

# THE ALEXANDRIAN

Troy University Department of History  
& Phi Alpha Theta-Iota Mu

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*In Remembrance of Professor Nathan Alexander*

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## *Alexandrian* Submission Guidelines

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*The Alexandrian* accepts manuscripts pertaining to the subjects of history and philosophy. Accepted forms include book reviews, historiographic essays, and full-length articles.

**Format:** All submissions should be in Microsoft Word. They should adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Please include footnotes instead of endnotes and refrain from using headers.

**Abstract:** Any article submission must include an abstract of no more than 200 words. This is not necessary for submissions of book reviews or essays.

Please send all submissions to Dr. Karen Ross at [kdross@troy.edu](mailto:kdross@troy.edu).

**Cover Art:** The cover art for this year's edition was created by David Henry Souter (1862-1935), an Australian artist, sometime between 1914 and 1918. It depicts a World War I nurse standing before the iconic symbol of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Tens of thousands of women from Europe and North America served in field hospitals during the war. Many more volunteered to train Army and Navy nurses, work in military and civilian hospital, and staff aid centers at home and abroad.

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## Contributors' Biographies

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### **Melissa Franklin**

Franklin is originally from Iron City, Georgia, and graduated from Troy University in December 2015 with a Master's of Arts degree in History. She is a member of Phi Alpha Theta and Phi Kappa Phi. Currently she is employed as a history professor by Bainbridge State College in Bainbridge, Georgia. Her plans are to continue conducting her own research, with particular interest in the Civil War and the Salem Witch Trials.

### **Petra Hokanson**

Hokanson is a senior at Troy University in American and Latin American History with a minor in Social Sciences. She graduated summa cum laude from Enterprise State Community College, where she earned her Associate's Degree in History. Petra is the spouse of an active duty service member and a mother of two and currently accompanies her husband on a tour in Germany. She is a remote member of Troy's History Club, Russian Club, and the Mortar Board Honor Society. Upon her graduation in May 2016, Petra plans to earn a Master's Degree and pursue her goal of becoming a teacher.

### **Megan Phillips**

Phillips attended Ohatchee High School where she graduated as salutatorian. She is currently a senior at Troy University where she majors in American and Latin American history and English. She has presented at the First Annual Troy University Research Conference in 2015 as well as the Alabama Association for Collegiate English Teachers annual conference in Fairhope, Alabama in 2015. She is president of the Troy University History Club and an active member of Phi Alpha Theta. After graduation, she will be attending Samford University's Cumberland School of Law as a Merit Scholar.

### **Casey Ralston**

Ralston is originally from Oak Harbor, Washington, although as the son of military parents, he moved a good deal. Eventually, he settled in New Orleans, Louisiana, which he now considers home. Ralston has his

bachelor's degree from the University of New Orleans and an Executive Masters in Business Administration from Colorado Technical University. He is working on his International Relations Master's degree at Troy University, focusing on Eurasia and Russian studies and plans to graduate in 2016. Currently on active duty in the Air Force, he plans to pursue more learning opportunities and focus on either a Doctorate in International Relations or Masters in Cybersecurity.

### **Eleanor Self**

Self is a senior at Troy University graduating in May 2016. She is from Birmingham Alabama, where she graduated from Hoover High School. Eleanor is majoring in European History with a dual minor in psychology and dance. She is also president of Phi Alpha Theta, co-editor of The Alexandrian, and a member of the History Club. She is a member of several honor societies including Mortar Board, Alpha Lambda Delta, Phi Kappa Phi, and Omicron Delta Kappa. After graduation, Eleanor plans to teach English as a foreign language in either Europe or Asia, and then apply to work with the United States Foreign Service.

### **Kenneth Tallant**

Tallant is a senior anthropology major, German Studies minor at Troy University. He is from Grady, Alabama, and graduated from Montgomery County Academy. He is currently the Vice President of the Pi Gamma Mu honor society, Troy chapter, and was previously the President of Troy University Students for Social Justice. After graduating from Troy this May, Kenneth intends to pursue a Ph.D. in Digital Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine.



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# The Decline and Fall of the Western Roman Empire: A

## Historiographical Essay

Melissa Franklin

*Abstract: This article analyzes the historiographical trends and the impact of archaeological discoveries on historical research since the late twentieth century. It argues that the inclusion of material evidence in scholarly research led to a revisionist movement within the field, wherein Edward Gibbon's theory of catastrophic decline was rejected in favor of theories of transformation and continuity based on discoveries from archeological digs. However, around the early twenty-first century, counter-revisionist scholars returned to the older theory of decline and supported their conclusions with the addition of archeological evidence. It strives to prove that these significant historiographical shifts were a direct result of newfound, material evidence and that historians combined it with a bottom-up approach to construct an explanation for the collapse of the Western Roman Empire that is steeped in social, cultural, and material evidence from the everyday lives of Roman citizens.*

It is well known within the historical community that the end of the Roman Empire was, in reality, the end of Western Roman Empire. Edward Gibbon marked the date of collapse at 476 CE in his famous work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the first volume of which was released in 1776. In total, Gibbon released six volumes, the last of which was published in 1789.<sup>1</sup> His works explained that the Western Roman Empire suffered a devastating collapse that marked a significant decline in civilization after that date. Debates ensued over the accuracy of that date and many twentieth-century historians have placed the date of collapse even as early as the late third and fourth centuries. Recently, more debates have ensued and are centered on the *causes* for the decline and fall of the empire. In 1971, Peter Brown published a reconsideration of Gibbon's catastrophic

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, David Womersley (London: Penguin Classics, 2001).

decline theories in his work, *The World of Late Antiquity*.<sup>2</sup> In his book, he renamed the era from the second to the eighth centuries Late Antiquity and described it as a time of transformation, rather than collapse and ruin. Much of the dramatic change in historical theories, like Brown's, resulted from advances in the field of archeology. Material evidence uncovered by archaeologists in site excavations and exploratory digs began to emerge in the nineteenth century, although the bulk of archaeological research began in earnest in the 1970s, and with technological advances within the discipline, new discoveries continue to this day. In some cases, the textually based theories of older historians have been replaced or revised due to conflicts with archaeological finds.

Although material evidence has been scant in some areas, a vast array of artifacts have been uncovered that aid historians in their reconstructions of the late Roman world and, as a result, the historiography has changed. An investigation into the progression of scholarly works on the subject has shown that the emergence of late twentieth century archaeological evidence from the late Western Roman Empire led to a revisionist movement within the historical community wherein scholars challenged older theories of catastrophic decline and fall and offered new explanations based on the continuity theory that had foundations in social and cultural history. A counter-revision followed in the early twenty-first century, based on social, cultural, and material evidence, which supported earlier historical theories of a catastrophic decline in the Western Roman Empire after the fifth century.

The earliest modern scholar of the late Roman Empire, Edward Gibbon, could also be considered the father of modern historical research on the subject. His publication *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* described internal and external causes for the end of the Western Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> He also set the precedent for the date of collapse at 476 CE when the last Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, was deposed. He noted barbarian invasions, civil war,

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<sup>2</sup> Peter R.L Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*



economic issues, changes in society, and military problems as reasons for the collapse. His work also focused on religion as a significant factor in the decline of the empire. Like other Enlightenment scholars at the time, Gibbon believed that religion was without reason, and he often criticized the Catholic Church. He proposed that the prolificacy of Christianity in the Late Roman Empire caused citizens to be less concerned with their present lives and more focused on their afterlife. As a result, Romans regressed into a superstitious people, under the control of priests and barbarians.

Gibbon also favored the catastrophic collapse theory, wherein the Western Roman Empire could not sustain itself. After the collapse, civilization entered a period known as the Dark Ages. Historians provide no agreed upon chronological parameters for the Dark Ages. It is generally considered to have begun after the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century and lasted until the fifteenth century. According to Gibbon, throughout the Dark Ages, civilization underwent a marked regression in terms of economics and culture wherein society did not begin to recover until after the Middle Ages with the emergence of the Renaissance. A lack of attention to available archaeological evidence from the later periods prevented Gibbon's incorporation of it into this work. Nonetheless, his research was thorough and based on textual evidence that set a precedent for future scholars to follow his methodology and expound upon his findings. In subsequent years, scholars have added to Gibbon's work and have challenged his theory of catastrophic collapse, but most agree that his work on the decline and fall of Rome formed the basis for all modern scholarship on the subject.<sup>4</sup>

As a contemporary of the French and American Revolutions, those influences are evident in Gibbon's writing as well. Gibbon denounced the revolution in France, but was less outspoken on the American Revolution. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the effects of

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<sup>4</sup> Peter N Miller, "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbon: David Womersley," review of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Abridged Edition*, by Edward Gibbon, ed. David Womersley, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4 (Fall 1997): 317-318.

revolution touched Gibbon's life both personally and academically as he fled from the French Army in 1793, while living in Lausanne. For example, G.W. Bowersock wrote an article in 1976, "Gibbon on Civil War and Rebellion in the Decline of the Roman Empire," which examined the manner in which Gibbon's feelings about civil war and revolutions manifested in his *Decline and Fall*.<sup>5</sup> Bowersock began with the proposition that Gibbon knew he had made a "terrible mistake."<sup>6</sup> The mistake was his dating of the beginning of Rome's decline. As evidence, Bowersock referred to a remark Gibbon wrote in his notes as he prepared an unpublished seventh volume. It contained a quote about a more accurate factor for decline: civil war. In the winter of 1790-91 he wrote, "Should I not have deduced the decline of the Empire from the Civil Wars, that ensued after the fall of Nero or even from the tyranny which succeeded the reign of Augustus? Alas, I should: but of what avail is this tardy knowledge? Where error is irretrievable, repentance is useless."<sup>7</sup> As a result, Gibbon reconsidered that his date of collapse in 476 CE should have been much earlier, closer to the second century.<sup>8</sup>

Bowersock determined that Gibbon's mind changed about the date and reason for decline because of his attitudes about the French Revolution. He also suggested that Gibbon had begun to emulate Tacitus in his work. For instance, he noted that Tacitus had also started a book about the civil wars of the early empire.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps Bowersock was correct about Gibbon's motives and influences. Either way, there is a possibility that Gibbon may have had misgivings about his theory on decline that resulted from influences in his contemporary environment. For example, Bowersock noted that Gibbon's discussion of civil war as a factor of decline was often superficial. However, if his mind changed drastically enough to consider his dating a "terrible mistake" due to his lack of attention to the negative effects civil war has on its people, then it

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<sup>5</sup> G.W Bowersock, "Gibbon on Civil War and Rebellion in the Decline of the Roman Empire," *Daedalus* 105, no. 3 (Summer 1976): 63-71, accessed December 4, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20024416>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

is likely the result of his disgust with the French Revolution and its effects on Western Europe, which he made clear in his other writings. Overall, Bowersock provided an important example for historians to consider contemporary influences as well as changes within the works of authors. Bias cannot be avoided, but also must be considered in the assessment of historical works.

After Gibbon, research into the fall of the Western Roman Empire began in earnest amongst the interested elite and scholars. Over time, technological and archaeological advances and discoveries were made that allowed historians to assess the late Roman Empire from a material evidence standpoint. In the 1970s, archaeological research came to the forefront of historical analysis in regard to the fourth and fifth centuries of Rome. As a result, the historiography began to evolve, with a stronger emphasis on analyzing and interpreting material evidence. In 1971, Harald von Petrikovits published the article, “Fortifications in the North-Western Roman Empire from the Third to the Fifth Centuries A.D.”, wherein he examined the remains of military structures.<sup>10</sup> In his analysis, he examined the differences in style, structure, and location of military buildings and proved there were only minor changes to them from the third through fifth centuries. Essentially, their architecture and layout remained continuous throughout the late Empire. Von Petrikovits postulated that the basic patterns hailed from the Eastern Empire and resembled their manner of building up fortifications around towns to defend against external attacks.<sup>11</sup> Although von Petrikovits’ archeological finds were from the two centuries before Gibbon’s official date of collapse in the fifth century, his work was nonetheless important because it emphasized a basis of continuity in constructions up until that point, which supports the transformative theory more so than catastrophic decline.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Harald von Petrikovits, “Fortifications in the North-Western Roman Empire from the Third to the Fifth Centuries A.D.,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 178-218, accessed December 4, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/300017>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 178, 203.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

Another continuist scholar, Peter Brown completed his 1971 work, *The World of Late Antiquity*, which described the period between AD 150 to 750 as a time of transition infused with the cultural arts. His transformation theory constituted a significant shift in the historiography of the fall of the Roman Empire. He rejected Gibbon's concept that Rome ever declined and, instead, focused on Rome's *continuity*. Indeed, he defined Late Antiquity as the period between the second and eighth centuries wherein there were "close links between the social and spiritual revolution."<sup>13</sup> His viewpoint differed from Edward Gibbon and other historians who subscribed to the decline and fall theory of catastrophic collapse. Brown believed that after the Western Roman Empire fell, much cultural, social, and religious change continued throughout the Empire. In particular, he focused on the Mediterranean area, to provide material evidence that the decline did not mean that civilization fell into ruin. Religion was a major aspect of his writing as well, and he focused on the impact that Christianity had in terms of government and on people's spiritual lives. Indeed, he suggested that the decline of the empire only affected political entities and had little to no effect on the social, cultural and religious lives of Roman citizens.<sup>14</sup>

Brown did an excellent job of incorporating material evidence into his work. He also provided numerous photographs of artifacts from Byzantium as well as the Western Roman Empire. He used archeological evidence throughout the book wherein he described and compared artifacts like coins, sculptures, drawings, and ceremonial pieces to textual evidence like military manuals and writings from contemporaries. His evidence came from artifacts that ranged from the second century through the eighth century. An added benefit of Brown's work was that it allowed the reader to visualize his evidence and it provided a balance between textual and material evidence. Recently, modern scholarship has shown a return to the theory of catastrophic decline and fall, which called for a counter-revision of works like Brown's. However, his focus on rise and incorporation of Christianity into Roman life has remained relatively

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., vii.

unchanged, except for differing opinions on the effects it had. Therefore, Brown's work remains a staple piece of historiography for any student of Late Antiquity or the fall of the Roman Empire. In addition, his work exemplified the trend in the 1970s toward the transformation theory. However, one must keep in mind modern changes in the historiography of the period as well as advances and discoveries in the field of archaeology.

Similar to Bowersock, Arnaldo Momigliano also offered a critique of Gibbon and a host of other classical scholars on the decline and fall of ancient Rome in his 1980 article, "Declines and Falls".<sup>15</sup> His introduction suggested that his goal was to discuss possible reasons for the intermittent publications of Gibbon's six-volume *Decline and Fall*. However, the bulk of the work mainly concerned Momigliano's defense of Gibbon's theories and chapters on Christianity as a factor in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. His main argument was that Christianity had a great deal more to do with the fall of the Roman Empire than even Gibbon suggested. The shift from paganism to Christianity had such an effect on the politics and military of Rome that its importance should not be ignored as a primary factor in the fall. He also discussed the works of other historians and their theories on the decline. As he concluded his work, he provided his thoughts on the historiography of the subject and his own theories on it.

For example, he explained that the main focus of historians should be to understand the changes that took place and not question the causes because the causes are generally apparent, unlike the reasons for change. He felt that Gibbon's work provided the tools needed to begin that understanding. On those points, Momigliano offered no room for other interpretations; he was quite final in tone. While his discussion of the historiography of decline and fall was interesting, Momigliano too quickly dismissed the work of other scholars on the causes for decline. Indeed, he did not even discuss archaeological developments that were

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<sup>15</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, "Declines and Falls," *The American Scholar* 49, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 37-50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4121058>

making inroads into older ideas. Overall, his article was too biased for use as a reference in scholarly research, and he was unable to provide a viable reason for dismissal of other approaches to the decline and fall of the Western Roman Empire.<sup>16</sup>

The economy, politics, and trade networks of the late Western Roman Empire have also been debated as factors of decline. Indeed, many historians have incorporated archaeological evidence to support their investigations in those areas. Greg Woolf and R. F. J. Jones both discussed their theories on trade networks and the economy of the Romans based on coinage, pottery, and the remnants of buildings. Jones focused on the effects of urbanization on Roman culture in his 1987 article, “A False Start? The Roman Urbanization of Western Europe.”<sup>17</sup> He differentiated between early and late Roman towns within which he described the use of different sized coins and how they correlated to different social strata. He concluded, in favor of theories of catastrophic collapse, that there was no definitive, urban population in late Rome and that the smaller towns were unable to sustain themselves during the decline of the Empire because the outward pressures of decline, like barbarian invasions, were too great on them, which supported historical theories of catastrophic collapse.<sup>18</sup>

Greg Woolf’s 1992 article, “Imperialism, Empire, and the Integration of the Roman Economy,” researched the different uses and locations of pottery vessels called amphorae.<sup>19</sup> He described long-distance trade networks through the findings of the amphorae, tableware, and coins in different places of the late Empire. He concluded that those artifacts in conjunction with textual evidence supported the theory that Roman imperialism was the reason for stability within the empire, not an

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 48-50.

<sup>17</sup> R. F. J. Jones, “A False Start? The Roman Urbanization of Western Europe,” *World Archaeology* 19, no. 1 (June 1987): 47-57, accessed December 3, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/124498>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>19</sup> Greg Woolf, “Imperialism, Empire and the Integration of the Roman Economy,” *World Archaeology* 23, no. 3 (February 1992): 283-293, accessed December 3, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/124763>.

internal, stable infrastructure. Woolf's assessment of Roman imperialism supported a theory of continuity because the Roman government was able to sustain economic relationships with other countries into the fourth and fifth centuries, the period after Gibbon's date of catastrophic collapse. Both scholars exclaimed the benefits of archaeological research and the need for continued research. In addition, both articles showed the renewed interest in archaeology of the late period and attention to the inherent problems within the field, especially in terms of dating. More recently, archaeologists have uncovered artifacts that belong to the late fourth or fifth century that were incorrectly placed in the earlier fourth century. Professionals, like Ellen Swift, in the field attributed this to preconceived notions that the materials had to belong to the fourth century or that the dating was based on the writings from only one historical source.<sup>20</sup>

James Wiseman also accepted the theory of a transformative period of Late Antiquity, but rejected the idea of the Dark Ages. He described contemporary works and theories on continuity in his 1997 article, "Insight: The Post-Roman World."<sup>21</sup> He mentioned a large research program, "Transformation of the Roman World AD 400-900", in Europe that dealt with research into continuity and transformation, with an emphasis on Christianity as agent of positive change within the period known as the Dark Ages. The trend toward revisionism in historiography was evident in his article. He noted that contemporary archaeological evidence such as letters from Greek historians, pottery, burials, and palace remains, supported assimilation of barbarians and a reduced set of circumstances for the Western Roman Empire, but not a complete decline of civilization.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly, the debate amongst scholars between continuity and catastrophe has been a heated one, with no universal agreement reached.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 287-290.

<sup>21</sup> James Wiseman, "Insight: The Post Roman World," *Archaeology* 50, no. 6 (November/December 1997): 12-14, 16, accessed December 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41771318>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 16.

As early as 1997, Bryan Ward-Perkins discussed the differences between historians on these views in juxtaposition to excavations of urban areas in Italy in his article, “Continuists, Catastrophists, and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy.”<sup>23</sup> Due to structural remains found in northern Italian towns, historians began to debate whether or not their remains proved a continuation of town life into the fifth century or an overall decline in population and urban dwellings. Ward-Perkins concluded that more research and excavation was needed to form a clearer picture of what happened to the towns between the second and seventh centuries.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that something drastically changed was not a matter of debate, but he explained how the evidence has been interpreted in vastly different ways. While some historians have viewed the changes as transformative, not catastrophic, other have said the changes proved the end of a civilization. Reasons for such disparate theories, he noted, could be the result of a “general fashion in later twentieth century thought” wherein people were more concerned with cultural change and the equality of all people.<sup>25</sup> Ward-Perkins referred twentieth-century thought as marred with the horrors of the century, which he likely based on the last hundred years or so of international violence and wars. He did not set out his specific thoughts on the subject, but his later publications explained well enough that his conclusions erred on the side of the catastrophists.<sup>26</sup>

The historiographical trend of continuity carried into the later twentieth-century for many, however. For instance, in 1998, Richard Hodges noted that contemporary scholars had uncovered evidence that the Dark Ages were more transitional than devastating due to archaeological evidence in his article, “The Not-So-Dark Ages.”<sup>27</sup> He

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<sup>23</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins “Continuists, Catastrophists, and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 65 (1997): 157-176, accessed December 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40310949>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 161, 168.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-174.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Hodges, “The Not-So-Dark Ages,” *Archaeology* 51, no 5 (September/October 1998): 61-63, 65, accessed December 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41771532>.



asserted that archeology's role was so important to history that through findings of complex social and economic changes based upon material evidence, Gibbon's work was reduced to a mere literary accomplishment. Hodges went on to surmise that a combination of historical and archaeological investigations had uncovered evidence that the Dark Ages produced the "foundations for modern Europe."<sup>28</sup> Many shared his theory and it has endured to modernity in many circles. However, it should be noted that the relative economic prosperity of the 1990s (on the heels of an economic downturn in the 1980s) likely affected Hodges' approach wherein he rejected the idea that the Dark Ages were a time of impoverishment and argued that Rome underwent a more economically stable transition into the "Not So" Dark Ages.

Ellen Swift, another historian-archaeologist, has focused extensively on the social and cultural history of the Late Roman Empire. She has conducted extensive archaeological research in the Western Roman Empire during the fourth and fifth centuries. Her excavations have uncovered mostly jewelry, dress adornments, and burial items that she used to substantiate her claim that the social and cultural aspects of the Western Roman Empire remained intact and did not suffer from catastrophic collapse. She synthesized her work in a summary-style book in 2000, *The End of the Western Roman Empire: An Archaeological Investigation*.<sup>29</sup>

In her introduction, she seemed to agree with Richard Hodges that the Dark Ages were not as dark and void of human advances as was previously assumed.<sup>30</sup> The bulk of her work explained the various ways that Roman culture survived the fifth century and endured into the Middle Ages and beyond. Before she expressed her scholarly intentions, Swift noted numerous issues with archaeological evidence including mishandling, incorrect dating, assumptions based on previous scholarship, and lack of material evidence. Nonetheless, she gathered

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>29</sup> Ellen Swift, *The End of the Western Roman Empire: An Archaeological Investigation* (Stroud and Charleston, SC: Tempus, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 13.

objects from Britain and other areas across the late Western Roman Empire that proved the collapse of the empire was not so prolific that Roman culture ceased altogether, despite indications of barbarian interactions and examples of decline. In her conclusion, she described how, through an analysis of pottery production, Roman values were inherited and cultural norms across European societies survived. Indeed, she explained that her research proved there was “no marked disruption in many spheres of life and culture.”<sup>31</sup>

Swift made clear in her introduction that she supported the theory of continuity. In fact, her final paragraph stated that the available material evidence proved a long-term transformation of the Roman Empire. There can be no doubt that Swift is an expert in her field. Her attention to the details of archaeological artifacts created a strong support system for her work and added food for thought about her argument for transformation. Nonetheless, materials she investigated, like jewelry, combs, and brooches, failed to prove that the Western Roman Empire did not enter a state of intense decline and collapse in the fifth century. An examination of military changes, literacy rates, dwellings, and cultural artifacts is necessary to provide a more comprehensive view of the late Western Roman Empire’s transition into the Middle Ages in order to demonstrate that Roman culture did not undergo a significant decline. For instance, it was only five years later when Ward-Perkins emerged with his archaeologically based work that incorporated many of the comprehensive elements listed above and he reached a vastly different conclusion. In essence, material culture has provided archaeologists and historians with conflicting evidence (or too little evidence in some cases) to reach an evidentiary conclusion in the eyes of modern historiography. We have yet to find another Gibbon, whose ideas were accepted to so readily and widely.<sup>32</sup>

Modern historiography has evolved into specialized areas of research, like Swift’s. John Caldwell also discussed transition of the Roman world, but his research specialized in fertility changes in ancient

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 119-136.

Rome. His 2004 article, “Fertility Control in the Classical World: Was There an Ancient Fertility Transition?,” combined textual and archaeological evidence to ascertain the demographics of the late Roman Empire.<sup>33</sup> Caldwell explained an older theory of population decline due to various birth control methods including the use of plant materials, the assessment of ovulation cycles, and male asceticism. However, he noted that evidence from classical demography proves that population levels were, in fact, stable. An exception was within the aristocracy who did practice birth control, likely exposure, in order to maintain smaller family sizes due to inheritance laws. His archaeological evidence consisted of life tables based on skeletal remains, tombstone inscriptions, and the work of physical anthropologists.<sup>34</sup>

Caldwell concluded this newer evidence proved, “[t]here was probably no decline and fall of the Roman Empire’s population.”<sup>35</sup> He allowed that there were periods of mortality rate differences due to plagues and war, but overall the population remained static. However, at the end of his article, he expressed a common concern of ancient historians, that there was not enough evidence to fully prove his theory and there may never be.

Nonetheless, his theory was based on the research of professionals in the field and provided an interesting perspective about what the ancients viewed as a traditional family. He suggested that perhaps their family units were not as similar to modern ones as was previously thought. It seems that the cultural and social conditions of the ancient family yielded more concrete evidence for Caldwell. Indeed, his section titled, “Classical society and the family”, made up the bulk of his article. Essentially, his discussion of fertility was more peripheral than his title suggested. Nonetheless, his work proved that population levels were more stable than scholars previously thought during the Late

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<sup>33</sup> John C. Caldwell, “Fertility Control in the Classical World: Was There an Ancient Fertility Transition?” *Journal of Population Research* 21, no. 1 (March 2004): 1-17, accessed December 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41110779>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Empire. His findings urge historians to reconsider the idea that population levels declined after the fall of the Empire.<sup>36</sup>

Thankfully, research like Caldwell's has continued with the support of governments, universities, museums, technological advances, and monetary contributions. In his 2004 article, "The Present State and Future Scope of Roman Archaeology: A Comment," Greg Woolf described those advances and advantages of archaeological research in the modern world.<sup>37</sup> An archeological historian himself, Woolf used his article to urge the community of archaeological scholars to band together and synthesize their work. He believed the discipline suffered from a lack of broad perspectives. Essentially, he noted that specialization in smaller areas has caused historians to lose sight of the larger picture of the Roman Empire and all its intricacies. He urged them to band together and hold meetings wherein professionals from all areas can come together and share their discoveries as often as possible. Fortunately, Woolf noted, that as museums and public interest has continued to support preservation of Roman archaeology it was unlikely that enthusiasm would wane anytime soon.<sup>38</sup>

Woolf's prediction has remained true thus far, and archaeological work continued with archaeologist and historian, Bryan Ward-Perkins' 2005 work, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*.<sup>39</sup> Ward-Perkins' view of the collapse of the Roman Empire was that he proposed the Romans did not simply decline, but underwent extreme cultural and economic deprivations after the collapse of the empire in 476 CE. In effect, he rejected the notion of many modern Late Antiquity scholars that there was not a Dark Age and insisted that the material evidence proved there was. Ward-Perkins grew up in Rome and

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 3-11.

<sup>37</sup> Greg Woolf, "The Present State and Future Scope of Roman Archaeology: A Comment," *American Journal of Archaeology* 108, no. 3 (July 2004): 417-428, accessed December 3, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40025760>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>39</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

spent many years studying and excavating Roman ruins which added to his depth of knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

His archaeological evidence consisted of the disappearance of luxury items from households, reductions in the size and grandeur of buildings, disappearance of common household items, reductions in literacy, and the lack of quality goods and foodstuffs. He explained that as the barbarians invaded, the Romans were unable to compete with them militarily due to their lack of citizen soldiers. Then, as their complex economic, political, and trading systems began to crumble, the Romans were unable to sustain their previous ways of life. Ward-Perkins also noted that as the decline continued, large cities became little more than sparse towns. In other words, the Roman's high standards of living left them almost incapable of a subsistence lifestyle. Thus, Roman civilization entered the Dark Ages.<sup>41</sup>

It is remarkable, the amount of information Ward-Perkins was able to glean from simple artifacts like pottery and graffiti, which he used to disseminate and make theoretical guesses on the levels of literacy and wealth throughout the western empire. Indeed, his use of archeological evidence to support his counter arguments against Late Antiquity historian's views of continuity was exemplary. He cited material evidence that proved a steep decline in standards of living, literacy, nutrition, and material wealth. Ward-Perkins also provided photographs, maps, and drawings that further explained the disappearance of cities and he displayed artifacts from different periods of the empire. Additionally, he provided notes and a bibliography at the end of his work, which included traditional, classic texts as well as twenty and twenty-first century works. His ability to blend archaeology and history proved effective and provided a strong foundation for future scholarship that blends the two, particularly in relation to counter-revisionist arguments.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., chap. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., chap. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., chap. 7.

Peter Heather's 2006 work, *The Fall of the Roman Empire A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*, proposed that the Roman Empire in the west collapsed due to external, barbarian invasions.<sup>43</sup> His idea was not new, as many other scholars have cited barbarian invasions as a cause of the collapse. However, Heather examined the barbarians based on textual and archaeological evidence that points to a political shift within the empire and an economic shift within the Germanic tribes. Heather's book should be read in conjunction with Ward-Perkins' as they complement one another in many areas. For example, both scholars are counter-revisionist because they felt that there has been too much emphasis on a generally peaceful barbarian infiltration and a lack of attention paid to the realities of violence and dramatic, devastating decline of the Roman civilization. In addition, they both adhered to Edward Gibbon's end date of the Empire at 476 CE.

Heather challenged the idea of transformation and provided an explanation based on the more violent tendencies of Romans and barbarians. He proposed that the formation of alliances between Germanic kingdoms and the Huns formed a force that unexpectedly overtook the Romans from the borderlands. After the Huns fell, the Germanic kingdoms were left in a position to invade Rome from the frontier areas. Heather also noted that economics played a vital role in the invasions. The barbarian nations had a desire for Roman wealth that Heather felt drove them inward. For example, in regard to Germanic peoples he noted, "...it is evident the power and wealth of the Roman Empire were in everyone's sights."<sup>44</sup> For example, he cited material evidence found in Germanic burials to support his thesis. He explained that the sites were discovered with Roman gold, jewelry, and weaponry, which had been exchanged throughout the Germanic lands. The riches had come from the alliances with the Huns wherein the Hunnic leaders had redistributed their wealth amongst their Germanic allies.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 458.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 8.

Although Heather based the bulk of his research on textual evidence, he used archaeological artifacts in his discussion of trade and social changes. He focused primarily on the burial practices and grave objects found in the Germanic regions of Europe. Although, he is not an archaeologist, much of his theory rested on the material evidence found. His textual evidence was based on primary sources that he did not list in the bibliography, but notes that they were of the traditional, classical sort. His secondary sources were listed, however, and were more recently published. The modernity of his sources strengthened his work because it provided the most up-to-date evidence.<sup>46</sup>

Overall, Heather's account of the barbarians was remarkable in the attention to detail he provided for various groups. He used his evidence to provide militaristic and economic reasons for the fall of the Western Roman Empire. However, the bulk of his work was focused on the specifics of the barbarian tribes and seemed less about the fall of Rome and more about disseminating the differences between barbarians. Additionally, Heather's thesis rejected all other possible factors in the fall. While it stands to reason that the barbarian tribes desired Roman gold and prestige, the assimilation of their culture with Rome's due to trade and military ties provided them a great deal of that already. In essence, his attention to the interworkings of barbarian tribes detracted from his conclusion that the Germanic tribes sought Roman wealth and surprised the Romans with their subsequent assaults. In essence, more material evidence was needed to support his final conclusion<sup>47</sup>

It should be noted that Heather and Ward-Perkins' works were written post-9/11 wherein international terrorism has become a serious threat to the world. Both scholars raise similar concerns over current affairs in relation to similarities between the Roman Empire and the western nations of today. In particular, in a 2006 interview with Donald A. Yerxa, Ward-Perkins was quoted as saying, "The Romans, like us, enjoyed the fruits of a complex economy...And like us, they assumed

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., chap. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., chap. 10.

their world would go on forever. They were wrong...”<sup>48</sup> It is likely world politics influenced them and international concerns over terrorism was reflected in their writing. For example, just as the modern world deals with the threat of terrorism from numerous places around the globe, so too did the Romans suffer from a mounting barbarian threat at their western borders. In addition, the scholars showed a disdain for modern preoccupations with historical equality, which provides unrealistic, “sunny” views of transformation rather than the realities of catastrophic decline.<sup>49</sup>

Another proponent of catastrophic declines is Lester K. Little. His 2007 publication, *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750*, was a compilation of scholarly articles based on research of the Justinian Plague.<sup>50</sup> The work was a result of the American Academy Conference in Rome in December 2001, wherein Little gathered with other historians, scientists, archaeologists, and medical professionals to employ modern research techniques in an attempt at a more thorough explanation of the Justinian Plague and its effects on the late Roman population. Their results were self-professed to be incomplete, but hopefully offered more concrete information than previous research. Essentially, Little synthesized the meeting’s findings with his theory that the plague caused the shift from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. With the plague, came changes in religion, politics, and the working class’ principles.<sup>51</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins reviewed Little’s work and took issue with his opening lines which charged the Black Plague with both the demise of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance. He noted that, “... [he was] not quite ready for this bizarre metaphor (an

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<sup>48</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins, “An Interview with Bryan Ward-Perkins on the Fall of Rome,” interview by Donald A. Yerxa, *Historically Speaking* (March/April 2006), 31-33.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Lester K Little, *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, preface and introduction.



undertaker doubled as a master of ceremonies?), nor for the sweeping generalization that it conveys.”<sup>52</sup>

Overall, the group of scholars at the American Academy conference tackled a challenge to prove there was evidence of continuity that pointed to a less catastrophic plague than ancient textual accounts described. More archaeological data was needed, so some of Little’s colleagues compiled evidence based on “burial pits, abandoned villages, and aborted buildings projects.”<sup>53</sup> In terms of the evidence provided, however, the materials uncovered were scanty and the authors duly noted this. At best, most of them were only able to make educated generalizations based on inscriptions and changes in building practices. Indeed, a distinct pattern of decline from the plague based on archaeological evidence has not been discovered yet. So, the use of archaeology in respect to investigations into the plague was not as beneficial as research has shown it to be in other areas.<sup>54</sup> It is interesting to note that Little described social and cultural changes during the plague era, like how workers’ mobility affected their wages, jobs, and ability to find work. He also described losses of faith as well as intensified piety in Christianity that resulted in changes in social norms.<sup>55</sup> His attention to cultural and social changes reflected a growing trend in historiography to include a bottom-up approach to the late Roman Empire.

A recent example of an archaeological discovery that helped corroborate the decline of the Roman Empire was a circus in Colchester, England. Philip Crummy summarized the material evidence in his 2008 article, “The Roman Circus at Colchester.”<sup>56</sup> The circus was discovered in 2004 and was investigated through 2007. Burial sites and graves were also found around the site, but that evidence has yet to be published. The bulk of the article described the particulars of the structure and

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<sup>52</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins, Review of *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541–750*, by Lester K. Little, *Speculum* 84 (2009): 466-467.

<sup>53</sup> Little, *Plague and the End of Antiquity*, xi.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 4 and chapter 9.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-32.

<sup>56</sup> Philip Crummy, “The Roman Circus at Colchester,” *Britannia* 39 (2008): 15-32, accessed December 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27793190>.

explanations of what each part was used for. However, in regard to decline and fall, the archaeologists made a most interesting discovery. Based on the circus' remains and evidence from the surrounding area, they were able to deduce the decline of the circus correlated directly with the decline of the town of Colchester.<sup>57</sup>

The investigators estimated that the circus was destroyed when the town declined and there was no longer money for its upkeep or spectators to attend its shows. Their discoveries were consistent with data from other areas of Britain as well. Indeed, Crummy stated that, "the construction of public buildings appears to have almost stopped [in Colchester] and the maintenance and repair of existing ones became much less assured."<sup>58</sup> Crummy described changes in the late third and fourth centuries, their findings were closely related to other historian's evidence of demographic and structural decline in the Western Roman Empire around the same period. In addition, the evidence at Colchester corroborated R.F.J. Jones and Bryan Ward-Perkins' work on the decline of late Western Roman Empire towns.

Twenty-first century historians have not all been counter-revisionists, however. In 2009, historian Chris Wickham published his contribution to the Penguin History of Europe series with *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages 400-1000*.<sup>59</sup> His work focused on the revision of the Dark Ages as a "bad" era with little to no history. He challenged the idea that the Dark Ages should be defined by the classical world before it or the Early Middle Ages that came after it. He also proposed that the rise of nation-states did not occur during the period either. He argued that there was no political unity or common thread between European nations around the year 1000. His basic tenet was to present a better understanding of the Dark Ages to the reader with an examination of the history of the period within the context of itself and its people without modern implications. He felt that modernity and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>59</sup> Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400-1000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

nationalism were the two “grand narratives” of history, which have provided a false interpretation of the Dark Ages. He proposed to clarify those misunderstanding through a comparative study based on textual and archaeological evidence from the period.<sup>60</sup>

In relation to archaeology, Wickham explained that, ideally, historians need textual history and archaeology to work together for the best interpretation possible of the past. In chapter ten, he examined four major architectural artifacts and the remains of villages throughout Europe. He noted that the Hagia Sophia, the Great Mosque of Damascus, the Northumbrian palace complex of Yeavinger, and the church of S. Prassede each had their own meanings for the aristocracy as well as the lower classes that usually related to the struggle to maintain power. In addition, he examined village ruins that explained, “changes in sociability,...competition,...and village hierarchies.”<sup>61</sup> He noted that each area of Europe had different hierarchies within villages and over time some of the buildings started to take different shapes, which eventually became fortified castles.<sup>62</sup>

Due to the lack of textual evidence for the Dark Ages, one would assume that Wickham would have relied more heavily upon archaeological evidence. However, he relegated the majority of his material evidence discussion to one chapter. Within that chapter, he discussed four, distinct architectural ruins. However, certainly, there were more than four structures and a survey of village remains to research for the timespan he covered. Therefore, that chapter did little to “illuminate” the Dark Ages in terms of material evidence. For instance, at no point did he mention burial practices, excavated everyday materials, or any other type of archaeological find. The evidence he cited gave little information as to how people during the Dark Ages lived and

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., intro.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., chap. 10.

with little textual evidence to back it up, it left the reader with a sense of mystery about the time period.<sup>63</sup>

In terms of sources, Wickham included a combined section at the end for notes and bibliographic information and the addition of photographs and maps strengthened his work, but the photographs were limited to the four architectural structures and villages mentioned in chapter ten. It would have strengthened his “illumination” to have provided more discussion of archeological evidence as well as photographs to complement his theory. Although Ward-Perkins’ work stopped at 800 CE, the incorporation of some of his archeological findings would have been beneficial for Wickham in terms of material evidence.<sup>64</sup>

Fortunately, the discovery of new artifacts and material evidence from all over the Western Roman Empire has gained momentum in the last decade. One such example was described in James Gerrard’s 2010 article, “Finding the Fifth Century: A Late Fourth-and Early Fifth-Century Pottery Fabric from South-East Dorset.”<sup>65</sup> He examined a new type of pottery found in the Dorset region called “South-East Dorset Orange Wiped Ware.” He explained that archaeologists used the pottery to examine the economic change from a centralized government to regional, local-type governments as the Western Roman Empire declined and fell. In addition, he described pottery’s attribute for assistance with precise dating, as many of the archeological historians have touched upon. Gerrard also suggested that the continued research of Dorset pottery in conjunction with surrounding material evidence will help illuminate more of the decline during the Dark Ages. This is evidence of historiographical trend toward the counter-revisionist movement and his

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., chap. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., index, bibliography.

<sup>65</sup> James Gerrard, “Finding the Fifth Century: A Late Fourth-and Early Fifth-Century Pottery Fabric from South-East Dorset,” *Britannia* 41 (2010): 293-312, accessed December 12, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41725166>.

acceptance of the Dark Ages as a decline in civilization, not a transformative era.<sup>66</sup>

Another archaeologist-historian, Neil Christie, has researched and explored numerous sites throughout the Mediterranean and Western Roman Empire in recent years as well. His theory could be considered one of the most balanced approaches to Rome's fall. He based his work on modern archaeological finds and textual evidence from the second through the fifth centuries of the Roman Empire. His 2011 publication, *The Fall of the Western Roman Empire: An Archaeological and Historical Perspective*, examined the most recent material evidence that he felt helped reveal areas of decline as well as the continuous areas of the Western Roman Empire.<sup>67</sup> He explained that archaeological evidence alone cannot provide a complete understanding of the empire's past, especially in regard to the fifth century. Textual, environmental, and other sources are required in order to complete the bigger picture for historians. Nonetheless, Christie did a wonderful job with the chronological compilation of his evidence, so that the reader grasps his theories easily on the decline, fall, and transformation of the Western Roman Empire.

Christie used transformation, decline, and continuity interchangeably and sometimes in the same sentence. He reasoned that there were obvious signs of decay throughout the empire, but less so in some areas. Therefore, decline and fall could be applied in some places, but overall, there was more transformation wherein some towns retained some of their stability and continuity. In particular, he noted that in the Mediterranean area, ... [those] kingdoms remained part of a network centered on towns, with fair population levels retained."<sup>68</sup> In essence, although decay or decline has been discovered in various forms in different areas, it did not constitute a catastrophic collapse of the entire

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 294, 309.

<sup>67</sup> Neil Christie, *The Fall of the Western Roman Empire: An Archaeological and Historical Perspective* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 288.

empire, because some sections remained partially productive and showed some stability or continuity.<sup>69</sup>

Christie's basic argument was that the failure of the Western Roman Empire to last as long as the Eastern Empire was due to external forces, which created an internal breakdown. He attributed the initial decline to barbarian invasions wherein the Roman military was unable to fend off threats. In addition, Christie felt that the lack of a stable economy to help pay and feed soldiers as well as a decline in urban life led to the breakdown of the western areas. As barbarian soldiers turned on Romans, they could no longer fend them off because there was no economic and military backbone with which to do so. Much of this section of his theory coincided with Peter Heather's work on the barbarians. Some of his evidence was based on texts, but the majority of his work showed how archaeological advances have provided crucial evidence that occasionally refutes previous historical theories, like those of Gibbon, who did not have the added benefit of modern archaeological evidence from the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>70</sup>

In his introduction, Christie quoted Victor of Vita's plea to the eastern emperor for help after years of Vandal rule in North Africa. In his plea, he described the destruction and horrors wrought upon the Roman Christians there and gave specific examples of the destruction to particular buildings in the area. Christie explained that archaeological excavations in that area proved a reality somewhat less dramatic and devastating than Victor's description implied. Christie noted there was certainly evidence of Vandal destruction, but also prior damage to some of the recovered buildings and other remains that supported continuity rather than dramatic collapse in that area. Victor was a Catholic clergyman and held deep resentment of the heretical Arianism that characterized Vandal rule for over fifty years. So, the details of Victor's descriptions must be analyzed in the context of his life at the time. Essentially, Christie explained that archaeologists and historians are now discovering that material evidence may not match or prove the textual

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, conclusions.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, intro. and conclusions.

evidence that historians have primarily used since Gibbon. Christie used these types of comparisons throughout his work to show that material evidence is leaning more toward a theory of continuity in some areas.<sup>71</sup>

Overall, he provided a fresh look at older evidence, backed up with new archaeological finds, which provided the historiography of the period an opportunity to revise and revisit prior theories about Rome's fall. As he frequently pointed out, textual, environmental, and archeological evidence can now work hand in hand to reconstruct a more accurate picture of real life in the fourth and fifth centuries. His work was remarkable in that it did not seek to persuade the reader to choose a school of thought between the catastrophic and continuity debate, but provided evidence and professional expertise about what his findings revealed. The reader would benefit from more detailed photographs, however, to provide context and visual support for his findings, particularly from the Mediterranean area. Nonetheless, Christie's balanced approach to Late Antiquity historiography and archaeology benefits both student and scholar alike. Due to the fact that he has continued his excavation work, it is likely that new evidence could be revealed soon and introduced in a follow up to this 2011 work.

Since Gibbon's time, the historiography of the fall of the Roman Empire has undergone two, distinct phases. The initial phase occurred after Peter Brown's theory on Late Antiquity and transformation. For decades after that, historians and archaeologists used material evidence in comparison with textual evidence as a foundation for the revision of catastrophic collapse. They focused on the continuity theory that the Western Roman Empire endured after 476 CE with little interruption and transformed into modern Europe throughout the Early Middle Ages. If continuist historians discussed decline, it was often to describe minimal evidence of it, not an overall state of a deteriorated civilization. Revisionists also placed an emphasis on the social and cultural history of the period. Many historians focused on the everyday lives of Romans and barbarians, which reflected their contemporary influences. For example,

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., intro.

in the 1970s, there was a major shift in the historical discipline towards a bottom-up approach to history as well as the emergence of social and cultural history, which involved the incorporation of ordinary citizens who had been left out of history books, like women and minorities. That era also experienced the Vietnam War, communist violence, and the threat of nuclear war. Those events and influences were reflected in the historiography of the late Roman Empire as historians and archaeologists delved into the everyday lives of slaves, lower classes, and barbarians.

Then, in 2005, archaeologist-historian Bryan-Ward Perkins, published his theories on the fall of Rome. His work, based on material evidence, suggested that Gibbon was accurate in his descriptions of catastrophic collapse and decline. Ward-Perkins based his theory on the ruins he excavated in northern Italy the surrounding areas of the Western Roman Empire. Peter Heather's work soon followed and he described the intense violence and destruction that the invading barbarians wrought upon Rome. Both scholars ushered in a counter-revisionist trend in the field. After that, others began to reassess material and textual evidence. Many conceded that there were significant physical signs of a major decline in population as well as standards of living around the fourth and fifth centuries. Some scholars, like Philip Crummy, have dated remains of decline as early as the third century.

There is still much interest in the bottom-up approach as well as in the research of the social and cultural aspects of late Roman life. Such approaches are prevalent in recent works because of the large amounts of material evidence from the everyday lives of citizens that provoke questions about social status, religion, wealth, and ethnicity. The counter-revisionist movement could be attributed to the influences of a post-9/11 world, wherein international terrorism and domestic economic crises could have influenced recent, bleak depictions of Rome's decline and fall. Certainly, textual evidence has not been replaced with archaeological evidence. Nonetheless, the impact of archaeology on the research and historiography of the late Western Roman Empire should not be understated. It was responsible for revisionist and counter-revisionist trends within a fifty-year period. Additionally, many scholars



have noted their desire to continue excavations and the current ability to do so is well-funded and widespread. As more archaeological evidence becomes available, the historiography of the period will continue to grow and foster more debate on the causes for the decline and fall of the Western Roman Empire.



## Nurses to the Rescue!

Petra Hokanson

*Abstract: This article explores the role of nurses in the United States during the outbreaks of the Spanish Influenza between 1918 and 1920. It describes the rise of nursing from an untrained service to a trained profession during a time of national hardship. It argues that the epidemic provided women with a chance to successfully insert themselves into the male-dominated medical field by providing valuable services to a nation paralyzed by the Spanish Influenza and World War I. The article follows the pandemic, its debilitating nature, and its deadly toll while analyzing the growing importance of nursing, not only for the medical field and the patients, but also for the women who became nurses during this time. It concludes that the Spanish Flu enabled women to blaze a trail to higher education and careers, regardless of gender, class, and race.*

When the Spanish Flu first arrived in the United States in the spring of 1918, neither the public, physicians, nor public health officials worried about it. After all, America had weathered many such outbreaks before, with the last major one in the winter of 1915/1916. Advancements in therapy surely meant this epidemic would play out without causing major damage. By the time the pandemic was over, however, America lost over half a million people. Children, the elderly, and a surprisingly large number of young, previously healthy adults had succumbed to this deadly disease. In its wake, the Spanish Flu left bewilderment about its fatality rate and possible long-term health issues, but also instilled the resolve to improve public healthcare and medical research to avoid a recurrence of such a fatal deadly. The Spanish Flu proved to be a trailblazer for women in general and nurses in particular, as through its course they managed to find their own niche in the overall male world of medicine by launching nursing into a respected profession for women.

What had made the Spanish Flu more devastating than previous influenza outbreaks were its swift onset and severe symptoms, its secondary conditions, its range of fatalities, and its long-term effects on survivors. Named after the one country in war-torn Europe that had not

censored its press and therefore had public records of the disastrous outbreak, the Spanish Flu's place of origin was initially unknown.<sup>1</sup> Virologists now theorize that it originated in China from a mutated influenza strand and traveled the world through trade and shipping routes. The first wave of the disease in the United States was recorded in the spring of 1918 in Kansas and in military camps throughout the country, but health officials largely ignored this outbreak as it killed few people. In September 1918, the virus reemerged, this time in Boston, Massachusetts, where it likely arrived with soldiers mobilized from the entire country to join the war efforts in Europe. Almost 200,000 died in the month of October, and the victory celebrations at the end of World War I in early November contributed to the large-scale spread of the disease in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The primary symptoms and secondary conditions caused by this particular epidemic were much more severe than in previous years. Unusually high fevers, often coupled with pulmonary edema, struck patients incredibly quickly. As Nancy Bristow notes in *American Pandemic: The Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic*, “for most the attack came without warning.” Additionally, most people who had contracted the disease suffered from complications such as sinusitis, laryngitis, psychoses, and more. Many patients ended up with pneumonia, which often became the cause of death.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the pattern of infection changed. During previous influenza outbreaks, mostly children and elderly succumbed to the disease, but during the 1918-20 epidemic an alarming number of young adults contracted the illness and died from it, with people between the ages of twenty and forty suffering the highest mortality rate.<sup>4</sup> Those who survived the Spanish Flu were not in the clear, either. Full convalescence was slow at best, and quite a few patients suffered from long-term issues like cardiac

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy K. Bristow, *American Pandemic: The Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 44.

<sup>2</sup> Molly Billings, “The Influenza Pandemic of 1918,” in *Human Virology at Stanford* (June 1997), accessed on 7 February 2016, <https://virus.stanford.edu/uda/>.

<sup>3</sup> Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 44-5, 127, 196.

<sup>4</sup> Billings, “The Influenza Pandemic of 1918.”

irregularities, pulmonary tuberculosis, and vascular disorders, as well as nervous and paralytic problems.<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, at least twenty-eight percent of the American population contracted the Spanish Flu, and an estimated 675,000 American succumbed to the disease between 1918 and 1920.<sup>6</sup> As the flu tore throughout the United States, men and women likely perceived the epidemic differently and reacted to it in diverging ways. In her book *American Pandemic*, Bristow goes to some length discussing the gendered roles of men and women, claiming men were "detached responders" and women were "emotional responders." She analyzes private letters from men and women that contain accounts of the disease, and concludes, quite logically, that women submitted to their gender roles by openly stating their feelings and emotions regarding the influenza outbreak, often admitting their great fear of it. However, most women also did their best to prepare for the case the epidemic crossed into their households. Men, on the other hand, while equally worried about the disease, attempted to sound positive and optimistic, even if just for the benefit of their loved ones. Many men who caught the disease expressed frustration over being bed-ridden, asserting at the same time that it really was nothing and that they would be well soon enough.<sup>7</sup>

Some examples of the attitude about the Spanish Flu can be found in contemporary newspaper articles. Following such reports as they trailed the flu, one often has to read between the lines and consider what is *not* mentioned as much as what *is* mentioned, especially when dealing with times in which gender and race were viewed differently. Nonetheless, these articles provide a fascinating insight into the social structure of America at any given time, and the reader gets a feel for the overall mood of the era. Many people seem to have retained an upbeat and positive attitude in line with the general positivity displayed by

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<sup>5</sup> Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 180.

<sup>6</sup> United States Department of Health and Human Services, "The Pandemic," in *The Great Pandemic: The United States in 1918-1919*, (accessed February 2, 2016), [http://www.flu.gov/pandemic/history/1918/the\\_pandemic](http://www.flu.gov/pandemic/history/1918/the_pandemic).

<sup>7</sup> Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 57-59.

public health officials (who were often male) and their agencies. The officials' goal was to avoid a major panic on top of the already existing issues of war and deadly influenza epidemic. This particular goal was arguably reached, even the official attitude may have been *too* positive, therefore creating an indifference toward the outbreak that was rather dangerous.<sup>8</sup>

Gender-based reactions played out even more in the responses to the epidemic, particularly in the area of volunteering. Volunteering -- often defined as a “distinctly female activity” by many Americans -- became a way for women to insert themselves into the public sphere by the end of the nineteenth century. During the early twentieth century, volunteering had taken on a new form when, thanks to the Progressive Movement, women set out to create a public space for their activities by “keeping house” on a larger scale, attempting to improve society one “stain” at a time.<sup>9</sup> Of course, volunteering itself was based on gender-roles, as women were seen as natural nurturers and willing assistants to men.<sup>10</sup> Therefore it was not surprising that women often reacted to the epidemic by immediately lending a helping hand. Newspapers, attempting to remain upbeat and positive while still alerting the public to the dangers and problems attached to the Spanish Flu, often reported on goodwill deeds and charitable events organized and performed by women. An article in the October 23, 1918, *New York American*, for example, describes relief efforts undertaken by the National League for Women Service and the Mayors Committee of Women on National Defense in New York. It highlights immediate efforts such as soup kitchens, but also explores the organizational skills necessary to fill all the needs that arose with the outbreak of the epidemic. It goes on to

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<sup>8</sup> Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 100, 111.

<sup>9</sup> Marian Moser Jones, “The American Red Cross and Local Response to the 1918 Influenza Pandemic: A Four-City Case Study,” *Public Health Reports* 125 (Suppl 3) (2010), 92-104, accessed February 7, 2016, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2862338/>.

<sup>10</sup> Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 59.

provide contact information for potential volunteers in order to ensure that all the relief efforts could be staffed properly.<sup>11</sup>

Men are rarely mentioned in such accounts, but this lack of male charitable work might be explained with circumstances other than just gender-role behavior. First, at the time of the outbreak the United States was in a state of war, which means that able-bodied men likely were preoccupied with war work, either directly at the front or at home as part of the mobilization effort. As it were, Marshalltown, Iowa's *Evening Times-Republican* proudly reported on June 1, 1918, that twenty-nine percent of all male students at Indianola's Simpson College voluntarily enlisted in the army. While not volunteers in a strict sense of providing a service without pay, their willingness to join the military rather than wait for the draft should not go unrecognized. Of course the article then goes on to mention that as of the declaration of war in April 1918, students had been "given drill work in accordance with the new army regulations" and that the female students had been given Red Cross instruction, thus reinforcing the roles of each gender.<sup>12</sup> Second, men still had to financially provide for their families, which means they had to seek and hold employment, which in turn made it hard to spare the time to volunteer. Therefore it is not surprising that the majority of Red Cross volunteers for example was made up of women. In her case study "The American Red Cross and Local Response to the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," Marian Moser Jones speaks of an "army of eight million female volunteers" who produced medical supplies and clothing,

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<sup>11</sup> "2,000 Victims Fed by Woman," *New York American*, October 23, 1918, 11, accessed November 2, 2014, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.1270flu.0006.721>. Also: "Women of Three Churches Take Turns in Caring for Epidemic Orphans' Clothing," *Worcester Daily Telegram*, October 18, 1918, 9, accessed November 2, 2014, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.1220flu.0012.221>.

<sup>12</sup> "Simpson Students Loyal," *Evening Times-Republican*, June 01, 1918, 3, accessed December 13, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85049554/1918-06-01/ed-1/seq-3/>.

provided social services, disbursed food, and chauffeured military and medical staff.<sup>13</sup>

Like other forms of volunteering, nursing was gendered, as Patricia D'Antonio's explains in her book *American Nursing: A History of Knowledge, Authority, and the Meaning of Work*. Nevertheless, the world war and the Spanish Flu changed the status from domestic sick-nursing as an untrained occupation to nursing as a respected and trained profession. Based on her own experience as a trained nurse, as well as on the analysis of statistics, letters, diaries, journal entrances, and news reports spanning over a century of nursing, D'Antonio concludes that nurses over time found a way to gather knowledge and authority while at the same time forging a sense of identity.<sup>14</sup> *American Nursing* helps to understand the history of nursing from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

At the time of the epidemic, nursing was still a relatively young vocation, composed of trained, full-time assistants to doctors practicing in hospitals. Until the end of the nineteenth century, private homes, regardless of status, ethnicity, or race of patients, were considered the best place to care for the sick, the dying, and those who gave birth. Patients were assisted by sick nurses who had plenty of experience and a general understanding of the human body, but possessed no formal training. As hospitals emerged in the late eighteen-hundreds, the need arose for trained nurses who could provide professional assistance for physicians.<sup>15</sup>

Physicians in the early twentieth century were predominantly male by design. During early colonial times, women took responsibility for the health needs of their families, nurturing ill family members as

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<sup>13</sup> Jones, "The American Red Cross." See also "World War I and the American Red Cross," The American National Red Cross (2016), accessed February 11, 2016, <http://www.redcross.org/about-us/history/red-cross-american-history/WWI>.

<sup>14</sup> Patricia D'Antonio, *American Nursing: A History of Knowledge, Authority, and the Meaning of Work*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), Kindle version.

<sup>15</sup> D'Antonio, *American Nursing*, loc. 221, 240, 354.



sick-nurses and assisting in birth as midwives.<sup>16</sup> In the late eighteenth century, however, a shift occurred that placed formally-educated physicians in a higher class, who then deliberately excluded women from their ranks. By 1918, physicians had gained prestige and high status due to the establishment of exclusive professional organizations such as the American Medical Association.<sup>17</sup> Medical licensing, comprehensive restrictions, and medical education reform heightened the gender barriers. At the beginning of the twentieth century, physicians had managed to drive most women out of the professional medical field. Only a few women attempted to become medical doctors, and in 1920 a mere five percent of all physicians practicing medicine in the United States were female. While men had carved out a niche as physicians, women carved out a niche as nurses. Domesticity, compassion, and selflessness were attributes ascribed to females across class boundaries. This meant that American society thought that women were predisposed to care for patients (not heal them, as that was the physician's task). Physicians may have been celebrated for their skills, but nurses increasingly earned respect for being "angels" and providing motherly care.<sup>18</sup>

Of course nursing, much like anything else in early twentieth-century America, was subject to racial division and segregation. Although qualified through training, many black nurses found their career options limited by geography and duty. In some areas in the North they worked alongside white women and performed all duties for which they had trained. In a majority of the country, though, they were highly segregated and reduced to fulfilling menial tasks for which no formal training was needed.<sup>19</sup> However, because of the severe shortage of nurses due to the double burden of war and epidemic, officials had no other

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<sup>16</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary, 1785-1812*, (New York: First Vintage Books, 1990), 12-3.

<sup>17</sup> American Medical Women's Association, "AMWA's History of Success," in *About AMWA*, accessed February 7, 2016, <https://www.amwa-doc.org/about-amwa/history/>.

<sup>18</sup> Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 123, 136.

<sup>19</sup> Alice Dunbar Nelson, "Negro Women in War Work," in *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War*, Emmett J. Scott, (1919), Ch. 12, accessed February 7, 2016, <http://net.lib.byu.edu/estu/wwi/comment/scott/SCh27.htm>.

recourse but to consider nurses they previously rejected in the public health field. For the first time, the United States called upon black trained nurses and other minorities to help with the war efforts. In the *Nashville Globe*'s July 26, 1918 edition, the front page announces that "UNCLE SAM CALLS FOR NEGRO TRAINED NURSES." Finally black nurses were given the chance to don the Red Cross uniform, but they were not going to be stationed just anywhere. Their place was on army bases that housed black troops rather than overseas with the main body of the military. To explain why they were suddenly trusted with the care of "the boys," the racial stereotype of the caring and nurturing "Southern Mammy" was applied.<sup>20</sup>

The elation of being able to secure a job outside of one's community, coupled with the opportunity to gain work experience and recognition were enough to lure a number of minority nurses to the camps. One such minority nurse, a Native American woman whose name is not known, wrote to a friend about her experience as a nurse in army camps, describing her work load and the working conditions, but also mentioning that the Red Cross was "certainly 'hard-up' for nurses," as they called out time and again for volunteers. In fact, according to the author, the Red Cross was so desperate that "even me" (emphasis added by the author of the letter) could volunteer successfully.<sup>21</sup>

Whether white, black, or Native American, nurses were in high demand during the epidemic, and the Red Cross had quickly jumped into action by organizing resources and, according to Bristow, by "establishing and provisioning emergency hospitals to driving ambulances, from delivering fresh meals to nursing the sick in their homes, from creating and circulating educational pamphlets to surveying and serving community social needs in the aftermath."<sup>22</sup> Accountable to

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<sup>20</sup> "Uncle Sam Calls for Negro Trained Nurses," *Nashville Globe*, July 26, 1918, 1, accessed December 13, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86064259/1918-07-26/ed-1/seq-1/>.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from nurse to her friend at the Haskell Indian Nations University, Kansas, October 17, 1918, Bureau of Indian Affairs, accessed November 2, 2014, <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/influenza-epidemic/records/volunteer-nurse-letter.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 54.

the U.S. Congress, the Red Cross initially concentrated on providing the army with trained nurses at the beginning of America's entrance into World War I, but with the influenza outbreak the service quickly returned to its original task of disaster relief (while still sending nurses the army's way).<sup>23</sup> Working closely with public health officials, local authorities, and newspapers, the Red Cross called on all trained nurses across the United States to volunteer their services, stressing the need for graduate nurses to fill their ranks. Klamath Falls, Oregon's *Evening Herald*, for example, informed its readers as early as June 4, 1918, that the Red Cross was in search of twenty thousand nurses, both for military and public health service. Appealing to the nurses' need for recognition and praise, the article states that the Red Cross was "seeking now America's bravest womanhood." It further advised nurses who were not eligible for military service (whether for health, marital status, or race/ethnic restrictions) to report anyway, as they could still be useful by taking care of supplies and resources, and by visiting the sick.<sup>24</sup>

As the epidemic intensified in 1918 and 1919, the staffing shortage only worsened. On October 8, 1918, Kentucky's *The Bourbon News* printed an "Appeal to Nurses," in which the Red Cross asked graduate and undergraduate nurses as well as nursing aids to report to their local office "for service in the present epidemic of influenza." In desperate need for staff, the Red Cross advertised that volunteer service "is desired," but that nurses, according to their education status, would be reimbursed their expenses and would receive a weekly payment. In this article, the Red Cross also implores nurses not to work without assignment from the agency, maintaining that only if it keeps track of its nurses can it assess all resources and send them where they are needed most.<sup>25</sup> Another article from October 15, 1918, in *The Washington Times*

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<sup>23</sup> Lavinia L. Dock, *History of American Red Cross Nursing*, (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 13.

<sup>24</sup> "20,000 Nurses Are Now Being Sought," *The Evening Herald*, June 04, 1918, 3, accessed December 11, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99063812/1918-06-04/ed-1/seq-3/>.

<sup>25</sup> "Appeal to Nurses," *The Bourbon News*, October 08, 1918, 4, accessed December 11, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86069873/1918-10-08/ed-1/seq-4/>.

highlighted the nurse shortage when it reported that an emergency hospital, opened on the day of the publication in the former quartermaster general building, had hired twenty nurses so far, but was in need of at least eighty more in order to provide adequate service to the up to five-hundred patients expected in its care.<sup>26</sup>

Articles and advertisements seeking nurses were published in newspapers and bulletins across the country. As it was painfully clear that there were not enough nurses to fill all the needs, young women were increasingly encouraged to apply to nursing schools, whether at a military facility or in a civilian hospital.<sup>27</sup> By this point it was also clear that trained nurses more and more had a say in their fate. While, according to D'Antonio, many nursing school graduates only worked briefly as nurses and usually dropped out of the work force by the time they got married, some nurses began to look at nursing as a life-long career, albeit not in sick-nursing where they would provide their services in various private homes, but rather in the public health sector as school nurses or teachers.<sup>28</sup> During the years 1918 to 1920, nurses could decide whether they wanted to go into private sick-nursing, work at hospitals, or do public health work. Of course this also meant that many simply ignored the call to serve. As the Red Cross informed officials and the public via newspapers about the number of trained nurses who have not registered for service, the wording suggests that qualified nurses not registering were not doing their best for their country and their society. Officials asked even "married and retired nurses" to reconsider and offer their skills instead of letting their experience go to waste. Of course, as

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<sup>26</sup> "New Hospital to be Opened Today," *The Washington Times*, October 15, 1918, Final Edition, 2, accessed December 11, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1918-10-15/ed-1/seq-2/>.

<sup>27</sup> "20,000 Nurses Are Now Being Sought" already advises young women to seek nursing training in June of 1918, but the need for nurses only grew with the massive outbreak of the Spanish Flu. Also: "Wanted: 50,000 Nurses: The Call," *The Washington Herald*, September 8, 1918, 5, accessed February 7, 2016, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045433/1918-09-08/ed-1/seq-17.pdf>.

Furthermore: "Nurses Wanted," *The Morgan City Daily Review*, October 10, 1918, 1, accessed February 7, 2016, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88064293/1918-10-10/ed-1/seq-1.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> D'Antonio, *American Nursing*, loc. 1296.

the Red Cross called on married and retired nurses at this point, the organization still ignored the minorities in its pleas.<sup>29</sup> Still, over 18,000 nurses followed the recruiting call of the American Red Cross, and honorably served their country in the war as well as in the battle against the Spanish Flu.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the outbreak and in its aftermath, these nurses found strength and validation in their work, often feeling that they actually made a change in the well-being of patients and that they managed to save people. Many nurses described their work during the epidemic as “treasured experience” and successful endeavor. One nurse exclaimed, “Terrible as was the influenza epidemic, with its frightful toll, there was a certain tremendous exhilaration to be felt as well as many lessons to be learned from such a terrific test.”<sup>31</sup> Another summed up her experience by stating, “Through the confusion and terror spread by the epidemic the visiting nurses, who had but little time to nurse, rushed on, instructing and leaving behind them a world of comfort, or reassurance, of encouragement, forming inseparable ties of trust, unity, and confidence between the patients and themselves.”<sup>32</sup> While certainly saddened about the loss of life, nurses were rather content with their role during the Spanish Flu outbreaks of 1918 and 1919. Unlike doctors, who were expected to treat and cure the disease (failing at this invariably as there was no cure), nurses did not set out to cure their patients, but instead looked at providing care and easing the suffering to the best of their abilities.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the exhaustion caused by overworking due to a severe lack of nurses, the women in nursing often found a value and nobility in

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<sup>29</sup> “20,000 Nurses Are Now Being Sought,” informs the public that as of June 4, 1918, there were at least 60,000 registered (eligible) nurses “who have not yet volunteered for military service.”

<sup>30</sup> Jones, “The American Red Cross.”

<sup>31</sup> “Annual Report of the Superintendent,” from *Report of the Board of Managers of the Visiting Nurse Society of Philadelphia, January 1-December 31, 1918*, quoted in Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 132.

<sup>32</sup> Miss Steinberg, “Personal experiences during the epidemic,” student nurse epidemic accounts, Simmons College, quoted by Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 133.

<sup>33</sup> Bristow, *American Pandemic*, p. 131-133.

their service. They also developed a certain courage during their fight against contagious diseases, a courage that enabled them to sign up for duty even when faced with the possibility of contracting the illness themselves.<sup>34</sup> Nursing provided a unique opportunity to prove strength and independence, and in a combination of epidemic and war, woman even found themselves serving in the military alongside men. As nurses and doctors shared many of the same risks to their personal health, as well as the problem of understaffing and exhaustion, they were still eager to serve their country's needs.<sup>35</sup>

In the aftermath of the epidemic, nurses pointed out their invaluable services while at the same time demanding standardized training across the board. As an increasing number of colleges and universities recognized the need to add nursing to the degrees they offered, hospitals, previously the only facilities providing nursing training, began taking a backseat in the making of new nurses. The University of Michigan, for example, heavily advertised its Nurses Training School in *The Owasso Times* of January 30, 1920. Already offering a three-year degree to aspiring nurses at no cost while they receive "full maintenance" at this point, the university also started a postgraduate program in public health nursing and a new five-year course in which women could earn a Bachelor's Degree *and* a nursing diploma. University officials pointed out that their training school provided more education than could possibly be dispensed at training hospitals alone, highlighting the increased desire to turn nursing into an academically-accepted profession instead of treating it as a craft or trade.<sup>36</sup>

As the Spanish Flu epidemic came to a close, nurses had inserted themselves into the public sphere by volunteering their services to the public for the greater good of society. Officials sought out and wooed

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<sup>34</sup> D'Antonio, *American Nursing*, loc. 1010.

<sup>35</sup> Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 134-135.

<sup>36</sup> "The Nurses Training School," *The Owasso Times*, January 30, 1920, 1, accessed December 11, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn97070614/1920-01-30/ed-1/seq-1/>.

nurses for their specific skills. As gender-assigned as the skills attributed to women at the beginning of the twentieth century may have been, the desperate times of war and epidemic enabled women to seek a higher education and to take their fate into their own hands as professional nurses. Highly regarded and honored for their role in the fight against the Spanish Flu (and of course in the war), nurses carved out an identity for themselves that filled them with pride and a sense of accomplishment. The epidemic certainly was tragic for the people of the United States, but it *did* help nurses to find their own niche in the male-dominated field of medicine. Good *can* come from bad, even in unexpected or not clearly visible forms; women became empowered while battling the influenza epidemic as volunteers and as trained nurses.





## Not: The Negative Linguistics of the American Legal System

Megan Phillips

*Abstract: This article discusses how the language of American law is fundamentally based in the negative, creating a binary to the positive which may or may not definitively exist, and defining legality through the illegal, allowing the two warring sides to mediate one another in an attempt to create an effective system. For Americans, the Constitution, being the highest law of the land, dictates any resulting legislation. America, founded on revolutionary ideas as well as precedent, created this document within the stage of an ever changing world with the realization that Americans are not virtuous people, and this is why the Articles of Confederation failed. Therefore, the legal system of the United States is based not in the positives of humanity, but rather the negatives, and this is what the language of the law represents. Holding to only laws created *mallum prohibitum*, and therefore bound by language, we can begin to look at the way that these laws exist first and foremost in the negative, and from this, investigate how linguistics plays a part in the way that the laws developed from the historical context to create a governing system.*

Without language, there can be no law. Language is, first and foremost, the binding element of legality. The resulting question then becomes what is the language of the law? How do we define legality and the resulting infractions of the law? For Americans, the legal system is founded on the Constitution. This document, being the highest law of the land, then dictates any resulting legislation. America, a country founded on revolutionary ideas as well as precedent, created this document within the stage of an ever-changing world. However, they also approached this foundational document with the realization that Americans are not virtuous people, and this is why the Articles of Confederation failed. Therefore, the legal system of the United States is based not in the positives of humanity, but rather the negatives, and this is what the language of the law represents. The language of American law is fundamentally based in the negative, creating a binary to the positive which may or may not definitively exist and defining legality through the illegal allowing the two warring sides to mediate one another in an attempt to create an effective system.

What is the law? This is a question which has always plagued civilized societies. Where does it gain its authority, and where does this authority stop? Legal philosophy is in itself an extensive field, but the major accepted philosophes are as follows: classical, positivism, constructivism, consequentialism, critical legal theory, practice theory, and new natural law theory<sup>1</sup>. For the purpose of clarity and historical significance, this paper will focus on classical legal theory, positivism, and constructivism with regard to the future development of consequentialism as these theories chronicle the transformation of the American perceptions of the legal system during the transitional period from a Confederation to the modern Democratic Republic. These legal theories, while somewhat outdated and occasionally discounted by modern philosophers, carry weight in a new historicist context with the understanding that they were the leading and primary thoughts influencing those who would come to write American law.

Classical law refers to the writings of Aristotle, Cicero, Aquinas, Grotius, and Blackstone.<sup>2</sup> Under the teachings of Classical law, society is inherently concerned with justice and uses communication in order to convey understanding of ingrained moral understanding and truth.<sup>3</sup> This does not necessarily make the society itself moral, but rather their own reenactment of morality. Classical law associates the morality of a society and the world around them with their creation of laws to support or reject certain behaviors.<sup>4</sup> For someone who subscribes to the theory of natural law, “legal truths are relative in nature (and) recognition of their essential connection to...moral principles that are universal”.<sup>5</sup>

Under classical law, that which is immoral is illegal and should therefore be punished, using the influence of the negative (that which is

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<sup>1</sup> Jefferson White and Dennis Patterson, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law: Readings and Cases*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 3-184.

<sup>2</sup> Jefferson White and Dennis Patterson, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law: Readings and Cases*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Einar Himma, "Natural Law", Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed 20 Mar. 2015, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/natlaw/>

<sup>5</sup> Jefferson White and Dennis Patterson, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law: Readings and Cases*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 4.

wrong) to act as a catalyst for the positive (that which is right). This moral objectivism creates a split in natural legal theory in that it can derive either from a place inherent to humanity, or it can be created by the society in which we live.<sup>6</sup> The latter is derived from theorist Thomas Aquinas who, in his work *Summa Theologica*, “Question 94” presents that “the order of the precepts of natural law is the order of our natural inclinations”.<sup>7</sup> He argues that law and morality are fundamentally intertwined, and therefore cannot be separated. What is right is legal, and what is wrong is, therefore, illegal and expressed as prohibited. For example, if we look at the Ten Commandments of the Christian Bible, a text which set binding legal principles for many western civilizations, the phrase “You shall not murder”<sup>8</sup> is both a moral principle and an expressed legal prohibition on an immoral behavior.

These philosophical contexts gave way to Sir William Blackstone, an English legal theorist who focused on the application of classical legal theory to British common law. Best known for his work on property law and his *Commentaries on the Law of England*, Blackstone argues that the entire British system can be based on reason and morality as well as the “golden rule” of Christianity.<sup>9</sup> According to Blackstone’s *Commentaries*, law is “a rule of civil conduct prescribed by the supreme power in a state, commanding what is right and prohibiting what is wrong.”<sup>10</sup> Perhaps his most significant contribution in regards to his recognition of the linguistics of the laws themselves is his distinction between acts as either *malum prohibitum*, meaning that which is expressed as forbidden, and *malum in se*, crimes that are inherently wrong. In an offense *malum prohibitum*, the accused has committed a crime that was made criminal by the creation of law itself. Does this make crimes *malum prohibitum* inherently positivist in nature? These

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Einar Himma, "Natural Law", Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed 20 Mar. 2015, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/natlaw/>

<sup>7</sup> Jefferson White and Dennis Patterson, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law: Readings and Cases*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 16.

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 20:13

<sup>9</sup> Jefferson White and Dennis Patterson, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law: Readings and Cases*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 36-37.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

laws, often most applicable to white collar and commerce law, need not violate a societal or inherent morality, but rather a dictating statute.<sup>11</sup> Blackstone develops in his work the idea that these laws are different from one another and he comments on the fact that from here, laws exist only as expressed. Also in his *Commentaries*, he defines laws as generally understood in their most accepted meaning. They are to be taken, “not so much regarding the propriety of grammar”<sup>12</sup> but rather as their “general and popular use”.<sup>13</sup> He goes on to acknowledge that there are times in which meaning cannot be discerned from use alone, at which point he presents that they should derive from context. For Blackstone, subject matter should be applied at the discretion of the legislator, and with no regard to consequence since it should hold no significance in the received sense of the law itself. Finally, he derives intent from the intent itself, applying a kind of new historicism to the legal text by evaluating the motives behind the creation of the law and whether or not said motives are currently applicable.<sup>14</sup> Published in a time coinciding with the founding of the Americas, Blackstone’s text became a quintessential part of both British and American legal systems at the time as they struggled to define legality and to decide where did the basis of said legality lie.

The colonists coming to America were most familiar with the British system of common law. Rather than having a written constitution or set of defining legal documents, they used a set of tradition and precedent as a legal system. It has no codex, and simply operates in a rolling system with the most recent decisions being the most binding. In a common law court, the lawyers argue the case, the jury decides guilt or innocence. Then, it is the judge who holds the most power as it is his responsibility to hand down the verdict as well as the punishment and to

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<sup>11</sup> Gerald Hill and Kathleen Hill, "Malum Prohibitum", *The People's Law Dictionary*, accessed 15 Mar. 2015, <http://dictionary.law.com/default.aspx?selected=1202>

<sup>12</sup> William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England I*, (The Project Gutenberg: 2009) Ebook, accessed 15 Mar. 2015. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30802/30802-h/30802-h.html>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Jefferson White and Dennis Patterson, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law: Readings and Cases*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 35.

write the brief that will define the case and add it to the ever-growing case law.<sup>15</sup> The problem colonists faced was that a system based on tradition needs tradition to function, and the Americas were quite literally a new world. As a result, many of the colonies wrote their own constitutions, forming a new tradition of civil law in the Americas.<sup>16</sup> Even in these tradition-based legal systems, the laws must be written once created. Otherwise, it would be impossible to enforce a penalty on a population that had been previously unaware of the consequence of their actions. It is only through a steady and fixed written legal system that a government can exist as that of law rather than of men.<sup>17</sup> What is interesting, though, is that the Americas did not abandon common law entirely in favor of civil law, but rather formed a new conglomerate of both systems. This new approach to law would become a major player in following years as tensions between the colonies and Great Britain continued to rise.

As the colonies began to rebel against the British prior to the Revolution, they also began to rebel against the British system. They saw the Royal government as a tyrannical system under which their voices had been irrevocably repressed. This split represents the shift in America from negative liberties, that in which the government is prevented from interfering with rights, to positive liberties, that in which the rights of citizens are allowed and allotted based on the ability of such person to act.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the Revolutionary era, the American legal system was concerned primarily with the moral and equitable application of the law among a uniquely virtuous people. It was paramount to the entire Classical Republic system on which the founding fathers were attempting to base their new country that the citizens participating in

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<sup>15</sup> "Common Law and Civil Law Traditions", School of Law Boalt Hall, UC Berkeley. Accessed 19 Mar. 2015.

<https://www.law.berkeley.edu/library/robbins/CommonLawCivilLawTraditions.html>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Morton J. Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law 1780-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 12.

<sup>18</sup> Melvin Urofsky and Paul Finkelman, *A March of Liberty: A Constitutional History of The United States*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. (New York: Oxford UP, 2011) 54.

government were “virtuous”, meaning that when given the choice, they would always place the needs of the Republic above their own. After gaining their independence, these principles came into practice with the nation’s first governing document, the Articles of Confederation. Under this system, citizens must be equal and independent in order to become participating members of a government, therefore excluding slaves, women, and the poor as they were all dependent upon others in order to make their livelihood.<sup>19</sup> The idea of Americans as virtuous people had been strongly supported during the Revolutionary War, especially in the learned leadership. During Valley Forge, George Washington was so convinced that the people would come to the aide of the soldiers for the good of the nation that he refused occupation and endured alongside his men the freezing cold and starvation of a Pennsylvania winter. He was once again proven wrong with the failure of the Articles of Confederation. The document was weak and many of its provisions, while successfully keeping the federal government weak, also managed to make it entirely ineffective. It was assumed that states would consider one another when provisions for unanimous voting and one vote per state, no matter the size or population were developed, and therefore allowing compromise and selflessness to overcome disagreements. This was not the case. Even once politicians realized this, correcting such provisions was exceedingly difficult for the same reasons that the document had been so unsuccessful. The document could not even be revised without excessive debate, and even then it could not be changed since any revision required a unanimous vote which the legislative body was unable to produce even once during its short span.<sup>20</sup> It had become clear that the Articles were a failure and the American people were not virtuous, and yet democracy still prevailed. How could this be? Americans were not virtuous and yet they were still free.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gordon S. Wood, "Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 66 no. 1 (1990): 23

<sup>20</sup> Melvin Urofsky and Paul Finkelman, *A March of Liberty: A Constitutional History of The United States*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. (New York: Oxford UP, 2011) 85-100

<sup>21</sup> Gordon S. Wood, "Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 66 no. 1 (1990): 37

We need only look as far as the Constitution itself to see these thoughts in action. The first ten amendments, often referred to as the Bill of Rights, act as a personal liberties buffer zone. The people wanted a government that not only did not challenge their personal liberties, but that protected them.<sup>22</sup> Proposed mainly by Anti-Federalist Patrick Henry, the people submitted a list of ten amendments that they saw as necessary to ensure freedom in democracy which would act to limit the government. While this all speaks to the people's inability to let go of the idea of positive rights, it becomes clear that, at least for those writing the new laws, positive rights had given way to a system of negative linguistics.<sup>23</sup> For example, take the first amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."<sup>24</sup> In this, perhaps the most beloved and heavily debated among the amendments, the words only assure a positive by creating a negative. It is the negative "shall not" is a defining element in that it has negative meaning and represents a "no" for the government, but it is a positive right for the American people. Throughout the first ten amendments, words like "shall not", "no", and "nor" appear in every single one,<sup>25</sup> and in every instance, they work much in the same way that they worked with the first amendment; they take a right to interfere away from the government and give a right of practice to the people.

Understanding the historical context allows us to understand what the writers meant, but to understand what the words themselves mean, we must delve deeper into the linguistics. Jacques Derrida, founder of the theory of deconstruction, focuses his study of meaning in the meaning conveyed by language itself.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, for Derrida and deconstruction, language is not phonocentric, focused on language, but rather based in writing, as is law. Furthermore, the written word does not

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<sup>22</sup> Melvin Urofsky and Paul Finkelman, *A March of Liberty: A Constitutional History of The United States*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. (New York: Oxford UP, 2011) 136

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>24</sup> Terry L. Jordan, *The U. S. Constitution and Fascinating Facts About It*. 7th ed, (Naperville: Oak Hill, 2010) 45.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-47.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Dale Parker, *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 91

exist with meaning, but rather as a free-floating signifier to which we later attach meaning, knowing that our meaning will never be able to truly represent intent.<sup>27</sup> A floating signifier does not give meaning, but rather accepts it from some outside source, and is therefore constantly susceptible to multiple or different interpretations according to the nature of words themselves.<sup>28</sup> Language exists not alone as one single meaning, but as multiple meanings which are then pitted against one another, and then derive meaning from their differences, their “differance” as Derrida puts it.<sup>29</sup>

These linguistic binaries play a major role in the idea that law exists in the negative because law cannot exist without a positive. There cannot only be an illegal, there must also be a legal. Through their differences, each proves the existence as well as the importance of the other. By wording law in the negative, we are also defining the positive and only then can the two work together to create law from only language, *mallum prohibitum*. When legality contains consistently only words like “shall not”, that signifier brings meaning to a realm in which the reader is intended to interpret in the negative any words that follow. It is the job of those who read and interpret the law to bring tactical real-world meaning to arbitrary terms.

Holding to only laws created *mallum prohibitum*, and therefore bound by language, we can begin to look at the way that these laws exist first and foremost in the negative. It must be understood that the language of the law is not just English.<sup>30</sup> Already in this paper, Latin has been accepted alongside English as a term for a legal action and given meaning within that context. Sometimes it is the responsibility of the law to create words in order convey a more specific meaning. For example, the word “kidnapping” was created by colonists in the new world to identify those who forcibly took children or adults and forced them to

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>28</sup> “Floating Signifier”. Oxford University Press. Accessed 21 Mar. 2015.

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095824238>

<sup>29</sup> Robert Dale Parker, *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 91

<sup>30</sup> David Mellinkoff, *The Language of the Law*, (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1969) 9.



work on plantations.<sup>31</sup> The point being that language in the law can be arbitrary. The free floating signifier can apply meaning to words which may or may not exist in the common jargon. The problem with this arbitrary aspect of language is that it threatens the meaning of the law itself. Without some kind of dictionary definition of the terms being used, it becomes hard to recognize the law as concrete.<sup>32</sup> This is the balance that legality must constantly tread, especially when creating a law from nothing. It must hold a concrete meaning, that which cannot be challenged or changed, but it also must remain flexible enough so that the language can adapt to the needs of a culture. Basing law in the negative creates a solid fix on words like “no” while allowing an elastic fix on other words.

Modern property law is a conglomerate of the American legal system and history. Laws regarding property are *mallum prohibitum*, meaning that without their creation by law, we have no basis for them within morality. It is not natural law to own, but rather constructed law. This makes it a prime example for investigation in the way that the negative directly affects and defines the way that we understand property law as a whole. In the eighteenth century, right to property was seen as the right of man to hold absolute dominion. This meant that he not only had power over his land, but also the power over use of his neighbor’s land if it interfered with his own dominion.<sup>33</sup> We see this logic carrying over into the American system in the third amendment to the Constitution which states that: “No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner...”.<sup>34</sup> The fundamental idea being Blackstone’s argument that an owner is to carry out his will over his land without any impeding threat from any outside authority. We see these concepts changing in the nineteenth century as it became evident that these two thoughts are inherently contradictory. For

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>33</sup> Morton J. Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law 1780-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 31.

<sup>34</sup> Terry L. Jordan, *The U. S. Constitution and Fascinating Facts About It*. 7th ed, (Naperville: Oak Hill, 2010) 46.

a man to hold absolute dominion over his land, he cannot prohibit the absolute dominion of his neighbor's land and vice versa, but in a land where landowners were scarce, a system of first come, first serve seemed to work best.<sup>35</sup> For Americans, especially early Americans still placing merit in Blackstone's theories, even lawful use of a neighbor's land becomes unlawful when the use of said land infringes on their own.<sup>36</sup> It was in their understanding of the loopholes in Blackstone's theory that Americans were able to form their own theory of property rights, which has become more fondly known as the "bundle of sticks". Revolutionary Americans saw property rights as not just one right given to one man with absolute dominion over all other men by the authority of his property, but rather as a group of rights which worked together to create the right to property itself.<sup>37</sup> This system of compromise worked two fold. On the one hand, there is the negative language which prevents one man's property from harming his neighbor's, but then on the other hand, there is the positive language which offers protection to said man from such harm in return.

It would be a disservice to talk about the language of the law and not address the legally binding contract. A contract is, for all intents and purposes, a legally binding agreement between two parties with mutual intent.<sup>38</sup> Dating back to the Code of Hammurabi and the Torah, contract law has been a quintessential part of the way we view law today.<sup>39</sup> However, it is safe to say that contract law as we recognize today emerged most strongly from the nineteenth century as both England and America began to form their legal systems in opposition to the traditional sense of equality, and instead began to view contract as an obligatory

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<sup>35</sup> Morton J. Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law 1780-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 32.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>37</sup> Anna Di. Robilant, "Property: A Bundle of Sticks or a Tree?", *Vanderbilt Law Review*. Vanderbilt University. (Apr. 2013) 878.

<sup>38</sup> Morton J. Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law 1780-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 161.

<sup>39</sup> Melvin Urofsky and Paul Finkelman, *A March of Liberty: A Constitutional History of The United States*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. (New York: Oxford UP, 2011) 190.

exchange.<sup>40</sup> Under this new system, contract law took on a more binding element, and entered both the public and private sectors as it became the foundational text for property, wills, market and goods transfer, and any other form of *mallum prohibitum* legal transference.<sup>41</sup> Contract law becomes a bit confusing in negative linguistics in that it does not inherently express prohibition. It is typically an agreement from one party to another establishing some criteria. However, the nature of contract law requires consideration to substitution.<sup>42</sup> This means that in order to be enforceable by law, a contract must contain an if/then statement. In this statement, the negative linguistics is pitted against the positive without expressing either one outright. To violate the if is to receive the then, whether the two correlate as a reward or a punishment depends solely on the free floating signifiers that surround the irreplaceable caveat of the if/then.

Classical law and the *mallum prohibitum* of legal jargon developed from and alongside the legal system on which America is based. Without the realization that Americans are not virtuous, it would not follow to understand that the framework of liberty needed to be one which offered democracy under the understanding that it would need to appeal to a population that was inherently concerned with their own interests over that of the Republic. Throughout the years, this understanding has given way to new theories of legal philosophy unique to the American system which continued understanding not only of the law, but of the implications of the entirety of the legal system. Take, for example, positivism. The first major school of thought to emerge after Blackstone, positivism focused on the validity of law. Major texts written by H. L. A. Hart evaluate law as having a natural order or cause and whether or not objection to the law cancels the law itself. The negative linguistics throughout Hart's works are extremely prominent as he

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<sup>40</sup> Morton J. Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law 1780-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 160.

<sup>41</sup> Melvin Urofsky and Paul Finkelman, *A March of Liberty: A Constitutional History of The United States*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. (New York: Oxford UP, 2011) 191.

<sup>42</sup> Jefferson White and Dennis Patterson, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law: Readings and Cases*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 191.

evaluates the establishment of law and therefore its creation.<sup>43</sup> Then, positivism gave way to constructivism as Ronald Dworkin questioned Hart's theories and added his own, defining the gray area of law as he questions hard cases against the reflective equilibrium. Hart takes into account that while the law can prohibit, it can never understand the circumstances of creation.<sup>44</sup> He, in a way, hints at Derrida's free floating signifier as he separates the linguistics of the law itself, the signifier, from the real-world situation in which said law will apply, the sign. Finally, constructivism gave way to consequentialism in which Richard Posner questioned even our ability to construct the law in regard to the consequences that it will bring.<sup>45</sup> Legal theory continues throughout time, constantly changing, but it does not wipe the slate. Instead, it tends to add to or correct that which has already been established. It does not discount or end its affiliation with Blackstone's original thoughts and theories any more than it does the understanding of how democracy works in a real-world setting. It is interesting to see the way that these thoughts add to one another, consistently making one single conglomerate understanding of human nature.

"The end of law is not to abolish or restrain," said John Locke, "but to preserve and enlarge freedom. For in all the states created of beings capable of law, where there is no law, there is no freedom."<sup>46</sup> Whether these laws exist under the pretext of morality with the intent to help a society enforce morals upon its citizenship, or if they exist solely under the pretext of language, or even just the linguistics themselves, is up for debate. However, the implications of a direct parallel between Derrida's deconstructionist idea of the free floating signifier anchored by the negative and the nature of legal linguistics remains strikingly similar. In a nation where even positive rights are based in the negative, it brings to question the societal implications of a government founded on distrust

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>45</sup> Jefferson White and Dennis Patterson, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law: Readings and Cases*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 65.

<sup>46</sup> John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, (The Project Gutenberg: 2010) Accessed 15 Mar. 2015, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm>

of its people. One must ask how effective can a government hope to be if it spends time constantly focusing on the negative implications, rather than the positive possibilities. The Articles of Confederation took less than a decade to fail. How long will it take for the Constitution to meet this same fate if we do not find a way to mediate between the two? Legal philosophy is evolving. Is the law itself?



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## Afghanistan's Political Crisis that led to the Soviet Invasion

Casey W. Ralston

*Abstract: This article examines the reasons for the Soviet Union's involvement in Afghanistan from 1950-1989. It analyzes Afghanistan's desires and political movements that led to the Soviet Union invading Afghanistan in December 1979. It further analyzes the events and timeline that set Afghanistan up to become communist and how the political decisions were made, leading to several coups and changes in leadership and reforms that led the country to disarray and civil unrest. The article examines the Soviet Union's interests in Afghanistan and decision making process that prompted the Soviets to send military troops to overthrow the government and invade the country. This decision was not made lightly and resulted in an unsuccessful 10-year war.*

This article will focus on the period of time between 1950-1979 identifying four shifts in political power, three coups and the subsequent Soviet invasion of 1979. The modern state of Afghanistan was founded in 1747, by Ahmad Shah Durrani, who unified Afghan tribes and led his country to independence until his death in 1772.<sup>1</sup> After Duranni's death, the country found itself in the middle of conflict that led to the clash between the British Indian and Russian empires in Central Asia, known as "the Great Game." Britain would engage in three Anglo-Afghan wars in an effort to oppose Russian influence and establish dominance in Afghanistan to create a buffer state. The last Anglo-Afghan war only lasted a short while due to the demands of World War I but garnered Afghanistan independence and the right to conduct its own foreign affairs as an independent state with the Treaty of Rawalpindi.<sup>2</sup> Prior to signing the final documents with Britain, Afghanistan established diplomatic relations with the new Bolshevik government and signed an Afghan-Soviet nonaggression pact in 1921, a relationship which would last until 1979. Afghanistan would experiment with democracy from 1963-1973, which would end in a "1973 coup and a 1978 communist

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 34.

<sup>2</sup>Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires America's war in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.), 7.

counter-coup.”<sup>3</sup> It has been argued that the Soviet-Afghan War stands out in 20th century history as contributing strongly to the collapse of the Soviet Union’s communist party, “playing a decisive contributing role in the disintegration of the USSR” and leading to the uprising of al-Qaeda taking root as a consequence of the war according to Gregory Fremont-Barnes. The Soviet-Afghan war left Afghanistan in external and domestic turmoil without a stable government and created a breeding ground for Islamic extremist groups. Forty years after Soviet military crossed into Afghanistan, the United States and coalition forces would still be attempting to stabilize the region. The results of the poor decisions made both by the United States foreign policy makers in the 1950s, and the Soviet Union’s 1979-89 invasion and failed attempt to secure and stabilize the country has costs billions of dollars and thousands of lives leaving an unsure future for the region.

Examining the origins of the 1979 Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan, it is important to identify and analyze particular periods of time and significant events that led up to the invasion. The first period covers 1953-1963 during which Afghanistan was governed by King Mohammed Zahir Shah (1933-1973) alongside his cousin Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud (1953-1963). The next segment from 1963-1973 has been given the title “the constitutional decade” by Hassan Kakar as it shifts focus on the governing policies and reforms by King Shah who felt Afghanistan was ready to test its hand at democracy.<sup>4</sup> This period lasted until 1973, when Mohammad Daoud shook the stability of the government and overthrew the constitutional monarchy in July 1973, establishing a republic and naming himself as president. Mohammad Daoud would be president until another coup in 1978 would remove him from power, establishing rule by the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) with Nur Mohamad Taraki as the first communist president. After the 1978 coup, events would further unfold, destabilizing the government and taking it down a path of civil unrest. Afghanistan

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<sup>3</sup>CIA Factbook, Background

<sup>4</sup>M. Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan, The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University Press, 1995), 8-10.



would face political and social unrest under the PDPA, leading to the 1979 Herat Uprising, death of its first president Nur Mohammad Taraki, Soviet's Operation Storm 333, and the Soviet's invasion in December 1979.

The Soviet invasion has been a subject of debate since 1979, considering that Afghanistan provided no major strategic advantage. Journalist Gregory Feifer argues that the decision to invade Afghanistan was not done in haste. The decision was deliberated by Kremlin leaders on several occasions during multiple meetings. Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader (1964-1982), was initially opposed to sending the Soviet military to Afghanistan to assist the regime against civil unrest. The vast works of authors from 1979-2014 discuss and analyze the evolution and interpretation of the Soviet-Afghan War's initial years from 1979-1982. The domino of events allowed for the perfect storm and not one event single-handedly prompted invasion. While historians focus on the USSR foreign policy during the time, it is understandable as to why many believe that the Soviet involvement was unlike other Soviet interventions. Afghanistan was not officially a satellite country or part of the USSR, unlike Hungary and Poland. Afghani leadership facilitated and incorporated communism without Soviet Union's interference, although it has been argued that the KGB played a significant role by embedding agents in the Afghan government and society as early as the 1950s.<sup>5</sup>

King Mohammed Zahir Shah, the last king of Afghanistan (1933-1973) and his cousin, Mohammed Daoud Khan, Afghanistan's Prime Minister (1953-1963), governed Afghanistan from 1953-1963. Afghanistan was a neutral party within the Cold War framework and independent of Soviet-United States foreign policies until December 1955. During Mohammad Daoud's ten year tenure as Prime Minister, the country was on course to modernization and reform. Daoud's leadership style was authoritarian, and he was determined to modernize Afghanistan. He was very impatient with strong nationalistic views and

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<sup>5</sup>Tomsen, 92

insistent on pursuing the issue over Pashtunistan forcefully and seeking foreign aid by any means necessary.

The creation of Pakistan in 1947, after the British withdrew from the Indian subcontinent, raised several questions about the self-determination to an area known as Pashtunistan, which was now claimed by Pakistan. Afghanistan disputed the claim of this area, yet Pakistan was unwilling to acknowledge Afghanistan's complaint. This caused political strife between the two nations, with mediation efforts by outside nations gaining no headway.

The leadership of Pakistan, due to unstable internal rifts, would join the United States sponsored SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) and CENTO (Central Treaty Organization), leading to further cleavage between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistani authorities discarded the Afghan claim over Pashtunistan completely. These agreements and treaties were part of the United States plan to contain Soviet expansionism, according to Kakar.<sup>6</sup> The Americans provided Pakistan and Iran with military and economic aid, rejecting Afghanistan's concerns over the military buildup of its neighbors, who were still at odds with Pashtunistan.<sup>7</sup>

The Soviet Union's involvement began in 1954, when Prime Minister Daoud needed assistance to achieve his goals of modernization and reform. Daoud was determined to modernize his country quickly to finance a modern military that could stand up against Pakistan, build an economic development program, and establish a strong government.<sup>8</sup> Daoud sent his younger brother, Prince Naim, to Washington to appeal for arms and assistance in 1954; however, The United States, not wishing to challenge Cold War ally Pakistan on the matter of Pashtunistan, refused aid. Payind argues the inexperience of Washington strategic planners did not take the local, national or regional disputes into

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<sup>6</sup>Kakar., 9

<sup>7</sup>Alam Payind, "Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (February 1989), 110. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/163642>)

<sup>8</sup>Kakar., 90

consideration when they provided aid to Pakistan and sided with them to help. The political alignment to Pakistan made the nonaligned Afghanistan frustrated and more concerned for its security, as Pakistan was using American-supplied arms against Afghanistan during border disputes.<sup>9</sup>

Both Kakar and Feifer mention the United States Secretary of State John Foster Dulles as a contributing factor in that he refused to allow Afghanistan to purchase military equipment. Dulles told Prime Minister Daoud to settle disputes with Pakistan first, despite being at increasing odds over Pashtunistan with tensions escalating between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute.<sup>10</sup> Dulles remarked, “After careful consideration, extending military aid to Afghanistan would create problems not offset by the strength it would generate.”<sup>11</sup>

While Dulle’s refusal angered Prime Minister Daoud, it broke the confidentiality of the bilateral exchange, revealing his response to Pakistan’s ambassador in Washington, which angered him more.<sup>12</sup> Daoud was forced to abandon hope for United States support, and in December 1955, he sought assistance from the Soviet Union, who happily accepted and provided aid. By January 1955, Daoud formally accepted a Soviet offer of \$100 million loan and adopted a “pro-Soviet” policy. Daoud thought that he could benefit from the Soviet Aid while at the same time limiting soviet espionage. The decision to accept advisors and Soviet economic and military support conflicted with the Musahiban generation that warned that the Soviets could not be trusted.<sup>13</sup> The influence in Afghanistan began to shift to the Soviet Union, and Afghanistan increasingly depended on the Kremlin to provide support. In 1956, an additional \$32.4 million in military aid was accepted by Daoud from the Soviet Union orienting the armed forces to the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> While Afghanistan made exponential progress in education, agriculture, health, public works, and military organization, it would later come at a

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<sup>9</sup>Payind, 111

<sup>10</sup>Kakar, 9

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Tomsen, 90

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 91

<sup>14</sup>Payind, 111

price. The policies that Daoud implemented began to estrange conservative and nationalist rural Afghanis, and the increased dependence of the Soviet Union did not fare well with King Zahir Shah and others. On March 10, 1963, the King would accept the resignation of Daoud in hopes to steer Afghanistan away from increasing Soviet influence.<sup>15</sup>

After the removal of Daoud, King Zahir Shah would assume a more prominent role in the government and improve relations with Pakistan and Iran in addition to moving the country to a democracy. He appointed a Tajik, Dr. Mohammed Yousuf, to be his first prime minister and an Uzbek, Abdul Sattar Sirat, to be his deputy prime minister. On October 1, 1964, the King signed a new constitution drafted by highly respected Pashtun and Tajik professionals, which included many of the traditional democratic principles and was based on the French constitutional model.<sup>16</sup> The constitution incorporated several individual liberties to include equality before the law, free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and due process; additionally, it would maintain balance between Islam and the state. King Shah sought to reinstate balance between the West and the Soviet Union in addition to ending anti-Pakistan propaganda and eventually restoring trade routes with Pakistan.<sup>17</sup> The King slowly restored Afghanistan neutrality between the superpowers, balancing Moscow meetings in 1965 and 1971 with Washington meetings in 1963. He began to distance himself from constantly siding with the Soviet Union and engaged with Chinese leadership by signing a border demarcation agreement and accepting aid from China. Moscow, as they had already invested millions of dollars into the country and believed themselves to be losing an investment, started to become very concerned that they were losing a valuable asset.

While the new government accomplished a great deal, one of the most important accomplishments allowed for security from government interference. This would make it possible for the People's Democratic

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 113

<sup>16</sup>Tomsen, 98

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), along with other parties, to emerge.<sup>18</sup> Tomsen mentions that Nur Mohammad Taraki was recruited by the KGB in 1951, and by 1956 would organize the first Marxist study group, given the name of his newspaper - Khalq (people). With the help of KGB agents, it was decided to create an Afghan communist party by combining Taraki's Khalq study group with Karmal's Parcham study group.<sup>19</sup> The combination would form the PDPA; however, it only took eighteen months until the PDPA would break between two factions: Khalq (people) and Parcham (banner).

The Khalq and Parcham both claimed to represent the "true" PDPA.<sup>20</sup> The two factions were influenced by their backgrounds on ethnic, regional and social ideologies and behaviors. They were distinct, even with differing views on national policies, morality and behavior.<sup>21</sup> The Parcham were primarily from well to do city groups that rose up in society, coming from landowning, bureaucratic, wealthy families. The Khalqis, on the other hand, found their way from poor rural groups. The majority of the Khalqis ethnic background was Pashtuns, whereas the Parchams were from urban ethnic minorities. The two factions were bound only through the education that they received from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on Marxist ideology. The two groups, despite having a short history in Afghan politics, were influential and detrimental to the future of Afghanistan.

The government under King Shah would come to an end by 1973. During 1969-1972, a three year drought consumed the lands and led to severe famine. The King was unable regain control over the government after he failed to act decisively and thousands lost their lives. This has been argued by David Gibbs as one of two destabilizing factors. It only made things worse since the Soviet Union was no longer providing economic aid and the demands of Vietnam lowered aid from the United States. The second was Daoud's new policies that reduced the

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<sup>18</sup>Kakar, 12

<sup>19</sup>Tomsen, 99

<sup>20</sup>Kakar, 58

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

ties it had with the Soviet Union, decreasing military advisors and also striving to form friendly relations with Pakistan after he took control of the government. Foreshadowing the events of the 1970s, in 1972, U.S. Ambassador Ronald E. Newmann would predict the King's democratic system would not last another year.<sup>22</sup> He was right; Mohammad Daoud would seize the government in 1973.

On 16 July, 1973 Mohammad Daoud, with the assistance of Soviet KGB officers, Parcham leader Babrak Karmal, and communist Afghan military officers carried out a coup which overthrew the constitutional monarchy and declared Afghanistan a republic.<sup>23</sup> King Zahir Shah was in Europe for an eye operation on the night of the coup. Mohammad Daoud declared Afghanistan a republic and established himself as president, ending the forty-year reign of King Mohammed Zahir Shah.<sup>24</sup> With Daoud as president, the relationship between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan went well for the first two years, and Soviet Aid increased. In 1974, the Afghan government and the Soviet Union established a joint economic commission.

By 1975, Daoud had established his own party, the National Revolutionary Party.<sup>25</sup> He would begin to lower the dependency of Afghanistan on the Soviet Union and repair relations with Pakistan, Iran and the United States. The Soviet Union was not thrilled over the emerging ties between the Islamic states and felt as though they were losing a grasp on the country they had invested billions of dollars on.<sup>26</sup> Daoud, by 1976, lowered the number of Soviet Military advisor from 1,000 to 200.<sup>27</sup> The Soviet Union found great displeasure in Daoud's new foreign policies and purging of the Parchamis. Later in 1976, the KGB set off to coerce the Khalq and Parcham to reunite.<sup>28</sup> The Afghan

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<sup>22</sup>Tomsen, 104

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 105

<sup>24</sup>Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Soviet-Afghan War, 1979-89* (Great Britain: Osprey Publishing, 2012), 8-13.

<sup>25</sup>Tomsen, 107

<sup>26</sup>Kakar, 14

<sup>27</sup>Tomsen, 108

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 109

president was annoyed at the Soviet Union's ploy to unite the Khalq and Parcham, and at the same time he was purging the leftists from the officer corps of the military, of the Pro-Moscow PDPA.<sup>29</sup> During one of his last meetings with Moscow, Daoud intended to ask Brezhnev about the ploy and efforts by the Soviets to unite the two factions' PDPA. Daoud was instead lectured by the Soviet president on the methods of governance and why Afghanistan was employing outside experts from the United Nations, NATO, and other multilateral aid project. Brezhnev wanted the Afghan government to get rid of these experts and challenged Daoud's leadership and governing effectiveness. The result was Daoud's response: "We [Afghanistan] will never allow you to dictate to us how to run our country and whom to employ in Afghanistan. How and where we employ foreign experts will remain the exclusive prerogative of the Afghan state. Afghanistan shall remain poor, if necessary, but free in its acts and decisions." After the meeting, Soviet and Afghanistan relations, under Daoud, began to deteriorate.<sup>30</sup> Daoud's popularity began to decline in Afghanistan, especially after Moscow successfully encouraged the PDPA Khalq and Parcham factions to unite in 1977.<sup>31</sup>

In 1977, Islamic fundamentalist and leftists led a series of attacks and greatly disturbed the peace in Kabul. During an attack on 17 April 1978, Mir Akbar Khyber, a prominent Parcham confidant, would be assassinated by an unknown assailant. Mir Akbar Khyber was Daoud's interior minister, a prominent member of the PDPA, and a top communist activist.<sup>32</sup> There is speculation that the regime, CIA, KGB, or Amin was behind the assassination; however, no evidence supports this.<sup>33</sup> The assassins were never caught. Babrak Karmal, a Tajik and leader of the Parcham faction of the PDPA, would later accuse Hafizullah Amin, a military liaison officer to the Khalq faction of the

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<sup>29</sup>David Gibbs, "Does the USSR Have a 'Grand Strategy'? Reinterpreting the Invasion of Afghanistan," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 1987), 370 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/424428>)

<sup>30</sup>Kakar, 14

<sup>31</sup>Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble, The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 23.

<sup>32</sup>Fremont-Barnes, 31

<sup>33</sup>Tomsen, 111

PDPA, and have two Khaliqis executed for the murder of Khyber.<sup>34</sup> The result of the assassination led to a funeral procession of over 10,000-15,000 demonstrators shouting anti-U.S. and anti-regime slogans and demanding justice.<sup>35</sup> During the funeral procession, Taraki, Karmal, and other PDPA's leaders denounced the government and spoke out, calling for the overthrow of Daoud.<sup>36</sup> The procession was in violation of the criminal code, as it was a demonstration of strength, causing the government to take action.<sup>37</sup> On 25 April 1978, Daoud set out to arrest and purge the rest of the PDPA leaders who sought to disrupt the government. The police detained seven members of the PDPA, including Nur Mohammad Taraki, the PDPA founder, who had spoken out at the funeral; this crackdown resulted in a stronger backlash. Hafizullah Amin, on the other hand, was not on the list of those detained, as he was not at the funeral procession at the time. The delay in Hafizullah Amin's arrest gave him time to draw up a plan with the help of Army and Air Force officers to overthrow the government. The coup was carried out on 27-28 April 1978. It is known as the April Revolution, or Saur Revolution, because of the Afghan lunar month of Sawr (Taurus).<sup>38</sup> In the early morning of 27 April, a few hundred communist junior officers led several armored units to surround the presidential palace. Major Watanjar, a Khalq, led a column of sixty tanks from the 4th Armored Brigade.<sup>39</sup> The Khalqi Air Force and Army seized the air base, allowing seven MiG-21's to launch sorties, along with helicopters, in support to Major Watanjar's tanks and shoot at the palace where Daoud was staying. While the army's seventh division was still loyal to Daoud and attempted to retake the city, their efforts were in vain and could not overcome the multiple air strikes and rebelling units.<sup>40</sup> The rebels, around 2 am on 28 April, launched an assault that would eventually seize the presidential palace. The assault left President Daoud and eighteen

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Kakar, 14

<sup>38</sup>Jones, 11.

<sup>39</sup>Tomsen, 112

<sup>40</sup>Feifer, 23



members of his family dead, in addition to around two thousand others.<sup>41</sup> This would be the end of the dominance of the Durranis, who ruled since 1747.

The days following the coup, on April 30, military officers handed over power to a Revolutionary Council headed by Nur Mohammad Taraki.<sup>42</sup> Taraki, a Khalq, was named president of Afghanistan on 1 May 1978, serving as president of the Revolutionary Council, prime minister, and general secretary of the PDPA.<sup>43</sup> Taraki established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan by Decree No.1. Amin, a Khalq, would be appointed first deputy prime minister and foreign minister with Babrak Karmal, a Parchami, appointed as deputy premier. Tensions between the factions would flare up again, causing it to split and prompting Taraki to exile Karmal to Czechoslovakia.

There have been many different opinions on whether or not the Soviet Union was involved in the Coup against Daoud; however, no evidence can be found to substantiate these claims. It is believed that the Soviet Union supported Taraki's 1978 revolution against Daoud, as the Soviets were "unhappy with" and "disillusioned" with Daoud's path of governance and leadership, according to William Overholt. Alam Payind claims that as one insider, a KGB defector, reported three years after the 1978 coup, "the Afghan communists consulted the Soviet embassy in Kabul and Moscow quickly confirmed that we [Moscow] would support their proposed coup against Daoud."<sup>44</sup> Contrary to what has been presented by Overholt and Payind, Odd Arne Westad, in her article from *The International History Review*, "Prelude to Invasion: The Soviet Union and the Afghan Communists 1978-1979," suggests that the Soviets were only involved after the event and had nothing to do with the planning or execution of the coup. She bases her research with the opening of the Moscow archives and fall of the Najibullah regime in 1992. Westad writes that the Soviet ambassador Aleksandr Mikhailovich

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Jones, 12

<sup>43</sup>Kakar, 15

<sup>44</sup>Payind, 117-118

Puzanov (1972-1979) was surprised by the successful coup by the PDPA.<sup>45</sup> Milton Goldman, along with Fremont Barnes, argues that there is no supporting evidence proving that the Soviet Union, not the KGB, supported, instigated, or engineered the president's removal, nor did they know of any plans to do so.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Fremont-Barnes mentions that while the KGB appears to have possibly known about it, they were not excited about the idea. It is crucial to annotate and understand that the KGB and Moscow were not always on the same page.<sup>47</sup>

Westad findings align with that of Feifer who contend that while the Kremlin had not even know or heard of the Journalist-activist Taraki or other Afghan politicians, many of the soviets applauded the revolution for "fostering the spread of communism."<sup>48</sup> As David Gibbs writes, "the coup was devised at the last moment in response to Daoud's crackdown," and as concluded from research, the more logical scenario. He goes on to mention that the PDPA was "totally unprepared for the power that unexpectedly, even accidentally, fell into its hands."<sup>49</sup>

The PDPA came into power extremely unprepared, lacked economic programs, administrative experience, and even internal unity, and required a great deal of assistance from the Soviet Union. The PDPA was unable to function properly due to its division in parties, the Khalq and Parcham, which had only united officially after ten years of conflict by assistance with the Soviet Union, were unable to get along.<sup>50</sup> The Taraki Administration was set on transforming Afghanistan into a more modern, socialist, state and wanted to bring stability to the country and provide education to improve the people's way of life. Taraki's government and reforms are perfectly summed up by Fremont-Barnes

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<sup>45</sup>Odd Arne Westad, "Prelude to Invasion: The Soviet Union and the Afghan Communist, 1978-1979," *The International History Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (February 1994), 49-69 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40106851>)

<sup>46</sup>Minton F Goldman, "Soviet Military Intervention in Afghanistan: Roots & Causes Polity," *Palgrave Macmillan Journals* Vol. 16, No. 3 (Spring 1984), 384-403 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3234556>)

<sup>47</sup>Fremont-Barnes, 32

<sup>48</sup>Feifer, 24

<sup>49</sup>Gibbs, 371

<sup>50</sup>Westad, 52

presenting the radical reforms which instituted, via decree, wide ranging land reforms, to include the abolition of peasant debts to landowners as a major factor in the uprising that would occur throughout the country. While there was a drastic widening of women's rights that included freedom of marriage, abolition of bride-price, and schooling for girls that was shown resistance by the rural community, it upset the conservative based populace that discouraged change and insisted it violated many Islamic codes. Promises were made for land reform, yet the Khalq went about it in horrifying authoritarian ways that included mass killings and executions, prompting uprisings and riots. Feifer argued that Taraki's reforms were just as, if not more than, ruthless as Daoud's.<sup>51</sup> Losing control, Taraki and Amin were forced to seek more assistance from the Soviet Union to regain control of the people and government.<sup>52</sup> The Soviets soon realized that the Saur Revolution and the powers of PDPA would become a liability to the Soviet Union. Payind acknowledged that the Taraki-Amin duo government grew increasingly more dependent on the Soviet Union for survival.<sup>53</sup> The Soviet leadership, Boris Ponomarev, attempted to warn Taraki that if he continued with these methods, the Soviet Union would no longer support his efforts. Taraki did not listen, as he believed the Soviets would never turn their backs on a fellow communist state. This confidence was because prior to the meeting, KGB Kryuchkov signed an Intelligence agreement with Kabul, and in December 1978, "the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness, and Cooperation" was signed during a meeting with Taraki and Brezhnev.

By February 1979, the situation in Afghanistan grew worse and culminated in the Herat Uprising in March of 1979. This caused great concern for the Soviet Union and was "a cruel wake-up call," as it had caught the Kremlin off guard again.<sup>54</sup> On the 19th of March, when the rebellion was put down, Puzanov met with Taraki to convince him to change their policies, advising him to take steps "with the same energy

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<sup>51</sup>Feifer, 24

<sup>52</sup>Gibbs, 371

<sup>53</sup>Payind, 119

<sup>54</sup>Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War From Stalin to Gorbachev* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 260.

as in the conduct of the armed struggle, to develop education and propaganda in order to attract the population to their side.” This shows that the Soviets knew the reforms Taraki was forcing upon the people were not winning the hearts and minds of the Afghans.<sup>55</sup> The Herat uprising acted as a double-edged sword as it shed light on the failures of the PDPA regime, in addition to marking a significant shift in Soviet policy towards Afghanistan. The uprising produced the first large scale “slaughter of Soviet advisors and Soviet-backed government soldiers,” according to Payind. By March 18, the Pravda was convinced and supported the DRA’s claim that Iran was responsible in forcing the uprising by sending thousands of soldiers dressed as Afghans.<sup>56</sup> General Aleksey A. Yepishev and his team were sent to Afghanistan to assess the situation after the Herat uprising. Upon the conclusion of this visit, all military decisions would be made by the Soviet advisors.<sup>57</sup> Taraki requested several times during the rebellion that the Soviets send back up and support, “to save the revolution.” The USSR no longer sought to seek out a successful PDPA revolution but became embedded in the domestic affairs to stabilize socialist transformation. The 1979 Herat Uprising was the first sign of a greater outside force of militant Afghan nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism. According to a March Politburo meeting, Gromyko has been declared as stating in transcripts, “In my opinion, we must proceed from a fundamental proposition in considering the question of aid to Afghanistan, namely: under no circumstances may we lose Afghanistan. For 60 years now we have lived with Afghanistan in peace and friendship. And if we lose Afghanistan now and it turns against the Soviet Union, this will result in a sharp setback to our foreign policy.”<sup>58</sup> The tides began to shift as to whether or not the Kremlin would support military intervention, “losing Afghanistan as a part of the Soviet sphere of influence would be unacceptable, geopolitically and ideologically.”<sup>59</sup> Gromyko is not mentioned by Payind

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<sup>55</sup>Westad, 57

<sup>56</sup>Payind, 119

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>“Transcript of CPSU CC politburo Discussion on Afghanistan”, 17019 March 1979, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113260>

<sup>59</sup>Zubok, 260

with regards to the March Politburo meetings. Mention of these discussions and meetings regarding Soviet intervention only came about in later works from Zubok, Feifer, and Fremont-Barnes. Fremont-Barnes, for example, attests that while Taraki repeatedly requested soviet troops to maintain order, Kosygin met him in Moscow on 20 March to outline the Soviet's position on internal affairs and refused direct military aid: "the intervention would worsen matters by inflaming opposition to the regime and arousing international condemnation suggesting there was no long term strategy to wage war in Afghanistan."<sup>60</sup> This is important to understand, as the Soviet Union was between a "rock and hard" place with regards to the issues in Afghanistan. These same discussions are reported in Zubok's book, in which he mentions that the next day, where the troika first advocated military intervention, it had changed to advocating non-military intervention. Both Andropov and Gromyko agreed that intervention was not the way to go, with Andropov stating, "We can uphold the revolution in Afghanistan only with the aid of our bayonets, and that is completely impermissible for us." Gromyko makes mention of détente and how that was still important to the Soviet Union at the time, saying, "All that we have done in recent years with such effort in terms of détente of international relations, arms reduction, and much more—all that would be overthrown. China, of course, will receive a nice gift. All the nonaligned countries will be against us." Additionally, reminding the Kremlin that intervention would lead to the cancellation of the summit with Carter. Feifer does not provide many details in this part, as he focuses on later events. This would all change seven months later in October 1979. By August 1979, the Soviet Union had mostly abandoned the idea of finding a political solution for Afghanistan and concluded that there was no viable alternative to the Taraki/Amin regime.<sup>61</sup> Taraki's government would not last very long due to his poor leadership and radical reforms. He took control of the government after the ousting of Daoud; however, he was just as easily ousted himself, this time by his own Prime Minister, Amin, who has been thought to be the mastermind behind the Saur Revolution.

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<sup>60</sup>Fremont-Barnes, 35

<sup>61</sup>Gibbs, 374

By September 16, Amin staged a coup against President Taraki and completely overthrew him, ordering his death on October 9, 1979. This deeply offended the Soviet Union, particularly angering Brezhnev and proving to be a critical turning point in the Soviet decision-making process, which effectively pushed the Kremlin to invoke military action. By October, Amin had begun to distance himself from the Soviet Union by openly criticizing Moscow and attempting to build relations with Pakistan.<sup>62</sup> By this time in 1979, stalemate with the United States had occurred and détente was a thing of the past, providing a good time for the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan, as it no longer restrained Brezhnev's decisions due to détente.

The rationale behind the invasion was due to Brezhnev's emotional tie to Mohammed Taraki, and it was the principal cause for the invasion, which is argued by Feifer. Furthermore, Gregory Feifer is fairly correct in his assessment that "most Americans have viewed the Soviet invasion as a naked act of aggression by a ruthless, totalitarian state"; however, the Soviet decision to send troops to Afghanistan was far more complex.<sup>63</sup> This view has been shared by other historians such as Zubok, who presents that Brezhnev asked Andropov and Ustinov, "What kind of scum is this Amin—to strangle the man whom he participated in the revolution? Who is at the helm of the Afghan revolution? What will people say in other countries? Can one trust Brezhnev's words?"<sup>64</sup> Brezhnev was offended by Amin's actions because it was stated that Amin promised the Soviets he would do no such thing. Additionally, Feifer argues that Moscow blamed Amin, as a ruthless, inefficient leader, for many of the issues that the government faced. The Kremlin believed that the fall of the Iranian shah would cause Washington to expand its influence in Afghanistan, which was a concern to the security of its borders. Moscow was determined not to allow Afghanistan to fall, in part, because of the millions that were vested in it and its establishment

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<sup>62</sup>Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgansty: The Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 71, see Raymond L Garthoff, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994, 1027.

<sup>63</sup>Feifer, 2

<sup>64</sup>Zubok, 262

of hegemony, and they believed that the proximity of the country would cause the Muslim population to spur anti-communist activities across its borders.<sup>65</sup> William Overholt argues that the accession of Hafizullah Amin threatened Soviet influence. He also states that “the emergence of a fundamentalist Muslim challenge to Amin’s communist regime risked the whole network of Soviet gains and the humiliating defeat of a government which was not only supported by the Soviet Union but also actively assisted by thousands of Soviet Military and civilian Advisors.”<sup>66</sup> What does not align with other historians is Overholt’s statement that it [USSR] “sought to forestall the loss of previous soviet gains and move the Soviet Union closer to its ‘historic goal’ of a warm water port on the Indian Ocean.” The decision to move into Afghanistan by the Soviet Politburo was only meant to be temporary and to defeat the mujahedeen (soldiers of god) in an effort to stabilize the government, not, as Overholt expresses, to obtain a warm water port. Furthermore, Overholt proclaims that it allowed access to the heart of the Indian subcontinent and to bases from which to influence events in Iran and “deter any US Military Intervention to free American hostages held in Teheran,” another fallacy or so evidence today has presented itself. Minton Goldman states that the Soviets wanted to remove Amin from power, as they feared his lack of leadership and governance would move Afghanistan closer perhaps to the United States or to other Islamic countries, becoming anticommunist and anti-Soviet.<sup>67</sup>

The Soviet Union changed its position and policy on Afghanistan after the killing of Taraki, according to Feifer and Kakar. Feifer presents that Defense Minister Ustinov was a prime advocate for military involvement and pushed for invasion at the December 12 meeting. It has also been presented that the Red Army’s generals were primarily against military intervention. Gromyko, as indicated previously, spoke out against invasion until October, when he was being pressured from Ustinov and Andropov, who had changed his mind.

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<sup>65</sup>Feifer, 3

<sup>66</sup>William H Overholt, “The Geopolitics of the Afghan War Asian Affairs,” Vol. 7, No. 4 Mar. - Apr., 1980), 205-217 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30171748>)

<sup>67</sup>Goldman, 389

Feifer, however, presents that it was Mikhail Suslov, another politburo member, who was the primary protagonist to invade on December 12, according to an interview with Leonid Shebarshin, a KGB Tehran station chief.<sup>68</sup>

The invasion of Afghanistan as part of the Soviet Union's grand strategy of fusing Soviet national interests with that of left leaning states on a global scale and socialist expansionism was presented by Matthew Ouimet; however, there is a much broader reason and rationale as to why the USSR got involved, as has been indicated in previous statements. It is important to bring up "the Grand Strategy," which is presented by David Gibbs.<sup>69</sup> Although he does not advocate this ideology, David Gibbs mentions "the Grand Strategy School" in the first few paragraphs of his paper. He breaks this down into three categories in which this school of thought presented itself during that timeframe. First, The Soviet Union followed a policy of global expansion in the third world, of which Afghanistan was a part. Second, the Soviet Union was able to expand into Afghanistan and third world countries due to the United States' failures in Vietnam. Third, Soviet influence threatened the United States' security and its allies. Kennan has argued that the Soviet Union's foreign policy and strategy is and has been mostly defensive, seeking out to prevent hostile regimes on its borders, and that there is no indication of a global expansion strategy. It has also been argued that the USSR wanted control of Afghanistan to strengthen its footprint in the area amongst Pakistan and Iran, which were openly hostile towards Soviet policy. It is good to note that Feifer stated that at least according to one general staff officer, "no one ever actually ordered the invasion of Afghanistan."<sup>70</sup> While there are many arguments as to why the Soviet Union got involved with Afghanistan's government and why it invaded, many historians are still trying to determine a best-case scenario.

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<sup>68</sup>Feifer, 13

<sup>69</sup>Matthew J Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) Print.

<sup>70</sup>Feifer, 59



In conclusion, the invasion on December 27, 1979, was a result of mixed concerns and Soviet interests. The subsequent overthrow of Amin was key to the Soviet Union in preventing Afghanistan from posturing itself to be vulnerable to Islamic extremism and U.S. encroachment that would bring Western nations closer to USSR southern boarders. The Soviet government saw drastic flaws in the leadership of Amin and set into motion a plan to replace the faction in power of the PDPA with the rival Parcham faction, which was most notably driven by KGB desires and informants. As previously stated by Feifer, the invasion of Afghanistan was not a decision made in haste, nor was it primarily driven by Soviet desires of expansionism, as Gibb's noted in the "Grand Strategy." It does bring into focus the realization that the primary reason for invasion was defensively oriented, as George F. Kennan states, and portray the leadership of the Soviet Union as being cautious and conservative. The political justification falls back to the "Brezhnev Doctrine," which carefully worded that "the Soviet view that if any of its client communist regimes is threatened, it has the right to intervene," giving it justification to aid the PDPA and squash the revolution in Afghanistan. In the end, the official death toll of the Soviet Union war in Afghanistan was about 15,000; however, it is believed to be much higher, upwards of about 75,000, which were cited by many veterans Feifer interviewed. Estimates have gauged the death toll of Afghans at 1.25 million, 9 percent of the country's population at the time. Today, the coalition of multiple nations is still in Afghanistan as well as the Middle East seeking ways to build and stabilize the government and assist in modernizing it. Only time will tell if the United States, along with over twenty other nations, is successful in this cause.



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## The Rise of Circumcision in Victorian America

Eleanor Self

*Abstract: "The Rise of Circumcision in Victorian America" analyzes how male circumcision became a routine medical practice for American newborns in the nineteenth century. It examines the way in which this medical choice was influenced by social, religious, and cultural factors that were unique to America at the time. This essay argues that it was a combination of these factors that created the appropriate environment through which routine circumcision could be adopted into common medical practice. It was the environment surrounding the circumcision debate in America that allowed for its acceptance in American medicine while it was rejected in other western nations.*

The practice of circumcision has become a routine medical practice for the majority of American male babies. Hospitals perform this surgery on thousands of newborns every year, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion. Before the late 1800s, however, non-Semitic citizens of the United States did not engage in circumcision. Immigrants and American natives alike simply left penises in their natural state. However, as the nation moved into the latter half of the nineteenth century, prominent physicians in America's major cities debated the trend making the practice of circumcision common and the eventual medicalization of this practice. The reason for the emergence of circumcision as a routine medical practice becomes both intricate and complex when examining the medical environment of Victorian Era America. The advertisement of circumcision as both a cure and preventive measure for venereal diseases, physicians' monopoly on medical information as well as the increase in medical knowledge of doctors, the common conviction that medicine must be learned through experience, the ways in which circumcision was believed to decrease the likelihood of masturbation, the emphasis Victorian physicians placed on personal hygiene and cleanliness, and society's religious beliefs create a larger framework from which one can examine the increasing prevalence of circumcision in the Victorian era and the eras that would follow it.

During the Victorian era, much of the English-speaking world adopted the practice of circumcision in the effort to maintain cleanliness and prevent the spread of venereal disease. However, in Great Britain and Canada circumcision quickly became an antiquated practice because medical practitioners in both countries felt no direct correlation between cleanliness and circumcision existed. The practice of circumcision in the United States, despite this, has remained common in the modern era because of unique cultural principles. These cultural principles make the American medical community distinct and allow a more direct view into the popularity of male circumcision in America.

The Greek Historian Herodotus documented the practice of circumcision in fifth century Egypt, and it continues to be an essential part of ancient “Semitic tradition...dating back to Abraham.”<sup>1</sup> Both Greek and Egyptian civilizations had distinct cultural significance and historical importance in western society and, therefore, garnered admiration from Victorian Americans. Because the Hebrew Bible makes up the first thirty-nine books of the Christian Bible, practices adopted by Jews in relation to this common religious text felt less foreign or alien to Christian Americans. Egypt, perceived as a place filled with mythic wonders and mysterious greatness, inspired a sense of fascination among Americans in the nineteenth century. The high-esteem of both societies in which circumcision originated went a long way in influencing the adoption of circumcision in America and the acceptance of it in the future; it helps explain how a practice so far removed in years from its creators remains prevalent.<sup>2</sup>

Physicians working in the United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century introduced circumcision as a “treatment for severe venereal infection of the penis... and was no more than a last-ditch amputation of incurably diseased tissue.”<sup>3</sup> As such, circumcision initially

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Aggleton, “Just a Snip?: A Social History of Male Circumcision,” *Journal of Reproductive Health Matters* 15 (2007): 16.

<sup>2</sup> Aggleton, “Just a Snip?,” 15.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Darby, “The Masturbation Taboo and the Rise of Routine Male Circumcision,” *Journal of Social History* 36 (2003): 737.

only served as a means by which physicians would cure those who already had severe symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases. However, by 1845, American physicians suggested that circumcision could be used as a type of preventative medicine to ward against venereal disease. No significant scientific evidence supported this belief, and yet physicians based their convictions of success on either personal experience with patients or the recommendation of the procedure by prominent and respected American physicians.

Circumcision became a kind of cure-all for diseases physicians did not fully comprehend or understand. As the belief in circumcision as an effective cure for venereal disease spread, it gained even more curative power in the minds of prominent American physicians. Physicians published their experiences with circumcision, noting that it had cured a variety of illnesses, some not even strictly connected to the reproductive system. In the 1870s, “a leading orthopedic surgeon claimed [that] circumcision cured paralysis, hip-joint disease, nervous irritability, hernia, [and] stricture of the bladder.”<sup>4</sup> A “connection between cancer and the foreskin had [also] been a matter of concern for years.”<sup>5</sup> Circumcision became a way for physicians to explain how previously unexplainable diseases could be moderated and even cured.

Edward Dixon, a prominent physician operating in New York, uplifted the effectiveness of circumcision in *Women and Her Diseases, from the Cradle to the Grave*. He exclaimed that there “is no doubt that it [circumcision] would prove a most effective means in preventing the spread of syphilis.”<sup>6</sup> Dr. Edgar Spratling, a contemporary of Dr. Dixon, called circumcision the “physician’s closest friend and ally, offering as it does a certain means of alleviation and pronounced benefit, granting as it

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<sup>4</sup>Aggleton, “Just a Snip?,” 18.

<sup>5</sup>David Gollaher, “From Ritual to Science: The Medical Transformation of Circumcision in America,” *Journal of Social History* 28 (1994):14.

<sup>6</sup>Edward Dixon, *Women and Her Diseases, from the Cradle to the Grave: A Treatise on Diseases of the Sexual System adapted to Popular Reading and the Exposition of Quackery* (New York: Ring, 1847), 164.

does immunity from after approach.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, circumcision guaranteed immunity from an assortment of possible medical problems after the procedure. In this way, circumcision was presented as a “precautionary measure... not exclusively as a means of alleviating reflex irritation, but as a preventative, hygienic measure.”<sup>8</sup> Because American physicians saw men like Dixon and Spratling as medical authorities, circumcision as a preventive measure against the spread of disease became widely accepted among American physicians.

The increase in medical knowledge and ability during this era aided circumcision’s growth as a routine medical procedure. The emergence of anesthesia as a relatively safe way to insure painless surgery, in particular, allowed circumcision to be as non-intrusive as possible. Edward Dixon explained in his book that “there are two conditions of the prepuce... during syphilis and gonorrhoea... [that] demand the interference of the surgeon.”<sup>9</sup> However, if a surgeon removed the prepuce before infection had occurred, as in the process of circumcision, the surgery would be more effective and less uncomfortable for the patient. Circumcision was advertised as a relatively painless, hygienic, and preventative practice; this perception went a long way in convincing the American public to adopt circumcision as a practice.

The belief that circumcision helped decrease the likelihood of male masturbation also assisted in the adoption of circumcision as routine. This was an extremely significant argument because religion provided a framework not only for the way physicians uplifted the medical phenomenon of circumcision, but also for religiously devout patients. Edward Dixon explains that the process of circumcision, “so often and forcibly enjoined in scripture, is the most efficient way to prevent the occurrence” of diseases like syphilis.<sup>10</sup> By including Christian scripture, Dixon makes a compelling argument for

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<sup>7</sup>Edgar Spratling, “Masturbation in the Adult,” *Medical Record* 48 (1894): 443.

<sup>8</sup>Gollaher, “From Ritual to Science,” 10.

<sup>9</sup>Dixon, *Women and Her Diseases*, 158.

<sup>10</sup>Dixon, *Women and Her Diseases*, 7.

circumcision in the environment of a largely Christian America. Discouraging the act of male masturbation quickly became a “major reason why doctors, educationists and childcare experts sought to introduce widespread circumcision.”<sup>11</sup> Because the “operation reduced the sensitivity of the penis and curtailed sexual pleasure,” it became “a powerful argument to use at a time when most respectable people believed that excessive sexual indulgence was morally wrong as well as physically harmful.”<sup>12</sup> Since the Christian Church saw masturbation as a sin, medical professionals used religion as a moral incentive for routine medical circumcision.

The general public also saw male masturbation as a way to develop severe illnesses, including epilepsy and mental health problems. The “significance of the idea of masturbatory insanity lies in the fact that sexual self-stimulation was the first in a long line of religious transgressions converted into medical diseases.”<sup>13</sup> Because of this belief, the understanding that “hygienic and health benefits stemmed largely from [the] correlation” between circumcision and the prevention of masturbation predominated.<sup>14</sup> Religion became the justification for acceptance of circumcision as routine. Medicine during the Victorian era occurred within a highly charged religious environment, and therefore Christianity dictated, or at least highly influenced, how the entire medical profession advertised the value of circumcision.

Not only did physicians see masturbation as a distinct physical danger to individuals, but also many perceived it as a non-religious social danger. It has been said that “the American enthusiasm for preventing masturbation and for promoting circumcision are manifestations of the same puritanical zeal for health as virtue” that has been ever present in

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<sup>11</sup>Darby, “The Masturbation Taboo,” 738.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 752.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas Szasz, *The Medicalization of Everyday Life –Routine Neonatal Circumcision* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 84.

<sup>14</sup>Kristen Bell, “Genital Cutting and Western Discourses on Sexuality,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 19 (2005): 131.

American society.<sup>15</sup> Medical doctors intrinsically linked good morals with proper health practices, raising the popularity of circumcision. In the 1830s, the battle against masturbation was widespread, as Sylvester Graham developed Graham Crackers as a diet to fight against masturbation and Kellogg developed cornflakes as a defense against male masturbation.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Spratling, who constantly preached the effectiveness of circumcision, called masturbation a “habit fraught with dangers to its devotee” and called these devotees “unable mentally or morally to stand on an equality with his free fellow-man.”<sup>17</sup> John Kellogg, founder of the Kellogg Company, “viewed [circumcision] as an effective cure for masturbation and the social ills [ethical depreciation and dishonor] said to accompany it”; he also created cornflakes as a way to combat masturbation.<sup>18</sup> Both of these men saw masturbation as a social problem as well as a medical one, a thought that made its way into mainstream medical consciousness.

Not only was masturbation in essence a social crime, but people also believed it led to debilitating medical problems. The fact that physicians used this logic helps one understand how big of a role the Christian religion played in the minds of Americans. Things like depressant drugs, chastity cages, “genital infibulations” and “spiked collars to wrap around the head of the penis” were also used.<sup>19</sup> By putting the struggle for circumcision as a routine practice into a social context, we are reminded of the social implications of such an act. Understanding male circumcision as “nearly always a strongly political act, enacted upon others by those in power, in the broader interests of a public good but with profound individual and social consequences,” clarifies why the medical world promoted the procedure of circumcision.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Szasz, *The Medicalization of Everyday Life*, 83.

<sup>16</sup>Lauren Rosewarne, *Masturbation in Pop Culture: Screen, Society, Self* (London: Lexington Books, 2014), 89.

<sup>17</sup>Spratling, “Masturbation,” 442.

<sup>18</sup>Aggleton, “Just a Snip?,” 19.

<sup>19</sup>Darby, “The Masturbation Taboo,” 739-40.

<sup>20</sup>Aggleton, “Just a Snip?,” 15.



Physicians also sought to convince themselves, the medical community, and the rest of society of the effectiveness of circumcision through both an appeal to authority and a reliance on their own anecdotal medical experiences. Hochlerner's medical accounts were included in the forty-sixth volume of the *Medical Record* in 1894. He used an appeal to larger medical authority by saying that prominent surgeons, such as himself, "never see any evil results from it [circumcision], and in many cases are sorry our patients have not been circumcised."<sup>21</sup> He used his own experiences of curing a particular Arab man who regretted that his parents had not had him circumcised.<sup>22</sup> Because medical professionals in the Victorian era believed medicine could be understood solely through personal medical experience, Hochlerner's accounts would have been seen as evidence in favor of circumcision. Dr. Rosenberry's writings were also published in the forty-sixth volume of the *Medical Record*. He recounted the way in which circumcising a young boy cured his incontinence.<sup>23</sup> He then makes it clear that he is "at a loss to explain the process but simply relate[s] it as fact."<sup>24</sup> By using his own experiences to explain the merits of circumcision, Rosenberry helps with our understanding of how medical professionals of the time made the case for routine neonatal circumcision. Because so many instances existed in which men of high medical authority cited their own positive experiences linking circumcision with the curing of multiple diseases, doctors dismissed those cases that went against this norm as random occurrences explainable through bad religious behavior on the part of the patient. By simply appealing to medical authority and citing their own experiences, medical professionals were able to uphold the effectiveness of circumcision.

The Victorian medical emphasis on cleanliness also played a large part in the rise of circumcision. With the emergence of the germ

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<sup>21</sup>R. Hochlerner, "Circumcision- Do We Need Legislation for it?," *Medical Record* 46 (1894): 702.

<sup>22</sup>Hochlerner, "Circumcision- Do We Need Legislation for it?," 702.

<sup>23</sup>H.L. Rosenberry, "Incontinence of Urine and Faeces Cured by Circumcision," *Medical Record* 46 (1894): 173.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

theory of medicine and Victorian notions of sanitation, experts overwhelmingly accepted that cleanliness achieved superior medical results. This emphasis on cleanliness spread from medicine to the individual as well. People washed their bodies more often, washed their hands before they ate, and cleaned themselves more prudently and regularly. The Victorian era “radically changed their [American] standards of personal cleanliness” and increasingly “identified personal cleanliness with good morals, sound health, and upright character.”<sup>25</sup> Cleanliness “became an essential criterion of social respectability.”<sup>26</sup>

The societal perception of cleanliness explains the importance of sanitation to the medical community. Dixon suggests that “the enlightened nations of the earth, should surely adopt the ancient rite of circumcision... not only to prevent these minor evils [sexually transmitted diseases], but... by facilitating cleanliness, the existence of the diseases themselves.”<sup>27</sup> For Dixon, the act of cleanliness directly correlated to the demise of prominent diseases; if one wants to eliminate the disease, he only has to observe the act of cleanliness. In this era, as the “Victorian imagination conflated physical and moral sanitation even more overtly” than in previous generations, there was a “correlation made between male circumcision and hygiene.”<sup>28</sup> Once doctors made this connection, people easily adopted the foreign practice of circumcision to promote their own cleanliness. Furthermore, when one recognizes that the “belief in the health benefits of circumcision is really the belief that the portion of the penis cut off is by nature pathogenic,” the idea that male circumcision is genital mutilation dissolves.<sup>29</sup>

While the medical world generally agreed on the benefits of circumcision, American physicians continued to debate whether or not circumcision was the best course of action. Educated medical professionals contributed to this debate within full view of the public.

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<sup>25</sup>Gollaher, “From Ritual to Science,” 11.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>27</sup>Dixon, *Women and Her Diseases*, 158.

<sup>28</sup>Bell, “Genital Cutting,” 131.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

Because these professionals had a monopoly on medical information, these men ultimately decided how to portray circumcision to the public. One physician published in the 1894 volume of the *Medical Record* a very negative viewpoint on circumcision. He believed that circumcision was “a relic of barbarous and semi civilized times, before soap and water and sanitation had been practiced,” and not only that but also it was “unnecessary and irrational mutilation.”<sup>30</sup> Dixon, seemingly responding to critiques, notes that he published his book with the hope that it would educate a country “flooded by men totally destitute either by education or habits of philosophic thought... [and] prevent the folly of an attempt at self treatment [*sic*].”<sup>31</sup> Dixon firmly believed that physicians were the ones with absolute medical knowledge and authority. However, because there was limited opposition to those “experts” presenting a generally unified view of circumcision, those who opposed circumcision were shut down by more well respected physicians.

Circumcision as a routine medical practice was a phenomenon unique to the Victorian America. A combination of religion, the medical monopoly on information, and the importance of cleanliness to medical professionals and individuals in American society created an environment in which circumcision continued to thrive. These ideals helped circumcision persist past the Victorian Era. Through the examination of how physicians dealt with the advertisement of circumcision as a non-invasive, natural procedure and how it was portrayed as an operation that would cure dangerous venereal diseases, the reason circumcision persisted in American society becomes clearer. American values and perceptions about health allowed for the growth and adoption of circumcision as routine.

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<sup>30</sup>“Circumcision,” *Medical Record* 46 (1894): 593-594.

<sup>31</sup>Dixon, *Women and Her Diseases*, x-xi.



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## Stemming the Tide: East Germany's Struggle to Retain its Citizens throughout the Ulbricht Regime

Kenneth Tallant

*Abstract: "Stemming the Tide: East Germany's Struggle to Retain its Citizens throughout the Ulbricht Regime" deals with the mass exodus from East Germany to West Germany after the end of WWII and the subsequent occupation of the area by Soviet forces, as well as the following decades under the administration of Walter Ulbricht. The paper discusses key factors that led to the extensive unhappiness of the citizens of the East and their desire to flee to the West. Of equal importance is the state's response methods to said migration. These responses, led by Walter Ulbricht, more often served as further motivation to leave, rather than as a means of migration deterrence. The conclusion of the research indicates that although the Soviet mandated policies brought about some consternation early on, the majority of the unrest in the population was the result of the leadership of Walter Ulbricht, the head of the governing Communist party of East Germany.*

### Introduction

After the fall of the Third Reich in 1945, and the resulting division of Germany, the German people would embark on two vastly different paths. West Germany, under the influence of the international patron of capitalism, the United States, would blossom into a consumer paradise over the course of the Cold War. East Germany, on the other hand, would aggressively pursue what would come to be known as "the utopian experiment" under the guiding Socialist principles of the USSR. For the 2,178,617 East Germans who fled west over the course of 1952 to 1961,<sup>1</sup> this experiment was far from utopian. This brings the question: What caused these citizens to abandon their lives in East Germany in favor of an opposing yet equally foreign occupier and ideology in the West? This paper provides a two part explanation of the population crisis

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<sup>1</sup> Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011), 142.

experienced in East Germany during this period. Firstly, the Soviet policies enacted during the time of initial occupation to formation of the German Democratic Republic instigated said population loss. Secondly, Walter Ulbricht's Stalinist policies concerning economy and population loss over the course of his regime further perpetuated this population crisis. This continuation of policies, which often directly or indirectly lowered the morale of the population, can be seen as the result of Ulbricht's desire to champion the concept of Stalinist Communism in the face of Nikita Khrushchev's "New Course" mentality being impressed on the Communist world. This New Course emphasized distancing the idea of Communism from what it had existed as under Stalin by promoting "stop forced collectivization, support small private enterprises... guarantee civil rights, treat intelligentsia and churchgoers respectfully and strengthen the role of the other political parties and mass organizations vis-à-vis the SED."<sup>2</sup> Ulbricht, however, maintained a fervor for the methods of population management learned from Stalin and continued to act in a manner contrary to the New Course, much to the dismay of his population. By not adapting Communism into a more progressive ideology, Ulbricht exacerbated the population loss experienced by the GDR, until the construction of the Berlin Wall.

### **Soviet Occupation of the Eastern Zone**

Joseph Stalin, Harry Truman, and Clement Attlee met in Potsdam, Germany in July of 1945 to discuss the fate of the territory and German people left in the wake of the defeat of the Third Reich. The resulting conclusion of the meeting was that Germany would be divided into separate zones of control, just as President Roosevelt proposed in 1943, at the Conference of Tehran.<sup>3</sup> This division, while initially between four powers, could truly be surmised as a division between East and West, a division between Communism and Capitalism, and a division which would set the stage for Germany to become the showcase for the

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<sup>2</sup> Hope Millard Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953- 1961* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003), 29.

<sup>3</sup>"Avalon Project - A Decade of American Foreign Policy 1941-1949 - Proceedings of The Tehran Conference," June 22, 2008, accessed April 26, 2015.

two competing ideologies at the time. Allied Western powers funneled money into a war-torn western Germany to create a showcase for the opulence that Capitalism could provide. The Soviet Union was also steadily sending material and financial aid to East Germany in order to foster and support the "Utopian Experiment" of a Socialist East Germany. As these two patrons, the United States and the Soviet Union, shaped and molded their respective developing governments in Germany to reflect the ideologies which they held to be correct, their paths diverged further and further in terms of social engineering. Were the early exoduses from East Germany the result of many Germans' inclination to Capitalism over Communism?

Beginning with the occupation of East Germany by Soviet troops directly after the end of the war, the Germans residing east of what would come to be coined the Iron Curtain were subject to rape, theft, property destruction, forced relocation, and an intense denazification purge by the Soviet troops and authorities.<sup>4</sup> These hardships would be just the tip of the iceberg for many of the Germans who would stay over the course of the next half century. Beyond this, East Germans would be subject to a radical transformation of kinship structures, living under the all seeing eye of the infamous Stasi, restrictions on travel, insufficient consumer goods and options of consumer goods, limited avenues of public expression, immense tensions, and even persecution of Germans by East bloc powers. This was in addition to the many other nuances of living within a centrally planned economy with an authoritarian government structure. Analyzing the policies enacted pre-GDR by the USSR officials presiding over the newly occupied East Germany in relation to their direct and indirect hindering of the functioning of the soon to be established GDR is the aim of the following section.

The amount of hatred toward Germans that Eastern bloc states had accumulated over the course of Hitler's Nazi regime existed for obvious reasons in nations such as Poland, but it also existed in

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<sup>4</sup> Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 87.

Germany's "allies" to the east, such as Czechoslovakia. This desire for some sort of revenge on Germans held in these states was most explicitly expressed during the period of deportations of Germans from what had recently become West Poland, known as Silesia. Not only were citizens harassed to leave the area, but there was also great neglect of the wellbeing of the Germans being deported. "Rail transports in the winter of 1945-1946 had to be suspended when freight cars arrived at their destinations full of corpses, Germans who had died in the cold."<sup>5</sup> This is only one example of the overall sentiment expressed towards Germans at the time in these areas. As Vlado Klementis, a Czech official, stated, "Until the issue (German deportation) is dealt with, none of the other important social, economic, and institutional problems could be addressed."<sup>6</sup> For many Germans the idea of deportation from their ancestral homes, or the possibility of being committed to a Polish or Czech labor camp, was too much to bear, and thus they committed suicide.

This desire for retribution was not only held by the citizens of previously occupied nations but also shared by the Soviets who had suffered millions of casualties at the hands of the German armies. This was likely the driving force behind the initial brutal treatment of the East Germans by Soviet troops. This aggressive mentality would eventually be replaced by a camaraderie held together through the ideology of Communism; however, in the early years of occupation, these actions left a lasting first impression of Communism as a scourge to be avoided. It is also important to note the lack of this brutality in Western Germany upon initial occupation by US forces who had not suffered any domestic attacks by Germans in the war and thus had less incentive to conduct acts of cruelty. A manifestation of these relationships can be seen in the interaction between German females and the occupying soldiers. While the East zone suffered a great deal of forced sexual assault, the women in the Western zones were far more apt to consent to a relationship with an

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<sup>5</sup> Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001), 129.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.



American soldier and thus "profitable dating" became the Western norm as opposed to the rampant rape in the Soviet Zone.<sup>7</sup>

Much of the pre-existing burden that was placed on East Germany economically was that of paying reparations. While the amount of reparations paid were mitigated in an attempt to prevent a repeat of the Treaty of Versailles reparations imposed on the Weimar Republic, which led to hyper-inflation and the rise of the Nazi party, the toll was still significant. East Germany's ability to pay off these reparations was further hampered by the fact that many of the factories that had been built in East Germany had been disassembled after the war as part of the demilitarization of Germany stated in section III.6 of the Potsdam Proceedings of July 1945,<sup>8</sup> and then shipped to the Soviet Union. Combined with Ulbricht's desire to mimic Stalin's focus on heavy industry, this called for the building of new factories in East Germany before production could resume at a rate comparable to West Germany.

Even once the gap in the worker productivity was bridged, West Germany still maintained an advantage in its amount of natural resources. Areas such as the Ruhr Valley region, which had been the primary producer of coal and steel supplies in Germany since the Weimar era, lay deep in the heart of West Germany. The initial division of Germany into Allied and Soviet zones left East Germany with an area which was comparable in terms of natural resources, known as the aforementioned Silesia. However, Stalin would fight to expand Poland's borders west, all the way to the Oder Neisse line, as an attempt to lessen the blow to the Polish people from his westward expansion of Russia into East Poland. Early talks on this expansion of Poland began in the conference in the Crimea; it would be confirmed in the proceedings of the meeting at Potsdam in section VII.B.<sup>9</sup> While Stalin would not live to see the negative ramifications of this shift in borders for the GDR in its battle against West Germany throughout the remainder of the Cold War,

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<sup>7</sup> Sheffer, *Burned Bridge*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> "Avalon Project - A Decade of American Foreign Policy 1941-1949," accessed April 18, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

the decision effectively further reduced the GDR's ability to produce at the same capacity as West Germany throughout the remainder of the century.

### **Formation of The GDR**

In 1946, the merger of the SPD (Social Democratic Party) and the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) created the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany.<sup>10</sup>) This new party was led by Walter Ulbricht, a devoted member of the KPD party throughout the Nazi German era who had spent much of his time in the Soviet Union and under the tutelage of Joseph Stalin.<sup>11</sup> Under his leadership, the GDR was managed entirely through Ulbricht's cult of personality, via the politburo of SED members. GDR officials operated in a place of disconnect from the population of East Germany since its inception; this disconnect between officials and the people manifested itself in the citizens who voted with their feet when presented with no political outlet to voice their unrest.

This population loss did, however, provide the opportunist Ulbricht with a perfect reason to request immense amounts of aid from the Soviet Union, as well as have much of the reparation payments to the USSR nullified. This request set the tone for the relationship between the USSR and the GDR for the remainder of the state's existence. Over the course of the next half century, the East German state would attempt to play economic catch-up with the West's "*Wirtschaftswunder*" (Economic Miracle), which was being stimulated by the Marshall Plan. Despite efforts by the Soviet Union, and later all of the Warsaw Pact nations, to keep the GDR at a place of comparable economic strength with West Germany, the inefficient, centrally planned economy (further burdened by constant disappearance of workers), combined with few natural resources to exploit, kept the GDR always a few steps behind its Western counterpart.

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<sup>10</sup> David Childs, "In The Beginning" In *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1983), 10.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Mario, *Walter Ulbricht: Eine Deutsche Biografie*. 1. Aufl. ed. Berlin: Siedler, 2001.

## Key Players: Khrushchev and Ulbricht

The request for aid from Ulbricht to the USSR first had to be cleared by Nikita Khrushchev, the successor to Joseph Stalin and the new Leader of the Communist world. Ulbricht's and Khrushchev's personalities were near polar opposites, which only made matters more complicated between the two on their true point of contention: Khrushchev's "New Course" mentality versus Ulbricht's *Afbau des Socialismus* (Construction of Socialism) approach.<sup>12</sup> The New Course proposed by Khrushchev was a radical break from the Stalinist style of Communism to which Ulbricht was devoted.

By openly criticizing Stalin in 1956, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of The Soviet Union<sup>13</sup> and attempting to ease relations with the West, Khrushchev was offering a radically different approach globally than Ulbricht was within the locus of Germany. Not only did this create conflict between Ulbricht and Khrushchev, but this was also the primary cause for the Sino-Soviet rift, as Khrushchev had offended Mao to an even greater extent than Ulbricht. The *Afbau* plan acted as Ulbricht's counter proposal to the New Course that had been introduced. Reminiscent of Stalin's collectivized farming programs, population movement, mass arrests, and focus on heavy industry, Ulbricht's primary goal was the consolidation of his own personal power within the GDR for the sake of perpetuating the ideology he believed was superior to Capitalism.

Khrushchev's New Course mentality was created with a global perspective of events in mind. Considering worldwide perceptions of Communism to be in a very delicate state, it attempted to put a more friendly face to Communism - a more modern form that was more capable of co-existence with the West. Khrushchev believed that Communism was truly superior to Capitalism and that, in time, people would see the progress in Communist states and begin to not only remain

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Davies, *Divided Loyalties: East German Writers and the Politics of German Division 1945-1953* (Leeds, UK:U of London School of Advanced Study, 2000), 94.

<sup>13</sup>Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up The Wall*, 63.

there but also to influence citizens in Capitalist states to migrate into Communist ones. In a letter of correspondence between Ulbricht and Khrushchev concerning ways in which to deal with the population crisis, Khrushchev stated "The best and most logical way to fight western influence is to try and win the minds of the people using culture and policies to create better living conditions." <sup>14</sup>

Continuing in defiance of the New Course, a scathing Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs report in 1953 that called for an end to mass arrests, and a generally less heavy handed approach to governing the GDR, Ulbricht increased the work quota 10% in factories without increasing pay on June 1. This was the final tipping point for many East Germans who began the famous 1953 riots in Berlin.<sup>15</sup> Beginning with only the workers under the immediate impact of the rise in the work quota, it would quickly grow to crowds of thousands of East Germans who were growing more volatile by the minute and expressing aggression towards the state which had suppressed such expression for so long. Complaints also ranged from abolishing the newly instated quota to the ousting of Ulbricht from office, using expressions such as "*Der Spitzbart mus Weg*"<sup>16</sup> ("The goatee must go," referring to Ulbricht). This event would frighten not only the GDR officials but also those in Moscow who feared that this type of behavior would spread to the other Communist nations, which it eventually would. This event also set the tone for the method in which the dissidents would be dispelled -- implementation of Soviet tanks and brutal force in the area served quickly to quell the uprising in 1953, and therefore would be utilized in Hungary in 1956.

Not only was Ulbricht in defiance of providing more favorable working conditions for the East German people, but this was also accompanied by his disregard for Khrushchev's request to transition

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<sup>14</sup>Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up The Wall*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Christian f. Ostermann and Malcolm Byrne, *Uprising in East Germany 1953: The Cold War, the German Question, and the First Major Upheaval behind the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central European UP, 2001), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Frank, *Walter Ulbricht: Eine Deutsche Biografie*, 13.

some of the production capability of the GDR towards a light economy and consumer goods rather than focusing entirely on heavy industry and infrastructure. While Ulbricht never disobeyed a direct order from Khrushchev, he was open about his disagreement with the New Course. In 1955, Ulbricht made a public announcement denouncing the New Course as incorrect, stating, "I must warn people with these ideas (the New Course) that we never meant to and never will embark on this mistaken course."<sup>17</sup>

Although the methods of achieving the same goals differed greatly between the two leaders, they maintained one common interest -- the perpetuation of the GDR in eastern Germany. For Ulbricht, the motivations were obvious; if there was no GDR state (population and territory), then there was nothing to preside over and ensure his vision of Communism for Germany. Khrushchev had come to the conclusion that East Germany was to act as a domino for other states engaged in the process of converting to Communism. If the Communist system failed in East Germany, it would certainly bring about the fall of Communism throughout the world, and therefore, the GDR state had to be maintained at all costs.

In the early 1960s, the conflict between the GDR and USSR officials became more apparent in the communications between the two. Ulbricht cited the tremendous speed at which it was being out-produced by West Germany, along with his most often used piece of leverage to negotiate aid from the USSR, which he stated in a letter to Khrushchev: "If socialism does not win in the GDR, if Communism does not prove itself superior and vital here then we have not won. And this is also the reason that the GDR occupies first place in negotiations or in credits."<sup>18</sup> Khrushchev's patience with the constant demand for resources by Ulbricht had worn thin as he replied, "By old habit you do everything through us. You should have learned how to walk on your own two feet, instead of leaning on us all of the time."<sup>19</sup> Khrushchev would eventually

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<sup>17</sup>Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall*, 51.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

give in to Ulbricht's demands for more financial aid. This was most likely done as an attempt to retain closer ties between the GDR and the USSR after Ulbricht's threat to align himself with Mao's emerging Communist China after the Sino-Soviet Rift. Mao and Khrushchev's relationship had already deteriorated after the denouncing of Stalin's policies, many of which Mao proudly emulated. Ulbricht recognized this division between two major Communist powers as another chance to further extort funding from Khrushchev by hinting at the idea of changing patrons.

### **Population Loss as a Result of GDR Policy**

Undoubtedly, the GDR was facing a daunting task upon its formation in 1949. There were reparations to be paid, and a population migration that threatened the GDR's existence. Despite these grave tribulations, Ulbricht's primary concern (when dealing with other political leaders or with the East German people) was always focused on securing the power of the GDR through the SED, with him at the head. This fixation with the perpetuation of power led Ulbricht to implement policies which placed immediate population control as the primary goal for the GDR, neglecting the bolstering of the light economy suggested by Khrushchev.

In an early attempt to decrease the amount of border crossers, Ulbricht took an uncontested Stalinist approach: deportation to the interior -- deportation of those coined "Unstable" border residents, further into Eastern Germany. One of the most famous of these deportation campaigns was "*Aktion Ungeziefer*" (Action Vermin),<sup>20</sup> where residents considered unstable within the *Sperrgebiet* (*Restricted Area, the 5km zone along the border*) were relocated, given only twenty-four hours after their notice to assemble their belongings for departure. As many began to take the previously considered, and now the only viable option, of fleeing to the West, Ulbricht decided that the amount of time between giving notice for deportation and departure of deportation should be further reduced to decrease the likelihood of the family fleeing.

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<sup>20</sup>Sheffer, *Burned Bridge*, 132.

However, this had quite the opposite effect, inspiring many to flee before ever receiving a notice of eviction.

One out of five families who were given notice of their impending departure fled. In an attempt to lure back some of the citizens, the GDR offered amnesty to anyone who would turn himself in and return to the east. Ninety percent of those who fled would decline, with only thirty-four individuals returning, most of whom were arrested on the spot, therefore decreasing the likelihood of others returning.<sup>21</sup> In order to effectively determine which residents of the border zone were unstable, the GDR needed to develop an organization capable of mass surveillance in the society. The answer to this was what would become a very refined tool of social control known as the Ministry of State Security. As this organization took on a more and more prominent role within East German society, it would be referred to simply as the Stasi.

Surveillance prompted dissent, and dissent surveillance, thus causing the apparatus to become self-perpetuating, with the Ministry of Security at its heart. Led by Erich Mielke under Ulbricht's regime, the Stasi would become one of the most infamous aspects of the GDR's legacy. It permeated every level of life and society, documenting every interaction, and, most importantly, seeking out those who had intentions of crossing the border into West Germany. The early period of the Stasi was not quite as grand as it would be under Honaker towards the latter years of the GDR; however, in this formative period, it began to insert itself into every crevice of life in East Germany.

The individuals who entered into the Stasi most likely did not all share the dream of a utopian society united under Communism, but rather they were seeking social mobility in one of the few ways allowed within a communist system: joining the cause. This social mobility brought along with it the ability to advance one's position in society through vehicles, travel passes, and more choices of consumer goods (mostly imported). This highly rewarding incentive structure took quite a good deal of time before people throughout East Germany decided to

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 102.

join, but nonetheless, over the course of Ulbricht's regime, the Stasi would establish a near omnipotent panopticon. John O. Koehler, director of communications under President Reagan's administration, emphasized the scale of Stasi operations in relation to what Germans had experienced under Hitler's Gestapo: "The Gestapo had 40,000 officials watching a country of 80 million, while the Stasi employed 102,000 to watch a country of 17 million. One might also add that the Gestapo lasted 12 years, whereas the Stasi terror lasted for four decades."<sup>22</sup>

So all-encompassing was the Stasi that it grew to be the largest employer within East Germany by 1964, employing one out of every ten individuals.<sup>23</sup> The goal for the Stasi was to reduce the level of population loss experienced by the GDR, and it grew to being fairly effective at this. One in five border arrests would be the direct result of a tip to the authorities from either a Stasi agent or simply a Stasi informant. Informants were not solely willing participants, being materially encouraged to inform on their fellow citizens.

Another tool that could be considered an extension of Ulbricht's omniscience was that of the Free German Youth (FDJ). The FDJ involved children aged 14-24, and its sister institution, the Young Pioneers, provided a social sphere controlled by the GDR in which children 6-13 could operate.<sup>24</sup> Many Germans initially opposed the sight of their children back in kerchiefs after being exposed to a similar program for children under Hitler's Germany. However, as time passed, the enrollment in these institutions skyrocketed. In 1962, FDJ members totaled 50.3% of all youth, but in 1978, they totaled 69.9%. In 1985, nearly all youths between the ages of 14-18 were members.<sup>25</sup>

These institutions were able to subject developing children to the views of the party almost constantly. This served a dual purpose for the

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<sup>22</sup> John O. Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Sheffer, *Burned Bridge*, 158.

<sup>24</sup> John Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 162.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



officials within the GDR. Firstly, it provided them with a way to create a generation enculturated in the ideology of the GDR; secondly, and more practically, children within these institutions acted as spies on the members of their household (willingly or not). By mentioning aspects of their home life, children unwittingly informed on their parents, oftentimes leading to reduced social standing within the party, further investigated by Stasi agents, and occasionally deportation. While this was not a system which many of the parents of these children favored, these programs held great opportunity for the children involved.

Within the GDR there were also radical changes to kinship structure, which most likely furthered discontent in the population initially. Along with granting children agency to pursue their interests with a greater degree of freedom from their parents, the most prominent shift was in that of the father/husband playing a critical financial role within the family. Thanks to the generous allotments for child rearing and single mothers in the GDR, many women were able to maintain families on their own without the need for a male figure in the house. Female freedom was furthered by the fact that women in the GDR were not only not restricted from working, but, on the contrary, they were encouraged to do so. This approach to women in the workforce took the opposite stance of the highly conservative Konrad Adenauer era of West Germany, where the ideal home structure was for the woman to maintain the home. This stance on women in the workforce was only one example of the morally conservative era of the West directly after its inception under Adenauer.<sup>26</sup> This promotion of gender equality in the workforce was primarily the reactionary result of the gaping hole left in the GDR workforce by population migration, and it further served to create tensions in a population already reeling from drastic changes to all aspects of their lives.

The most dramatic of Ulbricht's initiatives to prevent the flow of people across the border was to simply further militarize the border. While the most infamous example of the physical manifestation of the

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<sup>26</sup> Charles Williams, *Adenauer the Father of the New Germany* (New York: J. Wiley, 2001),. 528.

"Iron Curtain" would be the Berlin Wall,<sup>27</sup> one should consider the situation along the majority of the border between East and West Berlin. While the rest of the border was much less of an area for conflict, it was none the less distinguished by the barbed wire that ran along the demarcation line. Over the course of the Cold War, landmines, electric fences, and watchtowers would be added to the fortifications along the border on the Eastern side. This too would serve to not only demoralize the population further but also to provide Western media with physical symbols of the oppression of the GDR. Just as Khrushchev feared, this would not promote a positive image of what Communism could be to the developing nations at the time. Ulbricht however, caring little for global politics, saw the hermetic sealing of the border as the immediate answer to the population problem. Ulbricht would eventually bring the GDR to a position where the building of the wall was the only viable option if the great Socialist Experiment was to continue, and thus he attained the green light for "Operation Rose" (Construction of the Berlin Wall).<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

The GDR would not survive to see the beginning of the new millennium. The policies that were enacted by Ulbricht could be argued as necessary to maintain the state of the GDR, however, as evidence seems to show, Ulbricht acted to perpetuate his own immediate power at the cost of the longevity and international representation of East Germany. While it would be speculative to assume that the GDR would have prospered had it followed the suggested direction of Khrushchev early on, it is obvious that the methods chosen by Ulbricht that were contrary to this mentality were consistently and vastly unpopular with the citizens he presided over. In habitually undermining the requests of citizens and dismissing the warnings provided by the USSR officials such as Lavrenti Beria, Ulbricht confirmed and reinforced the negative associations that many East Germans had already made with Communism. Not only would Ulbricht's policies present the East

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<sup>27</sup> Fred Taylor, *The Berlin Wall: 13 August 1961-9 November 1989* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 62.

<sup>28</sup> Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins*, 148.

German people with an unsavory idea of practical Communism through leadership by a politburo disconnected from the average citizen, but due to the fact that Germany was the world stage of ideologies, this negative image would also spread and further diminish the international perspective of the ideology throughout the duration of the Cold War.

## News for the Division of History and Philosophy

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### **From the Wiregrass Archives:**

The Wiregrass Archives at Troy University Dothan Campus recently has acquired a number of collections important to the cultural history of the Wiregrass. One is the personal papers of Barbara Everett, wife of Congressman Terry Everett (R, AL-2) who served 1993-2009.

Congressional spouse records are unusual, and Ms. Everett's illuminate her work on medical and civic issues in Coffee County and the state.

Another is the minute books of the Board of Trustees and other materials of Mallilieu Seminary, a Methodist academy, in Kinsey, Henry County, Alabama, 1887-1927. Evangelical preacher Bob Jones graduated from Mallilieu in 1900. Jones founded Bob Jones College near Panama City, FL, in 1927, and two decades later moved it to Greenville, SC, where it became Bob Jones University.

Other recently received collections document the history of elite white women in Dothan during the twentieth century. The records of the Dothan Harmony Club, the New Century club, the Eclectas Club, the Sorosis Club, the Cherokee Garden Club, the Fine Arts Club, and the Dothan Study Club all attest to the depth that literary and self-improvement clubs from the Progressive Era permeated the middle class of small towns across the state, region, and nation.

Two other collections of note are the records of the Southeast Alabama Community Theater (SEACT), a gold mine of information on the organization, structure, growth, and production of this powerful and robust community theater, and a rare run of *The Dixie*, the weekly newspaper of the 31st Infantry Division during World War 2, produced while the division was in training camp or stationed in the South.

From July 2014 until July 2015, the Wiregrass Archives hosted public programming and (Mid-May through June 2015) the Smithsonian Institute's Museum on Main Street installation, "The Way We Worked." Public programming included lectures by former Alabama Folklife

Association chair Joyce Cauthen and Troy University's Dr. Karen Ross, screening of the film "Brother Joseph and the Grotto," and a workshop on local history by UAH historian Dr. John Kvach. The installation was five kiosks concerning industrialized work in the United States, ca. 1870-2010, hosted by the Troy Dothan Library.

For further information, please contact Dr. Marty Olliff.

## **Faculty News**

This has been an outstanding year for our faculty. First, we welcome two new philosophers to the Troy campus, Drs. Joungbin Lim and Jay Valentine. Joungbin and Jay are launching the new minor in Philosophy and Religion this year. Welcome to Troy University!

Margaret Gnoinska has been tenured and promoted to Associate Professor on the Troy campus. Congratulations, Margaret!

Adam Hoose's article, "The Sabatati: The Significance of Early Waldensian Shoes, c. 1184-c. 1300," will be published in the April 2016 edition of *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*.

Scott Merriman's article "What Should the Scales of Justice Balance?: Historical Aspects of the Religious Liberty Debate" is coming out this year in the *Faulkner University Law Review*.

Marty Olliff and Robert Saunders received an NEH Common Heritage grant of \$12,000 for the Wiregrass Common Heritage Project. The project features a workshop on African American genealogical research in Alabama and a second on preserving family archives. The main thrust of the project is to hold two community scanning days in which community members bring documents and photographs to be scanned into the collections of the Wiregrass Archives and posted to Alabama Mosaic ([alabamamosaic.com](http://alabamamosaic.com)).

Robin O’Sullivan published her first book: *American Organic: A Cultural History of Farming, Gardening, Shopping, and Eating* (University Press of Kansas, 2015). Last November, Dr. O’Sullivan was invited to give a guest lecture on *American Organic* at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y “In Session” series, New York City.

Congratulations to Luke Ritter. He was named the 2016 winner of the Environment in Missouri History Fellowship, State Historical Society of Missouri, Center for Missouri Studies, which carries a stipend of \$5,000 for the completion of a scholarly article to be submitted to the *Missouri Historical Review*.

Robert Saunders, Associate Professor of history and Assistant Dean of Administration on the Dothan campus, has an upcoming article appearing in the March 2016 *Florida Historical Quarterly*. It is entitled “A Flower at Elmira: The Prisoner of War Diary of Wilbur Wightman Gramling.”

## Gratitude

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Co-editors Megan Phillips and Eleanor Self would like to thank the many people who have made this volume of the *Alexandrian* possible. This publication would not have happened without all of the students and professors from multiple Troy campuses that gave their time in order to make this journal a success. A student-led journal that lasts five years is almost unheard of – yet, here we are. Volunteers have read and evaluated articles, provided editing services, and assembled the final product. Our student authors have written and rewritten their works in hopes of making them perfect for themselves and for you the reader. We appreciate all of your dedication and hope that the final product has made all of your work worthwhile.

We would especially like to thank the Alexander family: Sandra, Steve, Rachel, Andrew, Sarah, and Elisa. Nathan's family unfailingly continues to inspire and assist the department, our students, and this journal every step along the way. Thank you for your support – financial, spiritual, and intellectual – and for taking this journey with us once again.

## Professor Nathan Alexander Remembered

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### Smile

Memories are tricky. We cherry-pick them, manufacture them, forget them, enhance or diminish them. But one particular memory of Nathan Alexander is too consistent not to be trusted.

It was his omnipresent smile. Occasionally I roamed the corridors to see what was happening in the department. Whenever I passed Nathan's open door, he was with a student (or students) and...smiling. When I bumped into him on the way to class, he was smiling. He was serious in class—especially when talking about the French Revolution—but every few minutes he'd laugh at one of his own comments or, more often, smile at a student's. Whenever we walked to our cars in the evening, he was smiling.

My most vivid memory of his smile came during a visit to a Montgomery hospital, where he had an early morning appointment. He stayed overnight with Carol and me in Montgomery.

The next morning I was called from the waiting room after his (doubtless uncomfortable) procedure was finished. Per hospital rules, he was taken out in a wheelchair and greeted me with...you guessed it...with a huge smile. On the ride back to Troy, we got into a deep philosophical discussion about something I've forgotten. What I do remember is his smile.

Not long afterwards, Nathan left the department for the Washington hospital near his family. I don't doubt he understood the precariousness of his prognosis then, or perhaps even long before. Yet I never saw his smile falter.

In retrospect, this bespoke hope and acceptance. Nathan taught many things. I am very grateful to have been among his students.

Bryant Shaw, PhD  
(Former Chair and much-missed colleague)



## Nathan Alexander, My Favorite Yankee

Nathan had never lived in the South, he was a certified Yankee. The thing I loved the most about Nathan was the love he developed for the South. Southern culture was so different than what he was accustomed to. He loved a Southern accent. He told me once he could listen to a Southerner talk all day. He said when Southerners talked it was like they were smiling with every word that came out of their mouths. He enjoyed Southern slang and laughed when he heard someone say “I’m fixin’ to” or “he’s a right nice fellow.” Nathan really enjoyed Southern food. He loved eating at Sister’s Restaurant. He really loved the Southern staples of cornbread and sweet tea. He got excited when he learned that Sister’s had a breakfast on Saturdays. He became a big lover of grits.

Nathan got his haircut at Raymond’s Barber shop and couldn’t wait to tell me the stories he heard in there. Old men and their gossip really gave him a big chuckle. Raymond’s has mounted animals on the walls in the barber shop, and Nathan got a big kick out of that. Nathan went to the square in Troy a lot. He would tell me of the neat stores like the used book store. Bob McNellis was the owner, and Nathan became friends with him. He would tell me about little stores on and off the square that I didn’t even know about. He got ice cream at Byrd’s Drug store a lot and chatted with the locals there. Nathan saw everything in life as a big adventure and wanted to learn all he could. Always smiling and laughing, Nathan became my favorite Yankee. He embraced his new surroundings in a way that endeared me to him. He opened my eyes to my own surroundings here in Troy, Alabama. If ever a Yankee belonged in the South, it was Nathan, my friend, whom I still miss daily.

Machelle Danner  
Departmental Secretary History/Philosophy

Phi Alpha Theta Inductees, Fall & Spring 2015-16

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Ead S. Alsammani

Riley Cooper

Lindsay Brooke Guest

Dr. Adam L. Hoose

Jon Logan Horton

Andrew J. Johnson

Whitney Spake