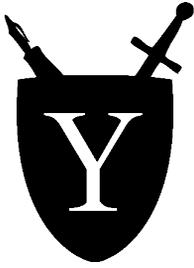


# THE YALE HISTORICAL REVIEW

AN UNDERGRADUATE PUBLICATION FALL 2013







**FALL 2013**  
VOLUME III  
ISSUE I

# THE YALE HISTORICAL REVIEW

## AN UNDERGRADUATE PUBLICATION

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Trumbull, John. The Declaration of Independence. 1818. Oil on canvas. U.S. Capitol, Washington. Architect of the Capitol. 21 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.aoc.gov/capitol-hill/historic-rotunda-paintings/declaration-independence>>.

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Much of history is, at its heart, self-perception. The ways individuals, groups, and nations understand their past, their contemporaries, and themselves offer invaluable insights about the events that have shaped the present. From historiography to cultural anthropology to the study of national identity, examinations of times gone by are incomplete without considering how past peoples viewed their world. As Yale's own history department undertakes a period of reflection on how the discipline is taught—creating new course pathways and retooling the requirements of the major—now is an opportune time to examine both the perception of history and history of perception.

The essays in the Fall 2013 issue of *The Yale Historical Review* discuss these questions over a wide geographic and temporal range. Recounting the controversy surrounding the 1801 replacement of a New Haven official, John Masko '14 examines how Jefferson and his Federalist foes regarded the role of partisanship and the legitimacy of opposition in a nation still defining its own political identity. Margaret Coons '14 has followed one strand of that identity in another take on early America, investigating the young republic's relationship with art and the representation of its own history through a study of John Trumbull's magisterial Declaration of Independence.

Similar issues arose in twentieth-century Europe, where authoritarian regimes engaged in systematic manipulations of national self-perception. Thomas R. Prendergast, University of Chicago '14, explores the career of a Nazi historian, Wilhelm Grau, as part of the Third Reich's writing and rewriting of history. After the war, the battle over national identity in Russia spread to the realm of poetry. Analyzing the intersection of language and politics, Noah Remnick '15 compares the two roles played by Soviet poets—as “antagonist and apologist.”

Our final two essays explore the history of cross-cultural encounters and impressions. Isabel Beshar '14 recounts the mixed success of American anti-malaria efforts in Cold War Nepal, a program which blended a surprisingly high degree of cultural sensitivity with a militaristic, non-democratic structure. Centuries earlier, we find al-Biruni, who published his massive *On India* to improve Persian attitudes towards Hindus. In her prize-winning senior essay, Deirdre Dlugoleski '13 examines this medieval work of anthropology for its engagement with, and manipulation of, Islamic concepts of religion, civilization, and cultural difference.

Along the lines of the self-reflective questions raised by the essays in this issue, our Editorial Board itself has been examining the *Review's* role and format. While we remain firmly committed to publishing quality essays in print, we recognize the power of online media. Recently, we launched our Facebook page and redesigned our website, with the aim of streamlining and expanding our reach. We encourage you to check out our online resources and offer suggestions for further improvement. Whether you prefer to read our latest issue in print or on the web, we encourage you to examine history's stories, and your own, with curiosity, rigor, and enjoyment.

Sincerely,

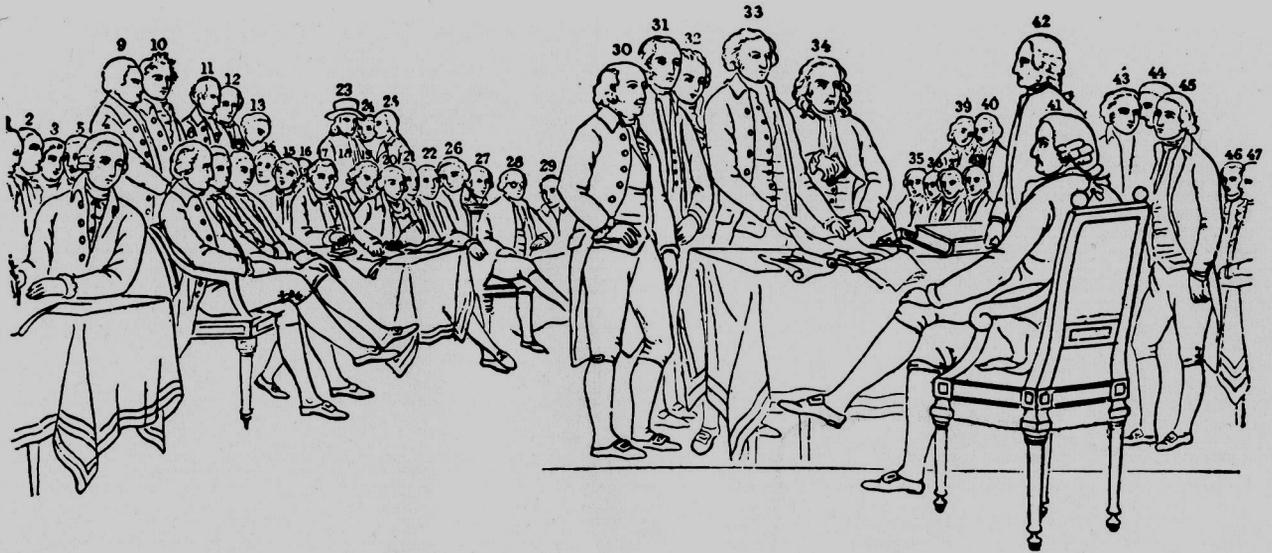
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DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE  
In Congress, at the Independence Hall, Philadelphia, July 4<sup>th</sup> 1776.



## THE “GREAT NATIONAL PAINTING” HOW JOHN TRUMBULL’S THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE SHAPED THE DEBATE OVER PUBLIC ART AND NATIONAL IDENTITY, 1817-1828

John Trumbull’s *The Declaration of Independence*, pictured on this issue’s front cover, is one of the iconic images of our nation’s early history – but it didn’t always carry such weight. As Margaret Coons ’14 relates, Trumbull’s painting touched off a contentious debate over the propriety of government patronage for the arts. Coons details how Trumbull presented himself as the painter for such a project, and follows the convoluted discourse, carried on in Congress and in print, over the commission, the painter, and questions of historical accuracy. The painting, once created, quickly became a touchstone for the self-image of the nascent country, a position it has retained ever since.

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By Margaret Coons, SM ’14  
Written for “The Age of Hamilton and Jefferson”  
Professor Joanne Freeman  
Faculty Advisor: Alejandra Dubcovsky  
Edited by Tiraana Bains and Nicole Ng

## THE “GREAT NATIONAL PAINTING”

There are few images of early America as ubiquitous as John Trumbull’s *The Declaration of Independence*. It appears in countless history textbooks, on the (now rare) two-dollar bill, and in its full grandeur as one of four Trumbull paintings commissioned by Congress to hang in the Rotunda of the Capitol. The painting depicts the committee of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston presenting the Declaration to John Hancock before the Continental Congress. With the commission of Trumbull’s paintings in 1817, Congress established the federal government as a supporter of the fine arts in the United States of America and a champion of public commemoration of the heroes of the Revolutionary War. In doing so, Congress also authorized the creation of an aesthetic object, *The Declaration of Independence*, around which a decade-long debate would take place. That debate reveals a complicated relationship between the federal government, fine arts, fiscal matters, and founding individuals in early America, as well as the way in which these issues affected remembrance of the Revolutionary War period. Art in general, and *The Declaration of Independence* in particular, became a medium through which early Americans could debate issues of national policy and identity. By examining the debate surrounding this image, we can better understand the attitudes of early Americans towards their recent history and governmental practices. Themes of personal politics, government policy, and national identity echo throughout the documentation of this debate—a debate that, at its core, has not been resolved to this day.

The author of the image in question, John Trumbull, was born in 1756 to Jonathan Trumbull—the famous “Brother Jonathan,” friend of Washington, and, later, governor of Connecticut.<sup>1</sup> As a painter, he is best known for the Rotunda paintings and his series of smaller Revolutionary War paintings that he donated to Yale University, effectively founding the art gallery there. He was also an aide-de-camp to Washington (if only for a matter of weeks), a diplomat, an architect, and an author. Financially unsuccessful, Trumbull was a bitter Federalist living in Jacksonian times. Outliving Jefferson and Adams by almost twenty years, he was one of the last remaining men of the revolutionary generation. When Trumbull died in 1843, just two decades shy of the disastrous American Civil War, he was perhaps “the Oldest Surviving American officer of the Army of the Revolution.”<sup>2</sup> More than that, however, he was the American artist who, more than any other, had shaped America’s memory of its own inception through the visual arts.

To date, most studies of John Trumbull’s life and work derive from history of art scholarship. At the forefront of these studies is Theodore Sizer, director of the Yale University Art Gallery in the middle of the twentieth century, editor of Trumbull’s autobiography, and compiler of *The Works of John Trumbull*. To Sizer, Trumbull was a man ahead of his time. As Sizer explains in the preface to his edition of Trumbull’s autobiography, “America was growing too fast to take lingering looks at her heritage.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Helen A. Cooper, ed., *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1982), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Sizer, ed., *The Autobiography of Colonel John Trumbull* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), xvii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

He argues that Trumbull lived into an age that was too busy with its present to concern itself with its past, noting—controversially—that substantial public interest in the early American period only developed after the Civil War. In *John Trumbull*, Irma B. Jaffe essentially agrees with Sizer, arguing that Trumbull was an eighteenth century man who lived far into the nineteenth century. She defines the shift Trumbull witnessed as one “from the republican ideals of the Revolution to the democratic realities of the Jacksonian era.”<sup>4</sup> Like Sizer, Jaffe highlights the rapidity of political change during Trumbull’s lifetime, even as Trumbull worked to preserve his own particular vision of the past.

Historians have also addressed this phenomenon of an early America too fixated on the future to delve into the past. Michael Kammen, in his work *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and Historical Imagination*, echoes Sizer’s and Jaffe’s line of reasoning. “Throughout the nineteenth century, most Americans prized change above stability,” he argues, citing both Thomas Jefferson’s idea that “the earth belongs to the living generation” and James Fenimore Cooper’s declaration, “We are a nation of change.”<sup>5</sup> Joseph Ellis, however, debates this point in *After the Revolution*, arguing instead that “Americans [began] to ransack their past for cultural accomplishments in a patriotic effort to provide the new nation with a respectable legacy in the arts and sciences.”<sup>6</sup> John Trumbull’s *Declaration* was part of the creation of such a legacy.

Few scholars, however, have addressed Trumbull as a kind of historian. Kammen admits that Trumbull’s work contributed to this effort to establish such a legacy. “I am convinced,” Kammen says, “that Trumbull’s efforts were intended to be documentary [...] It is ironic that his paintings now seem to us so stylized in search of inspirational patriotism; for Trumbull felt that he was sacrificing grandeur for historical factuality.”<sup>7</sup> Kammen thus sets Trumbull up as an artist whose painterly aspirations and commitment to historical authenticity were at odds, and claims that Trumbull’s historical instincts were mostly victorious within the context of his time and talents.

Studying Trumbull as a historian and *The Declaration of Independence* as a historical document allows us to unpack these ideas about historical memory in early America. They illuminate the ways in which people of the period thought about how best to record their own founding history, how to create a national identity, and what the role of politicians and the government writ large would be in that process. To elucidate these larger themes, we will examine Trumbull’s objectives and methods in obtaining the commission, the debate in Congress surrounding the commission, the public reception of both news of the commission and of *The Declaration of Independence* itself, and finally the second congressional debate over *The Declaration* that took place more than a decade after its original commission. The debate surrounding the painting and the moment it represents demonstrate early Americans’ overwhelming preoccupation with the

<sup>4</sup> Irma B. Jaffe, *John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975), 288.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *After the Revolution: Profiles of Early American Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), 11.

<sup>7</sup> Kammen, *A Season of Youth*, 79.

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precedents they were setting—precedents for Congress’s allocations of funding, for the arts, and for the creation of the historical record. In the early nineteenth century, America was certainly changing rapidly, and for this reason John Trumbull’s *The Declaration of Independence* played a crucial role in creating a sense of American tradition so that Americans had a framework within which to chart their own progress.

Trumbull was motivated to create both *The Declaration of Independence*, his most ambitious historical project begun at the end of 1816, and its companion paintings more out of personal financial necessity than patriotic pride. Trumbull was destitute. He did feel the time was appropriate to request a commission from Congress—the War of 1812 had ended, and the Capitol, under construction, was being redecorated—but he also needed the money. Before making his case in Washington, D.C. in early 1817, Trumbull set the stage for himself by penning a letter to his old friend Thomas Jefferson, reminding him, “Twenty eight years have elapsed, since under the kind protection of your hospitable roof at Chaillot, I painted your portrait in my picture of the Declaration of Independence, the composition of which had been planned two years before in your library.”<sup>8</sup> The letter’s opening sentence hints at three things: first, the longevity of his connection with Jefferson and other Founding Fathers; second, the fact that he painted many of their portraits, including Jefferson’s, from life; and third, that Trumbull wanted to make sure Jefferson felt a particular responsibility for this composition because he had been instrumental in planning it. Trumbull’s firsthand knowledge of Jefferson and other Founding Fathers as they were at the time of these historic events was a valuable asset; Trumbull intended to project the Founding Fathers’ involvement and approval of his paintings as a vindication of his work against criticism. Trumbull’s private correspondence and public writings show that Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers were names that could be invoked to lend legitimacy to contemporary ways of thinking, just as they are still called on today.

Trumbull was certainly aware of his peculiar position as an artist; he thought that he was the only man qualified to receive the hoped-for congressional commission and that Jefferson should share his opinion. In his letter, he repeatedly described his efforts as “proper.” Not only was it a “proper opportunity” to solicit the commission from Congress, but Trumbull’s paintings would also “be a proper ornament.”<sup>9</sup> Trumbull went so far as to claim that “the work has been carried thus far by my own unaided exertions, and can be finished only by me: future Artists may arise with far Superior talents, but Time has already withdrawn almost all their Models [...] no time remains therefore for hesitation.”<sup>10</sup> Trumbull was fairly confident that Congress would recognize how rare and irreplaceable his combination of talent and eyewitness experience was. As Jaffe notes, “He had, in fact, no competition, and his task was principally to persuade Congress to commission the work. He could be assured of influential backing.”<sup>11</sup> However, despite his

<sup>8</sup> John Trumbull to Thomas Jefferson, December 26, 1816, John Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> John Trumbull to Thomas Jefferson, December 26, 1816, John Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

<sup>11</sup> Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 234.

old friendship with Thomas Jefferson, Trumbull was a firm Federalist, and he was making a request of a Republican Congress, President, and Secretary of State, all of who likely knew of his hostility towards their politics.<sup>12</sup> Trumbull's friend Christopher Gore warned him, "Pericles could not advance himself at Athens without taking part with the Democracy against the Aristocracy." State-sponsored visual memory of the Revolution would not be possible without a healthy dose of personal politics.

Once in Washington, Trumbull wrote to his friend Judge Nicholson that he had received a "flattering" reception by both the legislature and the executive, and that the resolution would be introduced in the Senate the following day.<sup>13</sup> "I hope the other house will concur," Trumbull worried.<sup>14</sup> And Trumbull did, perhaps, have more reason to worry about the concurrence of the House of Representatives. On February 5, 1817, *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* described the debate that occurred upon the resolution's third reading in the House. "[A] debate arose, sufficiently interesting, amusing, and instructive, to be reported at large, if the mass of the debate now demanding publication did not forbid it."<sup>15</sup> After tantalizing readers with the curiousness of this debate, the article omits any details and simply reports that the resolution passed with 114 yeas and 50 nays, not an inconsiderable margin. Trumbull would author four paintings for the walls of the Capitol Rotunda.<sup>16</sup>

The Annals of Congress reveal exactly what was "sufficiently interesting, amusing, and instructive," though past scholars of Trumbull and his commission have glossed over it. Under the heading "Revolutionary History," Congress conducted a debate that had nothing to do with whether John Trumbull was the right man for the job – that was a given. Instead, the record states:

it was questionable how far it was just or proper for the Government of the United States to become the patron of the fine arts; that, if it were to do so, no such expense ought to be authorized until the faith of the Government was redeemed by the fulfillment of all its pecuniary obligations, nor until every debt was paid arising out of the war of the Revolution, or of the late war; that a nation, like individuals, should be just before it was generous[...]<sup>17</sup>

Congressional qualms did not end there. The opposition feared that, because the resolution stipulated that the artist and president would choose the subjects of the paintings, the chosen subjects might not merit Congress's approval. There were further concerns over whether the paintings would fit appropriately in the space. Finally, there was skepticism about the need for historical paintings. The record notes, "generally, in

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> John Trumbull to Joseph Nicholson, January 13, 1817, John Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette*, February 5, 1817.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Annals of Congress*, House of Representatives, 14<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 762.

## THE “GREAT NATIONAL PAINTING”

the countries where they had been brought to the highest perfection, paintings and statuary, in commemoration of liberty and of great events, had no perceptible effect in preserving the liberty and independence of those nations; and the rights and liberties of this nation depended on no such paltry considerations as these.”<sup>18</sup>

In essence, Congress turned the debate away from Trumbull and his wares to a debate about the role of the federal government in the fine arts, questioning whether support for the arts was compatible with fiscal responsibility in a time of debt, and whether the expense of such paintings would be justified by their “effect in preserving [...] liberty.”<sup>19</sup> Influenced by personal motivations, a bipartisan group composed of John C. Calhoun (SC-R) (whose portrait had been painted by Trumbull), Robert Wright (MD-R), Joseph Hopkinson (PA-F), William H. Harrison (OH-R) (whose father, Benjamin Harrison, appears in Trumbull's *The Declaration of Independence*), John Randolph (VA-R), Hugh Nelson (VA-R), and Thomas P. Grosvenor (NY-F) disagreed.<sup>20</sup> Evidently, support for the Rotunda paintings did not just come from Federalists or from one part of the country. Perhaps less surprisingly, many of the men in this group had particular connections to Trumbull. Future president William Henry Harrison even had a personal stake in the success of the commission—the commemoration of his father. Again, personal politics were in play. These men argued that “generosity and justice” weren't mutually exclusive, and it was therefore possible to do right by the nation in terms of fiscal responsibility while still patronizing the arts at a comparatively paltry cost to that of repaying the national debt. They also argued that the paintings would have “great value to the present and future generations” and “impel them to an imitation of the virtues of the men of those days.”<sup>21</sup> For these men, Trumbull's art would serve a didactic purpose; it would teach their generation and those to come—particularly “future legislators”—about the founding convictions and ideals of the United States of America.<sup>22</sup> These paintings were meant to guide and to inspire. Furthermore, they urged that “the time now was, which once passed away could never be regained.” Congress chose to take advantage of the opportunity before it vanished.<sup>23</sup>

With the passage of the resolution, the federal government formally supported the fine arts for the first time, explicitly linking this support to didacticism and the importance of remembering the revolutionary period and its players in order to emulate them. Congress was not supporting art simply for the sake of supporting art; rather, it was endowing Trumbull with \$8,000 for each painting for a specific purpose. In light of this, it was critical that Trumbull's paintings be as factually accurate as possible. The urgency of the commission was such because Trumbull was the only artist of his ability who had been a contemporary of his historical subjects and had already executed the paintings from which he would compose large-scale replicas for the walls of the Rotunda.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Annals of Congress*, House of Representatives, 14<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 762.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 761.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 762.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Annals of Congress*, House of Representatives, 14<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 762.

In light of the power Trumbull wielded with his brush, Trumbull's old friend John Adams saw fit to warn him of the dangers he saw in historical painting:

But you will please to remember that the Burin and the Pencil, the Chisel and the Trowell, have in all ages and Countries of which we have any Information, been enlisted on the side of Despotism and Superstition. I should have Said of Superstition and Despotism, for Superstition is the first and Universal Cause of Despotism. Characters and Counsels and Action merely Social merely civil, merely political, merely moral are always neglected and forgotten. Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, and Poetry have conspir'd against the Rights of Mankind.<sup>24</sup>

In a prescient way, Adams was warning Trumbull against the use of art as propaganda. Adams knew that art could be used to project power, and he recognized the emotional component of art. It could instill “superstition” in a way that written history arguably does not. While people and the things that they say could be “neglected and forgotten” in the long view of history, Adams knew that Trumbull's paintings of the American Revolution could capture the imagination of the American people in a universal and lasting way.

Upon officially receiving his commission, Trumbull and President Madison discussed what four images were worthy of hanging in the Rotunda. Despite their political differences, Trumbull and Madison agreed easily, selecting the themes of what would become *The Declaration of Independence*, *The Surrender of General Burgoyne*, *The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis*, and *General George Washington Resigning his Commission*. Of these four, Trumbull considered *The Declaration of Independence* the most important of the commissioned works. Writing to President Madison at the end of 1817, Trumbull explained, “I have devoted myself entirely to the Declaration of Independence, considering that as the Subject most interesting to the Nation, as well as most important to my own reputation.”<sup>25</sup>

While Trumbull was just beginning work on the canvas, in a February 1, 1817 article in *The Albany Advertiser* republished from the *New York Evening Post* under the heading “Liberality of Congress,” the writer congratulated the legislative branch for taking advantage of “the present opportunity to preserve the form and likeness of those patriots to whom we owe, under Providence, our national existence.”<sup>26</sup> The writer clearly ascribed to the argument that had helped Trumbull win the commission—that this “opportunity” was “a precious one, and if suffered to pass unimproved, will never again offer.”<sup>27</sup> The article lauded Congress for doing “honor to themselves and their country” in approving the commission, serving as an expression of public support for Congress's decision to fund Trumbull's paintings. Furthermore, the article placed Trumbull in his

<sup>24</sup> John Adams to John Trumbull, January 1, 1817, Franklin Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

<sup>25</sup> John Trumbull to James Madison, Dec. 26, 1817, *The Papers of James Madison Digital Edition*, J. C. A. Stagg, ed., (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> *The Albany Advertiser*, February 1, 1817.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

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historical and artistic context, noting that the painter was an army officer and the son of Governor Trumbull, as well as part of an esteemed group of American painters that included Copley, Stuart, and West. Such discourse helped to create a national identity; it proclaimed that the paintings had “benefits” that would honor Congress and the country. Furthermore, the article emphasized the importance of preserving the “form and likeness” of the Founding Fathers.<sup>28</sup> For early Americans, it was necessary to remember not only what the Founding Fathers had done but also what they looked like. American national identity resided in the identity of specific individuals.

Bolstered by public approval of his commission, Trumbull labored throughout the year on *The Declaration*. At the end of his first year of work, Trumbull wrote again to Madison that he was “at first intimidated by the magnitude of the work” but had progressed enough to calm his fears and even believe the enlarged version of the composition to be better than the original small one.<sup>29</sup> Adding to the pressure Trumbull felt was his conception of the “universal interest which my Country feels and ever must feel in this Event.”<sup>30</sup> Trumbull received one letter in particular that helps to illustrate this “universal interest.” Charles Tait, U.S. Senator from Georgia from 1809-1819, wrote to Trumbull expressing concern that the miniature likeness of George Walton’s father had arrived safely. He wrote to insure that Georgia would not be “wholly unrepresented in that great work, designed to immortalize a group of worthies in the performance of an act, the first in importance in the history of this Country.”<sup>31</sup> Tait’s concern is particularly revealing. In typical founding period fashion, Trumbull was painting an image – with the aid and input of his contemporaries – that they were self-consciously aware would have its place in the creation of America’s national identity, and Tait cared deeply that his state be represented. During this time, American national representation was also about state representation and documenting the contributions of each individual former colony.

Tait went on in the same letter to weigh in on the debate over government support of the arts in the affirmative.

Permit me, Sir, to congratulate you on this act of the Gov.<sup>t</sup> in their taking under their own patronage one branch of the fine arts. Although the Age of Pericles and of the Augustus has not yet arrived in these States; yet this measure of the Gov<sup>t</sup> is highly auspicious of the future; it is a pledge that in due time, amidst arms, it will not neglect the Arts; and that while it consults the power it will not forget the ornament of the Country.<sup>32</sup>

Note, first, that Tait congratulated Trumbull for the act of Congress, recognizing that the young federal government could not become a patron without a suitable client and

<sup>28</sup> *The Albany Advertiser*, February 1, 1817.

<sup>29</sup> John Trumbull to James Madison, December 29, 1817, John Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Charles Tait to John Trumbull, July 31, 1817, John Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

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

enforcing the earlier idea that Trumbull's proposal could not be refused. Next, Tait alluded to the two periods of Greek and Roman history regarded by some, though not all, as the golden ages of those civilizations, times when governmental stability allowed the arts to flourish, with the government as their patron.<sup>33</sup> Tait did not pretend that the United States had already reached its golden age, but he strongly supported what he perceived to be a "pledge" to future generations of support for the arts. Tait's letter reflects a particular way of thinking about the role of government—that its duties are not simply the "power" but also the "ornament of the Country."<sup>34</sup> As the original proponents of Trumbull's paintings argued, the ornament of a country can in fact be part of its power.

When Trumbull completed the painting in September 1818, it was displayed at the American Academy of Fine Arts in New York and then exhibited in New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.<sup>35</sup> Newspapers overwhelmingly encouraged the public to view this "GREAT NATIONAL PAINTING."<sup>36</sup> Several fawning articles, which circulated in newspapers throughout the country, expressed the general public's opinions of the painting. "No inhabitant of this country can view it," said the *New-York Daily Advertiser*, "without experiencing a deep sense of the hazards which the members of that illustrious assembly thus voluntarily assumed—of the anxiety, the sufferings, and the triumphant success."<sup>37</sup> The article emphasizes the ability of Trumbull's painting to create an emotional experience for the viewer, one that allows the viewer to feel the "hazards" of instantaneously committing treason with a vote for independence. Later in the same year, the *Advertiser* published another article on the topic, once again striking upon the emotional component of the painting. The facial expressions of the committee, it argued, "cannot fail, we think, to awaken the liveliest emotions in the mind of every beholder."<sup>38</sup> Later in October, an opinion appeared in *American Mercury* that waxed poetic on the power of the painting: "We gaze, then, with a degree of rapture on the exhibition — we are struck with the spirit of the whole scene, and our hearts swell with gratitude towards those our ancestors, who, at such hazard, performed an act so beneficial to us and our descendants."<sup>39</sup> Again, the "hazard" of the moment is emphasized, as is the emotional experience of viewing the painting. The article goes on to beseech the entire country to see Trumbull's *Declaration*: "Every American ought to view this painting, and take his wife and children to see it, that they may become familiar with the faces of these, our

<sup>33</sup> Notably, the Age of Augustus, though one of opulence for Rome, was not a period of democracy, but rather the beginning of the Roman Empire.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Tait to John Trumbull, July 31, 1817, John Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

<sup>35</sup> Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 241-246.

<sup>36</sup> *New-York Daily Advertiser*, May 16, 1818.

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

<sup>38</sup> *New-York Daily Advertiser*, October 8, 1818.

<sup>39</sup> [Hartford] *American Mercury*, October 20, 1818.

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glorious benefactors.”<sup>40</sup> The *Mercury* appears to be calling on Americans to make a pilgrimage to the exhibition in order to honor the painting as they would an altarpiece and the Founders as saints of liberty. Viewing *The Declaration of Independence* thus served as a shared experience, and out of shared experience came the formation of national identity as Americans gained a common visual sense of what this moment had been like, a shared point of reference for any discussion of this historic event.

In addition to the emotional experience of viewing the painting, newspapers also heralded its historic value. “There is more history in the single canvass of Mr. Trumbull’s Declaration of Independence, than can be crowded into a folio of descriptive history,” wrote the *American Mercury*, because “painting can show you things themselves” rather than just describing them, as the written word does.<sup>41</sup> Viewers felt that Trumbull’s painting not only had the power to impart the feeling of the moment, but also to accurately document what it looked like. “We can speak from personal acquaintance, [the] likenesses are admirable,” wrote the *Advertiser*, also noting that there were exactly forty-seven portraits, thirty-seven of which had been painted by the artist from life, the remaining ten copies from images after their deaths.<sup>42</sup> Writers for the *Advertiser* emphasized the public’s emotional connection to the Founding Fathers: “To suppose that any native American can [...] not feel a deep interest in the actual view of the personages by whom [this great event] was achieved, would be a species of reproach which we are not willing to cast on any fellow citizen.”<sup>43</sup> As previously noted, the achievements of the Fathers imbued their representation with a special significance, and how they looked was also deemed important and worthy of a kind of reverential curiosity. The Founding Fathers, then, were not only worthy of emulation—exemplars of merits to be aspired to—but also individuals with visages to be remembered and venerated. It was un-American, the *Advertiser* suggests, to not want to know what they looked like. This in turn points to an emerging conception of what it meant to be American and to take an interest in one’s own national history.

Trumbull was undoubtedly pleased to have this praise heaped on his canvas. Beyond “every American” viewing his painting, however, there was a particular American who he hoped would take the time to look at the piece: John Adams. While “Mr. Adams withstood the solicitations of Colonel Trumbull” for a period of time, he finally consented and paid a visit to Faneuil Hall in December 1818, accompanied by his family, including Susan Quincy, who documented the encounter.<sup>44</sup> “Mr. Adams approved of the picture,” and purportedly “pointing to the door nearest to the chair of Hancock, said, ‘When I nominated George Washington of Virginia for Commander in Chief of the Continental

<sup>40</sup> Note that “every American” refers only to men, suggesting that men were the chief conduits of art and its lessons, but the involvement of women and children was still critical to the creation of a complete national experience.

<sup>41</sup> [Hartford] *American Mercury*, October 20, 1818.

<sup>42</sup> *New-York Daily Advertiser*, October 8, 1818.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Susan Quincy’s Journals and Letters, December 5, 1818, in *The Articulate Sisters*, H. A. De Wolfe Howe, ed., (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1946), 32.

Army, he took his hat and rushed out of that door.”<sup>45</sup> Such an effusion of memory from the aging Adams, one of the last surviving signatories of the Declaration of Independence, must have offered Trumbull a certain validation. His recreation of the space was accurate to the extent that it triggered Adams’ memories of other significant moments in that room. As Adams stood in front of the historical painting created for the purpose of documenting and honoring his contributions to American history, Trumbull’s painting not only became a medium of history, but a witness to it as well, as it would continue to do in its permanent home in the Capitol Rotunda. Trumbull was careful to explicitly link the approval of one of the Founding Fathers to his painting, not only as personal validation of his work, but also because he recognized the power of invoking the opinions of these increasingly rare men.

Not everyone who went to see *The Declaration of Independence* approved of it as the second president did. On October 20, 1818, the Washington *National Advocate* published the letter of one “Detector,” who wrote that he was not concerned with the visual “merits” of *The Declaration of Independence*, but with its accuracy as a historical document. “Detector” argued that, because the painting had been “submitted to public inspection” in New York City, it had therefore also been submitted to public “dispassionate criticism.”<sup>46</sup> “Detector” posited that “the manifest intention of Congress” in commissioning Trumbull was “to perpetuate accurate recollections of one of the greatest events in history, and to hand to posterity correct resemblances of the men who pronounced our separation from Great Britain.”<sup>47</sup> He emphasized accuracy and correctness and was therefore perturbed that three men in the painting—George Clinton of New York, and Benjamin Rush and George Clymer of Pennsylvania—were not present when Independence was declared and therefore did not vote, while twelve men who had been present were not shown.<sup>48</sup> “Detector” was especially concerned that Caesar Rodney could not be found in the painting, since he considered Rodney’s vote critical to the passage of the resolution. Thus, he argued that Rodney’s visage should “substitute for one of the faces which have no pretensions to a place.”<sup>49</sup> “Detector’s” criticisms illustrate several important points: first, that public funding for art could result in public debate over art that reflected on both the artist and on Congress’s decision-making; second, for Americans at the time, historical paintings required accuracy and authenticity above all; and finally, the notion that, since Trumbull’s *Declaration* was increasingly coming to be regarded as the definitive historical record of the historical moment, it should be held to exacting standards. For “Detector,” Trumbull was not just painting one depiction of a historical moment; he was painting a

<sup>45</sup> Susan Quincy’s Journals and Letters, December 5, 1818, in *The Articulate Sisters*, H. A. Howe, ed., (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1916), 32.

<sup>46</sup> “Detector,” *Washington National Advocate*, October 20, 1818.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> “Detector” lists these twelve men as Henry Wisner of New York, John Hart of New Jersey, John Morton and Charles Humphreys of Pennsylvania, Caesar Rodney of Delaware, Thomas Stone of Maryland, Thomas Nelson, Jun. Richard Lightfoot Lee, and Carter Braxton of Virginia, John Penn of North Carolina, Button Gwinnet and Lyman Hall of Georgia. The majority of these men passed away before 1789, when Trumbull began collecting portraits for the small version of *The Declaration*.

<sup>49</sup> “Detector,” *Washington National Advocate*, October 20, 1818.

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historical moment – “one of the greatest in history” – as it would enter the public memory and discourse. His concerns certainly echo those of John Adams over the power of “the Burin and the Pencil.”<sup>50</sup>

The anonymous citizen went so far as to claim, “The errors in point of fact, with which it abounds, ought to exclude it from the walls of the capitol, where its exhibition will hereafter give to the mistake of the artist the semblance and authority of historical truth.”<sup>51</sup> “Detector” recognized the power of public art to define the historical narrative of the event; Congressional funding of the image amounted to Congressional approval, which in turn denoted a kind of congressionally approved version of the history of the Declaration of Independence. The scope of “Detector’s” fears went beyond imperfect historiography. Such an image, he argued, could also lead to embarrassment abroad: “To exhibit it in its present form on the walls of the capitol at Washington, would be a severe satire on our ignorance of our own history, and would justly expose our legislative councils to the scoffs and sneers of every intelligent foreigner who may visit us,” he wrote.<sup>52</sup> *The Declaration of Independence*, therefore, was not just an image of American history for the sake of creating a national identity through shared experience, but also a vision of national identity in opposition to a European identity; this painting could not get its own country’s history wrong without exposing America to humiliation from foreign powers. In this way, “Detector” argued that authenticity in national history was a way of establishing national legitimacy. To fail in this was to expose the young nation to ridicule.

Trumbull was furious. In response, he regaled “Detector” with the saga of the painting’s creation, beginning with its inception as a small painting in Trumbull’s series of Revolutionary War images painted in the 1780s.<sup>53</sup> His paintings, Trumbull opined, were approved by “the first artists and connoisseurs” in Europe, refuting “Detector’s” idea that Trumbull might contribute to national embarrassment rather than national respect through his artistic skill.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, Trumbull argued, he alone had not decided whom to include in the painting, but rather a decision had been made in consultation with Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, whom he invoked as the ultimate authorities on the matter. With Jefferson’s and Adams’s help, Trumbull used the Declaration document itself as a guide and was assured by Clinton and Willing themselves that they had been in the room on July 4, 1776, although neither had signed. Trumbull, however, remained silent on the matters of George Clymer and Caesar Rodney, stating instead that “with regard to all the most important characters represented in the painting, there was, and (begging my sagacious friend’s pardon) there is no doubt.”<sup>55</sup>

Trumbull also used his rebuttal as a forum through which to emphasize the immense debt the country owed him for fathering this “great national painting.” Writing

<sup>50</sup> John Adams to John Trumbull, January 1, 1817, Franklin Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

<sup>51</sup> “Detector,” *Washington National Advocate*, October 20, 1818.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> John Trumbull, *The Portfolio* 7, (January 1819):86.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> John Trumbull, *The Portfolio* 7, (January 1819):87.

in the third person characteristic of such a piece at the time, he declaimed, “During this period Mr. T had, and solicited, no other patronage or assistance in his arduous undertaking than subscriptions for those prints which have been long since published from his pictures of the death of Warren and Montgomery.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, Trumbull painted himself as a public servant, and he reminded “Detector” that if it had not been for his apparent foresight, “it would at this moment be impossible to obtain even such imperfect pictures as “Detector” considers this to be.”<sup>57</sup>

Trumbull continued to defend his work, publishing the pamphlet *Description of the Four Pictures, from Subjects of the Revolution, Painted by Order of the Government of the United States, and now Placed in the Rotunda of the Capitol* in 1827. His “description” of *The Declaration of Independence* functioned more as a vindication of his artistic choices. Trumbull explicitly stated that “To preserve the resemblance of the men who were the authors of this memorable act, was an essential object of this painting,” once again illustrating the emphasis on accuracy in depicting the unique faces of those present at the signing.<sup>58</sup> In this work, Trumbull elaborated further on the thought process that underlay the selection of the forty-seven personages who would be canonized in his painting, asking, “Should he consider the fact of having been actually present in the room on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, indispensable? Should he admit those only who were in favour of, and reject those who were opposed to the act? Where a person was dead, and no authentic portrait could be obtained, should he admit ideal heads?” He recounted seeking the advice of Jefferson and Adams and coming to the conclusion that the document and its signatures should be used as a guide. This passage also brings to light the consideration of whether or not to include those men who did not vote for independence. That Trumbull, along with Jefferson and Adams, decided that those opposed to the Declaration should also be included shows their commitment to historical accuracy and signifies their commitment to the presentation of a unified post-revolutionary America, including opposition. Though they might have been on the “wrong side of history”—to borrow a twentieth-century phrase—they still deserved their place in it. Trumbull also noted that no “ideal heads” were allowed to serve as placeholders for specific men whose likenesses could not be acquired, for fear that “a doubt of the truth of others should be excited in the minds of posterity.” In order for the whole painting to achieve a kind of historical legitimacy, those whose portraits could not be attained did not appear. This, perhaps, serves as a belated justification of the Detector-bemoaned exclusion of Caesar Rodney.<sup>59</sup>

The public debate over *The Declaration of Independence* stretched on, even a decade after Congress’s approval of Trumbull’s original commission of the first four paintings. Congress debated what to do with the four remaining empty spaces on the wall of the

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>58</sup> John Trumbull, *Description of the Four Pictures, from Subjects of the Revolution, Painted by Order of the Government of the United States, and now Placed in the Rotunda of the Capitol*, (New York: William A. Mercein, 1827), 8. John Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

<sup>59</sup> Trumbull, *Description of the Four Pictures*, 8.

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Capitol Rotunda.<sup>60</sup> Trumbull’s paintings, and several of the ideas used in the 1817 debate, became focal points of this discussion as well. Henry Dwight, whose portrait Trumbull had painted, thought it “painful to behold the other side of that splendid room a blank” when Trumbull’s paintings, the selection of which had “received the sanction of Washington and Jefferson,” filled the niches on the other side.<sup>61</sup> John Randolph, who had approved of the commission of Trumbull over a decade before, then chimed in to say that “he hardly ever passed through that avenue (the Rotunda) to this Hall, (which was almost every day, the other avenues to it being nearly impassable) without feeling ashamed of the state of the Arts in this country” and that “so ought, in his opinion, the picture of the Declaration of Independence to be called the *Shin-piece*, for surely, never was there, before, such a collection of legs submitted to the eyes of man.”<sup>62</sup> Philip Pendleton Barbour of Virginia then brought up the same fiscal arguments against the paintings that he claimed to have made in the original debate, stating, “I do not hold it to be a proper disbursement of the public money to devote it to purposes of ornament.”<sup>63</sup> Paintings for the Capitol Rotunda qualified as ornament, he argued, because “there is a better mode of handing down great actions to posterity than either painting or statuary.”<sup>64</sup> That better mode, Barbour felt, was “the page of impartial history,” if such a thing exists.<sup>65</sup> While he recognized that paintings such as Trumbull’s could have a “moral effect,” he argued that such an effect was unnecessary in times of the “high spirit of liberty which now animates this nation,” and would be ineffectual were that spirit to fall off. “Those period of the world when paintings and sculpture were at their highest point of perfection, were not the periods of its proudest character,” claimed Barbour, citing the Romans and the Greeks in such a way as to refute Mr. Tait’s aforementioned argument.<sup>66</sup> More important for a patriot, Barbour argued, was the “monument in the hearts of all his countrymen.”<sup>67</sup> The resolution was rejected, and the House adjourned, having discussed “historical paintings” for the entire day.

The debate over Trumbull’s *Declaration of Independence* ended on an entirely personal note. Trumbull took great offense at the dubbing of his “great national painting” as a “shin-piece” and responded by ridiculing Randolph to his friend Charles Wilkes, saying that “since Randolph has taken the liberty to break my shins indoors, he must forgive me if I smile whenever I see out of doors that wretched wrinkled visage ‘So very like a yellow pippin / Shrivell’d with a winter’s keeping.’”<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Trumbull had hoped that Randolph’s “elegant and ample fortune” would make him an “eminent patron

<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the niches would not have been perceived as empty if Trumbull had not persuaded Congress to allow him to fill the first four.

<sup>61</sup> *Register of Debates*, House of Representatives, 20th Cong., 1st sess., 940.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 942.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 950.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Register of Debates*, House of Representatives, 20th Cong., 1st sess., 950.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> John Trumbull to Charles Wilkes, January 13, 1828, John Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

& protector of the fine Arts.”<sup>69</sup> Trumbull even anticipated that Randolph would challenge him to a duel and had prepared his response just in case, leaving a blank for the date of such a challenge’s arrival.<sup>70</sup> No such challenge ever came, and Trumbull never forgave the insult of the “shin-piece” moniker, which stuck.

Criticisms of *The Declaration of Independence* have not ceased since 1828.

These debates take many shapes. From the small—modern observers wonder Thomas Jefferson appears to be stepping on John Adams’s foot—to the big—the development of a national tradition of art and the cultivation of an American national identity—the debates surrounding Trumbull’s painting reveal the complicated history of public funding for the arts, a topic that is still debated. In the 2012 U.S. presidential race between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama, public funding for the arts was once again thrust into the spotlight when Romney declared he would cut federal subsidies for PBS, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Romney argued that the federal government should not subsidize fine arts for public consumption when it must borrow the money to do so, but was criticized for citing a \$450 million subsidy as one of his only concrete cuts in the face of the \$1.1 trillion deficit and \$16 trillion debt. Neither Democrats nor Republicans were aware, however, that their arguments almost precisely mirrored those made over the commission of John Trumbull’s four paintings for the Capitol Rotunda in the House of Representatives in 1817, in which Congress questioned “how far it was just or proper for the Government of the United States to become the patron of the fine arts” in light of its remaining Revolutionary War debts. Nearly two hundred years later, with different players and different art, the debate over public arts funding remains the same.

What is particularly striking about the debate surrounding *The Declaration of Independence* is that early Americans were discussing so much more than art. The debates—in Congress, newspapers, and personal correspondence—reveal the importance of personal politics in early America, and how quickly the Founding Fathers were venerated and invoked for political support. Furthermore, Trumbull and his contemporaries were not simply concerned with preserving the memory of the founding generation as a whole, but also with the accurate and authentic representation of individuals in order that they might be emulated. Tracing the reception of *The Declaration* allows us to better understand the creation of an emotional, collective, cultural experience that was critical to the definition of what it meant to be an American in a period of nascent national identity. Trumbull and his fellow early Americans recognized that historical art, particularly public historical art, had the power to be instrumental in the historiography of the Revolutionary period. In light of this, it is possible to comprehend how a decade-long debate could center around one canvas; it was not just about art, but about creating a monolithic visual representation of a critical moment in American history, when the new nation was launching into its future.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> John Trumbull to John Randolph, January 1828, John Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. This letter was drafted but never sent.

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*The Albany Advertiser*

[Hartford] *American Mercury*

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## TITLE IMAGE

United States Architect of the Capitol. "Declaration of Independence: In Congress, at the Independence Hall, Philadelphia, July 4th, 1776." C. 1976. Sketched key of John Trumbull's *The Declaration of Independence*. *Art in the United States Capitol*. By United States Architect of the Capitol. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976. *Wikipedia*. 30 Nov. 2013. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:KeyTrumbullsDeclarationofIndependence1.jpg>>.



# FIGHTING THE RED EPIDEMIC

## FOREIGN POLICY AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN COLD WAR NEPAL

In the 1950s, American officials launched all-out attack to contain a grave threat in an Asian country. The encroaching menace, though, was not North Korean troops, but rather the spread of malaria in lowland Nepal. In this essay, Isabel Beshar '14 examines the interplay of Cold War geopolitics and global health in the shadow of the Himalayas. Describing the anti-malaria program's mix of culturally sensitive methods and anti-democratic structures, Beshar offers an insightful look at the reasons Nepalese health initiatives became "a medical success but a political failure" – both a model and a warning for similar efforts today.

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By Isabel Beshar, SY '14  
Written for "The Global Crisis of Malaria"  
Professor Frank Snowden  
Faculty Advisor: Joanna Radin  
Edited by Jacob Anbinder and Emily Yankowitz

During the 1950s, a number of Buddhist temples in the Himalayan region of Terai, Nepal were converted to medical clinics. The clinics were hastily fashioned: cracked wooden boxes served as examining tables and prayer gongs as privacy dividers. Amid the structural disorder, American doctors examined Nepalese citizens for malaria, in hopes of controlling the vector-borne disease endemic in Nepal. The malaria containment efforts were remarkably successful; indeed, malaria transmission fell by 70 percent in 1953.<sup>1</sup>

The doctors' rural medical experiences often contrasted with their interactions in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital. There, they encountered angry crowds of protesters who opposed the direction of Nepal's nascent democratic government, which was established in 1951 after decades of autocracy. American officials cited the political volatility as motivation for instituting Nepal's Five-Year Malaria Eradication Program, which was primarily funded with aid from the United States Public Health Service and Point Four Program. Concerned with communist expansion in South Asia, Americans used Nepal as a buffer to protect American interests in India. Cold War attitudes toward health also shaped the organization of the malaria eradication program itself. Yet the interventions also featured surprising cultural sensitivity and cross-ethnic cooperation, in sharp contrast to standard health programs of the Cold War era. In this way, Nepal presents a complex picture of international health during the 1950s and 1960s.

By the early 1950s, the United States and Soviet Union were fiercely engaged in their global conflict over political and economic ideology, scientific development, and geostrategic control. It is within this Cold War context that President Truman appointed Connecticut Governor Chester Bowles as ambassador to India and Nepal. Bowles touched down in Bombay in October 1951, armed with a liberal ideology and plans to strengthen relations between the United States and South Asia. Bowles nevertheless encountered strong resistance in his role as an American representative. Indian officials harbored resentment towards both Bowles's presence and the United States, believing that Asian nations had been inadequately consulted on the breakup of Pacific colonies. They refused to sign the United Nations Charter, and supported admission of communist China to the U.N., putting them at odds with Washington.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, many Indians perceived the Marshall Plan as symbolic of American support for European imperialism and criticized the U.S. Congress's decision to delay the loan of two million tons of surplus wheat to Indian farmers.<sup>3</sup> "[We are] a stranger and alien in the west...[we] cannot be of it," reflected Jawaharlal Nehru, the beloved leader of India from 1947 to 1964.<sup>4</sup> In Bowles's own words, "America's policies toward India were in a state of flux."<sup>5</sup>

India's opinion of the West worried American officials. By 1950, America was in no position to lose another Asian country to communist forces. Troublesome upheavals

<sup>1</sup> Moore, George, MD. "Experience of a US Public Health Officer: 1950s Nepal, Part I and II." (Public Health Reports, Vol 120, 2005), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Khadka, Narayan. "U.S. Aid to Nepal in the Cold War Period: Lessons for the Future" (Pacific Affairs, Vol 73, 2000), 81; Budania, Rajpal, "India's National Security Dilemma" (M.L. Gidwani, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Khadka, 81.

<sup>4</sup> Bowles, 100.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2.

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around Asia had followed the establishment of the People's Republic of China and the invasion of South Korea. The communist Huks had redoubled efforts to overthrow the established government in the Philippines, Indonesian communists had attacked the new republican government in Jakarta, and French colonists were battling the communist battalions of Ho Chi Minh in Indochina.<sup>6</sup> The United States needed to find a way to contain the spread of communism in South Asia.

And so, with the threat of a South Asian "Iron Curtain," American officials turned to India. If the U.S. government strengthened its relationship with India and boosted the legitimacy of India's representative democracy, then U.S.-Indian forces might together weaken the onslaught of communism. Before the 1950s, little American aid had gone to India, but in 1951, Congress provided \$54 million to stimulate the Indian economy and promised an additional \$45 million in 1952.<sup>7</sup> The United States expanded its Point Four Program, "a technical assistance program for developing countries"; increased the size of the United States Information Service (USIS); and strengthened the support staff of the United States mission in India.<sup>8</sup> Bowles described these changing dynamics, citing a turn away from China and an embrace of its neutral, neighboring countries:

When Communists speak of Asia, they see the great landmass of China...But I believe the heart of Asia and the key to her future lies in the billions of more people who live in the largely uncommitted nations, which stretch along the periphery of China to Cairo and Tokyo.<sup>9</sup>

Bowles describes a changing attitude toward Asian communism, one that prioritized the democratization of adjacent, smaller nations given the perceived inevitability of communism in China. India fell into this category of at-risk countries.

This geographic focus suited American diplomacy until early 1951, when potentially communist rebellions in nearby Nepal threatened India. The American focus in South Asia needed to shift. After all, how could the United States ensure an Indian democracy if its Nepalese neighbor became communist? Could India maintain its resistance to communism if it lost Nepal—an important geographic buffer against China?

Nepal comprised only 54,000 square miles and ten million people, a sharp contrast to India's booming population and vast geography.<sup>10</sup> Importantly, the massive Himalayan range and dense Tibetan jungle hermetically sealed [Nepal] from the outside world.<sup>11</sup> The mountain ranges that divided Nepal into small, disconnected valleys led one visitor to describe the land as "a Shangri-la of beauty and climate, but also a nation of diversified valleys, each living in its own culture and charm quite incognizant of the

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>8</sup> Truman, Harry S., "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1949. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13282>.

<sup>9</sup> Bowles, 209.

<sup>10</sup> As described, India's 1 million square miles housed over 300 million people by 1952.

<sup>11</sup> Bowles, 263.

world.”<sup>12</sup> A series of disinterested and isolated rulers had left a lack of infrastructure and transportation; few roads connected villages, adding to Nepal’s lack of cohesion.

This fragmented geography and social inequality contributed to Nepal’s political instability. Upon gaining independence in 1951, the Nepalese had no familiarity with democracy – only a long history of monarchical and despotic rule. General elections were postponed frequently between 1951 and 1959, and King Tribhuvan clashed with his son and successor Mahendra.<sup>13</sup> Prime Minister M.P. Koirala “could not keep a grip on the political machinery of Nepal,” and the country experienced internal conflict as political parties failed to gain majorities.<sup>14</sup>

The infighting helped provoke communist rebellions, as radical Maoists threatened the ruling government throughout the 1950s. In 1951, Communist Party leader K.I. Singh led a Maoist force that controlled Kathmandu for twenty-four hours.<sup>15</sup> American Technical Cooperation officials recount stories of communists encircling their aid groups, “shouting for revolutions...they had been incited by Communist rebels to target [us].”<sup>16</sup>

In this way, American attention on Nepal reflected an interest in protecting India, with foreign aid employed as the chosen instrument to prevent the Himalayan nation from becoming “a hot spot of rivalry between India and China.”<sup>17</sup> Working with Nepal would create a channel of information from Kathmandu back to Washington on activity inside communist China, and could serve as a base for American soldiers in wartime. For India, Nepal was equally important, a fact Bowles suggests Indians citizens were well aware of:

The Indians are aware of the danger to their own security from a Communist Nepal, and they know that this danger could come about not only by an armed attack from Tibet but also by infiltration, subversion, and a sudden coup d’état. A Communist Nepal is something that the Indian government is determined to prevent.<sup>18</sup>

Both American diplomats and Indian officials wholeheartedly agreed that Nepal’s independence was critical. Nepal offered a means of U.S.-Indian collaboration, further strengthening American efforts in India. If India was the “arch of world freedom and

<sup>12</sup> Moore, George, MD. “Five Year Malaria Public Health Program in Nepal.” (Part III, Series II, India and Nepal Correspondence). Box 111, Folder 495. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Yale University.

<sup>13</sup> Khadka, 87.

<sup>14</sup> Bowles, 274.

<sup>15</sup> Bowles, 274.

<sup>16</sup> Moore, George, MD and Moore, Berwyn. “Partners for Peace: An American Doctor and Journalist.” (Public Health Reports, Vol 122, 2007), 107.

<sup>17</sup> Khadka, 78.

<sup>18</sup> Bowles, 280.

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progress” in connecting American democracy to South Asia, Nepal was to be its keystone.<sup>19</sup>

As American officials shifted their focus to India and Nepal, they looked for tools to aid them in their democratizing mission. In particular, the U.S. government employed humanitarian health aid as a critical force in containing communism. President Truman formally addressed the role of aid during the Cold War in his 1949 inaugural address. Truman described America’s emerging foreign policy and listed four main objectives in achieving these goals. Most importantly, he described the use of scientific advances and economic progress to link America with nations abroad:

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery...They are victims of disease... For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve suffering of these people. The United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques... But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing and are inexhaustible.<sup>20</sup>

Truman called for global technological inclusivity, suggesting that the United States should distribute its abundant resources. Most importantly, he suggested that an allocation of U.S. technology could “win the hearts and minds of the developing world.”<sup>21</sup>

Following his speech, Truman established the Point Four Program, an American organization dedicated to advancing technology abroad. In the National Council Report 68 (NSC-68), a series of documents articulating American foreign policy in 1950, the program was described as “an emergency program to aid in thwarting communist advance, as in Southeast Asia.”<sup>22</sup> In 1950, Congress passed the Act of International Development, which set aside \$27 million in such military, economic, and technical assistance programs.<sup>23</sup> With these developments, aid not only had humanitarian implications, but also produced political, military, and social results. James Stevens, president of Harvard University’s School of Public Health, explained this shift in a series of “Industry and Tropical Health” meetings. “Powerful Communist forces are at work... taking advantage of sick and impoverished people, exploiting their discontent to undermine their political beliefs,” he said. “Health is one of the safeguards against this propaganda...through health we can defeat the evil threats of communism.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Khadka, 81.

<sup>20</sup> Truman, Harry S., “Inaugural Address”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States and National Security Affairs, 1950.”

<sup>23</sup> Cueto, Marcos. *Cold War, Deadly Fevers: Malaria Eradication in Mexico 1955–1975*, (Washington DC and Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 39.

<sup>24</sup> Cueto, 7.

Of the health programs initiated during the Cold War, many had a malaria eradication component.<sup>25</sup> Although malaria was essentially eradicated from the United States in the 1930s through the coordinated efforts of the Tennessee Valley Authority, malaria persisted in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia.<sup>26</sup> Lack of medical attention, unsanitary housing conditions, and malnutrition contributed to high infection rates.

Malaria presented itself as the ideal opportunity for introducing American ideology, and U.S.-led eradication efforts in the 1950s took on a distinctive Cold War tone. Brock Chisholm, the first director-general of the World Health Organization, wrote in *The World Health Organization and the Cold War* that attacking malaria would become “part of the war on communism.”<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Stevens argued, “[malaria eradication] is the most vital of our resources in the fight against Communism. They are part and parcel of the defense program of the democratic countries.”<sup>28</sup> Control of malaria—with the assistance of the United States—would encourage impoverished nations toward democratic development. Importantly, eradication of malaria was seen as conditional for capitalist growth. Many descriptions of regions where malaria was endemic identified its role in preventing economic growth, indirectly contributing to propagation of anti-capitalist, communist agendas. The disease caused agricultural land to lie fallow and left whole villages deserted, depreciating real estate and killing livestock. In most countries, treatment cost more than many families made in a year, leading to debt and contributing to economic malaise.<sup>29</sup> Fred L. Soper, head of the Global Malaria Eradication Program, described malaria populations in this way:

Malaria populations tend to live on a bare subsistence basis, contributing nothing to the common good. Even where the incidence of infection is low, there is surprising inhibition of both mental and physical effort. It has been well said that where malaria fails to kill, it enslaves. This is an economic disease. No infected area may hope to meet the economic competition of non-malarious region.<sup>30</sup>

Ragnar Nurske, an economist from the 1950s, contributed to this theory of “malaria enslavement.” Nurske described the onset of cycles of poverty in his “balanced growth

<sup>25</sup> Malaria is caused by a parasite that infects the Anopheles mosquito, which can transmit the parasite to humans during a blood meal. There are four parasites, *Plasmodium falciparum*, *P. vivax*, *P. ovale*, and *P. malariae*, which infect a patient’s red blood cells, causing hemozoin pigment to accumulate in the blood.<sup>25</sup> Clinically, the infection causes fevers, seizures, chills, and nausea. If malaria is endemic, the constant activation of the immune system can cause enlarged spleens or livers. Delays in diagnosis and care weaken the strength of the immune response and thus contribute to malaria’s worldwide notoriety.

<sup>26</sup> “Malaria” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>27</sup> Chisholm, Brock. *The World Health Organization, and the Cold War*, (UBC Press: Vancouver, 2008), 159.

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

<sup>29</sup> Bowles, 286.

<sup>30</sup> “Excerpt from Report of the UNICEF Executive Board, March 1935, Session WHO Malaria Eradication” Proposal by the Director General, 3 May 1995, WHO Library, 25-26. Cited in Cueto, *Cold War, Deadly Fevers*, 39.

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economic theory,” proposing that poor health caused low productivity and resulted in low real income and low buying power.<sup>31</sup> A lack of demand, in turn, resulted in limited investment and capital deficiency, feeding back into the vicious circle of ill health and low yield.<sup>32</sup> Only direct investments or introduction of capital, Nurske argued, could break the cycle.

With these influences in mind, the U.S. initiated an anti-malarial program in Nepal in 1952. At the time, the country’s public health infrastructure was nonexistent. For a country of ten million people, Nepal had a meager 650 hospital beds, only three doctors with standardized medical school training, and just ten nurses.<sup>33</sup> Its ten medical clinics and one sanitarium were unavailable to most of the population given the lack of transportation and passable roads. The health system lacked an adequate supply of drugs and medical instruments, and because Nepal had no medical infrastructure to organize patient records and results, epidemiological demographics were imprecise at best.<sup>34</sup>

The quality of general health in Nepal at the time reflected the lack of infrastructure. Given that 99 percent of the population lacked access to care, Nepal faced high mortality rates. Four out of every five babies died in their first year, exposed to high concentrations of tropical disease.<sup>35</sup> Malaria remained Nepal’s number one health problem: over 40 percent of the population had contracted it, with more than 345,000 new cases each year.<sup>36</sup> In Terai land, a region stretching from the Indian border to the Himalayas, as many as 95 percent of villagers were infected with malaria at any given time.<sup>37</sup> The economic, agricultural, and social damage wrought by the disease caused one official to describe malaria “as holding Nepal in her clutches.”<sup>38</sup>

As a result, American officials and diplomats in India began actively planning an anti-malaria program in Nepal. Dr. George Moore, a Public Health Service officer in the Korean War, headed the Point Four Partnership in Nepal and coordinated Nepal’s international aid as Chief Public Health Officer. Moore and Ambassador Bowles collaborated with the Rockefeller Foundation to organize “Nepal’s Public Health Mission.” In particular, they worked with Dr. Robert Watson, director of the Rockefeller Foundation in Southeast Asia and the world’s most prominent malaria expert.

In his initial proposal, Moore anticipated a limited malaria control program to begin in 1952 and grow into a full-scale eradication program by 1954. The program was divided into four main chronological periods: preparation, attack, control, and consolidation. In the preparation phase, Moore proposed the initiation of research studies, surveys, and censuses. By 1953, he had put his plan into action, with five main malaria

<sup>31</sup> Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995), 76.

<sup>32</sup> Escobar, 76.

<sup>33</sup> Moore, “Five Year Malaria Public Health Program in Nepal.”

<sup>34</sup> Bowles, 286.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>36</sup> Moore, “Five Year Malaria Public Health Program in Nepal.”

<sup>37</sup> Bowles, 267.

<sup>38</sup> Moore, “Five Year Malaria Public Health Program in Nepal.”

research surveys designed to improve the public health impact of the program.<sup>39</sup> These surveys recorded past malarial cases, mapped the terrain, and located pockets of immunity. Armed with this information, officials would commence the attack phase by way of a massive indoor DDT-spraying campaign.<sup>40</sup> By 1954, Moore had recruited sixty-six DDT technicians from the U.S. Public Health Service to systematically spray the Nepalese countryside.<sup>41</sup> DDT, an insecticide developed in the late 1930s, exterminated the malaria vector with ease. Moore and his team “haul[ed] barrels of DDT, the pesticide of choice, and hundreds of compression sprayers to venture on foot to villages throughout the jungle to destroy mosquitoes.”<sup>42</sup> This was Moore’s “foremost goal...in the subtropical lowlands known as the Terai.”<sup>43</sup> In the subsequent “control” phase, Moore planned to treat the remaining malaria cases, and he proposed a centralized organization that would address all contributions to malaria infection during the “consolidation” phase.

Nepal became the example for many subsequent eradication efforts. Moore’s organization laid the foundation for the WHO’s Sixth Report, a blueprint for malaria eradication programs proposed by a WHO advisory committee in 1956.<sup>44</sup> According to the report, such programs could be completed in roughly five to eight years, given the proper administrative organization, sufficient funding, full-time staff, and political support.

The Cold War considerably influenced this structure. On the most basic level, the program was militaristic in style: the focus on bureaucracy, management, and administration highlights the hyper-organized nature of the program. The phases of development, with names like “attack” and “consolidation,” evoked wartime imagery. Like other public health programs of the time, it employed a vertical approach, described by one historian as “calling for a solution of a given health problem by means of single-purpose machinery.”<sup>45</sup> Most of these vertical interventions transplanted a hospital-based healthcare system to developing countries and ignored whatever existing health system was in place. Usually, they avoided preventative health techniques, favoring mechanistic solutions at the expense of social and economic change and instead focusing on specific, disease-fighting weapons. Moore’s proposal aligned with this Cold War policy, given the “attack phase” focus on DDT. While the “consolidation phase” integrated DDT with social changes, agricultural solutions, and treatment, it would be secondary to the “attack phase” and implemented only if necessary.

Still, many vertically implemented programs were ultimately critiqued—then as now—for overemphasizing mechanistic solutions, implementing authoritarian and dictatorial health requirements, and devaluing community interaction. Two particular features of public health responses from the time reveal the top-down nature of malaria

<sup>39</sup> Moore, “Five Year Malaria Public Health Program in Nepal.”

<sup>40</sup> DDT’s full IUPAC name is: dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane.

<sup>41</sup> Moore, “Five Year Malaria Public Health Program in Nepal.”

<sup>42</sup> Moore, “Experience of a US Public Health Officer: 1950s Nepal, Part I and II,” 464.

<sup>43</sup> “Partners for Peace: An American Doctor and Journalist,” 107.

<sup>44</sup> Cueto, 47.

<sup>45</sup> Gonzalez CL. “Mass campaigns and general health services.” Geneva: World Health Organization, (Public Health Papers, No. 29, 1965), 9.

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eradication programs: the pressure on countries to adopt Western medical practices and the propagandistic depictions of the people the programs targeted.

Many eradication campaigns completely ignored non-Western medical traditions. Historians have particularly criticized the malaria eradication programs in Sardinia and Mexico. In Sardinia, Rockefeller Foundation officials ignored the protests and demands of villagers, many of whom tried to resist the widespread use of DDT. Their pleas were disregarded because, according to officials, “little actual damage took place.”<sup>46</sup> Indeed, medical workers described locals as “particularly unhospitable [sic].”<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in Mexico, “Western medical assimilation was the hegemonic trend.” Many public health campaigns in Mexico completely ignored the curanderos – popular, religiously symbolic medicine men. For many public health officials, Mexican culture was seen as primitive and superstitious, an inherent roadblock to progress. Unfortunately, these perceptions contributed to a racist depiction of malaria’s effects. Common malaria symptoms such as anemia and fatigue were perceived as leading to “apathy, fatalism, indolence” and a “depressive character” among locals.<sup>48</sup> Many indigenous people were depicted as lazy and purposefully uninterested in good health, a connection that was possibly the result of the top-down structure of the malaria programs.

Although ideologically derived from the same values, the Nepal program was distinct from those in Sardinia and Mexico with respect to its on-the-ground implementation. The Nepalese intervention employed convincing medical pluralism, with doctors using combined Western and non-Western therapies to work within Nepal’s cultural and religious environment.

Dr. Moore best represents the Nepal program’s unique approach, as his post-Nepal writings reveal a thoughtfulness absent among officials in Mexico and Sardinia. First, the Nepal Five-Year Malaria Eradication Program carefully analyzed the impact of foreign aid workers. Moore begins one of his reports expressing concern that Nepalese people would not accept teams of American doctors. “I wondered, though, how the people would react to a strange doctor spraying their homes with a poison,” he wrote, “examining their bodies, and injecting them with painful needles.”<sup>49</sup> Second, Moore and his team did not want to administer their program in “a grand American style that would be perceived as an affront.”<sup>50</sup> The Nepalese program incorporated existing systems of infrastructure and government by working closely with Nepalese doctors and soldiers. Moore and Ambassador Bowles helped appoint a Nepalese secretary at the main hospital and collaborated with local doctors such as the ophthalmologist G.C. Sood.<sup>51</sup> A group of Nepalese Gurkha officers also became critical to the success of the eradication program. The Gurkhas, a people that originated from the Faiput and Mongol tribes living in the

<sup>46</sup> Logan, John. “The Sardinian Project: An Experiment in the Eradication of an Indigenous Malarious Vector,” (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), 138.

<sup>47</sup> Aitken, T. H. G. and Casini, G. U. “Sardinia After Malaria Eradication.” World Health Organization, (WHO: Mal, Vol 66, 456, 1966), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Cueto, 118-9.

<sup>49</sup> Moore, “Experience of a US Public Health Officer: 1950s Nepal, Part I and II,” 463.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 569.

<sup>51</sup> Moore, “Partners for Peace: An American Doctor and Journalist,” 107.

Himalayas and served in British military units during World War I, were respected for their wartime bravery and national loyalty.<sup>52</sup> They served as important intermediaries in the doctor-patient interaction process, and Moore worked to gain their trust. When the Gurkhas “trusted me and my work,” he wrote, “[then] the Nepalese people readily put their trust in [the Gurkhas].<sup>53</sup> Upon entering a village, the Gurkhas would approach the village leader and explain the goals of the mission; then, with permission, the American team would spray the leader’s quarters with DDT. The following morning, they would revisit the home to remove the dead mosquitoes and bugs, publicly legitimizing the impact of the American team. Following this powerful demonstration, the program faced little resistance from villagers who had once been unwilling to spray their homes.

In addition, American teams employed Nepalese cultural symbols as backdrops for their campaigns. Often, they opened clinics in Buddhist or Hindu temples, ensuring that “the villagers’ first experience with modern medicine thus took place in the safety and familiarity of their temples.”<sup>54</sup> Posters promoting malaria treatment or DDT spraying depicted popular religious leaders or icons, encouraging people to seek care and trust the insecticide. Such “horizontal” health solutions stressed intimate interactions between doctors and patients, employed preventative medicine, and identified social contributions to disease.

Furthermore, unlike in Mexico, spreading the message of Western medicine’s superiority was not the ultimate goal. “Whether [Nepalese natives] attributed their improved health to us or their gods was irrelevant,” said one doctor.<sup>55</sup> To officials in Nepal’s eradication program, improving health was paramount. Not coincidentally, the program also avoided conveying stereotypical impressions of the Nepalese people. As opposed to describing Nepalese as lazy, they were considered “clever people...who were eager and receptive toward quick progress in the betterment of their environment.”<sup>56</sup> Health officers collectively described the Nepalese in 1954 as “dependable, loyal, strong, and rugged” husbands and beautiful, graceful wives.<sup>57</sup>

In this way, the Nepalese Public Health Mission adds nuance to our understanding of public health in the 1950s. Clearly, the program’s initiation reflects Cold War motivations. Its structure and organization were shaped by politicized public health attitudes common during the Cold War. Yet its “on-the-ground” implementation sets the Nepal program apart. With its embrace of medical pluralism, avoidance of Western medical hegemony, collaboration with the Nepalese government, and general air of respect, the Nepal malaria program is unique for its time.

From the viewpoint of the public health officials in Nepal, the Five-Year Malaria Eradication Program was a considerable success. In the first two years, malaria transmission fell by 70 percent, and there was “a declining trend in malaria” from the

<sup>52</sup> Moore, “Experience of a US Public Health Officer: 1950s Nepal, Part I and II,” 568.

<sup>53</sup> Moore, “Experience of a US Public Health Officer: 1950s Nepal, Part I and II,” 569.

<sup>54</sup> Moore, “Experience of a US Public Health Officer: 1950s Nepal, Part I and II,” 464.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>56</sup> Moore, George. “Health Clinics in the Helembu, Nepal” (*High Altitude Survey*, Vol 69, 4, 1954), 350.

<sup>57</sup> Moore, “Health Clinics in the Helembu, Nepal,” 342.

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1950s onward.<sup>58</sup> By 1977, malaria in Nepal was declared officially eradicated. According to Moore, the anti-malarial programs “helped Nepal’s Terai area become repopulated and serve as the bread basket for the country, exporting 15 percent of its grain crops to India.”<sup>59</sup> Although malaria has resurfaced today due to drug resistance, transmission remains under control.

Moore attributed his success to his method of approach, ensuring the trust of the Nepalese people through the integration of Nepalese culture and American medicine – what Moore called “medical diplomacy.”<sup>60</sup> As a result, American doctors did not experience the cultural clashes so common in other healthcare interventions of the 1950s. The visible benefits of the American-led efforts helped the Nepalese become increasingly open to the implementation of other changes in health and education.”<sup>61</sup>

The program was not simply implemented for malaria control, of course. It was a tool in the larger Cold War effort, and its success must be evaluated in this context. Though public health aid was the major diplomatic tool the United States used in Nepal, its success did not translate into control over Maoist forces. In the early 1950s, the Maoists and the United People’s Front in Nepal replaced more democratic parties. In December 1960, King Mahendra dissolved the government and established an authoritarian, though not technically communist, regime. Maoism remained an influential force in Nepalese politics, and surveys of the population revealed that a majority of citizens considered themselves communist.

In this way, Nepal’s Public Health Mission stands as a complex paradox from an American perspective: a medical success but a political failure. One historian has traced the reason to a particular irony of the anti-malaria efforts: by working so closely with the ruling regime and supporting their institutional structure of health, the program may have actually dissuaded the spread of democracy. Quite simply, the Nepal Public Health Mission—with its militaristic organization and hierarchical structure—did not offer a democratic model. While aspects of the program were medically syncretic, culturally pluralistic, and collaborative, these elements were localized. More broadly, the administrative nature of the program remained highly centralized, and its politics bore little influence on Nepalese party officials or government administrators.

This interpretation poses a challenge to health interventions in developing countries even today. The structures inherent in public health campaigns and the leadership required to make them successful may negatively affect the country’s political institutions. The Nepal experience suggests that the administrative structure of public health campaigns fundamentally works against any efforts they may have to promote broader political goals. It forces public health officials to reconsider health programs in developing countries with nascent representative governments. Inevitably, structure matters.

<sup>58</sup> Nepal Malaria Programme Review, World Health Organization, Regional Office for Southeast Asia (SEA-MAL-265, 2010), 7.

<sup>59</sup> Moore, “Experience of a US Public Health Officer: 1950s Nepal, Part I and II,” 466.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Moore, “Experience of a US Public Health Officer: 1950s Nepal, Part I and II,” 466.

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## THE ANTAGONIST AND THE APOLOGIST

### JOSEPH BRODSKY, YEVGENY YEVTUSHENKO, AND THE GENERATION OF POETS WHO CHANGED RUSSIA

One rotted in the confines of prison as the other achieved the heights of fame. While Joseph Brodsky, observes Noah Remnick '15, became “a poet in permanent exile,” his contemporary, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, emerged as a “rock star of poetry.” In this junior seminar essay, Remnick compares the parallel lives of these two Russian poets and the dichotomous roles they came to fill, as “dissenter and accommodationist, antagonist and apologist.” Using an incredible range of sources, from archival papers to contemporary interviews, Remnick examines the intersections of language and nationalism, of art and politics, in 1960s and 1970s Soviet Russia.

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Thousands of fans filled a Moscow concert hall in December 1963, rising from their seats in rapturous applause as Yevgeny Yevtushenko read his poetry aloud for nearly an hour, one poem commemorating an army battalion, another declaiming the beauty and barrenness of the Siberian winter of his childhood. That year, Yevtushenko had traveled to Paris and elsewhere, but Soviet authorities had chastised him for publishing an autobiography abroad, without first obtaining official permission. Still, on this night, as on so many others, Yevtushenko, sanctioned to perform by the state apparatus, drew an exuberant crowd.<sup>1</sup>

At around the same time, about five hundred miles north in Leningrad, Joseph Brodsky had been confined, first to a prison cell, then to a mental hospital, where he had been deprived of sleep and force-fed pills. A young poet of growing repute, Brodsky had angered the authorities because his moving metaphysical poems failed to exalt the Soviet state. A local newspaper denounced him as a parasite, and in that same December month of 1963, Brodsky began a Kafkaesque journey through the Soviet judicial system that ended with his expulsion from the country whose language stirred his soul.

The Soviet era produced two paradigms for the writer, embodied by Brodsky and Yevtushenko: dissenter and accommodationist, antagonist and apologist. Any repressive regime invites compromise because it imposes a level of fear that ensnares all but the most confident and unyielding. Few have the intellectual or moral stamina to withstand the explicit and implicit threats against self and loved ones. And so most people make “deals”—with the authorities, and with their consciences. They speak out on one subject, and demur on another. They alternate between courage and cowardice, integrity and ignominy. For the writer, that dilemma is even more public than it is for the laborer, or the office worker.

At many points in Russian and Soviet history, the rules were clear: conform or suffer the consequences. The Tsars demanded absolute fealty from the Russian people and adherence to the social and economic structures that preserved the aristocracy’s wealth and power. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin and Stalin professed to freeing the people from Tsarist sovereignty, but they imposed laws that required unquestioning allegiance to Communist dictates. Those caught defying the state usually lost their homes, their liberty, or even their lives. After Stalin died in 1953, the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev loosened—but did not release—the country’s artistic and political shackles. In a 1956 speech, Khrushchev denounced Stalin’s excesses, setting up a period known as the Thaw. Writers, artists, and ordinary citizens accustomed to repression struggled to define where their new horizon began and where it ended. The confusion only increased after 1963, following the Cuban Missile Crisis, particularly when Khrushchev withdrew many of those liberties in 1963.

Although the government never tolerated dissidence completely—and indeed prison camps and psychiatric hospitals continued to hold artistic and political critics of the regime—Khrushchev and his successors permitted some limited opposition. But the government manipulated defiance to serve its own aims—to allow, for example, a controlled release of tension to satisfy some collective need to rebel against authority, or

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Shabad, “Popularity Held By Yevtushenko,” *The New York Times* 15 Dec. 1963.

to put on a face of tolerance for the West. But at any moment, the state would snap the reins to pull back those who chomped too greedily at the bit of freedom.

Joseph Brodsky ignored the ruthless, inconsistent whims of state demands on artists by focusing his poetry on the purity of language and personal meditations on life, death, and the relationship between people and the places that possess importance. His sparse audiences met on street corners and in communal apartments, passing his words around on hand-copied sheets known as samizdat. Despite his relative obscurity, his refusal to comply with Communist party edicts earned him stays in psychiatric hospitals, a sham trial in 1964, internal exile in the polar north, and expulsion from the country in 1972. And yet, Brodsky's dissent came not from bold public advocacy, but rather from a quiet fealty to his artistic vision that would eventually earn him the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Yevgeny Yevtushenko was a poet of different mettle. He tended towards conformity, a man of clever compromises who managed to tweak the regime gently while enjoying the privileges of its elite class. He traveled abroad, wore Western clothes and smoked American cigarettes, had a capacious Moscow apartment and a dacha in the country. His most famous poem, *Babi Yar*, published in 1961, was overtly political, however, and exposed how Stalinist anti-Semitism conspired to hide the truth about the Nazi massacre of over 75,000 Jews in a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev in 1941. And yet, Yevtushenko was quick to express regret and scurry back in line when officials reprimanded him for flouting convention.

People in the liberal intelligentsia—among them writers, artists, scientists and alternative journalists—tended to view Brodsky's allegiance as being to the Russian language, and Yevtushenko's to the Russian establishment, or to himself. But the truth is subtler than the stereotypes. Both these poets revealed the beauty of the Russian language and the brutality of Soviet political reality to the public. In doing so, their works contributed, however haltingly, to the policies of glasnost and perestroika promoted in the late 1980s under the leadership of another man of their generation, Mikhail Gorbachev.

“There is no question that what both these men did in the 60s leads in a crooked, slow line to the opening of Soviet society under Gorbachev,” declared Olga Carlisle, an American writer and the granddaughter of the Russian playwright Leonid Andreyev, in a telephone interview.<sup>2</sup> Carlisle interviewed both Brodsky and Yevtushenko in the 1960s, for her book *Poets on Street Corners*.<sup>3</sup> She said it was obvious to her even then, when both men were still young if already experienced that Yevtushenko was “a cog in the Soviet propaganda machine,” while Brodsky was a “potent” writer whose “gift for language distinguished him” not only among his contemporaries, but in the pantheon of great Russian poets.<sup>4</sup>

Poets occupy a unique place in Russian hearts and history. They are hailed as prophets and truth seekers. Both Yevtushenko and Brodsky accepted this mantle when they undertook their work. In the opening lines of his 1964 poem “Bratsk Hydroelectric

<sup>2</sup> Olga Carlisle, Telephone interview, March 28, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Olga Andreyev Carlisle, *Poets on Street Corners* (New York: Random House, 1969).

<sup>4</sup> Olga Carlisle, Telephone interview, March 28, 2013.

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Station,” Yevtushenko wrote that, “A poet in Russia is more than a poet.”<sup>5</sup> In an essay for *The New York Times* shortly after his expulsion from Russia, Brodsky wrote at length about his attitudes and philosophy of writing and speech. At one point he noted that because of the historic failures in Russia of the judicial, religious, and educational systems, “Literature took upon itself the ‘instructive’ role. It became the focus of a people’s spiritual life, the arbiter of its moral character.”<sup>6</sup> To Russians, the names of Pushkin, Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Yesenin, Tsvetaeva, and Mandelstam are familiar in a deep way that has no equivalent in American culture. Russians memorize their words and their biographies. Poets often suffered tragic fates, at times at their own hands, at times at the hands of the state. Throughout Russian Tsarist and Soviet history, the country’s leaders coveted poets’ blessings and bristled at their opprobrium, often imprisoning them, and worse, if they questioned authority. “The roots of Russian poetry and music are buried deep in Russian history – a history of oppression and violence,” Carlisle wrote in the introduction to her book. “Poetry is the perfect means of expression for a suffering people....For Russians, poetry is an attempt to discover order in a raw, chaotic world.”<sup>7</sup>

Yevtushenko was born in 1933 in the small Siberian town of Zima Junction, near the vast, breathtaking Lake Baikal; Brodsky was born in 1940, amidst the canals and ornate porticoes of Leningrad. Though separated by a few years and thousands of miles, both grew up in the shadows of the Stalinist purges and terrors, and came of age as writers in the confusing period after Stalin’s death, when the new Soviet leader, Khrushchev, offered tantalizing glimmers of liberalization to a people starved for truthfulness and free expression. He allowed long-suppressed artists, such as the composer Dmitri Shostakovich, to create without interference, and in 1962 even sanctioned the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s wrenching fictionalized memoir of a Stalinist labor camp, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.<sup>8</sup> Khrushchev seemed to be steering Soviet society cautiously through a sea of liberty unknown before in pre- or post-revolutionary Russia, when he abruptly brought the ship to a halt. Embarrassed at being outwitted by the Americans during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, Khrushchev denounced the westernizing influences he had only just embraced. Ordinary citizens and artists scrambled to figure out the new rules and how to adjust to them, politically, artistically, and in their quotidian lives.

### THE COST OF CONFORMITY

Yevtushenko came to prominence during the Thaw years as a kind of rock star of poetry. A tall, sandy-haired young man, his handsome mug and dashing style filled concert halls and made him an ideal candidate to represent the Soviet Union in trips

<sup>5</sup> Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko, *Bratsk Station, and Other New Poems* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1967).

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Brodsky, "Says Poet Brodsky, Ex of the Soviet Union: 'A Writer Is a Lonely Traveler, and No One Is His Helper,'" *The New York Times*, October 1, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> Olga Andreyev Carlisle, *Poets on Street Corners* (New York: Random House, 1969), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, trans. Ralph Parker (New York: Dutton, 1963).

abroad and in meetings with foreigners at home. Western critics called his poetry “glib,” “facile,” and “second rate,” but the Soviet crowds loved him, as did the authorities.<sup>9</sup> His work was accessible and vivid, often celebrating common Russian and Soviet touchstones—a soldier’s valor, the frigid Siberian winter, a fisherman’s wooden hut. He, indeed, considered himself a bard of the common Soviet man, one who read his poetry not to the elite, but “in factories, colleges, research institutes, in office buildings and in schools.”<sup>10</sup>

Yevtushenko figured out early on that if he appeased the Communist party leadership, he could purchase some independence as an artist and citizen. At times, he used this convenient relationship for personal gain, boasting to reporters of his fame in a 1967 trip to Spain, and winking at the overflowing crowds as he posed for endless pictures on a 1966 jaunt to Australia, where he was said to have drawn larger crowds than the Beatles.<sup>11</sup> But he also occasionally staked out bold positions, most notably with his publication in 1961 of the poem “Babi Yar.” The Soviet authorities at first denounced the Nazi crimes at Babi Yar, but suppressed the fact that most of the victims who were shot and buried in massive pits were Jews. In his poem, Yevtushenko brought this hidden Nazi atrocity to light—“I am/ each old man/ here shot dead./ I am/ every child/ here shot dead./ Nothing in me/ shall ever forget!” Of more concern to Soviet officials, however, was the equal rage with which he spoke of Russian anti-Semitism:

Blood runs, spilling over the floors.  
 The bar-room rabble-rousers  
 give off a stench of vodka and onion.  
 A boot kicks me aside, helpless.  
 In vain I plead with these pogrom bullies.  
 While they jeer and shout,  
 'Beat the Yids. Save Russia! '  
 some grain-marketeer beats up my mother.  
 O my Russian people!  
 I know  
 you  
 are international to the core.  
 But those with unclean hands  
 have often made a jingle of your purest name.<sup>12</sup>

Olga Carlisle, now 82 years old, remembered “Babi Yar” as Yevtushenko’s “redeeming point,” the action that allowed him to call himself legitimately “something of

<sup>9</sup> Robert Magidoff, “The Poetry of Yevgeny Yevtushenko 1953 to 1965 by George Reavey” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 10.2 (1966): 210-11.

<sup>10</sup> Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko, *A Precocious Autobiography* (New York: Dutton, 1963), 116-22.

<sup>11</sup> Rita Dunstan, “NOT ANGRY... JUST TIRED!” *The Australian Women's Weekly* (1966): 4. Web. 25 Apr. 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Yevgeny Yevtushenko, “Babii Yar,” *Poem Hunter*, August 17, 2007. Web. <<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/babii-yar/>>.

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a dissident.” Although nothing in Soviet Russia in those days got published without official permission—and the authorities never disclosed why they allowed “Babi Yar” to appear in print—this was still a moment of bravery in Yevtushenko’s career since he risked fallout in the future should the regime shift its position and reprove the poet for criticizing the state. Carlisle said that artistically, Yevtushenko’s poetry was “like design on wallpaper; he doesn’t have dimension, or real talent. But ‘Babi Yar’ had a tremendous effect when it appeared and it caused a great sensation. For whatever reason, the authorities let it be published, maybe to curry favor with the West. But it put him in an entirely different position.”<sup>13</sup>

In his 1963 memoir, *A Precocious Autobiography*, Yevtushenko wrote movingly about a visit to Kiev that inspired the poem, of reading it unplanned at a talk in Moscow, and of the tearful response it received from people forced for so long to stifle their rage and pain over Communism’s terrorizing excesses. Yevtushenko described taking the poem to the offices of *Literaturnaya Gazyeta* (Literary Gazette) in the hopes of publishing it, and the deep emotions he felt watching editors and printers react to his words as the papers rolled off the presses: “An old compositor came in. ‘You Yevtushenko? I want to shake your hand, son. I’ve just read your poem ‘Babi Yar.’”<sup>14</sup> This was a moment of bravery in Yevtushenko’s career, and also one that gave him entrée to a world of prestige that many said soon sapped him of the audacity to speak truth to power.

One critical incident of capitulation occurred in 1963. Yevtushenko traveled to Paris, and, while there, he arranged for publication of *A Precocious Autobiography* and its serialization in *L’Express* without first getting the requisite approval from Soviet censors. The book is a thin and youthfully self-indulgent personal history, laced with commentary on the country’s need to recuperate from the trauma of the Stalinist years, and some mild criticisms of the harshness of the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>15</sup> The authorities released a barrage of criticism against Yevtushenko, accusing him in the Communist party’s main newspaper, *Pravda* (Truth), of being “ideologically and politically immature” and of expressing “inaccurate, absurd and actually harmful interpretations of Soviet reality.”<sup>16</sup> At a conference convened to rebuke young upstart writers careening too far from party dogma, Yevtushenko immediately sought to downplay his transgressions, charging the Paris weekly with selective editing of his work. But his self-defense did not sufficiently appease the authorities, who charged Yevtushenko with failing to “realize the root of his mistakes, either in his autobiography or in some of his verse.”<sup>17</sup> A few months later, Yevtushenko completely caved, saying he wished to repent for his literary “sins.” In a poem published by the journal *Yunost* (Youth), he asserted ruefully, “I come back

<sup>13</sup> Olga Carlisle, Telephone interview, March 28 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko, *A Precocious Autobiography* (New York: Dutton, 1963), 116-22.

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

<sup>16</sup> Theodore Shabad, “Writer’s Defense Muted in Soviet,” *The New York Times*, March 29, 1963; Theodore Shabad, “Soviet Poet Answers Attacks And Pravada Gives Him Space” *The New York Times* 30 Mar. 1963.

<sup>17</sup> Theodore Shabad, “Soviet Poet Answers Attacks And Pravada Gives Him Space” *The New York Times*, March 30 1963.

standing not high in the people's esteem -- / but after severe criticism that in the final analysis has been useful to me."<sup>18</sup>

Yevtushenko's bowing to the authorities at just the time the government shuttered the windows of liberalization anew underscored his difficulty finding a place of comfort, both politically and artistically. It also revealed a certain craven streak in Yevtushenko, for by refusing an opportunity to champion his own right to freedom of expression, he also failed to defend the rights of others with far less political capital. For about a year, Yevtushenko could not travel abroad, and he marked carefully the words he spoke and published. The K.G.B., the state security agency, monitored him closely. The chairman of the K.G.B., Vladimir Semichastny, told the Central Committee of the Communist Party, in a letter dated July 6, 1964, that while Yevtushenko "considers himself a fighter and follower of Communism," he nevertheless "makes immature political statements to foreigners." He cited an example of the poet meeting with the French singer Charles Aznavour, and telling him that, "Unfortunately for us, Chekhov, Dostoevsky and Gogol tell more of the truth about today's Russia than do our contemporary Russian writers." The letter also noted that Yevtushenko expressed concern about his recently curtailed ability to travel abroad.<sup>19</sup>

By later in 1964, all seemed forgiven, and Yevtushenko returned to the "glitterati" circuit, to the cafes in Dakar and Paris, the Ivy-covered walls of Princeton, the piazzas in Rome.<sup>20</sup> He received letters from international literary luminaries, including one from John Steinbeck and Edward Albee, inviting him, under the auspices of the P.E.N. World Association of Writers, to visit the United States: "You have been in our thoughts ever since we visited the Soviet Union last fall.... We writers can perform an important service in the cause of peace and international understanding; it is moreover a service which we can perform on our own, without bothering with governments and official exchanges."<sup>21</sup>

In this way, Yevtushenko vacillated through the years between official troubadour and rebellious provocateur, continuously adjusting his artistic and political tactics to satisfy the regime, while at the same time holding on to the public's trust. Indeed, his value to the Soviet Union on these trips abroad would have been undermined if he appeared too much as a party puppet, so he needed to maintain some veneer of liberalism and protest. There ensued a back and forth of pressure by the authorities, recantation, easing of pressures—a safety valve of political exhaling from an engine of ultimate control. In November 1965, for example, even after reading his poems to overflowing crowds at state-controlled stadiums and auditoriums, Yevtushenko wrote a poem accusing the leaders of the Komsomol, the Communist Youth League, of trying to "knead our souls

<sup>18</sup> "Yevtushenko Repents of 'Sins' as Poet On His Return to Print in U.S.S.R," *The Washington Post*, September 24, 1963.

<sup>19</sup> Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko, 1933-. Papers, M1088, Stanford University. Libraries. Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives. Box 9, Folder 14.

<sup>20</sup> Lloyd Garrison, "Yevtushenko, in Dakar, Extols Soviet Wine, Women and Poetry," *The New York Times* 20 Apr. 1966; Paul Hofmann, "Yevtushenko Arrives for 6-Week Reading Tour," *The New York Times*, November 5, 1966.

<sup>21</sup> Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko, 1933-. Papers, M1088, Stanford University. Libraries. Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives. Box 4, Folder 10.

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like wax.” The poem, “A Letter to Yesenin,” is a tribute to the Russian poet who committed suicide in 1925 at the age of 30. It goes on to call the Stalinist purges that killed more than a million Soviet citizens, “a war against the people.” Although Komsomol leaders took umbrage with the poem, Yevtushenko suffered no consequences, a sign of his connections within the establishment.<sup>22</sup>

His penchant for straddling the fence reemerged in 1966, when two Soviet writers, Yuli Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky, were tried as criminals for publishing satirical novels in the West under pseudonyms. The trial was a huge sensation at home and abroad. Many writers wrote letters to the authorities, deploring the prosecution as a literary witch-hunt and the sentence of five years hard labor as befitting Stalinist times. Yevtushenko said that he signed such a letter, and even attended the trial to show his solidarity with the writers.<sup>23</sup> But he later qualified that support when he told reporters in Senegal that he thought the two “should have been punished” because they chose to “wash their dirty linen outside their own country.”<sup>24</sup> Apparently, each trip abroad had its price.

Criticisms of Yevtushenko did not come only in retrospect, and they rained down from both sides. Even the establishment he courted mocked his malleability. Nikolai Gribachev, a former head of the Writers' Union and editor of the magazine *Sovyetsky Soyuz* (The Soviet Union), described Yevtushenko in 1967 as a dog with a tin can tied to his tail, chasing it round in circles. “He makes a lot of noise, but he doesn’t get anywhere. Sometimes he reminds me of a calf sucking at the teats of two cows. He spends more time in New York than he does in Moscow.”<sup>25</sup> When some students nominated Yevtushenko in 1968 for a professorship at Oxford University, British writers pelted him with even harsher words. In November of that year, Bernard Levin wrote in London’s *Daily Mail* that Yevtushenko was “a party hack pathetically parading as something better,” who “has come to represent captivity decked out like an aging whore with the cosmetics of freedom.” In the *New Statesman*, Kingsley Amis concurred, calling him a “squalid pseudo-liberal,” and Tobor Szamuely, in *The Spectator*, called him a “hack propagandist” who spent his time “indefatigably traveling around the world” on behalf of the Soviet regime.<sup>26</sup>

Yevtushenko’s commitment to human rights and progressivism returned, however, at a crucial moment in August 1968, when the Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev sent tanks to suppress the reformist movement in Czechoslovakia, known as the Prague Spring. A distraught Yevtushenko sent a telegram to Brezhnev, calling the violent Soviet action a “tragic mistake” and a “cruel blow to Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship and to the world Communist movement.” He wrote that he felt compelled to speak out because “in

<sup>22</sup> “Leaders Mocked By Yevtushenko,” *The New York Times*, November 14, 1965.

<sup>23</sup> Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko, and Antonina W. Bouis, *Fatal Half Measures: The Culture of Democracy in the Soviet Union* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 47-49.

<sup>24</sup> “Golden Boy of Poetry,” *The New York Times* 8 July 1971.

<sup>25</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury, “Pressures Rise in Soviet For End of Censorship,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 1967.

<sup>26</sup> Anthony Lewis, “Yevtushenko Assailed in Britain As Soviet ‘Hack Propagandist,’” *The New York Times*, November 22, 1968.

some situations it is shameful to remain silent.” In his 1991 book, *Fatal Half Measures: The Culture of Democracy in the Soviet Union*, Yevtushenko reprinted the text in its entirety in the prologue. But despite having the courage to send the cable, Yevtushenko refused for years to confirm that he had done so, diluting his act of conscience.<sup>27</sup>

Yevtushenko maintained the notion that he supported Communism. But the Communism he experienced and praised bore no resemblance to the lives of the narod, the common people, who lived in dingy, crowded communal apartments, stood hours in line for scraps of grizzled meat and tinned fish, and saw elite party favorites, like Yevtushenko, enjoy travel abroad and access to special stores where they could buy strawberries in wintertime.

Although Yevtushenko failed to act in any way on behalf of the marginalized of Soviet society, he seemed to have no qualms about advocating on his own behalf, even at the highest official levels. On April 7, 1969, he wrote an impassioned letter to Brezhnev, not for some greater social good, but pleading with the Soviet leader to intercede in improving the conditions of publication for a book of his poems.<sup>28</sup> The letter was an exercise in extreme sycophancy. In pursuit of a bigger print run—Yevtushenko claimed to have been promised the initial edition would be one million books, but it had been reduced to only 50,000, which, he lamented, was a “rather serious material blow”—he appealed to Brezhnev as a lover of “Soviet poetry.” It is astonishing that Yevtushenko felt he had enough prestige, and a close enough relationship with the head of the country, to write him seeking intervention in such a routine publishing matter. Yevtushenko aggrandized himself in the letter as a poet beloved by readers from all walks of Soviet life, “workers, collective farmers, students, intellectuals.”

Yevtushenko demonstrated how well he had learned to maneuver within the Soviet system when he wrote to Brezhnev that, to combat any critics who might question his loyalty to the state, he had asked the Bureau of Propaganda to allow him to read his poems on the air and to “talk about today’s America, about the terrible murder of Martin Luther King and the Kennedy Brothers.” He essentially offered to leverage his prestige as a writer to attack America in exchange for a larger first print run. In an ultimate show of groveling, Yevtushenko told Brezhnev he “dreams” of writing a poem about Lenin and that “your trust in me would provide me new strength.” He admitted that “[p]ossibly, sometimes I have made mistakes with my hot-blooded character,” but lest anyone doubt his motives, he assured Brezhnev that “the guiding principle within me has always been to serve our Motherland.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko and Antonina W. Bouis, *Fatal Half Measures: The Culture of Democracy in the Soviet Union* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 3-4; “Yevtushenko Play Is Withdrawn After His Criticism Of Invasion” *The New York Times*, October 17, 1968.

<sup>28</sup> Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko, 1933-. Papers, M1088, Stanford University. Libraries. Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives. Box 8, Folder 11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

### THE PRICE OF DISSENT

Joseph Brodsky wrote quite a different letter to Brezhnev when he addressed the Soviet leader on June 4, 1972, the day he was forced to bid farewell forever to the country of his birth, his persecution, and his literary roots “Dear Leonid Ilyich,” he began, in formal Russian style, and went on to exclaim his bitterness at being forced to leave Russia “against my free will.” Brodsky’s letter summarized his core philosophy about poets and literature and their place in society:

I belong to the Russian culture, I am part of it, and no change of place could influence this. The language is a thing more ancient, more inescapable than the State. I belong to the Russian language. As for the state to which I belong, in my opinion, the measure of a writer’s patriotism is the way he writes in the language of his people, not his oaths before tribunals.<sup>30</sup>

The letter revealed Brodsky at his most vulnerable state. He even used the word “beg” as he beseeched Brezhnev to “give me an opportunity to exist in Russian literature, on Russian soil.” He admitted being “sorry that I did not write to you earlier,” for now, “time has run out.”<sup>31</sup> But while understandably very emotional as he contemplated leaving his homeland permanently, Brodsky never humbled himself. He chose the words for his letter as deliberately and carefully as those he chose for his poems. He spoke of his work as glorifying Russian culture, not Soviet culture, a key distinction (in Yevtushenko’s letter to Brezhnev, he appealed to their common interest in Soviet poetry).<sup>32</sup> And even as he implored the Soviet leader to reconsider his fate, Brodsky remained defiant: “Though stripped from Soviet citizenship, I am still a Russian poet. I believe that I will come back; poets always return—in the flesh or on paper.”<sup>33</sup>

Brodsky seemed an unlikely martyr of the Soviet regime. He was a slight, red-haired young man, the son of secular Jewish parents whose professional lives were stunted by latent and semi-official anti-Semitism. He was born and raised in Leningrad, a city now known again by its pre-revolutionary name of St. Petersburg, but whose denizens always referred to affectionately as Peter. The city loomed large in Brodsky’s psyche. He survived the deadly 872-day German siege of the city in World War II, and wrote that from walking its streets, he “learned more about the history of the world than I subsequently have from any book” and “more about infinity and stoicism than from mathematics and Zeno.”<sup>34</sup> Although he was a bookish child, Brodsky dropped out of high school at age 15, and bounced from job to job, working, among other positions, as a morgue assistant, a boiler attendant, and a hand on a geological expedition. The scientists

<sup>30</sup> Liudmila Shtern and Joseph Brodsky Brodsky: A Personal Memoir (Fort Worth, TX: Baskerville, 2004), 169-170.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 170.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Brodsky, *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986), 4-5.

on the trip passed the long and restless hours reading and writing poetry, and an enamored Brodsky followed suit.

Upon his return to Leningrad, Brodsky devoted himself to poetic reflections on life, death, religion, and man's quest for immortality. To support himself, Brodsky worked as a translator, teaching himself English and Polish to better plumb the depths of the foreign poets' words, and to give truer voice to Russian poems rendered in other languages. He began to spend time with poets and writers of Leningrad, who furtively shared their works to avoid the attention of officials eager to sanction their defiant and unorthodox writings. In time, Brodsky became a darling of the poet Anna Akhmatova, the doyenne of the city's literary scene. She saw in the budding poet a depth of talent that belied his years, a talent that linked him to generations of Russian poets. Brodsky accepted Akhmatova's approbation and guidance, describing his mentor as "breathtaking," for both her physical and literary beauty.<sup>35</sup> Nadezhda Mandelstam, the widow of the great Russian poet Osip Mandelstam, who was murdered in a Stalinist labor camp, also recognized early on the power—and danger—of Brodsky's literary gifts. In her memoir *Hope Abandoned*, Mandelstam recounted a conversation she had with Akhmatova about her protégé's fate: "He is... a remarkable young man who will come to a bad end, I fear. Whether a good poet or not, the fact is that he is one, and this cannot be denied him. In our times it is hard luck to be a poet—and a Jew into the bargain."<sup>36</sup>

In the poems he wrote and the company he kept, Brodsky enmeshed himself in language, not politics. Unlike Yevtushenko, Brodsky never pitched himself as a voice of the people; he presented himself as a voice of the language. He was clearly not blind to the effect his words would have on the Soviet authorities, or on the people desperate to escape, if only for the duration of a poem, the constraints of the state's intellectually oppressive dogma. But he wrote because he felt compelled to do so. "Art has its own dynamics," Brodsky once said, "it's own history...it's own velocity...it's own incomprehensible target....One shouldn't subordinate art to life."<sup>37</sup> His entrancing "Grand Elegy to John Donne," a tribute to the great English poet written in 1963, bears testament to Brodsky's genius and his focus on the draw of language and time:

...and every poem with another, like a close brother.  
Although they whisper to each other: they move slightly  
But each is so far from the heavenly gates.  
So poor, thick, so pure, that in them – is unity.<sup>38</sup>

Brodsky's disregard for what the authorities wanted drew their ire: his decision not to be published, not to gather at the Writers' Union, not to sing the praises of the state in his poetry. In the sixties, as in so many other times in Soviet history, moles

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Abandoned* (New York: Atheneum, 1974). 102.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Brodsky, *Conversations with Joseph Brodsky* ed. Cynthia L. Haven (Jackson, Mississippi: University of Mississippi, 2003), 148.

<sup>38</sup> Roberta Reeder, Efim Etkind, and Yakov Gubanov. "The Crimes of Joseph Brodsky." *New England Review* 20.3 (1999), 115.

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penetrated cultural circles, reporting back to the authorities on those who skirted Communist conventions. Eager to curry favor with the party and the despotic Writers' Union, these writers bought peace of mind, and perhaps a bottle of foreign wine, in exchange for informing on their colleagues. Brodsky's poetic gift, and his rising popularity among a fairly limited circle of young people who passed his verses from hand to hand, invited scrutiny, and even envy. He ignored the intrigue, however, until November 29, 1963.

The *Vechernii Leningrad* (Evening Leningrad) edition of that date carried a scathing denunciation of Brodsky, written under the bylines of three writers from the union, changing the young poet's life irrevocably.<sup>39</sup> The article went on at great length condemning Brodsky for the clothes he wore ("velvet pants, and in his hands there was always a briefcase stuffed with papers"), the friends with whom he consorted ("a so-called pseudo-literary milieu"), his arrogance over his writing ("he considers himself not simply a poet, but 'the poet of all poets'"), and his ne'er-do-well ways ("a senseless and absolutely useless existence").<sup>40</sup> Brodsky went from unknown to most citizens of his native city, to one of its most famous malefactors. Within a month, Brodsky was arrested and charged with being a "parasite," for failing to earn a sufficient salary through his translations and poetry. The authorities threw him in prison and psychiatric hospitals, an attempt not only to break him down, but also to intimidate the coterie of writers and readers who encouraged and admired him.

The trial, which began on February 18, 1964, was a mockery from the start, with a sign on the courtroom door announcing that inside was the "Hearing of the Parasite Brodsky." In a measure of the equivocal tenor of the time, craven people who never met Brodsky testified against him under official duress, while brave friends and colleagues defended his talents and his enterprise, risking potential punishment. Brodsky sparred with the judge, who questioned the young man's right to be a poet without official state approval, only to hear in retort that such a right was bestowed by "God."<sup>41</sup> Frida Vigdorova, a journalist from Moscow, surreptitiously transcribed the proceedings and smuggled a transcript to the West, prompting an outcry from the international literary community that went unheard by the Kremlin. Even courageous writers would have been forgiven for crumbling under the pressure of such an unexpected and malicious prosecution, but Brodsky endured with grit and grace, worthy of his persecuted elders in literature. "If you have the courage to write something," he would say later, "then you have to have the courage to stick up for it."<sup>42</sup> Anatoly Naiman, a writer and poet in the circle surrounding Akhmatova, recalled with humility how Brodsky acted after unexpectedly becoming what Naiman termed "a figure in the spotlight" that winter:

During the trial he behaved irreproachably....[T]he way he acted was somehow so appealing to me that it made my heart ache....[H]e was up

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 101-05.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Brodsky Papers. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Box 3, Folder 3060.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Brodsky. *Conversations with Joseph Brodsky*. Ed. Cynthia L. Haven (Jackson, Mississippi: University of Mississippi, 2003) 10.

there on the heights that a human being is capable of reaching. And seeing his conduct during the trial – and all through that period – it suddenly dawned on me what it means to be a man. This is what men can be like, not just the usual, ordinary, everyday, dishonorable, ignoble creatures. Suddenly one saw this defenseless man, willing at any moment to lay down his life, stand his ground with dignity.<sup>43</sup>

Even after his conviction, and nearly two years of exile in the Arkhangelsk region, Brodsky refused to kowtow to the authorities, or abide by their dictates on art. But he was equally detached from the politics of persecution surrounding other writers, including Daniel and Sinyavsky. Although dozens of Russian and foreign writers signed letters supporting Brodsky during his legal nightmare, there is no evidence that he wrote any letters on behalf of his embattled colleagues (not that his input would have encouraged favorable responses from the Kremlin). His protest came from his determination to write, without fear or favor. “[F]or a writer,” Brodsky maintained, “only one form of patriotism exists: his attitude toward language.”<sup>44</sup>

After Brodsky’s sentence ended and he returned to Leningrad, officials of the Writers Union tried to bring him into their good graces, perhaps in an effort to reveal him as a hypocrite or perhaps to appease the West. With Yevtushenko acting as an intermediary, Yunost offered in 1967 to publish several of Brodsky’s poems. But when the magazine’s editors insisted on cutting some words and substituting others—demanding, for example, that the word “guard” not appear in the poem “New Stanzas to Augusta”—Brodsky declined, saying he did not wish to “come out looking like a shorn sheep.”<sup>45</sup> To him, the Communists had not only undermined Russian society, they had sabotaged one of its greatest treasures, the Russian language, causing “an unprecedented anthropological tragedy, a genetic backslide whose net result is a drastic reduction of human potential.”<sup>46</sup> He refused to allow his own work to get swept up in that tragedy by yielding to the censor’s scythe.

For his unwavering allegiance to the integrity of his language, Brodsky found himself on that June day of 1972 under the dull lights at Moscow’s Sheremetova International Airport, heading first to Austria, then to Michigan, and finally, to a house in Brooklyn Heights, a short stroll from the Hudson River. “We are all condemned to only one thing: to death,” Brodsky wrote in his failed entreaty to Brezhnev. “The writer of these lines will die, and you the reader of them will also die. Our deeds will survive us

<sup>43</sup> Valentina Polukhina, *Brodsky through the Eyes of His Contemporaries*, trans. Tatiana Retivov (Boston: Academic Studies, 2008), 18.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Brodsky, “Says Poet Brodsky, Ex of the Soviet Union: ‘A Writer Is a Lonely Traveler, and No One Is His Helper’” *The New York Times*, October 1, 1972.

<sup>45</sup> Solomon Volkov, and Joseph Brodsky, *Conversations with Joseph Brodsky: A Poet’s Journey through the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Free, 1998), 107-109.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Brodsky Papers. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Box 164, Folder 3681.

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only briefly; they too will end in ruins. Therefore no one should prevent another from doing his job.”<sup>47</sup>

### THE ACCOUNTING OF HISTORY

Brodsky and Yevtushenko clearly saw their roles as poets very differently, but their professional worlds still managed to overlap, before and after Brodsky's expulsion. Theirs was a complicated relationship, entangled with disparate philosophies and tensions deliberately sown by an authoritarian regime determined to keep its citizens too fearful to organize the mass anti-government demonstrations that rose around the globe in the 1960s. Brodsky loathed Yevtushenko's intimate associations with the sort of party officials responsible for his own arrest and surveillance, but he still allowed himself to entertain Yevtushenko's offers of help, even if they never yielded results. Yevtushenko's assurances that Brodsky's poems would be published in *Yunost* after his return from internal exile collapsed under the censor's demands. Then in 1972, after officials told Brodsky he had two weeks to leave the country, Yevtushenko called him. He told an elaborate story about urging “a friend I knew a long time ago, back at the Helsinki Youth Festival” to minimize the red tape for Brodsky's departure because “he's a poet and, consequently, a vulnerable, impressionable being.” Brodsky later told a friend that from hints Yevtushenko dropped, he deduced that the friend was Yuri Andropov, then the particularly repressive head of the K.G.B., and later the leader of the Soviet Union. Brodsky derided Yevtushenko's self-aggrandizement, and his refusal to reveal the identity of his well-placed friend. Moreover, Brodsky noted that his departure proceeded with the usual Soviet bureaucratic drama.<sup>48</sup>

But while Brodsky “hated Yevtushenko with a passion” for being a “cultural ambassador” of the regime, according to his close friend, Ludmila Shtern, he still succumbed to Yevtushenko's offer to help bring his aging parents to visit him in New York.<sup>49</sup> Later, Shtern wrote in a memoir of her friendship with Brodsky, Yevtushenko told friends in Moscow that Brodsky had begged him to intercede on his parents' behalf, but that Yevtushenko refused to “help this traitor and dreg of society.” Indeed, the authorities never granted Brodsky's parents permission to visit their son.<sup>50</sup> And Brodsky never forgave what he saw as Yevtushenko's duplicity, as a person and a poet. In 1987, when the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters inducted Yevtushenko as an honorary member, Brodsky resigned the organization in protest. He said the academy had “fully compromised its integrity” by supporting a poet who was a “high member of

<sup>47</sup> Liudmila Shtern, and Joseph Brodsky, *Brodsky: A Personal Memoir* (Fort Worth, TX: Baskerville, 2004), 170.

<sup>48</sup> Solomon Volkov, and Joseph Brodsky, *Conversations with Joseph Brodsky: A Poet's Journey through the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Free, 1998).

<sup>49</sup> Liudmila Shtern, and Joseph Brodsky, *Brodsky: A Personal Memoir* (Fort Worth, TX: Baskerville, 2004), 286-288.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

his country's establishment," a not-so-veiled reference to the Communist party leadership and the K.G.B.<sup>51</sup>

Yevtushenko well understood how his reputation played with Brodsky and his clique of writers and artists. In the introduction to his 1971 poetry collection, *Stolen Apples*, Yevtushenko took exception to those who called him a "tight-rope walker, toeing the slack wire between East and West," or a "conformist masquerading as a champion of liberalization."<sup>52</sup> The burden of fame was such, he contended, that, "legends of suspicion arise with the myths of praise."<sup>53</sup> One poem in that collection, "The Stage," revealed Yevtushenko's appreciation of his dubious reputation:

Of course, it will be quite obvious to posterity  
 That I –  
       alas! –  
               represent no ideal  
 ...  
               I was what I was, only myself,  
 And whether I lived as I should have –  
 let God decide<sup>54</sup>

The American press, he said, judged him too harshly for "not being rebellious enough," and "being conformist" simply because "I was not put in a prison or in a mental hospital." But he insisted that he "did everything that was possible for a poet to do."<sup>55</sup> Yevtushenko was unwilling, however, to assuage the concerns over his character and independence by severing his establishment ties—and with them his access to privileges and prestige. So he sought the liberal intelligentsia's approval by volunteering at times to intercede on their behalf with officials he claimed did not hold any sway over him, and he simmered with the indignity of their disdain, particularly Brodsky's. In a tempered compliment, Yevtushenko called Brodsky "the best Russian poet living abroad." He professed to have helped Brodsky in numerous ways "and he knows it," but claimed that Brodsky only repaid him with the blind accusation that Yevtushenko was "guilty of something." Once in New York, Yevtushenko said, Brodsky "asked my forgiveness" for his charges,<sup>56</sup> an assertion *Shtern* and Brodsky himself dismissed as absurd.

No matter the knot of enmity and envy they shared, Brodsky and Yevtushenko also shared the mantle borne by countless writers, artists, musicians, historians, and others, whose voices raised in the 1960s against Soviet authoritarianism were answered decades

<sup>51</sup> Edwin McDowell, "Brodsky Quits Arts Group Over Yevtushenko Induction," *The New York Times*, June 20, 1987.

<sup>52</sup> Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Yevtushenko, and James Dickey. *Stolen Apples: Poetry by Yevgeny Yevtushenko*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), xiv.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, xiii.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 85-89.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, and Katrina Vanden Heuvel, *Voices of Glasnost: Gorbachev's Reformers Speak* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., Incorporated, 1989), 268.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 267.



over the past few years. He is now nearly eighty years old, and divides his time between Moscow and Oklahoma, where he teaches at the University of Tulsa. Last semester he was teaching two courses, one in Russian Literature and one in European and Russian Cinema. His administrative assistant said that his busy schedule did not permit an interview.

Brodsky never returned to Russia; instead, like Ovid and Dante, he lived as a poet in permanent exile. After being forced to leave Russia, he was heaped with plaudits in the West, taught at Mount Holyoke and Columbia and at conferences around the world, was named Poet Laureate of the United States, and in 1987 received literature's highest honor, the Nobel Prize.<sup>63</sup> Brodsky never actively raised his voice in the political arena, as Yevtushenko did, even when Gorbachev's policies made it safe to do so. Safety was never Brodsky's concern. Until his death from a heart attack in 1996, when he was only 55 years old, Brodsky remained as true as ever to his creed that poetry is an act of art, not politics, but that in its purity, poetry had the power to fight repression. In a 1984 commencement speech at Williams College, Brodsky's words encapsulated his own impact on Russian history and glasnost and the forces of change. "[T]he surest defense against Evil," he told the students, "is extreme individualism, originality of thinking, whimsicality, even – if you will – eccentricity."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Joseph Brodsky Papers. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Box 79, Folders 1935-1936.

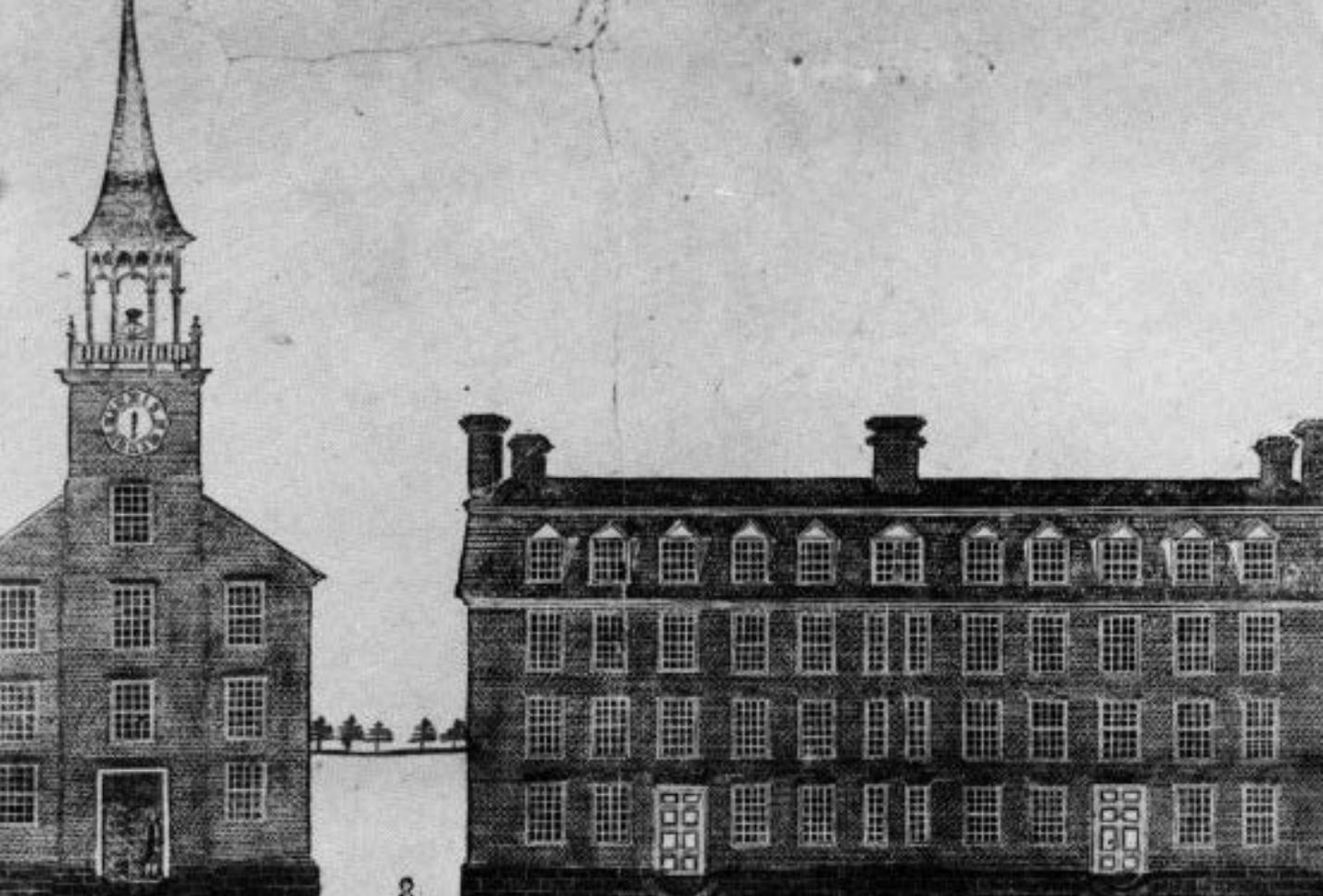
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# ALL REPUBLICANS, ALL FEDERALISTS? THE NEW HAVEN REMONSTRANCE AND TWO-PARTY AMERICA

While today, the American two-party system may be taken for granted, the election of 1800 marked the first time power transferred between political parties – and thus the first opportunity to replace a previous administration’s appointees. In this essay, John Masko ’14 explores President Jefferson’s bold removal of a Federalist customs collector in New Haven and the nationwide controversy it generated. Beneath the image of Jefferson as a conciliator above factional quarrels, Masko describes a president who uneasily reconciled partisanship and ideology. The incident, more than just a patronage scandal, laid the groundwork for acceptance of the legitimacy of political dissent in early national America.

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Written for “The Age of Hamilton and Jefferson”  
Professor Joanne Freeman  
Edited by Noah Remnick and Gene Kim

The American presidential election of 1800 ushered the Republican-Democrat Party and President Thomas Jefferson to power, ousting the Federalist President John Adams. Often noted for its remarkable smoothness, the election represented the young American republic's first experiment in a partisan shift of presidential power and served as its first referendum against the leadership of one political group in favor of another. Often ignored in our historical understanding of the period, however, are the bitter partisan leadership battles that raged under this glossy surface. Despite Jefferson's victory, President John Adams' appointments still held control in regional executive posts around the country. As for how Jefferson was to handle the responsibility of corralling these appointed officials, often numerous disgruntled or even openly hostile employees, there was little precedent to follow.

Early in his administration, Jefferson chose to turn a particular Federalist removal into the testing ground for his official policy on patronage. The official concerned was the popular New Haven Customs Collector Elizur Goodrich whom, for purely political reasons, Jefferson replaced with the almost eighty-year-old local Republican Samuel Bishop. The fallout from this high-profile political event, which involved a potent letter from the President himself and a nationwide pamphlet war, is revealing not only of the young republic's posture on patronage, but also of its feelings on the legitimacy of America's burgeoning two-party system.

Many historians, led by Merrill Peterson and Dumas Malone, portray the incident as an effort on Jefferson's part to reconcile the radical interests within his own party with the conciliatory principles of his Inaugural Address.<sup>1</sup> Though both authors see the incident as an important turn toward presidential patronage, they try to portray Jefferson as an enemy of partisanship through it all<sup>2</sup>. Peterson, typically, sees Jefferson's ideological shift in his Reply as forced upon him by the realities of a rising partisan political culture<sup>3</sup>, an idea with which other historians rightly take issue for its marginalization of Jefferson's role.<sup>4</sup> Richard Ellis, in his history of Jefferson and the judiciary, even sees New Haven as a precedent for ideology-based appointments of Supreme Court justices later in his administration.<sup>5</sup>

Most authors who touch on the subject of New Haven see it as one in a series of transformative political moments for Jefferson's early policy on patronage and executive

<sup>1</sup> Malone is at times ambiguous about the significance of the episode to Jefferson. While at times portraying Jefferson as a docile lamb torn by the competing interests of radical Republicans and entrenched Federalists (4.70), he also at times shows Jefferson as a protagonist, trying to make ideological inroads in the politically helpless state of Connecticut. (4.76) Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, Co., 1970).

<sup>2</sup> Merrill Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 676.. Also see Malone above.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 675.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Bailey, *Thomas Jefferson and Executive Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 168.

<sup>5</sup> This is the subject of the rest of his book 'The Jeffersonian Crisis,' which he leads off by discussing New Haven.

Richard Ellis, *The Jeffersonian Crisis: Courts and Politics in the Young Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

power.<sup>6</sup> None go into detail, however, on what the episode meant for Jefferson's own evolving thoughts on the legitimacy of partisanship, and few (perhaps only Jeremy Bailey) really consider Jefferson's own agency in the episode in addition to the external partisan forces of his administration and Federalist opponents.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, no authors, to my knowledge, focus on the popular press' response to the New Haven incident and its meaning for national feelings about partisanship.

The New Haven question, at first blush, is clearly concerned with patronage and the question of justifiable political appointments and removals. Under the surface, though, both Jefferson and the public he led were struggling with the concept of partisanship and its compatibility with American politics. This paper will demonstrate how Jefferson's principles of democratic idealism, as seen in his First Inaugural Address, came into friction with his resentment toward New England Federalists and his need to run an efficient administration free from Federalist sabotage. The New Haven incident provided a perfect ground for Jefferson to try and reconcile this friction, in turn causing him to transform a very limited regional conflict over a customs collector into a national battle of principle. In his Reply to the New Haven merchants, Jefferson gave a tacit acceptance of a partisan American future while still refusing to see his opponents' ideology as legitimate. A thorough examination of pamphlets in response to Jefferson's Reply shows that the ideological struggles of the early American public were remarkably similar to those of Jefferson.

Both Jefferson and the American people, Federalist and Republican, were caught in a political holding pattern. While they decried the dangers of partisanship and faction, there were still such deep ideological rifts as to make both Federalists and Republicans resolutely convinced that their opponents represented a subversion of the American project. And both sides maintained a fantasy of returning to ideological purity after the temporary scourge of that subversion had been dealt with. The New Haven Remonstrance represented an uneasy turning point. While both Federalists and Republicans remained attached to the ideal of a country with one true interpretation of its revolutionary legacy, both began to perceive a two-party American future as inevitable. This inevitability, through the next few years of Jefferson's policies on appointments, would become progressively clearer.

### LEAD-UP TO NEW HAVEN

On March 4, 1801, Jefferson delivered the words "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists" in his inaugural address.<sup>8</sup> Though the address had clear immediate political benefit, it also hamstrung Jefferson when it came to assembling an efficient administration. While genuinely wishing to stand by those lofty principles, he still had to

<sup>6</sup> Jeremy Bailey also uses the incident to get at changing Jeffersonian ideas on executive authority.

<sup>7</sup> However, Bailey incorrectly construes Jefferson's response on New Haven as indicating an uncritical acceptance of American partisanship as a "natural" eventuality, like the "Whigs and the Tories" in England. (Bailey, *Executive Power*, 168).

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Barbara Oberg, ed., 60 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 33:148-153.

deal with an Adams administration which had left him an executive branch full of adversarial local Federalist officials. With no precedent for removing federal officials, Jefferson knew well that he was in for a fight. The necessity of removing some officers, however, and the obvious benefits of doing so to create a streamlined and efficient administration seemed overwhelming.

Of course Jefferson knew that dealing with these Federalist holdovers would be difficult. But he also perceived a moral dimension to this battle: Jefferson saw his election as a mandate to restore the true meaning of the American project, returning it to a weaker centralized control and toward the rugged agrarian individualism of Jefferson's ideal Virginia. . This included, of course, bringing an end to counterrevolutionary Northern Federalist subversion. At the same time, Jefferson had claimed to be—and was supposed to be—a leader for the nation as a whole. As Merrill Peterson quite rightly points out, Jefferson's delicate position required that neither principle nor politics completely carried the day (at least publicly). While choosing definitively either to expel all Federalists or to make peace with them may have been logistically easier, Jefferson was forced to find a middle road.<sup>9</sup>

Other members of the administration, however, felt less pressed than Jefferson about following through on his inaugural platitudes. A rift on this issue divided his administration from the start, and the new president found himself caught in the middle. As Dumas Malone portrays in his perhaps overly sympathetic account:

As he lamented, he was cast in the unwelcome role of public executioner; and while his own supporters were shouting 'Off with their heads,' his political opponents were describing his victims as holy martyrs. This kindly man, who claimed that in private life he had had hardly any enemies, was in a most uncongenial situation.<sup>10</sup>

The principal member of the 'off with their heads' faction was Jefferson's fellow Virginian James Monroe, who in multiple exchanges of correspondence with Jefferson advocated a clean Republican sweep of the executive branch. Pulling in the opposite direction was Jefferson's Treasury Secretary, Albert Gallatin, who advocated a more conciliatory policy and would later play a significant role in the political aftermath of the New Haven controversy.

Jefferson first sought to make a Republican gain in New Haven because he saw low-hanging fruit. Customs Collector Elizur Goodrich, though popular in the Federalist bastion of New Haven, had been a last-minute appointment of President Adams, put on the job only three months prior to Jefferson's inauguration. Jefferson thought he could gain moral high ground by opposing Adams' 'midnight appointment' of Goodrich, which had been aimed at forcing the next administration, as Jefferson put it, to "work with thwarting cooperators."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Merrill Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 666.

<sup>10</sup> Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, Co., 1970), 4:70.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Pierpont Edwards, July 21, 1801, in *Papers of Jefferson*, 34:606-607.

## ALL REPUBLICANS, ALL FEDERALISTS?

There were far deeper political undertones to Jefferson's decision to replace Goodrich. As Jefferson's writings during the brutal 1800 election campaign indicate, he had come to see the political dichotomy of Federalists and Republicans in strictly black-and-white terms.<sup>12</sup> Jefferson's anti-Federalism was deepened by 'home-front' reports from Connecticut Republicans on the politics of their state. The suggestion, made by one of his most trusted Connecticut correspondent Gideon Granger, that Connecticut was politically incurable, helped sway Jefferson to the opinion that without federal intervention, that state would be lost permanently to monarchism.<sup>13</sup> Granger hysterically wrote to Jefferson that Connecticut Republicans "suffer much from an unceasing persecution and constant operation of the System of Terror—They are now bold enough to tell us that we must be destroyed root and branch."<sup>14</sup> The enthusiastic and caustic Connecticut Republican Pierpont Edwards also described his state to Jefferson as hopelessly Federalist and, equally problematic, the site of an unholy alliance between the puritanical church and the Federalist political machine. The clergy, he said, "are putting every faculty to the torture to effect the overthrow of your republican Administration – our leading federalists are all royalists; they think as our Clergy do 'Moses & Aaron here walk together.'" One can easily imagine Jefferson's blood boiling on reading these words. In Edwards' portrayal, the Federalists were challenging Jefferson to act,<sup>15</sup> while Connecticut Republicans, in the meantime, were shunted aside.<sup>16</sup> Granger and Edwards helped to push Jefferson in the direction of greater partisanship for the sake of ideological purity on a national level and Republican survival on a local level. Jefferson zealously took the bait, declaring that the state of Connecticut would "follow the bark of liberty only by the help of a tow-rope."<sup>17</sup> And Jefferson decided, for better or for worse, to provide the rope.

As far as is apparent from Jefferson's surviving papers, the first mention of removing New Haven Collector Elizur Goodrich was made in a March cabinet meeting amid numerous ideas for Federalist removals in other states.<sup>18</sup> Jefferson assigned Vice President Aaron Burr to consult local Republican authorities for ideas on Goodrich's replacement. Consensus favored the elderly Samuel Bishop, a local minority Republican dignitary in New Haven who, having held several offices there, Burr claimed, "will not only be unexceptionable; but, will appear to accord with the [perhaps old and stodgy] fashion of that county."<sup>19</sup> Jefferson gave the order for Bishop to replace Goodrich.

While Edwards, Burr, and Jefferson may have anticipated opposition to Goodrich's replacement, they did not anticipate that New Haven would become one of

<sup>12</sup> That is not to say in 'partisan' terms – Jefferson saw the Federalists as a faction so dangerous as to not deserve that sort of legitimacy. They needed to be eradicated, not negotiated with.

<sup>13</sup> Noble Cunningham, *The Jeffersonian Republicans in Power: Party Operations, 1801-1809* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Gideon Granger to Thomas Jefferson, October 18, 1800, in *Papers of Jefferson*, 32.228-230.

<sup>15</sup> Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 4.76.

<sup>16</sup> Peterson, *New Nation*, 671.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Pierpont Edwards, July 21, 1801, in *Papers of Jefferson*, 34:606-607.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Notes on a Cabinet Meeting, March 8, 1801, in *Papers of Jefferson*, 33.219-220.

<sup>19</sup> Aaron Burr to Thomas Jefferson, April 21, 1801, *Papers of Jefferson*, 33.626-627.

America's central battlegrounds on partisanship and executive authority during the coming year.

## THE NEW HAVEN REMONSTRANCE

Reaction to Goodrich's dismissal coming from New Haven's commercial community was bold and swift. Following Jefferson's order to replace Goodrich, a group of merchants penned a letter of complaint, dated June 18, 1801. They remonstrated against Goodrich's removal, citing their own commercial interests, the US Constitution's constraints on executive power, and the principles of unity Jefferson had claimed to hold dear. It was written in the hand of local merchant Elias Shipman.<sup>20</sup>

The remonstrance is, on the whole, perhaps more significant for what it did not try to do than for what it did. The letter is almost completely devoid of political principles or grand pronouncements, seeming to belie Edwards' and Granger's warnings about the demagogic Federalism clouding the judgment of Connecticut's people. The remonstrators' primary complaint was of Samuel Bishop's incapability of performing any official duties without assistance due to advanced age (he was almost eighty), and his lack of knowledge of the skills required of a collector. In a display of what must have seemed to be paranoia<sup>21</sup> the merchants accused Jefferson of only appointing Bishop so that after his death, which they considered imminent, his radical (and "universally contemned") son Abraham<sup>22</sup> would be appointed his replacement.

The text of the remonstrance is remarkably apolitical.<sup>23</sup> Though Jefferson's decision to override local sentiment and respect of tenure by removing Goodrich had far-reaching implications, the local merchants' first instinct was to solve their particular situation without a larger battle of political principle. Perhaps they knew that to get involved in a fight of lofty ideas with Thomas Jefferson, particularly in open widely-disseminated letters, was unwise. Perhaps they were exercising the 'pragmatic' Federalism of figures like Alexander Hamilton who, while grounded in political principle, were always more prepared to make an argument based on tangible benefit than political abstraction. More likely, the remonstrators simply wanted their customs collector back with as little public pain as possible. The simple resolution they wished for, though, was not in the cards.

<sup>20</sup> Elias Shipman, Remonstrance of the New Haven Merchants, *Papers of Jefferson*, 34:381-384.

<sup>21</sup> Though their fears would be realized just a couple years later

<sup>22</sup> Considering that Bishop made a speech comparing Thomas Jefferson to Jesus Christ, such 'universal contemnation' from Federalists is easily understandable. (Peterson, *New Nation*, 672)

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the only political statement that goes beyond the specifics of Goodrich and Bishop's qualifications comes in the very first paragraph, which claimed that Goodrich best represented "the mercantile interest of the district." It is easy to interpret this statement as implying that executive appointments, at least in this case, were geared more toward representing the people the appointees worked with than the administration itself. This was, at least in the deeply Federalist north, a popular view in the face of Jefferson's opposition administration.

## THE REPLY AND JEFFERSON'S CHANGING PHILOSOPHY ON PARTISANSHIP

The Remonstrance put Jefferson in an uncomfortable political position. The difficulty of it precipitated a broader and more monumental reaction than perhaps was called for, and had significant repercussions for Jefferson's ideas on partisanship. Jefferson was subject to two major political problems. First was the objective impracticality of running an efficient administration without unity of purpose among his officials. Jefferson's profound differences with the Adams administration on policies of commerce, for example, promised to make the president's dealings with staunch Federalist commercial officers like Goodrich difficult indeed. The second problem was Jefferson's perception that the Adams administration, particularly in Federalist strongholds like Connecticut, had managed to infiltrate his Republican administration with enemies of the Constitution. Jefferson's Reply to the New Haven Remonstrance would be informed by both of these factors, and, as he consciously decided, would be made the exemplar of policy for similar issues through the rest of his administration.<sup>24</sup>

Jefferson's decision to make a far-reaching philosophical statement is at first difficult to understand. Why could he not have rationalized his decision with a curt 'because I said so' or with warm praise of Bishop and his qualifications? Perhaps Jefferson chose the lofty and philosophical response because that was the only language he knew. But more likely, Jefferson, in his public reply to the remonstrators, was thinking out loud. He struggled to reconcile his ideas on the inherent value of democracy and non-invasive government with the necessity of running a functional administration and keeping the correct interpretation of the American experiment alive.

His fears of Federalist subversion, particularly in a state like Connecticut, were very real. As he wrote to Gideon Granger, "our government [...] can never be harmonious & solid, while so respectable a portion of it's citizens support principles which go directly to a change of the federal constitution, to sink the state governments, consolidate them into one, and to monarchize that."<sup>25</sup> It was the perceived extremism of the Federalists that gave Jefferson an excuse to quiet his mistrust of parties and factions and to override, at least for a time, the unifying message of his Inaugural. And, of course, this was a unifying message Jefferson had by no means abandoned. He still waxed optimistic about the dissolution of parties remains in other letters, even within a few months of his tackling the New Haven issue. As he wrote to the French author Volney in March, "Our citizens are now generally returned to their ancient principles, & there is the best prospect of an entire obliteration of that party spirit..."<sup>26</sup> He described, in another letter, the return of Americans to the unifying "principles of '76."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 4.78.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Gideon Granger, August 13, 1800, in *Papers of Jefferson*, 32.95-97. The similarity of this phrase (and his choice of the word 'harmonize') to this phrase in Jefferson's Reply: "Can they not harmonize in society unless they have everything in their own hands?" is noticeable.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Volney, March 18, 1801, *Papers of Jefferson*, 33.341.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Tadeusz Kosciuszko, March 14, 1801, *Papers of Jefferson*, 33. 288-289.

As Jefferson stated in order to save face, his Reply was meant to correct misconceptions on the meaning of the First Inaugural.<sup>28</sup> While removing Goodrich, he could do little but repudiate many of those sentiments, and have the public see him as favoring instead the interests of his party. Merrill Peterson has claimed that the main purpose of the Reply was as “a covenant to secure the Jeffersonian church with the elect of Republicanism,”<sup>29</sup> but such a narrow interpretation shortchanges the real complexity of the moment for Jefferson.

Strategically, the Reply had two main goals.<sup>30</sup> First, Jefferson wanted to counteract the idea that his soothing Inaugural Address meant that all Federalists would keep their jobs.<sup>31</sup> But, second and more importantly, Jefferson took the opportunity to update his philosophy on partisanship and his role in it as executive. His new, more cynical view was molded in the crucible of a tough-fought 1800 election and hardened by the anti-Federalist invective of New England Republicans like Granger and Edwards. He now seemed to believe that perhaps, at least in New England, the Democratic process could not be left completely up to its own devices. Though of course Jefferson’s acute political judgment pushed him to leave his intense rhetoric against the Federalists behind the scenes, his need to rationalize a more hands-on partisan approach called for a large public forum.

In keeping with these two main goals, Jefferson’s Reply had two parts. The first half addressed the specific case at hand. Though he acknowledged the difficulty of ascertaining candidates’ aptitude for executive appointments, he insisted that such an error had not been made in Bishop’s case. To defend the aged Bishop’s abilities, he invoked the memory of the elderly Benjamin Franklin, who made invaluable contributions to the founding. Jefferson did not go so far as to praise Bishop’s own capabilities, choosing rather to uplift him by comparison to the great Franklin.

In the second half of the reply, however, Jefferson made a more substantive philosophical statement. Referring to the Adams administration, he proclaimed:

When it is considered, that during the late administration, those who were not of a particular sect of politics were excluded from all office; when, by a steady pursuit of this measure, nearly the whole offices of the U S were monopolized by that sect; when the public sentiment at length declared itself, and burst open the doors of honor and confidence to those whose opinions they more approved, was it to be imagined that this monopoly of office was still to be continued in the hands of the minority?

In this bold statement, Jefferson cried foul on a double standard between his administration and Adams’. Jefferson asked why, simply for coming first, Adams was able to saddle subsequent administrations with those of his own ‘sect.’ (This use of the term ‘sect’ is a clear acknowledgement of Jefferson’s acceptance of an increasingly

<sup>28</sup> Bailey, *Executive Power*, 169; Cunningham, *Republicans in Power*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> Peterson, *New Nation*, 675.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Jefferson, To the New Haven Merchants, July 12, 1801, in *Papers of Jefferson*, 34:554-558.

<sup>31</sup> Ellis, *Jeffersonian Crisis*, 37.

prevalent partisan divide.) And furthermore, Jefferson asked, was “it political intolerance to claim a proportionate share in the direction of the public affairs?” In a sense, this was Jefferson’s more politically practical version of the argument he had made decades earlier in his letter to Madison on generational sovereignty: citizen government, in order to truly call itself such, demanded a constant finger on the pulse of the American people. Jefferson was still straddling the frontiers of partisanship here, trying to justify his increasingly party-focused policy with lofty, uncontroversial democratic principles.<sup>32</sup>

Despite his careful writing, undertones of the radical anti-Federalist partisanship behind his initial decision to replace Goodrich (Connecticut’s need to be led ‘by a tow-rope’) are present as well. In his list of good reasons to remove an official, he included removals based “on delinquency, on oppression, on intolerance, on incompetence, on anti-revolutionary adherence to our enemies.” In essence, he left himself an out to make judgments based on political opinion rather than pure competence. After achieving, through removals, fair and equal Republican representation in government, he claimed: “the only questions concerning a candidate shall be, is he honest? Is he capable? Is he faithful to the Constitution?” The use of the word ‘only’ here is meant to obscure the brazenness of this statement. ‘Faithfulness to the constitution,’ as shown by Jefferson’s criticisms of Hamiltonian Federalism, was as arguable and subjective a standard as any other.

At the same time, though, it is possible to take a more optimistic view of this passage; indeed, by placing it at the end of his letter, Jefferson invited us to do so. Despite our instinct to interpret ‘faithful to the Constitution’ as ‘agreeing with Jefferson,’ the passage still rang with Jeffersonian idealism, looking to a future of common understanding where political differences will simply melt away. Seen that way, the passage can be taken as clinging to the pre-partisan principles of his inaugural address. While these dueling interpretations of the ‘loyalty to the constitution’ passage are contradictory, they define the battle lines of Jefferson’s inner struggle on the place of partisanship in American life. Despite his romantic rhetoric in the Reply and the Inaugural, however, Jefferson’s actions in removing Goodrich spoke louder than his words.

Clearly, the Reply was a great act of political maneuvering that allowed Jefferson to justify his own (by the early republic’s standards) deviant partisan behavior with seemingly unassailable principles of fairness. He called for the two major parties to be equally represented in federal offices in order to better reflect the country’s political diversity. Behind this policy statement was a marriage of two quintessential Jeffersonian big ideas: that it was necessary for a democratic government to be responsive to the will of the people, and, more sinisterly, that leading Federalists were not really ‘the people’ at all. Jefferson’s Reply blended pragmatic need, rock-hard principle, and paranoid zealotry under the guise of high philosophy. It was a uniquely Jeffersonian mix, and it showed a president highly conflicted over the question of partisanship. He needed a partisan approach both to bring order to his administration and make inroads against militant

<sup>32</sup> When he changed his standard from ‘equal’ to ‘proportional’ representation (discussed later), Jefferson no longer seemed to tread with such trepidation.

Federalism. But he still clung to the principles of his inaugural address, hoping that partisan appointments would be but a temporary necessity.

Jefferson took his reply to the New Haven merchants very seriously and treated it as a definitive policy statement. Despite the popular ire and pamphlet wars ignited by the New Haven situation, he did not make another public statement on the issue of appointments until two years later, and even then he did so under a pseudonym.<sup>33</sup> A proliferation of other removals followed the New Haven incident. These included entrenched Federalist officials in Hamilton's home of New York, and a high-profile removal of Allen McLane, a reviled customs collector in the port of Wilmington, Delaware.<sup>34</sup> He went about these removals in true Jeffersonian style, trying to incite as little backlash as possible.<sup>35</sup> He trusted "public confidence" to "guide the sorting between too much or too little justice in removals."<sup>36</sup> Yet even while Jefferson won some popular approval with his moderation, his partisan opposition to Federalists in important positions continued apace, sometimes in stark contrast with the ideas of other members of his administration, most notably his Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin.<sup>37</sup>

Despite Gallatin's influence, Jefferson's aversion to Federalist control and dedication to rooting it out remained. The latent partisan ideas expressed in his Reply became bolder in his pseudonymous newspaper column 'Fair Play' in 1803. In the aftermath of the Louisiana Purchase, as Republicans seemed to be gaining more of the political upper hand, Jefferson shifted his Reply's advocacy of 'equal' representation between parties to 'proportional' representation. Jefferson's more brazen partisanship was also on display in his instructions to Attorney General Levi Lincoln in 1802 to identify partisan disloyalty in his administration. Jefferson wrote to Lincoln, in almost Robin Hood fashion, "I pray you to seek them, to mark them, to be quite sure of your ground, that we may commit no error or wrong, and leave the rest to me."<sup>38</sup> ('Them' here refers to disloyal crypto-Federalists within the administration.) Jefferson's increasingly unabashed partisanship as his administration progressed was a testament to the centrality

<sup>33</sup> Bailey, *Executive Power*, 165.

<sup>34</sup> Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 83. McLane's removal, though, being in the more neutral state of Delaware, was treated with greater trepidation despite that officer's personal odium to local Republicans. (Peterson, *New Nation*, 677.)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 84-85.

<sup>36</sup> Bailey, *Executive Power*, 164.

<sup>37</sup> The rather less dogmatic Gallatin had suggested, before Jefferson had sent his Reply, that he embrace a patronage policy in which "the door of office be no longer shut against any man merely on account of his political opinions," and that "integrity and capacity" be the only considerations in appointments and removals [Albert Gallatin to Thomas Jefferson, July 25, 1801, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Barbara Oberg, ed., 60 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 34: 635-636]. In Jefferson's reply to Gallatin, although he claimed to approve 'entirely' of those sentiments, he insisted that they not be deployed until the principle of equal representation had been fully applied (Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, July 26, 1801 *Papers of Jefferson*, 34: 644-645); Jay Heinlein stresses Gallatin's role as a moderator in an article [Jay Heinlein, "Albert Gallatin: A Pioneer in Public Administration," *William and Mary Quarterly* (January 1950)]

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Levi Lincoln, October 25, 1802, in *Papers of Jefferson*, 38:565-566.

of the appointment debates (and specifically New Haven) in making Jefferson more comfortable with party politics.

### PUBLIC REACTION TO THE REMONSTRANCE

The New Haven Remonstrance and its Reply were, as Jefferson and the merchants intended, widely distributed and read in local newspapers. Journalistic hysteria ensued in both Federalist and Republican circles for months, denouncing or praising Jefferson's big ideas or the grievances of the merchants, depending on the publication's slant. Typical of the Republican newspaper response, for example, was a headline in a Stonington, Connecticut newspaper; above the full text of the merchants' Remonstrance, which ran the headline "Federal Arrogance and Stupidity."<sup>39</sup>

The public outcry over the incident reveals much about changing ideas on federal authority and the legitimacy of political parties. And, just as importantly, the inflammatory pamphlets demonstrated important parallels between the train of thought in the public square and Jefferson's own mind.

The first major blows of the pamphlet war were struck in a lengthy document by one 'Lucius Junius Brutus,' entitled "An Examination of the President's Reply to the New Haven Remonstrance." Far more than a commentary on the New Haven situation, "An Examination" was directed at the administration's entire policy on patronage and appointments, advancing its argument by scoring hits on pragmatic, partisan, and lofty philosophical grounds. It quite self-consciously intended to widen the tent of opposition to Jefferson's politics beyond Connecticut's zealous Federalists: many of its arguments left the touchier issues of political philosophy completely aside. The pamphlet had five main arguments: Bishop's ineptitude; the impracticality of constant changes in government officeholders for those offices' proper discharge<sup>40</sup>; the danger of such policies placing too much power in the executive's hands; usurpation of 'the consent of the governed' stemming from Jefferson's replacements, and of course, the danger of overall Republican principles for government's role in American life.<sup>41</sup>

Brutus put himself in a difficult position as he attempted to tackle the issue of partisanship and 'consent of the governed.' His writing betrayed a nervousness about the advent of party politics in general. He excoriated the conclusion of Jefferson's Reply, which advocated judging officers solely on the basis of character and devotedness to the

<sup>39</sup> *The Patriot* (Stonington-Port, CT), August 7, 1801.

<sup>40</sup> Of these five arguments, this second one was probably strongest. In addition to stressing the inefficiency of constantly shifting officeholders, Brutus argued that the threat of job insecurity would drive the most qualified men from pursuing public employment, thus undermining the effectiveness of government. Brutus is not willing to grant, though, that Adams' 'midnight' appointments could be construed as roughly equivalent to removing a future Jeffersonian appointment. Brutus does not seriously engage with Jefferson's argument on the questionable ethics of midnight appointments, referring to Jefferson's isolation of these cases as "an unrivalled specimen of the logical powers of the Philosopher of Monticello" [Lucius Junius Brutus, *An Examination of the President's Reply to the New Haven Remonstrance*. (New York: George F. Hopkins, 1801), 14, 17, 19, 27.]

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. - perhaps the greatest mark of all that Brutus is trying to reach beyond a Federalist audience

Constitution. Standards of Constitutional devotedness were subjective, Brutus argued: “[H]e who can answer loudest, and produce the best proofs of his conformity [with party or ideology], is sure of being made one of the chosen servants of the people.” [and ‘correct’ interpreters of the constitution] <sup>42</sup> At the same time that Brutus decried the advent of political parties, though, he clearly saw Jefferson and his supporters through a partisan lens as political enemies. He seemed to think that partisan behavior was only necessary in order to eradicate Republicans’ dangerous ideas. Eerily reminiscent of Jefferson’s letters to Edwards and Granger, he labeled Federalists as the real guardians of the American project and painted Republicans, because of their late arrival on the presidential scene, as fanatical usurpers.<sup>43</sup> Brutus railed against Jefferson: “in the true spirit of a bigot, he now wages a war of extermination against all who are not within the pale of his established Church.”<sup>44</sup>

In many ways, Brutus’ pamphlet was a model for Federalist responses to the New Haven Remonstrance. In the same way that Jefferson had rationalized his removals (at least to himself) through the illegitimacy of Federalism, Brutus justified his protest by accusing Jefferson and the Republicans of being power-hungry extremists.<sup>45</sup> The Federalists, he argued, were the real American party, the true guardians of the American Revolution. His response was less a critique of partisanship itself than a simple refusal to concede the equality of the Republican Party to his own. It was difficult for Brutus, as it was for Jefferson, to acknowledge the legitimacy of a partisan system when he could not even acknowledge that of his political opponents.

Many other Federalist publications commenting on the scandal did so from a posture of fear over “a systematic course of persecution and revenge” on Jefferson’s part, rather than from principled philosophical arguments.<sup>46</sup> They also accused Jefferson of deviating from his inaugural address, a problem of which, as we have already seen, Jefferson was painfully aware. “No man in Europe or America, could have imagined, from the inaugural speech, that you entertained an idea of removing faithful officers,” complained the Federalist Connecticut Courant in a public letter to Jefferson.<sup>47</sup>

Propaganda on the Republican side of the New Haven issue was perhaps slightly more diverse. Three major surviving pamphlets were published in response to Brutus’ arguments, one written by Abraham Bishop himself, and the other two anonymous, under the pseudonyms of Tullius Americus and Leonidas. Bishop’s was unabashedly, unconcernedly partisan. It primarily defended the extension of Republican influence in the Federalist north. Commerce, he argued, was “in itself not a curse,” but it had “produced aristocracies in every part of our country and in no part more effectually than

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>43</sup> The Boston Commercial Gazette, echoing this sentiment, wrote: “The answer of Mr. Jefferson to the New Haven remonstrance is one of the most extraordinary ebullitions of party which ever appeared.” (*The Boston Commercial Gazette*, August 29, 1801.)

<sup>44</sup> Brutus, *An Examination*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> He slightly overplays his hand here when he accuses Jefferson of overt militant opposition to the constitution’s passage (Ibid., 20.)

<sup>46</sup> Ellis, *Jeffersonian Crisis*, 39.

<sup>47</sup> “Brutus,” *Connecticut Courant*, July 27, 1801.

in New Haven.”<sup>48</sup> The scourge of commercial Federalism was unnatural in New England, Bishop argued, and he did not, he felt, need more justification for eradicating it than that.<sup>49</sup> This affirmative and aggressive way of thinking defined the majority of Republican commentary on the New Haven incident. And it captured remarkably the thoughts of Jefferson, Granger, Edwards, and Monroe about the real meaning of Federalism—thoughts that Jefferson had been too discreet to make public. The remainder of Bishop’s pamphlet is mainly devoted to stinging satire of Federalist officials, making it more apparent with each passing page why he was so despised in his home state.

In countering Brutus’ claims against Jefferson, Leonidas took a very different approach. Instead of beginning with the specifics of the New Haven case, he started with an impossibly broad introduction. Invoking the concept of Rousseau’s ‘general will,’ he staked out his major premise: that the institution of elections in America gives the people the ability to make its will clear.<sup>50</sup> That will, according to Leonidas, should be reflected in the entire political system, and in every government position. The Constitution did nothing to impede such patronage policies, Leonidas argued.<sup>51</sup> Speaking in broad political absolutes, he posed as an impartial observer riding a wave of democratic sentiment. Leonidas (just as Brutus did before him) punted on the question of partisanship, justifying Republican power grabs by invoking the inherent legitimacy of elections. And, reminiscent of Jefferson, he used broad Democratic principles as a way to obscure his own pro-Republican, anti-Federalist partisanship.

But Leonidas’ pamphlet was filled with the demonization found in Brutus. Given that Federalists had “never ceased, since their induction into office, to plot [America’s] destruction,” Leonidas argued, it was natural for a president, as the ultimate representative of the people, to see it as his constitutional responsibility to remove them from office.<sup>52</sup> (It is almost inconceivable that Leonidas didn’t have the last line of Jefferson’s Reply, demanding loyalty to the Constitution, in mind as he wrote this.) And “with whom, then, was it most proper to begin the salutary work of removal? Unquestionably with those whose sentiments would be found defective if tested by those of the revolution, and whose every political act has been a demonstration of disaffection to the constitution.”<sup>53</sup> The Federalists, by being enemies of the American Revolution should have been, Leonidas argued, the first to go.

Leonidas gradually whittled down from lofty and grandiose arguments to the more specific aspects of the New Haven case. Of course, his alarmism about Federalist subversion of American principles had already proven his point as far as dogmatic Republicans readers would be concerned. However, as Brutus had, he gave us further

<sup>48</sup> Abraham Bishop, *New-Haven Remonstrance. Together with an Exposition of the Remonstrants, or a Curiosity for the Curious*. (London: Peter Porcupine, 1814), 22.

<sup>49</sup> Except to call the remonstrators “a miserable set of salamanders.”

<sup>50</sup> “Leonidas,” *A Reply to Lucius Junius Brutus’ Examination of the President’s Answer to the New Haven Remonstrance*. (New York: Denniston and Cheetham, 1801), 4.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 22.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

justifications for Jefferson's removal of Goodrich, in order to expand his audience beyond those who bought his political assumptions.

He laid out a reasoned argument for why the principles of democratic government were incompatible with a system of life tenure in political appointments.<sup>54</sup> He undermined Brutus' claim that having officers rotate in and out too often would discourage qualified applicants from applying. Leonidas argued instead that it was precisely that policy of keeping officeholders in office for life that excluded good applicants who might have come along after the position was filled.<sup>55</sup> He also argued that, regardless of the ruling party, long tenures tended to lead to "insolence of office."<sup>56</sup>

While Leonidas avoided answering the big questions of whether partisanship was good for the young republic, he seemed to tacitly acknowledge its inevitability by offering two sets of arguments in his pamphlet—one for those who legitimately disagreed with his premises and one for those who agreed. All this still came with the same demonization of opposition Federalists.

Other parts of the Republican press were still enamored, though, of the pipe dream of a nonpartisan future, and did their part to defend the sincerity of Jefferson's inaugural address. The address had been called into question repeatedly by Federalist accusations of hypocrisy, and Jeffersonians tried their best at damage control. As an editorialist at the Newark Centinel of Freedom wrote, the Reply "is written in a style evincive of a mild and humane disposition towards his enemies, demonstrating to them that he is actuated by just motives, and that he is willing [...] to submit his conduct to rational investigation."<sup>57</sup> Some Republicans did not give Jefferson's Reply as much credit, though, preferring instead to blame the Federalists for having overly high expectations. Tullius Americus made this point in his pamphlet, essentially accusing Americans of having made Jefferson into a larger-than-life idea, rather than a real person charged with leading a country.<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps Tullius made an incisive point here. Jefferson's inaugural, even after the grueling 1800 campaign, rested on the premise that there was common ground to be had between the parties, or that with a renewed sense of revolutionary purpose, partisanship would eventually melt away. But, as the reactions to the New Haven Remonstrance indicated, when it came to the all-important question of representation in the government, neither party was willing to compromise. The Federalists supported tenure in office simply because of the accident of their party having had the first turn in government. Republicans used lofty philosophical ideas about citizen governance to justify widespread removals as they rode the wave of popular support. But for both sides, underneath the debating points lay a fundamental tension: both parties saw a party system as inevitable in America. At the same time, though, neither party saw its opponents as worthy of acknowledgement or even existence.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>57</sup> *Centinel of Freedom*, July 28, 1801.

<sup>58</sup> "Tullius Americus," *Structures on a Pamphlet Entitled, "An Examination of the President's Reply to the New Haven Remonstrance"*. (Albany: John Barber, 1801), 24.

## ALL REPUBLICANS, ALL FEDERALISTS?

In a country where both parties saw themselves as the sole inheritors of the American Revolution, finding common ground was not just impossible, but an indignity to both sides. Though there were publications that sought to prove a unity of ideas between Jefferson's wistful inaugural and his pragmatic Reply to the New Haven Remonstrance, Federalists felt betrayed.<sup>59</sup>

Caught behind all this was Jefferson. In his core, he was just as partisan as his zealous supporters, but he insisted on holding himself, at least publicly, to a higher standard. Jefferson's Reply to the New Haven Remonstrance demonstrated an attempt to reconcile his bitter partisanship, his need for an efficient administration, and his democratic political principles into a coherent policy. In the end, though, as Jefferson shifted his appointment and removal policy from 'equal' to 'proportional' representation, his partisanship prevailed.

At a basic level, the New Haven controversy was a step toward a stable, accepted party system in America. Though Jefferson clearly did not view his political adversaries as legitimate, the political exigencies of the time forced him (and his Republican supporters) to justify the removals on pragmatic, not just ideological grounds. And perhaps the most important piece of Jefferson's actions toward the remonstrators (something his erstwhile supporter Leonidas derided him for)<sup>60</sup> was that he gave them the dignity of a reply. The very act of attempting to work out a policy for all appointments, treating adversaries as equals, if only publicly, was a major step toward the acceptance of a two-party system. American partisanship, both among the people and their president, had begun to come of age.

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<sup>59</sup> Newport, RI's *Guardian of Liberty* bombastically declared: "On the whole, the inaugural speech, his answer to the Address of Rhode Island, his answer to the Address from Carolina, and this Reply, form altogether the best exposition and defence of the Republican Principle of Government, and of a wise, just, and correct administration, that has ever appeared in the world." (*Guardian of Liberty*. August 1, 1801.)

<sup>60</sup> Leonidas, *A Reply*. 42-43.

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## VICTORY AT LAST

# WILHELM GRAU, NAZI HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND THE PROPAGANDA OF REVOLUTION

What role does the historian play in the making of history? Thomas R. Prendergast, University of Chicago '14, provides one answer to this question by following the career of Wilhelm Grau, one Nazi Germany's leading historians of German-Jewish relations. In his studies of German Jews in the Middle Ages and in the 19th century, Grau created a narrative of persistent failure to resolve the "Jewish Question" – and thus positioned Nazi Germany as the decisive resolution to an age-old challenge. Prendergast traces Grau's path through the fraught intellectual landscape of the Third Reich, and offers a fascinating meditation on the role of ideology and academia in world history.

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By Thomas Prendergast, University of Chicago 2013

Written for "Nazi Germany"

Professor Tara Zahra

Edited by Noah Remnick and Andrew Tran

An ideology is quite literally what its name indicates: it is the logic of an idea. Its subject matter *is* history, to which the “idea” is applied; the result of this application is not a body of statements about something that is, but the unfolding of a process which is in constant change...Ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process—the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future—because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas.<sup>1</sup>

—Hannah Arendt, *Ideology and Terror*

One commonly held maxim concerning the importance of historical study—“those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it”—took on, it seems, a perverse sort of urgency in the Third Reich. While today this justification for the discipline often points to the terror of National Socialism as a prime example of what is to be understood and avoided in the future, under the Nazi regime the historical mistake *par excellence* became Germany’s many failed attempts to successfully rid itself of internal enemies. The *Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands* (Reich-Institute for the History of the New Germany), established in 1935, was charged with investigating precisely these instances of failure. A branch of the Reich Education Ministry, one of the primary tasks of this new research center was to explain the persistence of anti-Semitism in German history and to diagnose the reasons for Germany’s historical inability to overcome the perceived threat posed by its Jewish population. For several years, the official story propagated by the *Reichsinstitut*’s “Department for the Jewish Question” was a product of its chief historian, Wilhelm Grau.

In monographic works on German-Jewish relations in the Late Middle Ages and on the classical liberal “betrayal” of the German people to the Jews in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Grau relentlessly returned to historical junctures at which the *Judenfrage* failed to be fully resolved. In doing so, he created a historical narrative for which the present state, the Third Reich, served as a culminating moment—the fulfillment of centuries of struggle against not simply the Jew, but also the broader category of “people’s enemies,” namely the Emperor, the Church, the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and the cultural elites. By recasting the political dynamics that led to National Socialism’s seizure of power—the rejection of traditional, established political powers in favor of a stronger national community—as a conflict with much deeper roots in the German past, Grau’s work contributed to the greater Nazi construction of a revolutionary narrative. He, among many others, infused the party’s propaganda of *Volksgemeinschaft* (“people’s community”) with an air of legitimacy by providing the historical self-justification for which the regime was searching in its early years. Blending moral didacticism, anachronistic applications of racial difference, and nationalist heroics, Grau’s writing played a crucial political role in the Nazi state, reshaping Germany’s image of its past so as to in turn reshape the nation’s image of the present.

The following analysis will attempt to identify elements of the late Weimar and early Nazi political landscape in Grau’s historical narrative, with the goal of better

<sup>1</sup> Arendt, Hannah. “Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government.” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Jul., 1953), 303-327; 316

understanding how the party marketed its “revolution” to the German population. This paper will: first, outline the current state of historical knowledge concerning the 1933 *Machtübernahme* (seizure of power); second, place Grau in the larger context of Weimar politics; third, examine Grau’s application of racial concepts to the history of anti-Semitism in late medieval Regensburg, in turn-of-the-19<sup>th</sup> century Berlin, and in the historical profession since Jewish emancipation; fourth, discuss how this research contributes to our picture of the Third Reich’s particular mode of power projection; and fifth, relate Grau’s image of the “liberal epoch” as an aberration from some German historical norm to the longstanding question of Nazism’s “modernity.”

### NAZI REVOLUTION? THE STATE OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

One aim of this paper is to test two major historiographical paradigms in which the Nazi era has been recently conceived. First, there is a particular way in which this research can speak to the more general debate surrounding the origins of the Nazi rise to power, to the question of whether Nazism owes its success to the political climate of the 1920s or to the economic hardships of the 1930s. In an essay entitled “The NSDAP 1919-1934,” Peter Fritzsche, a historian of modern Germany, enters this debate, locating the party’s mass appeal not in the depression of the 1930s but in the previous decade’s steady erosion of traditional liberalism and flourishing extremist movements: “In the end, 1933 stands out,” he argues, quite convincingly, “as the culmination of a broad national uprising that only in its later stages was dominated by the National Socialists.”<sup>2</sup> The distinctions drawn in Grau’s historical research between the *Volk* and the collective *Volksfeindlich* map quite clearly onto Fritzsche’s particular image of the Weimar Republic’s rapidly evolving political battlegrounds.

In this light, Grau’s history of the German *Volk* appears to be a backwards projection, and glorification, of the Weimar Republic’s gradual radicalization, of the political dynamics from which the N.S.D.A.P. eventually emerged victorious. The “racial enemies” that Grau names and subsequently demonizes in his historical works – the Emperor, the Church, and the Slavs (in late medieval and early modern periods), the bourgeoisie and urban liberals in the post-Enlightenment, the Jews in both eras – are precisely those enemies against which the National Socialists counterpoised themselves in virulent opposition.<sup>3</sup>

Second, a clearer picture of the role of party-sponsored historical writing in the Third Reich reveals what has been, up to this point, a poorly understood method by which the regime sought to “sell” their takeover as a true revolution. Like many Nazi tools of power projection, historiographical work promoted a certain image of the state, the image of a Germany united in revolution. Of course, just as propagandistic mass-market films such as *Jud Süß*, obscured a substantially less monolithic German society, Grau’s historical works intentionally distorted the factual basis of the Jewish Question in

<sup>2</sup> Fritzsche, Peter. “The NSDAP 1919-1934: from Fringe Politics to the Seizure of Power,” in Caplan, ed. *Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 48-72; 50

<sup>3</sup> See Evans, Richard J. “The Emergence of Nazi ideology,” in Caplan, ed. *Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 26-47; 46

Germany so as to present the Jewish population (and its “allies”) as a universally recognized menace. Here, in this clear disconnect between Germany as seen from the outside, and Germany as experienced from within, Peter Fritzsche’s helpful theoretical distinction between the outwardly projected Nazi state and its inner, everyday workings comes into play.<sup>4</sup> *Unter uns* was, to use Fritzsche’s phrasing, a “media construction,” one that called on historians like Grau for a large portion of its intellectual material.<sup>5</sup>

While Nazi-sponsored anti-Semitic historical literature has not gone unnoticed, these perverse re-interpretations of the past are normally considered with respect to the future of European Jewry, particularly with reference to the ongoing debates between functionalist and intentionalist explanations of the Holocaust. Max Weinreich’s massive 1946 *Hitler’s Professors*, likely still the most complete analysis of this specific topic, approaches important figures in the regime’s academic propaganda industry, including Grau, from exactly this perspective. The book, for instance, opens with the following assertion:

This murder of a whole people was not perpetrated solely by a comparatively small gang of the Elite Guard or by the Gestapo...German scholarship provided the ideas and techniques which led to and justified this unparalleled slaughter.<sup>6</sup>

More recent works, such as Norman Cantor’s controversial *Inventing the Middle Ages*, similarly aim to demonstrate the complicity of the German historical profession in the creation of an intellectual climate amiable to genocidal *Judenhass*.<sup>7</sup> While the impact of anti-Semitic literature of 1930s Germany on the fate of European Jews in the 1940s was considerable, Grau’s work connects not only to the complex questions of the Holocaust, but also to the past—to the political culture of the Weimar Republic—and to his present—to the early Nazi propaganda of revolution and racial unity.

## **WILHELM GRAU, WEIMAR POLITICS, AND GESCHICHTSWISSENSCHAFT**

Grau, like so many young men and women too young to remember the stability and prosperity of the Wilhelmine Empire, too young to have witnessed the Great War with emotions other than childish excitement, belonged to a generation which, to use Sebastian Haffner’s formulation, “daily experienced war as a great, thrilling, enthralling game between nations.”<sup>8</sup> Haffner, born 1907, and Grau, born 1910, share a strikingly similar adolescence, marked by common attitudes and concerns. Both, for instance,

<sup>4</sup> Fritzsche, Peter. *Life and Death in the Third Reich*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 74-75

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 74

<sup>6</sup> Weinreich, Max. *Hitler’s Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany’s Crimes against the Jewish People*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999; 6

<sup>7</sup> See “The Nazi Twins: Percy Ernst Schramm and Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz,” in Cantor, Norman. *Inventing the Middle Ages*. New York: Quill, 1991; 79–117

<sup>8</sup> Haffner, Sebastian. *Defying Hitler*. New York: Picador, 2002; 17

joined conservative youth organizations following the First World War, and both, throughout the course of the 1920s and early 30s, found themselves increasingly disillusioned with such traditional forms of political involvement. As Haffner so insightfully remarks in his autobiographical account, German youth in this period were presented with two sharply divergent alternatives to the tired “bourgeois” political culture of their parents; some, like Haffner, retreated into the bohemian counterculture of the *Großstadt*, while others, like Grau, committed themselves to the dynamic activism of extreme political ideologies.

Perhaps this sort of willful conversion to the fresh, exciting rhetoric of the German far right explains Grau’s transfer from Frankfurt University to the University of Munich in 1931. After just a year at the former institution, whose culture he considered “too intellectual,” he moved to Munich to study with Karl Alexander von Müller, a pioneer of explicitly racial historiography.<sup>9</sup> Müller’s approach represents a rejection of the dominant historical paradigm of the previous eighty years—namely the positivist, scientific, Rankean conception of historical knowledge developed in Germany at the height of what would come to be termed, in Grau’s work, “the liberal epoch.” In works such as *Des deutschen Volkes Not*, *Die deutschen Träumer*, and *Deutsche Geschichte und deutscher Charakter*, Müller developed a view of German history characterized by a sort of mythical, transhistorical racial spirit, one in need of renewal.<sup>10</sup> It was perhaps this historical justification for national renewal that inspired Grau to take up his own history of the Jewish Question.

### THE JEWISH QUESTION IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

In 1934, Grau made his first professional foray into this emerging field of academic anti-Semitism, earning his doctorate with a dissertation entitled *Antisemitismus im späten Mittelalter: Das Ende der Regensburger Judengemeinde 1450-1519*. Müller served as Grau’s *Doktorvater* and wrote an introduction to the work, which consisted of a short statement of the historian’s duties to his country. For Müller, the historical profession is “above all obligated to contribute to the political education of the [German] people” and can only succeed in its instruction through “conscientious research of the historical questions with which our present age struggles.”<sup>11</sup> History, he argues, serves a didactic end, offering insights into the problems of today so as to better educate the nation. It is “the task [of history] within the great renewal of the people” — “the great renewal” being

<sup>9</sup> Schiefelbein, Dieter. *Das ‘Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage Frankfurt am Main.’ Vorgeschichte und Gründung 1935-1939*. Frankfurt a.M. 1993; 26.

<sup>10</sup> See Shulze, Winfried. “Karl Alexander von Müller (1882–1964). Historiker, Syndikus und Akademiepräsident im „Dritten Reich,” in Willoweit, Dietmar. *Eine Geschichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in historischen Porträts*. München: Beck, 2009, 281–306

<sup>11</sup> Müller, Karl Alexander, von. “Zum Geleit,” in: Grau, Wilhelm. “Antisemitismus Im Späten Mittelalter; Das Ende Der Regensburger Judengemeinde, 1450-1519.” München: Duncker & Humblot, 1934. Original German: Die Geschichtswissenschaft ist vor andern verpflichtet, mitzuarbeiten an der politischen Erziehung unseres Volkes. Sie kann das nur auf ihrem eigenen Wege tun: durch das gewissenhafte...Erforschung der geschichtlichen Fragen mit denen unsere Gegenwart ringt.

an integral part of the newly empowered Nazi party's political project—to “recognize the necessities and possibilities of German progress and to steel the German will, the combative German passion for the present and the future.”<sup>12</sup>

A “serious history of Jewry in Germany,” Müller believes, “has been missing from almost all previous work,” although it “indeed ranks among the people's vital questions.”<sup>13</sup> This is precisely, Müller gleefully proclaims, the “missing” scholarship to which Grau dedicates himself in *Antisemitismus*. Müller can therefore “only add to Grau's book the wish that it brings about many successors through its example.”<sup>14</sup> Grau took his mentor's historical paradigm to heart, examining the “vital question” of German-Jewish history in a manner that was not only decidedly nationalist, but also, more importantly, decidedly didactic and presentist, a manner that assumed a sort of moral and ideological continuity with the German past.

Such presentism underlies Grau's many ahistorical interpretations of the roots of anti-Semitism in late medieval Regensburg. Throughout the first half of his dissertation, Grau offers an account of what he considers to be the three main forms of medieval anti-Semitism, describing the development of economic, religious, and “racial” anti-Jewish ideologies in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. While the first two of these three categories constituted longstanding areas of historical research, the third—the “racial” opposition to Jews—established a new and, by most standards, highly anachronistic concept with which to analyze the field of medieval Jewish history, one drawing directly and unambiguously from the lexicon of National Socialism and, more generally, from early 20<sup>th</sup> century social scientific rhetoric. “The third motive for late medieval anti-Semitism,” Grau argues in a section entitled “Race” (Die Rasse), “arose from the aversion and the disgust that the Jew, as a member of a foreign sort of humanity, caused the German to feel.”<sup>15</sup>

Here, Grau filters certain anti-Semitic voices through the sieve of Nazi racial politics, retroactively applying his conceptions of biological difference to the language of late medieval Regensburg. He does so consciously, as can be deduced from his explicit response to the accusations of anachronism he expects to receive from more historically sensitive readers. He admits that while “‘racial opposition,’ as one calls it today, ... remained reserved for the scientific era,” it was nevertheless “already present and to some extent operative” in this period; that is to say, while medieval Regensburg lacked the “scientific” vocabulary required to appropriately express its anti-Semitism, the Jew's

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Original: die Nötigkeiten und die Möglichkeiten unserer deutschen Entwicklung zu erkennen und unseren Willen, unsere kämpferische Leidenschaft für Gegenwart und Zukunft zu stählen: das ist ihre Aufgabe innerhalb der großen Erneuerung unseres Volkes.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Original: so fehlen auch für eine ernsthafte Geschichte des Judentums in Deutschland noch fast alle Vorarbeiten; und doch gehört sie zu den Lebensfragen unseres Volkes.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Original: ...ich möchte ihm nur den Wunsch beifügen, daß es durch sein Beispiel viele Nachfolger nach sich ziehe.

<sup>15</sup> Grau, Wilhelm. "Antisemitismus Im Späten Mittelalter; Das Ende Der Regensburger Judengemeinde, 1450-1519." Inaugural Dissertation. München: Duncker & Humblot, 1934; 134. Original: “das dritte Motive im spätmittelalterlichen Judenhaß entsprang der Abneigung und einer Art Widerwärtigkeitsgefühl, die der Deutsche gegen den Juden als Angehörigen einer anderen fremden Menschenart empfand.

“visible national uniqueness” certainly “must have entered the consciousness” of the city’s *Volk*.<sup>16, 17</sup> It is “beyond all doubt that the medieval man could not suffer the Jew, not only because he was an enemy of Jesus and Maria, not only because he practiced usury and cheated, but also because he simply was a ‘Jew’” – not only for religious and economic reasons, but for universally recognized, yet incommunicable, racial reasons.<sup>18</sup>

One element of contemporary Third Reich politics with which Grau sought to didactically re-envision German history in his *Antisemitismus* was therefore biological, racial nationalism. Other elements of Nazi ideology, though not necessarily anachronistic nor factually unfounded in the context of medieval Germany, similarly structure Grau’s anti-Semitic apologia; chief among such ideology was the party’s anti-Catholicism, anti-elitism, and anti-Slavism. In many ways mirroring the xenophobic paranoia which characterized Nazi attitudes toward Catholicism, Grau draws a sharp distinction between the local and foreign leaders of the Church, casting the former as strong supporters of the city council’s anti-Jewish politics and the latter as effete, morally bankrupt, and entirely “Jewish” in outlook. The pope’s “world politics had,” according to Grau, “led him into the domain of high finance,” turning the papacy, quite hypocritically, into a usurer, “one of the strongest facilitators of early capitalism.”<sup>19</sup> For this reason, “nothing, or not much, was expected from the pope in the social struggle against the Jews.”<sup>20</sup> By contrast, the city’s churchmen and monks, in this picture, “played a preeminent role in the battle against the Jews.”<sup>21</sup>

In addition to an “anti-elitist” stance against the Church, Grau also condemns *Judenfreunde* in the realm of temporal authority, at the highest echelons of imperial administration. The Kaiser himself, “prizing the [Jewish community] as a source of income,”<sup>22</sup> allegedly became, in the people’s mind, emblematic of “Jewish money’s” hold on the empire’s political elite, “the Volk in Regensburg” feeling “quite bitter about the emperor’s protection of the Jews.”<sup>23</sup> They waited impatiently for Kaiser Maximilian to die,

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Original: Das Element des Rassengegensatzes, wie man es heute ausdrückt...war damals schon vorhanden und in einem Maße wirksam...Gewiß, dieses Element ins volle Licht des Bewußtseins zu heben...blieb dem naturwissenschaftlichen Zeitalter vorbehalten.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 136. Original: eine einheitliche sichtbare nationale Eigenart, die ihrer Umwelt als etwas Fremdes...zum Bewußtsein kommen mußte.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 134. Original: “Aber es ist über allem Zweifel erhaben, daß der mittelalterliche Mensch den Juden nicht nur nicht leiden mochte, weil er ein Feind Jesu und Maria war, weil er wuchert und betrog, sondern auch, weil er eben ein ‘Jude’ war.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 80. Original: Seine Weltpolitik hatte ihn [den Papst] auf das Gebiet der Hochfinanz geführt...Das Papsttum war unter den fördernden Kräften des Frühkapitalismus eine der ersten und stärksten.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 80. Original: Vom Papst in Rom war also im sozialen Kampf gegen die Juden nichts oder nicht viel zu erwarten.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 84. Original: Die Preidten in den verschiedenen Kirchen der Stadt spielten in der Bekämpfung der Juden damals eine hervorragende Rolle.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 102. Original: Denn er schätzte sie [die Judengemeinde] als Geldquelle hoch ein.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 110. Original: Das Volk in Regensburg empfand recht bitter die kaiserliche Protektion über die Juden

for the “dam standing before the Regensburg Jews” to give way.<sup>24</sup> Lastly, and perhaps most interestingly, Grau adds to the list of political *Volksfeinde* a particular type of nobleman: the feudal lords of the Bohemian–German borderlands. Condemning the Jews’ “Slavic guardians,” Grau mentions a number of Czech “enemies” of the city, noblemen of questionable descent—King Wladislaus, Zdenko von Sternberg, the Bohemian high treasurer Burian von Gutenstein, and Buschko von Seeburg—who posed a serious threat to Regensburg; some even openly declared war on the city in an effort to defend “their Jews.”<sup>25</sup> Considering the absurd anachronism of such an ethicized claim, it is not unreasonable to assume that this critical appraisal of the nearly treasonous place of frontier nobility in the Regensburg conflict echoes, at least to some degree, the anti-Slavic revanchism of Nazi foreign policy.

Within Grau’s politicized historiography, the racial Jew stood at the center of a larger nexus of *Judenfreunde* (“friends of the Jews”) who threatened the body politic like a cancerous polyp. Although the city eventually managed in 1519 to realize its supposedly long-desired goal of expelling Jewish residents, this solution to the Jewish Question failed to prove final, due to the persistence of *volksfeindlich* elites. Toward the end of the book, Grau puts his research into a larger historical perspective, claiming that pre-modern anti-Semitism was a natural tendency of the German *Volk* and was universally recognized as racially beneficial. He writes: “Throughout the whole medieval era, pure segregation, the foundation of every well ordered life, was almost completely enforced in religious, intellectual, and biological spheres of life.”<sup>26</sup> In this sense, the “German middle ages understood to protect the ‘racial corpus’ [Volkskörper] better and more clearly than enlightened national liberals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.”<sup>27</sup> Modern anti-Semitism is thus a sort of return to the policies in place before the “national liberal” aberration of the past century and a half. Grau’s picture of the racial neglect of these German liberals will be further discussed in Section #5 of this paper.

Strangely enough, the content of this historical account does not appear, in light of Grau’s “research” methods, to be the most damning evidence of his particular brand of political revisionism. Grau’s ahistorical arguments and blatant anti-Semitic apologetics are in fact drawn from the work of German-Jewish historian Raphael Straus, whose own research on medieval Regensburg’s Jewish community was willingly offered to Grau in 1932, after the young researcher expressed interest in the topic to the older, established academic.<sup>28</sup> Having spent many months translating Hebrew and Yiddish texts into German, Straus intended to publish a sourcebook on the topic but was forced to flee from

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 110. Original: Wie ein gewaltiger Staudamm stand dieser Kaiser Maximilian vor den Regensburger Juden.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 125. Original: Vertreter jüdischer Interessen waren also schon geschworene Feinde der Stadt

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 139. Original: Durch das ganze Mittelalter hindurch war die reinliche Scheidung, die die Grundlage jedes geordneten Lebens ist, im religiösen, im geistigen, im biologischen Lebenskreis fast restlos durchgeführt

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 136. Original: das...deutsche Mittelalter besser und reiner seinen Volkskörper zu bewahren verstand als das aufgeklärte nationalliberale 19. und 20. Jahrhundert!

<sup>28</sup> Biographical study of Raphael Straus in: *Die Juden in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte einer Minorität*. Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1964; 210–213.

Germany to Palestine in 1933. With nobody to challenge his ethical and academic standards, Grau took advantage of this situation, using Straus' original research to his own ends. In the subsequent years, Grau actively prevented the publication of Straus' book. However, Straus eventually made Grau's wrongdoing known, publishing a direct accusation of plagiarism in a 1936 issue of the *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland*.<sup>29</sup> Later in the year, the journal was forced to print a defense of the book, written by Grau himself.<sup>30</sup> Here, as well as in the 1939 edition of *Antisemitismus*, Grau maintained that he had saved "German history" and "German thoroughness" from a corrupted, "Jewish" perspective on the Regensburg exile.<sup>31</sup>

What this reveals about the nature of Grau's picture of the past is not simply that it is highly scientifically unsound—this is already well understood. It reveals rather that Grau conceived of their racialized historical discourse itself as a revolutionary overthrow of the previous regime of professional historical writing; the *Machtübernahme* constituted a revolution in relation not only to the supposedly centuries long struggle against *volksfeindlich* forces in Germany, but also a victory over the *volksfeindlich* interpretation of history, over the Jewish historians who had, up to that point, obscured the people's true history. This "problem" of Jewish historians became an explicit concern of Grau's later work and received a thorough treatment in his third major publication, *Die Judenfrage* (see Section #5).

### THE JEWISH QUESTION IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Grau argues in his first publication that the people of Regensburg were foiled in their plans to resolve the *Judenfrage* not just by Jews—who were ultimately exiled for a number of decades after 1519—but also by the Jews' allies: the Church, the Emperor, and the Slavic nobility. In his second published book, *Wilhelm von Humboldt und das Problem des Juden*, Grau deals essentially with the same theme and writes with essentially the same objective, producing an account of the great German statesman's relationship to German Jews in order to legitimize his present-day politics. This work portrays Humboldt, director of the University of Berlin at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a strong proponent of Jewish emancipation, as a pawn of the urban, intellectual elite, and as a racially compromised German duped by "Jewish" proselytizers.

Grau begins his biography with a "scientific" study of how the young German psyche handles its initial contact with the Jew. Humboldt, according to Grau, was not of pure German blood, and therefore was not instantly disgusted by the Jews he met, as any full German would, of course, be. Employing American social scientific notions of perceptible racial difference, he claims that "the French-Burgundian element of Humboldt's maternal ancestors had fractured and endangered [his] racial instinct,"

<sup>29</sup> Straus, Raphael. "Antisemitismus im Mittelalter: ein Wort pro domo." Essay in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland*. Berlin, Volume 1, 1936

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Wilhelm Grau by Fritz Friedländer in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland*. Volume 4, 1936; 190-198

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 198

leaving him unable to “distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish,” unable to “approach this foreign human race with caution and deliberation.”<sup>32</sup> Such “biological phenomena” should “not be ignored,” Grau stresses, for they lie at the root of Humboldt’s “attitude with respect to so crucial a racial problem.”<sup>33</sup>

Humboldt’s circle of friends and acquaintances consisted, from a very early age, of the “enlightened and uprooted type of Jew.”<sup>34</sup> Susceptible to racially foreign worldviews, Humboldt absorbed their liberal cosmopolitanism and became what Grau terms a “dogmatic liberal.” His answer to the Jewish Question, Grau argues, represented the most radical proposal theretofore put forth in the German public sphere. More than simply taking an assimilationist stance, as became increasingly common in the second half of the 18th century, Humboldt advocated for the greater personal and spiritual freedom of the German Jewish population. Rather than calling for an extension of civil rights to Jews so as to transform them into Germans, Humboldt argued for an extension of civil rights in the name of humanity and its basic rights: while certain contemporaries wanted to make “citizens” out of the nation’s substantial Jewish population, Humboldt, Grau maintains, “wanted humans.”<sup>35</sup> In seeking not to Germanize the Jew, but to put him on equal footing with the German, Humboldt stepped forward as an influential advocate of the “radical liberalism” which came to define the second half of the 19th century. While serving as the Prussian Culture Minister and the University of Berlin’s chief administrator, Humboldt enacted policies aimed not at the protection of a racial state—a state for the German people and their unique culture—but, most tragically in Grau’s eyes, aimed at the creation of a “neutral state.”<sup>36</sup>

Out of this “neutral state,” this siren of 19th century classical liberal imaginary, emerged the long suppressed Jew, now fully emancipated and unrestrained. Grau characterizes the spirit of this dying epoch as one of both positive developments for the German people and grave threats to the *Volkskörper*: “already in the birth hour of the liberal worldview, in the cradle of the 19th century,” Grau writes, “a deadly illness gorged itself in the body,” an illness of the “Jewish” sort of “radical” individualism.<sup>37</sup> Entering into “symbiosis with the Jew,” Humboldt and his intellectual circle “forgot that races are natural entities with blood and soul and history, and that such facts are stronger and

<sup>32</sup> Grau, Wilhelm. *Wilhelm Von Humboldt Und Das Problem Des Juden*. Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1935; 13. Original: Der französisch-burgundische Geschlecht der Humboldts hat den beiden Brüdern Wilhelm und Alexander den völkischen Instinkt gespalten und sicher gemacht”

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 13. Original: eine biologische Erscheinung, die der Historiker nicht unbeachtet lassen darf, um eine Haltung der Brüder gegenüber einem so wesenhaft völkischen Problem wie der Judenfrage verständlicher zu machen.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 39. Original: Sie zählen alle, die Rothschilds ausgenommen, zu ein und demselben nämlich zum Typ des aufgeklärten und entwurzelten Juden.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 71. Original: Dohm will den Bürger, Humboldt dem Menschen.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Original: Humboldt ist gegenüber der Vertreter des radikalen Liberalismus, und als solcher für die zweite Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts der modernere.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 95. Original: Neben dem Gesunde fraß sich tödliche Krankheit in den Körper;...Schon in der Geburtsstunde dieser Weltanschauung! Nicht erst am Ende der liberalen Epoche...Die Krankheit saß an der Wiege des 19. Jahrhunderts.

more enduring than simple and lifeless inventions of an abstract “man himself.”<sup>38</sup> Therein lies, according to Grau, the “tragedy of liberalism.”

His conclusion is that Humboldt’s classical liberal worldview “unleashed” the Jew and his socially deleterious values. In doing so, in stripping the German of his “blood and soul and history” and replacing his political subjecthood with some theorized identity, Humboldt “abated in the unfettering of the disintegrative power of the Jew.”<sup>39</sup> Explicitly implicating the liberal bourgeoisie and intellectual elite in a 120-year-long willful corrosion of the German Volk, Grau condemns the cosmopolitan, *volksfeindlich* values of the Weimar era German intelligentsia. The Nazi regime represents, within this particular historical periodization, the beginning of a new epoch, a revolutionary return to the *Blut und Boden* politics of the pre-Enlightenment, as well as to the more *völkisch* political orientation of earlier, pre-modern times.

### THE “JEWISH-LIBERAL” HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REGIME

As suggested in the final chapter of his above-mentioned *Antisemitismus*, Grau’s view of German history is characterized by a qualified reverence for the supposed racial unity of the Middle Ages. While Grau acknowledges the crucial role played by liberal activists in the unification of the modern German state, he feels only disgust for the false philosophy of egalitarianism that underpins it. Learning from the mistakes made at these two pivotal points in German history forms the basis of his “scholarly” work. In his last major published work, *Die Judenfrage als Aufgabe der neuen Geschichtsforschung*, Grau develops a transhistorical theory of the *Judenfrage*, a theory designed to explain the Volk’s continued failure to find a solution to its vital questions. He picks up here where *Wilhelm von Humboldt*, published a few months earlier, leaves off, studying the political and historiographical culture to which the “radical liberalism” of Humboldt’s generation gave birth.

Walter Frank, newly instated director of the *Reichsinstitut* and Grau’s superior, opens *Die Judenfrage* with a reiteration of the truly revolutionary quality of the National Socialist victory—a victory not only for *völkisch* politics, but also for *völkisch* historiography. “It was about time,” Frank triumphantly declares, with respect to “Jewish-liberal” historiography, “to break this pseudo-scientific-moralistic terror in the name of genuineness.”<sup>40</sup> Throughout Grau’s essay, this basic conception of the historical profession—this demonization of the oppressive Jewish historical regime and heroization of German national “genuineness”—frames a variety of arguments about the “true” history of the Jewish Question in Germany. To those who might, like Viktor Klemper,

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 96. Original: Der Liberalismus trug von Beginn an sein End mit sich, da er vergaß, daß die Völker naturhafte Gebilde mit Blut und Seele und Geschichte sind und daß solche Tatsachen dauerhafter und lebenszäher in der Welt stehen denn bloße und leblose Erfindungen eines abstrakten Menschen an sich...

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. Original: [Humboldt] half bei, die auflösende Macht des Jüdischen zu entfesseln.

<sup>40</sup> Grau, Wilhelm. *Die Judenfrage Als Aufgabe Der Neuen Geschichtsforschung*, Schriften Des Reichsinstituts Für Geschichte Des Neuen Deutschlands. Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1935; 6. Original: Es war an der Zeit, im Namen der wissenschaftlichen Wahrhaftigkeit diesen pseudo-wissenschaftlichen-moralischen Terror zu brechen

claim that the Jew Question is “a false thesis of the National Socialists,”<sup>41</sup> Grau responds with a criticism of the Rankean positivism of 19<sup>th</sup> century German historiography, of the “presuppositionlessness and objectivity of liberal science,” which “simply suppressed the thousands of documents on this vital racial question.”<sup>42</sup>

In addition to restating the basic historical narrative developed in his first two works – the story of a *völkisch* Germany foiled by the late medieval political establishment and betrayed by the Enlightenment intelligentsia – Grau also sketches in this short essay a historical narrative of German historiography: “in every generation since assimilation began,” since the egalitarian politics of Humboldt and his liberal confreres took hold, “Jewish historiography wrote large historical works,” further entrenching its worldview in the German historical imaginary.<sup>43</sup> Fortunately, the National Socialist takeover put an end to this perverse, deeply *volksfeindlich* practice. German historians are now tasked with defending the revolution in historiography against the reactionary attitudes of the “Jewish-liberal” academe, which “stigmatizes the National Socialist attempt to solve the Jewish Question as a relapse into the Middle Ages” and considers “the medieval order as an act of violence and barbarity.”<sup>44</sup> This is “what the Jews say”; the facts, he contends, “say something different!” If the revolution is to succeed and the Volk is to recognize its true racial identity, the history of the Jewish Question, Grau contends, must be Germanized.

### 1933: REVOLUTION AND PROPAGANDA

It is certainly true that historically founded justifications represent just one of many “objective” measures by which the Nazi regime granted, denied, and assigned racial worth. The Nazi racial state employed numerous other metrics; biology, psychology, sociology – relatively well-known areas of national socialist intellectual perversion – offered most of these “objective” measures. But history also proved an extremely potent tool of the Third Reich’s propaganda, a tool useful for two purposes: for portraying the 1933 *Machtübernahme* as a truly revolutionary moment, as a victory of the *Volk*, and for projecting an air of popular, racial unity through this success.

<sup>41</sup> Klemper, Viktor. “The Klemper Diaries.” *The New Yorker*, April 27, 1998, translator Martin Chalmers, 120-135; 125

<sup>42</sup> Grau, *Judenfrage*, 11. Original: Seitdem die Emanzipation den Juden Bürgerrecht und Gleichberechtigung gegeben habe, meinten die Liberalen, sei das Problem aus der Welt geschafft. Mit der „Voraussetzungslosigkeit“ und „Objektivität“ der liberalen Wissenschaft kann es auch nicht so weit her gewesen sein, denn sonst hätte sie nicht Tausende von Dokumenten dieser Lebensfrage unseres Volkes einfach unterschlagen

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 16. Original: Große historische werke hat die jüdische Geschichtswissenschaft in jeder Generation geschrieben.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 20. Original: Wenn z.B. der NS Lösungsversuch der Judenfrage im Ausland als ein Rückfall ins Mittelalter gebrandmarkt wurde, so entspricht diese Vorstellung der jewish-liberalen Geschichtsauffassung, die die Struktur der angestrebten neuen Ordnung wie die des Mittelalters verkennt man hat den Mittelalter ganz auf die Formel Gewalttat und Barbarei gebracht; so die Juden. Die geschichtlichen Tatsachen aber sprechen anders!

Grau's three major publications—*Antisemitismus*, *Wilhelm von Humboldt*, and *Die Judenfrage*—achieved this first end—that is, the public appearance of genuine revolution—through an invented historical trajectory an anachronistic distortion of German-Jewish relations in the Middle Ages and Enlightenment. He provided the historical narrative with which a man or woman could justify his or her membership in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, with which he or she could be deemed a true German or some sort of *Volksfeind*. The roots of the Nazi rise to power might very well lie, as Peter Fritzsche contends, in the post-1918 “disintegration of the middle-class parties and the mobilization of middle-class sociability.”<sup>45</sup> That being said, the party's roots, in the Nazi historical imagination, ran much deeper, dating back to the early years of German national history, to the “First Reich.” In his attempt to explain the party's meteoric rise to power in the early 1930s, Fritzsche juxtaposes Nazism with various groups: political elites, the bourgeoisie, liberals, the Church—groups who, according to Grau, were the “people's enemies” responsible for the failure of past generations.

In the two years preceding his promotion to the directorship of the *Reichsinstitut's* Department for the Jewish Question, Grau had already established a basic historical narrative for the *Judenfrage*, and had already identified its key players and decisive moments. Following the Nazification of Germany's premier historical review, *Die Historische Zeitschrift*, in 1935, the general tone of the historical profession, with regard to Grau's racialized, avowedly political historiography, turned from a mixture of dismissal and disdain to near sycophantic admiration. Prior to the Nazification of the German historical profession, no review of this sparsely evidenced dissertation was, it seems, published in any major journal; a year later, Müller was personally selected to edit the *Historische Zeitschrift*, after which a number of glowing reviews began to appear. For example, a review written by a University of Munich professor lauds Grau's *Antisemitismus* as a “virtuous achievement thoroughly controlled by a will to truth”; a review of *Wilhelm von Humboldt* praises the “sweep of Grau's gaze and clarity of his presentation” and enjoins the “German historical profession” to reconsider its “whole depiction of Jewry in modern German history.”<sup>46 47</sup>

These journals became little more than platforms on which to present the state historical center's research, each issue detailing the proceedings of the *Reichsinstitut's* three main departments.<sup>48</sup> Outside Germany, this *völkisch* tone began to define the state's intellectual climate. Both positive reviews, including one written by a professor of German at Stanford University and published in a 1936 issue of *Books Abroad*, and negative reviews, such as a 1938 denunciation of *Antisemitismus* published by Solomon Grayzel in the *American Jewish Quarterly Review*, consider Grau's work to be indicative of the Nazi regime's politics and little more than “an attempt to bolster the anti-Jewish

<sup>45</sup> Fritzsche, *NSDAP 1918-1934*, 52

<sup>46</sup> Wohlhaupt, E. Review: “Antisemitismus Im Späten Mittelalter; Das Ende Der Regensburger Judengemeinde, 1450-1519.” *Historische Zeitschrift* 152, no. 1 (1935), 124-126; 126

<sup>47</sup> Haußherr, Hans. Review: “Wilhelm von Humboldt und das Problem der Juden.” *Historische Zeitschrift* 154, no. 2 (1936), 359-63; 63

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Grau, Wilhem. Wohlhaupter, E. “Geschichte der Judenfrage.” *Historische Zeitschrift* 154, no. 1 (1935), 104-109

tendencies of the Germany of today.”<sup>49</sup> Very quickly, it seems, Grau’s re-imagination of the past became an inescapable and incontestable aspect of the Third Reich’s *raison d’état*, both inside and, to a great extent, outside Germany.

Owing to his position of influence, Grau was able to direct—and stimulate—the historical discourse surrounding an issue that had become increasingly pressing as a result of anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda. In the face of constant indoctrination—films, books, magazines, youth clubs, public addresses, games—and historical accounts that ceaselessly drew a dividing line between *Volk* and *Volksfeinde*, many—perhaps, even, most—Germans could not help but join the “revolution.” As the years progressed and the Third Reich strengthened its power, all signs seemed to point to 1933 as a racial victory—a victory many Germans needed to be informed of.

### MODERNITY, ANTI-MODERNITY AND NAZI HISTORIOGRAPHY

In the above-cited *Ideology and Terror*, Hannah Arendt argues that ideology first gained mass political appeal in the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

Ideologies—isms, which to the satisfaction of their adherents can explain everything and every occurrence by deducing it from a single premise—are a very recent phenomenon and, for many decades, played a negligible role in political life.<sup>50</sup>

She goes on to claim, rather provocatively and perhaps rather tenuously, “Not before Hitler and Stalin were the great political potentialities of the ideologies discovered.” Objections and counterexamples aside, her understanding of ideology points to an undeniable aspect of the Nazi movement’s “modernity.” Despite its decidedly anti-liberal, anti-individualistic rhetoric and its glorification of a romanticized pre-Enlightenment German past, the Third Reich was built upon a thoroughly modern foundation—upon the new political techniques and technologies of innovative ideologues.

Both before and after the 1933 *Machtübernahme*, historians constituted a key element of the Nazi campaign, providing the particular cultural imaginary upon which the party’s politics relied. Grau and his likeminded colleagues were only “anti-modern” insofar as they developed a certain notion of “modernity”—a modernity of “Jewish-liberal” rationalism, egalitarianism, and deceit—and then declared themselves bitterly opposed to it on racial grounds. In this sense, the politics of periodization played an indispensable role in the Nazi regime’s attempts to win popular support and solidify its power. The legitimacy of the state depended on *völkisch* unity; this unity rested on a conception of the 1933 takeover as a necessary political development, and such a conception of 1933 called for a racialized historical narrative.

<sup>49</sup> Grayzel, Solomon, Review: Antisemitismus im späten Mittelalter (das Ende der Regensburger Judengemeinde 1450-1519) by Wilhelm Grau. *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Oct., 1938), 189-190; 189

<sup>50</sup> Arendt, 315

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### TITLE IMAGE

Der Stürmer. *Rassenschande*. C. 1935. Poster. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington. *Nazi Propaganda Poster Advertising a Special Issue of "Der Stuermer" on "Rassenschande" [Race Pollution]*. Photograph. By Arnold Kramer. #32615. *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. 26 Nov. 2013.  
<<http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1092065>>.



# AL-BIRUNI'S ELEVENTH CENTURY ANTHROPOLOGY ON INDIA

## THE MORAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF OBJECTIVITY

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973-1048) was a Persian scholar renowned for contributions to mathematics, natural sciences, linguistics, and history. Al-Biruni eventually became a courtier of the Ghaznavid dynasty, a Sunni empire centered in Ghazni, modern-day Afghanistan. In her prize-winning senior essay, Deirdre Dlugoleski '13 examines al-Biruni's *On India*, a formidable study of eleventh century Hindu society, religion, and culture, highlighting the Persian scholar's outsider perspective and attempts at objectivity. In this excerpt, Dlugoleski argues that al-Biruni was motivated in part by a desire for peaceful relations between the Ghaznavid Empire and the Hindus: he shaped his analysis of Hindu law and religion to accord with the Islamic notion of a "people of the book" and thus to shift Persian attitudes towards their eastern neighbors.

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Edited by Jacob Anbinder and John Hayashi

While serving as court astronomer to Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, ruler of the Ghaznavid Empire, the scholar al-Biruni composed a massive study of Indian society, culture, and religion called *On India*. In the early eleventh century, Mahmud aggressively expanded the Empire westward to modern-day Central Iran and eastward to Hindu lands. It was these eastern campaigns against Hindus that inspired al-Biruni to write *On India*. Al-Biruni's treatment of Hinduism constitutes an attempt to create a framework for peaceful interaction within Islamic legal thought, and thus change Ghaznavid views of Hinduism.

*Surat al-Kafirun* in the Quran reads: "To you your religion, and to me mine." This Sura offers a clue as to why al-Biruni chose to focus heavily on Hindu religious texts in his explanation of Indian customs. *Surat al-Kafirun* specifically refers to the Islamic idea of "peoples of the book," or *ahl-al kitab* (also referred to as *dhimmi*, or protected people)—that is, non-Muslims who adhere to a revealed scripture that Islam accepts and are thus afforded autonomy and tolerance under Sharia law. The Quran only explicitly recognizes Jews, Christians, and Sabians as people of the book, although Zoroastrians were given similar status in the wake of the Muslim conquests in Persia. With the Zoroastrian example in mind, it is important to closely examine the way that al-Biruni describes Hinduism. He clearly hoped to effect change in the Ghaznavids' policy towards Hindus with his writing. Furthermore, al-Biruni had already restricted his audience to the most elite circles of Mahmud's court. The sheer mathematical content of *On India* alone, to say nothing of the level of Arabic, ensured that only the most educated and most influential members of Mahmud's court could read it. Al-Biruni's presentation of Hindu theology shows what he hoped to accomplish in writing *On India*.

First, by differentiating between text-based beliefs and popular practice, al-Biruni highlighted that most offending aspects of Hinduism are, in fact, not "true" Hinduism. In addressing the issue of idol worship, al-Biruni writes, "[it] is well known that the popular mind leans towards the sensible world, and has an aversion to the world of abstract thought which is only understood by highly educated people, of whom in every time and every place there are only few."<sup>1</sup> He then notes:

...if, for example, a picture of the Prophet were made, or of Mekka and the Ka'ba, and were shown to an uneducated man or woman...their joy in looking at the thing would bring them to kiss the picture, to rub their cheeks against it...as if they were seeing not the picture, but the original, and were in this way, as if they were present in the holy places, performing the rites of pilgrimage, the great and the small ones.<sup>2</sup>

The end of the chapter restates the point: "[our] object in mentioning all this mad raving was...to illustrate what we have said before, that such idols are erected only for uneducated low-class people of little understanding; that Hindus never made any idol of any supernatural being, much less God."

Al-Biruni's argument that scripturally sanctioned Hinduism centers on one god instead of a pantheon of gods is significant. In doing so, he implied that Hinduism, too,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

is monotheistic. This was the defining characteristic that separated the religions of the Peoples of the Book and their “protected” status from the others.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Biruni used the same strategy in his treatment of supernatural figures that do appear in the Hindu scriptures, consigning them to a status below that of God. In one instance, al-Biruni translated “Indra, chief of the gods” as *re’is al-mala’ika*—“chief of the angels.”<sup>4</sup> Shlomo Pines and Tuvia Gelblum note that in translating “gods” as “angels,” “al-Biruni follows a long-established usage of translators of Greek texts in Arabic.”<sup>5</sup> Still, when describing the Greek pantheon in other sections of *On India*, al-Biruni used the term *al-alaha*—the gods.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he clearly differentiated between God and other supernatural beings in Hinduism, noting “the holding fast to meditation on God and the angels means a kind of familiar intercourse with them.”<sup>7</sup> This differentiation between God and angels suggests that he is selectively labeling the Hindu gods as “angels,” in order to better underscore God’s oneness in true Hinduism.

Second, al-Biruni emphasized the legal authority of the scriptures that he cites, legal authority being the other major defining characteristic of Peoples of the Book. Stylistically, his presentation of Hindu legends recalls *hadith* scholarship: he gives a source and proceeds with the account, in most instances refraining from commenting. Beyond implicitly relating the Hindu traditions to the *hadith*, al-Biruni wrote that Hindus believe that their law, too, has a divine source. In chapter ten, “The Source of the Traditions and Laws, and the Transmission of the Laws,”<sup>8</sup> he began by describing how the Greeks believed that their laws were divinely given:

Such was the case with the Greeks, and it is precisely the same with the Hindus. For they believe that their religious law and its single precepts derive their origin from Rishis, their sages, the pillars of their religion, and not from the prophet, i.e. Narayana, who, when coming into this world, appears in some human form. But he only comes in order to cut away some evil matter which threatens the world...<sup>9</sup>

The Rishis themselves were believed to be divinely inspired. It is also interesting that al-

<sup>3</sup> Cahen, Cl. “Dhimma.” In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Brill Online, 2013. Reference. Yale University. [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/dhimma-SIM\\_1823](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/dhimma-SIM_1823).

<sup>4</sup> *Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ketab fi tahqiq ma le’l-Hend* or al-Biruni’s India (Hyderabad, 1958), 6, quoted in Shlomo Pines, “Albiruni’s Arabic Version of Patanjali’s Yogasutra; *ibid.*,” 307.

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

<sup>6</sup> Abu Rayhan Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Biruni, *كتاب تحقيق ما الهند و مقولة مقبولة في العقل او مردولة الأبي الريحان محمد* [Alberuni’s India], ed. Fuat Sezgin, trans. Edward Sachau, *Islamic Geography* (London: Trubner and Co., Ludgate Hill, 1993; repr., 1993). *كتاب تحقيق ما الهند و مقولة مقبولة في العقل او مردولة الأبي الريحان محمد بن احمد البيروني*

<sup>7</sup> Al-Biruni, *Tahqiq Ma Le’l-Hind.*, *Tahqiq Ma Le’l-Hind*, 75.

<sup>8</sup> Here, I have given my own translation of the title. Sachau gives it: “On the source of their religious and civil law, on prophets, and on the question whether single laws can be abrogated or not.” I am disinclined to use his translation, however, because the notion of a separation between ‘civil’ and ‘religious’ law, in both Hindu and Islamic thought, literally did not exist at this time.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

Biruni chooses to specify that Narayana is a prophet.<sup>10</sup> Narayana, however, is actually the Vedic supreme god, also known as Vishnu, who sometimes takes human form and appears on earth. Al-Biruni chose to emphasize his appearance on earth and refer to him as a prophet, rather than a god, as the idea of God appearing physically on earth would have horrified his readers.

Throughout the rest of *On India*, al-Biruni consistently describes practice or custom and either precedes it or closely follows it with a supporting text. This is significant because the concept of the People of the Book is fundamentally legal in nature. The earliest documentation of Muslim and non-Muslim legal interaction is known as the Constitution of Medina, written in A.D. 622 when the population of Medina (both Jews and Muslims) requested Muhammad to be the arbiter of their disputes. This is also the earliest recorded use of the term *ummah* (community), demonstrating how Muhammad united, in a political sense, the Jewish and Muslim communities of Medina. While establishing a mechanism of common defense and governance of the town, the constitution also upholds the right of Jews to keep both their own religion and their own laws. The decision of legal questions, and the recourse grieved parties could claim in this procedure, was now determined by their religion.<sup>11</sup>

The verses of the Quran from this period in Muhammad's life justify this idea in Sura 5, 42-51:

Verily, we have sent down the Torah containing guidance and light, by it the prophet...gave judgment for the Jews....In their footsteps we caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow, confirming the Torah which was before him, and we gave him the Gospel, wherein is guidance and light;...Let the people of the Gospel judge by that which God has sent down therein....[W]ho is better than God in judgment to a people who have certainty in their belief?<sup>12</sup>

Although the Quran does not include any judgment on Hindus, these verses do provide a guideline for resolving disputes in a community of mixed religious faith. Here, a community that claims its own law embodied in an authoritative text or series of texts can legally be considered a People of the Book, and can resolve its own disputes without the intervention of a Muslim jurist. Hindus, as al-Biruni has presented them, implicitly meet this criterion.

Al-Biruni's description of Hindus also suggests a comparison between them and the Zoroastrians. This is not coincidental. Al-Biruni's utilization of rational moral judgment to determine whether a group may be considered *dhimmi* had a strong foundation in the historical precedent of his homeland. Whereas the status of Jews and Christians as *dhimmi* is clearly defined in the Quran, it says nothing about Zoroastrians.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Biruni, كتاب تحقيق ما الهند و مقولة مقبولة في العقل او مردولة الأبي الريحان محمد بن احمد البيروني. Here, I agree with Sachau's translation: الرسول الذي هو نارايين, "al-rasul aledhi hua narayan," literally translates to "the Prophet who is Narayana."

<sup>11</sup> S.D. Goitein, "The Birth Hour of Muslim Law," *Muslim World* 50 (1960), 26.

<sup>12</sup> Quran 5:42-51, quoted in "The Birth Hour of Muslim Law," p. 26.

Over the course of the conquests in the former Sassanian territories, however, the Zoroastrians majority of the Persian population gained *dhimmi* status as well.<sup>13</sup> As an administrative necessity, Muslims had to work with Zoroastrians, and consequentially had to carefully consider the ramifications of enforcing repressive statutes. While most residents of large urban centers had converted to Islam by the ninth century, the numbers of Zoroastrians would have been much larger in the countryside; as late as the eleventh century, a fire temple in Baihaq remained functional.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, in the majority of cases both sides seem to have acknowledged the mutual benefit of cooperation. As the conquests progressed, Zoroastrians themselves assented to pay the poll tax in order to save their temples. In some cases, Muslims even employed Zoroastrian administrators and local officials.

Analogy, or *qiyas*, was one acceptable mode of Islamic legal reasoning, called *usul al-fiqh*. In the hierarchy of sources on the basis of which Muslim jurists may reason through a case, *qiyas* is fourth. The first authoritative source of law is, unsurprisingly, the Quran. If the Quran says nothing on a given question, then the jurist may consult the *hadith*. If the *hadith* are also silent, then he may consult legal precedent among fellow jurists. If there is also no precedent, then the jurist may draw an analogy between a similar situation upon which the Quran, the *hadith*, or preceding jurists have given a ruling, and the question at hand.<sup>15</sup> Without ever using the term in connection with the Hindus, al-Biruni is laying the foundation for a legal argument that the Hindus could also plausibly be a People of the Book.

### TITLE IMAGE

Mayorova, L[idiya]. *Abu Rayhan Biruni*. 1973. Stamp. *Wikipedia*. 26 Nov. 2013.  
<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Biruni-russian.jpg>>.

<sup>13</sup> Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Jamsheed K. Choksy, "Conflict, Coexistence, and Cooperation: Muslims and Zoroastrians in Eastern Iran during the Medieval Period," *The Muslim World* 80, no. iii-iv (1990), 222; Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*.

<sup>15</sup> *Qiyas* was, in itself, a contentious mode of reasoning. Several schools of Islamic law, in particular the Hanbalis, did not accept it as valid. The Ghaznavids, however, employed Hanafi law, which considered *qiyas* legitimate (See: C.E. Bosworth, "The Imperial Policy of the Early Ghaznavids.").





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