



The Great Villains of History

Course Guidebook

Richard B. Spence, PhD





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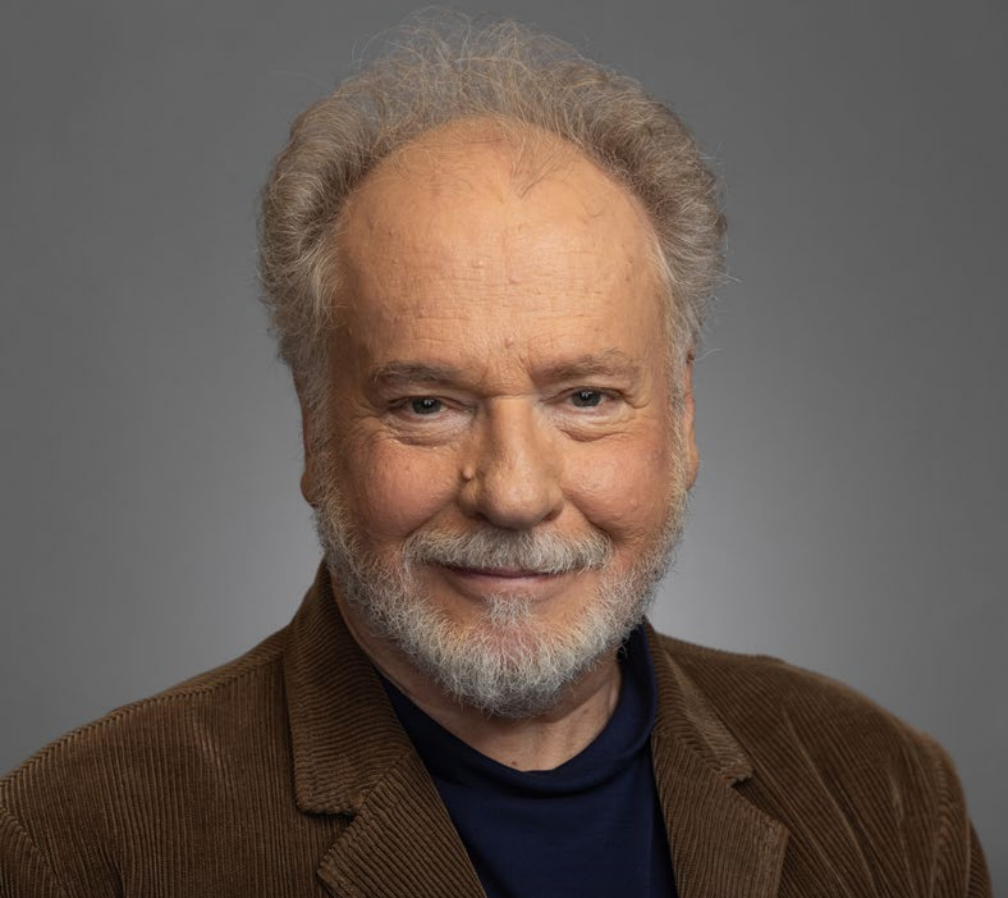
4840 Westfields Boulevard, Suite 400

Chantilly, VA 20151-2299

USA

1-800-832-2412

www.thegreatcourses.com



Richard B. Spence, PhD

Richard B. Spence is a Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Idaho. He holds a PhD in History from the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he also taught as a visiting assistant professor. His research areas include Russian and military history, espionage, occultism, secret societies, anti-Semitism, and true crime. He is the author of several books, including *Trust No One: The Secret World of Sidney Reilly* and *Secret Agent 666: Aleister Crowley, British Intelligence and the Occult*. He has also been a contributor for HISTORY.

Table of Contents

About Richard B. Spence, PhD	i
Disclaimer	iv
1. Just What Is a Villain Anyway?	1
2. Brainwashed into Villainy: Cult Leaders	8
3. The Worst of the Worst: Serial Killers	16
4. Going Old-School: Tyrant Style	24
5. A Villain to His Own People: Traitors	32
6. Conquering Heroes—or Villains?	41
7. Women Can Be Villains Too: The Femme Fatale	49
8. No Free Lunch—or Is There? Freebooters	58
9. Villainy for Profit: Dirty Money	66
10. From Rags to Rascals: Self-Made Villains	74
11. Devoutly Sinful: Religious Villains	83
12. “Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely”	91

13.	Hitler and the Third Reich	100
14.	Equality for All or Just Stalin and Trotsky	108
15.	Can't Trust Them: Scoundrels	116
16.	Tyranny Never Gets Old: New-School Tyrants	124
17.	Ultimate Turncoats: Spies Turned Traitors	133
18.	Battle Wasn't Violent Enough: War Criminals	141
19.	The Worst-Kept Secret Police	149
20.	Crime Never Pays? Criminal Masterminds	158
21.	Classical Corruption: Bad Romans	166
22.	Secrets and Lies: Femme Fatale Spies	174
23.	Wild, Wild Villainy: Outlaws of the Old West	183
24.	Imperialism's Dark Side	192

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1

JUST WHAT IS A VILLAIN ANYWAY?

The world would be a better place without villains—but arguably much less interesting. They're scary, scheming, and frequently disgusting. But they can also be awe-inspiring, brilliant, and sometimes sympathetic, not to mention dramatic, tragic, and compelling. They seldom live long and usually come to bad ends, but they let the world know that they were here. In this course, you'll meet more than 70 historical villains—some infamous, such as Adolf Hitler and Mata Hari, and others obscure, such as Bully Hayes and Joaquín Murrieta. Each one has made, in their own way, a notable contribution to the chronicle of human vice, madness, and depravity. And in many cases, the myths about them overwhelm the facts. This lecture begins with a general discussion about villains and then examines two figures from very different times and backgrounds: the Marquis de Sade and Fred Lee Crisman.

THE CLASSIC VILLAIN

The word *villain* is synonymous with a number of terms that cover a broad range of malfeasance, from *rogue*, *scumbag*, and *cad* to *knave*, *wretch*, and *reprobate*. So, are villains evil or just misguided? The original Latin term, *villanus*, just meant “a farmhand or peasant.” By the Middle Ages, *villain* meant “any crude or uncouth person.” The identification of villain with someone “mean, evil, or unprincipled” is mostly thanks to literature. The villain is the character whose actions drive the plot. For instance, the nefarious scheming of Superman’s nemesis, Lex Luthor, is what compels Superman to react. Without Luthor, there would be no story.

The true test of villainy is the malevolence or ill will that motivates it. Great or small, villains are disdainful of things such as morality and law and order. The term that comes closest to defining a classic villain is *malignant narcissist*. Narcissists have a bloated sense of self-importance, an insatiable need for attention, and, most critically, a lack of empathy and personal responsibility. A malignant narcissist combines all those characteristics with physical or psychological coercion and usually adds a toxic dose of sadism and paranoia.

No figure better epitomizes the villain than the prince of darkness himself, Satan. In Christian lore, he was an angel driven by vanity and ambition to rebel against God. Defeated, he became the wellspring of evil and corrupter of souls. The position of Satan in traditional Judaism is debatable. Rabbinical opinion split over whether Satan was an actual evil spirit or simply the personification of yetzer hara, the “inclination to evil.” But perhaps no one did more to define and complicate the image of the devil than English poet John Milton. In his epic 17th-century poem *Paradise Lost*, Satan becomes an arguably tragic figure who utters the famous line, “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.”

In the minds of some, Milton’s Satan became a symbol of rebellion and defiance. As such, Milton’s devil has become the model for every archvillain overpopulating modern pop culture, from Marvel’s Magneto to Harry Potter’s Lord Voldemort. And each character comes with a backstory that tries to explain the origin of their malevolence.

THE MARQUIS DE SADE

The Marquis de Sade has been called both the “most depraved man in history” and a “misunderstood genius.” From his name comes the word *sadism*, which refers to the receipt of pleasure from the infliction of pain, suffering, and humiliation. King Louis XVI and Napoleon Bonaparte viewed de Sade as a despicable reprobate whose works merited suppression. Yet others viewed him as an apostle of freedom and an important voice of libertine philosophy—the belief that sensual gratification is the highest goal of human existence.

Born in 1740, the future marquis was christened Donatien-Alphonse-François, the only surviving child of a venerable French military-aristocratic family. Expected to follow in his father’s soldierly footsteps, Donatien proved a capable student and by age 19 was a captain of cavalry. He’d also developed a taste for whores and gambling. Young de Sade was widely regarded as an arrogant ass by his peers, and he showed disrespect and even contempt for his superiors.



THE MARQUIS DE SADE

A COMMON ELEMENT AMONG
MANY VILLAINS IS AN AFFLUENT,
PRIVILEGED ORIGIN.

In 1763, de Sade’s parents contracted a marriage between their son and the devout Catholic daughter of a good and rich family. He briefly seemed to settle into the role of a semirespectable family man but behind the scenes doggedly pursued his libertine desires. The first scandal arose just months

after his marriage. A prostitute, Jeanne Testard, alleged de Sade had locked her in a room and repeatedly threatened her life to make her participate in blasphemous antics. Disaster was averted when de Sade's father intervened.

Five years later, fresh scandal erupted when de Sade was accused of imprisoning and abusing a female beggar whom he'd pretended to hire as a housemaid. According to the woman, de Sade had tied her to a bed and flogged her, even pouring hot wax on her wounds. De Sade's wife and her family paid off the woman, and once again, he went free.

In the years that followed, more accusations arose involving myriad abuses, including poisoning, kidnapping, and torture. In 1777, King Louis personally ordered de Sade arrested and imprisoned. He remained locked up for the next 13 years, mostly in the infamous Bastille. While in prison, de Sade penned his two most infamous works, *Justine; or, The Misfortunes of Virtue* and *The 120 Days of Sodom*.

The former tells the tale of a young, pious heroine who is repeatedly subjected to captivity, rape, and torture. This pales beside *The 120 Days of Sodom*, in which four libertines—a nobleman, a bishop, a judge, and a banker—methodically violate, torment, and gruesomely murder a score of hapless teenagers, including their own daughters.

DE SADE'S *THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM*
HAS PROBABLY DONE THE MOST TO
CEMENT THE AUTHOR'S REPUTATION
AS A DEPRAVED SEXUAL SADIST.

In 1790, de Sade was set free thanks to the French Revolution. A year later, the first version of *Justine* was published anonymously to some acclaim and much condemnation. He continued to revise and expand the work, making it more and more pornographic, eventually publishing a hugely expanded version. France's new ruler, First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte, condemned it as pornography and ordered its author arrested.

De Sade was declared to be afflicted by “libertine dementia” and remanded to an insane asylum at Charenton for the remainder of his life. He died in 1814 at age 74 and was buried on the asylum grounds. His gravesite was later lost when the building was demolished, but some enterprising doctor had removed de Sade’s head for “further study.” Its whereabouts today are a mystery.

FRED LEE CRISMAN

Many people have never heard of Fred Lee Crisman. He was a decorated veteran of World War II and Korea, a public schoolteacher, a family man, a political activist, a businessman, a radio talk show host, and even a bishop of the Universal Life Church. Perhaps the most demonstrably villainous thing about him was that he was a habitual liar.

Crisman was born in July 1919 in Tacoma, Washington. He joined the US Army in May 1942, trained as a pilot in the Army Air Corps, and was dispatched to the remote China-Burma-India front in 1944. According to official records, Crisman earned a Distinguished Flying Cross, a Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts.

After being discharged in early 1946, Crisman became a captain in the Army Air Force Reserve and worked for the Washington State Veterans Bureau. His knack for blending fact with fiction became apparent during a run for public office. He claimed to have been a fighter pilot, when he really flew light observation planes, and to have “worked with” the OSS—the wartime precursor of the CIA—though his name isn’t listed among OSS personnel.

Crisman also took an interest in science fiction and wrote letters to Ray Palmer, editor of the popular *Amazing Stories*, claiming that while in Burma, he and a buddy became embroiled in a battle with strange beings in a cave, during which Crisman was supposedly shot in the arm by some laser-like weapon. And though he did have a scar on his left arm, it was not from some mysterious gadget but from the rifle bullet he accidentally shot himself with as a teenager.

Telling tall tales doesn't make one a villain, but making up stories that get people killed arguably does. The first of Crisman's notorious involvements was the Maury Island UFO affair. By 1947, Crisman had formed a partnership with a man named Harold Dahl. They operated a boat and retrieved stray logs floating around Puget Sound.

On June 21, 1947, while searching for logs off Maury Island, Dahl claimed to have seen six donut-shaped craft hovering overhead when one of them started spewing what looked like lava all over his boat. The next day, Dahl took Crisman to the same spot, where Crisman vowed that he, too, spied one of the flying donuts. Dahl also added that he'd been visited by menacing men in black who warned him to keep quiet about what he'd seen.

But Dahl and Crisman collected some of the solidified saucer droppings, which looked suspiciously like metal slag, and sent a piece to *Amazing Stories* editor Palmer, along with their story. It's certainly no coincidence that their tale emerged just days after pilot Kenneth Arnold had claimed to see nine flying saucers over nearby Mount Rainier. Palmer hired Arnold to interview the two men and get to the bottom of the story. In the meantime, Crisman had leaked the tale to the press.

The air force took notice and dispatched two intelligence officers from California to conduct their own investigation. They quickly determined the whole thing was a hoax and that Crisman was the ringleader. The incident might have ended there, but on their way back to California, the plane carrying the officers crashed, killing both. This tragedy, later chalked up to an engine fire, sparked new stories that the crash had somehow been caused by the mystery slag the officers carried aboard, or even that the plane had been deliberately shot down. Such tales still circulate and are taken seriously today.

Under further interrogation by the FBI, Crisman and Dahl admitted it was all a hoax concocted for publicity. However, Crisman later claimed that he and Dahl were intimidated into the confession and that everything really happened just like they said.

Outwardly, Crisman looked like someone who desperately wanted to be something more than what he was. Or was there more to his story?

In 1969, a mysterious document began circulating that alleged that Crisman led a secret and villainous life. Dubbed the Easy Papers, it purported to be an exposé compiled by a dissident member of the CIA who believed that Crisman and his shady confederates were a menace to democracy. The report described how Crisman was first recruited by the OSS during the war and later transferred to the CIA. He was allegedly trained as a “disruption agent” as part of a super-secret internal security outfit, and his broad assignment was to undermine or destroy people, political movements, or anything else deemed harmful to the interests of the nation or the agency.

The CIA branded the Easy Papers a fabrication. But other strange documents made accusations about Crisman. In May 1967, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison received an anonymous letter from Dallas that included the names of persons supposedly involved in the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy. One of them was Crisman. In January 1968, a second anonymous communication went into greater detail, describing Crisman as a recruiter and bagman for the JFK hit, a role that brought him onto direct dealings with anti-Castro Cubans and the Mafia.

Believing the allegations, Garrison subpoenaed Crisman to appear before a grand jury in November 1968. Crisman steadfastly denied any knowledge of the assassination or most of the people he was asked about. Garrison’s investigation ultimately went nowhere, but to his dying day, he remained convinced that Crisman was an important name in the JFK conspiracy.

Crisman died in a Seattle hospital in 1975 at the age of 56. Whatever the truth of his life really was, he took it to the grave. But as with so many villains, real or imagined, the legend lives on.

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2

BRAINWASHED INTO VILLAINY: CULT LEADERS

The term *cult* gets thrown around freely. Most often, it's used in a disapproving manner to describe a fringe religious group. Precisely what differentiates a cult from any other organization is a tricky matter. One telltale sign of a cult is someone at the top who not only is charismatic but also exercises a powerful psychological influence over their followers—a leader who can make people believe and do things that are illegal, irrational, or insane. This lecture considers three examples of such leaders: Peter the Hermit, Charles Manson, and Jim Jones. The first has been accused of causing the deaths of as many as 100,000 people. The second, so far as can be proven, never killed anyone, but he convinced others to kill for him. The last convinced followers to kill not just others but also themselves.

PETER THE HERMIT

Scholars generally agree that Pierre l'Ermitte, known in English as Peter the Hermit, was a figure of some importance during the First Crusade in the late 11th century. Beyond that, his story is mostly a matter of conjecture and opinion. He was born in France around 1050, but the first 40 years of his life are mostly a blank. At some point, he began roaming the countryside as an itinerant holy man.

WHILE PETER THE HERMIT IS USUALLY
PORTRAYED AS A MONK, SCHOLARS
HAVE FOUND NO PROOF THAT HE WAS
OFFICIALLY ORDAINED AS ANYTHING.

Peter's "golden tongue" enthralled listeners and inspired them to follow him blindly. But was his eloquence genuine religious zeal or skillful acting? His message was simple: It was God's desire that Christians secure the pilgrimage route to Jerusalem and deliver the holy city from the rule of the infidel Turk.

Arab Muslims had taken Jerusalem in the 7th century and ruled it until 1071. It then fell to the Seljuk Turks. The Crusade was deemed necessary because the Turks, though also Muslims, were not as tolerant as the Arabs. As a result, Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land became a very hazardous proposition. Nevertheless, around 1093, Peter supposedly decided to try.

In one version of events, Peter reached Jerusalem and "saw many wicked and forbidden things," including the persecution of Christians and the inability of Jerusalem's Orthodox patriarch to do anything about it. Returning to Europe, Peter supposedly recounted his woeful tale to Pope Urban II, who was so moved that he ordered the First Crusade. In this version, Peter is the instigator of the First Crusade and all that followed.

But according to Peter's detractors, he never made it to Jerusalem, having turned back after being roughed up by the Turks. In November 1095, Pope Urban II, completely on his own initiative, proclaimed the need to restore Christian rule in the Holy Land. Only after the papal war cry was issued did Peter the Hermit make his first appearance on the historical stage.

He traveled from town to town, drawing huge crowds. He claimed to carry a letter from heaven, signed by God or Christ, exhorting all true Christians to march against the Turks. He collected an army of followers that grew from thousands to tens of thousands.

In April 1096, Peter's horde of 40,000 militant pilgrims required food and shelter while traveling through the Rhineland, and when Christian charity and divine providence didn't provide, they simply took what they needed. A particular target was the prosperous Jewish communities of Rhinish towns such as Mainz, Worms, and Cologne.

In Worms, 800 Jews were slain for refusing baptism, and at least 1000 more were slaughtered and robbed in Mainz. The total death toll may have been 10 times that. To be fair, there's no evidence that Peter preached violence against Jews, though he did claim to have a letter from the rabbis of France, demanding the Rhineland Jews provide aid to the Crusaders. But men claiming to act in Peter's name did command and commit violence.

So it went until early August, when Peter's followers, still numbering at least 30,000, arrived at the great Byzantine capital of Constantinople. Emperor Alexius Comnenus quickly hustled them across the Bosphorus into Anatolia, where they might at last fight some Turks. Instead, they occupied themselves plundering and butchering the local villages.

In October 1096, the main body of Peter's "spiritual army" was annihilated by the Turks at the so-called Battle of Civetot. Those who weren't slain were enslaved. Peter escaped the debacle, and when the real Crusader army arrived the following year, he joined them on the continued march to Jerusalem.

In 1098, after recovering from a crisis of faith, Peter took center stage at the climactic siege of Jerusalem, leading a barefoot procession around the walls of the city. A week later, Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders, and its inhabitants were butchered. His mission accomplished, so to speak, Peter sailed home to France

and sank back into obscurity. With the fortune some believed he'd amassed on his travels, he founded an Augustinian monastery. He died there in 1115 or, by another reckoning, 1131.

CHARLES MANSON

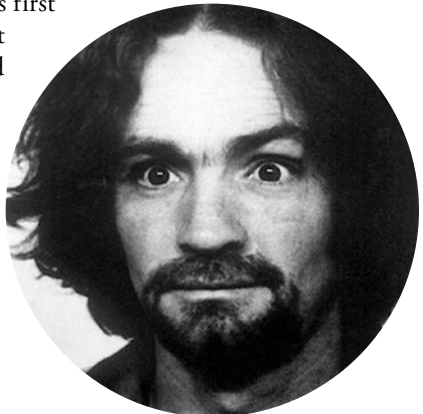
Charles Milles Manson has been variously credited with being responsible for the deaths of 10 to 35 people, maybe more. Yet, it can't be definitively proven that Manson personally killed anyone.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on November 12, 1934, Manson was the illegitimate son of 16-year-old Kathleen Maddox. She fell into a life of sex, booze, and crime. In 1939, her errant ways led to prison, and young Manson was farmed out to relatives.

Following in his mom's footsteps, Manson had his first brush with the law at age 7 when he stole some Christmas toys and set them on fire. A stint in reform school soon followed, and for the next decade, he was in and out of one correctional institution after another. Lockup taught him lots of things. A scrawny kid, he learned to live by his wits and exploit weakness in others.

Paroled in 1954, Manson soon married a 17-year-old girl and stole a car, which earned him his first term in federal prison. Back on the street in 1958, he unsuccessfully tried his hand at drug dealing in Mexico and was deported back to the States.

By 1959, he was back in federal custody on a forgery rap. Now in his mid-twenties, Manson showed keen interest in mysticism and religion and devoured books on esoteric doctrines such as theosophy, Rosicrucianism, and Freemasonry.



CHARLES MANSON

The book that may have had the biggest influence on Manson was Robert Heinlein's sci-fi novel *Stranger in a Strange Land*. It spins the tale of a self-proclaimed messiah, Valentine Michael Smith, who forms a cult based around the concept of grok or grokking, a type of intuitive "understanding" that binds followers into a kind of collective consciousness. This idea became Manson's template for the Manson Family. He even named his third son Valentine Michael Manson.

In March 1967, now 32, Manson was again granted parole, which he immediately violated by heading for San Francisco. In California, his parole was transferred, and he was assigned to a new case officer, Roger Smith, a doctoral student in criminology at the University of California, Berkeley. Smith took a special interest in the effects of drugs on group dynamics.

Smith probably enlisted Manson as an informant and gave him virtual free reign. Manson was supposed to have a job, avoid drugs and alcohol, and have no association with convicted felons. He ignored all of this with impunity.

In May 1968, with official permission, Manson moved back to Southern California and established a base of operations at the former Spahn Movie Ranch on LA's northern outskirts. While pursuing a dream of becoming a recording star, Manson expanded his criminal sphere and grew his Family. It became a hundred-strong community of devoted followers plus a motley collection of teenage runaways, bikers, and ex-cons. He kept them in line with drugs, mind games, and, when necessary, brutal violence. The faithful worshipped him like a god and obeyed his every command.

At least that's the story prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi told during the trial for the grisly murders of actress Sharon Tate and seven others, including Tate's unborn son, in August 1969. The Tate-LaBianca murder trial commenced in June 1970 and concluded in January the following year. Bugliosi argued that Manson was the mastermind in both sets of killings, which were part of a harebrained scheme to ignite an apocalyptic race war dubbed "Helter-Skelter," from which Manson and his Family would emerge to rule the world.

The other three defendants—Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel, and Leslie Van Houten—could be linked to the crimes through physical evidence and their own incriminating statements, but Bugliosi had none of that against Manson. Others testified against Manson, but the most damning witness was Manson himself.

Throughout the trial, he disrupted proceedings, uttered threats, and generally behaved like a loon, encouraging his codefendants to do the same. He took the stand over Bugliosi’s stringent objection and claimed that he would use his “hypnotic powers” to put a whammy on the jurors.

The jury subsequently found all four defendants guilty, and all were sentenced to death—later commuted to life in prison. By that time, Manson had decided that he was the devil. He died, in prison, in 2017.

JIM JONES

Jim Jones was born on May 13, 1931, in Crete, Indiana, a tiny burg on the Ohio line. “Dysfunctional” hardly describes his impoverished upbringing. As a neglected toddler, he wandered the town unwashed and naked. He became an object of pity for local church ladies who schooled him in Christianity. He caught on that ministers were men of influence and set his sights on becoming one.

From a young age, Jones exhibited a morbid interest in death and took to performing funerals for roadkill animals. When those weren’t available, he’d kill strays or pets. He found that he could dominate other children and frequently led them into dangerous situations.

By the time he reached high school, Jones was generally perceived as a social outcast. He was a voracious reader and



JIM JONES

expressed admiration for the likes of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Zedong. He defied social conventions by befriending African Americans, and at age 20, he staunchly identified as a revolutionary Marxist.

Jones married Marceline Baldwin and entered the ranks of the respectable Methodist Church, even while confiding to his new wife that he was an atheist. In 1953, he attended a Pentecostal prayer meeting. Pentecostalism placed heavy emphasis on the power of the charismata, or gifts of the Holy Spirit, which included healing, speaking in tongues, and the ability to interpret or “discern” the mystical meaning of words and signs. Maybe most interesting was the notion that through such gifts one might be recognized as a “manifested son of God.” Thus inspired, Jones founded his own Peoples Temple Full Gospel Christian Church in Indianapolis in 1955.

By 1960, he began to preach about an imminent nuclear holocaust from which he planned to rescue his congregation by moving to a safe location. In 1965, he and 140 followers relocated to Ukiah, California. The Peoples Temple engaged in widely publicized public and charitable works and recruited hundreds of new followers. Branch operations were opened in San Francisco, Fresno, and Los Angeles. Most importantly, Jones and the Peoples Temple made political allies, including California Governor Jerry Brown and, for a time, First Lady Rosalynn Carter.

But Jones slipped deeper and deeper into paranoia and megalomania. He claimed to be God. As such, he demanded absolute obedience from his followers. He dictated who could and could not marry or have children. Female parishioners, married or not, were expected to submit to his sexual demands, and he allegedly raped male followers to bend them to his will.

In 1977, *New West* magazine published a critical expose that left Jones’s halo and his political backing in tatters. By 1978, some 1000 Templers had moved to Jonestown, a communal farm in a jungle in Guyana. Despite Jones’s claim that it was a socialist paradise in the making, living conditions were primitive, labor hard, and food scarce. Defectors told of conditions resembling slavery. Families claimed their loved ones had been lured into a cult by a charismatic madman.

Such charges finally moved Congressman Leo Ryan to visit Jonestown in November 1978. Accompanying Ryan was journalist Don Harris and several others. Several Templers opted to depart with Ryan, so Jones decided he had to kill them all. His hitmen succeeded in gunning down Ryan and Harris, but others escaped and sounded the alarm.

Jones put in motion “White Night,” an operation that had been planned and rehearsed for a long time. Some 909 persons, a third of them children, willingly or forcibly consumed cyanide-laced fruit beverages and perished. Jones opted to put a bullet in his head.

THE JONESTOWN MASSACRE GAVE RISE
TO A NEW PHRASE TO DESCRIBE BLIND
OBEDIENCE: “DRINK THE KOOL-AID.”

While some argue that the Jonestown tragedy could have been averted if something had been done differently or sooner, perhaps Jones had been aiming for this outcome all along. If, as God, he couldn't create the world he wanted, he'd destroy it. His followers became pawns in his grandiose delusion of power and self-destruction.

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3

THE WORST OF THE WORST: SERIAL KILLERS

Today, no villain arouses more dread and morbid fascination than the serial killer. Not far behind is the pedophile. Two of the subjects in this lecture—the 15th-century nobleman Gilles de Rais and early 20th-century “boogeyman” Albert Fish—combine both types of crimes. The third, the much more recent and familiar “Son of Sam,” David Berkowitz, is a variation of those themes. These three people go beyond mere villainy and into the land of pure evil.

GILLES DE RAIS

Gilles de Montmorency-Laval, best known as Gilles de Rais, was born around 1405 into a family among France's warrior elite. In the first part of his life, he was a hero who rode side by side with Joan of Arc, battling the perfidious English and turning the tide of the Hundred Years' War in France's favor.

Things began to change in 1431, when Joan was captured by the English and burned at the stake as a witch. Some wondered why Gilles, her devoted friend, didn't use some of his great wealth to ransom her. It was a fair question because no sooner had she attained martyrdom than he commenced spending a fortune to promote a cult around her memory and presumed sanctity.

But Gilles was a spendthrift and lousy manager and was soon selling off lands and castles to make ends meet. Along came a dubious Catholic priest named Francesco Prelati, who proposed a solution. Prelati had abandoned the priesthood for the study of alchemy and spirits. He possessed a spell book, or grimoire, which he used to summon a demon named Barron, who Prelati claimed could manifest all the riches Gilles desired—in return for his soul.

Gilles reckoned that he could play the devil against God and win. So long as he clung to his soul, he could fall back on the church's sacraments and claim repentance. A resentful Barron had to suffice with the bodies and souls of children, preferably young boys, that Gilles and his accomplices provided.

How many boys were sacrificed is uncertain. At his church trial, Gilles was charged with the murder of "140 or more children," though his secular trial only indicted him for the "murder of several small children." Other estimates range from 60 to 600 victims. The children were tortured, sodomized, and eventually cut into pieces, with the best morsels offered to Barron.



GILLES DE RAIS

Gilles and his band of conjurors kept at it for years, until in May 1440, the bishop of Nantes commenced an investigation. That September, the bishop ordered the arrest of Gilles and several associates on charges of heresy, sodomy, and murder.

After Prelati revealed the details, Gilles confessed to the gruesome murders, though he claimed he committed them purely for pleasure, not because of any demonic pact. Gilles was likely trying to dodge the charge of sorcery, which threatened excommunication and the thing he feared the most—eternal damnation. In the end, he copped to the sorcery charge but with the proviso that he would be restored to the church and granted confession. He confessed his horrific crimes and offered public remorse, perhaps in an effort to win sympathy and clemency.

But on October 26, 1440, Gilles was hanged along with two of his servants. As part of his plea bargain, his corpse wasn't consumed by the burning pyre. Instead, it was taken from the flames and buried in holy ground. His servants were not so fortunate. Prelati was released scot-free and vanished back to his native Italy, never to be heard of again.

GILLES'S DEFENDERS MAINTAINED
THAT HE WAS FRAMED BY THE CHURCH
AND THAT HIS CONFESSION WAS
EXTORTED POSSIBLY AS A MEANS TO
DERAIL HIS JOAN OF ARC CULT, WHICH
SOME SAW AS A POPULIST DANGER.

ALBERT FISH

If anyone deserves to be described as a human monster, it's Albert Fish, who was a sexual predator, serial child killer, rapist, and cannibal. He was born in 1870 to a middle-class couple in Washington DC. His father, 43 years older than his mother, died when Albert was 5. His mom, forced into destitution, put him in an orphanage.



ALBERT FISH

His mother suffered from hallucinations, and an uncle was diagnosed with mania. One of his brothers was committed to an asylum, and several other relatives were diagnosed with some form of mental illness. At age 12, Fish commenced a sadomasochistic sexual relationship with an older boy who taught him new ways to inflict pain on himself and others. By age 18, Fish drifted north to New York City, where he sustained himself as a male prostitute and began stalking, molesting, and possibly killing younger street urchins.

In 1903, at the age of 33, Fish was arrested for theft and sent to Sing Sing, where he developed a full-blown obsession with sexual mutilation. He seduced a mentally challenged boy who he turned into a sex slave—tying him up, torturing him, and eventually cutting off his genitals.

Like his mom, Fish began to suffer from hallucinations and started inserting needles and nails into his groin and anus. He also modified tools and everyday instruments into what he called “implements of Hell” that were designed to cut, crush, and mutilate flesh and bone.

By 1920, according to his later admissions, Fish had begun to stalk and violently attack random people, mostly Black children. He paid older boys to lure or snatch younger ones, whom he'd take to lonely places to slowly torture and eventually dispatch with knives, meat cleavers, and saws. And he began to

drink their blood and eat parts of their bodies. He claimed that a voice in his head—that he believed to be God’s—commanded him to do these things. He also confessed to enjoying them immensely.

In 1928, he answered an ad in Irvington, New York, from a young man named Edward Budd who was looking for work. Introducing himself as Frank Howard, Fish turned up at the Budd farm on the pretense of hiring the young man. His real intention, Fish confessed, was to take Budd to an abandoned house where he’d torture and kill him. But Fish changed his mind when he realized the brawny 18-year-old was too old for his tastes and likely too strong to handle.

He redirected his attention to Edward’s boyish, 10-year-old sister Grace. Fish spun a tale that he was going to a niece’s birthday party and asked Grace’s parents if she might want to join him. Incredibly, they allowed her to go. He took her to a deserted house on Wisteria Lane in Worcester, where he strangled, decapitated, and dismembered her. Over the next 9 days, he cooked and ate much of her body.

In 1934, Fish sent an obscene letter to Mrs. Budd. In it, he told of meeting a man who’d gotten a taste for cannibalism, small children especially, while caught in a famine in China. Returning to the States, the man pursued his taste by killing and devouring young boys. He also discovered that torturing them first made their flesh sweeter. Thus inspired, Fish claimed, he decided to try it for himself. He went on to describe, in unspeakably graphic detail, what he did to little Grace back in 1928. The Budds took the letter to the police, who traced it to a Manhattan flop house where Fish was lodging. The Budds identified him as the Frank Howard who’d disappeared with their daughter.

The investigation soon linked him to the 1924 killing of an 8-year-old boy, Francis McDonnell, on Staten Island. He eventually confessed to that crime as well as the 1927 killing of 4-year-old Billy Gaffney.

In March 1935, Fish went on trial for Budd’s murder. The prosecution dubbed him the “most vicious child-killer in criminal history.” Fish pleaded insanity and claimed God’s voice had commanded him to kill. No one doubted Fish was crazy; the question was whether he understood right from wrong. The jury determined he did. Fish was returned to Sing Sing, where he died in the electric chair on January 16, 1936.

DAVID BERKOWITZ

David Richard Berkowitz's origins were complicated. He was born Richard David Falco in Brooklyn in June 1953. His mother, Betty Broder, claimed he was the son of her estranged husband, Anthony Falco. In reality, the baby's father was Betty's married boyfriend, Joseph Kleinman. Betty put him up for adoption, and he was claimed and raised by a Bronx couple, Nathan and Pearl Berkowitz, who reversed his first and middle names.

Despite a troubled childhood and some incidents of arson and shoplifting, Berkowitz seemed to turn himself around in high school, becoming a police auxiliary and volunteer fireman. He later joined the army. In 1974, at age 21, he got a job as a security guard.

Perhaps fueled by feelings of abandonment, Berkowitz found it hard to connect with women his own age. Frustration boiled into a hatred of young, pretty, sexually active females. He moved to Yonkers, where he met the Carr family, who were his neighbors. The family included Sam, his sons John and Michael, and their sister, Wheat. According to Berkowitz, they were secret members of a Satanic cult into which he was recruited.

As Berkowitz later told the tale, the cult operated nationwide and carried out ritual murders disguised as random slayings. But something had begun to go haywire in Berkowitz's head even before he met the Carrs. On Christmas Eve 1975, he stalked and tried to stab two girls, wounding one. Then on July 29, 1976, he approached and shot 18-year-old Donna Lauria and 19-year-old Jody Valenti in front of Lauria's Bronx home. Lauria was killed, Valenti wounded. Their attacker vanished into the night. Berkowitz never denied responsibility for this attack, which he insisted was carried out under the watchful eyes of other cult members.

Seven more attacks occurred between October 1976 and July 1977. Despite their irregular timing, the attacks showed a certain pattern. With one exception—the lone killing of 19-year-old Virginia Voskerichian on March 8—all the victims were couples or pairs, mostly between the ages of 16 and 20, and the attacks generally occurred around 1:00 am, always using a .44 revolver. So, police initially labeled the assailant the “.44-caliber killer.”

Berkowitz later took credit for the April 1977 fatal shootings of Alexander Esau and Valentina Suriani but claimed that all the other attacks were carried out by various cult members, including the Carr brothers. The Esau–Suriani killings also included something different: a letter, addressed to the chief of the .44-caliber killer task force. Written in crude capital letters and full of odd misspellings, it explained that the killer didn’t want to kill but was compelled to do so by an evil master dubbed Sam, or Father or Papa Sam, who needed the blood of the young to keep him alive.

The writer called himself Beelzebub, Mr. Monster, and, most famously, the Son of Sam and claimed that he’d been “programmed to kill.” The evil Sam of the letter was allegedly Sam Carr, Berkowitz’s neighbor. On May 30, 1977, *New York Daily News* columnist Jimmy Breslin received a second letter. In it, the killer expressed remorse about the death of Lauria and again cast blame on evil Sam.

ONE INTERPRETATION OF BERKOWITZ’S
LETTERS IS THAT HE WAS MIMICKING
THE BIZARRE COMMUNICATIONS OF
CALIFORNIA’S ZODIAC KILLER.

Berkowitz’s yellow Ford Galaxy—ticketed near the scene of the last killing—led to his arrest on August 10, 1977. After his capture, Berkowitz told an even crazier story. He initially confessed to all the attacks but claimed to have been controlled by the Carrs’ dog, a Labrador named Harvey, who was possessed by a demon. But to the surprise of many, Berkowitz eschewed an insanity defense and pleaded guilty on all counts.

In July 1978, Berkowitz was sentenced to six consecutive terms of 25 years to life. In 1979, Berkowitz denounced the demonic possession yarn as a hoax. But in the 1990s, he again changed his tune. He dropped the part about a demonic dog but reasserted a murder cult that included the Carrs. Most likely, the real story is that Berkowitz is a psychopath with a vivid imagination.

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4

GOING OLD-SCHOOL: TYRANT STYLE

Among the ancient Greeks, a tyrant was simply the ruler of a city. To the Romans, the title came to denote an illegitimate ruler. By the Middle Ages, it had acquired the meaning of a particularly cruel and oppressive ruler, legitimate or not. Today, it's as likely to be applied to a bad boss as to a political figure. This lecture discusses three tyrants who lived within a century of the year 1500: Vlad III of Wallachia, better known as Vlad the Impaler, or more famously, Dracula; Henry VIII, England's most notorious serial monogamist; and Russia's Ivan the Terrible.

VLAD THE IMPALER

Vlad III was the voivode, or warlord, of Wallachia—a title roughly equivalent to a prince. Wallachia was a small country sandwiched between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube River. Today, Wallachia is part of Romania, and Vlad is regarded as a Romanian national hero. To the south of Wallachia lay the expanding Ottoman Empire. To the north, the powerful Hungarian kingdom. Each wanted to make Wallachia an obedient vassal. Vlad was determined to maintain its independence. Between 1448 and 1477, he gained—and lost—the Wallachian throne three times. In all, he reigned for less than 9 years.

Vlad III's father, Vlad II, bore the title Dracul, or Dragon, which is why his son was later called Dracula, “Son of the Dragon.” Vlad Dracul got the nickname because of his membership in the Societatis Draconistarum, a Hungarian knightly order.

With the encouragement of the Hungarians, Vlad Dracul seized the Wallachian throne in 1436. But he was also obliged to bend his knee to the Ottoman sultan, and in 1442, he was summoned to the Ottoman court to pay homage. To ensure his loyalty, Vlad Dracul left his two sons—Vlad III and Radu—in the sultan's care. As Vlad III grew up in the Ottoman court, his father walked a tightrope between the sultan and the new Hungarian strongman, John Hunyadi.

Further complicating things, Wallachia's nobles, the so-called boyars, were a fractious and greedy lot whose loyalty could not be trusted. In 1447, Hunyadi invaded Wallachia, aided by treacherous boyars. Vlad Dracul was killed, and his oldest son, Mircea, was blinded and buried alive. Hunyadi planted an obedient puppet named Vladislav on the throne and marched away.



VLAD THE IMPALER

A year later, Vlad III and a small army stormed into Wallachia and seized the capital. He held power for barely 2 months before being chased back to Ottoman territory. He decided that his real enemies were those boyars who had murdered his father and brother.

Finding Vladislav less and less satisfactory, Hunyadi allowed Vlad III to settle in Hungary in 1450 and considered him as a potential successor. Six years later, Vlad, with Hunyadi's blessing, reclaimed the Wallachian throne. Vladislav was beheaded.

After taking power, Vlad invited the boyars to a banquet, where many were seized and killed. To restore order in the countryside, Vlad commanded that beggars, vagrants, and the sick be burned alive. Bandits were impaled—a punishment that had been practiced as far back as the Babylonians.

Vertical impalement involved thrusting the stake up through the victim's anus and, if done precisely, out through the mouth. The horizontal method just skewered the victim through the torso. Vlad employed both methods.

By some estimates, Vlad the Impaler slaughtered hundreds of thousands of people in Wallachia alone. More sober estimates put his death toll at 80,000 to 100,000.

To save money, Vlad took the bold move of ending tribute to the Ottomans. Sultan Mehmed II dispatched emissaries to demand obedience. Vlad had them impaled and later defeated the sultan's army of 10,000 sent to collect the tribute. In the winter of 1462, Vlad led his own army across the frozen Danube to ravage Ottoman territory, burning towns and killing every Muslim in sight.

But the sultan had an ace up his sleeve—Vlad's brother Radu, who was installed as the new ruler of Wallachia. Vlad again went into exile, this time, in Hungary. There, a new ruler, Matthias Corvinus, imprisoned him as a gesture of goodwill to the Ottomans.

Vlad remained in custody for roughly 12 years. In 1475, Radu was overthrown by another opportunistic upstart, Basarab the Elder. Corvinus decided to unleash Vlad, who slew Basarab and reclaimed the crown.

Vlad's triumph was short-lived. In early 1476, he was ambushed and killed while returning from battle by those ever-treacherous boyars. But his reputation as the "Impaler Lord" spread throughout central Europe. Stories of Vlad's monstrous exploits especially gained popularity in Germany. In 1500, an illustrated pamphlet was published purporting to be the true tale of Dracole Wayda, the mad prince of Wallachia. Nearly 4 centuries later, it helped inspire Irish writer Bram Stoker to choose Dracula as the name for his vampire antihero.

HENRY VIII

England's King Henry VIII has become a poster boy for "male chauvinist pig" because of his callous treatment of most of his wives, including two beheadings. Born in 1491, Henry was the second son of Henry Tudor, crowned Henry VII. At age 10, young Henry watched his 15-year-old brother Arthur wed the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon—the very same Catherine that he himself would marry in 1509, following Arthur's untimely death. Henry was 18, and she was 24. That same year, he ascended to the throne.

Henry VIII was physically imposing and looked every inch like a monarch. But for all intents and purposes, he was a narcissistic, charismatic bully. The most famous example of his bad behavior is, of course, his numerous wives. Henry's "great matter," as it was called, was to produce a male heir. Without one, he was a monarchial lame duck. Catherine had given birth to two sons, but neither survived more than a few weeks. She also had three daughters, one of whom, Mary, would survive and eventually take the throne.

By the early 1530s, Catherine was well past her child-bearing years. Henry's ever-roving eye fell on one of her ladies-in-waiting, vivacious Anne Boleyn. He opted to annul his first marriage and forbade Catherine to see their daughter Mary until she acknowledged the legitimacy of his marriage to Boleyn, something she steadfastly refused to do. He declared Mary illegitimate.

Things with Boleyn didn't go according to plan. After marrying Henry in a secret ceremony in early 1533, the already pregnant Boleyn gave birth to a daughter—future Queen Elizabeth I. Boleyn subsequently bore or miscarried two more children, one of them a boy. By early 1536, the king's patience had reached its limit. Along with her father and other family members, Boleyn was arrested, convicted of adultery and plotting Henry's death (without a shred of real evidence), and duly beheaded. The marriage was annulled, and Elizabeth was declared illegitimate.

Henry, now 45, then wedded Jane Seymour, who finally gave him the son he so desired. But Seymour succumbed 12 days later to complications of childbirth. The boy would live long enough to mount the throne as Edward VI but died at the age of 15 without an heir.

Henry's next two wives proved consecutive disappointments. His last marriage, to Catherine Parr in 1543, proved peaceful, if equally childless. Parr persuaded the irascible king to reconcile with his daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. Parr survived Henry.

One explanation for Henry's increasingly vicious behavior after 1536 was his injury in a jousting tournament. A shattered lance left wooden splinters in his thigh, causing lingering infection and constant pain. He was also afflicted with gout and painful boils that did nothing to improve his mood.

Some argue that Henry's one great deed was bringing the Protestant Reformation to England. But his religious stance was guided mostly by expediency. To Henry, reformation was nothing more than his seizing control of church assets and authority. One doesn't have to be a devout Catholic to wonder if it was karmic payback that none of Henry's legitimate heirs produced any of their own, thus condemning the Tudor dynasty to extinction in little more than a century.

IVAN THE TERRIBLE

Ivan IV was born in 1530, the eldest son of Vasily III, Grand Prince of Muscovy. On his father's side, Ivan was descended from a genuine Byzantine, or East Roman, princess. With a bit of imagination, he also claimed that Caesar Augustus, Genghis Khan, and the Viking Rurik were his ancestors. His mother, Elena, came from a prominent boyar clan. Ivan's life took its first abrupt turn in 1533, when his father succumbed to blood poisoning. This left Ivan, his younger brother, and their mother at the mercy of greedy and ambitious boyars.

IVAN THE TERRIBLE IS KNOWN IN RUSSIA AS IVAN GROZNY. THE TERM GROZNY TRANSLATES MORE CLOSELY TO "FORMIDABLE" OR "AWE-INSPIRING."

Ivan later claimed that as a child, he was threatened, starved, and physically abused. Some argue this was a self-pitying excuse for his monstrous behavior, but it's fair to say that his early years were insecure.

He was sickly; his brother Yury was deaf. Neither seemed likely to take the throne. When Ivan was 8 years old, his mother died suddenly. The rumor was that she'd been poisoned.

In early 1547, 16-year-old Ivan surprised everyone by asserting his right to the crown, but not as prince. Instead, he assumed the title tsar of all Russia. *Tsar* derived from the Latin title Caesar, a nod to Ivan's Roman ancestors, and it asserted that he was not



IVAN THE TERRIBLE

just the head prince but an emperor. Two weeks later, Ivan married Anastasia Romanovna, daughter of a minor noble family. Their marriage seems to have been a genuine love match.

To antagonize the boyars, Ivan selected a personal council composed mostly of men of humble origins, and he created a kind of parliament, or *zemsky sobor*, to further undercut boyar power. He also reformed the law code and the church, and beginning in 1552, he conquered the neighboring Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, adding their territories to his new empire and ending their raids that had long plagued Russia.

In 1553, Ivan fell deathly ill. He summoned the boyars and his chosen council to his bedside and asked them to pledge allegiance to his infant son. Most refused, even his supposed friends. Instead, the boyars looked to Ivan's 18-year-old cousin, Vladimir of Staritsa. To the chagrin of many, Ivan recovered. He learned a valuable lesson and declared that "a ruler must be feared, not loved."

In 1560, his beloved wife died. Rumors again whispered poison. Without Anastasia's stabilizing influence, Ivan began to alternate between periods of contemplative seclusion and riotous debauchery. In late 1564, he unexpectedly threatened to abdicate. A groundswell of support begged him to stay, and he agreed, but on the condition of absolute power to govern as he pleased.

Ivan began by carving out a separate domain within Russia, dubbed the *oprichnina*. Its territories constantly shifted and expanded. To enforce his will, Ivan also formed a personal army, the *oprichniki*, which unleashed a reign of terror against the hated boyars. At its head, he placed a sadistic henchman, Malyuta Skuratov.

If a boyar was lucky, he'd just lose his land. If not, he'd be slaughtered with his entire family. Townspeople and peasants also suffered. This chaotic violence reached a peak between 1569 and 1571. Ivan dealt with his cousin Vladimir by forcing him and his children to take poison. Vladimir's wife and mother were drowned in a river.

Ivan next sicced the *oprichniki* on the prosperous city of Novgorod, whose leaders he suspected of treason. The town endured weeks of pillage, rapine, and murder, in which thousands perished. Novgorod never recovered. In 1572, Ivan abruptly abolished the *oprichniki*, but his psyche continued to swing violently between excess and contrition.

In his prayerbook, Ivan kept a record of the killings he'd participated in or personally ordered. They numbered 3750, but he's reckoned to have been responsible for anywhere from 60,000 to 200,000 deaths.

In 1581, tragedy struck again when he took issue with his pregnant daughter-in-law's attire. He violently beat her, causing a miscarriage. When his son and heir, also named Ivan, intervened, his father struck and killed him. "May I be damned," the tsar cried, "I've killed my son! I've killed my son!"

Three years later, at age 53, Ivan the Terrible collapsed and died while playing a game of chess, possibly from a stroke. The throne went to his second, sickly son Fyodor, whose death would commence the so-called Time of Troubles. Yet, it's arguably a testament to Ivan's peculiar statecraft that Russia and the monarchy survived, albeit under a new dynasty—the Romanovs.

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5

A VILLAIN TO HIS OWN PEOPLE: TRAITORS

A traitor, in the classic sense, is someone who betrays a country or cause. The betrayal is usually accomplished by going over—openly or secretly—to the enemy side. Traitors are frequently regarded as one of the more despicable and dangerous varieties of villain. The US Constitution defines only one crime, treason, which is committed by “levying war against [the United States] or in adhering to [its] enemies, giving them aid and comfort.” This lecture examines the cases of Alcibiades, Guy Fawkes, and Alger Hiss, to see how they stack up against that definition. The goal isn’t to argue that the Constitution’s Treason Clause is the only or best definition. It just provides a common standard.

ALCIBIADES

Alcibiades was born in Athens around 450 BCE into an aristocratic family. At the time, Greece was divided into numerous city-states, the two most important being Athens and Sparta. During the first half of the 5th century BCE, they'd been allies repelling the invasions of the neighboring Persian empire. But that effort turned them into bitter rivals, and in 431 BCE, this rivalry erupted into the so-called Peloponnesian War. After 10 years of indecisive fighting, the exhausted combatants concluded an uneasy peace. A kind of cold war ensued. Having decided that war was more advantageous to his ambitions than peace, Alcibiades set out to destroy the agreement.

He got his chance when the Spartans sent a peace mission to Athens. The night before the Spartans were to meet with the Athenian Assembly, Alcibiades approached the assembly secretly. He offered that if they gave up their diplomatic authority and let him negotiate behind the scenes, he could get them a better deal. His intervention sent the Spartans home humiliated, and a grateful assembly made him a general.

In 416, Alcibiades instigated an Athenian assault on the pro-Spartan island of Melos, which ended with the island's men slaughtered and women and children enslaved. He then masterminded an alliance to challenge Sparta in its own Peloponnesian backyard. Despite a stinging Athenian defeat, Alcibiades's star barely dimmed.

Next, he talked the Athenians into a military adventure in Sicily, which also proved catastrophic, with 15,000 Athenians lost, dead, or enslaved. Alcibiades, however, had not been there. Just before he departed for Sicily, someone vandalized statues of Hermes throughout Athens. Such destruction was considered an act of sacrilege and a very bad omen. Alcibiades was suspected, though it's unclear whether he did it or whether it was a plot by his political enemies. He was permitted to sail to Sicily with the charges pending but was soon summoned back to Athens to stand trial. He refused and was sentenced to death in absentia. In response, he betrayed Athenian war plans to Syracuse—a Spartan ally—then fled to Sparta, begging sanctuary.

Alcibiades became an adviser to the Spartans. But they never entirely trusted the turncoat, especially after he seduced the Spartan queen. They were planning to murder him, but he escaped to the court of Tissaphernes, the Persian satrap, or governor, of western Anatolia. The Persians were enemies of all Greeks.

Alcibiades advised the Persians to keep the Greeks fighting each other as long as possible. When they were exhausted, he argued, Persia could simply walk in and take over. But at the same time, scheming Alcibiades opened a back channel to Athens. In return for a pardon, he promised to get Tissaphernes to shift his support to Athens.

Negotiations began between the Athenians and Persians, but little was resolved. In 411, a coup in Athens installed a government that promised Alcibiades a pardon if he could make a deal with the Persians.

The Persians got fed up with Alcibiades's incessant double dealing and tried to arrest him. He finally returned to Athens in 407, where all charges against him were dropped. He even convinced the assembly to name him supreme commander.

Under Alcibiades's leadership, Athenian fortunes briefly improved. But the Persians finally decided to back Sparta, and Athens suffered defeats. Alcibiades fled back to the Persians, who reluctantly offered sanctuary. In 404, they'd had enough of him and set his house on fire. As the story goes, Alcibiades rushed out, sword in hand, and was cut down by a hail of arrows. That same year, Athens surrendered.

Was Alcibiades a traitor? As far as Athens was concerned, most definitely. He levied war—that is, organized military action—against the city-state and gave aid and comfort to its enemies. Though Alcibiades might claim that he was the one betrayed first.

GUY FAWKES

Thanks largely to King Henry VIII, 16th-century English society was greatly perturbed by a religious reformation that turned most of the kingdom Protestant. Adherence to the new Church of England became synonymous with loyalty to the monarch. But a stubborn minority clung to Roman Catholicism. In 1559, the House of Lords passed laws requiring all English subjects to publicly affirm their belief in royal control of the church and attend Protestant services. In 1570, Pope Pius V retaliated by excommunicating Queen Elizabeth I and calling on her subjects to overthrow her. Some tried.

Her succession in 1603 by the equally Protestant James I did nothing to change the situation. A new plot arose that aimed to get rid of both the king and the whole House of Lords. In the end, a man named Guy Fawkes would become the poster boy for this regicidal conspiracy and an enduring symbol of protest.

Fawkes was born in 1570 in Yorkshire. His parents were nominally loyal members of the Church of England, though his mother's family was Catholic. Following the death of his father, Fawkes's mother remarried a Catholic, who seems to have turned young Fawkes back toward Rome.

In 1591, Fawkes left England for the Continent to seek his fortune as a mercenary. He joined the Spanish army of Flanders, which was fighting to crush Protestantism in the Netherlands. In 1598, he took his first known steps into political conspiracy. While in France, he tried to drum up support for the English Catholic cause, but French King Henry IV—a Protestant turned Catholic who was thoroughly sick of religious strife—showed no interest.

In 1603, the year James of Scotland took the English throne, Fawkes was in Spain, where he met Robert Catesby, the future mastermind of the Gunpowder Plot. Catesby advocated assassinating King James and replacing him with his 9-year-old daughter, Princess Elizabeth, despite the fact that she'd been raised Protestant.

Fawkes returned to England and attended an initial conspiratorial conclave in May 1604. The plan was to blow up Parliament when the House of Lords reconvened early the following year. If successful, it would eliminate the entire

Protestant establishment in one fell swoop. Meantime, other plotters would start a revolt in the Midlands, snatch Princess Elizabeth, spirit her to London, and proclaim her queen.

A setback occurred when James postponed the reopening of Parliament to the fall of 1605. But a break came when an undercroft, or storage basement, situated under Parliament came up for rent. The conspirators snapped it up and began to fill it with 36 barrels of gunpowder. Fawkes was put in charge of the explosives.

The reopening of Parliament was set for November 5. But in August, the plotters discovered the gunpowder had gotten wet. It was replaced, and preparations continued. But the king's security had started watching Fawkes, who'd adopted the alias of John Johnson.

Another rub was that numerous Catholics would be attending the ceremony. Catesby was willing to sacrifice them for the cause, but other plotters were more squeamish. On October 26, Lord Monteaule, a "loyal" Catholic in the House of Lords, received a letter telling him to stay away from the opening. Monteaule immediately took it to the king's chief of security, and the investigation went into high gear.

On the night of November 4, the king's security inspected the undercroft and discovered the gunpowder along with Fawkes and the fuses. Fawkes ran but was caught and subjected to the first of many interrogations. He claimed to be John Johnson.

However, he readily confessed his intention to blow up James and his pernicious House of Lords but insisted he was acting alone. After being tortured, Fawkes finally cracked on November 7, eventually giving at least three confessions. On November 8, Catesby and a few others tried to flee the country but were cornered and died fighting. On January 27, 1606, eight surviving conspirators, including Fawkes, were tried for high treason at Westminster Hall.

All were found guilty and condemned to the traitor's penalty of death by drawing and quartering, which involved a tortuous mix of hanging, dismemberment, and decapitation. Four days after sentencing, Fawkes and

three others went to their doom. Fawkes was the last to die, which may have given him an idea. While mounting the hanging scaffold, he either slipped or jumped and broke his neck.

Did he, by Constitutional standards, commit treason? By putting the conspiracy's violent plan into action, he and his cohorts arguably "levied war." The quibble is that the target of this action was King James and his regime, not England. In the Constitutional sense, treason is committed against the United States as a collective entity, not against the government. Fawkes and his fellows doubtless would claim that by attempting to restore Catholicism, they were acting in England's higher interest.

Guy Fawkes has the peculiar distinction of being a traitor with a holiday named for him, celebrated on November 5. And his purported image, in the form of the Guy Fawkes mask, has been embraced by various groups as a symbol of antiestablishment protest.



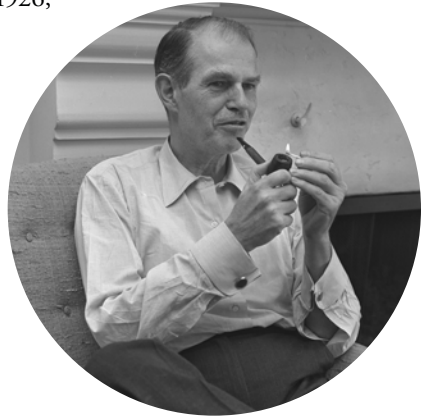
ALGER HISS

Alger Hiss was born in 1904 into a well-off Baltimore family. But thanks in part to the financial panic of 1907, his father lost his money, and then his mind, ultimately slitting his throat with a straight razor. The family was saved from poverty by the charity of his mother's rich relations, but his father's "disgrace," coupled with his sister's later suicide, cast a shadow over the family. Hiss made it his mission in life to restore his family's reputation by becoming as successful as possible.

After graduating from Johns Hopkins in 1926, he attended Harvard Law and eventually became a federal attorney in the new Roosevelt Administration. Hiss and his younger brother later joined the State Department, where Alger became assistant to an assistant secretary of state specializing in East Asian affairs.

Hiss had taken his first step toward espionage, and arguably treason, in 1933 when he joined a "Marxist study group" of federal bureaucrats run by Harold Ware. Ware took his marching orders from Josef Peters, a Hungarian-born Communist whose secret task was to build an underground network inside the US government. Peters also worked for Soviet intelligence. He ordered Ware's group to acquire any government documents they could get their hands on. Russian records show that the Hiss brothers signed on as assets of Soviet military intelligence, or the GRU, in 1935.

American Communist Whittaker Chambers eventually took over from Peters, but Chambers's affair with Communism ended in 1938. He took his tale of espionage to Assistant Secretary of State Adolphe Berle and named Hiss as a Soviet asset. Berle passed the story along to the FBI, but at that time, in the lead-up to World War II, even J. Edgar Hoover was more concerned with German and Japanese spies than Soviet ones.



ALGER HISS

But in 1945, Soviet code clerk Igor Gouzenko defected from his post in Canada. He told American debriefers that an assistant to US Secretary of State Edward Stettinius was a Red agent. That description fit Alger Hiss—but others as well.

Next, another American Communist defector and former spy handler, Elizabeth Bentley, identified a Soviet agent named Hiss working at State. And US Army cryptographers decoded a March 1945 Soviet cable discussing an agent codenamed ALES who had been part of the American delegation to the Yalta Conference. The particulars given fit Hiss, who had accompanied FDR on his critical meeting with Stalin and Churchill, and the analysts concluded the agent was “probably” him.

Growing suspicions about Hiss led to his departure from the State Department in 1947. The case against him mounted further in 1948 when Chambers testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee and produced copies of documents pilfered from State Department files, some of them in Hiss’s own handwriting.

The simple reason why Hiss wasn’t prosecuted for espionage was that the statute of limitations had expired. Thus, he was charged with two counts of perjury for lying before Congress. His first trial resulted in a hung jury. In January 1950, he was convicted and sentenced to serve two concurrent terms of 5 years. He was paroled after serving only 3½ years. To his dying day in 1996, at age 92, he claimed his innocence, though fewer and fewer people believed him.

Hiss was almost certainly a spy, but was he a traitor? Some of his defenders have argued that even if he did pass information to the Soviets, there’s no proof that he did actual harm to American security or interests.

Did he give “aid and comfort” to America’s enemies? That depends on how one defines “enemy.” Formally, that would mean a nation with which the United States was at war—a declared war. The US and the Soviet Union were never declared enemies. In fact, during much of the time Hiss’s espionage allegedly occurred, they were allies. But his case is inextricably bound up in the Cold War, in which the Soviets were definitely “the adversary,” which is kind of an enemy. Like almost everything else in the Hiss affair, the matter of his “treason” is a matter of opinion.

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6

CONQUERING HEROES—OR VILLAINS?

Conquerors use violence to achieve their ends, not just occasionally but habitually, perhaps compulsively. They live by the sword and for it. This category of villain is complicated by the fact that almost any conqueror, no matter how blood-drenched, is someone's hero. This lecture examines three conquerors: Attila the Hun, Tamerlane, and Napoleon Bonaparte.

ATTILA THE HUN

Attila the Hun certainly made a name for himself: *Flagellum Dei*, Latin for “Scourge of God.” His deeds would be recounted not just around Hun campfires but in Germanic folktales and Icelandic sagas.

The Huns were nomads and skilled horsemen who used their expertise with the bow to raid and pillage other peoples. In the 4th century CE, after centuries of warfare with the Chinese, some Huns headed west. Around 370, they crossed the Volga River and fell upon other barbarian tribes, such as the Goths, Vandals, and Alans, which either submitted to the Huns or fled toward the borders of the Roman Empire.

That empire was already split into East and West, each with its own emperor and its own set of problems and priorities. The Eastern Roman Empire, centered in Constantinople, ruled most of the Balkans and the Near East. The Western Roman Empire controlled Italy, Gaul, and Iberia. In the winter of 406, hordes of Franks, Visigoths, Vandals, and others swarmed across the frozen Rhine and overran most of the Western Empire. These barbarians carved out their own kingdoms and fought among themselves. Four years later, the Visigoth King Alaric captured and sacked Rome itself.

Into this dystopian world came the Hun Prince Attila, whose year of birth is uncertain. He and his older brother Bleda were nephews of the reigning Hun co-monarchs, Octar and Ruga. Up to the 430s, the Huns maintained a mutually agreeable relationship with the Romans, East and West. In 418, around age 12, Attila was received by the Romans as their “guest.”

In reality, he was a hostage sent to ensure the Huns stuck to their treaty. The East Romans paid the Huns 350 pounds of gold per annum to provide military aid when summoned. The Huns preferred to see this as tribute or protection money.

Attila and Bleda came to the Hun thrones in 434. Although the younger of the duo, Attila was the dominant personality. He recognized that most of the wealth remaining in the dying ancient world lay within Roman borders, and he was determined to get it. So, in 441, Attila broke his treaty with the East Romans and invaded the Balkans. The Huns were unstoppable, sacking city after city, often slaughtering their populations.

At Constantinople, Eastern Emperor Theodosius II made peace, paying Attila 6000 pounds of gold up front and increasing the annual tribute to 2100 pounds. Soon after, Attila became sole king when brother Bleda was killed, supposedly on Attila's order. When a new Eastern emperor stopped tribute, Attila invaded again in 447. A hundred towns were captured, and there was so much bloodletting "that the dead could not be numbered." In desperation, the East Romans tried having Attila assassinated but were forced to sign an even harsher treaty.

In 450, Attila made an alliance with Western Emperor Valentinian III to attack the Visigoths who'd taken over much of Gaul. But things took a twist when Valentinian's headstrong sister, Honoria, made a modest proposal of her own. Valentinian was trying to force her into an arranged marriage, so she begged Attila for help. She even sent him her engagement ring. Attila interpreted this as a proposal of marriage, which he accepted, demanding half the Western Empire as dowry.

When Valentinian balked, Attila led a huge army across the Rhine and began systematically pillaging and murdering his way across Gaul. In the summer of 451, he confronted a Roman-Visigoth army at Catalaunian Plains, where a 2-day bloodbath ended with the Huns retreating.

But Attila hadn't given up. The following spring, he invaded Italy. But Italy was beset with famine and plague, which spread to Attila's army. This led to the famous meeting between Attila and Pope Leo I. The later story was that Leo single-handedly persuaded the fearsome barbarian to go home. Others say that Attila was dissuaded by the supposed curse of Alaric, the Visigoth king who'd sacked Rome in 410, only to die soon after. In any case, there was no peace. Attila still claimed Honoria and half the empire and swore to return with a vengeance.

But in 453, Attila took a different wife. He already had several. After celebrating, he and his new bride retired to the nuptial chamber. The next morning, she was found weeping over his lifeless body. He lay in a pool of blood that had flowed from his nose. Was it a natural hemorrhage or had his enemies finally felled the monster by subtle means? Attila's body was placed in a secret tomb. It's testament to Attila's personal power that his empire died with him.

IN A FINAL ACT OF BLOODSHED, THE
WORKERS WHO BUILT ATTLA'S TOMB
WERE KILLED TO KEEP IT SECRET.

TAMERLANE

Born in 1336 in what's now Uzbekistan, Tamerlane—whose real name was Timur, meaning “Iron”—was a member of the Turko-Mongol Barlas tribe. Through his father, he claimed distant relation to the great Genghis Kahn, who lived 2 centuries earlier. Tamerlane proclaimed himself the “Sword of Islam” and waged war in the name of God. His aim was to restore Genghis's empire and make himself a universal ruler.

Tamerlane became a mercenary general serving the rulers of the Chagatai Khanate, the Mongol successor state controlling most of Central Asia. Through ambition, guile, and luck, Tamerlane overthrew the khan, replaced him with a puppet, and ruled as supreme warlord. Lacking royal blood, Tamerlane could never claim khan for himself. To compensate for his lack of royalty, he cultivated a cult of personality and presented himself as a man chosen by God to defend and expand Islam.

When Tamerlane invaded Persia in 1383, he was already in his forties, but over the next 20 years, he's credited with annihilating 5% of the world's population. Cities that accepted his rule, such as Tehran and the then-great metropolis of Isfahan, were spared. But when Isfahan later rebelled, the city was utterly destroyed, along with 100,000 to 200,000 inhabitants.

Tamerlane crushed another revolt by immuring thousands of prisoners in walls—alive. His most famous calling cards were the towers of severed heads he left in his wake. He also engaged in personal feuds. One was with

Tokhtamysh, a real descendant of Genghis Khan. Tamerlane helped him take control of another Mongol successor realm, the Golden Horde. Later, deeming Tokhtamysh ungrateful, Tamerlane marched 100,000 men 700 miles to teach him a lesson.

Tamerlane's spiteful defeat of the Golden Horde had far-reaching consequences. Its vassals, such as the Grand Principality of Moscow, were freed. After narrowly avoiding being destroyed by Tamerlane in 1395, Moscow would go on to create a powerful Russian state.

In 1398, Tamerlane led another huge army across the Indus River to attack the sultanate of Delhi for allowing “infidels,” that is, Hindus, to exist in India. His army advanced on a 10-mile-wide front, destroying everything in its path. When Delhi inevitably rebelled, he plundered and torched it, butchering 100,000 captives.



TAMERLANE

Tamerlane next turned his attention west, to the Middle East, where the Ottoman Turks were on the rise. In 1400, he lay waste to Georgia and Armenia, before falling on the great Syrian cities of Aleppo and Damascus, both of which he reduced to smoldering ruins and towers of skulls. In 1401, it was Baghdad's turn. A year later, he crushed the Ottomans.

In the winter of 1404, he turned to the conquest of China. A few decades earlier, the Chinese had toppled their Mongol dynasty and replaced it with the native Ming. Tamerlane determined that it was God's will that he should restore proper order and teach the infidel Chinese a lesson.

But not far into the journey, Tamerlane fell ill and died. China was spared. For all his destruction, Tamerlane arguably left something positive in his wake. His son and successor, Shah Rukh, was a competent, wise, and relatively peaceful ruler who ushered in the so-called Timurid Renaissance. Today, Tamerlane is regarded as a hero of the Uzbek people, and a statue of him in Samarkand adorns a pedestal previously surmounted by Karl Marx.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Napoleon Bonaparte probably enjoys wider popularity today than he did when he was alive. He's seen as an avatar of modernity, a shaker of the status quo, and the very model of a "self-made man." But in his day, Bonaparte was reviled as an ogre, a monster, a tyrant, and a usurper, even by many Frenchmen.

Curiously, Bonaparte wasn't French at all. His family was Italian, and he was born on August 15, 1769, on the Italian-speaking island of Corsica, only recently annexed to the French crown. Up to age 20, he styled himself a Corsican nationalist. Thus, some have argued, his Frenchness was a cynical affectation; in other words, Bonaparte was a fraud.

Bonaparte's family status helped him get into a French military school, and in 1784, at age 15, he began training as an artillery officer at the elite *École Militaire*. Five years later came the French Revolution, which young Bonaparte enthusiastically embraced. By abolishing nobility and officially recognizing the equality of all men, the Revolution swept away the obstacles of nationality and class and offered better career opportunities than the king. Thus, in terms of villainy, Bonaparte could be considered an opportunist.

Bonaparte's first assignment for the French Republic was the liberation of his native Corsica from foreign occupation. He failed completely. In 1793, he redeemed himself with the recapture of Toulon from the English. In the meantime, Bonaparte had become a protégé of Augustin Robespierre, brother of the infamous radical and architect of the Terror, Maximilien Robespierre. When the Robespierre brothers fell from power in July 1794, Bonaparte was briefly arrested but somehow saved from a similar fate.

Bonaparte's battlefield exploits have been hashed and rehashed, so this discussion includes only a couple examples that speak to his alleged villainy. In 1798, he commanded a French army in Egypt, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire. Securing Egypt, he led 15,000 men across the Sinai into Palestine and lay siege to the fortified town of Jaffa. When it fell, he discovered that many of its defenders were former prisoners of war who had sworn to never again bear arms against him. He ordered around 4000 summarily executed and looked the other way while his troops spent 3 days robbing, raping, and killing in the city.

When plague broke out in his army, Bonaparte allegedly commanded that hundreds of ill French soldiers be put out of their misery with opium. Bonaparte's defenders will argue that these measures were within the bounds of standard practice and military necessity. To his detractors, they're evidence that he was a mass murderer.

Back in France, Bonaparte led a coup in 1799 that made him first consul of the Republic. In 1802, after forcing his enemies into a peace treaty, he was anointed consul for life, or, more simply, dictator for life. Two years later, the insatiable egoist crowned himself Napoleon I, emperor of the French. While some see these promotions, for which voters voiced approval, as proof that Bonaparte was truly a man of the people, others dismiss the votes as pure political theater and consider him a tyrant.

Ten years of empire and near-constant war followed. Bonaparte's power extended across most of Europe except for Britain and Russia. In a bid to consolidate power over Europe, he amassed the Grand Armée and marched on Moscow. The result was one of history's great debacles. Half a million men marched into Russia, and fewer than 10% marched out. Bonaparte wasn't with them. He'd abandoned his army and sped home to raise a new one, revealing that he had no true feeling for the common soldiers he pretended to love.

Forced to abdicate, Bonaparte was exiled to the Italian island of Elba, where he might have lived the remainder of his days in relative comfort. His ego wouldn't permit this. He escaped, returned to France, reclaimed the throne, and resumed the war. But even if he'd won the Battle of Waterloo, his

strategic situation was hopeless. Once more defeated, he was exiled to another island, St. Helena, where he died in 1821. Whether it was natural illness or British poison is still a matter of debate.

The Napoleonic Wars cost an estimated 4 million lives. Accusations of opportunism and unbridled egoism are hard to deny. But Bonaparte's real sin was likely that he refused to play by the rules established by men who were mostly as callous and egotistical than he.

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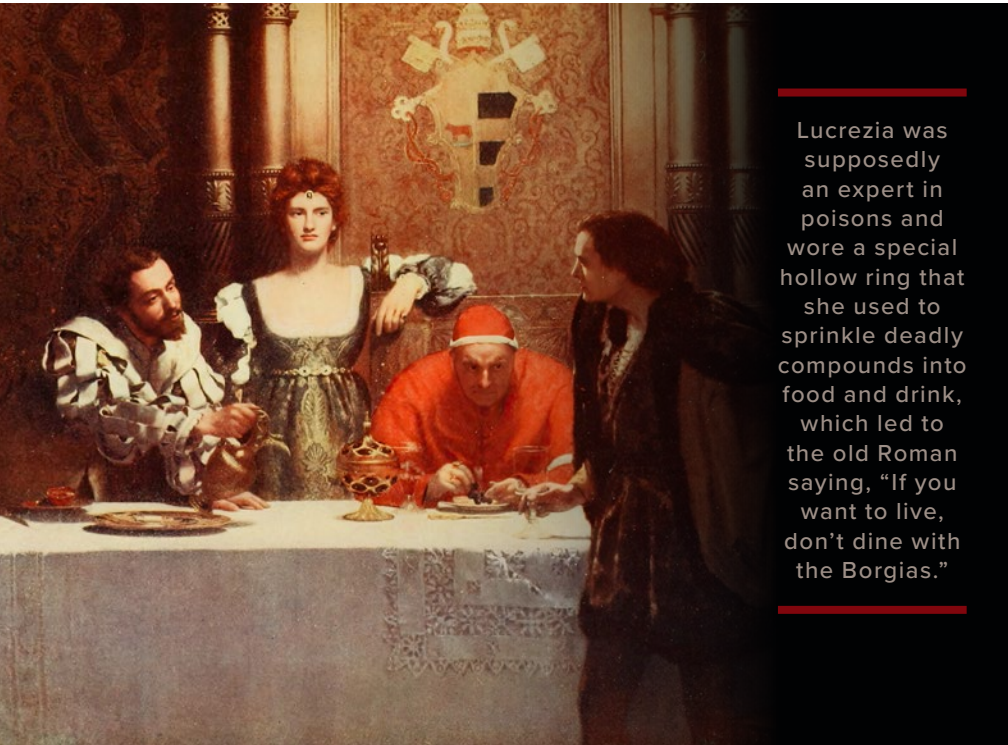
WOMEN CAN BE VILLAINS TOO: THE FEMME FATALE

One of the most intriguing and enduring villainous archetypes is the femme fatale. A stock character in film noir, she's the natural antagonist and erotic obsession of every hard-boiled detective—part siren, part scheming vixen, always ruthlessly self-centered, and frequently murderous. She's a woman at once dangerous and fascinating—and frequently misjudged. This lecture explores three historical femme fatales: Renaissance arch bad girl Lucrezia Borgia; Hungary's infamous "Blood Countess," Elizabeth Báthory; and Russia's "Scarlet Empress," Catherine the Great. All were born to wealth and power. So, what more did they want?

LUCREZIA BORGIA

Lucrezia Borgia was born in 1480 as the daughter of Rodrigo Borja, or Borgia, a Spanish nobleman and cardinal of the Catholic Church. Lucrezia was one of four children born to Rodrigo and his favorite mistress, Italian courtesan Vannozza Catanei. The other three were her brothers Juan, Cesare, and Jofré.

In many ways, Rodrigo was a poster boy for the corruption afflicting the Roman Catholic Church in the late 15th century. His uncle, a bishop turned cardinal, secured him an ecclesiastical post at age 14. But instead of performed any duties, Rodrigo simply pocketed the stipend and ventured off to Bologna to study—and party. In 1455, that same uncle became Pope Callixtus III, and the following year, he anointed his 25-year-old nephew a cardinal. And in 1492, at age 61, Rodrigo wangled his own elevation as Pope Alexander VI.



Lucrezia was supposedly an expert in poisons and wore a special hollow ring that she used to sprinkle deadly compounds into food and drink, which led to the old Roman saying, “If you want to live, don’t dine with the Borgias.”

Lucrezia was a beautiful woman who was also smart, well educated, and talented. Never one to overlook a valuable asset, Rodrigo contracted her—that is, sold her—to marry a Spanish nobleman at the age of 10. But when a more important count showed interest in Lucrezia, Rodrigo canceled the Spanish marriage and negotiated another.

On becoming pope, Lucrezia's father naturally figured she was worth even more and broke the second engagement to re-engage her to the even more powerful lord Giovanni Sforza. In 1493, Lucrezia, age 13, and Sforza, age 28, were duly wed, but the agreement stipulated that Lucrezia would remain in Rome another year before joining her husband.

In fact, Pope Alexander was weighing other options for his golden daughter. Sforza found himself pressed by his father-in-law and brother-in-law Cesare into annulling the marriage on grounds of his own impotence. Sforza refused and fled Rome in fear of his life. In 1497, he finally signed a document attesting that the marriage had never been consummated and that Lucrezia was a virgin.

In the meantime, Lucrezia had become inconveniently pregnant. To extract revenge for his humiliation, Sforza spread the rumor that the baby's father was Lucrezia's brother Cesare or her father. More likely, the sire was a Vatican chamberlain, Pedro Calderon, with whom she'd had an affair. Calderon was soon found murdered, along with one of Lucrezia's maids, possibly to keep this secret. Their killer was rumored to have been Cesare's personal hitman.

In 1498, 18-year-old Lucrezia was wed for the second time to Alfonso of Aragon, who was already the brother-in-law of Lucrezia's younger brother Jofré. Things were even more complicated because Jofré's wife—Alfonso's sister—had been carrying on simultaneous affairs with Lucrezia's other brothers Cesare and Juan. Many believed the affairs had something to do with Juan's murder in 1497. The chief suspect was again Cesare.

In time, the Borgias also soured on Alfonso. In 1500, he was stabbed on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica. When it looked like he would recover, he was strangled in his bed. Once again, Cesare was blamed. Lucrezia then married her third and most prestigious spouse, the Duke of Ferrara, with whom she had at least six children. This union proved to be long and reasonably happy, though out of the public eye, they amused themselves with numerous affairs.

Lucrezia died on June 24, 1519, soon after giving birth to her eighth child, a stillborn daughter. She was 39. She had outlived her father and two remaining brothers.

The “black legend” of the Borgias portrays them as depraved, extravagant, incestuous, and murderous. Some of that is certainly true. Yet there’s absolutely no evidence that Lucrezia killed anyone. Almost every wicked thing attributed to Lucrezia stems from the villainy of her father and brothers.

ELIZABETH BÁTHORY

Between 1590 and 1610, Elizabeth Báthory allegedly murdered hundreds of young girls for ritual purposes, sadistic gratification, or both. She has been dubbed Countess Dracula and the Blood Countess. However, much like Lucrezia Borgia, one could argue that Báthory was more victim than villain, though in Báthory’s case, the picture is a lot murkier and much darker.

Erzsébet, anglicized Elizabeth, belonged to one of the most prestigious, influential, and wealthy families in Hungary. She received the usual education of a young noblewoman and was thoroughly versed in etiquette and the so-called womanly graces. She even ran a finishing school for young ladies. Through an arranged marriage, she was married at age 14 to Count Ferenc Nádasdy, more than a decade her elder. They remained married for about 30 years.

Báthory supposedly learned cruelty from her father, who believed every noble, including women, had to be able to inflict punishment and death without flinching. It is said that an uncle introduced her to Satanism, and an aunt taught her the dark pleasures of sadomasochism. Even her beloved husband allegedly built her a torture chamber where she could act out her bloodred fantasies.

Most of these stories only arose decades or centuries after her death, so it’s hard to say what’s true. However, at least one of Báthory’s personal servants, and alleged accomplice, was an admitted witch, and it’s conceivable that Báthory might have dabbled in such things as well.

As a wedding gift, Báthory and Nádasdy received Csejte castle, located in modern Slovakia. Along with it came a large estate and 17 villages. Her husband spent most of his time away from home fighting Hungary's seemingly endless wars. This left Báthory mostly on her own and gave her the freedom to run the estate pretty much as she saw fit.

At the castle, Báthory opened her finishing school, or gynaecium, which attracted daughters of the lower nobility. Among these girls, mostly aged 10 to 14, Báthory allegedly found many of her first victims. According to her trial records, young women did go missing at the castle, but just who and how many is unclear.

Báthory eventually turned to peasant girls from the nearby villages. They would be recruited for work in the castle, never to be seen again. But as one skeptic noted, given that a stolen chicken usually resulted in a written report, reports of missing girls seem oddly absent. The counterargument is that Báthory used her clout to keep people quiet.

All these mysterious disappearances seem to have started around 1590. Báthory had turned 30 and supposedly had begun to fear aging and losing her beauty. As the story goes, she came to believe that drinking or bathing in the blood of virginal girls would preserve her looks. However, bloodbaths were not mentioned until the mid-18th century, and the vampire angle is purely modern sensationalist invention.

Contemporary accusations make it appear that Báthory was primarily interested in tormenting her victims for sadistic pleasure. Acts included inserting needles and other sharp objects into their flesh; biting off nipples, noses, and fingers; and beating, burning, mutilating, freezing, and starving victims.

BÁTHORY IS SAID TO HAVE
TORMENTED VICTIMS BY COVERING
THEM WITH HONEY AND BESETTING
THEM WITH ANTS AND BEES.

After years of rumors, in 1610, Hungarian King Matthias ordered an investigation, a task he entrusted to György Thurzó—the same man Báthory’s now-deceased husband had asked to look out for his widow and estate. Naturally, some sensed a conspiracy.

In one version of the story, when Thurzó entered the castle, he found one girl dead and another near death from starvation. In another version, he also discovered Báthory naked and covered in blood. Regardless, Báthory and four of her servants were put on trial in early 1611. Three hundred witnesses offered testimony, mostly about what they had heard as opposed to what they had seen. But other grim evidence turned up in the numerous unmarked graves discovered around the castle and surrounding countryside.

The result was 80 counts of murder, but others claimed there were as many as 650 victims. Some families identified the remains of their loved ones. Báthory maintained her innocence, but her servants confessed, albeit with the encouragement of a little torture, and were burned or beheaded.

But thanks to her rank and the entreaties of her family, Báthory was sentenced to spend the rest of her days under house arrest. Contrary to later stories saying that she was walled in a room with just slits for air and food, she was actually free to roam the premises at will. In 1614, at age 54, the notorious countess fell ill and died. She was later buried in the family crypt.

CATHERINE THE GREAT

In July 1762, Catherine the Great scandalized not just Russia but all of Europe by first proclaiming that she would crown herself empress in September and then a week later, announcing the death of her husband, Tsar and Emperor Peter III, from a sudden bout of “colic.”

Few believed this story. Rumors claimed Peter had been murdered by Catherine’s lover, Grigory Orlov. Adding to the shock and insult was that Catherine was a foreigner, a German by birth and rearing. As a mere *tsaritsa*, or “emperor’s wife,” she had no authority to crown herself anything. But

Catherine, known as the “Scarlet Empress,” was far from Russia’s only female ruler. The 18th century was dominated by empresses, including Catherine I, Anna, and Elizabeth, the last the daughter of the mighty Peter the Great.

How Catherine came to Russia requires some explanation. Empress Elizabeth chose her young nephew, Karl Peter Ulrich, Herzog von Holstein-Gottorp, to be her heir. Suffice it to say Peter was a huge disappointment. He considered himself German and hated Russia and his empress aunt. Nevertheless, in 1744, Elizabeth imported 15-year-old Sophie Friederike Auguste von Anhalt-Zerbst, the daughter of a minor German prince, to be Peter’s bride, hoping she’d produce a more suitable male heir. Sophie obediently converted to Russian Orthodoxy and adopted the new name of Ekaterina, or Catherine.

Realizing early on that her future husband was disliked by almost everyone at the imperial court, Catherine quickly won the good graces of Empress Elizabeth and others at court. She also took a series of lovers and in 1754 gave birth to a son, Paul. The father was almost certainly not Peter.

CATHERINE HAD THE
VILLAIN’S GIFT OF
BEING PLEASANT
AND INGRATIATING
WHENEVER IT SUITED
HER PURPOSE.



Empress Elizabeth died suddenly, and apparently naturally, in January 1762. Peter ascended the throne and soon alienated everyone who didn’t already despise him. A consensus arose among St. Petersburg’s elite that Peter had to go. Catherine took the initiative and assigned the task to the Orlov brothers. When Peter refused to abdicate, he was killed. By various accounts, he was bludgeoned to death or strangled with a dinner napkin.

Since Paul was still too young, the only viable candidate for replacement was Catherine. However, the former Ivan VI had a far better claim to the throne than Catherine. Ivan had briefly reigned as an infant more than 20 years earlier before being dethroned by the supporters of Elizabeth. He'd since lived in solitary confinement, his existence unknown to the world. Soon after Catherine took power, orders went out that if any attempt was made to free Ivan, he was to be killed at once. And by accident or design, that's exactly what happened.

Many assumed Catherine would be a puppet empress and leave the actual ruling to the noblemen of the imperial Senate and other state institutions. They couldn't have been more wrong. Although she's credited with being an "enlightened despot" who sought to modernize—that is, westernize—Russia, one could argue that her overriding aim was to consolidate power in her hands.

What most distinguished Russia from Western Europe was the survival and growth of serfdom, a condition which bound peasants—who composed 90% of the population—to their landlords through debt and compulsory labor. Under Catherine, serfdom was expanded to new territories and transformed into outright chattel slavery. She further lavished the nobility with huge awards of state lands, peasants included. During her reign, she "gave away" as many as 400,000 state peasants.

Catherine also stripped the Orthodox Church of its remaining lands and abolished the traditional autonomy of the Cossacks and Ukraine. She waged incessant wars against the Ottoman Turks, which led to the annexation of the Crimea. She further joined with Austria and Prussia to wipe Poland off the map. She also did not take kindly to the French Revolution in 1789 and joined a coalition to crush it.

On the morning of November 16, 1796, servants found Catherine lying on her boudoir floor, paralyzed, probably from a stroke. The following day, she took her last breath. Catherine was an authentic femme fatale. Cunning and ruthless, she was a manipulator of men as opposed to their pawn.

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8

NO FREE LUNCH— OR IS THERE? FREEBOOTERS

F*reebooter* derives from an old Dutch word meaning “someone who robs in plain sight”—a bold and brazen thief. The term has become largely synonymous with *pirate* or *plunderer*, but in a modern sense, *freebooter* can also denote a bandit with delusions of grandeur or an adventurer seeking wealth and power without responsibility. This lecture dissects three examples of freebooters: the ruthless conquistador Francisco Pizarro; the so-called last of the buccaneers, Bully Hayes; and the “Mad Baron” or “Bloody Baron,” Roman von Ungern-Sternberg.

FRANCISCO PIZARRO

Pizarro's story begins around 1475 on a small farm near Trujillo in the Kingdom of Castile. His father was part of the *hidalgo* class, a hereditary warrior caste whose name means “son of something.” Members of this class served the crown as soldiers in return for a bit of land and the right to call themselves gentlemen. But Francisco was an illegitimate son, which meant that he was barely above a common peasant.

In 1510, Pizarro joined colonists bound for the Spanish footholds in the New World. There, he came under the patronage of Vasco Núñez de Balboa, later famous as the first European discoverer of the Pacific Ocean. Alongside Balboa, Pizarro battled Native Americans, plundered their towns, and learned which violent tactics were allowable in this New World.

In 1513, a power struggle arose between Balboa and another Spanish commander, Pedro Arias Dávila. Siding with Dávila, who offered the better deal, Pizarro turned Balboa over to his enemy to be beheaded. As a reward, Pizarro became mayor of Panama City.

Spurred by tales of gold-rich lands along the western shore of South America, in 1523, Pizarro made a pact with two other men, fellow conquistador Diego de Almagro and a priest, Hernando de Luque. They planned an expedition to conquer the lands south of Panama and agreed to share the spoils equally.

The lands they sought were inhabited by the Inca empire, which was in chaos at the time. Around 1527, the reigning Inca monarch, Huayna Capac, died suddenly, likely due to smallpox, a European disease. Soon after, his eldest son also died from smallpox.

The Inca throne was left contested between two other sons and half brothers, Atahualpa and Huáscar. A brutal civil war raged for 5 years. In the late summer of 1532, victory finally seemed in Atahualpa's grasp. Then the Spanish reappeared.

Pizarro's expedition included an agreement that Pizarro would be governor of a new province dubbed New Castile, covering today's Ecuador and northern Peru. Nothing, though, was promised to Pizarro's partners Almagro and Luque.

The expedition got to Peru in 1532. Pizarro's "army" was absurdly small: 106 infantry and 62 horsemen armed with 12 muskets and 4 small cannons. Upon hearing of the Spaniards' arrival, Atahualpa dispatched a messenger offering to meet Pizarro at Cajamarca, some 70 miles from the coast, deep in a mountain valley. Atahualpa probably intended to impress the Spaniards with his power and ferocity. Simply put, it was a trap.

Reaching the city on November 15 and seeing the size of the Inca forces around it, Pizarro called a war council and proposed a bold, almost foolhardy plan. Atahualpa was coming to town the next day. The center of Cajamarca was dominated by a large plaza surrounded by stone buildings. Pizarro aimed to use cannons and musketeers hidden around the square to seize the Inca monarch by surprise. Once Atahualpa was in the Spaniards' power, they could negotiate from a position of strength.

The next day, an overconfident Atahualpa entered the city with a "small" guard of 6000 to 8000 who were unarmed. As they reached the plaza, Pizarro's soldiers swarmed Atahualpa's retinue and dragged him inside. By the time the slaughter was over, around 7000 Natives lay dead.

Atahualpa offered to ransom himself by filling two big rooms with 24 tons of silver and gold. Pizarro accepted the ransom but did not let the Inca go. In the summer of 1533, Pizarro accused Atahualpa of plotting rebellion—which may have been the case—and sentenced the Inca monarch to death by throttling.

It would take more years of fighting before the Spanish secured dominion, but for all practical purposes, the Inca empire died with Atahualpa. Pizarro obtained the title of marquess and lived like a king in his new capital of Lima, which greatly rankled his onetime friend and partner Almagro. In 1537, their feud burst into open warfare. Almagro killed one of Pizarro's brothers, only to be slain himself. In revenge, on June 26, 1541, a band of Almagro's men stormed Pizarro's abode and attacked him.

In the view of British historian Simon Sebag Montefiore, Pizarro “personifies the greed and callous inhumanity of the Spanish conquistadors.” In sheer ruthlessness, treacherousness, and brutality, none outdid him. Today, his tomb in Lima arouses mixed feelings. Without Pizarro, the modern nation of Peru and its culture would not exist. Yet, as Montefiore notes, many modern Peruvians regard him as a “criminal guilty of genocide.”

WILLIAM HENRY HAYES

William Henry Hayes was born in Cleveland, Ohio, sometime around 1827 to 1829. He’d later boast of being “born a scoundrel.” By his early twenties, he was an imposing 6 feet and 200 pounds of brawn who could “fight like a threshing machine” and knock a man out with one punch, hence, the nickname Bully.

However, Bully Hayes succeeded in his crimes more out of cunning than brute strength. Early on, he learned “gentlemanly manners,” and by most accounts, he could be quite charming—a handy skill for a swindler. That charm, however, was coupled with a hair-trigger temper and “black rages,” especially when he drank.

One of the first stories about Hayes involved an incident in 1853, when he sailed out of New York aboard the *Canton* as a passenger. By the time the ship docked in Singapore, Hayes had somehow become the captain. Something took the previous skipper out and Hayes used a forged master’s certificate to secure the helm. Another story says he won the vessel in a card game, probably by cheating. In Singapore, Hayes sold the *Canton* and its cargo, which he had no right to do, and disappeared—a pattern he repeated again and again.

He appeared next in Australia, where in 1857, he gained command of another vessel. The British were still exporting criminals to the Australian penal colonies, and Hayes made most of his money smuggling convicts elsewhere. Meanwhile, he racked up huge debts—which he never paid—and narrowly dodged a charge of indecently assaulting a 15-year-old girl. The rape or attempted rape of underage females would be another hallmark of his illustrious career, in addition to his two or three bigamous marriages.

By 1859, Hayes's infamy had reached Honolulu, where he was thrown off a ship for swindling passengers. He then drifted back to the Australian gold fields where he became ringmaster of a traveling circus and a member of a blackface minstrel troupe, all the while running cons on anyone taken in by his phony charm.

Next, he tried his hand as a hotel operator in New Zealand. When that fell through, he finagled command of another ship, the brig *Rona*, and began blackbirding, which involved the recruitment and transport of Native labor from the South Seas to plantations in Fiji, Australia, Tahiti, and even South America. Often enslaved through coercion and trickery, many blackbirded islanders never saw their homes again. In 1870, Hayes agreed to transport people from a remote island in the Marshall Islands to Pago Pago. But the travelers figured out something was wrong, and while stopped on another island, they sought help from the local chief, who arrested Hayes and turned him over to European authorities in Samoa.

Along with another dubious American named Benjamin Pease, Hayes escaped, and after acquiring yet another ship, they fled back to China. But by the time the ship reached Shanghai, only Hayes remained. Everyone assumed he'd killed Pease, but no one could prove it.

In 1874, on the Micronesian island of Kosrae, Hayes brutally raped a 9-year-old girl. Two years later, his vessel, the *Leonora*, was wrecked on the island, stranding him and resulting in a 7-month-long "reign of terror." He was again arrested and again escaped.

Hayes eventually returned to Kosrae to recover a stash of valuable copra (dried coconut). Others believed he was really after a strongbox of gold and valuables he'd buried there. A new member of his crew, a cook named Peter Radeck,

became fed up with Hayes's bullying and on March 31, 1877, bashed in his head with an iron implement. Other stories reported that Hayes was shot and tossed overboard. Some also suspected that Radeck and others killed Hayes in hopes of getting their hands on his treasure. In any case, Radeck wasn't prosecuted for the slaying, the consensus being that Hayes was a man who deserved killing.

AT ONE POINT IN HIS CAREER OF CRIME, HAYES WAS ARRESTED BY SPANISH AUTHORITIES IN MANILA. HE WAS RELEASED AND ENDED UP IN SAN FRANCISCO, WHERE HE LOST AN EAR FOR CHEATING AT CARDS.

ROMAN VON UNGERN- STERNBERG

Roman von Ungern-Sternberg was born on January 10, 1886. The Ungern-Sternbergs were part of the Baltic nobility of the Russian Empire. Although German in language and culture, they had faithfully served the tsars since the 18th century. Ungern's family tree included some unsavory characters, including his own father, who was reputedly a "bad man" prone to violence and cruelty and ultimately banned from contact with his children.

Ungern displayed signs of abnormal behavior early on. As a boy, he tortured and killed animals and was obsessed with weapons. After several expulsions from school, he ended up in the cavalry where, along with a reputation as a brawler and duelist, he was decorated for bravery. He regarded himself as a warrior.

In the years before World War I, Ungern was posted to Siberia and neighboring Mongolia. There, he encountered Buddhism, which he adopted as a personal faith, albeit with a few twists of his own. He claimed to have formed a secret Order of Military Buddhists in the Russian army to protect the tsar and fight the evils of revolution, even before the Russian Revolution took place.

UNGERN INTERPRETED REINCARNATION
TO MEAN THAT THE KILLING OF THE
WEAK AND DISABLED WAS FOR THE
BEST SINCE IT HASTENED THEM
TO A NEW AND BETTER LIFE.

In the Russian Civil War that followed 1917, Ungern sided with the so-called Whites against the “Red” Bolsheviks. By 1920, he was back in eastern Siberia, where he commanded a ragtag unit dubbed the Asiatic Cavalry Division. It largely consisted of the “scum of central Asia”: Russians, Mongols, Tatars, Tibetans, and even some rogue Japanese. Discipline was entirely at Ungern’s whim. Someone who displeased him might be sentenced to sit on a sharp-pitched roof for several days or tied to a tree and set on fire. Ungern’s inner circle consisted of a serial killer, a violent thug, and a sadistic physician who poisoned the sick and wounded and preferred operating without anesthesia so he could enjoy the anguished screams.

Ungern’s division guarded the rail line linking Siberia to Manchuria. Fortune did not smile on the Whites. By late 1920, Ungern faced the choice of withdrawing into Manchuria or heading off into the nearby Mongolian wilds. He chose the latter.

To avoid being burdened with sick and wounded, Ungern locked them in the hospital and set it on fire. What followed was a nightmare 500-mile trek across the Mongolian steppe in the dead of winter. Hundreds perished. Any habitations encountered were pillaged and their inhabitants ruthlessly slaughtered. There were rumors of cannibalism.

Ungern's goal was the capital of Outer Mongolia, Urga, today Ulaanbaatar. But Urga was just the first step in Ungern's larger plan, which was to create a vast Pan-Mongol empire that would wage merciless war with unholy Bolshevism in the name of Buddha and the tsar. The rub was that Outer Mongolia was then part of China and contained a large Chinese garrison.

Ungern's forces stormed the city in February 1921. What ensued was a general massacre of Chinese soldiers and civilians, as many as 2000, and the brutal looting of the town. Ungern eventually restored order but later issued an order declaring that "Commissars, Communists and Jews, together with their families, shall be destroyed." The order also elaborated Ungern's plan to unleash divine counterrevolution across Eurasia to cleanse Russia of its red contagion and restore the late Tsar Nicholas's brother, Michael, to the throne—never mind that Michael had been dead since 1918.

In June 1921, with about 3000 fighters, Ungern invaded Soviet-controlled Siberia. This first attempt was stopped dead at the border, and the Reds took Urga in July.

Ungern then reinvaded Siberia. He captured a Red Army hospital convoy with female nurses; atrocities followed. His little army got halfway to the Trans-Siberian railway before being stopped. His exhausted and exasperated troops mutinied, tied him up, and left him for the Reds. Duly captured, he was tried in a Soviet court, found guilty, and sentenced to be shot. The verdict didn't faze him. Taking heart in reincarnation, he smugly told his executioners, "I'll be back."

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9

VILLAINY FOR PROFIT: DIRTY MONEY

French writer Honoré de Balzac proclaimed that “Behind every great fortune is an equally great crime.” While a debatable proposition, many people then and now would agree. Money, after all, is the “root of all evil.” So, naturally, it attracts villains. This lecture considers a trio of alleged villainous business figures: arms merchant Basil Zaharoff, oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, and international wheeler-dealer Armand Hammer. What’s questionable here isn’t just their unscrupulous methods but also what they did with the power and influence that wealth bought.

SIR BASIL ZAHAROFF

Sir Basil Zaharoff was born Basileios Zacharias in 1849—though he variously claimed 1850 or 1851—in what was then the Ottoman Empire. He was probably an ethnic Greek, but others have claimed he was of Russian, Bulgarian, Armenian, or Jewish ancestry. Somewhere along the line, the original family name was Russified to Zaharoff.

His father was a merchant with business connections in London. In 1872, Basil was living as a “merchant and interpreter” in the heart of London’s financial district. That same year, he changed his surname to Zacharoff-Gortzacoff and adopted the title, or alias, “General de Kieff.” As such, he married a well-to-do young Englishwoman, Emily Burrows. Soon after, he was arrested for unlawfully disposing of goods belonging to his uncle. He posted bond and fled the country, leaving his wife behind.

Zaharoff reappeared in Cyprus bearing a British passport in the name of Z. Z. Williamson. There, he went into business with William Shaw, an Englishman who was the local rep for the Swedish Nordenfelt Guns and Ammunitions Company. When Shaw retired, Zaharoff stepped into his shoes, and his career as a “merchant of death” was born.

By 1879, the former fugitive was back in London hobnobbing with the rich and powerful. Bankrolled by someone, Zaharoff next headed to America. In New York, he billed himself as Zanat-el-Zahan, an Egyptian mind reader. But his most successful impersonation was the fez-wearing Count Zaharoff, who claimed to be a former officer of the Russian Imperial Guard and aide-de-camp to the tsar. As such, he became secretary of the Mann sleeping car company and invested in land, cattle, and railroads.

In August 1885, he bigamously married Jeannie Billings, an American heiress. Getting wind of the wedding, his English wife dispatched detectives to hunt him down. He and his new bride bolted for Europe, but the affair became a salacious public scandal. Eventually divorced by the first wife and abandoned by the second, he plunged deeper into arms dealing.

In the States, he’d seen a prototype submarine built by John Holland. It so happened that Zaharoff’s employer was working on the very same thing. In 1886, Zaharoff sold a Nordenfelt sub to the Greek navy. He immediately

turned around and sold two more to Greece's Ottoman enemies. This was the "Zaharoff system"—increasing profits by arming rivals. Nordenfelt merged with its American rival, Hiram Maxim. Their hot product was the Maxim machine gun. Zaharoff couldn't sell enough of those.

Next, in 1897, Maxim–Nordenfelt was bought up by Britain's premier arms firm, Vickers. Zaharoff became the "general representative for business abroad." In 1905, Vickers, Sons & Maxim paid him an £86,000 commission, today's equivalent of almost \$17 million.

But only part of his fortune came from arms and munitions. His fingers extended into shipping, salvage, railways, and banking. His critics insisted that the twin pillars of his dark empire were corruption and espionage. To further his business, Zaharoff even operated his own intelligence service, the so-called *Reseau ZZ*.

Zaharoff outwardly backed the Allies in World War I and enjoyed peculiarly close relationships with statesmen such as British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and Greek politician Eleuthérios Venizélos, but in everything he did, Zaharoff always put his own interests first.

In 1924, Zaharoff married his longtime mistress, Maria, Duchess of Villafranca de los Caballeros, but she died two years later. In 1932, a journalist published a scathing exposé openly branding Zaharoff a "Merchant of Death" and tool of British imperialism. Zaharoff was also accused of being behind the mysterious deaths of three business rivals. In 1934, Zaharoff's name featured in the US Senate's investigation of the munitions industry and war profiteering. On November 27, 1936, he died and was laid to rest near his duchess, though some believed he was actually interred in Monaco to deceive potential grave robbers.

ZAHAROFF HAD MANY NAMES
AND WAS FICTIONALIZED AS MANY
MORE. ORSON WELLES USED HIM
AS ONE OF HIS INSPIRATIONS
FOR CHARLES FOSTER KANE.

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

John Davison Rockefeller was born in upstate New York in 1839, the son of a traveling salesman nicknamed Devil Bill. The family settled near Cleveland, Ohio, where, as a schoolboy, John revealed a talent for making lightning-fast calculations in his head. By age 16, he'd parlayed that into a job as assistant bookkeeper.

In 1865, at age 26, Rockefeller got into the petroleum business. The most lucrative product was kerosene, but refineries were pumping out three times more product than they could sell, and kerosene prices dropped by half between 1865 and 1870. Regardless, Rockefeller saw a way to make money. The problem was that there were too many producers producing too much oil and competing by cutting prices. The first step was to put his competitors out of business.

In 1870, he teamed up with Henry Flagler to form Standard Oil. Rockefeller held more than one-quarter of the stock. The fledgling company controlled 10% of America's refining capacity. Ten years later, it would control 90%. To lure investors and increase his capital, Rockefeller paid higher dividends. He used the cash to buy out smaller companies.

Another problem was transportation. Getting product to market depended on the railroads, but rates constantly fluctuated due to competition among the carriers. Standard Oil and the bigger railroads joined forces. In early 1872, they secretly created the Southern Improvement Company, which fixed rates among themselves and left everyone else out in the cold. The result was the so-called Cleveland Massacre, in which Rockefeller gobbled up 22 of Cleveland's 26 oil refineries. Left out were the drillers, who got less for their crude; the workers, who saw wages cut; and the middlemen, who were cut out completely.

In 1882, Rockefeller created the Standard Oil Trust. A giant "corporation of corporations," it controlled 41 companies, 20,000 wells, 4000 miles of pipeline, 5000 tank cars, 80% of the world's refining capacity, and more than 100,000 employees.

In 1902, Rockefeller faced a new challenger in Ida Tarbell, a muckraking journalist and daughter of a man ruined in the Cleveland Massacre. Her series of articles were turned into a book, *The History of the Standard Oil Company*. Historian J. North Conway called it a “masterpiece of investigative journalism,” and another, Daniel Yergin, lauded it as “the single most influential book on business ever published in the United States.”

Tarbell condemned the petroleum industry as “a rich field ... for exploitative vice in every form” and “destructive of beauty, order, [and] decency.” Her exposé hit a nerve with the American public and set the stage for the 1911 Supreme Court decision that forced Standard Oil’s dissolution into 33 separate companies. Thus, Chevron, Conoco, Exxon, Mobil, Pennzoil, and many others emerged. The breakup did not, however, adversely affect collective profits or Rockefeller’s fortune. As of 1913, his share was \$900 million—\$23 billion in 2024.

Rockefeller also devoted himself to philanthropy. In 1901, he founded the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research and 12 years later set up the Rockefeller Foundation. He gave the University of Chicago \$80 million. But he wouldn’t give money to just any school. “To help an inefficient, ill-located, unnecessary school is waste,” he proclaimed.

Then and now, critics sneered that Rockefeller’s philanthropy, for all the genuine good it did, was at root a cynical exercise in public relations and perception management. On the positive side, historian Earl Latham calls Rockefeller’s riches “the least tainted of all the great fortunes of his day.”

Does that make him the “least villainous” of the robber barons?



Rockefeller lauded himself as the “savior of the industry” and an “angel of mercy” who put weak competitors out of their misery. To his detractors, Rockefeller was the worst sort of ruthless robber baron.

ARMAND HAMMER

Armand Hammer has been hailed as many things, but his most important role was as an agent of influence—someone who acts surreptitiously in the interests of one country to influence the perceptions and policies of another. And it's impossible to understand how he came to be a Soviet agent of influence without looking at his father, Julius Hammer.

Julius was born in Odessa, in what was then the Russian Empire. In America, he became a successful physician and ran a chain of drugstores and his own pharmaceutical company. But he was also a dedicated member of the Socialist Labor Party of America. Born in 1898, Armand was the middle of Julius's three sons.

ARMAND HAMMER WAS NAMED
AFTER THE ARM-AND-HAMMER
LOGO OF THE SOCIALIST LABOR
PARTY OF AMERICA, NOT FOR THE
ARM & HAMMER BAKING SODA.

In 1907, Julius met Vladimir Lenin in Germany, and a friendship was born. Early in 1917, the Hammers hosted Leon Trotsky during a visit to New York. Armand recalled his family greeting the Bolshevik Revolution later that year as “a dream come true.” Julius became a founding member of the US Communist Party and dedicated himself to the Soviet Union and the proletarian revolution it represented. He taught Armand to do the same.

However, the US government refused to recognize the Soviet regime and wouldn't until 1933, which made doing business with Russia difficult. In 1919, Julius became financial adviser to the Russian Soviet government bureau, which appeared in New York as the unofficial Bolshevik embassy.

It was headed by Lenin's authorized representative, Ludwig Martens, whose professed aim was promoting Russo-American trade. But his secret mission was to support clandestine Communist activities in the US.

A double disaster soon struck. US agents raided the bureau, and Martens was deported to the USSR. In the meantime, Julius was convicted of manslaughter for performing an abortion on a woman who died soon after. In 1921, while serving time in Sing Sing, Julius received a letter from Martens, who wanted him to take part in the new commercial concessions the Soviets were offering to Western businessmen. In his place, Julius dispatched Armand, who, assisted by his brothers, spent the next decade in Russia running one venture after another.

Hammer bought and sold everything from medical supplies to airplanes. From the Soviet standpoint, his businesses weren't about making money. His real job was to open a path into the American business world—and to launder money. Soviet currency was worthless abroad, and the Bolsheviks couldn't pay with gold because they couldn't prove they owned it. So, the acquisition of "hard" currency, such as US dollars, was a priority.

The Bolsheviks had confiscated a vast hoard of artworks from private homes and churches. Selling them to eager buyers in the West was an excellent way to raise hard currency. But it required a middleman. So, Hammer became an art dealer. In 1928, his brother Victor set up Hammer Art Galleries in New York. Among the big-ticket items were Fabergé Eggs, elegant relics of tsarist times. Collectors ate them up, and the Soviets provided Hammer with a steady supply, including many fakes. Art opened a path into America's elite. Hammer's income in 1955 was \$27,000, about \$300,000 today—well-off but not rich. He solved that by marrying a wealthy widow, Frances Barrett.

Hammer bought up a failing oil company, Occidental Petroleum, and turned it into one of the largest independent oil companies in the world. It was Hammer's ticket into the ranks of real power. But he never stopped being a shill for the Soviets. He advertised himself as a "back door" channel to Moscow and was on the chummiest terms with Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev and his successor, former KGB chief Yuri Andropov.

Meanwhile, Hammer's business dealings remained questionable. Most of Occidental's wells were in Libya. In 1974, Hammer made a special deal with Libya's new dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, even though Libya had nationalized oil production the previous year. Hammer was caught red-handed trying to bribe an Emirates sheikh and was convicted of making illegal contributions to Richard Nixon's campaign fund.

Hammer was and had always been a fraud. Whether he was more a fake capitalist or a fake Communist remains an open question.

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10

FROM RAGS TO RASCALS: SELF- MADE VILLAINS

Self-made villains are those who embrace villainy as part of their identity. They like to shock and horrify. Their Faustian choices overshadow whatever else they are or will ever be. Maybe they can't help themselves. They may start out trying to live up to a villainous reputation only to find out they can't live it down. This lecture explores the lives of three men who fall into this category: Aleister Crowley, Ignatius Trebitsch-Lincoln, and Dr. Hermann Erben.

ALEISTER CROWLEY

Edward Alexander Crowley was born on October 12, 1875, as the only child of a prosperous English family. His parents were Christian fundamentalists, but their son never seemed to embrace their beliefs. He adopted the name Aleister—his version of Alexander—but his mother simply dubbed him “Beast.”

Crowley started life with options. He attended the University of Cambridge and briefly envisioned a career in the diplomatic service. But in 1896, he had his first “mystical experience,” which he found both frightening and exhilarating. He’d spend the rest of his life chasing that high.

He dropped out of Cambridge and 2 years later joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, perhaps the most important occult society in late Victorian Britain. But he became frustrated with his advancement in rank and expressed an interest in “sex magic,” something other members abhorred. Crowley exploited rivalries within the order to precipitate its fracture and collapse, taking great satisfaction in doing so. An important part of his occult philosophy was transgression: To break free of the matrix of ordinary life and reach higher consciousness, one had to deliberately violate norms and break taboos.

Crowley had also been recruited by British intelligence. The Golden Dawn, it seems, harbored a political conspiracy that plotted to overthrow Queen Victoria, and the powers that be wanted the plot investigated and throttled. Crowley accomplished that as well.



ALEISTER CROWLEY

In 1904, Crowley had another mystical experience in which a spirit named Aiwass dictated *The Book of the Law*, which became the gospel of Crowley's new religion, which he dubbed Thelema, from the Greek word for "will." Its core commandment was "Do What Thou Wilt." Crowley envisioned Thelema replacing Christianity and becoming the universal religion of a new age of Horus. Crowley didn't lack charisma, but he did lack a sense of personal responsibility and regard for others. He demanded slavish obedience from followers, often to the point of outright cruelty.

When war broke out in 1914, Crowley bolted to America, where he openly wrote German propaganda. He later claimed that he'd been working for British interests the whole time, spying on the Germans and making a laughingstock of their propaganda. And he was telling the truth, as the Americans found out when they moved to arrest him in 1918: "Aleister Crowley was an employee of the British Government ... in this country on official business." British authorities did not come to Crowley's defense because his greatest value as an agent was that no one could believe he was one.

A few years later Crowley opened a kind of occult commune, the Abbey of Thelema, in Sicily. It spawned lurid tales of sex, drugs, and human sacrifice, some of them actually true. This prompted the press to label him the "wickedest man in the world." In 1923, Mussolini's new Fascist government expelled him from Italy as a pernicious foreigner.

In 1929, Crowley was expelled from France as an "undesirable." He slunk back to England with the reluctant help of "friends" in British intelligence. They dispatched him to Berlin, where he had a front-row seat for the rise of Hitler.

Finally returning to Britain, Crowley realized that his vile reputation made it virtually impossible for him to be taken seriously in any other way. In 1934, he tried to rebuild his reputation by bringing a suit against writer Nina Hammett, who had published a book containing libelous statements about goings-on at the defunct Abbey of Thelema. However, he emerged from the trial broke and smelling worse than ever.

The rest of his life was lived in semi-poverty battling a hopeless addiction to heroin. He was sustained, barely, by his intelligence connections, who continued to exploit him in their clandestine doings.

CROWLEY HIMSELF CLAIMED TO
HAVE COME UP WITH THE “V FOR
VICTORY” SIGN AS A GESTURE
OF MAGICAL PROTECTION.

In 1939, as a new war loomed on the horizon, his name appeared on the British Naval Intelligence Division’s emergency list as someone to be recalled for “special service.” He was assigned to a department involved in the interrogation of prisoners. Some suspect he aided in the interrogation of captive Nazi Rudolf Hess. Crowley died in 1947, largely forgotten except for a dwindling cadre of faithful followers.

IGNATIUS TREBITSCH-LINCOLN

Like Crowley, Ignacz Trebitsch was born into a bourgeois family steeped in religion. In this case, it was Orthodox Judaism and in Hungary. Born in 1879, Ignacz was the second of six sons.

He was an “impossible” student. He lied and stole. Young Trebitsch left Hungary one step ahead of the law. In Hamburg, Germany, in 1899, he was baptized a Christian and became Ignatius. He later joined the Anglican Church. By 1904, he was a curate in a rural parish in England. He married, became a British subject, and added Lincoln to his name to appear more English.

At some point, Trebitsch dumped religious life and became a personal secretary to a socially conscious candy manufacturer, Benjamin Seeböhm Rowntree. Rowntree put Trebitsch in charge of a research project dealing with the causes and effects of poverty. Trebitsch took advantage of this to rip off Rowntree any way he could.

In early 1910, Trebitsch was elected to a seat in the British Parliament, but he resigned a year later under murky circumstances. Adventures in the oil business and gunrunning followed, all failures. Facing bankruptcy, Trebitsch resorted to fraud. Exposed, he faced prosecution and prison.

World War I arrived not a moment too soon. Trebitsch landed a job with British Naval Intelligence as a censor. Always in pursuit of a better deal, he decided to sell everything he knew about the Brits to the Germans. Caught again, he offered to become Naval Intelligence's double-double agent. He ended up in New York and began writing pro-German propaganda. The British government pressed for Trebitsch's extradition on the earlier fraud charges. Eventually, they dragged him back to England, revoked his naturalization, and tossed him in prison.

In 1919, for obscure reasons, Trebitsch was freed and deported to Germany amid both revolution and counterrevolution. He dove headfirst into a conspiracy aimed at overthrowing the new republic and restoring the monarchy. In early 1920, the conspirators briefly seized Berlin, and Trebitsch was their public spokesman. When that plot collapsed, he was forced to flee.

He made his way to China, where, in 1925, Trebitsch underwent yet another conversion. He had a mystical experience and decided to renounce the world. He was initiated as a Buddhist monk in 1931 and took the name Chao Kung, to which he promptly added the honorifics Abbot and "the Venerable."

Trebitsch shuttled back and forth between the Orient and Europe on ever-mysterious business. He even acquired a small group of followers who slavishly served his every need. In 1934, he grandly announced the formation of something called the League of Truth, and he was its supreme leader. Its symbol was a reversed swastika. There was no connection to the Nazis, though Trebitsch probably wanted to imply as much.

In 1939, he was living in Shanghai, where he started making anti-British broadcasts from the German XGRS radio station. He was an agent of Nazi military intelligence, the Abwehr. He won the confidence of the Gestapo chief in Shanghai, Josef Meisinger, known as the Butcher of Warsaw. In May 1941, Trebitsch informed Meisinger that he represented the “Supreme Initiates” of Tibet, who were a “kind of unofficial world government.” These masters had decided it was time for Germany to make peace and desired Trebitsch to meet with Hitler and make the arrangements.

Trebitsch assured Meisinger that once he was in the führer’s presence, three of the masters would materialize as proof of their supernatural powers. The message was not well-received in Berlin, and Meisinger was curtly reminded that Chao Kung was a Jew.

In October 1943, Trebitsch was seriously ill and in the hospital. His friends soon learned he had died from an “unsuccessful operation.” But in March 1947, one of Trebitsch’s old Buddhist friends claimed they’d received a letter from him postmarked Darjeeling, India, suggesting that he was headed for Tibet.

By the time Trebitsch died, or vanished, in 1943, he’d assumed the roles of priest, member of Parliament, oil tycoon, international spy, Nazi collaborator, Buddhist monk, and agent of the hidden masters of the world.

HERMANN FRIEDRICH ERBEN

Hermann Erben was born on November 15, 1897, in Vienna, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father was director of a large steel firm. His mother reputedly had Jewish roots. In 1913, Erben took a trip to Africa with his father and was seized by a wanderlust that never left him. After

serving in World War I, he married a German countess, Klara Gottschalk, in 1920 and entered the University of Vienna's prestigious medical school. A bright future seemed to beckon.

In 1922, he joined the Austrian parallel to Hitler's Nazi Party. Erben next scored a Rockefeller Fellowship grant to study at the Psychiatric Institute for Medical Research in the United States and later the Pacific Institute of Tropical Medicine in San Francisco.

CONTRARY TO CLAIMS THAT ERBEN
WAS NEVER A REAL DOCTOR, HE
RECEIVED HIS MEDICAL DEGREE IN
1926. WHAT HE APPARENTLY LACKED
WAS A LICENSE TO PRACTICE.

Erben became a naturalized American citizen in 1930 and then became a ship's surgeon and sailed the Far Eastern routes. His wife divorced him. In 1932, he was in Shanghai, where he renewed acquaintance with an old Vienna buddy, Dr. Albert von Miorini, who had fled Vienna after performing a botched abortion. In Shanghai, authorities suspected him of performing illegal abortions, peddling narcotics, pimping, and being a "collector of intelligence." Miorini enlisted Erben to smuggle drugs.

In 1934, the US Customs Service in San Francisco found Erben in possession of a suspiciously large amount of morphine. Curiously, he dodged any serious consequences. Erben also took up Miorini's habit of carrying a camera and taking pictures everywhere he went. Miorini also introduced him to another dubious Shanghai character, Abbot Chao Kung—that is, Trebitsch-Lincoln.

In 1934, Erben returned to Vienna and plunged into an abortive Nazi plot to seize the country. He allegedly dressed up as Hitler and dashed across the city trying to create the impression that the führer had arrived.

Unscathed from the fiasco, Erben next made headlines when he joined the so-called Austro-American Trans-Asiatic Expedition. He and two companions planned to drive from Austria to Manchuria. By September 1935, they'd made it to Calcutta, where Erben was arrested for unlawful possession of a pistol. British authorities suspected Erben of being a drug smuggler or a spy, or both. They ultimately decided to deport him to the US.

In early 1937, Erben reteamed with Flynn for a “photojournalistic” tour of the Spanish Civil War, from the Loyalist side. To generate publicity, Erben released a phony story that Flynn had been wounded at the front. It's usually assumed that Erben was spying for the Germans or Franco. However, the American Knights of Columbus, who were pro-Franco, accused Erben of being “a well-known member of the Communist Party” who used Flynn as cover for Red intrigues.

In 1938, in Germany, Erben joined the real Nazi Party. In January 1941, he went to the German embassy in Mexico City and offered his services to German intelligence. He sailed for Shanghai on a German passport, arriving on March 5. A week later, his US citizenship was canceled.

In Shanghai, both Erben and Miorini became agents of the Abwehr—the same Nazi agency employing Trebitsch. Erben coaxed information out of stranded Americans, but in 1942, a shake-up in the Abwehr banished him to a Japanese-run internment camp. Miorini later died mysteriously, probably poisoned by the Gestapo. Trebitsch also perished under dubious circumstances. The Germans suspected both men of double-dealing with the Japanese and maybe the Soviets.

After the war, Erben was handed over to the Americans. Determining they couldn't prosecute him for treason because his citizenship was voided, US authorities hired him as an investigator for the US Army's Counter Intelligence Corps. But he didn't mend his ways.

He blackmailed Jewish refugees, and in 1947, he left China for American-occupied Germany. From there, Erben's villainous life began to fade into obscurity. He resumed practicing medicine in Iran and later in the Philippines. He finally came to rest where he began, Vienna, where he froze to death in his shabby, unheated flat in January 1985.

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11

DEVOUTLY SINFUL: RELIGIOUS VILLAINS

“Religious villain” is an especially vague category, depending, for instance, on how one chooses to define religion. The men in this lecture represent three very different types of religious villains. The first, Tomás de Torquemada, was unquestionably an authorized representative of a recognized faith, the Roman Catholic Church, even though today he’s mostly recognized as a symbol of fanaticism, bigotry, and cruelty. The second villain is the infamous Grigori Rasputin, who had no official connection to any church yet was widely regarded a holy man—except by those who regarded him as a charlatan. The third villain is Anton Szandor LaVey, founder and high priest of the Church of Satan.

TOMÁS DE TORQUEMADA

Tomás de Torquemada was born in 1420, in Valladolid, in the Kingdom of Castile. His uncle was a cardinal and theologian, and Tomás had an intensely religious upbringing. He entered the Dominican order at age 14 and by the age of 32 had risen to prior of the monastery of Santa Cruz. He later became the personal confessor of Princess Isabella and helped arrange her 1469 marriage to King Ferdinand II of Aragon, thus unifying Christian Spain. In due course, Torquemada also became Ferdinand's confessor.

To appreciate Torquemada's world view, some background is necessary. During the 8th century, Muslim invaders conquered most of the Iberian Peninsula. Over the next several centuries, Christians gradually reclaimed territory—a period known as the Reconquista. Amid ongoing Christian-Muslim conflicts, Jews played a key role in commerce and were generally afforded toleration.

But things took a violent turn in the late 1300s when a monk named Ferrand Martinez began publicly denouncing the presence of the Jews as an affront to Christ and demanding they be converted or expelled. Popular anger exploded, and even the king couldn't contain it. In Seville, the synagogue was burned and thousands of Jews were slain. Riots and massacres soon spread to other cities. Perhaps half of Spain's Jews converted to escape the violence. They were dubbed conversos or New Christians.

Torquemada dedicated himself to completing Martinez's mission. By the late 15th century, most of Spain's Jews had embraced Christianity. But because most had converted under duress, their sincerity was often questioned. Some conversos continued to practice Judaism in secret. These backsliders got a new name: Marrano, or "Pig."

Torquemada argued that in accepting baptism, conversos made an unbreakable pact with God and the church. But by continuing to observe Judaism in any way, they were committing the sins of apostasy and heresy, which endangered their souls to eternal damnation.

In 1478, Pope Sixtus IV sent in the Inquisition. Torquemada was initially one of 12 inquisitors, but such was his zeal that in 1483, at the age of 63, he was anointed grand inquisitor. The Inquisition's writ extended over not just apostasy and heresy but also sorcery, sodomy, polygamy, blasphemy, and usury.

As grand inquisitor, Torquemada drew up 28 articles to guide his subordinates. They included rules governing torture. For instance, a physician had to be present, blood was not to be spilled, and the application of physical duress was limited to a certain number of times for a certain number of minutes. The torture of children was forbidden. Women, on the other hand, were seen as more likely to be swayed by its application. Torquemada wanted “pure acts of contrition”—not what someone blurted out to stop the pain.

The “Torquemada treatment” usually began with an accusation. For example, a neighbor might notice that no smoke came out of a converso's chimney on Saturdays—possibly an indication [that] the conversos were secretly observing the Jewish sabbath. On such “evidence,” the Inquisition would seize the accused's wealth and property. The conversos would then be forced to walk around wearing nothing but a *sambenito*—a short yellow shirt adorned with crosses. A public flogging might follow.

If the accused still did not confess, torture finally came into play. The simplest form was the *tormenta de toca*, which was, essentially, waterboarding. The ultimate punishment was the auto-da-fé. The term means “act of faith,” but it really meant burning at the stake.

The Spanish Inquisition has been accused of torturing and killing millions over its 350-year existence. More sober investigation shows that about 2000 died at the stake under Torquemada's watch and that the vast majority of cases were settled with penances and fines.

Arguably, the real measure of Torquemada's villainy is found in the policies he persuaded Ferdinand and Isabella to enact. The Inquisition had no authority over practicing Jews since they weren't Christians; but they were wards of the Crown. By far his most vile achievement was getting Ferdinand to issue the Alhambra decree of March 31, 1492, which forbade the practice of Judaism in Spain. Of the roughly 100,000 Jews remaining in the kingdom, half converted, and the remainder fled elsewhere, carrying with them the remnants of a once vibrant Sephardic Jewish culture. In a mere 15 years as grand inquisitor, Torquemada, in the name of God, managed to destroy an entire people. He died in 1498.

GRIGORI RASPUTIN

Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin was born in Siberia in 1869. Like his father, he was a peasant and sometimes worked as a driver for government officials and others passing through. Being a driver afforded him the opportunity to meet people, possibly important people, from outside the area. He married young and raised a family. Later accounts, mostly hearsay, paint him as quarrelsome, lazy, drunk, and criminally inclined. But there's no evidence of serious trouble with the law nor anything to prove that he possessed some mysterious "power over women."

Among the many questions hanging over Rasputin's early life is his connection with a secretive religious sect called the Khlysty, or Flagellants. They rejected the Orthodox Church in favor of their own spiritual leaders, whom they called living gods. Their secretive rituals included ecstatic dancing and orgiastic group sex. Through sin, they sought forgiveness and a personal union with the Holy Spirit.

In 1897, at age 28, Rasputin supposedly experienced a spiritual awakening. He abandoned his family and trekked 400 miles to the monastery in Verkhoture. Some suspect he was really dodging the law. While there, he apparently learned to read and write, but he never took monastic vows. Afterward, he became a *strannik*, or "wanderer," who roamed from place to place offering prayers and blessings in return for food and shelter. He earned a reputation as a healer.

Rasputin landed in St. Petersburg around 1903. He became a stylishly freaky guest at high society salons, and his fame eventually reached the imperial palace. He had his first encounter with Tsar Nicholas and Alexandra in November 1905 and eventually became their go-to spiritual adviser and faith healer.



That fall was also the turning point in a wave of strikes and protests dubbed the Revolution of 1905, which brought the Romanov dynasty near the edge of collapse. One of the main leaders of this upheaval was an Orthodox priest, Father Georgy Gapon. Some were looking for a religious figure who could rally the masses back to the tsar. Many turned not to Rasputin but to Father Iliodor, whom the press had touted as the “tsar’s favorite” and “the man who secretly rules Russia.”

However, Rasputin ultimately proved far more popular, especially with Tsarina Alexandra, who credited him with helping her only son, Alexei, who suffered from hemophilia. What Rasputin was actually doing is a matter of conjecture.

Many people noted the apparent disconnect between Rasputin’s holy man act and his public displays of drunkenness and licentiousness. To them, he was a prime example of the “dark forces” bedeviling Russia and the Romanov regime.

In 1914, Russia went to war with Germany and its allies. The war went badly for Russia, and Nicholas left St. Petersburg to personally command his armies. His absence increased Alexandra’s influence, which in turn increased that of Rasputin. He took full advantage, milking bribes from aspirant office seekers and instigating the dismissal of those who opposed him. But he also counseled Nicholas against the war, prophesying, quite correctly, that it would lead to the downfall of the regime.

Also in 1914, Iliodor was reputedly behind an attempt on Rasputin's life and was forced to flee abroad. From exile, he claimed that Rasputin was Berlin's tool, secretly working to bring about a separate peace "to save the Monarchy and end the bloodshed," though there's no real proof of that. Iliodor further charged that Rasputin was planning to shake down the British by demanding a huge payoff to keep Russia in the war.

The Brits, too, had their doubts about Rasputin. They suspected he had leaked details leading to the death of their top soldier, Lord Kitchener, who was ambushed in 1916 in the North Sea by a German U-boat. Kitchener's mission was widely known, but the suspicions around Rasputin were enough that someone decided he was a problem that needed to be taken care of.

On the night of December 16, 1916, according to the old Russian calendar, Rasputin was lured to the home of Prince Felix Yusupov. Awaiting him were a band of men determined to save Russia and the tsar from a diabolical menace. Also there, according to some Russian witnesses, was a British intelligence officer, Oswald Rayner, who was overseeing the operation.

Rayner was tasked with extracting any information Rasputin might have about German agents and intrigues. But Rasputin put up a fight, the Russian assassins panicked, and Rayner shot Rasputin. He was dead, but his legend was just beginning.

ANTON LAVEY

Anton LaVey was born Howard Stanton Levey in 1930, in Chicago, the only child of a Jewish father and Baptist mother. LaVey would later claim to have been "a student of witchcraft, sorcery, and Satanism since he was a boy" and to have been encouraged by a Transylvanian grandmother. But LaVey would claim a lot of things.

From a young age, he'd had an interest in music. He learned to play the organ. At 16, he quit high school and, according to him, ran off to join the circus. He supposedly worked as a lion tamer and musician, including

after-hours sex shows. LaVey observed that the same men who slavered over carnival dancers sang the Lord's praises on Sunday, which awakened his loathing of Christian hypocrisy.

Records show that in 1951, as Howard Levy, he was living in Oakland, California, where he met and married the 15-year-old daughter of a bank manager. He briefly studied criminology, later claiming to have worked as a crime scene photographer for the San Francisco Police Department. But there's no record of that. By 1960, he'd changed his name to Anton LaVey and billed himself as a hypnotist and psychic detective.

In the early 1960s, he became a popular figure around San Francisco, performing gigs, driving a customized hearse, and acquiring a pet leopard. He hung out with fantasy and sci-fi writers and delved deeper into paranormal research. One of his acquaintances was avant-garde filmmaker Kenneth Anger, who was obsessed with British occultist Aleister Crowley. LaVey formed a club dubbed the Order of the Trapezoid and started giving talks on occult topics.

In March 1966, an episode of the TV show *Wild, Wild West* featured comedian Don Rickles as a devil-worshipper with a shaved head and appearance very similar to the look LaVey would adopt. Inspired, LaVey shaved his head and trimmed his beard. On April 30, 1966, he announced the advent of Anno Satanas, the "Year of Satan," and the formation of the Church of Satan, a tax-exempt religious corporation duly registered with the State of California and the IRS. The press ate it up. LaVey and his church got write-ups in major newspapers and magazines.

LaVey painted his house black and drove a Jaguar with the license plate "Satan 9." He performed the Satanic baptism of his 3-year-old daughter Zeena and, in February 1967, a public Satanic wedding.

IN 1969, LAVEY PUBLISHED
THE SATANIC BIBLE, WHICH
 BECAME A BESTSELLER.

LaVey never claimed to believe in Satan as an actual deity. Rather, his philosophy—which he mostly concocted from the writings of Aleister Crowley, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Ayn Rand—was “guiltless self-gratification,” a credo of individualism, hedonism, and enlightened self-interest. He probably revealed the real truth in a 1980 interview with the FBI in which he described the church’s adherents as “fanatics, cultists, and weirdos” and admitted that his whole interest in Satanism was “strictly from a monetary point of view.”

LaVey’s brand of Satanism eventually lost its shock value and thereby much of its appeal. He stepped back and anointed Zeena as high priestess and the main public face of the church. But in 1990, Zeena also concluded her dad was a phony and renounced him and his creation. LaVey died in 1997 at the age of 67 in, of all places, St. Mary’s Catholic Hospital.

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12

“ABSOLUTE POWER CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY”

The term *dictator* has evolved since its origins in ancient Rome. In the republic, a dictator was an official chosen by the Senate and the Comitia Curiata to deal with a problem, usually war or invasion. A dictator had extraordinary powers—but only for a set period and only for the problem at hand. He was also accountable for his actions. In fact, it was Julius Caesar’s bid to make himself dictator for life that precipitated his assassination. A modern dictator is basically a political leader who possesses, or seeks to possess, absolute power. In the early 20th century, the title was embraced by revolutionaries, presidents, and monarchs. To their opponents, however, they were villains. This lecture considers three modern dictators: Vladimir Lenin, the founder of Communism; Benito Mussolini, the founder of Fascism; and King Carol II of Romania, whom one might call a playboy dictator.

VLADIMIR LENIN

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, whose true surname was Ulyanov, was born on April 10, 1870, in Simbirsk, Russia. His family belonged to the tsarist empire's hereditary nobility, and his father was a devout monarchist and Orthodox Christian. Disaster struck the family in 1886, when Lenin's father died of a stroke. In 1887, Lenin's older brother was hanged for involvement in a conspiracy to assassinate the tsar. An incensed Vladimir swore revenge.

By 1891, Lenin had completed a law degree. But revolution called. In 1895, he went to Switzerland, where he met Russian radical exiles and converted to Marxism. He was soon in Russia fomenting strikes. Arrested by the tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, 25-year-old Lenin got 3 years internal exile, during which he married Nadezhda Krupskaya. They joined the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, the main Marxist group in the empire.



VLADIMIR LENIN

In 1900, Lenin again left for Switzerland. Soon after, he adopted the alias Lenin and created his own faction within the Social-Democrats—the Bolsheviks, or “Majorityites.” It began with the notion that the victory of Russian socialism wouldn’t be achieved through a mass workers party, as most Marxists believed. Lenin wanted a “vanguard party” of professional revolutionaries prepared to use any means. He argued that socialism could be forcibly induced through a “dictatorship of the proletariat” wielding “iron power.”

Most Russian Marxists, loosely called Mensheviks, or “Minorityites,” disagreed. One of them, Leon Trotsky, blasted Lenin as “despot and terrorist” who would erect a dictatorship over the proletariat. They were prophetic words, though Trotsky himself would fall under Lenin’s spell.

During World War I, Lenin wanted Russia to lose the war and cause the collapse of the tsarist regime. The "imperialist war" would become a civil war led by his revolutionary elite. In March 1917, Tsar Nicholas was forced to abdicate. The resulting Provisional Government was weak, indecisive, and unpopular. However, it granted a political amnesty that, with help from the Germans, allowed Lenin to return to Russia in April. The Germans also offered him money to further destabilize Russia and take the country out of the war.

Lenin was a revolutionary, not a patriot, and Russia was just another means to the ultimate end—world revolution. In early November 1917, a Bolshevik armed coup, not a popular uprising, seized power. Lenin realized the key to staying in power wasn't popular support but a monopoly of organized violence. He believed one couldn't make revolution without executions, and he created a new secret police force, the so-called Cheka.

Lenin solicited opinions but always dictated decisions.

One observer of this behavior, Arkady Borman, was disgusted by the Bolsheviks' near worship of their leader. "Apparently," he mused, "you can adore absolute evil."

On August 30, 1918, Lenin was shot and severely wounded. He recovered, but two bullets remained in his body. An attempt to remove them 4 years later set off a series of strokes that incapacitated and finally killed him in January 1924. He was 53.

He had arguably made his last important decisions in 1922. He forced a reluctant party to embrace a New Economic Policy that restored private ownership of land and much of the economy. He justified this move on the grounds that it was necessary to restore peace and prosperity and thus preserve Bolshevik political power. So long as they retained power, he argued, they could take back what they'd given. And just a few years later, Joseph Stalin—whom Lenin appointed as party secretary in 1922—would do precisely that.

BENITO MUSSOLINI

Benito Mussolini was born near Forlì, in northern Italy, on July 29, 1883. His dad was an outspoken Socialist and atheist who advertised his radical sentiments by naming his eldest son after Mexican President Benito Juárez.

As a schoolboy, Mussolini was a difficult student prone to violent behavior. Nevertheless, at age 18, he qualified as an elementary teacher, following in his mother's footsteps. But in 1902, he bolted to Switzerland to avoid the Italian draft. There, he briefly met Lenin and became involved in strikes, prompting the Swiss to boot him back to Italy.

Mussolini took advantage of an amnesty to do his time in the army and then plunged full time into the Socialist Party. In 1911, Italy invaded Libya, a move that the Italian Socialists, including Mussolini, opposed as an imperialist boondoggle. His opposition earned him 5 months in jail but also a bigger role in the Socialist Party.

But during World War I, Mussolini disagreed with the party's opposition to Italy's intervention as another imperialist war. As a nationalist, he believed joining the war, on the side of the Allies, would regain lost territories and assure Italy's position among the great powers.

Mussolini also came to believe that Socialism overemphasized class conflict, which pitted Italians against each other.



Mussolini despised egalitarianism, which he felt robbed "exceptional men," like himself, of their rightful power.

Instead, he imagined a revolutionary nationalism that transcended class. Like Lenin, Mussolini embraced the notion of a militant vanguard that would lead the masses to glory—whether they wanted it or not. He dubbed this idea Fascism, derived from *fascis*, an old Roman symbol of authority.

In 1914, he was kicked out of the Socialist Party and founded his own newspaper and a political party, the Fasces of Revolutionary Action. Italy's industrialists eagerly subsidized Mussolini's new venture because war meant big profits. So, too, did the British and French, who added Mussolini to their payroll of propagandists. But the war cost Italy more than 2 million casualties, including 650,000 dead, and resulted in few territorial gains.

The postwar environment was full of discontent. The Italian Communist Party emerged, spawned by the Russian Revolution and dedicated to forceful social transformation. Alarmed by the Communist threat, the same industrialists, along with the Catholic Church, the bourgeoisie, and even many Socialists, looked for an antidote. Mussolini offered Fascism as the answer.

In the elections of 1921, Mussolini's National Fascist Party got less than half a percent of the vote, but it got him elected to parliament. His power didn't lie in electoral support but in his paramilitary revolutionary vanguard, the Blackshirts or *squadristi*. Numbering around 40,000, they harassed and intimidated whomever they pleased.

In October 1922, 30,000 Blackshirts gathered in Rome to demand the resignation of the current government. The result was that the head of state, King Victor Emmanuel III, appointed Mussolini the new prime minister.

Parliament gave Mussolini a year's worth of dictatorial power to set things straight. He seized that opportunity to gain more power. The following year, he pushed through a law that automatically gave the biggest vote-getting party that obtained at least 25% of the votes two-thirds of the seats in parliament. Thus, in 1924, thanks to Blackshirt intimidation at the polls, a Fascist-led coalition won an absolute majority. When the Socialist Party leader Giacomo Matteotti challenged the electoral results, he was abducted and murdered by a squad of Fascist secret police acting on Mussolini's orders.

In November 1926, Mussolini transformed Italy into a one-party state and the parliament into the Fascist Grand Council. He also cultivated a cult of personality. As Il Duce, or “The Leader,” he was lionized as a visionary, hero, and genius.

In 1934, he threatened Hitler when the Nazis tried to take over Austria. A year later came Il Duce’s brutal conquest of Ethiopia, a campaign that featured poison gas and the aerial bombing of hapless civilians. He next committed money, equipment, and 50,000 soldiers to support pro-Fascist Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War, despite being acutely aware of Italy’s military weakness.

Mussolini’s hypocrisy was on greatest display when it came to anti-Semitism. Jews joined the Fascist Party, and he dismissed anti-Semitism as a “German vice.” He argued that race itself was imaginary. But he approved a 1938 “Manifesto on Race” stripping Italian Jews of their citizenship and livelihoods, just as in Hitler’s Germany. He stopped short, however, of approving deportation of Italian Jews to Nazi death camps.

World War II proved a disaster for Mussolini. When the Allies invaded Italy in July 1943, his own Fascist Council dethroned him. Rescued by Hitler’s commandos, he was reinstalled as leader of the so-called Italian Social Republic in the north. But he was just a German puppet, and he knew it.

On April 27, 1945, while trying to escape to Switzerland, Il Duce was captured by Communist partisans. The next day, he and his mistress, Claretta Petacci, were unceremoniously executed and strung up for public display.

KING CAROL II

Carol II was born October 15, 1893, to the Romanian crown prince, Ferdinand, and his wife, Marie. Carol’s upbringing was overseen by the reigning monarch—his uncle, Carol I. Sent off to the Prussian Guards, Carol II promptly deserted. As a teenager, he turned to drinking, and by his twenties, he’d sired two illegitimate offspring and was already getting the

reputation as the playboy prince of the Balkans. None of the royals had a drop of Romanian blood in their veins and were forbidden by law to marry a native Romanian.

Carol's father ascended to the throne in 1914. During World War I, Carol again abandoned his military post to elope and marry a general's daughter, Zizi Lambrino. Besides being a commoner, she was Romanian. The marriage was promptly annulled, but an enraged Carol threatened to renounce his royal title. He was talked out of it and, in 1921, married Princess Helen of Greece, who was also his cousin.

The union produced an heir, Prince Michael, but Carol was unsatisfied with Helen. In 1923, Carol met Elena "Magda" Lupescu, who was Romanian. They commenced a torrid and very public affair, which created problems. Lupescu was not only a commoner but also of Jewish stock, though both her parents were Christian converts.

In December 1925, while living with Lupescu in Milan, Carol again renounced the throne. This time, it was accepted. He changed his name to Carol Caraiman, and the couple moved to Paris. In 1927, King Ferdinand died, and the Romanian throne passed to Carol's 5-year-old son, Michael. Real power rested with a regency council headed by Carol's younger brother, Prince Nicolae.

At the same time, the old political elite in Bucharest was replaced with a new government under the National Peasant Party. Its leader, Iuliu Maniu, approached Carol to see if he wanted to regain the crown. He did. So, in June 1930, Michael was overthrown in a bloodless coup, and Carol was proclaimed king. Maniu assumed that Carol would be a foppish figurehead behind which the Peasant Party would reign. But Carol had his own ideas.

He was impressed by Mussolini and his Fascism. Dictatorship seemed the wave of the future, and Carol was determined to ride it. But he found serious competition in Corneliu Codreanu. Similarly inspired by Fascism, Codreanu led the Legion of the Archangel Michael, better known as the Iron Guard. Modeled on Mussolini's Blackshirts, the Iron Guard evolved into a full-blown political death cult. And they absolutely hated Jews.

In 1933, Carol named Ion Duca prime minister with the aim of suppressing the Iron Guard. Duca was quickly killed by Iron Guard assassins, but when Codreanu was tried for inciting the murder, he was acquitted and became even more powerful. Carol next tried, unsuccessfully, to have Codreanu poisoned. At the same time, Carol promoted a cult of personality around himself, portraying the king as a savior sent by God.

CAROL II ADOPTED THE TITLE
CONducĂTOR, OR "LEADER"—
THE ROMANIAN VERSION OF THE
TITLES IL DUCE OR FÜHRER.

Codreanu attracted the support of Hitler, with whom Carol was trying to negotiate economic treaties. To appease Hitler, Carol approved new anti-Semitic laws that revoked Jews' citizenship and their right to own land and businesses.

In 1938, Carol jailed Codreanu on a libel charge and, on November 30, ordered him and other Iron Guards in custody executed. Carol also proposed a new constitution that gave him dictatorial powers. Romanians had to publicly proclaim approval or disapproval. Unsurprisingly, over 99% said "yes."

World War II erupted in September 1939. In June 1940, Stalin demanded that Romania hand over two provinces. Next, Hitler insisted Carol cede Transylvania to Hungary. Romania lost nearly half its territory, and there was no one else to blame but Carol. In September, the resurgent Iron Guard launched nationwide protests demanding his abdication. He and Lupescu fled the country. Michael returned to the throne under control of a military dictatorship that would disastrously ally itself with Germany.

Carol and Lupescu eventually settled in Brazil. He tried to sell himself to the Allies as a counterweight to the pro-Nazi dictatorship and later to the Communists when they took over in 1947. No one was interested. Carol died in Portugal in 1953, Lupescu still at his side.

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13

HITLER AND THE THIRD REICH

Adolf Hitler is the most widely known mass murderer and dictator that has ever lived. His name has become synonymous with evil. As with so many villains, a morbid fascination with Hitler persists and shows no signs of abating 80 years after his death. Yet, Hitler, the man, remains an enigma. This lecture explores Hitler's wickedness in an attempt to understand the kind of villain he was: Was he a madman, mastermind, or puppet? The discussion then considers two persistent manifestations of Hitler's legacy: the myth of the Nazi superman and the "splendid blond beast," an image to which Hitler bore virtually no resemblance.

MADMAN OR MASTERMIND?

The common conception of Hitler as a raving lunatic is mostly based on the endlessly recycled image of his speech at the 1934 Nuremberg rally, where he's ranting and gesticulating in a kind of ecstatic trance. Supporting the madman view is the string of supposedly irrational decisions he made and what looked like a near-psychotic break with reality in the last months of the war. A case in point is the Battle of the Bulge, a last desperate German offensive in Western Europe in late 1944. Arguably, only an insane tyrant would green-light the pointless squandering of dwindling men and matériel.

But the madman theory doesn't hold up to scrutiny. Hitler didn't just rant and rave his way into the chancellorship of Germany. Curiously, only one recording of Hitler speaking in his regular voice exists, and in it, he sounds quite normal and rational. Was Hitler's public persona a carefully honed act by a cunning, ruthless narcissist?

JOACHIM FEST, ONE OF HITLER'S MOST THOROUGH BIOGRAPHERS, DESCRIBED HIM AS A "NONPERSON" WHO SEEMED TO HAVE LITTLE SUBSTANCE OUTSIDE HIS PUBLIC PERSONA.

That question leads to the mastermind or demagogue theory. A demagogue is a leader who seeks and retains power by manipulating the desires and prejudices of ordinary people. In Hitler's case, this approach is perfectly illustrated in a 1922 interview he gave to journalist Josef Hell. Hitler began by lambasting the Jews, proclaiming, "Once I really am in power, my first and foremost task will be the annihilation of the Jews."

This statement is often taken as prima facie evidence of Hitler's genocidal intentions. However, Hell noted that when he asked Hitler why he hated Jews so much, "Hitler suddenly calmed down and gave this unexpectedly sober and almost dispassionate explanation." Hitler said,

It is manifestly clear and has been proven in practice and by the facts of all revolutions that a struggle for ideals, for improvements of any kind whatsoever, absolutely must be supplemented with a struggle against some social caste or class.

The revolution needs an enemy against whom hatred can be focused. Hitler concluded,

Once the hatred and the battle against the Jews have been really stirred up, their resistance will necessarily crumble in the shortest possible time. They are totally defenseless, and no one will stand up to protect them.

The Hell interview possibly gives insight into the origin of Hitler's virulent anti-Semitism. Up to and through World War I, Hitler showed no notable dislike of Jews. The mastermind theory posits that Hitler's anti-Semitism was just another part of the act, the mimicking and amplifying of the prejudices of others. Mimicry, in fact, lies at the root of Hitler's whole Nazi shtick. His movement and even much of his public persona was a blatant rip-off of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his Fascists. And early on, Mussolini and most others saw it that way.

Interestingly, Hitler was gushingly outspoken in his admiration for American automaker Henry Ford—particularly his "anti-Jewish policy"—and praised Ford as a "great man" in *Mein Kampf*. Did Hitler mimic Ford's anti-Semitism the same way he copied Mussolini's bombastic speaking style?

Hitler also borrowed from his ideological enemies, the Communists. *Nazi*, after all, is shorthand for the National Socialist German Workers' Party. And the Nazi Party's 25-point program, compiled in 1920, appealed directly to labor and the lower middle class. Its guiding maxim was "Common good before individual good."

When it came to religion, Hitler swiped another page out of Mussolini's playbook. Personally, both men had nothing but contempt for Christianity, but as demagogues, they realized that another prejudice of the masses had to be catered to and exploited.

A really good demagogic mastermind also knows how to work the desires and prejudices of the upper classes. They wanted to retain not just power but, above all, their privileges. While Hitler never altered the party's original 25 points, he also never instituted many of them. Most notably, he did not nationalize industry or abolish the traditional military. In 1926, he also refused to support a widely supported referendum calling for the expropriation of princely estates.

The basic reason was that Hitler needed the support of the generals, industrialists, and even the aristocracy to achieve his political ends just as much as he needed the votes of the masses. His only real political goal was making himself unquestioned master of Germany.

MANY SAW HITLER AS THE
“REASONABLE NAZI,” SOMEONE WITH
WHOM A DEAL COULD BE MADE—OR,
MORE SIMPLY, SOMEONE WHO COULD
BE BOUGHT AND CONTROLLED.

PUPPET THEORY

The puppet theory proposes that while being every bit an ambitious, cunning narcissist, Hitler was simultaneously the tool or creation of others who controlled him, or tried to control him, for their own nefarious purposes. In considering this perspective, one might explore where Hitler's money came from.

As early as 1922, press reports noted Hitler was “spending lavishly” and had “splendidly furnished” offices in Munich. Subsequent research showed that the Nazi Party, and Hitler personally, got money from German industrialists, including steel magnate Fritz Thyssen and “coal king” Emil Kirdorf, and from Anglo-Dutch oil mogul Sir Henri Deterding. Even Mussolini tossed a few coins into the coffers of his Bavarian knockoff.

Several American firms, including Rockefeller’s Standard Oil, Chase National Bank, IBM, General Electric, and Ford Motor, did highly profitable business with the Third Reich right up to, and in some cases even during, World War II.

In 1928, when German unemployment stood at around 8%, the Nazis garnered less than 3% of the vote. But by 1930, unemployment had grown to 19%, and the party received 18% of the vote. Two years on, joblessness was an astounding 43%, the Nazis secured one-third of the vote, and Hitler became leader of the biggest party in the Reichstag. But this turnabout was only possible with a massive infusion of cash. One journalist observed that the Nazis seemed awash in money, enough to unleash a veritable flood of propaganda and an army of agitators to go with it.

The most important hidden hand behind Hitler and his rise to power was the German Army High Command. After World War I, the Treaty of Versailles drastically limited the size of Germany’s armed forces, but under the skillful and devious leadership of General Hans von Seeckt, the old general staff preserved itself and prepared for future rearmament. They amassed secret slush funds, but what they needed most was a compliant government under a popular demagogue who could rally the nation to a new crusade. So, they created one.

In Munich in 1919, following a short-lived Communist regime, the army instituted an anti-Communist indoctrination program and selected certain soldiers to be trained as agitators and propaganda agents. One of these soldiers was Corporal Adolf Hitler. His talents as a public speaker were first spotted by Captain Karl Mayr, who described the future führer as a “stray dog looking for a master.” Hitler was sent for further training at Munich University.

In the fall of 1919, Mayr directed agent Hitler to infiltrate the German Workers' Party. He joined and quickly assumed the leading position. The army probably continued to bankroll him right up to his ascension as chancellor in 1933, a position to which he was appointed by one of their own—former field marshal and World War I hero Paul von Hindenburg.

One can argue that Hitler displayed elements of a madman, a mastermind, and a puppet. Without the army, he never would have had a political career. In that sense, he was a puppet, shaped and directed for a specific task. But the generals and others got more than they bargained for. Driven by narcissism, Hitler increasingly became the master of his fate and, ultimately, the military which created him. Toward the end, though, the madness of narcissism ran amok, coupled with that of a cornered beast.

THE BLOND BEAST AND THE NAZI SUPERMAN

Two of Hitlerism's most enduring legacies are the images of the blond beast and the Nazi superman. Besides the blond hair and steely blue eyes, typical characteristics of the blond beast include extreme arrogance and at least a touch of sadism. For all his hypermasculinity, the blond beast also usually possesses certain feminine qualities in appearance or manner, suggesting a hint of androgyny. The blond beast can also be a woman.

The origins of both the blond beast and the superman trace back to German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, though exactly what he meant by either term remains a subject of debate. References to the beast appear in Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in which he describes "the magnificent blond beast avidly prowling round for spoil and victory."

So, the beast is instinctively predatory, like a lion. Some have argued that because lions are blondish and beasts, that's all he was talking about. But Nietzsche elsewhere clearly identifies the beast with history's "noble races,"

among whom he includes Vikings, Samurai, Arabs, and Romans—that is, aggressive warrior types. In Nietzsche’s view, such “nobility” wasn’t limited to blonds or Germans; it was a matter of attitude.

Nietzsche also observed that many non-Germans seemed reflexively gripped by an “inextinguishable horror with which Europe viewed the raging of the blond Germanic beast for centuries,” though adding that modern Germans bore little resemblance to the barbaric marauders of yore.

When it comes to superman, Nietzsche’s actual term was *Übermensch*, which first appeared in his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In German, *über* is most simply translated as “over” or “above,” so *Übermensch* translates to “overman.” It could also mean a higher or superior man. And *Mensch* refers to humanity in general, not just men. So, an *Übermensch* was anyone above or apart from the common herd and common morality. But the 1909 English translation turned it into “superman,” and it has stuck ever since.

From the Nazi standpoint, *Übermensch* was more an idealized type than a real one. But Reinhard Heydrich, a prominent Nazi, came close to embodying the characteristics of both the blond beast and the amoral superman. Standing 6 feet 2 inches tall, the blond-haired, blue-eyed Heydrich was arguably good-looking. Some thought his full lips and rather broad hips gave him an oddly feminine air. Heydrich was chief of the Reich Security Central Office, which included the Gestapo, criminal police, and the SS security service. Basically, he was the Third Reich’s top cop. He’s been called the hangman, the butcher of Prague, Himmler’s evil genius, and the god of death.

Among other things, Heydrich is credited with helping Heinrich Himmler plan and carry out the 1934 purge of Hitler’s political enemies, organizing the 1936 Berlin Olympics as a celebration of Nazi ideology, and orchestrating the “Night and Fog” liquidations of all those deemed an obstacle to Hitler’s New European Order. Heydrich also chaired the infamous 1942 Wannsee Conference that approved the Holocaust. He also masterminded the SS *Einsatzgruppen*, killing teams that slaughtered at least 2 million people, including Jews, Soviet prisoners of war, and Communist partisans, in occupied Eastern Europe.

On May 27, 1942, Czech partisans, aided by British intelligence, ambushed and mortally wounded Heydrich. The blond beast was dead, but the image lives on.

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14

EQUALITY FOR ALL OR JUST STALIN AND TROTSKY

If Adolf Hitler is considered one of modern history's greatest villains, Joseph Stalin rivals him, having caused more deaths and maintained power longer. Unlike Hitler, who died defeated and despised in 1945, Stalin joined Winston Churchill and FDR as an Allied victor of World War II. Despite his brutal rule, Stalin was still publicly praised in the USSR as a great leader and architect of Communism when he died 8 years later. This lecture examines Stalin's villainy as the result of who he was—a horribly flawed human being. The discussion also considers Stalin's alleged nemesis, Leon Trotsky, and whether he was a hapless victim of Stalin's malice and paranoia or a genuine conspirator, lusting over Stalin's power.

STALIN'S CRIMES

The crimes for which Stalin is best known occurred in the 1930s. They include the forced collectivization of land and consequent famines, a reign of terror based on mass arrests and mass executions, and the resulting purges that ruthlessly decimated the Communist Party and the Soviet military.

But Stalin has also been accused of arranging the murder of his father, poisoning Lenin, ordering the murders of countless others, driving one of his wives to suicide, being anti-Semitic, and generally bungling World War II, including ignoring reports from his spies that the Nazis were about to attack. But Stalin's original sin was his alleged spying for the Okhrana, the tsar's secret police.

However, the closest documentary "proof" of Stalin's double-dealing is the so-called Eremin letter, which didn't surface until the 1950s. It's a 1913 report from an Okhrana officer, Colonel Alexander Eremin, regarding an ex-informant, Iosif Dzhughashvili, Stalin's real name. Eremin relates that the subject supplied intelligence reports on his fellow Bolsheviks starting in 1908 but broke with the police in 1912 and returned to the revolutionary fold. As punishment, he was arrested and exiled to Siberia.

But the Eremin letter is a fake. Despite the lack of real evidence, there may be some truth in the Okhrana-Stalin connection. The tsar's police had thoroughly infiltrated the revolutionary parties, and such connections weren't unusual or exceptional. Stalin could claim he was forced to supply the police with information and then jumped ship the first chance he got.

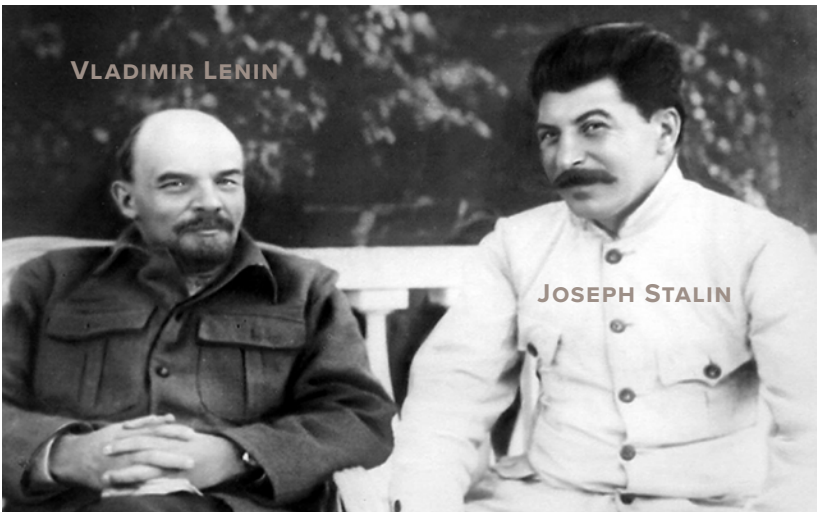
STALIN'S RISE TO POWER

Stalin was born in 1878 in Russian-ruled Georgia. His father was an alcoholic shoemaker who regularly beat his wife and only son, supposedly because the boy wasn't actually his son but the child of a local priest. Young Stalin grew up to hate his father. According to researcher Roman Brackman, in 1906, Stalin arranged to have the old man knifed to death in a staged brawl.

STALIN CAN'T BE CREDITED WITH PERSONALLY KILLING ANYONE. HE ALWAYS FOUND OTHERS WILLING TO DO HIS DIRTY WORK FOR HIM— THE MARK OF A TRUE VILLAIN.

By the time the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia in late 1917, Stalin had shown himself a capable and reliable party worker, which earned him the post of Commissar for Nationalities in the initial Soviet government. He later took the helm of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. Along the way, Stalin learned that the key to controlling the party was controlling its bureaucratic machinery.

In 1922, Lenin named Stalin Communist Party Secretary, a position that gave Stalin the ability to fill the party apparatus with people loyal, or at least obliged, to him. Yet barely 6 months later, in his so-called Last Testament, Lenin lamented that “[Stalin] has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution.” Lenin proposed that Stalin be replaced as secretary. So, why wasn't Stalin's rise to power stopped dead in its tracks?



Part of the reason may have been that by that point, Lenin was visibly dying, and his word didn't carry the same weight that it used to, especially among those jockeying to replace him. They decided to keep the testament secret. It wouldn't appear in print until leaked to *The New York Times* by an American follower of Trotsky in 1926. But the real reason Lenin's advice was ignored is because his criticisms weren't limited to Stalin. He found fault with everyone, and to accept Lenin's judgment of Stalin was to accept his judgments of all those he named. Stalin remained secretary, and the secret battle for the Soviet throne began.

Lenin died in January 1924. Immediately, rumors spread that the demise wasn't natural. Trotsky and Stalin pointed fingers at each other. Others noticed that people who posed a problem for Stalin tended to end up dead. Whether or not Stalin was responsible for those deaths, many believed he was. And maybe that was the point—to secretly encourage such rumors because it sowed fear and uncertainty in enemies. It's abundantly clear that Stalin had no qualms about having people killed, the most obvious example being Trotsky himself, who would be finally struck down in 1940.

TROTSKY VERSUS STALIN

Trotsky became leader of the so-called Left Opposition in the Communist Party. The main target of the Leftists was Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), which aimed to revitalize the war-torn economy by restoring low-level capitalism in the town and countryside. Lenin argued this was the only way the Communists could keep power.

To Trotsky and his allies, this approach was a betrayal of Communist ideals, and they wanted collectivization of agriculture and all-out industrialization, as implemented in the later Five-Year Plans. In attacking the NEP, Trotsky was implicitly attacking Lenin, which angered those who'd always suspected Trotsky of being a disloyal, self-aggrandizing opportunist.

By contrast, Stalin posed as the upholder of Leninism and the status quo. In 1924, Stalin announced his doctrine of "Socialism in one country," which departed from the Leninist view that the ultimate success of the Russian

Revolution was dependent on the success of world revolution. Despite abortive Communist uprisings in Germany and other countries, world revolution had gotten nowhere. Stalin argued that Soviet Russia should focus on transforming itself into a beacon of Socialist progress that the rest of the world would envy and emulate. This policy contrasted sharply with Trotsky's strident support for more foreign adventurism.

Eventually, Stalin won the ensuing power struggle decisively, and by 1927, he expelled Trotsky from the government and then from the party. Soon after, he exiled him to the wilds of Central Asia, and in 1929, expelled him from the USSR altogether. Why didn't Stalin have Trotsky eliminated early on? One possibility is that Trotsky was still too big to kill. But the real reason may have been far more devious and far-sighted.

Stalin knew Trotsky wasn't his only enemy. By letting Trotsky run free, Stalin could watch those who helped him abroad and those who maintained contact with him inside the USSR. And Trotsky's self-assuredness blinded him to the Stalinist agents all around him. Trotsky also provided Stalin with a useful devil to put at the center of the plots and damn all his enemies by association, real or not. And so, in 1940, having served his purpose, Trotsky was finally put down by a Stalinist assassin in Mexico.

Trotsky could have been killed at any point, but he was deliberately left alive to plot and scheme while Stalin's police mopped out those involved with his scheming.

Yet this theory flies in the face of Trotsky's denial that he was involved in any conspiracy and the subsequent consensus that the Moscow show trials—the alleged proof of the conspiracy—were based on false charges and forced confessions. All of it was just a grotesque manifestation of Stalin's rampant paranoia. Yet that idea flies in the face of the parallel consensus that Stalin was a maniacal tyrant who deserved to be overthrown. Were his opponents simply too gutless and inept to do anything but become hapless victims?

STALIN'S TYRANNY

At the close of the 1920s, Stalin abandoned Lenin's NEP and embraced the collectivization and industrialization previously championed by Trotsky and the Leftists. Collectivization was a massive social upheaval that forced tens of millions of mostly unwilling peasants onto state farms. Hundreds of thousands of the most recalcitrant, dubbed kulaks, were brutally deported to remote regions, often to perish.

Collectivization resulted in famines that killed millions from Ukraine to Central Asia. In short, it turned into a complete fiasco that had to be halted and then restarted on a more gradual scale. At the same time, Five-Year Plans expanded industry but at a huge human cost. Stalin faced mounting criticism in the party.

In mid-1932, one disgruntled party functionary, Martemyan Ryutin, decided to act. Ryutin organized a Union of Marxist-Leninists and penned a 200-page platform condemning Stalin and arguing that he should be overthrown—by force if necessary. Ryutin's followers formed conspiratorial cells and recruited others. But an informer spilled the beans to the secret police, and Ryutin and most of the key members were arrested by the end of the year. This plot became the basic template for the "grand conspiracy" later unveiled in the show trials but with Trotsky placed at center stage.

In the Stalinist playbook, Trotsky and his minions schemed not only to assassinate Stalin and other Soviet leaders but also to sabotage the Russian economy and foment treason in the Red Army, all with the assistance of the German Nazis, Japanese militarists, and Western imperialists. In return, Trotsky allegedly dangled territorial concessions and the restoration of capitalism.

The conspiratorial hysteria began with the assassination of Sergei Kirov, a party favorite and apparent Stalin pal, in late 1934. Stalin supposedly wanted to simultaneously eliminate a potential rival and blame his enemies. He certainly did the latter, and the ultimate result was the infamous show trials of 1936–1938.

The four trials are almost universally dismissed as frame-ups based on false charges and extorted testimony. The total number of defendants was a mere 52. That was selective prosecution, not mass terror. Stalin's great crime wasn't the show trials but the climate of paranoia, denunciations, and mass arrests they spawned. During the peak years of 1937 and 1938, some 1,600,000 people were arrested and nearly 700,000 executed. Another 300,000 died in the Gulag or other places of detention. And those are just the official figures.

While things returned to some semblance of normal in 1939, periodic purges and mass arrests persisted for the rest of Stalin's reign. Denunciation and fear of denunciation became a way of life.

STALIN'S PERSONAL SIGNATURE
APPEARED ON 357 DEATH LISTS
INCLUDING MORE THAN 40,000 NAMES.

TROTSKY'S VILLAINY

Trotsky and his supporters acted as if conspiracy was somehow beneath them. But was it? First, Trotsky was a professional revolutionary, and conspiracy was an essential tool of the trade. For example, in early 1917, he arrived in New York courtesy of a mysterious benefactor who Trotsky never identified. He was also accused of taking German money, and he probably did. But that didn't keep him from conniving with British intelligence to get out of America and back to Russia.

The British intelligence chief who dealt with Trotsky, Sir William Wiseman, hoped to cultivate Russian revolutionaries who were willing to collaborate with British and Allied interests. Some of Trotsky's actions in the early months of the Soviet regime suggest he did collaborate with the Brits, at least until a better deal came along. He appears to have been the opportunist his

enemies believed. So, Stalinist accusations of Trotsky cozying up to the Germans and Japanese don't seem quite as far-fetched.

Trotsky's defenders argue that their man didn't lie. So, when he insisted that he hadn't even communicated with anyone in Russia for years, that was the truth. To drive this point home, in 1937, American Trotskyists set up the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky, which, in turn, spawned the supposedly nonpartisan Commission of Inquiry headed by John Dewey. Basically, the Dewey Commission interviewed Trotsky and, with a few dissenting voices, accepted everything he said as gospel.



But Trotsky blatantly lied about not being in contact with anyone in Russia. As researchers J. Arch Getty and Pierre Broué discovered, he was in contact with people involved in anti-Stalin activity. Still, the Stalinist portrait of Trotsky as a master conspirator seems grossly overblown. He was outside Russia, looking in, and the men he was trying to lead didn't like or trust him. By involving himself, Trotsky may have actually harmed the opposition, especially when one considers that his correspondence likely helped Stalin track down the links.

Stalin was most definitely a bigger villain than Trotsky. But Stalin also had the greater opportunity. Had Trotsky stood in Stalin's shoes—the one thing he desired above all else—things could have turned out quite differently.

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15

CAN'T TRUST THEM: SCOUNDRELS

The term *scoundrel* is of uncertain origin. It cropped up in Britain in the late 1500s and denoted a “base, mean, worthless fellow.” Over time, it came to signify a brazen rascal and someone lacking any moral principles. This lecture discusses three unapologetic scoundrels: Kenji Doihara, a Japanese general; Serge Rubinstein, an international playboy and conman; and Jeffrey Epstein, a convicted sex offender and dubious financier. Each of their stories will begin with its ending, then circle back to the beginning.

KENJI DOIHARA

Around 11:30 pm on December 22, 1948, ex-General Kenji Doihara mounted the gallows in Tokyo's Sugamo Prison, along with three other men—all four convicted war criminals. One of them was Hideki Tōjō, Japan's former military strongman and Doihara's ex-boss. Tōjō offered an apology for Japanese wartime atrocities and asked the victorious Allies to show compassion to the Japanese people. Doihara apologized for nothing and begged no mercy. At 12:01 am, the trapdoor opened, and 7 minutes later, Doihara was pronounced officially dead.

Doihara was born in 1883 to a humble family in Okayama, Japan, a town about halfway between Osaka and Hiroshima. Japan was in the middle of the so-called Meiji Restoration period, a series of reforms that threw off 250 years of self-imposed isolation, catapulting the realm headlong into modernity. The big losers were Japan's traditional warrior class, the samurai, who were replaced by a modern army of conscript commoners. Some former samurai and their sympathizers formed a secret "patriotic" order ultimately dubbed the Black Dragon Society.

Under the leadership of Mitsuru Tōyama, the order dedicated itself to the belief that the Japanese were a divine race with a mandate to rule Asia. They were willing to do anything to achieve that end: assassinations, terrorism, every form of criminality, and war. Doihara, a faithful follower of Tōyama, dedicated his military career to furthering Japan's imperial ambitions by every dirty means possible.

In 1910, Korea was annexed to the growing Japanese empire. But Japan couldn't dominate Asia until it dominated China, and that became Doihara's overriding goal. In 1911, a revolution toppled China's decrepit Manchu dynasty, unleashing chaos and civil war as a result.



KENJI DOIHARA

In 1928, Major Doihara was posted in the mineral-rich northeastern province of Manchuria, which also produced opium. He arranged the assassination of Manchuria's top warlord, Chang Tso-lin, by bombing his private train. This act spread confusion that Doihara exploited to strengthen Japan's hand.

In late 1931, Doihara—now a colonel and the Japanese army's chief of intelligence in Manchuria—arranged the bombing of a Japanese train, for which the Chinese were duly blamed. This deception provided the pretext for a full-scale Japanese invasion of the province. Doihara next stage-managed the transformation of Manchuria into the puppet state of Manchukuo. He even secured a puppet ruler—China's discarded Manchu emperor, Puyi.

Doihara created a clandestine criminal empire of sex slavery, murder, blackmail, pedophilia, and, above all, drug addiction. The empire controlled brothels, opium dens, and gambling houses throughout China and beyond.

BY WORLD WAR II, DOIHARA HAD AN ESTIMATED 80,000 TO 100,000 OPERATIVES. MANY WERE CHINESE BUSINESSMEN, SOLDIERS, AND POLITICIANS COERCED THROUGH DRUG ADDICTION OR SEXUAL BLACKMAIL.

He got the Japanese Mitsui firm to produce a popular cigarette called Golden Bat. Small nodules of opium or heroin were inserted in the cigarette holders, which led to the unwilling addiction of millions of people throughout China and Southeast Asia. Doihara used health clinics to disseminate more opiates through adulterated pills and vaccines. Tens of thousands of women were forced into prostitution through drug addiction. His goal was the demoralization of Chinese society, making the country ungovernable and putty in Japan's hands. He ultimately failed—but not for want of trying.

In the last weeks of the war, Doihara returned to Japan and was put in charge of organizing underground resistance to the expected Allied invasion. Following the Japanese surrender, he was taken into custody. In May 1946, he went on trial. He was found guilty on 8 of 55 counts and sentenced to death. To the very end, he staunchly denied any wrongdoing.

SERGE RUBINSTEIN

On January 27, 1955, in a luxurious Manhattan townhouse, butler William Morter discovered the dead body of his boss, 46-year-old financier Serge Rubinstein. He was lying on the bedroom floor, his wrists and ankles bound with nylon cord and adhesive tape covering his neck and lower face. The autopsy showed death from strangulation.

No clear suspects ever emerged, and the case remains unsolved. A lot of people had reason to want Rubinstein dead, and few mourned his passing. It was later argued that he had no real friends because he had no idea how to be one.

Sergei Dmitrievich Rubinstein was born in 1908, in St. Petersburg, Russia, the eldest son of banker “Mitka” Rubinstein, who later claimed to have been a privy counselor to Tsar Nicholas II and financial adviser to Grigori Rasputin, the so-called Mad Monk. Actually, Mitka bribed Rasputin in hopes of obtaining an official title that would shield him from investigation.

Mitka was arrested in 1916 on suspicion of trading with the German enemy. The charge didn't stick, but British intelligence remained suspicious of his activities. After the revolution, Mitka was accused of acting as a front for the Bolsheviks in the illicit trade of Russian stocks and bonds. The apple apparently did not fall far from the tree, though Serge would prove far more ingenious, devious, and dishonest than his father.

Rubinstein studied economics at Cambridge University. Though his grades were average, he impressed one of his professors, noted economist John Maynard Keynes. In 1929, 21-year-old Rubinstein approached Keynes with a proposition.

He'd learned that many Russians who perished during the revolution left unclaimed accounts in Swiss banks, and their heirs needed help recovering the assets. Rubinstein wanted to help but needed a letter from the economist to get past the bank doors. Keynes obliged, and, as British intelligence put it, Rubinstein began finding heirs "who may or [may] not have been legitimate." One of those "heirs" may even have been the Soviet government. Rubinstein's price was 50% of whatever he recovered. Thus bankrolled, he bought stock in a small Parisian bank, the Franco-Asiatic, which had murky financial dealings with the Chinese government and the Soviets.

Rubinstein used his stock to take out personal loans from the same bank, which he then wrote off as the bank's manager. He was more interested in what a company was worth dead than alive. So long as its liquidation price was greater than the cost of acquiring it, there was money to be made. Eventually, other stockholders were left holding the empty bag.

The French government objected to his speculation against the franc and expelled him in 1935. He moved to London, where he bought into a floundering mining concern called Chosen Corporation, which controlled gold mines in Korea. He got rid of the managing director by leaking his financial irregularities to British authorities. By 1939, he'd drained nearly \$7 million out of Chosen and into his pockets.

He entered the US in 1938 and took up residence in New York. For a time, he was hailed as the new wonder boy of Wall Street. At one point, he owned or managed 17 companies.

Desperate to avoid the draft during World War II, he married model Laurette Kilbourne in 1941, when only bachelors were being called up. As the war rolled on, he purchased executive positions in defense-related companies so he could claim to be indispensable to the war effort. He was finally indicted for evasion in 1945. He was convicted and served 2 1/2 years in federal prison. Publicity made him America's most despised draft dodger.

In 1950, Rubinstein was indicted for stock rigging, and in 1952, he was found liable for deportation. Both cases were pending at the time of his death.

As for who killed Rubinstein, the most likely contender was Texas oilman Odie Seagraves, a former partner who believed he'd been cheated. He claimed Rubinstein owed him \$435,000, and he assigned the debt to Manny Lester, a New Yorker with gangland connections.

In August 1954, Serge claimed he was assaulted by two men near his home. He also reported threatening telegrams. He blamed Lester for everything. Lester even came to Rubinstein's townhouse to demand payment, and Rubinstein had him arrested—which may have been the last straw.

JEFFREY EPSTEIN

On the morning of August 10, 2019, 66-year-old Jeffrey Edward Epstein was found hanging in his cell at New York's Metropolitan Corrections Center. The official verdict was suicide, but the circumstances leave a lot of room for doubt.

Epstein was the eldest son of a middle-class Brooklyn family. He attended public schools and had talents for math and playing the piano. He was regarded as friendly by most of his classmates and seems to have had a knack for ingratiating himself with those in higher positions by catering to their needs and desires.

Graduating early, Epstein attended New York University's Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences. But in 1974, he dropped out. Despite lacking any formal credentials, he was hired as a math and physics teacher at Manhattan's Dalton School. This job brought him into the world of rich and powerful people. He was a popular instructor with students and parents alike. Epstein took a very keen interest in teenage females. The suspicion of "improper relationships" is probably what got him fired by Dalton in 1976, although his official evaluation stated that his teaching skills had not improved sufficiently.

Epstein continued to enjoy popularity among some parents, including Alan Greenberg, CEO of the investment behemoth Bear Stearns. Greenberg gave Epstein a job as a junior assistant to a lowly floor trader. But Epstein catapulted to limited partner in less than 4 years. It seems he was a whiz at "tax mitigation strategies"—tax dodging.

Epstein's appreciative clients included millionaires and billionaires. But in 1981, he was found to have violated SEC rules regarding unregistered securities. Bear Stearns let him go, but he remained pals with its leadership.

Epstein founded a company that specialized in recovering embezzled assets. He also allegedly helped embezzlers hide money. He became very adept at finding, moving, and stashing money around the world.

In 1987, Epstein was hired as a consultant by the Towers Financial Corporation, a band of high-flying corporate raiders who operated one of the biggest Ponzi schemes in Wall Street history, swindling investors out of an estimated half a billion dollars. That crime didn't come to light until 1993, after Epstein formally left the company. While he was suspected of walking away with some of the loot, he was never indicted, maybe because he secretly testified against his former partners.

Epstein had his own private jet and multiple properties, and his social sphere expanded to include politicians, intellectuals, Hollywood big shots, and Britain's former Prince Andrew. In 1991, Epstein met 30-year-old heiress and socialite Ghislaine Maxwell. She became Epstein's "main girlfriend" and the general manager of his life. An important part of her role involved maintaining a steady supply of young women to amuse and satisfy Epstein and his ever-expanding guest list of very important people.

Was it Epstein's or Maxwell's idea to install hidden cameras in the bedrooms and bathrooms of Epstein's homes—cameras that recorded his guests in compromising situations with very young girls? Basically, the two were operating a blackmail factory. But for whom?

Things ran smoothly until 2005, when a 14-year-old Palm Beach girl alleged that she received \$300 to strip naked and massage Epstein. During the investigation, more and more women came forward, perhaps as many as 50. The FBI got involved, and by 2007, Epstein was looking at a federal indictment on multiple felony charges.

But in another “lucky break,” Epstein received a plea deal, specifically, a “non-prosecution agreement.” He received immunity on all federal charges, the indictment was sealed, and he pled guilty to a single state charge of procuring a girl under 18 for prostitution. He was also obliged to register as a sex offender and serve 18 months in prison.

But he never went to prison. He spent 13 months of his sentence in a Palm Beach police facility, complete with daily work release and shopping trips, followed by a year of nominal house arrest, which he violated with impunity.

So, how did he get such a sweet deal? According to the federal prosecutor handling the case, he was told Epstein “belonged to intelligence” and to make the case go away as quickly and easily as possible. The deal was even kept secret from victims and their families.

Epstein never acknowledged that he’d really done anything wrong. His life resumed, but he faced an ever-growing number of civil suits for sexual abuse. Meanwhile, the FBI and New York State authorities dug into sex trafficking allegations. They arrested Epstein on July 6, 2019. A search of his Manhattan residence yielded hundreds of meticulously labeled photos and CDs of nude and semi-nude girls, many confirmed to be underage.

Despite offering an astounding \$100 million bail if he could remain on house arrest, a judge remanded Epstein to the fatal cell in the Metropolitan Correctional Center. Maxwell was taken into custody in July 2020 and subsequently convicted on five sex trafficking charges. In 2022, she was sentenced to 20 years. In 2024, she lost an appeal against her conviction.

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16

TYRANNY NEVER GETS OLD: NEW- SCHOOL TYRANTS

A tyrant is a ruler who uses power in a cruel, vindictive, and oppressive way. This lecture examines three such rulers: Idi Amin Dada, known as the Butcher of Uganda; Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi; and the enigmatic and genocidal Pol Pot, leader of Cambodia's dreaded Khmer Rouge. These "new style" tyrants are manifestations of late 20th-century postcolonialism.

IDI AMIN DADA

Idi Amin Dada Oumee was born around 1925 in what was then the Uganda Protectorate of British East Africa. While Uganda was predominantly Christian, Amin's family was Muslim. His status as a marginalized minority likely impacted his view of the world, including other Ugandans.

Amin didn't receive much education, advancing only to the 4th grade. In 1946, he enlisted in the King's African Rifles and rose to warrant officer, the highest rank attainable by a Native African. Evaluations rated him a good soldier who seemed staunchly loyal to the British Empire.

His loyalty changed when Britain granted Ugandan independence in 1962. The initial political strongman was Milton Obote, who established himself as a virtual dictator. Uganda's army grew in the years following independence, and Amin was promoted to major. In 1966, Obote named him commander of the army and later the entire armed forces.

He and Obote partnered in trading weapons to rebels in neighboring Congo and Sudan in exchange for gold, diamonds, and ivory. But soon, Obote saw Amin as his main rival. In late 1970, Obote demoted Amin and plotted to throw him under the bus for the arms scandals.

On January 25, 1971, while Obote was in Singapore, Amin's supporters seized control of the capital, Kampala, and key military bases. Declaring himself president, Amin condemned Obote's corruption. Right away, Amin launched a bloody purge of the armed forces, slaughtering at least 5000. Soon, two-thirds of the armed forces were dead or had fled abroad.



IDI AMIN DADA

DURING AMIN'S BRUTAL 8-YEAR
RULE, AN ESTIMATED 300,000
UGANDANS DIED AT THE HANDS
OF HIS SOLDIERS AND POLICE.

He abolished Obote's unpopular secret police but immediately set up his own. While Amin's Uganda was nominally a republic, he ruled by decree, rubberstamped by a "cabinet" mostly composed of loyal soldiers. Civil courts were replaced by military tribunals. Uganda became an unabashed military dictatorship.

Amin built a new army and quartered soldiers in towns and villages, supposedly to protect the populace, but really to control them. Despite this military power, Amin faced opposition. Obote found refuge in neighboring Tanzania, whose leftist leader, Julius Nyerere, backed the formation of an anti-Amin exile army. In 1972, these exiles invaded Uganda but were chased back across the border by Amin's forces.

Amin's signature act of villainy was his expulsion of Uganda's South Asian population in 1972. This 80,000-strong community, mostly Indian and Pakistani, comprised less than 1% of the population but controlled most manufacturing and retail trade. Amin ordered 75% of them to leave the country within 90 days. Most of the remaining 20,000, who were Ugandan citizens, fled over the next few years. Uganda's economy sank by two-thirds during Amin's rule.

Opposition mounted. Dissent even surfaced in the military. Amin squashed two coup attempts in 1977. The following year saw a mutiny and another incursion by Obote loyalists. That provoked Amin to launch a counterinvasion of Tanzania. He received aid from Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, who dispatched around 2500 soldiers to back up the Ugandan war effort. But the advance bogged down, and in early 1979, the Tanzanians, aided by Obote's rebels, counterattacked and crushed the Ugandans and Libyans. Kampala fell in April.

Amin eventually fled to Libya, then moved to Saudi Arabia. In 1989, after only 3 years of stable government, Uganda was plunged again into civil war, and Amin saw a chance to reclaim the throne. However, he was arrested in Zaire and deported to Senegal.

With great reluctance, the Saudis let him return to his home in Jeddah, where he died quietly in 2003. He always regarded himself as the one true president of Uganda, and never apologized for any of his actions. Today, Amin, the so-called Butcher of Uganda and Icon of Evil, is regarded by some younger Ugandans as a symbol of patriotism and progress.

MUAMMAR GADDAFI

Muammar Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi was born in 1942 in Italian-ruled Libya. He grew up under British administration, which shifted in 1951 to the absolutist rule of King Idris I.

Gaddafi's family were Bedouins of modest means, but they saw to it that he got a good education. Most of his teachers were Egyptians, who exposed him to politics, specifically the Arab nationalism of Egypt's military strongman, Gamal Abdel Nasser. By age 19, Gaddafi had become a Nasserite activist, something much frowned upon by Idris. Gaddafi was expelled from college—although he later received his degree in 1963—and his family was exiled from their hometown.

But in 1963, Gaddafi was allowed into the royal military academy. He continued his underground activity, forming a Nasserite Free Officers movement among the cadets. In 1965, he was commissioned as a lieutenant and sent to England for further training.

By 1969, Gaddafi had risen to captain. He continued subversive work with the Free Officers, and on September 1 of that year, with Idris out of the country, he and his comrades carried out a largely bloodless coup. Mimicking Nasser, the 12-man junta called themselves the Revolutionary Command Council, or RCC. It was supposed to be a collective leadership, but Gaddafi was the dominant personality. He promoted himself to colonel and assumed command of the army.

Libya's only significant resource was oil, which Idris had entrusted to foreign companies, mostly British and American. They paid the Libyan government mealy annual royalties of \$3.5 billion. Gaddafi nationalized Libyan petroleum production, kicked out the Brits, and forced American firms into profit sharing arrangements. Oil revenues surged sevenfold. This endeavor was arguably Gaddafi's greatest achievement.

New schools, universities, and hospitals sprang up. Government jobs employed tens of thousands of Libyans. But Gaddafi spent much of the money expanding the armed forces, which numbered 50,000 by the early 1980s. He also created secret police, and civilian Revolutionary Committees watched everyone.

In 1977, Gaddafi abolished the RCC and replaced it with the so-called People's Congress. He decreed Libya a *jamahiriya*, a "state of the masses," governed through popular referendums, but he intended the congress as a rubber stamp for whatever policies he dreamed up.

When Nasser unexpectedly died of a heart attack in 1970, Gaddafi anointed himself successor to lead the Arab world. Nasser's actual successor, Anwar Sadat, didn't agree. Sadat and other Arab leaders viewed the Libyan as a megalomaniac upstart running a pip-squeak country.



Gaddafi borrowed a page from Mao Zedong's playbook by penning *The Green Book*—a collection of thoughts and aphorisms—which he proudly sent all over the world.

Frustrated, Gaddafi reimagined himself as the great leader of Africa. Starting in 1978, and continuing for a decade, he annexed a large swath of northern Chad and attempted to turn the rest of the unstable former French colony into a puppet state. He failed miserably, losing an estimated 8000 Libyan soldiers.

Gaddafi's support of terrorism earned him more enemies in the West, particularly the United States. He provided money and training to the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Irish Republican Army, Basque and Corsican separatists, German Marxists, and even such groups as the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers. Libyan agents were implicated in several airline bombings, most notoriously the destruction of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, which killed more than 260 people in the air and on the ground.

In Libya, Gaddafi alienated more and more people. In 1978, he nationalized businesses and replaced them with half-baked cooperatives. He then expropriated all bank accounts over 1000 dinars. The Libyan middle class was gutted, and more and more Libyans realized that they were living under an unstable tyrant. Those who could afford it fled abroad.

Facing mounting opposition at home and abroad, Gaddafi seemed to mend his ways—sort of. He restored private business, freed political prisoners, and reined in the Revolutionary Committees. But he continued to fund terrorism and a secret program to develop chemical weapons. And he made new enemies with Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS. Starting in the 1990s, they launched repeated assassination attempts and local rebellions.

He finally met his fate in 2011 during the so-called Arab Spring of popular uprisings against many long-standing rulers in the Middle East. Libya was plunged into chaos and civil war, and that October, Gaddafi was captured and summarily executed.

POL POT

Pol Pot's real name was Saloth Sar. He was born in 1925 near Kampong Thom, Cambodia. The son of a wealthy farmer, Sar went to elite private schools and, in 1949, attended university in Paris. At the time, the Kingdom

of Cambodia was part of French-ruled Indochina, and the influence of French culture permeated the Cambodian elite. However, China had just gone Red, and French hegemony in Indochina was challenged by the Communist-led Viet Minh.

A radicalized Sar joined the French Communist Party in 1951. Two years later, he returned home primed for revolutionary struggle against the repressive regime of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who straddled a thin line between the nationalists and the French. In 1960, Sar and a handful of others founded the Cambodian Communist Party. He abandoned his job as a schoolteacher and melted into the jungle to build the Khmer Rouge—*Khmer* being the term for ethnic Cambodian and *rouge* being French for “red.”

Nearly another decade passed before the Khmer Rouge launched their war of liberation against the Sihanouk regime. They were assisted by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, who were in their own war with South Vietnam and its American backers. While the Khmer Rouge and the North Vietnamese collaborated in the causes of Communism and national liberation, neither liked nor trusted the other.

In 1970, Cambodian politics plunged into chaos when a US-backed military coup overthrew Sihanouk. He threw his weight behind the Khmer Rouge, which mushroomed from 12,000 fighters in 1970 to 40,000 three years later. The brutal Cambodian conflict killed an estimated half million people. The Cambodian military fell back to the major cities while its American allies bombed the countryside in a futile effort to hold back the Khmer Rouge. In early 1975, the Khmer Rouge besieged the capital, Phnom Penh, which surrendered on April 17. The US-backed regime collapsed, and the Khmer Rouge became masters of Cambodia.

In the meantime, Sar assumed the nom de guerre Pol Pot and the more telling nickname of Brother Number One. In theory, the Khmer Rouge had a collective leadership called the Angkar, or “Organization.” Pol Pot was the dominant figure, but it’s unclear whether the horrors about to unfold can be laid at his feet alone.

He ultimately rejected Communism and, instead, championed xenophobic Khmer nationalism. He regarded the humble, uneducated peasant as the ideal citizen and wanted to purge Cambodian society of foreign influences. Officials, teachers, and intellectuals represented this contagion. They needed to be reeducated—or liquidated.

POL POT ENVISIONED AN
AUTARKIC ECONOMY, ONE
WHOLLY SELF-SUFFICIENT,
BASED ON THE PEASANTRY AND
MASS CULTIVATION OF RICE.

After taking control of Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge commenced forced evacuation of its populace to the countryside, where labor was needed to restore rice production. Tens of thousands perished on the marches. Many more died in the rice paddies from overwork and malnutrition. Children over 7 were taken from parents and schooled by Khmer Rouge cadres.

“Bad elements”—contaminated city dwellers—were singled out and exterminated. The “purification” of the country, now renamed Democratic Kampuchea, was spearheaded by Pol Pot’s secret police, the Santebal, which operated nearly 200 prisons and execution centers throughout the country. One of the most notorious was Prison S-21. Of 17,000 people taken there, only 7 survived. In barely 4 years, the Khmer Rouge regime killed 1.5 to 2 million Cambodians, roughly a quarter of the population.

Pol Pot decreed large areas of South Vietnam, recently reunited with the North, Khmer territory. Khmer Rouge cross-border raids ruthlessly slaughtered thousands of Vietnamese civilians. On Christmas Day 1978, the fed-up Vietnamese launched a full-scale invasion of Democratic Kampuchea. Khmer Rouge resistance collapsed in 2 weeks. Pol Pot, Angkar, and what was left of his army fled to remote areas along the Thai border. The Vietnamese

installed a puppet government but remained in occupation for another 10 years. The Khmer Rouge regrouped and fought back viciously; tens of thousands more died.

In 1985, the Khmer Rouge removed Pol Pot as leader, though most assumed he still called the shots. In June 1997, he ordered the execution of Son Sen, ex-commander of the secret police, and the murder of Sen's entire family. This act so enraged another Khmer Rouge commander, Ta Mok, that he arrested Pol Pot and charged him with treason. Pol Pot conveniently died of a heart attack, or took his own life, in April 1998. Like Amin and Gaddafi, Pol Pot never offered a word of apology. "Everything I did," he insisted, "I did for my country."

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17

ULTIMATE TURNCOATS: SPIES TURNED TRAITORS

Traitors are an especially insidious breed of villain. Treason, like all villainy, is a choice. And it is often fueled by four main factors: money, ideology, compromise, and ego—summarized by the acronym MICE in intelligence circles. This lecture examines how these factors played a role in the cases of two British traitors, William Joyce and Kim Philby, as well as one American, Aldrich Ames.

WILLIAM JOYCE

Interestingly, British turncoat William Brooke Joyce wasn't British at all. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, on April 24, 1906. His father was an Irish Catholic and his mother an Anglo-Irish Protestant. When Joyce was 3 years old, his family returned to Ireland, which was soon plunged into political crisis, pitting nationalists, who wanted home rule or independence, against those loyal to the British Empire. Joyce's family fell into the latter category.

In 1920, Joyce became an informant for British military intelligence and assisted the notorious Black and Tans and Auxiliaries in their brutal war with the IRA. He was implicated in the murder of a pro-rebel Catholic priest. To protect him, the British command let him enlist in the regular army and dispatched him to England. But he was released from the army because he was underage, and his hopes for a career in the Foreign Office or the military were dashed.

His loyalty to king and empire wasn't rewarded, and a spark of resentment began to smolder. In 1924, Joyce discovered Fascism, and ideology was added to his wounded ego.

Joyce allegedly joined the British Fascisti, which functioned as a paramilitary wing of the existing Conservative Party. It also included intelligence operatives such as Maxwell Knight, who would later become MI5's chief hunter of Fascist and Nazi subversives.

The British Fascisti disintegrated by the end of the 1920s, but out of it arose the British Union of Fascists, or BUF, led by Oswald Mosley. Joyce joined in 1932 and proved himself a powerful public speaker and an able street fighter. Impressed, Mosley made him the BUF's director of propaganda.

But Joyce became fixated on Hitler and his Nazi movement in Germany. In 1937, claiming a financial crunch, Mosely sacked Joyce and several other self-proclaimed Nazis, who then formed a rival National Socialist League. Joyce believed that only an understanding with Nazi Germany and emulation of Hitler's policies could save the British Empire.

Back in 1933, Joyce made a fatal error. He received a British passport by falsely claiming that he'd been born in Ireland. Bearing that passport, he and his wife fled from England on August 26, 1939, just days before the outbreak of the war. In Berlin, the Joyces joined a small group of pro-Nazi British expats. Given his experience as a speaker and propagandist, the Germans offered him a job, and he accepted.

He made his first broadcast for German State Radio's English-language service on September 6, 1939. His six weekly broadcasts commenced in December and ran straight through April 30, 1945. They became oddly popular, but there's no evidence that his version of the news ever did much to demoralize the British public. Rather, he became a kind of comic villain.

Joyce, nicknamed Lord Haw-Haw, inherited the name from another English-speaking German broadcaster known for a condescending, upper-crust accent described as "English of the haw-haw, dammit-get-out-of-my-way variety."

Nevertheless, the Nazis awarded him German citizenship in 1940. But as the Third Reich crumbled in the spring of 1945, Joyce fled with a fake German passport, aiming to reach neutral Sweden. His luck ran out on May 28, near the German town of Flensburg.

Questioned by British soldiers, one recognized him by his voice. Joyce tried to run but was shot in the buttocks and taken prisoner. He was returned to England and went on trial in London's Central Criminal Court facing three charges of "traitorously adhering to the King's enemies." He pled not guilty.

The critical issue in his case was that passport he obtained back in 1933. After he was proven to be an American citizen, he was acquitted on two of the three charges. The remaining question was whether the British passport, even though fraudulently obtained, still granted him royal protection between the time he left Britain and his receipt of German citizenship. Could he betray if he never belonged? The jury decided that he could. He was found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging.

Technically, Joyce was sentenced to death for making a false statement on a passport application, an offense normally meriting a small fine. His execution, carried out on January 3, 1946, at Wandsworth Prison, was essentially an act of official revenge. Joyce never recanted his beliefs, but it was recently discovered that he'd made a deal with prosecutors to spare his wife a treason charge. In return, he agreed not to reveal what he knew about MI5's canoodling with British Fascists and Nazis during the 1930s, which could have been disastrous. It's ironic that a traitor's last act was to spare embarrassment for the very government that condemned him.

KIM PHILBY

Harold Adrian Russell Philby was born in India on New Year's Day 1912. He was nicknamed Kim after the Rudyard Kipling character, and it stuck with him for life. His father was a Cambridge-educated scholar, colonial official, and intelligence officer.

Following in his father's footsteps, Philby attended Cambridge, where he evidenced a "leaning toward Communism." He also studied under economics professor Maurice Dobb, a Communist and "spotter" for Soviet intelligence.

On Dobb's suggestion, Philby headed for Vienna, Austria, to work for an anti-Nazi organization that was a Communist front. There, he met and soon married a young Hungarian Communist named Litzzi Friedmann. She and Dobb recruited Philby into yet another Communist front group. He became a courier and took his first steps into the world of spies and deception.

Returning to London in 1934, Philby was formally recruited by agent handler Arnold Deutsch into the NKVD—the Soviet secret police agency and forerunner of the KGB. On Deutsch's orders, Philby outwardly severed all connection to Communist groups and individuals, including his wife. He started affecting pro-Fascist sympathies and even joined the pro-Nazi Anglo-German Fellowship, where he might have brushed elbows with Joyce.

In early 1937, Philby left for Spain as an independent journalist. A civil war raged there between the Soviet-backed Republic and the Italian- and German-backed Nationalists led by Francisco Franco. Philby reported from the Nationalist side, working out of Franco's headquarters. He simultaneously spied for both the USSR and Britain.

In 1939, he returned to England with a new assignment from Moscow: infiltrate British intelligence. This was made all the easier by the outbreak of the war, which required Britain's secret services to rapidly expand. Philby had already helped the NKVD enlist two of his college classmates, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean. In 1940, Burgess recommended Philby for MI6's D Section, which specialized in sabotage and irregular warfare. Philby soon shifted to Section 5, counterintelligence.

The deception and constant threat of exposure took a psychological toll on Philby. He became an alcoholic. In 1940, Soviet defector Walter Krivitsky told the Brits that two Soviet moles had penetrated the Foreign Office, and one had previously been a journalist in Spain. But the likable Philby avoided serious suspicion.

In 1949, he got the plum post of British intelligence liaison in Washington DC. Now he had access to American secrets and worked with the new CIA to develop joint operations against the USSR. In this role, he did his greatest damage. He tipped off the Soviets to the ultrasecret Venona program that had broken their codes.

Philby almost single-handedly frustrated Anglo-American efforts to infiltrate agents and freedom fighters behind the Iron Curtain. Between 1949 and 1951, around 300 Western agents, plus hundreds more Albanians, were killed in a series of failed—that is, betrayed—operations.

But 1951 also marked Philby's near downfall. MI6 and the CIA were closing in on his spy comrades Burgess and Maclean, and in May of that year, Philby helped them escape to the USSR. Under suspicion, and no longer of any use to his Soviet masters, he was dismissed from MI6.

Philby took a journalist job in the Middle East and soon resumed spying for Moscow. In 1961, a Soviet defector, Anatoly Golitsyn, finally provided the clues that unmistakably outed Philby as a traitor. Confronted, he verbally confessed to everything but refused to sign a formal statement.

On January 23, 1963, Philby hopped a Russian freighter in Beirut and sailed for the USSR, where he spent the last 25 years of his life. They provided a nice apartment, a new wife, and 500 rubles a month—six times the average Soviet salary—but kept him at arm's length.

When he died in May 1988, he was buried with all Communist honors, a hero of the Soviet Union. But he was never entirely trusted. Many suspected him of being a British mole. Like many villains, Philby had a knack for making people see him as he wished to be seen, even when the truth was staring them in the face.

ALDRICH AMES

Aldrich Hazen Ames was virtually raised in the CIA. In 1952, when he was 11, his college professor father, a specialist in Southeast Asia, joined the agency, and the family moved from Wisconsin to Virginia. Young Ames attended McLean High School alongside many other CIA brats. While a teenager, he worked summers at the agency doing clerical work. In 1960, he attended the University of Chicago with dreams of being an actor. When those didn't materialize, he came back to Virginia, and the CIA, where he ended up doing the same low-level jobs.

Ames impressed enough people to become a career CIA officer in 1969. He was assigned to Turkey, where his task was to target Soviet officials for possible recruitment. His success was limited, his evaluations mostly poor, and within 3 years he was back at Langley.

But in 1976, he received a new assignment in New York City where he handled existing Russian assets. His evaluations improved, even as his boozing got worse. That likely had something to do with his leaving a briefcase full of classified material on the New York subway. He received only a verbal reprimand.

In 1981, now 40 years old, Ames landed another foreign assignment, one that changed the course of his life. It was in Mexico City, where he kept an eye on the Russians and Cubans and cultivated informants. One of them was a younger Colombian cultural attaché named Maria Casas Dupuy. Thanks to his drinking, Ames's current marriage was on the rocks. Aldrich and Dupuy began an affair. Meanwhile, his job performance tanked, and by 1983, he was back Stateside. Dupuy came with him, and his wife filed for divorce.

Ames's new job was in the Soviet counterintelligence section of the Department of Operations, which gave him access to CIA operations against the Soviets, including the names and locations of Russian collaborators. To anyone paying attention, Ames was a man under a lot of stress. His divorce was costly, and his new wife, Dupuy, had expensive tastes. While posted in Rome, Ames's performance became increasingly erratic. It seemed unlikely that he would advance much further. All these factors should have been red flags.

It wasn't unusual for Ames to meet with Soviet intelligence officers. This was part of the dance involved in recruiting them—or they him. The deal was made in April 1985. At every meeting, Ames walked away with \$20,000 to \$50,000. He knew he'd crossed a line and there was no going back.

In Ames's case, his ego helped lure him into treason, but money was the overriding factor. He was never an ideologue. Even after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, he continued spying for the KGB's nominal replacement, the SVR, because they continued paying him.

Over the next 9 years, the KGB paid him an astonishing \$2.7 million, roughly \$8 million in 2024. With an average salary of less than \$70,000, Ames and his wife spent the money freely on their lavish lifestyle.

As early as 1989, at least one CIA staffer reported that Ames was living far beyond his means. Ames claimed his wife's Colombian family was loaded. In fact, they were dirt poor. He passed two lie detector tests with flying colors.

So, what did the Russians get for that money? Ames confessed to compromising “virtually all Soviet agents of the CIA and other American and foreign services known to me” and handing over a “huge quantity of information on United States foreign, defense and security policies.” Subsequent Russian defectors affirmed this. At least 10 highly placed CIA and FBI moles were liquidated. This ignited a mole hunt inside American agencies that spread consternation and suspicion.

In 1993, CIA and FBI investigators homed in on Ames. His looming duty assignment was Moscow, and some feared he would use the opportunity to defect. The FBI pounced in February 1994. In April, he pled guilty to everything and received life in prison without parole. Perhaps as part of a plea deal, Maria Ames received only 5 years as an accessory.

AT THE TIME THIS COURSE WAS
PRODUCED, AMES WAS STILL
SERVING OUT HIS LIFE SENTENCE
IN A FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL
INSTITUTION. HE DIED IN PRISON ON
JANUARY 5, 2026, AT THE AGE OF 84.

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18

BATTLE WASN'T VIOLENT ENOUGH: WAR CRIMINALS

War, by its nature, entails killing and destruction that is deliberately planned and executed. This principle is called military necessity. War crimes arguably occur when such actions are unnecessary or excessive. The US Army's Lieber Code of 1863 was the first attempt to define war crimes, prohibiting deliberate killing of civilians, unnecessary destruction of property, slavery, torture, rape, and pillage. But determining blame for excessive acts is complex. This lecture discusses three men accused of war crimes: Hitler's infamous right-hand man, Heinrich Himmler, whose guilt is uncontested; General Tomoyuki Yamashita of World War II, whose case is more debatable; and Henry Kissinger, whose charges remain highly controversial.

HEINRICH HIMMLER

Heinrich Himmler probably had more to do with bringing Hitler's insidious dreams into reality than anyone else. What turned an otherwise unexceptional man into a monster?

Himmler was born in 1900 into a well-to-do Munich family. His father was a schoolteacher and the family were staunch Roman Catholics. As a boy, Himmler was studious and socially awkward. He suffered from frequent illnesses, possibly psychosomatic.

He was too young to fight in World War I, which, to him, was a blow to his manly self-esteem. His dreams of a military career were crushed by the Versailles Treaty, which drastically limited the size of Germany's army. His social situations with Jews were polite, and there was no sign of the fire-breathing anti-Semite he'd become.

Graduating in 1922, Himmler briefly worked on a farm, but by September 1923, he was unemployed and living with his parents. He joined a right-wing paramilitary group headed by ex-army captain Ernst Röhm, which amalgamated with the budding Nazi SA, or Brownshirts. Himmler joined the Nazi Party and was on hand for Hitler's failed Munich Beer Hall Putsch in November 1923.



HEINRICH HIMMLER

In 1925, Himmler joined the new SS, or Schutzstaffel, a special guard detachment within the Brownshirts. When he took over as its leader, or Reichsführer SS, in 1929, it barely numbered 300. But under Himmler's energetic leadership, the SS swelled to more than 50,000 by 1933 and some 800,000 by the end of World War II. He had a knack for organization.

Inspired by Crusaders, Jesuits, Japanese samurai, and even witches, Himmler turned the SS into a party within a party, an army within an army, and a state within a state—the black heart of the Third Reich.

Much has been said about Himmler's fascination with the occult, but SS mysticism never coalesced into a coherent belief system. Himmler's evil lies not in his mystical activities but in his administrative ones.

Starting with Dachau in 1933, Himmler created a prison-industrial complex run on terror and slave labor. In 1941, he commissioned Generalplan Ost, a blueprint for German expansion in the east calling for the ethnic cleansing or outright extermination of 30 million people, notably Slavs and Jews. In 1942, he instigated the Wannsee Conference, which laid plans for the annihilation of European Jews in the so-called final solution.

Like all malignant narcissists, Himmler was ultimately out only for himself. In early 1945, the Third Reich faced imminent collapse, and he began looking for a way out. In April, he secretly contacted Count Bernadotte, vice president of the Swedish Red Cross, with a peace offer to the Western Allies. He offered that Germany would surrender to the Americans and British but continue fighting the Russians. The Allies never took him up on his deal.

After Germany's unconditional surrender on May 8, Himmler donned a sergeant's uniform and, using a fake ID, tried to flee to Switzerland. But on May 20, he was apprehended and turned over to the British. During interrogation, he bit into a cyanide capsule he'd concealed. The corpse of the once mighty and feared Reichsführer SS was unceremoniously buried in an unmarked grave. But other theories exist.

One holds that Himmler was murdered by British special ops, perhaps to keep the lid on secret Allied-Nazi negotiations during the war. Another story is that Himmler he was relocated and given a new identity as part of some personnel deal. That's highly unlikely but not impossible.

TOMOYUKI YAMASHITA

Tomoyuki Yamashita was born in 1885, the son of a country doctor. He attended military prep schools and graduated in 1905 from the Imperial Army Academy, number 16 out of a class of 920. After a brief taste of war in 1914, Yamashita's military career largely consisted of staff and military attaché posts in places such as Berlin and Vienna. By 1934, he'd risen to major general.

The 1920s and 1930s were a volatile and violent time in Japanese politics. At the center were two rival military factions: the Kōdōha, or "Imperial Way Group," and the Tōseiha, or "Control Group." Yamashita belonged to the former group, which was composed mostly of younger officers who favored a military dictatorship and an aggressively expansionist foreign policy. The opposing Control faction was led by more conservative officers, such as the future Prime Minister Hideki Tōjō.

Things came to a head in 1936, when officers aligned with the Imperial Way made a bloody coup attempt. It failed, and many were executed, cashiered, or demoted. Yamashita wasn't directly involved but was almost arrested and considered resigning. With enemies like Tōjō now in control of the high command, Yamashita's career didn't look promising. In 1937, the Japanese army launched a full-scale invasion of China, and Yamashita was soon commanding a division at the front.

Personally, Yamashita felt Japan wasn't prepared for such a war with China and the Western powers. But he was still a soldier, and when the Tōjō regime decided to attack American and British possessions in the Far East in December 1941, Yamashita dutifully played his part. His 25th Army was tasked with fighting its way through 500 miles of Malay jungle and capturing the naval bastion of Singapore.

Using innovative tactics, Yamashita outfought and outmaneuvered the more numerous Brits, who surrendered on February 15. Yamashita was hailed as a hero. Prior to the fall, he issued a general order commanding "no looting, no rape, no arson" and the humane treatment of POWs. Maybe most notably, he held Japanese officers responsible for the behavior of their soldiers.

But Japanese troops ran amok in the Alexandria military hospital, slaughtering at least 200 patients and staff. Between February 21 and March 4, the Japanese began mass killings in Chook Sing, the predominantly Chinese section of Singapore. It was a premeditated massacre based on an order from the 25th Army's staff.

Chook Sing's residents were being punished for their presumed loyalty to Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist regime. Around 30,000 to 50,000 people were killed. Yamashita later insisted he never personally issued such an order, but it came from officers on his staff, and he took no apparent action to stop the killings or to discipline those responsible.

By the fall of 1944, Tōjō had fallen from power, and Japan was facing crisis on almost every front. Yamashita was named military governor of the Philippines, charged with defending the islands from the Americans. By early 1945, the invaders had reached the main island of Luzon, home to the Philippine capital of Manila.

Rather than try to hold the sprawling metropolis of Manila, Yamashita withdrew his forces into the more defensible mountains. The real villain in this story, Rear Admiral Sanji Iwabuchi, flatly refused Yamashita's order to evacuate Manila. A month-long battle ensued in which thousands of Filipino civilians were killed by crossfire and ferocious American bombardments. Tens of thousands more were simply massacred by the vengeful and desperate Japanese.

At least 50,000 Filipinos, many women and children, were slaughtered in "clearing operations" in the northern part of the city. Japanese troops also used women and children as human shields, and thousands of hostages were taken and slaughtered in acts of revenge. The historic Bayview Hotel was turned into a "combat brothel" where hundreds of Filipino women and girls were raped and killed. The final death toll has been put at 100,000, possibly as many as 500,000.



TOMOYUKI YAMASHITA

As the battle neared its end, Iwabuchi died by suicide and would never face justice for his actions. When the war finally ended in September 1945, Yamashita was still holding out in northern Luzon with the remnants of his army. Even here, troops under his command had committed atrocities, including the murder of some 25,000 Filipino civilians in Batangas province and the killing of American and Filipino POWs.

Yamashita stood trial before the Philippines War Crimes Commission on October 29, 1945. The prosecution argued that he bore responsibility for the villainous deeds of his subordinates not because he ordered them but because he failed to discover and stop them.

YAMASHITA'S CRIME WAS NEGLIGENCE RATHER THAN MALEVOLENCE.

The prosecution prevailed, and its argument was enshrined as the “Yamashita Standard” of war crimes guilt and is still applicable today. Yamashita received his death sentence on December 7, Pearl Harbor Day. He was duly hanged at Los Baños prison, south of Manila, on February 23, 1946.

HENRY KISSINGER

Heinz Alfred Kissinger was born in Fürth, Germany, in 1923, the eldest son of a Jewish-German family. In 1938, the Kissingers fled the Third Reich, eventually settling in New York, where Heinz changed his name to Henry.

Kissinger impressed many as intelligent, hardworking, and charming, but others sensed a young man who was cold, calculating, and “relentlessly ambitious.” In 1943, while attending New York City College, 20-year-old Kissinger was drafted. He soon after became a US citizen. Because he spoke German, and probably because he impressed the right people, he was assigned to military intelligence.

In 1945, while just a private, he found himself in charge of the occupied German city of Krefeld. Later, he was involved in the denazification program, rounding up former Gestapo agents—and recruiting those who proved useful. Soon after, he became an instructor at the army's counterintelligence school.

Back in the States, he earned a PhD in political science from Harvard in 1954. He developed a special admiration for the diplomacy of Austrian statesman Count Klemens von Metternich, architect of the 1815 Congress of Vienna, which restored peace to Europe after the Napoleonic Wars. Metternich was an advocate of *realpolitik*—policies based on practicality and necessity, not fairness or morality.

For example, at the Congress of Vienna, the Polish kingdom was divided among the victors to maintain peace, regardless of Poland's interests. This approach, in a nutshell, became the basis of the Kissinger Doctrine, which prioritized agreement among key players over fairness.

Kissinger took a teaching post at Harvard, where he nominally remained until 1971. He became a consultant to the National Security Council, the State Department, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the Rand Corporation. But he aspired to even more influence on US foreign policy. In 1968, Kissinger shifted his focus to presidential candidate Richard Nixon.

Under Nixon, and later Gerald Ford, Kissinger served as national security adviser from 1969 to 1975 and secretary of state from 1973 to 1977. As the Vietnam War raged, incoming President Nixon promised a “peace with honor,” and Kissinger made it his mission to achieve that, even if that entailed abandoning US ally South Vietnam and bombing Cambodia.

In 1971, Kissinger vigorously defended the Pakistani army's genocidal slaughter of 300,000 to 3 million people in a failed bid to crush rebellion in Bangladesh. He likewise sanctioned the Indonesian military's 1975 annexation of East Timor, estimated to have killed another 200,000.

In Latin America, he supported the Chilean Pinochet regime's murder of some 40,000 political opponents and the Argentine junta's similar “Dirty War” that claimed the lives of thousands more. He justified these actions as *realpolitik* because the regimes were regarded as American allies, or at least “geopolitically useful.”

Arguably Kissinger's most cynical piece of politicking was his 1974 "Memorandum 200." Declassified in the 1990s, it advocated American support for birth control programs in countries such as India, Brazil, Bangladesh, and Mexico. The goal was not to improve people's lives but to keep population growth in check to prevent the national resources in those countries from being consumed by their own people.

Kissinger explained that "the United States relies on countries being underdeveloped in order to easily obtain [their] national resources." All of this has led critics such as Christopher Hitchens to argue that Kissinger was a war criminal and should be tried as such. In Kissinger's defense, others point out that while he may have advocated questionable policies, he didn't actually carry them out.

Regardless, Kissinger was never held accountable. In the decades following his departure from government service, he remained a public figure whose opinions on world affairs were solicited and granted significance.

KISSINGER'S LEGACY RAISES AN INTERESTING QUESTION: WHO IS THE GREATER VILLAIN, THE PERSON WHO CARRIES OUT THE EVIL DEED OR THE ONE WHO WHISPERED IT IN THEIR EAR?

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19

THE WORST-KEPT SECRET POLICE

The secret part of secret police is not that they exist. Everybody knows they do. The secret part is who they are, what they do, and how they do it. Ordinary police protect public order. Secret police protect political order. They control through surveillance, intimidation, and, when necessary, terror. Feared even by those they nominally serve, the masters of such organizations wield powerful influence within, and over, the political establishment. This lecture examines three secret police chiefs—Feliks Dzerzhinsky, Erich Mielke, and J. Edgar Hoover—and the secret police they led.

FELIKS DZERZHINSKY

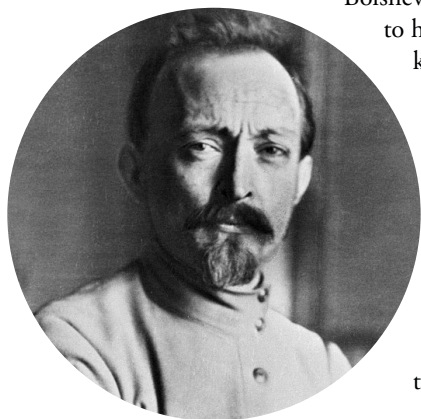
Feliks Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky was born on September 11, 1877, in modern-day Belarus, which was part of the Russian Empire at that time. The Dzerzhinskys were Polish, Roman Catholic, and members of the landed nobility. Dzerzhinsky briefly considered becoming a priest, but he drifted from Catholicism to Marxism. At 18, he was kicked out of school for distributing revolutionary pamphlets. By 1897, he was a full-time activist fomenting strikes.

His activities attracted the attention of the tsar's secret police, the Okhrana. Dzerzhinsky was arrested and sentenced to a year in prison. The Okhrana was Dzerzhinsky's greatest enemy and his greatest teacher. It excelled at recruiting informants among the revolutionaries, and it saw potential in Dzerzhinsky. After multiple arrests—and escapes—between 1898 and 1912, the Okhrana found him harder and harder to catch. He became “a master of conspiratorial technique.”

In early 1917, Dzerzhinsky sat in Moscow's Butyrka prison. Outside, World War I wasn't going well for Russia. That March, a coup forced Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate. Russia's new leaders issued a general amnesty that freed Dzerzhinsky and allowed firebrands like Vladimir Lenin to return home.

In November, Dzerzhinsky helped organize the Bolsheviks' seizure of power, but they struggled to hold it. Lenin saw mass coercion as the key to keeping power, and he pegged Dzerzhinsky as the man for the job.

In December 1917, the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolution and Sabotage was created. It was better known by the acronym Cheka. Its agents were dubbed Chekists. To Dzerzhinsky, anything or anyone that served the revolution was good, and all that opposed it was bad.



FELIKS DZERZHINSKY

The Cheka faced its first big test in the summer of 1918. In July, discontent with Lenin's policies exploded into open rebellion. In Moscow, a Cheka detachment mutinied. Dzerzhinsky threatened to have them all shot but also appealed to them as revolutionaries and Chekists. It worked. The mutineers surrendered and the rebellion soon fizzled.

On August 30, disgruntled revolutionary Fania Kaplan allegedly shot and seriously wounded Lenin. This act was the signal for the Cheka to unleash a full-blown Red Terror. Dzerzhinsky ordered the execution of hundreds of alleged counterrevolutionists. But none of the plots were really what they seemed. The key conspirators were all Cheka agents apparently acting on Dzerzhinsky's orders. Using the tactics of the old Okhrana, they encouraged the plots, getting enemies to reveal and compromise themselves.

The Cheka created special prisons for political enemies—the beginnings of the infamous Gulag Archipelago. Estimated totals of people executed by Chekists range from 20,000 to 100,000 or more. The Cheka also took on the peasantry. Having abolished free trade, the Reds found it hard to get food for the cities. The answer was forced requisitioning of grain. When the peasants resisted, the Cheka's "special purpose" units crushed peasant resistance.

One of the Cheka's special tasks was protecting Soviet leaders, which also entailed surveilling them. Dzerzhinsky trusted no one. His spies kept him informed about every unguarded comment and secret vice.

In 1922, the Cheka was nominally abolished and replaced with the State Political Administration, or GPU. A year later, it changed to the OGPU. It was still the secret police, and its powers increased. By 1924, in addition to heading the OGPU, Dzerzhinsky was chairman of the Supreme Economic Council and People's Commissariat of Communications and Internal Affairs. That same year, Lenin died, unleashing a power struggle pitting Leon Trotsky against Joseph Stalin. Dzerzhinsky seemed to favor Stalin, but no one was sure.

In July 1926, while addressing the Central Committee, Dzerzhinsky collapsed and died of a heart attack. While Stalin hailed him as “a devoted knight of the proletariat,” rumors claimed that Dzerzhinsky’s death was less than natural.

ERICH MIELKE

Erich Fritz Emil Mielke was born in the Wedding district of Berlin on December 28, 1907. His father, like most of the district’s working-class inhabitants, belonged to the Social Democratic Party, or SPD. Following the Russian Revolution and Germany’s defeat in World War I, Germany’s more radical socialists split to become the Communist Party of Germany, or KPD. The Mielkes followed suit, and Erich joined a KPD youth group at age 15.

By 1927, he was a reporter for a Communist newspaper, but he secretly enlisted in a paramilitary group run by Hans Kippenberger. Kippenberger was a former German officer and a graduate of the M-School in Moscow, a military and subversive training institute. He saw potential in Mielke and arranged for him to attend the M-School. In addition to military training, Mielke took courses in espionage and conspiratorial techniques.

Back in Berlin, Mielke joined a hit squad. In 1931, the Weimar Republic was dying. KPD militants battled Nazi Brownshirts, and both fought the police. The Communists had a policy of retaliation against the police: For every party member killed, two police officers were to be assassinated. Particularly hated was Captain Paul Anlauf.

On August 9, 1931, Anlauf and two fellow officers, Franz Lenck and Max Willig, appeared outside the Babylon Cinema on the Bülowplatz. Mielke and comrade Erich Ziemer were waiting. They opened fire, killing Lenck outright and mortally wounding Anlauf. Willig survived and identified the gunmen.

With false papers, Mielke escaped to Russia, where he joined the NKVD, the newest incarnation of Dzerzhinsky's Cheka. In 1936, the NKVD dispatched Mielke to Spain, where civil war raged between the Soviet-backed Republicans and Francisco Franco's Fascist-backed Nationalists. Mielke served in Republican military intelligence, but instead of catching Fascist spies, he hunted Trotskyites and other Communist opponents on the left. His boss in Spain was another German NKVD agent, Wilhelm Zaisser, who would become the first chief of the East German Stasi.



ERICH MIELKE

In 1939, the Spanish Republic fell, and Mielke returned to the USSR. He took part in the purge of German Communists who'd fled there to escape the Nazis. Some 60% of these refugees ended up dead or in the Gulag, many personally fingered by Mielke.

In April 1945, even before the Nazi collapse, the Russians brought Mielke to Soviet-occupied Germany along with comrades Zaisser, Walter Ulbricht, and Ernst Wollweber. Their job was to reboot the KPD and prepare a future Communist government.

In 1947, the NKVD, now called the NKGB, set up a secret police force in the Soviet zone called Kommissariat 5. Its head was Zaisser, and Mielke was his deputy. Under the guise of denazification, they rounded up anyone deemed an obstacle to Communist control. Concentration camps such as Buchenwald were reopened to hold these enemies of the people.

But in 1947, the Bülowplatz murders of 1931 came back to haunt Mielke. The Allied Control Commission issued a warrant for his arrest and handed the evidence file to the Soviets, who handed it to Mielke. Instead of destroying it, he locked it away.

By 1950, Germany was divided into East and West, with the Communists firmly in control of what they called the German Democratic Republic, or DDR, in the East. Kommissariat 5 became the Ministry for State Security, nicknamed Stasi. Zaisser remained chief and Mielke number two. That year, Mielke oversaw a purge of the Stasi's senior leadership.

In March 1953, Stalin died, unleashing confusion in Russia and unrest in its satellites. In June, anti-Soviet protests erupted in East Germany. Rioters stormed jails and freed thousands of prisoners. Hundreds of thousands of East Germans fled to the West. Mielke saved his job by turning on Zaisser. Wollweber took over as Stasi chief with Mielke still deputy.

But in 1957, Wollweber was sacked, and Mielke became Stasi chief, a job he would hold for more than 30 years. Under him, the Stasi became a force of nearly 90,000 full-time agents abetted by at least twice as many informants among the population.

The end of Mielke's reign came in November 1989. Defiant protestors breached the Berlin Wall. He ordered his loyal Stasi to barricade themselves and fight to the last man. But almost no one wanted to die for the DDR.

Mielke kept a few secrets of his own. The file on the 1931 Bülowplatz murders was discovered in his personal safe. He went on trial in 1992 and was convicted. But further prosecution was halted when he began to show signs of dementia. Released on humanitarian grounds, he lived in obscurity before dying in May 2000.

IN PRISON, MIELKE KEPT A RED PHONE
IN HIS CELL ON WHICH HE BARKED
ORDERS AT NONEXISTENT STASI AGENTS.

J. EDGAR HOOVER

John Edgar Hoover was born on New Year's Day 1895 into a middle-class Washington DC family. His father was a printer for the US government, but he slowly lost his mind and died in an asylum, leaving the family in dire financial straits. In 1913, young Hoover took a job at the Library of Congress, which he juggled while attending law school.

In 1917, an uncle got Hoover a job in the War Emergency Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ). The US had entered World War I, and the DOJ found itself tasked with keeping track of thousands of enemy aliens. In 1918, Hoover became head of the new Alien Enemy Bureau and quickly drew up a list of 1400 “dangerous” Germans.

A year later, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer named Hoover chief of the new Radical Division, later renamed the General Intelligence Division. Its purpose was to go after radicals and revolutionaries, especially the foreign-born, with the aim of deporting them. Hoover soon came up with a card file of 450,000 names, with additional files on 60,000.

In 1919, he arranged the so-called Palmer Raids that rounded up 10,000 alleged radicals. Most were US citizens. In 1924, Hoover became director of the entire Bureau of Investigation. It had about 650 employees, including 441 special agents. Agents weren't armed and couldn't make arrests, and they varied widely in experience. Hoover instituted strict guidelines for hiring, training, dress, and behavior.

Hoover's catchphrase became *scientific crime detection*, and in 1926, he established a national fingerprint bureau—and always, more and more files. At the time, Prohibition was the biggest law enforcement issue in the country, but Hoover ignored it because he feared his agents would fall prey to corruption. He also dismissed the notion of organized crime and the existence of the Mafia. The real threats were radicals and subversives, especially the American Communist Party.

Hoover took more interest in crime during the 1930s, when bandits such as John Dillinger went on highly publicized robbery sprees. Hoover hoped to exploit the publicity to his benefit. Bureau agents helped end the careers of such “public enemies” as Dillinger, Bonnie and Clyde, and the Barker-Karpis gang.

After a shootout killed 43-year-old Kate “Ma” Barker, who had cared for her gangster sons but took no part in their crimes, the bureau was accused of helping to gun down an innocent woman. In response, Hoover painted Ma Barker as “the most vicious ... criminal brain of the last decade.” Congress responded by making the bureau a full federal agency with police powers, including guns.

Hoover earned the support of presidents by feeding them dirt on political opponents and keeping their secrets secret. In the 1950s, he quietly aided Senator Joseph McCarthy’s campaign to expose Communists in the government and leaked information to the House Un-American Activities Committee. FBI leaks were also instrumental in the blacklisting of more than 300 actual or suspected Reds in the entertainment industry.

Hoover and Senator Lyndon Johnson shared disappointment in John F. Kennedy’s election in 1960. Johnson felt robbed of the presidency, and Hoover thought both Kennedy brothers were security risks. In July 1963, Hoover launched an investigation of one of JFK’s alleged mistresses, Ellen Rometsch, whom he suspected of being an East German agent. Despite no solid proof of spying or of even having an affair with Kennedy, Rometsch was deported.

Hoover’s most glaring affront to American liberties and legalities was a covert operation launched in 1956 dubbed COINTELPRO. It was his response to the civil rights and later antiwar movements, both of which he considered Communist inspired. COINTELPRO was to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” such movements and their leaders.

Illegal wiretaps, break-ins, and other “dirty tricks” were part of the playbook. Hoover was reluctant to publicly involve the FBI in civil rights cases and held Martin Luther King Jr. in special abhorrence. Bureau agents bugged King’s phone and did their best to smear his reputation.

Hoover died of a heart attack on May 2, 1972, at home. As a secret police chief, he reigned for half a century and made himself one of the most publicly admired men in the country and privately one of the most feared and hated.

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20

CRIME NEVER PAYS? CRIMINAL MASTERMINDS

While criminality pretty much goes hand in hand with villainy, the three arch-criminals discussed in this lecture are worthy of special consideration mostly due to their absolute dedication to a life of crime. None were forced into vice by need or circumstance. Like most villains, they chose to be the bad guy. And they reveled in it. Each went on to become a legend, and each was dubbed a king: 20th-century sex trafficker Joseph Silver, known as the “King of the Pimps”; criminal genius Arnold Rothstein, dubbed “King of the Roaring Twenties”; and the “King of Cocaine,” drug lord Pablo Escobar.

JOSEPH SILVER

Joseph Silver is the best-known alias of a man also known as José Silva, Charles Greenbaum, Charlie Silver, James Smith, and many others. He played the roles of petty thief, pickpocket, arsonist, stickup man, con artist, and dope peddler, but he became most notorious as a master pimp and brutal misogynist who terrorized women on three continents in what was then called white slavery. The key to his success, arguably, was his simultaneous performance as a police agent and informer.

What is known about Silver's career of vice and violence is almost entirely due to the historical detective work of South African historian Charles van Onselen. He discovered Silver while researching the sex trade in colonial South Africa and realized he was looking at an exceptionally brutal criminal.

Silver was born Joseph Lis in 1868, in provincial, Russian-ruled Poland. He was the eldest of nine children born to a ne'er-do-well Jewish businessman and his allegedly promiscuous wife. When his father's business deals left the family bankrupt, the teenage Silver decided to look for opportunity elsewhere.

In 1885, Silver joined tens of thousands of other, mostly poor, Jewish immigrants in London's East End. He trained to be a barber, but having no interest in honest labor, he turned to prizefighting, which developed into strong-arm robbery, pickpocketing, and burglary. It also led him into the world of prostitution, where a young man willing to use his fists, against men or women, was always useful. As a thief, Silver was a bust, spending a couple of monthslong stretches in prison.

Van Onselen argues that Silver was Jack the Ripper, responsible for the brutal 1888 Whitechapel murders of prostitutes in London's East End.

Van Onselen's case is admittedly circumstantial, but as a violent, compulsive misogynist, Silver was probably psychopathic enough to fit the bill.

In the summer of 1889, Silver hopped a ship to New York City. He presented himself to US immigration officials as a humble tailor. Gravitating to the Lower East Side, he plunged into the underworld of gin joints, gambling dens, dance halls, and brothels. That fall, a bungled burglary earned him 2 1/2 years in the notorious Sing Sing prison. Released in October 1891, he applied for US citizenship and assumed the name Joseph Silver.

He later moved to Pittsburgh and became an agent for the Society for the Prevention of Crime. Silver got an inside look at the operations of corrupt policemen and even more corrupt politicians. He also picked up syphilis, which caused acne-like lesions that pockmarked his face.

By 1895, Silver returned to London with a new plan. As Van Onselen notes, within a few years, he “went from being an unsuccessful burglar and petty thief ... to pimp and extremely well-heeled white-slave trafficker.” His victims were mostly young, poor immigrant girls looking for extra money. After seducing (or raping) them, he kept them in line through psychological domination and physical intimidation.

In 1898, Silver headed to Johannesburg, South Africa, where a gold rush and a brewing war offered new customers for the fleshly delights he and his cronies provided. He worked out a *modus vivendi* with local officials by acting as an informant. From Johannesburg, he moved around before settling in nearby German South West Africa in 1905. He was soon arrested, handed a 3-year sentence for “living off the proceeds of prostitution,” and shipped off to Germany to serve his time.

Once out of jail, Silver bounced around Europe and spent time in Argentina. By 1914, he was back in London and New York, until World War I drew him back to his homeland of Poland. Russian Poland was under German and Austro-Hungarian occupation, and in 1917, Silver and a small gang he'd assembled were skulking around the rear areas smuggling contraband and stealing whatever they could.

The Austrians also suspected him of spying, and in late 1917, a military tribunal convicted him of theft and espionage and sentenced him to death. His sentence was carried out in October 1918, but the paper trail is vague, and

Silver may have managed to slip away once again. Either way, he could never escape the syphilis, which was eating away his body and brain, the relentless revenge of some nameless prostitute.

ARNOLD ROTHSTEIN

Arnold Rothstein was born on January 17, 1882. Growing up, he had everything he wanted except, according to him, love, which went to his older brother, who died of pneumonia when Rothstein was a teenager. Disinterested in school, Rothstein did display one remarkable talent: the ability to make lightning-fast calculations in his head. In his criminal career, he became known as “the Brain.”

Dropping out of school at 16, he briefly plied the trade of traveling salesman. If nothing else, it reinforced the value of always being well-spoken, well-dressed, and well-mannered in matters of business. Rothstein took an early interest in gambling. He immersed himself deeper and deeper into Manhattan’s demimonde of pool halls, bookie joints, and gambling dens. He amassed cash and turned to loan sharking, financing the gambling addiction of others at 25% interest.

Soon, he was paying a lot of people, including cops, judges, and politicians. He became pals with a corrupt Tammany Hall politico, Timothy “Big Tim” Sullivan, who taught him the value of information and helped him establish his own casino in 1910. By age 30, Rothstein was a millionaire.

Rothstein viewed violence as foolish and crime as a realm of ever-expanding business opportunities in which everyone could profit. He gained a reputation for being evenhanded in his decision-making, basing everything on the logic of the odds. He became an arbiter and peacemaker in gangland disputes and was the point where the worlds of crime, business, and politics converged.

Rothstein was also known as the Fixer and was allegedly responsible for the infamous 1919 World Series scandal. The Chicago White Sox were favored to beat the Cincinnati Reds. A group of men bribed eight key members of the White Sox, including superstar slugger Shoeless Joe Jackson, to throw the series. On making the pitch to the players, the men openly used Rothstein's name. He undoubtedly was the brains of the operation, but there was no proof. He denied even betting on the series. That was definitely a lie.

According to Rothstein biographer Leo Katcher, Rothstein made at least \$350,000 betting against the Sox—some \$6 million today. In the end, no one was found guilty of anything because the grand jury testimony, including the players' confessions, mysteriously vanished. But the guilty players were banned from professional baseball for life.

To Rothstein, Prohibition was God's gift to crime. He bought quality whiskey direct from Scottish distilleries and shipped it to Canada on his own fleet of ships. He then smuggled it into the US and sold it in his own chain of speakeasies. By 1925, Rothstein was the most powerful crime boss in New York City.

Knowing that Prohibition was bound to end, he got into the profitable narcotics business. But getting raw materials to labs and then moving the drugs into the States required partners, logistics, and money—a cartel. In July 1926, two of Rothstein's underlings were busted in New York by federal narcotics agents while receiving 1250 pounds of heroin and cocaine. Rothstein paid their bail, and the pair kept their mouths shut.

In January 1927, a major narcotics ring was busted in Berlin. It was led by a gang of so-called White Russians. That ring was linked to the drug shipments seized earlier in New York. The operation was reportedly "far reaching and heavily financed." But in March, German authorities announced that all the key evidence had mysteriously vanished. Sound familiar?

In April 1928, Rothstein met in New York with Belgian venture capitalist Alfred Loewenstein. The pair concluded what's been called the biggest drug deal in history up to that time, with Loewenstein tentatively agreeing to bankroll further expansion of Rothstein's cartel. They agreed to meet

again in November to finalize the deal. However, a couple of months later, Loewenstein mysteriously fell out of his own plane while flying over the English Channel. Subsequent investigation showed it wasn't an accident.

Then, on November 4, 1928, Rothstein was shot and mortally wounded at the Park Central Hotel in what was supposedly a dispute over a card game. He died 2 days later. He was 46. His alleged killer, gambler George "Hump" McManus, was tried but acquitted for lack of evidence.

PABLO ESCOBAR

Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria was born on December 1, 1949, in the Colombian town of Rionegro. His father was a farmer and his mother a teacher. The family moved to the neighboring city of Medellín.

When Escobar was 16, he dropped out of school and plunged into petty crime. Later, he branched into the more lucrative and violent realm of kidnapping. In 1971, Escobar's gang collected \$50,000 ransom for businessman Diego Echavarria, but he died anyway.

The key to Escobar's success was his early realization of the potential of the cocaine trade, fueled by skyrocketing demand in the United States, especially during the crack cocaine epidemic in the 1980s. He started out transporting raw coca from Ecuador to labs in Colombia, but in May 1976, he was busted with a carload full of it by agents of the Colombian government's Administrative Department of Security. But Escobar had learned how to play the corruption game. Money was paid, a judge was removed, evidence disappeared, and the case was dismissed. But Escobar went even further. The following year, his arresting officer was brutally assassinated. Over his roughly 15-year career, Escobar is estimated to have caused the deaths of 4000 people, mostly police, magistrates, and politicians but also plenty of innocent bystanders.

Escobar aimed to control the flow of cocaine from the field to the lab through transport and distribution. Helping him was an inner circle of loyal lieutenants that included the three Ochoa brothers and Carlos Lehder. Through Lehder, Escobar acquired a private island in the Bahamas on which he built an airfield to smuggle coke into the States on a fleet of small planes.

BY THE MID-1980s, ESCOBAR CONTROLLED 80% OF THE COCAINE TRAFFIC, SHIPPING 70 TO 80 TONS PER MONTH AND GROSSING AN ASTONISHING \$420 MILLION PER WEEK.

Escobar lived lavishly. He had a house in Miami, but his pride and joy was Hacienda Nápoles, a sprawling country estate in Colombia. He also used his money for philanthropic projects among Medellín's poor. Drug money paid for houses, schools, hospitals, sports complexes, and even churches. In part, he felt genuine sympathy for the poor, but everything he built was a monument to his insatiable ego. It was also clever PR for his next realm of expansion—politics.

In 1982, Escobar was elected as an alternate congressional representative for Colombia's new Liberal Party. As such, he conveniently received parliamentary immunity from arrest and a diplomatic passport. But outrage over a drug lord in Congress led to his expulsion from the Liberal Party in 1983 and Escobar's resignation the following year. He extracted revenge by subsequently assassinating both Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara and Liberal Party boss Luis Galán.

Escobar's one real fear was extradition to the United States. In November 1985, he financed a daring raid by Marxist M-19 guerrillas on the national judiciary building, resulting in a bloody shootout in which more than half of Colombia's supreme court judges were killed—the same judges who were to rule on extradition. Escobar then offered to pay off Colombia's entire \$10 billion national debt. His offer was rejected.

Four years later, his henchmen allegedly planted a bomb aboard Avianca flight 203, killing all 107 aboard. But Escobar failed in his real aim to assassinate hostile presidential candidate César Gaviria Trujillo, who fortuitously missed the flight. Soon after, a truck bomb hit the headquarters of the Security

Department, killing around 63 and injuring as many as 2000. These outrages were aimed at influencing the upcoming 1990 elections, and they weren't without success.

The new government banned the extradition of Colombian nationals, and Escobar surrendered to authorities. The deal called for him to serve a 5-year sentence in a palatial “prison” that he built for himself, dubbed La Catedral. The deal produced outrage, especially among the families of his victims, and this boiled over when Escobar brazenly abducted, tortured, and killed two disloyal underlings inside La Catedral. Warned of an impending government raid, he escaped in July 1992 and went on the lam.

Escobar had an estimated \$25 billion stashed away (\$70 billion in 2024) and many friends, but he also had many enemies. On December 2, 1993, the day after his 44th birthday, police commandos raided his hideout in a Medellín suburb. A gun battle ensued, and Escobar made a break across the roof. A bullet hit him in the head, killing him. The reign of the King of Cocaine was over—but not his legend. An estimated 20,000 people turned out for his funeral. His Hacienda Nápoles has become a popular theme park.

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21

CLASSICAL CORRUPTION: BAD ROMANS

The Roman Empire has a mixed legacy. It's a model of transnational statehood and political power that many have tried to emulate. But Rome is also synonymous with decadence and depravity. By the time the Western Empire collapsed in 476 CE, Rome had produced 77 emperors, many of whom could qualify as bad. This lecture examines three such emperors: the infamous, fiddle-playing firebug Nero, the genuinely bloodthirsty Commodus, and Julian, the so-called Apostate, who tried to change the course of history.

NERO

When it comes to the “most evil” or “most hated” Roman emperor, no name comes up more often than Nero’s. He was the fifth and last representative of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty, which began auspiciously under Caesar Augustus but quickly degenerated into tyranny. Nero’s bad reputation is attested by three Roman historians, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio. But they basically relied on rumors as opposed to facts.

Nero was born into a dysfunctional, violent family and was manipulated by his ambitious, scheming mother, Julia Agrippina. After Nero’s father died, Agrippina convinced her uncle, Emperor Claudius, to adopt her son. Three years later, in 54 CE, Agrippina made her teenage son emperor by serving Claudius a fatal meal of poisonous mushrooms. She also engineered Nero’s marriage to his stepsister, Octavia.

The early part of Nero’s reign was free of the secret trials and bloodshed that characterized those of his predecessors. He restored some of the Senate’s independence, reduced taxes, and granted slaves the right to protest mistreatment. He banned the death of men or animals in public games and promoted athletic competition and the arts. For a time, he ruled over an empire that was prosperous and at peace.

Agrippina endeavored to control her son against Seneca, who was the commander of the Praetorian Guard and Nero’s tutor. But Nero pushed back. He began a love affair with a Greek girl, a former slave no less. Forced to give her up, Nero initiated a more scandalous affair with a married woman, Poppaea Sabina. Nero decided his mother had to go. He rigged her boat to sink, but Agrippina was a strong swimmer. The assassins were then forced to finish her off with swords.

In 62, he had his wife Octavia killed, freeing him to marry Poppaea. In response, protests erupted in the streets and in the Senate. Feeling disrespected, Nero struck back by reinstating the hated secret trials and putting opponents to death.

Then came the devastating fire of July 64, which raged for 10 days. Three of the city’s 14 districts were completely destroyed, and 7 more severely damaged. Thousands were dead, and tens of thousands were homeless.

Accounts describe Nero directing firefighting and arranging food and shelter for the victims. But rumors arose of mysterious men setting the fires or preventing citizens from extinguishing them.

These stories took on added significance when Nero announced a grand plan to rebuild the city. Some concluded that he had deliberately torched their homes to make way for this decadent extravagance, which included a huge palace and a 120-foot-tall bronze statue of himself. Adding insult to injury, he hiked taxes and devalued the currency to pay for it.

Actually, Nero wasn't in Rome when the blaze erupted. Still, historian Suetonius accepted Nero's blame. Tacitus doubted the arson story but held him responsible for unjustly blaming the Christians. At that time, roughly 30 years after the Crucifixion, the Christian sect was small and alien to the Romans—perfect scapegoats.

Nero had Christians rounded up and publicly slain. Among his victims were perhaps the two most important leaders of the budding faith: Peter, who was crucified upside down, and Paul, who was granted the “easy” death of beheading because he was a Roman citizen.

FOLLOWING HIS RESPONSE TO THE
FIRE IN 64, NERO BECAME THE
CHRISTIANS' ARCHVILLAIN AND
WAS LATER AWARDED THE TITLES OF
ANTICHRIST AND THE BEAST 666.

In 65, Nero's increasingly erratic behavior sparked an abortive coup. The ringleaders were caught and forced to die by suicide. He then further outraged the populace by killing his pregnant wife Poppaea by viciously kicking her in the stomach. That, too, probably wasn't true, but it says much that people were willing to believe it. Nero next shocked people by castrating and marrying a slave boy who resembled Poppaea.

In March 68, Nero's onerous taxes sparked a revolt in the provinces. An ambitious general, Servius Galba, proclaimed himself emperor and marched on Rome. By June, the Praetorian Guard had abandoned Nero, and the Senate proclaimed him a public enemy. Panicking, he fled to the villa of one of his few remaining friends. After failed attempts at suicide, he persuaded a companion to stab him in the throat. He was barely 30.

COMMODUS

In 161 CE, Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus entered the world. He was the son and heir to Marcus Aurelius, last of the so-called Five Good Emperors who reigned over a roughly 80-year period of relative peace, prosperity, and sanity.

Much information about Commodus comes from historian Cassius Dio. Dio was a contemporary who actually knew Commodus, but he also came from the senatorial class, who were the emperor's main enemies. Dio didn't consider Commodus to be "naturally wicked." Rather, he was "guileless,"—that is, stupid—and his "great simplicity ... together with his cowardice made him a slave to his companions." His associates encouraged "cruel habits, which soon became second nature."

While the empire was relatively peaceful, it faced serious economic problems. Under Commodus, the currency was devalued, inflation soared, and taxes increased, especially on the rich. Commodus tried to offset the growing hostility of the wealthy patricians by offering generous cash handouts, called donations, to the plebeian commoners. He even set up a public lottery with lavish prizes. This won him some support but did nothing to address the economy's underlying problems.

Commodus also tried to create a cult of personality, dubbing himself the Roman Hercules. Huge statues of him dressed as the mythical hero were erected throughout the empire. Caught up in his fantasy world, Commodus left the business of governing to favorites and subordinates who were neither honest nor loyal.

Two of these associates were Perinnis, the commander of the Praetorian Guard, and Saoterus, the court chamberlain and former slave. Also plotting behind the scenes was Commodus's ambitious sister, Lucilla. In 182, she conspired with a group of senators to kill Commodus. He survived and ordered Lucilla exiled to the Isle of Capri, where she was later quietly murdered.

Saoterus was also implicated in the plot and put to death. His executioner, Cleander, another freed slave, became the new chamberlain. By feeding Commodus's vanity, and his fears, Cleander became the dispenser of all public offices, making him the second most powerful man in the empire. Feeling unsafe, Commodus moved just outside of Rome, where he was free to indulge himself in chariot racing and general licentiousness.

In 185, Cleander engineered the execution of Perennis and took command of the Praetorian Guard. Two years later, another assassination attempt on Commodus sparked a fresh wave of executions. In 188, Commodus exiled his wife, Bruttia Crispina, to Capri. The charge against her was adultery, but her real "crime" was failing to produce an heir. Soon after, like Lucilla, she was murdered.

Using wooden swords, Commodus fought professional gladiators in the Colosseum for all of Rome to see. His opponents always let him win, and Commodus demanded, on pain of death, that his senatorial enemies attend his performances and cheer his victories.

In 190, a grain shortage hit the city. Blame fell on Cleander, who fled to Commodus's villa pursued by an angry mob. Fearful for his own safety, Commodus dithered until his mistress Marcia intervened and convinced him to kill Cleander and appease the angry throng. Cleander was beheaded, and his son was killed for good measure.

In November 192, Commodus hosted an extravaganza of fake gladiatorial combat and animal butchery in the Colosseum, grandly titled the Plebeian Games, in an attempt to regain the adoration of the masses. It didn't work.

The people had had enough. When Commodus announced that he was going to stage an even bigger spectacle on January 1, Marcia and others close to him tried to talk him out of it.

This angered Commodus, who decided to have them all killed, along with much of the Senate. Marcia, however, discovered the death list with her name at the top. Conferring with the others, they decided to kill the emperor to save themselves. Marcia first tried poisoning him. When he vomited, they persuaded his wrestling partner Narcissus to strangle him in the bath. The mad tyrant was dead.

JULIAN

Born in 331 CE, Flavius Claudius Julianus is known in history as Emperor Julian or, more commonly, Julian the Apostate. His great villainy, at least in the eyes of the Catholic Church, was to attempt to halt the rise of Christianity in the empire.

By the mid-4th century, Christianity had grown rapidly and may have encompassed up to 50% of the empire's populace, including the ruling dynasty. Rome was at a cultural crossroads. One of the hallmarks of Christianity—and a major cause of its earlier persecution—was its adamant refusal to recognize the legitimacy of other faiths. Thus, as Christians gained ascendancy, pagans began to feel the heat. In 341, sacrifices were banned in pagan temples, and the veneration of statues and images, at least the non-Christian ones, was banned later.

Such was the cultural landscape Julian grew up in, but early on, he had more serious matters to worry about. Although a member of the imperial family, Julian's father and many of his male relatives were killed in the fraternal strife among Constantine's successors. Julian and his half-brother Gallus were sent to Anatolia and kept under close watch.

Julian's parents were Christians, and he had been baptized. His religious education was entrusted to an Arian Christian bishop, a sect that believed that while Jesus was divinely inspired, he was still just a man. That differed from

the dominant Nicene sect that held Jesus and God to be basically one and the same. In 351, Julian secretly abandoned the Christian faith and turned to the old gods. Thus, in the eyes of Christians, he became an apostate.

Julian observed many doctrinal divisions and theological disputes within Christianity, a religion that seemed to be inventing itself as it went along. He was also disturbed by the hypocrisy of Christians like his cousin, Emperor Constantius, who killed his own family despite professing Christian virtues of mercy and forgiveness.

Paganism wasn't a religion but a blanket term used to describe the bewildering array of beliefs and cults traditionally practiced in the Roman Empire. Paganism included the Romanized Olympian gods as well as non-Roman deities. People were free to personally worship as many or as few of these gods as they liked, but it was considered good manners and good citizenship not to insult any of them or to refuse participation in civic rituals. Refusal to abide by these rules was what had long given Christians a bad name.

Julian saw the loss of pagan virtues as an important factor in the empire's political and economic decline. By reviving and repackaging the old religions, Julian hoped to halt and reverse that decline. He gradually assembled his own brand of pagan philosophy, a paganism at once opposed to Christianity and strongly influenced by it.

In the meantime, real life intervened. Gallus was executed for his alleged part in a plot against Constantius, who then summoned Julian to the Western capital of Milan. Julian's life was probably spared by the intervention of Constantius's wife, Eusebia. Julian was permitted to go to Athens to study. But he was eventually called back to the imperial court. Constantius had decided to anoint him Caesar—that is, sub-emperor—and give him nominal command over much of the Western empire. The 23-year-old Julian rose to the occasion, both militarily and administratively.

Constantius died in 361, naming Julian his successor. Once on the throne, Julian unveiled his grand plan for the restoration of paganism—or the containment of Christianity. First, he proclaimed the freedom, equality, and toleration of all religions, including the feuding sects of Christianity. He also appealed to the Jews, promising imperial support for the building of a Third Temple in Jerusalem, which would be restored as a Jewish capital. Finally, he sought to organize all the pagan sects, and maybe some Christian ones, under an administrative structure very similar to the Catholic Church.

Julian spent less than 2 years on the throne, dying in battle against the Persians. His great plans died with him. In 391, the Emperor Theodosius banned all pagan practices as “impious superstitions.”

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22

SECRETS AND LIES: FEMME FATALE SPIES

This lecture revisits the femme fatale—a special category of villainy filled with women who use their wiles to lure men to their destruction. The focus here is on three female spies: the archetypal spy-seductress Mata Hari; the cross-dressing vamp of East Asia, Yoshiko Kawashima; and America’s very own Red Spy Queen, Elizabeth Bentley. Besides being female and spies, they also allegedly have in common strong, possibly compulsive, sexuality. Whether they were good spies is another question as is whether their stories are more tragic than villainous.

MATA HARI

Mata Hari was born Margaretha Geertruida Zelle in August 1876 in the Netherlands. Her father lavished her with the luxuries of a bourgeois girlhood, but in 1889, he went bankrupt and abandoned his family for another woman. Two years later, her mother died, and Margaretha was pawned off onto godparents and relatives.

As a teen, she attended a teachers' college but became involved in a torrid affair with the married headmaster. Her life took a different turn when she married Captain Rudolph MacLeod, an officer in the Dutch Colonial Army. Soon after, she was living in Java as a wife and mother of two small children. She took in the local culture, especially the many styles of Javanese dance.

MacLeod proved to be an abusive drunkard and womanizer. Worse still, he had syphilis, which he passed on to his wife and children. Tragedy struck in 1899 when her son died from alleged poisoning by a vengeful nanny. The marriage ended in 1902, and Margaretha returned to Holland with her daughter. But MacLeod refused to pay support, and Margaretha was eventually forced to return her daughter to her father.

Margaretha drifted to Paris, where she became a nude model. In 1905, she became an erotic performance artist and rebranded herself with the name Mata Hari, a Javanese term meaning “Eye of the Day” or “the Sun.” As her fame spread, she shifted from appearing onstage to performing at private parties.

In 1915, nearly 40 years old, Mata shifted her focus to her secondary career as a courtesan—a high-class prostitute. But even a courtesan has a shelf life, and soon she was on the lookout for other business opportunities.



MATA HARI

Her first fatal step into the world of espionage occurred early in World War I. She'd gone to Berlin to perform, and although she was a Dutch national, her residence in France made German authorities suspicious. They raided her hotel room and confiscated her money and jewels. Suddenly destitute, German intelligence offered her 20,000 francs if she'd pass on any interesting tidbits dropped by her boyfriends back in Paris. She accepted.

She was supposedly sent to be trained in spycraft by Germany's mysterious female spymaster, Elsbeth Schragmüller, better known as Fraülein Dokter. Mata was also assigned a case officer back in the Netherlands, Major Arnold Kalle. Her code name was H21.

From Paris, she fed information to Kalle, but she didn't use the invisible ink she'd been given. Instead, she wrote reports on her hotel stationery and dropped them in the mail, where they were intercepted by the French. Perhaps she was distracted by her new obsession, dashing Russian pilot Vadim Maslov. In early 1916, Maslov was shot down and confined to a French military hospital near the front. Or that was the story.

To see Maslov, Mata needed the permission of French military intelligence. This led to an interview with its chief, Georges Ladoux, who knew she was working for the Germans and wanted to use her to feed them misleading information. There was also talk of using her to seduce the German crown prince or act as secret emissary to another German nobleman, Ernest Augustus, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, who was also the kaiser's son-in-law.

In late 1916, while traveling to the Netherlands from Spain, Mata was interrogated by British authorities. She readily confessed her work for Ladoux, but when the Brits queried him, he cryptically replied, "understand nothing" and suggested they send her back to Spain.

Meanwhile, in Holland, case officer Kalle smelled a rat, namely, Mata. He sent a wire to Berlin, knowing the French would read it. In it, he described agent H21's interrogation by the British and his conclusion that she'd been recruited by the French and was no longer reliable. He wanted the French to solve his problem.

They did. Turns out the Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg also held a British title and had ties to the British royal family. Mata was totally blown to the Germans and now useless as a spy. On February 13, 1917, shortly after her return to Paris, she was arrested and charged with eight counts of espionage.

That July, Mata faced a military tribunal. The prosecution accused her of being personally responsible for the deaths of 50,000 Frenchmen. Although no evidence was introduced as proof, she was convicted on all counts and sentenced to death. On October 15, she was led from her cell to the execution ground, where a priest, a doctor, and a 12-man firing squad awaited. Ledoux's secrets were kept safe, and a legend was born.

SOME CLAIM THAT IN THE
MOMENTS BEFORE HER EXECUTION,
MATA HARI BLEW A FINAL KISS
AT THE FIRING SQUAD.

YOSHIKO KAWASHIMA

Aisin Gioro Xianyu was born in 1907, into China's then-reigning Manchu (or Qing) dynasty. She was just one of Prince Su Shanqi's 38 children. When she was 6, Shanqi gave her to a Japanese friend, Naniwa Kawashima, who gave her a new name, Yoshiko.

The reason she came into Naniwa's hands is that in 1911, the Chinese Revolution toppled the Manchu dynasty and created the Republic of China. Shanqi dreamed of restoring the old order and thought Japan could help. Naniwa took great interest in China. He was a spy for a powerful secret society known as the Black Dragons, which existed to advance Japan's "manifest destiny" to rule Asia. Young Kawashima was groomed to be a pawn in this secret war. She was raised and educated as a young Japanese woman while never forgetting her royal Manchu heritage.

By most accounts, Naniwa raped his ward and initiated her into sadomasochistic sex practices. When she was 18, he broke up a romance between Kawashima and an army cadet, which provoked rebellion. She'd always displayed "tomboyish" habits, but in 1925, she publicly "renounced being a woman," shaved her head, and adopted male attire. She later flaunted love affairs with women and once introduced one as her wife. Nevertheless, her life would be dominated by relationships with powerful, ruthless, and manipulative men.

In 1927, her two fathers arranged her marriage to a Mongolian general who was part of the so-called Mongolian-Manchu Independence Movement, a Black Dragon-backed scheme aimed at separating China's northern provinces. Besides wifely duties, Kawashima's job was to spy on her husband. The union didn't last.

By 1930, she'd drifted to Shanghai and into its seamy world of bars, casinos, and opium dens. Coming to her rescue, so to speak, was Colonel Ryūkichi Tanaka, the Shanghai chief of the Japanese army's Special Service Agency. It specialized in espionage, subversion, sabotage, and other tricks.

Kawashima had no trouble passing for Chinese. In early 1932, Tanaka employed her to stir up anti-Japanese demonstrations in Shanghai as a pretext for Japanese military intervention. It worked marvelously. A weeks-long battle ensued between Chinese and Japanese forces, thousands were killed, and Japan tightened its grip on Shanghai.

Tanaka handed off Kawashima to another spymaster, Seishiro Itagaki. In 1932, the Japanese also took over Manchuria, which they transformed into a puppet state dubbed Manchukuo. They wanted to install China's dethroned "Boy Emperor," Puyi, as its ruler, but he played hard to get. Itagaki sent Kawashima to change his mind.

After Puyi discovered a poisonous snake in his bed, and a servant died from eating poisoned food, Kawashima convinced him that he would be safe only in Manchukuo. When his wife refused to join him, Kawashima exploited the empress's addiction to opium.

By 1933, Kawashima had also relocated to Manchukuo, where she resumed her drag king persona complete with cropped hair, monocle, and military uniform. Kenji Doihara, the central figure of the Black Dragon Society, put her in charge of a special network of female spies used to seduce, compromise, and control Chinese politicians, businessmen, and military officers.

Doihara ran his own opium cartel, and Kawashima became involved in that as well, including becoming an addict. But she proved difficult to handle. In 1933, Japanese journalist Muramatsu Shofu published a highly sensationalized biography, *The Beauty in Men's Clothing*, which made headlines around the world.

Kawashima became a celebrity in Japan and a radio personality. She spawned pulp stories, cut an album of Mongolian folksongs, and even inspired a cult among Japanese schoolgirls, who cut their hair and dressed in drag to imitate their idol.

This attention impaired her value as a spy and made her a target for Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalists, who made multiple assassination attempts. In 1940, her last spymaster-lover, General Hayao Tada, considered having her killed but opted to return her to Japan under house arrest. Kawashima was later allowed to return to Japanese-occupied Beijing, where she lived quietly under a new name, Princess Jin Bi-hui, or "Radiant Jade." She was still there when the Chinese Nationalists arrested her in 1945. In the fall of 1947, she went on trial for treason. The prosecution used the semi-fictional 1933 biography as evidence against her. She was executed on March 23, 1948, by a bullet to the back of the neck. She was 41.

ELIZABETH BENTLEY

Elizabeth Terrill Bentley was born in 1908 in New Milford, Connecticut. Her family was rock-ribbed Yankee, Republican, Episcopalian, and middle-class. She attended Vassar, earning a degree in Romance languages. Instead of getting married and starting a family, she enrolled in Columbia University and went on an exchange to Florence, where she promptly slept with her Italian literature professor. While in Italy, she was initially drawn to Mussolini's Fascism and briefly joined a Fascist student group. But her professor-lover, who was a secret anti-Fascist, turned her eyes leftward.

When she returned to the Depression-hit US in 1934, she was shocked by the poverty. A friend invited her to a meeting of the American League Against War and Fascism, a Communist front group. In early 1935, Bentley joined the Communist Party. Her WASP background made her less likely to attract attention, which also made her a prime candidate for what the party called secret work.

Using her knowledge of Italian and supposed Fascist sympathies, she landed a job at the Italian Library of Information in New York. There, she met fellow Communist Juliet Stuart Poyntz, who had recently become an agent of Soviet intelligence. Poyntz was likely Bentley's recruiter into the world of espionage. Bentley's KGB dossier indicated that she began working for Soviet military intelligence, or GRU, as early as 1936.

During the 1930s, Soviet intelligence operated freely in the United States. American counterintelligence was sparse and lax. The GRU and its larger counterpart, the NKVD—precursor to the KGB—recruited agents in academia, professions, industry, and even the US government.

In 1938, Bentley was introduced to a man called Timmy. He was witty, charming, and had a sexy Russian accent.



ELIZABETH BENTLEY

Bentley fell head over heels. Timmy revealed that his real name was Jacob Golos, which wasn't true either. It was actually Yakov Reizen, and he had a wife back in Moscow. Most importantly, Golos was the NKVD's new resident agent in the United States. He was an "illegal" operative, which meant that he wasn't protected by diplomatic immunity.

As cover, he operated a travel agency called World Tourists and the US Service and Shipping Corporation. He enlisted Bentley to help run these companies and to assist him in his real job: managing a spy ring inside the US government. The ring included about 40 assets in the War Production Board, Treasury, and other agencies.

In 1937, Poyntz returned from Moscow, where she'd witnessed Stalin's purges. Outraged, she quit the Communist Party and bad-mouthed the Stalinist regime. She was branded a Trotskyite. One day, Poyntz left her New York apartment and was never seen again. Golos later told Bentley that Poyntz had been liquidated as a traitor.

Meanwhile, Golos himself had come under suspicion as a Trotskyite and dreaded being summoned back to Moscow. According to Bentley, the stress caused him to have a fatal heart attack in November 1943. She was heartbroken.

The NKVD got suspicious when Bentley was spotted flirting with a suspected "[US] government agent" in a Washington DC bar. In the fall of 1945, they decided to kill her. Bentley first approached the FBI in August 1945. She played coy, and they weren't interested. But in September, Soviet code clerk Igor Gouzenko defected in Canada, revealing information that seemed to jive with what Bentley had claimed. In November, the FBI contacted her again. In return for immunity, Bentley blew the covers of around 40 agents. She and fellow Communist defector Whittaker Chambers effectively shut down the NKVD's whole operation in America—for a while, anyway.

BENTLEY'S TESTIMONY HELPED CONVICT
ALGER HISS AND THE ROSENBERGS, THE
LATTER LATER EXECUTED AS SPIES.

In July 1948, she testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee and appeared on *Meet the Press*. She was nicknamed the Red Spy Queen and Nutmeg Mata Hari. In 1951, she published a biography, *Out of Bondage*, which painted her as a kind of Communist June Cleaver. Among her outspoken admirers was Congressman Richard Nixon.

Bentley also attracted criticism from the American left. She spent the last decade of her life addressing anti-Communist groups and teaching in private schools, including a reform school for wayward girls. She died in 1963, age 55, of abdominal cancer.

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23

WILD, WILD VILLAINY: OUTLAWS OF THE OLD WEST

When thinking of villains of the Wild West, the first names to jump to mind might be Billy the Kid and Jesse James. But today—thanks in part to dime novels—both are generally regarded as heroic or at least sympathetic figures, not villains. So, instead of focusing on them, this lecture examines a different set of villains: Joaquín Murrieta, the so-called Robin Hood of El Dorado and the reputed role model for Zorro; Alferd Packer, the “Colorado Cannibal”; and Arthur Rochford Manby, the sinister land baron known as the Monster of Taos.

JOAQUÍN MURRIETA

The big question about Joaquín Murrieta is whether he existed at all. His brief career in banditry occurred in the mid-19th century, but evidence is scant and contradictory. Also complicating things is that Murrieta was among the first of the desperados to get the dime novel treatment in the 1854 book *The Life and Times of Joaquín Murrieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* by John R. Ridge.

According to Ridge, in 1848, Murrieta left his native Sonora, Mexico, along with his brother and young wife Rosa. They did well until the day a bunch of greedy Americanos showed up and unjustly accused the brothers of stealing a mule. The situation ended with his brother hanged, Joaquín horsewhipped, and Rosa brutally raped. She died in his arms, and he swore revenge. One by one, he hunted down her killers, resulting in a short-lived crime spree, a \$5000 price on his head, and a bloody death in 1853 at the hands of lawmen.

Ridge's tale bears only the slightest resemblance to the truth, as best it can be reckoned. The book was widely reprinted and translated into French, German, and Spanish, each adding their own twists to the story.

The Murrieta legend is supposed to have inspired Johnston McCulley's 1919 pulp novel, *The Curse of Capistrano*, which introduced the now-famous figure of Zorro, sword-wielding righter of wrongs and defender of the oppressed. So, who was the real Murrieta?

Mexican documents show that in 1849, one Joaquín Murrieta, about age 20, left Sonora for Alta California to join an older kinsman working in the goldfields. He was accompanied by a band of brothers, cousins, and in-laws, along with a wife named Rosa. In California, there are vague references to him, or some other Joaquín Murrieta, working as a miner, a vaquero, a horse trader, and even a three-card monte dealer.

In 1852, the same name appears on a criminal complaint as a “minor horse thief.” Newspapers wrote of a murderous bandit simply called Joaquín. He would be variously credited with killing 6, 13, or 19 Americans, including 3 lawmen, and 28 Chinese. Overall, he supposedly got away with \$100,000 in gold and at least 100 horses. However, there’s virtually no proof of any of those claims.

California was a free-for-all for banditry. The epidemic of lawlessness prompted Governor John Bigler to propose the creation of a special constabulary called the California Rangers, modeled on the Texas Rangers. The crux came in November 1852, when Major General of the State Militia Joshua H. Bean was shot and killed near Los Angeles.

While Bean’s death was actually the result of his involvement in dirty land deals, at the time, one accused gunman claimed he’d heard someone else say the real killer was Joaquín Murrieta. In May 1853, that slim evidence was enough to impel the state legislature to sanction the California Rangers with the express purpose of bringing to justice the so-called Five Joaquíns gang, one of whose members was said to be Joaquín Murrieta.

But outside the halls of the legislature, no one seemed to have heard of such a gang. Even so, on July 25, 1853, a posse of California Rangers, led by Harry Love, encountered a group of armed Mexicans near Cantua Creek in the San Joaquin Valley.

In the ensuing gun battle, several of the Mexicans were killed, one of whom proved to be Murrieta and another his right-hand-man, “Three Fingered Jack.” As proof, Love cut off Jack’s hand and Murrieta’s head. They were placed in jars of alcohol and carted around the state for the public to gawk at for \$1.

Many who claimed to know the real Murrieta insisted the head wasn’t his. Nevertheless, Love and his men received



JOAQUÍN MURRIETA

the \$5000 bounty, plus a bonus. Another complicating factor is that Murrieta was not the only Mexican bandit running around California. Their exploits inevitably became combined.

So, what was the real story? Murrieta, together with various kinsmen, ran a highly organized horse-smuggling operation. Several groups were involved, mostly operating independently, which probably gave rise to the notion of the Five Joaquíns gang. Robbery was an opportunistic sideline. They rounded up mustangs and combined them with horses they stole or bought from other thieves. The beasts were then herded south via a string of secret ranches all the way to Sonora, where they were sold. One of these ranches was in the Arroyo de Cantúa, very near to where Murrieta allegedly met his end.

ALFERD PACKER

Alferd Packer was born in Pennsylvania in January 1842 but grew up in Indiana. Family ties seem to have been minimal, as was education. He left home as a teenager and became a drifter. Between 1862 and 1863, he enlisted at least twice in the Union Army and was discharged both times because of epileptic seizures.

After the army came another decade of drifting and odd jobs. In the fall of 1873, Packer was hanging around Provo, Utah. He encountered a party of 21 gold seekers on their way to a new bonanza near Breckinridge, Colorado. Packer joined them by putting up \$25 and claiming to be an experienced guide who could get them to the goldfields quickly. That would be a challenge.

Winter was already descending on the rugged Colorado mountains. Packer doubtless knew that every prospector carried a



ALFERD PACKER

grubstake on him that might amount to a few hundred or several thousand dollars. If he was the cunning criminal many assumed, Packer may have intended to get ahold of their money along the way.

The 500-mile journey didn't go well. By January, they were still a long way from Breckenridge, half frozen and eating horse feed to stay alive. Most blamed Packer for leading them astray. The bunch was saved when they stumbled across the camp of Ute Chief Ouray near modern-day Montrose. Ouray generously invited the men to overwinter with his tribe. Half the party stayed, but 11, including Packer, pressed on. Ouray urged them to follow the Gunnison River, but Packer insisted he knew a shorter route through the San Juan Mountains.

Five men made the fatal decision to follow Packer. Among them were Frank Miller, Israel Swann, and Shannon Bell. They departed Ouray's camp on February 9, 1874, planning to reach the Los Pinos Agency some 75 miles away. Around 66 days later, Packer stumbled into Los Pinos begging for food. He was alone.

He explained that he and his companions had become snowbound and ran out of food. He went blind, and the others left him behind. Surviving on roots and the occasional varmint, he regained his sight and finally made it out. But his inquisitors couldn't help but notice that for a man who'd been starving for 2 months, he looked surprisingly well-fed.

Suspicion increased when members of the Gunnison and Ouray camp parties arrived. They pointed out that he had numerous items belonging to his missing companions, including wallets, and was spending hundreds of dollars in the nearby town of Saguache. Pressed, Packer changed his story.

After getting stuck in the mountains and running out of food, the other four men killed Swann, split up his money, and began to eat him. Packer joined in. The meat ran out, and the next to go was Miller. So it went until only Packer remained, having shot Bell in self-defense.

The agency commander, General Charles Adams, demanded that Packer lead a posse to recover the remains. He agreed but again lost his way. He tried to kill one of his guards and run. Adams locked Packer into the Saguache jail pending further investigation.

That August, the bodies were finally discovered by hunters. All five lay close together and all showed signs of violent death and cannibalism. It was also observed that plenty of meat remained. The theory was that Packer had slain them all, then got snowed in and survived by feasting on the best bits of each.

Meanwhile, Alferd escaped from jail and disappeared for 9 years. In early 1883, he was discovered in Cheyenne, Wyoming, living under the name of John Schwarze. Hauled back to Colorado, Packer went on trial for five counts of murder. He was convicted and sentenced to hang.

But he appealed, and the Colorado Supreme Court found that in the time between the killings and Packer's sentencing, Colorado had gone from a territory to a state. The state couldn't sentence a man to death for a crime committed before it existed. And they couldn't try him for cannibalism because it wasn't illegal. Instead, they tried and sentenced him for five counts of voluntary manslaughter. In June 1886, he received 40 years—the longest sentence handed out in the United States up to that time.

In 1901, Packer was pardoned by a reluctant governor after a newspaper reporter presented the convict as a valiant war veteran and a victim of circumstance and prejudice. He died in Littleton in 1907, age 65. Neighbors remembered him as kind and generous, if a bit odd, and a devout vegetarian.

IN 1968, STUDENTS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER
NAMED THEIR NEW CAFETERIA
AFTER PACKER. ITS MOTTO WAS
“HAVE A FRIEND FOR LUNCH!”

ARTHUR MANBY

Although Arthur Rochford Manby's career of villainy spanned the tail end of the Wild West, he checks the boxes of gunman, robber, gang leader, land grabber, conman, and much more. He was born in Morecambe, Lancashire, in 1859. His family was well-off but not rich, and Manby was obliged to make his own way in the world.

He supposedly suffered a blow to the head as an adolescent and was never the same. In place of a happy, sociable lad, there emerged a brooding lout with a hair-trigger temper. Still, he could be polite and charming whenever it suited his interest.

With brothers Alfred and Jocelyn, 24-year-old Manby arrived in New Mexico territory in 1883. They settled on a ranch near Raton, which sat on the huge Maxwell Land Grant, recently acquired by a group of British investors who operated as the Maxwell Land Grant and Railroad Company.

From the investors' standpoint, the Maxwell land was overrun with squatters. So, the company bankrolled a band of gun thugs dubbed Masterson's Militia to chase them off. The Manby boys were part of it. One of the company's main opponents, Dan Griffin, was their next-door neighbor. Griffin was soon dead, gunned down by Arthur. He claimed self-defense, and with good lawyers and a little bribery, he went free.

In 1891, Arthur headed south to Taos. Enchanted by what he saw—rich soil, abundant water, and gold in the hills—visions of empire swam in his head. He discovered that the area was part of yet another land grant, the Antonio Martinez, but few of the mostly Hispanic families who lived there had legal paperwork to support their claim.

Using money, intimidation, and, when necessary, murder, Manby set out to possess the land. And in 1913, he finally succeeded. A court awarded him the deed to the entire Martinez Grant. But just 3 years later, in June 1916, another court ordered most of the land auctioned off to settle Manby's massive debts. He was determined to get it back.

Manby turned to organized crime, forging a dark alliance with two unsavory locals, Columbus Ferguson and Bill Wilkerson. They were high-graders who stole nuggets and ore from productive mines and “salted” them in played-out diggings owned by Manby. He then lured suckers into investing in these useless holes. At one point, the men had a fourth partner named Stone. He got cold feet and was later discovered decapitated—a tactic that became Manby’s signature move.

Ferguson’s daughter, Terecita, would be Manby’s most important accomplice. Thirty years Manby’s junior, she became his mistress, confidante, coconspirator, and presumed heir. Terecita told fortunes and knew her way around potions and poison.

Manby’s magnum opus of villainy was the US Secret and Civil Service Society, Self-Supporting Branch. He claimed that he’d been authorized by Uncle Sam to combat criminal conspiracies and other evildoers that the government couldn’t tackle openly. Manby was assisted by treasurer Terecita and chief gunman Carmen Duran. Well-to-do members of the community received a letter “inviting” them to join. Refusal wasn’t an option. Once sworn in, members learned that “self-supporting” meant they had to cough up money on Manby’s demand or hand over deeds to their property.

He promised them they’d be reimbursed by the government in million-dollar gold certificates, fanciful notes he had printed up and flashed around. One resident, Cecil Ross, joined the society to get to the bottom of it. Ross recalled Manby acting out the shooting, stomping, and beheading of anyone who betrayed their oath. Ross concluded that Manby’s vigilantes were a front for extortion, land fraud, rum-running, cattle rustling, and murder for hire.

Manby ended up decapitated inside his own house. He was likely undone by Terecita, who was having an affair with Duran. Manby promised her that she’d inherit his fortune, which he claimed was an astounding \$827 million, plus property he owned in other states.

In fact, he was nearly broke, having sold or mortgaged almost everything in a futile effort to win back the Martinez Grant. However, some believed that the body and severed head found in the house weren’t Manby’s and that he’d pulled the old switcheroo and vanished, maybe along with his fantastic fortune.

TODAY, MANBY'S ADOBE
FORTRESS IS PART OF THE TAOS
CENTER FOR THE ARTS.

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24

IMPERIALISM'S DARK SIDE

History has no shortage of genuine and would-be empire builders: Attila the Hun, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Elizabeth I, and John D. Rockefeller, to name a few. In the postcolonial age, just about anyone or anything labeled “imperialist” is seen as villainous. This lecture considers three imperial villains who arguably take the cake in sheer single-minded ruthlessness. Each has blood on their hands and truly gives imperialism a bad name. They are Britain’s Cecil Rhodes, Belgium’s King Leopold II, and Japan’s late Emperor Hirohito. As with almost all villains, they were regarded by some as heroic, even godlike, and in some corners, still are. Whatever their real or alleged misdeeds, their names still adorn statues, memorials, and even coveted scholarships.

CECIL RHODES

Cecil John Rhodes was born in 1853 in the English town of Bishop's Stortford, the fifth of nine sons of an Anglican priest. A sickly child, Rhodes seemed unlikely to live long, which imbued him with a burning desire to achieve great things quickly—and by any means possible.

His lifetime coincided with the reign of Queen Victoria, an era often regarded as the golden age of British imperial fortunes. The empire controlled a quarter of the globe. From an early age, Rhodes believed he'd been “chosen” to make the British Empire even bigger, richer, and more powerful than it already was.

As an adolescent, he was sent to South Africa to join an elder brother. By age 18, Rhodes was seeking his fortune in the Kimberley diamond mines of the Cape Colony. He proved a canny and iron-willed businessman. Over the next 17 years, he bought up every mine he could. In 1888, he incorporated the lot as the De Beers Consolidated Mines, Ltd., which controlled around 90% of the world's diamond production. He convinced or strongarmed other producers into fixing prices high.

Rhodes joined forces with Alfred Beit, the German-Jewish agent of a rival diamond company. Beit put him in contact with financial backers, including the fabled Rothschilds. By the late 1880s, fueled with Rothschild money, Rhodes's dreams of empire went into high gear.

In 1890, Rhodes became prime minister of the Cape Colony. He began systematically marginalizing the Native African population. In 1892, he tripled the property requirement for voting, thus eliminating almost all Native African voters along with the white working class. He then pushed through a law limiting the amount of land Africans could own and drew up plans to confine them to just 10% of the Cape Colony's territory.

RHODES LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF
THE PERNICIOUS APARTHEID SYSTEM
THAT PLAGUED SOUTH AFRICA FOR
MOST OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

Rhodes also founded the British South Africa Company, or BSAC, which set its sights on everything south of the Zambezi River, despite the fact that much of this territory was already under the control of Portugal or the Boer republics. They would have to bow to the inexorable logic of British imperialism.

The BSAC succeeded in carving out two large territories, dubbed Northern and Southern Rhodesia—today, the nations of Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively. In Rhodes's vision, this was but the first step in creating a British-controlled railway that would run from Cape Town to Cairo. But his main fixation was the Boer republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State. In the early 1880s, they won a brief war to free themselves from British rule. To Rhodes, their victory was an unspeakable tragedy, especially because gold had been discovered in Transvaal.

Most of the miners working the goldfields were British subjects, whom the white, Dutch-speaking Boers called Uitlanders, or "Outlanders." They were free to work but denied political rights. In 1895, Rhodes used the political situation as an excuse to mount an armed invasion of Transvaal. The venture failed and led to Rhodes's resignation as Cape Colony's governor. But he didn't give up.

In 1899, fresh provocations goaded the Boer republics into declaring war on Britain. This time, the full weight of empire descended upon them. By 1902, they were crushed, occupied, and annexed, just as Rhodes desired. He got what he wanted but didn't live to savor his victory, dying of heart failure that same year.

KING LEOPOLD II

Born in 1835, Leopold II came from an illustrious line. He was the grandson of Louis-Philippe, the last king of France. But the wealth and position he was born into weren't enough for him.

At age 30, he succeeded his father as king of the Belgians. Belgium was a small, recently created country sandwiched between France and the Netherlands. It was far too small for Leopold's ambitions, so he created

another realm—the Congo Free State in the heart of Africa. With nearly 1 million square miles of jungles, rivers, and mountains, the area was 85 times larger than Belgium. Moreover, the Congo Free State would belong to him alone, a plaything empire to run as he pleased.

Leopold got his inspiration from the expeditions of Anglo-American explorer Henry Morton Stanley. In 1877, Stanley completed a trans-Africa expedition, from east coast to west coast through the heart of the Congo basin. He identified natural resources ripe for exploitation, especially ivory.

Enthused by the idea of slaughtering vast herds of elephants for profit, Leopold hired Stanley to undertake another Congo expedition on behalf of his newly formed International Africa Association. These events were happening in the lead-up to the 1885 Berlin Conference, during which the European powers divided up Africa with the avowed aim of “civilizing” it and, of course, exploiting its riches in the process. Since Belgium was small and officially neutral, the British, French, and Germans were OK with the center of Africa being turned over to Leopold. The Native population would have no rights.

Countless Congolese tribes were surprised to discover that they were suddenly subjects of a king they'd never seen—and never would see. In the almost quarter century Leopold ruled the Congo, he never set foot there. He left the actual governance to a small cadre of administrative personnel and a quasi army dubbed the Force Publique, whose purpose was to pummel any reluctant Congolese into obedience.

The Force Publique and other private militias used kidnapping, mutilation, mass murder, and even cannibalism to break resistance. Taking advantage of intertribal rivalries, they also pitted Africans against Africans. Congo's population, which is estimated to have been around 20 million when Leopold took over, declined significantly during his reign.



KING LEOPOLD II

LEOPOLD II WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF AROUND 10 MILLION PEOPLE. HE IS CREDITED WITH INSPIRING THE PHRASE *CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY*.

At first, the Native Congolese were forced to collect and deliver ivory. Workers were assigned a quota, and failure to meet it resulted in punishment—most often amputation of a hand or foot. But in 1890, Stanley drew Leopold's attention to another resource far more lucrative: rubber.

The actual collection of rubber was assigned to private concerns, such as the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company, which at its peak employed, or exploited, almost 50,000 people. Free State authorities took credit for ending the depredations of Arab slavers in eastern Congo, even as they imposed a new system of slavery over the whole territory.

No one profited more from this systematic brutality than Leopold himself. By 1900, he was estimated to have a personal fortune as high as \$500 million, or roughly \$18 billion today. He spent a small fraction of his wealth on public works in Belgium, which earned him good will at home.

But the horrors in the Congo drew increasing criticism. One of the first to point a finger was Edmund Morel. During the 1890s, he meticulously recorded that as the import of guns and ammunition to the Free State increased, so did the export of rubber. He also collected reports from missionaries on the human suffering that resulted. His work led to the creation of the Congo Reform Association in 1904, one of the first humanitarian nongovernmental organizations. That same year also produced a damning report on the Congo by British diplomat Sir Roger Casement.

In 1908, mounting pressure finally compelled Leopold to relinquish personal control of the Congo and hand its administration to the Belgian government, in whose hands it would remain until independence in 1960. Leopold died in 1909 at the age of 74.

EMPEROR HIROHITO

Japan's late Emperor Hirohito has the distinction of being the only Axis head of state to end World War II still in power and to have continued ruling for another 44 years—all with the explicit blessing of imperial Japan's most powerful enemy, the United States. The standard postwar narrative holds that Hirohito was a naive, mild-mannered figurehead forced to go along with the warmongering Japanese military and their imperialist designs.

Slight, stooping, and bespectacled, Hirohito's been described as “comically awkward,” a reclusive nerd more interested in writing poetry and studying jellyfish than running an empire. Yet he's also been described as “tireless, dedicated, meticulous, clever and patient”—all ideal characteristics for a villain.

But Hirohito's “innocence” was never universally accepted. In 1945, American diplomat Owen Lattimore questioned how the supreme commander of the Japanese armed forces could be neatly separated from what that military did. No one made a more vociferous case for Hirohito's guilt than American journalist and author David Bergamini. His 1971 book, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy*, flatly accused the emperor of being “personally responsible for Japan's aggression in the 1930s and '40s.”

Mainstream reaction mostly condemned Bergamini's accusation, which was based almost entirely on circumstantial evidence. Many noted that young Bergamini and his family had spent World War II in a Japanese internment camp and speculated that the experience had left him with a grudge he'd irrationally focused on Hirohito. So, was Hirohito the central villain of the Asia-Pacific War, which killed 30 million people, including almost 3 million Japanese?

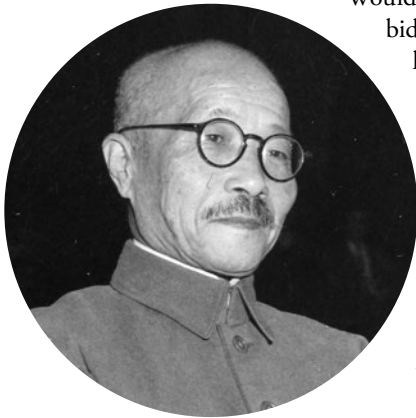
Hirohito was born in 1901, and while he didn't formally ascend the throne until 1926, he began acting as regent for his ailing father, Emperor Taisho, 5 years earlier. From the start, Hirohito surrounded himself with a cabal

of young officers, including Hideki Tōjō, who pledged to follow any order Hirohito gave. They believed Japan faced a dangerous future without firm guidance.

Parliamentary politics seemed rife with corruption and factionalism and was subject to constant shifts in leadership and policies. The Washington Naval Conference, which wrapped up in early 1922, set Japan's naval strength well below that of the United States and Britain. Tōjō and his comrades believed the Western powers were scheming to thwart Japan's imperial destiny.

By the late 1920s, many of these same officers were involved in an unofficial war against China. The Japanese seized Manchuria in 1931 and brazenly attacked the port city of Shanghai the following year. When an antimilitarist coalition won control of parliament in 1930, the prime minister was assassinated, and his successor was intimidated into resigning. Another prime minister was assassinated in 1932.

The election of another “unpatriotic” parliament 4 years later provoked a full-blown military coup attempt that saw the murder or attempted murder of the prime minister, former prime ministers, and other officials. The plotters declared their aim was to restore “direct imperial rule”—Hirohito's rule. He subsequently approved the execution of 19 coup leaders, the imprisonment of 40 people, and the purge or demotion of many more, which is often cited as proof that he did not instigate or condone their actions.



EMPEROR HIROHITO

Would Hirohito punish the men doing his bidding? All had pledged their lives and honor to the cause. Although objectively a failure, the 1936 coup attempt proved a death blow to Japanese democracy.

In 1937, the Japanese military launched a full-scale invasion of China, igniting the Asia-Pacific War. With Hirohito's blessing, Tōjō became war minister in 1940 and prime minister in October 1941. Were these actions those of a hapless puppet

or a ruthless mastermind? Tōjō seems to have been the puppet. He was unceremoniously stripped of power in 1944 yet never renounced his loyalty to his sovereign.

Arguably, the single most important convert to the imperial myth was American General Douglas MacArthur, who became the de facto shogun over defeated Japan. MacArthur was convinced that if the Japanese were deprived of their godlike emperor, they would collectively lose their minds, making the country ungovernable or susceptible to Communism. What irony, then, if Hirohito's throne and spotless reputation were preserved by the very pernicious Westerners he had plotted to destroy.

When Hirohito died in 1989, 250,000 mourners lined his funeral route, and 163 countries sent official representatives. As is the custom, he received the posthumous title of Emperor Showa, or "Bright Peace." A more accurate meaning is "Enlightened Harmony." Or should it really be "Clever Conspirator"?

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