

The Rhodes Historical Review



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The War For Public Opinion: Propaganda and Suppression in World War America

Colin Antaya

No conflict in the history of the United States prior to the First World War had required such a great mobilization of people and resources. When, on April 6, 1917, Congress passed its War Resolution, it voted not only to send the American military to war, but to send the entire nation as well. President Woodrow Wilson had warned Congress and the American people four days earlier of the unprecedented demands of this war, declaring that the nation would have to “exert all its power and employ all its resources to bring the Government of the German Empire to terms and end the war.”¹ Although many Americans supported the call to arms and patriotism, numerous others opposed America’s entry into the war and felt that Wilson had betrayed his earlier campaign promises of neutrality.

Thus, the government of the United States embarked on two distinct, but closely related, campaigns to win over and direct public opinion for the purpose of mass mobilization. These were a campaign of prescriptive propaganda and a campaign of restrictive suppression of dissent. The propaganda was prescriptive insofar as it informed Americans of what they should think regarding the war and how they should act to benefit the war effort, very often

¹ Woodrow Wilson, “War Message to Congress,” *The World War I Document Archive*,
http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Wilson%27s_War_Message_to_Congress.

drawing direct connections in word and image between the home front and the war front. Government suppression, on the other hand, was restrictive insofar as it informed Americans of what they were forbidden to do, write, and say, making loyalty a contentious issue on the home front and rousing suspicion toward non-conformity.

Furthermore, although the federal government initiated and directed these programs, it would be a mistake to see them as simply *inflicted* upon the American people. There was significant volunteer support for both campaigns among the American citizenry, which manifested itself in such popular organizations as the Four Minute Men and the American Protective League. In conjunction with the government's campaigns of propaganda and suppression, the widespread success and influence that these popular organizations enjoyed during the war should cause Americans to reconsider not only the place that the manufacturing of public opinion occupies in our nation's history, but also the role that everyday citizens have played in this process.

From a material standpoint, America was quite unprepared for war on the scale of the European conflict in April, 1917. The United States army numbered less than 200,000 soldiers and the state of the navy was little better. Even after Wilson had asked Congress to enter the war, it was not entirely clear whether or not American soldiers would actually join the fight in Europe. To use a modern politically charged phrase, members of both parties hoped that America's mere entry into the war would be enough to force an armistice without having to "put boots on the ground."² In fact, after hearing appropriations testimony for transporting troops to France, Senator Thomas S. Martin, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, is reported to have exclaimed: "Good Lord! You're

² Alan Axelrod, *Selling The Great War: The Making of American Propaganda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009), 60.

not going to send soldiers over there, are you?”³ But these initial doubts notwithstanding, Congress quickly realized that American soldiers would have to fight alongside the French and British in the trenches of the Western Front.⁴

In addition to these concerns of men and materiel, however, there existed the equally pressing issue of mobilizing the citizenry behind the war. As Chairman George Creel of the Committee on Public Information, an organization created by Wilson to serve as the government’s primary manufacturer of prescriptive propaganda, wrote soon after the war, “During the three and a half years of our neutrality the land had been torn by a thousand divisive prejudices, stunned by the voices of anger and confusion, and muddled by the pull of opposing interests.”⁵ Indeed, both America’s entry into the war and its entry on the side of the Allies had been divisive issues in the preceding years. And perhaps the supreme irony of the United States’ declaration of war was the fact that Wilson had been reelected less than a year earlier on the slogan “he kept us out of war.” Thus, his administration now had to make clear to its citizens why it had entered the war in April of 1917, and why it was necessary to send American soldiers across the Atlantic.

President Wilson intended his war message to Congress on April 2, 1917 to provide the outlines of such a justification. The declaration of war had been motivated largely by the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare by the German government on

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ For an excellent account of American society and politics during World War I, see David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁵ George Creel, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information That Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (Lexington, KY: Forgotten Books, 2011), 5.

January 31, 1917.⁶ As such, it is not surprising to see repeated references to this event and its deadly consequences for sailors and civilians in Wilson's speech. What was remarkable, though, was the way in which Wilson cast these aggressive actions against the United States as aggression against all of humanity. Condemning Germany's submarine tactics as "a warfare against mankind," Wilson declared that the American motive for entering the war was not "revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right, of which we are only a single champion."⁷ The speech was awash with such sentiments, including Wilson's famous exhortation that "the world must be made safe for democracy." Such declarations seem cliché and perhaps even suspect to modern Americans, as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (and Vietnam) were justified on similar grounds. To the average American in 1917, however, the ideals in Wilson's speech were inspirational, as made evident by the mass volunteer support for the war effort. The campaign on public opinion had begun.

Americans had been exposed to pro-Entente and anti-German propaganda since before April, 1917. This was especially the case in regard to the "rape of Belgium," as the German occupation of that small neutral nation was described at the time, often through sensational newspaper accounts and propaganda from the Entente nations. Wilson's speech, however, marked not only the entry of the nation into the war, but also the entry of the federal government into its campaign to influence public opinion of the war. Nevertheless, oratory from the president, no matter how emotive, could not accomplish this monumental task alone. Recognizing this, Wilson created the Committee on Public

⁶ For a detailed explanation of the US entering the war, see Michael Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁷ Wilson, "War Message."

Information under Creel by executive order on April 14, 1917. Although Creel, who had formerly been a muckraking journalist, was little known at the birth of the CPI, he soon came to embody the nation's propaganda efforts to such an extent that the CPI became known as the Creel Committee.

Creel's two most redeeming qualities were a conviction in the righteousness of the American cause, or what he sometimes called "the gospel of Americanism," and seemingly boundless energy. These character traits shone through in his description of the CPI's birth *ex nihilo* when it was "still penned in the navy library, fighting for breath."⁸ In his writing Creel displayed a penchant for exaggeration, but it is true that the CPI was created with essentially no precedent for guidance. Historian Alan Axelrod writes of the CPI being "conjured" rather than constructed as it exploded across the capital and into New York and other cities.⁹ In fact, after leaving its first temporary home, the naval library in Washington, the CPI never found regular accommodations. Major Douglas MacArthur (later to be the famous general) located accommodations for Creel's organization in a townhouse at 10 Jackson Place in Washington. The CPI later spread into the two adjacent townhouses as well as the Treasury Building, but never received proper offices of its own, despite having a staff membership at the end of the war which exceeded 100,000 persons.¹⁰

Creel and his colleagues, however, had little time to worry about their surroundings. They were far more concerned with defining the CPI's mission and beginning its work. The CPI's first official action was to engage in dialogue with the press in order to create guidelines for voluntary censorship. Creel was adamant that his committee not become an organ of government enforced

⁸ Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 84.

⁹ Axelrod, *Selling The Great War*, 90.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

ensorship, a sentiment which many members of the press echoed. The intensity of Creel's feelings regarding censorship were made clear in the italicized lines from his book: "*In no degree was the Committee an agency of censorship, a machinery of concealment or repression. Its emphasis throughout was on the open and the positive.*"¹¹ Thus, the voluntary guidelines, all having to do with information regarding the movement of troops and supplies, which were soon established with the cooperation of the press were essential to Creel's idea of the CPI.

Once the pressing matter of censorship had been addressed, at least in regard to the CPI, Creel's committee launched immediately into the war for public sentiment. In a metaphor mixing the home front with the war front, which became a defining characteristic of government propaganda during the CPI's existence, Creel explained the work of his organization thusly:

Back of the firing-line, back of armies and navies, back of the great supply-depots, another struggle waged with the same intensity and with almost equal significance attaching to its victories and defeats. It was the fight for the *minds* of men, for the 'conquest of their convictions,' and the battle-line ran through every home in every country.¹²

This meant, then, that the CPI would have to bring the fight into every home.

In order to do this, the CPI undertook to flood the nation's media with war news from official government sources. Creel and his colleagues saw this as a way to direct the content of the news without engaging in government censorship.¹³ It is important to note, however, that Creel did not see the CPI as a tool for manipulating Americans' passions. Rather Creel aimed to direct

¹¹ Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ Axelrod, *Selling The Great War*, 82-83.

public opinion “by unanswerable arguments that would make every man and woman know that the war was a war of self-defense that had to be waged if free institutions were not to perish.”¹⁴

The CPI’s first foray into this strategy was its hurried publishing of the pamphlet, *War Messages and the Facts Behind it*, an annotated version of Wilson’s war message to Congress. Guy Stanton Ford, a historian from the University of Minnesota, was recruited by Creel to lead a team in creating this version of the war message. The finished product contained forty footnotes of “fact” from various sources of “the highest official validity,” of which, according to the pamphlet’s forward, “almost none...are capable of dispute by any fair-minded person.”¹⁵ Even a surface-level reading of Ford’s pamphlet, however, demonstrates that the CPI’s definition of “fact” was less than rigorous. For example, both Wilson’s speech and the annotations make repeated reference to unrestricted submarine warfare as violating international law, but neither reference any international legal code. Ford’s annotations include the opinions of various American “experts” on international law, as well as U.S. naval code, but fail to demonstrate exactly how the German navy was in violation of international law. Moreover, regarding Wilson’s assertion that “Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments,” the pamphlet declared, “The present war is for a large part being waged to settle whether the American or the Prussian standard of *morality* is valid.”¹⁶ This statement was hardly an expression of fact. Indeed, such a loosely stated argument serves as a prime example of the manufacturing of public

¹⁴ Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 100.

¹⁵ Guy Stanton Ford, *War Message and Facts Behind It, The Library of Congress*, <http://www.archive.org/details/warmessagefactsb01unit>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 (author’s italics).

opinion under the guise of “truth,” and bolstered by the prestige of the president.

Even so, the pamphlet was devoured by the American public. According to Creel, 2.5 million copies were produced during the war. One city superintendent even requested 15,000 copies for the purpose of distributing them to the immigrant community in his city.¹⁷ This amazing success led the CPI to produce numerous other pamphlets in a “Red, White, and Blue Books” series and a “War Information” series, including such titles as: *The Battle Line of Democracy, American and Allied Ideals, German Plots and Intrigues, The German Bolshevik Conspiracy*, and many others.¹⁸ To accomplish this, Creel recruited an army of scholars and intellectuals like Ford, of whom, boasted Creel, not one refused the summons.¹⁹

But Creel was not satisfied merely with the printing of pamphlets. The CPI engaged in massive advertising campaigns, purchasing swaths of advertising space in magazines and newspapers throughout the nation. Its posters and ads could be found everywhere, from theatres and churches to schools and union halls. Creel even contracted with commercial advertising agencies to include patriotic messages in their advertisements for the most mundane items, such as soap.²⁰

Moreover President Wilson assisted the efforts of the CPI to engage the American citizenry in the war effort. For example, in a speech of April 16, 1917, Wilson appealed to the notion of a “great national, a great international, Service Army,” which would be composed of civilians in America and allied nations.²¹ Wilson

¹⁷ Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 102.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 105-7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁰ Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 83.

²¹ Woodrow Wilson, “Address on War Preparations, 16 April 1917,” *The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library*, <http://wwl2.dataformat.com/HTML/30695.htm>.

encouraged civilians of various trades to labor selflessly for the war effort, declaring that the “men and the women who devote their thought and their energy to these things will be serving the country and conducting the fight for peace and freedom just as truly and just as effectively as the men on the battlefield or in the trenches.” In directly linking the home front to the “men on the battlefield or in the trenches,” Wilson was using a tactic that was integral to the government’s propaganda campaign.

One division of the CPI, the Division of Advertising, released a report immediately after the armistice, which provided insight into the campaign to link the home front with the war front and to provide American citizens with prescriptive instruction. According to this report the Division of Advertising existed in order “to inform public opinion properly and adequately.”²² In executing this task it facilitated, among other things, the creation of 60,000 window displays in its less than one year of existence.²³ The report includes a number of examples of the displays, posters, and leaflets produced by the division, which are helpful in understanding the general nature of such government propaganda. One poster encouraged men to sign up for the United States Shipyard Volunteers and guaranteed that volunteers would be doing work “just as vital, just as necessary as the man who goes in the trenches.” To prove this the poster promised that a “badge of honor” would be given to every volunteer.²⁴ Another poster called for donations to the Red Cross with the single command, “JOIN.” To increase its emotive appeal, the poster featured a somber woman with her hand outstretched toward the audience as if

²² Woodrow Wilson, Executive Order of January 20, 1918, quoted in Committee on Public Information, *Report of the Division of Advertising, Committee on Public Information*, November 27, 1918, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/eaq_Q0043/, 1.

²³ CPI, *Report of the Division of Advertising*, 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

grasping for the passersby.²⁵ Like the shipbuilding poster and President Wilson's calls for a "Service Army," this poster connected the home front to the war front. By relating the "thoughts," "interests," and "hearts," of the home front to the "thoughts," "interests," and "hopes," of the soldiers in the trenches, this poster bridged the gap between the two.

Of all the CPI campaigns, however, few are as notable as the Four Minute Men. America in 1917 was in many ways a nation of immigrants. Upon entering the war, seventeen million of a total population of one hundred million were foreign born. In addition, either one or both of the parents of twenty million Americans were foreign born. Many millions of these people could not read English, and a significant number of native born Americans were illiterate as well. This made the spoken word supremely important in spreading information, and also meant that a significant portion of the population would go uninfluenced by the posters and advertisements of the CPI.²⁶ Fortunately for Creel, though, he found a solution to this problem almost immediately. Creel described how a young man named Donald M. Ryerson seized him by the lapel in a "death-grip" and asked permission to form a national organization of volunteer speakers for the war cause.²⁷ Ryerson had experimented with this idea in his hometown of Chicago with promising results, which enabled him to convince Creel to endorse his organization even in the chaos of the early days of the CPI.

The Four Minute Men were officially recognized on June 16, 1917, at which time Ryerson relocated his headquarters to Washington and began to spread the organization nationally. It caught on like wildfire – by the first Liberty Loan campaign the

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Alfred E. Cornebise, *War as Advertised: The Four Minute Men and America's Crusade, 1917-1918* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984), 2.

²⁷ Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 84.

Four Minute Men had enrolled 1,500 volunteers, and by the end of the war the organization's ranks had swelled to 75,000, despite the job being unpaid and uncompensated.²⁸ Using the model that Ryerson had built in Chicago, it was agreed that the Four Minute Men would primarily give speeches during movie intermissions in theatres across the country. Because of their limited time slot, the volunteers were instructed to use concise, powerful language, to focus on a single topic, to avoid politically controversial topics, and, above all, to speak for precisely four minutes.²⁹ Ryerson and Creel also forbid speakers from pre-writing their speeches, fearing that this would drain the orations of spontaneity and excitement. At the same time, the local directors of the spreading organization, who were responsible for recruiting and vetting volunteers, were instructed to avoid professional orators, who Ryerson and Creel feared would tend toward unnecessary embellishment. Instead, local directors were told to seek out young professionals.³⁰

Despite his enthusiasm, Creel recognized that "it was a delicate and dangerous business to turn loose on the country an army of speakers impossible of exact control and yet vested in large degree with the authority of the government."³¹ Therefore, in order to exercise some direction over the speakers, Four Minute Men headquarters distributed bulletins to all chapters. These bulletins, forty-nine of which were produced from May 1917 to December 1918, contained each campaign's required topics of focus, sample speeches, and various pieces of advise and guidance.³²

So popular were the speakers that the organization soon expanded beyond the movie halls and out into the churches,

²⁸ Cornebise, *War as Advertised*, 7, 12.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

³¹ Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 84-85.

³² Cornebise, *War as Advertised*, 15.

synagogues, lodges, labor unions, logging camps, mines, and even Indian reservations of America.³³ One speaker, R.B. Tappan from Alameda, California gave his speeches on trains, street-cars, and ferries. To catch the morning rush he boarded the trains going from Alameda to the San Francisco ferries at 5:20 am and spoke until 8:20, and in the afternoon he spoke on street-cars coming from Oakland. Meanwhile, Four Minute Men in Alaska traveled by dog-sled, and speakers were active in Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa.³⁴ The volunteers were drawn largely from the professional class, but within this class the Four Minute Men was a socially diverse organization. For instance, the Memphis, TN chapter included an editor, brokers, lawyers, insurance agents, manufacturers, a professor, a reporter, an auditor, a druggist, ministers, a bishop, a rabbi, and a priest.

Like the other campaigns of the Creel Committee, the Four Minute Men demonstrated a preference for what they saw as “facts.” This was emphasized in the bulletins and in the *Four Minute Men News*, the newspaper of the organization. The latter, for instance, reminded the volunteers that “at no time should our audiences be led to feel that the Government speakers appear before them to implant thoughts skillfully designed to create some ‘desired impression.’ The public should realize rather that the Government sends its representative to state indisputable facts.”³⁵ Furthermore, the bulletins instructed the Four Minute Men to abstain from chauvinistic condemnations of the enemy, as this was likely only to appeal to those Americans who needed no convincing of the righteousness of the cause. Nevertheless, as historian Alfred Cornebise insightfully concludes, the repeated

³³ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

³⁵ *Four Minute Men News*, ed. C, as quoted in Cornebise, *War as Advertised*, 39.

calls for conservative language in the bulletins and the *News* reveal that jingoism was somewhat of a problem in the organization.³⁶

The Four Minute Men employed their fact based and inspirational oratory on an impressive number of topics, ranging from the draft, to fire safety, and to responsible food rationing. They performed some of their most impressive work, however, in the Liberty Loan campaigns. Continuing the theme of linking the home and war fronts, the rhetoric in these campaigns brought the war and its possible consequences home to American citizens. For example, one bulletin prophesied that “either we shall walk down the Kaiser’s streets or his soldiers will goose-step along Pennsylvania Avenue and sign the Treaty of Peace under the dome of our capitol in Washington, or in the same room where Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.”³⁷ This focus on the nation’s cultural symbols was at once a reminder of America’s magnificence and of the grave threat that the Germans supposedly posed to it. Moreover, it should be noted that such imagery of American soldiers marching through the streets of Berlin clashed with Wilson’s earlier calls for a peace without victory, and demonstrates that the Four Minute Men were quite willing to appeal to passion and fear in soliciting Liberty Loans, despite their claims to stick to the facts.

To compliment the tactic of bringing the war home, the Four Minute Men also brought home to the war. One speaker reportedly appealed to the conscience of his audiences by beginning his speeches with phrases like, “But – let me see, it will soon be 10 o’clock here – 3 a.m. in France. Three a.m. – the usual hour, so I’m told, that the Germans start their artillery fire.”³⁸ Through such tactics the American people were reminded subtly or

³⁶ Cornebise, *War as Advertised*, 40.

³⁷ Bulletin No. L.L. 2, as quoted in Cornebise, *War as Advertise*, 67.

³⁸ Cornebise, *War as Advertised*, 80.

directly that the supporting the war at home could save American lives in France.³⁹

Ultimately, the Four Minute Men was a phenomenal success for the U.S. government's campaign on public opinion. The 75,000 speakers had given more than 7,555,190 speeches in roughly a year and a half.⁴⁰ They had canvassed every nook and cranny of the country from remote lumber camps in Washington State to the theatres of New York and Chicago, inspiring spin-off campaigns such as the Junior Four Minute Men in the nation's schools. Moreover, as is always preferred in any government venture, the Four Minute Men had cost almost nothing. Creel reported that because the Four Minute Men was entirely a volunteer organization, the government spent a mere \$101,555.10 on the organization. This averaged out to just over one cent per speech – a remarkable achievement by any standard. Finally, it is vital to understand that the Four Minute Men owe their success, as well as their remarkably minimal operating costs, to the enthusiasm of the American citizenry. The zeal displayed by ordinary civilians in bringing the “gospel of Americanism” to every corner of the country, often under the guise of questionable “fact,” made the American citizenry itself a partner in the manufacturing of public opinion.

The Four Minute Men were only one component of the immense propaganda machine built by Creel and his colleagues, but even this powerful engine of public opinion constituted only half of the government's effort to manipulate the American people. It was counterpart to the government's equally vigorous war against dissent. These battles were waged on America's streets, in the offices of local and state governments, and in courthouses across the nation. In defining what Americans were forbidden to say and write about the war, this campaign especially targeted

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁰ Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 85.

political radicals and the recently immigrated. And although it was in some ways less centralized than the propaganda campaign of the CPI, the war against dissent was waged with the encouragement and often the guidance of the federal government.

To understand the government's campaign against dissent it is necessary for us to begin our inquiry before America's entry into the war. On October 11, 1915 President Wilson gave an address before the Daughters of the American Revolution on the topics of patriotism and American identity. The nation was experiencing the final undulations of a massive wave of European immigration to its shores, and not surprisingly this had an effect on the discussion of patriotism in America. Unlike some of his more suspicious compatriots, President Wilson celebrated these millions of immigrants, declaring that these "strangers came to remind us of what we had promised ourselves and through ourselves had promised mankind."⁴¹ True, admitted President Wilson, these immigrants needed to be taught what it meant to be American, but Wilson rejoiced that "the wonder and beauty of it all has been that the infection has been so generously easy."⁴² Of course, such were not the sentiments of many Americans toward these seemingly countless immigrants. Wilson, however, stated that rumors of disloyal and subversive immigrants were simply that – rumors. In reality he believed that the number of disloyal immigrants was not large. Furthermore, Wilson informed his audience that the few disloyal immigrants among the lot could be brought into line through the "atmospheric effects" of public opinion.⁴³

Nevertheless, two years later, on April 2, 1917, Wilson stood before Congress with a message of a quite different tenor.

⁴¹ Woodrow Wilson, "Address of President Wilson to the Daughters of the American Revolution, Washington D.C., October 11, 1915," *The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library*, <http://wwl2.dataformat.com/HTML/30503.htm>.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

The occasion was Wilson's war message, and fittingly he condemned the trespasses of the Imperial German Government in fiery rhetoric. But Wilson did not reserve his scathing remarks for the overseas enemy alone. The threat to American liberty, declared the president, lay not only in the machinations of the German army and U-boat fleet, but in the streets, factories, and offices of the American homeland. It was here that "from the very outset of the present war [Germany] has filled our unsuspecting communities and even our offices of government with spies and set criminal intrigues everywhere afoot."⁴⁴ Moreover, speaking directly to German-American immigrants, Wilson maintained that only a small minority would be disloyal, but it was clear that the president no longer saw public opinion to be an effective method of combating sedition. Instead, Wilson warned that "if there should be disloyalty, it will be dealt with with a firm hand of stern oppression."⁴⁵ This speech points to Wilson's desire to immediately bring the war home to Americans, to make it present to them all, through the specter of foreign espionage.

Such warnings and threats recurred throughout the government's campaign to quell dissent, as is apparent in another speech made by Wilson on Flag Day, June 14, 1917. After quickly summarizing the ways in which Germany had forced the United States into war, Wilson launched into a tirade against German spies which was longer and more widely accusatory than the one he had given in his war address. The president then took his accusations one step further, saying of the "agents and dupes" that "they have learned discretion. They keep within the law. It is opinion they utter now, not sedition."⁴⁶ Thus, Wilson accused of disloyalty those who "declare this is a foreign war which can touch

⁴⁴ Wilson, "War Message."

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Woodrow Wilson, "Flag Day Address, 14 June 1917," *The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library*, <http://ww12.dataformat.com/HTML/30696.htm>.

America with no danger,” or who “appeal to our ancient tradition of isolation in the politics of nations.”⁴⁷ Since before the outbreak of the war in 1914 these common sentiments had been held by many Americans who opposed entry into the conflict, but now their president was declaring such beliefs to be traitorous and of the type held by “friends and partisans of the German Government.”⁴⁸ In effect, Wilson was equating undesirable “opinion” with “sedition.” The very next day Congress passed a law in an attempt to criminalize such sentiments.

The Espionage Act, passed on June 15, 1917, was the federal government’s attempt to combat what it saw to be problem of disloyalty among the American populace. It is title I, section 3 that we are most concerned with here as this section makes punishable by fine and imprisonment “false reports or false statements [made] with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces,” as well as “caus[ing] insubordination, disloyalty, [or] mutiny,” or “willfully obstruct[ing] the recruiting or enlistment service of the United States.”⁴⁹ Over 2,000 Americans were prosecuted under the Espionage Act from its enactment until 1921, and over 1,000 of them were convicted.⁵⁰ Even so, the government never succeeded in locating and convicting a single German spy during the war.⁵¹

Nevertheless, Congress felt that even the Espionage Act was not stringent enough to stamp out dissent and disloyalty, and so the Sedition Act was passed on May 16, 1918. Actually an amendment to the aforementioned title I, section 3 rather than a separate act, the Sedition Act greatly increased the federal

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ “The Espionage Act,” *Firstworldwar.com*, <http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/espionageact.htm>.

⁵⁰ Harry N. Scheiber, *The Wilson Administration and Civil liberties 1917-1921* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 63.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

government's powers of prosecution under the Espionage Act. This amendment made it illegal to "willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States, or the Constitution of the United States, or the military or naval forces."⁵² Thus, the Sedition Act demonstrated the full extent of the federal government's willingness to stamp out dissent in the populace, making it the archetypal example of the government's campaign of restrictive suppression.

These two acts are often held as the worst examples of the government's violation of civil rights during the First World War. While this is not a misguided characterization, it is important to recognize that they were only two components, albeit central ones, in a matrix of suppression. To better understand the nature and extent of this suppression, then, we must examine two other companion acts to the Espionage and Sedition Acts.

The first was the Proclamation Regarding Alien Enemies, which Wilson issued on the day that the United States declared war on Germany. The proclamation forbid enemy aliens from carrying or storing munitions and restricted their freedom of movement, so that they were disallowed from entering the area of any military post, arsenal, shop, or warehouse. Furthermore, they were forbidden to publish any attack upon the government, armed forces, or policies of the U.S., to commit hostile acts toward the U.S., or to assist its enemies. The proclamation was enforceable by summary arrest and was accompanied by an executive order making it the duty of the Attorney General to carry out the proclamation. The Justice Department registered enemy aliens and arrested 6,300 of them under the authority of this and other

⁵² "Sedition Act," *The World War I Document Archive*, http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_U.S._Sedition_Act.

executive orders. Of those arrested, the military subsequently interred twenty-three hundred.⁵³

The government's campaign against what it deemed to be suspicious enemy aliens was further empowered by the passage of the Trading-With-The-Enemy Act on October 6, 1917. This act mandated that foreign language newspapers submit full translations of each issue to the Post Office before printing, where they were reviewed by Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson and his staff. Burleson used this act and the Espionage Act to attack the left-wing and foreign press. The Trading-With-The-Enemy Act put an untenable financial burden on the small foreign language papers, forcing almost all of the German-language papers to either remain silent on the war or to adopt a pro-government line.⁵⁴ Even more damaging, the Trading-With-The-Enemy Act, as well as the Espionage and Sedition Acts, effectively gave Burleson the power to shut down any papers he chose. Once he had prevented a single issue of a paper from being printed according to one of the three acts, Burleson often then denied second-class mailing privileges to the publication. His reasoning was that the paper in question had skipped an issue and was therefore no longer a periodical.⁵⁵ By September 1918, Burleson had denied mailing privileges to twenty-two socialist papers in this manner and had threatened the *New Republic* with the same fate if it printed advertisements for the ACLU.⁵⁶ Thus, in conjunction with the Proclamation Regarding Alien Enemies, the Trading-With-The-Enemy act caused serious infringement on the constitutional rights of immigrants and political minorities.

The effects of these acts on the civil liberties of Americans becomes clearer when examining the prosecution of justice in the

⁵³ Scheiber, *The Wilson Administration*, 14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

courts. Perhaps the most famous of all the cases was *Schenck v. United States*. This case involved a member of a socialist organization who was charged with “causing and attempting to cause insubordination...and to obstruct the recruiting and enlistment service of the United States.”⁵⁷ Schenck had distributed leaflets encouraging men to dodge the draft, which the Supreme Court found to be in violation of the Espionage Act. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who wrote the Court’s decision, admitted that “in many places and in ordinary times, the defendants, in saying all that was said in the circular, would have been within their constitutional rights.” Nevertheless, Holmes concluded that “when a nation is at war, many things that might be said in time of peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight, and that no Court could regard them as protected by any constitutional right.”⁵⁸ Such a denial of the basic, First Amendment rights of American citizens demonstrates that the federal government viewed the suppression of non-conformist views and dissent during wartime to be more valuable than the preservation of civil liberties. Thus, the casualties of the war were social and political, just as much as they were human and material.

It is difficult to determine exactly how supportive President Wilson was of these and other violations of civil liberties. Of course, the president’s rhetoric immediately before and during the war certainly encouraged the suppression of aliens and political minorities, and the president did sign the Espionage, Sedition, and Trading-With-The-Enemy Acts, among others, into law. Nevertheless, Wilson also repeated throughout the war his desire to preserve the freedoms of American citizens. In a letter to renowned

⁵⁷ *Schenck v. United States*, 249 U.S. 47, 49 (1919), http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0249_0047_ZS.htm
1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

journalist Arthur Brisbane, who had apparently expressed concern with the passage of the Espionage Act, President Wilson wrote:

I can imagine no greater disservice to the country than to establish a system of censorship that would deny to the people of a free republic like our own their indisputable right to criticize their own public officials. While exercising the great powers of the office I hold, I would regret in a crisis like the one through which we are now passing to lose the benefit of patriotic and intelligent criticism.⁵⁹

Wilson meant to reassure Brisbane that the constitutional rights of Americans would be protected even in the “crisis,” but that was precisely *not* the case. How then, do we account for this apparent contradiction?

One likely possibility is that Wilson was not fully cognizant, at least at the time, of the violations of civil liberty that were taking place across the country. As we shall see, there were sometimes striking regional differences in the execution of federal laws and proclamations, which suggests that local officials interpreted the law in different ways. It would have been impossible for Wilson to keep track of these many variations, as he was more concerned with winning the war. Sadly, the historical evidence shows that Wilson, perhaps because his focus was elsewhere, was eager to trust subordinates like Burleson and Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory to a fault. In fact, Wilson rarely questioned Burleson or Gregory, and when he did it was merely to offer suggestions, to which the President hardly ever held his subordinates accountable.⁶⁰

The evidence also reveals that Wilson and others in the government (such as Justice Holmes) had a different understanding

⁵⁹ Woodrow Wilson, “Letter to Arthur Brisbane, 25 April 1917,” *The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library*, <http://wwl2.dataformat.com/HTML/32335.htm>.

⁶⁰ William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals 1903-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 128.

of constitutional rights in times of war. They were engaged in the great dilemma of all democracies at war: namely, what balance should be struck between ensuring rights and prosecuting the war as best as possible? It is clear that Wilson and his associates erred in favor of the war effort. The question remains, however, if such violations of constitutional rights were *necessary*. That is for Americans in the present to judge, and in hindsight it is difficult to justify many of the most egregious offenses committed by Wilson and his government.

These questions and their answers will become clearer by examining a number of regional cases of suppression. The Industrial Workers of the World were a primary target of both the federal and local governments during the war. The Wobblies, as they were known, were staunchly pacifist in the years immediately prior to America's entry into the war. Once war had been declared they reaffirmed their pacifism, but became less vocal about their beliefs, fearing suppression by the government. As such, the IWW did not order its members to resist the draft, and in some areas Wobbly registration in the draft was as high as ninety-five percent.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the Wobblies were unable to distance themselves from their pre-war radicalism. Matters were not helped by the extreme wording of their constitution, the preamble of which states:

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 88-90.

the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.⁶²

Such radical rhetoric demonized the Wobblies in the eyes of many government officials, who wished to keep the favor of local businesses and to guard war production from damaging strikes.

When this suspicion met with a resurgence of Wobbly organized strikes in 1915 and 1916, the situation was ripe for conflict. These strikes, which continued into the war, were held largely on Middle Western farms, in Arizona copper factories, in the Minnesota iron range, and in the lumber camps of the Northwest.⁶³ Despite the threat to production that strikes posed, the Wilson administration showed itself willing to negotiate with most strikers. In regards to IWW strikes, however, the administration was much less forgiving, due to the radicalism of the Wobblies.⁶⁴ Moreover, because officials overestimated the membership of foreigners in the IWW, the fear of radicalism was compounded with the general nativism that was all too prevalent at the time.⁶⁵

Thus, the federal government turned a blind eye when local officials and business leaders unconstitutionally called in federal troops against the overwhelmingly peaceful strikers in the Northwest lumber camps. During the summer of 1917, the military arrested strikers *in anticipation* of illegal activity and detained without the right of *habeas corpus*.⁶⁶ These arrests were made without warrants and were often based off of reports written by the private detectives of the businesses involved in the strikes. Even more astonishingly, when suppressing striking mine workers, the army was housed in barracks *constructed by the mines* for military

⁶² *Preamble and Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World*, 1914, <http://www.workerseducation.org/crutch/constitutions.html>.

⁶³ Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*, 91-97.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

use.⁶⁷ By the end of the summer, the U.S. army was looking more like the mercenary force of business interests than part of a military meant to make the world “safe for democracy.”

There were also striking regional differences in the suppression of the IWW. Wobbly organizing in the Tulsa, Oklahoma and Kansas City, Kansas oil fields, which were located in two adjacent federal attorney districts, is a prime example of this. In Tulsa, the federal attorney, W. P. McGinnis, refused the Oil companies’ requests to imprison the Wobblies preemptively, because the companies could not prove the Wobblies had violated federal law. In Kansas, however, attorney Fred Robertson arrested about 100 Wobblies and seized supplies, documents, and literature before the IWW had even held a strike, “as a preventative matter to prevent possible violence in the oil region in southern Kansas.”⁶⁸ Thirty-five Wobblies were held for trial in Robertson’s district, although they waited two years in the decrepit Sedgwick County Jail before being tried. Thus, the decentralization of federal authority in carrying out the suppression acts often resulted in differing legal standards and practices even in adjacent districts, not to mention across the nation.

Government suppression of dissent was further complicated by the suspicions held by many American civilians toward the specter of German espionage and foreigners in general. As America entered the Great War, the already widespread fear of German espionage was heightened by the woeful state of the country’s own intelligence capabilities. In April 1917 Army Intelligence consisted of merely two officers, and Naval Intelligence employed no counter-espionage officers. Once war had been declared and while the military scrambled to augment its meager intelligence staff, Attorney General Gregory called for

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁶⁸ Fred Robertson to the Attorney General, December 11, 1917, Department of Justice File 196609-4, as quoted in Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*, 131.

every loyal American to be a “volunteer detective.”⁶⁹ In conjunction with this, district attorneys were instructed to entertain even informal and confidential complaints. The result was that by May 1917, 1,000 complaints were arriving at the Justice Department each day, and a year later this had increased to 1,500.⁷⁰ Gregory reported that most of these complaints were worthless and were not acted upon. Nevertheless, this displays the remarkable eagerness of Americans to monitor and report on each other during the war.

This spirit of voluntary detecting saw its culmination in the American Protective League, which was founded in the first months of the war, like the Four Minute Men, by a group of businessmen in Chicago. One member, Albert M. Briggs, offered to expand the organization nationally and Attorney General Gregory accepted, intending to utilize the APL for counter-German espionage. After presidential and cabinet approval, the APL became an official auxiliary to the Justice Department and Briggs was informed to begin recruiting. It was slow going initially, but as the war kicked into gear the APL began to receive numerous volunteers. By war’s end, there were 350,000 leaguers organized into 1,400 local units across the country. In fact, by January 1918, every federal attorney had an APL local unit at his service.⁷¹ Probably to increase their self-image as official Justice Department auxiliaries, each of these leaguers received code numbers and badges and swore an oath of loyalty and secrecy.

Nevertheless, by as early as the end of 1917 it had become evident that there were few German spies operating in the United States. Still hoping to find a use for the League, Gregory instructed the APL to focus on more mundane tasks such as rationing drives,

⁶⁹ Harold Melvin Hyman, *To Try Men’s Souls: Loyalty Tests in American History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 271.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 273.

as well as vice control and investigating the loyalty of members of the armed forces and civil service. Many local chapters, however, especially those most isolated from central leadership, took it into their hands to police the morality of their communities and to conduct investigations under the Espionage and Sedition Acts, despite Gregory's repeated orders to the contrary.⁷² Ironically, it was the voluntary nature of the APL which made it sometimes heedless of orders from the Justice Department. State directors were supposed to have the power to punish and suspend members, but because leaguers were financially autonomous volunteers, these powers were largely illusory, making local units and members relatively independent. In the worst cases this unaccountability led to gross abuses of constitutional rights. There were, for example, thousands of instances of APL members arresting citizens, many of which arrests were not reported until after the war. Such was the fate of one man who had been honorably discharged, but was "arrested" by the APL for desertion and held in "custody" for ten days before finally convincing his captors of his innocence. The APL *did not* have the authority to arrest citizens, but there is no evidence that any leaguers were ever punished for such illegal conduct.⁷³

The American Protective League and its counterpart in the public relations sphere, the Four Minute Men, each represented the furthest extents of their respective government campaigns. The APL took Wilson's rhetoric of distrust and suppression to the extreme, and likely further than Wilson had desired, while the Four Minute Men embodied Creel's ceaseless energy and his devotion to Wilson and the war. Thus, the government's prescriptive campaign to garner public support and its restrictive campaign

⁷² *Ibid.*, 276.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 281.

against dissent enjoyed substantial public approval and participation. Americans may not be comfortable with what organizations like the APL and the Four Minute Men suggest about our national character. What is perhaps even more concerning, though, is that these campaigns for public opinion are largely forgotten, or at least ignored in our national consciousness. When Americans think of the greatest propaganda campaigns of the twentieth century, they invariably turn to Hitler's Germany and Stalin's USSR, but we must all remember that Creel came before Goebbels, and that propaganda is as American as apple pie.

Designing American Ascendancy: Operation TORCH, 1942

Jane Barrilleaux

Less than a month before D-Day for Operation TORCH, the Allied invasion of North Africa, General Dwight D. Eisenhower asked his staff: “Is it the object of policy (1) to have an independent French government established in North Africa in the place of the Vichy government and (2) to disrupt the Vichy government?”¹ This uncertainty expressed by the Commander in Chief of the invasion clearly illuminates the tension between the different political and military agendas at play in Operation TORCH. The North African invasion was itself a military operation with primarily political objections, and the political agenda of President Franklin D. Roosevelt trumped any sense of military purpose. Rather, Roosevelt used TORCH as an assured, victorious entry into World War II. Operation TORCH marks the beginning of American predominance in World War II and Anglo-American relations that would last the rest of the century, and even into present day. TORCH is much more important than just the invasion of North Africa, in ways that go beyond World War II itself. This operation changed the political landscape of the war and the world because TORCH was the vehicle with which the United States asserted itself over Britain by using France to place itself in the top position of global politics.

¹ Anthony Verrier, *Assassination in Algiers: Churchill, Roosevelt, de Gaulle, and the Murder of Admiral Darlan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 90.

In May 1940, Germany invaded France so rapidly and with such unmitigated strength that the French Government was unable to properly resist the invading forces. When the failed Battle of the Somme ended after just five days of fighting, the French Government considered obtaining a separate peace from Germany, but first contacted its Allies in Britain and the neutral U.S. French President Paul Reynaud telegraphed Roosevelt asking for assurances: “France can continue the struggle only if American intervention reverses the situation by making an Allied victory certain...if you cannot give to France in the hours to come the certainty that the United States will come into the war within a very short time, the fate of the world will change.”² Reynaud’s ending claim proved true: the fate of the world and the war changed with the fall of France in June 1940. Their relationship with France dictated how the war unfolded on the western front for the Allies. There was no way, however, for Roosevelt or Churchill to truly anticipate just what the repercussions of this event would mean. Churchill warned him that the French would keep their word, writing that “the British Ambassador in Bordeaux tells me that if your reply does not contain the assurance asked for, the French will very quickly ask for an armistice.”³ Threat of French capitulation or not, Roosevelt was incapable of bringing the U.S. into the war at that point, but he did try to make it clear that the American Government would provide whatever support possible short of actually entering the war to Britain and any other power that resisted Germany. Unable to provide the French the assurance

² “The President of the French Council of Ministers (Reynaud) to President Roosevelt, June 14, 1940,” *Documents Related to World War II – Mount Holyoke College*, accessed September 20, 2011, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/reynaud2.htm>.

³ Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langely, and Manfred Jonas, eds., *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1975), 106.

Reynaud asked for, Secretary of State Cordell Hull made it clear to the French Government that should the French “permit the French fleet to be surrendered to Germany, the French Government will permanently lose the friendship and good-will of the Government of the United States.”⁴ Even at France’s most vulnerable moment, Roosevelt was primarily concerned with protecting American interests.

Less than one month after Germany attacked, the French Government signed an armistice in June. The armistice separated France into two zones: the Occupied North and Unoccupied South. Named for the spa town in the unoccupied zone it was moved to, the Vichy Government refused to flee to North Africa and continue fighting alongside the Allies. Although the Vichy Government remained adamant that they would not surrender their fleet or fight alongside Germany, Nazi sympathizers within the government almost immediately began to acquiesce to German demands, most famously the unprovoked implementation of Nazi Jewish laws in occupied France by French officials.

The Franco-German armistice had serious repercussions for France’s relations with the Allies. The agreement, which exposed France’s willingness to give up the fight, did not grant Vichy any favor in the eyes of Britain and the United States. After the armistice, Churchill and French President Marshal Pétain “descended into mutual recrimination.” Churchill publicly denounced the Franco-German armistice, and Pétain replied just as publicly that “it was not Churchill’s business to judge the interests or honour of France.” In Churchill’s view, the French Government was now ruled by Germany, and its resources could be used against her former ally. Trust and basic communication broke

⁴ “The Secretary of State to the Ambassador Near the French Government at Bordeaux (Biddle) on the Status of the French Fleet, 17 June 1940,” *Documents Related to World War II – Mount Holyoke College*, accessed September 20, 2011, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/hull11.htm>.

down between Vichy and London.⁵ The diplomatic situation with the Vichy Government was a constant source of unease for the Allies.

This unease was further compounded by the presence of General Charles de Gaulle. After the French Government signed the armistice and moved to Vichy, General Charles de Gaulle fled to London to continue the war effort abroad. He created the Free French and claimed to represent France in exile while denying the authority of the Vichy Government. Churchill supported de Gaulle as a much-needed alternative to Vichy, but Roosevelt did not view de Gaulle's new role positively. Roosevelt expressed a personal dislike for de Gaulle, and his attempts to gain official recognition from the Allies had disastrous consequences on their relations. The incident that cemented Roosevelt's distrust of de Gaulle was the Free French invasion of St. Pierre et Miquelon, islands off the coast of Canada that belonged to France. After being explicitly told to turn around and cease the operation, de Gaulle openly defied Roosevelt and "liberated" the islands on Christmas 1941. This convinced Roosevelt that de Gaulle was not to be trusted or officially recognized.

In Roosevelt's estimation, surrender separated France and her government from the Allies, because the armistice had led to the emergence of "two political entities, each claiming to represent France to the exclusion of the other" – de Gaulle's Free French and Pétain's Vichy Government.⁶ This separation put Roosevelt in a difficult position at times, for he chose to establish relations with both Vichy and de Gaulle, but refused to recognize the ultimate authority of either one. Roosevelt and Churchill had to maintain some working balance between the increasingly collaborationist

⁵ Ian Ousby. *Occupation: The Ordeal of France, 1940-1944* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 72, 74.

⁶ Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 41, 48.

Vichy Government and de Gaulle. Thus Roosevelt placed the United States right in the middle of the French fight for legitimacy before America was even officially engaged in the war.

The United States exercised some diplomatic influence over the Vichy Government. Vichy wanted to maintain good relations with the still neutral U. S. Government, because the United States was a useful source of supply for Vichy. Diplomatic recognition by the United States was a precious reinforcement to Vichy's claim to legitimacy, especially with the growing presence of de Gaulle in London. American recognition, it was believed, gave the Vichy regime a mark of respectability.

Roosevelt felt there was no reason to withdraw diplomatic recognition from Vichy because Pétain's government had the support of an elected national assembly. Several other countries, including the Soviet Union and Canada, were represented at Vichy by ambassadors, and, even though Britain had severed ties with Vichy, Churchill used his other embassies and allies to stay in touch with Vichy. While still a neutral power, the U.S. had maintained diplomatic relations with France, and Roosevelt decided to continue those relations with Vichy. It was the view of the American government that "nothing but possible good could come from the preservation of friendly relations between the two governments."⁷ However, in the French territories that had rallied around the Free French, America would deal with de Gaulle, and in the territories that remained loyal to Pétain, with Vichy.

By pursuing this dual policy, Roosevelt was implying that "neither Pétain nor de Gaulle embodied French legitimacy and that therefore neither had the right to speak for France."⁸ He decided to maintain diplomatic relations with Vichy while dealing with de

⁷ Memo by Secretary of State (Hull), 27 June 1940 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1940*, vol. II: *Europe* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1957), 377.

⁸ Rossi, 50-51.

Gaule when necessary. While Churchill realized that the President's diplomatic ties to Vichy could serve as an asset to the Allied cause, the Prime Minister also recognized that Roosevelt's dual policy with Vichy and de Gaulle would undoubtedly cause problems.

The entrance of the U.S. into the war immediately opened the possibility of a much-needed second front in Europe. Although the U.S. had its own battle to fight in the Pacific theater against Japan, Roosevelt also committed the American army and navy to the European theater alongside Britain. This may have been compounded by Roosevelt's arguably racist sentiments towards Japan and the war in the Pacific, as evident by the eventual internment of Japanese citizens in the U.S. By early 1942, Stalin's demands for a second front were a top priority of the Allied war effort. At the Second Washington Conference in June 1942, Churchill and Roosevelt met to form a plan of action for the remainder of 1942 and into 1943.⁹ At the Conference, it became clear that Operation CATAPULT, the initial plan for an invasion of Western Europe that year, could not be launched successfully. This was due to a lack of manpower and material to effectively invade France and continue into Germany. Operation GYMNAST, an invasion of French North Africa that was eventually renamed as TORCH, was first proposed by as an alternative to CATAPULT. Within a month Churchill wrote to Roosevelt expressing his support of the operation, claiming: "I am sure myself that Gymnast is by far the best chance for effective relief to the Russian front in 1942. This has all along been in harmony with your ideas. In fact it is your commanding idea. Here is the true second front of 1942."¹⁰ The American delegation and advisors were against the operation, but the President saw an opportunity to assert himself and America into the forefront of Allied operations. Roosevelt agreed to the

⁹ Loewenheim et al., 221.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 222.

North Africa invasion, with the condition that it be a mainly American mission. So the TORCH was lit.

Planning for Operation TORCH began in earnest by early August, when General Dwight D. Eisenhower was named Commander in Chief of the invasion.¹¹ The large-scale amphibious invasion marked the first American-led operation of the war and was designed with very specific considerations. The aim was to come ashore during simultaneous landings in ports along the northern shore of Africa. The three designated targets were Oran, Algiers, and Casablanca. The motivation behind invading North Africa was due to Roosevelt's political considerations that the French fleet in the hands of Germany posed a threat to the United States. More importantly, Roosevelt could use North Africa as a political bridgehead from which to launch the American war effort in the west.

The proposed military strategy behind TORCH was that it would prevent Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's German army in Egypt from further progressing through North Africa. The landing in Casablanca was necessary to prevent Hitler from using neutral Spain to close the Straits of Gibraltar and trap the Allied troops in the Mediterranean and therefore keep a supply line to the Atlantic open. Perhaps the most key point of the landings, however, was Algiers. It was the epicenter of the France's empire in North Africa, and for Eisenhower, Algiers was the key to the operation because it served as the springboard for the drive into Tunisia. Occupying Tunisia was of the utmost importance to secure North Africa and lead the drive to meet Rommel's army to prevent Germany from advancing. Churchill secured Stalin's support of TORCH by asserting that if "North Africa were won this year [they] could make a deadly attack upon Hitler next year."¹² With

¹¹ *Ibid*, 232.

¹² Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. IV: *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 482.

the approval of all three Allies, planning for TORCH went into full effect.

At Roosevelt's insistence, TORCH was organized and executed as an American operation. The President believed an initial American landing would lead to only a token resistance from the French, but there was an underlying reason as well. Roosevelt was anxious about public impatience with the American involvement in the war effort so far and wanted an important U.S. military operation before the congressional midterm elections.¹³ A successful mission was needed to help secure the American public's faith in the war, Roosevelt, and his party. Ultimately the operation had to be pushed back until after the elections due to weather conditions.

Roosevelt did believe that his government's diplomatic ties to the French would have a positive effect for the invading armies. This was partially because of Ambassador to Vichy Admiral Leahy's personal observations and reports from American intelligence that the French army would not resist a large-scale American invasion. Roosevelt wanted an exclusively American ground force, while Britain would support the American troops with naval, transport, and air units. General Montgomery's Eighth Army would then advance into French North Africa from the east after the American landing. Roosevelt cabled to Churchill that he was

Reasonably sure a simultaneous landing by British and Americans would result in full resistance by all French in Africa whereas an initial American landing without British ground forces offers a real chance that there would be no French resistance or only a token resistance.¹⁴

¹³ Loewenheim et al., 244.

¹⁴ Loewenheim et al., 244.

Roosevelt reasoned that the French would be hostile to their onetime ally Britain because of the events that had transpired at Mers-el Kebir and Dakar.

In July 1940, British warships attempted to prevent French ships from falling under Germany control at Mers el-Kebir, near Oran. When the French did not accept their ultimatum, the British ships opened fire, killing 1,200 French sailors in five minutes.¹⁵ The bloodshed between the two allies was a breaking point, and Vichy formally severed diplomatic ties with Britain after the attack, resulting in an intense Anglophobia throughout the nation. This displeasure was further compounded by the battle at Dakar in September of that same year. De Gaulle's Free French forces led a failed attack on Dakar, a port in French Senegal, with the aim of installing de Gaulle and a provisional government there. The British sponsored this attack, and Vichy regarded Dakar as a further act of betrayal. Roosevelt used these past events to justify the American mission, and although Churchill did not share Roosevelt's belief that Vichy's feelings towards Britain and America would really make the difference between fighting and submission, he went along with the process anyway.

Beyond the military planning for TORCH, there was a much larger issue of political strategy at play. Churchill was correct when he said TORCH was "primarily political in its foundations."¹⁶ The most pressing question was how the Vichy Government would interpret the invasion. Roosevelt seemed to believe that there would be a token resistance at best, and certainly never thought that Vichy would declare war on either the U.S. or Britain. This gross overestimation of Vichy-American relations served as a serious detriment once Allied troops arrived on North Africa soil. The President clearly expected that Vichy would not

¹⁵ Rick Atkinson, *The Liberation Trilogy*, vol. 1: *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Owl Books, 2002), 26-27.

¹⁶ Loewenheim et al, 240.

forfeit the friendship of the United States. Roosevelt planned to use his relationship with Vichy to his benefit in North Africa. There was immense pressure on the operation, and Army Chief of Staff George Marshall insisted: “the TORCH landings must succeed...because failure in the first big American offensive of the war would ‘only bring ridicule and loss of confidence.’”¹⁷ Perhaps Roosevelt and his advisors thought that American relations with Vichy made North Africa an easy target of sorts: that America had enough political clout to possibly prevent fighting altogether. This over confidence was assumed into the most basic foundation of TORCH, and Roosevelt’s need to open a second front with an American operation meant that the already fragile Vichy-American ties would be exploited for his political gain and American predominance. In fact, the actual goals of TORCH were not even understood by those responsible for carrying out the operation. Roosevelt wanted to take the lead in the war, yet in a very Machiavellian manner exploited his Vichy ties to insure his position.

Charles de Gaulle further complicated the operation. Just as Roosevelt was adamant about excluding British soldiers from TORCH, the President used the operation to express his disillusionment with de Gaulle. As much as Roosevelt did not want to include de Gaulle in the invasion for purely personal reasons, political calculation justified his decision. Anti-Gaullist feelings in North Africa, which had openly declared itself loyal to Vichy, cemented the President’s belief that participation of the Free French army in the invasion would serve only to complicate the entire operation. Roosevelt did not want the resentment of Frenchmen fighting Frenchmen to have a negative effect on the overall success of the North African invasion. These expectations ensured that de Gaulle and his Free French movement would be left out of TORCH entirely.

¹⁷ Atkinson, 28.

The President not only decided that de Gaulle's army would not participate in the operation, but he also refused to allow de Gaulle to be informed of the invasion plans. On the eve of the landings, Churchill asked Roosevelt for permission to explain the operation to de Gaulle as a "United States enterprise and a United States secret," effectively placing the blame for the Free French exclusion on Roosevelt and the Americans.¹⁸ However, the President persuaded the Prime Minister not to give de Gaulle any information about TORCH "until subsequent to a successful landing."¹⁹ Churchill did not divulge any information to de Gaulle about the landings until hours after American troops were already ashore and de Gaulle was sitting in Churchill's office, unable to do anything but be outraged and wait, just as Roosevelt intended. Thus Roosevelt demonstrated that he was the chief architect of the Allied war effort, and that he could easily prevent de Gaulle from participating in any operation.

On the morning of November 8, the TORCH landings took place at Algiers, Oran, and Casablanca. The landing troops had no idea what kind of reception they would face from the French, and after months of planning the American organizers still could not say what would happen after TORCH began. Contrary to the expectations of Roosevelt and his Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Vichy French soldiers fought back. Algiers was the first to surrender, at 7:00 PM on November 8. By November 10, Oran had surrendered as well. Almost immediately after the landings began, Pétain contacted President Roosevelt to say:

It is with stupor and grief that I learned during the night of the aggression of your troops against North Africa... I have always declared that we would defend our Empire if it were attacked; you knew that we would defend it against any aggressor

¹⁸ Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. VI: *Finest Hour, 1939-1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), 248.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 251.

whoever he might be. You knew that I would keep my word...France and her honor are at stake. We are attacked. We shall defend ourselves. This is the order I am giving.²⁰

Pétain ordered his troops to resist the invasion to defend what was left of France's honor and meet the American troops with more than the expected token resistance. Thus began the political fall out from Operation TORCH that would further complicate the war's diplomatic landscape.

Admiral Jean Darlan, Commander-in-Chief of all Vichy forces, was in Algiers visiting his ill son on the day of the attack. When he received notification that the invasion had begun, he immediately claimed the right to act in the name of Pétain and the Vichy government. Despite directives to continue fighting, the Admiral ignored the cables and made his own decisions. Darlan was known to change allegiance in support of the most likely victor, and his decision to collaborate with the Allies reflected that. By 6:00 PM he had ordered the French troops to cease-fire and the city of Algiers had surrendered, since the invading force had taken all three target ports. Darlan was effectively under American control by that point, and he met with General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander of the Allied forces, to establish what would come to be known as the Darlan Deal.

Roosevelt and Churchill both realized that dealing with the Admiral was potentially politically dangerous but necessary. While Darlan was considered a villain for his collaborationist activities and attitude, it was through him that the Anglo-American forces would be able to gain quickly administrative control over French North Africa immediately following the invasion. Essentially, Darlan agreed to cooperate fully with the Allies in return for political control over French North African territories. Despite the

²⁰ Memo by Chargé in France (Tuck) to Secretary of State, 8 November 1942 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1942*, vol. II: *Europe* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), 431.

many positives that stemmed from it, the agreement between Darlan and the Allies was met with considerable disapproval in Britain and the United States. Roosevelt justified Eisenhower's negotiation with Darlan by famously citing an old proverb: "My children, it is permitted you in time of grave danger to walk with the devil until you have crossed the bridge."²¹ Luckily for Roosevelt and Eisenhower, Darlan would not long remain a problem. On December 24, a young French monarchist assassinated the admiral in Algiers. Churchill later wrote that Darlan's murder, though unfortunate and criminal, "relieved the Allies of their embarrassment at working with him, and at the same time left them with all the advantages he had been able to bestow during the vital hours of the Allied landings."²²

General Henri Giraud replaced Darlan. Giraud escaped from a Nazi prison camp and lived in unoccupied France before arriving in French North Africa on the day of the TORCH landings. The American president contacted Giraud as an alternative to the establishment of de Gaulle's authority in North Africa. Giraud, the President believed, would be able to rally the French troops and serve as an authority friendly to the Anglo-Americans. Roosevelt's handpicked replacement was indicative of how he viewed the new relationship between the Allies and France after TORCH, especially when he asserted:

We have a military occupation in North Africa...The people of France will settle their own affairs after we have won this war. Until then we can deal with local Frenchmen on a local basis wherever our armies occupy former French territory. And if these local officials won't play ball we will have to replace them.²³

²¹ Loewenheim et al, 282.

²² Churchill, 644.

²³ Loewenheim et al, 305.

It was thought that, since Giraud's political sympathies lay somewhere between Vichy and de Gaulle, more French people would identify with and support him. Roosevelt had originally planned for Giraud to arrive simultaneously with the landings to assume authority over all French interests in North Africa, but the unexpected appearance of Darlan prevented his arrival. While he was a considerably less controversial figure than Darlan, Giraud was not able to use his power to command the French troops in North Africa. Roosevelt and Churchill soon realized that Giraud was not as effective as they had thought he would be on his own. Eisenhower had warned the Combined Chiefs of Staff that Giraud was not "a big enough man to carry the burden of civil government in any way."²⁴ It was soon clear to the Allies that General Giraud was proving to be "every bit as much of a prima donna as General de Gaulle, with none of de Gaulle's qualities of intelligence, acumen, or leadership."²⁵

In January 1943, the President and the Prime Minister traveled to North Africa for the Casablanca Conference, at which the Giraud issue was one of many they hoped would be resolved. Negotiations took place between Giraud and de Gaulle to create a provisional government in French North Africa for the remainder of the war. De Gaulle strongly disputed Giraud's claim to legitimacy, mainly because de Gaulle felt his should be the sole French authority in North Africa and still resented the practically nonexistent involvement of the Free French in the war. On June 3, Giraud and de Gaulle finally agreed to set up a French Committee of National Liberation under their joint presidency. Roosevelt still opposed recognizing the Committee because he did not want de Gaulle to be able to claim a say in wartime strategic planning and postwar arrangements. Roosevelt urged Churchill to wait for

²⁴ Rossi, 118.

²⁵ Don Cook, *Charles de Gaulle: A Biography* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1983), 161.

satisfactory evidence of the Committee's determination to fight the Axis before bestowing any form of recognition. The President suggested that instead of recognizing the Committee, because that concession could be distorted to mean that he recognized the Committee as the government of France, the Allies should acknowledge the Committee as a local, and temporary, civil authority. Despite Roosevelt's numerous appeals to Churchill, the two could not come to a mutual agreement regarding the recognition of the French Committee of National Liberation.

In the mean time, the government of Vichy France, led in this regard by Pierre Laval, broke off diplomatic relations with the United States after the invasion of French North Africa. Following TORCH, for all intents and purposes, the Vichy government in unoccupied France had ceased to exist. The President had no desire to recognize de Gaulle's Committee as the legitimate authority of France, but Vichy had now disappeared as an alternative.

After news broke of the North African invasion and Darlan's agreement with the Allies, Germany retaliated. The Reich used the Allied landings in North Africa as a pretext for extending total control over the whole of France. On November 11, Hitler launched Operation Attila. German troops entered the unoccupied zone and garrisoned all of France.²⁶ The days of Pétain and Vichy were over. After Germany established complete control over France, Pétain and many of his officials were brought to Germany and remained in Nazi custody until the end of the war.

Roosevelt was now convinced that France did not exist, and as Secretary of State Cordell Hull stated, "since the German occupation of unoccupied France we [the United States government] have treated the former Vichy Government as extinct."²⁷ The President refused to recognize de Gaulle's

²⁶ Ousby, 67.

²⁷ Memo by Secretary of State, 18 November 1942 in *FRUS: 1942*, vol. II: *Europe*, 203.

Committee of National Liberation as the government of France because he felt he would be imposing a new leader on the French, which he was unwilling to do. Thus the invasion of French North Africa not only ended Vichy-American relations, but it ended the Vichy government itself.

Operation TORCH, and all of the political maneuvering that defined the invasion, ultimately achieved Roosevelt's goals of American ascendancy. He refused to support the French Government at its most vulnerable moment that led to the Franco-German Armistice, and then exploited his already fragile relationship with Vichy to insure the success of America's first major expedition in the western theater. With little regard to the potential consequences of TORCH, Roosevelt pushed an operation that would change the Allied relations for the rest of the war. From the outbreak of the war in 1939, Churchill looked to Roosevelt for assistance and assurance, such as the Lend Lease program, while Britain effectively fought alone in the west. However, America's entrance into the war and the invasion of North Africa marked a turning point in Allied relations. Roosevelt took the reins from Churchill and assumed the role of leading Allied power. This shift in Anglo-American relations began with TORCH, and continued into present day. Although the invasion of Normandy in 1944 is often perceived as the great, American led expedition of the war, TORCH set the standard two years before D-Day. It was because of Operation TORCH that Roosevelt secured America's top position in global politics for the rest of the war and after.

The Fog of 1952: A London Particular Turned Disaster

Courtney Hagewood

“Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city.”

–Chapter 1, *Bleak House*, Charles Dickens.¹

This Dickensian quote exemplifies the quintessential London fog, commonly known as a “pea-souper” or as the “London particular.” It is a long-established and familiar component of London’s urban identity and arguably one of the most famous aspects of the city itself. The uniqueness of London fog is that it is not merely a hovering mist that lingers in the city air. London fog is a lethal combination of fog, soot particles, smoke, and sulfur dioxide, resulting from centuries of industrialization. It is the omnipresent, dense mist that settles upon the city in the novels of Sherlock Holmes; the same noxious cloud that mysteriously obscured the crimes of Jack the Ripper. It is the poisonous fog that has darkened the drapes and blackened the walls of London homes for decades. A German traveler observed almost two hundred years later that “the winter-fogs of London are, indeed, awful. They surpass all imagining; he who never saw them, can form no idea what they are ... In a fog, the air is hardly fit for breathing; it is grey-yellow, of a deep orange, even black; at

¹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), 1.

the same time, it is moist, thick full of bad smells, and choking.”² This is the polluted London that stayed largely unchanged until the late winter of 1952, when a dense, blanket of smog settled over the city, lasting for four days, halting the city, and taking the lives of up to 12,000 Londoners.³ Twentieth-century London had had experienced its fair share of fogs and smogs, but it was this particular event that caught the alarmed attention of London’s inhabitants. Thousands suffocated and died in the hospitals scattered around the city. Politicians and medical doctors, as well as the general populace, demanded action in order to lessen the effects of any future smogs or fogs.

In the years after the event, a series of convoluted investigations were published by various members of the national government, including W. P. D. Logan, the government’s mortality statistician, citing an influenza epidemic instead of the true cause of the event. London’s romantic, Victorian fogs were combining with the soot, air pollutants, and coal smoke to create a sulfurous mist that was killing its inhabitants. This particular London fog was the embodiment of such a mist. With its scale of mortality and damage, it served as the primary catalyst for the passage of Clean Air Act of 1956, a legislative bill that regulated the domestic usage of coal in order to mitigate the dangerous smog that had defined London for centuries.

On December 4th, 1952, Londoners awoke to a brisk, breezy morning. That winter had been very cold, with heavy snowfalls in the region, and families across London burned large quantities of bituminous coal to warm their homes, as had been

² Max Schlesinger, *Saunterings in and about London*, trans. Otto von Wenckstern, (London: N. Cooke, 1853). Retrieved from <http://books.google.com>.

³ Michelle L. Bell, Devra L. Davis, Tony Fletcher, “A Retrospective Assessment of Mortality from the London Smog Episode of 1952: The Role of Influenza and Pollution,” *Environmental Health Perspectives* 112, no. 1 (2004).

their habit for centuries.⁴ Londoners had been burning coal as their domestic source of energy since as early as the sixteenth century. When the price of firewood tripled between 1540 and 1640, Londoners turned to coal to heat their homes and kept the habit for the following centuries. The prevalence of domestic coal usage is critical in understanding the detrimental effects of the London fogs. Fogs typically settled in during the winter months and combined with the air pollutants and coal smoke in the city's atmosphere to create an unhealthy amalgamation of the two called "smog," a portmanteau term coined in 1905 to describe the unique London fog that plagued the city.⁵ The air, saturated with unhealthy chemicals such as sulfur dioxide, frequently caused Londoners to cough and wheeze, and those with heart or lung conditions typically suffered the worst.⁶ The smog that settled in on the first week of December was a typical London "fog," but unusual weather circumstances exacerbated the smog, trapping Londoners in a poisonous mist.

That afternoon, an abnormal weather phenomenon known as an anticyclone moved over the southeastern portion of England, creating an unexpected mass of high-pressure cold air that quickly settled over the city. The anticyclone pushed the air downwards to the ground, creating a warm upper layer of air and a cold, stagnant lower layer. This thermal inversion allowed the dense fog to persistently sit in the city's atmosphere for the remainder of the weekend into the first few days of the following week. Thermal inversion creates a lid on the atmosphere of an area, locking the air—and whatever filters into it, such as coal smoke—in one

⁴ Met Office: Education, "The Great Smog of 1952," The Met Office Education Website. Accessed November 19, 2011.

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/education/teens/case-studies/great-smog>

⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s. v. "smog," accessed December 1 2011,

<http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/182692>.

⁶ Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution*, 28.

particular location. Thermal inversion is one reason why this particular London fog was dramatically worse in comparison to previous fogs. The weather patterns of that week in December facilitated the best possible circumstances for one of the worst smogs in London's history to take root in the city's atmosphere, lingering for days and impacting the lives of Londoners for months to come.

In the following days after the smog set in, a series of reports from newspapers indicated that London was experiencing a fog unlike the typical London "pea-soupers" that its citizens had seen before. A thick, dense mist had moved into the streets, and the city's inhabitants struggled to move on with their daily activities. The smog had halted even the most basic of movements within the city. Children attempted to walk home from primary school and found themselves lost within minutes. Over the weekend, most matches of the Football League in London were cancelled or postponed, many for the first times in the years since World War II.⁷ London's Heathrow airport grounded nearly all flights going in and out of the city.⁸ The BBC had difficulty in continuing its normal program as many people were "unable to reach the studios."⁹ The *London Times* reported that "those who ventured on to the roads in the gloom of what should have been daylight made little progress, and many had to abandon their cars and walk."¹⁰ The Automobile Association found it "almost impossible" to locate any members who required assistance in their vehicles and reported that "there was hardly half a mile of road in the centre of London where visibility was more than five yards."¹¹ The previous

⁷ *Times* (London), "League Programme Curtailed: Blank Day for London," Dec. 7, 1952.

⁸ Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution*, 164.

⁹ *Times* (London), "River Traffic Halted," Dec. 8, 1952.

¹⁰ *Times* (London), "Thick Weather Watch," Dec. 8, 1952.

¹¹ *Times* (London), "London Buses Stopped: Cars Abandoned," Dec. 8, 1952.

evening, all London bus and trolleybus services had halted, and shipping in the Thames River was at a complete standstill.¹² Familiar streets once easily navigated became impossible labyrinths. A nurse named Elinor Grace Jones, who worked at the Great Ormonds Street Hospital, lamented the thickness of the fog, saying it was “the blackest and worst fog of any that I had ever seen. We wore masks inside the hospital. We had to change the every five minutes ... even though I had quite good knowledge of the streets on London and lived in the adjacent nurses’ residence a few hundred meters away, I could not find my way home.”¹³ The fog continued for days as Londoners returned to the centuries-old habit of huddling in their homes and repeatedly burning coal to warm themselves. The stagnant air brought on by the anticyclone compounded with the smoke from the coal, increasingly keeping the citizens of London from breathing easily. Soon the fog dominated the entirety of Greater London, halting the movement of the city until the early morning of December 9th.

During the smog, London’s hospital services struggled to deal with the hundreds of people seeking medical attention. Many suffered from respiratory or heart problems that were worsened by the thick, poisonous air caused by the fervent burning of coal in London homes. The most vulnerable group of the pollution—the elderly and the young—also suffered immensely; Sulfur dioxide levels were “exceptionally high,” in fact the highest the city government had recorded since they began measuring them in 1932.¹⁴ The average concentration of sulfur dioxide for the period of the smog was 1,339 parts per million; the average concentration

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ As quoted in Devra Davis’s *When Smoke Ran Like Water: Tales of Environmental Deception and the Battle Against Pollution*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 42-43.

¹⁴ John A. Scott, “Fog and Deaths in London, December 1952,” *Public Health Reports (1896-1970)* 68 (1954): 474-479.

of smoke was 4.46 milligrams per cubic meter of air.¹⁵ For the sake of comparison it should be noted that the corresponding averages in the previous week—November 23 to November 29—were .139 milligram per cubic meter of air for sulfur dioxide and .50 milligram per cubic meter of air. This meant that there was a 792% increase in sulfur dioxide alone for the following week, the end of which comprised of the beginning of the fog.¹⁶ The Emergency Bed Service reported that calls for help surpassed the previous records for that week, including an influenza epidemic that occurred in 1951. As the weekend wore on, the Emergency Bed Service was overwhelmed with four times the usual number of cases asking for beds. By Monday, twenty percent of the patients seeking medical care could not be helped by London hospitals. Some 65 families awoke to find another family member had passed away in their beds. The average death rate for the first two weeks of December more than tripled by Sunday; Monday offered the same statistic.¹⁷ The London fog and its typical hazy atmosphere was no longer a charming component of the city's urban identity. It was a deadly combination of smoke and pollution that suffocated some of its inhabitants to death.

The fog of 1952 is often called one of the worst air pollution disasters in the history of the United Kingdom. Londoners had been accustomed to horrible fogs; yellow “pea-soupers” frequently complicated the city's daily activities in the past decades. Yet no one had seen a fog, more correctly termed “smog,” quite like the one that formed in December of 1952, and certainly not one that aroused such debate over the mortality rate sustained through the event. Medical reports, including one conducted by the government's chief medical statistician, Dr.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ As quoted in Howard R. Lewis, *With Every Breath You Take*, (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1965), 207.

William P. Dowie Logan, *estimated* that around 4,000 people passed away as a direct result of the smog.¹⁸ This is, however, generally considered to be a conservative estimate. Retrospective reports taking into account deaths from January 1953 to March 1953 indicate that as many as 12,000 people passed away from both the main four-day event as well as the lingering effects of the smog.¹⁹ The true death count resulting from this particular event and the air pollution that continued in the following months continue to be problematic, as initial reports often attributed the deaths to an influenza epidemic, including one conducted by the Ministry of Health almost a year after the fact (whose results, it should be noted, were not released until 1954, further complicating the official story of the smog).²⁰ This was, in short, an air pollution disaster, both for the public that suffered from it and the government that tried to mitigate it.

The initial response to the smog disaster was not optimistic or helpful. The Conservative government, wishing to minimize the event and therefore eliminating the possibility of panic, cautiously issued lower numbers to keep the impact of the mortality estimate low. The Conservative government at the time focused on an interpretation of the event as an influenza epidemic, despite the lack of statistical or medical evidence for that view.²¹ The recent party change in the government from the welfare state-driven Labour Party to the Conservative Party in 1951 transformed the administrative perspective of the time period. The Conservative Party barely won the election; in keeping with the need for stability, they focused on continuing the policies of the previous

¹⁸ W. P. D. Logan, "Mortality in the London Fog Incident, 1952," *Lancet* 261, no. 6755 (1953): 336-338.

¹⁹ Michelle L. Bell, etc., "Retrospective Assessment," 8.

²⁰ Paul Brown, "50 years after the great smog, a new killer arises," *The Guardian*, published November 30 2002. Accessed November 19 2011.

²¹ *Ibid.*; Michelle L. Bell, etc., "Retrospective Assessment."

Labour government and maintaining the parliamentary consensus.²² The need for the perpetuation of the “status quo” in postwar London was understandably high. Food rationing did not end until 1954; little over a decade had passed since the devastating Blitz that had destroyed London.²³ The economic impact of the war—leaving the country with an estimated war debt surpassing £31 billion—was still felt strongly, and a public report indicating that a sensational smog had struck London, resulting in a death count in the thousands, was unwanted, regardless of the dramatic and detrimental effects the fog the clearly had upon London’s inhabitants.²⁴ The incentive to regulate air pollution, and the ensuing difficulty in beginning such an initiative, was also heavily tied in with the nationalization of the coal industry, complicating the government’s need to clean the air without removing the nation’s largest source of energy.

The national government denied any responsibility for the smog and claimed in their report that the deaths were due to an influenza epidemic, regardless of the various other medical reports that indicated the deaths were directly due to the effects of the smog. On February 12, 1953, for example, a government spokesperson was asked if there were any investigative efforts being made by the government; he replied, bluntly, “None.”²⁵ The national government stubbornly refused to attribute any of the deaths to the smog of 1952, insisting on the presence of an influenza epidemic. In late 1953, however, a group of Parliament members, encouraged by the concern of the public, suggested that the domestic coal usage and the ensuing smoke was the culprit for the dramatic mortality rate. The debate began for the government

²² Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 75.

²³ Davis, *When Smoke Ran Like Water*, 45.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ As quoted in Thorsheim’s *Inventing Pollution*, 166.

to pass a bill that would regulate domestic and commercial coal usage in order to lessen the effects of any future London fogs.²⁶ In 1953, the same concerned members of Parliament formed the Beaver Committee, led by Sir Hugh Beaver. The purpose of the Beaver Committee was to investigate primarily the effect of smoke and fog upon public health, not necessarily the specific smog in 1952. Sir Hugh Beaver, the chairman, was adamant in explaining that the committee intended to investigate air pollution and its effects on health separate from the London smog of 1952 because “we [the Committee] felt that undue emphasis on it ... would distract attention from the fact that damage to health and danger to life were going on all over the country.”²⁷ He claimed that all of Britain was a “single permanently polluted area,” nationalizing the problem and pointedly detracting from the singularity of the 1952 smog as one of the worst air pollution disasters of the time.²⁸ The committee focused on air pollution in general and argued that limitations on domestic and industrialized coal usage would lessen the future effects of the famous London fogs, cleaning the air and keeping London (and Britain itself) safe. Their efforts eventually culminated into the proposal and passage of the Clean Air Act of 1956 (later amended and extended by the Clean Air Act of 1968), the first legislation of its kind in the United Kingdom.

The Clean Air Act of 1956 did not begin auspiciously. It effectively mirrored the delayed and onerous efforts to investigate the 1952 fog the national government had made in the previous years. The bill was not initially sponsored by the government and required the support of private funds. Later in 1955, the

²⁶ Basil Mackenzie, 2nd Baron Amulree, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, 18 Nov 1953, col. 364.

http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1953/nov/18/fog-and-public-health#S5LV0184P0_19531118_HOL_16, Accessed November 20 2011.

²⁷ As quoted in Thorsheim’s *Inventing Pollution*, 174.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

government caved to the pressures of the Royal Sanitary Institute as well as the local government and introduced its own bill to regulate air pollution, combining its efforts with the original private bill. Passage of the bill was difficult and tedious. The coal industry resisted, anxious about the economic impact of the restrictions, and skeptics of the bill criticized the government for intruding in on private homes.²⁹ Finally, a compromise was reached—private coal usage would be regulated by the products available on the market, which would consist only of authorized fuels. The legislative bill also regulated “the burning of solid, liquid and gaseous fuels, and controlled the heights of new industrial chimneys that were not covered by other legislation.”³⁰ It also introduced Smoke Control Areas, frequently referred to as “smokeless zones.” These zones succeeded in mitigating the effects of smoke resulting from the burning of unauthorized fuels. The committee also encouraged the usage of smokeless fuels (such as coke), electricity, and gas to counteract the detrimental effects of coal.³¹ The Clean Air Act of 1956 began the slow process of cleaning up not only the atmosphere of London, but also of the entire country. The efforts began by the Beaver Committee, and its following success in passing legislation to regulate air pollution, continued to play an active role in reducing London’s air pollution in the following decades. In 1960, for example, the average sulfur dioxide concentration in London dropped from 400 micrograms per cubic meter to 325 micrograms per cubic meter. By 1970 it was 150 micrograms per cubic meter, and in 2000, the concentration of sulfur dioxide dropped to zero.

²⁹ Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution*, 183.

³⁰ Ken Livingstone, *50 years on: The struggle for air quality in London since the great smog of December 1952*, Greater London Authority, 2002.

<http://www.london.gov.uk>. Accessed November 20 2011.

³¹ Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution*, 176.

The London fog of 1952 served as a catalyst to mitigating the air pollution that London had suffered from for centuries. For years, thoughts of London conjured romantic images of dense, multi-colored mists that settled over the city from the sidewalks to the tops of chimneys. This romantic image normalized the fogs, keeping inhabitants of London in the mindset that the fogs were not detrimental to their health. The fogs were a normal occurrence and were often enjoyed by tourists who wished to see London's famous "particular." But in 1952, that changed, as horrifying statistics revealed the many lives that were lost as a result of this deadly "pea-souper." The movement to weaken and entirely eliminate the destructive health effects of air pollution continues to be an important environmental issue today. Due to the efforts inspired by this one destructive fog, today many urban inhabitants of London breathe a cleaner, safer air supply, free from sulfur dioxide and smoke. It is this environmental disaster that spurred the efforts of politicians to keep their constituents free from the threat of deadly smog.

Race, Loyalty and Revenge: The Fort Pillow Massacre, 1864

Patrick Haris

On April 12, 1864, three years to the day since the firing on Fort Sumter that inaugurated the Civil War, Confederate troops under the command of General Nathan Bedford Forrest attacked an outnumbered Union garrison at Fort Pillow, Tennessee.¹ Behind the ramparts of the fort, perched on the bluffs above the Mississippi River, was a Federal force composed of white Tennesseans loyal to the Union as well as African-American soldiers. After several hours of fighting and an abortive attempt to negotiate a surrender, Forrest's troopers stormed over the Union works and rapidly gained control of the fort. What followed the Confederate assault has been the subject of a sometimes-acrimonious debate, in the days immediately following the battle and in the decades since. Union survivors alleged wholesale butchery of the defenders as they attempted to surrender, with black troops in particular being singled out for murderous treatment. One Union commander declared the capture of Fort Pillow "the most infernal outrage...committed since the war began."² Meanwhile, Confederates denounced the accusations of a massacre as "a tissue of lies from end to end."³

¹ Andrew Ward, *River Run Red: The Fort Pillow Massacre in the American Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2005), 1.

² Brig. Gen. Augustus Chetlain, "Letter to Gen. E.B. Washburne", April 14, 1864, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C., 1880) Volume Xxxii/1, 364.

Interpreting the bloody events at Fort Pillow requires negotiating this chasm between opposing partisan views by setting the battle in its proper context in the wider arena of the Civil War as it was fought in West Tennessee. That context was one of deep divisions among the local population and pervasive guerilla warfare, a civil war within the Civil War that embittered both sides and stretched the boundaries of conventional military standards of conduct. The chaotic circumstances of the fort's capture must equally be considered in order to properly account for the tragedy as it unfolded. The balance of eyewitness accounts and other evidence of the battle point to a slaughter which went far beyond the normal vicissitudes of combat and exhibited a frightful racial bias. But if the death toll of the garrison cannot be explained away as the outcome of open warfare, neither can it be reduced to an isolated act of racist malevolence. The massacre at Fort Pillow was the culmination of the combustible nexus of divisions and grievances in wartime West Tennessee, of which race was only one factor, if a crucial one. The bitterness bred by this multifaceted conflict combined with the strain of battlefield conditions to produce one of the darkest days of the Civil War.

Fort Pillow had been built in the early days of the war to exert Confederate control over the river flowing beneath its guns, forty miles north of Memphis. Constructed with the aid of slave labor, the new fortress was a grandiose engineering project dubbed the "Gibraltar of the Mississippi," but never lived up to such exalted expectations, and was partially demolished when the rebels abandoned the fort in June of 1862, leaving a denuded set of trenches, rifle pits, and earth ramparts by the time Forrest arrived

Official Records are hereafter abbreviated *OR*, with volume and page information given.

³ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War, a Narrative: Red River to Appomattox* (New York: Random House, 1986), 111.

nearly two years later.⁴ In an instance of bitter irony, Union forces were to have vacated Fort Pillow as well. General Stephen Hurlbut, the Federal commander overseeing the Federal occupation of Memphis, evidently countermanded his superiors in posting two regiments there, the 13th Tennessee Cavalry and the Sixth U.S. Heavy Artillery, along with a section of the Second U.S. Light Artillery.⁵ The men of the 13th Tennessee were drawn from local pro-Union whites, while the artillery units consisted of black troops led by white officers. Hurlbut assured the garrison commander that “the positions are commanding, and can be held by a small force against almost any odds.”⁶ The general also opined that the Confederate force under Forrest, which had mounted an incursion in the spring of 1864 into Union-occupied West Tennessee and Kentucky, would bypass Fort Pillow on their return from a raid on Paducah. Both predictions would prove fatal, not least for the black artillerists Hurlbut had dispatched upriver.

Forrest arrived at Fort Pillow on the morning of April 12, seeking “horses and supplies” for his column.⁷ By midmorning the smaller Union force had withdrawn from its indefensible outer positions into a central earthwork on the high point of the bluff. Forrest offered the garrison a truce at three o’clock that afternoon, by which time sporadic but sharp fighting had lasted for several hours. The Union commander, Major Lionel F. Booth, fell to a sharpshooter’s bullet earlier that morning, while Forrest himself

⁴ Ward, ii.

⁵ Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, “Letter to Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant”, April 15, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/1*, 367.

“I don’t know what these men were doing at Fort Pillow. I ordered it to be abandoned before I went to Meridian, and it was so abandoned. General Hurlbut must have sent this garrison up recently from Memphis.”

⁶ Maj. Gen. Steven A. Hurlbut, “Letter to Maj. L.F. Booth”, March 28, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/2*, 556.

⁷ Foote, 108.

suffered the loss of three horses shot out from under him.⁸ Forrest offered the Union commander twenty minutes to surrender unconditionally, and quickly received the reply, ostensibly signed by the late Major Booth: “Your demand shall not be complied with.”⁹ Almost immediately, the charge sounded and the Confederates stormed the Federal positions, flooding the small redoubt with overwhelming numbers.

The accounts of what transpired once the Confederates poured over the ramparts are numerous and frequently contradictory, but some attempt to sort through the competing factual claims must be made in order for any interpretation of the battle to have its grounding. One must establish a minimal sense of *what* happened before taking up the broader question of *why*. While not every claim of atrocity against the Confederates is credible, the more judicious eyewitness accounts together with the acknowledged figures of Union deaths make the notion of a normal, if particularly sanguinary, military engagement untenable. The blood-letting at Fort Pillow deserves the title of massacre.

Accounts from both sides agree that the Union garrison began to flee down the bluff towards the river, seeking the protection of Union gunboats, at which point the greater part of the killing began. The Union allegations are voluminous, collected as sworn affidavits by several military inquiries as well as a congressional investigation. Typical are the words of Elois Bevel, a white civilian from nearby Osceola, Arkansas, who deposed “I saw the Union soldiers, black and white, slaughtered while asking for quarter, heard their screams for quarter to which the rebels paid no attention.”¹⁰ A number of the survivors of the garrison

⁸ Foote, 109.

⁹ Capt. John T. Young, “Report on Fort Pillow”, May 11, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/2*, 594.

¹⁰ Elois Bevel, “Sworn Testimony Regarding the Fort Pillow Affair”, April 23, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/1*, 520.

personally testified to being shot while attempting to surrender or even after having been taking prisoner. Jason Souden, a white soldier in the 13th Tennessee, reported being shot and wounded “after I had surrendered, and while and I had my hands up and was imploring them to show me mercy.”¹¹ Private James Lewis, one of the black artillerymen, recalled “I was wounded and knocked down with the butt of a musket, and left for dead after being robbed, and they cut off the buttons of my jacket.”¹² Racial animosity is another recurring theme in the testimony; one black private reported a Confederate officer demanding “every damned nigger to be shot down,” allegedly on Forrest’s orders.¹³ Elois Bevel included in his affidavit a mention of meeting Confederate troops two days after the battle who said they were “hunting negroes.”¹⁴

Some of the charges made by the survivors display theatrical sadism that seems likely to be exaggerated, including tales of men nailed to walls and burned to death and bodies “bayoneted through the eyes,”¹⁵ a remarkable feat given that Forrest’s men did not carry bayonets.¹⁶ The broad allegations of the slaughter of prisoners, nonetheless, are corroborated by the words of a Confederate sergeant, Achilles Clark, in a letter home:

The slaughter was awful. Words cannot describe the scene. The poor, deluded, negroes would run up to our men, fall upon their knees, and with uplifted hands scream for mercy but they were ordered to their feet and then shot down. The white men

¹¹ Jason Souden, “Sworn Testimony Regarding the Fort Pillow Affair”, April 23, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/1*, 525

¹² Pvt. James Lewis, “Sworn Testimony Regarding the Fort Pillow Affair”, April 30, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/1*, 537.

¹³ Pvt. George Huston, “Sworn Testimony Regarding the Fort Pillow Affair”, April 30, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/1*, 537.

¹⁴ Bevel, 520.

¹⁵ Acting Master William Ferguson, “Report of the Capture of Fort Pillow”, April 16, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/2*, 571.

¹⁶ Ward, 203.

fared but little better. Their fort turned out to be a great slaughter pen... I, with several others, tried to stop the butchery, and at one time had partially succeeded, but General Forrest ordered them shot down like dogs and the carnage continued. Finally our men became sick of blood and the firing ceased.¹⁷

Numbers tell a vital part of the story. At the time of the Confederate attack there were, according to one account by a Union adjunct, Lt. Col. Harris, 557 officers and men in the Union garrison, of which 262 were black and 295 white.¹⁸ Harris' relatively detailed count of the garrison is a valuable tool in assessing the character of the battle and its aftermath, since many accounts of the capture of Fort Pillow from both Union and Confederate sources use round figures which appear to inflate the size of the Union forces (700 is a number which appears frequently) or else vary widely on the proportion of black soldiers among them. Comparing Harris' more reliable figures to the tally of prisoners taken by the Confederates allows a reasonable estimation of the casualties dealt to the garrison, both as a whole and in racial terms, as only a handful of the defenders escaped. Of the 295 white cavalrymen, 168 were reported as prisoners, about six in ten. Only fifty-eight black troops were taken, approximately one in five, with the vast majority of the rest being killed or wounded. According to a more recent scholarly investigation, as many as 63 percent of Fort Pillow's African American defenders were killed, an astonishing figure for most Civil War engagements.¹⁹ Forrest, by way of comparison, lost fourteen men killed and eighty-six wounded.²⁰

¹⁷ Sgt. Achilles Clark V, "Letter", April 14, 1864, quoted in Foote, 112.

¹⁸ Lt. Col. T.H. Harris, "Report of the Garrison at Fort Pillow", April 26, 1864, *OR*, Volume XXXii/2, 556.

¹⁹ John Cimprich and Robert C. Mainfort, Jr., "The Fort Pillow Massacre: A Statistical Note," *Journal of American History* 76 (1989): 830-837

²⁰ Foote, 111.

These figures serve as a rebuke to the Confederate claim that the death toll consisted entirely from Union troops killed “while fighting, [or] in the attempt to escape,” as the report of Forrest’s subordinate General Chalmers contended.²¹ The Confederate explanations of events at Fort Pillow tend to emphasize the terrain (Forrest’s own reports consistently mention Federals who “rushed into the river and were drowned”²²) along with the fact that no official surrender of the fort was ever given, rendering the fighting difficult to be brought to a halt. While such factors may have well have exacerbated the carnage, they cannot explain why white troops were three times more likely than their black comrades to be taken alive. Nor can such rationalizations dispel the weight of eyewitness testimony from both sides of the battle indicating a massacre. While several Confederate sources confirm the shooting of prisoners, no Union accounts venture to deny it, with the solitary exception of a certain Captain John T. Young, who was taken prisoner, offered a vaguely-worded letter defending Forrest’s men, and later recanted his story, claiming he testified under duress.²³ At best, the circumstances attending the Confederate takeover of the fort can only mitigate the scale of the atrocity. They cannot erase the evidence for a massacre, least of all the grim arithmetic of the butcher’s bill. William Ferguson, the commander of one of the Union gunboat crews watching the struggle unfold on shore, justly captured the facts of the battle and its aftermath:

When a work is carried by assault there will always be more or less bloodshed, even when all resistance has ceased; but

²¹ Brig. Gen. James R. Chalmers, “Report on the Capture of Fort Pillow”, May 7, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii /1*, 621.

²² Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, “Report on the Capture of Fort Pillow”, April 15, 1864. *OR, Volume XXXii/1*, 610.

²³ John T. Young, “Letter to Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest”,

here there were unmistakable evidences of a massacre carried on long after any resistance could have been offered...²⁴

If the bare facts of the massacre narrative are essentially confirmed by the evidence, the causes underlying the killing are more complex. Race was clearly one factor. One need not look far into Confederate sources to see the bitter contempt with which the rebels held the idea of blacks bearing arms. In his report of the battle, after noting with an eye for gory detail that “the river was dyed with the blood of the slaughtered for about 200 yards,” Forrest declared triumphantly “it is hoped that these facts will demonstrate to the Northern people that Negro troops cannot cope with Southerners.”²⁵ General Chalmers referred derisively to Fort Pillow’s defenders in a circulated speech to his troops as a “mongrel garrison of blacks and renegades,” and noted approvingly that his command had “taught [them] a lesson long to be remembered.”²⁶ The writings of both commanders demonstrate the perceived threat that the ex-slaves in uniform presented to the racial hierarchy central to Southern life, and the need to reassert white dominance by snuffing out this subversive phenomenon. General Steven D. Lee exhibits the same attitude in his correspondence with a Union general about the massacre, dubbing the black troops “a servile race, armed against their masters.”²⁷ If Confederate generals were expressing such sentiments, one can easily imagine the bitterness towards black soldiers of the rebel rank-and-file, fighting a life-and-death struggle with those whom even the lowliest among them were accustomed to seeing as social

²⁴ Ferguson, 571.

²⁵ Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, “Report on the Capture of Fort Pillow”, April 15, 1864, *OR Volume XXXii/1*, 610.

²⁶ Brig. Gen. James R. Chalmers, “Bulletin on the Capture of Fort Pillow”, May 7, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii /1*, 623.

²⁷ Lt. Gen. Steven D. Lee, “Letter to General C.C. Washburn”, June 18, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/2*, 601.

inferiors. That bitterness echoed in the vengeful cries at Fort Pillow that “every damned nigger be shot down.”²⁸

Nonetheless, as Sergeant Clark noted in his letter home, “the whites fared little better.”²⁹ While black troops may have been dealt the worst hand in the battle’s aftermath, their white comrades-in-arms clearly suffered atrocities as well. In some cases the racially-fueled fury of Forrest’s men was applied to white soldiers simply for fighting alongside the freed slaves. White officers of the black units may have received even worse treatment than their men: Jerry Stewart, a black private, recounted how his Confederate captors demanding he point out any officers of his regiment, presumably so they could be executed.³⁰ However, the sources of Confederate animus towards their white opponents, particularly the men of the 13th Tennessee Cavalry, had other sources as well. Confederate hatred for these “Tennessee Tories” ran deep. One of the 13th’s officers, Lt. Mack J. Leaming, testified,

“The rebels were very bitter against these loyal Tennesseans, terming them ‘homemade Yankees’, and declaring they would give them no better treatment than they dealt out to the Negro troops with whom they were fighting.”³¹

As mentioned above, the men of the Thirteenth Tennessee were drawn from Unionist locals, adding a fratricidal element to the struggle. Many of Forrest’s men were West Tennesseans themselves (Forrest was a native Memphian), and thus found themselves fighting their virtual neighbors. Adding to the sense of betrayal was the fact that Confederate deserters had found their

²⁸ Huston, 536.

²⁹ Clark, 112.

³⁰ Jerry Stewart, “Sworn Testimony Regarding the Fort Pillow Affair”, April 23, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/1*, 538.

“Lt. D. Hubank told me to tell him if there were any nigger officers taken prisoner and to point them out to him.”

³¹ Lt. Mack J. Leaming, “Sworn Testimony Regarding the Fort Pillow Affair”, April 23, 1864, *OR, Volume XXXii/1*,

way to the Union colors, including Forrest's own former troops. Forrest angrily declared that "the fort was filled with niggers and deserters from our army- men who lived side by side with my men."³² In sum, the Confederates viewed the men of the garrison, due to the bonds of servitude or of regional ties, as essentially illegitimate and contemptible. The presence of white civilians within the fort constituted another provocation, as they had, at least according to Forrest, fled to the safety of the fort to escape conscription by Forrest's men.³³ Nearly all the occupants of Fort Pillow, in one manner or another, represented a symbolic challenge to Southern identity and the Confederate cause.

The hostility of the Confederates towards Fort Pillow and its defenders was not simply born of a generalized sense of betrayal from their erstwhile neighbors and comrades. The conditions of the war in the surrounding countryside had done much to stoke animosity between both sides, due to the pervasiveness and cruelty of guerilla fighting. West Tennessee had been largely under Union occupation since 1862, but attacks by small bands of Confederate irregulars continued, along with efforts against them by both regular and guerilla units in Union service. Guerilla units on both sides were feared for their callous treatment of the lives and property of civilians. Elois Bevel reported he had fled from Osceola across the river to escape Confederate partisans.³⁴ Forrest makes numerous mentions of guerilla activity in his dispatches from West Tennessee, noting with pleasure that "large numbers of the Tories have been killed or made away with, and the country is very near free of them,"³⁵ later receiving a wry

³² Ward 91

Ward confirms Forrest's claim that deserters from the 47th Tennessee Infantry (CSA) formed part of the Union garrison.

³³ Forrest, Report of April 15, 610.

³⁴ Bevel 520.

³⁵ Forrest, Report of April 15, 610.

reply from General Braxton Bragg that “the break-up of the marauding bands of the enemy is very gratifying, if it is not to be followed by similar organizations claiming to be in our service.”³⁶ Bragg’s comment points to the vicious character of guerilla fighting on both sides, which was often difficult to distinguish from mere banditry. Fort Pillow was viewed by the Confederates as a source of particularly cruel counter-guerilla activity by the “Tories,” which Forrest described as “acts of oppression, plunder, and murder [which] made them a terror to the whole land.”³⁷ Hence, Fort Pillow was not a merely incidental target of Confederate revenge, but was itself a source of grievance for Forrest’s men, many of whom had had their homes and families threatened by this civil war within the Civil War.

An anecdote from the battlefield neatly encapsulates the Confederate attitude towards the men of the garrison. A captured Federal surgeon named Charles Fitch begged for Forrest’s personal protection when he saw the carnage taking place on the bluff. Forrest rebuffed him, shouting “You are the surgeon of a damn nigger regiment!” When Fitch protested that he was not, Forrest retorted “You are a damn Tennessee Yankee then.” The frightened Fitch then informed Forrest that he was an Iowan, whereupon the exasperated Forrest exclaimed “What in hell are you down here for? I have a great mind to have you killed for being down here.” Forrest nonetheless ensured Fitch’s safety³⁸.

The capture of Fort Pillow did not occur in a vacuum, and the Confederate attackers bore the weight of resentments and animosities bred by three years of war, feelings of hostility that

³⁶ Lt. General Braxton Bragg, “Letter to Maj. General Nathan Bedford Forrest”, April 28, 1864. *OR, Volume XXXii/1*, 613.

³⁷ Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, “Letter to General Braxton Bragg”, April 16, 1864.

³⁸ Jack Hurst, *Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2011), 224.

were particularly acute in the wartime environment of West Tennessee, aggravated by constant guerilla warfare. The battle was fought almost entirely by Southerners, white and black, and this fact is crucial to understanding the brutality that emerged from the clash. It was not a coincidence that Fort Pillow fell victim to the rage of Forrest's men, nor was the presence of black troops the only cause. Notions of race, loyalty, and revenge all played a role in the Confederate animus towards the garrison. In the hard-fought contest for the fort, this poisonous brew of longstanding grievances found a murderous outlet.

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The War For Public Opinion: Propaganda and Suppression in World War America

Colin Antaya

This paper is an examination of the ways in which the U.S. government used propaganda and suppression to influence public opinion of World War One and to guide public involvement in the war effort. I argue that the government embarked upon a campaign of prescriptive propaganda, which informed citizens of what they should do and say regarding the war, and a campaign of restrictive suppression of dissent, which demonstrated what Americans were forbidden to do and say regarding the war. Furthermore, I argue that we must fully appreciate the American people's own complicity in the manufacturing of public opinion – a fact which is made clear through examining two citizen organizations, the Four Minute Men and the American Protective League.

Designing American Ascendancy: Operation TORCH, 1942

Jane Barrileaux

The North African invasion of World War II, Operation TORCH, was a military operation with primarily political objections, and the political agenda of President Franklin D. Roosevelt overshadowed any sense of military purpose. Rather, Roosevelt used TORCH as an assured, victorious entry into World War II. Operation TORCH marks the beginning of American predominance in World War II and Anglo-American relations that would last the rest of the century, and even into present day. TORCH is much more important than just the invasion of North Africa, in ways that go beyond World War II itself. This operation changed the political landscape of the war and the world because TORCH was the vehicle with which the United States asserted itself over Britain by using France to place itself in the top position of global politics.

The Fog of 1952: A London Particular Turned Disaster

Courtney Hagewood

“The Fog of 1952: A London Particular Turned Disaster” examines the detrimental effects of the London fog, or “pea-souper” as it is known to locals, and how it served as the primary catalyst for the first air pollution legislation in the United Kingdom. A highly politicized event, the London fog of 1952 occurred around or after many other fogs, but this fog commenced the first rumblings of political and public concern for the health of those who survived the fogs. Londoners had always experienced the noxious fumes, but never quite like this before. Heightened mortality rates and horrific stories of families awaking to find members dead in their beds alerted Parliament to the issue of the fogs as deadly fumes rather than the charming mists they had always been described as. After a smaller fog in 1955, Parliament passed the Clean Air Act in 1956, setting a precedent for the mitigation of air pollution in the twentieth century.

Race, Loyalty and Revenge: The Fort Pillow Massacre, 1864

Patrick Haris

The Confederate capture of Fort Pillow, Tennessee on April 12, 1864 has been the subject of acrimonious debate both in the immediate aftermath of the battle and in the decades since. Union survivors alleged wholesale butchery of the defenders as they attempted to surrender, with black troops in particular being singled out for murderous treatment. This paper attempts to negotiate through conflicting accounts of the Fort Pillow affair with a particular emphasis on primary sources, with two aims in mind: first, to establish a sound interpretation of the events themselves (i.e., whether there was indeed a “Fort Pillow Massacre”), and secondly to place these grim facts in the wider context of the Civil War in West Tennessee. An understanding of the circumstances surrounding the tragedy at Fort Pillow reveals a nexus of divisions and grievances in the region that contributed to the bloody aftermath of the battle, including race, sectional loyalty, and the brutality of guerilla warfare.