

INTRODUCTION



Some of the best historical quotations, like the best stories, improve in the telling. Martin Luther did not tell the Diet of Worms in 1521, 'Here I stand; I can do no other', but spoke much less pithily. Marie Antoinette did not say in 1789 'Let them eat cake' (these words in fact appear in an anecdote in the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau). It was a British tabloid headline, What Crisis? during the then prime minister James Callaghan, who came out with 'Crisis, What Crisis?' during Britain's 'winter of discontent' of 1978–9. And the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai never suggested to the US secretary of state Henry Kissinger in 1972 that it was 'too early to tell' what might be the impact of the French Revolution – he was actually referring to France's 'événements' of May 1968.

Misquotations, as much as true quotations, can act as what the biologist Richard Dawkins called 'memes' – heritable units of cultural memory encapsulating a hinterland of knowledge, each one competing for our attention. The capacity of quotation to bear this weight of meaning is, perhaps, just one good reason among several for a collection of excerpts describing or reflecting on notable events in the past, and placed in their historical context.

History Day by Day offers a genuine quotation from or about history for every day of the calendar year. Each quotation consists of words actually spoken on that day, or relating to events that took place on it. Some of the quotations refer to famous or notorious anniversaries – 6 June, 1 July, 14 July, 11 September, to name but a few – others to less immediately familiar but still significant events, from the ancient world to the twenty-first century.

History Day by Day includes some the most celebrated of all 'historical quotations', from Caesar's cry of '*Alea iacta est!*' as he crossed the River Rubicon in 49 BC, to Marx's and Engels' 'Workers of the world, unite!' in *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848. But here I present these words in the larger context in which they were originally placed. The sound-bites of history may be memorable, but they become far more revealing when their preceding and succeeding paragraphs are also read, and when their historical context is fully understood.

As an anthology of original source materials – some of them key documents, others the reports of eyewitnesses, or written shortly after the event – *History Day by Day* offers a shortcut to the heart of history. Diary entries and memoirs,

letters and interviews, *bons mots* and sound-bites, narratives and journalistic accounts, speeches and sermons, official reports and briefings; the entries selected are as wide-ranging in form as they are in geography and timescale. In some cases two disparate accounts throw contrasting light on the same happening. They are limited only by the need to pin the event – or the quote – to a specific date in the calendar.

It is important to add a health warning: not every entry in *History Day by Day* should be taken at face value. Some of the statements here are self-serving, others deluded. And some may be accurate as far as they go, but are still partial accounts that more recent historians have reassessed in the light of a fuller understanding of their historical context. Yet as the raw material of history they remain vital and fascinating. The great British scholar G.M. Young once advised young historians to 'Read until you can hear the people talking' – and it is my hope that the 366 extracts in *History Day by Day* provide a wealth of opportunities to do just that.

Peter Furtado
Oxford
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JANUARY



1 JANUARY

THE DEBUT OF *THE TIMES*, 1785

To the Public

To bring out a new paper in the present day, when so many others are already established and confirmed in the public opinion, is certainly an arduous undertaking; and no-one can be more fully aware of its difficulties than I am; I, nevertheless, entertain very sanguine hopes that the nature of the plan on which this paper will be conducted will ensure it a moderate share at least of public favour; but my pretensions to encouragement, however strong they may appear in my own eyes, must be tried before a tribunal not liable to be blinded by self-opinion; to that tribunal I shall now, as I am bound to do, submit these pretensions with deference, and the public will judge whether they are well or ill founded.

...A paper that... by steering clear of extremes, hit the happy medium, has long been expected by the public. Such, it is intended, shall be the UNIVERSAL REGISTER, the great objects of which will be to facilitate the commercial intercourse between the different parts of the community through the channel of advertisements, to record the principal occurrences of the times, and to abridge the account of debates during the sitting of Parliament.

EDITORIAL, *DAILY UNIVERSAL REGISTER*, 1 JANUARY 1785.



The former underwriter John Walter launched his newspaper, under the title *Daily Universal Register*, on the first day of 1785. Exactly three years later he renamed it *The Times* and broadened its appeal to include society gossip, something that landed him in Newgate Prison for two years after libelling the Prince of Wales. By the 19th century its independent viewpoint and innovative technology had made it the leading newspaper in Britain, campaigning for Parliamentary Reform before 1832, and for army reform during the Crimean War of 1854–6, a conflict that showcased the journalism of *Times* reporter W.H. Russell (*see* 25 October). *The Times* was nicknamed the 'Thunderer', originally a self-description ('We thundered out the other day...') after an editorial challenged the verdict of an inquest into the death of the peer Lord Graves in 1830.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

1863 US President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation is issued.

1900 The Australian Commonwealth is established.

1993 Czechoslovakia splits into the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

2 JANUARY

THE CAPITULATION OF MUSLIM SPAIN, 1492

The Emirate of Granada was Islam's last stronghold on the Iberian peninsula. It finally surrendered to the forces of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile on 2 January 1492. Having besieged Sultan Boabdil in Granada since the spring of 1491, the recently married monarchs received his surrender in person, and in recognition of their victory the pope awarded them the title of 'Most Catholic Kings'.

The Christian 'reconquest' of Muslim Spain – the *Reconquista* – had been spread over four centuries, though for much of that time a policy of *convivencia*, or peaceful co-existence, had been practised, and the words of the capitulation document in 1492 echo the tolerance of former centuries.



That both great and small should be perfectly secure in their persons, families, and properties.

That their laws should be preserved as they were before.

That their mosques should remain as they were in the times of Islam.

That no Christian should enter the house of a Muslim, or insult him in any way.

That the Christians who had embraced Islam should not be compelled to relinquish it and adopt their former creed.

That no Christian should be allowed to peer over the wall, or into the house of a Muslim or enter a mosque.

That any Muslim choosing to travel or reside among the Christians should be perfectly secure in his person and property.

CAPITULATION AGREEMENT, GRANADA, SPAIN, 1492.



The reality of what was to come was very different, for a resurgent, more aggressive form of Christianity was on the rise in Spain. The Alhambra Decree, also in 1492, ordered the expulsion of Jews from Spain; just four years later, the remaining Muslim population of the former emirate was forced to convert to Christianity, and in 1609 the 'Moriscos', as they were called, were expelled from Spain entirely.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

AD 366 Barbarian Alemanni invade the Roman Empire across the Rhine.

1905 Russo-Japanese War: Port Arthur falls to the Japanese.

1945 WWII: heavy Allied bombing of Nuremberg takes place.

3 JANUARY

THE SIEGE OF SIDNEY STREET, 1911

The street had been cleared of all onlookers, but a group of detectives slunk along the walls on the anarchists' side of the street at such an angle that they were kept safe from the slanting fire of the enemy. They had to keep very close to the wall because Peter and his pals were dead shots and maintained something like a barrage fire with their automatics. Any detective or policeman who showed himself would have been sniped in a second, and these men were out to kill.

...In the top floor room... we observed a gas jet burning, and presently some of us noticed the white ash of burnt paper fluttering out of a chimney pot.

...They were setting fire to the house... The window curtains were first to catch alight, then volumes of black smoke, through which little tongues of flame licked up, poured through the empty window frames. They must have used paraffin... for the whole house was burning with amazing rapidity.

...A moment later I had one quick glimpse of a man's arm with a pistol in his hand. He fired and there was a quick flash. At the same moment a volley of shots rang out from the guardsmen opposite. It is certain that they killed the man for afterwards they found his body with a bullet through the skull. It was not long afterwards that the roof fell in with an upward rush of flame and smoke. The inside of the house from top to bottom was a furnace.

The detectives, with revolvers ready, now advanced in Indian file. One of them ran forward and kicked at the front door. It fell in... Peter the Painter and his fellow bandits were charred cinders in the bonfire they had made.

PHILIP GIBBS, *WEEKLY GRAPHIC*, JANUARY 1911.



Journalist Philip Gibbs observed the violent siege of a flat at Sidney Street, Mile End, London, on 3 January 1911. It followed the shooting of two policemen in December by thieves, believed to be anarchist revolutionaries; led by a Latvian Jewish immigrant known as Peter the Painter, they were tracked to the East End terraced house. Controversially, Home Secretary Winston Churchill arrived on the scene. He called in Scots Guards, and a gun battle ensued. Eventually, the house caught fire, but Churchill refused to allow the fire brigade to put out the flames, and two charred bodies were found in the debris.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

1521 Pope Leo X excommunicates Martin Luther.

1946 William Joyce, the pro-Nazi broadcaster 'Lord Haw-Haw', is hanged for treason.

1959 Alaska becomes the 49th US state.

4 JANUARY

THE DEFENCE OF PARLIAMENTARY INDEPENDENCE, 1642

May it please Your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here.

WILLIAM LENTHALL, 4 JANUARY 1642.



This dignified statement of the independence of the House of Commons – directed at the monarch – was also an affirmation of the authority of the Speaker, a position then held by William Lenthall. It was occasioned when Charles I went in person, at the head of a band of soldiers, to arrest five MPs – John Pym, John Hampden, Denzil Holles, Sir Arthur Haselrig and William Strode – and one member of the House of Lords, Lord Mandeville, all of whom he believed to have been stirring popular opposition to his rule. The king marched into the Chamber, sat in the Speaker's chair and, on seeing none of his intended victims, commented: 'I see the birds have flown.' When he commanded Speaker Lenthall to locate them, he refused. Up to that point, Lenthall had sought a compromise between the parties, and six months earlier had argued 'no peace to the king, no prosperity to the people'. But this attempt to assert royal authority was a step too far. Shortly afterwards Charles I moved his court and government to Oxford and called his own parliament there, a move that led inexorably to civil war (see 14 June).

William Lenthall remained Speaker for much of the so-called Long Parliament, and survived Colonel Pride's purge (1648) of members opposed to putting King Charles on trial, which reduced its membership to a 'Rump'. Following the period of Cromwellian rule, and its intermittent, shortlived and fractious parliaments, Lenthall reluctantly resumed his Speakership when the Long Parliament was re-formed in 1659. Thus he took a role in the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Instead of a tomb to glorify himself, he insisted on a plain plaque inscribed *vermis sum*, 'I am a worm'.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

1885 The first successful appendectomy is carried out, in the USA.

1959 The Soviet spacecraft *Luna 1* flies close to the Moon.

1965 The death of the US-born British poet T.S. Eliot.

5 JANUARY

THE DEATH OF 'SILENT CAL', 1933

How can you tell?

DOROTHY PARKER, 5 JANUARY 1933.



The poet and wit Dorothy Parker was unimpressed on hearing that Calvin Coolidge (1873–1933), the most laconic of US presidents, sometimes called 'Silent Cal', had died at home after a heart attack. Vice-President Coolidge had been sworn into the top job on his family Bible by his father, a Vermont storekeeper, following the death in office of President Warren Harding in August 1923. The sense of homeliness and lack of ostentation stayed with him throughout his career – qualities out of kilter with the materialist flamboyance of American high society in the 1920s. Yet he won an easy victory in the 1924 presidential election, defeating his Democratic Party challenger John W. Davis.

According to his adviser Walter Lippmann, people liked Coolidge for doing nothing:

This active inactivity suits the mood and certain of the needs of the country admirably. It suits all the business interests which want to be let alone... And it suits all those who have become convinced that government in this country has become dangerously complicated and top-heavy.

He applied the same principle to his dealings with people, once explaining: 'Many times I say only "yes" or "no" to people. Even that is too much. It winds them up for twenty minutes more.' According to Dorothy Parker, on one occasion a woman sitting next to Coolidge at a dinner party told him she had bet that she could get him to say at least three words. He quietly replied: 'You lose.'

His innate conservatism made him reluctant to intervene at a federal level, whether it was to initiate projects of aid for farmers or to invest in public works. History has laid blame at his door for leaving America unprepared for the depth and duration of the Great Depression that followed the Wall Street Crash (see 29 October). He left office in 1929 and settled into a – naturally – quiet retirement.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

1066 The death of England's Anglo-Saxon king Edward the Confessor.

1477 Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, is killed at the Battle of Nancy.

1941 The British aviator Amy Johnson drowns in the Thames Estuary.

6 JANUARY

ROOSEVELT'S THIRD INAUGURAL ADDRESS, 1941

This is no time for any of us to stop thinking about the social and economic problems which are the root cause of the social revolution which is today a supreme factor in the world. For there is nothing mysterious about the foundations of a healthy and strong democracy.

The basic things expected by our people of their political and economic systems are simple. They are:

Equality of opportunity for youth and for others.

Jobs for those who can work.

Security for those who need it.

The ending of special privilege for the few.

The preservation of civil liberties for all.

The enjoyment – the enjoyment of the fruits of scientific progress in a wider and constantly rising standard of living.

These are the simple, the basic things that must never be lost sight of in the turmoil and unbelievable complexity of our modern world. The inner and abiding strength of our economic and political systems is dependent upon the degree to which they fulfill these expectations.

...I have called for personal sacrifice, and I am assured of the willingness of almost all Americans to respond to that call. A part of the sacrifice means the payment of more money in taxes. In my budget message I will recommend that a greater portion of this great defense program be paid for from taxation than we are paying for today. No person should try, or be allowed to get rich out of the program, and the principle of tax payments in accordance with ability to pay should be constantly before our eyes to guide our legislation.

If the Congress maintains these principles the voters, putting patriotism ahead of pocketbooks, will give you their applause.

In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression – everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way – everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants – everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbour – anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called 'new order' of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.

To that new order we oppose the greater conception – the moral order. A good society is able to face schemes of world domination and foreign revolutions alike without fear.

...This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women, and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God. Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights and keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose.

To that high concept there can be no end save victory.

US PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, 6 JANUARY 1941.



Franklin D. Roosevelt's visionary statement of freedom, delivered as part of his third Inaugural Address, was intended to encourage the US Congress to pass the Lend-Lease Bill, which would commit the United States to materially support the fight against Hitler – at a time when Britain was the last man standing against Nazi Germany, its cities and factories bearing the brunt of the night-time bombing of the Blitz. Up until his successful election for a third term, Roosevelt had had to tread carefully; although personally disposed to put the United States' considerable weight behind the struggle to defeat Nazi aggression, he was battling for the presidency in a context of widespread popular isolationism.

But victory liberated his voice, and unleashed the idealism and determination evident in his address. The universal terms in which he framed 'freedom' also inspired the foundation and charter of the United Nations a few years later.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

1066 Harold Godwinson is crowned king of England.

1540 Henry VIII of England marries Anne of Cleves, his fourth wife.

1919 The death of Theodore Roosevelt, 26th US president.

7 JANUARY

ENGLAND LOSES CALAIS, 1558

When I am dead and opened, you shall find 'Calais' lying within my heart.

QUEEN MARY I, DYING WORDS (ATTRIBUTED), NOVEMBER 1558.



By the mid-16th century, the port town of Calais had been an English-governed outpost on the European mainland for hundreds of years. Henry VIII had found Calais a convenient launching pad both for military adventures and diplomatic initiatives, and Francis II of France had met him, and his future queen Anne Boleyn, there in 1532. Now, this last remaining enclave fell to the Duc de Guise in January 1558, never to be recovered. England's Catholic queen Mary I had allowed her country to become embroiled in the war between her husband Philip II of Spain and Henri II of France. There had been successes, including the Anglo-Spanish capture of the town of St Quentin in August 1557, after which the Earl of Pembroke's army had returned home to spend the winter. But the loss of Calais was a devastating blow to the national psyche, recorded by one ordinary Londoner, Henry Machyn, as 'the heaviest tidings... that ever was heard of'.

Writing about Mary's death in November 1558, Raphael Holinshed, the Elizabethan historian whose enthusiastic Protestantism inclined him to say little that was favourable about Mary, was careful to ascribe her famous words to eye-witnesses. He described how, on her deathbed, 'Bloody Mary' had admitted being troubled by twin losses, those of King Philip, whom she had not seen since his return to Spain in July 1557, and Calais.

After the loss of Calais, Mary's successor, her younger sister Elizabeth I (*see* 15 January), accepted that England could not reassert a permanent presence across the Channel, although later in her reign she supported military expeditions to aid the Protestant Dutch in their revolt against Catholic Spanish rule. She preferred to expand English influence on a global scale, encouraging many trading and exploratory ventures beyond Europe, sowing the seeds of empire.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

1536 The death of Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first wife.

1610 Galileo discovers three of Jupiter's moons.

1927 A London–New York telephone service begins to operate.

8 JANUARY

THE BATTLE OF ASHDOWN, 871

Roused by this calamitous defeat at Reading, the Christians, in shame and indignation, within four days, assembled all their forces, and again encountered the pagan army at a place called Ashdune which means the 'Hill of the Ash'...

Now the Christians had determined that King Ethelred, with his men, should attack the two pagan kings, but that his brother Alfred, with his troops, should take the chance of war against the two earls. Things being so arranged, the king remained a long time in prayer, and the pagans came up rapidly to fight. Then Alfred, though possessing a subordinate authority, could no longer support the troops of the enemy, unless he retreated or charged upon them without waiting for his brother. At length he bravely led his troops against the hostile army...

...The pagans occupied the higher ground, and the Christians came up from below. There was also a single thorn-tree, of stunted growth, and we have with our own eyes seen it. Around this tree the opposing armies came together with loud shouts from all sides, the one party to pursue their wicked course, the other to fight for their lives, their dearest ties, and their country. And when both armies had fought long and bravely, at last the pagans, by the divine judgment, were no longer able to bear the attacks of the Christians, and having lost great part of their army, took to a disgraceful flight. One of their two kings, and five earls were there slain, together with many thousand pagans, who fell on all sides, covering with their bodies the whole plain of Ashdune... The Christians followed, slaying all they could reach, until it became dark.

ASSER, *LIFE OF ALFRED* (9TH CENTURY).



The Battle of Ashdown, on the Berkshire Downs, represented the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon fightback – of Asser's 'Christians' – against the 'pagan' Danes, who had already conquered East Anglia. Prince Alfred demonstrated his military ardour, in contrast to his more cautious older brother, King Ethelred of Wessex. Within three months, Ethelred was dead and Alfred was king. During the long struggle with the Danes that lay ahead, Alfred's statesmanship and military prowess would justify his enduring epithet of 'The Great'.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

1815 US forces defeat the British in the Battle of New Orleans.

1886 The Severn Railway Tunnel opens in England.

1959 General de Gaulle becomes the first president of the French Fifth Republic.

9 JANUARY

THE PROBLEM OF THE SUDAN, 1884

No one who has been in a Turkish province... will need to be told why the people of the Sudan have risen in revolt against the Khedive [the Egyptian ruler]... Oppression begat discontent; discontent necessitated an increase of the armed force at the disposal of the authorities; this increase of the armed force involved an increase of expenditure, which again was attempted to be met by increasing taxation, and that still further increased the discontent... That the people were justified in rebelling nobody who knows the treatment to which they were subjected will attempt to deny. Their cries were absolutely unheeded at Cairo... and they rallied round the Mahdi [Muhammad Ahmad], who exhorted them to revolt against the Turkish yoke. I am convinced that it is an entire mistake to regard the Mahdi as in any sense a religious leader: he personifies popular discontent... The movement is not religious, but an outbreak of despair...

During the three years that I wielded full powers in the Sudan I taught the natives that they had a right to exist... I had taught them something of the meaning of liberty and justice, and accustomed them to a higher ideal of government than that with which they had previously been acquainted. As soon as I had gone... a population which had begun to appreciate something like decent government was flung back to suffer the worst excesses of Turkish rule.

GENERAL CHARLES GORDON, *PALL MALL GAZETTE*, 9 JANUARY 1884.



General Charles George Gordon (1833–85) had been governor-general for the British-Egyptian-dominated Sudan during 1877–80. His interview with the journalist W.T. Stead for the *Pall Mall Gazette* gave him a platform to present his views on the Sudan, now under the inept rule of the Ottoman Khedive of Egypt. It resulted in a popular clamour for Gordon's return to the Sudan, and the British government acquiesced. By then, the Sudan was in tumult from the rebellion raised by the Islamistic-nationalist forces of the 'Mahdi' (Muhammad Ahmad). On 26 January 1885, while attempting to organize the evacuation of Khartoum, Gordon was killed by Mahdist rebels, an event that shocked public opinion in Britain, and which would redefine 'Chinese Gordon' for posterity as 'Gordon of Khartoum'.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

1799 The British prime minister William Pitt the Younger introduces income tax.

1873 The death of the former French emperor Napoleon III.

1969 The Anglo-French supersonic airliner *Concorde* makes its first test flight.

10 JANUARY

THE CROSSING OF THE RUBICON, 49 BC

When the news came that the interposition of the tribunes in his [Julius Caesar's] favour had been utterly rejected, he sent forward some cohorts secretly, to prevent any suspicion; and to keep up appearances, he attended the public games and examined the model of a fencing school which he proposed building, then, as usual, sat down to table with a large company of friends.

After sunset some mules were put in his carriage and he set out privately, with a very small retinue. It grew dark and he lost his way until a guide led him on foot through some narrow paths, and he reached the road again. Coming with his troops on the banks of the Rubicon, which was the frontier of his province, he halted and, revolving in his mind the importance of the step he meditated, he turned to those about him, saying: 'Still we can retreat! But once we pass this little bridge, nothing is left but to fight.'

As he hesitated, a man of noble mien and graceful aspect appeared close by, and played a pipe. Some shepherds came to listen, as did soldiers, including some trumpeters. The man snatched a trumpet and ran to the river with it; then, sounding the Advance, crossed to the other side. Caesar cried out, 'Let us go where the omens of the Gods and the crimes of our enemies summon us! The die is now cast!'

He marched his army over the river; then he showed them the tribunes of the Plebs, who had come from Rome to meet him, and in their presence, called on the troops to pledge him their fidelity.

SUETONIUS, *THE TWELVE CAESARS*, AD 121.



In 49 BC Julius Caesar, the triumphant conqueror-governor of Cisalpine Gaul (which included what is now northern Italy), found himself in conflict with his erstwhile political collaborator Pompey and the Roman Senate. They ordered Caesar to resign and return to Rome to stand trial. On hearing the news, on or around 10 January, his response was to lead his army across the Rubicon, a small river – flowing into the Adriatic – which marked the southern boundary of Cisalpine Gaul; this action was tantamount to a declaration of war. The ensuing civil war led to Pompey's death and to Caesar's triumph, and ultimately to the downfall of the Roman Republic.

ALSO ON THIS DAY

1840 The Penny Post is introduced in Britain.

1863 The first line of the London Underground (the Metropolitan Railway) opens.

1946 The UN General Assembly meets for the first time.