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## German WWI expunging of words of foreign origin

Gerald Leonard Cohen

*Missouri University of Science and Technology*, [gcohen@mst.edu](mailto:gcohen@mst.edu)

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### ORIGIN OF ENGLISH *STRAFE*: OVERWROUGHT ANTI-BRITISH HATRED IN WWI GERMANY AND THE RIDICULING REACTION IT EVOKED

Gerald Cohen

‘Sir Walter asked them to sing the hymn with plenty of snarl, to express honestly the intentions of the composer...but they laughed too much to snarl.’

---- March 15, 1915 performance of Lissauer’s ‘Hymn of Hate’ at the Royal College of Music.  
(Byron Adams 2007: 309)

‘The Germans are called the Gott-strafters, and *strafe* is becoming a comic English word.’

----*Times Lit. Suppl.* 10 Feb. 1916, p. 62/1  
(in OED3)

## GERMAN WWI EXPUNGING OF WORDS OF FOREIGN ORIGIN

Gerald Cohen

Welch (2000: 59-60) presents a few WWI examples of the expunging of words of foreign origin from the German language. On the off-chance they been overlooked in linguistic literature, here is the relevant passage:

‘...A curious development of the [German] hate of all things foreign was the hunt led by the Police Chief of Berlin, von Jagow (a cousin of the Foreign Minister), for foreign words. Once it had been decided that all words of foreign origin must be expunged from the German language, the Hotel Bristol, for example, on the Unter den Linden, disappeared and the Hotel Westminster, on the same street, became Lindenhof. Commenting on this Gerard observed [i.e., James Gerard, the American Ambassador to Germany]:

“There is a large hotel called ‘The Cumberland’, with a pastry department over which there was a sign, the French word, *Confiserie*’. The management was compelled to take this down, but the hotel was allowed to retain the name of ‘Cumberland’, because the father-in-law of the Kaiser’s only daughter is the Duke of Cumberland. The word ‘*chauffeur*’ was eliminated, and there were many discussions as to what should be substituted. Many declared for ‘*kraftwagenführer*’, or ‘power wagon driver’. But finally the word was Germanised as ‘*schauffoer*’. [fn.: Gerard 1917: 222].’

## REFERENCES

- Gerard, James W. 1917. *My four years in Germany*. London, New York.
- Welch, David 2000. *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914-1918*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers U. Pr.