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historia nova

The Duke  
Historical Review  
Volume I, Issue 1:  
Fall 2018

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# Historia Nova:

## The Duke Historical Review

*Volume I, Issue 1:  
Fall 2018*

***Historia Nova* features exceptional historical analysis from undergraduate students at Duke University and at institutions from across the United States and around the world, with the ultimate mission of showing that history is *innovative*, history is *new*, and history is *ours*, as our name would suggest.**

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# Letter from the Editors

What is *Historia Nova*? The existence of *Historia Nova: The Duke Historical Review* owes much to chance, sound guidance, and a dedication to and love for the study of the unfurling of the human story. *Historia Nova*, literally “new history” or “our history” in Latin, was founded in response to an intersection of dearth and demand at Duke University. Three years ago, the Duke History department, despite its passionate faculty and eager undergraduate historians, possessed neither an active history club nor a historical review journal, both of which would have had great potential to bring together students and professors for the purpose of recognizing and promoting historical dialogue.

A change was needed. Fortunately, Duke’s students of history found indispensable allies in the Duke History department and its chairman, Dr. John J. Martin. We thank Dr. Martin and the Department for providing much needed support which has helped launch the Duke History Union to the forefront of Duke University’s co-curricular student-run organizations and for the many hours volunteered in assisting in the review and selection of *Historia Nova*’s contents. Together with our editors, reviewers, and contributors, we are proud of this publication’s opportunity to showcase the originality and scholastic aptitude of undergraduate historians and are happy to contribute to furthering Duke’s academic mission. In creating this publication, we had a few goals in mind. Unsurprisingly, we wanted to publish submissions which were interesting, well-researched, well-written, and unique. However, in order to truly benefit Duke and the wider collegiate historical community, we knew that we needed more. As a result, you’ll find topics in this edition which are unexpectedly relevant to 21st century human society. You’ll find an underlying pattern of thinking which influenced people of the past and of the present. You’ll read about issues which were unresolved long ago and remain unresolved now. You’ll see the resemblance of the past to the present, and you’ll wonder if things have really changed that much. This is the value of the study of history: it allows us to see how we got to where we are while also helping to guide us as we move forward.

In addition to its contents, *Historia Nova* is also noteworthy for its presentation. Instead of existing merely as a drab collection of endless text and citations, perhaps featuring a cover photo here and there, *Historia Nova* abounds with style, color, historical images, and interviews with historians of note, all of which serve to accentuate and enliven the stories which its pages tell. So, we encourage you, dear reader, to continue on and immerse yourself into this fascinating and valuable world of scholarly historical literature.

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# Letter from the Department Chair

It is a pleasure to welcome *Historia Nova*, a new journal edited and published by Duke history undergraduates. Envisioned as a space for outstanding historical writing by undergraduates, the journal will play an important role in offering new perspectives on the past. This first volume is enormously promising.

The promise lies first and foremost in the excitement our students have for the study of history. This does not surprise me. We live in a complicated world. Many of the institutions and values that we once believed to be enduring seem to be collapsing. The result is that the future itself seems less and less certain – and students especially are likely to experience this uncertainty with intensity. Yet it has often been at times of rapid and often confusing change that many have turned to history to make sense of the world around them. I am delighted to see our students doing the same.

The promise too lies in the attention the editors have given to history both as an art and as a science. Like medicine – a field to which it is closely allied – history depends both on the rigorous interpretation of evidence and a more humanistic feeling for the meaning of the patterns a scholar encounters. Thus, as a discipline, history is not for the faint-hearted. First the encounter with documents from the near or distant past may lead one to discoveries that can range from the joyful to the disconcerting. And then, once one has made these discoveries, one faces the arduous task of finding the best way to communicate them to others. Generally students write for their teachers and their professors. In *Historia Nova*, the editors and contributors have widened this circle for a larger readership. This is a major step. It requires courage and confidence in one's own voice. But the times demand this. All of us – within and beyond the university – need to work to bring excellent historical writing to broader and broader publics.

Finally, it is promising to see our students take up this endeavor. In the recent past, students in our history department have not enjoyed a venue for undergraduate work. To the contrary, one must go back a long way to find a comparable undertaking – and let me emphasize that the earlier initiative was comparable but not identical. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning here, as it takes us back to the very formation of our department.

In the 1890s – just as history was beginning to develop as a profession in the United States – students and faculty at Trinity College – the school that became Duke University in 1924 – joined together in a multifaceted effort to develop historical studies on our campus and in North Carolina more generally. To accomplish this they established the Trinity College Historical Society. Its work was multifaceted. Members collected books, manuscripts, and historical artifacts that would provide the foundation for research. They also published both faculty and student papers in a series of handsome volumes entitled *The Historical Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society* from 1897 to 1956.

By the 1950s, many of the functions of the society had shifted to other parts of our campus. At the same time, conditions within the historical profession had changed; and faculty, many veterans of the Second World War, began to have greater interest in publishing in more national journals. In this context, the Society saw no reason to continue its work and it was dissolved. But this decision left no regular space for student publications.

Today, with this publication, *Historia Nova* has begun to fill this gap. Please join me in wishing our Duke history undergraduates all the best in this undertaking. May it continue long into the future. - Dr. John J. Martin

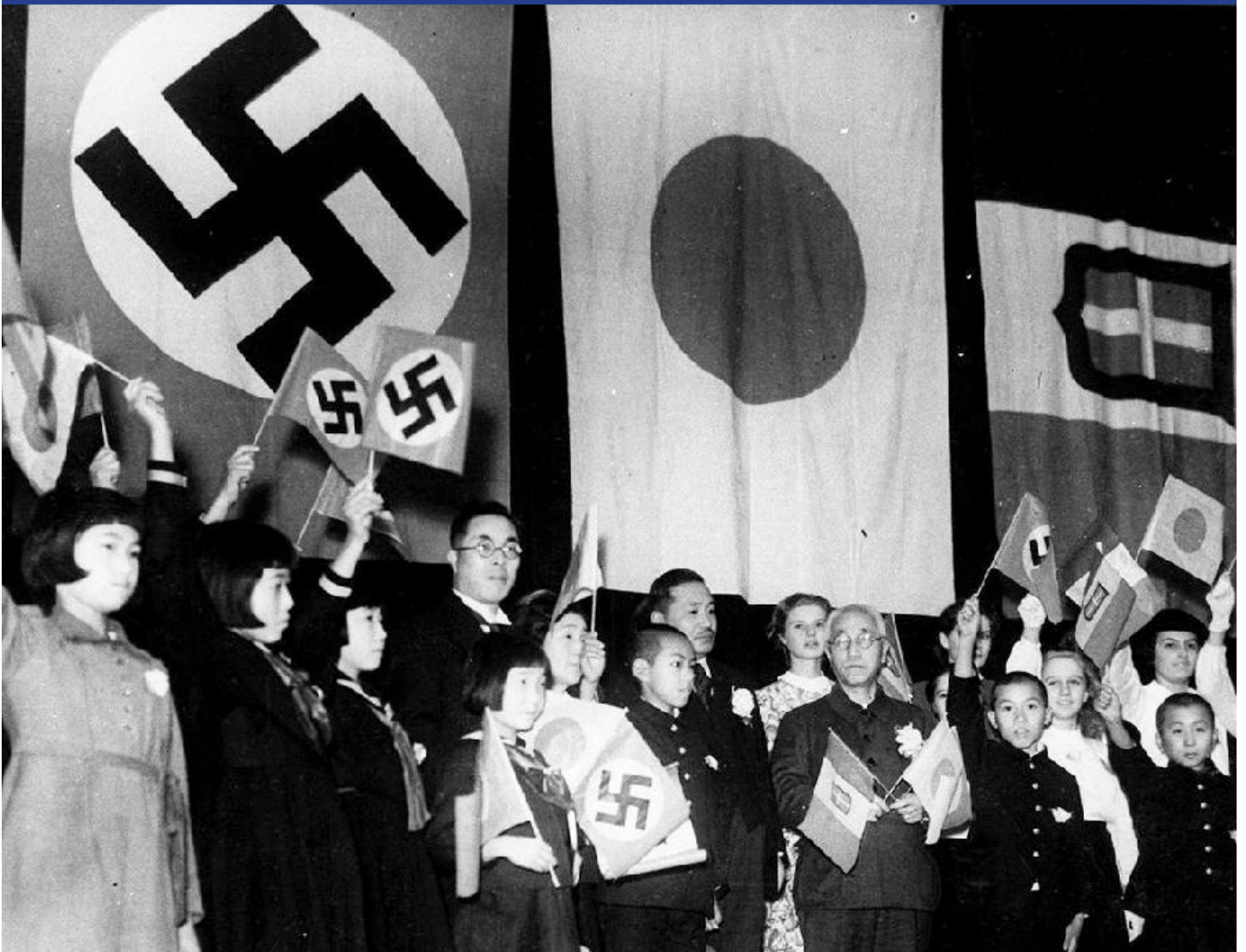
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# The Samurai and the Swastika:

German Popular Culture Images of Japan during the Nazi Era



**Alan Ko**

Duke University '19

Written for "Europe in the Twentieth Century"

Professor James Chappel

(Photo courtesy of Flashbak)



## Introduction

On September 27, 1940, German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, Japanese Ambassador Saburo Kurusu, and Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano, amidst “the greatest pomp and circumstances,”<sup>1</sup> signed the Tripartite Pact. Effectively, the Nazi regime officially allied with Showa Japan<sup>2</sup> and Mussolini’s Italy, as well as with each respective power’s goals for imperial expansion. The text of the written pact emphasized the binding requirement of all three governments to:

Co-operate with one another in regard to their efforts in greater East Asia and regions of Europe respectively wherein it is their prime purpose to establish and maintain a new order of things calculated to promote the mutual prosperity and welfare of the peoples concerned.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the Nazi mission of *lebensraum* in Eastern Europe and of carving out a new racialized empire based on the concept of Aryan superiority now became intrinsically linked to the Japanese end goal of a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” for the great Yamato race.<sup>4</sup> The process of cementing the actual Tripartite Pact in reality was years in the making, and was preceded by fervent periods of cultural and political exchanges of goodwill between the three powers. Even as early as 1937, American journalists bluntly spoke of a “tri-cornered German–Italian–Japanese Alliance” that posed a threat to U.S. interests.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, by the time all three parties officially signed the pact, the image of Nazi Germany, Showa Japan, and Mussolini’s Italy as a united “Axis” front was all but solidified on the international stage.

Racially, this alliance proved to be somewhat problematic considering the deeply entrenched racial ideology of the Nazi regime. Officially, the Nazism espoused the inherent racial superiority of the Aryan (i.e. German) people while classifying those outside the racial core as inherently inferior to varying degrees. The Japanese, an “Asiatic” people with extremely dissimilar phenotypes to those of Aryans, would have thus been classified as racially subordinate antipodes in normal political circumstances. In Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, for instance, the future Fuhrer commented on the positive “impact of Aryan culture” upon the “native Japanese character” under the Meiji modernization project, effectively implying the cultural inferiority of the “national Asiatic state” in comparison to Europe.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Hermann Goering vehemently spoke out against a German alliance with the Japanese, labeling such a pact “distasteful” given the inherent “differences in race” between the two nations.<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, German popular culture—heavily influenced by Nazi propaganda—played an important role in reconciling the racially paradoxical nature of the German-Japanese alliance to the masses who were already indoctrinated into the racial ideology of Aryan supremacy. Historian Peter Fritzsche describes the important role of Nazi propaganda in forging a popular mass culture in which “Germans became properly German by consuming programs offered by the national media” like films, magazines, and other publications sanctioned by the government.<sup>8</sup> Along similar lines, the Nazi regime, through the various apparatuses of popular culture, sought to highlight the many cultural, militaristic, and geopolitical similarities between both Japan and Germany in cementing the public image of the alliance.

Specifically, this paper analyzes consumer materials from the Nazi era (specifically the late 1930s to early 1940s) that depict the Japanese, such as the 1937 film *Die Tochter des Samurai* and the popular print pamphlet *Geopolitik im Kartenbild: Japan*, to examine the multitude of ways in which the similarities between the two nations were emphasized within German popular culture. These common affinities, as depicted within popular culture, ultimately endeavored to forge a public image of both peoples, notwithstanding obvious physical dissimilarities, as natural cultural/ideological, militaristic, and geopolitical allies in their respective goals of racial conquest.

Moreover, as heavily evident by such glamorized popular depictions of the Japanese, the racialized ideology of the Nazi regime was by no means fixed completely around the supremacy of Aryan peoples. As an international power linked to other empires of considerable stature by similar political aims, the Nazi Reich allowed for discussions that deviated from orthodox racial doctrine in the name of reinforcing public support for favorable global alliances with technically “inferior” peoples outside the Aryan race. Within such a racialized popular culture, as a result, populations originally classified as “Nordic” under Hitler’s ideology, such as the Americans,<sup>9</sup> and thus placed on a similar level with the Aryan race, could later be designated as “Jew-ridden” and “Negro-fied” depending on the needs of Nazi propaganda.<sup>10</sup> Simultaneously, the public image of a race initially classified as inferior “culture bearers” instead of “culture creators” by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* (e.g. the Japanese)<sup>11</sup> could be reworked into a more favorable depiction as racially comparable, semi-Aryans depending on shifting geopolitical alliances and needs.

Consequently, if popular depictions of the Japanese within German culture during the Third Reich exemplify anything, it is that race was by no means defined by fixed “black” and “white”

dichotomies under the Nazi regime. Rather, the racial ideology of the Nazi regime could very much be influenced by certain political factors, such as an international politics, that allowed for major deviances from the official doctrine of Aryan supremacy.

### **The Context of Japanese-German Relations Pre-1930s and Post-1933**

As noted by historians like Bernd Martin, the international trajectories of both modern Germany and Japan followed remarkably similar paths on the world stage.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both nations had overcome numerous obstacles to unity and became centralized, imperialist, and industrialized powers in their respective spheres. Moreover, both newcomers had shocked the world by defeating powers of the old international elite; Germany (then Prussia) had subdued the Second French Empire in 1871 while the Japanese had unexpectedly vanquished both Qing China and Czarist Russia by the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interactions between the two powers began roughly during this era as the Japanese ruling elite increasingly adapted German models of science, technology, politics, and military organization into the Meiji modernization project.<sup>13</sup> Linguistic imprints of this German-centric modernization can even be found within the contemporary Japanese language; words like “*Arubaito*” (part-time work) have obvious German origins (*Arbeit*).

The similarities between the two nations were not lost on the German masses, especially in the aftermath of Japan’s stunning victories against China in 1895 and Russia in 1905 (Germany’s age old enemy). The epithets “Prussians of East Asia” or “Germans of East Asia” were not uncommonly used by the German press to describe the Japanese during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, when Japan entered World War I against the Germans, Japanese politicians such as Honda Kumataro fervently criticized the move, emphasizing the “spiritual tie between the two peoples” against the “tyranny of the Anglo-Saxon countries.”<sup>15</sup> Even before the Nazi era, members of both populations could not discount the inherent similarities that existed between their respective nations, notwithstanding the obvious cultural and physical dissimilarities.

As a result, when both nations embarked upon similar goals of imperialist expansion under totalitarian governments during the 1930s, political, cultural, and social exchanges between the two powers reached an all-time high.<sup>16</sup> Hitler and other key Nazi officials such as Joachim von Ribbentrop (the future foreign minister) exhibited extreme interest in allying with Japan given both nations’ fervent opposition to the League of Nations and to Communism.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, Japan and Germany signed the Anti-Comintern Pact on November 25, 1936, which recognized the shared goal of both

powers to defeat the Third Communist International, and thus brought them closer to an official alliance. Cultural exchanges soon followed, with the *Völkischer Beobachter* (the Nazi party's official daily newspaper) reporting on a Hitler Youth delegation sent to Japan in 1938 and on Japanese games like *go* becoming popularized in Berlin during the late 1930s.<sup>18</sup> In the aftermath of the Tripartite Pact in late 1940, a record number of books written about Japan (including four German translations of the Japanese classic *Chūshingura*)<sup>19</sup> were published in Germany—a testament to the alliance's clear impact within the everyday popular culture of ordinary Germans.<sup>20</sup> These exchanges even extended into the realm of film, considered to be one of the most important branches of the Nazi propaganda machine, as evident by the 1937 co-production, *Die Tochter des Samurai* (Daughter of the Samurai).

Concurrent with the explicit aim of Nazi propaganda to disseminate a new favorable public image of their Japanese allies to German audiences in the Reich,<sup>21</sup> these cultural materials sought to highlight the many similarities between the two powers within a heavily racialized popular culture. As noted by Fritzsche, the uniquely modern and deliberate popular culture industry of Nazi Germany emphasized a heavily “*unter-uns*” (“other-ones”) mindset that included its Aryan consumers within an audio-visual-literary *volksgeinmeinschaft* (“people’s-community”) to the exclusion of Germany’s racial enemies.<sup>22</sup> However, rather than excluding the Japanese as “inferior” *untermensch* (“underperson”) within this Aryanized popular culture, the emphasis instead was on including the great Yamato race as exotic, yet closely similar brothers within the greater battle against the racial and political enemies of both peoples. Consequently, the majority of this paper will focus on analyzing various popular culture materials ranging from films to photobooks in order to examine the ways in which the Nazi regime aimed to depict the Japanese.

### **Die Tochter des Samurai: Volksgemeinschaft and Kokutai Visualized on Screen**

Given the historical context of German popular culture’s portrayal of the Japanese, a close examination of one such work, in this case the 1937 film *Die Tochter des Samurai*, is useful. In 1936, the same year the Anti-Comintern Pact was signed, German film director Arnold Fanck was invited by the Japanese film industry to work on what would become the first of two co-productions between Nazi Germany and Showa Japan.<sup>23</sup> The governments of both countries were at the time beginning to introduce new regulations to effectively create an anti-Anglo-American film bloc, which banned the importation of ideologically suspect and “offensive” films.<sup>24</sup> Instead, the government-monopolized film industries of both nations looked towards one another for new creative and financial markets in

the place of Hollywood's previously hegemonic position (American films had made up nearly 35% of all screenings in prewar Japan).<sup>25</sup> Consequently, Fanck (who had famously helped to jumpstart the career of Leni Riefenstahl during the Weimar era<sup>26</sup>) set out for Tokyo to work on *Die Tochter des Samurai* with a mixed German/Japanese cast and crew.

The basic storyline of *Die Tochter des Samurai* revolves around the conflict between a Japanese university student, Yamato Teruo, and his adopted family clan. As the audience learns, Teruo, originally the son of poor farmers, was adopted into the Yamato clan with the expectation that he would marry the daughter of its patriarch, Mitsuko, after completing his education in Europe (financed by his new family). In the film, Teruo has just returned to Japan with his Aryan female friend, Gerda Storm, after studying agriculture for eight years in Germany. Having learned the concepts of individual freedom and liberty in Europe, Teruo refuses to marry his fiancé, the obedient Mitsuko, who has been dutifully preparing herself for his arrival. However, after being inspired by the sage words of his Shinto teacher, Teruo changes his mind and chases after Mitsuko who, after being dishonored by Teruo's refusal, plans to commit suicide by throwing herself into a volcano. In the film's climax, Teruo rescues Mitsuko, and the two happily marry in the rural Japanese countryside. By the film's end, Teruo and Mitsuko move to Manchukuo, a Japanese colony in northeast China, and begin their lives farming a "New Japan."

Thematically, the film reveals the strong emphasis on the part of Fanck and other German commentators to apply familiar Nazi ideological themes in depicting a seemingly exotic Japanese culture as relatable to German audiences. German historian Hans-Joachim Bieber has noted that, within the realm of Nazi popular culture, Japan seemed to represent "a model of alternative modernity" in which the island nation was viewed as a technologically and economically advanced empire that had still been able to preserve its deeply ancient cultural and political traditions even in the aftermath of the Meiji modernization project.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, the Nazified *volksgemeinschaft*, a modern cultural construct that emphasized the collective unbreakable ancient bond of the Aryan people, found a suitable model in the *kokutai* ideology being proliferated by the Showa regime in Japan. Specifically defined by Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro in 1937 as a "national polity" based in "cooperative" and other traditionally Japanese values while simultaneously also being able to adapt to the modern age,<sup>28</sup> *kokutai* represented a key ideology of the Showa government and its seemingly progressive vision for a

“Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” ruled by the Yamato race. Effectively, both ideologies, emphasized the inherently traditional core of the German *volk* or Japanese *kokū*<sup>29</sup> without disregarding the necessity of modern technologies and industries.

Consequently, the similarities between this modern, yet tradition-bound German *volksgemeinschaft* and Japanese *kokutai* are heavily evident within the film’s cinematography. Vast cinematic sweeps contrasting the beauty of Japan’s rural landscape give way to the hustle and bustle of downtown Tokyo; likewise, scenes depicting the modernity of Japan’s heavy industries are contrasted with drawn-out cinematic glimpses into traditional activities such as *noh* plays and sumo-wrestling. Gerda, in commenting on the bright neon lights of downtown Tokyo’s Ginza district, notes jokingly to Teruo, “Now tell me, are we in Japan or Berlin?”<sup>30</sup>—underscoring the almost indistinguishable modern landscapes that had come to define the metropolitan centers of both nations. The seamless interplay between modernity and tradition that define the ideologies of both nations is also clearly visible in the montage scene of Mitsuko’s education during Teruo’s eight year absence; along with traditional Japanese activities such as kendo fencing and flower arrangement, she also notably practices “modern” and “Western” pursuits such as piano playing, swimming, and even learning the German language.

When Teruo divorces himself from tradition, and consequently the *kokutai*, by refusing to honor his familial obligations and by instead embracing individualism, Gerda heavily chastises her Japanese friend for his selfish actions, claiming that “one can’t escape so easily from the morals of one’s country.”<sup>31</sup> Later in the scene, commenting on a group of Japanese soldiers marching outside, Gerda even caustically jokes to him, “And these are all individualists?”<sup>32</sup> The association in the scene between the sacred duty of the imperial soldiers to defend their nation and Teruo’s duty to honor his ancestral commitments are clear. Teruo, like the imperial soldier, must disregard his selfish desires for the greatness of the *kokutai*; failing to do so can only result in the disintegration of the national spirit. Perhaps not so ironically, it is the German Gerda, who has most likely been educated in the Nazi concept of collective *volksgemeinschaft*, who must remind her Japanese friend of his sacred duty to his family and people. As noted by Maltarich, “the perception, long a tradition in the West, that Japan knew no individuals” often was reinterpreted by Nazi observers to mean that the collaborative spirit of the Japanese *kokutai* represented a notable antidote to the selfish European concepts of individualism and classical liberalism that threatened the existence of the collective



*volks-gemeinschaft*.<sup>33</sup> The language expressed by Gerda in defending traditionally “Japanese” morals against Teruo’s individualism thus speaks to the almost interchangeable nature of *kokutai* and *volks-gemeinschaft* within popular discourse, despite the obvious semantic differences between the two ideologies.

Midway through the film, Teruo only decides to honor his familial commitment once his *kokutai* has been rekindled by his old Shinto teacher. In a long voiceover monologue within a Buddhist temple, he sagely remarks to his young protégé:

You are, as a sole individual, not so important, for you are only a small link in the long chain of your ancestors. But even the smallest link is the bearer of the whole chain, and thus responsible to the whole that was before him and responsible for that which follows, which is passed on from this blood...this blood is only a drop flowing by in the eternal stream of the life of your people....The bow to one’s own father, however, shall be the daily sign of your love and gratitude towards the whole, that for us has the name: Japan.<sup>34</sup>

Again, the parallels between both *kokutai* and *volks-gemeinschaft* are made implicitly clear to the German viewers of the film. As highlighted by Fritzsche, the Nazified ideology of the *volks-gemeinschaft* often emphasized the sacredness of Aryan blood stretching back generations, as encapsulated by the obligatory *Ahenpass* (genealogy chart) required by ordinary Germans.<sup>35</sup> Just as ordinary Germans must honor their racial commitments to their *volks-gemeinschaft*, Teruo in essence must honor the *kokutai* of the Japanese race by fulfilling his duty to marry Mitsuko and thus continue the long, unbroken ancestral line of his people.

The cinematic connections between the two ideologies continue into the ending scene of the film, in which Teruo and Mitsuko are seen settling the seemingly vast, bountiful land of Manchukuo. After Teruo’s ancestral reckoning and subsequent marriage to Mitsuko, Teruo’s birth father remarks to his son on the tragic inability of the Japanese soil to sustain the newlyweds. In a voiceover against the backdrop of the rural Japanese landscape, he sadly notes:

Your father and your father’s father and all our fathers worked on this earth... Maybe it’s a thousand years my son, perhaps even more....But one thing your old father notes: today we are too many for this little piece of earth!<sup>36</sup>

The scene then cuts to Teruo driving a tractor on a Manchurian rice field beside the kimono-clad Mitsuko who is holding their infant son. Teruo then places his infant son upon the freshly tilled field and beseeches him to “Become a child of the earth too.” The last shot of the film then focuses on a Japanese soldier in the distance, keeping an ever-close eye on the young family as they continue their

sacred mission of settling the Manchurian frontier.

To a German audience, the clear association of Manchukuo in the ending of the film with the Nazi concept of *lebensraum* would have been almost unmistakable. Central to Hitler's vision of a new Aryan empire in Eastern Europe was the conquest of vast swathes of new earth where millions of Germans could settle a bountiful rural Arcadia unencumbered by the cramped confines of the "Old Reich."<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the film depicts Manchukuo in a similar light, as a Japanese *lebensraum* where Teruo and his young family can continue the sacred work of his ancestors in tilling the soil and producing the rice that will feed the Japanese people. Missing from Fanck's cinematic depiction of Manchukuo, moreover, are the native Manchu and Han residents of the former Chinese-governed province—another chilling parallel that speaks to the implicitly ruthless conquests of "inferior" peoples both ideological concepts of "living space" were inherently built upon.

As evident throughout this analysis of *Die Tochter des Samurai*, German commentary on Japan within the realm of popular culture tended to resort heavily to the language of cultural analogues in depicting Japan to German audiences. Most obviously, throughout the film, implicit comparisons are made between the Japanese ideology of *kokutai* and the German concept of *volksgeinmeinschaft*. Despite the film's exotic portrayal of the Japanese, German viewers in 1937 would have related well to the film's central themes of blood and soil—extremely typical Nazi cinematic tropes—which ultimately come to define Teruo's renewed identity as a member of the Yamato race. Such parallels had the subtle goal of bringing together both seemingly dissimilar populations within the public consciousness and thus cementing the Berlin-Tokyo alliance through popular culture.

### **Bound by the Sword: the Samurai and the S.S.**

More than just identifying the cultural and ideological similarities between the German and Japanese civilian populations, many popular culture depictions of the Japanese also included an emphasis on highlighting the many militaristic parallels among both war-minded races. Both racialized totalitarian empires, unsurprisingly, invested heavily in their respective militaries in order to realize their goals of imperial conquest of inferior races. Moreover, both the national ideologies of Showa Japan and Nazi Germany included a prominent emphasis on asserting seemingly ancient, militarized values in the everyday lives of their populaces, and of glorifying military service as one of the ultimate forms of patriotism. Consequently, German popular culture depictions of the Japanese

during the Third Reich tended to highlight these seemingly intrinsic military values shared by both races—as evident in the oft-utilized depiction of the “Samurai” as a cultural analogue to the S.S.<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned previously, the image of the Japanese as a tradition-bound, yet simultaneously modern and progressive *volksgemeinschaft* was frequently used in popular culture as an exemplary model for the Germans to emulate. This emulation extended into the realm of the Japanese military—often through the metaphorical image of a samurai warrior—which many in the Nazi leadership admired. Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the S.S., especially admired the so called “samurai spirit” of the Japanese soldier, going as far as to compare the seemingly ancient, sacred ethos of the Japanese samurai with the medieval, chivalric Teutonic German knight.<sup>39</sup> Himmler, in a display of atypical racial admiration, even suggested that members of the S.S. should seek to emulate the archetypical samurai’s heroism and spirituality.<sup>40</sup>

This obsession with associating the samurai spirit with the Japanese is particularly evident in Fanck’s retitling of *Die Tochter des Samurai* from the original Japanese title *Atarashiki Tsuchi* (The New Earth) —a testament to the deeply entrenched place of the samurai stereotype within the German popular consciousness. The samurai, as stereotyped by German authors like Heniz Corraza in *Samurai: Ritter des Reiches in Ehre und Treue*, represented the spiritual, moral wellspring of a *volksgemeinschaft* not afraid to die or commit suicide for the glory of the *volk*.<sup>41</sup> Instilled with these ancient “Samurai” and “Aryan” values of military supremacy, both the Japanese and the German peoples seemed to represent (in the eyes of many German commentators) superior races destined to acquire their respective empires by harnessing these courageous traditions of wartime might.

This portrayal of the Japanese soldier as a brave, progressive, yet simultaneously tradition-bound samurai warrior can clearly be discerned by analyzing imagery from popular Nazi era German publications. In *Gross-Japan; Dai Nippon*, one of the many popular photobook publications on Japan that were published in the early 1940s, a large portion of the book centers on portraying the specific culture of the Japanese military. Under the caption title “*Japanische Wehrmacht*,” page forty-nine of the publication includes a photograph depicting a group of fresh new recruits decked out in traditional aristocratic-style kimonos while registering for the army. The process by which these “traditional” Japanese recruits—more often than not from the rural countryside<sup>42</sup>—become molded into the image of a modern soldier is explained in detail within the following pages. Along with more conventional, “modern” training routines like muscle training and calisthenics, *Gross-Japan* also

includes depictions of soldiers performing “traditional” military routines such as kendo fencing (albeit with modern military garb and performed in a concrete courtyard). Thus, as depicted in *Gross-Japan*, the process of becoming a modern “Japanese” soldier does not entail discarding one’s kimono (i.e. tradition) on conscription day for the mold of a typical Westernized soldier. Rather, like with most facets of modern Aryan or Japanese culture, it entails harnessing and grooming the spiritual, traditional side of one’s racialized military character through ancient, samurai-esque activities like kendo-fencing in order to truly become a soldier of the *volksgemeinschaft*.

Likewise, the 1942 German photobook publication *Die Japanische Kriegsmarine* is rife with this strong interplay between the traditional “samurai” spirit and the technological modernity of the imperial Japanese military. The front cover of the publication, which depicts the main deck of a Japanese battleship, bombastically presents the reader with four cannons pointing ahead into the foreground with a calm naval officer in between, beckoning the German audience to marvel at the military might of the Japanese navy. Clearly, this was no *untermensch* race incapable of asserting its racial influence on the world.

On page thirty-nine of *Die Japanische Kriegsmarine*, special emphasis is placed on depicting pictorially a visit by a Japanese naval regiment from the ship *Ashigara* to Berlin in 1937. Like with *Gross-Japan*, the editor has included many images depicting “traditional” Japanese military activities, including photographs detailing an exhibition of kendo fencing and a bayonet battle given to an audience of Berliners. Again, the attitude towards this very anthropological display of Japanese military culture is not one of disgust or racialized scorn that may have characterized other German depictions of *untermensch* culture. Instead, the gaze of both the German reader, as well as that of the German audience depicted in the background, is focused upon the solemn, disciplined Japanese warriors who take center-stage as opposed to the far-removed, almost faceless Aryan spectators.

In consuming these images of the Japanese samurai spirit—as encapsulated by these photographic depictions and physical exhibitions within popular publications—Aryan consumers were clearly meant to be inspired by such exemplary examples of racialized military might. In certain instances, this admiration may have even bordered on emulation, as in the case of many Nazi leaders, in looking towards their Japanese brethren to model an Aryan military culture on more traditional, spiritual values.

Unlike *Gross-Japan*, *Die Japanische Kriegsmarine* also emphasized the strong interplay

between Japan's resurgent Shinto religious culture and the strength of its imperial military. Page twenty-six of the book includes a photographic depiction of Shinto priests sweeping and bowing to the bronze statue in Tokyo of the so-called "Three Brave Heroes as Human Cannons"—three soldiers who in 1932 valiantly gave their lives to the Yamato race by charging a Shanghai stronghold using a three-meter bamboo pipe filled with explosives.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, pages forty-two to forty-three of *Die Japanische Kriegsmarine* are filled with photographs of ordinary Japanese civilians and priests worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine, where Japanese soldiers are deified after dying in battle. Again, as with the photographs of the aforementioned traditional military activities, the emphasis on depicting the militarized religious customs of the Japanese is not intended to mock the folkways of an inferior people, but rather to respectfully depict the valorous practices of a racially comparable *volksgemeinschaft*.

Hitler particularly envied the Japanese concept of a nationalistic Shinto religion, which had its roots in ancient folk beliefs and emphasized the divinity of the Japanese race as encapsulated by the emperor, and consequently considered it to be a worthy alternative to what he viewed as an incompatible Christian religion for the Aryan race.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, Himmler and Joseph Goebbels, German Reich Minister of Propaganda, even advanced the idea that the S.S. should practice a type of ancestor worship, à la the Japanese, in the hopes that a similar warrior culture would develop among the Aryan race.<sup>45</sup> Ironically, whereas the Japanese elites of the Meiji period looked to model the culture of their new modern military on the Prussian/German model—the Imperial War College (*Rikugun Daigakko*) was for instance founded in 1882 along the lines of the German *Heereshochschule* complete with German military advisors<sup>46</sup>—the situation now had somewhat reversed. Nazi leaders were now looking towards the traditional "samurai spirit" of the Japanese military, with its ancient Shinto traditions, as a model for a similar S.S. ethos based in a primordial Aryan culture.

Consequently, far from regarding ancient Japanese customs such as incense burning or *seppuku* (ritualized suicide) as Asiatic (i.e. "barbaric") and thus as un-Aryan, these cultural institutions were regarded as worthy of intense respect by the Aryan reader. Echoing the sentiments of top Nazi Japanophiles like Himmler, the gaze of a German reader during the 1940s may have even regarded the Japanese with a degree of envy. The combination of modernity and military tradition—symbols of a racially superior *volksgemeinschaft*—are clearly at work within *Die Japanische Kriegsmarine's* photographic representations of the Japanese.

In highlighting the many cultural similarities between both populations, German popular culture often endeavored to depict the many militaristic parallels between the Japanese and Aryans. Often, the image of the Japanese samurai as a courageous, tradition-bound, and spiritually superior paragon of the Japanese *volksgemeinschaft* was used to depict the military might of a normally “Asiatic” race in either explicit or implicit comparisons with the military power of the Aryan nation. At times, this reverence given to the Japanese military and its related religious traditions could even take an adaptive approach by a normally racially superior people, as Nazi leaders like Himmler saw a model for a similar Aryanized military religion in Shinto and other militarized religious customs of the Showa regime.

### **East Asia and Eastern Europe: Separate, but Equal *Lebensraum***

As evident in *Die Tochter des Samurai*, Japan’s newly conquered territories in East Asia were often presented through the lens of the Nazi ideology of *lebensraum*. Just as the rural fields of the Ukraine seemed to represent a perfect rural arcadia for millions of land-hungry Aryans, the windswept plains of Manchuria seemed to offer the same for Japan, which ever since the days of the Meiji era lacked plentiful farmland for its booming population.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the geopolitical parallels between the two powers presented by German media extended beyond equating the Japanese idea of a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” with *lebensraum*. In presenting Japan to German audiences, the popular culture of the period also heavily emphasized the two powers as being united against the geopolitical forces of Western diplomacy and Bolshevism, as well as their status as fellow deserving “have-nots” in the international sphere.

In many ways, the extreme dissatisfaction over the post-World War I settlement sowed the seeds for future resentment by both powers against a seemingly hegemonic world order being crafted by Western elites through the League of Nations. In addition to imposing a huge financial indemnity for allegedly instigating the conflict, the Treaty of Versailles left Germany stripped of its overseas empire and parts of its eastern territories. Coupled with the fledgling republic’s immense financial instabilities throughout the Weimar era, Versailles and the League contributed greatly towards a feeling of intense resentment among the German populace.<sup>48</sup> Once a powerful empire stretching from Shandong to Cameroon, Germany now seemed to be a victim of an American, British, and French dominated world order bent on weakening the new republic. Karl Haushofer, the same German geopolitical scientist who first termed the phrase “*lebensraum*” in the 1920s, even suggested that



Germany was devolving into a status of a “*habenicht*” (have-not) nation at the hands of an Anglo-American conspiratorial alliance.<sup>49</sup>

Likewise, the post-World War I status quo left the Japanese elites of the Taisho government<sup>50</sup> extremely dissatisfied. Although Japan, by virtue of its status as a victorious nation, had earned a seat at Versailles, the seemingly meager concessions towards Japanese interests greatly angered the imperial government in Tokyo. Having demanded the former German colonies of Shandong, Tsingtao, and Kiachow in China as well as the inclusion of a racial equality clause in the Versailles treaty, the Japanese were only given temporary protectorate status over Shandong.<sup>51</sup> The racial equality clause was flat out refused by the other Great Powers, which particularly incensed Japan given the heavily anti-Japanese legislation being passed in many Western nations. In the United States, for instance, the Immigration Act of 1924 banned Japanese nationals from immigrating or applying for citizenship altogether.<sup>52</sup> This sense of deep national humiliation at the hands of Western powers continued with the Washington Naval Conference of 1921, which infamously set the mandated naval tonnage for the U.S, U.K, and Japan at 5:5:3 respectively.

Consequently, Japan and Germany entered what many Western powers hoped would be a stable, peaceful post-Great War period with a sense of cynicism and resentment towards the new world order being imposed on both proud peoples. The great German Empire, in the eyes of many including Hitler, had been reduced to a second-rate power at the hands of Western diplomacy, while the Great Empire of Nippon was still being treated as a second-rate “Asian” power through the lens of anti-Japanese xenophobia. Consequently, by the 1930s, when both nation-states saw the rise of authoritarian fascist-style regimes at the expense of democratic governments, Japan and Germany looked for paths outside the mechanisms of the League and Western diplomacy to expand their burgeoning geopolitical interests.

As with other aspects of the alliance, the similar geopolitical parallels of both regimes were very much highlighted within the public realm. Haushofer, who would later play an influential role within the Nazi Party in paving the way for the joint Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936,<sup>53</sup> also positioned Japan as a “*habenicht*” nation in opposition to Great Britain and the United States. Moreover, as Aristotle Kallis has noted, throughout the early 1940s, the Ministry of Propaganda heavily stressed through a series of *Propagandaparolen* that the war should be presented to the public as a war of *habenichts* (Italy, Japan, and Germany) against the plutocratic Western “haves.”<sup>54</sup> Likewise, Alfred Rosenberg,

head of the Foreign Policy Office of the Nazi Party, even likened Japan's conquests in East Asia to a "yellow *lebensraum*" over racially inferior Chinese, Korean, and Manchurian peoples.<sup>55</sup>

Examples of these geopolitical parallels are heavily evident in Walther Jantz's 1943 publication *His Geopolitik im Kartenbild: Japan*, a popular pamphlet that explores the geopolitical situation of Japan through a series of colorful maps. Page two of the publication, under the caption "Japan: People Without Space," features a map highlighting immigration out of an extremely densely populated, crowded Japanese mainland to other areas within the new "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." Likewise, page five of the pamphlet highlights Manchukuo as an exemplary new colony within this Japanese *lebensraum*; under the title "Manchukuo—Japan's Prototype Expansion," Manchuria is presented to German audiences as a booming economic and agricultural frontier for the millions of landless, destitute Japanese people suffering from the effects of the Great Depression.

To a German reader—the average Munich housewife paging through the publication during tea, or a Breslau schoolboy picking up a copy at a newsstand on his way back from a *Hitlerjugend* meeting—such obvious geopolitical parallels with the concurrent German situation on the Eastern front were probably hard to miss. Just as the proud Aryan race was fighting a holy war for a utopian, German-dominated *lebensraum* against masses of barbaric Slavic and Bolshevik peoples in Eastern Europe, Japan was undertaking a similar racialized war for geopolitical space against the Americans and Chinese in East Asia. Both peoples, as implicitly depicted in *Geopolitik im Kartenbild*, were fighting against a world order that threatened the very existence of the *volksgemeinschaft* and *kokutai*, as well as against the regressive, anti-imperialist policies of the West's post-World War I status quo.

Missing throughout the various maps and diagrams displayed in *Geopolitik Im Kartenbild: Japan* is any sort of German geopolitical interest in the realm of East Asia that was coming under Japanese dominance. In the pre-World War I era, when the German Empire possessed a clearly defined concession in China, relations between Tokyo and Berlin were somewhat strained, as evident by the prevalence of the "Yellow Peril" ideology among German elites against Japanese imperialism in the region.<sup>56</sup> However, with the loss of Germany's overseas colonial possessions in the aftermath of Versailles, such obvious geopolitical conflicts between the two nations evaporated. Other than maintaining a steady market for German goods under Chiang Kai Shek's visibly unstable Republic of

China,<sup>57</sup> the Nazi regime did not regard East Asia as a region of paramount geopolitical importance.

Consequently, this clear absence of any inherent geopolitical conflicts between both racialized powers was commented on throughout popular culture materials authored by German analysts of Japan. Dr. Otto Koellreutter, a prominent Nazi legal scholar at the University of Munich, under a section of his popular 1943 essay *Das Politische Gesicht Japans* titled “Japan und Deutschland,” highlighted this harmony. Koellreutter claimed that Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Australia had clear conflicts with Japan in the Pacific, but since Germany possessed no obvious stake in the region, the two powers were consequently exempt from such a hostile diplomatic relationship.<sup>58</sup> Throughout this section of the essay, Koellreutter continued to comment on this geopolitical harmony, claiming that both powers were pursuing “new political orders” in their own respective, separate realms of *lebensraum*.<sup>59</sup>

Implicit throughout such a glorified geopolitical depiction of Germany’s Japanese allies was the fact that their ideology of a so called “yellow *lebensraum*” was wholly separated from an Aryan *lebensraum* in Eastern Europe by tens of thousands of miles and was thus not mutually exclusive. Ironically, nation-states that were considered closer racially to Germany but possessed clear geopolitical conflicts with the Nazi vision of *lebensraum*, such as Great Britain and the U.S., were painted as racialized enemies to the German nation by Nazi propaganda. The United States, for instance, was oftentimes depicted as being ruled by a coalition of anti-German Jews bent on destroying European civilization.<sup>60</sup>

In presenting the Nazi-Japanese alliance to the German masses, popular culture materials from the period often emphasized the many geopolitical parallels between both racialized empires within the post-World War I order. Having both considered themselves to be victims of an inequitable, hegemonic world system of Western diplomacy, both powers subsequently embarked upon wars of racialized conquest to carve out “living spaces” in their respective geopolitical regions. Moreover, implicit throughout German portrayals of the parallel Japanese quest for living space in East Asia is the absence of any clear geopolitical conflicts with the Nazi ideology of a *lebensraum* in Eastern Europe. Consequently, the public image of the two nations as bounded together by similar geopolitical goals—visions that did not overlap geographically with one another—are clearly inherent throughout such German depictions of Japan.

### **Conclusion: The End of the War and Postwar Comparisons**

Popular culture depictions of the Japanese during the Nazi era endeavored to depict both the Aryan and the Japanese peoples as natural cultural/ideological, militaristic, and geopolitical allies in the context of World War II. Whether through films such as *Die Tochter des Samurai*, photo-books like *Die Japanische Kriegsmarine*, or political pamphlets such as *Das Politische Gesicht Japans*, these popular culture materials helped to cement the public image of the alliance despite the many ideological obstacles regarding race posed by the diplomatic relationship.

However, as the war drew to a close with the specter of defeat at the hands of supposedly inferior peoples creeping ever closer to the home-front, the production of German popular culture materials on Japan declined dramatically.<sup>61</sup> In some instances, irritated by the immense losses suffered by the German military on the Eastern front, Nazi leaders began to revert back to a pre-alliance language of anti-Japanese racism. Himmler in 1944 was even on record to have said “that we, the oldest civilized people and the oldest warrior people of the world, do not need to obtain examples and role models from a different race [the Japanese].”<sup>62</sup>

Such racialized sentiments against once-praised allies that gradually came to increase in frequency by the end of the war represented perhaps the ever-present shallowness of the Berlin-Tokyo pact that had only been sustainable during times of victory. When the alliance with Japan no longer served the greater political goals of the Third Reich and defeat was becoming increasingly inevitable, the construction of the Japanese as cultural, militaristic, and geopolitical allies subsequently also faded from the public consciousness. Everyday Germans, by this time, were probably more concerned with fleeing the Soviet advance or finding room in their urban air raid bunkers rather than viewing films or reading books that praised their Japanese allies. Of course, Germany’s defeat in May of 1945 ended the propagation of such popularly constructed parallel images of Nazi Germany and Showa Japan as inherent allies within the public sphere.

By the end of 1945, perhaps somewhat ironically, the political, economic, and social conditions of both defeated nations bore eerie similarities. Both Japan and Germany were faced with rebuilding their war-torn economies, absorbing millions of ethnic refugees expelled from previously occupied territories, as well as with the national humiliation of a foreign occupation. Perhaps most importantly, Japan and Germany in the immediate postwar period had to face similar cathartic reckonings surrounding both nations’ many war crimes. At the Tokyo Tribunal and Nuremburg Trials, shocking

wartime events committed by both Axis powers in the context of a racialized war—e.g. the Rape of Nanking and the Holocaust—were unveiled to the world and subsequently tried in front of a global audience.

Fittingly, the postwar trajectories of the newly forged Federal Republic of Germany and of post-occupation democratized Japan have also followed strangely similar paths. Both countries underwent an astonishing era of economic reconstruction—largely funded through U.S. aid—during the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1970s, both had rehabilitated their respective reputations as prosperous, democratic, and anti-Communist members of the global community.<sup>63</sup> Seventy years after the conclusion of the war, Germany and Japan continue to deal with the legacy of their previous racialized regimes, as evident by the recent controversial German trial of a former Nazi prison guard,<sup>64</sup> and South Korea's altercations with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe over the use of "Comfort Women,"<sup>65</sup> Thus, although the age of portraying the Japanese as the "Prussians of East Asia" and "Aryans of Asia" has clearly passed, international comparisons between both nations in the modern age cannot be discounted altogether.

### Endnotes

1. Ernst L. Presseisen, *Germany and Japan: A Study in Totalitarian Democracy, 1933-1941* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), 266.
  2. The term “Showa” refers to the reign name of Emperor Hirohito (1926-1989). For the purposes of this paper, “Showa Japan” will refer specifically to the early part of his reign (1926-1945) during which his divine likeness played a ubiquitous part within Japanese expansionism.
  3. “Tripartite Pact,” Berlin, 27 September 1940, available from *The Avalon Project*, courtesy of Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library. <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/triparti.asp>
  4. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Debating Racial Science in Wartime Japan,” in *Beyond Joseph Needham: Science, Technology, and Medicine in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. Morris Low (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 364.
- Literally *Yamato-minzoku*
- The term historically has been used to define the ethnic Japanese people (excluding Okinawans, and the Ainu) and even continues to be commonly used today within Japan despite its past racial connotations.
5. Michael Baskett, “All Beautiful Fascists?: Axis Film Culture in Imperial Japan,” in *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, ed. Alan Tansman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 218.
  6. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 38th ed. (Munich: Franz Eher Verlag, 1973), 414.
  7. Tajima Nobuo, “Images of Japan and East Asia in German Politics in the Early Nazi Era,” in *Mutual Perception and Images in Japanese-German Relations, 1860-2010*, eds. Sven Saaler et al (Brill: Boston, 2017), 271.
  8. Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 73.
  9. Adolf Hitler, “Selection from Hitler’s *Second Book* (1928)” (Class reading edited by Professor James Chappel, Duke University, Durham North Carolina, September 2017).  
Hitler in 1928 specifically stated that:  
“For since the emigration process in Europe was a selection of the fittest, this fitness in all European Volks lying primarily in the Nordic admixture, the American Union, in fact, has drawn to itself the scattered Nordic elements from among Volks who were very different as such.”  
Later, he praises American immigration policies of the Coolidge era for preserving the status of the United States as a “Nordic” state:  
“That the American Union itself feels itself to be a Nordic German State, and in no way an international mishmash of Volks, further emerges from the manner in which it allots immigration quotas to European nations. Scandinavians, that is, Swedes, Norwegians, further Danes, then Englishmen, and finally Germans, are allotted the greatest contingents. Rumanians and Slavs very little, Japanese and Chinese they would prefer to exclude altogether.”
  10. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 414.
  11. Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War*, 76.
  12. Bernd Martin, *Japan and Germany in the Modern World* (New York City: Berghahn Books, 2005), IX.
  13. Christian W. Spang and Rold-Harald Wippich, “Introduction: From ‘German Measles’ to ‘Honorary Aryans,’” in *Japanese-German Relations, 1895-1945: War, Diplomacy and Public Opinion*, eds. Christian W. Spang and Rolf-Harald Wippich (New York: Routledge, 2006) 2.  
Within the general historiography of Japanese history, the reign of the Meiji emperor (1867-1912) is generally regarded as the beginning of “modern Japan.” With the so called “Meiji Restoration” of 1868, the new progressive minded oligarchs of the imperial regime set out to modernize the once feudal state along Western modules.
  14. William Gary Maltarich III, “Samurai and Supermen: Japan in the Eyes of the Master Race” (doctoral dissertation, The University of Wisconsin at Madison, 2002), 141.
  15. Maltarich, “Samurai and Supermen”, 221.



16. Tajima, "Images of Japan and East Asia in German Politics in the Early Nazi Era," 267.
17. Maltarich, "Samurai and Supermen," 75.
18. Hans-Joachim Bieber, "Images of German-Japanese Similarities and Affinities in National-Socialist Germany (1933-1945)," in *Mutual Perception and Images in Japanese-German Relations, 1860-2010*, eds. Sven Saaler et al (Brill: Boston, 2017), 318.
19. Maltarich, "Samurai and Supermen," 310.
20. Maltarich, "Samurai and Supermen", 320.
21. Maltarich, "Samurai and Supermen", 317.
22. Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 74.
23. Baskett, "All Beautiful Fascists?", 224.
24. Baskett, "All Beautiful Fascists?", 213.
25. Baskett, "All Beautiful Fascists?", 218.
26. Baskett, "All Beautiful Fascists?", 225.
27. Bieber, "Images of Japan and East Asia in German Politics in the Early Nazi Era," 314.
28. Satafumi Kawamura, "The National Polity and the Formation of the Modern National Subject in Japan," *Japan Forum* Vol. 26, Issue No. 1 (2014): 26.
29. Koku roughly translates to "nation," "race," or "people" depending on the context.
30. *Die Tochter des Samurai*, directed by Arnold Fanck and Mansaku Itami (1937; Berlin: T&K Telefilm), film.
31. *Die Tochter des Samurai*
32. *Die Tochter des Samurai*.
33. Maltarich, "Samurai and Supermen," 194.
34. *Die Tochter des Samurai*.
35. Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 77.
36. *Die Tochter des Samurai*.
37. Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 154.
38. Spang and Wippich, "Introduction," 11.
39. Gerhard Krebs, "German Perspectives on Japanese Heroism during the Nazi Era" in *Mutual Perception and Images in Japanese-German Relations, 1860-2010*, eds. Sven Saaler et al (Brill: Boston, 2017), 328.
40. Krebs, "German Perspectives on Japanese Heroism during the Nazi Era".
41. Maltarich, "Samurai and Supermen," 197.
42. Simon Partner, "The Rise of the Japanese Empire" (lecture, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, September 19, 2016).
43. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 113.
44. Krebs, "German Perspectives on Japanese Heroism during the Nazi Era," 331.
45. Krebs, "German Perspectives on Japanese Heroism during the Nazi Era", 331.
46. Sven Saaler, "The Imperial Japanese Army and Germany," in *Japanese-German Relations, 1895-1945: War, Diplomacy and Public Opinion*, eds. Christian W. Spang and Rolf-Harald Wippich (New York: Routledge, 2006), 24.
47. Simon Partner, "The 1930s" (Lecture, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, October 5, 2016).
48. James Chappel, "A Failed Reconstruction: Interpreting Europe's 1920" (Lecture, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, September 12, 2017).
49. Christian W. Spang, "Karl Haushofer Re-examined: Geopolitics as a Factor of Japanese-German Rapprochement in the Interwar Years," in *Japanese-German Relations, 1895-1945: War, Diplomacy and Public Opinion*, eds. Christian W. Spang and Rolf-Harald Wippich (New York: Routledge, 2006), 143.
50. The Taisho period refers to the reign period of the Taisho emperor (1912-1926). This period in

Japanese history was characterized by increasing shifts towards democratization, and embracing Western culture, while simultaneously also representing a return to more “nativist” Japanese attitudes. The great Kanto earthquake of 1923, which practically destroyed the entire Tokyo metropolitan area, along with the many economic panics of the 1920s, in many ways obliterated the modernist optimism the early Taisho era represented in the eyes of many Japanese politicians and intellectuals. Coupled with political instabilities, as well as an unfavorable view of Japan’s position within international politics, the end of the Taisho era marked the beginning of the rise of authoritarian nativism in Japanese politics.

51. Maltarich, “Samurai and Supermen,” 47.
52. The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act), 43 U.S.C. § 153 (1924).
53. Spang, “Karl Haushofer Re-examined,” 150.
54. Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War*, 121.
55. Tajima, “Images of Japan and East Asia in German Politics in the Early Nazi Era,” 272.
56. Spang and Wippich, “Introduction,” 4.
57. Maltarich, “Samurai and Supermen,” 70.
58. Otto Koellreutter, *Das Politische Gesicht Japan* (Berlin: C. Heymann, 1943), 59.
59. Koellreutter, *Das Politische Gesicht Japan*, 60.
60. Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War*, 86.
61. Bieber, “Images of Japan and East Asia in German Politics in the Early Nazi Era,” 321.
62. Bieber, “Images of Japan and East Asia in German Politics in the Early Nazi Era”, 323.
63. Kawakita Atsuko, “Images of Japan in Post-war German Media: How the ‘Past’ is Used to Reinforce Images of Self and Other,” in *Mutual Perception and Images in Japanese-German Relations, 1860-2010*, eds. Sven Saaler et al (Brill: Boston, 2017), 374.
64. Stav Ziv, “World War II Nazi War Criminal Too Old for Prison? He’s 96 Years Old, But German Court Says No,” *Newsweek*, November 11, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/world-war-ii-nazi-war-criminal-too-old-prison-hes-96-years-old-german-court-726264>.
65. Summer Meza, “Japanese Mayor Infuriated By ‘Comfort Women’ Statue Cuts Sister City Ties With San Francisco,” *Newsweek*, November 24, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/japanese-mayor-cuts-ties-san-francisco-comfort-women-statue-722107>.

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# New York's Taste of Sabotage:

Waiters, Wobblies, “the Peculiar Industry,” and the Status of the Hotel Worker in the 1912- 1913 New York City Hotel Workers’ Strike



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## Introduction

105 years ago, the wealthy elite at New York's finest dining establishments and hotels – such as Delmonico's, the Plaza, the Belmont, and the Waldorf-Astoria – expected to ring in the New Year like any other year. While the wealthy dined in the fashionable dining rooms of New York behind the façade of “servant” geniality, the twenty-thousand or more hotel and restaurant workers of the City were working twelve to eighteen-hour days and frenzying in the kitchens. During the winter of 1912-1913, the New York elite met face-to-face with the types of industrial warfare they had perhaps only read about in the *New York Times* and *Herald*.<sup>1</sup> Throughout January, union organizers entered the dining rooms of famous establishments like the Astor, blew their strike whistles, and shouted “the strike is on,” leaving food uncooked and guests sitting dumbfounded in their seats. Outside of these hotels, workers picketed, marching in moving picket lines between establishments. Instead of plates of food, waiters served elite diners with brick through windows. Likewise, cooks exchanged spices for stink bombs in order to drive guests out of the Hofbrauhaus on Broadway. Throughout the strike, hotel workers attempted to storm the front doors of famous hotels like the Waldorf, smashed the windows of New York's finest establishments, and were urged by strike leaders to engage in industrial sabotage. Throughout 1912-1913, New York hotel workers acted in the first general strike in the industry in direct opposition to not only their bosses, but also to the patrons who frequented these establishments.<sup>2</sup>

The strike was in reaction to real conditions existing in the shop. Starting on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1912, hotel workers in the International Hotel Workers' Union (IHWU) began their strike at the Hotel Belmont. 300 workers walked out, followed by thousands more at other hotels in a general strike which began on May 24, 1912 and lasted throughout May and June; one in which 2,500 waiters, 1,000 cooks, and 3,000 other hotel workers at 54 hotels and 30 restaurants went on strike with Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) guidance and endorsement.<sup>3</sup> Among the major grievances, cooks complained of workplace temperatures of 100 to 140 degrees (causing the kitchen to be a breeding ground for respiratory disease)<sup>4</sup>, unsanitary conditions, twelve to eighteen hour days seven days a week, management discrimination against hotel workers who had engaged in union activity (most notably the termination of Hotel Belmont workers who marched in a May Day parade, which sparked the initial walkout on May 7), the degrading tipping system (which forced waiters to depend, sometimes entirely, on variable tips rather than on consistent wages and which essentially forced the



hotel worker to serve two bosses, the manager and the customer),<sup>5</sup> an arbitrary and tyrannical fining system<sup>6</sup> (which often left hotel workers with incredibly reduced paychecks), and low pay in general. Strikers demanded a minimum wage scale, a ten-hour day, a six-day week, union recognition, the abolition of fines, semi-monthly payment of wages, better sanitary conditions, and quality food served during mealtimes.<sup>7</sup> While the IHWU considered itself victorious in winning higher wages, improved conditions, the elimination of the fining system, and in gaining 15,000 additional members (although without official union recognition by the Hotel Men's Association) as a result of the June general strike, which was called off on June 25<sup>th</sup>, the changes were short-lived. By September, fines had returned, wages had decreased again, and conditions were essentially back to the way they were prior to the May-June strike.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the Union went on strike again, this time with explicit IWW leadership of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, with the same demands it made in May-June, but with a bit more radical flavor. This time, beginning with the December 31<sup>st</sup> walkout, the IHWU endorsed sabotage and did not discourage brick-throwing or other forms of property destruction. The strike ended, however, on January 31<sup>th</sup>, as most strikers had already drifted back to work and the general strike vote had failed.<sup>9</sup>

### Thesis

Many historians that do not focus on the hotel industry and instead focus on the IWW more broadly have coined this 1912-1913 hotel workers' uprising a failure.<sup>10</sup> Melvyn Dubofsky states that the strike was doomed due to a lack of "middle class reform and endorsement and assistance" which did not exist because of the "very alliance of waiters and Wobblies, utilizing IWW methods and agitators" as "Wobblies were anathema to the respectable community."<sup>11</sup> Howard Kimeldorf, as well, states that the IWW alienated many middle class diners "whose support the strikers desperately needed." Therefore, Kimeldorf considers the strike as having been "unwinnable."<sup>12</sup> IHWU and IWW organizers never claimed to appeal to the middle-class diners and patrons of these luxurious hotels, however. Instead, the organizers, declared war not only on the bosses, but also on the public in a call for total class warfare in the hotel.<sup>13</sup> It is, thereby, unfair to deem the strike an unequivocal failure by declaring that the union did not appeal to middle class support, when that was entirely anathema to the Union's set goal. The strike was not a failure, but a foundation and a lesson for hotel workers.

From the perspective of an IWW narrative, perhaps, these statements are true: the waiters' strike was an insignificant footnote, and the strike was an utter failure for the IWW due to the



incompatibility of IWW “Western... character and style” of “direct action, sabotage, and violence infused rhetoric,” as Dubofsky contends, with New York hotel industry service work.<sup>14</sup> Within the realm of a history of the ascendancy of unionization of New York hotel workers, however, simply classifying the strike as “unwinnable,” “unsuccessful,” a “failure,” or “doomed” is not sufficient. Flynn and Jay Rubin, the first president of the Hotel Trades Council (HTC)<sup>15</sup>, both point to 1912 as the beginning of the Union.<sup>16</sup> It is important to contextualize the strike not only in the history of the IWW (as Kimeldorf and Dubofsky do), but also in the history of the organization of New York hotel workers over the course of the twentieth century. What remains unstudied is the ways in which the IWW and IHWU appealed to the peculiarities of hotel service workers and thereby attempted to alter public notions and the self-respect of the hotel worker.

This paper will first examine the hotel workers’ strike from the perspective of its significance to future hotel worker organizing in New York by substantiating the claims made above by future union leaders. By studying the 1912-1913 hotel workers’ uprising from the perspective of the hotel workers rather than from the IWW, one is able to consider how the IWW endeavored to alter the denigrated socioeconomic status of hotel workers, worker militancy, worker self-perception and class-consciousness of the New York hotel worker without the dismissive categorizations of the strike as a failure, insignificant, or an outlier, as many historians of the IWW tend to do. The IHWU – under the influence and leadership of the IWW – appealed to the peculiarities of hotel service work through its rhetoric on self-respect, its renunciation of the hotel worker as a “servant,” the use of sabotage, industrial unionism, and its appeals to women and workers of various ethnic backgrounds.

### **Significance**

In the history of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the 1912-1913 strike is often glistened over as a failed strike or insubstantial footnote. As a “failed” strike within the IWW narrative, between the successes at Lawrence and Paterson, the 1912-1913 hotel workers strike is often ignored in mammoth IWW chronologies, like Melvyn Dubofsky’s *We Shall Be All*, even though Elizabeth Gurley Flynn in her 1955 autobiography *Rebel Girl* claimed that she was “never in such a hectic strike,” which is quite a characterization considering Flynn’s long career as an IWW organizer.<sup>17</sup>

Even within the triumphalist narrative told by HTC organizers in their recounting of how New York City hotel workers eventually organized, the specifics of the 1912-1913 strike are ignored even though it is acknowledged as an essential precursor to the HTC as it “laid the foundation for [the hotel

worker's] improvement" through the "sacrifices" of 1912-1913, according to Rubin.<sup>18</sup> Although the strike may not have been "the greatest success that ever was known in the labor movement," as one article in the *International Hotel Worker (IHW)* (the official publication of the IHWU) prematurely stated in June 1912, the strike was a valuable and significant learning experience and model of organizing for future leadership.<sup>19</sup>

The strike was significant for a number of reasons – both as an historical first and as a moment which attempted to alter the public image and identity of the hotel service worker. This strike was the first general strike against the hotel trade of New York City<sup>20</sup> and thereby caused the relatively more conservative Hotel/Restaurant Employees (HRE) craft union to give a significant amount of attention to New York City after the IWW/IHWU strike.<sup>21</sup> The HRE previously deemed New York City impossible to organize because of the multitude of jurisdictional squabbles between locals, the polyglot workforce that was divided ethnically and by job classification, which served as an impediment to working class solidarity, and the advent of new "palace hotels" combined with the old-style craft union mentality of New York waiters in HRE Local 1, which virtually closed membership to the union by raising initiation fees from \$15 to \$65 (meanwhile, the IHWU lowered initiation fees to one dollar and dues to 50 cents per month for waiters and cooks, and 30 cents per month for female workers and all other workers).<sup>22</sup>

By engaging in the first general strike, the IWW aggressively and forcefully shook the sleeping HRE awake to the possibility of organizing New York, as both Rubin and Flynn suggested.<sup>23</sup> The IWW was supposedly the first to realize that the new "skyscraper" 'palace' hotel was in effect a "factory," serving food and shelter on a massive scale with whole battalions working from dawn to dusk.<sup>24</sup> HRE previously organized by approaching the employer first, instead of reaching out to the workers themselves. This was somewhat effective in small privately owned saloons and eating places, but it did not work in the new 'palace hotels,' in which the managers knew the names of the waiters only by their badges.

In addition, the IHWU and IWW taught the labor movement a useful lesson that the more conservative HRE would later take up: the necessity of organizing New York 'palace' hotels industrially in 'one big union.' As Elizabeth Gurley Flynn stated, the strike "helped to lay a basis for industrial unionism in this industry, which expressed itself in the 1930s, in the Food Workers Industrial Union, out of which the present Union (HTC) grew."<sup>25</sup> Thus, as a model of organizing, the

IWW and IHWU created an industrial model that future leadership would directly learn from. It only takes a simple comparison of statements by the general organizer in 1912-1913 and the first President of HTC in 1943 to validate Flynn's statement. Jack Britt Gearity, the general organizer of the IHWU in 1913, stated that the only possibility to organize effectively in the hotel industry is to organize from "cellar to roof" in "one big union of hotel workers."<sup>26</sup> Likewise, first HTC president Jay Rubin also stated, in a 1943 shop delegate class about the history of the Union, that it is a necessity to organize hotel workers "from the roof to the basement" in "one big union."<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, by espousing such confrontational rhetoric during the strike, the IHWU and IWW publicized the working conditions of the hotel worker and attempted to change the public image and self-respect of the New York service worker.<sup>28</sup> It was also the first attempt to organize hotel workers by accommodating the multiple foreign language groups by publishing literature in all of the languages represented in the hotel workforce.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, this strike deserves attention as New York hotel labor leaders have pointed to the 1912-1913 uprising as the foundation for further organizing. Some future leaders even received their political education during this strike and in the years following. Michael Obermeier (the first president of Local 6)<sup>30</sup>, for example, suggested in a letter to Jay Rubin, that the strike actions that he took part in during the 1910s were the real beginning of "the Union," HTC.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Status of the Hotel Worker and Managerial Control**

At its very core the 1912-1913 hotel workers' strike was a strike for the self-respect of the hotel worker. The hotel worker, according to IWW/IHWU organizers, was victim to a peculiar onslaught of disrespect and lack of dignity in the workplace and in the press that no other "worker" had to endure – the status of the hotel worker purportedly was far below that of most other laborers in America.<sup>32</sup>

In order to substantiate these claims made by the IHWU and IWW, it is essential to gain at least a rudimentary understanding of how the press comprehended the status of the hotel worker. In early twentieth century America, the press constantly reminded its readers of the social hierarchy of the "servant" to his supposed social superiors – the patrons of the hotels. The attitude towards the hotel service worker is clearly on display in a March 1912 *Washington Post* article entitled, "Girl of Nobility Servant in Hotel." The article describes the story of Dona Teresa, the granddaughter of a Spanish Duchess, but fundamentally it is about turn-of-the century socioeconomic class hierarchies. The author finds it absurd for a member of the nobility to be "reduced to earn her bread as a

chambermaid in a hotel.”<sup>33</sup> It was unthinkable for an upper class person to have been “reduced” to the status of a “servant.” The whole premise of the article is that there existed at least two classes of people – those that are served and those who serve. To cross this boundary was thus considered a socioeconomic class reduction.

The press also demeaned the service worker with language used to describe both hotel employees and their activities during the strike. It was not uncommon for the press to refer to hotel workers as “slaveys,” “servitors,” or even “acquisitions.”<sup>34</sup> These terms underscore the turn-of-the-century socioeconomic status of the hotel worker.<sup>35</sup> The hotel worker was an assumed social inferior to the patron of the hotel because of a social Darwinist supposition of fundamental weakness of intellect or character. A conversation recounted by a hotel worker between himself, a waiter, and a guest is especially telling. When asked what he would like to be, the waiter responded, “a writer.” The guest quickly rebuffed, stating, “you aspire too high... why don’t you try to be a head waiter, head butler, or something like that?”<sup>36</sup> This conversation reveals the belief by the elite guests, and inherent in the language used by the press, that the “servants” were “servants” due to their intrinsic inability to achieve anything higher than the status of “servant.” This implication of the weakness of the “hotel worker” is explicit in a statement by Police Sheriff Harburger, in which he stated that it was due to the so-called “feeble-minded[ness]” of the hotel workers that the strikers were led by the IWW.<sup>37</sup> The press perceived hotel workers as subjects, “servitors,” and “acquisitions” that could be easily controlled by management or, as per Sheriff Harburger, by “un-American,” “firebrand,” “serpentine,” “evil” labor agitators.<sup>38</sup> In the eyes of the press and management, the workers were to be controlled, and not to control themselves, in the form of a union. If management did recognize the union it was implicated as a “third-party” rather than the democratic conglomeration of hotel workers.<sup>39</sup> All of these statements, terms, and accounts suggest that within the media, by the police, and by the elite dining guests in the hotels, the hotel service worker was trapped in a class system of social inability where their assumed greatest characteristic was “loyalty to management,” which in the case of the hotel worker was both the boss and the guest.<sup>40</sup>

The IWW/IHWU intended to flip social Darwinism “on its head” by building the self-respect and power of the hotel worker.<sup>41</sup> A social Darwinist may suppose that the wealthy had risen to the top of American society due to fitness, while the poor and dependent “servants” were so because of their assumed unfitness. On the other hand, the IWW/IHWU believed the working class was most

fit because its members were not “idlers and parasites” who dined and resided in New York’s hotels, and thus the working class, through “trustified labor,” would ultimately become the ruling class.<sup>42</sup> Service work, according to the IHWU, was “a useful and necessary work... it is respectful and worthy,” therefore the working class was, allegedly, the stronger class as a result of its expenditure of labor power.<sup>43</sup> A political cartoon (*Figure 1*) in the *IHW* clearly represents this concept. Through means of “sabotage” – the knife in the cook’s hand – the hotel worker was to become the ruling class – “the majesty” – symbolically standing atop “capitalist society,” as represented in this cartoon. In the cartoon, the former capitalists beg the working class hotel workers not to allow them to fall victim to the same starvation the working class in capitalist society had to experience. As one IWW pamphlet exclaimed, “it is the law of nature that the strong rule and the weak are enslaved,” but that did not necessarily mean the workers, although supposedly enslaved at the time, were always to be enslaved.<sup>44</sup> Through the industrial weapon of sabotage and the power to labor and withhold labor in an industrial union, the working class was to overpower the supposedly weak “idlers and parasites” of the capitalist class.

Even though it may be true that many wealthy “elites” at the time perceived all working class people as inferior, the hotel service worker had the additional gilded-age societal burden of being a supposedly more “feminine” and “servile” self-selected group of workers, lacking “masculine” traits commonly associated with more defiant coal miners, factory workers, and longshoremen.<sup>45</sup> According to one veteran waiter, attempts by management to control everything from dress to the type of facial hair a waiter had (mustache bans, for example) were examples of tyrannical managerial control to limit the “manhood” of the waiter and make him appear more “servile.”<sup>46</sup> New York hotel workers were not considered along the same lines as supposed “real workers” (such as industrial factory workers), but rather as a class unto themselves. It was thence uncharacteristic for so-called “slaveys,” which were expected to act submissively to management, to act militantly in their own unions.<sup>47</sup> That is perhaps an explanation for why, as Matthew Josephson claims, it was an especially “novel sight” to see New York “slaveys” rebelling. Thus, servility, loyalty to management, “feeble-mindedness,” femininity, and a reduced social status by the nature of service work were all supposed characteristics of a hotel worker, according to the press, management, and New York’s upper class.

### **Female Hotel Workers and the IHWU**

While attempting to forge self-respect in the workplace, organizers perhaps overcompensated

for the supposed feminine qualities of the hotel service worker by expounding and reinforcing a masculine image of the American worker. This sort of messaging, as Howard Kimeldorf suggests, alienated a majority of the female job classifications in the hotel – like the chambermaids and charwomen.<sup>48</sup> It is difficult to construct an image of the activity of female workers during the strike, as both the mainstream papers and labor press are generally silent. There is only one article in the two-year run of publications by the IHWU that speaks directly to female workers. In an article entitled “To Our Female Fellow Workers,” the IHWU exclaims, “whatever you are doing... you are a hotel WORKER!” The article then goes on to invite female workers to have tea, read, write, and have a “social good time” at the Union hall. Other than this single appeal, there was a large drought in Union efforts, at least as represented in the labor press, to appeal to female workers. The majority of appeals to workers between February 1912 through December 1912 urged hotel workers to not be “feminine” and “servile” to their “masters,” but rather to “be a man – and act as such.”<sup>49</sup> Although the Union claimed prior to December 1912 that female workers were hotel “workers” as well, and thereby deserved to organize equally to men, there was an ingrained lack of equality between men and women inherent in the Union’s demands. In the June 1912 demands, the Union demanded \$10 per week for steady waiters, \$7 per week for omnibuses, \$7 per week for bellboys, \$12 per week for porters, but only \$5 per week for the all-female job classification of chambermaid.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the Union, at least previous to the December-January strike, did not actually equally represent women as it claimed. It is therefore not surprising that when the union leaders called the chambermaids to join the waiters and cooks during the June general strike, they refused. The gender gap in the Union was simply too large and the appeal to have tea at the Union hall was obviously not enough to compensate for the \$2-\$3 per week pay gap between male and female hotel workers.<sup>51</sup>

Although the IHWU’s general organizer Jack Britt Gearity wrote a significant number of articles after December encouraging hotel workers now to “stand up as men and women,” there was a persistent lack, or at least a lack of significant mention, of *local* female union activity (not including Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, of course).<sup>52</sup> Throughout the entire *IHW* chronicle of the strike, the *IHW* only mentioned chambermaids once, in a walk-out at the Hotel Knickerbocker on January 23.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, one can only assume that female activity during the strike was not that great. Nonetheless, the inability to mobilize female hotel workers stood as a lesson for future organizers. As Jay Rubin stated in May 1938, “part of our success... is undoubtedly due to the fact that we have made



a special appeal to women workers through women organizers.”<sup>54</sup>

### **The IHWU and Self-Respect: From “Servant” to “Hotel Worker”**

Up against a negative public image and a demeaning work environment, the organizers of the strike often framed both the strike and Union activity as symbolic of forging self-respect in the workplace and elevating the social status of hotel workers. One union newspaper stated that, “A little over a year ago the papers and periodicals of this country would not mention a waiter or other hotel worker, except to joke... no more of that now... we are considered now as useful and most necessary workers, and not as servants, owned body and soul by the boss.”<sup>55</sup> It is important to note the great amount of stress the organizers placed on the type of language that was used when discussing hotel workers.

It was not only the press that prescribed hotel staff to being outside the realm of “workers.” The labor legislation at the time did not apply to hotel kitchens or the conditions therein. As one *IHW* article suggested, “When is a factory not a factory? When located in a hotel. When is a basement bakery not a basement bakery? When located in a hotel basement... Men working in hotels are not working men. Women working in hotels are not working women.”<sup>56</sup> Through the neglect of the hotel service worker in labor legislation, the state, in effect, undermined the status of hotel employees as being actual “workers.” Within labor legislation, the press, and even the mind of some service workers themselves, hotel staff were not necessarily considered “workers” in the traditional sense. The IHWU, however, tried to alter the way legislators, the press, and hotel staff viewed hotel workers by instilling working class consciousness and self-respect within the hotel worker.

Through organizing, the Union was altering the ways in which the hotel worker self-identified—no longer as a “servant,” but now as a “hotel worker.” Repeatedly, the IHWU attempted to instill the idea that the Union represented the interests of “workers” rather than “servants.” The term “servant” in itself implies a “loyalty to management” rather than the term “worker,” which implies a loyalty to fellow workers in a “class organization.”<sup>57</sup> By identifying as “servants,” according to Paolo Raspadori, much of the hotel staff had a close relationship with the lifestyle of the middle class and aristocracy that received scorn by others in the working-class. Hence, much of the hotel staff peculiarly perceived their position as leading to managerial roles, which led to further complacency by the hotel staff in the hopes that one day they too would become management. Thus, the hotel worker – like every worker, as Oscar Lewis argues – existed in his/her own “culture of poverty.” For the hotel worker, the

“culture of poverty” doomed the “servant” to low wages, a paucity of social, political, and economic organization by association with the middle-class lifestyle and lack of class consciousness. It also created a pervasive set of values – imposed by the wealthy, which stressed “servility” and explained low economic status as a result of personal inadequacy or inferiority.<sup>58</sup> The IHWU/IWW offered hotel workers a way out of their respective “culture of poverty” through organizing and thus fostered the improvement of the self-image and self-respect of its members, as Dubofsky argues.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, for the IHWU to use the term “worker,” rather than “servant,” “waiter,” or “cook,” was to combat the employer-imposed boundaries between employees and forge class solidarity “to try to unite all the workers in our industry into one body,” rather than reinforcing the “culture of poverty,” which supposed a close relationship between the middle/upper class and their “servants” without any real upward mobility or self-respect and dignity in the workplace.<sup>60</sup>

### **Class War, the “Dear Public,” Sabotage, and Public Sympathy/Public Fear**

Much as the mainstream press implied that the strike undermined the class status quo between those who serve and those served, the IHWU/IWW interpreted the strike as a form of class warfare. In defining who the “dear public” was, the union identified the “public in our industry” as the “patrons of the hotel...[which] belong to the same class as our bosses belong to... they are one, and in sympathy with each other, not with the working class.”<sup>61</sup> Dubofsky and Kimeldorf claim that the strike failed because the Union did not appeal to public sympathy, but the Union defiantly abhorred appealing to public sympathy, stating “it is not ‘public sympathy’ that... can make a strike successful ... [because] the public in our case is just as much an enemy as the boss against whom we fight.”<sup>62</sup>

Due to the abnormality of the hotel service industry (in comparison to factories), in which the hotel worker must both serve the boss and the “public,” in this case the wealthy guests, the strike acquired the peculiar characteristic of engaging in industrial warfare not only against the boss, but also against the consumer. As already mentioned, the treatment of the hotel worker was supposedly different from the treatment of any other worker because of the element of servility expected of the hotel worker. From the farmer to the railroad brakemen, most workers had “self-respect” because their occupation did not demand servility to the customer, according to the IHWU.<sup>63</sup> Since the wage of a service worker, through the form of a tip, “hangs upon the benevolence and charity of the persons he serves,” the service worker is expected to “cringe before the customer,” allow the customer to “wipe his feet on him,” and work with indignity.<sup>64</sup> The Union perceived the strike not simply as a strike for

better wages, but one to destroy “the cant of custom and prejudice” present within the gilded age class system that allowed some workers to be treated as “slaves.”<sup>65</sup>

Ideologically, the hotel service industry was the perfect battleground for the IWW to show one of the ways in which “class antagonism,” the “irrepressible conflict between the capitalist class and the working class,” the “displacement of human skill,” and the “servitude of all workers” realized themselves in the early twentieth century. Within the hotel dining room, according to the IHWU/IWW narrative, the working class serves the capitalist class with complete submission in order to receive a tip, which chains him in subservience and servility to the capitalist patron who is directly opposed to the hotel worker because the patron is, purportedly, of the same class as management.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the IHWU strike represented class conflict, the “enslavement” of the worker to the capitalist “master,” and the dehumanization of the worker under the capitalist system.<sup>67</sup>

Since the hotel was the symbolic battleground of the early twentieth century for the IHWU and IWW, the essential industrial syndicalist weapon of sabotage allegedly worked best in the hotel service industry. As Frank Bohn notes, “in no other industry can sabotage be so successfully employed as in that of preparing and serving food.”<sup>68</sup>

First, however, it is essential to decode what exactly the IWW meant by the term “sabotage” in reference to the 1912-1913 waiters strike. The mainstream press used a speech by IWW organizer Joe Ettor to fundamentally undermine the strike and define “sabotage” for the IWW. Ettor allegedly stated, “And if you are compelled to go back to work under conditions unsatisfactory to you, you go back with determination to stick together and with your minds made up that it is the unsafest proposition in the world for the capitalists to eat food prepared by members of your union.” The stipulation made by the press, and the police sheriff, was that Ettor suggested that hotel workers should poison “the public.”<sup>69</sup> Sheriff Harburger went to great ends to denounce the IWW, the legitimacy of the strike, and the “feeble-minded” hotel workers, stating, “the remarks made by this un-American anarchist are brutal, murderous, incendiary, inflammatory, and apt to bring about murderous designs... [this] is not free speech... better men have been electrocuted.”<sup>70</sup> The press and police used Ettor’s supposed statement to undermine the legitimacy of the strike by falsifying the IWW/IHWU’s own definition and endorsements of industrial sabotage by denoting sabotage as “violence,” “lawless,” and as a form of “terror.”<sup>71</sup>

Kimeldorf and Dubofsky have both accepted that Ettor uttered these comments because they

were supposedly “consistent with the IWW’s views at the time on industrial sabotage,” despite the fact that Ettor rebutted the claims – Ettor stated that “[these falsified statements] attributed to me... would not bring success, but the opposite... our cause is not to be won by any policy that endangers human life” – and the policies were not consistent with the IWW’s theories of sabotage at the time (either in IWW official literature, as represented by Flynn’s pamphlet *Sabotage*, or on the pages of the *International Hotel Worker*).<sup>72</sup>

Fundamentally, sabotage, according to the IWW, meant the “withdrawal of efficiency.” As a weapon of industrial warfare, the IWW saw sabotage as an exhibition of workers’ power in the workplace in order to achieve demands in lieu of public sympathy. The intense police brutality, beatings of organizers by private detectives during the strike, and the “at-will” nature of employment showed that the employers, in coalition with the state, held power over the worker.<sup>73</sup> Sabotage was a powerful means to engage in industrial warfare against the bosses and public and to seize power – all by striking at the “pocketbook of the masters.”<sup>74</sup>

The IWW, however, made clear that “sabotage is not physical violence.... sabotage is an internal, industrial process... to affect quality, the quantity, and the service.”<sup>75</sup> Ettor’s rebuttal is, therefore, in alignment with the official IWW stance – as the implication of his supposed statement, which implied poisoning food, was contradictory to the nonviolent IWW stance on sabotage.<sup>76</sup> According to Flynn, although engaging in sabotage is typically called “immoral” by the mainstream press because it undermines the intertwined “moral and economic system” of the boss by damaging his pocket book, sabotage, especially in the service industry, is in the best interest of “the public” as well. ‘Open Mouth’ sabotage, which was supposedly used in the hotel strike, entailed honestly informing the customer about the unsanitary conditions in which the food was prepared and collecting affidavits of kitchen and pantry conditions.<sup>77</sup> The only form of adulteration supposedly used in the strike was the addition of salt to make food inedible, which Flynn again adds was in the interest of the public because “the diner, or customer... would be a lot better off... to have [food] unfit for consumption than to have it left in a state where it can be consumed but where it is continually poisonous” due to the conditions in the kitchen.<sup>78</sup>

At the same time that Flynn claimed not to care about the “dear public” and the IHWU claimed that the strike was a war against the entire capitalist class, Flynn spent a considerable amount of time discussing how “striking at the taste of the public” achieved improvements in conditions.<sup>79</sup> A large

portion of the pamphlet is dedicated to the way in which Flynn was able to get the “dear public” on the side of the strikers by explaining the unsanitary kitchen conditions, which disgusted the upper-class reformers because it “[struck] at their taste.” Sabotage, either by open-mouth or by inefficiency of service, was meant to turn the capitalist class on itself by pitting the “dear public” against the bosses.

Slow and bad work in the kitchen, bad service in the dining rooms, and apartments, mistakes when cooking, accidents when serving.... will all tend to force the diners to seek safety and comfort in other establishments... we are forcing our snobbish capitalist public to help us fight their own brethren, the bosses help us, the workers, win the victory.<sup>80</sup>

The “dear public” was thence to be a tool of the workers, not by appealing to their sympathy (as they are the supposed enemy as well), but exhibiting worker power in forcing the “dear public” to essentially boycott the establishments on strike through the workers’ withdrawal of efficiency or through sabotage.

The organizers did not even attempt to employ “public sympathy.” The New York waiter’s strike lacked a *cause célèbre* for public sympathy, unlike the children’s crusade in Lawrence, which increased national publicity and sympathy for the strikers’ cause due to the “sight of undernourished children removed from their parent’s home because of industrial warfare” and the police brutality that followed.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps, however, the reason the IWW/IHWU did not employ public sympathy in the hotel workers’ strike was simply because it could not. Unlike the undernourished children of Lawrence or “the pigtailed, worn-out women, or ascetic looking male Jewish immigrants” of the 1913 New York Garment Workers’ strike, the well-dressed waiter in a “good house” was a worker peculiarly devoid of pity by New York upper class reformers.<sup>82</sup> The “dear public” had no clue what lay behind the veil of the waiters’ smiles and the immaculate dining rooms of the Essex House, for example. The IHWU was cognizant of the fact that “the clean, neatly dressed, polite and smiling waiter” would not receive public sympathy. The IHWU argued that the waiter was like an actor; stating, “the actor jokes for the same reason as the waiter smiles; they both are making their living that way... the [hotel] houses know it ... they can therefore mistreat the waiter as they please.”<sup>83</sup> Just because the waiter looked well did not mean he was treated well, but this was a hard case to make to the “dear public” as they only saw the “act.”

Therefore, the IWW/IHWU employed public fear as a tactic because it could not employ public sympathy. As one organizer stated, “the fear of another strike makes the dear public considerate

towards our fellow workers... it is not sympathy with the workers that does it.”<sup>84</sup> The peculiarity of the hotel industry and the framing of the customer as the enemy did not make appealing to the relative “public” for this strike possible. The IWW/IHWU could not both espouse the hotel dining room as the prime symbol of industrial warfare and capitalist degradation of the working class while also appealing to the “public sympathy.”

### **Conclusion**

Although the 1912-1913 hotel workers’ strike does not fit into many histories of the IWW, it should have a place in the litany of strikes the IWW led or helped lead. Although deemed a failure, as in the end no general strike was called and workers’ conditions remained deplorable – the strike and the hotel industry was the prime symbolic battleground for class warfare as it pitted the “idle,” “parasitic” capitalist and “servile” proletariat directly against each other. It is true that the IWW did not appeal to the sympathy of the “dear public,” but if one thing is certain, the IWW did not contradict itself as it would if it attempted to forge an alliance between the capitalist patrons of hotels and the oppressed working class.

Historians, and the IHWU in the aftermath of the strike, spent a significant amount of time pointing fingers. Historians such as Kimeldorf and Dubofsky blame the IWW for the incompatibility of its Western character and style with the hotel industry, while the IHWU blamed the “IWW fire-eating organization” as well as the “reactionary” AF of L.<sup>85</sup> However, neither the IHWU nor modern labor historians have truly reflected on the strike as an essential battleground of industrial warfare in the early twentieth century or analyzed the ways in which the IWW attempted to ignite revolution in New York through service workers.

Essentially, the strike was about dignity in the workplace of the “peculiar” hotel service industry. This required rebutting not only the degradation service workers faced in the press, but also contemporaneous notions of service work reinforced by legislation that excluded hotel workers, police statements, and the ways hotel workers self-identified. The IHWU, under the auspices of the IWW, was neither successful in inciting a full-scale revolution nor in constructing a long-term hotel workers’ union (as the IHWU was defunct by November 1913), but the Union did highlight the peculiar situation of the New York hotel worker by emphasizing turn-of-the-century degradation and inequality under capitalism in the fashionable New York dining rooms. Through the study of this strike from the perspective of the hotel worker rather than the IWW as an organization, one can



perceive the status of the hotel worker, or so-called “servant,” at the time.

Although IHWU organizers made costly mistakes such as their general neglect of female workers and most job classifications besides cooks and waiters and their assumption of an intentionally inflammatory stance towards the “dear public,” the IWW introduced industrial unionism to the hotel industry, highlighted the unequal treatment of the hotel worker as a so-called “servant,” inspired self-respect, began the process of redefining service work through sabotage, and appealed to the peculiarities of the multi-ethnic hotel industry workforce like no other labor organization previously. This strike was not the end of a hotel workers’ union, but the beginning. It increased the militancy of the hotel worker, politically educated future leadership, led to a series of IWW-inspired strikes which took place in 1918, 1924, 1934, and 1936, and motivated the eventual organization of the Hotel Trades Council industrial union in 1938. As Jay Rubin stated in 1943, “the Hotel Union did not start in 1937-1938 when the Hotel Trades Council was organized. The union was born because hotel workers fought for many years within the industry,” beginning with the 1912-1913 hotel workers’ strike.<sup>86</sup>

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# Gentlemanly Chaos: Social Standing and Mob Behavior in the Stamp Act Crisis



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(Photo courtesy of Educational Technology Clearinghouse)



## Introduction

Collective violence is often perceived as a last-ditch effort by common folk to have their grievances addressed by inattentive, if not outright unsympathetic, community leaders. The popular unrest of American colonists in the decade prior to the Revolutionary War is no exception. Historians such as Lawrence Lee have referred to colonial rioters as “hoodlums,” and even sympathetic historians like Edmund and Helen Morgan have remarked that mob violence was a popular tactic that “alarmed the best people in town.”<sup>1</sup> Although the characterization of mob violence as a means of communication for the unheard commoner is often fairly apt, this definition does not adequately allow for the cross-sectional potential of collective violence. In the case of the Stamp Act Crisis in British North America, the presence or absence of the local elite among protesters played a considerable role in the language and structure of the riot.

The Stamp Act Crisis was a period of widespread protest which occurred throughout the American colonies against the enforcement of the Stamp Act of 1765, primarily because the colonists viewed the levying of taxes as the sole right of colonial assemblies, not of the British Parliament. Colonial protest of this perceived trespass against their traditional rights took the forms of pamphleteering, legislating, and, ultimately, rioting. Rioting in particular gained momentum after several hundred Bostonians set a precedent of violent unrest in August 1765, but few of the following mob events in other colonies reached the level of violence perpetrated by the Boston crowd. In particular, North Carolinians in the Cape Fear region shared many economic and philosophical grievances with the Bostonians, but the rioters in Wilmington in the fall and winter of 1765-1766 were considerably more ordered than their countrymen in Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup>

The difference between the Boston and Wilmington riots is stark enough to warrant investigation: why would two colonies with such similar grievances and strategies for communicating them differ so greatly in the execution of those strategies? According to Donna Spindel’s analysis, the difference between the Boston and Wilmington riots can be attributed to the role of colonial law enforcement in peacekeeping. However, this perspective fails to account for the role of prominent community figures *without* official peacekeeping powers in curtailing potential violence.<sup>3</sup> Closer analysis of the socioeconomic composition of these Stamp Act mobs and the actions they took while rioting reveals that those of higher social standing were logically less prone to violence towards property than the common folk. With this in mind, the distinction between the Boston and

Wilmington riots becomes clear: while the elite participants in the Wilmington riots acted to temper the rage of the common participants and prevented the violence of those protests from escalating, the Boston riots were primarily driven by the common folk and crossed the cultural lines of acceptability.

### **Context of the Stamp Act**

Following the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, England had gained control of Canada, Florida, and the land between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. While such a substantial expansion helped secure preexisting British possessions in North America against French incursion, the enormous cost of the war left the British government desperately in need of more income. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Grenville, sought to raise funds by tapping into what he saw as an underutilized source of revenue, the American colonies.<sup>4</sup> To most of Parliament, Grenville's strategy seemed perfectly logical; after all, the late worsening of Britain's debt problem was a result of fighting to expand the North American colonial territory and even more funding would be needed to defend against the American Indians and Spanish in and around said new territory. Grenville himself best summarized Parliament's sentiments in a speech he gave in March of 1764: "we have expended much in America. Let us now avail ourselves of the fruit of that expense."<sup>5</sup> Although Parliament had never before imposed a direct tax on the American colonies, the British government certainly believed it had the right to do so.

Parliament thus decided to exercise its power to tax North America by passing the Sugar Act of 1764 and the Stamp Act of 1765, outraging the American colonists. Ironically, the Sugar Act effectively lowered the duty on molasses, as British legislators designed it to bring in revenue by placing the duty's value at a level which would be high enough to be profitable but low enough to not impede trade.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, the Sugar Act was ill-received by American colonists. Interestingly, most colonies (with the exceptions of New York, Massachusetts, and North Carolina) limited their protests to the argument that it would be economically harmful, often avoiding the claim that Parliament had no right to pass it.<sup>7</sup> While the preamble of the Sugar Act stated that it was "just and necessary, that a revenue be raised, in your Majesty's said dominions in *America*," and as such was in practice a tax, its deep association with American trade placed it in a poorly understood gray area and, consequently, most colonies did not push the issue.<sup>8</sup> Many Americans were willing to grant Parliament the right to regulate trade – just not to place a direct tax intended to raise revenue. For the colonists, this distinction served to make the Sugar Act unpleasant but the more explicitly tax-related Stamp Act

intolerable.

Unlike the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act was unquestionably intended solely to raise revenue for the British government in a manner clearly unrelated to the regulation of trade. The fateful legislation levied a tax on paper goods and official documents such as diplomas and ship clearances. Although such a tax had been in effect in England for nearly a century, and the levels of the taxes were in most cases at least halved for the colonies, the act was viewed by the colonists as a parliamentary overreach.<sup>9</sup> Seeing as the American colonies had no direct representation in Parliament and thus had no legislative sway in the levying of parliamentary taxes, many colonists considered taxation to be the exclusive right of the colonial assemblies in which they were directly represented. British counterclaims that the colonies were “virtually represented” provided little comfort and were in fact the source of much scorn in colonial pamphlets, which proliferated after the act’s passing.<sup>10</sup> Pamphlets like North Carolina assemblyman Maurice Moore’s *The Justice and Policy of Taxing the American Colonies, in Great-Britain, Considered* wholly rejected the concept of virtual representation because it essentially denied the colonists the equality and rights that the colonists theoretically should have enjoyed as Englishmen.<sup>11</sup> This and other pamphlets laid out the philosophical groundwork for resisting the Stamp Act. By the summer of 1765, resentment was heating up.

Rhetorical resistance to the Stamp Act mounted in the summer and fall, but Parliament and royal governors refused to yield. In North Carolina’s case, the General Assembly was prorogued by Governor Tryon in May, 1765 after John Ashe, the Speaker of the House, stated that the tax “would be resisted to blood and death,” and while resistance would not quite reach that point in 1765-1766, American anger in the following months certainly gave the royal government plenty to fear.<sup>12</sup> Later that same month, Virginia’s House of Burgesses passed a series of resolves that decried virtual representation and newspapers throughout the colonies printed paraphrased versions that portrayed the Burgesses as even bolder than they had officially been.<sup>13</sup>

With the spirit of the Virginia Resolves and public discontent in the air, the Massachusetts House of Representatives sent out a call for delegates to gather at an intercolonial meeting in New York to address their shared grievances. The legislatures of Virginia and North Carolina had been dissolved for the summer and were thus unable to elect delegates, but twenty-seven delegates from nine colonies in total met in October of 1765 as the Stamp Act Congress.<sup>14</sup> This show of colonial unity allowed for the Americans to draw their line clearly that “the only Representatives of the People of

these Colonies, are Persons chosen therein by themselves, and that no Taxes ever have been, or can be Constitutionally imposed on them, but by their respective Legislature.”<sup>15</sup> However, no matter how formally or uniformly the colonists expressed their views, the British government was unmoved. As is often the case, the failure of the political elite to adequately respond to the grievances of the people led to the outbreak of violence.

Riots against the Stamp Act, beginning in Boston and spreading throughout the colonies, managed in most cases to make the tax nigh impossible to enforce, and the unrest further alienated the colonists from the London metropole. From the American perspective, protesters of the Stamp Act were defending the political status quo and as such were well within the bounds of custom and tradition that historically legitimized riots in British culture. As historian Pauline Maier notes, Whig philosophy in Anglo-American culture simultaneously justified popular uprisings and reinforced conservative values, and this philosophy of political rights was a driving force of American revolutionary action.<sup>16</sup> However, the political “rights” that the colonists valued so dearly had never actually been articulated or formally granted to them by the British Empire; consequently, British officials interpreted the colonial cause as radical in nature.

### **Riots in Boston**

As would become a trend in the 1760s-1770s, the citizens of Boston took the initiative in violently protesting against British colonial policy. Naturally, the people of Massachusetts could not rely upon their elected assemblymen to prevent the Stamp Act from going into effect. By August 1765, the Massachusetts House of Representatives had not instructed civil servants to ignore the act as Rhode Island’s assembly had, and even if they did before November 1, such a measure would not affect those who did not answer directly to the House such as judges and royally-appointed customs officers.<sup>17</sup> Since appealing to the House could not prevent the enforcement of the tax, and appeals to Parliament had already been ignored, the most effective course of action in the minds of common Bostonians was taking to the streets, which they did on August 14th, 1765.

Although the August 14th riot was planned in advance by an organization called the “Loyal Nine,” the crowd’s violence quickly escalated beyond prediction. The Loyal Nine had chosen a leader of the previous year’s Pope Day brawl, Ebenezer McIntosh, and though McIntosh certainly kept the crowd united in purpose and action, he directed them to commit what at the time was the most violent riot in Boston’s history. The riot began with a morning call to action on Newbury Street: passersby

witnessed the hanging of an effigy of Andrew Oliver, the man who had reportedly been appointed to be the Distributor of Stamps for the colony, next to a boot representing the hated Earl of Bute with a devil sticking out of it. Governor Bernard and Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson immediately recognized the danger of these symbols, but before the City Council could order them to be taken down, the sheriff reported that officials could not remove the figures without putting themselves at the mercy of the mob that had assembled. Now aware of the powerlessness of their position, the Council ordered the sheriff to summon peace officers as the mob itself cut down the images to parade around the town.<sup>18</sup>

Confident that it was now controlling the city, McIntosh's mob escalated from symbolic violence to destruction of property. After marching around the Town House with the effigies, McIntosh led his men on to Kilby Street, where Andrew Oliver had recently built what the protesters assumed to be his future office as Stamp Distributor. The building was destroyed within minutes. From there, the mob moved to Oliver Street and beheaded the Oliver effigy in front of the alleged future Stamp Distributor's home while some threw rocks at his windows. The "cautious" part of the riot then came to a close at Fort Hill, where according to Edmund Morgan, the mob "ceremoniously 'stamped' on the figure [of Oliver]" and used the wood torn from the destroyed Kilby Street building to burn the effigy in a bonfire.<sup>19</sup> At this point, the local elite who had joined the mob in disguise dispersed, leaving McIntosh with only the remaining crowd of rowdy, adrenalized common Bostonians. It was this remaining mob that turned the demonstrations from a fairly traditional protest into an incredibly violent riot.<sup>20</sup>

The nature of this Boston mob had changed, and this change was reflected in its increased determination to harm the real Oliver, not just his effigy. Oliver, realizing the possibility that the mob might return, had fled with his family to a neighbor's house and had his friends barricade the doors to his home. However, these defenses did little to protect the Oliver home when the remaining mob left Fort Hill and descended upon his house once more, furiously ripping apart the fence and beating in the doors and windows. Once inside, rioters declared that they would find and kill Oliver, resulting in the flight of Oliver's friends from the invaded house. After searching the home and finding no Stamp Distributor, the mob started upon neighboring houses but stopped after someone told them that Oliver was in Castle William, thus saving the hapless bureaucrat's life. However, this lie did not save Oliver's property: since they had no living target for their righteous indignation, the rioters took their

fury out upon the Distributor's belongings.<sup>21</sup>

The colonial leadership of Massachusetts at this point was at a loss. Governor Bernard, acutely aware that he must do *something* to restore order, ordered the Colonel of the Militia to have a drummer beat an alarm. However, the Colonel informed Bernard that any attempt at drumming would be dangerous for the drummer (not to mention the instrument), and that even if a drummer could safely beat an alarm, they were likely too busy rioting themselves.<sup>22</sup> Governor Bernard decided then that he had fulfilled his duties to the best of his abilities and retired for the night, but Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson was not so quick to give up. When the rioters seemed to be quieting around eleven o'clock, Hutchinson and the sheriff tried to break up the mob. However, an unknown leader of the crowd cried "the Governor and the sheriff! To your arms, my boys!" Hutchinson and the sheriff fled the scene while being pelted with rocks, and official attempts to control the mob ended in pain and embarrassment. The riot continued for about another hour before McIntosh finally dispersed his men, bringing the destructive evening to a close.<sup>23</sup>

Further Stamp Act disturbances in Boston for the most part followed the post-Fort Hill strategy used on August 14. A second riot on August 26 involved the setting of another bonfire along with the injury and harassment of a fire warden when he attempted to extinguish it, after which a "great Number of disguised Ruffians...armed with Clubs, Staves, and etc." attacked the homes of the deputy registrar of the Court of Admiralty and the comptroller of customs for the port of Boston, where a second mob joined them and raided the wine cellar and stole various possessions and papers, including £30 in cash.<sup>24</sup> Notably, the mob showed particular ferocity towards possessions that they felt represented the socioeconomic distinctions between themselves and the comptroller, such as "some very curious carv'd Work in one of his Rooms."<sup>25</sup> Clearly socioeconomic frustrations influenced the actions of the August 26 mob.

The August 26 riot culminated in the invasion of Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson's home, which was reduced to "a mere shell from top to bottom."<sup>26</sup> Although the Hutchinsons were able to escape with their lives, they were left with little but the walls of their home when they returned. Hutchinson later reported to London that the rioters had destroyed or stolen nearly all of his belongings, including £900 in cash.<sup>27</sup> According to Spindel, the "most eminent citizens of Boston assembled at the Town House [on August 27] to denounce the events of the preceding day and to discuss means of preventing 'like disorders,'" further revealing the socioeconomic divisions between



violent rioters and more passive dissenters.<sup>28</sup> There were two attempts on August 27 to incite further popular violence, but both were aborted by the colonial militia.<sup>29</sup>

Although Boston had an extensive history of violent demonstrations, the Stamp Act riot stood out as particularly destructive. Boston was infamous for its enthusiastic celebrations of “Pope Day,” the colonial equivalent of England’s Guy Fawkes Day, in which Bostonians organized themselves into paramilitary units along neighborhood lines (specifically, the north and south ends of the city) and competed violently for control of an effigy of the pope. This local tradition had intensified over the years, culminating in the death of a small child in 1764 which did little to disrupt the festivities. The parallels between the festive traditions of Pope Day and the actions of August 14, 1765 are clear: the precipitating action of the riot was the public display of an effigy of which the mob refused to relinquish control, and the leader of the mob, McIntosh, was specifically recruited by the Loyal Nine because of his leadership of the South-Enders on Pope Day in 1764.<sup>30</sup> Unlike Pope Day, however, the Stamp Act riot was clearly vindictive rather than festive in nature. The desire to punish Oliver was demonstrated repeatedly via his symbolic hanging, the destruction of his property, and even the failed attempt on his life. Why did the rioters go so far on this occasion?

The composition of the crowd is particularly illuminating in terms of the structure of the Stamp Act riots. In the first phase of the August 14 riot, gentlemen disguised as common workers participated, and the violence therein remained within traditional bounds: rioters used symbolic violence towards the effigy to demonstrate their anger towards Oliver and the Stamp Act without actually harming the stamp distributor himself and focused their destruction of property upon his presumed place of work. These actions comfortably mirrored those of past riots that were culturally (though not legally) legitimate in English history, as effigies were used in a variety of demonstrations from charivaris to Guy Fawkes Day and the destruction of the stamp office mimicked the destruction of mills often seen in bread riots.<sup>31</sup>

However, the nature of the riot changed dramatically once the gentlemen left at Fort Hill, a shift that implies their role in thus far reining in the anger of the common rioters. After the gentlemen left, McIntosh, a well-known but poor shoemaker by trade and leader of what was essentially a street gang, either instigated or bent to the extant desires of the remaining common folk to attempt to kill Oliver rather than merely threaten him.<sup>32</sup> Although the post-Fort Hill crowd was ultimately unable to seize Oliver, the difference in goals of the crowd with genteel participants and without genteel

participants is stark. The vengeful bloodthirst along with the noted increase in theft and destruction of private property of the post-Fort Hill August 14 and August 26 riots reveal the importance of socioeconomic resentment in Boston's Stamp Act riots.

It is important to note that the Loyal Nine, which would eventually come to be known as the "Sons of Liberty," was at the time mainly comprised of middling but ambitious shopkeepers and artisans. As the organization that originally recruited McIntosh to lead the August 14 demonstrations, they presumably had at least a partial plan for how the riot was supposed to unfold. Considering that at least two of the nine were local elites – Benjamin Edes was the printer of the Boston Gazette and John Avery, Jr. was a third-generation Harvard man – it is likely that they did not encourage McIntosh to allow the violence to go as far as it did. Notably absent from the riot and the membership of the Loyal Nine at this time were politically prominent Bostonians such as James Otis, Jr. and John Adams. Although the Loyal Nine may have thought that they had the approval of Massachusetts elites, the wealthy and powerful were not yet amongst their ranks and certainly not in the crowd that destroyed Hutchinson's home.<sup>33</sup> Although philosophical and practical issues with the Stamp Act were the motivations to riot, the socioeconomic frustrations of the common rioters played a key role in the actual structure of the riots.

By October of 1765, Boston had clearly set a precedent for popular protest against the Stamp Act. Bostonian protesters had been incredibly violent towards their targets and had hardly been punished for it. In fact, their violent strategies had met with resounding success considering the "resignation" of Oliver and the dismissal of McIntosh's arrest.<sup>34</sup> Disgruntled Americans throughout the colonies had read or heard about the events and their mild consequences and many followed suit, including the colonists of the Cape Fear region of North Carolina. If North Carolinians knew that they could possibly cross the lines of acceptable protest and escape unscathed, why were their own protests so cautious and diplomatic in comparison?

### **Riots in Wilmington**

Despite the violent outbursts occurring throughout the colonies, North Carolinians were surprisingly reserved in their protest of the Stamp Act. Like the Bostonians, Wilmingtonians were, as citizens of a seaport town, especially vulnerable to the economic effects of the tax and renewed vigor of policing smuggling and were consequently more likely to resort to violence to prevent the act's enforcement. Unlike the Bostonians, Wilmingtonians had the benefit of a precedent to follow

when protesting the Stamp Act, yet the Cape Fear riots remained comparatively nondestructive when compared to the Boston examples.

The precipitating action in the series of Cape Fear riots was eerily similar to that of Boston's August 14 riot, but the similarities between the two colonies' popular responses to the Stamp Act end there. On October 19, 1765, a Wilmington crowd hanged an effigy of a stereotypical genteel supporter of the act, and though the crowd indulged in some festive drinking, they ultimately "dispersed without doing any Mischief" according to the *North Carolina Gazette*.<sup>35</sup> A mob congregated again in a Wilmington churchyard on Halloween to the sound of bells and drums and performed a funeral for "Liberty," which they lowered in effigy into its grave before declaring that it was still alive.<sup>36</sup> Halloween 1765 thus ended in Wilmington with the enthroning of the personification of liberty in the town square.<sup>37</sup> Unlike the Bostonians, North Carolinians did not learn who was to be their official Stamp Distributor until mid-November (despite the official enforcement date of November 1), so the October 19 and 31 mobs lacked a specific target for their fury and indignation. This being the case, November 1, 1765 came and went peacefully in North Carolina since there were no stamps and no distributor.<sup>38</sup>

However, the angry colonists were later granted a target in Dr. William Houston, a colonial physician and public critic of the Stamp Act, who was apprehended on November 16 by a Wilmington crowd of 300-400 demanding to know whether or not he planned to enforce the tax. Accompanied by drums and flags and menacing in their numbers, the protesters must have been a fearsome sight for Houston, who had come into town on personal business and apparently did not even know that he had been appointed as the distributor.<sup>39</sup> Like Oliver in Massachusetts before him, Houston capitulated to the mob's demands. The mob then ushered him to the courthouse to sign a resignation letter, after which they paraded him in an arm-chair around the courthouse and back to his residence, where he was treated to cheers and toasts rather than death threats. After confronting the printer of the *North Carolina Gazette* to ensure that the newspaper would continue to operate without stamps, the mob staged a bonfire before retiring for the night without "the least Insult offered to any Person" according to the *Gazette*.<sup>40</sup>

Although other towns around Cape Fear staged a few miscellaneous demonstrations in the meantime, tensions were not fully raised again until the hated stamps finally arrived in Brunswick harbor onboard the *Diligence* on November 28. Upon hearing that the stamps were forthcoming, militia colonels Hugh Waddell of Brunswick and John Ashe of New Hanover gathered their men in

Brunswick. Thus armed and ready, Waddell and Ashe informed the *Diligence*'s Captain Phipps that anyone attempting to unload the dreaded stamps from the ship would be fired upon.<sup>41</sup> This threat, though not the climax of the Stamp Act Crisis in North Carolina, marks the closest the Cape Fear rioters ever came to the murderous intent expressed by the Boston rioters on August 14. No one attempted to unload the stamps, however, so no shots were fired, and the stamps stayed aboard the *Diligence* until the Stamp Act Crisis ended.<sup>42</sup>

Although the stamps remained in the ship, tensions still ran high. This tension came to a head once more on December 20, 1765 when William Tryon was officially inaugurated as governor in Wilmington.<sup>43</sup> Tryon, a shrewd man, had heretofore as acting governor largely avoided the ire of his constituents by relying on persuasion and prevention of political turmoil rather than force, but North Carolinians still resented his attempts to make the tax seem more palatable.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, his inauguration was a source of entertainment and free food and drink, drawing a massive crowd to welcome him into Wilmington.<sup>45</sup>

Although Tryon sailed into town with great pomp and circumstance, the decorum of the crowd broke down quickly upon Tryon's entreaty to them to obey the Stamp Act. To make matters worse, Captain Phipps then ordered his men to seize an Irish national flag (apparently raised in honor of the previous governor, Arthur Dobbs, an Irishman) flying from one of the ships in the harbor, further infuriating the already indignant crowd.<sup>46</sup> The audience of sailors, militiamen, and townspeople joined together in a quest to reclaim the seized Irish flag, resulting in the capture and parading to the courthouse of one of the governor's boats. Before the boat could be set on fire, however, the crowd decided instead to trade it back to Phipps in return for the flag.<sup>47</sup> Although Phipps agreed to relinquish the flag, members of the crowd "manned the Boat as if on the Water and dragged her round the Town till they came under the Window of Capt. Phipps' Lodgings where they made a stand to insult him," according to witness Samuel Johnston.<sup>48</sup>

The furious and humiliated Governor Tryon berated the mob from his window, but his condemnations did not garner the results that he likely wanted. Instead of dispersing, the mob returned the boat to the water before descending upon the seven or so barrels of punch and the ox that had been provided by Tryon for the occasion. Rather than consuming the spread, the rioters instead emptied the punch onto the streets, pilloried the ox's head, and turned the rest of the ox over to the slaves.<sup>49</sup> According to Johnston, it was the giving of the meat "*to the Negroes*" that most

infuriated Tryon: in North Carolina's white-supremacist culture, allowing the slaves to eat the governor's feast was considered a terrible insult to his position and honor.<sup>50</sup> The mob's decision to insult the governor in this way ultimately cost their town dearly. Probably due in large part to the disastrous inauguration, Tryon made New Bern the colonial capital rather than Wilmington. However, though the inauguration was a fiasco, no one was physically harmed or even threatened.<sup>51</sup> On December 20, the Wilmingtonians maintained their strategy of humiliation rather than physical violence.

Considering that no one was punished for the events of December 20 and business in the colony had ground to a crawl due to Tryon's continued insistence that the Stamp Act be obeyed despite the stamps' exile upon the *Diligence*, it is unsurprising that the crisis in North Carolina continued into the next year.<sup>52</sup> 1766 began on a troubling note in Cape Fear due to the January seizure of the *Dobbs* and the *Patience*, both merchant sloops, by the *Viper's* Captain Jacob Lobb for lacking the proper stamped clearance papers. Lobb turned over the *Dobbs'* and *Patience's* papers to William Dry, the customs collector of the colony, who then consulted the North Carolina attorney general, Robert Jones, Jr., for orders. Jones's decision, which became public on February 15, stated that the sloops had violated the Stamp Act and would therefore be tried in the vice-admiralty court in Halifax, Nova Scotia.<sup>53</sup> If the sheer enforcement of the stamp provision was not enough to enrage the populace, the insistence that they be tried in a distant court without a jury was perceived by the colonists as a grave threat to their rights as Englishmen.<sup>54</sup> The stage was thus set for a massive demonstration of popular discontent.

Over the next few days, North Carolina stood on the precipice of open rebellion. A group declaring themselves to be Sons of Liberty organized on February 18, 1765 and began plans for their resistance. In a letter to Dry, the "principal inhabitants" of Cape Fear threatened to "come down in a body" if the *Dobbs* and *Patience* were moved to Halifax for trial, and though the customs collector tried to convince the public that he did not plan to follow Jones's ruling, his words fell on deaf ears. On February 19, a mob of around 1,000 congregated in Brunswick and divided into two groups: one to "guard" Governor Tryon's home from insult and the other to seize the impounded sloops' papers from Dry. Unlike Oliver or Houston, however, Dry was not willing to capitulate to the demands of a mob easily. Unfortunately for him, his valiant stand did little to stop the crowd from entering his home and stealing the papers for themselves. The governor realized that the time for action had come, so he

ordered Captain Lobb to “repel force with force” at Fort Johnston if necessary.<sup>55</sup>

The riot’s leaders came to an agreement with Lobb and Dry on February 20 to reopen trade and even release the *Patience* and the *Ruby* (another sloop that had been seized over the winter), but this apparently did not satisfy the crowd. The next day, a mob forced Lobb, Dry, and the comptroller to swear a public oath to not enforce the Stamp Act despite their prior compromise.<sup>56</sup> The comptroller in particular was a difficult man to come by because Tryon had brought him into the governor’s residence and warned the crowd that if they wanted the comptroller, they would have to come to Tryon’s home and seize him themselves.

Tryon’s actions demonstrated that he was certainly a strategic man who tried to use power imbalances to his advantage. Unfortunately for him, his schemes were rarely effective. Historian Wayne Lee has proposed that “Tryon may have hoped to end the conflict...by confronting the crowd with a choice between backing down or definitively stepping over a certain invisible boundary by breaking into the house of the royal governor.”<sup>57</sup> If Tryon was implicitly challenging the crowd, they called his bluff. On February 21, a mob of roughly 500 men surrounded the governor’s residence where “a Gentleman was once more sent to the Comptroller, to desire he would not put the people to the disagreeable necessity of entering his Excellency’s house, with a promise that if he would come out no injury should be offered to his person,” according to the *Gazette*.<sup>58</sup> The comptroller, despite Tryon’s protests, resigned from his position and surrendered himself to the crowd, following them to the courthouse to swear their oath.<sup>59</sup> Once again, the crowd got what it wanted, and no one was harmed or punished.

The events of February 18-21 were the climax of the Stamp Act Crisis in North Carolina. After the public oaths of Dry, Lobb, and the comptroller, Tryon ordered cessation of further protests through force, but this measure was unnecessary considering he also lifted the restrictions on trade that had so irked the populace in the first place. Even if the colonists were still dissatisfied by these concessions, Parliament ultimately repealed the Stamp Act on March 18, 1766.<sup>60</sup> North Carolinians truly got to have their cake and eat it too.

Previous historians have credited the success of the Cape Fear riots to the caution of the crowds, but few have examined the cause of this caution. Wayne Lee has rightfully attributed the behavior of the rioters primarily to the long-established British culture of “legitimate” rioting with a few regional twists (e.g. the feeding of the ox to slaves), but his analysis does not explain why



Bostonians, as fellow Englishmen, would trespass the “rules” of rioting while North Carolinians adhered to them so closely.<sup>61</sup> Based on the differing actions and circumstances of the riots in both regions, socioeconomic status seems to lie at the heart of this discrepancy.

While Boston’s August 14 riot started with genteel participation that it lost and never quite regained in later riots, the major Cape Fear riots consistently had both genteel participation and leadership.<sup>62</sup> Although the socioeconomic composition of the crowd which led Houston to the courthouse on November 16 is uncertain, his resignation was officiated by Moses John DeRosset, who would be elected as mayor of Wilmington in January 1766.<sup>63</sup> When the stamps arrived in Brunswick on November 28, the militia was led by Hugh Waddell, hero of the French and Indian War, and John Ashe, the Speaker of the House. Moses DeRosset continued his leadership in the demonstrations by penning along with Hugh Waddell the letter to Dry warning that they would “come down in a Body” if the *Dobbs* and *Patience* were taken to Halifax.<sup>64</sup> As promised, DeRosset and Waddell along with John Ashe were instrumental in directing the riots of February 18-21.<sup>65</sup> Throughout the crisis, both the political and socioeconomic elite of Cape Fear played invaluable roles in maintaining “orderly” riots.

### **Socioeconomic Standing and Rational Resistance**

Based on crowd analysis of the Boston and Wilmington Stamp Act riots, there is a positive correlation between the presence of genteel protesters and a more reserved use of violence. However, this correlation fails to explain why those of higher social standing would be unlikely to resort to extreme violence or why the opposite would be true of the common folk. In order to fully understand this phenomenon, one must examine the psychological factors that influence collective violence. While Maier attributes the decreased violence in Stamp Act resistance after Boston’s August 26<sup>th</sup> riot to a general understanding that such measures were not legitimate in Whig philosophy, this flattering explanation fails to acknowledge the subconscious impulses of the genteel and common alike.<sup>66</sup> Though Whig philosophy was certainly used simultaneously to legitimize limited violence and condemn excessive violence, the line between legitimate and excessive was drawn by those who hoped to either usurp or protect their status from the British elite. As such, wealthier resisters had a vested interest in maintaining control over common resisters and in decrying property damage as an illegitimate form of protest.

In order to condemn the actions of the August 26<sup>th</sup> mob in Boston, wealthier Whigs used the same rhetoric of liberty that legitimized their protests to paint property damage in particular as

counterproductive to the colonial cause. The distinctions between the August 14<sup>th</sup> and August 26<sup>th</sup> riots provided a useful dichotomy of legitimate/illegitimate for colonial newspapers. For instance, the *Boston Gazette* reported that the two mobs had “very different Motives, as their conduct was evidently different... [the] pulling down Houses and robbing Persons of their Substance [committed by the August 26<sup>th</sup> mob was] utterly inconsistent with the first Principles of Government, and subversive of the glorious Cause.”<sup>67</sup> This supposed philosophical inconsistency stemmed from the argument that since the protests were motivated by British trespasses against colonial property rights, it was hypocritical for colonists to violate the property rights of their supposed oppressors.<sup>68</sup> However, it should not be ignored that this argument is inherently advantageous to those of established wealth. It does not necessarily follow that those who have infringed upon the property rights of those under their power should retain their own property rights regardless of the severity of their transgressions. This conclusion was consciously drawn by those who had substantial property to lose should they find themselves in power when the rioters’ dust settled. Philosophical soundness notwithstanding, this message spread throughout the colonies and in was in this context of hesitation that the Wilmington protests occurred.

Though the “better sort” clearly sought to draw the line of legitimacy to exclude property damage, this distinction was not a significant concern to common protesters. To imply, as Maier does, that the August 26<sup>th</sup> mob was primarily motivated by individual petty grievances more so than philosophical disagreements with the Stamp Act may be useful in that particular instance, but that does little to explain the actions of the August 14<sup>th</sup> mob after the genteel participants left.<sup>69</sup> Considering Boston’s economic circumstances in 1765 in conjunction with the city’s culture of violent street activity, socioeconomic frustration in general seems to be a more thorough explanation for the violence of the Boston Stamp Act riots.

Logically, Bostonians of lower socioeconomic status would tend to have a greater sense of economic frustration than those of higher socioeconomic status. From a long-term perspective, English colonists in Colonial America had reason to aspire to higher stations than they may have in Britain: English propaganda often promised the opportunity to own land and/or prosper economically to motivate Britons to move to America.<sup>70</sup> However, for the common Bostonians who dominated the post-Fort Hill August 14 riot, though their lot in Boston may well have been better than it would have in England, they were certainly aware and resentful of the differences between

their positions and those of Boston's wealthy merchants. For instance, Harvard's commencement day was for years before 1765 an occasion for expressing resentment towards the wealthy and powerful of Massachusetts. As Boston's supposed best and brightest processed back into town from the ceremony in Cambridge, Boston's common folk would welcome them back with jeers about the promiscuity of their women and insinuations that the "better sort" were in fact no better than those they passed on the streets.<sup>71</sup> From a short-term perspective, the colonies were suffering from a fairly severe economic depression that was particularly damaging to port cities like Boston and Wilmington.<sup>72</sup> Both of these forces, exacerbated by the Stamp Act Crisis, likely played instrumental roles in dictating the actions of the post-Fort Hill August 14<sup>th</sup> and August 26<sup>th</sup> riots.

Prior to the Fort Hill bonfire, however, the August 14 riot included several genteel participants and was well within the bounds of a traditional riot. Genteel protesters, though clearly unhappy with the prospects of the Stamp Act, had little reason for prior resentment and held a vested interest in preventing the legitimization of property damage. These protesters, though perhaps not Harvard men, could reasonably attain such status for themselves or for their children, while the common crowd that they left behind likely could not. As a result, the genteel protesters had a much less intense sense of economic frustration than their common peers on August 14, making it unlikely that their threshold for attempted murder had been crossed although the common protesters had clearly reached that point in their own psyches.

Although it is often tempting to attribute all of the credit or blame to those in leadership roles, the August 14 Boston mob reveals the extent to which the status of mere participants can affect the structure of a riot. Despite the fact that McIntosh himself was a common man, neither he nor the rest of the crowd undeniably crossed the line until after the genteel participants left. This implies that the presence of Bostonian elites kept the rest of the crowd in line, perhaps either due to the common folk's fear of losing powerful support or merely due to a lack of group cohesion. Regardless, it was the genteel who philosophically dominated the crowd based on the fact that the anger felt by the common folk was not fully expressed until the genteel left. Once the common folk felt free to express the full extent of their frustration, the Boston crowds lost much genteel support, further revealing the tendency of the "better sort" to be more conservative in their actions.<sup>73</sup>

Unlike the post-Fort Hill Boston crowds, the major Cape Fear mobs all boasted elite participation, leadership, or both. As one might expect based on the observations from the Boston

incidents, the Cape Fear gentry remained reserved in their actions throughout the crisis. Their presence and leadership not only contributed to the perceived legitimacy of the Cape Fear riots, but to the strategies used as well. Although the elite of Cape Fear arguably threatened to become as violent as the common Boston crowds when Waddell and Ashe threatened to fire upon anyone caught unloading stamps from the *Diligence*, the distinction between a threat from a military official and from an entire mob must be made. In Brunswick's case, the death threat was conditional: the militia would open fire *if* someone attempted to unload the stamps. In Boston's case, no offer of mercy was granted to Oliver: if the mob found him at all, they would likely have killed or at least harmed him.

When viewing the Stamp Act mobs through a socioeconomic lens, the differences between the motivations – and therefore the actions – of the elite and the common folk in the Stamp Act Crisis become clear. While both parties were called to action due to their philosophical and practical issues with the Stamp Act, those issues were added to an extant sense of frustration that was much more intense among the common folk than among the elite. While the Stamp Act thus pushed both parties past the threshold of frustration that incites riots, the spark of the Stamp Act added to the prior frustration of the common folk and consequently incited chaos.

### **Conclusion**

Although riots often function as a language for the unheard common masses, the Stamp Act riots defied that schema. Due to the shared practical and philosophical grievances between the colonial common folk and socioeconomic elite, riots against the Stamp Act were particularly cross-sectional in nature – up to a certain point. In Boston, Stamp Act protesters originally had elite participation but lost much of it when the common folk viciously took out their socioeconomic frustrations upon private property. In Cape Fear, however, the local elite took charge of the riots, maintained control, and prevented violence from escalating too far, maximizing their legitimacy and sympathy among the genteel and other colonists in general. Ultimately, the differing structures of Stamp Act riots in Boston and Cape Fear can be attributed to the degree and constancy of the presence of the local elite.

Since the colonial elite had comparatively little frustration from socioeconomic circumstances, the irritation of the Stamp Act pushed them to riot but not to cross the lines of acceptability while doing so. This phenomenon is distinctly exemplified in Wilmington and Brunswick, where the genteel leadership and participants conducted the riots carefully to remain within the bounds of custom and

legitimacy and the common folk followed suit. The same can be said of the August 14 Boston riot until the genteel participants dispersed from Fort Hill, at which point the common protesters escalated the violence. Unlike the socioeconomic elite, the common folk had a fairly intense sense of socioeconomic frustration, and this was exacerbated when the Stamp Act was passed. As a result, the tax pushed them past the threshold of “orderly” rioting and past the bounds of custom and legitimacy once a trigger was provided and once certain physical and moral checks were removed, specifically the initial lack of a forceful government response and the removal of the restraining presence of the local elite.

Along with the language and structures of riots, the socioeconomic composition of crowds can reveal clues about the nature of the grievances they share and those that they do not. In the case of the Stamp Act Crisis, elite Wilmingtonians and common Bostonians may have shared the same fury towards Parliamentary overreach, but they differed greatly in their initial degrees of frustration and thus in their actions while rioting. Essentially, these riots demonstrate that it is far easier to remain civil when one is faring well in life and much harder when one is not.

### Endnotes

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# A Bag of Worms: Sociocultural, Political, Economic, and Historical Dimensions of Caterpillar Fungus Harvest



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(Photo courtesy of International Business Times)

In 1993, Chinese women stunned the world at the Chinese National Games, smashing world records in the 1500, 3000, and 10,000-meter events. Their coach attributed this success partly to their consumption of caterpillar fungus.<sup>1</sup> Caterpillar fungus, or *Ophiocordyceps sinensis*, is a mushroom that parasitizes and eventually kills ghost moth larvae found in the alpine grasslands of Tibet. The fruiting body that emerges out of the larvae and the ground is highly valued as an herbal remedy.<sup>2</sup> Despite the suspicion and controversy surrounding the record-breaking runs, interest in and demand for the caterpillar fungus skyrocketed.<sup>3</sup> This meteoric rise in the caterpillar fungus's value has transformed the lives of poor, rural Tibetans, causing changes that ripple up, down, and beyond the commodity chain. However, the sociocultural, political, economic, and environmental ramifications of the harvest of this herbal medicine are shaped by and are shaping the complicated and sometimes contentious relationship between Tibet and China. Embedded in the story of the humble caterpillar fungus are narratives of Tibetan identity and independence and narratives of struggle against and resistance to cultural annihilation—narratives which are ultimately part of larger historical trends in interactions between Han Chinese and Tibetans and also between the Chinese government and Tibet.

The caterpillar fungus had been recognized as an herbal medicine for centuries before the revival in interest a few decades ago. One of the earliest recorded mentions of the caterpillar fungus was in a 15<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan text by Zurkhar Nyamnyi Dorjé. Dorjé notes that, among other “innumerable qualities,”<sup>4</sup> the caterpillar fungus has aphrodisiac properties and can sharpen the senses and effectively treat bile diseases, which in Tibetan medicine are diseases resulting in imbalance of the *MKhris pa* (bile or fire) humor.<sup>5</sup> In Tibetan, the caterpillar fungus is referred to as *yartsa gunbu*, which translates to “summer grass, winter worm.” The herbal medicine first appeared in Chinese texts in Wang Ang's 1694 *Ben Cao Bei Yao (Essentials of a Compendium of Materia Medica)* as *dongchong xiaocao* or “winter worm, summer grass”.<sup>6</sup> Both these names describe the metamorphosis that the fungus-insect complex itself undergoes while also reflecting the transformation enacted by medicine to return a body to health. In 1736 Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, a Jesuit missionary, provided Western audiences with one of the first descriptions of the caterpillar fungus, specifically as a plant which changes into a worm and then strengthens the body when consumed. The fungus's reputation as a tonic still held two centuries later as evidenced in Oliver Coales' 1919 economic notes on Tibet, in which he mentions the caterpillar fungus and its ability to restore the body's constitution. Even today, caterpillar fungus has maintained its reputation as a purported aphrodisiac (some have dubbed



the caterpillar fungus the “Himalayan Viagra”<sup>7)</sup> and, consequently, is still popular among Chinese consumers.

However, the validity of the caterpillar fungus’s purported properties did not receive serious scrutiny until a movement in the 1930s to scientize Chinese medicine and validate or debunk Chinese herbal remedies in biomedical terms. This relatively recent trend to scientize Chinese medicine began in 1929 as part of a compromise between Chinese practitioners of biomedicine and Chinese practitioners of Chinese medicine. Chinese medicine practitioners could gain institutional and state support through the Institute of National Medicine as long as they dedicated their research to defining, in biomedical terms and through established scientific research protocols, potentially beneficial medical properties of Chinese herbs and drugs.<sup>8</sup> This movement directly contributed to the eventual redefinition within the last ten years of the medicinal properties of *Ophiocordyceps sinensis* in biomedical terms. Research now has shown that *O. sinensis* has many beneficial effects ranging from anti-inflammatory and anti-tumoral properties to renal and reproductive system protection, seemingly validating its famed benefits.<sup>9</sup>

Much like how the movement to scientize Chinese medicine represented a greater struggle to determine and shape Chinese modernity and the future of both medicine and the state, the caterpillar fungus itself is embedded in and plays a role in the sociocultural, political, economic, and historical relationship of exchange, interaction, and sometimes contention between Tibet and China. It is therefore worth briefly examining Tibetan history and Sino-Tibetan relations to better understand how past and current interactions influence matters concerning *Ophiocordyceps sinensis*.

Today, Tibet is a part of the People’s Republic of China as the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and Tibet has been considered by Han Chinese as an integral part of China for hundreds of years.<sup>10</sup> However, this narrative does not recognize Tibet’s history and self-conception as its own separate, independent entity that only nominally entered the Chinese fold after the Mongol conquest of the area and incorporation of Tibet into the Yuan dynasty. For example, in the early 600s, Songtsen Gampo (617-650) unified all of Tibet into an expansive Tibetan Empire. A far cry from narratives of Tibetan subordination to China, the Tibetan Empire wielded enough strength to seize a daughter of a Chinese lord, attack China, depose a king, and exact annual tribute.<sup>11</sup> According to Chinese historiography, the arrival of the Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> century marks the beginning of China’s jurisdiction over Tibet. This control over Tibet would pass onto the succeeding Ming dynasty, remaining unbroken.<sup>12</sup>

However, there is evidence to suggest that even during the Yuan dynasty, Tibet enjoyed some measure of autonomy. Kublai Khan allowed the *lama* to have the highest authority in religious affairs and the lama's consent for the king's commands. Essentially, the lama was in a higher position than Kublai Khan in religious matters and on equal footing with him on governmental matters. Additionally, in return for providing religious instruction, Lama Pakpa Rinpoché was offered authority over the entirety of Tibet, making the payment of tribute to the Mongols, in fact, unnecessary.<sup>13</sup>

Curiously, Chinese historiography does not acknowledge this independence, and the Nationalist Party went so far as to proclaim in 1943 that “there are various family branches in the Chinese nation but there are no racial distinctions.” Instead words like “Tibetan” were taken to indicate only geography rather than ethnicity, and China's history of conflict between other ethnic groups was not one of clashes with foreign groups but instead a much tamer story of intra-familial disputes. During this period, the Nationalist directive was framed as a way of presenting a united front against attacking Japanese forces.<sup>14</sup> The 1951 “liberation” of Tibet was celebrated by the Communist Party as a liberation of the entirety of the Chinese people from imperialistic forces. It was also, according to the official statement, an opportunity to bring Tibet in as “a member of the big family of a united, strong and new China where all races operate on the basis of equality.”<sup>15</sup>

With the birth of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the 1951 incorporation of Tibet represented the beginnings of Tibet's complicated relationship with modern Communist China. Han Chinese cadres entered Tibet with the goal of helping Tibet “return to the Motherland,”<sup>16</sup> but Tibetans felt that they had lost their independence—both of their country and of their way of life as the Chinese state attempted to transform a previously-feudal Tibet into just another region of an “indivisibly multi-ethnic”<sup>17</sup> Communist China. Mutual misunderstandings and mutual distrust—the Tibetans overwhelmed by Chinese political and technological innovations and the Chinese viewing themselves as superior liberators—led to conflict and resistance that eventually erupted in revolt in 1959 and has never truly died down since. Following this revolt, the Chinese state amplified its efforts to integrate Tibet into China. The destruction and prohibition of traditional social and economic institutions in Tibet, the suppression of Tibetan Buddhism (which forms a critical, inseparable part of Tibetan identity), and the abolition of the Dalai Lama's administration were intended to pave the way for the installation of new socialist and patriotic values and beliefs in Tibetans.<sup>18</sup>



After Mao Zedong's death and Deng Xiaoping's rise to power, the Chinese state's efforts became focused on economically reforming Tibet—an effort that has lasted to the modern day which will be discussed in depth later. In the 1990s, the government poured billions of yuan into regional infrastructural and other economic projects and enticed non-Tibetans from the interior to migrate to the area. Non-Tibetans, especially Han Chinese, transformed demographics in cities like Lhasa and now dominate the local economy, benefiting from market economy growth. Meanwhile Tibetans fear that they are becoming marginalized in their own land and cannot compete with skilled non-Tibetans in an economy no longer based on traditional pastoralism.<sup>19</sup> The caterpillar fungus has provided a way for Tibetans to resist these trends, for now.

Caterpillar fungus distribution is found on high-elevation grasslands at minimum altitudes of at least 3,000 meters. It is primarily located on the Tibetan Plateau in surrounding areas including Tibet, Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces of China, southern regions of the Himalayas, and parts of Nepal, India, and Bhutan.<sup>20</sup> Partly because of this mountainous region's remoteness and harsh environmental conditions, indigenous communities have had rather limited economic opportunities.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, these western provinces and the Tibet Autonomous Region in particular have not experienced the same kind of economic prosperity in recent years as relatively wealthier eastern provinces. The average gap in per capita gross domestic product between western and eastern regions in 2010 was around 20,000 yuan, double what it had been eight years prior. In 1985, the average income of Tibetan farmers was 353 yuan compared to Chinese farmers's average income of 393 yuan. In 1996, Tibetan farmers earned 975 yuan while Chinese farmers made 2,090 yuan, a dramatically widening gap.<sup>22</sup> Beginning in the 1980s, it was common for Chinese farm households to participate in non-farm activities like managing commercial shops, but for Tibetan farmers and herders, non-agricultural activities did not play a major role in their economic livelihood until nearly twenty years later.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the most significant non-agricultural activity for this population is the collection of caterpillar fungus, especially after it became an incredibly sought after and valued commodity.

Although Jean-Baptiste Du Halde as early as 1736 noted that the caterpillar fungus was worth four times its weight in silver and only used by the emperor's physician because of its rarity,<sup>24</sup> the caterpillar fungus had very little value in the years leading up to its boom in popularity in the mid-to-late 1990s. Very few Tibetans were actually engaged in harvesting the fungus until the 2000s.<sup>25</sup>

Villagers traded it for cigarettes, noodles, and other difficult-to-obtain goods<sup>26</sup> before the price paid to harvesters increased by 350% between 1997 and 2004.<sup>27</sup> In September 2014, people paid as much as 14,000 dollars per kilogram for caterpillar fungus—three times its weight in gold.<sup>28</sup> In 2004, estimates of the caterpillar fungus industry indicate that it makes up 8.5% of Tibet's 21.1 billion yuan GDP, surpassing even the industry and mining sector valued at 1.5 billion yuan. Approximately 40% of rural income in Tibet now comes from the caterpillar fungus trade.<sup>29</sup> Most of the people gathering caterpillar fungus come from the poorest communities and a good day's harvest can bring in five times the average yearly wage.<sup>30</sup> The dramatic increase in the fungus's value has transformed lives by providing discretionary income to purchase products like motorcycles and television sets, resources to invest in local infrastructure and economic development,<sup>31</sup> and access to tuition, healthcare, and bank loans. This has led to an empowerment of these rural communities, whose members previously had no means to access or afford these resources and services, as well as participation in and integration into the regional, national, and international economies through the caterpillar fungus.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, because the industry is so lucrative, many Tibetans can afford to focus on the harvest and sell their livestock.

However, pastoralism, the practice of raising livestock and following herds, has played a large part in the Tibetan identity,<sup>33</sup> so the disappearance of sheep and yak from the landscape<sup>34</sup> has led to a “growing critical discourse about the ultimately deleterious effects of the [caterpillar fungus] harvest on Tibetan livelihoods and work ethics.”<sup>35</sup> The caterpillar fungus is viewed by some to be the root of vices antithetical to Buddhist values like gambling, conflict, and a lack of motivation to gain skills to survive in a post-caterpillar fungus, modernizing Chinese economy.

Outside of the contrast between pastoralism and modernization, there has also been other conflict as a result of the caterpillar fungus harvest. Much of this conflict comes from disputes over state-issued collection permits and the increasingly limited land on which to gather caterpillar fungus. Increasing numbers of people have been migrating to the alpine grasslands during the harvesting season in hopes of also benefiting from the caterpillar fungus's high value.<sup>36</sup> However, competition has continued to increase, so some local regulations are in place that restrict collection to people from the area or require outsiders to purchase more expensive permits.<sup>37</sup> Discontent over the state government selling permits to outsiders without benefiting local governments or the people with long-term usage rights over the land and tensions between local and nonlocal harvesters have on a few occasions

erupted into deadly violence between Tibetans. In May 2005, local herders in Dzado County, Yushu attempted to barricade neighboring Nangchen County Tibetans from entering the area to collect caterpillar fungus with permits that the Dzado prefectural government sold without distributing profits to local governments or herders; 2,000 people were involved in the conflict, ten died, many were injured, some shops were looted and burned, and military forces were ultimately summoned.<sup>38</sup> By 2013, the issue had become so prevalent that even the Dalai Lama urged an end to the violence between Tibetans over access to harvest grounds.<sup>39</sup> Though these conflicts were between Tibetans, some community members tied them back to the Chinese state. A Dzado village leader stated that, “What the Nangchen people did was very similar to the Japanese invasion of China,” alluding to both the severity of the conflict and Tibet’s incorporation into China. A local reporter suggested that had the clashes been truly just an inter-ethnic tension, it would have long been resolved.<sup>40</sup> Thus, ethnic resentment towards the Chinese state deepened as a result of conflicts that have been viewed as manufactured by the Chinese government.

Despite these conflicts, the great profits that the Tibetan harvesters have managed to make from gathering caterpillar fungus have allowed them, to a certain extent, to retain their pastoral, herder lifestyle and have insulated them from changing economic realities in China. China’s central government has largely brought about these economic changes by seeking to end pastoralism in Tibet and by repurposing land for development and large-scale agriculture. This push is embodied in the government’s Great Western Development (GWD), which has the official goals of addressing regional economic inequalities, increasing social and national stability in western areas, and protecting the environment. However, while these official goals seem benign, it’s not unlikely that they conceal ulterior motives—namely attempts to control ethnic unrest in the name of “national unity”<sup>41</sup> by funneling resources into large-scale investment projects, such as infrastructure or natural resource extraction products, in areas dominated by minorities.<sup>42</sup> In this sense the GWD appears strikingly similar to aforementioned efforts in the 1990s by the Chinese government to focus on economic development.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, under the GWD, the government encourages migration as a method of allocating the necessary human resources of skilled, educated personnel. Government policy furthermore facilitates the migration of both skilled and unskilled labor with incentives like allowances and relaxed household registration systems, encouraging Han Chinese to move into and integrate minority regions.<sup>44</sup>

In Tibet specifically, there are government-sponsored construction and infrastructure projects, but the job openings for those projects frequently go to Han Chinese who are already in local managerial positions and often have better educational and occupational skills.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, the Chinese government has attempted in recent years to build a “New Socialist Countryside” and to improve living conditions and the local economy by moving Tibetans from their rural, pastoral communities to new permanent housing in settlements usually on the periphery of small towns. This strategy, however, disrupts traditional livelihoods at the expense of economic independence and separates Tibetans from a part of their cultural identity, placing them in situations in which they lack the skills and sometimes the social capital (as ethnic minorities) necessary to compete with Chinese migrants.<sup>46</sup> The settlements’ standardized back enclosures are too small to raise many livestock, and they are long distances from pastures, forcing many Tibetans to sell off their animals. Local authorities have also urged Tibetans to shift cultivation from grain to vegetables. Unfortunately, many Tibetans have found that they cannot compete with Chinese vegetable vendors in city markets with customers who do not buy from Tibetan sellers. Vegetables, unlike grains, also cannot be fed to livestock and cannot sustain a household.<sup>47</sup> These changes jeopardize Tibetan livelihoods and economic self-sufficiencies. The government does provide subsidies to the resettled farmers and herders -sometimes contributing up to half of the income for the bottom 10%<sup>48</sup>- but many Tibetans report that the subsidies are not enough to survive. Often, profits from the caterpillar fungus harvest have buoyed them and made up for the deficit.<sup>49</sup> The sustainability of the harvest, however, is a serious consideration as the market value of the caterpillar fungus has begun to decline in the last four years and questions about the long-term ecological effects of digging up the grasslands have arisen.

The Chinese government’s actions have, in part, decreased the demand for caterpillar fungus, making futures uncertain for the people whose economic survival has shifted to depend on the herbal medicine’s trade. The exorbitant prices of the caterpillar fungus have made the product a luxury item only accessible to wealthy buyers like government officials who use it as gifts or bribes.<sup>50</sup> However, the Chinese government began an anti-corruption campaign in 2012, cracking down on corrupt officials who accepted bribes and thus impacting the luxury goods market in general.<sup>51</sup> In 2013, the caterpillar fungus was worth 300,000 yuan per kilogram, but its value has now decreased to one-third of that in the last three years.<sup>52</sup> On February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the China Food and Drug Administration (CFDA) announced on its website that toxic levels of arsenic had been found within caterpillar fungus,

declaring it dangerous for consumption and medical purposes; however, because this announcement is so recent, there is not enough independent research yet to confirm the CFDA's findings. Arguably, if demand and sales continue to decline for caterpillar fungus and the business becomes no longer profitable for the Tibetan harvesters who are now so dependent on it, they will lose the measure of economic independence the trade has given them, and their remaining options will be ones provided by the government: the housing of the New Socialist Countryside and the encouragement of cash crop farming and small business ventures.<sup>53</sup> If viewed in the light of the Chinese government's past attempts to integrate the Tibetan people into the fold of Han Chinese society but not on Tibetan terms, this could be yet another manifestation of a larger historical trend of ethnocide.

In addition to these economic and political forces, ecological factors frame the caterpillar fungus as a limited resource that is potentially at risk. The incredible demand for the herbal remedy places an unprecedented strain on its availability in the grasslands. In 2012, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) declared *O. sinensis* to be an endangered species.<sup>54</sup> Many harvesters report that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find and that its yields are decreasing, making them concerned about being able to continue gathering it in the future. According to one study published in 2012, 92.9% of harvesters believe supply is decreasing; 95.1% believe the availability of the fungus is decreasing; 70.9% believe it is increasingly difficult to find; and 67% believe current harvesting practices, which consist of over-harvesting and premature harvesting, are unsustainable.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, concerns about climate change weigh heavily on the mind of researchers, though research on its impact on caterpillar fungus has not been conclusive. Modifications to soil temperature and moisture brought about by less snow, earlier snow melting, erratic rainfall, and increased temperatures may in fact negatively impact the ghost moth larvae populations that the fungi parasitize;<sup>56</sup> however, there is the possibility that fungal fruiting could begin earlier in the year to accommodate temperature changes.<sup>57</sup> The caterpillar fungus, too, has thus far survived centuries of cultivation, which suggests some resiliency.<sup>58</sup>

In response to these concerns, the scientific community has optimistically turned towards the possibility of artificially cultivating the caterpillar fungus to relieve the stress on the limited resource and take advantage of the multitude of its medicinal properties. With the support of the Chinese government through programs such as the Major State Basic Research Development Program of China, the National High-tech R&D Program of China, and the National Natural Science Foundation

of China, Chinese research institutes and universities have made some progress in growing ghost moth larvae and *O. sinensis* fungal strains under laboratory conditions.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, this poses problems for the rural communities that are dependent on the caterpillar fungus economy. Cultivation in laboratories has so far proven elusive but, if it is achieved, it would solve the problem of sustainability of *O. sinensis*. However, should these efforts succeed, no contingency plan is in place to fill the vacuum in the incomes of Tibetan harvesters, many of whom have focused entirely on the caterpillar fungus harvest that thus far has been able to make up for, if not exceed, profits from their previous pastoral occupations. Moreover, if supply of or demand for the fungus were to drop off, rural Tibetans would likely have to turn to the Chinese government's alternatives, potentially giving up their traditional livelihood and a crucial aspect of their cultural identity.

There are several other concerns related to disassociating Tibetan people from the caterpillar fungus. Recently, consumers have become concerned about fake or contaminated products, leading to a change in advertising rhetoric for the caterpillar fungus that emphasizes a construed pristine landscape of Tibet in the absence of any of the people of Tibet. The fungus can be bought in high-end retail stores, regional stores specializing in Tibetan products, and ordinary grocery stores. The packaging and advertisements for caterpillar fungus typically depict clean skies, yaks grazing, and vast grasslands, removing the presence of Tibetans themselves from the consciousness of consumers. This imagery is not limited to the sale of caterpillar fungus alone but represents a broader romanticizing of Tibet and Tibetan culture starting in the late 1990s and early 2000's. The autonomous region became the site of relief and escapism for urban middle-class Chinese anxieties. Tourists can fantasize about Tibet as a refuge from their stresses and a place for self-improvement. Absent from these fantasies are the Tibetans and their own struggles and challenges. Tibetan culture is reduced to one of "people's simplicity and spirituality and its nature all [serving as] reservoirs for health and self-renewal," and Tibet itself becomes a natural resource—pristine, pure, and uninhabited. This kind of rhetoric helps justify resettlement and relocation of rural communities in order to preserve this natural resource.<sup>60</sup>

As a parallel to this romanticizing of an imagined Tibet, the rhetoric of scientization and scientism has further encouraged Chinese consumers to believe they are consuming a pristine product free of any associations with the Tibetan people. The clean, sterile processing of caterpillar fungus in factories is so far removed from the alpine grasslands of Tibet where people crouch low to the ground, scanning for fungi poking out of the soil and then digging them out of the earth. The new process and



technologies supposedly correct errors of traditional caterpillar fungus preparation and consumption, increasing the efficacy of the medicine.<sup>61</sup> In light of the concerns over fake or deficient products as well the unrest in Tibet, this strategy simultaneously allays wealthy consumers' concerns while taking advantage of the romanticizing of the land of Tibet in order to market the caterpillar fungus without the now-controversial mention of Tibetans. Certainly, the erasure of Tibetan identity is not something new in Chinese history.

*Yartsa gunbu* has become an integral part of many Tibetans' lives, changing the sociocultural landscape in a precarious time when political and economic forces surrounding the caterpillar fungus harvest could disrupt Tibetan communities as quickly as they transformed them. Dependence on the caterpillar fungus has simultaneously reinforced and challenged Tibetan identity by allowing Tibetans some economic independence and the ability to retain their traditional pastoral lifestyles but in an altered form, often without livestock herding. This reliance on one particular economic activity, however, has left Tibetans poorly equipped to gain the skills that would allow them to survive in a post-caterpillar fungus economy that may arise due to overharvesting and dwindling availability. The Chinese government is also pushing this particular future through direct actions such as resettlement and development projects and indirect means such as thorough political campaigns which seek to modify public opinion and economic choices. Additionally, as scientization and changing rhetoric surrounding the sale of caterpillar fungus remove the Tibetans from the commodity chain, their livelihoods are at even greater risk. Ultimately, the fungus, while tiny, is part of a much greater picture that pits the past and future of the Tibetan people against the monolithic government of the Han Chinese, a force which seeks to change and control those which differ from it on the Tibetan Plateau.

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# “Eulenspiegel” in America: German Experiences of Internment in Fort Oglethorpe during the First World War



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(Photo courtesy of Daily Mail)

## **Introduction**

On April 6<sup>th</sup> 1917, the United States of America declared war on Imperial Germany. As President Woodrow Wilson declared, The War to End War was supposed to make the world “safe for democracy.” However, it also had profound consequences for the tens of thousands of Germans citizens residing in the US at the time.<sup>1</sup> Suddenly, they had become “Enemy Aliens” and faced collective suspicion, surveillance, and often imprisonment.

Eighteen months later, Germans now interned in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia wrote “ein erstes Wort.”<sup>2</sup> “Till Eulenspiegel, devout and free”, it says in a short poem on the second page, “is now jesting around in the Orgelsdorf camp”.<sup>3</sup> Till Eulenspiegel, a semi-mythical figure and the personification of the clever trickster, became the mascot and inspiration for the writers of the newspaper who constantly sought to outsmart their censors.<sup>4</sup> The name Eulenspiegel, consisting of the words Eule for owl (a symbol of wisdom) and Spiegel for mirror, deliberately conveys typical attributes of a jester who holds a mirror up to the people. Furthermore, the original spelling, Ulensp(i)egel, conveys a word play with the Middle Low German sentence „ick bin ulen spegel, meaning “I am your mirror.” The prisoner-made newspaper Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel was both a reaction as well as a coping mechanism formulated in response to the large-scale actions against and incarcerations of Germans.

Consequently, this paper will examine the internment and captivity of Germans in the US during the First World War. The aforementioned newspaper, Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel, proves to be a substantial Spiegel for German experiences, perspectives, and possibilities during imprisonment. In the spirit of Ad Fontes, this exceptional source will be contrasted by official US documents of the era to gain a deeper understanding of this very peculiar phenomenon. The historic case-study of Fort Oglethorpe has not been subject to detailed analysis by scholars.<sup>5</sup> In general, the field of (German) internment in the United States lacks its own comprehensive publication.<sup>6</sup>

To achieve a wider insight into the political context of internment, it is necessary to give a brief account of the legal guidelines which were laid out by domestic and international law. After a few remarks on the wider situation of internment across the United States, Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel will be analyzed in depth, as well as put into the perspective of “wartime captivity” to comprehend what imprisonment as carcer species torturae meant to German enemy aliens.<sup>7</sup>

## **Prisoners of War and Enemy Aliens: Legal Foundations in the United States**

For most of human history, little to no regulations existed on how to properly handle captured

combatants. Even though Arnold Krammer tracks the first concerns for prisoners of war back to the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi<sup>8</sup>, it was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that the first internationally negotiated and accepted regulations began to emerge. Before the outbreak of World War One, both the Hague Conventions and the Geneva Convention laid out a basic humanitarian groundwork on how to treat captured enemies.<sup>9</sup> As the war continued, it became apparent that agreed upon standards of “humane treatment” were not and could not always be upheld, and some scholars saw an “erosion of standards of legal protection.”<sup>10</sup> To make matters worse, the controlling international agreements were mainly concerned with belligerents, leaving the status of civilian internees blurred.<sup>11</sup> Gustave Ador, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, recognized this problem when he concluded that:

Civilian internment is a novel feature of this war; international treaties did not foresee this phenomenon. At the start of the war it seemed logical that enemy civilians might be retained as suspects; a few months should have been enough to separate the chaff from the wheat. (...) These civilians have been deprived of their liberty and their treatment hardly differs from that of prisoners. After three years and more of war, we demand that these different categories of civilian detainees should become the object of special consideration and that their situation, which in some respects is even more cruel than that of military prisoners, should be properly discussed before the fourth winter of the war.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, this was in many aspects initially only a problem for the European combatants, meaning the United States had considerable time to watch and learn from what happened across the Atlantic. By 1917, the American government had witnessed the events occurring overseas, and “before the declaration of war on 6 April, the nation was mentally prepared for large-scale actions against a German threat within the American homeland”.<sup>13</sup>

The conflict with Imperial Germany was not the first that raised the issues of war captivity and civilian internments.<sup>14</sup> In fact, there has been a long-standing Anglophone tradition of the concept of Enemy Aliens. Twenty-two years after declaring the “unalienable rights” of all men, the self-declared “Land of the Free” passed the Alien Enemy Act in 1798 in order to “limit criticism of the American Government,” specifically enemy propaganda.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Great Britain passed an Alien Acts in 1905.<sup>16</sup> In its most basic form, the American and English Encyclopaedia of Law defines Alien Enemy in 1887 as “one who owes allegiance to the adverse belligerent.”<sup>17</sup>

The term itself was first used by William Blackstone in his Commentaries on the Law of England in 1766, making it much older than the conceptualized term of a prisoner of war (POW).<sup>18</sup> In his commentaries, Blackstone stated that “(...) anybody may seize to his own use such goods as

belong to an alien enemy,” explaining that “(...) such enemies, not being looked upon as members of our society, are not entitled, during their state of enmity, to the benefit or protection of the laws; and therefore every man that has opportunity is permitted to seize upon their chattels, without being compelled, as in other cases, to make restitution or satisfaction to the owner.”<sup>19</sup> While this may sound radical at first, Blackstone clarifies that the people who do so must be authorized by the state.<sup>20</sup> The underlying idea that citizens of a belligerent country are being excluded from society, and to some degree, the protection of law, certainly demonstrated its influence in the already mentioned Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. Despite its age, it served as a first foundation for the German internment in the United States and was directly quoted by President Wilson in his call for a declaration of war against the German Empire.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Situation in the United States: Good Aliens, Bad Aliens?**

In addition to the previously existing statutes, Wilson, who on April 2<sup>nd</sup> declared that “We have no quarrel with the German people,”<sup>22</sup> introduced additional restrictions which he found “necessary in the premises and for the public safety.”<sup>23</sup> These included the prohibition of the possession of firearms or “any form of signaling device” by the designated enemy aliens (among other prohibited objects), a requirement that they register themselves,<sup>24</sup> a ban on entering or leaving the United States without permission, and restrictions on approaching or living near certain “prohibited areas.”<sup>25</sup> Other acts such as the Espionage Act of June 1917, the Trading with the Enemy Act of October 1917, and the Sabotage Act of April 1918 followed, and by the end of the war 260,000 male German alien enemies were registered and 6,300 arrested.<sup>26</sup>

It is notable that these restrictions almost exclusively targeted German citizens, whereas Austro-Hungarian citizens were explicitly exempted from these regulations after the United States declared war on Austria-Hungary on December 7, 1917.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the declaration of war’s text refrained from using the term alien enemy, instead only referring to “natives, citizens, denizens or subjects” of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>28</sup> The New York Times related that:

The President’s motive in drawing distinctions between Germans and Austrians (...) as twofold. First, it was realized that the sympathy of Hungarians, Rumanians, Poles, Serbians, Czechs, Slovacs, and other immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire is not with the mother country in the war and they have not been guilty in participation in the campaign of violence practiced under the German war system. Secondly, such a large proportion of laborers in munition and steel plants and coal mines consists of Austrian subjects that it was found practically impossible to administer against them the rigid regulation imposed on the Germans, who are not half so numerous and more individualistic.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike the British Empire, which usually made no distinction between Germans and Austrians in terms of internment, the United States clearly identified Germans as their main threat.<sup>30</sup> Even though most German-Americans did not have particularly strong ties to their homeland, the perception of Germany as an unusually homogeneous nation state (as opposed to the declining multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire) seemed sufficient to justify both public Germanophobia as well as government-directed civilian internment.<sup>31</sup>

### **From Makeshift Detainment to Camp Imprisonment**

The state of war changed not only the status of German civilians, but also those of the sailors and merchantmen who had been staying in American ports under various circumstances for different durations and reasons prior to the declaration of war.<sup>32</sup> It is important to note that, before April, the United States had already prematurely detained and confined some of the German merchant crewmen<sup>33</sup> Once war was declared, their ships were seized through a number of executive orders and the remaining roughly 2,300 seamen were detained at various immigration stations.<sup>34</sup> This makeshift situation, one of which was based on the famous former immigrant processing center of Ellis Island, caused numerous problems as many Germans succeeded in escaping, exacerbating fears among the already paranoid American public.<sup>35</sup>

As a consequence of these early mishaps, more durable solutions had to be found as fast as possible to demonstrate to the public that the state was able to maintain control over its various prisoners. On the other side, both civilians and merchant and navy sailors found themselves jailed by a society which feared them as threats to national security. Whether the claims of highly-organized espionage, sabotage, and dissemination of anti-American propaganda were true or merely results of the widespread Germanophobia among all Allied powers lays beyond focus here.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the sentiments created by such accusations were a strong incentive for the American government to separate the “wheat from the chaff” by sorting out the dangerous enemy aliens from the “great body of the alien Germans [that] behaved themselves and obeyed [the American] laws to a very commendable degree.”<sup>37</sup>

This process resulted in the establishment of several camps: Fort Douglas, Utah, Fort McPherson, Georgia, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and Hot Springs, North Carolina.<sup>38</sup> The short-lived camp in Hot Springs held all of the interned civilian seamen under the supervision of the Labor Department, while civilian internees and POWs were moved around between McPherson and Oglethorpe, with the



former concentrating the prisoners of war.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Fort Oglethorpe was to hold alien civilians from west of the Mississippi and Fort Douglas those east of it.<sup>40</sup> Out of these camps, Oglethorpe stood out because of its unique mixture of merchant seamen who were transferred from Hot Springs and civilian internees, many of whom were artists, authors, conductors, or professors forming the intellectual elite of the German internees.<sup>41</sup>

### **Fort Orgelsdorf: An Atypical Internment Camp**

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, a little more than a week after the sensational escape of some of its men, the remaining 750 crew members and officers of the ships Prinz Eitel Friedrich and Kronprinz Wilhelm arrived in Georgia and were “placed for safe keeping in stockades at Fort McPherson and Fort Oglethorpe under guard of the Seventeenth Infantry.”<sup>42</sup> While the more than 400 men from the Wilhelm were assigned to McPherson, the remaining POWs were incarcerated in Fort Oglethorpe, alongside fifty-six merchant seamen and ninety-eight civilian internees.<sup>43</sup> The number of civilians grew steadily as more and more dangerous enemy aliens were arrested throughout country, and by June 1918, when the merchant seamen and sailors were transferred to Fort McPherson, it had reached 840.<sup>44</sup> With the arrival of the “Hot Springser,” Oglethorpe grew to roughly 4,000 internees by fall of 1918.<sup>45</sup>

The camp itself was located in the Northwest corner of Georgia on about sixty acres of treeless plains, and ultimately possessed three compounds. Camp A, also called the “millionaires” camp, was where the wealthier internees lived at their own expense in individual rooms, free of mandatory work, and utilized a separate wash-house and privately hired chefs.<sup>46</sup> Camp B consisted primarily of two-story hundred-man barracks that housed the majority of the prisoners, as well as the mess and activity halls. Here, unpaid work inside the camp was mandatory, though money could be earned through work outside of the camp.<sup>47</sup>

Lastly, Camp C contained the punishment barracks in which prisoners were put on half rations if they who refused “volunteer” work, tried to escape, or caused trouble in the camp.<sup>48</sup> In a way, the organization of the camp reflects its diverse composition. The unusual fact that a small and privileged group had sufficient free time led to a number of effects which benefitted the entire camp, one of the most important being the publication of the Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel: “Camp Gossip” or Artistic Resistance?**

The first issue of the Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel was published on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1918.<sup>50</sup> Nine



more would follow, with the last published on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1919, totaling one hundred-six pages that dealt with a variety of topics written by a multitude of authors. As a source, it is truly remarkable, not only because of its rarity, but also because the Eulenspiegel defies the notion of prison-newspapers in many aspects.<sup>51</sup>

What set this publication apart from other prison newspapers was its high proportion of poetry and artistic images, as opposed to the “regular news” from inside and outside the camp that usually dominated prisoner newspapers of that time.<sup>52</sup> The issues together included a total of forty-nine images: thirty depicted camp life, ten portrayed inmates, and nine depicted things outside of or unrelated to camp life.<sup>53</sup> Apart from their artistic value, these pictures gave a fairly accurate representation of the camp.

Another unusual characteristic was the high number of contributors, with at least thirty-two different authors contributing. Some used their real names, while some used pseudonyms.<sup>54</sup> By far the most dominant type of article was the poem. At least twenty-four poetic features can be found in various length and forms.<sup>55</sup> On top of that came eleven educational articles, a dozen short anecdotes, several (multi-part) novels, nine “spotlights” of other inmates with accompanying portraits, and the column Lieber Eulenspiegel, which also varied greatly in form and content.<sup>56</sup> Most of the issues possessed a thematic structure. The third issue was in memoriam of the deaths caused after a heavy epidemic ravaged the camp, the fourth was “conceptualized as Deutsche Nummer and is thus in its contents with one exception serious.” Later periodicals were special editions for Christmas, New Years, and the Hot Spring camp.<sup>57</sup>

Despite its relatively short existence, the Eulenspiegel underwent major changes in design, and with the slow release of internees, authorship.<sup>58</sup> Making the best out of insufficient paper and printing tools, the title page as well as the rest of the magazine constantly became more elaborate.<sup>59</sup>

The exterior form changed, but the function remained the same. The very first article proclaimed the Eulenspiegel as “A magazine that was created by internees for internees and that is not merely a joke magazine, but rather seeks to cultivate the arts, and tries to offer something lasting.”<sup>60</sup> This endeavor, however, had to be achieved in the face of a constant fight between the publishers and the camp censor.<sup>61</sup> Most likely the most hated man in the entire camp, the censor was described by internee Richard Goldschmidt’s in his memoirs as “one of the ugliest fellows I have met. A teacher of German in some college, dry and pedantic to the bone, this man considered his office a means of

inflicting mental torture on the prisoners”.<sup>62</sup>

Apart from the many jokes directed against the nameless censor, the prisoners tried to veil their criticism in poetry, complicated words, and the use of dialects in their writings.<sup>63</sup> Just like their patron Till Eulenspiegel, they tried to outsmart the American officials as a virtually undetectable form of protest against their treatment and situation. In a way, this strategy worked. The commandant of Fort Oglethorpe’s report to the War Department in 1919 notes merely that “two publications were issued from time to time by the prisoners. Die Bombe and Der Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel, under the supervision of the censor, consisting principally of camp gossip, and were apparently very much enjoyed.”<sup>64</sup>

This victory over the Argus-eyes of official censorship was clouded by the fact that, even after the armistice in November 1918, internees began to realize that they would have to remain in Orgelsdorf longer. Additionally, the realization that their home country had lost the war was a heavy blow for the prisoners.<sup>65</sup> From January to May 1919, publication ceased, and the final issue marked a change in tone that reflected both the frustration and drop in camp morale. It only featured one poem and four pictures and was more occupied with discussing up the events of the past month.<sup>66</sup> However, even the last edition, depicting the Eulenspiegel rising from ashes like a phoenix, kept its unparalleled style of being highly-intellectual, equally satirical, and artistic despite primitive resources and restricted possibilities at expression.

### **Conclusion**

When Fort Oglethorpe finally closed in April 1920, it had shaped the lives of thousands of Germans who were interned there.<sup>67</sup> The Eulenspiegel, as a product of this unique environment, was exceptional in many ways. On the other hand, it does reflect one of the most prominent phenomena of the time. Cases of the so-called “Barbed-Wire Disease” have been reported from all around the globe during the First World War.<sup>68</sup> The first researcher and inventor of the term, A.L. Vischer, argued that the actual conditions of captivity have little to do with onset, and that “civilian internees living in relatively comfortable camps showed the same incidence of the condition as prisoners in the most brutal work camps”<sup>69</sup> – an assertion that the German internees, their “nerves ruined by the barbed-wire” could only confirm.<sup>70</sup> Even seven years later, Erich Posselt would still remember that the “barbed-wire which surrounded us on all sides, and made us do idiotic things under its eternal irritation.”<sup>71</sup>

In the wider context of a global phenomenon of captivity during the First World War, the German internees in the United States were typical victims of politics who found a typical way of coping with a very typical “disease.”<sup>72</sup> The outcome however, was atypical. Thus, the Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel is not only a Spiegel for their experiences but also reveals itself to be a portal into the widely unexplored world of German internment in the United States during the Great War.

## Endnotes

1. Woodrow Wilson, Address to a Joint Session of Congress Requesting a Declaration of War Against Germany, (April 2, 1917). Available online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65366>).
2. "Ein erstes Wort", Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel (OE in the following), Nr. 1., October 15<sup>th</sup> 1918. "Ein erstes Wort" (a first word) is the title of the first article in the first issue.
3. „Schelmenlied“ in OE, Nr. 1, translation of the author. The original poem is written in Middle Low German, the same dialect in which Eulenspiegel's stories were originally published.
4. The first book containing Eulenspiegel's (Dyl Ulenspiegel) stories was published in 1515 and became an early best-seller that was widely spread and translated throughout the 16th century.
5. Two of the only notable examples are Cross and Myers' 2012 article „'Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel' and the German Internee Experience at Fort Oglethorpe, 1917-19“, Georgia Historical Quarterly Vol. 96, No. 2 (2012): 233-259, as well as Davis' 1991 article "Orgelsdorf: A World War I Internment Camp America", Yearbook of German-American studies 26 (1991): 249-266.
6. There is, however, a multitude of articles from different perspectives and fields illustrating various aspects. For examples see the bibliography.
7. For those conceptions see the various articles in: Anne Marie Pathé and Fabien Théofilakis (Ed.), Wartime Captivity in the Twentieth Century, (Paris: Berghahn, 2016).
8. Arnold Krammer, Prisoners of War. A Reference Handbook. (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), 17.
9. The US ratified the First Geneva Convention in 1882 and the Hague Convention in 1909.
10. Arnold Krammer, „Prisoners in the First World War“, Prisoners in War, ed. Sibylle Scheipers (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010), 76. The German Empire, for instance, was not prepared for the vast number of Russian POWs leading to catastrophic conditions in the camps, for more details see Jochen Oltmer (ed.) Kriegsgefangene im Europa des Ersten Weltkrieges, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006).
11. As a result of the experiences endured during the World War(s), the subsequent Geneva Conventions clarified this.
12. Cited in Matthew Stibbe, „The Internment of Civilians by Belligerent States during the First World War and the Response of the International Committee of the Red Cross“, Journal of Contemporary History London Vol 41, (Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi):5–19.
13. Davis "Orgelsdorf", 251.
14. For more details see Robert C. Doyle, The Enemy in our Hands (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010). In the Civil War, the lines between belligerents and civilians often vanished. A result of this issue was Lieber's Code, which in return influenced the formation of the international agreements mentioned earlier.
15. Lynn Hunt, Inventing Human Rights, (New York: Norton, 2007, 178. Additionally, the US had banned emigration from China in 1882, and from all of Asia in 1917.
16. Lynn Hunt, Inventing Human Rights, P. 185. For more on the relations between Germans and England see Panayi, Panikos. The Enemy in our Midst. Germans in Britain during the First World War, (Oxford: Berg, 1991).
17. John H. Merrill (Ed.). The American and English Encyclopaedia of Law, (New York: Edward Thompson Company, 1887), 465. It seems that until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the term Alien Enemy was more common, whereas the use of enemy alien is dramatically increasing later. Compare the N-Gram-viewer results for both terms: [https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=enemy+alien&case\\_insensitive=on&year\\_start=1720&year\\_end=1920&corpus=15&smoothing=20&share=&direct\\_url=t4%3B%2Cenemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%2Cso%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20Alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20ALIEN%3B%2Cco%3B%2Cenemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%2Cso%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20Alien%3B%2Cc1%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20Alien%3B%2Cc1%3B%3Benemy%20ALIEN%3B%2Cc1](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=enemy+alien&case_insensitive=on&year_start=1720&year_end=1920&corpus=15&smoothing=20&share=&direct_url=t4%3B%2Cenemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%2Cso%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20Alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20ALIEN%3B%2Cco%3B%2Cenemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%2Cso%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20Alien%3B%2Cc1%3B%3Benemy%20alien%3B%2Cco%3B%3Benemy%20Alien%3B%2Cc1%3B%3Benemy%20ALIEN%3B%2Cc1) for enemy alien and [https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=alien+enemy&case\\_insensitive=on&year\\_start=1720&year\\_end=1920&corpus=15&smoothing=20&share=&direct\\_url=t4%3B%2Calien%20enemy%3B%2Cco%3B%2Cso%3B%3Balien%20enemy%3B%2Cco%3B%3Balien%20Enemy%3B%2Cco%3B%3Balien%20enemy%3B%2Cco%3B%3BALIEN%20ENEMY%3B%2Cco](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=alien+enemy&case_insensitive=on&year_start=1720&year_end=1920&corpus=15&smoothing=20&share=&direct_url=t4%3B%2Calien%20enemy%3B%2Cco%3B%2Cso%3B%3Balien%20enemy%3B%2Cco%3B%3Balien%20Enemy%3B%2Cco%3B%3Balien%20enemy%3B%2Cco%3B%3BALIEN%20ENEMY%3B%2Cco) alien enemy.
18. According to the OED (prisoner of war), The word prisoner of war itself was first noted in 1608, but legal definitions including rights would follow only much later.
19. Sir William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books. Notes selected from the editions of Archibald, Christian, Coleridge, Chitty, Stewart, Kerr, and others, Barron Field's Analysis, and Additional Notes, and a Life of the Author by George Sharswood. In Two Volumes, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1893), 401-402.
20. Sir William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books.
21. See Woodrow Wilson, Proclamation 1364—Declaring That a State of War Exists Between the United States and Germany, (April 6, 1917). Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www>.

[presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=598](http://presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=598).

22. Woodrow Wilson, Address to a Joint Session of Congress Requesting a Declaration of War Against Germany. According to Wilson’s rhetoric, this war was brought upon the Germans by their undemocratic government without their consent, comp. “It was not upon their impulse that their government acted in entering this war”.
23. Woodrow Wilson, Proclamation 1364—Declaring That a State of War Exists Between the United States and Germany.
24. The compulsory registration for all males above the age of 14 started not until early February 1918, see “Gregory defines Alien Regulations“, New York Times from February 2nd 1917.
25. “Gregory defines Alien Regulations“, New York Times.
26. See U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General, Annual Report of the Attorney General of the United States 1918, 30, for the number of registrations and Davis, Orgelsdorf, 251 for the number of arrests.
27. “Puts no Rigid Ban on Austrians here“, The New York Times, December 13th 1917. The only restriction was that Austro-Hungarians could not leave the without permission.
28. “Puts no Rigid Ban on Austrians here“, The New York Times. Attached to the article is the wording of the declaration.
29. “Puts no Rigid Ban on Austrians here“, The New York Times. Attorney General Gregory explains the motivations in very much the same way.
30. For more details on German internment in Great Britain see Panikos Panayi. *The Enemy in our Midst. Germans in Britain during the First World War*, (Oxford: Berg, 1991).
31. For more on the treatment of German minorities see: Panayi Panikos (ed.) “Germans as Minorities during the First World War. A Global Comparative Perspective.” (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). After the war started, many German-Americans in fact celebrated their German identity stronger than before, e.g. on the Birthday of the Kaiser on January 27th. Still, most Germans advocated for neutrality. Language as a unifying factor, in this context, seems to may have an important role, since the US government frequently complained about the fact that in some areas “German was the rule and English the exception”.
32. Most of them sought to escape destruction on the British-dominated seas. Some of the crews lived aboard their (disarmed) vessels, whereas others constructed housing under American guidance ashore.
33. Jacqueline B. Painter, *The German Invasion of Western North Carolina. A Pictorial History*. (Johnson City: The Overmountain Press: 1997), 11.
34. For the executive orders and a list of the seized German vessels see Woodrow Wilson, Executive Order 2624—German Boats, May 22, 1917; Executive Order 2651—German Boats, June 30, 1917 and Executive Order 2653—German Boats, July 3, 1917. The number 2300 is taken from Davis, Orgelsdorf, 251. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, cynically called them “the fleet the Kaiser built for us” as many ships were used by the US to transport material and men to the European theater of war.
35. One such case occurred in the Navy Yard on League Island in Philadelphia on March 19th 1917, as 10 German sailors from the Prinz Eitel Friedrich escaped „in a sensational dash for liberty“. The paper allegedly reports that the escapees left names of „the names of German residents in this city (...) [and] also the names of five prominent German-Americans who reside in Hoboken, N.J. Ten interned men made their escape“, in New York Times, March 21st 1917.
36. For more information on Germanophobia among the Allies powers, see the various contributions in Panayi Panikos, *Germans as Minorities during the First World War*. For the Americas specifically see the essay of Tammy Proctor. There were indeed many German spies and saboteurs, most notably Franz von Rintelen who invented “fountain pen” bombs and destroyed a number of Allied supply ships.
37. U.S. Government Printing Office, Congressional Serial Set 1919, 2250. The head of the Bureau of Investigation, predecessor of the FBI, Bruce Bielaski made those remarks when being questioned by Senator Overman and Major Humes.
38. An in-depth research on all four, however, would burst the frame of this paper. For a short overview on all camps see William B. Glidden, “Internment Camps in America“, *Military Affairs* 37 (1973), 137.
39. Jeanne Glaubitz Cross, and Ann K. D. Myers. „Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel” and the German Internee Experience at Fort Oglethorpe, 1917-19.“, *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 96, No. 2 (2012), 237. For a detailed study on the Hot Springs see Jacqueline. Painter, *The German Invasion*. Other sources on Hot Spring can be found in the bibliography. Fort McPherson was featured in an illustrated coverage in the 64<sup>th</sup> volume of Munsey’s Magazine, see Reuben A. Lewis, “How the United States Takes Care of German Prisoners”, *Munsey’s Magazine* LXIV (1918): 137.
40. Cross and Myers „German Internee Experience“, 237.
41. The Hot Springs camp was taken over by the War Department in July 1918. Most of the 2,124 internees had been moved to Oglethorpe by 31 August 1918, except those who fell victim to an outbreak of typhoid fever which claimed 26 lives. Painter, *German Invasion*, 72.
42. “Germans interned at Georgia Forts“, The New York Times, March 28th 1918.
43. “Germans interned at Georgia Forts“, The New York Times; Davis, Orgelsdorf, 253-254.



44. Davis, Orgelsdorf, 254. See also footnote 39.
45. Davis estimates that Oglethorpe had „more than four-thousand“ (254), whereas Cross and Myers claim „thirty-six hundred“ prisoners (238). Among the newcomers from North Carolina was an entire military band that had made its way from Tsingtao and should become famous for playing concerts on a regular basis. For more details on the odyssey of this band see Edmund Bowles, „From Tsing-Tao to Fort Oglethorpe: The Perigrinations of a German Military Band During World War I“, *Journal of Band Research* (2008).
46. Davis, Orgelsdorf, 254; Cross and Myers, *German Internee Experience*, 239. These ninety individuals, despite not being all actually millionaires, included many prominent Germans such as Karl Muck, Richard Goldschmidt, or Hanns Heinz Ewers to name just a few.
47. Davis, Orgelsdorf, 239. Cross and Myers and Davis are nearly identical here.
48. Cross and Myers, *German Internee Experience*, 240. Davis, Orgelsdorf, 254, also reports the visit of a Swiss delegation on 3-4 June which found ten percent of the camp population during that time. Camp McPherson practiced a similar strategy for troublemakers, Lewis, „How the United States Takes Care of German Prisoners“, 145.
49. The revenue from the newspaper was to be distributed among the poorer inmates, „Ein erstes Wort“, OE, Nr. 1. Another positive side-effect being the establishment of a school. As the Report of the Adjutant General notes: „A school was organized entirely by the internes, and every facility possible was afforded them in this work. From the number of highly educated men interned it was a simple matter to Obtain instructors, and every subject was taught, from the elementary branches up to and including the arts and sciences. The school was remarkably well attended.“ *United States. War Dept., Annual Reports of the War Department* ,(U.S. Government Printing Office, 1920), 535.
50. OE, Nr. 1.
51. Davis falsely assumes that there is only one existing file of the newspaper (footnote on p. 262/263), a gift from former inmate Richard Goldschmidt to the Hoover Institute. In August 2009, the Rubinstein Library acquired another version (call number: D627.A1 O744 1918 Nr.1+10 c.1). This version must have belonged to one of the inmates, most likely Hans Stengel, since several pages include handwritten dedications to him, one being: „Mister Hans Stengel in the reminder of shared experienced and spent seven months in Oglethorpe. 15 November 1918 Karl Muck“ (translation of the author), *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel*, Nr. 1, 5. All issues of the *Eulenspiegel* are collected and bound in a small book, and most of the publications are the colored versions, which were more rare and expensive. Hans (von) Stengel was a cartoonist and arrested under charges of pro-German propaganda on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1917. After the war, he continued to work and live in New York.
52. For examples of French prison-newspapers see the collection in the Rubinstein Library.
53. Eighteen of which have been made by the interned artist Max von Recklinghausen. The illustrations were published by von Recklinghausen separately after the war in Germany as *Illustrationen für den „Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel“*, auf Holz u. Linoleum gezeichnet und geschnitten im Internierungslager von Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, in den Jahren 1918 und 1919. (C. Weyhe, 1920).
54. None of the other articles dealing with the newspaper have used this statistical approach yet.
55. Some of these are as short as a few lines, whereas other go on for several pages. Their types ranged from satirical songs written dialect, to translations of Walt Whitman, to long elaborate poems and many more.
56. The introduced prisoners were: Karl Muck, Hanns Heinz Ewers, Richard Goldschmidt, O.K. Wille, Ernst Kunwald, Dr. Krüger, Jonathan Zeneck, Albert Walter, Carl Heynen, and Wilhelm Steinforth. Unfortunately, it is impossible to report the backstory of every internee. Steinforth, for instance, was notorious for tunneling out of a French POW camp, taking up a new identity and escaping to New York where he worked as a German teacher before he was arrested as dangerous enemy alien and brought to Oglethorpe where he would become the head of the „University“ there, see „Intern a German who fooled British“, *New York Times*, 27 November 1917 and „Lagerangelenheiten“, OE, Nr. 10. Steinforth himself, published his memoirs titled „Flucht!“ (Escape) in 1939.
57. See note at the end of OE, Nr. 2, „The next number will be dedicated to the comrades who died during the Influenza epidemic“, translation of the author. The quote is taken from „Redaktionelles“, OE, Nr. 4, translation of the author.
58. Twenty of the authors only wrote once, most of them being the various pseudonyms.
59. The editor and founder Erich Posselt described the first printing press used as „toy of the sort children use to print calling cards“, Erich Posselt „PRISONER OF WAR NO. 3598“, *The American Mercury* (July 1927) , 320. The situation and thus the quality of printing improved later, as reflected in an article called *Die Druckerei* (The Print Shop) by Paul Sperber, OE, Nr. 9.
60. „Ein erstes Wort“ in OE, Nr. 1, translation of the author. The German term used is *Witzblatt*, most likely a reference to the former magazine printed at Oglethorpe called *Die Bombe* , which Posselt described as having „no more artistic or literary merit“ than student newspapers , Posselt, *PRISONER OF WAR NO. 3598*, 320.
61. The author comparative describes this feeling of constant censorship in his *Xenien* (epigrams, a reference to the book by the Roman poet Martial): „Zensur: Ein zartes Gebild das ueber allem schwebt, das Briefe oeffnet, liest und dann wieder



verklebt.“ (Censorship: A fine structure, which hovers over everything, which opens letters, reads and closes them again, translation of the author), „Xenien“ in OE, Nr. 1. See also “Redaktionelles” in OE, Nr. 2.

62. Richard B. Goldschmidt, *In and Out of the Ivory Tower: The Autobiography of Richard B. Goldschmidt* (Seattle, 1960), 175.

63. The dialects span a wide geographical variety reflecting the heterogeneity of the prisoners including Bavarian, Swabian, Hessian, Austrian and Low German.

64. Annual Reports of the War Department, 1920, 534, emphasis added.

65. Posselt notes the “Armistice Day in camp was certainly among the dreariest and gloomiest days I have ever seen”, Posselt, PRISONER OF WAR NO. 3598, 317. For many (translated) examples of the publications in the Eulenspiegel dealing with this see Davis Orgelsdorf and Cross and Myers German Internee Experience.

66. The preceding number contained five woodcuts, two poems half-a-dozen short humorous anecdotes. The section Lagerangelegenheiten (camp issues) fills several pages, s. OE, Nr. 10.

67. The last internee was not released until late March 1920, Posselt, PRISONER OF WAR NO. 3598, 323; Cross and Myers German Internee Experience, 241.

68. For more on this phenomenon see the book by John Yarnall, *Barbed Wire Disease. British & German Prisoners of War, 1914-1919*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2011).

69. Jonathan F. Vance, “Barbed-Wire Disease” in, Jonathan F. Vance (Ed), *Encyclopedia of prisoners of war and internment*. (Millerton, New York: Grey House Pub., 2006).

70. “Fritz Konrad mit ´nem Bindestrich” (Pseudonym), “Lieber Eulenspiegel” in OE, Nr. 8, my translation.

71. Posselt, PRISONER OF WAR NO. 3598, 317.

72. In addition to the earlier remarks, Annette Becker concludes in her essay: “When successful escape is impossible, or ends in failure, everyone tries to escape mentally. Craftsmanship, intellectual life, drama and music – all of these are true forms of artistic expression. Being part of a group engaged in intellectual, manual, artistic or playful activity meant the creation of a form of social life inside the prison.” In: Pathé and Théofilakis (Ed.). *Wartime Captivity in the Twentieth Century*, p. 81.

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# Nine Questions with Dr. Kate Brown



**Interviewed by Michael Brunetti**

Duke University '19

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(Photo by Annette Hornischer)

## About Kate Brown

“Kate Brown is a Professor of History at UMBC. She is the author of *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Harvard 2004), which won a handful of prizes including the American Historical Association’s George Louis Beer Prize for the Best Book in International European History. Brown’s *Plutopia: Nuclear Families in Atomic Cities and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* appeared in 2013 with Oxford University Press. *Plutopia* won the the 2014 George Perkins Marsh Prize from the American Society for Environmental History (ASEH), the 2014 Ellis W. Hawley Prize from the Organization of American Historians (OAH), the 2014 Heldt Prize from the Association for Women in Slavic Studies, the Wayne S. Vucinich 2014 Book Prize of the Association for Slavic Studies, East European, and Eurasian Studies, the 2014 Robert G. Athearn Prize from the Western History Association, the 2014 Albert J. Beveridge Award from the American Historical Association (AHA), and the 2015 John H. Dunning Prize also from the AHA, for the best book in American history in the last two years. To read more about Kate Brown’s book *Plutopia*, see [www.plutopia.net](http://www.plutopia.net). Brown’s newest book, a collection of essays, *Dispatches from Dystopia: Histories of Places Not Yet Forgotten*, was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2015. It explores place and the construction of space as a springboard for histories of communities and territories which have been silenced or destroyed. She is currently finishing a book, *A Manual for Survival*, on the environmental and medical consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, to be published by Norton in 2019.”

## What attracted you to the study of history?

“I studied undergrad at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. I wasn’t necessarily interested in anything—neither history nor Russian stuff, but I guess I was first drawn to history and Russia when I first saw the original Red Dawn. It was when Reagan had just become president, and he was doing a little bit of what Trump is doing now—like “we’re gonna attack you” and calling the Soviets the Evil Empire. There had been that kind of détente under Carter, and Reagan ended it. Everybody was threatening each other again, and I thought that was bad.

Then I went to a movie theatre, and every time a commie was killed, the kids in the theatre in Chicago where I grew up were cheering. So I thought, “God, they buy into this—this renewed propaganda?” When I told my mom, she said, “Why don’t you do something? Learn Russian!” So I thought yeah, I could change the world. I went back to school and signed up for classes. You know, the week before classes started, and signed up for Russian language classes, Russian literature, Russian history. And I got hooked and wanted to go there. I kept studying Russian, and I went in 1987 to study in Leningrad, which is St. Petersburg now.

The whole Gorbachev thing was just starting to happen, and it was very interesting, so I thought that—first of all—it’s not an evil empire. They can barely get salt on the table, and America just seemed so much more with it at the time. I thought that more people should have that experience, so I started working for an exchange program. At the time, George H.W. Bush and



Gorbachev started an exchange program for dancers and artists and undergrads. I started working for that organization, and we brought usually 50-100 American students over to Russia. Wherever they wanted to go in the Soviet Union, they got to visit. They wanted to go to Yakutsk where there was permafrost, and they did. And if there were two students from Duke, then there would be two Soviet students in their place here.

I traveled around a lot because it was my job to go wherever the students went. I would go to the middle of Russia, Georgia, Moldova, the Baltics. But everywhere I went, I would see these problems. People would get upset. These spontaneous meetings on the streets. And it would often be about history. They would dig up in a courtyard bones of people who had been chopped by the KGB, the NKPD, and they would say “see, this is what the Communist Party did to us.” And they went to some place where there had been a Gulag camp, and Gulag prisoners would tell about how they got thrown into jail for making a joke about something dumb. So, I realized how powerful history was as a force to tug and pull down a huge empire like the Soviet Union. I stopped doing this job and went back to the States to go to grad school in Seattle at the University of Washington, mostly because they had a pretty good Eastern European program, but mostly because I wanted to live in Seattle. I liked it there.

I worked on my dissertation, but I wasn’t in a hurry because I didn’t think I would become a professor. I was mostly aiming to be a writer, so I used the cover of grad school as a small salary and insurance pay by working as a TA. In place, I could work on films and freelance for newspapers. I was an NPR reporter on part-time. That was really fun, and I learned a lot of journalistic skills, and how to meet a deadline and interview someone. Workers would be striking, so you would have to have it up online by 4:00 in the afternoon. So that was really good experience, interviewing people and digging around to find new stories.

*Would you say that your experience in journalism effected your writing style?*

Yeah! Though journalists don’t write in the style I use [first person]. They, like most academics, get nervous about the first person. Recently, I’ve seen a bit of ice-breaking. It certainly gave me skills to go find people, talk to them, ask them—those things that journalists do. Although, historians are more like “I can’t call anyone up.” They’d be more comfortable working in the archives, touching the paper. It’s true that I’d rather work in the archives when meeting people is more difficult.



## What steps are there for writing history in a way which is not “dry” or “lifeless?”

Well I always have the present tense in mind when I write. I have written for over 25 years, and I’ve been aware that my focus changes as politics and context around me change. I keep that in mind and I try to think of the questions that I care about now and try to relate those things to the past. More and more recently in this next book I’m writing, I’ve been more interested in questions concerning the Anthropocene because it seems apparent that there is climate change, and there’s all kinds of other ways in which humans have radically altered their environments so that they are the greatest planetary force. That has led me to think about ways in which we get that story. And that story isn’t necessarily in archives. In the 1950s, humans weren’t aware that they were radically altering the fate of the planet they lived in. So you won’t be finding much consciousness of that in the archives, but you can go out to follow biologists or into forests and see those imprints. You can go into the medical field and see that imprint in bodies. So that’s one way I keep it from being lifeless, in that I try to keep it politically pertinent.

## Can you discuss the upcoming book you just mentioned (*A Manual for Survival*)?

I worked in the archives, followed biologists around and talked to people. *A Manual for Survival* is about the number of people who died from the Chernobyl catastrophe. 33 or 44 is the number you can cite from the New York Times or any source. That’s a pretty small number. I don’t think anybody believes that only 44 people died from Chernobyl. But that’s the number. I’m basically trying to change that number. When I went into the Ministry of Health archives, I first wanted to check out the Soviet Ministry of Health. I found this public health disaster that starts in the summer of 1996 and just keeps on going. That’s what I have been doing, just thousands and thousands of documents. What I want to know is why we don’t know about this public health disaster, so I went to the UN archives and NGOs with Chernobyl assessments. That’s what this book is about. Ultimately, I found that just in Ukraine the actual number was fifty thousand. The official Ukrainian count for hospitalizations after the accident is 200 people. That’s also the official account that Moscow gave out. Those are pretty drastic differences. I can’t do a fatality count; I don’t have the resources. But I can show that there was a lot of sickness, disease, and all kinds of crises. I think that after this book, people will start researching more about the effects of low doses, for example on cancer, but also on a whole bouquet of illnesses related to radiation.

*You mentioned that in the 1950s, people were ignorant about the effects that they had on the planet. You also mentioned in your writing that were cover-ups going on by both private corporations and the government, particularly regarding nuclear power—how much of it do you think was actual ignorance as opposed to “willful” ignorance?*

There’s definitely ignorance and also willful ignorance. In *Plutopia*, I was accusing American officials of remaining happily ignorant...not doing that much for the environment after blowing up a hundred bombs in Nevada. What if you find something? Not carrying out studies until people really started demanding them, and people started demanding them because there were a lot of kids running around with leukemia and thyroid cancer in Kansas. And when research was done, they hid the ones that showed spikes in leukemia, for instance. That shows that you can produce ignorance—like you produce knowledge.

This relates to something that happens where you live, here at Durham—the tobacco companies. Some people say that tobacco is healthy, and other say that it causes cancer. So the tobacco companies developed an entire arsenal of tactics. You start an institute to create a rival study. There’s a study that says it causes cancer and another that says it doesn’t cancer. If you find in your lab a research study that finds a link to cancer, you get rid of that study. You also relativize it: “well it’s more dangerous to drive than to smoke, and you still drive your car.” You stone wall or slow walk studies: “studies take time. You need many years of epidemiological studies to conclude if cigarettes cause cancer.” This happens with many toxins. It took a hundred years to find that lead was poisonous, for the administrative offices to pass legislation to ban lead in fuel and paint. Tobacco took a good 50 years. Radiation—still. A lot of people still say that radiation is good for you in small doses.

Historians can step in and identify exactly these tactics. When cigarettes were first found to cause cancer. When they covered it up. How long it took them to do a study. What kind of rivals did they try to get rid of. When people get stuck at a truth, for example climate change, historians can go in and show how this is a manufactured knowledge and the deliberate ignorance regarding it.

*Has your research on governmental projects in the interests of national security changed the way you see national governments or how much you trust them?*

I was really shocked when I was working on *Plutopia*. Of how mendacious and cavalier and cold-blooded American government agents and corporate actors were. There was a culture of “this is how we do things. There is no other way, and don’t get too worked up about it.” It was a very masculine culture, meaning multiple kinds of things happened. I thought I was a pretty cynical

person, but I became more cynical working in that program. It was shocking. I grew up watching Nixon on TV, getting impeached. I was a post-Watergate child. I never grew up having the notion of great leaders, unlike my parents who had FDR. Even so, I was surprised.

*What do you view the role of the historian as? Should they be objective, or can they let subjectivity influence them?*

There's never just facts—even if you just listed facts, you still have to choose the facts that you list. It's highly edited. History is a stream of consciousness. You are always editing everything you read. Editing is an interpretation of what is important or what is true. So it's always a mix of fact plus interpretation. It's important if we can make transparent what we're interpreting, then we can help our readers understand what is actually “true” versus “fake” news. This goes along with using the third person voice. It's a “God looking down” perspective, a legitimizing voice. It's also a tactic to legitimize what you're writing. I don't think we need to do that. People are savvy enough about choosing knowledge. History right now is super important, and you see people like New York Times doing this fact checking page, and this is exactly what historians do. Is this statement consistent, consistently true? When you have depth, you're not as easily fooled in the present.

*Do you think remembering and thinking about our past facilitates progress, or keeps us stuck in it? How can we make history more relevant? What do you think prevents us from getting stuck in the negative side of history?*

I spent most of last year in Germany. Germans are pretty amazing in that they really take to heart the Holocaust. Everywhere you go, there would be a plaque saying, for example, “In 1922, 20 Jewish kids were taken from this house and shot in the basement.” They would put that plaque there and everyone who walks into that building will remember that. Those plaques are everywhere. In the center of Berlin, there is this huge monument of the Holocaust. In this country, if we had those plaques all around, and if we took the statues of the Robert E. Lee and all the fallen heroes—I don't think we should bulldoze those. I think we should put them down. They're fallen heroes. Lay them down. Let people sit on them. Let people spraypaint them. Because at one time, American society saw these guys as heroes for specific reasons. And have a plaque of when that statue went up and who did it. I think we wouldn't be having the problems we have today if people were more informed about the negatives of American history. We've never made amends, never said we're sorry. People's histories shouldn't just be erased, but they shouldn't be glorified if they did horrible things. They should be recognized, and we should acknowledge those facts so that we can move on.

