



# **The Historian**

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**The Historian**  
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## From the Editors

For sixty-one years now, *The Historian* has given student editors a platform for publishing, promoting, and preserving the original research and historical writing of our fellow undergraduates. As students, we are honored to carry on this decades-long tradition of showcasing the exceptional scholarship of our classmates. As editors, we are proud of the rigorous process through which the seven articles contained within these pages were selected, edited, and prepared for publication.

Of course, this process, like all of university life, was disrupted and complicated by the coronavirus pandemic. Yet thanks to the resilience of our contributors and staff editors, especially those personally impacted by the virus, we were able to overcome the challenges of this moment and continue *The Historian*'s proud tradition of celebrating undergraduate research.

This tradition would not be possible without the generous funding of NYU's Department of History and the continued support of its faculty. We are especially grateful to our advisor, Professor Rebecca Anne Goetz, and to the faculty members who encouraged and guided the research contained within this journal. We are also grateful to Jackie Menkel, the History Department's extremely capable undergraduate administrator, for always being a helpful resource and having answers to our many questions.

Most of all, we are grateful to the students who did the research, crafted the arguments, contributed their essays, and worked with our editors. Their articles, spanning three centuries and four continents, reflect both the strength and the diversity of undergraduate historical scholarship at NYU. They draw on a wide variety of primary sources, ranging from treaties and federal laws to propaganda posters and oral histories. And they tell important stories, set in places like the textile mills of Massachusetts, the battlefields of the Middle East, and the streets of East Harlem.

Many of the articles contained within this issue challenge popular and conventional narratives. James Duffy shows us that the Iran-Iraq War, rather than being a product of sectarian division, was a conflict motivated by the competing political interests of two rival leaders who manipulated sectarianism for their strategic purposes. Nico Mendoza reminds us that the often celebrated alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom during World War II was not always so harmonious. And Victoria Nefve deconstructs the popular narrative of the United States as an omnipotent dominating force in Latin America and instead shows us the resolve of the Nicaraguan people in determining their own fate.

These articles also contribute to important conversations about how marginalized groups asserted their agency even in the face of systemic oppression. Bjørn Fjæran Berntsen highlights how enslaved peoples in the Danish West Indies engaged with religion—both their own and their masters'—in ways that intentionally subverted the authority of slaveholders. Maria Farman explores the ways in which immigrant women mill workers used their maternal duties and traditional feminine roles to secure wage increases, labor protections, and greater autonomy.

And a number of these articles examine how government policies have historically failed vulnerable populations. Era Gonjbalaj details how centuries of broken promises from the federal government have worn away at the sovereignty of the Six Nations, even as indigenous people remain resilient. And Mollie Yellin shows how government failures exacerbated urban decay in postwar East Harlem; resulted in housing shortages, economic decline, and educational inequities; and contributed to rising gang violence and deepened socio-economic disparities.

It is often said that history is written by the victors. But as the articles contained within this journal demonstrate, history students and historians today are engaged in the critical enterprise of holding power to account and uplifting marginalized perspectives. *The Historian* is proud to play a part, however small, in promoting this important work.

Thank you for reading,

John Barna  
Editor-in-Chief

Dana Kirkegaard  
Managing Editor

## Letter from the Faculty

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the sixty-first edition of New York University's history undergraduate research journal, *The Historian*.

This is the first time in the journal's lengthy history that our students have produced their annual volume under pandemic conditions. Even though COVID-19 dispersed our editors and contributors all over the globe, our intrepid editor-in-chief John Barna and managing editor Dana Kierkegaard have produced a journal about people and places ranging from the Danish West Indies, to Nicaragua, to post-Second World War New York City.

Each of the seven articles in this issue represent months of painstaking original research, long hours spent drafting and revising, and diligent editing. It has been a delight to watch this volume emerge through the dedication and initiative of our undergraduates.

Happy reading,

Rebecca Anne Goetz  
Associate Professor



**Religiosity Enslaved:  
Religion as a Means for Social Agency  
In the Dutch West Indies**

Bjørn Fjæran Berntsen<sup>1</sup>

Slavery dominated economic life in the Caribbean for the majority of the colonial period, extracting labor by reducing the individual to the level of property. Slaves were forcibly transported from Africa to the New World, a dangerous journey initiated at the behest of faraway governments and plantation owners. The world Africans left behind was markedly different from the one in which they arrived. Lost were many of the ties of family, language, religion, and nation—the perpetrators of the slave trade were not concerned with maintaining the cultural identities of their victims unless it was administratively useful. Slaves who survived the voyage across the Atlantic found themselves in the Americas on plantations surrounded mostly by strangers. This new reality was compounded by the depersonalization inherent to the exploitative institution that is slavery.

The Danish colony centered on the islands of St. Jan, St. Thomas, and St. Croix in the West Indies (the current U.S. Virgin Islands) owed its existence to the cruel practice of slavery. The Dano-Norwegian state had been unable to achieve economic viability by other means of production or with other types of labor. Voluntary immigration supplied far too little productive capacity, and prison laborers shipped from Europe often succumbed to local disease or were unable to exert themselves in the heat and humidity.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the acquisition of territory on the African coast made the state a direct player in the slave trade, facilitating an increased level

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to express their gratitude to Professor Sinclair Thomson for his invaluable assistance in the creation of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Waldemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule (1671-1754)* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 187.

of population transfer. Danish Guinea, also known as the Danish Gold Coast, was a collection of forts and surrounding areas directly controlled by the Danish Crown in modern-day Ghana.<sup>3</sup>

While Denmark-Norway eventually outlawed the slave trade in 1792 (with the law coming into effect in 1803), ships flying the Danish flag had already transported 100,000 Africans across the Atlantic to various European possessions. Those already in servitude on the islands were not freed.<sup>4</sup> Even after a slave insurrection caused the institution to be abolished in 1848, the United States bought the islands because of their economic productivity.<sup>5</sup>

Sugar plantations were the lifeblood of the West Indies. The goal of this colonial institution was to extract as much value as possible to enrich the home country. During the slave trade period of the territory's history, approximately 55,000 slaves were transported to the islands' main plantations. While relative numbers waxed and waned, slaves tended to outnumber whites ten-to-one between 1755 and 1846.<sup>6</sup> Enslaved people were not of the same background, and there were a variety of religious identities. In 1820, according to Lieutenant Brady (an officer of the British Navy visiting his brother, a plantation manager), Moravian Christianity predominated amongst the indentured, with "Danish Lutheran, English Episcopalian, and Roman

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<sup>3</sup> Holger Weiss, "The Danish Gold Coast as a Multinational and Entangled Space, c. 1700-1850," in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*, by Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin (New York: Springer, 2013), p. 243.

<sup>4</sup> Erik Goebel, "Danish Shipping Along the Triangular Route, 1671-1802: voyages and conditions on board," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36, no. 2 (May 2011): p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Varlack and Harrigan Norwell, *The Virgins: A Descriptive and Historical Profile*, (St. Thomas: The Caribbean Research Institute, College of the Virgin Islands, 1977) 33, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Lomارش Roopnarine, "Maroon Resistance and Settlement on Danish St. Croix," *Journal of Third World Studies* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2010): p. 95.



Catholic churches [dividing] the [remaining] slaves in nearly equal proportion.”<sup>7</sup> Slaves also participated in the legal system, both as plaintiffs and defendants. However, judges and prosecutors treated them harshly and limited their freedom of expression. This was achieved through rigorous and leading questioning, selective use of testimony, and unequal weighting of Blacks and White speech.<sup>8</sup>

Conditions as, if not more, brutal than other Caribbean colonies plagued the lives of those enslaved in the West Indies. There is evidence of slaves fleeing Danish territory and seeking refuge on Spanish-held islands. No such journeys in reverse have been documented, hinting at the harshness of the Danish colonial society.<sup>9</sup> Trial documents display rampant abuses of power: beatings, sexual assaults, and generally poor labor conditions throughout the area.<sup>10</sup> With the usual avenues for political expression, such as petitioning the government, protest, or limited electoral participation, cut off or silenced by the Dano-Norwegians, few opportunities to exercise agency existed besides such violence.<sup>11</sup> Free people of color, primarily offspring of Europeans and female slaves or manumitted household slaves, did exist, but they largely did not advocate for the rights of enslaved people of color. The trial documents transcribed by Gunvor Simonsen from the Danish National Archives do, however, illuminate a more subtle subversion of the colonial order and power structure: one empowered by faith. The enslaved used spirituality—

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<sup>7</sup> Lt. Brady, *Observations Upon the State of Negro Slavery in the Island of Santa Cruz, the Principal of the Danish West India Colonies: with Miscellaneous Remarks upon Subjects Relating to the West India Question, and a Notice of Santa Cruz* (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1829), 18, Gale Slavery & Anti-Slavery.

<sup>8</sup> Gunvor Simonsen, *Slave Stories: Law, Representation, and Gender in the Danish West Indies* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule*, p. 161.

<sup>10</sup> Simonsen, *Slave Stories*.

<sup>11</sup> Roopnarine, *Maroon Resistance*, p. 89.

syncretic Christianity and Afro-Caribbean Obeah—as expressions of dissent towards a system that stripped and muddled identities.

The tenets of the Moravian Church, a Protestant denomination, allowed slaves to present themselves as equal in the eyes of the church and to press for greater rights. Essentially, it encouraged them to work for personal betterment within the confines of the colonial system. Obeah, on the other hand, gave means to subvert authority outside that power structure. Slaves employed the practice to alter the behavior of their overseers and their fellow plantation workers, exercising a more active social agency toward their lives and conditions. Syncretic Christianity, the faith of Europeans molded to the views of the enslaved, provided a similar outlet for anticolonial action. Slaves used faith to undermine the strictures and depersonalization of the society in which they lived.

### **From Colonial Sympathy to Slave Agency**

The historiography of slavery in the Danish West Indies follows a generalized trajectory of ever-increasing importance of the enslaved. Academic writing on the institution on the islands is generally accepted to have begun with Waldemar Westergaard's *The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule*, an account of the colony's history.<sup>12</sup> The age of the book shows; it was written in 1917 and is itself a revision of Westergaard's earlier doctoral dissertation. The author discusses resistance to the Danish plantation owners' usage of slaves as arising directly from its brutality, not from the use of slaves itself. Nor does Westergaard assign the slaves much agency beyond reacting to basic needs and desires. He states that the most prevalent inspiration to insurrection was the response to food shortages, not an innate desire for freedom or betterment. In general,

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<sup>12</sup> "Slavery in Danish America," Oxford Bibliographies, accessed November 5, 2019.

Westergaard takes a relatively sympathetic tone to the planters and the colonial authorities. This is particularly evident in his discussion of a 1733 slave revolt, where his verbiage paints the rebelling slaves very negatively; rather than speak of resistance or revolution, he uses the words “slaughter,” “murder,” and “bloody work.” The revolt was perhaps the most successful rebellion in the history of the Danish West Indies - slaves had effective control over large parts of the island for months and were only defeated with the aid of French and Swiss mercenaries.<sup>13</sup>

*Slave Society in the Danish West Indies* (1992) by Neville A. T. Hall expands on the work of Westergaard by attempting to tell the stories of the enslaved. However, it falls victim to lack of narrative sources and thus relies primarily on government documents.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the focus it grants the population of free Black people represents a new contribution to the existing scholarship. His study of their relationship with the enslaved and their position in colonial society, began the trend of analyzing the existence of free black people within the colonial framework.<sup>15</sup> Continuing the study of the interaction between free Blacks, slaves, and colonial society is Signe Flygare’s 2016 paper, “The Free Negro Company of Christiansted.” It is a case study of a free Black militia in service to the colonial government that by, “[positioning] themselves in the social space of a racially divided ... society,” both challenged and accepted colonial authority.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Holly Kathryn Norton, “*Estate by Estate: The Landscape of the 1733 St. Jan Slave Rebellion*” (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 2013), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Colin A. Palmer, "Reviewed Work: *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix* by Neville A. T. Hall, B. W. Higman." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51, no. 3, (July 1994): p. 550.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Signe Haubroe Flygare, “The Free Negro Company of Christiansted: Struggles for equality, 1773-1799,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 41, no. 4-5 (September 2016): p. 586.

After Hall's monograph, scholarly work on the Danish West Indies proliferates. Of note to this paper is Gunvor Simonsen's *Slave Stories* - a dissection of identity as it relates to gender and sexuality based on court proceedings and associated documents. Yet, it does not end in a claim that the enslaved used the courts as a vehicle to resist colonial authority, as one might expect. Instead, the argument is more subtle and represents the slaves as anticolonial by virtue of their use of the court system to achieve individual dignity.<sup>17</sup> The theme of this paper primarily emerged from studying the sources used in *Slave Stories*, as many slaves discussed their belief in and usage of religious practices to oppose colonial institutions and symbols. The historiography of the West Indies has followed a path of acknowledging increased levels of agency for the enslaved. This piece will attempt to add to that, specifically through the lens of faith.

### **Christianity – Moravian and Syncretic**

The evangelizing by the Moravian missionaries began in 1732.<sup>18</sup> Initially, planters and the colonial authorities were concerned about slaves adopting relatively modern Protestant notions – equality in the eyes of God, the equal value of men, and the importance of the individual.<sup>19</sup> However, that sentiment soon changed, and the Moravians found success. The Danes accepted the conversion of their slaves and would come to “[boast] that their Christian Negros provided greater security against insurrection than their forts.”<sup>20</sup> Eugene Genovese, a

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<sup>17</sup> Fredrik Thomasson, “Review Work: *Slave Stories*: law, representation, and gender in the Danish West Indies,” *Slavery & Abolition: A journal of slave and post-slave studies* 40, no. 2 (April 2019): p. 415.

<sup>18</sup> Geroge F. Tyson and Arnold R. Highfield, *The Kamina Folk: Slavery and Slave Life in the Danish West Indies* (U.S. Virgin Islands: The Virgin Islands Humanities Council, 1994), p. 61.

<sup>19</sup> “The Moravians: Missionaries in the West Indies,” Rigsarkivet - Danish National Archives, accessed December 15, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1976), p. 170.

Marxist historian (later turned conservative), was skeptical of the notion that religion was truly subversive to colonial authority, and wrote that “[the Moravians] undermined the unity and the subversive potential of the slaves in ways more effective than by inculcating submissiveness.”<sup>21</sup> He argued that the adoption of Christianity created a divided spectrum: slaves perceived as more Christian, more creole, were considered “civilized” in comparison with their non-Christian or African born counterparts. Genovese claims that Christianity “exacerbated... dangerous cultural divisions” by “[narrowing] the gulf between master and slave, white and black” while simultaneously “[weakening] the unity of the quarters”<sup>22</sup> and widening differences between slaves. Yet, the belief that the Christianization of slaves reduced their revolutionary potential is not incompatible with the notion that slaves utilized the language and perception of faith to act in anticolonial manners.

The power of religious conviction becomes apparent when analyzing the response of Whites. Emilia Viotti da Costa relates the tale of John Wray, a missionary sent to Demerara in British Guiana. Demerara proves useful, as it shared a number of similarities with the Danish colony: location in the eastern extremities of the Caribbean, Protestantism, northern European administration, reliance on sugar plantations, and largely populated by slaves from West Africa. These parallels allow us to extrapolate its analysis. Wray notes that in 1814, a letter purportedly written by Jesus Christ spread in the area, complete with the claim that possession would render the bearer protected from harm, and that work on the Sabbath was prohibited.<sup>23</sup> This syncretized

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, p. 171.

<sup>23</sup> Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 106.

expression of Christianity, undoubtedly unsponsored by any major denomination, displays the power of faith to enable subversive behavior. It becomes easy to resist colonial authority by refusing to work if one believes that work on Sundays is prohibited by the word of the prophet and that harm cannot come to the possessor of a letter. One colonist noted in *The Essequibo and Demerary Royal Gazette*, a local newspaper: “[Let] he that chooses to make negroes Christians ... give them their liberty,” leading Costa to comment that the planters believed “there was a fundamental incompatibility between Christianity and Slavery.”

The illustrative story of Demerara continues with Wray’s fellow missionary, John Davies, who reported strange happenings on the colony’s largest plantation. Wray had already vocalized misgivings about Blacks “setting themselves up as preachers” when a woman “calling herself the Virgin Mary ... set the slaves into an ‘enthusiastic frenzy’” and led her followers to “[behave] in a rebellious manner towards their manager.”<sup>24</sup> The proprietor of the plantation called for Davies, hoping more institutionalized Christianity could quell the revolutionary spirit of the syncretic variant.

Regrettably, no direct accounts of happenings like those in the British colony exist for the Danish West Indies. Yet, the value of Christianity holds for that territory as well. As Simonsen puts it, “Enslaved men and women found strength and ideational ammunition in Christian and African-Atlantic spiritual powers as they sought to bring some measure of order and meaning into the unsettling and violent world of plantation slavery.”<sup>25</sup> In less overt ways than in Demerara, slaves worked against their depersonification. Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp, a

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<sup>24</sup> Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 106.

<sup>25</sup> Simonsen, *Slave Stories*.

German-born Moravian missionary, traveled to the Danish West Indies to evangelize from 1767 to 1768. While there, he compiled a detailed description of the various facets of the islands, including social history, slave society, and natural history. Selections from the account are published in *The Kamina Folk* (1994), a collection of primary sources from the Danish West Indies edited by George F. Tyson and Arnold R. Highfield. In this piece, Oldendorp relates a cultural practice “common among the Negroes on all three of the Danish islands” of Congo descent. He describes a practice of adult baptism: it generally proceeds with “pouring water over the head of the baptized, placing some salt in [their] mouth, and praying over [them] in the Congo language.” However, “before the baptism [the slave] must receive five to six lashes... for the sins which he had committed.”<sup>26</sup> Those who performed the baptism would often adopt the baptized as children, obliging their new wards to care for them in life, and provide them a coffin and burial clothing in death. This attempt to reestablish family ties broken by the slave trade constitutes anticolonial action, as it attempts to ameliorate the harm caused by colonialism. In creating cultural and familial ties to replace those that had been severed, the slaves utilized a religious ceremony to counter the will of authority.

These varied accounts expose a tension: to what extent was the usage of Christianity truly subversive? Per Genovese, the answer is only marginally. Such a claim is understandable, as demonstrated by the perception of the Danish administration that Christian slaves provided a safeguard against insurrection. Simonsen also documents that, after gaining their initial foothold, “succeeding governors general and other high ranking officers in the ... colonial administration supported the Moravians.” This was not borne out of religious or ethnic kinship, but because

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<sup>26</sup> Oldendorp in Tyson and Highfield 1994, *The Kamina Folk*, p. 96.



they “came to believe that some [slaves] could be truly Christian, modest, and chaste.” In effect, when following the teachings of the Moravian brethren, Christian slaves were considered close to ideal. Indicative of this, “by the 1760s many of the African helpers and elders within the Moravian church were highly placed on their plantations, occupying positions as drivers and craftsmen or as housekeepers.”<sup>27</sup> Relatively easy posts were given to those held in high esteem by the church, evidencing a symbiotic relationship between Moravian Christianity and colonial society.

Although participation in the Moravian church did better the lives of enslaved adherents, one cannot say institutionalized religion on the Danish islands provided an increased degree of personal agency. The account of Lieutenant Brady reinforces this, stating in the 1820s:

The Moravian brethren... received every encouragement and respect from the planters... The negroes who belong to this sect are universally acknowledged to be the most orderly and correct in their conduct of any in the colony. This favorable distinction is attributed to their being more under the spiritual control of their pastors, than any other slaves.<sup>28</sup>

Herein lies the root of the competing dual powers of the Christian religion. In the hands of the representatives of colonialism, Christianity stood for structure, for control. From this understanding, it is easy to conclude, like Genovese, that “Black Christianity offered profound spiritual strength ... but it also imparted a political weakness, which dictated, however necessarily and realistically, acceptance of the hegemony of the oppressor.”<sup>29</sup> This narrative changes when the ability to exercise religious influence rests in the hands of the oppressed. The slave woman in Demerara, claimant to the mantle of the Virgin Mary, took a message from her

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<sup>27</sup> Simonsen, *Slave Stories*.

<sup>28</sup> Lt. Brady in Tyson and Highfield, *The Kamina Folk*, 164.

<sup>29</sup> Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 284.

understanding of scripture and wielded it in an attempt to force change. Effectively, slaves took ownership of an imposed religion, molded it to suit the circumstances, and employed it as an anticolonial tool. In Demerara, what was done to stop the influence of this syncretic Christianity? The preaching of a British missionary, the very embodiment of institutionalized faith.

### **Obeah – an Afro-Caribbean Practice**

Before analyzing the impact of this cultural force, Obeah must be defined. Obi, as it is otherwise known, “can be described as a set of magical or religious perceptions and practices that existed among enslaved laborers.”<sup>30</sup> Essentially a Creole creation, Obeah originates from the exposure of African traditions to the reality of the colonial Caribbean. The linguistic roots of the term likely lie with the Twi language of West Africa. While famed for its prevalence in the British Caribbean, Obi was also common on the islands of the Danish West Indies. The term Obeah, for the purposes of this paper, also encompasses Myal, a similar religious practice more focused on the healing and palliative aspects of Afro-Caribbean faith, primarily practiced in a group or community setting. Obeah is generally differentiated by its increased focus on the aggressive, yet it, and Myal, “operated in the same sphere of spiritual and herbal knowledge,” and thus “the distinction was not always clear.”<sup>31</sup> Most sources from the colonial period conflate the practices, though slaves themselves held finer distinctions. In the words of Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez, Europeans did “not understand the intricate workings of the religious ethos of the slaves.” In addition, Myalists did not “[disclose] all their secrets to those outside

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<sup>30</sup> “Obeah and justice - Records of the Police Court,” Rigsarkivet - Danish National Archives, accessed December 13, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Caribbean Religious History* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 122-123.

their religious community.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the extensive variation of the practice means that the following claims are general; the highly individualized expression of the faith would render all sweeping statements easily undercut.<sup>33</sup>

A client-practitioner relationship defines the basic structure of Obeah. The Obeahmen, analogous to the popular conception of witchdoctors, sold their services for financial compensation. The specialists would rely on their expertise to “manipulate spiritual powers and the secrets of herbs and other substances” to alter the lives of their clients. A request to an Obeahman could take any form; the goals were as varied as harming adversaries (master or otherwise), increasing romantic success, bettering gambling chances, or healing chronic conditions. Equally varied were the means to achieve these requests:

Therapeutic or protective treatment might involve some combination of taking herbal baths; ingesting herbal concoctions; and wearing charms made of herbs, animal bones or blood, and human matter such as hair or bodily fluids. Aggressive obeah, intended to inflict harm, could involve the burying of substances in the yard.<sup>34</sup>

The tradition of Obeah is clearly a rich and multifaceted one. Yet the question remains: to what extent was the practice an expression of anticolonialism? Again, as with Christianity, analyzing the response of Whites brings us closer to understanding. Per the account of Oldendorp, “[the slaves] left their gods behind in Guinea, and particular care was taken as they were being shipped to the West Indies that they were not able to take their fetishes with them.” Particular care did not suffice as, in 1701, “a Negro was burned to death in St. Thomas ... on the charges of witchcraft.” Early in the history of the Danish West Indies, fear of Obeah did not stem

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

<sup>33</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Obeah, Myal, and their differences, consult *Caribbean Religious History* (Ibid.).

<sup>34</sup> Edmonds and Gonzalez, *Caribbean Religious History*, p. 124.

from a belief that it could provoke revolutionary fervor. Rather, it was feared because, “at that time, it was considered to be the result of demonic forces” and thus “worthy of the death penalty.”<sup>35</sup> The 1701 event occurred near contemporaneously with the Salem Witch Trials, evidencing a wider belief in the power of witchcraft, and lending veracity to this claim. By 1813, this understanding had largely faded from prominence. Taking British Guiana as representative of the colonial Caribbean, colonial assemblies there, when asked about Obeah, “had indignantly replied that no reasonable person in the West Indies now thought anything seriously of [it], [any] more than the English now did of witchcraft.”<sup>36</sup>

The threat of the practice thus moved from a genuine belief that Obi’s spiritual aspects could affect the corporeal world to an understanding that it could motivate and enable subversive behavior, even if it was deemed merely superstitious. Simonsen utilizes court cases in *Slave Stories* that exemplify this aspect of Obeah. In 1832, Christopher, Adam, and Henry, three enslaved men of the Golden Grove Estate on the island of St. Croix, were accused of murder. Their victim was the estate manager, a man named Peter Mackin, whom they perceived to have been “too bad.” This perception seems warranted, as during the trial Henry explained Mackin had “sexual intercourse” with his wife, implying rape. He also asserted that Mackin “ran after young negresses on the plantations, the wives’ of negro men, their sisters and families” or alternatively “had them brought by the watchmen at night.”<sup>37</sup> While such behavior would prompt a strong reaction in most, Mackin’s position as estate manager renders him a symbol of the

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<sup>35</sup> Oldendorp in Tyson and Highfield, *The Kamina Folk*, p. 95.

<sup>36</sup> William Wilberforce in Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, p. 107.

<sup>37</sup> Simonsen, *Slave Stories*, quotes from her transcription of 3.81.219 Den Vestindiske Regering, Gruppeordnede sager: Restvæsen. Mord på plantageforvalter P. Mackin, 1832.

colonial order. Moreover, his crimes were not isolated. Simonsen notes a troubling prevalence of this sort of misconduct, thus Mackin's actions and the response to them should be analyzed as a part of a larger trend. In their testimony, Christopher, Adam, and Henry paint the portrait of a sexual predator. Before arriving at murder, their chosen solution to deal with the problem also lay outside the strictures of the state: Obeah. They contacted an "old negro ... born on the Coast of Guinea," an Obeahman, to remove Mackin from the plantation. The majority of the slaves on the estate contributed to the practitioner's fees, however, when he was unable to remove the manager, the community turned to murder. This attempted removal of a colonial agent is yet another demonstration of the usage of religion as a tool to facilitate anticolonial action.

The study of other Afro-Caribbean religious systems often yields similar displays of faith. Louisiana Voodoo, a spiritual relative of Obi, demonstrates another means by which slaves increased their social agency against the backdrop of colonialism. Despite his cynicism regarding the impact of Christianity, Genovese concedes the power of Voodoo to counteract the spiritual diminishment inherent to slavery. By showing "slaves ... other slaves with great power," the practice "offered resistance to that doctrine of black impotence which slaveholders worked incessantly to fasten on them." According to him, "The social significance of voodoo ... among the slaves lay less in some direct threat to the Whites"<sup>38</sup> than in its ability to change the perceptions of slaves about themselves and each other. This is not to say Voodoo did not empower anticolonial actions. Genovese also imparts the story of a spell cast "on [a] master to keep him from noticing that the slaves were stealing hogs" and shares the account of a woman

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<sup>38</sup> Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 221.

who owned “a charm that would keep her master from whipping her.” The Voodoo did not work as intended in either case, yet it shifted how slaves interacted with the strictures of colonial life.

Back in Danish Christendom, on St. Croix, Simonsen recounts the 1794 ordeal of the enslaved couple Bucan and Anna Maria. They were accused of theft but refused to testify; “an oath of silence ‘in the manner of the Coast’” had been taken. This oath is not necessarily indicative of religion, however, one interpretation is that it represented a shared duty between the couple – and an orientation towards African, not European, spiritual ideals. Anna Maria and Bucan refused to participate in the legal processes of the Danish West Indies and supported that anticolonial refusal through Afro-Caribbean thought. In 1774, the slave Raina was accused of poisoning her owner, as she had placed an unknown powder in his cup. The authorities were convinced its purpose was lethal, yet Raina explained that “old negroes,” likely Obeahmen, had informed her the remedy would soften her master’s heart, reducing his severity.<sup>39</sup> Another instance of attempted “softening” occurred in 1779, when the slave Lembrecht was accused of poisoning his overseer by placing “something in a dish of cabbage.”<sup>40</sup> Once again, Obi empowered slaves to express their social agency, even if the attempts were unsuccessful.

Another, perhaps more obvious, expression of anticolonial sentiment by slaves was marronage. Maroons were fugitives who escaped their bondage and established independent communities. Within these communities, Obeah occupied a place of high esteem. Richard Price, in his introduction to *Maroon Societies: Slave Communities in the Americas* (1973), notes the

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<sup>39</sup> Simonsen, *Slave Stories*, quotes from her transcription of 38.5.16 Christiansted Byfoged Gæsteretsprotokoller, case 1774-10-15.

<sup>40</sup> Simonsen, *Slave Stories*, quotes from her transcription of 28.9.4 Christiansted Byfoged, Politiretsprotokoller, case 1779-09-23.

“paramount importance of religious beliefs and practices to the fighting maroons.” In Cuba, they used “magical paraphernalia;” in Jamaica, a fighter “was able to attract and catch bullets between her buttocks, where they were rendered harmless” and another “caught all the bullets fired at him in his hands and hurled them back;” in Surinam and elsewhere, “warriors underwent complex rituals and wore amulets... to make them bulletproof.”<sup>41</sup> Accounts such as these likely provided a degree of motivation to engage in similar acts. While these stories are the product of the imagination of the enslaved, they unveil the importance of syncretic belief systems in the maroons’ anticolonial actions. Obeah is presented as powerful, a tool to be wielded in the struggle against colonial authority, and a motivator to those in slavery.

### **Faith as Anticolonial**

“... one considers the blind zeal with which even the most ignorant people often cling to their religion, which perhaps they do not even understand in the slightest...”<sup>42</sup>

Spirituality is an undeniable part of human culture, regardless of how it is expressed or utilized. In the Caribbean, and within the context of colonialism, faith became more than a set of beliefs one held to help explain the world – it became a means to interact with power, a mechanism for both control and subversion, wielded by both the colonizer and the oppressed. While the hierarchical heads of the power structure, the colonial administrators and planters, exploited institutionalized Christianity to exercise influence, the exploited made use of syncretic faith – Christian and Afro-Caribbean – to act counter to the state and the slave-holding elites.

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Price, *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1973), p. 9-10.

<sup>42</sup> Oldendorp in Tyson and Highfield, *The Kamina Folk*, 95.



The ideal of the Christian slave that existed in the minds of the planters was the product of a hope that the strictures and delineations of European Christianity could quell the revolutionary spirit and fervor of the enslaved. This religion, as it was employed, did not seek to counter the depersonalization of slavery. It sought to minimize those aspects of personhood that pursue freedom in the face of brutality. Was it always successful in these goals? In the Danish West Indies, not entirely; “To remind Black slaves that god made no distinction of class or race was not revolutionary, but neither was it without dissident ideological content.”<sup>43</sup> Simonsen shares that “in the late eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century, enslaved people developed more forceful narratives about themselves as Christian men and women” in the colonial court system. This development led Blacks to take identities for themselves, increasing their agency, but restraining them to act in the framework created by Denmark. As so, even though the teachings of the Moravian brethren led to “[emphasis] that they were faithful spouses, caring parents, and responsible workers,” this expression by the slaves was not subversive.<sup>44</sup>

Subversion was the property of syncretism. From Demerara, where an African self-proclaimed Virgin Mary appropriated Christian scripture to encourage resistance, to Danish West Indies Obeah giving Afro-Caribbeans the means to oppose their masters, faith was made anticolonial when slaves made it their own. Religious anticolonialism took the shape of creating new familial ties, through baptism, to replace the ones the slave trade broke, as well as stories of magical invulnerability to the bullets of European soldiers. The spiritual frameworks of these two faiths, syncretic Christianity and Obi, were different but their usage was similar. Obeah derived

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<sup>43</sup> Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 264.

<sup>44</sup> Simonsen, *Slave Stories*, 78.

some of its importance from its African roots: “Slavery, of course, made it particularly difficult for Blacks to maintain their traditions in the New World.” As such, “[holding] unto their traditions as long as they could” was “a strategy of resistance and survival” in a “struggle to keep traditions alive.”<sup>45</sup> It was in the interest of colonialism for these traditions to disappear. A people without background is easier to exploit; the loss of history contributes to dehumanization and diminishment. Thus, the effort to oppose this erasure was anticolonial. Christianity, as it was presented to the slaves, was a thoroughly European phenomenon. Therefore, the appropriation of it to bely European desires takes on a subversive character, and an increased importance. Faith, in the hands of the oppressed, enslaved, and marooned, facilitated action. It was action in one’s own interests, interests counter to those of authority.

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<sup>45</sup> Genovese, 1976.

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## **The Iran-Iraq War: Sectarian Conflict or Power Struggle?**

James Duffy

On September 20, 1980, Iraqi forces invaded Iran, setting off an eight-year conflict between the two nations. While a number of factors contributed to the war's outbreak, the sectarian divide between the two states has provided observers with a simple narrative for explaining the conflict. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a Shiite cleric, had just led a successful Islamic uprising in Iran, and Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime in Iraq worried that the tide of revolution might cross over the border. While the Baathists were mostly a secular political party, Hussein himself was a Sunni Muslim, and religion played a powerful role in his worldview. Although Hussein initially expected a quick victory, his invasion soon turned into a near decade-long struggle replete with trench warfare and chemical weaponry. Historians estimate that more than one million people had lost their lives in the combat by 1988. For horrified viewers of the conflict, mostly in the West, sectarianism was a tool for coming to terms with the unthinkable violence: it could be most easily understood and explained as yet another episode in a timeless, intractable feud between fanatical, warlike Muslims bent on killing each other. However, as this paper will argue, the reality of the conflict was far more complex than a medieval struggle rooted in religious enmity. Indeed, those who attributed the war to sectarianism alone fell victim to Saddam and Khomeini's own sinister propaganda strategies.

This article will analyze the role sectarianism played in the Iran-Iraq War, as well as the roles of Ayatollah Khomeini's Shiite regime and Saddam Hussein's Baathist party in stoking religious divides for their own political interests. It argues that both leaders manipulated religion to their own ends by using Islamic ideology to mobilize their armies and rally support from their

domestic audiences. Both before and during the war, Khomeini and Hussein were effective propagandists and deft strategists who convinced their people and Western observers that the conflict, at its core, was religious. But as this article will show, rather than a sectarian struggle, the Iran-Iraq War was in fact a geopolitical power struggle, stemming from the fallout from the Iranian Revolution, in which Hussein and Khomeini each used sectarianism strategically to advance their regime's political ends. By examining the political context in which the war began, and the strategic uses of sectarianism by the Iraqi and Iranian regimes before the conflict, this article will reveal Hussein and Khomeini's actual motivations for going to war with the other, and the ways in which each leader exploited sectarianism during the war to bolster his cause. Sectarianism has been wielded as a political tool throughout history, and this conflict serves as an informative case study for understanding sectarian power dynamics in the 20th century.

### **Historical Background of the War**

It is important to understand the history of the Sunni-Shi'a divide to understand the role of sectarianism in this war. Observers were quick to attribute the war to sectarianism due in large part to the long and well documented history of Sunni-Shia animosity in the Middle East. However, an examination of historical Sunni-Shia conflicts shows that, then as now, such conflicts often had political roots, and were strategically "sectarianized" for political purposes.

Perhaps the most prominent historical example of Sunni-Shia warfare is that of the conflicts between the Ottoman and Safavid empires during the Middle Ages. The Ottomans and Safavids engaged in a number of wars from the 16th to 18th centuries but generally warred as much as two rival empires might be expected to. Apart from Ottoman Sultan Selim I's hatred of Shias, there was no particularly salient sectarian motivation driving these conflicts. Instead, the

Ottomans felt threatened by the growing Safavid state, not because it was predominantly Shia but rather because it was becoming a powerful force in the region. These medieval struggles between the Safavids and Ottomans laid the groundwork for modern sectarianism, but on an individual level many Sunnis and Shias coexist and cooperated peacefully, dispelling the notion that the two sects are or were inherently incompatible.<sup>1</sup>

Sunnis and Shias in medieval Anatolia lived in relative harmony outside of brief periods when the leaders of the two empires weaponized sectarianism. By further analyzing the individual Ottoman-Safavid wars, and perhaps more importantly the peace treaties that ended them, this becomes more evident. For example, following the Ottoman-Safavid War of 1532-1555 the two sides agreed to the Peace of Amasya. This agreement between the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman I and the Safavid Shah Tahmasp I redrew the borders between the empires following the war, but also guaranteed protection for Safavid pilgrims travelling to Medina, Mecca, and other holy Shia sites within Ottoman borders.<sup>2</sup> By only demanding concessions of land and allowing religious protections, the Ottoman victors showed this conflict had little to do with religion. With his geopolitical ambitions satisfied, the Sultan was ready and willing to compromise on the sectarian dimension of his conflict with the Shah.

### **Selective Sectarianism: Political Uses of Religion in Prewar Iran and Iraq**

With this historical background in mind, it becomes clearer that the Iran-Iraq War too was about much more than existing sectarian divides. Instead of being a contributing factor to the

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<sup>1</sup> Heather M. Robinson, Ben Connable, David E. Thaler, and Ali G. Scotten, *Sectarianism in the Middle East: Implications for the United States*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 109.



start of the war, it is likely that increased sectarian tensions were a product of this conflict. While ancient animosity does exist, those flames needed to be stoked by leaders to contribute to this conflict. The true religious issue at the heart of this war was less about sectarianism and more about “sectarianization,” a process by which sectarianism is constructed and fostered.

### ***Sectarianism in Khomeini's Iran***

In Iran, Khomeini walked a thin line: he framed his uprising as a pan-Islamic Revolution, but attempted to appeal to Shias in particular. Khomeini knew his political advantage lay in mobilizing Shias, so he used Shia-specific propaganda, and presented himself in a Messianic role that would resonate with Shias in particular. He played heavily on the oppressed, victimized mentality that has been pervasive throughout Shia history and placed his revolution on the same level of significance as the murder of Husayn and the Battle of Karbala. Husayn, the grandson of the prophet Muhammed, became a central figure in Shia tradition after this battle, where he lost his life fighting the Umayyads for control of the caliphate. In propaganda promoting his Islamic Revolution, and later rallying support for the Iran-Iraq War, Khomeini frequently referenced Karbala. One propaganda poster from 1981 showed Imam Husayn on his horse at Karbala, captioned "Every day is Ashura and Every Soil is Karbala."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Graphics of Revolution and War: Iranian Poster Arts, A New Karbala, The University of Chicago Library, 2011.



*Imam Husayn depicted riding his horse at the Battle of Karbala, captioned "Every day is Ashura and Every Soil is Karbala."<sup>4</sup>*

By adhering to Twelver Shiism in particular, Khomeini was able to present himself in a Messianic role. According to Twelver tradition, the Imamate was passed down from Ali until the Twelfth Imam, or Mahdi, who has been in hiding since his birth in 869 and will reveal himself when Allah deems.<sup>5</sup> Twelver Shiism is the predominant religious sect in Iran, as more than 90 percent of Iranian Shiites are Twelvers. While he never claimed to be the Mahdi, Khomeini essentially implied as much. He referred to the government of Mohammad Reza Shah as *mofsidin fi 'l-arz*, or corruptors of the earth, terminology used historically to describe the Twelfth

<sup>4</sup> The Graphics of Revolution and War: Iranian Poster Arts, A New Karbala, The University of Chicago Library, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Newman, Andrew. "Twelver Shi'a," Oxford Bibliographies, 2011. Online.

Imam's enemies.<sup>6</sup> Once during his reign a parliamentary deputy asked Khomeini directly if he believed himself to be the Mahdi. When Khomeini did not answer, the deputy asked again but Khomeini refused to affirm or deny the claim that he was the Twelfth Imam.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, Khomeini knew the power of wielding sectarianism, and his words and actions serve as clear demonstrations of that mentality. In his book *Islamic Government*, he wrote that the division of Muslims was the work of "imperialists and self-seeking rulers,"<sup>8</sup> yet, recognizing the strategic value of mobilizing Shias, he played on those same divides himself. For instance, Khomeini supported various Shia movements in the region, once again displaying that his vision of a pan-Islamic revolution had a clear sectarian bias. Not only did the Islamic Revolution inspire the founding of the radical group Hezbollah in Lebanon, Khomeini personally encouraged members of the group who visited Iran in 1982.<sup>9</sup> In a speech in 2000, Hezbollah's secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah said "From the very beginning, [Khomeini] encouraged us to fight for the sake of God, and showed us the way, filled our hearts with certainty and reliance of God, and gave us glad tidings of victory, and so victory came!"<sup>10</sup>

In practice, Khomeini did not observe numerous Shia traditions with deep significance. For instance, during his rule he did not preside over observances of The Day of Ashura—the remembrance of Husayn's death at Karbala—nor did he visit the Imam Reza Shrine—the

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<sup>6</sup> Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, Translated by Hamid Algar, Contemporary Islamic Thought, Persian Series. (Berkeley, Calif.: Mizan Press, 1981).

<sup>9</sup> Osman, Marwa. "Imam Khomeini: The Founding Father of Hezbollah," Khameni.ir, 2016. Online.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

mausoleum of the eighth Imam and the largest mosque in the world—which are both sacred for Shias. While Khomeini undoubtedly strongly believed in Islam, he showed a clear tendency to pick and choose which aspects best served him. Religion was a political tool for Khomeini, and he essentially said so himself. In 1986, the Ayatollah wrote that “anyone who will say religion is separate from politics is a fool; he does not know Islam or politics.”<sup>11</sup> Understanding Khomeini’s willingness to use religion for power and manipulation is crucial to understanding his actions during the war.

### ***Sectarianism in Baathist Iraq***

While the use of religion in Baathist Iraq was less prominent than in Khomeini's Iran, it was no less strategic. The ruling Baathist Party was founded to be secular, but in an Iraqi state where more than 95 percent of the population observed Islam, the party found it expedient to appropriate religion nevertheless. Michel Aflaq, the founder of the Baathist Party, said Ba’athism “is with [religious] faith, but is not a religious party, nor should it be one.”<sup>12</sup> Aflaq believed most contemporary understandings of Islam were inherently flawed and interpreted Islam as deeply connected with Arab nationalism, believing that one’s identity as an Arab superseded their religion.<sup>13</sup> Saddam Hussein, a Sunni who became the leader of the Baathist regime in 1979, attempted to strengthen the regime’s grasp on all aspects of Iraqi life, including religion. While Hussein had his own interpretation of Islam and the role of Baathism in religion, he was deeply

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<sup>11</sup> Ruhollah Khomeini, *Tahrir al-Wasilah*, Vol. I, 1986.

<sup>12</sup> William Harris, *Challenges to Democracy in the Middle East*, (Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: Saddam Hussein, Islam, and the Roots of Insurgencies in Iraq*, (Oxford University Press, 2018), 28.

influenced by Aflaq and believed that this Baathist Islam could be a powerful tool for his government.<sup>14</sup>

In general, the Baathist regime under Hussein attempted to control religious activities and promote this Baathist interpretation of Islam. They employed a tactic that historian Samuel Helfont called “Baathification” in which the regime would install loyalists into social and political institutions, oust extremists, and slowly integrate these institutions into the regime.<sup>15</sup> Hussein also actively attempted to downplay sectarian divisions and promote unified Arab nationalism, partially because he felt sectarianism could threaten his regime’s stability, but also because he needed to manage a majority Shia population as a Sunni.<sup>16</sup> The population and political landscape in Iraq make it clear why Hussein was drawn to Baathist Islam, especially in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Moreover, Hussein well understood his precarious position as leader of a Sunni regime in a majority-Shia country, and employed different tactics under different circumstances to maintain control over the Shia majority. At varying times he ruled with an iron fist or a giving hand, and these seemingly contradictory, stick-and-carrot actions are typical of a despot struggling for power. Hussein spent lavishly to improve Shiites quality of life, spent time in the Shia district of Al Thawrah (modern day Sadr City), and attempted to increase Shia involvement in the Baathist party, but none of these tactics of gaining Shia support were as effective as he had hoped.<sup>17</sup> A

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 29-34.

<sup>15</sup> Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: Saddam Hussein, Islam, and the Roots of Insurgencies in Iraq*, 29-34.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 29-34.

<sup>17</sup> Kurtis Jensen and Matthew Klunder, “Saddam Hussein’s Master Strategy During The Iran-Iraq-War” (National Defense University, 2001).

frustrated and paranoid Hussein moved from dangling carrots to brandishing sticks, most notoriously ordering the massacre of at least 148 Shiite men and boys from the town of Dujail in 1982 following an attempt on his life.<sup>18</sup> After visiting the town, Hussein's convoy was attacked by members of Dawa, a radical Iraqi Shiite group that had been founded in 1958.<sup>19</sup>

Shia discontent with the Baathist regime grew in Iraq long before the Iranian Revolution as social changes and religious oppression swept across the nation in the 1970s. As noted above, the Dawa Party was founded in 1958 as a direct response to Baathist repression of Shiites.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the 1970s, declining living conditions and the continued rise of authoritarianism in Iraq drove progressive groups, largely led by Shiites, to protest the regime and call for change.<sup>21</sup> Many of these protests were not inherently religious, but as historian Thom Workman noted "Shi'ism clearly had the capacity, as evident in Iran, to structure and animate social struggles against the Ba'th."<sup>22</sup> We can see, then, that Saddam interpreted Iraq's Shia majority as a threat to his regime long before the outbreak of war with Iran, and as his rulership shows, he thought of sectarianism, in the repression of Shias, as a risky but necessary political tool for ensuring his regime's survival. Saddam's use of sectarianism during the war thus represented not an ancient animosity he felt toward Shias, but a cunningly employed strategic weapon.

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<sup>18</sup> Jake Tapper, "The Crime That Sent Saddam To The Gallows," ABC News, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> W. Thom Workman, *The Social Origins of the Iran-Iraq War* (Lynne Reinner, 1994), 15.

<sup>22</sup> Workman, *The Social Origins*, 16.

## **The War Begins: The Iraqi Invasion of Iran**

Hussein and Khomeini had a contentious relationship in the months preceding the war. Hussein called the Iranian leader a “Shah in a turban,” and Khomeini called him a heretic who stood in the way of the spread of Islam.<sup>23</sup> When the Ayatollah originally took power from the Shah, Hussein had hoped for a better relationship with Iran, but those hopes were quickly dashed. Khomeini called for the overthrow of the Baathists, which worried Hussein and partly contributed to the start of the war. Overall a number of socio-economic, political and regional factors led to Hussein’s decision to invade Iran, and while the religious aspects must be thought of, further analysis shows that they were not primary in the mind of the Iraqi dictator.

When the war began, Hussein’s official explanation for invading Iran was to slow the spread of Khomeini’s Shiite revolution. “ Its purpose, according to Saddam Hussein, was to blunt the edge of Khomeini's fundamentalist, backward movement and to thwart his attempt to export his Islamic revolution to Iraq and the Arab Gulf states,” wrote United States Naval Lieutenant Commander Gregory Cruze in 1988<sup>24</sup>. While this was certainly true, his motivation was likely far more political than religious. Hussein felt threatened by Khomeini and his revolution, less because of Shiism tied to it and more because he worried it would result in his deposition. Luckily for Hussein — and telling of how the public viewed sectarian divides — Khomeini’s calls for Iraqi Shias to rise against the regime largely failed. Despite Khomeini’s appeals to the oppressed majority, Iraqi nationalism usually trumped sectarianism.

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<sup>23</sup> Davis Reed, “The Unholy War Between Iraq and Iran,” *Reader’s Digest*, Aug. 1984.

<sup>24</sup> Gregory S. Cruze, “Iran and Iraq Perspectives in Conflict,” USMC Command and Staff College, Spring 1988.



Hussein likely had significantly more compelling reasons to invade Iran as well, namely economic and political motivations. By 1979, the power of the Baath regime rested primarily on its ability to control Iraqi oil revenues, as that income allowed them to quell discontent in the working class by raising wages periodically and soothe religious tensions by constructing and refurbishing mosques, for instance.<sup>25</sup> As a landlocked nation, Iraq had limited options to export oil and was dependent on other nations to provide them with pipelines for exports. By attacking the Khuzestan region of Iran and capturing the Shatt al-Arab waterway, Hussein saw a perfect opportunity to increase Iraq's power in the region and secure an easy avenue for exporting oil.<sup>26</sup>

In a report filed in August 1988, United States Naval Lieutenant Commander Gregory Cruze identified "consolidation of authority," "economic independence through oil nationalization," and "broadening [their] popular base" as three of the major goals of the Baathists.<sup>27</sup> By invading a primarily Arab district of Iran, a nation still in disarray following Khomeini's revolution, Hussein thought he could accomplish each of these goals quickly. Reports say that Hussein thought he could achieve victory very quickly<sup>28</sup>, but after just two weeks of fighting it became clear that he had grossly miscalculated. According to a Washington Post report on October 5, 1980, "The short and painless war with which Saddam Hussein had hoped to launch his own visions of grandeur as the new power in the gulf, and the Arab world as a whole, in fact appears to have failed."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Workman, *The Social Origins*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> Workman, *The Social Origins*, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Cruze, "Iran and Iraq Perspectives."

<sup>28</sup> Workman, *The Social Origins*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Loren Jenkins, "Khomeini Rejects New Truce Offer, Calls For Victory," *The Washington Post*, October 5, 1980.

### **Sectarianization: Wartime Propaganda in Iran and Iraq**

By 1982, Iranian forces had stopped the invasion and began pushing back into Iraq. Khomeini repeatedly declined the idea of a ceasefire from the early days of the war, demanding that an Islamic Republic take power in Iraq or he would not end the war.<sup>30</sup> Emboldened by Iran's successes, the already vocal Khomeini continued to publicly evoke religious symbols to rally Iranians. He considered the war an extension of the revolution, and hinged the survival of Iran and Islam on victory. "The issue is one of Islam versus blasphemy, and not of Iran versus Iraq," he declared on April 4, 1985.<sup>31</sup> Khomeini framed the war as the greatest battlefield for Islam, and that by defeating Iraq and its Western allies, Iran could strike a blow to heresy and blasphemy that no other Islamic figure had been able to achieve. It's quite possible that Hussein's invasion actually had the inverse effect compared to his original intentions: instead of capitalizing on a weak nation coming out of a revolution, he likely allowed Khomeini to seize a stronger hold on power and legitimize his reign by striking against a foreign foe.

Iran's strategy essentially turned the war into one of attrition. Khomeini hoped to drag the war out as long as possible and make it unreasonably expensive and taxing for Iraq, essentially biding time until the government crumbled, and until his regime settled down in Iran. In an effort to keep morale high within his own country, Khomeini continued to play up the importance of religion in the conflict. Much as he originally compared his Islamic Revolution to the events at

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 133.

Karbala, more than ten Iranian military operations were named after Karbala and other historic battles fought by the family of the Prophet.<sup>32</sup> Propaganda continued to push similar messages, promoting martyrdom and the connection between the Iran-Iraq War and historic struggles in Islam. Despite the fact that Khomeini had refused to stop fighting and had even pushed into Iraq, the Iranian government labeled the war “The Holy Defense” and claimed the moral and religious high ground.<sup>33</sup> One poster created in 1980 showed a young boy holding a rifle and the body of a dead soldier while disembodied arms rose from the ground, portraying the continuity of the martyrs from Karbala to the ones who gave their lives in the Iran-Iraq War.



*The martyrs of Karbala rise from the ground to meet the martyrs of the Iran-Iraq War.*<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Adam J. Silverstein, *Islamic History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> The Graphics of Revolution and War: Iranian Poster Arts, The Holy Defense, The University of Chicago Library, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> The Graphics of Revolution and War: Iranian Poster Arts, The Holy Defense, The University of Chicago Library, 2011.

Iranian propaganda was so effective that volunteers went on to form the backbone of the Iranian military, with estimates saying that hundreds of thousands of young men signed up to fight.<sup>35</sup> Even after soldiers were convinced to enlist, the propaganda did not stop there. Not only was death expected, it was encouraged by Khomeini. According to a 1984 Reader's Digest article, Iranian boys as young as ten were sent to the front line, and "their mission is to detonate mines and draw fire in preparation for full-scale attacks Iraqi lines. The boys carry plastic keys to heaven. They have been assured by their leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, that if they are killed on the battlefield they will go directly to paradise. 'The purest joy in Islam,' Khomeini has explained, 'is to kill and be killed for Allah.'"<sup>36</sup> There is no doubt that the men and children that died for Iran believed the religious aspect of their fight, but it has become clear that Khomeini was able to manipulate these beliefs for his own gain in the war.

#### *Iraq in Wartime*

As before the war, the Baathist regime's use of religion during the conflict was subtler than in Iran, but no less strategic. In some respects, the government aimed to frame the war as a pan-Arab, all-Muslim struggle against the heretical forces of the Ayatollah. The regime began referring to the conflict as *Qadisiyyat Saddam*,<sup>37</sup> a reference to a 7th century Arab victory over the Persians, and reflective of the deep connection between Sunnism and Arab nationalism. At the Battle of Qadisiya, Arab Muslims led by the Caliph Umar defeated a larger Persian force to pave the way for the conquest of Iran, making it clear why Hussein wanted to evoke images of

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<sup>35</sup> Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 90.

<sup>36</sup> Reed, *The Unholy War*, 39.

<sup>37</sup> Workman, *The Social Origins*, 6.

this battle.<sup>38</sup> Not only was Hussein able to push propaganda without alienating the Shiites in his country, this tactic also helped him draw support from other Arab-Sunni nations in the region.<sup>39</sup> Iraq gained the backing of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait during the conflict, all of which are Arab nations with Sunni majorities.

In other instances, however, the Iraqi regime far more overtly exploited sectarian sentiments to try to gain an advantage in the war. For instance, Iraqi planes dropped flyers to Iranian soldiers that said Iraq allowed for religious freedom, and any refugee that fled to Iraq would be looked upon favorably but those that fought it would be looked down upon by God in this life and the afterlife. The flyer had an image of Husayn on it, and reiterated that Iraq is the land where Husayn and Ali lived and were slain. It is clear, then, that while Saddam's war effort deployed sectarianism both subtly and overtly, the Iraqi ruler, as in the years leading up to the war, did so not out of religious conviction but as a strategic tool meant to secure his vulnerable regime's survival.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Encyclopaedia Iranica, Battle of Qadisiya, Online. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/qadesiya-battle>.

<sup>39</sup> Satgin Hamrah, "The Iran-Iraq War: The Use of Religion As A Tool," E-International Relations, February 7, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Declarations by Iraqi planes over Iranian soldiers, namehnews.ir, translated. 2012. Online.



*A flyer distributed by the Iraqi government to warn Iranians against fighting the homeland of Husayn and Ali.<sup>41</sup>*

While sectarianism played a role in the start of the Iran-Iraq War, boiling this conflict down to a Sunni-Shia war ignores the bigger picture. Sectarianism was a minor factor in a wide array of motivations that drove conflict, but it was utilized by Ayatollah Khomeini and Saddam Hussein effectively in different ways depending on the context, as outline above. Soldiers on the ground in Iran and Iraq undoubtedly had strong convictions that drove them to take up arms, but the origins of the war did not lay in ancient Sunni-Shia animosity. Instead, the rulers that dictated these conflicts behind the scenes exploited those sentiments and led their peoples to war for their own geopolitical purposes. Much of the discourse in the West, both at the time of the war and today, focuses on the Sunni-Shia divide as a driving force, using sectarianism as a device for simplifying the unthinkable violence that continues to plague the Middle East. However, this misinterpretation only plays into the propaganda spread by both Iran and Iraq. and as long as we

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

have a flawed understanding of what drives conflict in the Middle East, the world is likely to continue to misunderstand, and thus mismanage, conflicts in the region.

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## **Bread and Roses: A Feminine Feat in Lawrence, Massachusetts**

Maria Layla Farman

On January 1, 1912, in the dead of winter, a new law went into effect in Lawrence, Massachusetts, slashing the pay of the women and children mill workers by thirty-two cents and reducing their work week from fifty-six to fifty-four hours. To the workers, this was a pay cut. On January 12, Polish women weavers at the Everett Mill left their looms and walked out, crying “Short pay!” The following day, 25,000 workers followed suit, daring Lawrence police forces and militia to stop them.<sup>1</sup> The crowd of mostly female workers marched from Lawrence’s Washington Mill, collecting operatives from other mills and destroying looms, stopping motors, and cutting belts-- the symbols of their own oppression.<sup>2</sup> While the mob was not able to reach William Wood, the owner of the Lawrence mills who had merged eight textile firms to form the American Woolen Company, the laborers voiced an indignation that planted a seed for the enactment of stronger working class rights in Lawrence.<sup>3</sup>

Though the strike happened somewhat spontaneously, abysmal conditions in both the mills and the city of Lawrence had oppressed the workers for years. Mary O’Sullivan, a labor leader affiliated with the strike, claimed that “the reduction [in pay] was only the last straw in a situation that the workers could not endure longer. The many injustices of the section boss with his personal distaste for men and women who refuse to submit to his demands helped to bring on

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Forrant, Jurg K Siegenthaler, Charles Levenstein, and John Wooding, *The Great Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912: New Scholarship on the Bread and Roses Strike* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Watson, *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream* (New York: Viking, 2005), 12-19.

<sup>3</sup> Watson, *Bread and Roses*, 20-23.

a rebellion. The rise in cost of living during the prior two years, including increased rents, had reduced the mill hands to an extremity where the loss of a few cents weekly in their wages became a calamity in hundreds of homes.<sup>4</sup> By 1910, Lawrence had the eighth highest mortality rate in the nation and the seventh highest infant mortality rate. One-third of the families in Lawrence earned less than seven dollars per week, which was not enough for most families to afford rent or food. A mill worker could expect to live only to their thirty-ninth birthday.<sup>5</sup> In congressional hearings on mill conditions in March 1912, Josephine Lis, a young Austrian-Polish mill worker, testified to the U.S. House Committee of Rules that she had to pay fifteen cents just to access water in the mills.<sup>6</sup> Carmella Teoli, a twister in the Wood Mill, described losing part of her scalp after her hair got caught in a machine.<sup>7</sup>

Fed up with starvation wages and unjust treatment, the strikers developed a list of grievances. Designated members of the Lawrence Strike Committee then visited each mill official and presented them with their demands. Women weavers from the Arlington Mills, Atlantic Mills, Everett Mills, and Pemberton Mills wanted a fifteen percent increase in wages while weavers from the Wood and Pacific Mills demanded a twenty percent increase and the

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<sup>4</sup> Mary K. O'Sullivan, "The Labor War at Lawrence," *The Survey*. Vol. 28, (6 April 1912): 72-82.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Patrick Neill, "Housing Conditions and Family Earnings," in *Report on the Strike of Textile Workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1912), 143-62.

<sup>6</sup> Josephine Lis, "'Statement of Miss Josephine Liss,' Hearings Before the Committee on Rules of the House of Representatives...1912, 62nd Congress, 2nd Session, House Document 671 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912)," in *How Did Immigrant Textile Workers Struggle to Achieve an American Standard of Living? The 1912 Strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts*, ed. Thomas Dublin and Kerry Harney (Binghamton NY: State University of New York, 1998), 241-47.

<sup>7</sup> "Carmella Teoli Testifies About the 1912 Lawrence Textile Strike," *History Matters*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/61/>.

abolition of the premium system, which gave extra wage payments for an increase in production that exploited the workers' time and effort.<sup>8</sup> Spinners and twisters, often teenage girls, demanded a fifteen percent advance "and that no girl will be obliged to run a side and a half without extra pay." Workers from all mills asked for "no discrimination to be made against any employee for activity during the strike."<sup>9</sup> Massachusetts' Governor, Eugene Foss, offered arbitration so he could end the strike without satisfying any of the strikers' demands. The strikers refused.<sup>10</sup>

The nascent strike was in need of organized leadership and, while Lawrence witnessed a rivalry between two labor unions, only one would support the mill workers' cause. The United Textile Workers decided to ally with the more conservative American Federation of Labor, which had previously ignored the plight of the unskilled immigrants.<sup>11</sup> Skilled immigrants were usually of German, British, or Irish descent, but were native-born.<sup>12</sup> Because the AFL refused to support a strike of unskilled, foreign-born laborers, such as Middle Eastern, Southern European, and Eastern European laborers, the Industrial Workers of the World organized in Lawrence. This group demonstrated the possibility of bringing disparate nationalities together under a single cause.<sup>13</sup> The mill workers, seven out of eight laborers in Lawrence were foreign-born or first-

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<sup>8</sup> Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1969), 242.

<sup>9</sup> "List of Grievances By Mill," in *Report on the Strike of Textile Workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912*, ed. Charles Patrick Neill (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1912), 47-49.

<sup>10</sup> Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 245.

<sup>11</sup> Karen Koziara, Michael Moscow, and Lucretia Tanner, *Working Women: Past, Present, Future* (Washington DC: Industrial Relations Research Association, 1987), 173.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Cole, *Immigrant City: Lawrence, Massachusetts 1845-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 123-25.

<sup>13</sup> Robert E. Weir, *Workers in America: A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1* (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 2013), 419.

generation Americans, saw the lack of the AFL's involvement as detrimental to their cause. Mill officials, however, viewed it as beneficial, as they believed that without the AFL's organization, the strike was destined to fail.<sup>14</sup>

The IWW's capitalization on Lawrence's multinational demographics played a crucial role in the strike's success. Lawrence was one of the most diverse mill towns in the country and possessed a diversity of immigrant populations, rivaling Boston and New York.<sup>15</sup> Beginning in the 1840s, Lawrence experienced waves of immigration as foreign-born workers flocked to the mills for better pay and employment opportunities. The first to arrive were the Irish, who were fleeing from the potato famine; they built the dams and canals of Lawrence. Then came the British in the 1860s, many of whom were textile workers in Manchester and Leeds. In the 1870s, the French-Canadians arrived, followed by the Germans.<sup>16</sup> From the 1890s through the 1910s, Italians, Russians- especially Jews fleeing pogroms- Lithuanians, Turks from the Ottoman Empire, Greeks, Syrians, Poles, and Armenians all arrived in Lawrence.<sup>17</sup> Fifty-nine nationalities were represented in Lawrence. By 1910, nine percent of the laborers were French-Canadian, seven percent were English, three percent were German, and seven percent were Irish.<sup>18</sup> About 20,000 immigrants were Eastern Europeans or Middle Eastern, roughly twenty-three percent of the population. These immigrants made up the vast majority of workers in the mills.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Watson, *Bread and Roses*, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Cole, *Immigrant City*, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid cit. Watson, 36-37.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 39-41.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.cit. Dublin and Harney.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.cit. Watson, 39.

The IWW took advantage of the diversity by calling for several members of each nationality to form a Strike Committee. The organization made it a point to include female delegates.<sup>20</sup> This committee of 50 people met each morning to hear reports, investigate complaints, and give suggestions. All strikers were allowed to stand in the back of the hall during the meetings. The creation of a multi-ethnic decision-making body unified the strikers in a way the mill owners previously thought impossible.<sup>21</sup> The IWW's Bill Haywood told the strikers, "there is no foreigner here except the capitalists... do not let them divide you by sex, color, creed, or nationality... Billy Wood can lick one Pole, in fact he can lick all the Poles, but he cannot lick all the nationalities put together."<sup>22</sup> Instead of allowing ethnic divides, the IWW and strikers used the diversity of Lawrence to their collective advantage.

By 1910, over half of the laborers in Lawrence were women.<sup>23</sup> The female strikers' ages ranged from thirteen to forty-eight, with most workers in their twenties.<sup>24</sup> Seventy percent of the children were second-generation immigrants.<sup>25</sup> One-half of Lawrence's children worked in the mills.<sup>26</sup> Unaccustomed to such blatant female uprisings, the striking men of Lawrence at first resisted the significant role of women in the strike, until they discovered their success.<sup>27</sup> Even

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<sup>20</sup> Meredith Tax, *Rising of the Women: Feminist Solidarity and Class Conflict, 1880-1917* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 256.

<sup>21</sup> Lorin F. Deland, "The Lawrence Strike: A Study," *The Atlantic*, Vol. 109, No. 5 (May 1912): 694-705.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Marcy, "The Battle for Bread at Lawrence," *The International Socialist Review*, 12 (March 1912), 538.

<sup>23</sup> Tax, 243.

<sup>24</sup> Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts 1860-1912* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 160.

<sup>25</sup> Cole, 106.

<sup>26</sup> Cameron, 160.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *I Speak My Own Piece: Autobiography of the Rebel Girl* (New York: Masses and Mainstream, 1955), 132.

policemen were unsure of how to treat the female strikers. In the beginning, they honored propriety and avoided extreme violence. However, as soon as they realized the threat these women posed, they established more extreme measures of maintaining order. In the end, 130 women were arrested during the strike.<sup>28</sup> The women's unexpected strength compelled the Lawrence district attorney to write, "one policeman can handle ten men, while it takes ten policemen to handle one woman."<sup>29</sup>

The women of Lawrence changed the fabric of the city's history. When combined with their ethnic diversity, their domestic and maternal role became an asset that led the mill workers to a triumph of working class rights. Early 20th century femininity was a crucial element to the success of the Lawrence strike.

### **Femininity in Early 20th Century New England**

Conceptions of femininity—the state of being a woman—have varied extensively over time and place. Before understanding how femininity appeared in the Lawrence strike, it is important to understand the prevailing conceptions of femininity and the role of women in the early 20th century in New England. The definition of femininity was made complex by the increasing participation of women in the workforce. Industrialization had created textile manufacturing centers in New England that drew many women into the labor force. The "laboring women" in this region had a specific female role that was as traditional as it was "radical."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Cameron, 159.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Watson, *Bread and Roses*, 156.

<sup>30</sup> Cameron, 1.

The development of this role did not come without conflict, and Lawrence demonstrated competing ideologies about women's expectations. Between 1880 and 1920, the proportion of women in the labor force increased from fifteen to twenty-five percent, inciting fears about "the decline of the family," as women were traditionally expected to have their primary role be in the home.<sup>31</sup> As women earned their own wages, the fear of "female militancy" also developed on a national scale. Men in power, including the leaders of the Lawrence mills and the city of Lawrence, tended to have a conservative perspective and believed that the activism of the female mill workers made them "radical."<sup>32</sup> These men defined worker poverty, malnutrition, and social unrest as a "problem of maternal ignorance" and not as problems attributable to stagnant labor practices.<sup>33</sup> As a result, an ideological divide was created. The conservatives who supported the "cult of true womanhood," believed that women were expected to behave in a manner distinctly separate from men. This meant remaining inside of the home, dependent, and far away from any activism. At the same time, progressive thinkers, often women, demonstrated a desire for female economic independence, which entailed protest and activism.<sup>34</sup>

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, an organizer in the Lawrence strike, categorized this divide in terms of a class war, writing in the IWW's newspaper, *Solidarity*, that the "queen of the parlor" who assumed the traditional female control of the household had different interests than the "maid in the kitchen" category of woman.<sup>35</sup> The maid had to work to support herself and her family and was thus more inclined to participate in a sphere of activism for working class

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 7-8.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>34</sup> Cameron, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Tax, *Rising of the Women*, 12.



rights.<sup>36</sup> The Lawrence women combined both of these roles into the strike. As mill workers, the women who participated in the Lawrence strike constituted the lesser privileged sector of society, meaning that they were forced to work and were more inclined toward activism that increased their wages. However, because the Lawrence women were largely immigrants, they brought with them more “old world” feminine expectations that led them to embody the traditional, domestic version of femininity. They combined this femininity with a sense of agency that developed from the challenges of being female laborers.<sup>37</sup>

As a whole, immigrant women in Lawrence were charged with domestic roles. They maintained responsibility for the security of their families, which remained a significant feature of their femininity as immigrants in a challenging environment. They were in charge of the difficult task of cultivating the “family spirit” in households with very little privacy or comfort. The female immigrant who found work in the Lawrence mills was not able to easily balance her work with responsibilities at home.<sup>38</sup> One of the most important cultural responsibilities for an immigrant woman was producing a large family. This was made especially challenging by the high infant mortality rate created by disease, starvation, and an unhealthy, unsanitary environment in and around the tenements.<sup>39</sup> Maternity was thus another facet of femininity that was important to the women in Lawrence. By the turn of the century, motherhood “had assumed a central position in Progressive circles” and, in Lawrence, a new conception of “mother power” justified “extrafamilial” activities such as social activism and suffrage.<sup>40</sup> Beyond childcare,

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<sup>36</sup> Cameron, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Cole, 101.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 106-7.

<sup>40</sup> Cameron, 70.

immigrant women were also in charge of the rest of the domestic tasks, including food preparation, laundry, and nursing. Reconciling their control of the domestic sphere with their equally necessary work in the mills was a challenge that crossed ethnic divides.<sup>41</sup>

The notion of femininity in Lawrence was unique in that it “merged issues of the home with those of the workplace,” drawing on their experience in the sphere of unpaid domestic labor to benefit their activism in wage work in the public sphere.<sup>42</sup> These two sectors of femininity, the traditionally domestic and the new activist, were reflected in the Lawrence strike. The women transformed the tasks considered passive when completed inside the home- those of motherhood and domesticity- into active tactics in the strike. As the women met responsibilities in each world to create a role for themselves, they channeled agency through the traditional notions of femininity. Thus, the success of their strike was not the result of a war between traditional and nontraditional roles. Rather, the women’s weaponization of traditional tasks in a sphere women did not traditionally enter -the workforce- brought an ingenuity to the strike that led to their victory.

### **Femininity Through Nonviolent Tactics**

The Industrial Workers of the World was an international labor union formed in 1905 in Chicago after William Haywood called for syndicalists, anarchists, and trade unionists to join forces to oppose the AFL’s compliance with capitalism and its refusal to include unskilled workers in craft unions.<sup>43</sup> The IWW’s aim was to create “one big union” and develop a system of unionism that united all workers as a social class and organized workers by industry instead of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 92-93.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Dubofsky, 79-81.

trade.<sup>44</sup> Twelve of the founding members were women, including Mother Jones and Lucy Parsons.<sup>45</sup> “Wobblies,” members of the IWW, had a reputation based on frequent confrontations with law enforcement as anarchists prone to radicalism and violence, even though IWW leaders actually advocated the opposite. Joseph Ettor, an IWW leader in Lawrence, cautioned the strikers, “by all means make this strike as peaceful as possible. In the last analysis, all the blood spilled will be your blood. And if any blood is spilled, it will be on the hands of the mill owners, for they will be responsible for it.”<sup>46</sup>

The IWW’s tactics in Lawrence were based on principles of nonviolent resistance, which did not help the mill owners’ cause. The IWW and the women strikers anticipated that the mill owners and law enforcement would aim for the dialogue around the strike to link any violence committed by the strikers with “ethnic ignorance” and a divergence from traditional gender roles. The women and the IWW avoided violence especially to prevent the confirmation of this idea.<sup>47</sup> Given their understanding of this rhetoric, the IWW wanted to draw a contrast between a masculine, brutally violent law enforcement and the more humane, domestic, and maternal women of Lawrence. The IWW arranged for women to incorporate female symbolism into their resistance, drawing on the women’s desire to protest “a world that condoned the ‘violence’ of hunger but condemned as violent those who denounced starvation.”<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn noted the IWW’s encouragement of women leaders, stating that “the IWW has been accused of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 164-66.

<sup>45</sup> Autumn Gonzalez, Nicholas DeFilippis and Donal Fallon, “Celebrating a Rich Tradition of Women in the IWW,” *The Industrial Worker* #1733 Vol. 108, no. 2 (March 2011): 6.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph R. Conlin, “The IWW and the Question of Violence,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* Vol. 51, No. 4 (Summer, 1968): 316-320.

<sup>47</sup> Cameron, 130.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 134.

pushing women to the front. This is not true. Rather, the women have not been kept in back, and so they have naturally moved to the front.”<sup>49</sup>

### **Children’s Exodus**

Domesticity and characteristically feminine duties were weaponized in the Lawrence strike. One of the most notably feminine tactics that the strikers employed was the “Children’s Exodus.” The IWW drew this idea from a tactic employed in Europe. Lawrence’s Italian Socialist Federation had heard about strikers in Italy sending their children to sympathetic families in order to free their mothers from the burden of feeding them. This also sent a tangible message of the grave conditions and the strikers’ demands to people outside the bounds of the striking city.<sup>50</sup> The IWW, the women’s committee of the Socialist party, and the Italian Socialist Federation of Lawrence all worked together to orchestrate the Children’s Exodus.<sup>51</sup> On February 10, 1912, 119 children, aged 4 to 14, were sent by train to New York City; Barre, Vermont; Philadelphia; and Manchester, New Hampshire.<sup>52</sup> In these cities, sympathetic families -after seeing the IWW’s appeals in pro-labor and socialist press and being vetted by the IWW- were prepared to receive the Lawrence children and care for them for the duration of the strike.<sup>53</sup> Many of these families were Socialist.<sup>54</sup> Some Lawrence mothers sent their children away willingly, enticed by the prospect of their children for once being able to enjoy “a place of plenty.” Other mothers felt coerced to send their children away because they feared that there

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<sup>49</sup> Flynn.

<sup>50</sup> Watson, 142.

<sup>51</sup> Forrant, *The Great Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912*, 67.

<sup>52</sup> C.C. Carstens, “The Children’s Exodus from Lawrence,” *The Survey*. Vol. 28, (6 April 1912): 70-71.

<sup>53</sup> Forrant, 61.

<sup>54</sup> Neill, *Report on the Strike of Textile Workers*, 51.

would not be sufficient relief, or that it may even be withheld, if their children remained in their care. Regardless of these mothers' differences in motivation, one magazine noted the unifying result of the mothers' participation in the exodus: "the solidarity which the textile workers of Lawrence, though including at least nineteen nationalities, have evinced, is certainly a new phenomenon in American strikes."<sup>55</sup> The children's train, headed for Grand Central station, arrived late, but this did nothing to dim the enthusiasm of their arrival: the children were soon fed warm meals, given medical exams, and warmly received by their new families, singing the "Marseillaise" in many languages and waving red socialist flags. Some families even clamored for any leftover children to take home.<sup>56</sup> Although the exodus was based on an emotional appeal, Bill Haywood claimed that it was adopted as a "war measure."<sup>57</sup>

The Children's Exodus was clearly centered on the Lawrence strikers' motherhood. The greatest sacrifice a mother can make is to give up her children, and the fact that mothers were willing to give up their most valuable possessions- the ones for whom they toiled in the mills everyday- demonstrated not only their devotion to the strike but also the extent of their poverty and suffering. Maternity was the unifying feature of the exodus. Motherhood acted as a universal language. Though each mother had her own personal reasons for striking, women of all ethnicities could understand the pain of parting with their children. They could relate in their shared principle of justice before personal well-being and in their objection to a system that required such extreme measures for the achievement of basic rights.

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<sup>55</sup> Carstens, "The Children's Exodus from Lawrence," 70-71.

<sup>56</sup> "150 Strike Waifs Find Homes Here," *New York Times*, 11 February 1912, 1-2.

<sup>57</sup> William D. Haywood, "When the Kiddies Came Home," *International Socialist Review* Vol. 12, No. 11 (May 1912): 716.

One of the reasons the Children's Exodus was such a successful tactic was the media coverage and the moral debate that followed it. Media coverage figured prominently in the Lawrence strike. The direct voices of the women themselves were limited, as they were driven by action, not by text. However, women and the IWW were cognizant of the media attention and they used it to influence public opinion toward the laborers' cause. The media also offered insight into the contrasting expectations for a group of immigrant women's striking capabilities. While the *Boston Transcript*, *Herald*, and other Republican-owned dailies sided with the mill owners,<sup>58</sup> other newspapers generated sympathy for the women and children of the strike.<sup>59</sup>

While the exodus was not received well by certain journalists and Lawrence officials, who were mostly male, women became outspoken supporters of the exodus. C.C Carstens, the General Secretary of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, wrote a report condemning the exploitation of children and their exile to "a place where they might be brought up as thieves or prostitutes."<sup>60</sup> William Randolph Hearst's newspaper *Boston American* claimed the exodus was a "Pathetic Spectacle as Lawrence Little Ones March Shivering in Cold."<sup>61</sup> Lawrence mayor Michael Scanlon believed "Lawrence could have very easily cared for these children."<sup>62</sup> The *Literary Digest* called the event "at best a tactical blunder and at worst an inferno of law."<sup>63</sup> Prominent women, on the other hand, encouraged the exodus; Margaret Sanger

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<sup>58</sup> Watson, 124.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 166-67.

<sup>60</sup> C.C. Carstens, "The Children's Exodus from Lawrence," *The Survey*. Vol. 28, (6 April 1912): 70-71.

<sup>61</sup> Forrant, *The Great Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912*, 68.

<sup>62</sup> Watson, *Bread and Roses*, 146.

<sup>63</sup> "The Lawrence Strike Children." *The Literary Digest* Vol, 44, (9 March 1912): 471.

and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn even accompanied the children out of Lawrence.<sup>64</sup> Flynn praised the exodus in the *Boston Globe* as an “outburst of human brotherhood,”<sup>65</sup> and Sanger wrote an editorial for the *New York Call*, conveying the necessity of the exodus’ message and appealing to families outside of Lawrence. She wrote, “Mothers in comfortable homes, whose own children are clothed and fed and housed, protected and loved, you all must come forward and do your share to care for the children of Lawrence!”<sup>66</sup> The supporters of the exodus recognized that they were at the mercy of other mothers’ charity and relied on the pathos of hungry, emaciated children to appeal to maternal sensibilities nationwide. Articles like Flynn’s allowed the strikers to “win the moral approval of the American people” despite the Lawrence establishment’s objections to the immorality of endangering children. Their success was compounded after police brutality became a widely publicized tool against the women and their children.<sup>67</sup>

The tide turned in the strikers’ favor after another attempt at a Children’s Exodus, which incurred extreme police brutality that made for countless headlines in support of the strikers, and ultimately, a public relations success.<sup>68</sup> On the morning of February 24th, forty-six children went to the train station, this time each with an identification card their parents had signed to show permission for the child to leave Lawrence.<sup>69</sup> Lawrence’s Marshal Sullivan, prepared this time around with auxiliary police forces, announced to the women that any attempt to send the children away would result in arrest for both mother and child. A mother responded: “I send

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<sup>64</sup> “150 Strike Waifs Find Homes Here,” *New York Times*, 11 February 1912, 1-2.

<sup>65</sup> Watson, *Bread and Roses*, 153.

<sup>66</sup> Farrant, *The Great Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912*, 69.

<sup>67</sup> Farrant, *The Great Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912*, 61.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 89-90.

<sup>69</sup> Watson, 167.

them to my friends! They is mine children, not yours! You mind your business!”<sup>70</sup> Though accounts vary and no photographs exist, most agree that what happened next was violent. As the 7:11 train approached the station, a Polish woman and her child ran from the waiting room towards the platform and were caught by police. Seconds later, the rest of the mothers and children marched towards the train and police grabbed them, tearing them apart. The women clamored for their children, fighting off policemen who cracked their skulls together and smacked them with their clubs. One woman exclaimed, “Be careful of the children, you are killing them!”<sup>71</sup> Thirty women were arrested for congregating and five women were held for “neglect of children.”<sup>72</sup> Although police would continue to deny their use of weapons, the newspapers overwhelmingly condemned the police’s use of violence on women and children. The *Boston Globe* announced, “The women shrieked and clung to their children” and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported “no discrimination was shown as [the] women were beaten.”<sup>73</sup> A sketch in *Collier’s*, a magazine largely devoted to social reform, invoked the pathos of defenseless maternal strikers confronting the armed masculine brutality that tried to prevent the children’s departure. In the cartoon, a giant policeman stepped on the children of strikers and forcibly shoved their mothers. The policeman raised his club over the crowd while mothers shielded their children with their own bodies, leading the exodus from “The Hunger City” of Lawrence towards a statue of a female “Sympathy.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 169.

<sup>72</sup> Neill, 51.

<sup>73</sup> Forrant, *The Great Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912*, 60.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Washburn Child, “The Industrial Revolt at Lawrence: Why the American Melting Pot has Boiled Over.” *Collier’s* Vol. 48 (9 March 1912): 14.





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The headlines provoked widespread outrage and garnered national attention, prompting a Washington congressional investigation the next week.. The event was given even more visibility with the attendance of the First Lady Helen Taft, as well as a subsequent investigation by the Federal Bureau of Labor.<sup>76</sup> President Taft later claimed that Lawrence sparked a national investigation of labor conditions.<sup>77</sup> Giving in to public pressure and fearing government restrictions, the mill owners met with a committee of ten representatives of the strikers and settled on a fifteen percent pay raise for the poorest workers, nearly double pay for overtime, abolition of the premium system, and amnesty for the strikers.<sup>78</sup> The strike ended in March 1912, after nine weeks of violence. The mill workers' children returned home to a joyous parade.<sup>79</sup>

In this attempt at the Children's Exodus, the contrast of the mothers' desperation and the children's innocence with the heightened brutality of the police force offended public morality. Questions about the welfare of the strikers' children had been growing since their initial

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>76</sup> Forrant, 60.

<sup>77</sup> Dubofsky, 252.

<sup>78</sup> Watson, 206.

<sup>79</sup> Deland, "The Lawrence Strike: A Study," 694-705.

separation from their parents, and newspapers addressed this public concern. When the mothers lawfully trying to board their children on a train were met with abject violence, moral objections developed into direct legal action. The marked escalation of police violence in this exodus was a public relations success: danger to the defenseless mothers and children was a benefit to their cause, as the media's portrayal of their nonviolent resistance in the face of law enforcement's armed assault generated a national sympathy for the strikers.<sup>80</sup> But beyond the clear moral offense, the police misconduct was also seen to violate laws on a local and national level, and it prompted investigations that created a turning point in the strike. In this way, the strikers' intentional, open displays of maternal protection were a catalyst for public outcry and the investigations that would result in not only their own success but also a new scrutiny of American labor conditions at large.

### **Relief Efforts**

Though the Children's Exodus was Lawrence's signature nonviolent tactic and the ultimate reason for the strike's success. But, the strikers employed other tactics based on their maternal and domestic roles. What distinguished Lawrence from other IWW strikes was the women's use of collaborative action in "female networks" in the neighborhoods of Lawrence.<sup>81</sup> This was not based on demonstration and was instead aimed at increasing the longevity of the strike. The IWW raised funds nationally to support relief efforts for the strikers. Soup kitchens, volunteer doctors, and nurseries were made available to every striker in Lawrence. The relief sites were not only popular for the nourishment they provided but also for their refuge from the

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<sup>80</sup> Forrant, 89.

<sup>81</sup> Cameron, 126.

brutal Massachusetts winter, as the small stoves in the tenements provided insufficient warmth. The kitchens were organized along ethnic lines and were based on the Franco-Belgian model of a cooperative, where women cooked the meals for neighbors in need. Despite the ethnic divisions, the kitchens were not likely to refuse a hungry striker, especially a hungry child. The unspoken promise to feed each other's children broke down cultural barriers.<sup>82</sup> A Lithuanian woman reflected on the neighborhood women's solidarity, born of a shared desperation: "You know how workers lived then, like slaves, but we all helped each other out, that's just the way it was back then, you did for others."<sup>83</sup> These relationships translated to the picket lines, marches, and meetings, where the women, with their children cared for, could actively participate in the strike.<sup>84</sup> The Lawrence women turned their familiar domestic task of cooking into a widespread relief effort. This tactic was not a headline-grabbing demonstration, but it addressed a daily burden the strikers could not continue without. The soup kitchens drew their success in the strike from the unity they created among women, especially mothers, of all nationalities as they collectively battled hunger and oppression, ultimately demonstrating how maternity and domesticity could be utilized to aid the longevity of the strike.

### **Moving the Picket Line**

Picketing was another popular and nonviolent tactic of protest. The IWW and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn made a point to hold special women-only meetings to ensure that the women were empowered to play a role in the strike and to picket.<sup>85</sup> She explained the importance of these

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<sup>82</sup> Watson, 87-88.

<sup>83</sup> Cameron, *Radicals*, 93.

<sup>84</sup> Watson, 88.

<sup>85</sup> Tax, *The Rising of the Women*, 255.

meetings by stating that, in Lawrence, “the women... were strikers as well as wives and valiant fighters. We knew that to leave them at home alone, isolated from the strike activity, a prey to worry... was dangerous to the strike.”<sup>86</sup> In Lawrence, picketing assumed a unique, symbolic role. On February 12, the IWW debuted a new tactic of the “moving picket line,” wherein the strikers linked arms to form a human chain that circled the whole mill district twenty-four hours a day. Anyone who still wanted to work would have to cross the picket line on their way to the mills and endure insults from their neighbors and loud renditions of the “Marseillaise” and “Internationale.”<sup>87</sup> The endless chain represented an endless strike. The picket line not only provided a sense of ethnic unity but also protected the strikers from arrest. Picketing allowed the strikers to evade an increasingly antagonistic militia and prevented the women from violently pursuing scabs, or workers who refused to strike. Women were usually charged with chasing the scabs, a task which could lead to their arrest, but the linked arms in the picket line prevented this by restricting their movement.<sup>88</sup> The moving picket line was so effective that the IWW employed it in later labor standoffs.

The success of this tactic stemmed from its nonviolent nature. The social and psychological intimidation from neighbors and the displays of solidarity through the singing and the unique formation proved more effective than violence.<sup>89</sup> The strikers’ linked arms symbolized not only an ethnic solidarity within Lawrence’s multicultural demographic but also the construction of a family dynamic among the strikers. The IWW’s construction of a “family”

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<sup>86</sup> Flynn, 122.

<sup>87</sup> Dubofsky, 242.

<sup>88</sup> Watson, 148.

<sup>89</sup> Dubofsky, 242.

of strikers took advantage of themes of women and family, especially since women played key roles in the picket lines. Just as women felt an obligation to manage their biological families in ordinary life, they were compelled to organize the “family” in the picket lines of the strike. As mothers, they were accustomed to acting as the backbone of their families, cultivating a sense of solidarity in the family unit. They applied this role to the picket lines, keeping order to send a clear message of the strikers’ sentiments. During a strikers’ meeting, one woman said, “women strikers are not being egged on by anyone or forced to go upon the picket line... we go there because we feel that it is but duty,” demonstrating how women incorporated a sense of responsibility into the context of the strike.<sup>90</sup>

### **Marches**

In addition to picketing, the marches of the Lawrence strike were arranged to highlight womanhood. Women strikers chose to march together. Children and young girls remained in the center of the marching lines, while older women stayed on the edges. This formation not only shielded the children from the sidewalk militias but also symbolized maternal protection from the risks children faced in the mills and the mill owners’ careless indifference. Mothers were concerned with child labor in the Lawrence mills especially for the dangers that it imposed. One 169 of 1,000 children died each year in Lawrence as a result of occupational dangers.<sup>91</sup> By including their children’s welfare as a focal point in the strike and placing them in the center of the marches, the women strikers used their maternal role to advance their cause.

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<sup>90</sup> Watson, 157.

<sup>91</sup> Cameron, 160-161.

## **Boycotts**

A final “neighborhood” tactic that the women employed at the direction of the IWW was to boycott the shops in downtown Lawrence. On February 14, a crowd of strikers marched down Essex Street arm in arm. They entered the shops and department stores, looked around for several minutes, then left without purchasing anything, as a way of demonstrating to the shopkeepers the cost of the strike to their businesses and, by extension, their families.<sup>92</sup> By invading Lawrence’s neighborhood economy, where women exercised a central role, the female strikers pressured their neighbors, the *other* members of the working class with whom they had developed close relationships and who depended on the mill workers’ wages. The women were able to exert more of an influence because it was their neighbors they were walking out on. The women demonstrated to their usual grocers and shopkeepers the consequences of wage cuts, which they themselves had experienced at the hands of the mill owners. As business became hindered by the strike, the shopkeepers faced a growing threat of hunger with which the mill women were all too familiar.<sup>93</sup> In this way, the women’s domestic responsibilities in the marketplace and their corresponding relationships were made into threats that advanced the strikers’ message.

## **The Legacy of the Lawrence Strike**

The Lawrence strike is noteworthy in the context of American labor history as the first large-scale industrial strike that demonstrated how groups of women and immigrants who traditionally lacked authority could create “a perfect solidarity of brotherhood in a common

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<sup>92</sup> Watson, 149.

<sup>93</sup> Cameron, 133.

cause” and prevail over powerful industrial leaders.<sup>94</sup> Diversity came to be recognized as a strength. Before the strike, no stable labor organization existed in Lawrence for mill workers.<sup>95</sup> Through tactics such as the multinational strike committee, the IWW overcame the obstacle of bringing immigrant workers from many nations into one union and created a new industrial unionism that was representative of the population.<sup>96</sup> Lawrence is also remembered for its tactical creativity and feminist approach to organizing the strike. The IWW debuted new methods which were developed out of the women’s unique capabilities and whose success would earn them a place in later strikes, including another Lawrence strike in 1919.<sup>97</sup>

The Lawrence strike is often remembered as the “Bread and Roses” strike, a term that romanticizes an early victory in the American Labor movement while also, as some strikers believed, glamorizes the suffering in Lawrence.<sup>98</sup> Julia Dublin Garbelnick, a Lithuanian woman from Lawrence, resented the term for its failure to capture the “horrible period of existence in those days. They were cold... they were hungry. They had no money.” She went on to call it “an insult to humanity.”<sup>99</sup> The origins of this term’s association with Lawrence are debated; legend claims that a woman carried a sign proclaiming “We want bread, but we want roses too.” The slogan came from a poem in *American Magazine* published in 1911 before the strike even began. It was written by James Oppenheim about women in the labor movement. The first verse reads:

As we come marching, marching in the beauty of the day,  
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray,

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<sup>94</sup> Deland, 705.

<sup>95</sup> Dubofsky, 234.

<sup>96</sup> Deland, 694-705.

<sup>97</sup> Watson, 251.

<sup>98</sup> Forrant, 139.

<sup>99</sup> Forrant, 144.

Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,  
For the people hear us singing: Bread and roses! Bread and roses!

The poem was later published in Upton Sinclair's 1915 labor anthology, with a new dedication to the strikers of Lawrence.<sup>100</sup> "Bread" represented the notion that workers deserved dignity and the ability to earn enough money to eat, and "Roses" embodied the idea that, while workers deserved human rights, they were also entitled to pleasure.<sup>101</sup> The poem came to encompass a standard for the labor movement and women's organization, now celebrated as the inspiration for labor strikes throughout history.

The women of Lawrence were an early example of female leadership in the workforce. They highlighted the sentiments behind the fight for working mothers' rights, a debate that endures today. Their female activism for fair wages is reflected in modern discussions of equal pay. The bravery and ingenuity of the Lawrence strikers, as workers and as women, brought an important victory for American labor and demonstrated working women's capacity to effect change.

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<sup>100</sup> Watson, 256.

<sup>101</sup> Forrant, 221-22.



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## **Haudenosaunee Sovereignty and the Uncertainty Posed by the 1794 Treaty at Canandaigua**

Era Gjonbalaj

Each year, on November 11, in the small town of Canandaigua, New York, a celebration is held commemorating the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua by its signatories, the United States and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The Haudenosaunee is a confederacy of six Indigenous nations; the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and Tuscarora; who once inhabited the majority of the area surrounding the Great Lakes as far south as North Carolina, but are today located in upstate and western New York. Though the date of its creation is unknown, the alliance formed long before Europeans arrived to the Americas and is known also as the Iroquois Confederacy (a name given by the French) and the Six Nations (a name given by the British and later used by the Americans).

In November 1794, Colonel Timothy Pickering, the official agent to United States President George Washington, and General Israel Chapin met with around 1600 representatives of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, including Seneca chief Cornplanter and Seneca orator Red Jacket, along with a group of Quaker mediators and translators. The treaty signed in what is today a small town in western New York just south of Lake Ontario has been strained and violated, but its annual ceremony celebrates its continued and active recognition by both signatories. The root of continued infringements on the 1794 stems from the time of its signing, when the United States showed a passive attitude toward signing the treaty and instead emphasized its ratification. This was compounded by the United States unexpected and decisive upper hand in the negotiations at Canandaigua. The United States' disregard for the treaty

established at its signing in 1794 would carry through the rest of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

For the Haudenosaunee people, the treaty made between their Six Nations and the fledgling United States of America at Canandaigua, New York on November 11, 1794 remains unwavering proof and support of their sovereignty. Sovereignty should be understood as the full authority of a state to govern itself without interference from outside bodies. Chief Irving Powless Jr. of the Onondaga Nation defines sovereignty as meaning, “that you are the power within specified boundary lines” and that sovereignty is “the state of existence as a self-governing entity.”<sup>1</sup> Pointing to sovereignty as a body’s right to govern itself, Powless makes it clear that, “although physically situated within the territorial limits of the United States today, Native nations like the Onondaga Nation and the other members of the Haudenosaunee retain their status as sovereign nations.”<sup>2</sup>

International treaties between the Haudenosaunee and colonial British and Dutch leaders were the first acknowledgments of their sovereignty by imperial powers. Today, Powless and the Haudenosaunee point to the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua as the testament to their sovereignty from the United States. The treaty remains especially valid because the Haudenosaunee still receive United States annuities, as promised by the Canandaigua Treaty “in the form of bolts of muslin cloth and a \$4,500 annuity allocated each year from the US Treasury.”<sup>3</sup> The annuity that continues to be provided to the Haudenosaunee by the United States is promised in Article VI of

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<sup>1</sup> Powless, Irving. *Who are these People Anyway?* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016. p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

the 1794 treaty, whose purpose is to remove from Haudenosaunee minds “all causes of complaint” and to establish “a firm and permanent friendship with them.”<sup>4</sup> However much the circumstances and language of the treaty may provide a clear basis for Haudenosaunee sovereignty, dozens of violations of Haudenosaunee sovereignty by New York State, the United States federal government, and other foreign nations since 1794 put the validity of the treaty and Haudenosaunee sovereignty in question. Even the signing of the Treaty of Canandaigua by the Haudenosaunee was not viewed by the United States as a demonstration of Haudenosaunee sovereignty. Colonel Pickering and the United States’ failure to understand the Haudenosaunee as sovereign would carry through to the future and form the foundation for continued disrespect of the treaty, allowing it to be infringed upon multiple times throughout the following two centuries.

The 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua establishes peace and friendship “between the United States and the Six Nations,”<sup>5</sup> by securing the Six Nations their lands and granting them an annuity, in exchange for the Six Nations promises they will not lay claim to other lands in the United States and that they allow the U.S. to build and use a road crossing through their land. Most historians assert that Haudenosaunee land titles, as recognized by the 1794 treaty, continue into the present day. The key historical debate surrounding the treaty, then, is whether it is an authentic or persuasive symbol of Haudenosaunee sovereignty.

Jack Campisi and William A. Starna argue in their essay, “On the Road to Canandaigua: The Treaty of 1794,” that the treaty confirms Iroquois sovereignty without a doubt, though it has

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<sup>4</sup> “Treaty with the Six Nations.” Opened for signature November 11, 1794. *ProQuest: Indian Claims Insight*. p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.

been disrespected entirely by United States policy.<sup>6</sup> In Campisi and Starna's eyes, even though the treaty has not been respected, the proof of sovereignty is shown by its 1794 writing. Other historians argue that Colonel Pickering's misunderstanding of the treaty's significance falsifies the claim that it was valid from the beginning -- a point Michael Leroy Oberg concedes. In *Peacemakers: the Iroquois, the United States, and the Treaty of Canandaigua, 1794*, Oberg goes on to argue that the Haudenosaunee had an upper hand in the signing of the treaty, noting that the United States was vying for the loyalty of the Haudenosaunee as the U.S. fought a war against the Six Nations' Ohio allies. Oberg notes that the Six Nations representatives "used that considerable power, and their own powerful diplomatic skills, to secure the return of a key parcel of land and, more importantly, the recognition of their sovereign right to the 'free use and enjoyment' of their lands."<sup>7</sup> Because the Haudenosaunee recognized the leverage they had in the negotiations at Canandaigua in November 1794, Oberg argues, they acted with an agency that validates their sovereignty.

Even those who agree that the Treaty of Canandaigua was a valid symbol of Haudenosaunee sovereignty at the time of its signing, however, cannot deny that it has been violated to an extent that calls its validity into question. Chief Irving Powless notes several key slights of the treaty by the United States in the years since its signing. He complains, "If you get a copy of the November 11th, 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua... there is a sentence in there that says going from point 'A' to Buffalo there is a toll road. And the Natives will not have to pay a

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<sup>6</sup> Campisi, Jack and William A. Starna. "On the Road to Canandaigua: The Treaty of 1794." *American Indian Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1995): 467-490. doi: 10.2307/1185560. p. 486.

<sup>7</sup> Oberg, Michael Leroy. *Peacemakers: the Iroquois, the United States, and the Treaty of Canandaigua, 1794*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. p. 162.

toll on that road... Now when they built the toll thruway, those people forgot about these treaties. They charge us for traveling on that road.”<sup>8</sup> Powless explains that New York State’s construction of Route 81 through the Onondaga Nation by means of eminent domain and the Haudenosaunee people’s forced payment of its toll disregards the Canandaigua Treaty’s promises. Further infringements of the treaty, including the construction of the Kinzua Reservoir on Seneca land in the 1960s, are cited in the anthology, *Treaty of Canandaigua, 1794: 200 Years of Treaty Relations between the Iroquois Confederacy and the United States*.<sup>9</sup> The grand extent of disregard exhibited by the United States toward the 1794 treaty does not embolden those who argue in favor of its status as a symbol of Haudenosaunee sovereignty.

United States laws can also be included among the infringements against the 1794 Canandaigua Treaty. In fact, current federal United States laws allow New York State jurisdiction over Haudenosaunee land and people in the enforcement of United States Laws. Title 25, Section 232 of the United States Code says that “The State of New York shall have jurisdiction over offenses committed by or against Indians on Indian reservations within the State of New York to the same extent as the courts of the State have jurisdiction over offenses committed elsewhere within the State as defined by the laws of the State.”<sup>10</sup> New York State even has jurisdiction over civil proceedings among American Indians, per Title 25, Section 233 of the United States Code, which states, “The courts of the State of New York under the laws of such State shall have jurisdiction in civil actions and proceedings between Indians or between one or more Indians and

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<sup>8</sup> Powless. p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> Mohawk, John C. “Preface.” *Treaty of Canandaigua, 1794: 200 Years of Treaty Relations between the Iroquois Confederacy and the United States*, edited by Peter Jemison and Anna Schein. Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 2000. p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Indians, 25 USC § 232 (1948).

any other person or persons to the same extent as the courts of the State shall have jurisdiction in other civil actions and proceedings, as now or hereafter defined by the laws of such State.”<sup>11</sup>

Neither of these laws allows for any pretense of Haudenosaunee sovereignty today by New York State’s standards. USC Section 232 does clarify itself by stating that, “nothing contained in this section shall be construed to deprive any Indian tribe, band, or community, or members thereof, hunting and fishing rights as guaranteed them by agreement, treaty, or custom, nor require them to obtain State fish and game licenses for the exercise of such rights.”<sup>12</sup> This clarification only condescends by maintaining American Indian hunting and fishing rights that are already promised by treaty while disregarding all other treaty promises.

The Haudenosaunee further recognize U.S. law enforcement within the reservation as a blatant violation of their sovereignty. Chief Irving Powless Jr. remembers that as a child, he would watch U.S. sheriffs come into Onondaga and arrest people, walking into their houses without search warrants. When Powless became a leader in 1964, he advocated to U.S. officials, demanding that USC title 25, sections 232 and 233 “are violations of the Constitution, because they don’t have the right to pass laws going into another nation’s territory.”<sup>13</sup> Powless’ advocacy was quite successful, and he explains that since then, “the state troopers don’t come into our territory anymore. The sheriffs don’t come into our territory. The city police don’t come into our territory. And if they do, they have to ask permission.”<sup>14</sup> If anything, Powless’ fervent defense of his nation and its civil jurisdiction is the best proof of Haudenosaunee sovereignty.

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<sup>11</sup> Indians, 25 USC § 233 (1950).

<sup>12</sup> Indians, 25 USC § 232 (1948).

<sup>13</sup> Powless. p. 61.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 62.



Doubt that the Canandaigua Treaty has any power to confirm Haudenosaunee sovereignty is further increased by a 2010 incident in which the Nationals, the Iroquois national lacrosse team, was denied travel to England on their Haudenosaunee passports for an international tournament. According to the New York Times, “The British government first objected to the team’s travel plans last week, when it said the Iroquois players would not be allowed to travel to the tournament in Manchester, England, unless the United States vouched for their tribal passports and guaranteed the team would be allowed to re-enter the country.”<sup>15</sup> While this refusal to recognize Haudenosaunee sovereignty makes it clear that the Canandaigua Treaty is not respected internationally, the United States itself failed to recognize its treaty obligations. Thomas Kaplan of the New York Times goes on to report that, “The United States refused to [vouch for tribal passports and guarantee re-entry] until Wednesday, when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton granted the team a one-time waiver to travel without United States passports. But later Wednesday, British officials informed the team it would not receive visas after all, dealing a blow to the team’s hopes and angering several lawmakers who had lobbied on the team’s behalf.”<sup>16</sup> The United States’ failure to recognize Haudenosaunee sovereignty as it had since 1794 continued as State Department spokesman P. J. Crowley opined: “From our standpoint, we’ve done what we can do,” and simply claimed, “It would appear to us at this point that the U.K. has made their final determination.”<sup>17</sup> As a direct result of a lack of international respect for their sovereignty both from its treaty partner and from England, the Haudenosaunee Nationals

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<sup>15</sup> Kaplan, Thomas. “Iroquois Defeated by Passport Dispute.” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2010. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/17/sports/17lacrosse.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

were unable to compete in the world championship tournament for the sport they had created. The Treaty of Canandaigua meant nothing to the United States or the United Kingdom in their denial of Haudenosaunee passports. Only the refusal of the Iroquois national lacrosse team to travel on passports other than their own remained as confirmation of Iroquois sovereignty.

Perhaps the most crucial infraction against the Canandaigua Treaty's supposed acknowledgment of Haudenosaunee sovereignty was the 2005 Supreme Court case, *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*. The decision allowed New York State to tax the Oneida Nation. Although the Oneida had been battling against their taxation by New York State since the mid-20th century, the Supreme Court ruled against them. The decision holds that, "Given the longstanding, distinctly non-Indian character of central New York and its inhabitants, the regulatory authority over the area constantly exercised by the State and its counties and towns for 200 years, and the Oneidas' long delay in seeking judicial relief against parties other than the United States, standards of federal Indian law and federal equity practice preclude the Tribe from unilaterally reviving its ancient sovereignty, in whole or in part, over the parcels at issue. The Oneidas long ago relinquished governmental reins and cannot regain them through open-market purchases from current titleholders."<sup>18</sup> Essentially, the Supreme Court held that the precedent of previous infringements on Haudenosaunee sovereignty is proof enough that Oneida sovereignty no longer exists. Because the Oneida had failed to defend themselves against U.S. treaty infringements in the past and because they were the minority in the area of central New York, they are accused of having "relinquished" their sovereignty themselves and are told they are no longer justified in trying to take it back. The *Sherrill* decision suggests that the United

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<sup>18</sup> *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*, 544 U.S. 197 (2005).

States views the 1794 Canandaigua Treaty as an outdated document that once acknowledged Haudenosaunee sovereignty, but that the United States' own disrespect of the treaty invalidates it. The insularity of the argument is egregious. The ruling of *Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*, more than any other infraction, demonstrates that even if the Canandaigua Treaty did at one point represent United States acknowledgement of Six Nations sovereignty, that sovereignty no longer exists.

Setting aside the more recent infractions of the treaty, some historians have argued that, even at the time of its signing, the Treaty of Canandaigua was not viewed by the United States as a demonstration of Haudenosaunee sovereignty. The United States' dubiousness is suggested by two key factors: the circumstances of the United States and the Haudenosaunee leading up to the conference at Canandaigua and the process of the treaty's ratification by the U.S. government. The 1783 Treaty of Paris ending the American Revolutionary War had necessitated multiple attempts at treaties between the United States and the Six Nations to end hostilities caused by England's unfounded surrender of its right to preemption of territories east of the Mississippi River. While in 1784 the United States' "Treaty with the Six Nations" at Fort Stanwix stripped the Haudenosaunee of most of their lands in New York, the U.S. was met with aggression from the Six Nations and their Ohio Valley Indian allies, neither of whom considered the treaties or others like it to be valid. By the time General Henry Knox and the Ohio Valley Indians went to war in 1793, the United States was extremely threatened by the Native Americans on the Wabash River, especially those still allied with England. When the Seneca leader Cornplanter threatened that, "We, the Six Nations, have determined on the boundary we want established... and, if these

difficulties are not removed, the consequences will be bad,” it was clear that the Senecas’ land had to be restored quickly to avoid war with the Six Nations.<sup>19</sup>

On September 20, Pickering first heard word of General Wayne’s victory over the Ohio Valley Indians at Fallen Timbers. However, reports were uncertain and scattered. The battle of Fallen Timbers was not in and of itself a massive defeat for the Ohio Valley Indians, with less than fifty killed, “but the defeat assumed more the aspect of finality when it became apparent that the British guns at Fort Miamis were to be silent and that war was not to take place between the United States and England.”<sup>20</sup> The significance of the victory became clear to Pickering and the Six Nations delegates only later in October once the council had already formally convened. On October 27, William Savery, a Pennsylvania Quaker delegate who had been aiding Pickering, wrote in his journal: “A runner, a Tuscarora... brought intelligence of a late engagement between the Western Indians connected with some British soldiers, and General Wayne, fought near the forks of the Glaize, in which many on both sides were killed; and being weary, the combatants withdrew from the field of battle. The Indians appear cautious of letting out the particulars, probably from the fear that they may operate to their disadvantage at this critical juncture of the treaty.”<sup>21</sup> While Savery, who did not play a central role in the council, may not have grasped the implications of Wayne’s victory, Pickering knew he had the upper hand in treaty negotiations, as did the Six Nations delegates. The threat of the English in Ohio, the very factor that had necessitated Pickering’s negotiations with the Six Nations, no longer existed. As such, Michael

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<sup>19</sup> Campisi. p. 478.

<sup>20</sup> Downes, Randolph. *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio*. Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969. Accessed November 13, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central. p. 335.

<sup>21</sup> Downes, Randolph. *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio*. Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969. Accessed November 13, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central. p. 74.

Leroy Oberg's argument that the Haudenosaunee had an upper hand in negotiations is undermined. Oberg claims that the Haudenosaunee's recognition that the United States was vying for their loyalty as it fought a war against the Six Nations' Ohio allies grants the Haudenosaunee agency and the treaty validity. In actuality, however, before the signing of the treaty was completed, the upper hand had shifted from the Haudenosaunee to the United States.

It is unlikely that Pickering and Washington considered the 1794 treaty a symbol of Haudenosaunee sovereignty, especially considering the recent victory at Fallen Timbers. Pickering did not perceive the treaty to be complete until it was approved and ratified months later by Washington and the U.S. Senate. The legitimacy of the agreement, then, did not belong to the treaty or to the wampum, but to the federal government's approval. On March 11, 1797, Pickering wrote to John Jay:

When, in 1794 [at Canandaigua], it was thought of much importance to quiet the claims of the Six Nations and secure their friendship, I was myself appointed to hold a treaty with them, the only evidence of my appointment was a certificate under the hand and seal of the Secretary of State, that I was designated by the President of the United States for that service.

Pickering goes on to reassure Jay by saying, "the subsequent assent of the Senate and ratification of the treaty by the President, cured every defect in its formation."<sup>22</sup> In Pickering's opinion, it was the ratification by the President and Senate, rather than the endorsement of the delegates, that legitimized the treaty.

In fact, Pickering wrote to the Six Nations delegates to confirm the legitimacy of the treaty after its ratification by the President and the Senate on March 31, 1795. He wrote:

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<sup>22</sup>Jennings, Francis. *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: an Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and their League*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985. p. 96.

To the Sachems Chiefs and Warriors of the Six Nations. Brothers;-- It is with much pleasure I inform you that the Treaty of Peace, and Friendship, which in behalf of the United States, I concluded with you at Kon-on-Daiguae on the eleventh day of last November, has been Ratified by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate of the United States. Now that treaty is made strong. No act on the part of the United States can make it stronger.

Clearly, Pickering only considered the treaty to be complete and legitimate once ratified, undermining the authority of the Six Nations delegates, whom he could not have considered to be representatives of a sovereign state. Continuing in his letter, Pickering told the delegates, “Herewith I send you written Parchment the evidence of that Ratification, this you will keep with the Original treaty now in your possession... You may also rely on the complete performance of every Article of the treaty on the part of the United States.”<sup>23</sup> It was not the treaty signed at the council fire half a year prior then, that secured the Six Nations’ land claims for the future, but rather the Ratification by the U.S. government. By 1795, Pickering considered his negotiations with the Haudenosaunee to be a success, but he certainly did not recognize them as sovereign.

Pickering and Washington’s lackadaisical attitude toward the treaty and emphasis on its ratification, along with the upper hand that the United States suddenly gained in the negotiations, established a disregard for the 1794 treaty that would carry on into the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. The Treaty of Canandaigua was not viewed by the United States as a legitimate demonstration of Haudenosaunee sovereignty even at the time of its signing in 1794. The attitude of the United States towards the Haudenosaunee in 1794 built the foundation for the disregard that would plague the Haudenosaunee over the next two centuries. Repeated infractions against the treaty since 1794 provide significant evidence that the treaty does little to ensure

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<sup>23</sup> Timothy Pickering, Letter to the Six Nations Informing them of the Ratification of the Treaty Concluded at Kon-on-daiguae, January 22, 1795.

Haudenosaunee sovereignty. Rather, evidence of Haudenosaunee sovereignty lies in Chief Irving Powless Jr.'s activism and education and the refusal of the Iroquois national lacrosse team to travel on passports other than their own. Haudenosaunee sovereignty is maintained by the attitudes and actions of its members, who continue to identify as members of a sovereign nation and fight to maintain autonomous political standing.

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## **A Mission in Unity: Obstacles to a Special Relationship**

Nicolas Mendoza

The United States and the United Kingdom are often romantically seen as the closest of friends during World War II, a great alliance forged to combat the evil menace of the Axis powers. The war is frequently credited with initiating the “special relationship” that the two countries share to this day. Yet even the closest friendships are mired by conflict that threatens the stability of the relationship. The United States and Great Britain had to deal with internal divisions between their two armies as intense rivalries, debates, and animosities arose among the foot soldiers and leadership. Knowing the danger these hostilities could pose to the alliance, commanders like General Dwight D. Eisenhower waged concerted campaigns to minimize tensions and maintain a united force. Inevitably, differences would arise in such a large and complex alliance, but to mitigate the danger of a fractured whole, there was a need to contain behavior that might breed animosity and incoherence. Managing an intricate alliance is not easy, clashing personalities amongst the higher ups and natural animosities between soldiers emerge in national armies and such divisions are only heightened between the armies of different nations, even the closest of allies. These hostilities threaten to slow decision making, confuse units on the ground, cause mistakes in strategy, and undermine military order. Though often challenging, concerted practice by the Allies in maintaining a unified fighting force free from major internal division helped in running campaigns to end the Axis threat in Europe.

Because the special relationship between America and Britain features so prominently, one neglects to look at their relationship before the war. It can be said that the two were in competition with one another, with Britain realizing that America was a growing industrial

power. As a result, they enacted economic policies that tried to curry favor with the United States, though such policies were domestically unpopular.<sup>1</sup> Many abhorred the idea of trying to appease the Americans as it made them feel subordinate in a global political landscape they were used to dominating. Furthermore, relations between the citizenry of the two could be very contentious. Many people in America were either Irish who had fled Britain to escape persecution or of Irish descent and thus harbored a deep animosity toward the Isle. So, the special relationship we see today was certainly less prominent before World War 2, though the United States and United Kingdom were undoubtedly shared cultural and economic ties. Despite these ties, there were divisions which influenced the each country's perception of the other, divisions that would have been on the minds of many of the American and British troops that served together during the war.

Ensuring the unity and camaraderie of the rank and file of the U.S. and U.K. armies was vital to creating a more effective fighting force. This task was not as straightforward as it might seem given the chummy relationship Americans appear to have with the British today and the relative similarities between the fighting forces of both countries. Indeed many American troops could trace their heritage back to Britain, and of course the two shared a common language. Otto Von Bismarck in response to what he thought was the most significant political development of the 19th Century said, "the inherited and permanent fact that North America speaks English."<sup>2</sup> The shrewd politician likely recognized the capabilities that a relationship built on shared cultural and linguistic attributes could produce. But such commonalities did not lend themselves

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<sup>1</sup> David Reynolds, "Rethinking Anglo-American Relations," *International Affairs*, 65, no. 1, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Winter 1988-1989, 89-111.

<sup>2</sup> George L. Beer, *The English-speaking Peoples, Their Future Relations, and Joint International Obligations*, (London: Macmillan, 1918), 186.

to easy cooperation and warm feelings between the two armies. Each side was already dealing with their own internal conflicts and introducing foreign soldiers added another challenge. When the American troops arrived in Great Britain in 1942, much of the initial animosity arose from the British quarters. The length of time each nation had been engaged in the war contributed to this, as Britain had been fighting since 1939, and the US had only recently entered the conflict. As a result, the British mainland had born the scars of war from bombings, loss of life, and a dearth of adequate resources for its citizens. The British troops were tired, disheveled, and had low morale (especially among the army as the air force and navy had enjoyed success in defending their homeland<sup>3</sup>) at this point in the war after so many major losses. Therefore, the fresh American troops invited jealousy and resentment from the British forces.<sup>4</sup> These troops arrived in Britain with clean clothes in contrast to many of the British troops' battered garbs. They were well equipped and could count on a wealth of resources that the British couldn't provide at this point in the war.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps there was also a sense of resentment towards the Americans for not having entered sooner to prevent the Axis from taking such a heavy toll. There was no doubt that the United States was strong, and that their involvement could have decisively turned the war early on. Winston Churchill in a 1938 speech directed to the American people called for their action, "We need the swift gathering of forces to confront not only military but moral aggression; the resolute and sober acceptance of their duty by the English-speaking peoples... Their faithful and zealous comradeship would almost between night and morning clear the path of progress and banish from all our lives the fear which already darkens the

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<sup>3</sup> Harry Hodges, "Yanks and Limeys: WW2 Soldiers Reveal Relationship," *Express*, August 29, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

sunlight to hundreds of millions of men.”<sup>6</sup> To make matters worse, the Americans brought with them plenty of cash to spend, and they often flaunted this wealth to their hosts.<sup>7</sup> To add insult to injury, there were concerns of American soldiers forming relationships with British women, and this made the British men feel even more inadequate to these fresh, wealthy troops. The Americans too had problems with their British hosts, some bore old grudges due to their Irish heritage. Americans were also unaccustomed to the British way of life, and often felt that their hosts were rude.<sup>8</sup> This feeling came about as a result of cultural differences, for example the British were much more reserved than Americans were used to. The War Department published the *Instructions for American Servicemen in Britain* (1942), essentially a guide on all things British including their government, financial system, their customs, and how to be pleasant guests. In it, they clarify this cultural difference, “The British are often more reserved in conduct than we. On a small crowded island where forty-five million people live, each man learns to guard his privacy carefully—and is equally careful not to invade another man's privacy.”<sup>9</sup> As a result of this culture difference and others, a slew of problems initially rose between the troops of both armies—problems which threatened to impede a unified strategy for the war effort.

These early resentments rankled the officers and commanders on both sides who knew that unity had to be a top priority if their forces were to be effective. There were several initiatives that demonstrate the efforts used to encourage this unity. The maligned behavior of American GIs in Britain was no secret, and indeed the American army planned to combat such behavior

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<sup>6</sup> Winston Churchill, “The Lights are Going Out,” National Churchill Museum, 1938.

<sup>7</sup> Hodges, “Yanks and Limeys: WW2 Soldiers Reveal Relationship.”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. War Department, *Britain: For All Members of American Expeditionary Forces in Great Britain*, 1942.

before their arrival. The War Department's pamphlets on British culture were distributed to every troop in an effort to promote good behavior and educate them on the country where they would be stationed. Some of the passages are illuminating in their attention to the promotion of unity. The guide notes that Hitler would try and promote divisions within the Allied forces to weaken them, "the first and major duty Hitler has given his propaganda chiefs is to separate Britain and America and spread distrust between them. If he can do that, his chance of winning might return."<sup>10</sup> With that said, the document addresses some of the issues that may have prompted the Americans to dislike the British. Aware of the presence of soldiers with backgrounds that conflicted with the British in the past, the pamphlet has a section urging soldiers to not let previous conflicts (particularly aimed at the Irish) to stand in the way of unity, "If you come from an Irish-American family, you may think of the English as persecutors of the Irish, or you may think of them as enemy Redcoats who fought against us in the American Revolution and the War of 1812. But there is no time today to fight old wars over again or bring up old grievances."<sup>11</sup> The War Department mentions things that the Americans might do that would be offensive to the British and vice versa. These include offensive words, what's considered rude and friendly behavior, and to avoid mentioning the losses of the war or any previous one. The motivations for this were to try and promote the best behavior among their soldiers to minimize the distaste the British might feel to their new comrades. The American leadership was well aware of the suffering of the British and the resentment that fresh, foreign troops might bring (indeed there's direct reference to the rudeness of flaunting of money), so they sought to encourage positive

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. War Department, *Britain: For All Members of American Expeditionary Forces in Great Britain*, 1942.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

behavior and respect. One of the more successful efforts to promote unity was in having the troops train and fight together.<sup>12</sup> This built camaraderie that couldn't be built on the home front, as mutual respect developed during difficult trials. Troops would emerge from these experiences referring to them as "buddies" and "a very nice set of fellows."<sup>13</sup> Efforts like these helped to foster respect and cooperation among the British and American troops and prevent disputes from fracturing the alliance.

The high command could promote unity with their troops, but they themselves grappled with rivalries and heated debates that often threatened the strategy and cohesion of the war effort. Some of the most important officers and leaders were renowned for their bluster and ego. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, General George Patton, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and others were all well known for their egoism and insistence on getting their way. But even commanders without boisterous personalities could stir up trouble. Throughout the war there was a wide range of contentious debates between commanders on strategy, and this often led to bitter disagreements and impasses. The American and British commanders did not see eye to eye on many issues throughout the war including on the outcome, deployment of troops, allocation of resources and command hierarchy.<sup>14</sup>

The man tasked with bridging all these fiery personalities and producing a victory with an undivided force was General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Well aware of the dangers of fracturing in the alliance, he employed many strategies to encourage troop unity and pacify or whip squabbling commanders into line. The general's role during the war was multifaceted; it was not

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<sup>12</sup> Hodges, "Yanks and Limeys: WW2 Soldiers Reveal Relationship."

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Steven L. Rearden, *Council of War: A History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1942-1991*, NDU Press, July 2012, 3.

solely about coordinating the largest army ever assembled but also a very carefully played game of politics. Eisenhower showed the considerations of trying to promote unity in various ways, often with great subtlety. He carefully used language and critiqued how others spoke to maintain an image of a united front. For instance he took issue with phrases that singled out one ally or the other. In one case, he is said to have reprimanded an officer for saying “British sons of bitches”. He took issue not with the curse word itself, but with the addition of the descriptive “British” to make the phrase derisive to their allies. As punishment, Eisenhower sent the officer back home on a boat<sup>15</sup>, sending a clear message that internal animosities or hatred of the other due to their nationality would not be tolerated. Another example of this focus on using united language was in speaking to British General Macmillan after Allied troops had taken Tunis. Upon seeing a large Allied army headed towards Egypt, Macmillan remarked to Eisenhower that the site was validation of , “the fruits of your victory” to which Eisenhower replied, “Ours. You mean ours”.<sup>16</sup> Eisenhower’s philosophy for commanding the British and American troops was one of mutualism. Both sides were to bear equal sacrifice and merit when they started working together, both sides moving “shoulder to shoulder”.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the general emphasized the idea of the two armies being in this together and derided remarks that could even hint at any internal division. David Eisenhower in his book *Eisenhower at War* remarks on this, “Eisenhower’s mission as an Allied commander was a political as well as a military challenge”.<sup>18</sup> One of his greatest

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<sup>15</sup> Robert MacDougall, *Leaders in Dangerous Times: Douglas Macarthur and Dwight D. Eisenhower*, (Trafford Publishing, 2013) 92.

<sup>16</sup> Robin Renwick, *Fighting with Allies: America and Britain in Peace and War*, Palgrave Macmillan Limited, September 13, 1996, 52.

<sup>17</sup> David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower at War: 1943-1945*, Juldee Inc., 1986, 345.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, xviii.

challenges was in balancing the interests and opinions of his American colleagues and bosses with those of the British while keeping a united coalition.

The commanders on the ground could also get into heated rivalries that at times threatened Allied movements. Perhaps one of the most famous rivalries of the war occurred between General Montgomery and General Patton. Both were gifted generals, but they were also excessively proud, stubborn, and egotistical. As a result, their own belief in their infallibility led them to dislike one another and compete for glory. Operation Husky, the campaign to take Sicily from the Axis, shows exactly the kind of contentious relationship the two generals had. Both of them bypassed the chain of command during this operation in order to attain their goals<sup>19</sup> showing the problems of having such personalities in the army. Commonly, the generals would give direct orders to divisional commanders based on what they thought the correct course of action should be, without consulting the officers in command. They were both vying to be the general to liberate the major cities of Palermo and Messina. Patton was tasked with covering Montgomery's 8<sup>th</sup> Army, allowing the British to focus on capturing the main city of Messina. However, the American general was not content with acting as protection for the main thrust of the campaign, indeed he felt as though he were not being given the chance for glory. He believed General Harold Alexander, the man in charge of the operation, to be giving Montgomery the glory behind the Sicily campaign, "Monty is trying to steal the show... and may do so".<sup>20</sup> The two seemed to be jockeying with each other during the campaign to see who would get the honor of marching into and liberating the Sicilian cities. Patton used the language of equality among

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Reynolds, *George Patton & Bernard Montgomery in Operation Husky*, Warfare History Network.

<sup>20</sup> Mark Zuehlke, *Operation Husky: The Canadian Invasion of Sicily, July 10 - August 7, 1943*, Douglas and McIntyre (2013) Ltd., ProQuest Ebook Central, 2009, Pg. 140.



allies in order to bolster his own claim to be able to take Palermo, “I shall explain the situation to General Alexander on the basis that it would be inexpedient politically for the Seventh Army not to have equal glory in the final stage of this campaign”.<sup>21</sup> In trying to achieve his own goals, Montgomery bypassed General Alexander and acted on his own accord on several occasions.<sup>22</sup> For example, on July 12, 1943, rather than consulting with General Alexander, Montgomery decided to split his army to outflank the Axis forces and set the stage for the remainder of the campaign. Though the Sicilian campaign was a success for the Allies, the behavior of Montgomery and Patton was problematic in their disregard for their superiors, in their rivalry which could produce strategic weaknesses, and in their egotistical drive which caused both of them and others to lose trust in each other.

How then was one supposed to control these two extreme personalities, bridge divides, and create a culture of camaraderie and a united front? Only so much could be done, and it fell on the highest echelons of power to try and control them both enough to curb their worst behaviors. Such problematic commanders had the potential to become liabilities on the mainland, so they had to be dealt with to avoid critical mistakes or failures of coordination brought about by animosities. The primary tactic seemed to be to reign them in with threats or placate them with concessions. General Eisenhower was able to control some of Patton’s worst impulses, and indeed many credit him with saving Patton’s career during the war. One instance was during a speech by Patton where he claimed the British and Americans’ destiny post war would be to “rule the world”.<sup>23</sup> This omission from such a high profile general rankled the general public and

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<sup>21</sup> Zuehlke, *Operation Husky: The Canadian Invasion of Sicily, July 10 - August 7, 1943*, 141.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Reynolds, *George Patton & Bernard Montgomery in Operation Husky*, Warfare History Network.

<sup>23</sup> David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower at War: 1943-1945*, Juldee Inc., 1986, Pg. 219

American media, an editorial post from the Washington Post claiming that Patton had, “succeeded in slapping the face of every one of the United Nations except Great Britain”.<sup>24</sup> To deal with this transgression, Eisenhower originally threatened to fire him, but instead “chastised Patton so severely that the noise could be heard by the sentries down the hall”.<sup>25</sup> Patton was a great general and Ike knew he would need him, but he was getting tired of the undisciplined behavior and actions that threatened the unity of the alliance. So, Eisenhower leveraged the close relationship they had with one another to give his admonishment more weight and to correct the boisterous general’s behavior.

As seen with the Sicily campaign, Montgomery was emblematic of a tough general who was difficult to give orders to. He ignored General Alexander’s orders and overall objectives in order to accomplish what he believed was the optimal strategy. These patterns continued on the European mainland, and Eisenhower and others had to develop strategies to deal with the general. Although admittedly, there was limited success in curbing Montgomery’s divisive behavior; indeed to this day he is still one of the most controversial generals with many admirers and critics. During mainland battles, Montgomery continued his headstrong behavior taking his own initiative without fully informing his superiors. He would devise his own plans that contradicted Eisenhower’s which they would fight about, leading to their having a difficult working relationship. On one occasion after the invasion of Normandy, Montgomery drew up major initiatives that ended in a drive towards Berlin. This entered the realm of grand strategy which was the domain of General Eisenhower.<sup>26</sup> The trouble was that by creating separate plans

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<sup>24</sup> *Marshall and the Knutsford Affair*, The George C. Marshall Foundation, April 29, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower at War: 1943-1945*, Juldee Inc., 1986, Pg. 221

<sup>26</sup> David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower at War: 1943-1945*, Juldee Inc., 1986, Pg. 412

from the supreme commander, it also threatened to confuse the movements of troops on the ground as various plans muddled the idea of who was in control of ordering troop movement.<sup>27</sup> Tensions could get high between the two, and it was no secret that the men differed greatly in terms of strategy. After the war, Montgomery would publish several memoirs, one in which he very publicly questioned Eisenhower's judgement (an action which earned him few accolades).<sup>28</sup> To get over their disagreements, the Supreme Commander could play into Montgomery's proclivity for public approval. For example, during a period of tension, he gave a press conference in which he praised the British General's efforts in Caen in an attempt to lower the animosity between the two.<sup>29</sup> Eisenhower was also careful in sidestepping questions about General Omar Bradley becoming a "co-equal" to Montgomery on the field, a subject that would have assuredly made the British general upset.<sup>30</sup> Using flattery was one method of controlling Montgomery, though this and other strategies met with limited success in curbing some of his worst impulses.

One of the most controversial campaigns of the war after the landings at Normandy was Operation Market Garden. The mission was strategized by Montgomery as an attempt to end the war by making a full forced thrust into Berlin in September, 1944. Eisenhower and General Bradley opposed the plan citing problems such as an overly precise timetable (making it easy for the enemy to disrupt), thinly spread troops, and a massive reorganization of said troops.<sup>31</sup> A

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, Pg. 412

<sup>28</sup> John Buckley, *Monty's Men: The British Army and the Liberation of Europe*, Yale University Press, 2013, Pg. 13.

<sup>29</sup> David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower at War: 1943-1945*, Juldee Inc., 1986, Pg. 413

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, Pg. 442

campaign with so many risks and uncertainties was bound to cause disagreements among the leadership, but the various checks and balances put in place to prevent the worst decisions from Montgomery failed in this scenario.<sup>32</sup> Unwaveringly true to his convictions, when Montgomery published his memoirs in 1958, he defended the campaign, “I remain MARKET GARDEN’s unrepentant advocate”<sup>33</sup> (though recognizing some of his own faults) and placed blame on the leadership, “if the operation had been properly backed from its inception...it would have succeeded in spite of my mistakes”.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps one of the tensions that Montgomery most embodied was in whether American or British generals should claim victory. Who would get to take a certain city or get the press for a victory was clearly front of mind for the commanders as everyone wanted to secure their place in history. There was also national pride in taking important cities or which country would claim overall victory for the war. Eisenhower and others, again, tried stressing unity throughout the war to combat this idea and quell the influence it had on decisions. However, it was a powerful driving force and at times concessions had to be made for the sake of placating commanders with big personalities.

Among the highest levels of power, there raged intense debates over the course of the war. Field commanders like Patton and Montgomery caused headaches because of their very public image, but that publicity disappeared in the conference rooms where the Combined Chiefs of Staff and members of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces debated

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<sup>32</sup> John Buckley, *Monty's Men: The British Army and the Liberation of Europe*, Yale University Press, 2013, Pg. 303.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard L. Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field – Marshal The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K, G*, The World Publishing Company, 1958, Pg. 267.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

logistics. Such debate was a natural part of the war, but to examine some of them is to show the difficulties the two armies faced in working with one another. There are countless examples of disagreements over strategy, resource allocation, command structure, and other matters of war. The debate over opening the second front and the alliance with Admiral François Darlan demonstrate how these debates were handled.

One of the longest debates between the British and Americans was over the decision to open a second front in Europe which the Americans continually pushed for and the British kept delaying. This of course angered another ally, the Soviet Union, who had been taking the brunt of the war for years in the East and had been clamoring for the Allies to open another front to relieve pressure. As early as 1942, Stalin insisted that a second front must be opened, “We are of the opinion therefore that it is particularly in 1942 that the creation of a second front in Europe is possible and should be effected”.<sup>35</sup> The British had, as mentioned earlier, already suffered terrible losses in the war and still had memories of the mainland battle of World War I. These images fresh in their minds, they held off on opening the second front, instead preferring to weaken Germany through air raids and pressure from the sea.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile the Americans, especially George C. Marshall, believed that it would be important to open up this front as soon as possible.<sup>37</sup> Their more aggressive stance was likely buoyed by their fresher troops and less of a bad memory of World War I. The British strategy prevailed in the first few rounds of debating leading to Operation Torch and Operation Husky. Several American commanders kept pushing

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<sup>35</sup> Joseph Stalin, *Memo From Joseph Stalin about Opening of Second Front during World War II, August 13, 1942*, State Historical Society of Iowa.

<sup>36</sup> Tami D. Biddle, *Leveraging Strength: The Pillars of American Grand Strategy in World War II*, Elsevier Limited, Winter 2011, Pg. 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

for a quicker landing into France but, having only recently entered the war, Marshall was content with the British strategy. The Americans weren't yet experienced at fighting the Axis, thus they needed experience and more time to properly mobilize the vast amount of equipment they would need for a mainland invasion.<sup>38</sup> The Americans and the British leveraged the close relationship between FDR and Churchill to come to agreements. By leveraging the enormous political clout of their leaders, the chiefs could produce agreements more easily. Thus, Marshall was able to overcome the insistence on keeping to a Mediterranean campaign by having FDR support an invasion of the mainland in 1944.<sup>39</sup> Churchill, although the most powerful and vocal proponent of the Mediterranean offensives, caved in to FDR's pressure and agreed on an invasion.

Various tactics pursued by the British were influenced by this prolonging, one goal being to keep their empire alive or expand their influence in Europe for after the war. For example, in the Mediterranean theater, the British sought to take more islands which the Americans disagreed about because it seemed like an unnecessary use of resources. Marshall explained the difference in strategy that influenced this desire claiming, "Their military objectives were conditioned upon political aspects of guaranteeing their post-war position – above all in the Mediterranean".<sup>40</sup> To Britain, maintaining influence abroad and keeping their empire intact was a consideration that was, naturally, not shared by the Americans. The Americans had no immediate interest in trying to shore up spheres of influence in the Greek Islands, and indeed, they believed it to be a

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Tami D. Biddle, *Leveraging Strength: The Pillars of American Grand Strategy in World War II*, Elsevier Limited, Winter 2011, Pg. 21.

<sup>40</sup> Robin Renwick, *Fighting with Allies: America and Britain in Peace and War*, Palgrave Macmillan Limited, September 13, 1996, Pg. 53.

distraction. In trying to curb the British's imperialistic bent, FDR was trying to overcome differences to focus on the main task at hand, defeating the Nazis.<sup>41</sup>

This debate over the second front demonstrates the stark contrast in opinions of the leadership. The two nations managed to lay their differences aside and come to an agreement about when to launch, where to do so, under what leadership structure, and with what resources (though unfortunately for the Russians it took a while). Marshall used the strength of FDR to get a mainland invasion to happen in 1944 illustrates a tactic used by many during the war: relying on the authority of high ranking officials to put an end to disagreements.

Another heated debate took place in the lead up to Operation Torch about the degree to which the Allies should work with Vichy France under François Darlan, if at all. Eisenhower had agreed to give control of French North Africa to Darlan and his forces in exchange for an end to hostilities. Many, including Churchill, were not fond of this decision for they viewed the French leader as odious and in creating an alliance with him as politically toxic. Writing to FDR, Churchill said of Darlan, "We must not overlook the serious political injury which may be done to our cause".<sup>42</sup> In this case, disagreements were overcome by trust and what seemed to be sound strategy. General Marshall and FDR supported Eisenhower's decision, and without that support, Eisenhower may have faced serious political problems. Nevertheless, with the alliance in place, the Allies were able to focus on reaching Tunis rather than fighting the French and occupying the territories they marched through.<sup>43</sup> Both the leadership of America and Britain recognized the

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Dallek, *Review: Churchill and FDR: Friends in Need or Friends Indeed?*, *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, March 1985, Pg. 115.

<sup>42</sup> Robin Renwick, *Fighting with Allies: America and Britain in Peace and War*, Palgrave Macmillan Limited, September 13, 1996, Pg. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Brian Fiderlein, *The Morality Issue: How Darlan Influenced the Allied Unconditional Surrender Pledge in World War II*, Semantic Scholar, 1998, Pg. 16.

political problems they would face back home, but they trusted the decision because they needed such advantages to free up resources and save the lives of many troops.<sup>44</sup>

These two examples demonstrate some of the tough decisions the British and American leadership had to make during the war. Intense emotions were at play within these debates and many others throughout the campaign, and various tactics had to be used in order to maintain a structured, united leadership. However, the conflicts could be very heated with aides frequently reporting about the yelling and hurt feelings that the top commanders faced in the strategizing rooms. The air was always tense; so much so that when a gun was accidentally fired inside one of those meetings as a demonstration, one aid is reported to have said, “My God! Now they’ve started shooting!”<sup>45</sup> But demonstrating sound strategy, relying on the authority of the highest officials to back decisions, and making concessions were all techniques employed to overcome differences and produce results while staying united.

This article is not meant to invalidate the special relationship that Britain and the U.S. formed during the war, nor to suggest that both sides were toxic in dealing with one another. It is simply interesting to reevaluate a part of the Allied forces that’s often neglected: their internal conflicts. That they managed to overcome serious disagreements and animosities is a testament to their ability to produce such an effective force. To bolster unity among the common soldiers, there were campaigns to promote international understanding and teaching one another how to get along. It became clear to the soldiers that to win this war, they would need to work together and abandon unnecessary national rivalries. When they worked together in combat, the soldiers often

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<sup>44</sup> Biddle, Tami D., *Leveraging Strength: The Pillars of American Grand Strategy in World War II*, Pg. 73, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Robin Renwick, *Fighting with Allies: America and Britain in Peace and War*, Palgrave Macmillan Limited, September 13, 1996, Pg. 59.



remarked on the great qualities of the other troops. The commanders on the ground were often driven by remarkably strong personalities that clashed with one another. Sometimes the rivalries could be good in bolstering resolve and getting results, but they could also lead to problems of ignoring orders and creating unnecessary risks. Thus it was up to leaders in the high command to discipline these commanders and help bridge differences between them. Yet the debates and arguments that raged among the highest decision makers could be legendary as well. In those circles, compromise was a tried and true practice, but other tactics such as leveraging the leaders of the two nations and strongly arguing for risky but smart military decisions would be necessary as well. It wasn't guaranteed that the allies would be able to work together as effectively as they did, but by using these various tools the army managed to promote unity and bridge gaps. Churchill summed it up well in discussing a meeting with the other allied powers at the Tehran Conference, "although we were all great friends, it would be idle for us to delude ourselves that we saw eye to eye on all matters."<sup>46</sup> No perfect alliance exists; sides can argue endlessly about minute details or grand strategy. But what's important is their ability to stay united, make compromises, and work together to achieve their goal of victory, something this alliance demonstrated very well.

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<sup>46</sup> Robin Renwick, *Fighting with Allies: America and Britain in Peace and War*, Palgrave Macmillan Limited, September 13, 1996, Pg. 67.

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## **An Obscured Triumph of Democracy? The 1984 Elections in Nicaragua**

Victoria Nefve

This article will argue that the astounding voter participation in the Nicaraguan elections of 1984 was a significant show of the anti-imperialist sentiments felt in Nicaragua in this period. The Sandinista Government went to extensive lengths to ensure the organization of free and transparent elections in 1984. This marked the first instance of an electoral process free of U.S. intervention and internal corruption in the country's history. In the lead up to November 1984, media outlets such as *Barricada* and *Envío* juxtaposed the government's great strides towards democracy with the intensification of US covert intervention in the country. This made the Nicaraguan public acutely aware of the US's neocolonial intentions and rallied support to institutionalize and legitimize the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional's (FSLN) anti-imperialist revolution.

Nicaragua's 1984 general election was a landmark success for democracy. Despite Nicaragua's "long history of elections," from the Liberal and Conservative oligarchies (1856-1926) to the US Marine Occupation (1927-1933) and the Somoza dictatorship (1934-1979), Nicaraguans saw the November 4th elections of 1984 as the "first ones" in their history.<sup>1</sup> The revolutionary Sandinista Government, which took power in 1979, went to great lengths to ensure that the elections of 1984 were free, fair, and representative of the population's wishes. This was done very consciously by the revolutionary government to mark a definite contrast to - and reversal of - the electoral tradition in Nicaragua. Historically, elections were

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<sup>1</sup> Envío, "Nicaragua: An Inside View of the Elections," *Envío: Información sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 42, (December 1984).

used during various periods of U.S. domination to legitimize and “fine-tune” their domination.<sup>2</sup> Elections under the most recent regime, the Somoza dictatorship, were accompanied by strong coercion.<sup>3</sup> As a result, there was an overwhelming pressure for the Sandinista leadership to make the 1984 elections as fair and faultless as possible. In eight months, the government doubled the number of polling centers from the Somoza regime, from 2,000 to nearly 4,000, and voter turnout on election day was 75.4%.<sup>4</sup>

However, this relative triumph of democracy in Nicaragua’s electoral history is hardly considered as such in the contemporary literature on the Sandinista regime of 1979 to 1990. Instead, it is often used in larger arguments about the United States’ interference with the FSLN’s intended system of direct democracy. Historians such as Harry Vanden and Alejandro Bendaña use 1984 as a “stepping stone” example to argue that by 1990, Nicaragua had shifted to a “Western-style” system of democracy in an attempt to appease the United States.<sup>5</sup> They argue that the 1990 victory of the US-backed candidate, Violeta Chamorro, came as a shocking blow to the FSLN leadership, who had allowed disillusionment to grow by failing to address key economic concerns among rural voters.<sup>6</sup> While there is certainly credence to this perspective, not enough emphasis is given to the success of the 1984 electoral process and what it revealed about the intensity of Nicaraguans’ anti-imperialist and anti-colonial motivations.

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<sup>2</sup> Envío, “US Intervention and Elections in Nicaragua,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 32, (February 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Envío, “Nicaragua: An Inside View of the Elections,”

<sup>4</sup> Envío, “Nicaragua: Analysis of the Electoral Results,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 41, (November 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Gary Prevost and Harry E. Vanden, eds, *The Undermining of the Sandinista Revolution*, London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2016, (Accessed November 5, 2019): 3, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

It is widely acknowledged that the FSLN built popular support by representing the “culmination of the Nicaraguan people’s century-long struggle against US domination.”<sup>7</sup> It is less often recognized, however, that in the lead up to the elections, the threat of US intervention was used extensively to push for voter participation. Free and fair voter participation was stressed as the key to breaking the cycle of US electoral domination and intervention in Nicaragua, and legitimizing national sovereignty. The Sandinista newspaper, *Barricada*, included extensive coverage of “US aggression” and “CIA tactics” in its 1984 issues leading up to the November elections. *Envío* magazine also included thorough and consistent coverage of U.S. political and military intervention. This coverage ensured that Nicaraguan readers remained highly attuned to the U.S.’s omnipresence and rallied support for the FSLN as the leading anti-imperialist force in the country.

### **The Traditional Portrayal of the United States as the Most Significant Factor in Nicaragua’s Fate**

The secondary literature surveyed for this paper was published between the late 1980s and the 2000s, and identifies some important reasons behind the level of popular support that the FSLN managed to build and some of the challenges to this support that emerged over time. With regard to these challenges, the literature considers the role of the United States’ destabilization campaign to be very significant not only in diverting government resources to fight the Contra Insurgency, but also in perturbing the FSLN’s intended system of direct democracy. While it is impossible to ignore the role of the U.S.’s destabilization efforts, this paper will give more weight to the depth and significance of Nicaragua’s internal political process than has been

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<sup>7</sup> Fred A. López, “The Nature of the Sandinista Revolution,” *Latin American Perspectives* 14, no. 1 (1987): 126.

traditionally given. This significance is traced through the 1984 elections and explores the domestic process and justification given for holding elections.

In the second half of the 1980s, Carlos Vilas published important works on the Sandinista Revolution which have been deemed highly significant to other scholars of the region. Fred A. Lopez III who reviewed Vilas' 1986 book, *The Sandinista Revolution* argues that Vilas emphasized the role of the FSLN in building popular support by representing the "culmination of the Nicaraguan people's century-long struggle against US domination."<sup>8</sup> Throughout its regime, Vilas notes that the FSLN maintained national political unity through its alliance with different classes, and that external US aggression and support for the counterrevolution resulted in a worsening economic crisis.<sup>9</sup> In his 1988 article, "Popular Insurgency and Social Revolution in Central America," Vilas makes the important claim that "in neocolonial societies, social revolutions involve an anti-imperialist struggle."<sup>10</sup> It is important to consider that these works were published before the 1990 election that took the FSLN out of power because they stress the significance of Nicaraguans' anti-imperialist sentiments in bolstering support for the Sandinistas. The significance of Nicaraguans' anti-imperialist sentiments becomes more muted in the literature published after 1990, which focuses on the role of the United States in tampering with the Sandinistas political system through the military as well as diplomacy.

Harry Vanden, in his chapter entitled "Democracy Derailed: The 1990 Elections and After" (originally published in 1999), explains that when the FSLN took power in 1979, it demonstrated a genuine intention to experiment with forms of participatory and direct

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<sup>8</sup> Lopez.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Carlos M. Vilas, "Popular Insurgency and Social Revolution in Central America," *Latin American Perspectives* vol. 15, no. 1 (1988): 56.

democracy, in the first half of the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> While Vanden deems the Sandinistas' democratic efforts to be "attempts," this paper will argue that organizing the general election of 1984 served to galvanize the population behind their anti-imperialist platform and legitimize their revolution.

Nevertheless, Vanden sees external pressure from the United States as the cause of a shift in the late 1980s from anti-imperialist politics towards a representative and electoral form of democracy that would appease the US. He argues that "Forms of representative democracy began to supplant the attempt at direct democracy represented by the mass organizations and the Council of State."<sup>12</sup> He ultimately claims that a large portion of the Sandinista government's failure in 1990 should be attributed to its shift to a "Western-style" system of democracy in an attempt to appease the United States.<sup>13</sup> Vanden consciously traces the shifts in the democratic processes within the country throughout the 1980s and the population's growing disillusionment with the Sandinista leadership's concessions over time. This is a very important contribution to a body of literature that has sometimes obscured the diplomatic pressures placed on Nicaragua in favor of the military and counter-insurgency role that the US played.

The Sandinista government experienced a significant amount of external pressure and economic strain in this period, leading it to adopt a system of martial law and declare a State of National Emergency. While some observers accused the Sandinistas of "paranoia" for adopting these measures so early, they arguably enabled the revolutionary government to survive all of the military and diplomatic attacks it faced.<sup>14</sup> One of these measures was to devote sixty percent of

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<sup>11</sup> Gary Prevost and Harry E. Vanden, eds. *The Undermining of the Sandinista Revolution*, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Envío, "The State of National Emergency in Nicaragua: Background, Causes And Implementation," *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 11, (April 1982).



their budget to military spending in a constant struggle to fend off US-backed Contra attacks.<sup>15</sup> This kind of economic sacrifice largely came at the cost of their constituents, particularly agrarian and rural populations, who later lamented the cost and impact of those sacrifices. Although much of the population at the time was driven by anti-imperialist sentiments, many later concurred that one of the reasons for the fall of the FSLN was its assumption that the Nicaraguan population could withstand indefinite economic hardship for the cause of the revolution, while “the FSLN leadership and the cadres in the bureaucracy remained noticeably unaffected.”<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it seems that the Sandinista leadership not only neglected public grievances by the late 1980s, but were also largely ignorant of them due to poor organizational lines of communication and faulty polls.<sup>17</sup> Vanden furthers this by concluding that the Sandinistas’ move towards representative democracy and politics among elites was the last straw for the disenfranchised masses.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, the intense external force on Nicaragua contributed to the FSLN’s partial abandonment of its revolutionary principles and with it, its mobilized people.

Alejandro Bendaña, in his 2004 article “The Rise and Fall of the FSLN,” notes that the initial success of the Sandinistas in 1979 was the product of “widespread hatred for Somoza and the identification of the FSLN as the embodiment of nationalist hero Augusto Sandino”<sup>19</sup> who

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<sup>15</sup> “The Contras still in War with Private Aid,” in *U.S. policy toward anti-Communist insurgencies: hearing before a subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, Ninety-Ninth Congress, first session: special hearing Congressional witnesses, Department of Defense, Department of State, nondepartmental witnesses* (1985): 85.

<sup>16</sup> Alejandro Bendaña, “The Rise and Fall of the FSLN,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 37, no. 6 (2004): 23. ProQuest.

<sup>17</sup> Gary Prevost and Harry E. Vanden, eds. *The Undermining of the Sandinista Revolution*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Alejandro Bendaña, “The Rise and Fall of the FSLN,” 21.

mounted a successful campaign against the US occupation of Nicaragua from 1927-1934.

Bendaña explains that the invocation of Sandino served to broaden the FSLN's appeal with the underscoring of nationalism and anti-imperialism. However, Bendaña also notes the significance of the US's destabilization campaign and the extent to which it forced the FSLN to make several concessions, including organized elections in 1984 and the drafting of a "bourgeois democratic constitution," which gave more power and more voice to opposing parties.<sup>20</sup> He argues that a top-down political structure "fell far short of people's aspirations for genuine economic and social democracy, let alone sovereignty."<sup>21</sup> This conclusion is similar to Vanden's, highlighting the pervasive nature of US influence and its ultimate victory in destabilizing the Sandinista vision of Nicaraguan democracy. While external influence should not be ignored or undermined, this paper will focus on the extent to which Nicaraguans continued to support the FSLN based on its anti-imperialist platform and active military struggle against US-backed forces. The influence of the legacy of Augusto Sandino, while emphasized as a big factor for the 1979 revolution, disappears from scholarly discourse once the FSLN comes into power and the Reagan administration begins to intervene.

The loss of emphasis on the legacy of Augusto Sandino is made all the more interesting by the fact that, despite the later loss in popularity of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, around six hundred thousand Nicaraguans continue to think of themselves as "Sandinistas."<sup>22</sup> However, the crucial caveat to this claim is that "Sandinismo" in Nicaragua

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<sup>20</sup> Bendana, 22.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>22</sup> William Grigsby, "William Grigsby: "Refounding" the Sandinista movement," *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 225, (April 2000).

today is understood in the “broadest sense of the term,” and includes Nicaraguans who never belonged to the FSLN. Hence, despite the political developments in the 1980s and 1990s and the large-scale disillusionment with the FSLN, the legacy of Augusto Sandino remains largely intact as Nicaraguans continue to proudly associate with Sandinismo. This is an impactful show of the sustained and collective anti-imperialist sentiments in the country and the weight of these feelings on the population.

Indeed, one final and important book written on this period is William LeoGrande’s *Our Own Backyard*, which looks at the Sandinista period in Nicaragua through the lens of US policy. In this book, LeoGrande ultimately argues that “for good or ill,” the fate of the region was based on decisions that were debated within the various bodies of the US administration, and that these were “decisions over which Central Americans themselves had little influence.”<sup>23</sup> The notion of Latin American countries being in the United States’ “backyard” was one that preceded this book. The phrase was popularized during the Cold War as the US made great efforts to maintain its influence all over the world and contain the Soviet Union’s influence. Chomsky situates these Cold War politics in Latin America, explaining that when Kissinger was leading the effort to overthrow the Chilean government, the National Security Council underlined the importance of this enterprise by warning him that if the US could not “control Latin America,” then “it could not expect to achieve a successful order elsewhere in the world.”<sup>24</sup> It may be worth drawing attention to an editorial in *Barricada* from April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1985 entitled “No one’s ‘backyard,’” which explicitly refutes this US mentality and states that “what is in crisis is not the security of the

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<sup>23</sup> William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Noam Chomsky, “History of US Rule in Latin America,” *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, (lecture, Cambridge, Massachusetts, December 15, 2009).

United States [...] but rather its political and economic domination over what that government's ruling interests have historically considered its 'backyard.'"<sup>25</sup> In other words, the editorial rejects the US's traditional narrative, which justifies intervention as necessary to preserve national (and global) security, and instead brands this kind of intervention as a manifestation of US attempts at preserving its imperial domination over the region.

In this context of the US's vast neocolonial enterprise, it will be argued that the 1984 elections in Nicaragua were organized largely as an anticolonial response to US imperialism and intervention in the region. This argument serves to highlight the level of Nicaraguan agency and control over the fate of their country that is often obscured in narratives of the country's history vis-a-vis the United States. In addition, a case will be made for the role of the press in attuning Nicaraguans to the activities of the US in the region, particularly in the months preceding the election, and encouraging them to vote in the elections and seize the fate of the country. The success of this endeavor will be demonstrated with the election process, the number of people who registered to vote, and the number of people who voted on election day despite the threat of attacks from the Contras.

### **The Anti-Imperialist Angle in the Nicaraguan Press in the Year Preceding the Election**

The anti-imperialist angle of the election was emphasized in the months preceding it. It is worthwhile to note the significance of anti-imperialist discourse to the fabric of Nicaragua's national identity. The country's long and painful history of foreign intervention (both militarily and diplomatically) was one that the FSLN strove to bring to end, and thus was a significant component of their campaign. Indeed, on the day preceding the announcement of the date for the

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<sup>25</sup> Barricada, "No one's 'backyard,'" *Barricada Internacional: International Weekly of the Sandinista National Liberation Front*. Nicaragua Libre, vol. V, no. 154, April 4, 1985, (accessed November 21, 2019).

November elections, *Barricada* published an article stating that “The Sandinista principle of defending national sovereignty will not lose validity in Nicaragua as long as the contradiction with imperialism continued.”<sup>26</sup> The interconnection between nationalism and anti-imperialism allowed the Sandinistas to also use both terms relatively interchangeably.

*Envío*, the monthly magazine out of the Central American University (*Universidad Centroamericana*), published numerous, extensive articles on the significance of the electoral process and the extent of US intervention in its 1984 issues. *Envío* magazine is a dual-language publication that was born in February 1981 with the goal of “provid[ing] critical support to Nicaragua’s revolutionary process” with “objective and critical” reporting.<sup>27</sup> As its name suggests, the magazine aimed to send news of the events in Nicaragua internationally to provide an analysis of the situation from where it was taking place.<sup>28</sup> *Envío*’s articles are thorough, well-researched, and very analytical, so much so that one Sandinista official said that they read the magazine “to understand the meaning of what they had just done.”<sup>29</sup> While likely said in part as a lighthearted commendation of the magazine’s insightful articles, this comment also illustrates *Envío*’s alignment with the Sandinista message. The anticolonial angle of the election is raised in nearly every one of *Envío*’s issues from February 1984 to the November elections:

February 1984: “US Intervention and Elections in Nicaragua”;

March 1984: “Sandino: The Chronology of our National Hero”;

May 1984: “Full-Scale Baffle against Destabilization”;

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<sup>26</sup> Barricada, “Archives no. 12,” *Barricada Internacional: International Weekly of the Sandinista National Liberation Front*. Nicaragua Libre, vol. IV, no. 102, February 20, 1984, (accessed November 21, 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Envío, “Brief History of Envío Magazine,” *Envío: Información sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica*,

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

August 1984: “*The Electoral Process Advances, But Abstention Encourages Intervention*”;

September 1984: “*Offensive Against Nicaragua and its Elections: On the Way to Invasion?*”

Similarly, the weekly Sandinista newspaper, *Barricada*, also continued its extensive coverage of US and Contra aggression in its issues preceding the election. Big headlines in 1984 include: “US violates international law”; “Major ‘contra’ offensive underway”; “Covert war on trial: US rejects International Court jurisdiction”; “Who will defend the CIA?”; “US Plans: ‘portray Nicaragua as aggressor.’” In these articles, the newspaper heavily relies on quotation marks when discussing the “Contras,” the “covert war,” and “CIA tactics.”<sup>30</sup> This approach has the effect of discrediting the legitimacy of the aggression and foreign intervention, while also keeping readers highly aware of the US’s involvement in the region. Press censorship in Nicaragua, particularly during the State of Emergency in 1984, meant that a limited number of newspapers – and narratives – were circulating.

It is worthwhile to consider the rigorous documentation of the CIA’s actions in the Nicaraguan press (which began even before 1984) in the context of the Iran-Contra hearings that began in 1985 in the United States. It is widely acknowledged in the US that these hearings failed to answer the majority of Americans’ concerns over the “what exactly the CIA’s role was and what laws were broken,” as these were addressed in secret sessions that the public was not privy to.<sup>31</sup> However, looking at newspaper articles from Nicaragua during this time paints a

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<sup>30</sup> Barricada, “Major ‘contra’ offensive underway,” *Barricada Internacional: International Weekly of the Sandinista National Liberation Front*. Nicaragua Libre, vol. IV, no. 102, February 20, 1984, (accessed November 21, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> David Kasper and Barbara Trent, *Cover Up: Behind the Iran Contra Affair*, Documentary, Directed by David Kasper and Barbara Trent, USA: Iranian Movies, June 1988.

clearer picture of the precise nature of the CIA's involvement and its explicit violation of the Boland Amendment, passed in 1983, which "prohibit[ed] covert assistance for military operations in Nicaragua and to authorize overt interdiction assistance."<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Kwitny makes the astute observation that covert warfare, while intended to be secret, "[is] not secret from the Russians, it's certainly not secret from Laotians [...] or the Nicaraguans. It's covert from the American taxpayer."<sup>33</sup> The articles from *Barricada* and *Envío* certainly support Kwitny's comment that Nicaraguans were highly aware of – and opposed to – US intervention.

From the outset, the FSLN based its platform on anticolonialism and anti-imperialism. On the first page of its monograph from 1977, the FSLN introduces its "struggle" as one that came out of "the patriotic liberation struggles against nineteenth century Yankee expansionism and twentieth century imperialist domination."<sup>34</sup> The monograph then presents the historical timeline of foreign domination in the region, beginning with Spanish colonialism in 1821 and ending with US influence through the Somoza Dictatorship. This timeline gives considerable emphasis to the national figure of the 1930s, Augusto Sandino, who led the anti-imperialist war against the US Marines who occupied Nicaragua from 1927-1934. Sandino's achievements in driving out the US ground forces raised his status to that of a national hero and a symbol of anti-imperialism, independence, and patriotism. Sandino's influence and impact on Nicaraguans' memory was not lost on the FSLN, which was originally founded under the name "National

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<sup>32</sup> Rep. Boland Amendment, H.Amdt.461 to H.R.2968, Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1984. Passed 227-194, October 20, 1983.

<sup>33</sup> David Kasper and Barbara Trent, *Cover Up: Behind the Iran Contra Affair*, June 1988.

<sup>34</sup> Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, "Nicaragua: On the General Political-Military Platform of Struggle of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation for the Triumph of the Sandinista Popular Revolution," *The Freedom Archives*. (Resistance Publications: 1977): 2.

Liberation Front” (FLN) in 1961.<sup>35</sup> The term “Sandinista” was added to their name only two years later, as a way of grounding their struggle in anti-imperialism and in Sandino’s legacy.<sup>36</sup> The FSLN monograph from 1977 further reinforces their alignment to Sandino, claiming that “the first major stage in [the] Sandinista revolution was our people’s successful struggle from 1926-34.”<sup>37</sup> In addition to emphasizing their anti-imperialist platform, the FSLN’s association with Sandino served to broaden their popular appeal by committing to continue a widely successful and nostalgic legacy. Bendaña indeed argues that a significant portion of the FSLN’s initial success should be attributed to its perception among Nicaraguans as the “embodiment” of Sandino.<sup>38</sup>

It is significant to consider that *Envío* published similar timelines of foreign intervention in Nicaragua to those presented in the FSLN’s 1977 monograph, in two consecutive 1984 issues. In its February article, “US Intervention and Elections in Nicaragua,” *Envío* demonstrates the ways in which elections were used by the United States in Nicaragua to achieve different goals at different points in time.<sup>39</sup> The timeline begins in 1856, with the election of William Walker, and goes through the “supervised elections” in the 1920s to the highly coercive and corrupt elections under Somoza.<sup>40</sup> Of course, the focus of the article on US intervention through elections was made very consciously ahead of the November elections. Not only did this remind readers of the

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<sup>35</sup> New World Encyclopedia contributors, “Sandinista National Liberation Front,” *New World Encyclopedia*.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, “Nicaragua: On the General Political-Military Platform of Struggle of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation for the Triumph of the Sandinista Popular Revolution,” 4.

<sup>38</sup> Alejandro Bendaña, “The Rise and Fall of the FSLN,” 21.

<sup>39</sup> Envío, “US Intervention and Elections in Nicaragua,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 32, (February 1984).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



importance of elections within the framework of an anti-imperial struggle, but also of the importance of free and fair elections completely independent from US involvement.<sup>41</sup>

In its March 1984 issue, *Envío* presents a second timeline of US intervention, this one outlining the “Chronology of [Nicaragua’s] National Hero.”<sup>42</sup> This title already presents Sandino as a nationalist figure for his key role in pushing the US military forces out of Nicaragua and ending their physical occupation. The body of the article explains that Nicaragua’s 1979 Revolution should be viewed from a “historical perspective,” rather than through revolutionary theory, and claims that “This is the viewpoint on which many researchers, sociologists, political scientists, and journalists with an interest in Nicaragua base their analysis of the country.”<sup>43</sup> The magazine places a focus on this historical lens to justify the significance of Sandino’s legacy and its relevance to understanding the current revolutionary and political process.<sup>44</sup> This presentation of the historical perspective and the necessity of understanding Sandino’s significance is a parallel argument to the one presented in the FSLN’s monograph. It is important to keep this in mind, because while the magazine was not a direct product of the Sandinista Government, its stated mission was to provide “critical support to the revolutionary process.”<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, *Envío* did not always remain so aligned with the Sandinista narrative and produced various critical articles on the period several years later. One noteworthy article that illustrates the eventual disillusionment felt by the population was published by the magazine in

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Envío, “Sandino: The Chronology of Our National Hero,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 33, (March 1984).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Envío, “Brief History of Envío Magazine,” *Envío: Información sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica*.

2011. It is entitled “Memories of the Betrayed Generation” and includes accounts from eight former combatants and war wounded Nicaraguans who later felt betrayed by the revolution and its leadership. There is an overwhelming consensus in these accounts that the demobilization of 1990 was “shameful.”<sup>46</sup> To many of the combatants, the neglectful attitude of the leadership and the lack of compensation offered to war veterans for their service was a sign that they had been used as political pawns to propel the leadership to the top. One squadron leader reflects on this by remarking that, “There was money to finance the war, but there wasn’t any for all that happened to us after the war.”<sup>47</sup> This statement also confirms the national disillusionment with the severe wartime economic constraints that eventually became unbearable for nearly all Nicaraguans. This sentiment is taken further by another combatant, “Lucas”, who joined the FSLN in 1977 and concludes that the lack of financial assistance and support from the FSLN showed that “we didn’t betray the FSLN; they, the leaders, betrayed us.”<sup>48</sup>

The significance of this article further lies in the hindsight it provides on this period by those who lived through it and reflect on whether it was all worth it. While the interviewees’ conclusions vary, there is another consensus that the Sandinista leadership evolved into one that uses “Band-Aids to cover gaping wounds and [hands] out trinkets here and toys there so people will vote for them,” seeking to “win the elections without offering long-term solutions.”<sup>49</sup>

However, despite the heavily critical tone of the article, the accounts also voice the initial enthusiasm and willingness to engage in a patriotic struggle for the greater good of their country.

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<sup>46</sup> Envío, “Memories of the Betrayed Generation,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 362, (September 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Indeed, the interviewees confirmed that most Nicaraguans became involved in the Resistance voluntarily and were mostly unpaid, but that they did it out of inspiration after “the triumph in 1979 [...] a project that favored most of the poorest in Nicaragua.”<sup>50</sup> Perhaps this initial optimism elucidates the intense bitterness felt over the Sandinista leadership’s eventual betrayal of its principles and ideologies: “These days the Sandinista party is different, [it is] corrupted. In the old days they’d hold assemblies and you really got to vote and we’d take two days to get a resolution. Now everyone knows beforehand who’s going to be chosen. There’s less participation from the rank and file, it’s no longer democratic; everything comes straight down from the top.”<sup>51</sup> This kind of reflection is deeply significant to the purpose of this paper, which aims to recognize the accumulated failures of the Sandinistas over time while drawing attention to the initial optimism and hope they engendered. Further, this critical article from *Envío* is also useful in showcasing the independent magazine’s optimism about the revolution’s potential and the political process in 1984.

### **The Landmark 1984 Elections**

The announcement to hold the elections on November 4<sup>th</sup> was made on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1984, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Augusto Sandino’s death.<sup>52</sup> *Barricada* reports that this announcement was made before 100,000 people and 58 foreign delegations at the commemoration of the anniversary of Sandino’s death, where President Ortega made a speech stressing the importance of the democratic process in these elections that would be completely

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Envío.

<sup>52</sup> Barricada, “Government announces: Elections in November,” *Barricada Internacional: International Weekly of the Sandinista National Liberation Front*. Nicaragua Libre, vol. IV, no. 103, February 27, 1984, (accessed November 21, 2019).

transparent, free and fair.<sup>53</sup> The deliberate decision to announce Nicaragua's first democratic elections on the anniversary of the death of the country's greatest nationalist and anti-imperialist hero was not only a symbolic move on the part of the Sandinistas, but also strategically sound. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sandino was heavily publicized in the months leading up to it alongside a series of articles about his significance to the country's revolutionary process and history with the US. The announcement to move forward the election date (which was initially set tentatively for 1985, back in 1980) on such a momentous occasion was the first step towards rallying and inspiring the population to vote in these historic elections that signified the continuation of Sandino's legacy.

The popularized notion, supported by Bendaña, that the United States pressured the Sandinistas to hold elections at a time when there was no adequate infrastructure in place to organize such a large-scale endeavor is complicated by several accounts in *Envío* magazine. In its February issue, the magazine states that Nicaragua's decision to schedule its general elections two days before the US presidential elections on November 6<sup>th</sup> would "lessen the possibility of a direct invasion of Nicaragua during the last months of Reagan's first term, obtain greater legitimacy for the revolution internationally and greater internal unity in Nicaragua in case Reagan is reelected."<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the threat of an aggravated military situation on the part of the US to interfere with the elections was also publicized by the Sandinista leaders.<sup>55</sup> Hence, the Sandinista leadership used the threat of US aggression to massively mobilize the population and

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Envío, "Electoral Process Moves Ahead Amid Difficulties," *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 33, (March 1984).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

encourage them to flex their political agency in the face of an imperial giant. This also demonstrates that the Sandinista government repurposed the narrative that the United States “controlled” the fate of Nicaragua’s political process, using this to encourage voter participation. The significant (and historic) voter turnout that will be outlined in this paper demonstrates the extent of Nicaraguans’ anti-imperialist sentiments and the social mobilization power of elections.

Voter registration for the elections occurred from July 27<sup>th</sup> to July 30<sup>th</sup> at 3,896 polling centers throughout the country.<sup>56</sup> During this time 1.56 million citizens registered to vote, a figure that “surprised everyone.”<sup>57</sup> This comment not only refers to the surprise of the United States, but also the Nicaraguan government, as such an astounding voter registration figure led the National Institute for Census Research to recalculate its population estimates.<sup>58</sup> One US Administration spokesperson commented that they “[could not] explain what moved the Nicaraguans to register to vote.”<sup>59</sup> This comment from the US spokesperson is significant because it points to the deeply corrupt legacy of elections in Nicaragua and the disillusionment with the electoral process that was expected on the part of Nicaraguans. In an interview with two key organizers for the election: Leonel Argüello, director of the Nicaraguan Insurance Institute in charge of public relations and the civic educational campaign, and Roberto Everstz, director of electoral affairs, *Envío* illuminates Nicaragua’s electoral past. Everstz explains that, “In the past, people had little interest in voting, and the government devoted little energy to facilitating the

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<sup>56</sup> Envío, “Nicaragua’s Political Parties in Two Months of Electoral Campaigning,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 40, (October 1984).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

voting process.”<sup>60</sup> During the Somoza dictatorship, elections were not secret and accompanied by strong coercion in the form of citizens marking their ballots in front of electoral officials or voting in a booth covered with a transparent bedsheet.<sup>61</sup> In addition, the ballots were made of onion skin paper that allowed electoral officials to see citizens’ votes. Those who voted for Somoza’s party received a special pink card as they left the polling center, which could be used to “avoid problems with the police, secure help from the National Guard in the case of a neighborhood quarrel, avoid paying fines, etc.”<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, by Somoza’s last reelection in 1974, there were fewer than 2,000 polling centers in the country.<sup>63</sup> Not only did this not allow many Nicaraguans to vote, it also enabled officials at each polling center to “vote” in the place of the registered voters who had failed to come to the polls.<sup>64</sup>

The dire electoral process that Nicaraguans were used to, paired with extensive foreign intervention, explains the lengths that the 1984 election’s organizers had to go to secure the population’s faith in the free and fair program. Part of this effort was ensuring that the whole country would have access to a polling center, which meant that the number of centers was doubled, from 2,000 to nearly 4,000.<sup>65</sup> 48% of the centers were in the countryside and 52% were in the cities, and Everstz highlights this success by saying that “people voted on November 4 in places where elections had never even been heard of before.”<sup>66</sup> Everstz and Arguello insist that

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<sup>60</sup> Envío, “An inside view of the Elections,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 42, (December 1984).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Envío.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

every detail ensuring the secrecy of the voting, the orderliness, the participation, the nonpartisanism of electoral officials, and the vote-counting procedures were carefully thought out and planned by their technical team. Moreover, part of the election effort was educating the population that had such little experience with the democratic process. Part of this effort was conducting a “literacy crusade” and promoting civic education, both to members of the electoral bodies and the population.<sup>67</sup> Arguello explains that their civic education campaign was where they made their greatest expenditures and concludes that this “couldn’t have [been] a better investment” as “the elections [were] very educational, as much for those of us working in the electoral process as for the genuine actors in the process.”<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, the government’s huge push towards organizing elections in eight months had a significant financial toll on a country already engulfed in guerrilla warfare. The Sandinistas inherited an embryonic infrastructure for democratic elections from the Somoza period, which was further destroyed by the Contra War and continuous fighting. In their attempt to reverse the corrupt and farcical history of elections in the country, the Sandinista government spent over 500 million córdobas on the general election of 1984.<sup>69</sup> Although the election’s organizers showed great optimism at this “investment towards peace,” the combined cost of the election with the cost of the Contra War arguably accelerated the FSLN’s decline.<sup>70</sup> The FSLN’s miscalculation of the extent to which the Nicaraguan people could withstand this level of economic hardship

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<sup>67</sup> Barricada, “Editorial,” *Barricada Internacional: International Weekly of the Sandinista National Liberation Front*. Nicaragua Libre, vol. IV, no. 103, February 27, 1984, (accessed November 21, 2019); Envío, “An inside view of the Elections,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 42, (December 1984).

<sup>68</sup> Envío, “An inside view of the Elections,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 42, (December 1984).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

complicates the simple notion that it was largely “US pressure” which caused their downfall. Instead, it reinforces the notion that the Sandinistas became detached from the population’s wishes and demands and misjudged the extent to which they could remain unwavering in their revolutionary zeal and idealism after years of survivalist conditions.

Political pluralism was one of the cornerstones of the Sandinistas’ vision of democracy, and political pluralism was encouraged by the Sandinista government in the 1984 elections, despite the popular narrative in the United States that this was not the case. While in January 1984 the rightwing parties in Nicaragua suggested the election date be moved up from 1985, they became “somewhat disconcerted” after the February announcement that elections would occur in November.<sup>71</sup> The CDN, or “Democratic Coordinating Committee,” was a coalition of three rightwing Nicaraguan parties led by Arturo Cruz, who presented himself as a “mediator” between the Nicaraguan government and the counterrevolutionary leaders, whom he called “friends.”<sup>72</sup> From the outset, Cruz threatened to withdraw the CDN from the electoral race if their additional demands were not met.<sup>73</sup> He criticized the openly discussed and debated (and publicized) Electoral Law, calling it “political distortion.”<sup>74</sup> In the end, the CDN’s demands were not met and so they refused to register their candidates by the July 25<sup>th</sup> deadline (stipulated in the Electoral Law), nor by the extended deadline of August 4<sup>th</sup>, nor by the 24-hour prolongation after that.<sup>75</sup> In a State Department report, this was considered to be a testament to the FSLN’s exploitation of its

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<sup>71</sup> Envío, “Electoral Process Moves Ahead Amid Difficulties,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 33, (March 1984).

<sup>72</sup> Envío, “Nicaragua’s Political Parties in Two Months of Electoral Campaigning,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 40, (October 1984).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



control and failure to “negotiate seriously” on the demands of the CDN.<sup>76</sup> While the State Department deemed this to be an abuse of power on the part of the Sandinistas, and advocated for the CDN’s demands which the party considered were necessary to holding “free and fair elections,” the CDN then went to considerable lengths to encourage voter (and party) abstention.<sup>77</sup> In addition, it is undeniable that encouraging abstention was also a move to sabotage the legitimacy of the elections; PLI presidential candidate Virgilio Godoy criticized the CDN, stating that not running in the elections “[was] the best way to ensure that the FSLN [remained] in power.”<sup>78</sup> Domingo Sanchez of the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) substantiated Godoy’s comment, calling abstention unpatriotic and supportive of “the uncompromising position of Ronald Reagan.”<sup>79</sup>

In his reflection on the elections, Arguello confirms that perhaps their biggest success was “the large number of votes for parties other than the FSLN” which allowed for the expression of dissidence inherent in a state permissive of political pluralism.<sup>80</sup> In Domingo Sanchez’s (PSN) criticism of the CDN for abstaining, he further commented that “no one has the right to say that the conditions necessary for an electoral contest do not exist.”<sup>81</sup> The election results further demonstrate that the publicity attempts of opposition parties and

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<sup>76</sup> United States Department of State, *Resource Book: Sandinista Elections in Nicaragua*, Report no. 51/6, 1984; Envío, “Nicaragua’s Political Parties in Two Months of Electoral Campaigning,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 40, (October 1984).

<sup>77</sup> Envío, “Nicaragua’s Political Parties in Two Months of Electoral Campaigning,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 40, (October 1984).

<sup>78</sup> Envío.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Envío, “An inside view of the Elections,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 42, (December 1984).

<sup>81</sup> Envío, “Nicaragua’s Political Parties in Two Months of Electoral Campaigning,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 40, (October 1984).

counterrevolutionary radio stations urging Nicaraguans to cast void votes failed; only 6% of the votes cast were voided.<sup>82</sup> This result confirms Nicaraguans' commitment and restored faith in the power of the democratic process.

Indeed, this commitment is demonstrated in the November election results, which show that 75.4% of the people registered to vote did so, and that the FSLN received 63% of the vote.<sup>83</sup> *Envío* is adamant that the voting percentage was “comparable to the normal average of most traditional democracies” and that this percentage further discredits US predictions that the elections would only amount to a plebiscite.<sup>84</sup> Hence, these results also contradict the widely made claims in the US that the elections were conducted in a “totalitarian or dictatorial style.”<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, the uptick in Contra attacks on the day of the elections demonstrate the continued, and illegal, attempts of the United States to intervene. However, these attempts were not significant in affecting voter participation on election day, as only 16 out of the 3892 total polling centers in the country had to be closed due to Contra attacks.<sup>86</sup> In light of these attacks, it is helpful to consider Chomsky's assessment that “leading Reaganite scholars concede that democracy is a good thing, ‘if and only if it is consistent with [US] strategic and economic interests’”<sup>87</sup> Despite the US's destabilizing attempts, Arguello and Everstz note the rapid shift in its attention to the elections following the results: “[The US] began talking about an “electoral farce” and then had to invent the MiG story so people would stop talking about our elections [...]

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<sup>82</sup> Envío, “Analysis of the Electoral Results,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 41, (November 1984).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Envío, “Analysis of the Electoral Results,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 41, (November 1984).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Noam Chomsky.

The US reaction was a clear demonstration of the honesty and freedom displayed in our electoral process.”<sup>88</sup>

To conclude, the significance of the 1984 elections lies both in the landmark political participation of Nicaraguans, and the concealment of this democratic effort in the United States (both at the time of the election and in subsequent literature on the Sandinista period). This paper argued that the FSLN’s anti-imperialist platform, which gained them tremendous support during the revolution, was largely responsible for mobilizing over one and a half million voters to exercise their political agency under the watchful eye of the international community. During a time of intense guerrilla warfare and a State of Emergency, the population’s support for the Sandinistas’ anti-colonial efforts superseded these destabilization efforts from the US-backed counterrevolutionaries and contributed to the success of the election. It is therefore surprising to see such an absence of literature on this historic election, which made great strides to end the legacy of corruption and intervention in Nicaraguan elections. It may be that the reason for this absence lies in the overwhelmingly US-centric narrative surrounding this period and this region. As the State Department report of the election elucidates, these were not considered “free and fair” elections by the United States, which argued that the Sandinistas did not allow for adequate political pluralism and competition. More importantly, the US’s history of intervention with the electoral process in Nicaragua and its significant, albeit “covert,” presence in the region during the 1980s explains its reluctance to applaud the Sandinistas’ achievements in furthering the democratic (and anti-imperialist) process. As a result, perhaps the 1984 elections were obscured both by the US’s domination over the historical narrative, as well as by Nicaragua’s own dire

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<sup>88</sup> Envío, “An inside view of the Elections,” *Envío: Información Sobre Nicaragua y Centroamérica* no. 42, (December 1984).

electoral history. In other words, the fact it was the Sandinista government (or a “Marxist/Leninist state” according to the State Department) that organized the country’s first intervention-free, transparent, and democratic elections significantly contributed to its absence from the US-dominated literature.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> United States Department of State, *Resource Book: Sandinista Elections in Nicaragua*, Report no. 51/6, 1984

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## **WHEN THE WAR CAME HOME: NAVIGATING GANGS IN POSTWAR NEW YORK CITY**

Mollie Yellin

For many Americans, the end of World War II meant the beginning of peace. But for the people of New York City, a new war was only just beginning. This war would be fought with more modern and lethal guns as well as anything else that could be used as a weapon. The soldiers who would fight it were the marginalized youth of the city: Puerto Ricans, African Americans, Italian Americans, Irish Americans, and others. And the recent war overseas would have a clear influence on the use of violence that would characterize the postwar era at home, and also on the ways social workers attempted to subdue this violence. This paper will examine the development of youth gangs in New York City, arguing that they were inherently entwined with the experience of World War II. In addition, postwar gang development influenced how this era understood race, social work, and society. Puerto Ricans were particularly impacted by postwar gang violence, although by no means did they alone participate in it—despite some media portrayals to the contrary.

Understanding the ethnic tensions which beset postwar New York is key to understanding postwar gang activity. An oral history provided by Esmay Robinson, an African American woman and lifelong resident of Harlem, details the changes that came to her neighborhood which contributed to the development of ethnically charged juvenile delinquency during the 1940s. She recounts how people were migrating from a variety of countries, particularly Puerto Rico, and that different nationalities came into close proximity. She says that for “some reason, the different nationalities didn’t get along too well” which caused “gang fights with younger



people.”<sup>1</sup> Robinson recognizes how the influx of new people to the neighborhood spurred ethnic tensions that resulted in different ethnic groups feeling the need to claim their territory—and defend it.

Postwar New York City suffered from an acute housing shortage which exacerbated ethnic tensions by forcing different ethnicities to live in extremely close proximity. By 1950, the city had an extraordinarily low 1% vacancy rate, with an even lower rate for low-cost housing.<sup>2</sup> Harlem’s dearth of affordable housing, which resulted in overcrowding, exemplifies how postwar New York’s limited housing availability was ill-equipped to meet the city’s housing needs. Henry LaCossitt recounts how dire the housing crisis in East Harlem was in his *Saturday Evening Post* article, “God Sent Them to the Slums.” According to LaCossitt, “on East 100th street between First and Second Avenues, 4,000 people live in 27 rotting tenements.”<sup>3</sup> A startling image which helps explain how congestion contributed to tension.

Attempts by the city to relieve the housing crisis were not only futile but actually fueled the destruction of the neighborhood of Harlem, which created an even more hostile environment that Harlem’s youth reacted to. These attempts were futile because the housing projects being built lacked the capacity to house those who were previously homeless in addition to housing the thousands of previous residents displaced by new development. According to LaCossitt, the housing projects that were being built at the time, while spanning over 11 square blocks, could only house 12,000 residents. This proved to be insufficient, as 1,000 new Puerto Rican migrants

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<sup>1</sup> Esmay Robinson, Oral History interview conducted by Ruby Valdez, April 17, 2014, *A People’s History of Harlem: A Harlem Neighborhood Oral History Project*, New York Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> Eric C. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York*. Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press, 2001, 42.

<sup>3</sup> Henry La Cossitt, “God Sent Them to the Slums.” *Saturday Evening Post* July 5, 1952, 65.

arrived to New York City per week in 1951, and many of them settled in East Harlem despite the lack of available housing.<sup>4</sup> Robert Moses chose East Harlem to receive public housing projects in the 1950s due to the “hoards of Italians, Puerto Ricans, Jews, and Negroes” which had come to reside there, just as Robinson’s oral history described.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, he accelerated the neighborhood’s decline: the public housing projects pushed businesses out of East Harlem while attracting residents who were increasingly impoverished as well as the growing immigrant population even though new housing could not be built as quickly as new residents moved in.

The government’s failure to solve the housing crisis—and the damage they inflicted while attempting to do so—led to the deterioration of East Harlem’s schools, which in turn helped to fuel Puerto Rican involvement in youth gangs. As East Harlem became increasingly diverse, racially-prejudiced, white school administrators and teachers let their schools deteriorate. As a result, Puerto Ricans would have the highest dropout and suspension rate in the city.<sup>6</sup> These tensions—economic, educational, and ethnic— created an urban crisis that led New York City youths to participate in gangs, which in turn worsened educational outcomes. But Puerto Rican youths were not alone; Italian gangs futilely fought to preserve their previous dominance as Puerto Rican gangs fought to establish their hold over the new space. As the neighborhood’s economy declined and schools deteriorated, it reached to a dire point where dropping out and joining a gang was a viable option for all sides left behind by government.

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<sup>4</sup> Henry La Cossitt, “God Sent Them to the Slums.” *Saturday Evening Post* July 5, 1952, 68.

<sup>5</sup> Sonia Song-Ha Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement : Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and the Pursuit of Racial Justice in New York City*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 47.

<sup>6</sup> Sonia S. Lee, and Ande Diaz. “‘I Was the One Percenter’: Manny Diaz and the Beginnings of a Black-Puerto Rican Coalition.” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 26, no. 3 (2007): 52.

In addition to changing city demographics and housing shortages, the explosion of violent youth gang behavior was intimately intertwined with World War II in several ways. New York's ethnic gangs no doubt had violent altercations before the war, but World War II proved to spark more militarized violence. The largest impact World War II had was that it led to the use of deadlier weapons among gangs. Thousands of young men who had recently served overseas were suddenly released back into civilian society. They brought with them souvenir weapons and knowledge of military combat maneuvers which they shared with and taught to other gang members. Stories about combat encouraged young people to begin fighting with guns, both purchased on a black market and homemade by using a barrel, hammer, and rubber band. In addition to rising ethnic tensions among the city's poorest residents and the growth of gangs as the city's economy declined, the use of new and deadlier weapons and tactics contributed to a rising juvenile homicide rate and increasing juvenile arrest rates for murder or manslaughter.<sup>7</sup> The increased violence of gang clashes increased their visibility in the media and raised fears of a new war happening on at home, one influenced by the war just fought abroad.

The rhetoric used by gang members as well as social workers attempting to help the problem is also indicative of the influence World War II had on the development of gang behavior. In *My Life With Juvenile Gangs*, a memoir by Vincent Riccio, he recounts his time between 1950-1955 as a social worker trying to subdue the major gang violence that was plaguing the streets of New York. He talks about the concept of "japping," which was a popular gang tactic of multiple gang members surprising a lone rival gang member in a sudden attack,

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<sup>7</sup> Henry La Cossitt, "God Sent Them to the Slums." *Saturday Evening Post* July 5, 1952, 68.

followed by a quick retreat.<sup>8</sup> The name is a clear allusion to the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor as well as the racist language that subsequently developed in the United States.<sup>9</sup> This demonstrates how gang violence was also racialized on several different levels: even the most common of gang-related violent acts had a racist name.

The war imagery continues throughout other parts of Riccio's memoir. These tense, impoverished neighborhoods like East Harlem—which had been created as a result of the changing ethnic makeup of New York City—were often referred to as “territory” or “turf” by gang members. This framing establishes something which had to be defended from foreigners, invoking a combative relationality through militarized language. He goes on to state that he remembers gangs being badly beaten in fights, but he does not recall a gang “losing all its turf as might happen in international war.”<sup>10</sup> From this, it is clear that rhetoric of war was still on the minds of most gang members at the time of this crisis and influenced how gang activity was understood. Another piece of evidence to support this claim comes from an interview with ‘Carl Joyeux’ who led the “midget” division of the Bishops, an African American gang, whose leader stated that he had “ideas about becoming the Hitler of all the Little People [junior gang members].”<sup>11</sup> Once again we can see the clear effect that World War II in how gangs understood themselves as well as how they established their strategies.

Black and Puerto Rican youths were not the only marginalized group that reacted to the postwar urban crisis with the creation of more violent gangs, but they were the only groups that

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<sup>8</sup> Vincent Riccio, “My Life with Juvenile Gangs.” *Saturday Evening Post* 235 (September 29, 1962): 72–75.

<sup>9</sup> Sarah Bremser, “Pearl Harbor.” *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Vincent Riccio, “My Life with Juvenile Gangs.” *Saturday Evening Post* 235 (September 29, 1962): 72–75.

<sup>11</sup> Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 72.

earned the reputation of “menacing” and “prone to criminality” due to them.<sup>12</sup> All youth gangs at the time engaged in rising levels of violence, but the media chose to focus their attention on the violence of African American and Puerto Rican gangs, while Irish and Italian gangs were viewed as reflective of a “healthy level of male adolescent boisterousness.”<sup>13</sup> In addition, predominately white police that patrolled areas such as East Harlem had a tendency to target Puerto Rican and African American gangs and overlook the actions of the white gangs that they were fighting.<sup>14</sup> Esmay Robinson confirms this in her oral history, explaining that the police in the area were prejudiced and could have done more to stop white violence.<sup>15</sup>

Some Puerto Rican gangs reacted to this hyper-racial environment and embraced their racialization when it came to combat. Riccio recalls a rumble that occurred between the Kane Street boys of Brooklyn and an unspecified local Puerto Rican gang, during which the Puerto Ricans marched in carrying Puerto Rican flags, following a man blowing a bugle.<sup>16</sup> This moment shows that rather than shy away from their highly racialized identity, Puerto Rican youths embraced it. Conversely, as gangs appeared in the media and focused on ethnicity, racial fears among white families grew, contributing to mounting fears of the new Puerto Rican arrivals.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to economic decline and rising violence, Postwar New York was also facing a narcotics addiction epidemic which hurt further hurt poor neighborhoods like East Harlem. In her oral history, Esmay Robinson “recounts how this affected her neighbors, that “after the second

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<sup>12</sup> Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement*, 51.

<sup>13</sup> Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement*, 51.

<sup>14</sup> Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 205.

<sup>15</sup> Esmay Robinson, Oral History interview conducted by Ruby Valdez, April 17, 2014, *A People's History of Harlem: A Harlem Neighborhood Oral History Project*, New York Public Library.

<sup>16</sup> Vincent Riccio, “My Life with Juvenile Gangs.” *Saturday Evening Post* 235 (September 29, 1962): 72–75.

<sup>17</sup> Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement*, 51.

war there was a lot of drugs around and we had a lot of drug addicts... the heroin addicts... it was so sad and bringing down the community.”<sup>18</sup> She recalls that this affected the local youth particularly, but the media chose to make it appear as if the problem disproportionately affected Puerto Rican youths and was inherently linked to gang activity, which was an over exaggeration.<sup>19</sup> In most gangs, heroin addicts were generally not trusted as their addiction might overcome their loyalty to the gang, so drug use was not prevalent or generally accepted by the gangs.<sup>20</sup>

The media’s insistence on portraying the Puerto Rican youth in particular as violent and drug addicted, however, spurred the widespread belief that Puerto Ricans in general were dangerous junkies. The portrayal of Puerto Rican gang members as more violent than their white counterparts can be seen in the media coverage over the arrest of Salvador Agron, a young Puerto Rican member of the Mau Maus of Brooklyn and the Vampire of the West Side Manhattan.<sup>21</sup> Agron had been arrested in connection with murders of Robert Young and Anthony Krzenski, who had been mistaken for members of a rival white gang.<sup>22</sup> The media relied on stereotypically violent images of Puerto Rican youths and established them as more violent than their white counterparts. One New York Times article emphasized Salvador’s name, explicitly stating that it was the “Spanish Salvador” instead of the “Italian Salvatore.”<sup>23</sup> This reflects

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<sup>18</sup> Esmay Robinson, Oral History interview conducted by Ruby Valdez, April 17, 2014, *A People’s History of Harlem: A Harlem Neighborhood Oral History Project*, New York Public Library.

<sup>19</sup> Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement*, 52.

<sup>20</sup> Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 183.

<sup>21</sup> David Vidal, "The 'Capeman' Reflects as Prison Release Nears: Freedom due Next Month 'I have Matured' an Eclectic Reader Mother and Sister Await." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Oct 03, 1979.

<sup>22</sup> Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Milton Bracker, "2 GANG SUSPECTS ARE DENIED BAIL: YOUTHS HELD IN PLAYGROUND SLAYINGS -- COURT CALLS FOR FIRMER ACTION ON CRIME TWO GANG SUSPECTS ARE HELD WITHOUT BAIL." *New York Times*, Sep 04, 1959.

society's tendency to highlight race and ethnicity while reporting gang violence in order to perpetuate violent stereotypes for Puerto Rican youths while at the same time downplaying white gang violence.

While government had caused or exacerbated many of the socio-economic problems that led to gang violence, it also attempted to reduce this violence. Government attempts to resolve the juvenile delinquency problem among Puerto Rican youths revealed what was important to them and to the social workers engaged in the enterprise of reducing gang violence. The field of psychiatry underwent drastic changes during World War II because the high rate of psychological trauma among soldiers led the government to invest heavily in psychotherapy for the military. Seeing the success of this intervention with the soldiers, the government recommended its use in troubled communities.<sup>24</sup> As it became understood that an individual's mental health could be affected by their environment as well as individual disorders, it made sense to adopt methods that improve their environment while also individually counseling gang members. Due to this influence and the growing violence in the postwar period, the New York City Youth Board was created by the Office of the Mayor in 1947 and initiated a street work program.<sup>25</sup> Social workers employed through the street work program sought out individual gang members, counseled them to give up a life of crime, and even organized field trips and group events to create some community outside gang life with some success.

At the same time, America also saw a surge in the emphasis of the importance and expectations of family life.<sup>26</sup> This new emphasis had an impact on the Puerto Rican gangs for

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<sup>24</sup> Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement*, 109.

<sup>25</sup> Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 190.

<sup>26</sup> Gilbert, James Burkhardt. *A Cycle of Outrage : America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in The 1950s*. New York: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1988., pp. 130.

several reasons, both for gang members themselves and for the social workers who attempted to resolve their problems. It was common for Puerto Rican gang members in East Harlem to come from dysfunctional families but that did not stop them from wanting to have their own. While there was an important but often contradictory understanding of the family during this time, there was no denying the explicitly gendered aspect of this. This was also true of Puerto Ricans engaged in gang activities. Riccio explains the importance of women to the hyper-masculine Puerto Rican youth gangs during this time period, that the “good” girls in the neighborhood were the only ones capable of helping or changing the most “hopeless” of the young gang members. According to Riccio, “love and then marriage have saved more potential bums than all the clergy, police, social workers, and Youth Board people combined.”<sup>27</sup> This stems from the belief that falling in love and getting married with ultimately result in ending their gang affiliation. Riccio’s emphasis on “good” girls is interesting, because young Puerto Rican gang members who had come from unstable families actively sought girls who were not part of gang life and come from “a stable family.”<sup>28</sup> This suggests that Puerto Rican youths were aware of their familial dysfunction and sought to improve their lives by seeking this stability.

It was a common postwar belief that juvenile delinquency stemmed from familial dysfunction, which was solidified when looking at the broken nature of many Puerto Rican families in poor slums such as East Harlem. In addition to this, “disorganized families under stress did not generally reach out to public institutions for help” in this time period.<sup>29</sup> This explains why the street workers method was more effective, rather than waiting for the gang

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<sup>27</sup> Vincent Riccio, “My Life with Juvenile Gangs.” *Saturday Evening Post* 235 (September 29, 1962): 72–75.

<sup>28</sup> Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, p. 175.

<sup>29</sup> Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, p. 131.



members to come to them. Street workers like Vincent Riccio spent months with juvenile gangs hoping to gain their trust and end the violence they experienced. This model reflects the 1950s American emphasis on a solid family structure ending social dysfunction because street workers were intended to become “substitute fathers” for the troubled youths.<sup>30</sup> They tried to instill values and teach them lessons that a functioning family would, such as being aware of the consequences of their actions, taking responsibility for themselves, and thinking through problems rather than acting impulsively.

Some street workers also tried to organize field trips like Bill Webber, who organized a trip for the Puritans—an East Harlem gang—during the summer when school was out and gang activity surged.<sup>31</sup> He took 13 gang members on a hiking trip to Vernon—something these youths never would have been able to do on their own. The assumption of Webber as a father-figure to these youths is apparent, because for the first time they had to depend on someone who was not themselves. Webber guided them, told them stories, and they eventually opened up to him and had intimate conversations about girls, their home-life, and religion.<sup>32</sup> Webber’s attempt to reach this group of juvenile delinquents was unusually successful because he was able to connect with them on a personal level. Even as other attempts to stop gang fighting by removing the gangs from the city were largely unsuccessful, the street work program proved to show better results. The Youth Board increased its staff from 40 to 150 between 1955 and 1965, practically blanketing troubled areas. In addition, Youth Board workers began collaborating with the police in 1956 to prevent the large, deadly rumbles that had plagued the city. By the early 1960s, this

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<sup>30</sup> Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, p. 194.

<sup>31</sup> LaCossitt, “God Sent Them to the Slums,” 66.

<sup>32</sup> LaCossitt, “God Sent Them to the Slums,” 67.

cooperative effort partially succeeded in subduing the rampant gang violence that had plagued the city.

The racialized gang culture in New York City of the post-World War II era was clearly influenced by the rising racial tensions in the city that arose due to increased migration and severe overcrowding in the city's poorest areas. The war itself clearly influenced the increase in gang violence and the way the public perceived increased gang activity. As the gangs became more violent, they received more media attention which sparked fears of a bloody war not in the battle arenas of Europe or the Pacific but in the streets of New York. This, in turn, motivated a response from the same government which had failed to solve the housing shortage, provide educational opportunities, or improve economic conditions for the urban poor. But the government's street work program was somewhat successful, and the tactics employed by social workers also reflected the ways in which World War II changed how Americans understood violence and trauma.

World War II was not alone in exacerbating or influencing criminal activity and gang violence. War itself seems to have a tendency to ignite gang violence. While gang violence decreased in the mid 1960s—as America increased involvement in Vietnam and sent more young men overseas—the conclusion of the war fueled the same increases in gang activity that was seen after World War II. Despite this recurrence, New York's political and social scene had changed drastically enough to prevent the outbreak of a full-blown gang war that had occurred after World War II. Those gangs were caused by a unique set of socio-economic conditions and their history sheds insight into the intersection of race, family, and community in postwar New York.



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