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A Defence of World History

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World history was once taken for granted as the only sensible basis for understanding the past. Christians could do no other than begin with creation and fit subsequent details into the framework of divine revelation. This ordering of the past survived into the seventeenth century as Bossuet and Walter Raleigh may remind us. But with the revival of antique letters, a different model for historical writing asserted itself that could not fit smoothly within the Christian epos. In effect, Thucydides and Tacitus challenged Augustine, presenting the history of states and their interaction as a self-contained whole. Guicciardini and Machiavelli wrote their histories accordingly, dismissing as irrelevant the world historical framework that had seemed essential to earlier believers.

World history was once taken for granted as the only sensible basis for understanding the past.

In the eighteenth century a secularized version of the Christian vision of universal history found expression, especially in France. Progress was substituted for Providence. To be sure there was much room for difference of opinion as to what constituted progress; but then there had been wide differences of opinion as to how to fit the facts of history into biblical revelation, too. The important thing was that the essential unity and linearity of the Providential, Christian view of human experience on earth remained intact. With the nineteenth century, however, reaction against French cultural and political primacy found expression in nationalist, national histories. The fact that governments kept records and began to make them accessible to scholars assisted this development; so did the expanding power of the na-

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A Letter from the President Pro Tem.

We are a diverse group, we 400 or so World History Association members. A few have made the history of the world their specialty. Others have been asked by their departments to teach as if it were. Others still, experts in such exotic fields as Burma, Cameroon, and France, are attempting to broaden their focus, develop techniques of comparative analysis, or make their work more global. In addition, we harbor Western civilization instructors, graduate students, and even the gainfully employed.

What brings us together is a conviction that the time has come for world history. The world has become too small for us to ignore the majority of its inhabitants. If we are not the first generation to live in a single world, united by its vulnerability to annihilation, we are at least reminded continually of our common pedestal. Satellite photos and tapes, space shuttle flights, and campaigns advertising "world class" products underscore the dimensions of the new ecumene.

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The world has replaced the nation-state as the arena of life or death, and we continue to ignore its boundaries at our peril.

We come together to show ourselves and each other how to understand the historical experience of our new neighbors. Individually, we have at least as many questions as answers, but we join together in association to learn from each other and to ask for the help and encouragement of our national and academic institutions.

Already we have many to thank. The U.S. Air Force Academy brought many of us together for a conference on world history in May 1982. That led to an organizational meeting under the aegis of the American Historical Association the following December. The steering committee chosen at that meeting was invited to the Johnson Foundation's Wingspread Conference Center, in Racine, Wisconsin, where organizational matters were completed in May 1983. Now, Drexel University has given us our own voice with this newsletter. Join us, if you have not already done so. The first payment of dues (\$10) will continue your membership through all of 1984. You will receive our newsletter twice yearly, and you will aid us in our effort to encourage the study and teaching of world history.

Kevin Reilly
President Pro Tem.

A Message from Philip D. Curtin

President, American Historical Association

The foundation of the World History Association and the first issue of the *World History Bulletin* are gratifying events. Not long ago, world history and Western civilization were synonymous, but a new generation of specialists, mainly from one or another variety of non-Western history, have begun to recognize that it is not enough to pursue these fields in their own terms. For the sake of a balanced view that can portray both Western and non-Western history even-handedly, it is important for historians to keep the breadth of a world-historical perspective alongside the depth necessarily required for research in any particular field.

Historians in North America already have the distinction of



teaching more European history than is taught in Europe, in the sense that we use an all-European framework in place of the national framework more common in European universities. In much the same way, the world-history movement represents an appropriate improvement on, and departure from, the area-studies framework.

WORLD HISTORY BULLETIN

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tional state over everyday life in the most active centres of European civilization. The vaunted scientific criticism of sources by nineteenth-century scholars therefore developed very largely inside governmental archives. As a result academic history as it became institutionalized, first in Germany and subsequently in other European countries, was well and truly captured by the record-manufacturing and record-keeping bureaucracies that sustain modern states.

Insofar as governments matter in human affairs, there was nothing wrong with such a marriage of convenience. Governments did matter more and more as the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth; and the national frame within which nearly all academic history had been cast therefore did not appear particularly constrictive or inadequate. On the contrary, keeping up with the flood of documents any modern government generates became a task to daunt even the most industrious historian. Those who tried had no time to think, or, indeed, to notice that bureaucratic output of ink-soiled paper does not and never has embraced all the parameters of human life with which an historian might appropriately concern himself.

Medievalists, at least, were always wiser inasmuch as national states mattered less, if, indeed, fifteen hundred to five hundred years ago, anything plausibly to be called a national state could be discerned at all. Local communities on the one hand and "universal" institutions — Church and Empire — on the other played such prominent roles that they could never be dismissed from the centre of attention. Church-state polarities remain even in our secularized age, as recent events in Poland and Iran illustrate. Other, less firmly institutionalized groupings also continue to affect public life profoundly. Languages, for example, only occasionally and quite imperfectly match up with political jurisdictions, as any speaker of English ought to recognize.... Since shared meanings, disseminated through communications networks, are what shape and govern collective human behaviour, historians ought always to take language groups seriously into consideration. Messages transmitted within governmental bureaucracies are only a small part of the communications net that ought to constitute our concern.

Though shared languages and messages conveyed in words are the most important element in fixing behaviour, they are not alone in binding human beings together into structured wholes. Civilizations and cultures also exist; and most civilizations embrace speakers of several different and mutually incomprehensible languages.... The stylistic coherence of a civilization... arises from key commitments to organizing, dominating values, and to institutions that express such

values. Consequently, religious texts and rituals are often more clearly indicative of civilizational identities than other facets of human behaviour. But art styles, technology and quite secular forms of association — caste, family, polity — are also important elements of civilization and have a role in maintaining its coherence. When they leave tangible traces, as art and technology do, their territorial and temporal distribution help historians to define boundaries between one civilization and another rather more sensitively than written texts ordinarily permit.

However complicated and massive they may be, civilizations are not self sufficient entities, either. Important interactions run across civilizational boundaries, and always have.... For whenever a person encounters something curious and new, and especially when the novelty also appears to be superior to what had been familiar before, the only intelligent response is to do something about it. One may try to appropriate the new thing and make it one's own by learning how to make and use it. Porcelain spread from China in this fashion; guns diffused around the world on the same basis; and so did sewing machines and motor cars....

However complicated and massive they may be, civilizations are not self sufficient entities.

But if the novelty seems wicked or dangerous and repugnant to existing commitments within one's own society, what then? One can try to disregard the offending persons and things, and hope they will not come again; or seek to drive them away by force. But to exclude a genuinely attractive novelty usually calls for strengthening local skills and institutions. As a minimum, repudiation requires more strenuous policing of ports or of the people's minds. As a maximum, radical revolution masquerades in reactionary guise....

Thus, whether people accept or reject what is alien and new to them, encounter with bearers of another culture or civilization is sure to change local ways of life. This was and remains, in my opinion, the main drive wheel of historical change. Human communities, left to themselves, are very prone to settle towards a fixed routine. What prevents routinization is either disturbing encounters with strangers or else an ecological crisis, when interaction with the natural environment runs up against some unforeseen limit. Since encounters with strangers are far more frequent than ecological crises, strangers' alien ways are what mainly compel and induce men to alter their behaviour, thereby creating historical change and maintaining its momentum across the centuries.

Societies situated in places where such encounters were

unusually frequent pioneered civilization; and civilizations are distinguished from simpler forms of society by the fact that stimulating and disturbing encounters with strangers remained numerous and important throughout civilized history. Indeed, civilizations eventually made their bearers such strangers one to another that in our own age an auto-catalytic process of social change within the body social seems to have set in. By now, for example, special research and development teams dedicated to changing the way we do things have about a century of permanent, bureaucratically institutionalized revolution behind them.

You may object that encounters with strangers only became important in recent centuries, beginning perhaps with the world shaking overseas expansion of Europe. The cultural encounter between Europeans and the rest of the world's peoples is indeed the central axis of modern history, even if we ordinarily study it from a rather lopsided perspective. But similarly critical encounters are as old as civilization itself, and indeed older. In the very beginning, for example, when a handful of Sumerian cities became the seat of skills hitherto unknown among men, neighbours near and far took note and felt both attracted and threatened by the power of Sumerian metallurgy and Sumerian theology....

... Indo-European speaking barbarians of the Eurasian steppe started to make stone battle axes in shapes resembling Sumerian bronze prototypes, and then proceeded to carry their new weapons across much of Europe. These same barbarians accepted the Sumerian pantheon and made it their own, as later literary records from India, Greece, Rome and the Celtic and Germanic peoples make obvious. For Sumer's Enlil, god of storm, has his analogues in Indra, Zeus, Jupiter, Thor, and the rest. Clearly, in the 3rd millennium B.C., when Sumerian theology was new, a system of belief that explained natural events as acts of will emanating from a politically ordered cluster of divine personalities, was a dazzlingly persuasive way to understand the world and (not incidentally) to control it by appropriate rites of propitiation and supplication. The advantages of socketed axes, whether made out of metal or of stone, were no less apparent, as the design of axes we use today still attests....

Indo-European borrowing and adaptation of Sumerian skills and ideas is no more than what one would expect.... Cultural interaction ought to have accelerated and become more important as soon as significant differentiation of skills arose between richer and more powerful, i.e. more civilized, communities and their neighbours.- ... Our evidence suggests that this was, indeed, the case.

My contention, therefore, amounts to this: in recent as in ancient times, encounter with strangers was central to hu-

man history because that was what forwarded innovation, always and inevitably. Communities that refused to alter their ways in the light of threats and promises arising from contacts with strangers were liable to extinction. Those who reacted intelligently by accepting new ideas and learning new skills — whether this meant reinforcing old ways and strengthening defences, or, in emergency, abandoning the tried and true in favour of deliberate borrowing from abroad — were the people most likely to flourish and enlarge their hold upon the earth's resources.

Encounter with strangers was central to human history because that was what forwarded innovation.

If this is so, historians' fixity of attention on national and local affairs is misleading. The profession still needs, as in the Christian past, a vision of the ecumenical setting within which each separate national state and more local community lived and moved and had its being. Only consciousness of how the process of cultural interaction were running in a given age can provide an adequate context for understanding national and local history. Centres of skill, after all, rise and fall. Other, new centres, take their place.

The history of industrialization and the geographical migration of industrial skills and organization in recent centuries is a relatively well known example of this phenomenon, since Great Britain's primacy was unusually pronounced in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the establishment of industrial skills on new ground in Europe, America and Asia was rapid and dramatic, thanks to the intensified communications network created by the new industrial technology itself. Italian cities of northern Italy enjoyed an earlier, less pronounced and somewhat lengthier economic and cultural dominion over much of the European peninsula, between, say A.D. 1100 and 1600. Still earlier, when communications were less well developed, dominating centres of power and wealth migrated within the Mediterranean lands in a familiar pattern: shifting from the Syrian coast to the Aegean, and from the Aegean to Italy with the successive rise of Greek city states and the Roman empire.

Moreover, these European metropolitan centres, with their accompanying cultural slopes and barbarous peripheries, arose in a broader Eurasian setting where other styles of civilization were doing much the same thing in other favourable environments. Europeans entered into contacts with these other civilizations sporadically but significantly from the very beginning. Minoan connections with Egypt and with Asia Minor are well known; ancient Greek art derived key stimulus from the statuary of Egypt; and, as Juvenal complained, the Syrian Orontes later flowed into the Tiber.

About the time of the Christian era, caravan trade across Asia created a slender, direct link between Syria and northwest China. At nearly the same time, sea voyaging attained a new intensity and level of organization, connecting the South China coast with the shores of the Indian Ocean, and India with Egypt and the Mediterranean. Short overland portages across Malaya, south India and Suez raised costs and restricted the volume of this trade, but did not inhibit important exchanges of ideas and techniques as well as of goods.

Proof of such exchanges are not far to seek. The contribution of mass-produced Greek statuary to Buddhist art, and its subsequent stylistic transmogrifications in the course of transmission across Asia, are well known episodes of art history. Simultaneously, religious aspiration in which Hellenistic and Jewish, Hellenistic and Persian, Hellenistic and Indian ideas merged and mingled gave birth to three powerful missionary religions, namely, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Mahayana Buddhism. Reaction against Hellenism also hardened Judaism into an enduring, rabbinical form, and helped to generate Islam. Subsequent Eurasian history turned, in no small degree, on how civilized populations reacted to these rival faiths.

But this is no place to recapitulate the landmarks of world history. Suffice it to say that sensitive attention to human reactions to encounters with strangers provides a powerful key to that history. Moreover, such encounters altered systematically from time to time, whenever some new technology of transport created new paths of communication and contact. The cavalry revolution of the ninth century B.C., for example, gave an importance and centrality to the peoples of the steppe analogous to the importance and centrality conferred upon western Europe by the navigational achievements of the fifteenth century. Railways, aeroplanes, rockets and electromagnetic communications belong in this same category of world-transforming breakthroughs. Each in its time altered the shape of older communications nets and thereby transformed patterns of cultural interaction and growth. Here lies the core and kernel of world history. Here are the structures within which local affairs can and ought to be understood.

All this may sound painfully *a priori*. Many historians indeed, refuse to interest themselves in world history because they feel it involves so much vagueness and generality that testable statements about the past simply slip away. Such a view is quite wrong. World history depends on sources in exactly the same way as national or any other scale of history depends on sources; and the effort to corroborate or refute a particular hypothesis is the same, whether the hypothesis in question pertains to the entire world, to a civiliza-

tion, to a nation or to some little village in the Pyrenees.

What constitutes adequate evidence is always problematical. One-to-one correspondence between an historian's statements and what "really" happened is untenable; and if it were attainable would be undesirable, since it would simply preserve the buzzing, blooming confusion of everyday experience.... What is needed—always—is a suitable shorthand: a system of terms that classifies experience into meaningful, usable, and satisfying patterns. Only so can we understand the world around us. Only by leaving things out, and lumping varying individual instances together into categories and classes of things, can we hope to navigate successfully amidst the infinitely various actual encounters humans have with one another and with the world around.

Language does this for us. Its capacity to generalize and order experience is built into every word we use. This is what makes human beings so incredibly powerful compared to all other forms of life. To be sure, the question still remains, whether terms available for world history—civilization, communications net, metropolitan centre, cultural slope and the rest—are adequate to organize the observable experience of humanity on a global scale. Certainly there is room for improvement; and across time one can expect that historians and other students of society will develop new terms and modify those in use today....

... Who can say that terms we use for national histories are unambiguous and adequate to all the facts? The very notion of government or nation, of Parliament and Crown, of public opinion and GNP embrace innumerable anomalies and variations of behaviour on the part of individuals and groups of individuals. Full precision and exactitude escape such terms. It is their virtue that they erase what is judged by their users to be trivial differences and minor perturbations from norms and average patterns of conduct. That is what gives these terms their real, inescapably blurred, but none the less very useful meanings.

Epistemological exactitude is unattainable. To insist on it is an excuse for not thinking. For only by using inexact words to organize confusion, lumping together a range of particulars that differ from one another in some degree or other, can the intellectual enterprise proceed at all....

Epistemological exactitude is unattainable. To insist on it is an excuse for not thinking.

... Because a given term applies to a larger number of particulars than another term, it is not necessarily vaguer or less useful. The Kingdom of England is just as real as the city of London or the borough of Westminster, and for some pur-

poses, the larger entity is both more definite and more important. In general, large-scale patterns are just as real as small-scale patterns.... No one supposes that accurate description of a tree can only be attempted by describing all its cells.... Similarly, in recognizing each tree as part of a forest and the forest as part of an ecosphere that extends right round the globe, we change scale without necessarily losing precision of meaning.

The plain fact is that radically different patterns co-exist, each at its own appropriate scale.... To discern patterns at each scale, an appropriate distance between observer and observed is requisite. Appropriate instruments to assist the naked eye are often necessary in our encounter with the natural world. For history, instruments analogous to the microscope and satellite scanner are not usually available: we simply have our eyes and the traces men happen to have left behind them on the face of the earth. We have the sources, in short. What is variable is the conceptual sensitivity and frame of reference that we can bring to the interpretation of those sources. Our questions turn attention hither and thither, depending on what hypotheses we seek to test. Consequently, the history we derive from our interrogation of the sources will differ radically with the questions we ask, since we will be using similar or identical sources to answer different questions and confirm or contradict different hypothetical patterning of the past.

Perhaps a parable will make my point clearer. Once upon a time, when working on my PhD thesis, I found myself at loose ends in New York City on a 4th of July afternoon. The library was shut for the holiday, so I went for a stroll in Morningside Park. Below me ran the Henry Hudson Parkway, crowded with cars. When I glanced down at it, to my amazement I observed that the stop-and-go traffic on the Parkway constituted a longitudinal wave, with nodes and anti-nodes spaced at regular intervals, moving along the Parkway at a pace considerably faster than any single vehicle could make its way along the crowded roadway. Ever since, when caught in stop-and-go traffic I console myself with the thought that my car is no more than a particle in another longitudinal wave.

Few if any of the drivers whose behaviour created and sustained the longitudinal wave on the Henry Hudson Parkway were aware of that dimension of their condition. Yet the wave pattern was most certainly there—clear and unambiguous. To recognize it required an observer, located at an appropriate distance, who possessed, ready-made, the notion of longitudinal wave with which to generalize the infinite detail.... as particular cars formed ever-changing geometrical relations to one another. Observer, scale of observation and concept all entered into the act of recognition.

Without the fortuitous coming together of all three, the wave would have existed without being known.

Ever since, this chance experience has symbolized for me what large-scale historical study may hope to achieve. With appropriate concepts and sensitivity, a questioning historian can stumble on significant patterns in the past of which men of the age were often quite unaware, which yet are real and testable and important because they may endure for centuries and millennia and affect civilizations and continents, so as to constitute, like the ecosystem itself, an ever changing framework within which human history as a whole runs its course.... To be sure, historical patterns are not as simple nor as apparent as that long-vanished longitudinal wave. But that merely makes the study of history more complicated as well as more interesting than the science of wave mechanics....

The pursuit of world history... conforms to the canons of our profession as far as I can see, and does so just as rigorously as history on any other scale. What is different is the conceptual frame and the geographic and temporal scope of the patterns one seeks to discern. In other respects, the method is identical; the validation the same; and the truthfulness of result neither greater nor less than what is attainable on otherscales of history.

Is world history worth pursuing under such circumstances? Surely the answer is "yes".... The circumstances of our age demand a global account of how things got to be the way they are. Only so can the world in which we live make sense....

The circumstances of our age demand a global account of how things got to be the way they are.

...Human minds imperiously demand historical experience to have shape and meaning—at least in retrospect—just because events as actually experienced in the present are so tumultuous, surprising and unintelligible. They simply have to be given shape afterwards, or else are banished from human consciousness. After all, we all have quite enough background noise to distract us, without worrying about the jumble that assailed our predecessors, unless, that is, their encounter with the world can be made intelligible by competent and conscientious historians.

Historians have in fact always performed this function for their fellows, and have habitually done so in universal terms. No more than a century ago, for example, patriotic English and American historians assumed that world history and their respective national histories were essentially the same.... Times and peoples who had played no part in the constitutional development of Britain and America were

banished from the pages of the meaningful past on the specious ground that although tyrannous rulers came and went, nothing really changed in Africa, Asia and other benighted parts of the earth. Such regions joined the march of history only when Europeans arrived, bringing Christianity, free trade and a just colonial administration to set such peoples' feet on the path towards civilization and eventual participation in the benefits of liberty under law.

This caricature of the human adventure on earth still governs the way history is usually studied in the United States and Great Britain. To be sure,

no one now subscribes to such a narrowly ethnocentric vision of the past. Perhaps it is for this reason, indeed, that teachers have banished serious consideration of world history from our schools, no longer believing what our great grandfathers took for granted, but having no better view to put in its place....



... It seems clear, at least to me, that unless historians seek actively and energetically to construct a credible portrait of the human past on a global scale, we will have failed to perform our professional function adequately. We cannot afford to make the world in which our fellow citizens live historically unintelligible. We cannot afford to obstruct the effort to achieve a credible view of the human past by insisting on excessive detail that merely obscures the global structure and patterns within which human communities exist and always have existed. I therefore commend world history to your serious attention. It is not a luxury but a necessity, both for our profession and for our time.

The Prothero Lecture, read 1 July 1981

Excerpted from *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, with the permission of the Royal Historical Society, London.

Wingspread Conference

WHA Steering Committee at Work

The steering committee of the World History Association met at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin, May 18-19, 1983, to establish a structure for the group and initiate future programs. The Johnson Foundation generously provided support for the meeting as well as a most hospitable atmosphere. The following is a rough summary of the two days of discussions.

Day One

After introductions, some preliminary announcements, and selection of a pro tem. secretary (Craig Lockard), the group set about preparing a constitution. Martin Yanuck supplied a well-conceived preliminary draft, which the committee set about fine tuning. Most of the draft was ratified without excessive debate, but a few items elicited spirited discussion.

Among the most controversial points were: the name of the group (the committee reaffirmed "World History Association"); our relationship with the American Historical Association; election of officers (see below); the need for an executive director (to have ex officio membership on the executive committee); term of service for officers (two years); automatic succession of the vice-president to the presidency (the vice-president will be considered president-elect); term of service for executive committee members (three years, with one third of the members to be elected each year); executive committee size (nine members); the role of secondary school teachers (at least two members of the executive committee shall be drawn from this group); the flexibility of the officers and executive committee in interpreting votes by the general membership; and the role of the current steering committee.

The proposed constitution reflects the dual nature of the association, stressing the promotion and facilitation of both scholarship and teaching.

After tentative approval of the constitution, the group discussed other organizational matters: qualifications for tax exempt status, plans to publish sample syllabi for world history courses, and the possibility of later employing a lawyer-accountant.

We then talked about the newsletter, which was christened the *World History Bulletin*. Editor Ray Lorantas reported on submissions already received and presented thoughts for the future. After some debate, the group decided on an eight-page, semiannual publication for the first year. There was also some discussion of the scope of the *Bulletin*. For example, should we include short scholarly essays and book reviews or concentrate initially on disseminating news and teaching materials?

The Role of the Association

Craig Lockard and Tien-wei Wu read short reports on the role that the WHA might play in furthering graduate teaching and scholarly research. Lockard outlined some of the problems facing the world history field, including the present status of teaching and writing. Using the comparative world history program at the University of Wisconsin as an

example, he analyzed the development of the field over the past several decades, and suggested strategies by which the WHA might help to reinvigorate scholarship.

Wu emphasized the need to sponsor research and provide a service for secondary school and college teachers, especially in developing information packages on the Third World. Along with several others, he proposed formation of committees to compile outlines on Third World areas for use in world history courses.

Ernest Menze and Mary Rossabi then offered short reports on ways in which the WHA might assist secondary school teachers. Their remarks included an assessment of the state of world history and global studies in American schools, the relationships with social studies curriculums, the need for closer contacts between college and secondary school faculties, the need to introduce world history at lower levels (seventh grade), and the value of sample syllabi. Concern was expressed about proposals for altering world history teaching in New York and Texas schools.

The Future: Relationships, Resources

In the evening session, Lynda Shaffer spoke on where the WHA might be in five years, and offered some suggestions for regional organizations on the model of the Association for Asian Studies. The relationship with the AHA continued as a lively topic; there seemed to be a general feeling that the AHA was in the process of broadening itself. The WHA, it was suggested, could encourage this internationalizing trend with more panels at the annual meeting. At the same time, Shaffer suggested that we should form close ties with various area studies organizations, such as the African Studies Association and the Association for Asian Studies. This led to some discussion on the nature of world history (a collection of regional histories or a more complex tapestry?) and its differences from comparative history.

The group then talked about funding sources and resource development. The prospects for successfully petitioning fellowship-granting agencies (NEH, the Mellon Fund and so on) to sponsor summer seminars and scholarly conferences were weighed. Several members suggested that such sources as Fulbright-Hayes and Social Science Research Council should be approached as well as monitored for existing programs relevant to world history.

Day Two

During our final session we concentrated on setting up a committee structure and discussed potential nominees for the forthcoming election.

Most members felt that at this stage we should establish only a few necessary committees. One of these will be a committee on secondary education, under the general direction of Ernest Menze and Mary Rossabi. This committee will be charged with developing curriculum ideas and identifying interested individuals and institutions involved in world history at the secondary level.

An editorial committee was formed to oversee production of the *Bulletin*. Ray Lorantas will chair this committee; other members are Sam Ehrenpreis and Craig Lockard.

We also decided to establish a finance and membership committee to coordinate membership lists and fund raising. This committee includes Kevin Reilly, Ernest Menze, and Sam Ehrenpreis. They will seek to obtain seed money, investigate IRS exemption, and procure bulk mail permits.

The fourth and final committee is the fellowship and resource development committee, chaired by Lynda Shaffer; members include Ross Dunn, Craig Lockard, Martin Yanuck, Mary Rossabi, and Tien-wei Wu. This committee will investigate grant possibilities for world historians, survey possible private sector sources of funds, and communicate with fellowship agencies.

We worked out a timetable for electing officers and seeking membership approval of the constitution which calls for the constitution to be submitted to the membership by October, followed shortly thereafter by a mail-in ballot to elect officers. The results can then be ratified at the AHA meetings in December.

Nominations

Acting as a nominating committee, the group chose the following official slate of officers (for 1984-85): president, Ross Dunn (presently vice-president pro tem.); vice-president, Kevin Reilly (presently president pro tem.); secretary, Craig Lockard (presently secretary pro tem.); treasurer, Ernest Menze (presently treasurer pro tem.). The nominations reflect a general feeling that the WHA needs a certain continuity of leadership at this juncture. Joe Dixon agreed to serve as executive director for at least the 1983-84 academic year.

We talked about how to nominate potential candidates for the nine-member executive committee and how to arrange initially staggered terms. We agreed that the two secondary school teachers with the highest vote totals would automatically gain a spot on the committee. Seven steering committee members agreed to be listed as nominees. Some twenty college and secondary teachers with known world history interests (indicated by attendance at Colorado

Conference or the AHA-World History meeting in 1982) were mentioned as additional candidates. A nominating subcommittee was charged with narrowing this list to eight. Thus, the official slate for the executive committee will include seven present steering committee members and eight newcomers. At least three of the fifteen nominees will be secondary school teachers. The official slate will be submitted to all dues-paying members for approval.

The group agreed to award honorary memberships to several prominent world historians in gratitude for their pioneering work.

Craig Lockard
WHA Secretary, Pro tem.

WHA Steering Committee: Joe C. Dixon, U.S. Air Force Academy; Ross E. Dunn, San Diego State University; Samuel D. Ehrenpreis, Bronx Community College; Craig A. Lockard, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay; Raymond M. Lorantas, Drexel University; Howard D. Mehlinger, University of Indiana; Ernest A. Menze, Iona College; Kevin Reilly, Somerset County Community College; Lynda Shaffer, Tufts University; Lloyd S. Swenson, Jr., University of Houston; Tien-wei Wu, University of Southern Illinois; Mary Rosabi, Fieldston School of Riverdale, NY; Martin Yanuck, Spelman College.

Students Need World History to Gain a Rounded Perspective

Ross E. Dunn
Professor of History
San Diego State University

Bill Honig, California's new superintendent of public instruction, has entered office pledging to restore history, among other core disciplines, to an important place in our school systems. What history and whose history remains to be revealed, but he might take a suggestion from the nearly one hundred college and high school teachers who gathered in Washington, DC late in December (1982) to found the World History Association.

There was a time not long ago when "world history" in the classroom was more or less synonymous with the history of Europe, that modest peninsula protruding from the western end of the Afroeurasian land mass. World history defined as the Rise of Western Man is a remnant of the age now past when the European nations (plus the United States) set, or thought they were setting, the terms of human progress.

The explanation of freedom's march from the Acropolis to the Bastille to the Statue of Liberty seemed an obvious and essential subject for the training of good citizens. Even today, the narrative history of Europe and its offshoot societies is the main subject of numerous secondary and college textbooks published assuredly under the title "World History" or some variation of that phrase.

Rejecting the Europe-centrism inherent in a definition of humankind that leaves out three-quarters of it, the founders of the World History Association have committed themselves to help the teaching profession design courses that present a truly global and comparative perspective on the human past.

California public education, in its present state of impoverishment, not only fails to require young people to study global history; it requires them to study almost no history at all. It is possible for a resident of this state to progress through high school and four years of public university education having formal exposure to nothing other than the history of California. Burdened with a mental framework of the past whose geographical frontiers are Point Conception and the Colorado River, is such a student equipped to think intelligently, as we suppose he must, about Soviet foreign policy, or Islam, or the aspirations of one billion Chinese?

If by electing Honig the voters are demanding a return to the basic subjects, the time may be ripe to reconsider what kind of history public school children and the future teachers of those children should learn. America inherits the structure of its school curriculum partly from 19th century Europe, whose dominant intellectual values were fervently nationalist. Thus we have perpetuated a history education focused on the stories of nations, particularly our own.

United States history was organized for the classroom in the last century to produce an informed and patriotic citizenry. Then, in 1919, the Western Civilization course was invented at Columbia University to teach the deep origins of America's free institutions extending back through the West European past to republican Rome and Athens. These two courses together were the backbone of history and civic education at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

Since the 1960s, however, most California colleges and some high schools have added courses on non-Western parts of the world, and both American history and Western Civilization courses have broadened their range of topics to include social and economic issues. Even so, national or, at best, culture group history still predominates. Thus, no matter how many more units of study we oblige high school or college students to take, they are likely to form an overall historical image of humankind as an unstable collection of discrete political or cultural entities, occasionally banging into one another as they follow their separate paths through time. The internal histories of the United States or of other civilizations are, of course, important academic subjects. But is there no need to give the generation that will lead the first great age of microchip internationalism a feel for the

wholeness and interconnectedness of the human adventure over the long run of time?

The challenge is not simply to feed pupils more current events or additional study projects on one foreign culture or another. Rather, it is to teach the history of humankind as an organic whole, instilling in young minds a cosmopolitan consciousness, a capacity to take in the entire world scene in both its historical and contemporary dimensions. Platitudes about global interdependence are heard everywhere, yet the nationalist structure of history education has hindered in some measure our ability to cultivate an integral vision of humankind. At worst, it has probably contributed to the disposition among some of us to contemplate the beneficial features of international trade war or the notion that a nuclear cataclysm might obliterate some national units but leave others to carry on much as usual.

So far, the nationwide movement for a new world history has centered among college teachers. But the place to start may be in the primary grades, where an essential foundation in world geography and basic political and anthropological concepts could be laid. This would lead to a mandatory introductory global history course in high school, supplementing the existing requirement in American history.

Over the short run, the practical obstacles to implementing such a program are great. Most public school teachers never had world history themselves, not counting Western Civ. They are, by and large, unfamiliar with the conceptual tools, textbooks and teaching aids that might encourage them to develop a global history program. At the university level, many instructors justifiably resist getting involved with so diffuse a subject as the history of humankind when the academic system continues to bestow almost all its prizes on the research specialist. The designer of a world history syllabus or textbook is far less likely to get funded than is the promising scholar of Serbian nationalism.

Yet just as the general shape of Western Civilization was worked out by historians earlier in this century, considerable progress has been made over the past two decades toward conceiving a framework of world-historical themes, patterns, and periods. A few textbooks that integrate world history intelligibly, vividly and interestingly are already on the market. Several more are on the way.

The fundamental organizing problem is not how to "cover" world history, as if the past were merely the sum total of the histories of all nations and civilizations. The task rather is to decide what are the weightiest issues of human change and achievement over, say, the past 10,000 years and what lesser fluctuations reasonably may be omitted. The question of why "modernity" blossomed in Europe about the

17th century, rather than someplace else in some other time, will necessarily figure large in a global history course. The political and military facts of the Thirty Years' War will not. However topics and themes are selected, the larger aim will not be to teach mountains of new facts about ancient China or emergent Africa but to sharpen public awareness of contemporary world complexities through systematic study of their historic roots over the very long term.

"Formerly, the things which happened in the world had no connection among themselves. Each action interested only the locality where it happened. But since then all events are united in a common bundle." Thus wrote Polybius more than 2,000 years ago. Can we afford to give young Californians a perception of their world less cosmopolitan than his?

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The San Diego Union, March 13, 1983

World History Notes

World History Association Launched

Wingspread was the site of a key organizational meeting for the new World History Association, an affiliate group of the American Historical Association. The organization comes into being in response to a call for a more global view of history on the part of historians and academicians. Its principal purposes are to improve the teaching of world history, to encourage the extension of graduate programs in world history, and to aid the development of world history courses in schools and colleges. According to members of the steering committee, over 200 college and university teachers have already expressed interest in response to the initial invitation to membership.

During their Wingspread meeting in May, the newly elected steering committee put the final touches on the organization's constitution and by-laws, established initial working groups, projects, and publication plans. This dedicated group of academics represented various disciplines in the field of history, including American history, and Asian, European, Middle East, and African studies. The new association gives promise of stimulating fresh thinking in all of these areas and developing new concepts and approaches to the teaching of history.

From the *Wingspread Journal*, Summer 1983: Reprinted with permission of The Johnson Foundation, Inc., Racine, Wisconsin.

Aids in Teaching World History

In the future, the World History Association plans to publish syllabi, course descriptions, and other teaching aids. In the meantime, the *Bulletin* has received a number of such items, and we list some of them with addresses where you might write for further information:

- "Consensus-Legitimacy and Consensus-Vacuum: A Note on Two Useful Concepts for the World History Survey." Marvin Goldwert, Department of History, New York Institute of Technology, 1855 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.
- An extensive course and seminar guide on twentieth-century world history. Henry T. Bernstein, History Department, St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, Middlesex, England.
- "Use of Comparative Biography," an essay with examples for world history. Ken Wolf, Department of History, College of Humanistic Studies, Murray State University, Murray, KY 42071.

Editor's Note

Twentieth-century world history has been taught at Drexel University since 1949. At that time, Drexel was an "institute of technology," but then-president James T. Creese believed that engineering and science students needed an understanding of history in order to place their more practical education into some perspective.

To teach the course, Creese brought Bess Howard to Drexel. Trained as an historian, Bess Howard had also served in the International Red Cross, worked as a World War II correspondent, and been a radio commentator. She was friends with Georges Bidault, George Marshall, and many other international figures.

World history has been part of the Drexel curriculum ever since, albeit with many changes in the nature of the course. In the early 1970s, its design became more global and thematic. In 1981, a second course, covering world history and world literature from ancient times to the present, was added.

Support for the study of world history continues at Drexel with the *World History Bulletin*. Financing for the *Bulletin* comes from the Office of the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, headed by Thomas L. Canavan; the publication expertise, from Drexel's Director of Publications/Communications, Philip Terranova.

Future issues of the *World History Bulletin* will be sent only to members of the World History Association. Yearly dues (January through December 1984): \$10.00 (for students, unemployed, disabled, and senior citizens: \$2.00).

Please print or type information.

Name _____

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I have enclosed \$ _____ for the dues of the World History Association.
(Make check or money order payable to the World History Association.)

Mail to: Professor Ernest A. Menze
Treasurer Pro Tem., World History Association
Iona College
New Rochelle, NY 10801

World History at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association
San Francisco, 27-30 December 1983.

World History Association, business meeting

Tuesday, December 27, 5:00
Hyatt Regency Embarcadero, Room San Francisco "A"

Session 42. World History, 924-1500

Wednesday, December 28, 2:30
Sheraton, French Parlor
(Joint session with the World History Association)

CHAIR: Dilip K. Basu
University of California, Santa Cruz
Islam and World History in the Middle Period, 954-1500
Ross E. Dunn, San Diego State University
The Role of Steppe Peoples in the Integration of Civilization before 1500
Morris Rossabi, Case-Western Reserve University
Civilization as a Unit of World History: Eurasia and Europe's Place in It
Edward Farmer, University of Minnesota
Europe in World History before 1500
William H. McNeill, University of Chicago

COMMENT: Dilip K. Basu

Session 63. Workshop: Teaching World History

Wednesday, December 28, 5:00-7:00
Sheraton, Comstock

CHAIR: Marc Jason Gilbert
North Georgia College

Modeling the World History Course for the Student Constituency
Martin Yanuck, Spelman College

Continuing the Revolution: Establishing and Sustaining World History in the Liberal Arts Curriculum
Joe Gowaskie, Rider College

Integrating Themes and Epochs in World History: Premodern Women
Lynda Shaffer, Tufts University

Twentieth-Century World History Through Symbolic Figures: Zhou Enlai, an Example
Raymond M. Lorantas, Drexel University

The Appropriate World History for the Community College: Constructing a Syllabus and Selecting Suitable Supplemental Readings and Audiovisual Aids
Samuel D. Ehrenpreis, Bronx Community College

COMMENT: Kevin Reilly

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