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## *Franklin Delano Roosevelt as Lord of the Admiralty 1913–1920*

JOSEPH C. SWEENEY\*

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) was a lawyer but not an Admiralty lawyer; nevertheless, his position as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for seven years and five months (during the First World War) made him “Lord of the Admiralty” and director of government policy affecting ocean transport and even military actions. FDR’s service modernized the Navy and provided the experiences and confidence he continued to exude after he was crippled by Polio in 1921.

Our only four-term president guided the nation through its most serious financial collapse (1933–39) and the mightiest of world wars (1941–45). Standard biographies of FDR<sup>1</sup> agree on the

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<sup>1</sup>H.W. Brand, *TRAITOR TO HIS CLASS: THE PRIVILEGED LIFE AND RADICAL PRESIDENCY OF FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT*, 72–150 (2008); J.M. Burns, *ROOSEVELT: THE LION & THE FOX*, 49–71 (1956). K.S. Davis, *FDR: THE RECKONING OF DESTINY*, 1882–1928, 270–646 (1972); F. Freidel, *FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT: THE APPRENTICESHIP*, 134–372 (1952); N. Miller, *FDR: AN INTIMATE HISTORY*, 102–172 (1983); T. Morgan, *FDR: A BIOGRAPHY*, 146–240 (1985) A. M. Schlesinger, Jr., *THE CRISIS OF THE OLD ORDER*, 1919–1933, 342–62 (1957); J.E. Smith, *FDR*, 95–186 (2007); R. Tugwell, *THE DEMOCRATIC ROOSEVELT*, 94–129 (1957); G.C. Ward, *A FIRST CLASS*

importance of his Navy years in the development of his administrative and executive skills but none of them provide a close examination of the content and consequences of his maritime decisions. All consistently describe his supreme self-confidence and mistrust of experts as clues to his career in government.

Assistant Secretary of the Navy was an office FDR sought for many reasons. His devotion to the Navy was life-long but more important was the fact that his distant relation, Theodore Roosevelt (TR), had held it on his way to the White House. While FDR and his wife called him Uncle Ted, he was truly Eleanor's uncle but only a fifth cousin, once removed to FDR. Nevertheless, despite their different political parties FDR always admired "Uncle Ted" even though he could not publicly endorse his aggressive foreign policies while part of the Wilson administration, and TR always encouraged FDR's career.

Theodore Roosevelt came from a New York City branch of the family. TR was an enthusiastic supporter of the Navy and author of *The Naval War of 1812*, which was published in 1882 shortly after his graduation from Harvard College. TR lectured at the Naval War College while in the Navy Department. As president, TR proudly expanded the Navy and sent the "Great White Fleet" around the world from July 7, 1908 to February 22, 1909 to advertise the United States as a maritime power. Theodore Roosevelt had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy for eleven months at age 40, resigning to become a "Rough Rider" in the 1898 Spanish War.<sup>2</sup>

FDR was only 32 when he sought the job, having served one term as a New York state Democratic Senator, but earning a

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TEMPERAMENT: THE EMERGENCE OF FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT, 210-512 (1989); See also R.G. Albion, MAKERS OF NAVAL POLICY, 31-39, 66-67, 110-111, 220-227, 338-344, 358-385 (1988).

<sup>2</sup>E. Morris, THE RISE OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 560-616 (1979). Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) A.B. Harvard 1880 (magna cum laude); NY State Assembly 1882-84; U.S. Civil Service commission 1889-95 under Harrison and Cleveland; NY City Police Commissioner 1895-97; Asst. Sec. Nav. April 6, 1897 - May 11, 1898; Governor of N.Y. 1900-01; President 1901-09; Nobel Peace Award 1906.

reputation as an enemy of Tammany Hall's New York City bosses, thus congenial to Wilson, an enemy of New Jersey bosses. He had been reelected in 1912 before he sought the Navy appointment; his reelection bid was managed by Louis Howe<sup>3</sup> who would be his assistant in the Navy Department, his subsequent business affairs, the New York governorship and the Presidency.

Both TR and FDR were adherents of the "Big Navy" thinking of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, as espoused at the Naval War College, Newport, RI.<sup>4</sup> Mahan's demands for a one-ocean Navy of overwhelming power, naval bases abroad, larger battleships, and a vigorous merchant marine would greatly influence the "Imperialists" of the Spanish American War in 1898 who added the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico and Hawaii to America's empire. FDR had a brief correspondence with Mahan and was anticipating discussions with him, but Mahan's sudden death in 1914 eliminated that possibility.

While Admiral Mahan's theories were viewed with suspicion and hostility by Pacifists and even American senior officers, they were enthusiastically adopted in London, Berlin and Tokyo and pushed to extremes in the construction of giant warships like *HMS Dreadnought*, which was launched by Great Britain in 1906 with

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<sup>3</sup>Louis McHenry Howe (1871–1936) born in Indianapolis, began a career in journalism in a Saratoga NY family owned newspaper. Howe was the Albany Reporter of the NEW YORK HERALD since 1906. Howe became an expert on the U.S. Congress and the Navy bureaucracy. See A.B. Rollins, ROOSEVELT AND HOWE (1962).

<sup>4</sup>The Naval War College was established on October 6, 1884 under Commodore Stephen B. Luce USN (1827–1917) to improve the professional qualifications of naval officers. Alfred T. Mahan (1840–1914), son of Dennis H. Mahan, Dean of Faculty at West Point (1838–1871). Alfred graduated from U.S. Naval Academy 1859, continuing on active duty until 1896. He lectured on tactics and naval history at the Naval War College, of which he was President 1886–89 and 1892–93. His major works were: THE INFLUENCE OF SEA POWER UPON HISTORY 1660–1783 (1890); THE INFLUENCE OF SEA POWER UPON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION 1793–1812 (1892); NAVAL STRATEGY (1911) and MAJOR OPERATIONS OF THE NAVY IN THE WAR OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE (1913). See R. Seager II, ALFRED THAYER MAHAN: THE MAN AND HIS LETTERS (1977); and R. Spector, PROFESSORS OF WAR: THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE AND THE MODERN AMERICAN NAVY (1977).

ten monster 12 inch guns and capable of 21 knots. The result was an arms race to build the most expensive and dangerous ships afloat. Those concerned with naval policy were distracted by the arms race even as the nature of naval warfare changed completely with the introduction of the submarine. The First World War would be a war of submarines and their enemies, the destroyers. The day of the Dreadnought ended in 1916 at Jutland. (infra).

An Irish-American inventor, John Phillip Holland,<sup>5</sup> produced the first effective underwater vehicle with two power sources: a battery for submerged operation and a gasoline engine for surface movement. Holland launched his prototype in May 1897, and it was purchased by the U.S. Navy in April 1900 after Holland and his financial backers founded the Electric Boat Co. to design and manufacture submarines for the United States, Great Britain and Japan.

There are several slightly conflicting stories about the influences on Woodrow Wilson in favor of FDR as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, but the end result was confirmation by the Senate on March 17, 1913 and his assumption of the office in the State War and Navy Building (now the Executive Office Building) on the same day.

## I

### FDR AND THE SEA

FDR's middle name, Delano, tied him to a nautical legacy. His mother, Sara Delano (1854–1941), came from a family of New Bedford merchants and ship owners in the China trade to and from Hong Kong that had been a Massachusetts specialty since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Sara's father, Warren, had recouped family fortunes in the opium trade during our Civil

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<sup>5</sup>John Phillip Holland, 1840–1914 born in County Clare, Ireland immigrated to the United States in 1873, became a school teacher in Paterson, NJ but was always fascinated by the challenges of steel armored vessels like the *Monitor* and *Merrimac* battle in the American Civil War. See R.K. Morris, JOHN P. HOLLAND 1841–1914, INVENTOR OF THE MODERN SUBMARINE (1966).

War, then retired from business. He bought Algonac, an estate in New York's Hudson River Valley where Sara grew up except for two years in Hong Kong (1862–64). At Algonac, she met James Roosevelt, a wealthy widower known to her father from business and social clubs. Despite the difference in their ages (Sara was 26, James was 51) Sara was determined to marry James Roosevelt, ignoring her father's concerns about the age difference.

FDR's father, James Roosevelt<sup>6</sup> came from a family of Dutch planters (Patroons), the fifth generation descendent of Nicholas Roosevelt (1658–1742) whose father, Claes, came from Holland to America in 1644. James was born on a Hudson River estate, Mount Hope. He was sent to Union College in Schenectady, NY and received his A.B. in 1847. James attended Harvard Law School and received the LL.B. in 1851, then spent two years in a New York City law office before turning to a business career. James was an investor with his father, Isaac (1790–1863) in transport and coal mines (Consolidation Coal Co.), served as Vice President of a canal company (Delaware and Hudson) and President of the Southern Railroad Security Company (a railroad holding company). He acquired the 500 acres of "Springwood" at Hyde Park in 1865. James married a distant cousin, Rebecca Howland, in 1853; she died in 1876. James met and married Sara Delano in 1880. (Sara was the same age as James' son, also James (1854–1927), but known as Rosy). James was devoted to his new family—their only child, Franklin was born January 31, 1882. James did not pursue active business after his new marriage and remained with Sara and FDR in Hyde Park or their annual trips to Europe and Campobell. However, by FDR's teen age years, James had become an invalid due to heart disease.

FDR's seamanship began at home on the Hudson River, and continued more seriously at the family summer home at

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<sup>6</sup>James Roosevelt (1828–1900). He lived as an English country gentleman and refused to accept appointments to Embassies or public office despite substantial political contributions. James was a strong supporter of Grover Cleveland. See G.C. Ward, *BEFORE THE TRUMPET: YOUNG FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT 1882–1905*, 4–27, 86–93 (1985). James' first son, Rosy, did accept diplomatic assignments in Vienna and London but preferred his father's lifestyle.

Campobello, New Brunswick (just over the U.S.-Canada border, acquired by James in 1883). FDR's first teacher was his father who bought a 51 foot sailing yacht, the *Half Moon* in 1891 when FDR was nine.<sup>7</sup> A larger version, the 60 foot *Half Moon II* was bought in 1900; she was sold to the government in 1917 as a patrol vessel (*infra*). FDR also owned the *Hawk*, a 28 foot ice yacht, acquired in 1904.

By 1913, FDR had crossed the Atlantic forty times (twenty round trips). His mother insisted on an annual trip to visit her sister in Paris and his father took thermal waters at Bad Nauheim. By the time he entered Groton School at age fourteen (1896) he had made sixteen crossings. The result of his ocean, coastal and river experiences made him a vigorous and daring sailor, and a fearless commander always ready to try unconventional procedures and uncharted waters. He read widely about the sea and "Uncle" Ted's "War of 1812" and tried to persuade his parents that he should go to the Naval Academy at Annapolis, but his father refused to consider any school but Harvard.

The Roosevelt extended family was also involved in trading enterprises requiring water transport. Nicholas Roosevelt, (1767–1834) a New York City merchant, was known as "Steamboat Roosevelt." He became an associate of Robert Fulton in Hudson River steamboats in 1809; after more than ten years of his own experiments, he received a United States patent in 1814 for an improved paddle wheel, having operated his steamboat *New Orleans* from Pittsburgh to New Orleans from 1811.

FDR's paternal great grandfather, John Aspinwall, was from a family of New York ship-owners involved in the California trade—the Pacific Mail Steamship Co., and later the Panama Railroad. (The Atlantic terminal of the Panama Canal, now Colon, was once Aspinwall, and FDR's last born child was named John Aspinwall Roosevelt (1916)).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>A list of vessels owned by FDR or on which he sailed is found in R.F. Cross SAILOR IN THE WHITE HOUSE, 203–06 (2003).

<sup>8</sup>D. Somerville, THE ASPINWALL EMPIRE, 45–61 (1985).

As a New York City lawyer, FDR was a member of many social, fraternal and alumni clubs but was particularly devoted to the New York Yacht Club and the Seaman's Church Institute, an organization concerned with the welfare of seamen, of which he was a Director.

No other American President or political figure comes close to FDR with connections to the sea: practical navigator, student of the oceans, winds and tides, appraiser of the qualities and capabilities of vessels and lastly a naval historian. In fact, his bitter experiences after January 1919 at the hands of political enemies in the Republican controlled Congress convinced him of the necessity of professional historians as immediate observers of naval operations, resulting in the appointment of Samuel Eliot Morison from the History Department of Harvard University (and a veteran of the First World War) to compile the magisterial fifteen volume *History of Naval Operations in the Second World War*. (1947–1963).

## II FDR AND THE LAW

After graduation from Harvard College in 1904, FDR considered law school, not necessarily as a career but as an adjunct to politics. Instead of his father's choice of Harvard, FDR chose Columbia, his mother's preference and that of his Uncle Ted. (TR left in his first year after election to the New York Assembly.)

His law school studies did not include Admiralty. The curriculum consisted mostly of required courses for the first two years, but FDR left Law School after his second year, having passed the New York Bar Exam taken in July 1906. His mediocre grades demonstrated the low priority he assigned to a legal career.<sup>9</sup> FDR married Eleanor, niece of the President in his first

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<sup>9</sup>Four B's and two D's in First Year, but he was permitted to retake the failed exams (Contracts and Pleadings) and passed; three B's, two C's, one D in Second Year. See F. Freidel (n. 1 supra) p. 76.

year of law school (March 17, 1905) and took a 14 week honeymoon trip to Europe after freshman exams.

FDR was admitted to the New York Bar in February 1907, during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, a circumstance that did not hinder his job search. On Sept. 23, 1907 he began his legal career at the powerful New York City law firm of Carter, Ledyard and Milburn, without salary for the first year, as was then customary among the leading Wall Street firms. The firm's major clients were large corporations with anti-trust problems and other business disputes. After a few months of routine chores suitable for an Office-boy he was disabused of the law as a career, if he had ever held such possibility. He was later assigned to work for the Admiralty partner, Edmund Baylies, but came to call that work "ferryboat cases." FDR was not turned on by the possible adventures of an Admiralty practice. His thirty nine months at the firm had exposed him to many aspects of corporate law practice and he did not like it.

FDR was nominated for the state senate on October 6, 1910 and elected on November 8, the first Democrat to carry the seat since 1884; his mother had picked up his campaign expenses. On January 9, 1911 FDR resigned from Carter Ledyard and Milburn. A few weeks later FDR joined the new law firm of Marvin, Hooker & Roosevelt at 52 Wall Street, a connection he maintained until 1923 without ever doing much legal work; the firm's practice was trusts and estates which he found boring.

FDR never relinquished his membership in the New York Bar and remained a partner of Basil O'Connor in the firm of Roosevelt and O'Connor specializing in international business from 1924 until his death in 1945. Like TR, his career became politics; law was the side-line.

FDR was not personally a wealthy man, although he had a \$120,000 trust fund from his father; his mother, Sara, a domineering personality, controlled the family fortunes until her death in 1941. Thus, it was essential for him to find a law-related activity that could use his name and occasional advice. His household expenses always outran his income; having given birth to six children, Eleanor required a large staff of servants. His Navy salary was \$4,500 per annum, but his mother assisted with family expenses. After the Navy and his defeat as vice president

in the 1920 election, Van-Lear Black, an avid yachtsman, owner of the Baltimore Sun newspaper, fervent Democrat and in control of the Fidelity & Deposit Company of Baltimore, Maryland (one of the largest surety bond companies in the United States), hired FDR as Vice President of F&D at an annual salary of \$25,000. The F&D arrangement specifically allowed him to engage in private law practice and his job and salary continued after he was stricken with Polio (Infantile Paralysis).

### III

#### BRIEF HISTORY OF THE U.S. NAVY 1798–1913

The Navy Department was established under President John Adams in 1798<sup>10</sup> with a Maryland politician, Benjamin Stoddert<sup>11</sup> as Secretary. (The Cabinet position was lost in 1947 when the Navy became part of the Department of Defense and the Secretary of the Navy now reports to the Secretary of Defense.)<sup>12</sup>

The War of 1812 did not feature high seas fleet engagements and the Navy did little to interfere with the British blockade of U.S. ports. Some U.S. warships had successful individual actions: *U.S.S. Constitution (Old Ironside)*, *U.S.S. United States*, *U.S.S. Essex*, *U.S.S. Wasp* and *U.S.S. Hornet*, but there were also disasters: *U.S.S. President*, *U.S.S. Essex*, *U.S.S. Frolic* and *U.S.S.*

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<sup>10</sup>1 Stat 553. The Continental Navy, authorized on October 13, 1775, had merely disrupted British commerce and had been allowed to deteriorate by the time of ratification of the Constitution. War with the Barbary Pirate states (Morocco, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli) persuaded Congress to authorize construction of six warships under control of the Secretary of War in 1794. Threats of war with France persuaded President Adams to ask Congress to create a naval establishment, which was authorized in April 1798. War with the pirate nations gave us our first naval heroes: Stephen Decatur Jr. and Edward Preble.

<sup>11</sup>Benjamin Stoddert (1751–1813) had served in the Continental Army in the Revolution (1777–79) and was Secretary to the Board of War (1779–81). He became a successful merchant and Federalist politician, involved in the acquisition of lands for the federal government in the new capital city being built on the Potomac River. His reward was to be Secretary of the Navy but that terminated with Jefferson's election in 1801.

<sup>12</sup>Department of Defense, 61 Stat. 495 (1947).

*Argus*. There were spectacular victories on Lake Erie and Lake Champlain but the U.S. Army and Navy could not prevent the invasion of Maryland and the burning of Washington D.C. (August 25, 1814). Andrew Jackson's great victory at New Orleans (January 8, 1815) occurred after the peace treaty had been agreed at Ghent, Belgium on December 24, 1814.<sup>13</sup>

Many of the Secretaries of the Navy were politicians being rewarded by grateful Presidents for services rendered (past, present or future). Politicians who attempted successful reforms were George Bancroft and Gideon Welles.

George Bancroft (1800–1891), a Boston reformer and famous historian, served for 16 months under President Polk during the Mexican War. He founded the Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1845, reformed stale and dangerous customs, and ordered the fleet to occupy California.<sup>14</sup> Polk then sent him to London as Minister Plenipotentiary to deal with dangerous relations with the United Kingdom. The Mexican War (1846–48) involved naval amphibious operations but no fleet engagements.

Gideon Welles (1802–1874) was a loyal supporter of Lincoln who supervised a vast expansion of the Navy and implemented the successful blockade of Confederate ports, greatly weakening the Secession states.<sup>15</sup>

The office of Assistant Secretary of the Navy was created in 1861.<sup>16</sup> The first Assistant Secretary was Gustavus Vasa Fox.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>See generally, R.D. Utt, *SHIPS OF OAK GUNS OF IRON: THE WAR OF 1812 AND THE FORGING OF THE AMERICAN NAVY* (2013).

<sup>14</sup>L. Handlin, *GEORGE BANCROFT: THE INTELLECTUAL AS DEMOCRAT*, 203–19 (1981).

<sup>15</sup>Gideon Welles (1802–1878) from Glastonbury, CT. He was a Jackson-Democrat, Postmaster of Hartford, then civilian Chief of Navy Bureau of Provisions and Clothing in the Mexican War. His anti-slavery views caused him to join the new Republican Party in 1856. See R. Carse, *BLOCKADE: THE CIVIL WAR AT SEA* (1958) and J. Niven *GIDEON WELLES, LINCOLN'S SECRETARY OF THE NAVY* (1973).

<sup>16</sup>Rev. Stat § 415.2 C. 17.

<sup>17</sup>Gustavus Vasa Fox (1821–1883) born in Saugus MA, he attended Phillips Academy Andover but joined the Navy at age 16. He was commissioned a Midshipman on Jan. 12, 1838, (The Naval Academy was not created until 1845) and served in the Mexican War as lieutenant under Commodore Perry on U.S.S.

Unlike his successors in the office, Fox was a Navy man. At the start of the Civil War Lincoln sent him, then a civilian, to relieve Fort Sumter, but the bombardment of April 12, 1861 had already forced its surrender and Fox's chartered ship, *Baltic*, was used only to remove the defenders who were prisoners of war. Three months later, Lincoln appointed Fox Assistant Secretary of the Navy under Gideon Welles. Welles and Fox starved the rebellious states into submission and were responsible for the end of flogging and the daily ration of grog (rum) to seamen.<sup>18</sup>

Between the end of the Civil War and the 1898 War with Spain, the Navy gradually deteriorated. During this period, the Navy shifted from sail to steam and experimented with propellers and steel hulls, but was not involved in hostilities. However, the Navy did participate in territorial expansion: on August 28, 1867, Midway Island was occupied by the Navy pursuant to the Guano Island Protection act of 1856 (11 Stat. 164); and beginning in 1887, the Navy became involved in diplomatic adventures with Great Britain, France and Germany over Samoa. Annexation followed the Spanish War when Samoa (31 Stat. 878), Hawaii (30 Stat. 758) and Wake Island were annexed.

Hostilities with Spain concerning Cuban independence had been narrowly averted several times in 1873 and 1895. War finally came on April 25, 1898 following the still mysterious loss at Havana of the U.S. battleship *Maine* on Feb. 15, 1898. TR's reputation as "war-monger" arose because of TR's cabled order to the U.S. Asiatic Squadron at Hong Kong (Commodore George Dewey, USN) to keep ready for action against Spain in the Philippines, issued in the absence of Secretary Long on February

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Washington at the capture of Tampico. He resigned in 1856 and began a business career.

<sup>18</sup>The campaign against flogging—the infliction of lashes by a leather whip on a bare back—began with Richard Henry Dana's *TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST* in 1840. On Sept. 28, 1850 Congress abolished flogging as punishment in the Navy and on commercial vessels. 9 Stat. 515 Ch. 80. The Navy was slow to implement the prohibition. See H.D. Langley, *SOCIAL REFORM IN THE U.S. NAVY, 1798–1862*, 170–208 (1967). The spirit ration or grog was abolished as of Sept. 1, 1862, 12 Stat. 565 Ch. 164. See Langley 242–269. See also C.L. Symonds, *LINCOLN AND HIS ADMIRALS*, 280–293 (2008).

25, 1898, two months before the Declaration of War. The Navy was involved in a blockade of Cuba, and two significant naval battles over ill-prepared Spanish fleets, one at Manila Bay on May 1 by Dewey, and the second off Santiago on July 3 by Schley and/or Sampson. Spain surrendered in Cuba on July 17, 1898, and in the Philippines on Aug. 13, 1898.<sup>19</sup>

American imperialism was firmly established by the Treaty of Paris with Spain on December 10, 1898, and ratified narrowly on February 6, 1899 (30 Stat. 1754), whereby the United States acquired the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico. U.S. Marines were used to protect U.S. interests in Hawaii (1893), Panama (1903), Dominican Republic (1903), Cuba (1906, 1912 and 1917), Nicaragua (1911) and Haiti (1917).

Under the accidental presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, naval appropriations increased to meet expected challenges from Great Britain, Germany or Japan. However, despite the "Great White Fleet," the U.S. Navy vessels were obsolete compared to the Europeans and Japanese.<sup>20</sup>

Under William Howard Taft (1909–1913), military budgets had to be reduced to accommodate tariff reductions. The Secretary of the Navy responsible for enforcing budget reductions was George von Lengerke Meyer (1858–1918), a Boston diplomat with no naval experience or interests, but who had been ambassador to Italy and to Russia during the Russia-Japanese War.<sup>21</sup> Congress had long permitted politicians of both parties to

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<sup>19</sup>F. Freidel, *THE SPLENDID LITTLE WAR*, 13–32, 192–231 (1958); Morris, n.2 supra 602–05. H. F. Pringle, *THEODORE ROOSEVELT: A BIOGRAPHY*, 178–9 (1931).

<sup>20</sup>T.R. was served by six different secretaries of the Navy during his seven years and five months as president: Long, Moody, Morton, Bonaparte, Metcalf and Newberry. E. Morris, *THEODORE REX*, 180–82, 455–57, 485–511, 548–49 (2001); G.C. O’Gara, *THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE RISE OF THE MODERN NAVY* (1943); see also J.R. Reckner, *TEDDY ROOSEVELT’S GREAT WHITE FLEET* (1988) and G.T. Davis, *A NAVY SECOND TO NONE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN AMERICAN NAVAL POLICY* (1940); and P.E. Pedisich, *CONGRESS BUYS A NAVY: POLITICS, ECONOMICS AND THE RISE OF AMERICAN NAVAL POWER 1881–1921* (2016).

<sup>21</sup>Pedisich, supra n. 20 180–195; see also M.A. de W.Howe, *GEORGE VON LENGERKE MEYER: HIS LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICE* (1920).

use Naval Shipyards for patronage purposes resulting in “no-show” jobs and padded contracts for outside work. Meyer was a follower of the “Principles of Scientific Management” (1911) of Frederick W. Taylor whose time and motions studies had introduced efficiencies into most major industries. Labor unions and politicians became united in opposition to change. Meyer’s remedy was to close many U.S. government shipyards and require drastic reductions in the labor force of those that survived, but Congress was not interested in reforms that eliminated jobs for constituents.

#### IV THE WILSON ADMINISTRATION

The presidential election of 1912 became chaotic as the Republican Party shattered into two warring groups: the Taft Regulars who controlled the national convention, and TR’s Bull-Moose Progressives who broke away. The Democrats reunited under Wilson’s New Freedom slogan for progressive reforms. As usual there were minor parties: the Socialists (Eugene V. Debs), Socialist Labor, and Prohibition parties.

On election day, the South remained solid for the Democrats aided by Josephus Daniels’ campaigning, but the North and West were divided so that Wilson was a minority president (6,286,214 votes) while TR received 4,126,020 votes and Taft received 3,483,923 votes. Wilson gained the presidency with 435 electoral votes; Democrats retained control of the House of Representatives and took control of the Senate.<sup>22</sup> Daniels could anticipate a Cabinet post as a well-earned reward.

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<sup>22</sup>D.K. Goodwin, *THE BULLY PULPIT: THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF JOURNALISM* (2013).

*A. Secretary of the Navy*

The Secretary of the Navy during the Wilson Administration was Josephus Daniels,<sup>23</sup> a man twenty years older than FDR and totally unfamiliar with the Navy. Nevertheless, Daniels' eight-year tenure was the longest of any Secretary of the Navy and he can be credited with many progressive reforms. Daniels was essentially a newspaperman; although he had been admitted to the North Carolina Bar (1885) after studies at the University of North Carolina, he never practiced law. An astute observer of local and national politics, Daniels was a master of political maneuvers and intrigue which he conveyed to a very apt pupil.

An early interest in Democratic politics resulted in a political job as Chief Clerk of the Federal Department of the Interior under Cleveland (1893–1895), during which he bought and became editor of the *Raleigh News and Observer*. He was an early and powerful supporter of Woodrow Wilson in capturing Southern Democrats for Wilson at the long drawn out 1912 Democratic Convention in Baltimore (46 ballots) despite the candidacies of Senator Oscar Underwood of Alabama and Speaker of the House Champ Clark of Missouri.

Daniels was a progressive follower of William Jennings Bryan, except on issues of race where he followed the white supremacy

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<sup>23</sup>Josephus Daniels (1862–1948) born in rural Washington, N.C., attended Wilson Collegiate Institution. His newspaper career began at age 23 in the RALEIGH STATE CHRONICLE, a weekly which he turned, unsuccessfully, into a daily. Forced to sell the Chronicle he enjoyed political patronage in the second Cleveland administration during which he bought THE RALEIGH NEWS AND OBSERVER, a daily which he edited for the rest of his life. While Daniels' father had once been a ship carpenter, Daniels had no knowledge or interest in the U.S. Navy, but members of a Presidential Cabinet were then selected for political reasons and were expected to learn on the job. Daniels' relations with Congress were always excellent. He described his relations with FDR as "yoke fellows" and despite differences of opinion on war and preparedness, they remained personal friends. FDR always called him "Chief" and Daniels called him "Franklin." In 1933, FDR nominated Daniels as Ambassador to Mexico, a very difficult job because of Mexican nationalization of the oil industry; he served until 1941. Daniels sought that embassy because of his wife's illness. Daniels' son, Jonathan, served as FDR's last Press Secretary. See L.A. Craig, JOSEPHUS DANIELS: HIS LIFE AND TIMES (2013) and J.L. Morrison, JOSEPHUS DANIELS: THE SMALL D DEMOCRAT (1966).

of Woodrow Wilson. He was free of conflicts of interest, not an investor in steel, coal, petroleum or munitions and had no personal friends in the Navy Department who would be seeking preferment, unlike other candidates for the job. He was very successful in dealing with Wilson's Democratic Congress that included a large number of pacifist followers of W.J. Bryan. His legacy to the Navy was the total prohibition after July 1, 1914 of alcohol consumption on U.S. Navy vessels, including the officers' ward room.<sup>24</sup>

As a Bryan populist, Daniels scored a notable early success over the American steel industry conspiracy to fix a very high price for armor plate for warships by seeking a bid from a British steelmaker at a much lower price, forcing the American companies to lower their non-competitive bids.<sup>25</sup>

Senior officers of the Navy and their Government superiors often betrayed a tendency to consider enlisted men, regardless of age, as inferiors akin to factory workers. Josephus Daniels was aware of this aristocratic attitude and was determined to change it. He also knew that sea duty would require thousands of young men to be enlisted for years of hard and lonely service far from home. It was Daniels' plan from the beginning to make naval service an educational experience that would encourage volunteers. Education, not just on the job training, was his most important reform.<sup>26</sup> Daniels' goal to make the Navy a learning experience for young men was appropriated by the Navy League as an argument in favor of a bigger and more powerful Navy—not one of the goals of the pacifist Daniels. To Daniels, the war in Europe was too far away from our Atlantic and Pacific barriers and should not interfere with the reform of the Navy required of a modern democracy.

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<sup>24</sup>Navy Regulations 1162, formerly G.O. 99. Daniels was a Southern Methodist opposed to alcoholic beverages. Congress had authorized a daily ration of one half pint of distilled spirits on March 27, 1794 for each member of a vessel's crew; it lasted until 1862. (See n.17 *supra*).

<sup>25</sup>J.T. de Kay, *ROOSEVELT'S NAVY: THE EDUCATION OF A WARRIOR PRESIDENT*, 97–8 (2012); S. Weintraub n. 35 *infra* 37–8.

<sup>26</sup>J. Daniels, *THE WILSON ERA*, 273–78 (1944).

Under Daniels, practical and theoretical studies were required to be established for every ship and shore station. Educational opportunities were a major step in Daniels' goal to enable enlisted men to become officers.<sup>27</sup> FDR shared these goals and encouraged Daniels' pursuit of them so long as they did not inhibit the power of the Navy. On the other hand, senior naval officers disapproved of any change in the relations between officers and enlisted men.

Daniels did not make decisions quickly or easily; procrastination was his style. His frequent absences on inspection trips and visits to his North Carolina newspaper provided many opportunities for FDR to make decisions as "Acting Secretary of the Navy" and subordinates soon realized the necessity of waiting for Daniels' absence when something controversial needed a signature at the highest level.

The idea of a Navy Secretary being in command of the Navy in 1913 was not realistic. Military Personnel (Graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy) firmly controlled most naval activities through the Navy General Board, created in 1900.<sup>28</sup> Members of the Board were often Chiefs of the Bureaus (*infra*), but the President of the Board exercised an iron control over the Board. The President of the Board was Admiral George Dewey, U.S.N. from its creation until his death in 1917.<sup>29</sup> Dewey's method of dealing with proposals was to classify any proposal as belonging to one of the bureaus where it could repose until forgotten. His initial classification did not prevent competition among bureaus eager to expand their budgets, resulting in much overlap into several bureaus. It was a system barely functional in peace time but inappropriate for modern war, which requires constant changes in

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<sup>27</sup>*Id.* p. 253-63, 274-76.

<sup>28</sup>Navy General Order No. 544 of March 13, 1900. See C.O. Paullin, PAULLIN'S HISTORY OF NAVAL ADMINISTRATION 1925-1933, 432-38 (1963).

<sup>29</sup>George Dewey (1836-1917) born in Montpelier, Vermont. Graduated from the Naval Academy in 1858, served under Farragut in the Civil War; Chief of Bureau of Equipment 1869; Commodore of Asiatic Squadron, destroyed Spanish fleet at Manila Bay May 1, 1898. Congress created him Admiral of the Navy. See R. Spector, ADMIRAL OF THE NEW EMPIRE: THE LIFE AND CAREER OF GEORGE DEWEY (1974).

technology and cooperation with unfamiliar allies or the U.S. Army.

Ashore, the structure of the Navy was very complex, resembling a museum of artifacts from the Age of Sail, enacted by Congress during the Civil War<sup>30</sup> and jealously guarded by the professionals. Naval activities were divided among the eight Bureaus:

1. Navigation (including Personnel);
2. Ordinance;
3. Equipment;
4. Engineering;
5. Construction and Repairs;
6. Yards and Docks;
7. Supplies and Accounts;
8. Medicine and Surgery.

The officer in charge of each bureau (usually a Rear Admiral) was confirmed by the Senate for four year terms. Congress usually appropriated funds for each bureau separately rather than consolidating funds in a single Navy budget until the 1921 Bureau of the Budget. Adjuncts to the Department were the Judge Advocate General, the Office of Legislative Affairs and the United States Marine Corps.

In fact, the U.S. Navy in 1913 was ranked in third place behind the United Kingdom and Germany, although they were considered to be ahead of Japan, Italy and France. It consumed 20% of the federal budget. Comparison is dangerous because of dissimilarities in armor, weapons, speed, efficiency and training.

The U.S. Navy consisted of a battle fleet of 39 vessels: 26 battleships and 13 heavy cruisers. In 1913, there were 220 other commissioned vessels, but many were obsolete and inefficient, easy victims of the modern fleets of potential enemies. The total manpower in 1913 was 63,000 Navy and Marine Corps personnel

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<sup>30</sup> Act of July 3, 1862, 12 Stat. 510.

(59,000 enlisted and about 4000 officers).<sup>31</sup> The Navy was powered by fossil fuels (coal first, then petroleum after 1908); this required coaling stations or large shore establishments for refueling before fleet oilers were available to refuel at sea.

Because of a build-up during the periods of preparedness and wartime, the fleet in 1918 consisted of 29 battleships, 15 cruisers, 267 destroyers and 86 other vessels. The personnel component amounted to 284,845, of which 24,858 were officers; 11,275 women were enlisted as "Yeomanettes" after March 1917.<sup>32</sup>

As a result of enemy action, collisions and other navigational errors, 48 ships were lost during the hostilities: 14 from submarine attacks, five to mines and 29 to human error for which court-martial prosecutions were held, resulting in the legal review of the proceedings by the Secretary or Assistant Secretary. (*infra*).

### *B. The Assistant Secretary*

Josephus Daniels first met FDR at the Baltimore convention and recognized FDR's potential even before Daniels knew of his future Navy job. Despite warnings of the Roosevelt family's impetuosity and ambition, Daniels was not deterred and in fact frequently delegated many duties to FDR, who already had a vast portfolio of statutory functions.<sup>33</sup>

FDR was fortunate to be associated with Louis Howe, who understood bureaucracy as well as how to negotiate with organized labor, since a large part of the job involved the shore establishment with many civilian employees.<sup>34</sup> The situation of

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<sup>31</sup>H&M Sprout, *THE RISE OF AMERICAN NAVAL POWER 1776-1918* (1939).

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>The Assistant Secretary was responsible for Navy contracts of all kinds (except where policy changes were made), for preparation of annual budget estimates, for supervision of ten major Navy Yards (especially their largely civilian labor) and for supervision of the eight Navy Bureaus.

<sup>34</sup>U.S. Navy Bases and Yards in 1913: Portsmouth (NH); Boston; Newport; New York; Philadelphia; Washington (DC); Norfolk; Charleston; Key West; Pensacola; New Orleans; San Diego; San Francisco; Seattle; Guantanamo (Cuba), Pearl Harbor (Oahu HI), Olongapo and Cavite (Philippines), Guam and Pago Pago (Samoa). Naval

Naval shipyards was critical because of politics and low morale due to Secretary Meyer's attempted efficiencies.

While supervising the Surface Navy was the most visible aspect of FDR's work, he also spotlighted three increasingly important areas of naval developments: (1) the undersea service; (2) naval air; and (3) radio communication. On March 28, 1915, at San Pedro, he boarded Submarine K-7 (SS 38) for a dive along the California coast to reassure the public who were alarmed at the loss of Sub. F4 and crew off Hawaii.

FDR's first flight was on August 14, 1918 over the Bordeaux region of France from the U.S. Naval Air Station at Pauillac. On April 14, 1919, while Acting Secretary, he flew over New York City in NC-2T, then the largest American flying machine—one of 4 anti-submarine patrol planes produced by Glenn Curtiss for the war but not delivered until after the Armistice. (The aircraft flew across the Atlantic from Newfoundland to the Azores, Lisbon and England in May 1919 and would be one of four similar aircraft to circumnavigate the earth in 1924 from Seattle to Seattle in 175 days).<sup>35</sup>

The loss of the *RMS Titanic* in 1912 had alerted the maritime and naval communities to the life-saving possibilities of radio and FDR strongly pushed for the purchase and installation of radio equipment both in the U.S. and in France and England.

Navy Admirals, however, were slow to see military advantages in aviation; in 1911, the Navy purchased its first two aircraft, but the Admirals were not convinced of their utility until the humiliating destruction of obsolete and enemy battleships by the Army's Billy Mitchell in the 1920s.<sup>36</sup> FDR's first flights came after six years of support for aviation at Harvard and in the Navy. As Acting Secretary, he created the Bureau of Naval Aeronautics

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Training Centers: Newport; Norfolk; Great Lakes; San Francisco. See Freidel, n.1, 192–206.

<sup>35</sup>S. Weintraub, *YOUNG MR. ROOSEVELT: FDR'S INTRODUCTION TO WAR, POLITICS AND LIFE*, 166–69 (2013).

<sup>36</sup>T. Wildenberg, *BILLY MITCHELL'S WAR WITH THE NAVY: THE INTERWAR RIVALRY OVER AIR POWER* (2013). See G. van Deurs, *WINGS FOR THE FLEET: A NARRATIVE OF NAVAL AVIATION'S EARLY DEVELOPMENT 1910–1916*, 97–101, 155–158 (1966).

in the Bureau of Navigation. FDR also saved the Pensacola Naval Station from closing and was responsible for its designation as the flying school for naval aviation. In 1920, a Navy coal carrier was converted into an experimental aircraft carrier, U.S.S. Langley. (The independent Bureau of Aeronautics was created in 1921.)

FDR alone was responsible for the Naval Reserve, established on May 3, 1915 while FDR was Acting Secretary in the absence of Daniels, who was on vacation; Congress approved it without any changes.<sup>37</sup> FDR had proposed this creation to Daniels in the past, but nothing had been done, apparently because Daniels feared it would be an anti-democratic group of blue-blooded yacht owners. FDR's Naval Reserve had two parts: groups of power boats to serve in coastal defense; and 50,000 officers and petty officers available for active duty on short notice without the necessity of lengthy training.<sup>38</sup> Reserve officers of the Navy, like the Army, then paid their own way; each paid \$30 for the 25 day Reservists' cruise from August 15 to September 9, 1916.

## V

### CHRONOLOGY OF FDR'S SERVICE IN THE NAVY

FDR's career in the Navy Department can be conveniently analyzed in four periods:

- A. On the Job Training: March 1913–December 1914
- B. Preparedness – the Struggle against Pacifism: January 1915–March 1917
- C. Wartime Leader: April 1917–November 1918
- D. Demobilization and Peace: November 1918–August 1920.

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<sup>37</sup>38 Stat. 940.

<sup>38</sup>Massachusetts organized a naval unit in its state militia in 1885. Separate naval militias were subsequently organized in New York, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. By the Spanish War in 1898 there were 16 state units. Earlier efforts to replace state naval militia with a federal naval militia were rejected by Congress.

*A. On the Job Training: March 1913 – December 1914*

In this preparatory period, FDR had to learn the management of people (including his boss) and discover the political traps from the press and political enemies. While he had no recent management skills from law practice or Albany politics, from 1903 to 1904 he had served as President (Editor in Chief) of the Harvard Crimson, a daily college newspaper (except Sundays) full of college sports and gossip without much coverage of the world outside Cambridge.

Louis Howe carefully shepherded FDR's Washington career (except for FDR's failed effort to capture a Senate seat in 1914). The smooth running of the office was due to FDR's private secretary, Charles H. McCarthy, a Georgetown University Law graduate who had served FDR's predecessors since 1908. McCarthy eventually served on the U.S. Shipping Board created in 1916.

FDR learned about the dangers of the press after a West Coast inspection tour in April 1914. A dispute with the unrecognized regime of Mexican General Huerta (who had killed President Madero and the Vice President) became explosive. The cause was the U.S. effort to prevent Huerta acquiring German arms and ammunition from a German ship in Vera Cruz harbor. A bloody battle occurred on the streets of Vera Cruz where 19 U.S. Navy and Marines were killed while 126 Mexican troops and civilians were killed; 70 Americans and 195 Mexicans were wounded. During his cross-country return trip from the West Coast, reporters at each stop would demand the latest news, to which FDR responded "WAR." President Wilson, however, favored a neutral arbitration and Daniels had to shut up his Assistant as quickly as possible.<sup>39</sup>

*1. Swimming by Naval Personnel*

FDR did learn to cherish and appreciate the young men in his care, beginning with the requirement that they know how to swim. A bad custom from the Age of Sail was the absence of swimming

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<sup>39</sup>J.T. de Kay, n. 25 *supra*, 119–24 (2012). Freidel, n. 1 228–237.

ability among crew members. Sailing vessels could not stop and search for "Man Overboard" in time to prevent death from hypothermia or sharks and it was felt that swimming merely prolonged the agony. With new internal propulsion sources, vessels could stop and search, yet naval personnel were still drowning at sea because they could not swim. The answer in July 1913 was not to force a retroactive requirement on older sailors, but to encourage swimming by competition among vessels and stations for the "Roosevelt Cup"—awarded to the ship with the largest number of crew members to swim 100 yards after an 18 foot dive. The first competition was at Guantanamo Bay in January, 1914, won by U.S.S. Wyoming.

Several biographers of FDR make the claim, without documentary support, that FDR was responsible for the requirement that midshipmen of the Naval Academy and enlisted trainees of Naval Training Centers were required to pass a swimming test before entering Naval service.<sup>40</sup> This is incorrect. Incoming midshipmen were tested for swimming ability in 1905, although special swimming instructions began in 1873. By 1912, swimming ability became a requirement for graduation after Secretary of the Navy George von Lengerke Meyer by letter of March 20, 1912 noted, "Swimming being an important qualification for all naval ratings it is desirable that the midshipmen be proficient, not only in swimming, but also as instructors in it." For Naval Training Center, Navy Instruction CNET P 1552/16 required three levels of qualification. Recruits had to begin at basic Third Class Level to survive "Men Overboard" situations.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>D.E. Weingast, FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT, MAN OF DESTINY, 49 (1952); J.T. de Kay n. 24 *supra*, 96-7; K.S. Davis, n. 1 *supra*, 219; J.W. Coady, FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT'S EARLY WASHINGTON YEARS, 1913-1920, 84-5 (1963) (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, St. John's University).

<sup>41</sup>M.D. Besch, A NAVY SECOND TO NONE: THE HISTORY OF U.S. NAVAL TRAINING IN WORLD WAR I (2002).

## 2. Vessel Navigation

Most important for their initial impact on 259 naval vessels, and their eventual impact on all United States flag vessels and United States territorial waters, were the General Orders signed by FDR (or by Secretary Daniels as prepared by FDR), that grew out of FDR's personal experiences as navigator and helmsman: General Orders: 30, 98 and 154 on helm orders, G.O. 35 on collision prevention and G.O. 67 on vessel speed in fog. These General Orders were not opposed by the Bureau of Navigation, the General Board or Secretary Daniels.

Vessels used in Northern European waters were initially steered by a steering oar on the right side of the vessel looking forward, the steering side or "*starboard*." When the vessel tied up to a wharf or pier, it tied up on the left or loading side looking forward, the "*larboard*." These descriptive terms remained in use even after the steering oar was replaced by the rudder controlled by a steering wheel. Their similarity in sound caused mischief and confusion during heavy weather and strong winds when the terms could easily be confused. The British Board of Trade recognized the problem and in 1844 substituted the word "*port*" for *larboard*, applying to all ships in the Royal Navy. Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft applied the new terminology in a General Order of February 18, 1846 that removed the term *larboard* and substituted *port*. That, however, was not the end of confusion.<sup>42</sup>

In the days of the steering oar, the order "*Port* your helm" was used to make a right or *starboard* turn. Likewise, a port turn required the order "*Starboard* your helm." Older mariners continued to use the old helm orders while newly trained persons used "Turn to Port" or "Turn to Starboard," resulting in the occasional grounding, collision or embarrassed navigation. Central Europeans had substituted their words for left and right for their equivalent words for port and starboard. Only British and American mariners continued to use the traditional expressions. One of the most important decisions of FDR was the replacement

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<sup>42</sup>A similar problem occurred in France where "*tribord*" was used for *right* and "*babord*" for *left*.

on the bridge of naval vessels of the traditional nautical direction orders "Port" and "Starboard" with "Left" and "Right" to bring an end to confusion on the bridge as to direction to be steered.

General Order No. 30

May 5, 1913

*Orders Governing the Movements of the Rudder*

On and after July 1, 1913, the present designations "starboard" and "port" governing movements of a ship's helm are hereby ordered discontinued in orders or directions to the steersman and the terms "right" and "left" referring to movement of the ship's head shall thereafter be used instead.

The orders as to the rudder angle shall be given in such terms as "Ten degrees rudder, half rudder, standard rudder, full rudder," etc., so that a complete order would be "Right - half rudder" etc. Commanders in chief and commanding officers acting independently may in their discretion, institute the above change at an earlier date.

F.D. Roosevelt  
Acting Secretary of the Navy

G.O. 30 was replaced by G.O. 98 on May 18, 1914.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>General Order No. 98

*Orders Concerning the Movements of the Rudder*

1. This order supersedes General Order No. 30 of May 5, 1913, which should be marked "Canceled" across its face.
2. The term "helm" shall not be used in any command or directions connected with the operation of the rudder; in lieu thereof the term "rudder" shall be used - standard rudder, half rudder, etc.
3. The commands "starboard" and "port" shall not be used as governing the movement of the rudder; in lieu thereof the word "right" shall be employed when the wheel (or lever) and rudder are to be moved to the right to turn the ship's head to the right (with headway on), and "left" to turn the ship's head to the left (with headway on). Instructions in regard to the rudder angle shall be given to the steersman in such terms as "handsomely," "ten degrees rudder," "half rudder," "standard rudder," "full rudder," etc.; so that a complete order would be "right - standard rudder," "left - handsomely," etc. The steersman should afterwards be informed of the new course by such terms as "course - 135°."

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Josephus Daniels  
*Secretary of the Navy*

G.O. 98 was in turn replaced by G.O. 154 of July 15, 1915 which contained a full lexicon of correct terminology for use on the bridge.

General Order No. 154

Orders to the Wheel and to the Engine Telegraphs

1. This order supersedes General Order No. 98 of May 18, 1914, which should be marked "Canceled" across its face.

The term "helm" shall not be used in any command or directions connected with the operation of the rudder; in lieu thereof the term "rudder" shall be used.

Orders to the Wheel

Manner of Giving Orders

3. In conning – In giving commands to the quartermaster or steersman, the first command will be one of direction, i.e., **Right!** or **Left!** Followed by the amount of rudder, such as **Right, standard rudder!** **Left, ten degrees rudder!** The object being to insure the quick carrying out of the order by the steersman, who starts turning his wheel instantly on receiving the command **Right!** or **Left!**

Standard Orders

4. **Right (left) rudder!** or **Right! (left).** A command to give her right (left) rudder instantly, an indeterminate amount. In all such cases the officer conning the ship should accompany the order with a statement of his motive, or the object to be obtained, in order that the steersman may execute the order with intelligence and judgment. Thus, "**Right rudder!** Head for the lighthouse." "**Left rudder!** Pass the buoy close on your starboard hand."

5. **Right (left) full rudder!**

6. **Right (left) standard rudder!**

7. **Right (left) standard half rudder!**

8. **Right (left) five (ten, etc.) degrees rudder!** This order is used in making changes of course. The steersman should then be informed of the new course (by such terms as **Course 275!**) in time to permit him to "meet her" on the new course.

9. **Right (left) handsomely!** This order is given when a very slight change of course is desired.

10. **Give her more rudder!** Increase the rudder angle already on to make her turn more rapidly.

11. **Ease the rudder!** Decrease the rudder angle already on, when she is turning too rapidly, or is coming to the heading required. The order can be given **Ease to fifteen! (ten, five, etc.)**

12. **Rudder amidships!** In battleships, when making a turn, put rudder amidships when about 20 degrees from the new course.

13. **Meet her!** Use rudder as may be necessary to check, but not entirely stop, her swing. Given when the ship's head is nearing the desired course, and she is to be kept from swinging past the new course.

14. **Steady!** or **Steady so!** or **Steady as you go!**

15. **Shift the rudder!** Change from right to left rudder or vice versa. Given, for example, when the ship loses headway and gathers sternboard, to keep her turning in the same direction.

16. **Mind your rudder!** A warning to the quartermaster (or steersman) (a) to exact more careful steering, or (b) to put him on the alert for the next command to the wheel.

17. **Mind your right (left) rudder!** A warning that the ship shows a tendency frequently to get off her course, and that if right (left) rudder be not applied from time to time to counteract this tendency, the ship will not make good the course set.

18. **Nothing to the right (left)!** Given when the course to be made good is a shade off the compass card mark, and therefore that all small variations from the course in steering must be kept, for example, to the southward of the course set.

19. **Keep her so!** A command to the quartermaster (or steersman) when he reports her heading, and it is desired so to steady her.

20. **Very well!** Given to the quartermaster (or steersman), after a report by him, to let him know that the situation is understood. (The expression **All right!** should not be used. *It might be confused as an order to the wheel.*)

Orders to the Engine Telegraphs

The command is in three parts:

21. The first part is to the engine; as **Starboard (port) engine!** or, **All engines!**

a. This puts the proper telegraph man (or both) on the alert. This is the preparatory command, and he should at once start his lever.

b. The second part of the command is the command of execution, and it is the direction the engine telegraphs are to be moved; as, **Ahead!** or, **Back!**

c. The third part of the command gives the speed at which the engines are to be moved.

22. The following are all the commands to the engine telegraphs:

a. **All engines, ahead one-third (two-thirds, standard, full)!** or **All engines, back one-third (two-thirds, full)!**

b. **Starboard (port) engine, ahead one-third (two-thirds, standard, full)!**  
**Port (starboard) engine, back one-third (two-thirds, full)!**

Orders Concerning Ship's Compass Course

23. All orders as to the course should be preceded by the word "Compass;" "Compass course, zero;" (two-one; Three-O-four; Six-five, etc.); in every case naming the numbers separately.

Repeating and Reporting

24. (a) Every command of the officer of the deck to the wheel or to the engine telegraphs must be repeated word for word by the quartermaster (or steersman) or engine telegraph men, as the case may be. *This should be insisted upon.* When the order to the engines is acknowledged by the engine room, and the revolution indicator shows that the engines are obeying, the telegraph men must report, for example, *Starboard engine backing one-third, sir! Port engine backing one-third, sir!*

(c) In all cases the officer of the deck must check the execution of his orders. This must be done to eliminate all chances of error.

Congress did not enact the helm orders rule for all vessels until Aug. 21, 1935, 49 Stat. 668, now codified as 33. U.S.C. §142. In the United Kingdom, the change was made by statute in 1932, Merchant Shipping (Safety and Load Lines Convention) Act, Art. 41, S. 29 and Sched. I.

### 3. Collision Prevention

Collision-prevention rules imposed by government began in England in 1846, with additions in 1851, 1854 and 1858, and in 1862 Parliament invited other nations to accede (Merchant Shipping Act of 1862, 25 & 26 Vict. Ch. 63). Congress adopted similar Rules in 1864, 13 Stat. 58. In 1889 the United States sponsored the Washington Conference that prepared Navigational Rules, effective in 1897 and amended in 1910.<sup>44</sup> A review of the case law by FDR and the Bureau Chiefs was signed by Secretary Daniels as a General Order.

### 4. Speed in Fog

The Supreme Court had dealt with speed in fog in three cases, attempting to provide analogies to explain moderate speed in fog: *The Pennsylvania*, 86 U.S. 125 (1873); *The Martello*, 153 U.S. 64 (1893) and *The Umbria*, 166 U.S. 404 (1897). The last case is the source of the requirement that in fog a vessel's speed must be no more than that which will bring the vessel to a stop in half the

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Josephus Daniels  
Secretary of the Navy

<sup>44</sup> General Order No. 35 of June 12, 1913 provides:

Attention is called to the fact that the provisions of Article 28 of the International Rules for Preventing Collisions and of Article 18 of the Inland Rules are mandatory; and to the additional fact that in some 400 decisions in collision cases, the court has invariably decided against the vessel that did not blow her whistle.

Josephus Daniels  
Secretary of the Navy

distance of the visibility (166 U.S. at 417).<sup>45</sup> For detailed precedents, the General Order made use of a textbook.<sup>46</sup>

*B. Preparedness: January 1915 – March 1917*

The Wilson Administration had been in office a mere fifteen months when the perpetual Balkan troubles erupted into a world crisis with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, by a Serb nationalist on June 28, 1914. Pre-existing alliances and mobilizations of reserves led to war by the beginning of August as the “Central Powers” (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and later Turkey) faced off against the “Allied Powers” (Serbia, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and later Italy).<sup>47</sup> President Wilson immediately announced the policy of neutrality on August 4, 1914,<sup>48</sup> joining Presidents Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Madison in the struggle to maintain neutral rights during a world war. Wilson’s neutrality in thought and deed was unenforceable and could not, however, prevent American business from enjoying rich profits from sales of food and armaments to belligerents. Wilson was not blind to the domestic implications of European war, but his 1912 election promise of “New Freedom” put progressive reforms at

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<sup>45</sup> N.J. Healy and J.C. Sweeney, *THE LAW OF MARINE COLLISION*, 104–111 (1998).

<sup>46</sup> General Order No. 67

*Speed of Naval Vessels in a Fog*

The department calls the attention of the service to the discussion on the subject of speed in a fog which appears on pages 254–259 and 303–306 of Knight’s *Seamanship*, edition 1910.

Use of a textbook in a General Order was unusual, but this was a very special book, the work of RADM Austin M. Knight U.S.N. at the Naval Academy in 1901 drawing not only on the experiences of many serving naval officers, but the experiences of 40 masters of merchant and passenger vessels. It was intended to replace for the Age of Steam the classical texts used in the Age of Sail.

<sup>47</sup> B. Tuchman, *THE GUNS OF AUGUST*, 91–134 (1962) and M. MacMillan, *THE WAR THAT ENDED PEACE: THE ROAD TO 1914*, 575–631 (2013).

<sup>48</sup> E.R. May, *THE WORLD WAR AND AMERICAN ISOLATION 1914–1917* (1959); see also A.S. Link, *WILSON, THE DIPLOMATIST: A LOOK AT HIS MAJOR FOREIGN POLICIES* (1957).

the top of his agenda, for which military activities would be a fatal distraction. FDR could not publicly oppose Wilson's neutrality and retain presidential favor (as well as his job). In private he approved TR's aggressive support of the Allied Powers and scorned the utopian pacifism of Bryan and Daniels. FDR as president would encounter an almost identical struggle to prevent preparation for an inevitable war from 1939 until December 7, 1941.

Wilson's impartial neutrality soon succumbed to the realities of finance as American bankers eagerly loaned the Allies \$2.8 billion to buy America's products. Germany was not a regular customer and its response to Allied purchases was submarine warfare to prevent Allied as well as "neutral" ships from bringing food, fuel and munitions—loosely labeled "contraband"—to England and France. The effectiveness of hidden submarines was demonstrated within the first year of the war when, on May 7, 1915, a single torpedo from German submarine U-20 sank the 31,550 gross registered tons British passenger ship. The sinking of the *Lusitania* in a mere 18 minutes from impact, causing the deaths of 1,198 innocent (i.e., non-military) passengers, of which 128 were American citizens. (The Cunard liner was carrying ammunition for military use).

While America's political and intellectual elite always favored the Allied cause, the scientific and entrepreneurial elites were tolerant of Germany's progressive appearances, but the *Lusitania* changed that and America's citizens began to tilt uniformly towards the Allies. Undoubtedly British propaganda assisted this change. *Lusitania* also shifted naval thinking away from titanic encounters between fleets of surface battleships (or dreadnoughts) to the more humble job of protecting the flow of commerce through the use of convoys, guarded by a large number of "destroyers."<sup>49</sup> In fact the only Fleet battle of the war was that off

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<sup>49</sup>J.A. Bailey & P.B. Ryan, *THE LUSITANIA DISASTER: AN EPISODE IN MODERN WARFARE AND DIPLOMACY* (1975) and E. Larson *DEAD WAKE: THE LAST CROSSING OF THE LUSITANIA* (2015).

Jutland beginning May 30, 1916—at best a stalemate as both fleets were badly damaged and withdrew to safe havens.<sup>50</sup>

Protest notes concerning *Lusitania* from President Wilson to Germany (May 13, June 9, and July 21) failed to accomplish public changes in Germany's submarine warfare policy. The German response to Wilson's first protest claimed the *Lusitania* had carried contraband, which was correct. Wilson's second protest suggested a violation of international law by Germany and led to the resignation of Secretary of State Bryan on June 9, 1915, because it implied a negative reaction from Germany and failed to mention the British blockade. Wilson's third protest warned that repetition of a contravention of neutral rights must be regarded as "deliberately unfriendly." This vague language contained an element of potential retorsion or countermeasure, even though the United States could not then threaten the vast military might of the European belligerents.

On August 19, 1915, the British passenger liner *Arabic* was sunk by submarine attack without warning in the Atlantic en route to New York; 44 passengers including two Americans died. Clearly Germany was not listening, so President Wilson was forced into a new policy of "preparedness" in order to be heard by the belligerents.

Hostile reaction to the *Lusitania* sinking in America was unexpected in Berlin and caused the German Naval High Command to issue secret orders to submarine commanders not to attack passenger liners without advance warning or providing an opportunity to discharge passengers into lifeboats. Germany offered an indemnification payment for the 44 *Lusitania* and 2 *Arabic* Americans although legal demands invoking international law from a weak America had been ineffective. After the *Arabic* sinking, trans-Atlantic passenger ships were not attacked by German submarines until German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare against belligerents and neutrals on February

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<sup>50</sup>D. McIntyre, JUTLAND (1958). The British Navy had defeated German forces in encounters in the Falkland Islands (Dec. 1914) and at the Dogger Bank (Jan. 1915). See J. Black, *Jutland's Place in History*, 30 NAVAL HISTORY, 16 (June 2016).

1, 1917. Cargo ships were another matter and German submarines successfully devastated British and French cargo ships before Britain reluctantly agreed to the defense provided by a convoy screened by destroyers. German submarines sank 5,234 ships during the hostilities; the high point came in April 1917 when 375 ships were sunk.<sup>51</sup>

On September 3, 1915 President Wilson changed the entire outlook of his administration from pacifist unarmed neutrality to “preparedness,” but Josephus Daniels did not follow Bryan out of the Cabinet, dashing FDR’s hopes to be Daniels’ successor. Nevertheless, Bryan pacifists considered preparedness as war like and remained opposed to any military activity by the United States.

The vast extent of preparedness measures was revealed in Wilson’s Message to Congress on December 7, 1915, when the President asked Congress to spend \$600,000,000 over five years to expand the Navy; the United States was then sixteen months from war. Wilson’s goal, eagerly supported by FDR, was “a Navy second to none.” Wilson also expanded the Army from 100,000 to 223,000 over five years, and authorized a 450,000 man National Guard and Reserve Officer Training Corps at universities. The resulting Appropriations Act was approved by the President on August 29, 1916. To remedy the shortage of British, French and German ships to carry our foreign trade, a subsidized merchant marine under a new U.S. Shipping Board was created in 1916.<sup>52</sup> The Board received \$500 million to build, lease or buy merchant ships.

The most important development in the Wilson Administration was the creation of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) by the Act of March 1, 1915.<sup>53</sup> The statute charged the CNO with fleet operations and the preparation of war plans.

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<sup>51</sup>C.L. Symonds, *HISTORICAL ATLAS OF U.S. NAVY*, 129 (1995). Germany lost 203 submarines: rammed, destroyed by mines and depth charges or naval gunfire, or by accidental collision and stranding. J.L. Leighton, *SIMSADUS: LONDON: AMERICAN NAVY IN EUROPE*, 55, 159–169 (1921).

<sup>52</sup>Act of Sept. 7, 1916, 39 Stat. 728.

<sup>53</sup>38 Stat. 929.

Secretary Daniels was very uneasy about this new office for fear it would "Prussianize" the Navy with a European style General Staff not subject to civilian control. FDR and his advisor, RADM Bradley A. Fiske, USN<sup>54</sup> strongly favored the CNO concept. Fiske was a brilliant inventor, strategist and tactician who served as Secretary Daniels' Aide for Operations and was a Member of the General Board. (Aide for Operations was an office created by Secretary Meyer to consolidate Navy Bureaus, but it was rejected by Congress). Fiske had previously urged a Navy General Staff and viewed a Chief of Naval Operations as a step in that direction. In fact, Fiske cooperated with Congressman Richmond P. Hobson (D. Ala.), a naval hero of the War with Spain, in drafting the CNO legislation. Secretary Daniels responded to Congressional demands for the CNO by inserting a requirement that any order to the fleet by CNO must come from the Secretary. Civilian control of the military was preserved.

Daniels appointed the first Chief of Naval Operations, RADM William S. Benson, USN on May 11, 1915, rather than Fiske, who had been the obvious candidate but who had crossed Daniels too often on the education of enlisted men. Benson was a congenial Southerner who did not challenge the secretary, thus passing over Fiske and two dozen more senior officers. Benson's decision-process paralleled that of Daniels. Financing the office was not provided until the Naval Appropriations Act of 1916.<sup>55</sup>

FDR had skated very close to the thin ice of presidential disapproval and retaliation (i.e., forced resignation) by his testimony before the Congressional Committees on Naval Affairs and in speeches before the Navy League and other Naval enthusiasts during the period before Wilson adopted "preparedness." Wilson's conversion to preparedness saved

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<sup>54</sup>Bradley A. Fiske (1854-1942) born in Lyons, N.Y. graduated from U.S.N.A. 1874, served at Manila Bay, selected RADM 1911, he retired when Benson became CNO. See T.E. Coletta, ADMIRAL BRADLEY A. FISKE AND THE AMERICAN NAVY (1979).

<sup>55</sup>39 Stat. 578. See M. Klachko with D.E. Trask, ADMIRAL WILLIAM SHEPHERD BENSON FIRST CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, 29-39, 159-167 (1982). The legislation provided for the construction over three years of 10 battleships, 16 cruisers, 50 destroyers and 67 submarines.

FDR's job for the election year of 1916 in which Wilson faced a reunited Republican party headed by Supreme Court Justice Charles E. Hughes. Secretary Daniels took the stump in the campaign while FDR became Acting Secretary to carry out preparedness through vast construction projects for land based facilities and shipyard expansion of the fleet.

The November 7, 1916 election returns were not final until California reported on Nov. 10. Wilson had won California by less than 3800 votes. The result: Wilson had 277 electors (9,129,606 in popular votes) to Hughes' 254 electors (8,538,221 in popular votes). Wilson's new term would have to deal with the apparently successful slogan of his supporters, "He kept us out of War!" Ironically, Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war twenty-eight days after his second inauguration.

Neutral American ships were unarmed, but the German notice of resumption of submarine warfare Feb. 1, 1917 created a demand for Navy guns and gun crews for self-defense on American flag cargo ships, in the absence of which the vessels would not leave port.

Neither the six-inch guns (to combat submarines on the surface), nor trained gun crews, were readily available from commercial sources or gun enthusiasts, but FDR discovered that the Navy had the guns and the crews. Wilson and Daniels, however, believed statutory authority was necessary to dispose of such Navy property. On February 17, 1917, FDR suggested that the guns could be loaned to American flag owners with a surety, surely a precursor of the 1941 Lend-Lease Act.<sup>56</sup> Still uneasy, on February 26 Wilson requested Congress for statutory authority to arm merchant vessels; but on March 2, several pacifist senators began a filibuster against the bill during the Presidential Inauguration celebrations (March 5, 1917). One week later (March 12) President Wilson signed an Executive Order for an armed guard on U.S. merchant vessels.<sup>57</sup> Isolationist members of

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<sup>56</sup>Act of March 11, 1941, 55 Stat. 31.

<sup>57</sup>54 Cong. Rec. 4723. The President cited, "... the plain implication of my constitutional duties and powers." Secretary Daniels had sent a 28 paragraph memorandum (undoubtedly prepared by FDR) to the President on Mar. 12, 1917.

Congress raised the issue again in 1939, but the ships were armed without trouble.

*C. Wartime Leader: April 1917 – November 1918*

United States participation in the First World War lasted from April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918—19 months and 12 days. Unlike TR who became a U.S. Army officer in 1898, FDR's offers to join the military in the First World War were firmly rejected by President Wilson and Secretary Daniels. TR urged FDR to get into uniform as quickly as possible but that endorsement had no influence with Wilson.<sup>58</sup> FDR as Assistant Secretary was too valuable to risk in the trenches of France.

The war in Europe had already lasted 2 years and 8 months when the United States entered and was expected to last several more years because the Germans had begun to shift armies to the Western Front (France) from the Eastern front (Russia) because of the virtual surrender of the Soviets after the November 1917 Bolshevik Revolution leading to the peace of Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918). The Germans were confident that unrestricted submarine warfare would starve Britain and France in five months, forcing them to seek a negotiated peace before U.S. aid would be effective; therefore, war with America was worth the risk, especially if the U.S. could be distracted by war with Mexico. Transport and supply problems delayed the German offensive until Spring 1918, by which time the American Expeditionary Force was arriving to bolster the exhausted Allies. The Kaiser and his generals could not foresee mutiny and revolution at home.

Resumption by Germany of unrestricted submarine warfare on February 1, 1917 elicited Wilson's decision to break diplomatic relations with Germany on February 3, 1917, but it was not enough to force Wilson to war, nor was the quick loss of four American vessels. The clinching event was the Zimmerman

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<sup>58</sup>As a 37 year old father of five, FDR was unlikely to be drafted. For the relations of T.R. and Wilson see J.M. Cooper Jr., *THE WARRIOR AND THE PRIEST: WOODROW WILSON AND THEODORE ROOSEVELT* (1983).

Telegram from Berlin to the German Ambassador in Mexico instructing the Ambassador to suggest a military alliance to Mexican leaders financed by Germany whereby Mexico would regain territories lost to the United States in 1848. (Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of Texas). The Germans also suggested a Mexico-Japan alliance against the United States.<sup>59</sup> British Intelligence decoded the message and furnished it to President Wilson just before Inauguration Day when Congress had already recessed for the session. Fortunately, Mexican leaders ignored German proposals, despite General Pershing's invasion of Mexico in pursuit of Pancho Villa who himself had invaded Texas.

Press Revelation of the Zimmerman Telegram alerted even pacifist America to the possibility of war but President Wilson forbade any obvious physical preparations for hostile actions; Germany must force the United States into war. A major goal was to defend the Panama Canal and its approaches that began by negotiating the purchase of the Danish West Indies, (St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John of the Virgin Islands).<sup>60</sup> The Panama Canal had opened in August 1914.

The British pushed the United States a little further towards war by suggesting a naval liaison officer be sent to London. The First Sea Lord, Admiral John Jellicoe, R.N. suggested his long-time acquaintance (from 1900 service on the China coast) Captain William S. Sims, USN,<sup>61</sup> recently installed President of the Naval War College, and selected to be Rear Admiral U.S.N. (effective March 31, 1917). FDR knew and admired Sims and urged the appointment, as did Uncle Ted—not a helpful endorsement for Wilson. (Sims did not reciprocate after the war in sensational criticism of the Navy Department although his principal target was Daniels.)

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<sup>59</sup>B. Tuchman, *THE ZIMMERMAN TELEGRAM* (1985).

<sup>60</sup>39 Stat. 1706 (Aug. 4, 1916); U.S. Occupation began Mar. 31, 1917. Prussia had easily defeated Denmark in 1864 and threatened to do the same in 1917. The price was \$25 million.

<sup>61</sup>William S. Sims (1858–1936), born in Ontario of American parents, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1880; served at Manila Bay in 1898, expert on naval gunnery 1902–09 and on diplomatic missions in Europe.

Secretary Daniels hurriedly approved Sims' secret mission to London provided it could be deniable. Sims sailed "incognito" as a civilian passenger on the *S.S. New York* on March 31, 1917; by the time of his arrival in London on April 10, the United States was at war with Germany.

President Wilson's Cabinet voted unanimously for war with Germany on March 21, 1917 and the President ordered a Special Session of Congress for April 2, 1917. Congress voted the Declaration of War on April 6, 1917; the House vote was 373-50 and the Senate was 82-6. President Wilson justified the war, "to make the world safe for democracy."

Having maintained neutrality for two years and eight months, despite provocations, Wilson found it impossible to become an immediate ally of Britain, France, Italy and Russia; Wilson's decision was to "associate" with those Allied Powers. The commander of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) Major General John J. Pershing maintained autonomous direction of the AEF while cooperating with French Field Marshall Foch, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces on the Western Front. The U.S. Navy had never operated jointly with allies, nor often with the U.S. Army, and Sims soon found it necessary to be an ally to protect convoys and the movement of more than two million American fighting men and more than four and a half million tons of supplies to France.

The United States Navy entered the war when a six-vessel destroyer squadron arrived in May 1917 in Ireland to establish a base for convoy operations, using the well-furnished port of Queenstown (now Cobh) on the south coast of Ireland in County Cork. Captain Taussig's first group was soon followed by two destroyer tenders and 31 additional destroyers. Eventually an air base and additional ports in Bantry Bay would be set up for three battleships. Six older battleships were stationed at Scapa Flow (North Scotland) but the battleships were not used in combat.

A very great influence on the American naval war effort was the permanent liaison of Sims to the British Admiralty.<sup>62</sup> Sims would become far more than a mere liaison. British Naval needs were known immediately in Washington and rapidly satisfied. Thus, an unusual coordination of naval efforts between U.S. and U.K. eventually developed, despite the suspicious hesitations of the anti-British CNO Benson who lost control of European naval operations.

Initially operating out of the U.S. Embassy, with frequent visits to Admiral Jellicoe and his staff, Sims was initially moving in uncharted waters as merely the senior naval officer present, until President Wilson conferred command status on Sims on May 25, 1917 as Commander United States Destroyers operating from British bases, with temporary rank of Vice Admiral. Secretary Daniels broadened the terminology (without specific language of responsibility or authority) on June 14, 1917; Sims was designated Commander United States Forces Operating in European Waters. Sims was promoted to Admiral in December 1918.

After war began FDR stayed at his post, signing thousands of documents—contracts, requisitions, receipts, memoranda and letters—signature machines were not used in those days.<sup>63</sup> Wilson's preparedness had involved plans for new ships but did not build training facilities, recruit men or provide the weapons and supplies for modern war. That would be FDR's job in the 15 months after the war began. Daniels and Wilson came to appreciate the speed and accuracy of the work of FDR and Louis Howe in procuring supplies and constructing facilities.

In his wartime experiences FDR developed the creation and staffing of specialized agencies to solve new or difficult problems—a foretaste of the trial and error creations of the New Deal and the Second World War. Among these were the *Arsenals*

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<sup>62</sup>E.E. Morison, ADMIRAL SIMS AND THE MODERN AMERICAN NAVY, 337–431 (1942); D. Kohnen, THE U.S. NAVY'S GREAT WAR CENTURION, 31 NAVAL HISTORY, 14–19 (April 2017); and M. Simpson, ANGLO-AMERICAN NAVAL RELATIONS 1917–1919 (1991).

<sup>63</sup>The first signature machine (Robotpen) was bought by the Government in 1947.

and Navy Yards Wage Adjustment Committee to keep civilian employees at their jobs, the predecessor of the National War Labor Board; and the *Committee on Merchant Naval Auxiliaries* to charter cargo ships and procure patrol vessels for harbor or coastal defense.

FDR's Naval Reserve Plan of 1915 involved the use of small boats for protection of harbors and coastlines from lurking submarines. War made the menace immediate, and FDR devoted much time to the design and equipment of shallow-draft "subchasers," but a practical problem soon emerged in that the rapid construction of destroyers for convoy duty and cargo ships to feed the Allies and A.E.F. left no available ship-building capacity in American shipyards. Subchasers would have to wait, despite the immediate need—they became the P.T. boats of the Second World War.

In desperation, FDR turned to the fleets of fast and versatile pleasure craft owned by fellow yachtsmen whose patriotism might be enlisted for the war emergency. Although these wealthy men and their influence troubled Secretary Daniels, he did not impede FDR's scheme to charter or buy private yachts for government service. FDR relied heavily on the New York Yacht Club for his purposes.

Unfortunately, problems soon developed. When the yachts were made available, a naval crew under a commissioned officer and a U.S. Navy number were assigned, followed by the installation of fore and aft naval guns (usually 3 inch bore). The armament affected vessel buoyancy, reducing speed and rendering vessels unseaworthy in part. It was a bold scheme but its execution was not a success.

FDR sold his yacht to the Navy as did J.P. Morgan, John Severance, William Harkness and other New York Yacht Club Commodores. Some profited from the sale, most did not. A few vessels survived to be returned to their owners after the war, but many were condemned and scrapped.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Descriptions of many of the yachts may be found in S. Regan, *Gilded Men and the Suicide Fleet*, 29 NAVAL HISTORY No. 3, 58–63 (June 2015).

The need for troopships was solved, in part by the use of interned German passenger ships that were confiscated as alien enemy property under existing customary international law.<sup>65</sup> Chartered vessels of neutral countries were also used.

Another useful scheme with effective public relations results was FDR's "Eyes for the Navy" campaign where Americans donated their binoculars for naval use. 50,000 were contributed during the war; many were returned to their owners after the war with a note from FDR.<sup>66</sup>

To accomplish an unknowable number of possible tasks, VADM Sims' staff of 400 was situated in offices in London's Grosvenor Square (the traditional site of United States representatives since John Adams in 1785). From there the work became an informal alliance without use of the word: use of common shipboard signals, convoy plans, and actual joint operations in the Atlantic followed.<sup>67</sup> One effect was the British decision to abandon opposition to the convoy system of destroyer protection for merchant and troop ships in convoy. Immediate needs for berthing and bunkering American ships and feeding sailors led to occasional haphazard decisions and costly mistakes.

Rapid expansion of both Army and Navy stretched the 1888 State, War and Navy Building (now the Executive Office Building) beyond its capacity. Various Navy offices had already been located in rented spaces around the city when consolidation was ordered in a new Main Navy Building on Constitution Ave., finished by Navy Construction men of the Bureau of Yards and Docks under the general supervision of FDR (Main Navy survived the Second World War, Korea and Vietnam but was demolished and replaced in 1982 in part by the Vietnam Memorial.)

FDR's contributions to naval strategy were his strong support of the convoy system with greatly increased numbers of

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<sup>65</sup>See Executive Order 2651 of June 10, 1917.

<sup>66</sup>F. Freidel, n.1 *supra* 333.

<sup>67</sup>J.L. Leighton, *SIMSADUS: LONDON: AMERICAN NAVY IN EUROPE*, 23–43, 64–5, 82–91 (1920). U.S. destroyers were used to protect convoys in the most vulnerable area from the ocean south of Iceland to the coasts of Ireland.

destroyers instead of vulnerable battleships. He was also responsible for the North Sea Barrier to prevent German submarines' access to the Atlantic.<sup>68</sup> It was to be a "wall" of nets and antenna type mines over 240 miles from Norway to Scotland, set at three descending depths. Construction began in June 1918. At the Armistice, 70,000 mines had been placed at a cost of \$80 million. Its effect on the outcome is uncertain but it could have deterred submarine "wolf-packs" or led to naval mutiny.

President Wilson and Secretary Daniels finally approved FDR's overseas trip to investigate conditions at naval and air bases in Europe, to inspect men and material, to negotiate terms for leases and to review Marines at the front. It began on July 9, 1918 when he sailed from New York aboard the new destroyer, *U.S.S. Dyer* convoying five troopships with 20,000 men to Europe by way of the Azores, arriving at Southampton on July 21 (a twelve-day crossing).

Diplomacy was also part of his assignment, holding discussions with Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of the Admiralty, Prime Minister Lloyd George, Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour and King George V. FDR attended a Gray's Inn Dinner at which he met Winston Churchill, former First Lord of the Admiralty (1911–1913). When they next met in 1941, FDR recalled the meeting but Churchill could not.<sup>69</sup> FDR inspected bases in Britain and Cobh in Ireland and the operations of VADM Sims in London.

In France FDR actually visited the Front at Belleau Wood, Chateau Thierry and Verdun (25,000 U.S. Marines had fought in the most desperate battles at Meuse-Argonne, St. Michel, Aisne-Marne and Chateau-Thierry). His diplomatic work involved meetings with President Raymond Poincaré, Prime Minister

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<sup>68</sup>Freidel n. 1 313–317; N. Friedman, *NAVAL WEAPONS OF WORLD WAR ONE* (2011). R.C. Duncan, *AMERICA'S USE OF SEA MINES*, 47–68 (1962); Naval Research Laboratory. The British installed a mine barrier in the English Channel with some success but opposed the North Sea barrier because of cost. FDR's persistence and the availability of new types of mines and nets from America wore down the opposition.

<sup>69</sup>M. Gilbert, *CHURCHILL AND AMERICA*, 77 (2005).

Georges Clemenceau and Georges Leygues, the Minister of Marine. FDR also travelled to Rome on an unsuccessful mission to persuade the Italian Navy to engage Austrian and German activities in the Mediterranean. (Italy had changed sides in 1916 and was now hard-pressed by the Austrians but would not risk its fleet as long as the Austrians remained in port).

FDR finished his exhausting inspections and interviewed U.S. General John J. Pershing and Marshal Ferdinand Foch concerning the use of surplus naval guns with a 24-mile range to be mounted on railroad cars, because the battleships for which the guns were intended had been replaced by destroyers. He then visited the site in Scotland where his North Sea Mine Barrage was finally beginning to be installed. He returned to France to sail from Brest to New York on the passenger/troop ship *Leviathan* (the former German liner *Vaterland*). FDR became deathly ill with influenza and double pneumonia on the voyage. Although he arrived in New York on September 19, his recovery took several weeks and he did not return to the Navy Department until October 18, 1918. FDR had been out of the office for 10 weeks and 2 days.<sup>70</sup> His illness nearly destroyed his marriage; sent directly to the Hospital on arrival in New York, his wife unpacked his suitcase and discovered love letters to FDR from Lucy Mercer, her Social Secretary.

The First World War ended on November 11, 1918, three weeks after FDR's return to the office. It had not been a war with heroic battles for the U.S. Navy; it was a war of routine convoy duty; but more than 2,084,000 men of the A.E.F. had arrived safely in France.<sup>71</sup> The war had cost the lives of 116,516 U.S.

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<sup>70</sup>F. Freidel n.1 supra. 337–372. Daniels had sent FDR to inspect the occupation of Haiti by U.S. Marines in January 1917. Freidel n. 1, 276–285.

<sup>71</sup>American troop transports proceeding eastward to France and protected by U.S. Navy convoys arrived safely without loss of personnel. Two troopships protected by the British Navy were torpedoed with losses. Three U.S. troopships proceeding westward empty were sunk. P.G. Halpern, *A NAVAL HISTORY OF WORLD WAR I*, 434–37 (1994).

military, although the 1918 influenza pandemic killed more than combat; 204,002 were wounded.<sup>72</sup>

*D. Demobilization and Peace: November 1918 – August 1920*

While FDR recuperated in 1918, President Wilson and his Democratic party were rejected in the mid-term elections of November 5, 1918, narrowly losing control of both houses of Congress just a week before the end of the war. The defeat raised the specter of endless and hostile Congressional investigations of the war and procurement.

*1. Military Justice*

There had also been a build-up of serious convictions of crimes other than military discipline that required review. Under the Articles for the Government of the Navy, harsh punishments were authorized for imposition by General Court Martial: the death penalty was authorized for 20 offenses (Art. 4) and life imprisonment was authorized for 22 offenses (Art. 8) justifying the nickname “Rocks and Shoals” for the Articles.

The death penalty could be adjudged by at least two thirds of the members (at least 5 but no more than 13 superior officers) (Art. 50); such sentences must be confirmed by the President (Art. 53). Dismissal from the Naval Service could be adjudged by a majority of the members (Art. 50) and if the accused was a commissioned officer the dismissal must be confirmed by the President (Art. 53). Convening authorities (Art. 38) had the power to remit or mitigate sentences (Art. 54a) but the Statute gave a general supervisory power to the Secretary of the Navy (Art. 54b).<sup>73</sup> There were no approved naval death sentences in the First World War.

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<sup>72</sup>Department of Veterans Affairs of American Wars, [fsamericaswars.pdf](https://www.fsamericaswars.pdf): deaths: 53,402; non-combat death, 63,114. Statistics are controversial but the proportions are similar from other sources.

<sup>73</sup>The Secretary of the Navy may set aside the proceedings to remit or mitigate, in whole or in part, the sentence imposed by any naval court martial convened by his order or by that of one officer of the Navy or Marine Corps.

Prosecutions by General Court Martial of Officers for navigational errors that produced collisions and groundings required “action” by the Secretary of the Navy (or Acting Secretary). FDR, as founder of the Naval Reserve, was concerned that Regular Navy Officers (graduates of the Naval Academy) might be prejudiced against Reserve Officers leading to unfair convictions and harsh sentences, especially the permanent curse of dismissal or even prison; thus, he carefully reviewed records of General Court Martial proceedings and was often the Reviewing Officer in the absence of Secretary Daniels.

A prosecution of the Reserve Commanding Officer for neglect of duty involving a collision while the vessel was under the command of a harbor pilot resulted in conviction and a fine of \$300 (loss of pay of \$50 per month for 6 months). The fine was cut in half by executive clemency (recommended by 4 of the 5 members). FDR’s action (as Acting Secretary) approved the proceedings and clemency but noted,

The proper place for the captain of a ship in pilot waters is on the bridge. The captain is at all times responsible for safe navigation whether a pilot is on board or not. In this case it is probable that if the captain had been on the bridge more judicious action might have been taken \* \* \*. <sup>74</sup>

An enormous embarrassment to the Navy was the grounding of the *U.S.S. Northern Pacific* off Fire Ireland near New York Harbor on January 1, 1919. The vessel was a passenger liner in naval service to bring some 2800 troops home after the Armistice. Prosecutions of the Commanding Officer, Navigator and Officer of the Deck by General Court Martial followed. In the prosecution of the Commanding Officer, a Regular Navy officer, the sentence after conviction was a loss of seniority of 40 places (“placed at the foot of the list of temporary captains . . . and there to remain until he shall have lost 40 numbers. . . .”) Clemency recommended by the Bureau of Navigation would change the loss of numbers from

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<sup>74</sup>United States v. Sorensen, C.M.O. 98–1919.

40 to 10. FDR's action reflected concern for the gentle treatment of Regular Navy Officers.

In consideration of the recommendation of the Bureau of Navigation and of the final action heretofore taken by the department in cases similar in general character to the one at bar, the sentence of the general court-martial in the foregoing case of Captain Louis J. Connelly, U.S. Navy, is mitigated to the loss of ten (10) numbers in his temporary grade of captain and to the loss of ten (10) numbers in his permanent grade of commander. From a personal knowledge of these cases, I am of opinion that the sentences ultimately given were too light, and I am constrained to the view that a stricter policy must hereafter be adopted by the department in the disciplining of officers who strand or otherwise improperly hazard vessels of the Navy under their command.<sup>75</sup>

The navigator, a Reserve Officer Lieutenant Commander, was convicted and sentenced to dismissal, but executive clemency mitigated this to reduction to permanent rank (Lieutenant) and restoration to duty.<sup>76</sup> The Officer of the Deck, a Reserve Lieutenant, was convicted of culpable inefficiency and neglect of duty because of his failure to report a change in the weather at 0214 in consequence of which the ship stranded. The sentence was dismissal. Executive clemency was granted because "[it] is entirely problematical what the effect would have been to avert the disaster had the required report been made and it is even possible that the ship would have stranded although the change in the weather had been reported." His provisional enrollment as Lieutenant was reduced to Lieutenant, Junior Grade and he was restored to duty.<sup>77</sup>

## 2. *Demobilization*

The unexpected end of the war left many loose ends in Europe: now unnecessary leases, employees, procurement contracts and

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<sup>75</sup>U.S. v. Connelly, CMO 122-1919.

<sup>76</sup>U.S. v. Hunter, CMO 104-1919.

<sup>77</sup>U.S. v. Morgan, CMO 104-1919.

other obligations. FDR knew he would be a target of Republican fishing expeditions into the hasty and sometimes ill-advised arrangements made for the more than 2 million Americans at more than 50 bases (including 27 new air bases) that had been opened in Europe for the American Expeditionary Force in 1917 and 1918.<sup>78</sup>

Provided with authority to settle all outstanding contracts and obligations arising from Naval Operations, FDR and Eleanor sailed on the passenger liner *George Washington* on January 2, 1919. (Divorced men had no political future in 1920 and Sara had absolutely forbidden any type of marital separation.) They arrived in France (Brest) on January 9. FDR had a staff of legal and business assistants to deal with problems in France, England, Belgium, Germany and Italy. His part of the operation was concluded in five weeks so that FDR and Eleanor returned to America on the *George Washington*, departing February 15 from Brest and arriving in Boston on February 23, 1919.<sup>79</sup> (President and Mrs. Wilson were fellow passengers, but the Roosevelts had little contact with the President who was preparing to challenge a hostile Senate on the proposed League of Nations). When the President returned to Paris in March, he requested the presence of Secretary Daniels to advise on naval disarmament; thus FDR was Acting Secretary for three months in 1919.

FDR remained on the job in Washington during the remainder of 1919, the last pitiful days of the invalid President Wilson

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<sup>78</sup>American naval bases in Europe had to service more than 350 U.S. naval vessels: five battleships, cruisers, destroyers, minesweepers, troop transport vessels, cargo ships, tenders and patrol craft. Some of the bases at existing facilities were leased from the host country while others were built from scratch on leased land. For troop transport the most important was Brest, but St. Nazaire, Le Havre, Marseille, Pauillac and Bordeaux were also used. Cardiff in Wales, Cobh (Queenstown) and Bantry Bay in Ireland, Inverness and Invergordon in Scotland. Naval Air Bases were established at Horton and Moutchie (near Bordeaux), Fromentine and Pauillac. Dirigibles operated from Paimboeuf (Loire River); Bantry Bay, Cobh, Wexford and Lough Foyle in Ireland; Killingholme (Lincolnshire) and Eastleigh (near Southampton) in England. Bases were also established at Porto Delgado in the Azores and at Bascare and Porto Corsini in Italy. See J. Bauer and P.E. Coletta, eds. *UNITED STATES NAVY AND MARINE CORPS BASES OVERSEAS* (1985).

<sup>79</sup>F. Freidel, 2 *FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT: THE ORDEAL*, 3–15 (1954).

whose dream of a world organization to keep the peace was destroyed by the refusal to compromise by the President and Senators. The Senate finally refused to ratify the Versailles Treaty, on March 19, 1920. Wilson had been felled by strokes after Sept. 26, 1919 at Pueblo, CO during a 10,000 mile speaking tour urging ratification of the League of Nations; he remained partially paralyzed and did not appear in public until he left office on March 4, 1921.<sup>80</sup> FDR finally resigned on August 6, 1920 in order to accept the Democratic nomination for Vice President that had been conferred by acclamation at the San Francisco Democratic National Convention on July 6, 1920. The Democratic candidates, Cox and Roosevelt were defeated by Republicans Harding and Coolidge on November 2, 1920; the Republicans amassed 16,152,200 votes (404 electors) to 9,147,353 votes (127 electors – the solid South).

## VI CONCLUSION

Despite his frustration at the way Secretary Daniels did his job and his hidden but deep disagreement with the pacifism and caution of the Wilson Administration, FDR successfully completed a graduate course in politics, patriotism and public administration during his almost eight years in the Navy department, emerging as an attractive future president.

The historian David Kennedy has drawn a broad picture of FDR in 1920.

Impetuous, romantic, ambitious... he had been compelled to serve out the war bound to his desk as a civilian administrator. His magical political name, his familial Rooseveltian vigor, his handsome youthful presence, his apparent ubiquity, his volleys of crisply phrased memos had all earned him a reputation as one of

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<sup>80</sup>G. Smith, *WHEN THE CHEERING STOPPED: THE LAST YEARS OF WOODROW WILSON* (1964).

the most able and charismatic of Washington's wartime personalities.<sup>81</sup>

FDR was ready to lead but the vision of an America of opportunity for all would not come until he overcame his personal tragedy of infantile paralysis that struck in the next year.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>D. Kennedy, *FREEDOM FROM FEAR*, 3 (1999).

<sup>82</sup>See J. Tobin, *THE MAN HE BECAME: HOW FDR DEFIED POLIO TO WIN THE PRESIDENCY* (2013)

