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Originally published in *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* #33 — Summer ’92.

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Eurocentrism than the life, times and legacy of Christopher Columbus. Still, since Eurocentrists the world over have so evidently clasped hands in utilizing him as a (perhaps *the*) preeminent signifier of their collective heritage, and are doing so with such apparent sense of collective jubilation, the point has been rendered effectively moot. Those who seek to devote their scholarship to apprehending the psychopath who sits in our room thus have no alternative but to use him as primary vehicle of articulation. In order to do so, we must approach him through deployment of the analytical tools which allow him to be utilized as a medium of explanation, a lens by which to shed light upon phenomena such as the mass psychologies of racism, a means by which to shear Eurocentrism of its camouflage, exposing its true contours, revealing the enduring coherence of the dynamics which forged its evolution.

Perhaps through such efforts we can begin to genuinely comprehend the seemingly incomprehensible fact that so many groups are presently queuing up to associate themselves with a man from whose very memory wafts the cloying stench of tyranny and genocide. From there, it may be possible to at least crack the real codes of meaning underlying the sentiments of the Nuremberg rallies, those spectacles on the plazas of Rome during which fealty was pledged to Mussolini, and that amazing red-white-and-blue, tie-a-yellow ribbon frenzy gripping the U.S. public much more lately. If we force ourselves to see things more clearly, we can understand. If we can understand, we can apprehend. If we can apprehend, perhaps we can stop the psychopath before he kills again. We are obligated to try, from a sense of sheer self-preservation, if nothing else. Who knows, we may even succeed. But first we must stop lying to ourselves, or allowing others to do the lying for us, about who it is with whom we now share our room.

Contents

pansionist European 'civilization' which has reached out to engulf the planet.

In coming to grips with Lecter, it is of no useful purpose to engage in sympathetic biography, to chronicle the nuances of his childhood and catalogue his many and varied achievements, whether real or imagined. The recounting of such information is at best diversionary, allowing him to remain at large just that much longer. More often, it inadvertently serves to perfect his mask, enabling him not only to maintain his enterprise, but to pursue it with ever more arrogance and efficiency. At worst, the biographer is aware of the intrinsic evil lurking beneath the subject's veneer of civility, but — because of morbid fascination and a desire to participate vicariously — deliberately obfuscates the truth in order that his homicidal activities may continue unchecked. The biographer thus reveals not only a willing complicity in the subject's crimes, but a virulent pathology of his or her own. Such is and has always been the relationship of "responsible scholarship" to expansionist Europe and its derivative societies.

The sole legitimate function of information compiled about Lecter is that which will serve to unmask him and thereby lead to his apprehension. The purpose of apprehension is not to visit retribution upon the psychopath — he is, after all, by definition mentally ill and consequently not in control of his more lethal impulses — but to put an end to his activities. It is even theoretically possible that, once he is disempowered, he can be cured. The point, however, is to understand what he is and what he does well enough to stop him from doing it. This is the role which must be assumed by scholarship *vis-a-vis* Eurosupremacy, if scholarship itself is to have any positive and constructive meaning. Scholarship is *never* 'neutral' or 'objective'; it *always* works either for the psychopath or against him, to mystify sociocultural reality or to decode it, to make corrective action possible or to prevent it.

It may well be that there are better points of departure for intellectual endeavors to capture the real form and meaning of

ing of Cambodia, for the systematic slaughter of the indigenous peoples of California during the 19th century and of the Mayans in Guatemala during the 1980s. And, yes, he was very much present in the corridors of Nazi power, present among the guards and commandants at Sobibor and Treblinka, and within the ranks of the *einsatzgruppen* on the Eastern Front. The Third Reich was, after all, never so much a deviation from as it was a crystallization of the dominant themes — racial supremacism, conquest and genocide — of the European culture Columbus so ably exemplifies. Nazism was never unique: it was instead only one of an endless succession of "New World Orders" set in motion by "The Discovery." It was neither more nor less detestable than the order imposed by Christopher Columbus upon Espanola; 1493 or 1943, they are part of the same irreducible whole.

The Specter of Hannibal Lecter

At this juncture, the entire planet is locked, figuratively, in a room with the socio-cultural equivalent of Hannibal Lecter. An individual of consummate taste and refinement, imbued with indelible grace and charm, he distracts his victims with the brilliance of his intellect, even while honing his blade. He is thus able to dine alone upon their livers, his feast invariably candlelit, accompanied by lofty music and a fine wine. Over and over the ritual is repeated, always hidden, always denied in order that it may be continued. So perfect is Lecter's pathology that, from the depths of his scorn for the inferiors upon which he feeds, he advances himself as their sage and therapist, he who is incomparably endowed with the ability to explain their innermost meanings, he professes to be their savior. His success depends upon being embraced and exalted by those upon whom he preys. Ultimately, so long as Lecter is able to retain his mask of omnipotent gentility, he can never be stopped. The sociocultural equivalent of Hannibal Lecter is the core of an ex-

Was the "Great Discoverer" Italian or Spanish, Nazi or Jew?

It is perhaps fair to say that our story opens at Alfred University, where, during the fall of 1990, I served as distinguished scholar of American Indian Studies for a program funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Insofar as I was something of a curiosity in that primarily Euroamerican staffed and attended institution, situated as it is within an area populated primarily by white folk, it followed naturally that I quickly became a magnet for local journalists seeking to inject a bit of color into their otherwise uniformly blanched columns and commentaries. Given our temporal proximity to the much-heralded quincen-tennial celebration of Christopher Columbus' late 15th century 'discovery' of a "New World" and its inhabitants, and that I am construed as being in some part a direct descendant of those inhabitants, they were wont to query me as to my sentiments concernng the accomplishments of the Admiral of the Ocean Sea.

My response, at least in its short version, was (and remains) that celebration of Columbus and the European conquest of the Western Hemisphere he set off is generally analogous to celebration of the glories of nazism and Heinrich Himmler. Publication of this remark in local newspapers around Rochester, New York, caused me to receive, among other things, a deluge of lengthy and vociferously framed letters of protest, two of which I found worthy of remark.

The first of these was sent by a colleague at the university, an exchange faculty member from Germany, who informed me that while the human costs begat by Columbus' navigational experiment were "tragic and quite regrettable," comparisons between him and the Reichsfiihrer SS were nonetheless unfounded. The distinction between Himmler and Columbus, his argument went, resided not only in differences in "the magnitude of the genocidal events

in which each was involved," but the *ways* in which they were involved. Himmler, he said, was enmeshed as "a high-ranking and responsible official in the liquidation of entire human groups" as "a matter of formal state policy" guided by an explicitly 'racialist' ideology. Furthermore, he said, the enterprise Himmler created as the instrument of his genocidal ambitions incorporated, deliberately and intentionally, considerable economic benefit to the state in which service he acted. None of this pertained to Columbus, the good professor concluded, because the "Great Discover" was ultimately "little more than a gifted seaman," an individual who unwittingly set in motion processes over which he had little or no control, in which he played no direct part, and which might well have been beyond his imagination. My juxtaposition of the two men, he contended, therefore tended to "diminish understanding of the unique degree of evil" which should be associated with Himmler and ultimately precluded "proper historical understandings of the Nazi phenomenon."

The second letter came from a member of the Jewish Defense League in Rochester. His argument ran that, unlike Columbus (whom he described as "little more than a bit player, without genuine authority or even much of a role, in the actual process of European civilization in the New World which his discovery made possible"), Himmler was a "responsible official in a formal state policy of exterminating an entire human group for both racial and economic reasons," and on a scale "unparalleled in all history." My analogy between the two, he said, served to "diminish public respect for the singular nature of the Jewish experience at the hands of the Nazis," as well as popular understanding of "the unique historical significance of the Holocaust." Finally, he added, undoubtedly as a crushing capstone to his position, "It is a measure of your anti-semitism that you compare Himmler to Columbus" because "Columbus was, of course, himself a Jew."

I must confess the last assertion struck me first, and only partly because I'd never before heard claims that Christopher Columbus was Portugal, and ultimately nationalized as a citizen of Spain, Province of Aragon. Perhaps he also spent portions of his childhood being educated in Greek and Latin while residing in Corsica, Majorca, Chios, or all three. Maybe he had grandparents who had immigrated from what is now Poland and France. It *is* possible that each of the parties now vying for a "piece of the action" in this regard are to some extent correct in their claims. And, to the same extent, it is true that he was actually *of* none of them in the sense that they mean it. He stands, by this definition, not as an Italian, Spaniard, Portuguese or Jew, but as the penultimate European of his age, the emblematic personality of all that Europe was, had been, and would become in the course of its subsequent expansion across the face of the earth.

As a symbol, then, Christopher Columbus vastly transcends himself. He stands before the bar of history and humanity, culpable not only for his literal deeds on Espanola, but, in spirit at least, for the carnage and cultural obliteration which attended the conquests of Mexico and Peru during the 1500s. He stands as exemplar of the massacre of Pequots at Mystic in 1637, and of Lord Jeffrey Amherst's calculated distribution of smallpox-laden blankets to the members of Pontiac's confederacy a century and a half later. His spirit informed the policies of John Evans and John Chivington as they set out to exterminate the Cheyennes in Colorado during 1864, and it rode with the 7th U.S. Cavalry to Wounded Knee in December of 1890. It guided Alfredo Stroessner's machete wielding butchers as they strove to eradicate the Ache people of Paraguay during the 1970s, and applauds the policies of Brazil toward the Jivaro, Yanomami and other Amazon Basin peoples at the present moment.

Too, the ghost of Columbus stood with the British in their wars against the Zulus and various Arab nations, with the U.S. against the 'Moros' of the Philippines, the French against the peoples of Algeria and Indochina, the Belgians in the Congo, the Dutch in Indonesia. He was there for the Opium Wars and the 'secret' bomb-

really exists, and has since the Illuminati takeover of the Masonic Orders. One hopes the JDL doesn't rally to defense of these 'interpretations' of history as readily as it jumped aboard the "Columbus as Jew" bandwagon.[33]

Other Contenders

By conservative count, there are presently 253 books and articles devoted specifically to the question of Columbus' origin and national/ethnic identity. Another 300-odd essays or full volumes address the same question to some extent while pursuing other matters.[34] Claims to his character, and some imagined luster therefrom, have been extended not only by the four peoples already discussed, but by Corsica, Greece, Chios, Majorca, Aragon, Galicia, France and Poland.[35] One can only wait with bated breath to see whether or not the English might not weigh in with a quincentennial assertion that he was actually a Briton born and bred, sent to spy on behalf of Their Royal British Majesties. Perhaps the Swedes, Danes and Norwegians will advance the case that he was a descendant of a refugee Viking king, or the Irish that he was a pure Gaelic adherent to the teachings of Saint Brendan. And then there are, of course, the Germans…

In the final analysis, it is patently clear that we really have no idea who Columbus was, where he came from, or where he spent his formative years. It may be thought that he was indeed born in Genoa, perhaps of some "degree of Jewish blood," brought up in

[33] A much sounder handling of the probabilities of early Jewish migration to the Americas may be found in Keyserling, Meyer, *Christopher Columbus and the Participation of the Jews in tlte Spanish and Portuguese Discoveries*, Longmans, Green Publishers, 1893 (reprinted, 1963).

[34] For a complete count, see Conti, Simonetta, *Un secolo di bibliografia colombiana 1880–1985*, Cassa di Risparmio di Genova e Imperia, Genoa, 1986.

[35] These claims are delineated and debunked in Heers, Jacques, *Christophe Columb*, Hachette Publishers, Paris, 1981.

bus was of Jewish ethnicity. "What possible difference could this make?" I asked in my letter of reply. "If Himmler himself were shown to have been of Jewish extraction, would it then suddenly become anti-semitic to condemn him for the genocide he perpetrated against Jews, Gypsies, Slavs and others? Would his historical crimes then suddenly be unmentionable or even 'okay'?" To put it another way, I continued, "Simply because Meyer Lansky, Dutch Schultz, Bugsy Siegel and Lepke were all Jewish "by blood," is it a gesture of anti-semitism to refer to them as gangsters? Is it your contention that an individual's Jewish ethnicity somehow confers exemption from negative classification or criticism of his/her conduct? What *are* you saying?" The question of Columbus' possible Jewishness nonetheless remained intriguing, not because I held it to be especially important in its own right, but because I was (and am still) mystified as to why any ethnic group, especially one which has suffered genocide, might be avid to lay claim either to the man or to his legacy. I promised myself to investigate the matter further.

A Mythic Symbiosis

Meanwhile, I was captivated by certain commonalities of argument inherent to the positions advanced by my correspondents. Both men exhibited a near-total ignorance of the actualities of Columbus' career. Nor did they demonstrate any particular desire to correct the situation. Indeed, in their mutual need to separate their preoccupation from rational scrutiny, they appeared to have conceptually joined hands in a function composed more of faith than fact. The whole notion of the "uniqueness of the Holocaust" serves both psychic and political purposes for Jew and German alike, or so it seems. The two groups are bound to one another in a truly symbiotic relationship foundationed in the mythic exclusivity of their experience: one half of the equation simply

completes the other in a perverse sort of collaboration, with the result that each enjoys a tangible benefit.

For Jews, at least those who have adopted the zionist perspective, a "unique historical suffering" under nazism translates into fulfillment of a biblical prophecy that they are "the chosen," entitled by virtue of the destiny of a special persecution to assume a rarified status among — and to consequently enjoy preferential treatment from — the remainder of humanity. In essence, this translates into a demand that the Jewish segment of the Holocaust's victims must now be allowed to participate equally in the very system which once victimized them, and to receive an equitable share of the spoils accruing therefrom. To this end, zionist scholars such as Louis Irving Horowitz and Elie Weisel have labored long and mightily, defining genocide in terms exclusively related to the forms it assumed under nazism. In their version of 'truth', one must literally see smoke pouring from the chimneys of Auschwitz in order to apprehend that a genocide, per se, is occurring.[1] Conversely, they have coined terms such as 'ethnocide' to encompass the fates inflicted upon other peoples throughout history.[2] Such semantics have served, not as tools of understanding, but as an expedient means of arbitrarily differentiating the experience of their people

[1] See, for example, Horowitz, Irving Louis, Genocide: *State Power and Mass Murder* (Transaction Books, New Brunswick, NJ, 1976) and Weisel, Elie, *Legends of Our Time* (Holt, Rine-hart and Winston Publishers, New York, 1968.) The theme is crystallized in Manvell, Roger, and Hein-rich Fraenkel, *Incomparable Crime; Mass Extermination in the 20th Century: The Legacy of Guilt*, Hine-mann Publishers, London, 1967.

[2] See, as examples, Falk, Richard, "Ethnocide, Genocide, and the Nuremberg Tradition of Moral Responsibility" (in Virginia Held, Sidney Morganbesser and Thomas Nagel [eds.], *Philosophy, Morality, and International Affairs*, Oxford university Press, New York, 1974, pp.123–37), Beardsley, Monroe C, "Reflections on Genocide and Ethnocide" (in Richard Arens [ed.], *Genocide in Paraguay*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1976, pp.85–101), and Jaulin, Robert, *L'Ethnocide a trovers LesAmer-iques* (Gallimard Publishers, Paris, 1972) and *La decivilisation, poli-tique et pratique de I'ethnocide* (Presses Universitaires de France, Brussels, 1974).

Jewish?

The idea that Columbus might have been a Spanish Jew is perhaps best known for having appeared in Simon Weisenthal's *Sails of Hope* in 1973.[29] Therein, it is contended that the future governor of Espanola hid his ethnicity because of the mass expulsion of Jews from Spain ordered by King Ferdinand of Aragon on March 30, 1492 (the decree was executed on August 2 of the same year). Because of this rampant anti-semitism, the Great Navigator's true identity has remained shrouded in mystery, lost to the historical record. Interestingly, given the tenacity with which at least some sectors of the Jewish community have latched on to it, this notion is not at all Jewish in origin. Rather, it was initially developed as a speculation in a 1913 article, "Columbus a Spaniard and a Jew?", published by Henry Vignaud in the *American History Review*.[30] It was then advanced by Salvador de Madariaga in his unsympathetic 1939 biography, *Christopher Columbus*. Madariaga's most persuasive argument, at least to himself, seems to have been that Columbus' "great love of gold" proved his 'Jewishness'.[31] This theme was resuscitated in Brother Nectario Maria's *Juan Colon Was A Spanish Jew* in 1971.[32] Next, we will probably be told that *Tlie Merchant of Venice* was an accurate depiction of medieval Jewish life, after all. And, from there, that the International Jewish Banking Conspiracy

[29] Weisenthal, Simon, *Sails of Hope*, Mac-millan Publishers, New York, 1973.

[30] Vignaud, Henry, "Columbus a Spaniard and a Jew?", *American History Review*, Vol. 18,1913. This initial excursion into the idea was followed in more depth by Francisco Martinez Martinez in his *El descubrimiento de America y las joyas de dona Isabel* (Seville, 1916) and Jacob Wasser-man in *Christoph Columbus* (S. Fisher Publishers, Berlin, 1929).

[31] Madariaga, Salvador de, *Christopher Columbus*, Oxford University Press, London, 1939. His lead was followed by Armando Alvarez Pedroso in an essay, "Cristobal Colon no fue hebro" (*Revista de Historia de America*, 1942) and Antonio Ballesteros y Beretta in *Cristobal Colon y el descubrimiento de America* (Savat Publishers, Barcelona/Buenos Aires, 1945).

[32] Maria, Brother Nectario, *Juan Colon Was A Spanish Jew*, Cedney Publishers, New York, 1971.

documents" allegedly proving conclusively that Columbus was a Spaniard from cradle to grave. In 1928, however, the Spanish Academy determined that these documents had been forged by parties overly eager to establish Spain's exclusive claim to the Columbian legacy. Since then, Spanish chauvinists have had to content themselves with arguments that The Discoverer is theirs by virtue of employment and nationality, if not by birth. An excellent summary of the various Spanish contentions may be found in Enrique de Gandia's *Historia de Cristobal Colon: analisis critico*, first published in 1942.[27]

Portuguese?

Portuguese participation in the fray has been less pronounced, but follows basically the same course — sans forged documents — as that of the Spanish. Columbus, the argument goes, was plainly conversant in the language and his wife, Felipa Moniz Perestrello, is known to have been Portuguese. Further, the first point at which his whereabouts can be accurately determined, was in service to Portugal, plying that country's slave trade along Africa's west coast for a period of four years. Reputedly, he was also co-proprietor of a book and map shop in Lisbon and/or Madiera for a time, and once sailed to Iceland on a voyage commissioned by the Portuguese Crown. Portugal's desire to extend a serious claim to Spain's Admiral of the Ocean Sea seems to be gathering at least some momentum, as is witnessed in Manuel Luciano de Silva's 1989 book, *Columbus Was 100% Portuguese.*[28]

[27] Gandia, Enrique de, *Historia de Cristobal Col6n: analisis critico*, Buenos Aires, 1942.

[28] Manuel Luciano de Silva, *Columbus Was 100% Portuguese*, Bristol, RI, (self published) 1989.

— both qualitatively and quantitatively — from that of any other. To approach things in any other fashion would, it must be admitted, tend to undercut ideas like the "moral right" of the Israeli settler state to impose itself directly atop the Palestinian Arab homeland.

For Germans to embrace a corresponding "unique historical guilt" because of what was done to the Jews during the 1940s, is to permanently absolve themselves of guilt concerning what they may be doing *now*. No matter how ugly things may become in contemporary German society, or so the reasoning goes, it can *always* (and is) argued that there has been a marked improvement over the "singular evil which was Nazism." Anything other than outright nazification is, by definition, 'different', 'better' and therefore 'acceptable' ("Bad as they are, things could always be worse."). Business as usual — which is to say assertions of racial supremacy, domination and exploitation of 'inferior' groups, and most of the rest of the nazi agenda — is thereby freed to continue in a manner essentially unhampered by serious stirring of guilt among the German public *so long as it does not adopt the literal trappings of nazism*. Participating for profit and with gusto in the deliberate starvation of much of the Third World is no particular problem if one is careful not to goose step while one does it.

By extension, insofar as Germany is often seen (and usually sees itself) as exemplifying the crowning achievements of "Western Civilization," the same principle covers all European and Euro-derived societies. No matter what they do, it is never 'really' what it seems unless it was done in precisely the same fashion the nazis did it. Consequently, the nazi master plan of displacing or reducing by extermination the population of the western USSR and replacing it with settlers of "biologically superior German breeding stock" is roundly (and rightly) condemned as ghastly and inhuman. Meanwhile, people holding this view of nazi ambitions tend overwhelmingly to see consolidation and maintenance of Euro-dominated settler states in places like Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, the United States and Canada as

"basically okay," or even as 'progress'. The 'distinction' allowing this psychological phenomenon is that each of these states went about the j intentional displacement and extermination of native populations, and their replacement, in a manner slightly different ' in its particulars from that employed by nazis attempting to accomplish exactly the same thing. Such technical differentiation is then magnified and used as a sort of all purpose veil, behind which almost anything can be hidden, so long as it is not openly adorned with a swastika.

Given the psychological, sociocultural and political imperatives involved, neither correspondent, whether German or Jew, felt constrained to examine the factual basis of my analogy between Himmler and Columbus before denying the plausibility or appropriateness of the comparison. To the contrary, since the paradigm of their mutual understanding em-i bodies the *a priori* presumption that there *must be no such analogy*, factual investigation is precluded from their posturing. It follows : that any dissent on the 'methods' involved in their arriving at their conclusions, never mind introduction of countervailing evidence, must be denied out of hand with accusations of 'overstatement', "shoddy scholarship," 'stridency' and/or 'anti-semitism'. To this litany have lately been added such new variations as "white bashing," "Ethnic McCarthyism," "purveyor of political correctitude" and any other epithet deemed helpful in keeping a "canon of knowledge" fraught with distortion, deception and outright fraud from being 'diluted'.[3]

[3] Assaults upon thinking deviating from Eurocentric mythology have been published with increasing frequency in U.S. mass circulation publications such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News .and World Report*, *Forbes*, *Commentary, Scientific American* and the *Wall Street Journal* throughout 1990–91, A perfect illustration for our purposes is Hart, Jeffrey, "Discovering Columbus," *National Review*, October 15, 1990, pp.56–7.

in.[23] Moreover, while several variations of his name were properly applied to him during his lifetime, none of them was drawn from a dialect which might be considered Italian. He himself, in the only known instance in which he rendered his own full name, utilized the Greek *Xpõual de Colón*.[24] Still, Genoa, Italy, and those of Italian descent elsewhere in the world (Italo-Americans, most loudly of all) have mounted an unceasing clamor during the 20th century, insisting he *must* be theirs. Genoa itself invested considerable resources into 'resolving' the question during the 1920s, ultimately printing a 288 page book assembling an array of depositions and other documents -all of them authenticated — attesting that Columbus was indeed Genoese. Published in 1931, the volume, entitled *Christopher Columbus: Documents and Proofs of His Genoese Origin*, presents what is still the best circumstantial case as to Columbus' ethnic identity.[25]

Spanish?

Counterclaims concerning Columbus' supposed Iberian origin are also long-standing and have at times been pressed rather vociferously. These center primarily in the established facts that he spent the bulk of his adult life in service to Spain, was fluent in both written and spoken Castilian, and that his mistress, Beatriz Enrfquez de Arna, was Spanish.[26] During the 1920s, these elements of the case were bolstered by an assortment of "archival

[23] On Columbus' written expression, see Milani, V.I., "The Written Language of Christopher Columbus," *Forum italicum*, 1973. Also see Jane, Cecil, "The Question of Literacy of Christopher Columbus," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 10, 1930.

[24] On Columbus' signature, see Thatcher, op. cit., p.454.

[25] City of Genoa, *Christopher Columbus: Documents and Proofs of His Genoese Origin, Institute d'Arti Grapche*, Genoa, 1931 (English language edition, 1932).

[26] de la Torre, Jose, *Beatrix Enriquez de Harana, Iberoamericana* Publishers, Madrid, 1933.

The Emblematic European

This leaves open the question as to whom, exactly, the horror which was Columbus rightly 'belongs'. There are, as it turns out, no shortage of contenders for the mantle of the man and his 'accomplishments'. It would be well to examine the nature of at least the major claims in order to appreciate the extent of the mad scramble which has been undertaken by various peoples to associate themselves with what was delineated in the preceding section. One cannot avoid the suspicion that the spectacle bespeaks much of the Eurocentric character.

Was Columbus Italian?

The popular wisdom has always maintained the Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, a city state which is incorporated into what is now called Italy. Were this simply an historical truth, it might be accepted as just one more uncomfortable fact of life for the Italian people, who are — or should be — still trying to live down what their country did to the Libyans and Ethiopians during the prelude to World War II. There is much evidence, however, militating against Columbus' supposed Genoese origin. For instance, although such records were kept at the time, there is no record of his birth in that locale. Nor is there reference to his having been born or raised there in any of his own written work, including his personal correspondence. For that matter, there is no indication that he either wrote or spoke any dialect which might be associated with Genoa, nor even the Tuscan language which forms the basis for modern Italian. His own writings — not excluding letters penned to Genoese friends and the Banco di San Grigorio, one of his financiers in that city — were uniformly articulated in Castilian, with a bit of Portuguese and Latin mixed

Columbus as Proto-Nazi

It is time to delve into the substance of my remark that Columbus and Himmler, nazi *lebensraumpolitik* and the "settlement of the New World" bear more than casual resemblance to one another. It is not, as my two correspondents wished to believe, because of his 'discovery'. This does not mean that if this were 'all' he had done he would somehow be innocent of what resulted from his find, no more than the scientist who makes a career of accepting military funding to develop weapons in any way 'blameless' when they are subsequently used against human targets. Columbus did not sally forth upon the Atlantic for reasons of "neutral science" or altruism. He went, as his own diaries, reports, and letters make clear, fully expecting to encounter wealth belonging to others. It was his stated purpose to seize this wealth, by whatever means necessary and available, in order to enrich both his sponsors and himself.[4] Plainly, he prefigured, both in design and by intent, what came next. To this extent, he not only symbolizes the process of conquest and genocide which eventually consumed the indigenous peoples of Ameri-ca, but bears the personal responsibility of having participated in it. Still, if this were all there was to it, I might be inclined to dismiss him as a mere thug rather than branding him a counterpart to Himmler.

The 1492 "voyage of discovery" is, however, hardly all that is at issue. In 1493 Columbus returned with an invasion force of seventeen ships, appointed at his own request by the Spanish Crown to install himself as "viceroy and governor of [the Caribbean islands) and the mainland" of America, a position he held until 1500.[5] Setting up shop on the large island he called Espanola (today Haiti and

[4] See Morison, Samuel Eliot (ed. and trans.), *Journals and Other Documents on tire Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, Heritage Publishers, New York, 1963.

[5] The letter of appointment to these positions, signed by Ferdinand and Isabella, and dated May 28,1493, is quoted in full in Keen, Benjamin (trans.), *The*

the Dominican Republic), he promptly instituted policies of slavery (*encomiendo*) and systematic extermination against the native Taino population.[6] Columbus' programs reduced Taino numbers from as many as 8 million at the outset of his regime to about 3 million in 1496.[7] Perhaps 100,00 were left by the time of the governor's departure. His policies, however, remained, with the result that by 1514 the Spanish census of the island showed barely 22,000 Indians remaining alive. In 1542, only two hundred were recorded.[8] Thereafter, they were considered extinct, as were Indians throughout the Caribbean Basin, an aggregate population which totaled more than 15 million at the point of first contact with the Admiral of the Ocean Sea, as Columbus was known.[9]

Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by His Son Ferdinand, Rutgers University Press, 1959, pp.105–6.

[6] The best sources on Columbus' policies are Floyd, Troy, The Columbus Dynasty in the Caribbean, 1492–1526 (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1973) and Schwartz, Stuart B., The Iberian Mediterranean and Atlantic Traditions in the Formation of Columbus as a Colonizer (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986).

[7] Regarding the 8 million figure, see Cook, Sherburn F., and Woodrow Borah, *Essays in Population History*, Vol. I, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971, esp. Chap. VI. The 3 million figure pertaining to the year 1496 derives from a survey conducted by Bartolome de Las Casas in that year, covered in Thatcher, J.B., *Christopher Columbus*, Vol. 2, Putnam's Sons Publishers, New York, 1903–1904, p.348ff.

[8] For summaries of the Spanish census records, see Hanke, Lewis, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1947, p.200ff. Also see Madariaga, Salvador de, *The Rise of the Spanish American Empire*, Hollis and Carter Publishers, London, 1947.

[9] For aggregate estimates of the precontact indigenous population of the Caribbean Basin, see Denevan, William (ed.), *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1976), Dobyns, Henry, *Their Numbers Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1983) and Thornton, Russell, *American. Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1987). For additional information, see Dobyns' bibliographic *Native American Historical Demography* (University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, 1976).

bore in Sepulveda's estimation a holy obligation to enslave and destroy them wherever they might be encountered.[19] The eugenics theories of nazi 'philosopher' Alfred Rosenberg, to which Heinrich Himmler more-or-less subscribed, elaborated the mission of the SS in very much the same terms.[20] It was upon such profoundly racist ideas that Christopher Columbus grounded his policies as initial governor of the new Spanish empire in America.[21]

In the end, all practical distinctions between Columbus and Himmler — at least those not accounted for by differences in available technology and extent of socio-military organization — evaporate upon close inspection. They are cut of the same cloth, fulfilling the same function and for exactly the same reasons, each in his own time and place. If there is one differentiation which may be valid, it is that while the specific enterprise Himmler represented ultimately failed and is now universally condemned, that represented by Columbus did not and is not. Instead, as Sale has observed, the model for colonialism and concomitant genocide Columbus pioneered during his reign as governor of Espanola was to prove his "most enduring legacy," carried as it was "by the conquistadors on their invasions in Mexico, Peru, and La Florida."[22] The Columbian process is ongoing, as is witnessed by the fact that, today, his legacy is celebrated far and wide.

[19] See Hanke, Lewis, *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World*, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1959. Also see Williams, Rob, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought*, Oxford University Press, 1989.

[20] The most succinctly competent overview of this subject matter is probably Cecil, Robert, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology*, Dodd and Mead Company, New York, 1972.

[21] The polemics of Columbus' strongest supporters among his contemporaries amplify this point. See, for example, Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, Seville, 1535; Salamanca, 1547,1549; Valladoid, 1557; Academia Historica, Madrid, 1851–55, esp. Chaps. 29, 30, 37.

[22] Sale, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

found there, so that a stream of blood was running, as if a great number of cows had perished."[17]

Elsewhere, Las Casas went on to recount how:

> "In this time, the greatest outrages and slaughters of people were perpetrated, whole villages being depopulated…The Indians saw that without any offense on their part they were despoiled of their kingdoms, their lands and liberties and of their lives, their wives, and homes. As they saw themselves each day perishing by the cruel and inhuman treatment of the Spaniards, crushed to earth by the horses, cut in pieces by swords, eaten and torn by dogs, many buried alive and suffering all kinds of exquisite tortures…[many surrendered to their fate, while the survivors] fled to the mountains [to starve]."[18]

The butchery continued until there were no Tainos left to butcher. One might well ask how a group of human beings, even those like the Spaniards of Columbus' day, maddened in a collective lust for wealth and prestige, might come to treat another with such unrestrained ferocity over a sustained period. The answer, or some substantial portion of it, must lie in the fact that the Indians were considered by the Spanish to be *untermenschen*, subhumans. That this was the conventional view is borne out beyond all question in the recorded debates between Las Casas and the nobleman, Francisco de Sepulveda, who argued for the majority of Spaniards that American Indians, like African blacks and other "lower animals," lacked 'souls'. The Spaniards, consequently,

[17] Las Casas, Bartolome de, *Historia de las Indias*, Vol. 3, Augustin Millares Carlo and Lewis Hanke (eds.), Fondo de Cultura Economica, Mexico City, 1951; esp. Chap. 29.

[18] Las Casas, quoted in Thatcher, *op. cit.*, pp.348ff.

This, to be sure, constitutes an attrition of population in *real numbers* every bit as great as the toll of twelve to fifteen million — about half of them Jewish — most commonly attributed to Himmler's slaughter mills. Moreover, the population of indigenous Caribbean population destroyed by the Spanish in a single generation is, no matter how the figures are twisted, far greater than the seventy-five percent of European Jews said to have been exterminated by the nazis.[10] Worst of all, these data apply *only* to the Caribbean basin; the process of genocide in the Americas was only just beginning at the point such statistics became operant, not ending, as they did upon the fall of the Third Reich. All told, it is probable that more than one hundred million native people were 'eliminated' in the course of Europe's ongoing 'civilization' of the Western Hemisphere.[11]

It has long been asserted by "responsible scholars" that this decimation of American Indians which accompanied the European invasion resulted primarily from disease rather than direct killing or conscious policy.[12] There is a certain truth to this, although starvation may have proven just as lethal in the end. It must be born in mind when considering such facts that a considerable portion of those who perished in the nazi death camps died, not as victims of bullets and gas, but from starvation, as well as epidemics of typhus,

[10] These figures are utilized in numerous studies. One of the more immediately accessible is Kuper, Leo, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1981.

[11] See Dobyns, Henry P., "Estimating American Aboriginal Population: An Appraisal of Techniques with a New Hemispheric Estimate," *Current Anthropology*, No. 7, pp.395–416.

[12] An overall pursuit of this theme will be found in Ashburn, P.M., *The Ranks of Death*, Coward Publishers, New York, 1947. Also see Duffy, John, *Epidemics in Colonial America*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1953. Broader and more sophisticated articulations of the same idea are embodied in Crosby, Alfred W. Jr., *The Columbia Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1972) and *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900–1900* (Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, Australia, 1986).

dysentery and the like. Their keepers, who could not be said to have killed these people directly, were nonetheless found to have been culpable in their deaths by way of deliberately imposing the conditions which led to the proliferation of starvation and disease among them.[13] Certainly, the same can be said of Columbus' regime, under which the original residents were, as a first order of business, permanently dispossessed of their abundant cultivated fields while being converted into chattel, ultimately to be worked to death for the wealth and 'glory' of Spain.[14]

Nor should more direct means of extermination be relegated to incidental status. As the matter is framed by Kirkpatrick Sale in his book, *The Conquest of Paradise*:

> "The tribute system, instituted by the Governor sometime in 1495, was a simple and brutal way of fulfilling the Spanish lust for gold while acknowledging the Spanish distaste for labor. Every Taino over the age of fourteen had to supply the rulers with a hawk's bell of gold every three months (or, in gold-deficient areas, twenty-five pounds of spun cotton); those who did were given a token to wear around their necks as proof they had made their payment; those who did not were, as [Columbus' brother, Fernando] says discreetly, 'punished' — by having their hands cut off, as [the priest, Bartolome de] Las Casas says less discreetly, and left to bleed to death."[15]

[13] One of the more thoughtful elaborations on this theme may be found in Smith, Bradley F., *Reaching Judgement at Nuremberg*, Basic Books, New York, 1977.

[14] See Tpdorov, Tzvetan, *The Conquest of America*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1984.

[15] Sale, Kirkpatrick, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy*, Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, New York, 1990, p.155.

It is entirely likely that upwards of 10,000 Indians were killed in this fashion alone, on Espanola alone, as a matter of policy, during Columbus' tenure as governor. Las Casas' *Brevisima relation*, among other contemporaneous sources, is also replete with accounts of Spanish colonists (*hidalgos*) hanging Tainos *en masse*, roasting them on spits or burning them at the stake (often a dozen or more at a time), hacking their children into pieces to be used as dog feed and so forth, all of it to instill in the natives a "proper attitude of respect" toward their Spanish 'superiors.'

> "[The Spaniards] made bets as to who would slit a man in two, or cut off his head at one blow; or they opened up his bowels. They tore babes from their mother's breast by their feet and dashed their heads against the rocks…They spitted the bodies of other babes, together with their mothers and all who were before them, on their swords."[16]

No SS trooper could be expected to comport himself with a more unrelenting viciousness. And there is more. All of this was coupled to wholesale and persistent massacres:

> "A Spaniard — suddenly drew his sword. Then the whole hundred drew theirs and began to rip open the bellies, to cut and kill [a group of Tainos assembled for this purpose]-men, women, children and old folk, all of whom were seated, off guard and frightened.. And within two credos, not a man of them there remains alive. The Spaniards enter the large house nearby, for this was happening at its door, and in the same way, with cuts and stabs, began to kill as many as were

[16] Las Casas, Bartolomi de, *The Spanish Colonie (Brevisima relacion)*, University Microfilms reprint, 1966.