

FAIR LAWN

MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE VIII

2021

Special Committee:

The Court of King Edward III

Chairs:

Kasey Murray, Nafees Shaheed, Lauren Wilner



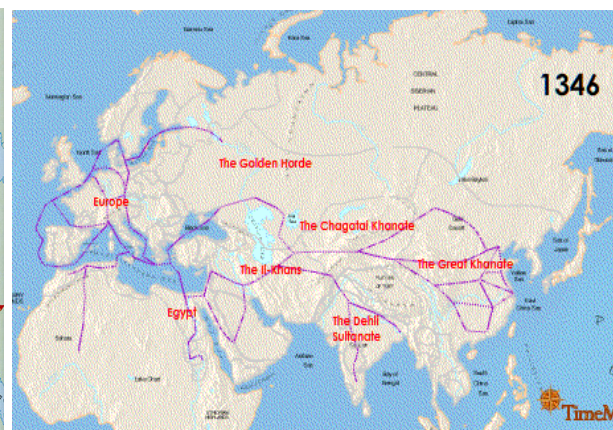
Topic: The Bubonic Plague

Introduction:

Greetings delegates. A spiteful, sneaky sickness hath swept the nation, a grave danger presented at our doorstep. Our year beith **1348**, on this crisp **fall** morning, we enter our debate. Anon we face grave peril: the Black Death hath revealed itself to have infiltrated our ranks, wreaking havoc upon vast expanses of our precious lands, a disease unnethe survived. Be it God's divine wrath or a foe unseen, thilke evil must be struck down as mightily as our King strikes down his French enemies. Today, a team of our King's most trusted fellows hath assembled to quell thilke raging storm. We kin not why thilke illness hath appeared nor how we moot expel it from our lands, but our effort in thilke session henceforth is to decide what measures we shall set in place anon. We must defeat thilke perilous foe, for the sake of our lives, our lands, and our beloved King. Long may Edward III reign!

Origins of the Plague:

The Bubonic Plague originated on the Eastern shores of Russia and was carried by infected fleas that traveled on rats. These flea-carrying rats made their way onto cargo ships and eventually traveled over trade routes, infecting large populations in the Mediterranean, Northern Africa, and the rest of Europe along the way. The plague first appeared in England in June of 1348 by way of a ship full of infected crewmates, and the disease spread rapidly throughout the isles, a timeline of which is shown below. None of this was known to the people of the time, and many popular origin theories included the wrath of God and other theories like poisoned water supplies.



Timeline of Plague Spread in the British Isles:

- 1317: Great Famine in England
- May 1337: Declaration of the Hundred Years War by Edward III.
- June 1348: Black Death arrives at Melcombe Regis (Weymouth)
- Aug 1348: Black Death hits Bristol
- Sept 1348: Black Death reached London
- Oct 1348: Winchester hit - Edendon's 'Voice in Rama' speech

Responses to the Plague:

Positive:

The high mortality rate of the Bubonic Plague decimated England, and between 30-45% of the population was lost. The largest group affected was the class of serfs and peasants. Because the economic system of the time was feudalism, the loss of the main labor source, peasants, disrupted society immensely. Since there was no longer a large labor force to work fields to harvest crops, individual peasants became more valuable. They eventually banded together and revolted against the oppressive system of feudalism. Another result of the massive loss of peasants was a drastic decrease in taxation as well as a drastic increase in pay, which further empowered the peasant class. This also resulted in a surplus of goods and foods, causing prices to drop, another contributing factor to improved living conditions of post-plague England.

Negative:

Despite significant improvements in peasant life, other groups were negatively affected by the plague. Many Jewish communities were targets of scapegoating and attacks as a result of conspiracies that blamed them for poisoning and polluting water supplies, a theory that would later be proved incorrect, and even condemned by the Pope. Many were tortured, killed, or forced out of their homes in search of peace. The Catholic Church also suffered from the plague. The devastation caused many congregations to disperse or break up entirely. Since the plague was also largely viewed as punishment by God the church lost some of its influence over the masses as they lost faith.

Medicine of the Time Period and Religious Correlation to the Plague:

The average life expectancy in 1348 was 30-35. People died from simple injuries and diseases all the time. A thousand years after the fall of the Roman Empire the way of practicing medicine has receded and people have returned to more of a basic outlook on how to act in the medical field. Ways of trying to heal people during this time consisted of treatments like herbal remedies and supernatural ideas.

Doctors during 1348 did not have access to the medical knowledge that we do today. Instead they had their own remedies they used when dealing with the Bubonic Plagues. These remedies included...

- making their patients bleed
- applying leeches
- having their patient smell strong posies
- Making their patients vomit
- Cutting open buboes to drain the pus
- Making the patient hot with a hot bath
- Making the patient cold
- Cutting a hole in the skull (trepanning)
- Lighting fires in the rooms and spreading the smoke
- Herbal remedies

Doctors believed in the Greek Theory from Galen that the signs of becoming ill is when the Four Humours, phlegm, black bile, yellow bile, blood, become unbalanced.

Doctors also believed that when people became sick it was because it was the will of God. They even thought that stars, demons, sin, bad smells, charms, luck, witchcraft, or astrology could be responsible for when people got ill.

People believed that God was punishing them and He had sent the plague. The Church called for people to pray, organized religious marches, and pleaded God to stop the pandemic. People also speculated that the planets were in the wrong conjunction, or even that it was all a cause of just foul air. Witches, Jews, and nobility were blamed for the catastrophe and would be violently attacked.

Effect of the Hundred Years War on the Plague

The Hundred Years War exacerbated the effects of the plague by making it easier for the disease to travel distances. King Edward III's troops and resources being spread out over large distances also weakened the efficacy of his response to the catastrophe while hastening its spread. The poor medical training and equipment that was used during the time actually contributed to the spread of the plague in certain areas. Especially with prominent figures that visited Gascony, the plague was easily able to spread through to the upper classes. The lower classes were already starving and poor from the war, and so the plague did nothing but worsen the effects. The weakened state of much of the population gave the plague easy access to hosts, which allowed it to spread easily.

Delegates

❖ King Edward III

He was known as Edward of Windsor before ascension to the throne and ruled as King of England and Lord of Ireland from 1327 to 1377, the second longest reign in medieval English history. He strengthened the English parliament significantly and increased the military greatly during the Hundred Years War, which he started in 1337 over claiming the French throne as his.

❖ Philippa of Hainaut

Wife of Edward III and Queen of England. She acted as regent in her husband's stead for a brief period in 1346 while he was handling military affairs for the Hundred Years War. She had great influence over her husband, and therefore English politics as a whole, eventually convincing him to campaign for Scotland and France.

❖ William Montagu

English nobleman, held the titles of First Earl of Salisbury, Third Baron Montagu, and King of Mann. Son of William Montagu, Second Baron Montagu. He befriended Prince Edward as a child and formed a close relationship before he was crowned as king. The two worked together in a coup against Roger Mortimer. Montagu assumed many kingly responsibilities in Edward's stead as he fought the Hundred Years War, especially in

aiding in the Scottish Wars (his valor in these earned him the Lordship of the Isle of Mann).

❖ **Edward of Woodstock**

Son of King Edward III of England, next in line to the English throne, Duke of Cornwall, Prince of Wales, and knighted by his father in 1346. Also known as Edward the Black Prince Father to Richard II, who assumed the throne after his father's death during Edward III's reign. Edward of Woodstock earned great recognition for his efforts in the Hundred Years's War, after serving as commander. His most accomplished service mission was during the Battle of Crécy.

❖ **William de la Zouche**

Lord Treasure of England, Archbishop of York, son of Roger de la Zouche of Lubbesthorpe. William was educated at Oxford University in the studies of Canon Law. Other titles earned throughout his lifetime include Royal Chaplain, Keeper of the Wardrobe, Controller of the Wardrobe, Lord Privy Seal, Archdeacon of Barnstaple and Exeter, Dean of York, and Warden of the Marches. Distinguished during the Battle of Neville's Cross for his victory over the Scots.

❖ **Pope Clement VI**

Head of the Catholic Church 1342-1352, fourth Avignon Pope. Born Pierre Roger, joined the Benedictine order at the Abbey of La Chaise-Dieu, studied at La College de Sorbonne, and College de Narbonne where he studied theology and canon law. Famously attributed the Black Death to divine wrath, and codemned violence against Jews. Wanted to Expand the Catholic Church, ordered forces to Smyrna in 1343, and also later attacked the Kingdom of Naples.

❖ **Robert Stratford**

He was an English Bishop and one of Edward III's principal ministers. He was born in 1292 and was the brother of John de Stratford who was the Archbishop of Canterbury. Titles he previously held included Prebend of Aylesbury, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Chancellor, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Archdeacon of Canterbury, Bishop of Chichester.

❖ **John de Stratford**

Brother of Robert Stratford. He held many positions including: Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop of Winchester, Treasurer and Chancellor of England, Archdeacon of Lincoln, Canon of York, Dean of the Court of Arches, Lord Treasurer of England. He was very significant politically during this time as he held many positions, engaged in public business, was one of the king's most prominent advisers, and was the head of the Lancastrian or constitutional party.

❖ **Henry de Stratford**

He was a Greater Clerk of the Royal Chancery and a member of the Noble House of Stratford. He is related to Robert Stratford and Jon de Stratford. He often owed people money and often was involved in litigation because of it.

❖ **Sir Robert de Crull**

He was Clerk of the King's Ships and Warden of the Sea and Maritime Parts'. He manned the king's ships during the Black Death.

❖ **William Edington**

He was an English bishop and administrator. Titled previous held included Bishop of Winchester, Keeper of the Wardrobe, and Treasurer. His reforms of the administration contributed to the English military efficiency in the early stages of the Hundred Years' War.

❖ **Chief Justice William de Shareshull**

He was an English lawyer, Judge of the King's Bench, and Chief Justice of the King's Bench. He achieved prominence under the administration of Edward III of England.

❖ **Marie de St. Pol**

Wife of the Franco-English nobleman Aymer de Valence, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, Marie de St. Pol was the founder of the nunnery, Order of the Poor Clares. She came from a prominent and wealthy family and was even the great granddaughter of Henry III of England. She later went on to found Pembroke College.

❖ **William Trussell and Orleton**

William Trussell was an English politician and leading rebel of Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer. He opposed King Edward II and participated and led multiple rebellions against the king. After helping create an invasion force in Flanders, he helped conquer England for Edward III and was appointed speaker of the house of commons.

❖ **William Latimer, 4th Baron Latimer**

William Latimer was an English noble, soldier, and diplomat who served in France for Edward III. He was impeached during the good parliament of 1376, under the accusations of taking bribes, retaining fines, selling cattle to the enemy, and oppression. He was found guilty, removed from his offices, fined, and imprisoned, before eventually being pardoned in 1376. He then returned to favor with the rise of the Lancaster family influence

❖ **John Neville, 3rd Baron Neville**

He fought against the Scots at the Battle of Neville's Cross as a captain under his father. He was knighted after a skirmish near Paris while serving under Sir Walter Manny, and fought in Aquitaine in 1366, and again in 1373. He served as joint ambassador to France and was made a Knight of the Garter in 1369. He served in Scotland and the Scottish Marches. In 1378 he had licence to fortify Raby Castle, and in June of the same year was in Gascony, where he was appointed Keeper of Fronsac Castle and Lieutenant of Gascony. He spent several years in Gascony, and was among the forces which raised the siege of Mortaigne in 1381.

❖ **Sir John de Lisle**

He was an English lawyer and politician who sat in the House of Commons at various times between 1640 and 1659. He supported the Parliamentary cause in the English

Civil War and was one of the Regicides of King Charles I of England. He was assassinated by an agent of the crown while in exile in Switzerland.

❖ **Representative of the Peasants**

The peasants did not have much, if any representation, at this time and were the subjects of their lord. The only way peasants could get their point across to their leaders was by speaking in front of their lords at a court, though this was rare, or by starting a revolt.

Most peasants usually died trying this and had to pay harsher fees to their lord afterward.

Guiding Questions:

1. Was your delegate directly impacted by the Bubonic Plague?
2. What resources did they have available to them in terms of protection or avoidance of this danger, and how would that have influenced their opinions on how to respond to it?
3. How would your delegate have felt about the Bubonic Plague's impact on peasants, farming, the economy, and the overall social structures of the time?
4. What kind of power or influence did your delegate have to sway responses to the Bubonic Plague to their favor?
5. How would your delegate respond to the tandem plagues: the Black Death and the Hundred Years' War? Which would they see as more important and what would their responses to each be?

Sources:

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