

The image features a central circular graphic. A thick, light grey ring is positioned around the perimeter of the circle. Inside this ring, a teal-colored wreath is depicted, composed of numerous teardrop-shaped leaves or petals that radiate from the center. The background within the circle is dark and filled with a complex, radial pattern of fine lines and dots, creating a textured, almost crystalline effect. The text 'Tai - Pan' and 'Unto Caesar' is centered within the circle, with a thin orange horizontal line separating the two lines of text.

Tai - Pan

Unto Caesar

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Acknowledgements

Unlike my previous work, 'Unto Caesar' is a different beast altogether. 'White Witch', 'Color', and 'Drifting Together, Floating Apart' were very personal and directly related to me and my experiences. They were a personal analysis of grief, love, fear, and my relationships with the people I care for most. The inspiration, drive, desire, and need to produce content at all comes from the same place despite the difference in substance with this project.

I want to thank my loved ones, those living and dead. I want to thank those who have made me into the man I am today. I want to thank those who have instilled in me a passion for learning, a desire to explore ideas and concepts that are outside of my comfort zone. I also want to thank the people that have sustained my passion for history, exploration, and knowledge. I would be lost without books, podcasts, and teachers.

None of this would be possible without you, together, and your love, care, and desire to instill knowledge in others. Whatever good there is in me, it's because of you.

This is for all of you.

May Our Noble House Reign Eternal.

Aim

'Unto Caesar' is meant to be a commentary on the relationships that individuals have to the state. How individual decisions, behaviors, beliefs, and movements impact human history and modernity in significant ways. I am an avid consumer of historical content. I love to read, learn, and understand the past. As an anthropologist the human experience at the core of all of the events I chose is paramount. Rather than include my own poems or writings throughout this work, I decided to take a different path. I wanted to find relevant, in context, or thought provoking rhetoric or poetry that directly relates to the topic at hand. In every case, I believe the work I chose set a sense of place, the context, and the lived experience better than I ever could alone. In some places I interject my own words, and the juxtaposition between selected works and my own words are clearly outlined in the lyrics and are appropriately cited within the context of that song. I wanted to take this opportunity to explore the ongoing conversation across time, place, and culture between people of a variety of backgrounds and periods in time and how those conversations influence our politics, our view of the world, and relationships to one another today. Of course a bonus benefit is I get to talk about historical events that I am deeply passionate about, and that is never a bad thing in my mind

Gear

HARDWARE

Native Instruments Komplete Kontrol S49
Shure SM7B
Beyer-Dynamic DT 990 Pro (80 ohm)
Ibanez AZ2204N
Fender Telecaster - Modded
Larrivée OM-O3R
Spector Legend 5 - Modded
Charvel Pro-Mod San Dimas PJ-5
Solid State Logic 2+
Yamaha MSP7 (Courtesy of Joey Orona)

SOFTWARE

Spectrasonics Omnisphere
Spectrasonics Keyscapes
Audio Imperia - Nucleus
Audio Imperia - Photosynthesis
Native Instruments - Lores
Softube Eden WT800
Studio One 6

SAMPLES USED

Audio Imperia: Cerberus Drums
PSE: Tokyo Ambiance
Komorebi Audio: Drum Samples
Big Room Sounds: Rain and Wind

Historical Note

I am not a historian. I do not have a degree in history, and I do not have any prerogative other than personal interest to discuss these topics. All of the topics that I've chosen are large, complex, and their impacts are far reaching. My descriptions are not exhaustive. My citations are not exhaustive. I don't have the whole story, but I've done my best to provide an interesting and accurate representation of these events. However, this is a flawed document, and it should be treated as such. My ultimate aim is that the people that hear or read this work take a personal interest in history and explore these ideas for themselves. I have done my best to provide citations that people can reference at their leisure but there is so much more to read and discover and I hope my citations provide a starting place.

G.P.O

G.P.O.

"I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,
Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words,
And thought before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club,
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

[That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?
This man had kept a school
And rode our wingèd horse;
This other his helper and friend
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,
So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed
A drunken, vainglorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.]

[Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse splashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:
The stone's in the midst of all.]

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.
What is it but nightfall?
No, no, not night but death;
Was it needless death after all?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.
We know their dream; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead;
And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
I write it out in a verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born."

William Butler Yeats
September 25, 1916

G.P.O.

Ireland has been ruled by England, in some form or fashion since the 11th Century. The history, the story, the passion of Ireland is long, it runs deep, and it is a complicated story, filled with violence, a belief in self determination, and is inseparable from the history of the United Kingdom. Ireland tried many times throughout its history to remove the yoke of British rule, but tensions came to a head in the first few decades of the 20th century, around the beginning of World War I.

It would be impossible to tell the story of Ireland in such short form, and in truth I cannot do it justice. This instead will be a brief overview of the Easter Rising, the major players, the events that led up to Patrick Pearse declaring the creation of the Irish Republic in front of the General Post Office (G.P.O.) on that fateful day in April 1916, and the aftermath of that declaration.

After years of civil lawmaking and parliamentary steps to allow Ireland the freedom of Home Rule (which had been passed, but was deferred by the beginning of World War I). Many of the Irish political leaders felt that Home Rule was not enough, it crippled the Irish state under its rules and regulations, and placed severe restrictions on spending, organization, and actual self governance. Even though Irish Home Rule had been officially passed by British Parliament, its continual deferment and the language of the law meant that even in the best case scenario, very little would change for the Irish people and it certainly did not grant independence.

In part, from the British perspective there was fear of granting the Irish too much independence because historically they had been allies of Germany and France, both nations that England had fought long wars with and had clashing geo-political aims.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and other revolutionary organizations are at the core of the Easter Rising and the modern fight for Irish independence, and Dublin is the focal point. Ireland is a small country, and Dublin especially in the late 19th and early 20th century was a relatively small city. In various ways everyone knew everyone else, meaning you know the people you sat down with at the end of the day, at the pub or at a restaurant or as you walked the streets. Yeates indicated this in the poem with the line "I have met them at close of day...". However, a sense of revolution and the dream of self-governance was an undercurrent that had existed in Irish society for centuries.

The IRB was founded in Ireland and America after the famine of 1845-52, in which it is estimated that over a million people died. Money and guns flowed from the United States to Ireland for several decades after this, however the primary aim of the IRB was not violent revolution, and since 1867 they instead sought to enter into politics to fight for change and ultimately failed.

G.P.O.

The IRB was then reconstituted in 1906/1907 with a new generation of younger Irishmen who were dedicated to the overthrow of British rule in Ireland by violent means if necessary. An Irishman named Tom Clark was one of the only older members of the IRB that was allowed to remain in the IRB after it was systematically cleansed by new members to remove those who were not radical enough. Clark was central to the actions the IRB would undertake in the middle of the 1910's. Clark had been involved in a dynamiting campaign in England in the 1880's, was arrested and after getting out of English prison, went to America and then returned back to Dublin and owned a tobaccoist's shop near the G.P.O, and it was here in September 1914 that the IRB decided they must act while the British were distracted by World War I. England's misfortune was Ireland's opportunity. In 1915, Tom Clark helped organize a military council to figure out how best to enact a revolution.

Patrick Pearse was born to an English father and an Irish mother, he went to university and qualified as a lawyer, but he was most inspired by the revitalization of the Gaelic language. He set up his own boys and girls school to further education in Gaelic for Irish children to build citizenship around language. He stood in favor of Home Rule in 1913, and even though he felt it was not enough, it was a start, but towards the end of 1914 he began to become more and more involved in the idea of an Irish revolution. He was appointed as the head of the military council of the IRB in 1915, and set a date for the rebellion, Easter 1916.

The second group that was integral to the Easter Rising were the Irish Citizen Army headed by James Connolly who was born in Edinborough to Irish parents and came to Ireland as a labor organizer and was involved in the 1913 lockout. This was a trade union lockout in Dublin and was a vivid demonstration of the extreme poverty of Dubliners. Labor agitation began at the same time as the founding of the Ulster Volunteers by Edward Carson. Connolly had the idea that they would protect their workers with the Irish Citizen Army, and being a former British army soldier trained the men in military tactics.

It is impossible to understand the Easter Rising without first understanding the militarization of Irish society started by the Ulster Volunteer Force, and the funnel of guns from America and Germany. In the middle of the 1910's Ireland had a standing army of about ~15,000 people who were being prepared for revolution and actively being armed and funded by external entities.

Even more than the military and political ideologists that pushed toward revolution, Ireland was also full of intellectual, philosophical, and religious organizations that used ideas, religious frameworks (due to Catholic oppression by the British), and beliefs to provide reason and Gaelicise Irish organizations and institutions. Finally, St. Andrews school in Dublin near the G.P.O. leading up to the week of the Rising had no students, and a sign was posted on the doors stating the school was closed for the 'Poets Revolution'.

G.P.O.

Poetry comes to the revolution as a vehicle to show an alternative to the British Empire through language and ideas, key among them that there is an ancient Ireland State, and that the Irish had been there before the British and they would be there long after them. Most of the leaders of the Easter Rising were also poets, and while this was a revolution of force, it was also a revolution of ideas, and words. The Imagination of an Insurrection by William Irwin Thomas crystalizes this point by showing that there is a relationship of poetry, revolution, and the human condition and how they are all related and intertwined. The stage was set.

The Easter Rising was long planned for, and even though it was always likely to end in failure, the ideas it spread would endure, and Pearse especially believed that the leaders of this movement would be offered up as sacrifice for the continuation of the hope for a free Irish state. The Irish parliamentary members did not believe there would be a revolution, and told the English Parliament as much, in fact they warned Parliament against moving against the standing militias because then there would be a clear reason for violent revolt.

The Irish revolutionary members sought to recruit Irishmen from German P.O.W. camps at the outset of World War I, and asked for guns and soldiers to add force to the revolution. However, the guns being shipped from Germany were caught and the ship scuttled before it could be reclaimed by the British authorities, and its organizer was locked in the Tower of London.

The revolutionaries decided to go ahead with the plan anyway. Some of the volunteers of the militia were recruited by Irish parliamentarians to fight in France which further split the force of the militia, however all remaining members were asked to launch the revolt in Dublin on Easter Sunday, and following the taking of Dublin the rest of the country would rise.

Due to confusion within the ranks of the rebels there were missives sent and published in Irish newspapers to delay the maneuvers, and rather than everyone mobilizing simultaneously on Easter Sunday in Dublin, they began instead on Easter Monday with fewer than 1000 men.

After noon on Easter Monday, the revolutionaries marched on the General Post Office and subdued the five British soldiers who were stationed there. Pearse then stood on the steps of the General Post Office and declared the birth of the Irish Republic, but the citizens of Dublin were not stirred to revolution. The rebels then moved to barricade the entry points to Dublin and began to take small governmental buildings, and avoiding Dublin Castle instead took several facilities with no real strategic value, There was little resistance from British armed forces because they believed there would be no revolution and many of the soldiers stationed in Ireland were enjoying their Easter weekend away from Dublin and blessing their luck they were not on the front line in France.

G.P.O.

The revolutionaries took Stephen's Green in the center of Dublin (a large park) and dug a trench there, but due to the number of tall buildings surrounding the park were forced to retreat to the Royal College of Surgeons where they stayed for the rest of the week.

Once British armed forces arrived they immediately began pacifying Dublin, and due to poorly designed defenses they entered with little to no opposition.

By Monday evening most rebel strongholds had been retaken. On Tuesday morning martial law was declared in the midst of severe looting throughout the city. There are stories of children breaking into sweet shops and taking candy they had never and likely would never be able to afford, and other stories of men banding together to haul a grand piano down the main thoroughfare.

By Wednesday April 26, 1916 the British began to shell Dublin from the sea and leveled rebel strongholds throughout the city. On Friday, the 28th, Pearse and the other rebels began to surrender in order to avoid enormous loss of life, and sue for peace, and eventually agreed to unconditional surrender. Smaller uprisings across Ireland held out for a few more days after the initial surrender in Dublin, but were eventually suppressed. From its outset the leaders of the Easter Rising understood that barring total victory, there was only one thing waiting for them if captured: death.

Militarily the Easter Rising was a failure but, politically it was a huge success.

Britain won the battle, but lost the war of public opinion by their brutality against leaders of the rebellion, who were condemned to death by charge of treason against the ruling government, which was exacerbated by acting in the midst of World War 1. The martyrdom of the rebel leaders gave the Irish people a reason to stand firm against the oppression of British rule. While the Irish monarchist party of Sinn Féin had nothing to do with the Rising itself, after the treatment of the rebels and the roundup of innocent civilians by British authorities they were pushed to fight for a free Irish state.

Eventually as we now know, Ireland was partitioned North and South, where southern Ireland is independent of the United Kingdom and is a direct descendent of ideas propagated by the rebel leaders of the Easter Rising and all those who came before. The Irish War of Independence took place in the 1920's and was galvanized by the people who organized, fought, and ultimately died for the idea of a free Ireland, a debate, and fight which continues to this day.

William Butler Yeates wrote the poem Easter, 1916 eight months after the Easter Rising had concluded though it was not published until 1920. He knew the men that organized the Rising, and he watched them all summarily executed for treason. We never get a sense of Yeates true feelings for the Rising itself, but his sense of grief is tangible in every line, and that is what drew me into this poem and this moment in history: the human cost.

Somme

Somme

"With proud thanksgiving, a mother for
her children,
England mourns for her dead across the
sea.

Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of
her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august
and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,
There is music in the midst of
desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they
were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and
aglow.

They were staunch to the end against
odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are
left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years
condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the
morning

We will remember them.
They mingle not with their laughing
comrades again;

They sit no more at familiar tables of
home;

They have no lot in our labour of the
day-time;

They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our
hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden
from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own
land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when
we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly
plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time
of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain."

Listen to the sounds of life passing by,
dancers to a discordant system
Moving from place to place in search of
ancient wisdom

The truth is, none can be found.
The sounds of the past have all but
drowned.

Living is such a dream, it seems
impossible to wake up
Passing glances down the hall through
the door where darkness bubbles up

It's the deepest winter of our mortal
souls
Surrounded by the voices of those who
will not grow old.

Laurence Binyon
'For the Fallen'
The London Times, 1914

Somme

World War I officially began on July 28, 1914 when the Austria-Hungarian empire declared war on Serbia almost a month after the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Of course this is not the only cause of what was largely a war of imperial interest, increasing diplomatic tensions across Europe and the rest of the world, a rise in nationalism and self-determination, and straining alliances across the continent. While WWI was fought across the world, European economic and strategic interests were at its core. The conflict spread from Western Europe in the Atlantic all the way to East Asia and the Pacific Ocean.

As with every topic on this record an exhaustive detail of causes, outcomes, and far reaching effects extend way beyond the scope of this work. However, it is worth exploring the geopolitical forces that were at work here and the human experience bred by one of the most brutal conflicts in human history. It could be argued that World War I was largely an unjust war as its primary concerns were imperial and caused by extreme and violent nationalism. What cannot be understated is the incredible cost of life, the terror of trench warfare, the violence that was delivered across the planet in some of the most horrendous ways imaginable, from bayonet charges, being cut in half by machine gun fire, choking on mustard gas, and the constant shelling that could last days which robbed soldiers of sleep and any sense of safety.

The largest and arguably most famous battle of WWI, the Battle of the Somme was fought between July 1 - November 18 of 1916 on both sides of the upper reaches of the river Somme in France. More than three million people took part in the battle and there were over a million casualties. It is one of the deadliest battles in all of human history. Though the battle continued for over five months it ended in a stalemate. France and Britain gained 125 square miles over the course of the battle at the cost of ~600,000 Allied casualties by its end.

Despite the fact the Battle of the Somme was a stalemate, there were some important tactical lessons learned. Battles of attrition would not work, the way that artillery and infantry worked in tandem must change (they must work more closely together in coordinated assaults), and most importantly infantry attacks on fixed position enemy gun emplacements was tantamount to a mass suicide. Since so much of the battleground was leveled from constant shelling, infantry were forced to dig through to the opposite trench, or run across a 'No Man's Land' after a series of artillery and gas attacks while being cut to pieces by machine gun fire and barbed wire. The way humanity waged war was forever changed, and we saw that evolution in World War II, where synchronous assaults on multiple fronts using the power of air, land, and sea became absolutely paramount.

Somme

Like all conflicts, there are enormous global, political, and socioeconomic impacts that are far reaching and complex, but ultimately the price is paid by countless individuals across the entire planet, forever.

Germany of course lost World War I. In its desire to seek colonial and economic boons, that almost every other country in Europe enjoyed, it failed, and the price of that failure was enormous, not only for the nation-state at the time, but for those who would come later. The Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to accept full guilt for the war and imposed severe military, economic, and social restrictions on the populace.

Germany also lost large portions of land, the region of Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France, Eupen and Malmedy were ceded to Belgium, North Schleswig was given to Denmark and substantial eastern territory was given to the newly created Polish state. The Weimar Republic that replaced the German Empire was fragile, plagued with political extremism, economic difficulties and social unrest. The humiliation and the hardships inflicted by the Treaty of Versailles coupled with political instability of the newly formed republic facilitated the rise of extremist parties, the most notable of whom were the National Socialist German Workers' Party otherwise known as the Nazi Party. Traditional social structures in Germany were broken down, there was widespread disillussionment, and a 'lost generation' of dead citizens and soldiers.

While there was a period of significant cultural change in the Weimar Republic there was also a flowering of literature, art and film, which was all brought to an end by the rise of the Nazi regime.

"For the Fallen" by Laurence Binyon was written in the early stages of the war, the Somme hadn't happened yet, the enormous bill of World War I was not yet due, and the numbness that comes with constant death, terror, and fatigue had not set in. The poem largely focuses on several key themes, remembrance, sacrifice, grief, the death of youth and wasted potential, glory and unity in war, and national identities. These are all themes that resonate deeply with me, and remind us all of the price that individual people pay to achieve the goals (just or unjust) of the nation states for which they fight. This poem, war, revolution, and a life lived under threat of tyranny and conflict remind us that in so many ways our destinies are not our own, that so often fate and chance take choice from us. Humanity has celebrated the glories of war while shying away from its depravity for as long as conflict has existed, and when the few make choices for the many inevitably they spill so much of other people's blood.

Delaware

Delaware

“Although she feeds me bread of
bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her
tiger’s tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will
confess
I love this cultured hell that tests
my youth.”

[Her vigor flows like tides into
my blood,
Giving me strength erect against
her hate,
Her bigness sweeps my being like
a flood.
Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in
state,
I stand within her walls with not
a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of
jeer.]

This is not my story to tell,
This is a world lost to me by
birth and by age.

But if I may, I’d learn it well.
And pull their stories from
untethered page.
Who am I to claim what God has
given by right?
Like a thief cruelly borne into
the night.
But if I may, I’d learn it well,
I’d sing it loudly in a verse to
tell,
Of life that’s lost, under a
familiar sky,
But maybe not, who am I to try?

“Darkly I gaze into the days
ahead,
And see her might and granite
wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time’s
unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking
in the sand.”

Claude McKay
'America'
Liberator, 1921

Delaware

American history is filled with places, objects, and regions that dot the landscape across the continental U.S. and into the farthest reaches of the Pacific and Alaska that personify the American story, and American mythology. Few however, hold the significance of the Delaware River that runs down through New York and drains into Delaware Bay. It played a significant role in the American Revolution, and the painting of General Washington crossing the Delaware in the dead of night, standing at a ship's prow, might be the closest thing American mythos has to Zeus casting lightning down from Mt. Olympus.

The story of the American Revolution is something that has been retold, remade, and committed to a sense of legend that bears little resemblance to what actually took place. The British colonies in North America and their citizens believed up until their declaration of independence from the British empire (and some continued to hold that belief long after the war was over) that they were true born English citizens that should be afforded all of the same rights and privileges that any person born in London had. In truth, while the North American colonies were a jewel in the British crown, they were of little consequence to the overall financial stability of the empire and its imperial reach forward across the rest of the world.

Colonies in the West Indies were far more profitable (primarily due to slave labor) and were significantly more important to the British which is why a majority of their deployed naval forces in the Atlantic stayed around Jamaica to protect it from French conquest.

In the early stages of the Revolutionary War, the American Continental Army, led by General George Washington, suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the British. Throughout 1776, the British forces, under General William Howe, had successfully captured New York City and forced the American troops to retreat through New Jersey and into Pennsylvania.

By December, the Continental Army was in a dire state. Morale was extremely low, the army was disorganized, many soldiers had deserted, and those who remained were poorly clothed and ill-equipped for the winter weather. Additionally, enlistments were about to expire for many soldiers at the end of the year, meaning the army was at risk of disintegrating.

Recognizing the need for a decisive action to boost morale and keep the cause alive, Washington devised a daring plan to cross the icy Delaware River on Christmas night and launch a surprise attack on the Hessian garrison at Trenton, New Jersey. The Hessians were German mercenaries hired by the British.

Delaware

On the night of December 25, in freezing temperatures and amid ice flows in the river, Washington led around 2,400 of his troops across the Delaware. The crossing was accomplished with great difficulty, using Durham boats, which were large, heavy cargo boats.

The Continental Army then marched nine miles to Trenton, arriving on the morning of December 26. In what is known as the Battle of Trenton, they caught the Hessian forces by surprise, and after a short but fierce battle, the Americans captured more than 900 Hessians, with minimal casualties on the American side.

Consequently the Battle of Trenton did several things for the Continental Army, it boosted morale, encouraged retention of enlisted soldiers, the victory encouraged French support after the American revolutionaries demonstrated they could in fact defeat the British forces in combat, and created a momentum for Washington, that despite the continued supply and enlistment challenges he faced throughout the war, his belief in the providence of the cause, and dogged determinism eventually led to victory in 1783.

It is impossible to overstate the significance of the American Revolutionary War and the founding of the United States of America.

Of course there are the stories that are told by popular culture as to why the war was fought including independence and sovereignty, representation, and the continuing disparity between English people and those who were born and raised in what is now the United States. While these are all true to a degree, the political and social repercussions are inordinately complex, and they are full of contradictions that led the United States to fight its way across the West, go to war multiple times with Britain, Spain, Mexico, and eventually against ourselves. The crossing of the Delaware is emblematic of something that is truly American, a deep seeded determination to fight for, and achieve by any means necessary the mastery of our own destinies.

No people, nation, or political system is perfect and the United States is no different, but the dream of the United States, the original dream, was one of equality before the law, the self determination of its citizens, and a government made up of the people, for the people, and by the people.

Delaware

Abraham Lincoln summed up the potential of the United States best saying:

“Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We, of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We — even we here — hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free — honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just — a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.”
— Abraham Lincoln, 1862

The poem ‘America’ by Claude McKay is an interesting personification of the United States in the early 20th century.

Claude McKay was a Jamaican-American writer and poet who was a seminal figure in the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural movement in the 1920s that celebrated African-American literature, art, and music.

He was born on September 15, 1889, in Clarendon, Jamaica, and passed away on May 22, 1948, in Chicago, Illinois. He emigrated to the United States in 1912 to attend Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) and later studied at Kansas State University. He spent most of his adult life in the United States, but he also traveled extensively in Europe and lived in various countries for periods of time. ‘America’ focuses on several themes, the conflict of love and hate, racial tensions and discrimination in the U.S., the importance of resilience and strength in adversity, the industrialization of American society and hope for the future. These are all concepts that are just as present in America today as they were in the 20’s and were even present in the Revolutionary War. America has always been a contradictory place, but what should unite us is our belief in civil liberties, the self determination of the individual, and equality before the law no matter the circumstance. This is the dream, and the ‘great hope’ of the United States. Our actions do not always live up to our words or proclamations, but as a people we have never failed to aspire to greatness, to a higher standard, and an example to the rest of the world.

La Terreur

La Terreur

The French Revolution was a divisive, violent, and dramatic period of upheaval that took place in France from 1789 to 1799, which then gave way to the

Napoleonic Era and the expansion of the French Empire across Europe.

Before diving into the Reign of Terror or La Terreur, let's discuss the systemic causes of the French Revolution. France was in a state of near economic collapse in the 18th century, they were

enormously in debt partially due to their assistance with the American Revolution and outrageous spending by the monarchy, there was also extreme social inequality within French society between nobles/clergy and commoners, and the lack of a strong functional government/monarchy that failed to address problems that put such high pressure on the populace that eventually became untenable.

The French Revolution was led by a group of factions and figures who played various roles at different stages over the course of the 10 year revolution. The Third Estate and the National Assembly (the commoners), the Jacobins (republicans, and in favor of the abolition of the monarchy) who were led by Maximillien Robespierre and Georges Danton. Jean Paul Marat was a radical journalist and politician who helped shape public opinion in the early stages of the revolution. The Girondins were a moderate political faction who were majority leaders in the National Assembly but were eventually sidelined by the more radical elements of the revolutionary forces.

The Sans-culottes who were the common people of Paris who played a crucial role in the storming of the Bastille, and finally Napoleon Bonaparte who became the eventual Emperor of France and waged war across the entire European continent and into Russia.

The Reign of Terror was a particularly violent and radical phase of the revolution that lasted from September 1793 to July 1794. During this period the revolutionary government was led primarily (ironically, I must say) by the Committee of Public Safety under Maximilien Robespierre who took extreme measures to suppress perceived enemies of the revolution both within and outside of France.

The Reign of Terror had several key elements that made it unique: first and foremost was the aforementioned Committee of Public Safety who were the executive government of France. It was initially created as a temporary body to deal with threats of foreign invasion and internal rebellion (against the already present rebels) but later evolved into a central authority. The Law of Suspects was passed in 1793 which expanded the definition of "enemies of the revolution" to include not only those actively conspiring against the revolutionaries but those who were insufficiently supportive of revolutionary ideas.

La Terreur

The revolutionary government imposed severe economic and religious controls on France by setting price ceilings on grain and other staples to keep inflation while also actively campaigning against the Catholic church by closing churches and imposing restrictions on religious practice. Most famously however were the mass executions by the guillotine. The guillotine personified the Reign of Terror, it was viewed as an egalitarian method of execution and thousands of people were executed without fair trial. King Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and other nobles were executed summarily by and alongside commoners.

The great irony of the Reign of Terror and the Robespierre government (who was deified) was that it enacted much of what it fought against. Civil liberties were largely suspended, and the Law of Suspects essentially created a surveillance state that made the random arrest of citizens under any circumstances legal. Violence and fear was the most important tool the Robespierre regime had at maintaining order which led to thousands of deaths, many of whom had no proven involvement in counter-revolutionary activities.

There was little to no room for moderate voices or a lowering of the temperature in public discourse, if an individual did not pass the purity test for an ideal revolutionary citizen they would be arrested and likely killed. Power was centralized in an even more extreme way than it had been under the monarchy which silenced the voice of the people and left policy decisions to the whims of Robespierre and his cronies.

The Reign of Terror divided the French populace, it created a culture of fear, distrust, suspicion, and fanaticism that disregarded pluralism and individual freedoms. It was a period of unchecked authoritarianism and violence that tarnished the once noble ideals of the French Revolution that sought to bring about a more equal and free society, much like the one they had fought and paid to create in the United States.

Unsurprisingly, the government collapsed in on itself due to the culture of suspicion, infighting and leaders within the Robespierre's government turning on each other. Eventually the National Convention or peoples government arrested and condemned to death Robespierre and other key officials and they moved to a more conservative government, which led to the creation of the Directory in 1795, a more pragmatic approach to governance compared to the Reign of Terror.

Of course even this would not last, Napoleon Bonaparte who had enjoyed military successes in the Revolutionary Army, put down a Royalist revolt in 1795, and won victories in Italy and Egypt, eventually led a coup that overthrew the Directory in 1799, which led to the Consulate government of France, Napoleon being First Consul in 1799 and his being crowned Emperor of France in 1804 after consolidating power and ending the French Republic. The Napoleonic Era would last for 16 years and would lead to a very rough estimate of between 2.5 - 3.5 million military deaths before its conclusion and Napoleon's exile to the island of Saint Helena.

La Terreur

Despite the extreme volatility of the French Revolution, and the sheer lack of a functioning state for some time there were major consequences for not only the French, but also the rest of the world. While this piece is not primarily about Napoleon you cannot mention one without the other, as Bonaparte was a direct outcome cultivated by war torn France.

The French Revolution ended absolute monarchy in France, there would be monarchs after the Napoleonic age but their power was significantly reduced. As with most revolutions, especially the ones I've mentioned here, a sense of devout national identity was cultivated by the revolutionaries. The French public, not just the nobility and those in power had a distinctive conceptualization of what it meant to be 'French', and this pattern would continue to burgeoning states around the world. The Napoleonic Code abolished the feudal privileges in France, a system that stretched back to roughly the year 800. The idea of a French democratic society would go through several iterations before becoming stable and similar to the French system of government we see today, but these ideas began in the mid to late 18th century. Church power declined significantly in France, which is arguably one of the most shocking outcomes to me personally. France had been the brightest jewel in the papal miter for centuries, in the 1300's the papacy (though contested) was even moved to Avignon in southern France.

All of this is not to mention the dramatic cultural impact the revolution had on the populace. It encouraged intellectual and artistic expression by an outpouring of literature, art, and music that reflected the changes taking place around France.

Napoleon himself directed many of these changes with a fervor and pride that had seldom been seen in French society before. His relentless wars across all of Europe redrew borders of European nations, and after his defeat they were redrawn again by the victors. After his final defeat and exile, the British who were but a part of the European armies arrayed against Napoleon (albeit a significant one), rose to true global dominance. With France recovering from the defeat of Napoleon and scrambling to put the state back together financially and politically, the British Empire relatively unchallenged went on to become the largest Empire the world has ever known.

Whether or not Marie Antoinette ever flippantly said "Qu'ils mangent de la brioche" (note the word brioche, not gâteau or cake), which there is no evidence that she did. She and Louis XVI could never have envisioned what would come from their execution and enormous geo-political upheaval the French Revolution would have on the rest of the world.

Arnhem

Arnhem

I seem to go away.
Amidst violence and haste,
against an agonized bray.

It's darkness and then it's
light.
Raging fires burn through the
night.

I looked into you, and standing
there, I saw my dreams,
Will and choice, through light
and shadow, in streams.

And that joy, took part in
peace, though also anger,
That too I did see.

There is a cost, to all that is
fair and green.
Where the forces of fate
intervene.

The levy that all mortals
dread.
It runs down the street, in the
finest red.

Arnhem

After the Allied liberation of Normandy and France began in June 1944, the coalition forces believed that they could launch an even larger more ambitious offensive to end World War II in 1944.

Operation Market Garden was conceived, largely by British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery and was intended to deliver a decisive blow to German forces by establishing a bridgehead over the Rhine in the Netherlands, thus allowing the allies to bypass the heavily fortified Siegfried Line and advance into the German industrial heartland.

There were two main components to Operation Market Garden:

Market - was the airborne phase of the operation, it involved the dropping of three airborne divisions, two American (the 82nd and the 101st Airborne) and the 1st British Airborne Division behind enemy lines to secure key bridges over several rivers and canals in the Netherlands.

Garden - was the ground phase of the operation. It involved the advance of the British XXX Corps, supported by other Allied units along Hell's Highway with the core objective being to link up with the airborne forces after they had crossed the bridges they had secured.

For 'Market' the British 1st Airborne Division was given the task of capturing the bridge at Arnhem (Holland), which was the furthest objective from the starting point of the operation. The 1st Airborne Division was commanded by Major General Roy Urquhart who was dropped around Arnhem and Oosterbeek, where they faced numerous challenges.

The division was dropped too far from the bridge due to anti-aircraft fire and limited aircraft availability, radio communications were ineffective, and the division was also heavily outnumbered, and faced the elite II SS Panzer Corps which was in the area at the time. One of the key failures of Market Garden was poor planning and design, it was a long shot from the beginning, each stage of the plan relied on the earlier stages to succeed with little to no hangup and this was essentially impossible given difficulties encountered by every deployed group at every point in the operation. The 1st Airborne Division were trapped in the town of Arnhem and the surrounding forest and fighting devolved to moving from house to house and shooting across streets and large open areas that were divided almost evenly between British and German troops. The bridge in Arnhem lay directly parallel to the German line of fire and any attempt to take and hold the bridge was met with heavy casualties. It should be noted that the 1st Airborne did hold the bridge for four days before being pushed back by a large German counterattack.

Due to issues with weather, and troop movements the paratroopers in Arnhem would not receive any assistance or reinforcements until it was far too late.

The 1st Airborne Division was only meant to hold out for about 48 hours and instead they kept fighting for 9 days before they were forced back across the Rhine. After it was all said and done, there were 1,500 casualties and 6,500 troops captured.

Arnhem

Market Garden is a widely controversial operation and it is still heavily debated today. Many historians (not all) believe it was 'worth the punt' to try and get on the other side of the Rhine and push into Germany as fast as possible, but poor planning, heavy resistance, and battlefield confusion made this impossible almost from the outset. The Germans were still committed to fighting to the last man and the last bullet, which would drag the war in Europe out until May 1945. The Allies faced some of the bitterest fighting and highest casualty rates of the war in the first part of 1945, and the war in the Pacific dragged on until September.

As indicated in the historical brief of 'Somme', World War II was largely brought on by World War I, and the political extremism that had been borne by the restrictions imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler was able to rally the populace against the 'Fifth Column' that defeated Germany from the inside (mainly Jews) and the growing fear of Communism from the East (the Soviet Union). If Germany did not win World War II quickly, they were never going to win it, and despite the hard fighting that continued past 1941, the writing was on the wall from that point forward. The people at Arnhem, in the Ardennes, in Northern Africa, in the concentration camps, in Poland, not to mention the war in the Pacific would all have to die before the matter was settled. It would take Germany well over a generation to become whole again after the end of World War II. The end of the war would see our world changed forever. The emergence of atomic weapons, the rise of the United States and Soviet Union as super powers.

The United Nations was formed, the state of Israel was created by the Balfour Declaration and displaced people who had lived there for centuries, and the colonies of Asia and Africa began to disintegrate. Not to mention the Cold War began, and arguably has never ended. I would like to conclude with a brief section of Churchill's 'Sinews of Peace' speech delivered on March 5, 1946. I encourage everyone to read it in its entirety.

"I have now stated the two great dangers which menace the homes of the people: War and Tyranny. I have not yet spoken of poverty and privation which are in many cases the prevailing anxiety. But if the dangers of war and tyranny are removed, there is no doubt that science and co-operation can bring in the next few years to the world, certainly in the next few decades newly taught in the sharpening school of war, an expansion of material well-being beyond anything that has yet occurred in human experience. Now, at this sad and breathless moment, we are plunged in the hunger and distress which are the aftermath of our stupendous struggle; but this will pass and may pass quickly, and there is no reason except human folly or sub-human crime which should deny to all the nations the inauguration and enjoyment of an age of plenty. I have often used words which I learned fifty years ago from a great Irish-American orator, a friend of mine, Mr. Bourke Cockran. "There is enough for all. The earth is a generous mother; she will provide in plentiful abundance food for all her children if they will but cultivate her soil in justice and in peace."

Cromwell

Cromwell

It'll Come Back Around

Cromwell

In 1649 outside of the Banqueting House in Whitehall, London something incredible happened: the English people put King Charles I on trial, and then executed him. In 1642 England erupted into a series of civil wars between Royalists and Parliamentarians that eventually led to the dissolution of the monarchy and the creation of the Commonwealth and Protectorate of England, Scotland, and Ireland led by Oliver Cromwell.

The English Civil War was fought for a few different reasons, and most of them began with Charles I inability to maintain a stable and effective government and his behavior towards key advisors and members of Parliament. The concept of the Divine Right of Kings and Absolute Monarchy had been fading across England for some time, beginning as early as the signing of Magna Carta (1215), the English people believed there should be limits on what a monarch could do regarding spending, policy, taxation, the levying of war, and judicial acts against the nobility of the realm. Charles held firmly in his belief in the divine right of kings and that monarchs were only accountable to God, not to their subjects or any earthly government. Believing this, he sought to rule as an absolute monarch and ignore or overrule the English Parliament which created severe tensions throughout the government. Additionally there were deep divides in religious practice and even though England was primarily a Protestant kingdom (Henry VIII split from Rome in 1534) there were tensions between Anglicans (who were much more 'Catholic' in their ceremonies) and Puritans who believed they practiced the purest form of Protestantism.

Charles I was seen as being too sympathetic towards Catholicism, which was exacerbated by his marriage to the Catholic Princess Henrietta Maria of France which alarmed the Protestant factions across England who feared a return to Catholic dominance which had been fought against culturally, violently, and in the legislature since Henry VIII's reign. Charles I was also terrible at managing the finances of the realm and his excessive spending during the Thirty Years War emptied the Crown coffers, so he sought to raise funds through non-traditional means without the consent of Parliament, he forced loans and by levying the Ship Money tax (a tax paid to the crown by coastal cities for naval protection) against Parliamentarian consent created further tension. Charles I then fought The Bishops' War with Scotland in 1639 and 1640 when he tried to enforce the Anglican prayer book on Presbyterian Scotland which resulted in widespread unrest, Charles was unable to subdue Scotland (as so many English kings before him), lost an incredible amount of money, and the lack of support for the war within Parliament took tensions to a boiling point.

Charles I then tried to arrest five members of Parliament which led to the armament of Royalist and Parliamentarian factions. Charles raised the royal standard at Nottingham in August 1642 which began the English Civil Wars. Both sides believed victory could be achieved rather quickly, and like most wars, exactly the opposite happened.

Cromwell

Throughout 1642 at the outbreak of the Civil War and into 1644 a series of battles were fought that led to various stalemates, alliances, and breaks in fighting. It wasn't until The Battle of Marston Moor in July 1644 that the Parliamentarian's 'New Model Army' led by Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell turned the tide of the war and things began to shift. The New Model Army was the name of the Parliamentarian standing army that existed during the English Civil Wars.

In June 1645 at The Battle of Naseby, the Parliamentarians enjoyed a decisive victory by destroying the Royalist force and capturing a large number of officers and the king's personal baggage train.

In 1646 Charles I surrendered to the Scottish Covenanters who then handed him over to the Parliamentarians. Throughout 1648 Royalist uprisings took place across England and a Scottish army invaded England in support of Charles (internal factional disputes play an important role here) however they were all summarily put down and repressed by the 'New Model Army' led by Cromwell ending with the Battle of Preston in August 1648. Following this defeat, Charles I was put on trial for treason and other high crimes against the realm and was executed on January 30, 1649. The Commonwealth of England, Ireland, and Scotland was born.

In order to further solidify the validity and sovereignty of the Commonwealth Cromwell was sent to Scotland and Ireland to lead a series of campaigns there to put down Royalist opposition and sequester any form of rebellion.

Cromwell's behavior in Ireland was particularly brutal where he committed a series of war crimes including mass dehousing of Irish citizens across the country and the massacres at Drogheda and Wexford. He ruled with an iron fist, and was unnaturally brutal, and his son-in-law would continue this tack after Cromwell returned to England.

There was a final Civil War which was fought by Charles I son, Charles II, when more Royalist forces invaded England from Scotland but they too were defeated decisively at the Battle of Worcester on September 3, 1651.

Charles II fled to the European mainland which finally put an end to the English Civil Wars.

While the Commonwealth was capable of maintaining law and order through brutal military force it was still a poorly functioning government and when the Rump Parliament was dissolved by Cromwell in 1653 the Protectorate was created, Cromwell named himself Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, a position he held until he died in 1658. Cromwell ruled as an autocratic military dictator while enforcing a Puritanical moral code across the Commonwealth.

Cromwell

Unsurprisingly when Cromwell died the realm was incredibly unstable, it faced a succession crisis and continued to face economic and external pressures that were just as severe if not worse than before the civil wars broke out. Eventually, due to a desire for stability, a return to form, and harboring a new understanding of governance the English people and its nobility elected to bring Charles II back to England as king, where he was crowned on Tower Hill in 1661.

The Commonwealth experiment did lead to several fundamental changes to the way England governed itself and the way in which its monarchy was viewed. Parliament began to be seen as a sovereign entity, and independent as a law making body that had rights and considerations that set them apart from direct influence of the monarch. Monarchical power was limited and the concept that no monarch was above the law was a key takeaway from the English Civil Wars. This was a foundational change that led to the concept of a 'constitutional monarchy' or a monarchy that is subject to the same laws and statutes that applied to citizens. The monarch was subject to legal accountability, and could be put on trial (and in the case of Charles I executed) which was a revolutionary concept at the time considering that monarchs had historically led by divine right and were anointed by and accountable to God alone.

The establishment of republican law in England without the assent of the monarch allowed a representative government to make and enforce laws across the land that would gradually lead to the continual weakening of the monarchical position. While there were many knock on effects of the English Civil Wars, arguably the most important was the passing of the Habeas Corpus Act of 1679. This was passed during the reign of Charles II, and recognized individual and civil liberties to English citizens that protected individual freedoms and prevented arbitrary detention.

The experiment of the Commonwealth and Protectorate of England was one of the most important periods in Western history and we still feel the effects of this period today, especially in the philosophical arguments found in the American Revolution. Cromwell's behavior in Ireland and Scotland would create animosity against the English that eventually led to continual unrest, the declaration of the Irish Republic in the 20th century, and the Irish/English Civil Wars. The development and enactment of laws that governed civil liberties is a focal point in democratic societies the world over. The French Revolution carried the ideas of representative government and individual rights as a rallying point, and the American Revolution was fought largely over the protection of civil liberties and representation with fair taxation.

Jinan

Jinan

The Chinese Civil War took place over a large swathe of the first half of the 20th century. The Communist Party of China (CPC) led by Mao Zedong and the Nationalist Party, also known as the Kuomintang (KMT) led by Chiang Kai-shek fought in multiple phases from 1927-1936 and then again after the Japanese had been defeated from 1946 to 1949. In the first phase of the Chinese Civil War the CPC and KMT were allies in an effort to unify China. Chiang Kai-shek turned against the CPC when he saw them as a threat to his vision for a centralized and modern Chinese state. This split led to the beginning of a full scale civil war between the CPC and KMT. Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang controlled most major cities and the central government of China, and they eventually pushed Mao and the rest of the CPC up into northern China facing almost complete annihilation.

The Chinese Civil War was put on hold however in 1937 when the Japanese launched the full scale invasion of China and began capturing major Chinese cities, and halting trade routes in Hong Kong, Canton, and Macau. Both the CPC and KMT realized that the Japanese threat was far more important and thus formed an unstable alliance known as the Second United Front to resist Japanese aggression. The KMT fought the Japanese from central and southern China while the CPC fought from northern China, all the while jockeying for position, increasing political standing on both the world stage and amongst Chinese citizens. Both sides were preparing for the civil war to resume after the Japanese were thrown out of China.

It is hard to understate the violence committed in China during WWII by the Japanese and by the Chinese military organizations against its own people. Roughly 20 million people were killed (military and civilian) throughout the course of the war, and vast quantities of land were flooded, burned, or outright destroyed and because the civil war began almost immediately after Japanese defeat it took some regions decades to heal and rebuild.

Once Japan was pushed out of China, the CPC was rebuilt. They had strengthened their forces and methods of fighting and they spent 1946-1949 pushing the KMT out of China into Taiwan. The KMT had been severely weakened during WW2 due to direct confrontations with the Japanese, and they had been subject to internal corruption, economic issues, and lack of popular support due to their treatment of the civilian populace during the war.

The KMT prosecuted the war with a fervent scorched earth policy, notably in 1938 Chiang Kai-shek agreed to flood the Yellow River to stop the push of the Japanese inland, it destroyed thousands of acres of arable land, and killed roughly ~500,000 people (these numbers are hotly debated). Decisions like this were made frequently in the KMT governmental war policy to stop the Japanese and this caused them to lose popular support whereas the CPC had fought mostly a guerrilla war from the north and achieved victories against overwhelming odds.

Jinan

By 1949 the Communist forces had captured Beijing and most of the country, and on October 1, 1949 Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China, while Chiang Kai-shek established a separate government in Taiwan. Mao's China and the PRC instituted major changes to Chinese society and during The Great Leap Forward (the attempt to reconstruct the entire country from an agrarian economy into a communist society) millions of people were killed. Mao and other communist leaders from the outset of the civil war believed the conversion of China to a communist state would achieve several things: class divisions would be eliminated, the removal of Western imperial powers from influencing a weak Chinese state, large scale poverty, inequality and landlessness would be significantly reduced, China would be forced to modernize under a communist society, the peasants would play a significant role in the future direction of China, and Mao himself desired personal power and so built a cult of personality around himself.

The Cultural Revolution began several years later in 1966 as a response to the failures of the Great Leap Forward. Mao encouraged paramilitary groups of young people to attack the Four Olds: old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas. Thus began a campaign of terror, the attacking of intellectuals, the destruction of historical artifacts and the purge of those deemed to be enemies of the Communist Party (which was largely arbitrary).

This period was marked by widespread chaos and violence. Many people were persecuted and centuries of Chinese heritage and cultural artifacts were destroyed, the economy was disrupted, and the Revolution didn't end until Mao died in 1976. After his death Deng Xiaoping took power and began a period of rapid economic growth and modernization that has characterized China's global posture and economic policy to this day.

China's emergence as a communist state contributed to the bipolarization of the world during the Cold War. Initially aligned with the Soviet Union as part of the socialist bloc against the Western bloc led by the U.S., this strengthened communist efforts and position around the world. Communist China intervened in the Korean War siding with North Korea against South Korea and U.N. forces, which escalated the conflict and solidified a divided Korea. Eventually the Sino-Soviet split allowed China to pursue a more independent foreign policy, but increased tension between Russia and China.

Finally in the late 1970's China began to open up, expand its economic base, and assert itself evermore into international affairs. The world has become increasingly dependent on China for manufacturing and supply chains, and China has begun to connect its infrastructure to more than 60 countries across Asia and into Europe.

Jinan

International geo-politics, positioning in military affairs, and ideologies don't exist in a vacuum. China's communist upheaval stems from generations of foreign rule, governmental corruption, and economic/social pressure from the West. It can be easy to feel disconnected from the past, to see things that happened hundreds of years ago in a different part of the world as totally separate from ourselves, but that isn't the way the world works.

As the world becomes more connected, more interdependent, and routes of supply cross oceans, continents, and completely different societies, the influence of powerful ideologies begin to proliferate with goods and services. Ideas, actions, individuals all matter, and they matter on a global scale, now more than ever. I don't think there is a better demonstration of how true that is than the multi-generational transformation of the Middle Kingdom.

Ruin

Ruin

I wondered then, standing on the edge
of the abyss, looking deep into the
darkness ahead of me, what would be
there, on the other side, would it still be
me?

If I dive in, who resurfaces, is it me or
someone else?
Is this what it means to die, is it waking
up after drowning, while staring at the
sky?

I can't begin again, unmarked and
unfettered
There is no new start for those so
settled.

There's a rhythm to life that forces the
habit,
And I know now, no power lies in the
adamant

Though living is no newer.

It's all the same to me,
Wasted and thinned on worldly things
There's a divinity in what the void
might bring

"Because I am too soon.
Because without You, I am only
revolutions
Of ruin.

I'm the prophecy prophecies pass.
Why need dies at last.
How oceans dry. Islands drown.
And skies of salt crash to the ground.
I turn the powerful. Defy the weak.
Only grass grows down abandoned
streets.

For a greater economy shall follow Us
and it will be undone.
And a greater autonomy shall follow Us
and it too will be undone.
And a greater feeling shall follow Love
and it too we will blow to dust.
For I am longings without trust. The
cycloidal haste
freedom from Hailey forever wastes.
Dust cares for only dust.
And time only for Us.

Because I am too soon.
Because without Her, I am only
revolutions
Of ruin."

Danielewski, Mark Z.
Only Revolutions.
Pantheon Books, 2006.

Ruin

The question of conflict between people whether, politically, socially, economically, or ideologically motivated has always interested me. This is always framed by asking is war, revolution, demonstration, or clash of peoples is justified, and if successful will it make the world a better place. These are questions that cannot be answered here, and probably will never be answered to anyone's satisfaction. What I've tried to do with 'Unto Caesar' is bring several examples that, while seemingly loosely related by time, place, demography, and political aims, connect us to the past and play important roles in our lives today. I wanted to demonstrate reasons why people fight, what they fight for, and the colossal outcomes of these conflicts.

What conflicts are indeed just or necessary and which are not? It all depends on your perspective. No soldier wants to die for nothing, for the ambitions of other people or to attain goals and political aims they have no direct benefit from. Too often conflict seemingly has no meaning and no resolution. What I've tried to do with 'Unto Caesar' is provide a lens, a background, and some foundational information on some of the most interesting and most important conflicts in history. Of course, I am biased. I am not a historian, but a historical enthusiast, and I am not a philosopher, and I'm not even really a poet. I do have a profound interest in the human experience, what people make matter in their world, and what makes life worth living.

World War I, World War II, the American Revolution, the English Civil Wars, the French Revolution, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the Easter Rising are all interesting and pivotal moments in history that feed into one another, in some form or fashion. Oliver Cromwell's treatment of the Irish people led to an increase of tension that still has not diminished, and while Ireland's desire for unification and independence cannot be laid solely at the feet of the Protectorate, a fair amount of blame does lie with Cromwell and the Parliamentarians. European imperial expansion across the ocean, into North America and Asia are key aspects of World War I and World War II, and all of the baggage that goes along with the western ideologies, military and economic expansion at the cost of others, and the desire for dominance changed our world forever.

The Communist Movement in China was a direct response to European and Capitalistic expansion into Asia, and the Maoist regime changed China's standing in the world forever. We feel the effects of a growing and expanding China everyday in 2023, especially post COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, as an American, I see the United States from a different perspective than those who live elsewhere in the world, as someone of European descent my experience in the U.S. has been dramatically different than those who are not. This has shaped my understanding of the people who created this nation and fought for its existence, and then 90 years later fought to reunify it, while also coming to terms with the atrocities that they committed.

Ruin

Revolutions have happened the world over, and I've left most of them out. If we pause to think briefly about the few I did outline here, specifically the English Civil War, the French Revolution, and the American Revolution, think about their outcomes.

The English Civil Wars spawned Cromwell, the French Revolution spawned Napoleon. The United States exchanged one George for another. King George famously said of Washington when told he was going to resign: 'If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world' and Washington did.

There is no doubt that the story any country tells about themselves can be more honest, and inclusive, while still recognizing the better angels of our collective nature.

Aspiration, a desire to be better than we were yesterday, and a willingness to make the world an equitable and beautiful place are not uniquely American ideas, but we have placed them at the very core of the story we tell ourselves about what we believe America to be. That doesn't change the fact that humanity, and every conceivable form of government, political/social ideology is rife with contradiction.

The world is a beautiful place, and humanity has done wonderful and terrible things. Empires rise and fall, civilizations burn to the ground and some are renewed, we create and live out simple, but equally complex, artistic, and amazing lives in our very short time here on Earth. I find myself so interested in learning and understanding the past because it makes me believe in what is possible in our future.

I chose to include lines from 'Only Revolutions' to close 'Ruin' with because it encapsulates so much about the way I feel, the way I love, the passion that burns through me as soon as my eyes open in the morning and is never quite quenched. It's a love story, of two people traveling through space and time, anchored only to one another, grieving only one another as the world collapses around them. It's beautiful in the way a dying star is beautiful, both spectacular and terrible but yet never fully understood. Just like this body of work, it is all seemingly disconnected while simultaneously being inseparable.

At its core 'Ruin' is a reflection of my perspective of myself, how I view my time on Earth and my familiarity and fear of death, but it is also an acknowledgement of the importance of what I think makes life worth living: love, beauty, art, culture, and people. Humanity has so much more to do, we have so much more to prove and I want to play a part in it, however small.

I have so much left to do, I have so much more to see. I never want this ride to end, and I want You along for all of it.

Appendices

Appendix

PROCLAMATION READY BY PATRICK PEARSE OUTSIDE OF THE G.P.O. OF DUBLIN MONDAY APRIL 24, 1916

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN:

In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment and supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms.

Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades in arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

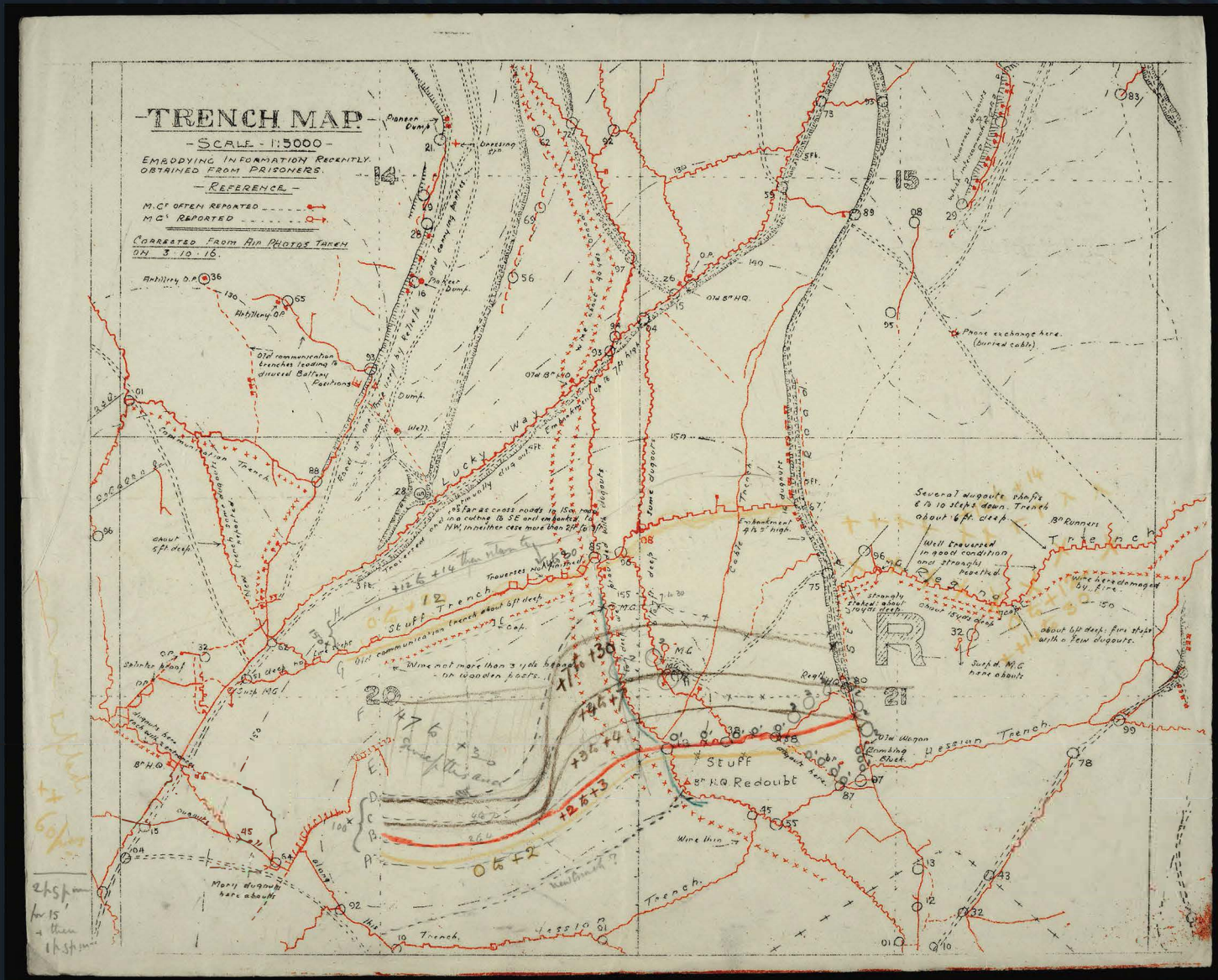
Appendix

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline, and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional
Government:

THOMAS J. CLARKE
SEAN Mac DIARMADA
P. H. PEARSE
JAMES CONNOLLY

Appendix



Trench Map of the Battle of the Somme used by the Commander Royal Artillery of the 18th Division during the later stages of the battle.

Retrieved from the British National Archives

Appendix



British Soldiers in the trenches.

Retrieved from the BBC

Appendix



Washington Crossing the Delaware
Painted by Emanuel Leutze a German American in 1851

Retrieved from the MET Public Domain

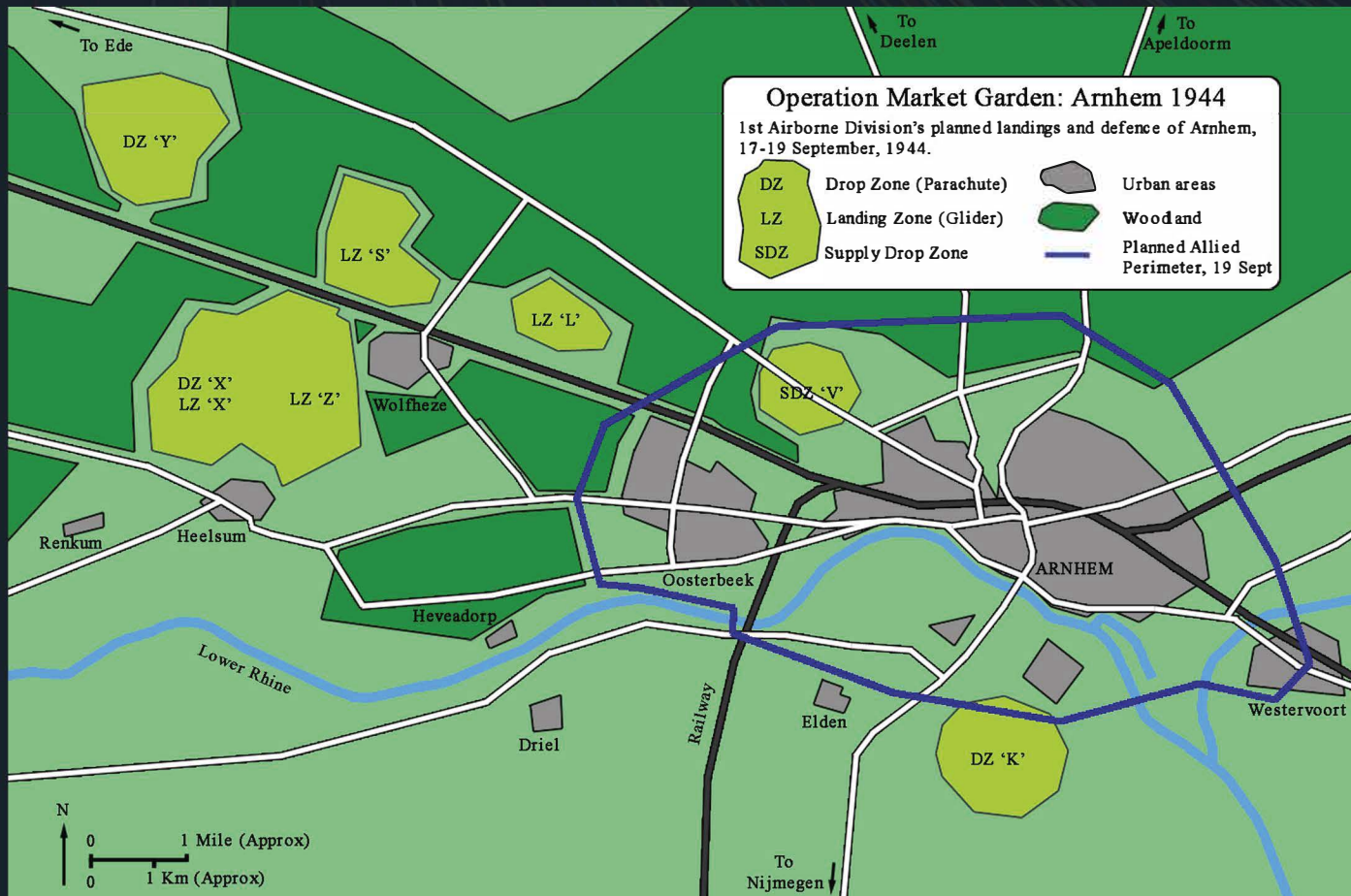
Appendix



An execution by guillotine during the Reign of Terror, oil on paper by Pierre Antoine Demachy, Painted in 1793.

Retrieved from Britannica, displayed at Carnavalet Museum

Appendix



Planned British Landings and Defense of Arnhem

Retrieved from Wikipedia, verified by Royal Archives

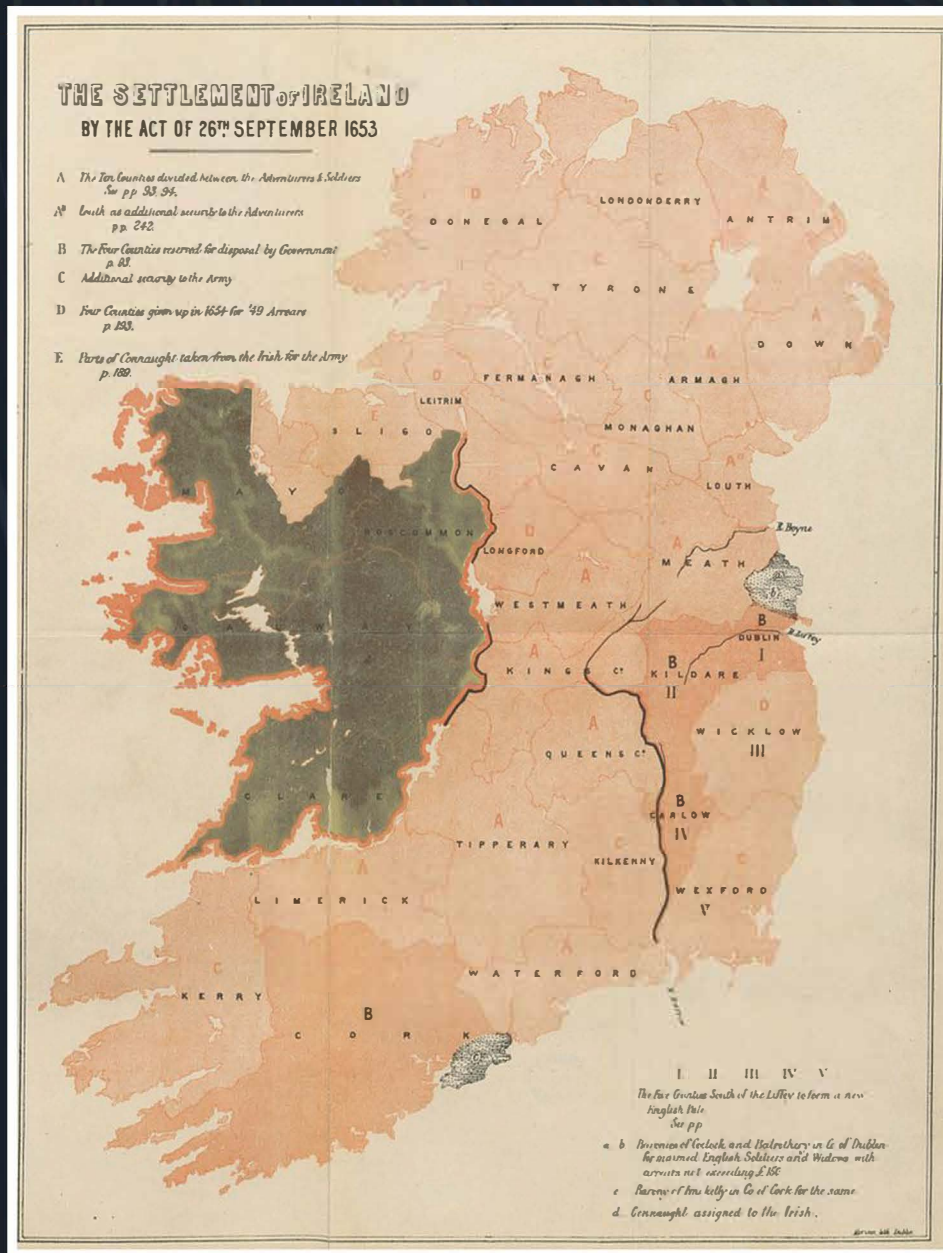
Appendix



Portrait of Oliver Cromwell by Robert Walker
Oil on Canvas circa 1649

Retrieved from Royal Archives

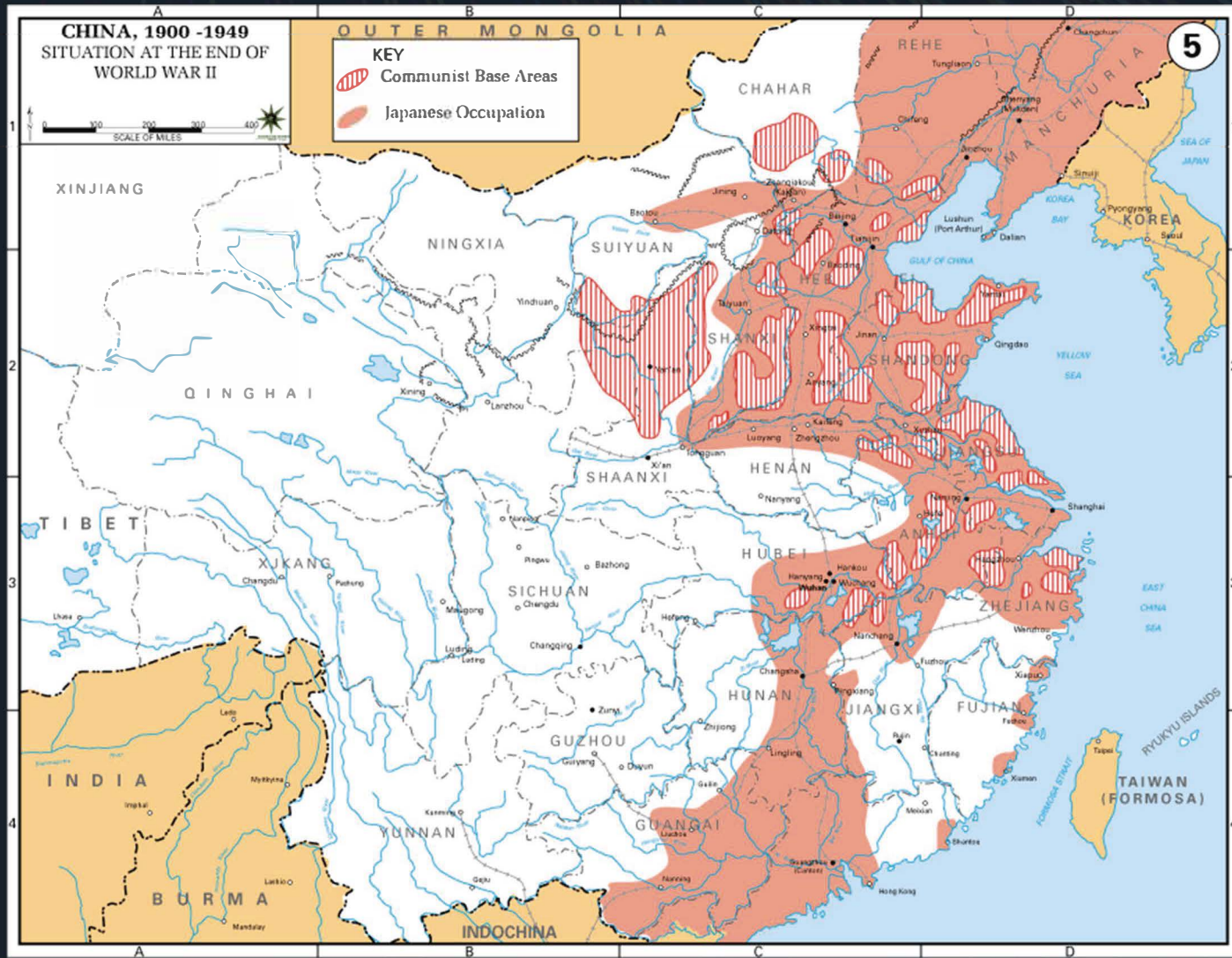
Appendix



Cromwellian Action in Ireland

Retrieved from Royal Archives

Appendix



Japanese Invasion of China showing Japanese controlled regions in red, communist controlled pockets in stripes, and KMT regions in white.

Retrieved from the Pacific Atrocities Museum

Appendix



Maoist Propaganda for the Cultural Revolution. The caption reads "The Chinese People's Liberation Army is the great school of Mao Zedong Thought"

Retrieved from the Royal Archives

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