“As far as the wood’s edge”: 250 years since the removal of the Delaware people from the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania

Eric London
5 September 2022

A quarter of a millennium ago, the last publicly identified members of the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) tribe of Native Americans were forcibly removed from the territory in Eastern Pennsylvania where they had fought to establish a homeland. [1] Today there remains almost no public awareness of the scale and scope of this great historic crime, though the Delaware people remain active in drawing attention to their struggles both past and present. [2]

The real story of the removal of the Delaware clashes with the “official” narrative of American history as laid out by the *New York Times*. In 2019, the *Times’* 1619 Project argued that America’s “true founding” was the year of the arrival of the first slave ship in Port Comfort, Virginia. Fundamental to the 1619 Project was the claim that “black Americans fought back alone” to “make America a democracy.” To the *Times* and the 1619 Project, the American Revolution was a counterrevolution led by reactionaries aimed at protecting slavery. The argument of 1619 Project founder Nikole Hannah-Jones and the *Times* amounted to a declaration that the British Empire was the progressive force in the struggle against the colonists.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and a section of principled historians have exposed the *New York Times* and the 1619 Project’s false, pseudo-historical foundation, but one element which has not been sufficiently addressed is its lack of any serious reference to the struggles of the Native Americans to resist the encroachment of their lands by the British Empire. Even the selection of 1619 as the year of America’s “true founding” leaves out the fact that the immensely complex and ultimately tragic dynamic between the Native population and Europeans began years earlier upon the arrival of the first colonists.

This essay recounts the Delaware tribe of Native Americans and its long and complex struggle against the British Empire and the expansion of colonial settlements across the Pennsylvania frontier. This year, 2022, marks the 250th anniversary of the removal of the last Delaware people from the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania in 1772, after waging a bitter, years-long struggle for the establishment of a democratic homeland in the region which today encompasses Allentown, Scranton, and Wilkes-Barre. [3]

The essay places central focus on the life and times of Teedyuscung, an overlooked figure whose fascinating political career personifies the contradictory and dynamic complex of social relations in the period leading up to the American Revolution.

His life story, and the story of the struggle of the Delaware people, testifies to the falseness of the 1619 Project’s underlying conception that “blacks fought alone,” and that “black people,” “white people,” or even “Native Americans,” shared and acted upon interests determined by race. A materialist analysis of the history of this critical period in pre-Revolutionary America exposes the bankruptcy of the racialist approach to history. The truth, as always, is far more complicated, and far more interesting.

1. Introduction

Teedyuscung (born c. 1700, died April 19, 1763) was called many names over the course of his remarkable lifetime. He called himself “King of the Delawares,” and through his actions he convinced the governments of England and of France to call him the same, though in reality he was never even made a formal chief.

The white settlers in the town where he grew up called him “Honest John” as a young boy, while the leaders of the Moravian Church which he joined called him first by his Christian name, “Gideon,” after the prophet-general of the Old Testament, and then “Chief of the Sinners” after he broke with them to challenge the British Empire. The politicians and agents of various interests who came to know Teedyuscung called him “Teddy” or “Old Ted.” Quakers of the Pennsylvania Assembly who supported his tribe’s land claims called him “more of a politician than any of his opponents, whether in or out of our Proprietary Council.” John Pemberton, the Quaker agent who allied with Teedyuscung in a fight against Pennsylvania’s proprietary executive, said he was as powerful a speaker as William Pitt, who he had also heard speak in person. [4]

In the Algonquin language spoken by the Delaware, Teedyuscung’s name means “as far as the wood’s edge,” and this meaning is fitting. [5] At the height of Teedyuscung’s power as a political leader, the edge of the woods where the white settlers built their homes was where the authority of the British Empire stopped, and his began. Under Teedyuscung’s leadership, for a brief but heroic period, neither the landed gentry of Pennsylvania backed by the British crown nor the Connecticut speculators of the Susquehanna Company could dislodge the Delaware from their land.

For this reason, Teedyuscung’s name obtained great meaning to the hundreds of Native Americans from many different tribes who supported his utopian political vision. Teedyuscung was a politician of a *sui generis* type. He was the product of a clash of two civilizations no longer separated by the Atlantic Ocean but still separated by hundreds of years of economic development and proof of the uneven and combined development of the world’s productive forces. He was perhaps the first person in North America to build a political movement against the power of joint-stock corporations that were then emerging as instruments of global mercantile strategy.

His political career coincided with the French and Indian War (1754-61), which was part of the Seven Years War (1756-63) fought on multiple continents by the French and the British to determine who would be the greatest world power. The territory occupied by Teedyuscung and his tribe was among the most coveted geopolitical prizes over which the British and French colonial empires fought. His career was full of

© World Socialist Web Site

vacillations, transformations, maneuvers, and military campaigns. But throughout Teedyuscung's life, one central element of his political project remained constant: His call for the creation of an independent Native homeland, one based not on a return to the old ways of Native life but on the opening of trade and cultural exchange with the settlers, so as to eradicate Native poverty through the introduction of modern technology.

In this sense, that Teedyuscung operated with a longer-term, strategic goal, he can be compared to the imperial politicians directing affairs of state from London and Paris. But unlike his counterparts in the great metropoles, Teedyuscung's vision had a democratic and even social content. In the homeland for the Lenni Lenape, Natives would learn to read, write, construct houses and develop an agricultural economy based on advanced European methods.

Teedyuscung recognized the power of technology to eradicate hunger and poverty, but he also hated the brutal methods by which the supposedly "enlightened" government of Britain established its presence in the New World. His program was informed by an egalitarianism that emerged both out of the Delaware's primitive communist culture but was also cultivated by the democratic political ethos of the Pennsylvania frontier. He responded to the threats of the representatives of the British Empire with a phrase he was noted for repeating—"*I am a man*"—a phrase whose echo can be heard resonating through 200 years of social struggle. [6]

Perhaps the most "American" aspect of Teedyuscung's life was his death. He was burned alive by agents of the Susquehanna Company on April 19, 1763 because he was an obstacle to the land grab. A century before the Pinkertons came into being, the land company hired agents from among the Natives to take advantage of Teedyuscung's debilitating alcoholism to get him drunk and burn his home, as well as the homes of the Delaware around him. [7]

A week after his death, the largest, coordinated native rebellion in North American history spread across the vast western frontier. During the rebellion, Teedyuscung's son, Captain Bull, led a raid on the Susquehanna Company settlers in the Wyoming Valley and killed 10 people using methods of torture so brutal as to make clear that if the raid was not triggered by Teedyuscung's assassination, the raiders were motivated by a desire for vengeance. But the British Empire pioneered savagery of a more coldblooded and calculated type. It was in Pennsylvania that the commander of the British forces in North America, Jeffrey Amherst, sanctioned the distribution of blankets infected with smallpox to the Lenni Lenape.

Today, Teedyuscung's name is not known, though it should be. The poet Stephen Vincent Benét, who was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the Moravian outpost where Teedyuscung had spent many years of his life, may have been referencing the Delaware leader when he described the frontier as the mystery that lies *beyond the wood's edge*. In his poem *Western Star*, Benét wrote:

> I say,
> When the night has fallen on your loneliness
> And the deep wood beyond the ruined wall
> Seems to step forward swiftly with the dusk,
> You shall remember them. You shall not see
> Water or wheat or axe-mark on the tree
> And not remember them.
> You shall not win without remembering them,
> For they won every shadow of the moon,
> All the vast shadows, and you shall not lose
> Without a dark remembrance of their loss
> For they lost all and none remembered them.

The Delaware people ultimately lost all they had. A 1949 biography by University of Pennsylvania ethnographer Anthony F. C. Wallace, from whose book much of the factual material in this essay is drawn, is an important exception to the lack of attention given to the life of Teedyuscung and the crimes perpetrated against the Delaware people. Fred Anderson gives due attention to Wallace's biography and is clearly tempted at various points in his book *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America* to step into the captivating story of Teedyuscung. He addresses the drama of Teedyuscung's death in a brilliant five-page chapter entitled "Yankees Invade Wyoming—and Pay the Price." [8]

The Delaware people once occupied much of the present mid-Atlantic, including the island of Manhattan, but now live on four small, impoverished reservations: one in Ontario (Canada), two in central Oklahoma, and one in north central Wisconsin. The Wyoming Zion that the Pennsylvania government promised Teedyuscung was taken from the Delaware over a long series of struggles. It later became among the most valuable pieces of property in the world with the discovery of anthracite coal. With the Delaware forgotten and friendless, in 1979 the Carter administration attempted to revoke their tribal status. Teedyuscung's forlorn plan to abolish indigenous poverty is no closer to completion today under conditions where the Native population suffers the most abysmal poverty.

And so when the *New York Times*—newspaper of the wealthy and powerful, whose headquarters sits on former Delaware territory—writes in the 1619 Project that "blacks fought back *alone*," and portrays the British Empire as a humanitarian defender of the oppressed, it negates the history of the Delaware people, who also fought back and paid a terrible price. Their history forms a powerful link in an unbreakable chain of social struggles that must not be forgotten. As Benét concludes:

> This was the frontier, and this,
> And this, your house, was frontier.
> There were footprints upon the hill
> And men lie buried under,
> Tamers of earth and rivers.
> They died at the end of labor,
> Forgotten is the name.
> Now, in full summer, by the Eastern shore,
> Between the seamark and the roads going West,
> I call two oceans to remember them.
> I fill the hollow darkness with their names.

2. The Delaware and land grievances

At the time of Teedyuscung's birth, around 1700, the Delaware people were experiencing the shock of the arrival of Europeans, which had thrown Native society into crisis. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Wallace estimates there were roughly 8,000 Delawares who spoke an Algonquian language and whose villages spread from the Delaware Bay in the south through all of New Jersey to present-day Kingston, New York in the north and the Susquehanna River in the west. They called themselves "Lenni Lenape," or "the original people." They are believed to have migrated from the Mississippi Valley some 2,000 years earlier.

Theirs was a mixed agricultural and hunting and fishing-based society that bore the cultural traits of primitive communism. Lineage was determined by maternal ancestry, and women appointed the tribal chiefs. Groups of 200-300 people gathered in villages during the fishing and farming seasons and families lived together in lodges regulated by matrons. In the winter, the groups split into smaller families, whose appointed male leaders directed the hunts according to carefully

© World Socialist Web Site

delineated hunting grounds. [9]

After their arrival, the Europeans recorded numerous observations about the social practices of the Delaware people, which though relatively primitive, were rooted in principles of a compassionate and communal character. Lenni Lenape treated the children with a degree of gentleness unknown in Europe and the Colonies, where parents "beat their children and other dependents with a readiness and a fierceness that today leaves us wincing," as historian Gordon Wood notes. [10] One 17th century colonist noted that the parents educated the children never "in an authoritarian or forbidding tone, but, on the contrary, in the gentlest and most persuasive manner, nor is the parent's authority ever supported by harsh or compulsive means; no whips, no punishments, no threats are ever used to enforce commands or compel obedience." Delaware society treated animals with respect and, according to another colonial observer, "they do not exclude other animals from their world of spirits, the place to which they expect to go after death." Resources were shared, and there was rarely a surplus of food or other necessities.

These relations changed drastically due to the introduction of equipment and technology produced by European society.

The Dutch settlement at Manhattan, founded in 1609, marked the first known interaction between the Delaware and Europeans. In 1623 the Dutch built a trading post on the Delaware Bay and began trading in earnest with the Delaware. In 1642, the British set up a trading post on the Schuylkill River. In 1681, Charles II gave present-day Delaware and Pennsylvania to William Penn as payment for services rendered to the crown.

Throughout this period, the Europeans introduced the Delaware to metal agricultural tools and more advanced farming and home building methods, as well as to alcohol, gunpowder, and diseases like smallpox and syphilis which ravaged North American Native society, likely killing millions across the continent over the decades in question.

The Delaware, like many other tribes, played a critical role in the beaver trade to accommodate the sartorial habits of the rising bourgeoisie in Europe. The first North American industry, the trade of pelts, was financed by European banks and joint-stock corporations, and introduced the Native population of North America to new forms of exchange. In 1689, one Albany trader explained that for one beaver skin, a Native American could buy eight pounds of gunpowder, and for two beavers could purchase a gun.

Between the establishment of the first trading post in the Delaware Bay and the arrival of the Penns, Wallace writes, "a considerable quantity of European goods in the form of red and blue cloth, arms and ammunition, axes, knives, hatchets, copper and brass kettles, hoes, spades, shovels, glass beads, awls, bodkins, scissors, mirrors, needles and so forth, must have begun to circulate among the Delaware by the middle of the seventeenth century" and "by 1682, when the first colonists under William Penn's charter reached Pennsylvania, the Indians of the valley had for two generations been subject to continuous and powerful acculturating influences from the whites in New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and the Philadelphia area."

The first white settlements in the immediate vicinity of Teedyuscung's birthplace outside of present-day Trenton, New Jersey were established in 1679. [11] Many Delaware, including Teedyuscung's family, lived impoverished, dangerous and unstable lives on the edges of the white settlements, trading and taking jobs as hired hands or small tradesmen. Teedyuscung's father, known as "Old Captain Harris," was a Delaware who spoke English and was known for resenting the encroachment of the whites on Delaware land. As a youth, Teedyuscung became a basket and broom maker, and plied his wares to the local whites in a manner, as Wallace explains, "that was an already quite common one among the detached and dispossessed Delaware families who, like gypsies, wandered from place to place along the river of their name, manufacturing baskets, brooms, wooden spoons, dishes and the like, and selling them to the white people for food and clothes." [12]

The three decades immediately preceding Teedyuscung's birth witnessed the first major land sales by individual Delaware desperate for income with which to buy basic necessities. By 1710, when Teedyuscung was a boy, most of the land in the area of his birth was owned by whites. These years marked the first substantial exodus of the Delaware, who were forced as far as the western reaches of the wilderness of the upper Delaware River valley. Teedyuscung's family "crossed the Delaware" in this way around 1730, and the New Jersey Delaware became guests of those already living near the Kittatinny Mountains.

Teedyuscung is mentioned for the first time in the archive in 1734, in a report on a meeting between Thomas Penn (William's son) and the Delaware at Durham, Pennsylvania, to address the Natives' grievances about the land. By that time, he had experienced the sharp crisis of Delaware society, and had been forced off the land on which he grew up. He, and his people, had suffered disease, poverty, insecurity and cultural crisis. [13]

3. Land speculation and the methods of land accumulation

Thomas Penn inherited the position of Pennsylvania's proprietor after the death of his father, William Penn. William had sought to establish the Pennsylvania colony as a "Holy Experiment," a Quaker haven in which the rights of the Native Americans would be respected to a greater degree than elsewhere in the Americas—an effort that was recognized by the Delaware. The Pennsylvania Frame of Government, a predecessor to the US Constitution first authored in 1682, was, for its time, a relatively democratic founding document that sought to enshrine liberties and a degree of participatory rule among "freemen," inspired by Quakerite desire for a return to primitive Christianity. The amendments to the charter, however, reflected the power struggle that emerged, after William Penn returned from Pennsylvania to England in 1684, between the proprietary faction led by Thomas Penn and a section of the landed colonial aristocracy, on the one side, and, on the other, the Quakers, who came to dominate the assembly and represented a more plebeian section of the population with interests in the trade economy with the native Delaware population. [14]

The 1734 meeting between the Delaware and Thomas Penn resulted in no action taken by the Pennsylvania government to protect the Delaware lands. In May 1735, Teedyuscung was again present when a group of Delaware leaders traveled to Pennsbury to meet once more with representatives of the colonial government. James Logan, an agent of the colony and its proprietary faction, informed the Delaware that they had sold a substantial portion of their territory to the Penn family decades ago, in 1686. Shocked, the Delaware had not heard of this purchase and saw it for what it was: an illegitimate attempt to trick them out of their land.

The then-Delaware chief Nutimus, replied, according to a transcript of the meeting: "When You have gott a Writing from us you lock it up in ye Chest & no body knows what you have Bought or what you paid for it, and after a while by Selling our Land out in small parcels for a great deal of money you are able to build … houses, high as ye Sky while we beg having so little for ourselves." [15]

When Logan replied that Nutimus had no right to discuss land in Pennsylvania because he had been born in New Jersey, Nutimus "asked [Logan] how he came to have a Right here as he was not born in this Country" at all. The next year, Logan and the Pennsylvania proprietors succeeded in convincing 10 Iroquois chiefs to affirm falsely that the Delaware had sold all the land they possessed below the Kittatinny Mountains.

In the autumn of 1737, the Delaware conceded to settle the land question by means of a "Walking Purchase," in which they affirmed the deed of 1686 and fell for a cynical ruse in which they agreed to give the British all the land that could be reached by walking north up the

© World Socialist Web Site

Delaware River for one-and-a-half days. [16] The British, in violation of the terms to which the Delaware believed they agreed, cleared a trail and used runners who sped up the Delaware as quickly as they could on foot, without stopping except to rest for the night. In a day-and-a-half the British runners had traversed 20 miles north of the Kittatinny Mountains, acquiring far more land than the Delaware had intended to cede by what they viewed as an act of good will to ensure the peace. The trap was prepared by agent James Logan, who had a personal financial interest in robbing land that he would later take for himself. Logan stole the land he needed for his highly profitable smelting furnace from chief Nutimus. [17]

By 1740, 100 white families settled in the area acquired through the "Walking Purchase" of 1737. In November 1740, the Delaware again complained about land encroachments to Thomas Penn, this time in a rendezvous in Bucks County. Penn, the Delaware said, "wearies us out of our lives" with his schemes of land speculation. In Philadelphia, the colony established a land office that sold land in the Walking Purchase area to George Whitfield, the famed Methodist evangelist of the Great Awakening, who planned to build an orphanage for black children in the area. Before the orphanage was built, however, Whitfield sold the land to the Moravian Church, who established a settlement and called it Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The Moravians were a proto-Protestant group, which split from the Catholic Church in 1467, before the Reformation. Persecuted in Europe, their American proselytizers advocated a communal pacifism. The church community they established in Bethlehem practiced semi-utopian forms of exchange. As Wallace describes it, "the products of labor on the church-owned lands were contributed to the common stock; the people ate at common tables and slept in common dormitories."

It is likely that Teedyuscung first heard the Moravians preach in 1742, and he was baptized in 1750 along with his wife and children. Around the same time, he moved with his family into the Moravian mission at Gnadenhütten, Pennsylvania. The Moravians were viewed as radicals for their kind treatment of the Native population, and were threatened with mass violence by settlers in Connecticut after fighting broke out between settlers and Native Americans over land near the town of Shecomeco. [18]

The British encroachment worsened as more and more native Delaware were bribed or threatened into selling their land. Epidemics, including smallpox, ravaged the native population. The powerful Six Nation Confederation, meanwhile, had agreed to an alliance with the British Empire against the French, who still possessed Canada and much of the territory west of Pennsylvania. A subsidiary part of the agreement was that the Six Nations agreed to help the British evict the Delaware, acceding to the colony's demand "to remove from the Lands in the Forks of Delaware, and not give any further Disturbance to the Persons who are now in Possession" (i.e., the proprietary landowners of Pennsylvania). [19]

4. The rise of Teedyuscung

Teedyuscung's political career as a militant leader began in earnest late in his life, around 1753-54. It developed out of a split within the Delaware over the approach to efforts by the Susquehanna Company of Connecticut to settle and sell the land of the Wyoming Valley, at the northern edge of Delaware territory. The formal chief, Nutimus, had been weakened by his earlier support for the Walking Treaty, through which the Delaware were duped out of so much territory. The Six Nations, who feared settlement in the north, and the Pennsylvania government, which opposed efforts by rival colonies to obtain title of land claimed by Pennsylvania, each encouraged the Delaware to move north into the Wyoming Territory when the Susquehanna Company sent a surveying team into the valley in July of 1753.

Teedyuscung's first significant political act is his public support for migrating to the Wyoming Valley. On April 24, 1754, Teedyuscung led a substantial delegation of 65 Native Americans out of Gnadenhütten and into the Wyoming Valley. He returned later that summer with a representative of the Iroquois, to appeal to those Delaware who remained at the Moravian mission to move to Wyoming to stop the Susquehanna Company. [20]

On May 28, 1754, only a month after Teedyuscung became the leader of the migratory movement, the first military clashes between the French and British, the latter under the command of a young George Washington, occurred at the battle of Jumonville in what is today southwestern Pennsylvania. Among those who fought alongside Washington were members of the Delaware tribe. [21]

In response, the British convened a conference at Albany involving representatives of the colonial governments and Native American tribes. Teedyuscung was present, and evidently played a significant role in the conference, though beyond one account by John Dickinson describing Teedyuscung's drunkenness at the conference, not much is known. [22]

At the conference, the delegates deliberated over Benjamin Franklin's proposal for the Albany Plan of Union, an intercolonial government with a president appointed by the King of England and delegates from the colonies. The plan never went into effect, but it became a model for both the 1777 Articles of Confederation and the US Constitution of 1787. A primary aim of the congress was to secure an alliance between the British Empire and the Six Nations against the French.

After the congress, British forces fought the French in July at the Battle of Fort Necessity, leading to Washington's surrender and return to Virginia. The war known as the French and Indian War was underway.

Initially, Teedyuscung allied himself with the British, a natural alignment given the fact that, unlike the portion of the Delaware Indians who had fled west into Ohio, Teedyuscung's Delaware had no second potential trading partner. Recognizing the necessity of British goods for the wellbeing of the eastern Delaware, Teedyuscung understood that the British were the force to be reckoned with in eastern Pennsylvania. At this stage in his career, he hoped through his loyalty to win royal backing, or at least the backing of the Pennsylvania government, for a Wyoming Valley home protected by law.

5. The dynamic of Pennsylvania colonial politics

The proponents of racialist history present "whites" in general as guilty of the policies directed against the North American native population. Such reductionism cannot capture the political dynamic in Pennsylvania, which was the center of fierce class antagonisms within the "white" community, driving the colony to the point of civil war. The issue confronting both poor whites and Delaware Natives was access to the land, which was dominated in semi-feudal fashion by the Penn family, whose actions became more and more distant from the utopian intentions of William Penn.

Teedyuscung's project met with opposition from within the proprietary faction of the Pennsylvania establishment, represented by Thomas Penn, who had become sole proprietor for Pennsylvania in 1746, and Robert Hunter Morris, who had become governor of Pennsylvania in 1754. Morris was born in 1713, over a decade after Teedyuscung. Both men were born in or around Trenton. [23]

The ascendency of Penn as sole proprietor and Morris as governor marked a shift in the politics of Pennsylvania toward the forces of political reaction. "Thomas Penn harbored a bold design when he became proprietor and chief executive of Pennsylvania in 1746," writes Charles Michael Dowling in a 1995 Ph.D. thesis titled *Robert Hunter Morris and the Politics of Indian Administration in Pennsylvania, 1754-55*. [24] "Penn had watched with growing concern as the [Quaker-led] Assembly had increased its power over the previous two decades. The new proprietor desired to roll back the political gains of the Assembly and to reassert the proprietary interest as a means of restoring balance to Pennsylvania's government." [25]

Tensions within the Pennsylvania elite had intensified over the

© World Socialist Web Site

1730s-50s as a result of the emergence of a land movement of a different type than the one waged by the Delaware against the same proprietary interest. (Recall that in 1754, Teedyuscung had aligned himself with both the proprietary/executive and Quaker/assembly factions of the Pennsylvania government in order to block the land grab by the Connecticut-based Susquehanna Company).

Morris had risen to prominence as a leader of the proprietary faction by crushing a movement of landless settlers aimed at squatting and winning title to Penn family land throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In the 1740s, Morris "inundated the courts with lawsuits against small landholders with questionable titles as well as outright squatters" and "in a majority of these cases the proprietors succeeded in obtaining ejectments." [26]

Notably, "Not only did Morris and the proprietors seek to invalidate the land clams" of various settlers, "they sought to nullify land titles that some settlers had obtained initially from the Delaware Indians. … Between 1741 and 1743, the proprietors brought several suits against white farmers who traced their ownership to Indian deeds. The proprietors won virtually all the suits and were subsequently accused of jury tampering by the frustrated 'quitrenters.' In 1749, Morris struck at the very root of the Indian land title question when he argued against Indian rights to the land on which the few remaining Delawares in New Jersey were living." [27] In other words, the proprietary faction was waging a ruthless two-front war against both the poor farmers and the Native Delaware.

The settlers erupted in violent protest against the proprietary interest. "For a decade," Dowling writes, "the colony was plagued with a series of 'land riots.' Mobs attacked local jails to free imprisoned patentees and those being held for removing timber from unoccupied proprietary lands. The governor and council viewed these disturbances as treasonable offenses and moved to suppress the lawlessness." [28]

The Pennsylvania Assembly, dominated by Quakers and represented most ably by Benjamin Franklin, rejected the proprietary efforts to crush the squatters' movement. Morris and the proprietaries were as unmoved by the land claims of poor whites as they were by the claims of the Delaware. Morris declared of the protests, in verse, "No man is safe in property or fame, Where laws are broken or where laws are lame, Much less when force suspends all legal right, Making men wrongfully submitt to might." [29]

In 1749, the Quaker-led Assembly sent a petition to King George II which "asserted their loyalty to the crown but explained the cause of the disturbances in terms sympathetic to the rioters. The Assembly portrayed the conflict as one of rich against poor." [30] On the basis of his role suppressing the land movement, Morris was appointed governor in 1754.

The Assembly and Morris clashed on another fundamental issue to the political context of the 1740s and 50s: the question of policy toward the Native Americans.

According to Dowling, "The dispersal of presents among the indigenous Delawares and the other tribes who settled within Pennsylvania's boundaries was an integral part of the colony's Indian policy … the Quaker-dominated Assembly spent lavishly in the cause of maintaining peaceful relations with its Indian neighbors." [31] But the proprietary faction wanted to spend resources on military funds to expand the frontier through violent repression of the Native peoples. The Quaker Assembly refused, on financial and moral grounds.

Underlying the bitter division between the Quaker and proprietary faction was control over the land, which the Penn family dominated as a result of Charles II's 1681 charter. The Penn proprietors used their monopoly on land as a mechanism for patronage.

One study of the proprietary system, *The Proprietary Group in Pennsylvania, 1754-1764*, by G. B. Warden, stresses the semi-feudal character of the Penn family's royal land charter, which "allowed the Penns to make all necessary laws for the province with the consent of the freemen and the approval of the Privy Council. … The charter also allowed Penn to appoint and commission all necessary executive officials for the province's internal administration." [32]

Land ownership figures from the 1750s and 60s show the proprietary supporters in and around Philadelphia received far more acres in land grants than their Quaker opponents. The proprietary landowners engaged in a high degree of land speculation, Warden writes: "The warrants could be bought and sold, presumably for speculative purposes. And it seems clear that in many cases warrants were given to Proprietary men as rewards of service to the Penns." [33]

"It is little wonder," Warden continues, "that the peace-loving Quakers were apprehensive of the Penns' prerogatives." [34] In this division, the question of the power of the legislatures versus the unchecked executive became a major political question that would inform the attitudes of the American revolutionaries.

There is little doubt that the Quaker faction had substantially more popular support among the white settlers of the colony. "Pennsylvania's citizens regarded the proprietary interest as exceedingly narrow and tended to view the Assembly as representing 'the whole people,'" Charles Dowling explains. [35] "In the mid-1750s, Penn's supporters were mostly wealthy, self-interested men whose political activity extended only to accepting executive appointments and other patronage." [36]

Only two of the 36 members of the assembly were supporters of the proprietary faction between 1754 and 1764, the final decade of Teedyuscung's life. Beginning in 1755, the Delaware "King" was to launch a series of military raids against the British, establishing himself as a political force which the Empire had to acknowledge. [37]

As the historian Francis Jennings noted, the 1755 war of the Delaware against Pennsylvania "had been in the making, gradually acquiring force and implacability, for decades." [38] Teedyuscung had been willing to collaborate with the British to secure a Wyoming Valley homeland for the Delaware, but the British broke their promise, and war was inevitable. In the war, which coincided with intensified fighting between the French and British, "The Delawares … fought not for the French, but to preserve their own lands from white settlement." [39]

6. Who were the white settlers?

Before addressing the development of Teedyuscung's career as a military leader, it is first necessary to review the social composition of the European-descent people who were settling Pennsylvania in the middle of the 18th century.

It is impossible to deny, given the extremely violent and unstable character of frontier life, the presence of mutual animosity and fear that was a regular feature of relations between the Native Americans and settlers. Especially in the period of the 1750s and 60s, violence was a regular feature in this relationship. And it is also true that the material interests of the settlers, in search for land, were different than those of the Delaware, who had no conception of the land as private property.

And yet this still does not tell the full story. Many settlers, especially on the Pennsylvania frontier, were themselves impoverished outcasts fleeing feudal reaction in Europe. Thousands of them were indentured servants who fled into the woods before their seven- and four-year contracts expired, or as soon as they were over. Many such men and women had no interest in staying on the eastern coast where the moneyed interests held the balance of power and treated them with such contempt.

The social composition of the Pennsylvania settlers in this period is addressed succinctly by Vernon Parrington in his classic work, *The Colonial Mind 1620-1800*.

The two largest groups of migrants to the Pennsylvania frontier in the 18th century, Parrington explains, were poor Scotch-Irish peasants on the one hand, and indentured servants on the other. From 1718 to the time of the Revolution, some 200,000 Scotch-Irish immigrants came to the colonies. "They were desperately poor," Parrington writes. "The available

© World Socialist Web Site

lands near the coast were already preempted, so armed with axes, their seed potatoes, and the newly invented rifle, they plunged into the backwoods." [40]

Then there were the indentured servants who came mostly from England, Scotland, Ireland and Germany. Parrington refers to the "brisk trade" conducted by "white slavers" who recruited indigent Europeans into "a steady stream of indentured servants" who "turned the wheels of colonial industry." [41]

This was especially true in Pennsylvania. "In the middle colonies, particularly Pennsylvania, the greater number of servants came from the Rhine country," Parrington writes. "Deceived by swindling agents, thousands of German peasants, eager to get away from their war-harried and plundered homes, sold themselves into servitude to pay their passage to America." [42]

Parrington quotes newspaper advertisements announcing the arrival and sale of white indentured servants, which reveal the horrific reality many would-be settlers passed through before reaching the frontier.

The February 18, 1729 edition of the *American Weekly Mercury* wrote: "lately arrived from London, a parcel of very likely English servants, men and women, several of the men tradesmen, to be sold reasonable and time allowed for pavement."[43]

The December 16, 1750 edition of *Der Hoch Deutsche Pennsylvanische Bericht* announced: "Capt. Hasselwood has arrived from Halland with the latest ship that brought Germans. It is the fourteenth that has come laden with Germans this year, 4,317 have registered in the Court House. Besides these, 1,000 servants and passengers arrived from Ireland and England." [44]

Parrington writes:

> In some such fashion, year after year, thousands of immigrants were transported to America. …They came as social derelicts, were greeted by the awaiting 'soul-drivers,' found masters, worked and got on, or lost heart and slipped away into the tempting backcountry whither so many broken men went in search of refuge. They were a plebian lot, and they endured the common fate of the underling. Very likely they transmitted to their children a bitter hostility to the ways of an aristocratic society, the residuum of old grievances, and this slowly accumulating animus was eventually to count heavily with lower-class colonials in favor of a more democratic order in the new world. [45]

Wealthy visitors to the Pennsylvania frontier were shocked at the leveling social impact of the frontier, even at times expressing concern over the friendly relations between the Indians and settlers during times of peace. In the letters of French-American agriculturalist, scientist and materialist (and Pennsylvania inhabitant) St. John de Crèvecoeur, published in 1782, Crèvecoeur wrote movingly of the Pennsylvania frontier:

> The rich stay in Europe, it is only the middling and the poor that emigrate. In this great American asylum, the poor of Europe have by some means met together, and in consequence of various causes; to what purpose should they ask one another, what countrymen they are? Alas, two thirds of them had no country. Can a wretch who wanders about, who works and starves, can that man call England or any other kingdom his country? No! ... Here they rank as citizens. By what invisible power has this surprising metamorphosis been performed? By that of the laws of their industry … his country is now that which gives him land, bread, protection and consequence. [46]

And yet, the land did belong to others, who were pushed farther and farther out of their ancient homelands until they could stand it no longer. History did not provide a path for their cooperation.

7. War as a last resort

In April 1755, Teedyuscung and the Delawares occupying the Wyoming Valley pursuant to the agreement with the British and the Six Nations, traveled to Philadelphia, unannounced, to present their grievances over the delay in granting them legal title to the Wyoming territory they were promised. [47] At a conference with newly-appointed Governor Morris, Teedyuscung was noted to have given a "suave speech" which impressed the proprietary elite who were present. [48]

A year later, the British refused to support the Delaware claim to the valley. The Delaware began to understand that the British had no intention of fulfilling their promise. Meanwhile, defeats by the French of the British along the Monongahela River led many western Native tribes to ally with the French. A tremendous fear swept through the Delaware community that they had been left for dead by their British "allies." In November 1755, the Delaware made one last ditch effort to ask the British for support, as rumors spread through the frontier that the French and their Native allies were conducting brutal massacres of those Natives who had supported the British interest. Once again, the British refused Teedyuscung's appeal. The Delaware had no good choice but to strike the settler communities. [49]

In December, Teedyuscung appealed to the Delaware and won support for his call for war against the British. There was a split among the Delaware and neighboring tribes, and Teedyuscung emerged as the unquestioned leader of the pro-war faction. At the heart of the war appeal was a call for the Delaware to fight to defend their control of the Wyoming Valley. Teedyuscung named himself king and appealed to the Six Nations for support against the British. The reply was negative, but in an act of boldness, he violated an order by the Six Nations that he stand down. On New Year's Eve, he led a 30-man scalping party that initiated several months of terroristic activity against the British military outposts and Pennsylvania settlers. [50] Over the course of his campaign, Teedyuscung's army grew to include 200 warriors from not only the Delaware tribe. It represented the stirrings of a pan-Native alliance including Shawnee, Mahicans, Nanticokes, as well as some members of the Six Nation tribe who were opposed to the confederation's ongoing alliance with the hated British.

The raids struck terror into the Pennsylvania frontier and caused extreme nervousness in Philadelphia. Wallace estimates that 200 settlers and British soldiers were killed, and another 200 captured. However, Teedyuscung reportedly did not torture any of his victims or kill any needlessly, a fact which led Wallace to conclude that his raids were unusually humane, at least by comparison with other Native uprisings or attacks on settlers. Those white people who were captured in the raids were not thrown into confinement like the prisoners of European armies. Instead, they replaced Delaware men and women who died from settler violence or epidemics and were treated like members of the family. It was not rare in this period for captured whites to refuse to return to colonial life after having experienced Native life and customs.

In the aftermath of the raids in early 1756, Teedyuscung's stature grew in the eyes of the Native Americans, the Pennsylvania government and the British. He began to be called "boss," and, according to Wallace, "His backroom politics extended even to such projects as trying to persuade a runaway Negro to organize a slave rebellion." In April 1756 he responded positively when Governor Morris, under pressure from the Quaker Assembly, sent a request for peace negotiations. Morris' policy had previously been one of bloody terror, placing a bounty on Delaware scalps

© World Socialist Web Site

of Native men, women and children. Morris' declaration of war against the Delaware, issued that same spring, read:

> For the Scalp of every Male Indian Enemy above the age of Twelve Years, produced as Evidence of their being killed, the Sum of One Hundred and Thirty Pieces of Eight;
>
> For every Female Indian taken Prisoner and brought in as aforesaid, and for every male Indian prisoner under the Age of Twelve Years taken and brought in as aforesaid, One Hundred and Thirty pieces of Eight;
>
> For the Scalp of every Indian Woman, produced as Evidence of their being killed, the sum of Fifty Pieces of Eight. [51]

En route to the armistice conference that spring, Teedyuscung returned on horseback to the settlements, where he had once been a poor basket weaver, with a triumphalism that Wallace calls "Ulyssean." [52] The Quakers, in a radical departure from past negotiations by other representatives, treated the Delaware leader with respect and moved Teedyuscung to tears. [53] The proprietary faction was incensed that the Quakers had intervened to strengthen his negotiating position against the landed elite.

Teedyuscung's speech at the armistice conference merits broader awareness. Calling the Pennsylvania representatives "Brother Onas," the name they had respectfully given William Penn in remembrance of his friendly attitude toward the Native people, Teedyuscung requested the government free Delaware warriors and villagers captured in the skirmishes of the previous months, and appealed for peaceful unity between settler and Native:

> Brother Onas, We desire you will look upon us with Eyes of Mercy, we are a very poor People, our Wives and Children are almost naked, we are void of Understanding and destitute of the Necessaries of Life. Pity us.
>
> Brethren, There is a great Number of our People among you, and in a Manner confin'd, we desire you will set them at Liberty, rather give them a safe Conduct to Wayomick [Wyoming] where we intend to settle, as on your Fireside there we will jointly with you kindle Council Fire which shall always burn and we will be one people with you. [54]

Thus begins the diplomatic phase of Teedyuscung's political career. Having established a reputation and stature as a political and military leader, capable of enunciating the just demands of the Native Delaware for land, education, and respite from crippling poverty, Teedyuscung used his new-found stature to collaborate with the Pennsylvania Quakers in an attempt to establish a project at Wyoming.

A treaty was planned for late in 1756 to formalize peace with the Delaware. In September, Teedyuscung called a conference of various Native tribes at Tioga, in modern day New York state, to discuss the terms of a prospective peace. Peace with the English, Teedyuscung explained, was necessary to gain access to the goods which English traders sold at higher quality and lower prices than the French. [55] This difference was ultimately a major factor in the French Empire's loss of North America in the Seven Years War.

In October, Lord Loudon, commander in chief of the British forces in North America, wrote Governor Morris's successor, Governor Denny, relinquishing his power to sign a further treaty with the Delaware. The power of Teedyuscung had grown too great. Nevertheless, he traveled to Easton and talks began in early November. The Quakers and the proprietary interest were at each other's throats, and Benjamin Franklin was present representing the former.

What Teedyuscung did at the second Easton conference is revealing of his political style: He told the truth. While he had told the assembled tribes in September that he would stress their alliance with Pennsylvania against the Connecticut Susquehanna Company, he instead told the proprietary faction that Pennsylvania, too, had stolen the Delaware's land. Specifically, he told the representatives of the Penns that the Walking Purchase of 1737 was a fraud, and demanded its revocation. By this maneuver, Teedyuscung fundamentally altered the parameters of the peace conference, taking his enemies by surprise.

Teedyuscung said: "This very Ground that is under me (striking it with his Foot) was my [i.e., the Delaware] Land and Inheritance, and is taken from me by Fraud." "Indians," he continued, "are not such Fools as to bear this in their minds. The Proprietaries, who have purchased their Lands from us cheap, have sold them too dear to poor People, and the Indians have suffered for it."

With these words it is clear that Teedyuscung recognized not only that his *specific* opponent was the proprietary faction, but also his recognition of the fact that the proprietaries also took advantage of poor whites by selling the stolen land "too dear to poor People" on the frontier.

At the conclusion of the conference, Teedyuscung met separately with the Quaker delegation, which had also been in attendance, and had again lent him political support against the proprietaries. In January 1757, Benjamin Franklin traveled to London on official state business. He took a copy of Teedyuscung's plea on the fraud of the Walking Purchase to King George himself. [56]

8. The most realistic utopia: the Wyoming Project

Having stood up to the Pennsylvania proprietary interest, Teedyuscung began working with the Quakers to establish secure Native title over the Wyoming Valley. No title was forthcoming, as both the proprietary faction and the British Empire feared the precedent that would be set by carving up pristine territory and giving legal title to the Indians. Unlike in the past, Teedyuscung was not willing to rely on empty promises, and he had enough experience in the modern politics of the British Empire to understand the importance of having all deals set down as legally enforceable documents. This the Empire would not do.

An anecdote is recorded which sheds light on Teedyuscung's genuinely egalitarian political aims. When asked by a supporter whether he was a believer in the Christian notion of the Golden Rule, he is said to have responded, "I thought that the Great Spirit who made the land never intended one man should have so much of it as never to see it all, and another not to have so much as to plant corn for his children. I think the Great Spirit never meant it should be so." [57]

On this basis, at the July 1757 treaty conference held in Easton, Pennsylvania, Teedyuscung laid out his vision in a moving speech before the representatives of the British Empire:

> We intend to settle at Wyoming, and we want to have certain Boundaries fixed between you and us; and a certain Tract of Land fixed, which it shall not be lawful for us or our Children ever to sell, nor for you, or any of your Children, ever to buy. We would have the Boundaries fixed all round, agreeable to the Draught we give you, that we may not be pressed on any Side, but have a certain Country fixed for our own Use, and the Use of our Children, forever.

But Teedyuscung's project entailed more than just the land itself. What made his utopian vision realistic is that he asked the Pennsylvanians to

© World Socialist Web Site

teach them modern skills so that they could develop a functioning economic basis through which they could raise themselves out of poverty. This was not a proposal to segregate white from Native, but to establish an equal and democratic format for cultural and economic exchange. His speech continued:

> And as we intend to make a Settlement at Wyoming, and to build different Houses from what we have done heretofore, such as may last not only for a little Time, but for our Children after us; we desire you will assist us in making our Setlements, and send us Persons to instruct us in building Houses, and in making such Necessaries as shall be needful; and that Persons be sent to instruct us in the Christian Religion, which may be for our future Welfare, and to instruct our Children in Reading and Writing; and that a fair Trade be established between us, and such Persons appointed to conduct and manage these Affairs as shall be agreeable to us.

Teedyuscung then drew a map on the table outlining the 2 million square acres he was demanding from Governor Denny. The crown's representatives were shocked by the insolence. Over the next year, Teedyuscung refused to return empty professions of peace from British and Pennsylvania envoys, until title over the Wyoming Valley had been established in law.

That never came. But remarkably, the Quaker interest in the Pennsylvania Assembly did succeed in passing legislation that allocated substantial funds (£500) to hire 150 laborers to build the huts and schoolhouse Teedyuscung had requested. In May 1758, a team of laborers traveled to the Wyoming Valley and built 10 modern houses for the Delaware, including one for Teedyuscung. The laborers were forced to flee from the area before the community development could be completed after one laborer was killed, but for the first time, something had been done.

9. "Bird on a bough"

Six months after the Quakers facilitated the initiation of a modern settlement at Wyoming, the British Empire, through the proprietary interest, reneged on promises of peace with the Delaware and insisted on gaining access to the Wyoming Valley. At a third treaty meeting in Easton in 1758, Teedyuscung's political position collapsed.

There was growing opposition among his own Delaware supporters to continuing hostilities. The spread of epidemics and crushing poverty had placed them in an extremely difficult material condition. If there were to be more raids, the men would be absent for another hunting season. Under immense pressure, Teedyuscung was increasingly isolated in his desire to continue the war for control of the Wyoming Valley.

His enemies were also moving against him. According to Wallace, the Six Nations met separately with the Penn agents and agreed to support the proprietary claim on the Wyoming territory. Teedyuscung reportedly drank heavily as he watched his position deteriorate, knowing that he would lose support among the Delaware. [58]

He gave a speech directed at the Six Nations representatives who had just betrayed him. If he was drinking—and his opponents rarely missed an opportunity to take advantage of his alcoholism—his poetic eloquence remained remarkable:

> Uncles, You may remember that you have placed us at Wyoming, places where Indians have lived before. Now I hear since that you have sold that Land to our Brethren the English; let the Matter now be cleared up, in the Presence of our Brethren the English.
>
> I sit there as a Bird on a Bow; I look about, and do not know where to go; let me therefore come down upon the Ground, and make that my own by a good Deed, and I shall then have a Home for ever; for if you, my Uncles, or I die, our Brethren the English will say, they have bought it from you, and so wrong my Posterity out of it. [59]

And that is exactly what happened, several years later, when Teedyuscung waged one last campaign against the Susquehanna Company, which began to rapidly settle the Wyoming Valley on the spurious grounds that they had acquired title from the Six Nations.

10. The fight against the Susquehanna Company

The political situation in Pennsylvania and along the frontier changed rapidly in the early 1760s, when the Susquehanna Company moved aggressively to settle the Wyoming Valley for the first time since 1754. The British Empire, with command of the sea and the ability to trade with Native Americans on better terms than the French, had turned the tide in the Seven Years War, taking Quebec from the French in 1759 and Montreal in a campaign lasting three months in July-September 1760. While war raged in Europe (and continued in the Caribbean and India as well), the British had identified the strategic necessity of driving the French from the Ohio country, as well as from Canada. By 1760, the fighting in North America was coming to an end.

The British Empire turned its attention to the management of its colonial territories both old and recently acquired. Jeffrey Amherst, Commander of the British forces in North America from 1758 until the crisis that was about to unfold in 1763, adopted the proprietary position against the Native population, proscribing in 1762 the giving of presents to Native tribes on the grounds that the Native population must be whipped into submission. The giving of "presents" was a fundamental feature of frontier and colonial diplomacy and trade for over a century, and Amherst's proscription threw the indigenous population into desperate crisis. [60]

Without presents from the British, a chief source of gunpowder, ammunition and other necessities dried up, and with the alternate French trading partners having been defeated, the Native population confronted disaster and the prospect of mass starvation. Native life and social relations had been uprooted by the introduction of goods which had made Native villages totally dependent on presents and trade. Guns and ammunition were no longer luxuries, they were required for the continuation of Native life. [61]

Amherst's aim was to prevent rebellion. By withholding British rum from the Native population, his policy also had the effect of throwing a substantial portion of the Native population into forced alcohol withdrawal, an exceedingly cruel policy, given the fact that the British had previously engaged in a policy of encouraging inebriation as a method of social control, with devastating social consequences for the Native people.

In this context, the Susquehanna Company began to make more open encroachments on the Wyoming Valley. Teedyuscung, having been sidelined politically by the agreement between the proprietaries and the Six Nations at Easton in 1758, traveled to Philadelphia to lobby the government in his long effort to secure Delaware title to the Wyoming land. This time, the Pennsylvania government decided to use the Delaware as a pawn to occupy the Wyoming, prevent its settlement by the Connecticut-based Susquehanna Company, and secure royal assent to Pennsylvania's claim over the contested territory.

On January 5, 1762, the Susquehanna Company voted to "use proper Means to prepare The minds of the Indians for the admition and Carrying on Setlements on the Lands and Transact any other affairs that shall be necessary for the Setlement of Sd Lands and That the Comte have Liberty to Imploy one hundred men for That purpose." In May, the company

© World Socialist Web Site

encouraged 100 settlers to move into the territory, selecting only "wealthy and proper" individuals for the privilege. As Wallace reports, "It was reported at this time that the minutes of the meetings of the company were regularly burned at the next following session."

When the Susquehanna settlers reached Delaware territory in the Wyoming Valley and began constructing a settlement, Teedyuscung was in Philadelphia attempting to parley the Pennsylvania government's opposition to Connecticut claims on the valley into an alliance. His wife, her sister and her sister's husband had all been killed by a devastating dysentery epidemic before Teedyuscung left for Philadelphia. By all accounts, the Delaware leader was devastated by the loss.

During the talks, the propriety faction overpowered the aging Delaware leader. Exactly what happened is not entirely clear, but at one point the proprietary leadership was apparently able to secure a verbal statement from Teedyuscung recanting all Delaware claims on the Wyoming Valley. This fraud was perpetrated by the reading of the proprietary defense of the Walking Purchase of 1737 in English.

The Quaker representatives were so disgusted by the bullying of Teedyuscung that its leading representative, Israel Pemberton, stood up and denounced the Pennsylvania executive.

"Teedyuscung said no such thing!" Pemberton shouted when the Penn faction claimed the Delaware had acknowledged their claim to the land. Regarding the documents which Teedyuscung was purported to have endorsed, Pemberton said, "Not one sentence of which Teedyuscung understood!" When William Johnson, representative of the crown, said to the Quaker leader, "What right have you to interfere in this matter?" Pemberton replied, "I am a freeman and have as much right to speak as the governor." Johnson, according to Fred Anderson, "drew his sword and threatened to run the Quaker through." Teedyuscung left the conference with a gift of £200 in goods and £400 in cash. [62] It is possible that this was a bribe, though it is doubtful Teedyuscung was fully aware of what had happened.

Teedyuscung returned to Wyoming as the Connecticut settlers continued to press into Delaware territory. He sent a war belt to the western Delaware Indians in the Ohio region, making an appeal to unify in one more great military campaign to protect the land. [63]

His appeals for support from Pennsylvania were falling flat. Anderson writes that, while there is no record of the reply of the western Delaware, "they evidently gave the Delaware king enough assurances that he was able to withstand strong pressures from within his group to abandon Wyoming. He and his warriors settled in to await the Yankees' return." [64]

The anticipated battle never came. Instead, just before the settlers were scheduled to make their largest movement into the valley in the Spring of 1763, Teedyuscung was burned alive by agents hired by the Susquehanna Company. Wallace's account is as follows:

> On April 19, 1763, Teedyuscung was murdered. In the evening, as he lay asleep in his cabin (some say in a drunken stupor), the house was set afire from outside. He was burned to death within the flaming walls of the lodge which Brother Onas [the Pennsylvania government, with Quaker support] had built for him. Almost simultaneously the twenty surrounding dwellings burst into flames. Within a few hours the whole town of Wyoming lay in ashes. [65]

And so did the Delaware dream of a homeland.

Wallace leaves no doubt as to who was responsible. The Six Nations had no reason to kill Teedyuscung, since at the time of his death he was preparing to defend the Wyoming against Connecticut settlers, who the Six Nations also hoped to drive away. Wallace concludes:

> There does not seem to be much room for doubt that the Susquehanna Company was behind the murder of Teedyuscung and the remarkable simultaneous firing of the houses at Wyoming. Following his death, which occurred so conveniently for them, the charge was widely circulated that it was the Connecticut people who had murdered the Delaware "King." The Six Nations accused the Connecticut men. The Delawares themselves believed that the Yankees had committed the crime, enshrining Teedyuscung's memory in a verse of the Walum Olum [the historical narrative of the history of the Delaware]:
>
> *"But Tadeskung was chief in the east at Mahoning and bribed by the Yankwis: that he was burnt in his house, and many of our people were massacred at hickory (Lancaster) by the Land robbers Yankwis."* [66]

11. Epilogue: The Wyoming Valley origins of the 1763 Rebellion

Two weeks after Teedyuscung's death, the Odawa chief Pontiac launched an attack on the British military outpost at Detroit, Michigan and triggered the largest, pan-Native rebellion in the history of North America. [67] Pontiac's siege of Detroit triggered a rebellion spanning across multiple tribes that lasted three years. It resulted in the firing of Jeffrey Amherst as supreme military commander of North America, and resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,000 Native Americans, British soldiers and settlers. [68]

Fred Anderson writes that Pontiac's War "ignited more than 350 miles west of Wyoming at almost exactly the same time that Teedyuscung's assassins set fire to his cabin." He continues:

> The fuel for that larger conflagration lay in the incursions of backcountry settlers onto Indian lands and in Amherst's postconquest reforms in Indian diplomacy and trade, and the spark that set it off was struck when an obscure Ottawa chief organized an assault on the British garrison at Detroit. But what made this conflict unique among Indian wars of the colonial period—what ultimately combined a number of local attacks into an uprising that stretched from the Susquehanna to the Mississippi and from northern Michigan to the Ohio Valley—was a religious vision, which for the first time in American history enabled many Indian groups to act together. That spiritual message, interestingly enough, had emerged in the Susquehanna Valley as a series of Delaware prophets responded to the crisis that followed their people's dispossession by the Iroquois and the heirs of William Penn. [69]

Given Teedyuscung's remarkable political career, is it an accident that the political and spiritual preparations for the rebellion had originated within the Delaware tribe? Anderson explains the origins of the spiritual/political message in the struggle, at various points led by Teedyuscung, over the Delaware land in Pennsylvania:

> The earliest Delaware prophecies were purely nativist denunciations of alcohol as the substance by which Indians had been made dependent upon Europeans. Once the Delawares had been deprived of their lands by the Walking Purchase, however, the message of the prophets began to take on a political and

© World Socialist Web Site

> implicitly anti-Six Nations character. In the last years before the Seven Years War, a female prophet at Wyoming and two male preachers who lived farther up the Susquehanna's east branch began to elaborate on the earliest prophecies. [70]

These prophets were followed by Neolin, a western Delaware man who preached abstention from alcohol and trade with the settlers, and a return to traditional Native practices. [71] In this way the prophecies were of a different character than those of Teedyuscung, who as a modernizer sought to incorporate European technology as a means for protecting Native culture and elevating the Delaware people. But Neolin's preachments spread across the west and north under conditions of dire Native poverty, growing hostility to the British, land encroachments and the spread of terrible epidemics. Anderson writes, "the pan-Indian elements implicit in Neolin's prophecies began to furnish common ground for nativist resistance to the British." [72]

The rebellion succeeded at seizing dozens of outposts across the colonies ranging from present day Indiana through Michigan and Ohio as well as eastern Pennsylvania and New York. It was in the context of suppressing this rebellion that Amherst and the British carried out what may be the clearest indication of specific genocidal intent through the entire conquest of North America, by distributing blankets ridden with smallpox to groups of Natives attempting to negotiate with the British garrison at Fort Pitt.

Anderson writes: "Bewilderment at the Indians' success in capturing forts and defeating redcoat detachments, delay in understanding what was going on, inability to restore order once the rebellion's scope became clear—all these factors now helped promote a singular bloody-mindedness among the British commanders." [73]

On June 24, 1763, Delaware warriors approached the British military at Fort Pitt (present-day Pittsburgh) and its commanding officer Captain Simeon Ecuyer. They advised him to surrender and conduct negotiations. Ecuyer politely welcomed the Delaware representatives into the fort, told them he would not surrender, and offered them a gift for their soldiers: two blankets and a handkerchief deliberately infected with smallpox. [74]

The policy was supported by the highest representatives of the British crown in the colonies. Amherst, writing to another commander after Ecuyer had distributed the infected blankets, urged the distribution of smallpox-infected blankets. "We must Use Every Stratagem in our Power to Reduce them," Amherst wrote. To his junior officers Amherst declared that the Native Americans were "more nearly allied to the Brute than the Human Creation. I wish to hear of no prisoners, should any of the villains be met with arms. Could it be contrived to send the Small Pox among these disaffected tribes of Indians?" [75]

Amherst elaborated his views in a letter to William Johnson. "I am," he wrote:

> determined to go through with [the suppression of the rebellion] in such a manner that the whole race of Indians who have any connection with the English may see the folly and madness, as well as the ingratitude of setting themselves in opposition to a people from whom they have received so many benefits, and whose power is such as can in a very short time, make the Savages feel the utmost extremity of want, and render their pretended importance of very little effect. [76]

Another officer wrote to Amherst that the British must "extirpate that Vermine from a Country they have forfeited, and with it all Claim to the Rights of Humanity." Anderson wrote of this sordid affair: "Sanctioning the 'extirpation' of enemy populations by spreading smallpox among them had no precedent." [77]

This was the attitude of the leaders of the British Empire that the 1619 Project implies was the progressive force in North America at the time of the American Revolution.

In October, Teedyuscung's son, Captain Bull, launched a military assault on the Wyoming settlement of the Susquehanna settlers. The assault, part of the general Native uprising then spreading throughout the frontier, killed some 54 people, with Captain Bull later claiming to have killed 26 with his bare hands. [78] When the war party reached the town where Teedyuscung and supporters had been burned alive by the Susquehanna Company only six months earlier, they massacred 10 white settlers, roasting one woman over a fire and torturing nine men to death. When Thomas Penn, the proprietary leader, learned of the attack and its brutality, he replied: "I am concerned for the fate of those deluded Connecticut people, tho the consequence of their own folly." [79]

12. The fight for recognition today

The Delaware people who remain in Pennsylvania today have been waging a years-long fight to establish state tribal status, which the Democratic and Republican parties are opposing. Members of the tribe recently concluded a voyage down the Delaware River (also known by its original name, Lenape Sipu) to draw attention to the struggle of the Delaware people and to build support for official tribal recognition by the Pennsylvania government.

Damon C. Williams wrote in the *Bucks County Courier Times* on August 13, 2022: "Hundreds of years after they were forced from their ancestral home along the Delaware River, the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania is still fighting for perhaps the most precious resource of all. Recognition." [80]

Williams continues:

> Pennsylvania does not officially recognize the Lenape Nation or any Native American tribe, a fact that strikes to the very core of Lenape Nation member Adam Waterbear DePaul.
>
> "The fight for recognition has been incredibly disappointing so far. Pennsylvania is the only commonwealth to never recognize indigenous people, and we are trying to change that," DePaul added. "Right now, we are taking steps to become state recognized. But it's hard to say how that will turn out."
>
> Gaining state recognition is a step in the process to being recognized on the federal level, advocates say. That will require legislative efforts in Harrisburg. Efforts nearly 20 years ago failed, and in the current session in the Pennsylvania legislature, there isn't a bill submitted that directly deals with state recognition of Native American tribes. [81]

Recognition is not merely a formality. Williams quotes Douglas Miller, Executive Director of the Pennsbury Manor historical society:

> Federal recognition "comes with the ability to get federal financial aid for different elements," Miller said, adding that recognition also signifies that they are independent nations within our country. "It also deals with things such as repatriating their ancestors and reclaiming historical artifacts," said Miller, who has spent time with the Delawareans in Oklahoma. "So, non-federal groups like the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania are not allowed to receive the physical remains of their ancestors dug up by archeologists. It's all of that, plus federal funding and tax relief."

© World Socialist Web Site

Democrats and Republicans have long rejected attempts at state recognition on the grounds that they believed the Indigenous merely wanted to build a casino. Even after the Pennsylvania Lenape formally stated they would not build a casino, the state government has still refused to grant recognition. Williams quotes Villanova University Professor Paul Rosier, who said: "For the Lenape, their fight for recognition would provide funds for scholarships and cultural programming as well as acknowledge the Lenape's role in the creation of Pennsylvania; Lenape place names such as Conshohocken and Manayunk dot Pennsylvania's map. Delaware and New Jersey have extended official recognition to Lenape groups, but not Pennsylvania, which benefited the most from fraudulent treaties." [82]

In 2021, NPR-affiliate WHYY contacted Democratic Governor Tom Wolf to ask whether the administration would support recognition:

> In a statement to WHYY News, a spokesperson for Gov. Tom Wolf was noncommittal on whether he would throw his full support behind the possibility of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania receiving state recognition.
>
> "Gov. Wolf believes that diversity makes our state stronger and that all cultures should be respected and appreciated. The state legislature would need to pass legislation for the commonwealth to officially recognize a tribe, unless it is recognized by the federal government. If such a bill reaches the governor's desk, he will give it serious consideration," the spokesperson said. [83]

It was far easier for Wolf and the Democratic and Republican parties in the state legislature to pass a massive corporate tax cut earlier this year, lowering the rate corporations pay in Pennsylvania from 10 percent to 5 percent. When it comes to handing out billions of dollars to Wall Street and corporate America, there is agreement between the two parties, but when it comes to recognizing the forced removal of the Lenape people, nothing can be done.

13. Conclusion

It is impossible to draw simplistic, blanket conclusions from the events described here. This vindicates Friedrich Engels' admonition of historians who "divide men who act in history into noble and ignoble and then finds that as a rule the noble are defrauded and the ignoble are victorious." [84] The 1619 Project's claim that "blacks fought alone" does not stand up to scrutiny.

The British Empire, and then the American bourgeoisie, carried out the violent and murderous forced removal of the Native Americans of North America from their land. Every rising colonial power participated in its share of horrific crimes. The transition from the mercantilist to the properly capitalist order was carried out through the dispossession, appropriation, cultural destruction, and killing of millions. As Marx wrote in *Capital*, "If money comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek, then capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt." [85]

The American Revolution was among the most progressive events in world history. In the words of Marx, it "sounded the tocsin for the European middle class" and paved the way for the French Revolution of 1789-94. The American bourgeois revolutionaries, in rebelling against the British Empire, enshrined in their founding documents the profoundly revolutionary idea that political authority derived not from the divine right of kings, but from the rights of the people.

But the revolution produced no positive change in the conditions or rights of the Native people. The revolution was bourgeois, it unleashed tremendous economic power and facilitated the rise of capitalist property relations. This was a progressive historical development. But in relation to the land question, it introduced a liberalization of the buying and selling real property. [86] This process made a target of the Native people who occupied the land west of the Appalachian Mountains and a continuation of the policy of the British Empire toward the Natives. In 1782, for example, Pennsylvania colonials attacked and massacred 96 Delaware Moravians at a convent in eastern Ohio. Many of the victims had been in the Wyoming Valley before removal. Their non-violent principles meant they were slaughtered by the Americans without fighting back. The University of Scranton's Native History of the Wyoming Valley Project describes what took place:

> On the night of March 7th, 1782, the natives stayed up all night praying and singing hymns while the American troops desecrated the settlement and got drunk on communion wine. The next morning, the American militiamen took 96 men, women, and children to "killing houses" for their slaughter. The women and children were brought to one building, and the men to another. They tied up, tortured, and raped the women and even some young girls. They tied up and tortured the men as well. Finally, they killed all of them – 28 men, 29 women, and 39 children. As they were suffering, the natives reportedly prayed, consoled one another, and begged for their lives, but they did not fight back as they were fully committed to Christian pacificism. [87]

The British Empire did not pose a "progressive" alternative to this bloody history, as its treatment of the Delaware shows. In the Proclamation of 1763, at the end of the period considered here, the British Empire adopted a policy of prohibiting colonial settlement west of the Appalachians. The representatives of the monarchy did not issue the proclamation out of kindness toward the Native peoples whom they had been deliberately infecting with smallpox only months earlier, nor did the policy rest on any acknowledgment that the Indigenous had any "rights" at all.

At various times over the prior 150 years, the British had encouraged or restricted western settlement depending on the status of the competition with the French and their relationship with various Native tribes and differing colonial interests. At various times throughout the Seven Years War, colonial settlers rebelled against British attempts to conscript them into war against the Natives. [88]

By 1763, the empire was more interested in enshrining the new status quo established by the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Seven Years War and set new North American zones of influence for the French, British and Spanish. The British, who emerged from this treaty stronger than ever, having just established domination over India and the Caribbean, had every reason to restrict settlement and forestall further conflict so as not to impede the lucrative fur trade.

With the outbreak of the American Revolution, the British continued a policy of alliance-building, using the Natives as pawns to suppress the American Revolution just as they had turned the indigenous population against the French at the end of the Seven Years War, only to turn against them again. But to claim that this temporary war measure testifies to the "progressive" role of the empire in the revolution would be as great a fallacy as the claim that Lord Dunmore's proclamation of 1775 made the British a force for abolition and the Americans a force for slavery. It is not a matter of passing judgment on those Native Americans and those slaves who aligned themselves with the Empire against the revolution in the hope of securing freedom. One need look no further than the horrific treatment of the First Nations in Loyalist Canada over the last 250 years to understand how the monarchy repaid those who tried to serve the crown.

The closer to the modern era, the worse the American crimes against the

© World Socialist Web Site

Indigenous become. The genocidal wars fought by the US government on behalf of the corporations, cattle ranchers and land owners in the Mountain West in the post-Civil War period are uniquely horrific and unjustified. In these "Indian Wars" of the 1860s-80s, the industrial bourgeoisie practiced the brutal methods it would unleash across the world with the eruption of American imperialism in the Spanish American War of 1898. And throughout this time, the British were carrying out unspeakable crimes against the indigenous populations of their remaining colonies, including in Australia and New Zealand, where "frontier wars" involving the racist massacre of the aboriginal population took place well into the imperialist epoch, occurring as late as the 1930s.

While the bourgeoisie today pretends to recognize the crimes of the past, the abysmal poverty rates which dominate in the Indigenous population in contemporary America compound the tragedy. Everyone recognizes the seizure of Manhattan by the Dutch was a great scam, but is it any less of a scam that the average household income for Native Americans in 2022 is only $23,000? According to the latest data on life expectancy released August 31, 2022, life expectancy for Native Americans has fallen *six and a half years* since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. The average life expectancy for Indigenous Americans is now 65 years, the same as the national average for all Americans in 1944.

Having removed the Native people from the land, now the ruling class, through the *New York Times*, wishes to remove them from history by claiming "blacks fought alone" and that the British Empire was a progressive force on the continent. The reality of history, as we have shown, is far richer, more tragic, and, we should add, interesting.

A final point must be made about the *New York Times*' declaration that "blacks fought alone" against oppression. Only politically reactionary aims can be served by presenting American history as a zero-sum game where populations are forced to compete with one another to establish status as "most exploited."

The exploitation of any one section of the population under the weight of political reaction does not *diminish* the exploitation suffered by another section. The immense historical weight of the crime of slavery does not *detract* from the ruthless exploitation of the Native Americans. Neither historical fact must detract from an understanding of the immense exploitation that the immigrants of Ireland confronted while escaping famine, or the horrific racism the immigrants of China confronted to escape the British Opium Wars. Recognizing the sacrifice of the Mexican who fought the Marines in the 1840s does not minimize the struggle of millions of Koreans and Vietnamese who fought the Marines in the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

And none of this diminishes both the history of exploitation and courageous struggle waged by tens of millions of American workers of all races who today confront unprecedented rises to the cost of living amid record levels of social inequality. As complex as the history is, the political point is simple: If one section of workers fights imperialism alone, they will be crushed and their cause defeated. If the working class of the entire world rises up *together* regardless of race, there is no repressive power which can stop it.

Notes:

[1] This is the year given for the removal of the last homes of the Delaware by Canadian anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace (1923-2015). Of course, not all Lenape people left at this time. The Pennsylvania Lenape to this day remain a presence in eastern Pennsylvania, and in a 2008 article, former Tribal Secretary Shelley DePaul said, "We are still here, carrying on the traditions of our ancestors in a way that not only preserves our history, but also makes sense and restores balance in our world today. We are, indeed, 'Living Lenape' and not just a part of history. It will be very thrilling indeed, for all of our children, to see our own culture and history unfold through the stories and artifacts of our people and to see them displayed alongside many of the other great cultures of the world." Abigail Selden, "Fulfilling a Prophecy: The Past and Present of the Lenape of Pennsylvania," *Expedition Magazine* (Philadelphia: Penn Museum, 2008).

[2] See the website of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, where a regular schedule of contemporary events is posted and updated. Available at: https://www.lenape-nation.org/.

[3] Anthony F. C. Wallace, *King of the Delawares: Teedyuscung 1700-1763*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1949), 265.

[4] Id. at 19, 31, 49, 204-206.

[5] Id. at 103.

[6] Id. at 1.

[7] Id. at 258.

[8] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America*(New York, NY: Random House, 2000), 529-34.

[9] Wallace at 7-9.

[10] Gordon Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, NY: Random House), 49.

[11] Id. at 2-5.

[12] Id. at 18-19.

[13] Id. at 10, 19-20.

[14] Charles Michael Downing, *Robert Hunter Morris and the Politics of Indian Affairs in Pennsylvania, 1754-1755* (Williamsburg, VA: College of William & Mary, 1995), 27.

[15] Wallace at 20-22.

[16] Id. at 22-25; Anderson at 165.

[17] Wallace at 24-26.

[18] Id. at 31-34, 39, 47.

[19] Id. at 35.

[20] Id. at 49-55.

[21] Anderson at 50-66.

[22] Wallace at 57-58.

[23] Dowling, at 4, n. 2.

[24] Id. at 26.

[25] Id.

[26] Id. at 15.

[27] Id. at 16.

[28] Id. at 17.

[29] Id. at 18.

[30] Id.

[31] Id. at 28.

[32] G. B. Warden, "The Proprietary Group in Pennsylvania, 1754-64," *The William and Mary Quarterly* vol. 21, no. 3, July 1964, 369.

[33] Id. at 384.

[34] Id. at 369.

[35] Dowling at 31.

[36] Id.

[37] Id.

[38] Francis P. Jennings, "The Delaware Interregnum," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 89. no. 2, April 1965, 174.

[39] Downing at 45.

[40] Vernon L. Parrington, *The Colonial Mind: 1620-1800*, (New York, NY: Harcourt Press, 1927), 136.

[41] Id. at 136.

[42] Id. at 137.

[43] Id. at 136.

[44] Id. at 137.

[45] Id. at 137-138.

[46] Id. at 144-145.

[47] Wallace at 65.

© World Socialist Web Site

[48] Id. at 66.

[49] For the following paragraphs, *see* Wallace's chapter on the fear that predominated among the Indigenous Delaware during this harrowing period, at 87-102.

[50] Id. at 83.

[51] Robert Morris, Declaration of War against Delaware, published April 14, 1756. Available at: https://archive.ph/20140207020013/http://faculty.simpson.edu/nick.proctor/www/1756/war.htm#selection-235.0-251.1.

[52] Wallace at 104.

[53] Id. at 108.

[54] Id. at 95.

[55] Id. at 126.

[56] Id. at 144.

[57] Id. at 46-47.

[58] Id. at 176-177, 184-187, 202-203.

[59] Id. at 206.

[60] Id. at 232-233.

[61] The impact of Amherst's reform is described in detail in Anderson's chapter "Amherst's Reforms and Pontiac's Rebellion" at 535-547.

[62] Wallace at 249-250, 254.

[63] Anderson at 533.

[64] Id.

[65] Wallace at 258-59.

[66] Id. at 260.

[67] Anderson at 538.

[68] Id.

[69] Id. at 535.

[70] Id. at 535-536.

[71] Id. at 536.

[72] Id. at 537.

[73] Id. at 542.

[74] Id. at 541.

[75] Id. at 542.

[76] Id. at 543.

[77] Id. at 543.

[78] Wallace at 264.

[79] Id.

[80] Damon C. Williams, "Lenape tribe brings treaty, fight for recognition to Bucks County during Delaware River journey," *Bucks County Courier Times*, August 13, 2022. Available at: https://www.buckscountycouriertimes.com/story/news/2022/08/14/lenape-nation-pennsylvania-delaware-river-journey-pennsylvania-recognition/65373004007/.

[81] Id.

[82] Id.

[83] Kenny Cooper, "'We just want to be welcomed back': The Lenape seek a return home," WHYY, July 30, 2021. Available at: https://whyy.org/articles/we-just-want-to-be-welcomed-back-the-lenape-seek-a-return-home/

[84] Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, 1886.

[85] Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* Vol. 1, 1867.

[86] William E. Nelson, *Americanization of the Common Law: The Impact of Legal Change on Massachusetts Society, 1760-1830*, (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 159-160.

[87] *Collapse*, University of Scranton, Native History of the Wyoming Valley Project. Accessed August 28, 2022. Available at: https://digitalprojects.scranton.edu/s/native-history-wyoming-valley/page/collapse.

[88] *See* Anderson at 287-288.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site