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SGS HISTORIAN

Produced by the Lower Sixth Form

The Jewel in the Crown under Nazi Rule

HOW THE CHANNEL ISLANDS FARED UNDER OCCUPATION



Did **Richard I** deserve to be called the **Lionheart**?

An examination of the 12th century king's reign

'**Saving Private Ryan**': The Art of War

How Spielberg created the most accurate depiction of warfare ever seen on film

Notes

FOR THIS YEAR'S ISSUE OF THE HISTORIAN we had a passionate group to bring together the magazine. We thought our main stumbling block was our extremely varied historical interests that meant we found it impossible to agree on an overall theme. In the end we decided that we wouldn't have one. By doing this it would allow each and every one of us the creative freedom to fully express our broad range of interests. From Richard I to the Nazis, we really believe this year's issue provides you with a wide range of articles and questions covering many periods of history. I couldn't be more proud of what we have been able to create and I am sure that the entire group would agree with me. I do hope you enjoy reading the magazine as much as we have enjoyed putting it together!

Alex Malone

THIS YEAR'S SGS HISTORIAN TEAM have chosen to write a selection of articles covering an eclectic range of themes and periods. So much so that finding an umbrella 'theme' for this edition proved beyond them! However, this should be considered as a strength, reflective of the broad range of interests that exists within this cohort of interested and engaged historians; many of whom have looked far beyond the narrow confines of the A Level curriculum. This will stand them in good stead for future study of History or other disciplines. Perhaps an appropriate theme would be *Challenging the utilitarian approach of 21st Century Sixth Form study*? I hope you enjoy their work!

Mr D J Stone, Head of Sixth Form

Layout and design by Jamie Carson

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Was the **1933 Book Burning** a clear sign of what was to come in Nazi Germany?

Did a German writer predict the events of the Holocaust over 100 years in advance?

The Jewel in the Crown under Nazi Rule

WRITTEN BY ALEX MALONE

Winston Churchill once said that 'history is written by the victors'. With the allied victory at the end of World War II we are constantly reminded of the victories such as the Battle of Britain or the storming of the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. However, we hear very little about the losses.

The Channel Islands sit alone between France and Britain in the English Channel, so it was inevitable that at some point civilians would catch sight of the Kriegsmarine floating just beyond their shores. This terrifying sight would come sooner than expected; with France capitulating to the German Reich in just 46 days, Britain was all that stood between them and victory.

With German invasion impending, the British government concluded that the Channel Islands held no strategic importance and instead would be left to the mercy of the Nazis. However, what the government failed to do was pass on this information to Germany, who was still under the impression that the Channel Islands were armed and ready to fight. Not only had Britain given up the oldest possession of the Crown but had also condemned them to a full German onslaught.



Islanders receiving Red Cross parcels

On the 28th June 1940 islanders would witness the beginning of an occupation that would continue until the final year of the war. A squadron of Luftwaffe bombers unleashed hell on the defenceless islands, bombing the harbours of Guernsey and Jersey. Two days later on the 30th June the occupation would officially begin. For the next five years the occupation would torture the islanders and tear mothers from their children.

Thankfully just before the German invasion, a civilian evacuation was hurriedly arranged with the fear of a German attack at any moment. Guernsey managed to evacuate 5,000 school children and 12,000 adults; this number is just a small fraction of the 48,000 who wanted to escape the island. Children of all ages were torn from their home by war with many never to make the return. The evacuees landed in Weymouth and were sent by train to various areas of Britain, with many ending up in Stockport. Days after landing in England it would be heard over the radio that their home had been occupied.

It had been concluded by the Germans that the islands had no real value to them in war, so their only purpose was to serve as propaganda to show the Nazis had seized British land. While the island managed to maintain its own government it wasn't much of a victory for those islanders

whose lives were quickly ruined by unemployment with businesses quickly collapsing under the Nazi occupation. Civilians were being forced to live as if they were in Germany, currencies changed into Reichsmarks, clocks were changed to German time and people were forced to drive on the right hand side of the road.



Almost every family was affected by the evacuation

It seemed that the brutal dictatorship that Hitler was running in Germany was being forced on the helpless people of Guernsey and Jersey. As the islands became cut off from the rest of the world the once hidden gem of the British empire fell on hard times. As the war dragged on and came to a stand still, life became tough and morale fell among the people. With radios being confiscated in September 1942, people struggled to find an escape from the horrifying life they were forced to live.

These gems of the sea were ransacked almost as soon as the occupation was announced. The Nazis forced those who remained on the island to construct,

fortifications, bunkers, air raid shelters, destroying the natural beauty that their home possessed. The islands were turned from a paradise into a prison in which its prisoners were forced to construct concrete fortifications. Concentration camps were set up on Alderney holding up to 6,000 prisoners of war, who were kept there until they were transferred to France in 1944. These towers of concrete that once ruled the islands during the occupation still remain there to this day and have now blended into the natural beauty that these islands hold. They serve as a reminder to those growing up on the island and those visiting of the true hardship that its population were left to suffer alone.



German occupation towers can still be seen today
They have left a permanent mark on the islands

However the amazing resilience of the people of the Channel Islands was shown. Resistance against the iron fist of the Nazi regime varied from small acts of sabotage, to the running of an underground newspaper.

In the final months of the war with much of mainland Europe liberated the Channel Islands remained under an infuriated Nazi control. The final winter before liberation was one of the toughest of all for the civilians. The temperatures were bitterly cold and food had become a rarity. All that kept people from starvation were parcels that arrived by boat from the Red Cross. In the face of such hardships people came together to find substitutes for foods that had simply run out, seawater was used for salt, acorns were used instead of coffee, stinging nettles were seen as a replacement for vegetables. This ability of islanders to keep on going in the harshest of times is truly inspiring.

Finally on the 8th May 1945 at 15:00 Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that 'our dear Channel Islands are also freed today'. On the 9th of May Guernsey was granted its liberation from German occupation; a day that

is remembered every year by islanders. Still 74 years later, the events of what happened to this wonderful collection of islands is almost never spoken. It is one of the greatest stories of grit and determination, and the will to keep going in the face of a brutal future.

I feel it is time that the events of what transpired on these islands is brought to mainstream attention as a testament to the courage of those who were affected by the occupation of Jersey and the Bailiwick of Guernsey.



News delivered to the islands updating the of the events in Europe

Fact File

START OF OCCUPATION	30 June 1940
END OF OCCUPATION	9 May 1945
WARTIME POPULATION	66,000
EVACUATED	25,000
DEPORTED	2,300
ESCAPED TO MAINLAND	225
IMPORTED LABOURERS	16,000
DEATHS IN CAMPS	700+



Did **Richard I** deserve to be called the ‘**Lionheart**’?

WRITTEN BY **CLAIRE MURPHY**

‘**Lionheart**’ or ‘**Cœur de Lion**’ has clear connotations of gallantry, courage and nobility, but is this term really accurate for the 12th century king? Or would the terms reckless, negligent or even foolish paint a better picture of the royal?

The legend surrounding Richard is one of medieval fantasy, depicting a dauntless king, and an illustrious military leader. Nevertheless, this view has been challenged by many historians. William Stubbs for example, offers a counter argument that states he was a ‘bad son, a selfish ruler, and a vicious man’

Richard I was able to come into power after having defeated his own father. With the King of France by his side, the pair attacked King Henry II, after he had refused to name Richard as his rightful heir. Their forces ended up defeating Henry’s army at Ballans in 1189, two days later, Henry II died, leaving Richard to take the crown. The nature of Richard’s reign begins to present his immorality, as he would go as far as rebel against his own father in order to achieve his personal ambition.



19th-century portrait of Richard the Lionheart by Merry-Joseph Blondel



A map of the crusader's route

Richard I ruled England from the years 1189 to 1199, yet during his ten year reign, he was only in England for 6 months. The King clearly preferred France and used England for revenue for his wars. For instance, he once tried to sell London to the highest bidder to fund the crusades. Upon becoming King, Richard’s main ambition was to join the Third Crusade in order to reconquer the Holy Land from the Muslim leader Saladin. Western leaders joined together to fight the crusade, including the King of France, and the Holy Roman Emperor. The voyage would take Richard through Sicily, Cyprus and Acre, before eventually reaching the Holy Land. Throughout the journey to reach Jerusalem, Richard created many enemies, which would inevitably lead to his capture in 1196.

His strong leadership is hard to deny, as he was able to conquer both Messina and Cyprus on his travels, albeit at the expense of a violent rivalry between himself and the King of France, Philip II.

For instance, Richard refused to give the French king a share of the treasures of Cyprus, the pair also quarrelled over leadership after Frederick I of the Roman Empire drowned, and finally, Richard married Berengaria of Navarre, frustrating Philip since his sister, Alice had originally been betrothed to Richard. These were key factors for Philip’s departure back to France after the following success at Acre.



The siege of Acre

Philip’s anger towards Richard would soon culminate in the massive ransom for his freedom when he got captured, as Philip had great influence in the matter. This not only shows Richard undermining the French royal, but we also learn that he is not a man of his word. In addition, Richard found an enemy in the Duke of Austria – Leopold V. Upon conquering Acre, a coastal town near Jerusalem, the monarchs placed personal banners to illustrate their power, Leopold demanded that his banner be placed higher than Richard’s, however Richard refused. This

illustrated his condescendence and his sense of superiority in the feudal society, since he was a King, whilst Leopold was a Duke. Leopold then decided to depart back to his native country, once again, leaving Richard with a lost ally.

Acre has further significance in regard to Richard I, as this was the location of the Massacre of Ayyadieh. Around 3000 soldiers, men, women, and children from the city were brutally murdered after Saladin had failed to agree to Richard's negotiations. The agreement underlined Richard's desire to have the 'True Cross' (which was believed to be the cross that Jesus was crucified on), 200,000 gold coins and the release of Christian prisoners. Another reason for the massacre was the lack of resources; Richard would have been unable to feed the prisoners had he waited longer, prompting his desire to kill them. Though there are grounds on which the bloodshed could be seen as inevitable, this does not pardon the heartless act.



The massacre of Ayyadieh

The central objective of the crusade was to recapture Jerusalem, but this was unsuccessful. Though Richard led the army victoriously, particularly in the battle of Arsuf, he was unable to achieve the ultimate prize. Their first march on Jerusalem was foiled due to terrible weather, which destroyed food, clothes and weaponry. The second attempt was equally atrocious, with the crusaders having a lack of water since Saladin had tactically poisoned the wells. Richard soon came to the conclusion that fighting for Jerusalem was pointless. The

city had strong fortifications, leaving the coast to march would leave them vulnerable to attack, and even if, against all the odds, they had captured Jerusalem, they would not have had the man power nor resources to hold it for long. Thus, Richard pragmatically called for a peace treaty – the treaty of Jaffa. The treaty declared that the Holy Land would remain in the hands of the Muslims; however Christian pilgrims would be allowed to visit freely and safely. This is the reason for the misconception that the Third Crusade was a success, hence granting Richard such a prestigious moniker. But in reality, the Crusade highlights the failing and callousness of the Lionheart. If the real aim of the crusade was the recapture of Jerusalem, Richard would not have created political tension or overturned Byzantine rule on Cyprus. The outcome of the Crusade was Richard's increased strength in Eastern Europe, rather than a virtuous holy war.

Arguably, the largest failing of the Crusade was Richard's return. He was shipwrecked off the northern Adriatic coast, forcing him to plough through enemy territory to get home. In an attempt to get by freely, he disguised himself, though was soon captured by Duke Leopold's men. The ransom was agreed upon by Leopold, Philip II and Henry VI to be 100,000 marks – a substantially large amount of money. This created a considerable economic burden on England's shoulders, as drastic tax increases followed. Had the King not created so many enemies, the ransom would have been smaller, or even would never have occurred.

Finally, Richard's death was anticlimactic, yet also epitomises his character. He was attacking a small chateau in Limoges, after hearing of a hidden treasure. Richard had lived through countless battles, and many argue that he thought that he was invincible. Richard was walking the chateau's perimeter without wearing his chain mail and he

was shot by a castle defender using a crossbow. He died later of an infection. His overconfident foolishness led to his downfall.

Richard's legacy is often debated, he was undeniably a strong military figure, but the same level of praise cannot be attributed to his rule. History is often glamorised by the media, painting an image of a romantic, selfless hero for children to look up to. No King or Queen is perfect, and Richard the Lionheart was no exception.



The Statue of Richard I located in Old Palace Yard outside the Palace of Westminster

Was the sword the **most popular battlefield weapon** in pre-gunpowder Europe?

WRITTEN BY ALFRED BRADSHAW

“ The sword was used in the ancient world in the same way that a pistol is used today. ”

The standard modern perception of the battlefields of old is of knights in shining armour wielding flashing swords in their glorious and honourable charges against other similarly minded and equipped opponents. This description most accurately depicts the late fifteenth century in terms of how a battlefield would look from afar but does not exactly fit any particular time period. The usual depictions of medieval warfare in modern media usually depict armour from the fifteenth century (in the case of the knight in shining armour), morals from the nineteenth century due to the time that most of these stories were written and swords from the fourteenth century. These common misconceptions have very logical and interesting roots going back to the pre Roman Bronze Age.



So how did the sword become the symbol of the knight and synonymous with medieval warfare if it was only a backup weapon the equivalent of a pistol in the arsenal of a modern soldier, to be used when the main battlefield weapon was not convenient or simply broken or misplaced? The first reason is exactly that: the sword was used in the ancient world in the same way that a pistol is used today. On the battlefield it is an adequate backup weapon which will serve in a pinch to protect a soldier from

being overrun without a weapon. However on the streets it is a practical self-defence weapon far more convenient than the main battlefield weapons such as spears or halberds of the time. Where an eight foot spear would be inconvenient to say the least to carry about town during daily life, a sword provided the needed protection against common ruffians without getting in the way of going under low arches or turning tight corners. This is the same reason that modern day people in America carry pistols on their belts rather than fully automatic belt fed machine guns.

Another reason for the mystique of the sword comes from the fact that they usually cost more than most battlefield weapons such as spears or large axes; although they were not as exclusive to own as many half-learned people will tell you (I have heard them compared to modern day super cars in relative terms). They were undoubtedly made with more steel and required more skill from a blacksmith to forge their thin and specific proportions. This would undoubtedly elevate their position over other weapons of the time that required less skill to make and were cheaper to produce.

The myth of King Arthur and Excalibur (formerly Caliburnus) is an interesting and expertly crafted story that although largely written in the twelfth century by a French monk, has its basis in pre-Roman Britain. For those who are not so clear on the specific story of Arthur's sword Excalibur, here is a summary; Excalibur was pulled from stone thus proclaiming Arthur the rightful king of all England. After many adventures with the sword and after the victory over Arthur's arch-nemesis "Mordred" in which Mordred was killed and Arthur mortally wounded at the hands of Mordred, Arthur instructs Sir Lancelot to throw Excalibur into the nearby lake for the water spirit "The Lady of the Lake" to keep. Lancelot eventually does this after much displeasure at the idea of throwing away the sacred sword but



A ritually destroyed dagger/ shortsword

eventually does, as a final request of his dying king. Although this story seems simply poetic, it shares striking similarities to Bronze Age British practices which show that even since its earliest days, the sword has been a sacred object, more so than any weapon before or since. Bronze age swords were cast in moulds made of rock and so the production of a sword could easily be explained as “pulling a sword from a stone”. There have also been hundreds of swords found in the British Isles which have been “ritually destroyed” meaning that they have been bent over multiple times, had notches cut in the blade and most importantly: thrown in rivers and lakes. This to me is the evident source of the myth of Excalibur and the fact that this was done to hundreds of swords but to no spears or axes that I know about highlights their sacred importance even at the start of their existence.

The next question that must be asked is ‘*If swords were not the main battlefield weapon during the pre-gunpowder age, then what was?*’ This is a complex question due to the large range in time and location that such a vague question necessitates. The answer is relatively simple. Before the eleventh century, aside from the Roman Empire and the Persians, for most of central Europe the most common weapon was the spear. This is simply because it is a very effective and good weapon. Used in even a basic formation it is very difficult for any enemy force to move through and far outreaches a sword. The Romans however, opted for a short sword called the Gladius as their main weapon with a throwing spear called a Pilum as a form of preliminary bombardment of sorts. This was an attempt by the Romans to solve the problem of moving fast whilst keeping formation and fighting in mountainous terrain which is common in central Italy: an attempt which turned out to be very successful. The typical warrior of the Persian Empire, so the ancient scholar Herodotus tells us, used bows and short spears, with the Persian bodyguard of Xerxes himself using longer spears. It is bordering on the unnecessary to point out that other weapons did of course exist and were used at these times; these are just the most common ones.

After the eleventh century however there is a change in common battlefield weapons as armour

became more effective. The sturdy spear of old was no longer as useful in combat against opponents who were now protected by solid steel plates and not rings of wire. As a response to this the most prevalent battlefield weapons changed throughout the next few centuries. They utilised two different methods to deal with armour. The first method is of a large blunt force which could break bones and wind opponents despite their armour. This school of armour nullification contains the mace, the war-hammer, the flail and the “bec de corbin”. The war-hammer was a single handed hammer with a textured face on one side and a spike (or bec in French) on the other. These weapons were lighter than most people think, usually weighing about the same as a medium sized modern DIY hammer with a longer handle. The bec de corbin was a two handed version of the war-hammer and was an extremely popular battlefield weapon for heavily armoured knights from the fourteenth century onwards due to its great effectiveness against other armoured opponents. The flail was simply a studded weight on a chain attached to a handle. This was a particularly difficult weapon to control but exerted a massive force on opponents when it hit them.

The other school of armour nullification is that of penetrating through the gaps of the armour with a thin, very pointy and extremely stiff thrusting weapon. The common weapons which utilised this technique were the estoc, ahlspiess and longbow. The estoc was a direct evolution to a longsword and the hilt (or handle and guard area) was exactly the same as on a sword. However the blade, if it can be called that, was usually completely square or diamond in cross section and had no cutting edge. This was so that the blade could be grabbed about half way up in a method called “half-swording” and accurately placed into a gap in an opponent’s armour. The rigidity of this blade then provided a powerful thrust to get through the lighter armour underneath. The ahlspiess worked with a similar blade to the estoc but was much shorter and placed on a large stick as a polearm. The ahlspiess also had a disk behind the blade to protect the user’s hands.

The longbow was a primarily British weapon and obviously not a melee weapon, indeed it was



Fighting with the ‘bec de corbin’ from a medieval fencing manual

considered unsporting by the knights who had to fight against it due to proficiency in killing rich men at long ranges. Nevertheless it was a very common weapon in the English armies of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as shown in the battles of Agincourt and Crecy where large numbers of longbow men defeated cavalry charges by the French knights. It is a widespread and ongoing debate that includes the opinions of scholars, reenactors and hobbyist archers as to whether the longbow could pierce the knightly plate armour or whether the arrows could only kill the horses of the knights and the knights themselves when their visors were lifted or when hit in a gap in the armour. I personally believe that the longbow could not shoot through plate armour and I hold as testament multiple demonstrations and attempts to shoot through plate armour with historically accurate longbows. Oh and for all of the crossbow supporters out there: no, the crossbow could not shoot through plate armour either.

The sword always has been and always will be an object of great intrigue and will remain the world over as possibly the only weapon to be romanticised

in the way that it has been. A sword has always been something more than a weapon; The sword had been a symbol of English sovereignty in Excalibur, an item of status in the dress swords of modern ceremonial uniforms as are seen at remembrance parades and in the case of "Mad Jack" Churchill when he stormed the Normandy beaches with one in 1944, a weapon which did more damage to the German soldiers psychologically than any machinegun he could ever have carried. Such is the myth of the sword.

A mounted knight with a war-hammer flanked by two footmen armed with ahlspeisses



SGS Sixth Formers at the beating heart of our political system

WRITTEN BY MR D J STONE

On Tuesday, the Lords and Baronesses of the Communications Committee heard from Sir Lenny Henry as part of their enquiry into Public Service Broadcasting in the UK. However, on Wednesday it was seventeen Lower Sixth Form pupils who had their chance to share their views, experiences and thoughts with the committee, as arguably the highlight of a packed and productive visit to Westminster to learn more about Politics, History, International Relations and Law.

A 5.45am meet at Stockport Station ensured the group were ready to emerge from the steps at Westminster Station onto (a scaffolding clad) Parliament Square with sufficient time to visit the Houses of Parliament, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Supreme Court.

The visit started with 800 years of British political history being condensed into fifteen minutes of light and sound show, excellently put together by the Parliament Education Service. The complexities of the evolution of the Westminster model, which due to Britain's imperial legacy has been copied the world over, were adeptly broken down into digestible snippets. This set the group up for the tour of the Palace of Westminster that followed.

Led by our guides, the pupils had the opportunity

to go into the chambers of the Lords and the Commons, step through the Division Lobbies, and learn about the conventions that shape the work of Parliament. This included seeing former Lib Dem leader and others placing their reservation cards in the seats they wanted, ahead of Prime Minister's Questions and the debate on whether or not Parliament should be able to take control of business again to block a no-deal Brexit in October.

This was followed by the session with Lord Gordon, and Baronesses McIntosh and Bonham-Carter in a Lords Committee Room. The pupils were split into two groups and asked to consider how they access Public Service Broadcasting and how this contrasts with other providers, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and NowTV. The pupils



The group inside Westminster Hall

embraced the opportunity to play a part in this key aspect of the Lords work, with Omid and Kate feeding back to a whole group discussion at the end. We look forward to reviewing their final report later in the year!

Another opportunity to travel through the nooks and crannies of Parliament followed as we were whisked away to Westminster Hall to meet Mary Robinson, MP for Cheadle. The pupils really valued the opportunity to quiz Mary on the big issues of the day, including Brexit, the prospect of a Peoples' Vote, and the Tory leadership contest. Mary's openness as to her views on these issues and her support for Sajid Javid elicited a positive response from the group, ahead of her needing to dash to the chamber to join the debating.

Our next stop, having passed Chancellor Phillip Hammond on our way out of the hall, was the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Here, the group had the opportunity to meet with four diplomats with contrasting experiences of work in the FCO and the Home Office; both at home and overseas. Again, their openness and the insight they were able to offer into the application process, the practical realities, the strategic importance and the personalities at the heart of diplomatic work left many in the room (including the teachers!) aspiring to a career in the Foreign Office. Valuable insights were gained into the world of counter terrorism work and personal experiences of recent diplomatic postings to Khartoum, Washington, Afghanistan and other intriguing destinations.

This part of the visit concluded with a tour of the two parts of the grand building on King Charles



View of Number 10 from the Foreign Office

Street that originally contained the Foreign Office and the India Office, before the two were amalgamated with the transfer from Empire to Commonwealth in the post-war era. From these offices and grand rooms in London, direct rule was exerted over up to 350 million subjects. Although very different today, in many ways the group were struck by the way that the hustle and bustle in this hive of activity was very much as it would have been in the past.

After lunch on the South Bank, our final stop of the day took the group to the Supreme Court. Here, the pupils had the chance to sit in the seats occupied by the Justices, the appellants, and their legal teams, as the intricacies of the interpretation of laws are reviewed in the highest court in the land. The pupils responded really positively in an interactive session, where they were asked to make decisions on a range of legal dilemmas extending from the right to object to making a cake with pro-gay marriage slogans on it to the legality of school uniform policies.

The group returned to Stockport after a very busy day in London tired but enthused about the places they had visited and the people they had met. As they look ahead to the challenge of applying to study beyond school, many had original intentions confirmed or new sparks lit. As revolutions around the world unfold, the Brexit debate continues, and the Supreme Court continues to rule in cases of legal significance, the group will be well placed to hold informed views and a desire to find out more as a consequence of an excellent day out in London!



Meeting diplomats inside the FCO



Inside the Supreme Court

‘Saving Private Ryan’: The Art of War

WRITTEN BY ARCHIE EADY-GURR

“ Many proclaim that it contains the most accurate depiction of warfare ever seen on film. ”

Steven Spielberg’s 1998 epic ‘Saving Private Ryan’ is widely regarded as being one of the greatest war movies of all time, succeeding both critically and fiscally upon its release, and cementing Spielberg’s growing reputation as being amongst the most talented directors of cinema history. It follows the story of Captain John H. Miller (Tom Hanks) and several men from his company who are charged with finding Private Ryan (Matt Damon) due to a protocol known as the ‘Sole Survivor’ policy. This policy stipulates that if several members of the same family are killed in action, the sole survivor, Ryan in this case, is to be taken out of action to prevent further bereavement. The plot splits its time between this fictional storyline and the real events of the D-Day Omaha beach landings in 1944. Many proclaim that it contains the most accurate depiction of warfare ever seen on film, deviating from a common tendency amongst filmmakers to glamorize combat for the benefit of engaging the audience; a tactic which often involves sacrificing historical credibility.

The most praiseworthy portion of Spielberg’s work arguably takes place in the first act of the film, composed mostly of a 27-minute action sequence portraying the Omaha beach landing. The setup of the scene is a concept that most viewers are familiar with; a large body of men must breach a line of enemy fire in order to secure victory. What sets this scene apart from so many others like it is Spielberg’s outstanding attention to both historical and stylistic detail. The scene is comprised of mostly handheld



camera shots, allowing the footage to follow the motion of the battlefield with ease, whilst its shaky action reminds the viewer of the turbulence of the surroundings. The shutter angle of the camera was drastically reduced; this gave a greater crispness to the action by limiting motion blur, making the explosions and gunshots feel far more visceral and impactful. The negatives were then run through a process to extract brightness, creating a darker ambience. This was done to emulate the tone of photographs of that time, as well as to reflect the grim reality of the scene. Another unusual creative decision was the complete absence of an epic score for the scene. Long-term collaborator John Williams does contribute to the soundtrack (as he does for many other Spielberg films, for example *Jaws* and *Schindler’s List* to name a few), but it is absent from one of the most pivotal moments of the production. This was another subtle attempt to secure the realism of the scene, rather than allowing it to succumb to over-dramatization.



In the majority of scenes of this magnitude, an extensive storyboard has to be drawn up in order to orchestrate chaos in an organized and efficient fashion (some action films such as George Miller’s *Mad Max Fury Road* rely solely on storyboarding), but Spielberg chose not to use this technique. His reasoning is that he wished to make the camera motion more spontaneous, and in this sense it fully succeeds. The motion is erratic but not disorientating, and the mobility of the camera allows Spielberg to produce prolonged over the shoulder

tracking shots, engaging the viewer by making them feel as if they were running behind the other soldiers. Often in large action scenes it is easy to lose the concept of the spatial geography of the character; where they are in proportion to everything else in the scene. Many directors often struggle with this, and their action scenes lose coherency because we don't understand the trajectory of the actors, and the finished results often feel like a disparate connection of shots rather than an organized scene (Michael Bay's *Bad Boys* is a good example of this, although to his credit, it is still a really entertaining film). The sequence is saturated, and cuts quickly between shots of our protagonists, German machine gun posts and mutilated soldiers. To balance this many factors without disorienting viewers (and to do it all without a storyboard) is testament to Spielberg's skill as a director.

The film has aged excellently, and still holds up to other productions which contain an equivalent amount of action scenes. This is due to Spielberg's reliance on mostly practical effects (a special effect created without use of computer imagery). There is a good reason why this film feels so real, because most of it is. Thousands of squibs (packs of firecracker-like explosives which mimic the impact of a bullet) had to be laid out the night before filming in order to accurately show machine gun crossfire on the battlefield, as well as many larger charges which were used to simulate artillery fire. They were not simply be added in digitally in postproduction. This created huge amounts of pressure to get the scene done perfectly the first time in order to avoid hours of laying out more explosives. Rifles were designed so that pulling the trigger detonated the squib pack on the actors' costume, and were made so detailed that distance was taken into account to ensure that the time between trigger pull and detonation was realistic. The importance of these kinds of effects cannot be understated. Classic films such as *The Thing*, *Jurassic Park* and *Alien* have all stood the test of time because of their dependence on practical techniques. Early (and by modern standards, poor) digital effects will never highlight their age, and pivotal scenes never lose their impact. This is not to say that all CGI is bad, and in modern times it can often be so good that it mostly goes unnoticed. Notable examples include David Fincher's depiction of a downtown San Francisco crime scene in *Zodiac*, which is almost unrecognizable as being totally digitally recreated on green screens. However, the consensus amongst most filmmakers is that, in the action genre, there is no substitute for the real thing.

Veterans of D-Day praised Spielberg's work upon its release, with many former soldiers becoming emotionally overwhelmed at how well it recreated their own experience. The film's characters are not a rehash of the generic, stoic GI's, but behave as real people would when faced with the horror of war. Before even storming the beach they are shown vomiting with seasickness, or praying desperately



with shaking hands. Deaths do not occur in blazes of glory, but with soldiers screaming in agony, crying out for their mothers as they die. There is also an absence of black and white morality in the film, and Spielberg resists the urge to exclusively demonize the German side, and is willing to show US troops shooting unarmed prisoners of war or watching German soldiers burn to death rather than put them out of their misery. Tom Hanks is unsurprisingly excellent in his role as Capt. Miller, to the extent that it is easy to overlook the performance of the supporting actors. Vin Diesel (Caparzo) and Giovanni Ribisi (Wade) especially are quietly endearing throughout the film, and despite their limited impact into the plot, they still generate a great deal of emotional investment for their characters; coming across simultaneously as war-hardened but profoundly human.

In terms of historical accuracy the production is fairly sound. It is mostly small details which are done incorrectly; for instance some ballistic errors are made in the scenes at Omaha beach and Romelle (both underwater bullet fatalities at that range, as well as Jackson's 450 ft. through-scope headshot are highly improbable). The machine gun posts shown in the opening sequence do not represent what the Germans would have actually used, as the apertures are far too wide and would have made gunners massively vulnerable to return fire. However these details are so small they are almost not worth mentioning, and for the most part the film is faithful to the time period. For instance the sole survivor protocol was indeed an existing policy at that time, which came to pass after the death of the four Sullivan brothers who were all serving on board the USS Juno when it was destroyed by a Japanese torpedo strike.

Ultimately, the film is a blend of excellent writing, acting, special effects and directing, and unlike so many other historical epics (think *Braveheart* or *300*) it manages to do this whilst maintaining a respectful amount of historical realism. But most importantly, it does justice to the hardship faced by those who fought in the Second World War, brutally showcasing humanity in the midst of extreme emotional and physical strife. For this it deserves credit, not just as a cinematic masterpiece, but as a valuable monument for those who gave their life in service of their country.

The Fourth Crusade: victory for Christendom or a failure of the short-sighted?

WRITTEN BY JOSHUA BROUGHAM

The crusades: a series of wars spanning hundreds of years, vicious conflicts fought between the Christian West and the Islamic East. Armies the size of which the world had never seen clashed across Syria and the surrounding lands, ravaging local cities and decimating both sides' manpower. After a crusade, the Christians either retreated or placed some noble on the throne of Jerusalem, only for him to be toppled by a Jihad in the following years. This was not the case with the Fourth Crusade, however, and the effects of that short war can still be seen today.

After years of waiting, the time for a new crusade was here, and Pope Innocent III saw this. The Holy Roman Emperor had died, leaving only a small child as his heir, and the kings of France and England were clashing in battle; there was no one to question papal authority, and so the stage was set. Every lord in Europe received an invitation to join Innocent's crusade, and before long he estimated that he would be joined by some 30,000 men – one of the largest armies the medieval world had ever seen.

11,000 men showed up. This army was still huge, likely more than a match for anything the Muslim kings could gather, but size wasn't the issue here – the crusaders had commissioned enough ships for 30,000 men (and their horses, and their provisions) and were struggling to pay even half of what they owed. Old currencies can be hard to estimate in modern terms, but we know that new coins had to be minted for the crusaders to pay for these new ships, showing the absurdity of the costs involved.

Understandably annoyed at the crusader's inability to pay, the Venetians making the ships proposed a deal – they would finish the rest of the ships and consider all debts paid if the



Pope Innocent III

crusaders would capture for them the city of Zara. This was problematic for two reasons: firstly, Zara was a Christian city and so attacking it would go against what the crusaders stood for, and secondly the city was owned by the King of Hungary, who had recently pledged his men to the crusade. Even so, the crusaders had little choice and so decided to march on Zara, the dream of the holy land fuelling them still.

While Zara was besieged by the crusaders, Marquis Boniface of Monferrat – no leader of the crusade – received an offer from a deposed prince of the Byzantine

(or Roman) Empire. This prince had narrowly escaped prison after his father was blinded by new usurper, his uncle, Emperor Alexius, and made a very tempting proposal: if the crusaders were to help him reclaim his throne then he would give them an extreme amount of money (more than three times what the Venetians had charged them for the ships) as well as feeding all of their men for the rest of the crusade and sending 10,000 men of his own. The burning ruins of Zara behind them, the crusaders now set off to besiege the Byzantine capital of Constantinople, yet another Christian city.

The tyrant emperor soon realised that he would have few allies to call on in his defence; his Frankish mercenaries would betray him to join the Frankish crusaders, while the Varangian Guard, his most loyal warriors, were mainly English and Danish,



and as such would refuse to fight the Catholics. Rather than simply throwing his life away, Alexius ran, leaving Constantinople to surrender itself to the crusaders, and the young prince was named emperor.

But this was a victory in vain for the crusaders, who had discovered that the new emperor had no way of paying what he had promised, and he had very few soldiers to his name. The young emperor did make some attempt to settle his debts, but his tax collectors returned empty handed, his vassals annoyed at his sacking of Constantinople. During this time of unrest, the emperor was assassinated by his advisor Murzuphulus, who claimed the throne for himself, denying any form of debt to the crusaders.

From this point on, it was clear that there was only one way for the crusaders and the Venetians to make this crusade worth their while, and that was to take Constantinople. The Byzantine Empire had to fall, its wealth stripped from it and granted to these men who had come so far for so little. The Pope had now given his consent for the crusaders to attack anybody who actively delayed the crusade's arrival in the holy land, and it seemed now that Byzantium very much fulfilled that criteria. To no one's surprise, war was declared, and it would be a bloody battle.

Nuns were raped in their convents by the so called warriors of god, countless women and children were lying dead on these once beautiful streets and artefacts from the Hagia Sophia – a famous church in Constantinople – were completely destroyed. Historian Nicetas Choniates said that “even the Saracens (the Muslim kingdoms which were in a bitter rivalry with Byzantium) would have been more merciful”.

And so fell the Byzantine Empire. From its ruins rose the Latin Empire, also known as the Empire of Romania, but that was not long for this world and fell



The Sack of Constantinople (1204)

to the local Greeks before long. The Byzantine Empire would rise again, only to be crippled and then wiped out for good by the Seljuk Turks afterwards, and in the place of that empire would be the Ottomans, in the place of Constantinople would be Istanbul.

From the eyes of your average crusader, then, the Fourth Crusade was a massive success – they all became rich, Venice got some new trade deals, and the Pope finally extended his reach over the Balkans. The Latin Emperor even swore fealty to him, recognising him as an emperor above emperors, though his loyalty was as short lived as his empire.

But can this truly be considered a success for Christendom? The fall of the Byzantine Empire led to the whole of the Balkans and Anatolia being significantly weakened, allowing for the Turkish invasions that would go on to form the Ottoman Empire, which remained a dominant regional power until the Great War and would threaten major Christian nations for centuries to come – even its child nation of the modern era, Turkey, is hesitant to engage in any true diplomacy with the West, and remains a threat. The weakening of the East can perhaps still be seen as a good thing, however, as it allowed Venice to get many very profitable trade deals that

formerly only the Byzantine Empire could capitalize on, and this led to Venice's growing role as an important state in the colonial era. One could argue that without the boons brought to them and the other city states of Italy by the fall of Byzantium, Italy to this day wouldn't be as major a European nation.

Of course, a major insult to this crusade's legitimacy is the fact that the crusaders never even left Europe, let alone reaching Jerusalem and Egypt as they had intended. The ships they bought from the Venetians were ultimately for nothing, and the Holy Land would remain under Islamic reign, though perhaps this is also a positive thing in the long run; the fragile peace with the lords of Jerusalem meant the continued passage of pilgrims and the like, allowing for the interaction of cultures and likely meaning that the Islamic and Christian nations could have closer ties than before, albeit this is without taking into account the great failures of the other crusades, which would see Jerusalem become a war zone once again and would deny any real Christian presence in the area for hundreds of years.

This major conquest for the Catholics also went to the Pope's head, and those that followed him; they saw that Europe now feared the Papacy to some degree, and used this to their

advantage – they engaged in hunts and even crusades for heretics and heathens, including the Christian Cathars despite worshipping the same god in more or less the same way. This power hungriness on the Catholic side led to various papal reforms, and can be seen as adding more fuel to the ever-growing powder keg that was the eventual split between Catholicism and Protestantism, which was disastrous for people all other Christendom for centuries, including the persecution of peasants and monarchs alike in nations such as England.

With the Byzantines gone, the Latin Empire rose, their terrible reign known to the Greeks as the Frankokratia (French Occupation), and following them came the Ottomans, who would similarly abuse the Greek people and treat them as inferiors.

This would go on in total for over 500 years, with the Greek people only winning their independence after the Great War, obviously a terrible set of events not just morally but also religiously as Christian men and women (albeit Orthodox Christians rather than Catholics) would end up ruled for centuries by the Saracens they had once served as a bulwark from.

So, while the Fourth Crusade may have initially seemed to be a major victory for the Christians, and perhaps it was, the years following this strange anomalous conflict surely proved otherwise, and this war between Christianity and its own lack of funding should be seen as something to be ridiculed, a self-detriment at a time when religious kingdoms such as the Papacy needed all the support they could get.

Bringing history to life by sharing stories of our past

WRITTEN BY MR R A DAVIES

The way we, as a nation, choose to remember those that fought and died in the First and Second World Wars has shifted over the years, and as well as the traditional formal ceremonies that serve as acts of remembrance, we now give time to recalling the experiences of those otherwise ordinary individuals who found themselves caught up in events that they had never imagined they would find themselves facing. For many families today, the memories they have of their relatives are not those bound in heroism, instead they appear more mundane; yet they are no less interesting, as they serve to offer a broader account and build a truer picture. This is one such account.

John (Jack) Elston was born in the latter part of the 1800s. He grew up in Liverpool, one of four brothers and a sister, my grandmother. Jack's father owned a publishing and bookbinding business that was located in the city centre and when he left school he went to work there. At that point, it seems likely that Jack, like so many others, would have imagined that the future that lay ahead of him was most likely to follow a path remarkable only, perhaps, because of its normality. Sadly, that was not to be the case as, with the outbreak of war in 1914, his world was to change dramatically.

Shortly after the start of the war, Jack was called up to serve as a gunner in the 131st Heavy Bty, of The Royal Garrison Artillery. Following a short period of training, he was sent to serve in France. While there, he managed to keep in contact with his family by writing letters that were delivered to his home in Liverpool. Remarkably, while he must

have been experiencing conditions considered unimaginable to most of us now, and faced, daily, with the fear of what was likely to happen to him, he conveyed little of this in what he wrote. Instead, he expressed his concern for the health and wellbeing of his family and loved ones left in Liverpool; little mention is given to what *he* is experiencing, other than his hope that things will improve and that the war will come to an end soon so that he can return home. He must also have received at least some of the letters my grandmother sent to him, as he replies to her comments about apparently trivial things such as an older relative being unwell, or looking forward to a church event that was looming. In some respect the letters are typical of those that might have passed between brother and sister, regardless of circumstances. However, the heading of each that registers his address as '*Somewhere in France*' is a stark reminder that circumstances

were very far from normal. When I see that heading I am reminded, not only of the need for secrecy that meant he was not allowed to identify exactly where he was, but also that of the many, many young men who had been parted from their normal world and transported onto the field of battle not knowing how long it would be before they were reunited, it surely must have felt as though they were in a place that had lost its identity and had simply become 'somewhere'.

Almost nothing is known about the role Jack played while he was fighting in France and there are no stories about his time there, heroic or otherwise, that have been passed down through the family. Indeed, the only time his name is mentioned in dispatches is to record him as having been shot by a sniper while venturing out to mend the communication lines. He died on 21st March 1918, a few months before the end of the war; his body was never recovered.

The tragedy of his death was, in some sense, made more acute given how close it came to the end of the war. Indeed, I can remember my grandmother telling me that on the day the war was declared over, she left the bank where she worked and walked home along streets full of people who were happy and rejoicing, unable to share their joy so sad was she that her brother would not be returning home.

In the months and years that followed, Jack's parents tried to find out what had happened to his body after his death, however, their efforts did not meet with success and he is now considered to be lost among the many thousands of others.

Except for his name that appears on the walls of the Arras Memorial, the only thing that exists as a memory of Jack today is a portrait of him in his uniform. It was painted by the artist Josh Fisher, one of a group known as The Liverpool Artists that was made up of lecturers and associates from The Liverpool Art College. As a bookbinder and

publisher, Jack's father spent time teaching at the college and he and Fisher had become good friends. Fisher agreed to paint the portrait of his friend's son, however, he was faced with the problem of not knowing what Jack looked like. To solve this, he asked that my grandmother to sit for him, as she was considered to be most like Jack in appearance. The portrait of 'Jack' hung in the family home until his parents' death, after which it hung in my grandparents' house and now, in mine. Fisher has managed to capture a likeness of both Jack and his sister, my grandmother, in the painting and I think it serves as a fitting memory and a wonderful link to my family's past.



The portrait of 'Jack Elston'
painted by Josh Fisher



1989: Thirty years on

WRITTEN BY LINTON ARMSTRONG

The year 1989 is a year of utmost significance in terms of its effect on today's world. It can be defined by profound triumphs in Western cultural imperialism and by the symbolic end to many oppressive and autocratic ways of governance that had dominated the 20th century.

The later end of the 20th century is a period of time that will grace history textbooks for years to come, and 1989 is certainly no exception. In terms of symbolism, it cannot be emphasised enough how important the events of 1989 were.

There has been perhaps no greater symbol of the re-unification of people and at a stretch the successes of modern capitalism than the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. The wall was itself a symbol of the 'iron curtain', alluded to by Churchill, and the wall's subsequent destruction became an even greater symbol of the impending failure of the 'iron curtain' to restrict the people of Eastern Europe. Since its construction in 1961 the wall had claimed the lives of 200 people who attempted to breach it and all but eliminated any chance of emigration for East Germany's 16 million inhabitants. Its destruction allowed for photographs and videos that gave a sense of revolutionary zeal to all that saw, but primarily allowed for the people of East Germany to be reunited with their friends and family after almost 60 years of tyranny under the Nazis and Soviets. The fall of the Berlin Wall was part of a chain of revolutions in Soviet satellite states, originating in Poland and Hungary. The importance of the events of 30 years ago cannot be understated but they show a strange turning point in history. Europe, the mighty continent which had dominated the world since the industrial revolution was no longer front and centre on the global stage. Its time had passed and there was now an awareness that Europe's return to normality meant different players in terms of diplomacy.

China thirty years ago no doubt could have been considered a sleeping giant. Now freed from the constraints of Chairman Mao's leadership it was felt that it was time for China to open itself up to the world. China's proposed economic reforms seemed a step away from tyranny, but all this was called into question after the events of mid-April to early June 1989 in what we commonly know as the Tiananmen Square protests. The protests reflected the mood in China that its transition into a market economy was being engineered in a way that only benefitted the few. At the height of the protests 1 million people



Tank Man: A protester holds up a convoy of tanks leaving Tiananmen Square

were gathered in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. As the protests dragged on for over a month, the upper echelons of the Communist Party became worried, eventually culminating in the mobilization of 300,000 troops and an estimated death toll varying from several hundreds to several thousands. The ambiguity of the death toll highlights efforts by the Communist Party to censor the events, setting a precedent of concealment of truths in modern China; a technique we today see replicated in the infamous internment camps in the Xinjiang region. The image of 'tank man' and his courage to block the advancing tanks spread rapidly across the world. Subsequently it became of the utmost importance for the suppression of such images in China in order to prevent the inspiration of other acts of defiance. The protests have been imperative in shaping modern China. At first Deng Xiaoping's policies of liberalisation were halted in their tracks, delaying China's entry into the global economy. Significantly however, the protests showed that despite China's reforms and emergence, the Communist party had no intention of loosening their grip on China.

On a lighter note, yet one no less important, 1989 was the year in which the groundwork for the World Wide Web was laid by computer scientists in Cern. Perhaps the team that included a Brit, Tim Berners-Lee, had not anticipated the significance

of their work, but it would not be a far stretch to assume that all involved realised their work had the possibility to transform many global processes such as commerce and communication. I believe it to be no coincidence that at the same time barriers of oppression were falling in Eastern Europe, innovation was further connecting the world in ways previously unconceived. It was becoming more difficult to stop the wave of people power that swept much of the non-Western world.

1989 was a year of success for the Western ideology and certainly for photographers who captured moments in time that will be cemented in history, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall. It's incredible to think how much the world has changed in just 30 years, but also incredible how much of this change stems from events in 1989.



Fall of the Wall: Protesters commence demolition of the barrier that divided Berlin



A first-hand account of revolution

INTERVIEW BY JAMIE CARSON

In September 1989, the *Montagsdemonstrationen* began in East Germany. "It all started in Leipzig", explains Frau Christmann, now a teacher of German at SGS. "There were peace prayers on Monday at 5 o'clock, and after people went on a protest march around the city centre: from Karl-Marx-Platz, to the train station, past the Stasi headquarters, and back."

"I went to two demonstrations including the one on the 9th of October – that was the big one where 70,000 people were on the streets. The interesting thing was that I, by that time, was qualified and teaching English, Russian and a bit of Modern Greek at the university and we were actually forbidden to go – they also locked the doors behind the students in the Halls of Residence, but they climbed out of the windows."

But was a violent suppression of the protests a cause for concern? "I was very naïve, I think we all were" is the response. "I had a friend who was a doctor and they were told not to go home because they were expecting casualties. I turned up on my bike with my boyfriend then, and I had a mackintosh because I had heard of the water-cannons. We had never experienced anything like this, none of this would have helped. We tried to be on the outer-edge of the crowd. 70,000 people is a lot, and they did apparently have tanks in the side streets."

However, the protests remained peaceful. "There was a spontaneous grouping of six people that formed to avoid a bloodbath: three members of the SED [Sozialistische Einheitspartei], the conductor of the Gewandhaus [the Leipzig symphony orchestra], a political satirist, and a lecturer of theology, and they were sending out messages over the loudspeakers to the demonstrators – 'keep calm, don't provoke the policemen' – and the people themselves chanted

things like 'Keine Gewalt!' [no violence] and 'Wir sind das Volk' [We are the people]."

"It was an amazingly peaceful thing, and I actually felt for the policemen because a lot of them didn't want to be there either, and you would have ended up with relatives on either side of the confrontation if it had come to it."

"Obviously many were there, we didn't know how many exactly so we rushed home to watch the West German news at 8 o'clock to get some information about what happened, and that was basically the breakthrough... it took exactly a month until the wall came down on the 9th of November – you can tell I know all these dates by heart because it played such an important part in my life."

"When the wall came down, I couldn't quite believe it because they kind of messed up the information... I think it was Schabowski [the unofficial spokesman of the ruling SED] who said something like 'from now on, there's free movement' and somebody asked 'When does it come into effect?' and he responded 'I'm not quite sure, I think as of now.' This miscommunication ultimately led to the premature fall of the wall. "Friends of mine went straight to the checkpoints, not Checkpoint Charlie, I think Bornholmer-Strasse was a famous one. Three days later, I went with my mother in our old Trabant to Berlin, and we actually took some flowers for the soldiers on the border because not all of them wanted to be there and obviously they were expected to shoot. When we arrived, the cafés gave us free coffee and cake because we didn't have any currency. There was this overwhelming range of things in all the shops which I still find overwhelming."

Was the **1933 Book Burning** a clear sign of what was to come in Nazi Germany?

WRITTEN BY *PHOEBE MICKLEFIELD*

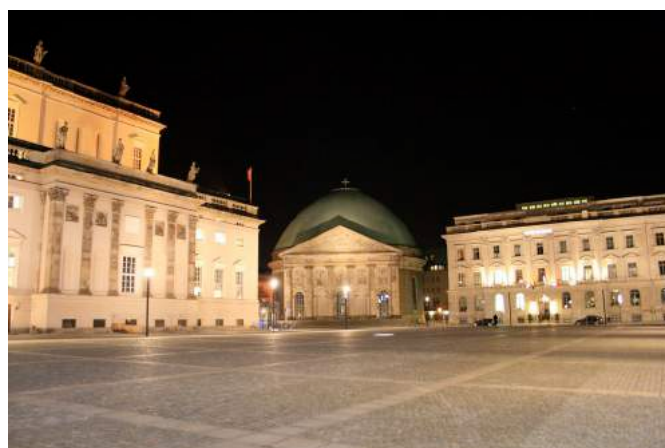
“Where they burn books, they will, in the end, burn human beings too.”

HEINRICH HEINE, 1821

Upon first inspection, the Bebelplatz Square in Germany's capital would seem to be a hub of progress and creativity, enclosed both by the Berlin State Opera House as well as the highly reputable Humboldt University. It is, therefore, seemingly counterintuitive to imagine that just over 85 years ago it was the scene of such a disturbing act of demonstrative propaganda as was the May 1933 Berlin Book Burning. The stark juxtaposition of the Square's cultural and historical significance against this public cleansing of any and all literature deemed "non-German" makes the shadow of the Nazi regime loom greater.

Earlier in that same year, the Nazis had used the February 27th burning of the Reichstag government building, which was supposedly instigated by Communist Council member Marinus van der Lubbe, to rally an increase of fear and hatred towards the Communists throughout Germany. There has been significant speculation to suggest the Nazis instigated this fire, merely using van der Lubbe, and by extension the Communists, as a scapegoat. Whether this theory has any grounding in truth or is merely conjecture, it does serve to demonstrate how the Nazis were able to gain from this fire, both in their opportunity to be rid of the Communists as well as their ability to strip back integral civil liberties which has been so indicative of the relative social freedom of the Weimar Republic. The resulting Reichstag Fire Decree and Enabling Act gave Hitler the ability, as Chancellor, to retract policy regarding freedom of expression, freedom of speech and freedom of the press making the subsequent book burning three months later seem a direct consequence of this increase in oppression.

Interestingly, the book burning was instigated not by SS or SA members, but by the students



| Modern day Bebelplatz square

themselves. This subverts the inherent 'left-wing student' stereotype and supports the idea that, by 1933, the fascist Nazi ideology was already irreparably indoctrinated into the minds of Germany's youth, as to make any reversal of Hitler's influence, at least among said youth, seemingly impossible. Though extreme pro-Nazi sentiment was not unanimous among the people of Germany: only 40,000 attended the burnings in Berlin, a mere 1% of Berlin's population at the time, it was inherently deep-rooted in its society. The texts primarily targeted were those which posed any threat or potential opposition to the strict Nazi agenda, with regards to politics and race. One of the first writers to have their work burned was Karl Marx, clearly highlighting Nazi fear of communism, for its popularity and anti-capitalist sentiment which was a direct assault to the authority of NSDAP. It also served to show that propaganda acts, such as the book burning, were invaluable in solidifying popular support for the Nazis within Germany, by preventing



writer Heinrich Heine near-predicted the progression of the Nazi regime from burning books to people in his play *Almansor*. This adheres to the idea of the Book Burning as a sign of what was to come and further perpetuates the significance of literature in society, for the ideas contained have the ability to influence political viewpoints and sway public opinion. Hitler's own novel, 'Mein Kampf,' which was written during his prison stint, is a prime example of the influence literature can have upon a population, for its popularity was a signal of the dissemination of Hitler's throughout German society. Hence, the banning of *Mein Kampf* in many countries for fear of the spread of Hitler's dangerous racial opinions does to some extent reflect the Nazis own attempt to destroy literature of Jewish or Communist origin, however it was the extreme and violent nature of the Nazi book burning and the all-encompassing array of texts destroyed which was more of a sign of the violent, discriminatory atrocities to come.



**German writer
Heinrich Heine**

Students surrounding the burning books, 1933 in Berlin

the growth of alternative political ideas.

The importance of literature throughout history has been consistently substantial, hence book burnings have not been a rare occurrence, often with the purpose of weakening a particular religious or political grouping which is deemed threatening to either the existing church system or the government system of the time. An example of this which bares some resemblance to the Nazi book burning was the burning of up to ten-thousand Hebrew manuscripts following the Trial of the Talmud in the French court of Louis IX in 1240. The texts were accused of having blasphemous depictions of Jesus, causing the texts to be publically burned on the streets of Paris. Much like its 1933 counterpart, this event clearly demonstrates the extent to which literature can be deemed dangerous to an oppressive system, should it contain ideas which oppose the set ideology of the oppressor in any way. Texts of a Jewish, Communist or Pacifist origin conflicted with Hitler's views on race, capitalism and the importance of warfare respectively, thus they were among the most heavily targeted.

The boycotting of Jewish businesses, which had begun only a month prior, showed that the book burning was not particularly

extraordinary, given the political situation of the time; it was merely a symptom of the increasingly oppressive nature of the new autocratic government. It does not, therefore, seem coincidental that just over a year following saw the Night of the Long Knives: the systematic killing of many major opponents of the Nazi regime. This three-day purge, which saw off the likes of Kurt von Schleicher, the former German Chancellor, and Gustav von Kahr, the Bavarian leader who helped quash the 1923 Nazi Munich Beer Hall Putsch, served in many ways as an extension to the social and political cleansing which was the Book Burning. Where the Book Burning began the dictatorial ritual of Nazi totalitarianism with the destruction of alternative written ideas, the Night of the long Knives continued this by removing the potential for spoken opposition, either from a group or an individual.

Despite the appalling nature and incomprehensibility of the subsequent persecution of the Jewish people and later Holocaust, the events surrounding May 10th were indicative of the potential for further extremist policy in Germany, thus giving some background for the eventual culmination of genocide. Over one-hundred years prior to the events of the Third Reich, German



**News report following the
Night of the Long Knives**

