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Letter From the Editor:

Hello All!

My name is Clare Keaney and I acted as executive editor for *Chronos* this year! I am currently a sophomore history major and was delighted to be able to participate in the production of this journal. I believe that the tradition of *Chronos* is a great one, as it allows us, as people interested in history, to stay connected with one another and to share our love and appreciation for the nuances and intricacies of the subject matter itself.

Although we received a small number of submissions this year, I believe our selection of papers represents the ability, talent, and varied interest of the Syracuse University student body. The rest of the executive board and I spent much time deliberating the selection of papers for the 2013-2014 journal, so I sincerely hope that you enjoy and benefit from each and every one!

Best,
Clare Keaney

Modernity and Brutality in Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany

As a result of World War I, change spread like wildfire throughout Europe. There was a movement towards modernity that would not only be seen in combat on the battlefield, but would also translate into all aspects of society including politics and governments treatment of civilians. After the close of The Great War, the world saw the rise of two dictators that used their power to terrify their subjects into order. The books *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* by Marion A. Kaplan and *Journey into the Whirlwind* by Eugina Semyonovna Ginzburg bring to light what living under this type of rule was like. Josef Stalin of the communist Soviet Union and Adolf Hitler of fascist Nazi Germany introduced regimes to the world that demonstrated a sense of modernity as well as complete brutality. Within their own countries internal enemies were defined. Despite the dehumanization and mechanization of imprisonment and killing of these "enemies", in both states those persecuted held on to a false sense of hope that their imprisonment was a mistake, and the government would correct itself. Additionally, in these regimes women saw a reversal of gender norms, although German women were urged to spend more time in traditional roles than women in the Soviet Union. However, the most significant of the difference between Russia and Germany at this time was ideology. These regimes were like nothing the world had seen before, and many would die because of them.

In the First World War, internal enemies were typically not members of a state: they were outsiders. An example of this was in South Tyrol at Trentino and Alto-Adige. The villagers in these towns were seen as Italian internal enemies because these villages were taken from the Austria-Hungarian Empire and forced to fight on the other side of the war. As a result, the men were rounded up and sent off to war and the women and children were moved off the land and put in refugee camps.¹ This was not how internal enemies would be classified, or treated, in Stalin's and Hitler's regimes. Under these modern rules internal enemies Jews in Germany and those that were seen as resistors in the Soviet Union came from inside the state. Jews have a history of being persecuted throughout Europe long before the rise of fascism in Germany. In fact, Jews in Germany at this time had been well integrated into society and identified themselves as German.² In the memoirs of German Jews the phrases, "we were so German," "we were so assimilated," "we were so middle class," are seen over and over again in firsthand accounts.³ Even though many Jewish men had fought for Germany in the First World War, when Hitler came to power they were not considered part of the community, or *Volksgemeinschaft* which can best be defined as 'the racial community'. This is because they were not considered a part of society and they were not considered German.⁴ In the Soviet Union, many of those condemned by Stalin's purges, like Eugina Ginzburg as she describes in her memoir, were active communists and party members. Not all Jews had actually committed crimes against the government, many like

¹ Professor Ebner, "War without Moral Limits and the Brutalization of European Society." (lecture, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, September 9, 2013).

² Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³ Kaplan, 5.

⁴ Ibid, 4.

Ginzburg were guilty by association. She was officially charged with “relaxation of vigilance” and accused of “collaborating with enemies of the police.”⁵ In both states, the enemy was within the state and it was of the utmost importance to the regimes that these internal enemies be dealt with and eliminated.

In both states, those persecuted experienced a social death, in which they were cut off from society and culture. German citizens were unprepared for what the Nazis wanted to ultimately accomplish by exterminating all of the Jews. The state’s philosophy for doing so first began with killing them socially, which they did by attacking “their political rights, economic livelihoods, and social relationships.”⁶ This idea of social death had a larger impact on the men in Nazi Germany than it did on the women. For one, women did not have jobs as Hitler urged them to return to more traditional roles and produce healthy Aryan children to help the master race grow, which was a key principle in Nazi ideology. On the other hand, the men were much more active in society, and had real ties to Germany. Jewish men identified first and foremost as German, not as Jews, and many that fought in the First World War were still decorated.⁷ Additionally, it can be argued that the women were thinking more about necessity, their families, and survival. Jewish men on the other hand were too proud to leave. German-Jewish men were educated and held important positions in society, and had done this despite the anti-Semitic society.⁸ It was not clear at the time what the outcome for the Jews would be, but the men weighed the pros and cons and it was a trying decision whether it was worth leaving Germany and giving up everything that they had worked hard for. It is for these reasons that generally the women pushed to leave Germany as the legislation and treatment towards Jews over the course of time became more restrictive, demoralizing, and dehumanizing. It was similar in the Soviet Union, but not to the same degree. When Eugina Ginzburg was being targeted as an internal enemy before her imprisonment, those that were her friends and colleagues started to break ties until they no longer interacted with her with fear of being targeted themselves.⁹ This social death contributed to the pain of being ostracized by one’s country. It was not only the fear for oneself and for one’s immediate family, but also unintentionally hurting one’s family and friends by association.

These internal enemies were treated in a brutal and dehumanizing manner in Germany and Russia. After spending a great deal of her sentence in a series of prison cells, Ginzburg’s passage from the prison to the work camps was seen as refreshing. This was in part because not only was her treatment while in the prisons less than humane, but while in prison fresh air was hard to come by. In her interrogation she had gone without food or sleep, which Ginzburg referred to as being on a conveyor belt.¹⁰ However, it was her brutal treatment in prison that was a characteristic of this regime. Not only were the women not excused from punishment, but they were questioned for hours, which Ginzburg confirms. In one case a woman of high stature was beaten. This dehumanization would also be seen in her transportation to the gulag. The relatively healthy and strong women were loaded on to cattle cars, packed in there like animals and shipped across the Soviet Union, in a journey

⁵ Eugina Semyonovna Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*. (New York: Harvest, 1967), 33.

⁶ Kaplan, 3.

⁷ Ginzburg.

⁸ Kaplan, 5.

⁹ Ginzburg.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 83.

that not many would survive.¹¹ This dehumanization and brutality was also present in Germany in the way in which the German Jews were treated. While the Jewish women were physically spared from the beginning of the ostracizing and social death, men on the other hand were seen as a greater threat and beaten regularly. After the Pogrom in November 1938, these men that were horribly treated were now forced into concentration camps, where they would barely be fed, and worked to death. It was a transition from social death to actual death.¹² The men, and eventually women, were treated much like cattle; the government, “herded Jews together, tagging them and compelling them to do forced labor.”¹³ The brutality and dehumanization that these internal enemies were treated with is a common theme during this era, and would characterize these two regimes.

It is most surprising that despite the dehumanization and the persecution that these internal enemies faced that many people in both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union held onto this false sense of hope, not only for their survival, but also in their regime. Ginzburg has complete faith in the communist system until there is a knock at her door, and still believes in it after her imprisonment, although she did not have a favorable view of Stalin. Before her arrest she said, “I would have obeyed without the slightest hesitation. I had not the shadow of a doubt of the rightness of the party line. Only Stalin...I could not bring myself to idolize.”¹⁴ Until their arrest and deportation Jews in Germany had a very similar attitude. “Jewish daily life also shows that, despite the abundant deprivations and humiliations, until November 1938 the majority of Jews attempted to adjust, to the new circumstances.”¹⁵ This is part of the reason Jewish men were reluctant to leave Germany until it was too late. From a modern day perspective, it is amazing to think that despite all the hardship these people faced because of their governments, these people kept an optimistic outlook and still believed in their regimes to some extent. Maybe it was the best they could do to survive.

With all the men being sent off to war, women were forced to enter the workforce to keep the economy alive during The Great War, and the modern woman was created. It was said that, “women drew upon tenacity they didn’t know they had.”¹⁶ This type of woman would not disappear after the end of the war, and the characteristics of a modern woman would be present in both Stalin’s Soviet Union and Hitler’s Germany. However the roles the women played were different in each country. In Stalin’s communist Russia women such as Eugina Ginzburg played an active role in daily life and were not spared from the purges. Ginzburg was a mother as well as a well-respected professor at a university involved in journals and publications and was an active member of the communist party. At the height of Stalin’s purges, she was persecuted by Stalin’s regime for her interaction with a colleague that was deemed an anti-communist.¹⁷ However, she did not lose hope in her beloved political system and did not sit by idly. She went to fight for herself and prove her innocence by meeting with party officials often without the presence of her husband and she expected to be taken seriously. Ginzburg’s actions can earn her a title as a modern

¹¹ Ibid, 279.

¹² Kaplan, 184.

¹³ Kaplan, 145.

¹⁴ Ginzburg, 3.

¹⁵ Kaplan, 5.

¹⁶ Kaplan, 60.

¹⁷ Ginzburg,

woman, just as the equal punishment of men and women by the regime is truly a modern philosophy. Much was similar in Hitler's Germany. It was up to the strong Jewish women to protect their German families. While German men were beaten in the streets, the Jewish women were spared from physical abuse at first. It was because of this that the "women took on new roles – interceding for their men with the police, the tax offices, and the landlord – while continuing older patterns of mediating for their families in the neighborhood, at the grocery, or in the schools."¹⁸ Although, once the women arrived in the death camps, they were seen as weak and were the first to be killed. Gender divisions ran deep in Nazi Germany and even though women ran the house and in their time of need protected their men, they were seen as weaker and therefore were the first to be killed.

Although there are clear similarities between the two governments of Hitler and Stalin, these two regimes were by no means the same. The main difference was ideology: Germany was fascist and the Soviet Union was communist. This difference in ideology was influential when discussing internal enemies. Fascist ideology was driven by race, and the Nazis viewed the Jews as an inferior race. They 'became the scapegoats for all social and economic ills,' as they were blamed for the loss of the First World War, and it was up to Hitler to restore that sense of pre-war greatness.¹⁹ In the Soviet Union, the persecution of comrades was driven by Marxist ideology. Part of Marxist ideology is centered around an uprising of the masses and class struggle. Eugina Ginzburg was considered top of the food chain by Marxist benchmarks. Her husband had a fairly high standing in the communist party, and Eugina herself was educated and a professor at a university.²⁰ It was part of Marxist ideology that there be no upper class or elites, and this is what Stalin hoped to achieve by purging the Soviet state.

Both the regimes of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union showed striking similarities despite their differences in ideologies. Both Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany saw a break from not only morality but from the law, one of the defining characteristics of a modern regime. However it was the brutality, the dehumanization, and the reversal of gender roles that also helped to demonstrate these regimes as not only modern but similar in certain ways despite their very different ideologies. These reversals in normal thought and contemporary characteristics came about because of the First World War and the themes would carry over through the interwar years, through the rule of these brutal and modern regimes and their leaders.

¹⁸ Kaplan, 17.

¹⁹ Kaplan, 13.

²⁰ Ginzburg, 3.

Judeo- Bolshevism: The Politics of Scapegoating

Rarely has a human being faced a greater threat than following capture as the enemy by the Nazi's during World War Two. The mentality surrounding National Socialism was one of militarism, systemic dehumanization and persecution. Such a callously militaristic mindset led to the deaths of millions of civilians and prisoners of war (POW's), as almost all conventions of war were broken. Throughout the 1930's the psyche of the German people was whipped into frenzy by the promise of a brighter economic future. People were led to believe that the road to such a future was paved with the realization of political conspiracy and the ever- present aura of stealthy anti-German activity. It was the acquisition of this mentality by a majority of German people that allowed for the justification necessary to round up and shoot innocent civilians. The mind of a Nazi killer was filled with war. Hitler in his master rhetorical craftsmanship was able to cultivate and tie together politics with race, thus turning separate racial groups into wartime enemies who were to face the wrath of 'annihilation'. There was no bigger political enemy to the Nazis than the Jews. In a wave of political paranoia Hitler openly fantasized about the destruction of the Jewish race in his infamous Prophecy speech, where he explicitly linked Jewry with 'Bolshevization'²¹. Most Germans of the time could agree that there was no greater political threat to Germany than Bolshevism, and because of the tie between war and politics, a war mentality surrounding the Nazis treatment of Jews was seen. This concept, Judeo-Bolshevism, supplied the impetus for the unconventional slaughter of civilians seen throughout the Holocaust as a necessary wartime action. Cold and callus, infected with these Judeo-Bolshevist beliefs, the Nazi military was able to put human sentiment aside long enough to proceed with the development of very effective mass murder programs protected by the cover of war.

Once any sentimentality for the life of a fellow human had been cast aside, it became much easier to focus on the logistics of their speedy annihilation. This was, at the very least, the hope of Nazi leadership between the war years of 1939 and 1945. The first victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau were soviet POW's. The Nazi's did not believe in the conventional rules of war that attempt to standardize treatment of POW's. The reasoning behind this is firmly rooted in their persistent paranoia that Bolsheviks were very much prone to plotting and were seen as a constant danger. This sentiment is reflected in field marshal Walter von Reichenau secret memo he wrote when stationed in Russia on the need to "pitilessly exterminate foreign treachery" to "protect the lives of military personnel"²². The killing of POW's in this regard was thus justified as an action to decrease imminent danger. Further criminalizing and distancing the Bolsheviks from the good and hearty German soldier was the predominant belief that they were uncivilized 'pigs', who according to the diary of an SS soldier 'slept on top or behind their stove', and had factions of women soldiers "fighting with their hair shorn, in uniform!"²³ The Nazis already had Hitler's notion of the Bolsheviks in their heads, which painted them as anti-German and unclean, so any sight that might reinforce this idea could go a long way in justifying their killing.

²¹ N.H. Baynes, ed., *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, 1, (London: 1942) 737-741.

²² Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau, "Conduct of Troops in Eastern Territories," in ed. Robert Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009) 117-119.

²³ Karls Fuchs, "A German Soldier's Letters from the Eastern Front," in ed. Robert Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009) 119-124.

The excessively harsh treatment of Soviet POW's was rivaled only by the treatment of Soviet Jews. The brutality exerted upon this hapless population reached its peak in the summer of 1941 and served as an example of what a belief in 'Judeo-Bolshevism' could lead to. Throughout Christopher Browning's book "Ordinary Men", the day-to-day acts of violence against these Soviet Jewish civilians by Nazi police battalion 309 are thoroughly documented. As previously established, many Nazis already politically realized the impetus for Jewish destruction. This is why the Jews of Bialystok were treated so harshly as to have their beards burned off and to have been forcibly burned alive by the thousands in the local synagogue²⁴. Some historians even pin this event as the start of the Holocaust. Given the concept of Judeo-Bolshevism, it makes sense that it might start here. The Jews in this region were seen as responsible for 'whipping the Bolsheviks up into a frenzy'²⁵, further supporting this notion that a race of people were seen as being consistent with a political ideology.

When it came to rounding up and killing German Jews, some work needed to be done and precautions had to be taken. For one, some Jews were lucky enough to be involved with mixed marriages so they were at first seen as off-limits. The Nazi leadership, despite being very narrow-minded and displaced from reality was surprisingly receptive to the collective concerns of the German people. And the German people, at first, were reluctant to see the destruction of the German Jews. This is evident in the failure of the Boycott of 1933, where many Germans refused to avoid shopping at Jewish stores; these sentiments changed however. As the Nazi regime pressed on through the 1930's the idea that the Jews and the Bolsheviks were against Germany became much more prevalent, this greatly contributed to the great Jewish 'social death'. Jews were erased from society; laws prevented further mixed race marriages and by 1938 only 20 % of privately owned Jewish businesses remained²⁶. The Nazis considered shopping at Jewish stores as an act of aiding the enemy. In this sense, giving money to Jewish businesses was seen as giving life to Bolshevism. Jews, only after thoroughly being labeled, ostracized and villainized throughout German society, were moved away to the east for 'resettlement'. It was the combination of this particular euphemistic terminology and the thought of Jews as political enemies that led to the widespread indifference of deportations starting in 1939.

Jews were already seen as religiously different by many Germans, over 95% of the population was Christian, but it was the idea that they were *politically* different as well that prepared the German population for what was seen as a necessary removal of Bolshevik elements from a fascist society. For this reason, many Germans looked the other way when families were put on trains to the east. With public sentiment out of the way, the Nazis could now focus on the creation of their killing machine. The construction of death camps were to most, a means of eliminating not just a race of people, but an ideology, and thus the logistical aspects of controlling such destruction came into focus, now with war-time significance. The assembly of train schedules by notorious 'desk murderers' like Adolf Eichmann and the establishment of Jewish councils 'Judenrat' to organize things like

²⁴ Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998) 11-25.

²⁵ Karls Fuchs, "A German Soldier's Letters from the Eastern Front," in ed. Robert Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009) 119-124.

²⁶ Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 17-46.

deportation/execution lists and train schedules became essential to the completion of the Holocaust. The creation of these councils freed up Nazis to work at different posts related to other war efforts.

Poland was the site for one such effort; that is, the massive logistical undertaking involved with the killing of millions of Jews. Poland was selected as the best site for such an operation because it provided the necessary cover of war. The killing that happened there looked less conspicuous mainly because German forces were already stationed there and the local civilians had either been driven out or enlisted as 'Hiwis', or paramilitary helpers. This rare combination of a politicized and persecuted race being subjected to the logistics of an unhampered war machine with an entire country at its disposal is what led to the destruction of a race.

The Polish war theatre was so suitable for killing in fact, that it also led to the continuation of more ambitious 'cosmetic' programs of the Third Reich, most notably the Action T-4 campaign which was the program responsible for killing more than 300,000 mentally and physically handicapped citizens by the war's end. Initially, the program was halted due to protests from widely respected Catholic Bishop von Galen, and numerous complaints of awful stench emanating from nearby hospital crematoriums, where the bodies of gassed victims were burned. This would not be a problem amid the Polish war theatre however, and after a brief halt in the program, T-4 was simply relocated to where nobody could or would complain.

Given the treatment of cosmetic undesirables inside the Reich, it is not hard to see just how harsh the treatment of *political* undesirables would be. The transport of such politically undesirable Jewish civilians into death camp barracks; located in the heart of the so-called 'bloodlands' of western Poland gave the whole operation a very militarized feel. Everyone involved in the Holocaust effort, from order police battalions to the guards at Auschwitz were infected with this idea of militarized necessity. Daniel Goldhagen in his book "Hitler's Willing Executioners", talks extensively about deep seated 'eliminationist anti-Semitism' that had been infecting the German population for centuries. This sentiment had started off as a religiously based hatred, but became secularized with the formation of the 'Weltanschauungskrieger', or 'ideological warriors' of the Nazi military²⁷. Goldhagen argues that the excessive brutality committed against innocent civilian Jews was born out of this notion of ideological superiority, the belief that Fascism was in every way superior to Judeo-Bolshevism. At no place or time is this concept of ideological domination more clearly demonstrated than in the callous killing facilities of Poland.

In order to fully understand the cold, distant and methodical approach the perpetrators of the Holocaust assumed, it is very important to understand just how deep the ideology of Jewish conspiracy infected German society. Christian Gerlach in his piece about the Wannsee Conference talks extensively about how the decision to carry out the murder of all European Jews came within a week after the bombings of Pearl Harbor. This is largely because Hitler believed the Jews were 'war agitators', and following the United States' declaration of war against Germany, delivered a speech to the Reichstag on December 11th, 1941 in which he claimed that 'the Jewish war agitators are behind Roosevelt'. The next week on December 18th, while at a meeting with Himmler it is believed that he answered the "Jewish question" by calling for their complete extermination as

²⁷ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996) 91-103.

'partisans'. This is a point of contention among historians however, because Himmler's only notation from the meeting read "Jewish Question | To be exterminated as partisans"²⁸. I propose however, that this is direct evidence of how the ideology of Judeo-Bolshevism was responsible for not just the de-sensitization of Nazi military in regard to killing Jews, but that it was also the main impetus behind Hitler's final solution to the Jewish question.

Millions of Jews were sent to their deaths because of an ideological falsehood. Judeo-Bolshevist thinking was as prevalent throughout the Third Reich as simple arithmetic. Jews were snuffed out of the population, isolated and branded as the enemy from within, and sent packing 'to the east', never to return. This callous wartime ideology made it easier for Nazis to kill innocent civilians as they considered themselves 'Weltanschauungskrieger', a certain type of warrior fighting not just a race or a religion, but a threatening ideology. Under the cover of war, many atrocities were allowed to go unnoticed and unstopped as the holocaust was carried out, much in accordance with Hitler's vision. Throughout the dark years of Nazism, humanitarianism was trumped by pressing wartime necessity and the public's conscious was appeased with euphemism. The result was an intense and startling loss of life.

²⁸ Christian Gerlach, *The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler's Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1998) 759-812.

Thomas Paine's Independence

Thomas Paine, the son of an English Quaker,(Sharp) published *Common Sense* anonymously in 1776 in order to sprout the idea of American Independence from the British (Sharp). He argued that liberation was quintessential to America's full economic development as a nation and that the prolongation of colonial occupation would make it harder to accomplish. By the mid eighteenth century, Britain had held firm reigns over the American economy and liberties by parliamentary ordinances such as the Stamp Act, Townshend Act, Tea Act and the Coercive Acts. These laws escalated tensions between the colonists and the British, fueling discontent among Americans, thus weaving an atmosphere of resistance by 1774. The Revolutionary War was a result of this dissatisfaction amplified by the growing concerns of the exploitation of American economy. Although it began as a war of revolution, it gradually transformed into one of independence, encouraged by the ideas presented in Paine's *Common Sense*. His tone of urgency fused with his simple language, "sound logic and unanswerable reasoning" (Sharp) provoked the movement toward Independence in 1776.

Paine, in his argument, identified that not only was it in America's best interest to separate from Britain in order to maximize her potential as a nation, but also that the longer independence was delayed, the harder it would become to attain it. He argued that Britain was exploiting American economy, thus consuming her wealth. By the mid 1770s, Americans had been through an assortment of experiences that made them receptive of the arguments laid out in his pamphlet. These ranged from rigid economic reforms such as the Townshend Act, The Stamp Act and the Tea Act to the Coercive Acts of 1774 and augmented much resentment among Americans, especially from the resistance leaders, pushing them on the brink of revolution.

Throughout *Common Sense*, Paine asserted that America would not thrive commercially if it continued to linger in a state of foreign dependency, "cramped and fettered by legislative powers." (Sharp) He emphasized that even though America's power was unparalleled with that of other nations, it was hardly comparable to the capability it would reach under liberation. In his argument, he compared Britain and America to France and Spain, contending that their interdependence would ultimately topple the economy. He exemplified the case of a powerful financial system in two independent states, France and Spain, thus providing support for his theory. He also attested that Britain was simply colonizing America as a monetary benefit, as opposed to protecting her out of altruistic purposes. Furthermore, he vindicated his claim of commercial exploitation by demonstrating the unjust extension of Canadian borders arguing that the back lands, which some states had been unfairly deprived of, were organically valued at five pounds sterling per hundred acres; but now amounted to twenty-five million Pennsylvania currency. (Sharp)

Paine's second argument stated that prolongation would make independence a difficult feat to accomplish. He insisted that if they waged a war for independence in 1776, when they had the military ability and experience to do so, they would achieve liberation because their military had just undergone the Seven Years War, which ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763. However, if they waited a few more years, there was a probability that they would be ruptured of the same capability thus making independence an impossible stroke to accomplish. Furthermore, he advocated that

waging a war of independence was a “single simple clear line”(Sharp) where as reconciliation was “exceedingly perplexed and complicated” (Sharp)thus making the former a default preference. He also emphasized the impracticality of reconciliation-arguing that it would spiral into a web of complexities because America’s condition in 1776 was “truly alarming.” (Sharp) He further contended that America was inadvertently in a state of independence, combating for dependence and that prolongation encouraged Britain to fully conquer her.

By the mid eighteenth century, Americans had experienced financial drain in the form of various government reforms. These included the Stamp Act, the Tea Act, the Townshend Act and the Coercive Acts. The Stamp Act of 1775, introduced by George Grenville, levied tax stamps on most printed materials, thus affecting nearly every colonist, especially merchants and members of the colonial elite. In addition, it also required that tax stamps be purchased with scarce sterling coins. Americans viewed the law as an oppressive design stimulating the destruction of their economic liberty. Similarly, the Townshend Act of 1767 extended the Navigation Acts by enforcing tax on trade goods such as paper, glass and tea. It specifically applied to items imported into colonies from Britain, not to those from foreign countries, thus violating the mercantilist theory, which aimed at minimizing imports that cost the nation money and maximizing exports that generated income. In addition, the revenues were used to pay colonial officials, which meant that assemblies could no longer deter the cooperation of officials by withholding their salary. The Townshend Act was met with much anger and disapproval from merchants because it put their profits in jeopardy, thus conforming to Paine’s theory of economic drain. Parliament passed the Tea Act in May 1773, which primarily aimed to save the East India Company from bankruptcy. According to the Tea Act, solely the East India Company’s designated agents could sell legal tea in America. Resistance leaders interpreted this law as a device to make them admit Parliaments right to tax them, because the cheaper tea was still to be taxed under the Townshend Act. Another sector of Americans viewed it as an attempt of an East India Company monopoly in colonial trade. The movement against the Tea Act comprised an eclectic mix of Americans including blacksmith, doctors, farmers and so forth and was a key factor in shaping their perception of Paine’s arguments in *Common Sense*. (Norton)

The Coercive Acts of 1774 were the last dose of reforms that pushed the Americans toward a revolutionary war. Parliament adopted a set of four laws that were later known as the Intolerable Acts of the mid eighteenth century. The first law closed part of Boston until the tea was paid for, thus hindering all but coastal trade in food and firewood. Later that spring Parliament passed the Massachusetts Government Act revising the province’s existing charter and substituting the appointed council for an elected one, complimented by an increase in the governor’s powers and the prohibition of most town meetings. The third act, the Justice Act, stated that a person accused of committing murder in the course of suppressing a riot would be tried outside the colony at the location of the incident. Finally, the Quartering Act allowed military officers to lease privately owned buildings. In addition, Parliament also passed the Quebec Act, which allowed more religious freedom for Catholics in Quebec, thus alarming Protestant colonists. As a result of these laws, resistance leaders feared deliberate oppression by the British. The stipulations threatened the security of the ports in New York and Philadelphia, the royal charters of the other colonies, the occupation of America by

military forces and the inevitable spread of the favored Catholic Church all over the country. (Norton) Thus, the oppression embroidered by these Acts and experiences pushed Americans into revolution and cultivated their commitment toward resistance, ultimately provoking a strong, positive response to Paine's *Common Sense*.

While the experiences Americans faced pre- 1776 played a vital role in their positive response toward *Common Sense*, the crisp language, urgent tone and systematic content backed by evidence made it a popular uproar in the 1770s. Paine stated his arguments in an orderly fashion, making them concise and coherent, thus enabling Americans of nearly every occupation capable of comprehending them. He combined these with a tone of persistence, exemplified in sentences such as "The Rubicon is passed", (Sharp) thus effectively conveying the seriousness of the situation. Besides that, his discourse was structured by evidence at nearly every step. For instance, when he asserted the claim of economic stagnation, he strengthened it by exemplifying the case of Spanish and French economy. Moreover, he ignited the nationalist excitement of the "birth of a new nation" (Sharp) whose diversity and prosperity would be comparable to that of Europe's. By the same token, he offered a rational method of waging a war of Independence, i.e. one that began with legislation, so as to cultivate a finely tuned nation after liberation. These factors made *Common Sense* well favored in 1776, making it a significant tool of instigating Independence.

Thus, economic oppression in the form of various government reforms pushed Americans into a state of resistance. In *Common Sense*, Paine critically examined sections of these reforms to conclude that Independence was not only imminent for economic growth but also for practical reasons (for instance, it was simpler than reconciliation). His methodical arguments combined with the simplicity in language, made *Common Sense* a popular beacon of nationalism and ultimately pulled the trigger for the American War of Independence in 1776.

Shaping the Public Memory about the Vietnam War through Dramatization

The Vietnam War waged on for nineteen long years in Southeast Asia before American troops were finally pulled out in 1975. Newborn babies were on the cusp of adulthood before this conflict came to its inevitable end. Due to the extended process of “Vietnamization” and the simmering down of riotous activity on the home front, when American troops had finally cleared out of Vietnam, the military defeat did not feel all that overwhelming. It was something that the American public had lived through for two decades, and while some were still undoubtedly shocked by the conclusion of the war, the majority of U.S. citizens saw it coming. By the time the war was over, the Tet Offensive had long passed and the raucous 1968 Democratic National Convention was a distant memory. The American consensus was desperately needed a reminder of its nation’s most tumultuous time, so it turned to entertainment, where new life could be breathed into the past.

The most influential forms of entertainment that were used to reinvigorate the public’s memory of the Vietnam War were films and memoirs. These two mediums allowed for in-depth looks at first-hand experiences of war, something to which not everyone would have ready access. Through dramatization, fictional films and authentic memoirs were able to shape the public memory about the war in Vietnam by accurately representing its meaninglessness, psychological impacts, and intra-platoon race relations.

Sources for Analysis

Several films and memoirs have been used to shape the public memory of Vietnam over the last four decades, but it is best to focus on a select few. Popularity and critical acclaim are key factors in deciding which films and memoirs to pursue. In this paper, focus will be on memoirs entitled *A Rumor of War*, *Dispatches*, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*, and *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* as well as the following seven films: *Go Tell the Spartans*, *84 Charlie MoPic*, *Platoon*, *Hamburger Hill*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Coming Home*, and *Apocalypse Now*.

Meaninglessness

Opinions about the war grew and changed over time. It began as something simple, protecting democracy against the threatening spread of communism in Southeast Asia. Philip Caputo was not the only one under the impression that the conflict in Vietnam would be a “splendid little war,” as he suggests in *A Rumor of War*. Him and his brigade believed that the whole thing would be over quickly. He was admittedly a slave to the myth of America’s indomitable military might. Caputo, his brigade, and the whole of the U.S. military received a shocking wake-up call when the “Asian guerillas” began to get the better of them (Caputo 66). They were completely unprepared for what was to come.

Ted Post’s *Go Tell the Spartans* provides somewhat of a visual aid to Caputo’s *A Rumor of War* in that it represents this unanticipated state of war. In fact, in almost all of these films, the commanding officers are portrayed as shaky at best. None of the lieutenants seemed to know what they were doing, despite being skillfully trained in the art of war. The issue was that this war was unlike anything they had ever fought before. The terrain alone provided countless problems for U.S. forces. *Go Tell the Spartans* focuses on the time during the war when conflict was beginning to escalate for the worst. Like

Caputo's memoir, this film depicts both the boring and terrifying sides of war. There are an awful lot hours spent waiting and doing office-related activities, such as paperwork, but there are also a lot of gunfights, booby-trap detections, and raids on enemy bunkers (Caputo; Post).

The platoon depicted in *Go Tell the Spartans* was given a mission to hold an old, abandoned French fort. To everyone involved, the task seemed rather ridiculous. The fort was of no noteworthy value to the U.S. military, but they were to hold it anyway. Military intelligence suspected that there were no V.C. in the area. The mission was speculated to be relatively uneventful; by the end of the film, all but one have fallen and lie dead in the blood-soaked Vietnamese mud. The final image of Cpl. Courcay limping to salvation through a French graveyard as the text on the screen reads "1964" resonates with remarkable power (Post). It implies that all of the death that the viewers had just witnessed was only the beginning of an already doomed war. The Americans would end up just like the French, buried in the ground of a country in which they had no business being. Hundreds of thousands of bodies would be added to the pile by the time the U.S. figured out that this was not a war worth fighting. In the end, the sacrifices that Cpl. Courcay's friends made meant nothing when the U.S. lost the war and communism spread. Thus, in knowing the outcome of the war, post-war viewers could better grasp the weight of such a message.

Much like the insight provided at the end of *Go Tell the Spartans*, both John Irvin's *Hamburger Hill* and Oliver Stone's *Platoon* also had powerful closing scenes that adequately conveyed the meaninglessness of the war. *Platoon* ended with the central character, Chris Taylor, looking down at a crater full of dead bodies from a helicopter. As he gazed at the sea of limp, lifeless corpses and burst into an indescribable mix of sorrowful yet joyous tears, a voiceover captured his inner-thoughts (Stone). He noted that when all was said and done, they were not even fighting the Vietnamese. They were fighting each other. They were fighting themselves. The body count below Chris was colossal, yet he was still figuring out who the enemy was. From above, he waved goodbye to the friends he had made during his time in Vietnam, the same friends who would continue to fight this unclear enemy, and most likely turn into one of the countless bodies that lie at their feet.

In a slightly more subtle way, *Hamburger Hill* portrayed the same sense of impending doom as it came to a close. Not unlike *Go Tell the Spartans*, the troops were sent on an ill-fated mission to obtain control of a particular area. This time, the target was not an abandoned fort, but rather a massive, enemy-fortified hill. The men spent a total of ten days and suffered unbearable deaths before finally taking the hill. In the final scene, only three of the central characters manage to make it to the top. One of the soldiers takes a moment to gaze down at the towering mass that he triumphantly conquered, only to be disheartened by the myriad of bodies that lie lifeless in the mud. As he sheds a tear for the innumerable losses, troops continue their onward march behind him (Irvin). This image provides a sense that the entire war was made up of an endless cycle of meaningless battles. Today it's this hill; tomorrow it's that valley. There is no time to mourn the lost lives. It is simply time to move onto the next one, the next inevitable slaughter, and for what? What did these men die for? They did not die for democracy, or America; they died for a hill.

One of the main characters in Hal Ashby's *Coming Home*, Luke Martin, a paralyzed Vietnam War veteran, said it best during a speech that he gave to an auditorium full of high school students:

“I wanted to be a war hero, man, I wanted to go out and kill for my country. And now, I'm here to tell you that I have killed for my country, or whatever, and I don't feel good about it. Because there's not enough reason, man, to feel a person die in your hands or to see your best buddy get blown away. I'm here to tell you, it's a lousy thing, man. I don't see any reason for it” (Ashby).

He had already completed his tour and learned to live with his paralysis, but he still could not make sense of his involvement in the war. He spent endless hours contemplating what it all meant, the war, the death that accompanied it, but he ultimately came to the conclusion that there was no reason for any of it; it was meaningless.

Psychological Impacts

It is no coincidence that the term “posttraumatic stress” was coined during the Vietnam War. The amount of psychologically disturbed veterans who returned home from the ferocious jungles of ‘Nam was staggering. The general consensus was that the war had changed them; it had messed with their minds. While that consensus is correct, as seen in Michael Herr’s *Dispatches*, select memoirs from *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, and Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*, one film helped to expand this idea beyond soldiers of war to soldiers in training as well.

Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* depicted the psychological brutality of a U.S. Marine boot camp and juxtaposed it with the Vietnam War itself. The Marines did everything they could to prepare their soldiers for war, including belittling them and tearing them down until all that remained were machines of war. They were no longer men. Their human intuition was replaced with tactical strategy. This process had the greatest effect on Private Leonard Lawrence, who was cruelly nicknamed “Gomer Pyle” by his commanding officer, Gunnery Sergeant Hartman. He was slow and overweight, he could not decipher his left from his right, and he remained remarkably incompetent through the majority of his training. Sergeant Hartman berated him like no other; he was there to crush Pyle at every turn. He stripped him of his manhood, taking every ounce of power away from him. That was until Pyle finally discovered something that he was good at, shooting a rifle (Kubrick). The moment that he felt even the tiniest glimmer of power, everything had changed. Private Leonard Lawrence was gone, only Pyle remained. He was told that his ability to shoot a rifle meant that he was a killer, so a killer he became. Before boot camp ended, two soldiers were dead. Pyle gunned down Sergeant Hartman and then turned the gun on himself (Kubrick). The rest of the soldiers, after witnessing this horrific turn of events, shipped out to Vietnam with an early taste of trauma.

The latter half of *Full Metal Jacket* lines up surprisingly well with *Dispatches*, both of which recount the experiences of combat correspondents. The main character in *Full Metal Jacket*, Joker, lived through similar traumas that Michael Herr depicts so brilliantly in his memoir. Herr recounts a number of graphically violent experiences, like when his helicopter was hit and he watched his friend’s blood cover his boots “until they were dark like everything else he wore” and heard “the drops [of blood] hitting the metal strip on the chopper floor” (Herr 168). Through the intense imagery of this one scene alone, it is no surprise that Herr, and any other veteran for that matter, came back mentally scarred. At one point, Herr even noted that his memory of the war had been distorted; yet “every image, every sound comes back out of smoke and the smell of things burning” (Herr 108). Regardless of all he forgot about the war, it is the instances he remembered that took their

toll. The memory of the billowing smoke after explosions and the smell of burning Vietnamese villages will forever remain engraved in his mind; he will never be able to truly escape the horrors of this war.

Such terrors proved inescapable for an innumerable amount of Vietnam veterans. Some soldiers even opted to take their own lives in an attempt to rid themselves of their horrific memories, much like Bill Munson and Captain Bob Hyde in *Coming Home* (Ashby). Others chose to tell their stories like Herr, however in much less extensive detail. Some examples can be found within *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, most notably those of Porter Halyburton and Bob Gabriel.

Halyburton became a prisoner of war after the Vietnamese shot down his aircraft carrier. He went on to describe his experiences of torture and starvation during his time as a POW. The most notable section of his short account was when he explained his desire to give a confession to his captors:

“Psychologically, I think this was more damaging than the physical torture because you felt like you had completely failed. You had given up. You had capitulated. You had violated the code of conduct. You’d let everybody down. It was very depressing. Eventually I found out that everybody else, including the people I respected the most [...] had been through exactly the same thing and had reacted pretty much the same way I did” (Halyburton 225-226)².

While he received some peace of mind with the knowledge that he was not alone in his act of confession, the depression had already taken its toll. In combination with the physical torture, Halyburton’s eight years spent as a prisoner of war would leave a lasting psychological impact on his day-to-day life.

Bob Gabriel may not have been a POW like Porter Halyburton, but he witnessed his fair share of horror nevertheless. As a member of the 2nd Battalion of the 12th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division, also described as the “lost battalion,” Gabriel experienced the viciousness of American soldiers (Gabriel 298, 301). He made it clear that he was not overtly psychologically scarred by his time spent in Vietnam, but he knows “a lot of people who have problems now [because they] did stuff over there that was inappropriate,” such as the rape and mutilation of the Vietnamese (Gabriel 301). The fact the he alone can recall several people who suffer indescribable trauma from their actions is a testament to the vast, negative psychological impacts of this war.

With that said, it is important to pay some attention to the most popular, critically acclaimed, fictional account of the Vietnam War, *Apocalypse Now*. With the help of Michael Herr, Francis Ford Coppola pulled off a remarkable adaption of Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness* set in the Vietnam War. As an exploration of pure, true-natured savagery, *Apocalypse Now* depicts Colonel Walter Kurtz’ fall from grace into madness. As viewers follow the journey of Captain Benjamin Willard as he hunts down Kurtz in an attempt to assassinate him, it becomes clear that the very nature of this war could drive even the most brilliant of men to insanity. When Kurtz and Willard finally meet, Kurtz goes about justifying his heinous crimes committed on humanity with a single, simple sentence: “I’ve seen horrors.” The things he has seen during his time in Vietnam have horrified him to the point of madness. He later notes that the horrors he has seen are the same horrors that Willard has seen on his way to find Kurtz, and the same horrors that the audience has witnessed while watching the film (Coppola). *Apocalypse Now* makes an incredibly powerful statement about the psychological impacts of the Vietnam War by having the

audience go through the same things that Willard goes through, which are in turn the same experiences that Kurtz went through before losing his mind entirely. By putting oneself in Willard and Kurtz' shoes, it is much easier to understand the trauma that many Vietnam veterans suffered.

Intra-platoon Race Relations

Every single film and memoir depicted platoons like families. It was more than a group of soldiers, but rather a brotherhood of men. The love they had for one another was undeniable, but like in all families, brothers tend to fight.

The most heartwarming sense of family can be seen in Patrick Sheane Duncan's *84 Charlie MoPic*. This group of seven men made up the entirety of a Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP). Sent on a routine mission, the soldiers run into major trouble when the Vietcong ambushes them. While a new addition to the group, LT, is officially in charge, a macho African American man, OD, is the true leader of the LRRP. He is the kind of leader who would willingly take a bullet for any of his men, and ultimately does. The most intriguing scene throughout the film is when LT asks Cracker, a southern white man, about how he feels being commanded by a Negro. Cracker immediately jumps to the defense of OD, making it clear that they share a formidable bond and that he would lay down his life for a man that he considers his brother. While the sentiment is truly touching, when LT asks Cracker how it feels being led by a black man, he dodges the question entirely. He claims that it is a "Real World question" and that it should not be asked while they are in Vietnam, but rather back home in South Carolina (Duncan). Despite the familial love that Cracker has for OD, it is clear that things are different back in the "Real World" and that going home would hinder their sense of brotherhood.

This sentiment is further explored in *Hamburger Hill*, as many of the black soldiers note that their contribution to the war "doesn't mean a thing," and that when they return to the States, they will be treated like every other black man. One soldier even noted that he had to clean up his act before returning home (Irvin). The white men would be forgiven for their crude actions upon returning from war, but the black soldiers had to shape up if they wanted any respect.

However, according to the accounts made by black veterans in Wallace Terry's *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*, respect was often hard to find during the war itself. Some African American soldiers were put in base jails for the smallest of violations while the FBI specifically hunted young black men back in the U.S. for attempting to dodge the draft. Most of the African American men who joined the war voluntarily did so because they had no other options post-high school. The short memoirs compiled within *Bloods* offer multiple depictions of intra-platoon race relations and when it came down to life or death situations, they were brothers. As Colonel Fred V. Cherry put it simply, "a soldier's a soldier" and the soldiers were always there for each other when it really counted, regardless of the color of their skin (Terry 283). However, when things were not particularly dire, the tension between races was undeniable. It did not help that these black soldiers had to exhaust their efforts fighting a war in Vietnam only to return home to civil war in their own backyards.

Overall, Americans may not have been shocked by the outcome of the war at the time of its conclusion. They had seen it coming, and all of the public memory had already

begun to fade. Through influential, popular mediums such as fictional films and memoirs, Americans were reminded of what an overwhelming defeat this war really was. Accurate depictions of the Vietnam War's meaninglessness, psychological impacts, and intra-platoon race relations helped to not only shape but also restore the American public's memory of such a devastating event in its history.

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“...to smash it as an evil thing”

The Second World War was one of the most racially driven wars in human history. Even from the start with the onslaught of Poland, Adolf Hitler spoke of “living space” and eventually the Final Solution regarding ethnic populations. What sometimes goes unnoticed however, are the racial implications in the War of the Pacific. This theatre of war saw the deaths of hundreds of thousands of military combatants along with hundreds of thousands of civilians as well. Though fought with the same intentions as the war in Europe, to destroy the enemy with every technological means of modern warfare by air, land, and sea, the Pacific War was fought in a very different manner. Looking at the behavior of United States Military personnel in the Pacific theatre compared to that of the European theatre, it can be noted that in the Pacific, US troops were far more violent, cruel, and savage towards the Japanese than the US troops in Europe were towards the Germans. The lasting imagery of US Marines mutilating Japanese corpses and methodically looting the bodies of everything to the gold teeth in their mouths²⁹, provides the representation of the true viciousness and unethical practices exhibited by the United States Military towards the Japanese. Why was this war fought in such a manner unseen in American Military history? In trying to pinpoint a rationale or motivation behind such violent acts, one tends to look at racial implications. The true horrors of race infused violence can be seen on the Eastern Front of the European theatre, so it is a somewhat logical assumption that violence is connected to racial attitudes and that American violence towards the Japanese was racially fuelled. This notion, however, is contradicted by looking at primary accounts from US Marines, Air Force personnel, and Navy seamen. In these sources it is suggested that the fighting in the Pacific was *not* particularly influenced by ideas and attitudes about race, causing the character of the war to be different from that of the European conflict. Rather, the nature of the fighting had to do with three distinct, though heavily connected factors: Japanese military ideology, an Allied spiritual foundation that morally justified behavior, and the realization, by US Marines in particular, that the only way to defeat the Japanese was to match their level of devotion, ruthlessness, and perceived unethical military practices.

The brutal, cunning, and daring nature of the Japanese Military provided Japan with some strategic victories at the outset of the Pacific conflict, though its eventual reliance on fight-to-the-last-man and suicide tactics as the war progressed, proved to have a tremendous impact on the fighting style of US troops. This notion can be exemplified through an excerpt from Robert Leckie of the First Marine Division fighting in Guadalcanal, “They attacked us, some one hundred of them against our force of some twelve hundred, and, but for the five prisoners, we had annihilated them.”³⁰ This bit of context provides some explanation to the massive levels of death and destruction the Japanese endured at the hands of the Marines. What needs to be clearly noted is that in many cases, involving combat at least, the massive casualty figures associated with the savage nature of the fighting was essentially self-inflicted in accordance to Japanese Military ideology. The willingness of the Japanese to fight to the death meant that Marines had no choice but to kill every Japanese soldier refusing to surrender. This proved to be one of the most

²⁹ Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee and Frans Coetzee, *The World In Flames: A World War II Sourcebook* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2011) 154.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 155

stressful aspects of the Pacific War and is what heavily differentiated it from the war in Europe.³¹ The utter annihilation of the Japanese Military, though clearly self-inflicted as the war turned against Japan, was conducted in a brutal and ruthless manner by the US Military, which has led to questions regarding the necessity and morality of the behavior. This is where many like to assume race played a role in the fighting, however primary sources suggest US troops were acting more out of retribution than they were out of racist ideology.

The brutality of the Japanese military in the early years of the War in the Pacific provided the premise for the Allied understanding of their enemy as a truly “evil thing”. The infamous Rape of Nanking during Japan’s invasion of China, and the unforgettable peacetime attack on the US Naval base at Pearl Harbor, surely resonated with the Allies and contributed to an urge for revenge. Similar to Pearl Harbor, the Japanese occupation of the US-held Philippines and the horrendous Bataan death march also added to this notion. This can be clearly understood through the words of William E. Dyess, commander of the Twenty-First Pursuit Squadron in the Philippines, who was held as a POW by the Japanese. “Our Jap guards now threw off all restraint. They beat and slugged prisoners, robbing them of watches, fountain pens, money, and toiletry articles. Now, as never before, I wanted to kill Japs for the pleasure of it.”³² When the tide of war had turned and US troops began inflicting massive casualties amongst the Japanese, an unfamiliar trend started to emerge within the US Military: brutality. What is important to note is that this brutality was accompanied by a feeling of indifference, or even satisfaction amongst American soldiers. Eugene Sledge, who fought with the First Marine Division on Peleliu, describes how he felt as he participated in the ruthless destruction of Japanese Military forces, “They tumbled onto the hot coral in a forlorn tangle of bare legs, falling rifles, and rolling helmets. We felt no pity for them but exulted over their fate. We had been shot at and shelled too much and had lost too many friends to have compassion for the enemy when we had him cornered.”³³ This excerpt is significant in that it suggest that the Japanese casualty figures, and lack of prisoners, were not solely a result of Japanese Military ideology, but also due to a devaluing of Japanese life amongst US Marines. These unethical military practices happened and continued to happen in the Pacific theatre because the Allies felt as if they were morally justified to act in such a manner. This idea of having a spiritual foundation, or a just-cause for war, is best explained by British General Sir William Slim. “We had this (a spiritual foundation); and we had the advantage over our enemies that ours was based on real, not false, spiritual values. If ever an army fought in a just cause we did....So our object became not to stop the Japanese advance, but to destroy the Japanese army, to smash it as an evil thing.”³⁴ Though fighting in Burma, a somewhat different context than the other primary sources, Slim’s account can be used in explaining the savage nature and brutality of Allied troops as they encountered Japanese soldiers in combat. In these excerpts it is understood that the lasting impression of a more ruthless and violent style of fighting in the Pacific, compared to that in Western Europe, was a result of Allied, mainly US, troops acting out of

³¹ Ibid., 226

³² Ibid., 208

³³ Ibid., 224

³⁴ Ibid., 215

retribution with a morally justified spiritual foundation. Ideas and attitudes about race were not mentioned nor appear to have any connection with the character of the war.

As hinted at previously, one of the contributing factors to the staggeringly high and appalling Japanese death tolls, which provide the interpretation of the War in the Pacific as being fought in a much different manner than in Europe, was the US Marines' ability to match the intensity of the Japanese. Japanese Military strategy made it very evident that the war needed to be fought in a very different manner than any other war the US had been fought. It is quite a challenging task to remain "ethical" when your enemy insists on fighting to the last man. In many cases Marines were essentially forced to kill Japanese soldiers to the last man in order to attain victory. This required adopting an entirely different outlook to fighting for US Marines. Drawing back on Robert Leckie's account on Guadalcanal after a Japanese suicide mission, this attitude can be expressed, "Were they brave or fanatical? What had they hoped to gain?...Why had he (the Japanese commander) not turned around and marched his men home again?...I cannot answer. I can only wonder about this fierce mysterious enemy – so cruel and yet so courageous – a foe who could make me in his utmost futility, fanaticism, if you will, call upon the best of myself to defend against him." As Leckie remarks that Japanese intensity and ferocity provoked fanaticism of his own, Marines all across the Pacific theatre were having similar experiences. For example, Eugene Sledge on Peleliu stated: "I learned realism, too. To defeat an enemy as tough as the Japanese, we had to be just as tough. We had to be just as dedicated to America as they were to their Emperor. I think this was the essence of Marine Corps doctrine in World War II, and that history vindicates that doctrine."³⁵ As Leckie and Sledge claim that it was the Japanese themselves that attributed to the Marines' conduct of fighting, it can be understood that race did not play a crucial role in making the character of the Pacific theatre so much different from that of the European.

The ruthless and daring nature of Japanese Military operations at the start of the war proved to leave a lasting impression on the Allied forces in the Pacific. The savagery and brutality conducted by the Japanese provided a sense of polarity in comparison to Allied war aims and allowed a spiritual foundation to take form. This foundation proved instrumental in morally justifying the perceived unethical military practices exhibited by US Marines and other combatants fighting the Japanese. Some of these unethical practices however, have been discovered as somewhat necessary as the only means possible to wage war against Japan and its military ideology. In conclusion, the fighting in the Pacific does not appear to have been particularly influenced by ideas and attitudes about race, rather by a multitude of reasons previously stated. One of the best explanations of how and why the War in the Pacific was so characteristically more violent and deadly than in Europe can be seen through an excerpt from the war diary of Navy Seaman James Fahey, "These suicide, or Kamikaze pilots wanted to destroy us, our ships, and themselves. This gives you an idea what kind of enemy we were fighting. The air attacks in Europe are tame compared to what you run up against out here against the Japs. The Germans will come in so far, do their job and take off but not the Japs.... You do not discourage the Japs, they never give up, you have to kill them."³⁶

³⁵ Ibid., 225

³⁶ Ibid., 227

The Force that Forged an Empire: Janissary Corps and their Role in Ottoman Empire Building

A popular saying goes, that Empires are forged through war. To launch a successful war, culminating in lands, riches, and people under a single banner, one needs an elite and loyal fighting force to carry out the deed and to not stray from its original intentions. For the Ottoman Empire, this force was the Janissaries. A Janissary, meaning “new soldier”, was a member of a distinctive class in Ottoman society that enabled the rise of the Ottoman Empire. The Janissaries came to be a double-edged sword, bringing forth the rise but also the decline of the Empire. This paper examines the causes for Janissarial rise to prominence in Turkish society, their unique culture and relationship to the Sultan as an elite fighting force, and the actions that led to their eventual doom.

The Janissary Corps was first established by Sultan Murad I in the year 1383. The Corps was established due to the need for a loyal, professional fighting unit that served the needs of the Sultan with exclusive loyalty. Prior to that period, the Sultan was compelled to use local tribal warriors called ghazis as his instrumental fighting force. However, this practice was impractical because this made the Sultan dependent on the ghazis and their loyalty was not certain. The Sultan needed a method for the systematic recruitment of loyal personal soldiers that he would have been able to use as he pleased without worrying about loyalty or morale. Sultan Murad I is credited with creating the Devşirme System.

The Devşirme System, meaning blood tax, was the practice of the Ottoman Empire to take young, strong, and intelligent boys from Christian families and train them in the Turkish language, culture, and the rules of Islam. The purpose was to bring them up from humble beginnings, and teach them the two vital elements of becoming a true Janissary: strict discipline and prevalent order. Those two elements were guaranteed to ensure unswerving and loyal soldiers to the Sultan. To guarantee sole loyalty to himself, the Sultan looked to marginalized groups within his Empire that were placed on low hierarchical levels compared with the general majority populace. Therefore, the Sultan turned towards the Christians. The Christians did not enjoy the same privileges that the Muslims enjoyed throughout the Ottoman Empire. Becoming a part of this exclusive fighting force offered the marginalized group some social mobility. By including Christians in the regime, the Sultan was bound to receive more compliance from the people. The boys recruited would come from Christian families; Jews were not included in the Devşirme system, and it was not permissible to enslave a Muslim according to Islamic doctrine. Also, by recruiting Muslims, they would be more likely to rebel and protest due to their pre-existent high societal standing. By recruiting boys who were not native to the central societal structure, they would be less inclined to go against the person who provided them with the opportunity of social advancement. Thus, the unswerving loyalty was guaranteed.

With loyalty guaranteed from marginalized groups, the next step was the selection and indoctrination of the boys to Ottoman ideals. Selecting boys from Christian families meant that the vast majority would come from the pre-dominantly Orthodox Christian Balkans. The young, strong and most intelligent boys were regularly selected by Ottoman officials to be taken and trained as Janissaries. The boys were taken from their families and placed with Turkish families. The job of the Turkish families was to teach them the Turkish language, culture and the Islamic religion. The brighter boys would be sent to the Palace

institutions, where they would have the ability to learn about the science of statecraft, thus enabling them to become high-ranking government officials, including Advisors, Governors, or even Grand Viziers. However, the majority would pursue skills in the art of war. The sole purpose of the Janissaries was to be a loyal war machine to the Sultan. This acculturation of Christian boys was met with little resistance from the Christian communities that produced the boys because this ensured those that were selected a way of social advancement that could lead to them becoming Governors of the regions from whence they came. It was in the people's interest to have one of their own in the Sultan's court, although the familial heartbreak was painful.

Once the boys were selected and made familiar with Ottoman culture, they were then trained in the skills of war as sharpshooters and soldiers. The more capable ones became officers in the Corps. The boys ate and slept together; the Corps became their family. This formulated an uncommon Janissary culture that was instrumental to the successful building of a wealthy and extensive Ottoman Empire. Boys underwent intense military training that would teach them the two core attributes of the Janissaries: strict discipline and prevalent order. They were not allowed to marry, to grow beards, or to pursue skills other than war. This was true at least in the beginning establishment of the Corps. Prevalent order was the immense respect that Janissaries held for their superiors, whether they were older Corps members or governmental officials. The Corps was under the direct supervision of the Ottoman Sultan. The Sultan would visit the barracks, meet with Janissaries and even dine with them. They were his personal troops and he served as a father figure to them. This helped to foster a unique relationship between a ruler and his troops that would be very beneficial for Sultans at first but one that would become progressively more and more strained in the future.

The second part that made the Janissaries such an important factor in building the Ottoman Empire was their unique culture and relationship with the Ottoman Sultan. When Sultan Murad I formed the Janissary Corps, he did not only form an elite fighting force, but another class within Ottoman society. The cultural development through years of intense training produced an extremely loyal and capable fighting force designed for one thing: war. More specifically, they were meant for the extension and successful governance of a functioning Empire. In the year 1383, the Ottomans had already established a strong foothold in Asia Minor and the southern Balkans and were progressively swallowing the last remnants of the Byzantine Empire. Murad I needed the Janissaries for his Balkan conquests against the established Slavic Empires. The first major campaign that the Janissaries took an instrumental part in was the Battle of Kosovo that led to Ottoman conquest of Serbia. The Janissary loyalty and skill was proven very valuable and thus the Sultan became a more independent central figure, capable of launching a war single-handedly without the support of local rulers. Further conquests included Bulgaria and most of the Balkan Peninsula before the time of Mehmed II. During this time, Ottoman leadership was centralized around the Sultan due to his elite guard. The Sultan became progressively independent and that made the governance of an Empire easier but more autocratic. Everything rested on the Sultan, and there was no real opposition, whereas before local rulers could show their dissatisfaction by withholding local troops and taxes from the Sultan. The Ottoman Sultan was able to get a firmer grasp over his territories and to enforce his laws thanks to the steadfast support of the Janissaries.

With the centralization of power in the Ottoman Empire, further conquest was made possible at a much faster rate. In the year of 1453, the young Sultan Mehmed II conquered the Byzantine city of Constantinople. Not only did this feat ensure greater riches and power to the Ottomans, but it sent shockwaves throughout Europe that the Ottoman were here to stay. It is important to note that this conquest along with many others were due to the central administration of the Sultan, which in turn was ensured by the Janissaries. The culture embedded in this elite Corps, strict discipline, loyalty and order, directly influenced conquests by the Sultans.

This culture of the Janissaries helped to form the special relationship with the Sultan. They would do his bidding by carrying out his orders in times of war. The Sultan would personally lead the Janissaries to battle, whose main job was to support the central formation of the Army. With cavalry support, the Janissaries proved to be a very competent and lethal fighting force that was the turning points of many battles in favor of the Ottomans. A unique characteristic was that the Janissaries would march with a band, whose music before battle would put fright into the hearts of the enemy. The clothing worn by the Janissaries was colorful and traditional Ottoman garb. The most interesting part was their headpiece, which resembled a long sleeve with a spot for a spoon. The attire and characteristics of the Janissaries were a source of interest in Europe for the coming centuries.

The personal relationship between the Sultan and the Janissaries culminated in the formation of a whole separate class within Ottoman society. The Janissaries were not associated with the different millets. They were a unique, homogenous group because they were from a Christian background, indoctrinated in Islamic culture and now enjoyed the personal support of the Sultan. Their position of power was even greater than that of the Muslim millet in the Ottoman Empire. Although oppressed, the Christian millet provided this route of social mobility for young boys. The Sultan's preference was to select those groups that would otherwise not have the opportunity of high social ranking in order to ensure their everlasting loyalty. The Janissaries also had other opportunities for progression. The Sultan personally oversaw the Corps and appointed the more capable Janissaries to important governmental positions. Numerous Janissaries became Grand Viziers to Sultans, while others served as Ministers and Governors of newly conquered territories. This was beneficial for the Sultan, to appoint a Governor over a land whose ethnic origin is the same with the people of the land, to ensure less rebellions and hostilities in conquered territories. Thus, the Janissaries rose to become a powerful and distinct class within Ottoman society that had a direct support of the Sultan.

The status of the Janissaries as a distinct elite group in the Ottoman Empire earned them many privileges and opportunities. Their importance in the forging of the Empire was unquestionable. Through their efforts the Ottomans reached the doorstep of the Hapsburgs in Vienna. However, through all the conquests that the Janissaries helped to achieve, one thing began to corrupt the previously unshakable strict discipline and prevalent order of the Corps. The Janissaries began to become aware of their importance in Ottoman Empire building. They began to demand more autonomy from the Sultan and the Ottoman state. The direct support of the Sultan began to turn to the Janissaries' direct influence over the Sultan. The relationship between the two soon began to deteriorate.

In order to understand the changing relationship between the Sultan and the Janissaries and how it influenced the Ottoman Empire, the relationship between the two must first be explored. The Janissaries were dependent on the Sultan to provide a better life and to help them rise through the social ranks. However, in the subsequent centuries the Janissaries began to exert more influence over the Sultan and his political decisions. The Janissaries understood that the Sultan was mutually dependent on them and so they began to play a major political role starting in the sixteenth century. This political influence did not only undermine the power of the Sultan but the tradition of the Janissary Corps as a whole.

The Janissaries were created to serve as an elite fighting force and their rank guaranteed them regular salaries. The first show of dissatisfaction with the Sultan came in 1449, when the Janissaries revolted for higher wages. They refused to take their meals and instead struck their spoons on their plates. The Sultan was pressured to give in to their demands because his right to rule could only be secured with a strong muscle, and that muscle was the Janissaries. Another characteristic of the Janissaries was that they could not marry and that they could not pursue other fields of skill besides that of war. Those traditional characteristics were later undermined through greater Janissary pressure. In 1566, with an ensuing strike by the Janissaries, Sultan Selim II gave in to their demands and allowed them to openly marry. This event signified the symbolic break from tradition; the sole loyalty to the Sultan, the one characteristic that made the Janissaries so special and so valuable to the Ottoman Empire was broken. Instead Janissaries now started their own families. The Sultan was no longer their father but rather he was a counterpart, someone who could bring them great wealth if they could exploit his good graces.

Similarly, with the relaxation of the celibacy rule, further rules imposed on the Janissary Corps were later relaxed. Through pressure, the values that once defined the Janissaries began to crumble. Janissaries could pursue other skills besides war. This gave the soldiers options on top of their already privileged rank. This led to the rise of the great architect Sinan, but this also led to the undermining of the fighting unit that was the Janissaries. They began to be less warlike and less capable on the field. Furthermore, children of Janissaries began to be recruited for the Corps. This undermined the basic rule used in recruitment: to take the strongest and the brightest. Now, the Corps came to be a lineal affair and the new recruits were neither the best boys in the land nor the brightest. This act undermined the reason for the creation of the Janissaries: a professional fighting force composed of the best Christian boys. The Corps and the ideals behind its creation began to disintegrate throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Janissaries were no longer effective in the field of battle because they did not go through the intense training that their predecessors did. The strict discipline and prevalent order that held the Janissaries together was disintegrating. What resulted was a self-interested caste in the Ottoman Empire that came to be more of a burden than a benefit to later Sultans.

Through all these changes to the Janissary Corps, the relationship with the Sultan changed as well. The Sultan became a virtual subordinate to the Janissaries' demands. Through securing more rights and privileges for themselves and their families, the Janissaries began to exercise greater political control over the Empire. Their demands included greater wealth, but the Empire could not comply with this due to the lack of conquest over new territories. The Ottoman Empire had shrunk from their wars with the Hapsburgs, partially due to the lack of Janissary discipline and effectiveness on the field of battle. The last attempts at significant territorial expansion came in the late seventeenth

century and culminated in the Battle of Vienna between the Ottoman forces and the joint armies of the Holy League. The Ottoman defeat marked the end of the era of Ottoman expansion further into the heartland of Europe. The Ottomans were beaten back and lost a significant amount of wealth, cattle, and manpower. The Janissaries that were once the most professional and effective fighting unit in Europe did not resemble anything of their former self. They had become decadent and avaricious leeches living off of the Ottoman state, which was more concerned with personal riches than serving their Sultan. The great Janissary prowess was gone.

The relaxing of the rules for the Janissary Corps came after the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent and symbolized the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The influence that the Janissaries had over the Sultan prevented the Empire from modernizing and making the necessary changes to its military in order to make it up to par with the rest of Europe. Suffering numerous defeats, the Ottomans were pushed back to the Balkans. Revolts among the different ethnic people in the Ottoman Empire resulted in the undermining of central Ottoman authority. If it wanted to survive, the Ottoman Empire needed to modernize quickly. The central authoritarian rule of the Sultan should have enabled rapid modernization but he was already under the direct influence and surveillance of the Janissaries. Any proposed change to the military by the Sultan was met with a Janissary revolt. The Janissaries would come out of their barracks and take over the palace. They were powerful enough to depose the Sultan. The deposition of the Sultan resulted in the accession of a new Sultan who was more reluctant to institute changes to the military in fear of Janissary backlash. What started out as a professional military Corps, whose members would be the slaves of the Sultan, evolved to become the de facto leaders of the Ottoman Empire with the Sultan as their puppet.

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the Ottoman Empire becoming a bystander in world affairs, while the modernized European powers rushed off to establish colonies overseas and raise their national revenue. The political elite and the Ottoman people were weary of the Janissaries and their constant demands. The Janissaries were absorbing state wealth without contributing to the betterment of the Ottoman Empire. Their ranks were swelled with the children of retired Janissaries who lacked the ethics of their predecessors. They were holding on to the remainder of their power and resisted change because they feared that it would infringe on their special privileges in Ottoman society. Their depositions of Sultans became more frequent and severe. Selim III was deposed due to his willingness to adopt minor changes on the military. He was succeeded by Mahmud II who realized the need to get rid of the Janissaries for the betterment of his Empire. With the support of the army and the people of Istanbul, on June 15, 1826, Sultan Mahmud II began to modernize his army, which encouraged Janissary mutiny. The Sultan declared war on the Janissaries and used European gunners to fire on their barracks while the army aided by citizens, fought the Janissaries in the streets of Istanbul. Soon the Janissaries were defeated as the majority of the Corps was killed, imprisoned, or exiled. Later on this act came to be known as the Auspicious or Fortunate Incident. The Empire was in dire need of modernization and throwing off the shackles of its once loyal elite fighting force was the only way.

It is important to note the events that led to the fall of the Janissaries. The Corps was formed on the principles of strict discipline and prevalent order. It was those principles that led to the rise of the Janissaries and it was only by the abandonment of the two that led

to their impending doom. Prevalent order ensured the Janissaries' sole loyalty to their Sultan, while the strict discipline ensured the professionalism and competency of the Corps on the battlefield. During the formation of the Janissaries, they had become an incredible asset to the Ottoman Empire, helping to expand territories and bring immense wealth while forging a strong Ottoman presence in Europe. By the beginning of the nineteenth century however, the Janissaries had abandoned the very principles that made them great. They were no longer the assets that they once were but were now a liability that cost the Ottoman Empire money that the treasury did not possess.

In conclusion, this paper examined the causes for Janissary rise, their culture and relationship with the Sultan and the actions that led to their disbandment. The Janissaries were established due to the need of a reliable and loyal military force to serve the Sultan. They rose to prominence due to their competency and ability to conquer new territories that brought wealth, lands, and people under Ottoman dominion. This in turn led to the rise of a unique Janissary culture defined by their personal relationship with the Ottoman Sultan. Selected from young Christian boys, the Janissaries underwent immense military, cultural, and religious training. Strict discipline and prevalent order were emphasized and this guaranteed their competency and sole loyalty to the Sultan. The Janissaries enjoyed salaries, high rank in Ottoman society and social mobility, with some Janissaries rising to become Grand Viziers. This in turn led to the actions that brought about their inevitable doom. The abuse of their privileges, relaxing of Janissary norms, incompetence, and constant interference in the politics of the Sultanate, all led to the eventual disbandment of the Janissaries. However, it is very important to note that it was due to the Janissaries that the Ottoman Empire reached its zenith under Suleyman the Magnificent. The Janissaries brought the Ottoman Empire to an enormous size and the Corps was widely regarded as the best fighting force in Europe. The benefits that the Janissaries brought to their Empire were great and the Corps will always be regarded as the Force that forged an Empire.

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Medina, Alex, Lecture "From Imperial overreach to the Tulip Age", Sept. 7, 2013

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Medina, Alex, Lecture "From the Rise of the Ottomans to Mehmet the Conqueror", Sept. 4, 2013

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