



NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL WORLD HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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The Meeting of the Steering Committee March 11, 1995

The Steering committee of NER-WHA met at Northeastern University on March 11, 1995 to assess the organization after its first year and make plans for its development. Since its establishment in December 1993, NER-WHA has published two newsletters, sponsored world history panels at two meetings of the New England Historical Association, and built a membership list of nearly 100. (Cheap dues—free—have helped with the latter.)

Nine members of the Steering Committee attended, with representation from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. In the course of the meeting, President Theodore Von Lage modestly suggested that it might be time for him to step down from his position of leadership, but he soon gave in to the blandishments of the other members of the Steering Committee who agreed by acclamation that he should continue for at least another year. Northeastern University will be able to provide financial support for NER-WHA for at least one more year.

David Burzilo of The River School presented preliminary results of his survey of over 100 New England high school teachers of world history. The results indicated the range of world history courses they teach and the difficulties of preparing world history courses, but also the imaginative ideas many teachers have developed. Details of the survey will be published in the June issue of this newsletter.

The discussion of plans for the organization focused mostly on teacher training, for both new and continuing teachers of world history. The group laid plans for presentations at meetings of college and secondary teachers, for a summer seminar in world history, and for establishing archives (both electronic and paper) of teaching materials. Further, the Steering Committee agreed to continue publication of its newsletter, with three issues per year, and to campaign to build membership among both secondary and college teachers of world history.

The next meeting of the NERC (New England Regional Council of the National Council of Social Studies) will take place in Hartford in March of 1996. It seems certain that the organizers of NERC will highlight the pioneering world history program of the Hartford-area high schools, supported by the Connecticut Humanities Council. NER-WHA hopes to contribute to this effort by proposing one panel in which individual teachers discuss their work in teaching world history, and another in which teachers suggest guidelines for the training of world history teachers.

For the New England Historical Association fall meeting, members of the Steering Committee decided to propose a panel on the hotly debated national standards in world history, and to invite national figures to participate in the panel. For the spring 1996 meeting, it was proposed to organize a panel on teacher training in world history. Taking a step further, members of the Steering Committee discussed the possibility of seeking support (most likely from the National Endowment for the Humanities) for a summer seminar for teachers in world history, probably to be held in Boston. Such a seminar might rely on museum and other institutions of the Boston area, and focus on role of New England in world history. The New England theme would address such issues as commerce, technology, migration, health, and disease.

Plans for building archives or resource centers include both paper and electronic dimensions. On paper, NER-WHA will build a collection of teaching aids including bibliographies and syllabi. On the Internet, NER-WHA will form a discussion list of all its members who have access to e-mail. Further details on each of these projects will be announced in the June 1995 newsletter.

----- Patrick Manning

Getting a Ph.D.-Preparing to Teach World History

by Christine Skwiat, Rutgers University

Rutgers University graduate students who take their minor field in Global or Comparative History discover that this concentration has a welcome, if surprising, focus: pedagogy is the thing. As is the case at many universities, a high premium is placed on research. Consequently in the effort to help graduate students complete their exams and theses in a timely fashion, teaching them how to teach often seems to escape a high-priority rating. Teaching assistantships represent the primary arena for pedagogical training. As a result, Ph.D. candidates who can debate historiography endlessly and speak Foucault with fluency often find themselves overwhelmed when they face their first day in front of a room full of undergraduates who address them as "Professor."

The Minor Field in Global and Comparative History at Rutgers is designed to prepare graduate students to teach undergraduate world history surveys. Unlike the Ph.D. programs at Northeastern or Tufts, Rutgers does not offer a major-field concentration in world history. Rather, candidates take their major field in a traditional topic area, such as Africa, Europe, Latin America, or the United States. Those who elect to take their minor field in world history take three courses in comparative and global history and write a minor field examination. Teaching remains the focus of both requirements. The Colloquium in World History on the Atlantic System offered by Allen Howard is a case in point. Each week the class addresses a major historiographical problem, such as the environmental legacy of the Columbian exchange; resistance to slavery; the transition from mercantile to industrial capital. In discussion, participants debate various ways to teach each topic; primary and secondary readings; activities and discussion topics for our potential classes. We discuss articles about teaching world history and review and critique textbooks. Finally each candidate prepares a world history survey of his or her own. Each student designs a syllabus; develops the major themes of the course; selects readings, films, and activities; and writes a lecture. The last day of class is devoted to reviewing each other's prospective courses.

Studying for the minor exam continues the process begun in coursework. My own reading lists, for example, built on the historiography relevant to the course I designed on "Africa, the Americas, and Europe: The making of the Atlantic System." By the time I took the minor field exam, I had an entire file drawer filled with notes and articles that I will use when I prepare to teach the world history survey at the University of Massachusetts/Lowell this summer.

In courses and while studying for exams, candidates were encouraged to explore topics not readily suggested by textbooks or historiography. My own research on the history of tourism in Cuba and Hawaii led me to develop a section on tourism for a world history survey. (cont. page 3)

'The Quest For Survival': A Proposal for a World History Framework

by John Murnane, Clark University

I would like to respond to Professor Theodore Von Laue's recent "Message From the President," in the Fall *New England Regional World History Association* newsletter by offering a framework that meets his challenge; one that provides a coherent basis for teaching and understanding world history, one that is also highly relevant to today's concerns.

First, his prescription for teaching world history makes a great deal of sense. I agree with his assertion that teachers should interact with students and share their "concerns and uneasiness" in light of the chaos we witness daily on the evening news and all around us. Students need to know that their teachers are groping, just as they are, to comprehend, cope with, and devise solutions for (at least at some level) the challenges of our time. In an effort to "use the past" to such ends, Von Laue's recommendation that educators "select from the available historical data what is needed for living more effectively in the present" is equally sound. In order to do this, it follows that "relating the past to the present calls for simplification and abstraction." What I offer here is just such an abstraction. While not "universally applicable," it at least makes sense of what otherwise appears as sheer pandemonium. Moreover, I believe my model orders events without neglecting the essentials Von Laue outlined; a complete coverage of human experience; emphasis upon the human skills for self-reliance; the importance of religion; the effects of geography; and other important elements.

The common thread I see running through all of world history is the human quest for survival. At the most basic level, the goal of all living things is survival; this is also true of groups ranging from the family to the tribe, from the nation-state to even the global community as a whole. In providing for the survival of any organized group there are three interrelated components: protection against predators or aggressors; access to material needs and resources; and a high degree of social cohesion. The inability to maintain any one of these components jeopardizes the other two and ultimately negates the goal of the group: survival.

I imagine early humans taking the potentially dangerous step, away from reliance on the individual and/or the family and towards *uniting* the group, as the most momentous event in human history; it truly was a leap in the dark. However it made sense in terms of survival. In an almost cost plus fashion the pluses outweigh the minuses in terms of the individual quest for survival. The larger the group, the easier it is to have a functioning division of labor and protection against outside aggression. This dynamic of increased reliance upon the group--this enhancement of human survival--represents, at its core, a fundamental choice between "conflict" and "cooperation." Of course, these two choices are opposite poles with a great range of options between them; human interaction takes place along a spectrum of conflict and cooperation. (cont. page 3)

"Quest for Survival" (con't.)

Conquest, exploitation, and war belong at the extreme conflict end of this spectrum; mutually beneficial trade, regional alliance systems, and global institutions like the United Nations, are some of the things that make up the cooperation end.

Obviously, not everything fits into this model; but, enough of the important things in world history do. In addition to the phenomena mentioned above, other human activities and endeavors also fit into this survival model. Religion, law, and other human institutions can be seen as essential for insuring a high degree of social cohesion; farming, mining, and the entire gamut of economic and resource development activities contribute rather directly to the group's survival; science and technology are a means for improving the group's ability to both protect itself, and gain and use materials and resources.

A complicating factor in all of this is, of course, the issue of perception. Different groups have conducted their quest for survival in a myriad of ways. In essence, cultural diversity is a matter of the multiple responses to the challenge of survival trusted upon people in all parts of the world at every stage of human history. Customs usually enshrine or institutionalize the various methods of insuring group cohesion—through rituals, myth, legal codes, social arrangements, and so on.

Particular methods of procuring material needs are usually adaptations to specific geographic, climatic, and demographic forces. Methods of protecting the group are usually in response to the actual or perceived intentions of neighboring groups, with the choice between conflict and cooperation occurring on a sliding scale. Perception can determine whether the "other" is an enemy or ally, trading partner or competitor. The details involved in terms of such choices, and in terms of the perceptions of various people at various times in human history make up the context and the details of world history.

The survival model offered here is, of course, a rough framework. However, its strength lies in its high degree of explanatory power, and in the fact that it stresses the commonality of human experience throughout time and space while also cultivating a respect for differences: this alone should recommend it as a model for teaching world history. It also focuses on the essential challenge, one that we face today with a vengeance: survival. Today's headlines are filled with news concerning the destruction of our natural environment, global instability and the rapid proliferation of nuclear weapons, overpopulation, civil wars, and a sagging global economy. These and other current problems dramatically jeopardize human survival, in some respects, on an unprecedented scale. Most would agree that a high level of global cooperation is needed in order to prevent disaster; as such, the fundamental choice between conflict and cooperation remains a key to human survival. An understanding of the range of responses made to similar challenges in the past—by a multitude of societies and peoples—can only help us escape the present quandary. Such an understanding can only help us in the ongoing quest for survival.

"Getting a Ph. D." (con't.)

Throughout much of the Caribbean and the Pacific, tourism has succeeded plantation agriculture, such as sugar, as the major source of foreign earnings. As the world's largest industry group, which by 1990 served 400 million international tourists annually and employed one in fourteen workers worldwide, tourism is a phenomena with which many students have familiarity. Moreover, the study of tourism enables an instructor to connect themes developed throughout a course on the late twentieth century. These themes include: global transformations of capitalism; challenges and resistance to capitalism and imperialism; class, race, and gender in the international division of labor; struggles over use and control of land and resources; environmental change and crisis. A variety of rich source material makes such connections explicit. The "settler town" described by Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* uses tourism to analyze colonial social psychology. In *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid critiques the neocolonial tourist economy of Antigua in terms of the legacy of slavery. Hansson Kay-Trask treats tourism as the latest stage in the imperial conquest of Hawaii which began with the arrival of Captain James Cook in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii*.

While no amount of preparation can substitute for teaching, my studies with members of the Minor Field in Global and Comparative History Committee have helped me take the first steps toward becoming an articulate, engaging, and well prepared instructor. Indeed, many new teachers I know—from Ph. D. candidates to associate professors—have commented that they wished that they had had similar training in the course of their graduate training.

JUNE ISSUE OF NEWSLETTER

The World History Survey

by David Burzillo
The Rivers School

During the early spring of this school year over 100 surveys were sent to public, private and parochial schools in western and central Massachusetts. Dependent heads were asked to answer a series of questions about their world history offerings. Questions included whether or not world history courses were offered, what textbooks were chosen for world history courses, what methods were used, etc. These results are in the process of being finalized and analyzed. Once this work is completed, they will be compared with the results of a survey of world history that was conducted by the National Center for History in the Schools in the 1989-1990 school year.

World History and the Advanced Binary

by Derek Prizala

This article will continue to look at the colleges and universities that offer graduate work in Ph. D.s in World History. In the fall 1990, we looked at: Binghamton, Ohio State, U. Illinois, and Williams. For the June issue, we will look at: DePaul, Johns Hopkins, Ohio State, and the U. Minnesota.

The Spring Meeting of the New England Historical Association will be held on Saturday, April 29, 1995 at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA. (413-538-2220).

Location: Mount Holyoke College
Date: Saturday, April 29, 1995
Directions: From the Massachusetts Turnpike
(east or west) Take Exit 5 (Holyoke/Citropees) and bear to right. At the end of the ramp, turn left on Route 33 for five miles to Route 116. Turn right onto 116 and drive approximately 1.5 miles north to the college.
From the South: Travel north on Interstate 91, to Route 202 (Exit 16, Holyoke/South Hadley). Head north on 202 through Holyoke; across the Connecticut River, and around the rotary to the exit marked South Hadley Center-Ast. Route 116 north. The College is approximately 2.5 miles from the exit.
From the North: Travel south on Interstate 91, take Exit 16, and follow the directions above.

New England Regional
World History Association

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Note to the Members

If you know of anyone who would be interested in joining NER-WHA, please let us know and we will send them a newsletter. Also, if you have any questions, comments, or ideas for future articles for the news-letter, please feel free to call us at (617-373-4060). Your article submissions are encouraged and appreciated.

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