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Historians at the End of the Twentieth Century: Ornamental Mandarins or Responsible Global Citizens?

Theodore H. Von Laue

In every scholarly group, there ought to be a heretic, a disturber of the blandness prevailing at such occasions, a voice crying, as the Sierra Club poster puts it, that "in wildness is the preservation of the world." Coming out of wildness, the heretic should put a few burrs under the saddles of tradition. The irritation they cause may put us in touch again with reality. Let me play the role of such a wildman, beginning with a comment on a distant place and civilization, often much admired yet in endless trouble — China.

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A Statement

Ross E. Dunn,
President, World History Association

Not long ago, a skeptical colleague asked me whether in advocating world history teaching so enthusiastically I was "on some kind of crusade." I had to answer with a qualified yes, realizing that the founding and development of the World History Association have taken on the dimensions of a national academic movement, and its members, some of the attributes of True Believers. The Association does indeed have a high and difficult mission, to help achieve far-reaching changes in American education, changes that will produce a citizenry far more sensitive than it is now to the history of the human community and, therefore, to the global challenges facing it in our own time.

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Announcement

The World History Association has been invited by the National Council on Foreign Language and International Studies to gather for publication innovative syllabi with international content for mainstream courses. We are looking for syllabi in American history and Western civilization courses that stretch the traditional boundaries, as well as syllabi in world history, comparative history, and transregional history.

In addition to your own syllabi, please send any suggestions, hints, or rumors that would help us track down others, but please send whatever you have now. Our deadline is June 30. Send to: Kevin Reilly, WHA Syllabus Project, Somerset County College, Box 3300, Somerville, NJ 08876.

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For seven years, before he was thrown out by the Japanese in 1940, a young American of independent means named George M. Kates settled in Peking in order to steep himself in the immortal wisdom of ancient China. In his book, *The Years That Were Fat: Peking 1933-1940*, Kates described the tribulations and triumphs of an American trying to fathom the inwardness of an utterly alien way of life (for that reason, he still serves as a useful guide to that country). Inevitably, Kates came to admire the living sages embodying the sacred knowledge. "Those few oldest scholars of the highest learning of whom I had occasional glimpses during their sunset years," he wrote, "were so transmuted, had been made so humane and so gentle by their long studies that a complete justification of their own system spoke majestically from their faces."

There were two flaws, however, in George Kates's sinophilism. For the Chinese people, those years were not fat years at all. And worse: the ancient wisdom was doomed. Kates never mentioned Chiang Kai-shek or the problems of the Kuomintang. He was not aware of the Communists' Long March or the gathering storm approaching from Japan. And he leaves his readers wondering what became of those admirable scholars in the years of Japanese occupation, the civil war that followed, and Mao's communism. What use was their wisdom when Mao announced that the Chinese people were like a clean sheet of paper, free of all "feudal" relics, on which his regime was to write a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist message, and when the Red Guards in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution wrought havoc among the treasures of the past? Mao himself admittedly wrote poems in the classical style and inadvertently stirred up the Chinese past to its very dregs when he tried to mobilize the peasant masses, the most tradition-ridden and change-resistant segment of the population. At his death, he left his country in ideological confusion and political turmoil, nevertheless pursuing goals in the Four Modernizations (agriculture, industry, defense, and science) hardly compatible with the wisdom of the sages. A few of them, one hears, are still around, ornaments preserved at the public expense.

Well, one might say, that's distant China. I say: that condition, and perhaps worse, prevails right here, among academic historians. Professionally and in our imagination, I will argue (mixing my biblical metaphors), we still live in the fat years while the oil has drained, or is rapidly draining, from our lamps. Let us for a moment assess our condition realistically, beginning with our classrooms. Most of us make our livings by teaching college students. What has happened to our students? In my assessment, they have lost the old contexts of meaning and cultural tradition of which our history — the history of the texts and monographs, traditional academic history — was an essential part. The canon of the Liberal Arts has disappeared up and down the ladders of education and with it the substance that made sense of academic history. Our students are barely interested in what we offer.

. . . In an interdependent world, roots are the source not of life but of death.

Furthermore, they don't command the skills of reading and writing crucial for historical study; they are dragged down by the ballast of the present. They hear the news from China, Africa, Asia, Europe, or Latin America dished up indiscriminately, without perspective or depth. Moreover, their awareness is overwhelmed by the mind-boggling avalanche of data streaming from the media, undigested, unstructured, and poisonous to intellectual curiosity. Finally, their finer sensibilities are deadened by incessant noise (if not hard rock) and all the psychological dirt abroad in our society. How do we relate the history presented in scholarly journals and monographs to our classrooms? That is a big question, to which I myself have found no satisfactory answer (hence my criticism of academic history). Admittedly, we may catch a few bright students with esoteric or plain antiquarian tastes trying to escape into a recondite quiet presided over by a true scholar. So what? The best students are likely to escape us, and the bulk of them don't really care.

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Next, how does our brand of history relate to the concerns that motivate the publicists and opinion-makers who influence our students? What does it contribute to the welfare of polity? Very little, I would say. History and historians have justly faded from the headlines, replaced by social scientists, technologists, and psychiatrists addressing a generation which craves instant gratification. What use is the past, anyway, when you deal with unprecedented, never-before-in-history phenomena, with ever greater and more diverse human multitudes, with ever larger numbers of facts, with hitherto unimagined technologies, and with ever more contradictory opinions issuing from every corner of the world — even from our own profession?

Teaching history has become progressively politicized (as writers of history textbooks, especially for high schools, have come to know, to their dismay). Historical studies, following trends of public opinion, have become polarized, especially so in the African or Russian/Soviet fields. At the same time, the political bias underlying academic, or "objective" and "scientific," history shows up more blatantly.

Wherever we look, the traditional consensus-based universe of meaning that has made possible objectivity and historically sound long-range perspectives is falling apart. What, for instance, has become of that framework-building confidence in "progress"? What we see in its place is an aggressive yet vapid present-mindedness and a callous carelessness toward both past and future. And even the present is too much for us, as the tempo of life is growing breath-takingly rapid, and the burden of merely keeping up with the daily chores and stream of information (or distraction), insufferably heavy. How can we, as citizens, keep up with crime waves, drug abuses, corruption in business and public administration, the influx of aliens, the decay of inner cities, the wastage of young lives through lack of care or unemployment, not to mention the state of the economy or of democratic government?

But why stop with our society? We are citizens of an inescapably interdependent world in which our welfare depends on distant, alien, and often hostile peoples, not under our control, yet equally dependent on us in a global network whose complexity lies beyond anybody's comprehension. In that global setting, too, we face a host of problems requiring immediate attention and study: the conflict between rich and poor, North and South; the agonies of "development," of "reculturation" under pressure by a highly competitive global state system; the pressure of a massively growing world population upon the limited resources of Planet Earth; and all the tensions arising between peoples of different cultural experiences

and creed thrust all too suddenly into a common world.

What universal truths do we find in that divided world? We are impressed by the awesome objectivity of raw power and the skills that produce that power: science, technology, large-scale organization in economics and politics. Yet in the deeper layers of life below these universals, we also observe a profound confusion over values and metaphysical truths. All gods and ultimate sanctions for life and the institutions of social existence are contradicted and refuted by other gods and other sanctions. In terms of the languages we speak, literally and figuratively, we live in an ever more contentious and competitive Tower of Babel.

The inescapable openness of all societies to the ways of all other societies has tended to reaffirm or even to harden (rather than transcend) divisive traditions. In the pervasive alienation, many people — and with the help of historians, too — want to go back to their roots. But in an interdependent world, roots are the source not of life but of death. For the sake of preserving their customary identity people are prepared to fight to the finish. For this reason, the world abounds with inhumanity; indeed, the larger the world's population, the higher the disregard for human life and dignity in case of conflict. The volume and intensity of worldwide hostility may be measured by the progress of the arms race, reaching into the budgets and welfare of even the poorest countries. How urgent is our academic history now, when human life and all its accomplishments through the ages

may be destroyed in a flash? The nuclear holocaust may well be the culmination of the fattest years in all human existence.

Meanwhile, what have academic historians been doing in their mandarin enclave? Speaking from my own 40-year experience as an academic historian, I offer a forthright answer: We have acted as though the original framework of meaning were still intact. We have proceeded with little or no response to the changed framework in which we live, as though the imperial stability of a Western-centered world were permanent. Like the members of all the other professions, historians have taken for granted the setting in which they work, as though it were no responsibility of theirs. Feeling secure, we have gone into ever greater specialization and more subtle detail, refining methodologies with the help of the social sciences, quantifying, and trying to be more "scientific."

Yet the accentuated positivism of so much of our research has had largely negative results. It has stultified our imagination and reduced our capacity for common sense. Sticking to an outdated framework of meaning and



In 1970, Theodore H. Von Laue was invited to Clark University as the first Jacob and Frances Hiatt Professor of European History, a post he held until his recent retirement. Professor Von Laue gives additional views on the importance of world history in an article published in *Change* (September 1983) entitled "In Honor of Teaching: Reflecting on Forty Years as a College Professor."

contexts, the run of academic historians have become as conservative, at least in their professional roles, as the leaders of our current Administration. Admittedly, our history has moved with the times by paying attention to special interest groups who have come to the fore, to minorities (including women), as well as to all the related social sciences, but the overall result has been even further proliferation of specialists and specialized publications, further fragmentation.

Consider the current incubus of professional journals and monographs dealing with history. Who can keep up with the literature even in a relatively small field? And how minute have the fields of interest grown! A friend told me that one of his colleagues is a proud expert on sodomy in eighteenth-century France. Other examples readily come to mind. What do we do with the results of such refinement? Since there is not enough room on the crowded programs of our annual historical conventions, we exhibit our wares at esoteric minimarkets — like local craft fairs — at regional history conferences attended for the better part only by the exhibitors themselves.

Where in this setting are the perspectives that do justice to our contemporary world and put our petty research into a context of meaning useful to our times? Most efforts at synthesis of which I know — whether individual works or collective volumes — resemble a mosaic put together by specialists: they lack an all-inclusive design that could bring unity to the Tower of Babel. In the twentieth century, only Toynbee has attempted an expansion of historical vision to keep pace with the expansion of the effective framework of human existence. The grandeur of his work is still impressive, but his message is outdated. How can we find a more timely message?

But enough of our monstrously overgrown academic-history-industry. Let me turn now from the certitudes of meaninglessness to the uncertainties of the search for meaning and civic responsibility, asking: What is the proper history for our times? Aware that this question takes us into an unexplored frontier, I merely offer my own fallible answer. My plea, essentially, is for a civic-minded global history that serves the needs of our anarchic global community and helps to reduce its murderous anarchy. Since, as responsible human beings, we are concerned with other human beings, such history (like Thucydides' or Toynbee's) is also moral history. Moral sensibility, unfortunately, has not thrived in academic history. Civic-minded global history concentrates on the welfare of the community, which now is expanded into our interdependent world. Our obligation is to the people now living, without whose willing cooperation we could neither do our work nor survive.

It follows that, like Thucydides or Toynbee, we first acquire an intimate knowledge of the world in which we live. We always start from the present, from the fact that if the community here and now breaks down, all human activities (including our own) perish also. What, then, we should constantly ask, deserves top priority for the survival of the peaceful cooperation that sustains our

society? Once we have answered that question, we can proceed to elaborate suitable time perspectives that can link the past with the present and its most urgent needs. Civic-minded global history serves the present by helping the community achieve a common purpose within a framework of meaning that extends both backward and forward (there ought to be something of a futurologist in every historian). Without meaningful time-perspectives true community and high culture are impossible.

Let us recognize, however, that even the best of civic history does not *make* history. As we, and many generations to come, live (if we live at all) between the nation-state and effective international organizations, the evolution of appropriate institutions and supporting perspectives is a collective achievement under forward-looking political leadership. All that civic-minded globalists can do in this in-between age is to prepare the stage, to teach people and their leaders to transcend their past identities and strive for a more inclusive vision of self-interest that helps to counteract the trend toward ever more murderous violence.

Knowledge of our ancestors is necessary only so that we may escape their parochialism and learn what obstructs the growth of a more inclusive awareness on our parts.

More precisely then: what should civic-minded global history teach? In the first place, we should explain how we got into the present Tower of Babel. Let us call our age the *Age of the Global Confluence*, the age in which for the first time in all human experience all peoples regardless of their cultural experiences have been forced into an inescapable intimate association for the sake of mere survival. The present world population of about 4.5 billion can exist only because of the close-knit network of political, economic, and cultural relations created in the twentieth century. Tamper with that network and you threaten genocide.

Furthermore, that network was created especially under Western auspices, by people from Europe and North America. The Age of the Global Confluence was therefore also the Age of the World Revolution of Westernization. That term calls attention to the fact that the confluence has foisted Western institutions and values upon an unwilling and unprepared majority of humankind. These days the Western nation-state is an indispensable agency for survival and prestige. Yet it also imposes a host of dire necessities upon people who in the past had no experience with this demanding instrument of large-scale cooperation. Most non-Western peoples resent both the discipline that statehood requires and the fact that it was imposed from without, much against their preference. Now they have to cope with the even greater complexity of an interdependent world.

The explosively expanded framework of survival in a physically shrunken world has imposed a vast and still uncomprehended burden on everybody, including the

peoples of the West. Even under the best of circumstances, effective management of the nation-state has proved difficult. Keeping reasonable order in the entire world, in which growing multitudes press upon each other and upon the limited resources of their planetary habitat, lies far beyond contemporary human capacity. No wonder that our world abounds with violence and inhumanity — what else would we expect?

These are dismal perspectives, yet they offer at least a rational explanation, which in turn allows suggestions for a rational response. Admittedly, our world has grown over our heads: how then can we rise to the required comprehension? The answer seems obvious. Rather than freeze our traditional identities in a violence-escalating fundamentalism, we must go forward and define a new, more inclusive identity that does justice to all the others, some of whom now have the power of life and death over us (as we over them). Civic-minded historians may therefore feel some misgivings about the revival of Western civilization surveys that is currently under way — pioneering world history surveys instead. In this age, the definition of individual and collective identity looks forward, not back; let the dead bury their dead. Knowledge of our ancestors is necessary only so that we may escape their parochialism and learn what obstructs the growth of a more inclusive awareness on our own parts. In this endeavor, however, let us be careful. We cannot afford to weaken our current bonds of community; we must stretch and expand them, must search for those values that lend themselves to ecumenism and transcendence.

As civic-minded global historians we should prepare the way by showing how other people with other creeds, ideologies, and ways of life, came to be what they are now. We have to grant them the legitimacy of their present practices however contrary to our own. Thus, we should valiantly counteract the near-universal practice of cognitive imperialism, of annexing other peoples to our own standards. We should advocate, in other words, a peace-making, consciousness-raising, transcendence-oriented cultural relativism that aims at finding common ground beneath the immensity of hostility-creating human diversity.

In trying to disarm such hostility, we also have to expand the time-frame of our histories to correspond with the spatial expansion of our community. Global history means millennial history, history going back to the origins of the differences that pose such threat in the tight harness of contemporary interdependence. To give one pertinent example: the Soviet system is not the invention of Soviet Communists but the product of many centuries of sharp adversity. Viewing cultural development comparatively over long periods of time, we learn, incidentally, how little we know about the factors shaping collective behavior, how poorly we are prepared for effective intercultural judgment free of cognitive imperialism.

Recognition of our ignorance then prompts the utmost caution in drawing conclusions. As moralists we consider it our highest obligation to understand before we judge, no matter how repulsive the phenomena under

consideration. Thus we should never be carried away by the moral indignation that all too easily leads to even worse inhumanities. How can we be sure that under similar circumstances — circumstances understood from the inside — we and our fellow-citizens would have behaved differently? Do we, as outsiders, really know the conditions that led to the rise of totalitarianism in this century? The same question arises when we assess the widespread violation of human rights. Are we sure that the conditions that made possible their historical evolution in our society prevail elsewhere in the world? Beware of cognitive imperialism!

Thus, we have come to contemporary history. My vision of good history gives priority to contemporary history, to events that have happened within the memory of living people. In this context lie the lessons of our times, the sources of action now and of policy for the future. For that reason, it is necessary to apply the largest applicable contexts, the most informed understanding of the conditions under which our society operates, and the broadest time-frame. Like Thucydides, we must set long-range perspectives before we deal with the events of our times, but the latter must hold the center of the stage. What could be more important for our future than understanding the breath-taking events that have taken place in the twentieth century?

It will have become clear by now that my emphasis rests on broad contexts and generalizations. They are part of the demanding language of global-minded historians. For living in peace in this age, we need capacious concepts to encompass human experience through the ages and around the world. We cannot possibly remember the myriad documented details of human experience available to us. We have to simplify and abstract, to conceptualize and boil down the data into usable form. The Eskimos have dozens of words for snow in its various forms; in our urban lives, a single word will do. So it must be with the details of social experience in our drastically enlarged world. More capacious terms will have to be invented if we are going to take an adequate view of contemporary existence. Have we not lived for some time with big abstractions like "nation," "state," "church," or "progress" (to mention but a few)? Now we have to look for even more inclusive verbal formulae.

Generalization and abstraction also imply forgetting. Throughout their history, people have abandoned skills no longer useful in favor of new and more serviceable ones. Likewise, civic-minded global historians must learn to forget and assist in collective forgetting. They are engineers of selective remembering at a time when more than ever "salvation lies in remembering," as it says on the Yad Vashem monument to the victims of the Holocaust. But let us be careful: the remembering has to be responsible and constructive remembering. Historians must eliminate the useless and harmful, and press reconciliation over revenge. Civic-minded global history is a moral enterprise helping to fashion more inclusive generalizations with positive moral overtones. What this age needs, obviously, is a higher — a global — order of abstractions that can reach down into the human subconscious where morality is anchored. When at last

we have achieved an adequate and historically sound framework of meaning in a stable world order, we can begin to do greater justice to the details of human experience on the ground floors of life; we can see them in a better light.

At this time, however, our need is not research on the ground floors of life, but more creative thought, more insight, more reflection. Scholarly research, I suspect, is often an excuse for thinking too narrowly or for not thinking at all. As matters now stand, we have more knowledge of the past than we can use — we know far too little of the present. What is needed is a thoughtful arrangement of our existing historical knowledge to fit the drastically changed circumstances of our times — and also a sense of hurry in doing so, for there is little time left before the storm strikes.

For living in peace in this age, we need capacious concepts to encompass human experience through the ages and around the world.

Well now, I can hear the question in the background: Are my views any less esoteric and more relevant to the current state of mind in our society (or in our classrooms) than the scholarship of which I am so disdainful? That scholarship at least is innocuous (even though it wastes socially valuable time), while my views are disturbing to prevailing opinion. Maybe so. Yet there is no question in my mind that my variety of history fits with open eyes into the global openness where all humanity blindly descends to catastrophes greater than ever known in history. It offers a sense of salvation and control, a view into a viable if highly demanding future. It follows my motto: "We live in extraordinary times, and intellectuals (historians included) who don't think big, don't earn their keep"; they are ornaments like George Kates's mandarins in a spent society.

Statement, President, WHA

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Patterns of thinking and teaching about the past with roots in nationalism, positivism, and Western cultural arrogance still deeply influence American education. Subject specialization in university teaching and research is still much more highly rewarded than efforts to interpret broad historical processes. The challenge to our Association is to demonstrate not only that "global" history is an academically sound approach to the past, but that world-oriented historical studies should be central to the secondary and college curricula.

Proponents of a world history that stresses themes, processes, and comparative analysis and that draws heavily on the conceptual tools of cultural anthropology must continue to make vigorous defense against the conventional argument, "How can you teach global history when there is so much to teach about the United States or Western Europe?" On the other hand, the idea of world history has been receiving a much warmer

welcome in the discipline in the past few years for a number of reasons. One is a more general understanding that world history, especially as presented in the introductory course, is not an escape into superficiality nor a campaign to democratize the past by making everyone's history equal to everyone else's. Another is that innovative conceptual ideas and vocabularies for writing and teaching world or transregional history are being worked out without sacrificing depth or clarity. A third is the manifest success of world history courses around the country in terms of both student response and faculty opportunities for cooperation and intellectual discourse.

The principal work of the WHA is, and will continue to be, to serve as a channel for teachers and scholars to share information and ideas on world, cross-cultural, and comparative history. In less than a year of formal existence, the WHA has developed a constitution, sponsored two sessions at the American Historical Association meeting in San Francisco, founded a newsletter with a high standard of design, and produced a publication, *A Sampler of Course Materials in World History*, for the teaching profession.

In the coming year, the WHA will sponsor a panel and a workshop at the AHA meeting, explore the idea of a national survey of world history courses and programs, and take steps to make the organization more widely known by initiating contacts with other professional associations.

Probably most important of all, the WHA will work to strengthen cooperation between college and K-12 teachers in advancing world history teaching and curricular development. In the public schools, this will require action to influence both local school systems and state departments of education. The WHA encourages members to establish working groups of elementary, secondary, and college teachers to cooperate with both school districts and state agencies in developing world history and global education. Since many states are currently rethinking the importance of history and social science education in their public systems, now may be the time to get involved. We might look forward to the day when permanent committees affiliated with the WHA are operating in all fifty states to promote the cause of world history education. Please let the *Bulletin* know of any efforts you are making in this area of concern.

Looking over the two years during which the idea of this organization has come so rapidly to fruition, I find nothing more gratifying than to witness the surge of initiative all across the country to advance our aims. Regional world history conferences are being scheduled, several new world history textbooks are in progress, innovative curricula and syllabi are being developed and shared, and many, many letters and phone calls have come to the organizers of the WHA, asking "What can I do to help?" We currently have a membership approaching three hundred.

As the WHA continues to grow and broaden its range of activities, let us work together to ensure that it continues to have the mark of a "movement," indeed even a crusade.

World History Association Annual Meetings

December 27-30, 1983

The WHA sponsored several activities during the annual meetings of the American Historical Association (San Francisco, December 27-30, 1983), which resulted in increased visibility and cohesion for our group.

Business Meeting

About thirty people attended the WHA business meeting, on December 27. The president pro tem., Kevin Reilly, presided. He opened with a report on the steering committee meeting at Wingspread last May, which drafted a constitution and defined the purposes, structure, and initial leadership of the group. Ross Dunn distributed copies of the first WHA publication, *A Sampler of Course Materials on World History*, which includes syllabi of a considerable variety of world history courses taught at ten universities, colleges, and junior colleges in the United States. Raymond M. Lorantas unveiled the first issue of the WHA newsletter, the *World History Bulletin*, which was received with general acclaim. The treasurer pro tem., Ernest Menze, reported on the financial status of the association, which at the end of 1983 possessed \$1,988.64, derived entirely from dues and the sale of the mailing list. The WHA has nearly three hundred dues-paying members paid up through 1984.

Lloyd Swenson and Lynda Shaffer reported on the status of a WHA panel on global themes proposed for the 1984 AHA meetings in Chicago; the panel is still in the process of organization. The possibility of a WHA teaching workshop was also discussed, and Craig Lockard was tentatively charged with organizing something on textbooks and textbook selection. Several forthcoming conferences dealing with world history—at the University of Denver, Bard College, Michigan State University, and the University of California-Santa Cruz—were also announced.

Kevin Reilly then announced that the constitution had been approved by membership vote, and that the following had been elected to office for 1984: president, Ross Dunn (San Diego State); vice-president, Kevin Reilly (Somerset County College); secretary, Craig Lockard (Wisconsin-Green Bay); treasurer, Ernest Menze (Iona). Elected to the executive committee were: William McNeill (Chicago), Howard Mehlinger (Indiana), and Lynda Shaffer (Tufts), three-year terms; Marilyn Hitchens (Wheat Ridge HS), Raymond M. Lorantas (Drexel), and Arnold Schier (U.S. Air Force Academy), two-year terms; Sarah S. Hughes (Hampton Institute), Mary Rossabi (Fieldston School), and Martin Yanuck (Spelman), one-year terms.

The newly elected president, Ross Dunn, presided over the remainder of the session, which was devoted to a general discussion of possible new directions for the

WHA. Among the ideas and topics mooted were: regional teaching conferences; state WHA branches, on the Colorado model; retooling workshops for world history instructors not trained in the global approach; world and comparative history panels at the annual meetings of such groups as the Association for Asian Studies and Middle Eastern Studies Association; problems with secondary school texts (the subject of a recent study by Doug Alder of Utah State); possible WHA input into state decision-making on world history courses and texts at the secondary and primary levels (Ross Dunn outlined some California experiences); the development of a graduate program in comparative world history at the University of California-Santa Cruz; a possible grant proposal to NEH for the study of world history teaching and courses at the postsecondary level; the publication of the papers from the two WHA-sponsored panels at the 1983 AHA meetings, possibly in the *History Teacher*; the need for an interorganizational committee to build coalitions with other organizations interested in global approaches; increasing interest by publishers in producing world history texts at all levels; the development of a new series on comparative world history by Cambridge University Press, under the general editorship of Philip Curtin; the necessity of planning now for panels and workshops at the 1985 AHA meetings (to be held in December of that year), due to the October 1984 submission deadline.

Executive Committee Meeting

The newly elected officers and executive committee, as well as the executive director, Joe Dixon, met on December 29. The group appointed a nominating committee, to be chaired by Lynda Shaffer: Dorothy Abrahamse (California State at Long Beach) and Raymond M. Lorantas, three-year terms; Margery Ganz (Spelman) and Lynda Shaffer, two-year terms; Marilyn Hitchens and Howard Mehlinger, one-year terms. The group also discussed the 1984 and 1985 AHA panels and some possible participants; a prospective NEH grant proposal; a likely new and expanded edition of the world history syllabi collection; the introduction of a book review section to the *World History Bulletin*; and a possible summer meeting, probably on the East Coast, of as many officers and executive committee members as could attend.

Other Activities

The WHA also sponsored two sessions at the AHA, a workshop on teaching world history, chaired by Marc Gilbert and a panel on world history, 924-1500, chaired by Dilip Basu. Some sixty people attended the workshop, and the panel attracted about eighty.

Finally, it should be noted that during his address, AHA president Philip Curtin of Johns Hopkins, a WHA member, made an eloquent plea for the global approach in history and attacked the narrow specialization so prevalent in the history profession today.

Craig Lockard, Secretary

Book Reviews

The Twentieth-Century World: An International History

By William R. Keylor. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984. 468 pp. Annotated bibliography, index. Cloth, \$24.95; paper \$12.95.

Perhaps more than other teachers, world historians are continually on the prowl for new textbooks, books of readings and primary sources, and other supplemental materials for classroom use. The scarcity of good world history textbooks and the lack of additional reading materials makes teaching world history more difficult than it should be and is a factor that deters some faculty from instituting world history courses. William R. Keylor's *The Twentieth-Century World: An International History* presents a curious dilemma: it is a first-rate book for the world history teacher, but will probably be of limited value as a text. For many courses, the time frame will be too narrow; for most, the book has too political a focus.

The author's purpose was to produce an undergraduate textbook that synthesized the specialized scholarship of twentieth-century international relations into a truly global format. His organizing principle was "to provide a narrative account within an analytical framework of the struggle among the major nations of the world for power, prosperity and prestige in this century." Keylor accomplished his purpose admirably. The book is a superb account of twentieth-century power politics, with an excellent description of the underlying economic forces that operate within the context of international relations. The author deftly works his way through a maze of international and national policies, public and private diplomatic maneuverings, treaties and alliances, conflicts and peace settlements. His narrative treats the issues, events, and personages with balance and objectivity. Where scholarly controversy exists, he dissects it dispassionately; his personal judgments and interpretations are judicious and sound. He writes clearly and effortlessly; his prose is not the stilted variety found in many textbooks.

Yet, the book has several drawbacks as a text. While Keylor focuses on the political, economic and military struggles among the world's powers, he devotes little attention to their social, cultural, intellectual, and technological contacts. That, after all, is not his purpose. World history teachers, nevertheless, must be concerned with introducing their students to these important areas of interaction and exchange. Furthermore, the author's emphasis leads naturally to the kind of history that views the world primarily in terms of its leaders and downplays the significant contributions of those outside the political arena. In other words, this is very much elitist history—at a time when many world historians, responding to the initiatives of the new social history, are attempting to provide their students with some feeling for the historical

texture of daily life among the globe's inhabitants.

Keylor also says very little about the less powerful nations except when they intrude on the stage of the world's great powers. Many world historians, however, feel strongly obligated to devote some analysis to the histories of these nations, particularly to how they became incorporated into a Western-dominated world and why they are responding to that domination in such diverse, but frequently violent, patterns.

In summary, this book merits careful reading by world history teachers as they prepare their classes, but its narrow focus and special emphasis will probably cause them to look elsewhere for student assignments.

Joe Gowaskie
Rider College

Global Rift: The Third World Comes of Age

By L. S. Stavrianos. New York: William Morrow, 1981. 890 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Paper, \$15.

Most world historians are familiar with the work of L. S. Stavrianos, an author of major texts with a truly global focus. Now this eminent scholar has written an interpretative but meaty history of the Third World (Asia, Africa, Latin America) over the past 500 years. *Global Rift* is characteristically stimulating, well researched, and informative (even for specialists), as well as opinionated and controversial. Roughly half of the text discusses the twentieth century; the postwar era receives over one third of the total coverage. The author concentrates on global patterns of change; hence, the reader will gain as much perspective on the forest as on the individual trees.

A somewhat neo-Marxist orientation suggested in Stavrianos's recent writings becomes explicit in *Global Rift*. Stavrianos has clearly been influenced by the ideas of Wallerstein and other scholars employing a world-system approach. This approach emphasizes the interrelationships between the West and the Third World in the development of a global market economy to which all peoples have become subject. Stavrianos focuses his attention on the historical processes that produced a world in which some countries are rich and powerful while others are poor and powerless. The main force in this development was capitalism, a dynamic socioeconomic system and subversive socioeconomic process that emerged in northwestern Europe, later spreading with overseas voyages to embrace much of the world, enmeshing all societies in a world economic system. The ideas in the book are not especially original; however, Stavrianos is a more accomplished historian than Wallerstein. He makes a powerful, in many respects compelling, argument for the notion that the development of the industrialized West and the underdevelopment of the Third World are related

phenomena. Stavrianos also offers a penetrating analysis of the meaning of underdevelopment and the types of political-social-economic systems which emerged after World War II: nationalist (neocolonial or reformist), social revolutionary (China, Cuba, Vietnam), and white settler (notably South Africa and Israel).

The attentive and critical reader will learn much about Third World history. Yet, this book has serious deficiencies. Highly selective in its coverage, *Global Rift* offers little information that does not relate directly to the general theme of Third World underdevelopment; the reader will learn little about religion, culture, or the arts. Most world regions—including Eastern Europe, Russia, Western Europe, and the United States—receive attention where relevant; but (as in his earlier books) Stavrianos all but ignores Southeast Asia, except for the Vietnamese revolution. Many historians will dispute his interpretations of topics long subject to debate: the reasons for Latin American underdevelopment and Anglo American development; the rise of Zionism and Israel; the importance of New World and slave-trade profits in generating capital for Britain's Industrial Revolution; Japan's successful response, and China's "failure" to respond, to Western pressure in the nineteenth century; the nature of Maoism; American policies, activities, and interventions (which receive harsh—in my view, deserved—criticism). In Stavrianos's view, Third World countries can only begin to overcome underdevelopment through social revolution on the model of Mao's China. His mostly admiring analysis of the pre-Deng Chinese Communist development experience (and of those of other social revolutionary regimes) seems at times idealistic and simplistic.

Despite these reservations and occasional differences of opinion, I highly recommend this book. The clear and articulate perspective should stimulate students and confirm that history can be exciting, controversial, and committed. Although lengthy, *Global Rift* could be used as a text in a modern world history survey, provided the instructor also used a variety of supplementary materials, especially on Western history. I am currently using it as the main text in a general course on the modern Third World.

Craig A. Lockard
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

Europe and the People Without History

By Eric R. Wolf. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1983. 503 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. Paper, \$8.95

This stimulating and important work by the American anthropologist Eric Wolf represents a significant departure from previous one-volume histories of the modern world. Attractively produced and priced, *Europe and the People Without History* has much to offer

instructors looking for an antidote to the Great Man approach to the writing of world history, with its implacable chronology and Olympian judgments. Wolf's anthropologist's eye inevitably sees post-1500 history differently, emphasizing the cumulative impact of capitalism upon even so-called primitive peoples, and tracing the patterns of change from Europe to isolated villages in Africa and Latin America.

At its core, the book is a challenge to positivist history and its key assumptions: that civilizations and societies are static and disconnected (except for the West, which alone is dynamic), that the "rise of the West" is a moral success story in which the virtuous triumph (and earlier peoples are only precursors of this final apotheosis), and that complexity and change are unique characteristics of the West (and certainly not of less complex societies).

For Wolf, an authentically historical account of the last five centuries of human history must constantly entertain the possibility that things could have been different. Specifically, his history invites us to "account in material terms for what happened at each juncture, to account for how some relationships gained ascendancy over others." He argues that even seemingly isolated "primitives" and other peoples without history have been profoundly affected from the beginning by the spreading ripples of the emerging world capitalist system. Wolf's approach is explicitly (but eclectically) Marxist. As opposed to theorists like Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein, who stress the operation of the forces of the world market (to the neglect of other significant factors), Wolf is concerned with the impact of change at the local level and the complex relationships of production, the state, the market, and cultural methods of coping with them.

The book is divided into three parts of approximately equal length. In the first section, entitled "Connections," Wolf provides an overview of the world in 1400. The first chapter — an unconvincingly rapid survey of the history of social sciences and the place of the Marxist tradition within it — is frankly disappointing. Once past it, however, things improve. Chapter 2 focuses on the operation of two processes—the rise of empires and hegemonic systems, and the growth of long-distance trade — in the shaping of non-European societies. Wolf next presents a major concept, the mode of production, and distinguishes three main types: capitalist, tributary, and kin-ordered. He clearly states that he is concerned with using the concept to better understand the connections that develop between Europeans and the other peoples of the globe, and not as a mechanical device to process historical facts. (Wolf's lack of dogmatism and awareness of microprocesses of change are reassuring — though those resistant to Marxist concepts will probably remain unconvinced). The section closes with a chapter on European society in the fourteenth century, which focuses on changes in long-distance trade, political consolidation, and expansion as being of particular significance.

The second section, "In Search of Wealth," covers the great expansion of the period 1500-1750. The four chapters are among the most useful and insightful in the

volume. Wolf treats, in succession, the Iberians in the Americas, the fur trade, the slave trade, and trade and empire in the Asian world. Each chapter moves easily through the existing literature, artfully surveying economic and social changes from the global level to that of the local village, and manages to convey something of the richness of cultural variation, and the range of choices available. Here the anthropologist's interest in the concrete details of everyday life and awareness of the global patterns of change are especially impressive.

The final section, "Capitalism," traces the impact of the Industrial Revolution. Chapters follow the Industrial Revolution in Europe (and how it was connected to worldwide processes of change), crisis and differentiation in capitalism, the movement of commodities, and the new laborers. Several features strike this reviewer as especially original. One is Wolf's survey of commodity production for the market, which usefully focuses upon the ways in which local social and economic structures had to accommodate to the requirements of the market, and the disruptions this entailed for many societies. Another is his emphasis upon labor systems, where he takes a Thompsonesque interest in the transformation of everyday life, and the impact of capitalist production on the social fabric of diverse world societies, including European and American.

Europe and the People Without History is a suitable supplementary text for courses in world history in which part of the goal is to deal with social and economic change at the village level and to assess the impact of the world economy locally. For courses based on the old Wisconsin "world and the West" model, it might be considered as a main text. For its deft summaries of a whole series of literatures, as well as for its impressive bibliographic essay, graduate students and teachers will want to have it.

Edmund Burke III
University of California-Santa Cruz

Letters to the Editor

World History Documentary

The founding in the United States of the World History Association is a most welcome and timely event. Millions of children throughout the world are learning forms of history that are highly culture oriented, not to say nationalistic. Being English, I identified myself at school with the European expansion across the world. It was only later on in life, as I traveled, that I began to see history from the point of view of those that were invaded. Speaking with an Indian in the Canyon de Chelly, Arizona, I realized that he was a hurt individual.

There were also huge gaps in my knowledge. I knew nothing of the precolonial history of China, Africa, and the Americas. My knowledge of the history of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was fragmentary. It seemed to me that if we were to achieve a peaceful world, we would have to get to grips in a profound way with the psyches of other races and nations. This inevitably means going back deep into their past: connecting to their collective unconscious. The study of world history at schools would be a considerable aid to this process. How to bring about the necessary change in curricula?

I felt it would be useful if a documentary film could explore this subject. It would be necessary for the film crew to travel to various countries and continents and interview students, teachers, and public education officials. The local approach to history teaching would be discussed, together with its effects, i.e., the kind of image of the external world it was building up in the minds of children and adolescents, and the results this produced in people-to-people attitudes and international relations. This part of the film would simply be factual, i.e., explore current realities.

The film would then explore solutions. This could, *inter alia*, consist in discussions with WHA members concerning their work and aspirations in terms of the production of world history texts, the problems of writing "objective" history (free of class, cultural, or national bias), and the introduction of new curricula into schools.

Finally, these ideas could be discussed with the first group: What problems and difficulties did they see in the introduction of such teaching in their schools? How could they be overcome? This might result in WHA establishing sections in different countries and extending assistance in the introduction of reforms.

Once completed, the film would be publicized and distributed as widely as possible in educational circles: it would be used as an instrument to bring about change. The cost of the whole effort would not be inordinate and would be a contribution to the cause of world peace.

This letter is an appeal to WHA members who would like to play a creative part in the production and distribution of the film. A steering group could be formed that would provide the necessary guidance to the film producer: where to go, whom to interview, how to structure the film, etc.

I do not anticipate problems in obtaining finance for the film, provided the proposal is written up adequately. The steering group would also give guidance in this. I look forward to hearing from those of you who would wish to cooperate in this venture.

Austin Arnold
route du Jura
1261 La Rippe
Vaud, Switzerland
Telephone: (022) 67-18-36

Austin Arnold, a member of the WHA, is a United Nations official stationed in Switzerland. (Ed.)

Women in World Cultures

I am very interested in the new World History Association and have become a member. My partner, Marjorie Bingham, and I are both high school history teachers. Seven years ago we were funded under ESEA Title IV-C to write curriculum materials on the history of women in world cultures for secondary students. At the conclusion of the three-year grant period, the Northwest Area Foundation funded us to write additional units. Most recently, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Northwest Area Foundation, and the Japan Foundation are funding us to write *Women in Japan*.

Marjorie and I are committed to improving and furthering the study of world history at the K-12 level. A global perspective must be introduced before the university level so that students will have the broad interest in world affairs that well may lead them to choose topics in international affairs and whole history. Obviously, we are also interested in balanced curriculum that includes women's history as well as more traditional materials. As trained teachers and historians we have seen our task as making the excellent new (and older) scholarship on women available in a format that is understandable to younger students.

Susan Hill Gross
Women in World Area Studies
St. Louis Park Schools
6425 W. 33rd St.
St. Louis Park, MN 55426
Telephone: (612) 925-4300

Editor's Note

With mixed feelings, we report that the demand for the first issue of the *Bulletin* far outstripped the supply. The original mailing list of the WHA had 380 names; we printed 650 copies; we have none left! As a result, we have resorted to the use of photocopies to meet the continuing requests, and some of these are still available. We are sorry that we have none of the original, but we are happy that the interest is so great.

Book reviews are a new feature in this issue. Anybody interested in reviewing books in world history should write to our book review editor, Craig A. Lockard, Department of Social Change and Development, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Green Bay, WI 54302.

The officers and council of the WHA express a special sentiment of appreciation to Andrew Verdesca, Michael Coyne, and Joseph Walker of Drexel's Zeta Theta Chapter of Alpha Phi Omega for labeling, sorting, and preparing both issues of the *Bulletin* for mailing.

We hope that it is apparent from the contents of the first two issues of the *Bulletin* that it serves as an open forum for all kinds of information concerning world history. Send on anything that might be of service to teachers and scholars in the field: comments, suggestions, announcements, meetings; no areas are restricted. Submissions should be typed double-spaced.

Think globally. Join the WHA.

WHA Council

- Three-year term: William H. McNeill, University of Chicago
Howard Mehlinger, Indiana University
Lynda Shaffer, Tufts University
- Two-year term: Marilyn Hitchens, Wheatridge Senior High School, Colorado
Raymond M. Lorantas, Drexel University
Arnold Schrier, University of Cincinnati
- One-year term: Sarah Hughes, Hampton Institute
Mary Rossabi, Fieldston School of Riverdale, NY
Martin Yanuck, Spelman College

WHA Nominating Committee

- Three-year term: Dorothy Abrahamse, California State University-Long Beach
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- Two-year term: Margery Ganz, Spelman College
Lynda Shaffer, Tufts University
- One-year term: Marilyn Hitchens, Wheatridge Senior High School, Colorado
Howard Mehlinger, Indiana University

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 _____

Mailing address _____

Affiliation, if any _____

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, World History Association
Iona College
New Rochelle, NY 10801

World History Notes

- Advance notice of two world history sessions at the AHA Centennial Program in Chicago, December 27-30, 1984:

"Periodizations, Conceptualizations, and Premises:

Leaping Regional Boundaries," organized by Lynda Shaffer, Tufts University

"Textbook Selection and Evaluation," organized by Craig A. Lockard, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

- The Council of the World History Association will meet at Iona College, New Rochelle, New York, on July 14 to discuss various issues and projects. Ernest A. Menze, WHA treasurer, generously offered to host the meeting.

- An opportunity to learn of African art, with the possibility of integrating it into world history. A showing of the Art of Cameroon, at the National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC until June 17, 1984; Houston, July 28 to September 9, 1984; New Orleans, October 6 to November 25, 1984; Chicago, March 9 to June 15, 1985; and New York, July 25 to October 15, 1985.

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Photo courtesy of
Marc Jason Gilbert,
North Georgia
College.

Two Summer Institutes

- "The Introductory History Course and The 'New History,'" sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Community College Humanities Association, Union County College, 1033 Springfield Avenue, Cranford, NJ 07016. The institute will be located at the University of Colorado from June 3 until June 29, 1984. The objectives of the institute are to acquaint

history faculty from two- and four-year colleges with the content and methodology of the new history, to introduce curriculum materials from the new history that will enable faculty to reshape the introductory history course, and to present faculty with a model of history instruction that will strengthen the general education curriculum. (This information was provided by Anne D. Rassweiler, Executive Director, CCHA.)

- "Teaching About Africa in World History Courses," at Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia, under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, June 25 until July 27, 1984; lectures, films, and discussion of topics in African history appropriate for inclusion in a world history course. This Institute is under the direction of Sarah S. Hughes of the Department of History at Hampton Institute.

The deadlines for applying to these institutes have passed; however, look for results of these meetings in future issues of the Bulletin. (Ed.)

Aids in Teaching World History

- Sampler of Course Materials in World History. This is a collection of ten syllabi from colleges and universities from around the country. For copies, write to Ross E. Dunn, President, World History Association, Department of History, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182-0380.

Ross Dunn is preparing a second edition for the near future. Send your syllabi as soon as possible.

Women in World Area Studies offers books and filmstrips to help integrate women into world and survey history courses at the secondary and community college levels. Material now available includes Africa, ancient Greece and Rome, medieval and Renaissance Europe, China, India, and the USSR. To receive a descriptive catalog, write to Glenhurst Publications, Central Community Center, 6300 Walker Street, St. Louis Park, MN 55426 telephone: (612) 925-3632. (Ed.)

WORLD HISTORY BULLETIN

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