised Fullerton for his "solid character, and at the same time extraordinary kindness." With regard to his scientific qualifications, Lipps notes that "although he is certainly not the best known of American philosophers abroad, he is perhaps the greatest mind among them." Lipps writes that "Professor Fullerton is without question one of the premier American philosophers of the present day. Even here in Germany there is no philosopher or historian of philosophy who has not profited from the numerous works that Fullerton has published . . . Fullerton is a first-class figure and we should consider ourselves lucky to get him." In his *Introduction to Philosophy and Metaphysics* – volumes that Fullerton had completed during his years in Munich – Fullerton "shows his astoundingly rich and comprehensive education, his intellectual creativity, the composure and prudence of his judgments, as well as the proper charm and fine humor of his writing style." Lipps continues that Fullerton would bring these deep philosophical gifts and his wide life-experience to benefit the academic situation at the University of Munich. He points especially to the advantage of having instruction offered by a senior scholar like Fullerton, rather than by private docents, when dealing with questions of "the philosophy of religion, conceptions of life and the world, and the large cultural and epistemological questions."

In these letters, Lipps also discusses Fullerton's unusual relationship with Columbia University. Fullerton, he writes, "was only required to be in residence at Columbia for a few months every other year to offer a course of lectures. Otherwise, he was to be permitted to reside wherever he wanted, for example, here in Munich." Lipps continues that the primary reason why Fullerton, "in spite of his extraordinary position at Columbia," was willing to be nominated for an honorary professorship in Munich was that "his wife is ill; and, for reasons that I do not understand, she cannot endure the climate in New York. The climate here in Munich, however, suits her better." Thus, Fullerton had arranged the last few years to maximize their time in Munich, "and now he would like to sever his connections with Columbia because of his wife's condition and reside here permanently." Lipps continues that Fullerton was understandably reluctant to break all ties with the academic life and, at Lipps' own suggestion, agreed to be considered for an honorary professorship.<sup>15</sup>

Lipps' petition was acted upon favorably by the Philosophical Faculty in early 1909; but, when the petition reached the Academic Senate, strong resistance developed. Part of this resistance seems to have resulted from a lack of familiarity with Fullerton's philosophical writings; part, from some doubts about his German-language skills. The bulk of the resistance, however, seems to have resulted from a reluctance on the part of the Faculty Senate – apparently fed by some earlier honorary professorship cases that had turned out badly – to welcome as a professor an individual who did not have a long relationship with the University.<sup>16</sup> In the face of this resistance, Fullerton eventually withdrew his candidacy in a gracious hand-written letter to the Royal Bavarian Internal State Ministry for Church and Social Affairs. After indicating his sense of the honor of the nomination and his gratitude to the members of the Philosophical Faculty for recommending him, Fullerton, writing in English, emphasizes that "I should be very unwilling to accept the honor of the appointment if I believed that it could cause the slightest embarrassment to the Senate or to the Faculty, or if it could give the least annoyance to any of my colleagues." He notes that his administrative experience in

America had taught him the importance of collegiality in academic life. "I have met with so much kindness and courtesy from German scholars, both in Munich and elsewhere, that I prize their good-feeling more highly than any appointment," he continues, "I beg, therefore, that they may understand that I have no wish to put myself forward, and would much rather quietly withdraw than cause them any perplexity, or add any complication to their already difficult task of ruling a great University."<sup>17</sup> This episode offers a clear indication of Fullerton's respect for things German and of some level of respect for Fullerton on the part of German academics at the midpoint of his approximately two decades in Germany.

## V

The next important theme is the background to the publication of the volume, *The Truth about the German Nation*, and the American version, *Germany of To-day*. Fullerton wrote the book while living in the Munich area during the early stages of the War; and, contrary to the suggestions of the *Times* obituary, this book did not outrage the German authorities. In fact, they were behind its publication.

To begin to get a better sense of this background, we can consider the letter of Counsel General Thiel of the Central Office for Foreign Service in Berlin to Professor Ernst Sieper, another of Fullerton's friends and a professor of *Anglistik* at the University of Munich of 18 May 1915.<sup>18</sup> In this letter, Thiel writes of Fullerton that "through his formulation of matters German, the author has performed an extraordinarily valuable service. The Central Office is most interested in bringing about the dissemination of this book." Thiel indicates that the Central Office would bear the costs for printing the volume in Germany and then divide any potential receipts with the publisher. His intention at this point was to distribute a large number – perhaps five hundred – copies of the book gratis, with the Imperial Treasury also paying the costs of distributing the volumes. He writes that the exact number of copies "will depend upon the special possibilities for using the work for particular propaganda purposes." One target that he foresaw for these free books was to be the "leading members of Congress and other educated persons in the United States." Thiel also expressed his concern that Fullerton's book find a publisher in the United States.<sup>19</sup>

The American edition of Fullerton's book, entitled *Germany of To-day*, was published with the assistance of a Mr. Pagenstecher, a friend of Fullerton's German publisher, Paul Oldenbourg, and William R. Shepherd of Columbia University. Oldenbourg – an uncle of Sieper – introduces the pre-publication copy of *The Truth about the German Nation* that he had sent to Pagenstecher on 7 June 1915 by indicating that Fullerton's work "without a doubt is completely suitable for eliminating the false impression about us Germans, and especially about our so-called 'militarism,' that exists in the United States." Moreover, it was written by an American: "this book is not simply sent into the world from the lectern of a self-important German professor, like so many clumsy books that have no recognition of, or feel for, American ways of thinking . . . Professor Fullerton's book has set just the right tone." Oldenbourg requests Pagenstecher to find a publisher – preferably "a completely American, rather than a German-American, publisher" – "whose independent voice has not yet been drowned in the sea of lies that has flooded American from the naval-power England." Oldenbourg notes that Fullerton had declined any royalties on the volume, and indicates that his

publishing house is "prepared if necessary to pay the printing costs." These costs were to be reimbursed, presumably, by the Central Office for Foreign Service. Given these favorable circumstances, Oldenbourg does not feel it out of place to impose the following provision: "The only condition that I must put on the publishing house would be that it send a free copy to all members of Congress and Senators, and be ready to send a few additional free copies to some specific addresses later." Oldenbourg indicates that there is some urgency to Pagenstecher's task. He notes that, lest the book be seen as a German export, "Professor Fullerton's book is yet to be announced here in Germany, and it will not be announced until it is released in America." The copy that Oldenbourg had sent Pagenstecher was thus one of the very few that would leave his publishing firm "until I have received notice from you that the book has appeared in the United States." At that point, Oldenbourg indicates, "I will welcome the news and release the book here in Germany approximately one week later."<sup>20</sup>

On 4 October 1915, Shepherd writes to Pagenstecher in English that he had just signed a contract with Bobbs Merrill for the publication of Fullerton's book. The contract required an up-front payment of \$1,000 to Bobbs Merrill for preparing five thousand copies of the book. The publisher was to release the book within two months and advertise and sell it in an ordinary fashion so that it would be successful. If the trade edition sold well at \$1 a copy, a popular edition would follow at 50¢ a copy. The publisher would pay Fullerton a 12½% royalty on the first two thousand copies and 25% after that, with the usual exclusion for author and complimentary copies, and discount sales. Although there is no record to be found of this payment, or of the ultimate source of the funds, the volume appeared from Bobbs Merrill late the next month.<sup>21</sup>

On 7 December 1915, Oldenbourg writes to Fullerton in Munich announcing that, following the November publication of *Germany of To-day* in America, *The Truth about the German Nation* had been released in Germany.<sup>22</sup> Oldenbourg perhaps included a copy of the advertisement that he had placed in the *Business News of the German Book Trade* the day before. This advertisement points out that Fullerton's volume "offers Americans in a popular presentation a clear picture of our constitution, our social legislation, and most of all the military organization of our Fatherland." About Fullerton's qualifications, Oldenbourg had written: "The author, who stems from one of the oldest American families and who is active as a professor of philosophy at Columbia University in New York City . . . knows Germany, where he has also been an exchange professor, from his personal experience and from decades of affectionate study." Oldenbourg notes in particular that this American professor is "full of deep appreciation for the strength of Germany that flows from inner sources, for the organization of our government that confirms itself as a government for the people in far higher levels than in the democratic Anglo-Saxon countries, and for the unsurpassed status of the German army."<sup>23</sup>

Oldenbourg's letter continues with a promise to Fullerton that, despite the appearance of *The Truth about the German Nation* during the Christmas season, he would do all that he could "to turn the attention of the public to your splendid book." After advising Fullerton about the procedures for handling the copies intended for free distribution, Oldenbourg closes with a statement of his own deep appreciation. "I cannot allow the announcement of the appearance of your book pass, my dear Professor, without expressing – not as your publisher but rather as a German citizen – how uncommonly highly I treasure your volume from a patriotic standpoint." Oldenbourg's appreciation continues: "If, as I hope and believe, your book opens the eyes of many in



your country about our much slandered Fatherland, you will thereby have performed an eternal service."<sup>24</sup>

While Oldenbourg's formulation may be over-the-top, the sentiment that he expresses in this letter would seem to reflect the appropriate German reading of *The Truth About the German Nation*. Is it possible that anyone in the German government, even under the pressures of wartime, could have interpreted Fullerton's writings as dangerous to the German war-effort and consequently ordered his internment?

## VI

Another possible source of information is Fullerton's correspondence during the War. Prior to my year in Munich, I had consulted the collection of wartime letters between Fullerton and Nicholas Murray Butler, the president of Columbia University, that were written between 26 August 1914 and 22 December 1916. In a letter of 23 June 1915, Fullerton promises to forward a copy of his forthcoming volume, *The Truth about the German Nation*, which was intended, he writes, to strengthen international understanding and foster conciliation. On 2 March 1916, Fullerton writes to Butler that, after approximately eighteen months of war, things were going about as well as could be expected in Germany, that Americans are well treated, and that his only real inconvenience had come from the British interference with the mail traveling on neutral ships. Fullerton's later letters to Butler discuss his efforts on behalf of the Red Cross, the general suffering of the German people, his wife's medical problems and his consequent inability to return to New York City, his willingness to resign from Columbia,<sup>25</sup> and, repeatedly, how well he and the other Americans were being treated in Munich.<sup>26</sup> It is possible to maintain, of course, that these letters from Fullerton in wartime Germany are themselves part of an elaborate charade, and that the interned philosopher was writing these upbeat letters under duress; but there is no corroborating evidence for this interpretation.

There is, instead, a considerable amount of evidence that indicates that Fullerton was not interned. We can consider, for example, a trio of letters that Fullerton wrote to the German authorities that indicate that, while he was living under some restrictions, he was traveling in the Munich area until at least early 1918 – and probably until the very end of the War. Fullerton writes to the Immigration Office at Royal Police Headquarters on 18 October 1916, for example, requesting "an exemption from the requirement to register when traveling or making short trips within the district of the Royal Bavarian First Army Corps for myself and for my wife, Julia W. Fullerton." This permission was granted. On 29 August 1917, Fullerton writes directly to a Captain Roth of the Central Command in Munich, indicating that they are about to return to Munich from their summer residence in Oberammergau and requesting that he and his wife "be freed from the standard duty to register in Munich" because of their ongoing medical problems. This request was also granted. On 28 March 1918, Fullerton again writes directly to Captain Roth, requesting "that my wife and I be permitted to spend eight days in May in Kempten, and fourteen days in July on Lake Tegern, for the purpose of a medical recovery." In this letter, Fullerton continues that, "with the kind permission of the General Command of the First Bavarian Army Corps," they had been allowed (as we have just seen) to spend the summer of 1917 in his villa in nearby Oberammergau. His wife's medical condition – she had had an appendicitis operation and other difficulties

– and the lack of proper care facilities in Oberammergau would make a similar trip there unadvisable this summer. For this reason, Fullerton was requesting to be allowed to travel to more favorable locales. This request seems to have been granted as well. In support of his latter two letters, Fullerton provides a long list of individuals in the Bavarian Army and Government, the Munich Government, the University of Munich and the local business world as character witnesses.<sup>27</sup>

These documents could all be fabrications as well, although it is inconceivable to me that Fullerton would merit such an elaborate charade. As far as I can tell, Fullerton and his wife lived through the war years in the Munich area under the prevailing difficult conditions; but there was no internment or mistreatment. Fullerton's high regard for Germany and its people continued after the War when, as the registration documents indicate, he and his wife returned to the Munich area for an extended stay in 1921.<sup>28</sup>

## VII

The final piece of evidence that I can offer to counter the claim that Fullerton was interned and abused in Austria and Germany during the War is the death notice that was published in Munich's *Neueste Nachrichten* on 31 March 1925. The main theme of this notice is lament over the recent suicide of a great friend of Germany. It details Fullerton's tireless efforts during the early stages of the War; and, while it itself contains numerous claims that must be seen as inaccurate in the light of the other evidence that I have gathered – for example, that Fullerton was expelled from Munich after the Americans entered the War in 1917 – it contradicts the claim of internment. I reprint this death notice in full.

### Prof. George Fullerton †

Professor George Stuart Fullerton of Columbia University in New York City, a well-known and highly valued personality in Munich, departed this life by his own hand on March 23rd. Fullerton, 66 years of age, committed suicide in his home in Poughkeepsie. He had suffered for a number of years from a nervous disorder; and, under the influence of his insanity, he hanged himself while his wife was out of the room.

This tragic end of an esteemed teacher has produced heartfelt sympathy in Munich because Professor Fullerton was an ardent friend of the German people. He came in the summer of 1914 as exchange professor from Vienna to Munich. The outbreak of the War prevented him from taking up his teaching duties. Nevertheless, he remained quite active. In association with the former American Consul General Gaffney, Professor and Mrs. Franz Jung, and other Americans who were living in Munich, he founded the American Hospital in Prinz-Ludwigstraße. This hospital afforded numerous wounded men admission and care. He also distributed large amounts of bandages and hospital linen that were received from the American Red Cross. In a private magazine called *American Notes*, Professor Fullerton also published a series of articles in which he opposed the actions of his country in delivering war materiel and assorted food supplies to the enemies of Germany, actions that

contradicted all neutrality. Further, a stirring protest signed by the numerous Americans living here was sent to Washington.

Among the articles that Fullerton published, the following are prominent: "The Meaning of German Militarism," "Why the German Nation Has Gone to War," and an additional article opposing the transgressions of the neutrality that America had assured. Thousands of copies of these articles were sent to his friends and acquaintances in America to offer some truth to counter the dishonest reports of the enemy. Professor Fullerton and his wife spent the summers in Oberammergau, with which so many Americans had fallen in love, and where he was a well-known and esteemed guest.

When America officially declared war on Germany in February 1917, Professor Fullerton had to leave Munich. He was one of the few who had remained in Germany up to the last minute. Before his departure, he delivered a letter from the departing Americans to Munich's Lord Mayor Dr. v. Borscht and to the commanding officer of the city. In this letter, they expressed their deepest sympathy for Germany and their sincere admiration for the courage and the self-control of the German people. They also gave recognition to the hospitality that the citizens of Munich had showed so many Americans in difficult times. In this letter, special emphasis was placed upon the fact that during this horrible crisis the Americans had felt just as safe in Munich as in their own country. Professor Fullerton departed Munich with the most friendly impression, and numerous friends and acquaintances escorted him to his train.

We have emphasized these facts, which can be confirmed by numerous witnesses including Lord Mayor Dr. v. Borscht, because the Paris edition of the *New York Herald* of March 24th has connected Professor Fullerton's mental illness, and further his death, to his supposed internment in a prison camp in Munich. He was, according to this report, so badly treated here that he returned to America in broken health. These assertions completely contradict the truth and constitute a slander against the German people. The truth is that Professor Fullerton was not interned in Munich or anywhere else in Germany during the War, and that he left Munich in the best of condition. He admitted himself that his stay in Munich, and especially in Oberammergau, had done wonders for his health. It is very deplorable that the American newspapers continue to feed anti-German sentiments with such false reports.<sup>29</sup>

## VIII

These assorted, and themselves unrelated, pieces of evidence from numerous archival sources in Munich lead me to believe that Fullerton – as I had suspected – was not interned or mistreated in Germany during the War. He suffered, of course, as did many others who were caught up in the War. Restrictions on travel, limitations on communication, rationing of foodstuffs, and difficulties accessing money from abroad were aspects of their everyday life. For those with medical problems, including Fullerton

and especially his wife, life was harder still. Yet Fullerton, while an enemy alien, was respected and continued to be treated as a true friend of the German people.

There is still much to be resolved. For example, while it is surely safe to say that the internment and abuse story is false, we can still wonder about its origin and when it began to be circulated. Was it perhaps developed by Fullerton, or his American supporters, in an attempt to explain away his time in Germany when he returned at the end of the War? Or was it perhaps extrapolated by deadline-pressed reporters from the fragmentary comments of well-meaning neighbors after his suicide? Or was the internment and abuse story perhaps part of the mentally failing Fullerton's unconscious compensation for his feelings of guilt over having misunderstood the War. Or was it perhaps simply fabricated at his death by the American newspapers as part of an ongoing anti-German campaign?<sup>30</sup> It seems likely at this point that no clarification of the internment and abuse story will ever emerge.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "DR. G. S. FULLERTON COMMITS SUICIDE," *New York Times*, 24 March 1925.

<sup>2</sup> "PROF. FULLERTON, PHILOSOPHER, VASSAR SUICIDE," *New York Herald Tribune*, 24 March 1925.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, and *Washington Post*, all of 24 March 1925.

<sup>4</sup> Fullerton File, Columbia University Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Fullerton, *Die amerikanischen Hochschulen* (Wien: K. Tempsky & Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1914). See also: Fullerton, "Impressions of Austrian University Life," *Columbia University Quarterly*, 17 (December 1914): 27-39.

<sup>6</sup> Fullerton File, Columbia University Archives.

<sup>7</sup> An earlier version of the next section appears in my volume, *A Thoughtful Profession: The Early Years of the American Philosophical Association* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 2006), 214-17.

<sup>8</sup> *Germany of To-day* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1915), iii-vi.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 8, 14-15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 33, 35-36, 55.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 60, 81, 55-56, 86-87.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 135, 1, 150-51, 158.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 161-62, 173, 181.

<sup>14</sup> I am very grateful for the assistance that I received at the following archives in Munich: Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv; Bayerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv; Kriegsarchiv München; and Universitätsarchiv, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität. Except where noted, all of the materials are originally in German. The translations are my own.

<sup>15</sup> Lipps to the Philosophische Facultät (31 December 1908, 11 March 1909), Universitätsarchiv, E-VII-10.

<sup>16</sup> Dekan H. Granert to Akademischer Senat (14 February 1909); Rektor von Bollinger to Philosophische Facultät (25 February 1909); Granert to Senat (13 March 1909); von Bollinger to K. Staatsministerium des Innern für Kirchen- und Schulanangelegenheiten (10 May 1909), Universitätsarchiv, E-VII-10; Staatsministerium to Senat (20 May 1909), Universitätsarchiv, O-N-14 (Fullerton); von Bollinger to Staatsministerium (15 June 1909), Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, MK-11344; and Staatsministerium to Senat (7 July 1909), Universitätsarchiv, E-VII-10.

<sup>17</sup> Fullerton to Kultusministerium (22 June 1909), Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, MK-11344.

<sup>18</sup> In a letter of 25 November 1915 to LTC. von Sonnenburg of the Ministry of War, Sieper claims that Fullerton had prepared *The Truth about the German Nation* "according to an outline that I had devised." He also reports that he had prepared a German translation to appear under the title, *Die Wahrheit über Deutschland* (Sieper to Oberstleutnant v. Sonnenburg [25 November 1915], Kriegsarchiv München, Mkr 13871). Sieper later claimed to have written *The Truth about the German Nation* himself ("Memorandum by Dr. Kanner of a Conversation with Professor Sieper, July 13, 1915," *Fall of the German Empire, 1914-1918*, ed. Ralph Haswell Lutz, [Stanford: Stanford UP, 1932], two volumes, 1:78-79). While the former claim may have some validity, the latter has none.

<sup>19</sup> Generalkonsul Thiel, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, to Ernst Sieper (18 May 1915), Bayerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, F5 / 20.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Oldenbourg to Pagenstecher (7 June 1915), Bayerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, F5 / 20.

<sup>21</sup> William R. Shepherd to Pagenstecher (4 October 1915), Bayerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, F5 / 20.

<sup>22</sup> Fullerton, *The Truth about the German Nation* (Munich & Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1915). This book was also translated into German and French: *Die Wahrheit über Deutschland*, tr. Ernst Sieper, (Munich & Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1916); *La Vérité sur la nation allemande* (Brussels: A. Norz, 1916).

<sup>23</sup> *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel*, 6 December 1915, Bayerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, F5 / 20.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Oldenbourg to Fullerton (7 December 1915), Bayerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, F5 / 20.

<sup>25</sup> Columbia University records list his resignation date as 30 June 1917.

<sup>26</sup> Fullerton File, Columbia University Archives.

<sup>27</sup> Fullerton File, Kriegsarchiv München, 1. Armeekorps 2025.

<sup>28</sup> Summary of Fullerton's Fremdenkartothekkarte, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, MK-11344.

<sup>29</sup> *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, Number 89 (31 March 1925), Universitätsarchiv, O-N-14 (Fullerton).

<sup>30</sup> For aspects of this campaign, and its aftermath, readers may want to consult: Kuno Francke, *A German-American's Confession of Faith* (NY: Huebsch, 1915); William Roscoe Thayer, ed., *Out of Their Own Mouths* (NY: Appleton, 1917); Hermann Hagedorn, *Where Do You Stand? An Appeal to Americans of German Origin* (NY: Macmillan, 1918); *The University of Chicago War Papers*, I-VIII (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918); Clifton James Child, *The German-Americans in Politics, 1914-1917* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939); and Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974).

