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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In the midst of an accelerated, forward-thinking society, the challenge of all historians remains to produce historical research which sparks genuine curiosity among other people. By choosing a wide variety of topics – from the Beatles to Truman’s nuclear weapon policy and a local Madison farm – the authors of this year’s ARCHIVE have demonstrated the relevance and vitality of historical research through an undergraduate perspective. An entirely student-run endeavor, the publication of ARCHIVE represents the highest degree of undergraduate scholarship, conscientiousness, and creativity.

As a result of a concentrated publicity campaign by the Editorial Board, ARCHIVE experienced an amazing 300% increase in submissions from last year. Each member of the Editorial Board worked closely with an author to edit and improve their paper, and I am profoundly impressed by the collective final product – a provocative, innovative, and high-quality collection of research. I consider myself humbled and honored to serve as the Editor-in-Chief of such a remarkable journal. For their enthusiasm, expertise, and patience with my all-too often visits to the History Department Office, I am deeply indebted to Scott Burkhardt and Amy Phillips, the Undergraduate History Advisors. For her insight and support, I wholeheartedly thank ARCHIVE’s Faculty Advisor, Professor John Hall.

For their generous financial support, I sincerely thank the Undergraduate History Department. For his support and invaluable assistance obtaining future funding for ARCHIVE, I thank UHA President Kristen Cassarini. Artistic genius, Ashley Jensen cannot be thanked enough for her expertise and dedication to the beautiful layout and cover of ARCHIVE. For their unending wealth of knowledge, I thank StudentPrint and ASM. Finally, the ARCHIVE Editorial Board deserves endless recognition for their creativity and deep commitment to historical accuracy and scholarship. Building upon the foundation of previous Editors, I am confident that this year’s ARCHIVE has set a remarkable precedent for the direction of future ARCHIVE editions published at UW-Madison – ones which will be steeped in historical curiosity, invigorated by dedicated student Editors, and shaped by the passion of undergraduate authors.

Teague Briana Harvey
Madison, Wisconsin
May 3, 2011

ABOUT ARCHIVE

In 1997, the UW-Madison chapter of Phi Alpha Theta with the support of the UW-Madison History Department created ARCHIVE: An Undergraduate Journal of History. Thus far, Phi Alpha Theta has sponsored the publication of eleven volumes of the journal. Students wishing to work on ARCHIVE's staff are not required to be a history major or a member of Phi Alpha Theta. Members of the staff work together to select papers, publicize the journal, and edit the chosen submissions. ARCHIVE will accept papers for next year's volume until **February 18, 2012**. Requirements and submission forms can be found at <http://www.uwarchive.wordpress.com>

ABOUT PHI ALPHA THETA AND THE UNDERGRADUATE HISTORY ASSOCIATION (UW-MADISON)

The UW-Madison chapter of Phi Alpha Theta and the Undergraduate History Association function as one group. Together, they provide student representatives to the History Department's Undergraduate Council, hold regular meetings on historical topics and publish ARCHIVE. Information about the group can be found at <http://www.uwuha.wordpress.com>

Cover Photo: Old Abe, mascot of the 8th Wisconsin Infantry during the Civil War. In commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the civil war. Reprinted with the generous permission from the university of Wisconsin-Madison library digital archive.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

JAMES DOING is a Senior majoring in history, with a concentration in 20th-century Europe. He also studies German and ESL, and hopes to spend a few years abroad teaching English before coming back to Madison for graduate school. In his free time James enjoys analyzing language and costume errors in historical films (especially atrocious hairstyles from the sixties).

ASHLEY JENSEN is a senior majoring in History and LACIS. She is completely thrilled to join ARCHIVE for a second year and is grateful for the incredibly enriching experience. Her favorite pastime is her internship with the Wisconsin Veteran's Museum where all of her historical dreams come true where she has had primary responsibilities in several exhibits. Ashley graduates hoping to become an archivist and museum curator.

SAMUEL JONAS is a Senior majoring in History and English, and plans on teaching in some capacity after college. His concentration is in general American History, but his true passion lies in the history of Antebellum and Reconstruction America. He also recently announced his candidacy for school elections as a member of the Whig party.

AUBREY LAUERSDORF is a Junior majoring in Anthropology and History, with a focus on the early modern era. Her research examines the role of European contact on the social, military, and political roles of Iroquois women. Besides being an ARCHIVE editor, she is also a Writing Fellow and the Submissions Editor for The Journal of Undergraduate International Studies (JUIS). In her free time, she enjoys drawing, writing, and playing indoor soccer.

KRISTEN SCHUMACHER is a junior majoring in American history and folklore with interests in 20th century gender and labor history. She is a member of the Undergraduate History Association, Phi Alpha Theta, and the Undergraduate Council, as well as a card-carrying member of the Wisconsin Historical Society. She has worked as a researcher and writer for the Institute of Southern Jewish Life's online Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, and currently works with the UW Archives and Oral History Program's Campus Voices project. During her free time, Kristen enjoys performing musically questionable renditions of IWW ballads, studying the historiography of hip-hop, and scrutinizing McCarthy era propaganda films.

CRESCENTIA STEGNER-FREITAG is a sophomore who would love nothing better than to be in Rome in 63 BC. Since she cannot do so, she has to content herself with majoring in Classics and History. She is an active member of the Undergraduate History Association/Phi Alpha Theta, the Undergraduate History Council, and the Classics Society. In her free time, Crescentia plays piano and knits.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ANDREW W. LANG will graduate in the spring of 2011 with a Bachelor's of Science in History and certificates in Classics and European Studies. His contribution, "Rule without Force, Love without Law: Individual Sovereignty, Social Freedom, and Free Love in the work of Dr. Juliet Severance," was originally written in the Spring semester of 2010 for Professor Stephen Kantrowitz's seminar on American Reconstruction. Beginning in the fall of 2011, Andrew will be attending the University of Wisconsin Law School and intends to pursue a dual J.D./M.A. with Library and Information Sciences.

CLAIRE LYNCH is a senior majoring in History and Biochemistry with a certificate in Mathematics. She wrote "The Voit Farm: An Evolving Relic" for Professor Cronon in Fall 2010, researching a part of Madison's landscape that had sparked her curiosity since childhood. After graduating, she plans to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer and then attend medical school.

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RYAN PANZER is a graduating senior majoring in history and psychology. He wrote "Karl Barth: The "Silent" Voice of Reason Between East and West" for Professor Rudy Koshar's Fall 2010 Seminar on religion and politics in modern Europe. After graduation, he will be working for Google in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

RULE WITHOUT FORCE, LOVE WITHOUT LAW: INDIVIDUAL SOVEREIGNTY, SOCIAL FREEDOM, AND FREE LOVE IN THE WORK OF DR. JULIET SEVERANCE

BY ANDREW W. LANG

In the summer of 1883, Spiritualists from around the nation flocked to Lake Pleasant, Massachusetts, for their tenth annual camp meeting. The atmosphere was electric, as the devout, the curious, and the skeptical all gathered from July 29 to August 26, to enjoy musical entertainment provided by the "celebrated Fitchburg Band," a cavalcade of lecturers and orators, and the oft-prophetic speeches of Spiritualist mediums, purporting to deliver knowledge from beyond the grave.* Equally thrilling to nineteenth century Americans were the addresses given by radical Spiritualist reformers who called for women's equality, labor reform, dietary and dress reform, and an absolute separation of church and state. Such movements were controversial, both within and without the ranks of the Spiritualists, and threatened to fracture their tenuous unity. Though most Spiritualists generally supported reform movements, key radical figures exceeded the bounds that the more conservative factions were willing to tolerate. As one reporter observed, "the members of the New England spiritualists' association do not seem to be in a happy frame of mind, judging from the circulars they are firing at each other from hand printing-presses."†

This hostility and professional rivalry would increase dramatically in the coming months in light of a controversial address that was delivered by the female health reformer Dr. Juliet Hall Worth Stillman Severance. Dr. Severance was no stranger to controversy; at the Lake Pleasant camp meeting six years earlier, camp authorities had forced her to surrender the podium for expressing her unorthodox views. Nevertheless, the enthusiastic audience followed her to an adjacent pine grove where she finished her speech.‡ Her *Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*, delivered in 1883, advocated and demanded extreme versions of individual liberty that chafed with the aims of more conservative Spiritualists. This controversy centered on the polarizing issue of "social freedom," an ambiguous term that most reformers and conservatives equated with the free love movement, which carried strong negative connotations of chaos and unrestrained lust. Later described as a "radical among radicals," Severance espoused a broad conception of freedom that exceeded the boundaries of legislation.§

*. David Jones, "Lake Pleasant Camp Meeting for 1883," in *The Olive Branch*, reprinted from *Banner of Light*, Vol. viii., No. 6, (June 1883): 112.

†. "Lake Pleasant with some Greenfield Notes. Why The New England Spiritualists Are not Altogether Happy," *Springfield Republican*, Springfield, MA, August 12, 1883.

‡. Joanne E. Passet, *Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 128.

§. Frances Elizabeth Willard, "SEVERANCE, Mrs. Juliet H." in *Woman of the Century*, ed. Frances Willard and Mary Livermore. (New York: Mast Crowell & Kirkpatrick, 1897), 642-3.

of what other reformers deemed acceptable and rejected prevailing notions of freedom that were dependent on legislation.* In the three categories of freedom that she defined, religious, political, and social, Severance advanced a radical viewpoint that emphasized the sovereignty of the individual and denied the legislative authority of the state, a position that was firmly rooted in the political theory of individualist anarchism of Josiah Warren and Stephen Pearl Andrews. Radicals like Juliet Severance sought to battle the inequality of women in the private sphere as well as the public by extending anarchist theories into the realm of social and sexual relationships; the resistance mounted by conservatives and fellow reformers alike reveals how the perception of social freedom as a threat to both morality and political authority limited efforts at reform.

This principle of “individual sovereignty” is attributed to the political theories of Josiah Warren, sometimes identified as the father of American Anarchism. The tenets of Warren’s philosophy, elaborated by his close friend and associate Stephen Pearl Andrews, denied the authority of institutions, both church and state, and sought to place power into the hands of individuals. In Warren’s words:

“Liberty defined and limited by others is slavery! Liberty then is the SOVEREIGNTY OF THE INDIVIDUAL; and never shall man know liberty until each and every individual is acknowledged to be *the only legitimate sovereign of his or her person, time, and property, each living and acting at his own cost*; and not until we live in society where each can exercise this inalienable right of sovereignty at all times without clashing with, or violating that of others.”†

Thomas and Mary Gove Nichols later expanded Warren and Andrews’ theories from the world of concrete institutions of church and state into the social realm, developing a theory of free love that used individual sovereignty to justify the elimination of legally binding marriage.‡ They argued that marriage should be bound solely by mutual affection between two individuals and should not need legal sanction to constrain it. The legal, contractual aspect only served to bind partners when mutual affection no longer existed, thus imprisoning men and women in loveless and oppressive relationships. Free love entailed women’s equality in all relationships by denying the man’s possession of the woman as property that institutional marriage justified.§ Although Warren insisted through his lifetime that his conception of individual sovereignty was meant to apply solely to political and economic reforms and did not vindicate social upheaval or free love, his ideas and phrases were employed by free love and social freedom advocates throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.¶ In 1871, free love radical Victoria Woodhull delivered *A Speech on the Principles of Social Freedom*, in which she situated the principle of social freedom soundly in Warren’s political philosophy: “If a person govern, not

*. Frances Elizabeth Willard, “SEVERANCE, Mrs. Juliet H.” in *Woman of the Century*, ed. Frances Willard and Mary Livermore. (New York: Mast Crowell & Kirkpatrick, 1897), 642-3.

† Josiah Warren, *Equitable Commerce*, (New York: Fowlers and Wells, Publishers, 1852), 57. (Italics original)

‡ John C. Spurlock, *Free Love: Marriage and Middle-Class Radicalism in America, 1825-1860*, (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 125-126.

§ Ibid., 125-8.

¶ Ibid., 129, 132-4.

only himself but others, that is despotic government, and it matters not if that control be over one or over a thousand individuals.”* Victoria Woodhull and Juliet Severance both believed that Americans’ alleged devotion to principles of freedom and liberty were a sham so long as men were allowed domination over religious, political, and social spheres.†

Issues within the social sphere, primarily the relationships between men and women, tended to be the most contentious, likely because they were the most private. Radical reformers, disenchanted with the restrictions and inequality of legal marriage, proposed and practiced alternative lifestyles, including free love, that were a source of great scandal and misunderstanding. The population at large had been lead to mistakenly believe that social freedom and free love were synonymous.‡ The distinction between the two ideas is subtle and easily overlooked, but it is fundamental for understanding how social freedom is aligned firmly within the individualist anarchist tradition and in keeping with Juliet Severance’s libertarian approach to reform. In her *Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*, Juliet Severance first introduces the notion of social freedom, then describes her stance as a proponent of free love within the sphere of social freedom, explicitly separating the two ideas.§ By this definition, free love is a single social philosophy that falls into the larger category of the social realm. Social freedom would be applied more generally, allowing individuals to freely chose their lifestyle without fear of censure. While free love sought to dismantle all bonds and social institutions that enforced sexual inequality, social freedom sought to eliminate the *requirement* of legal bonds; legal bonds, as in marriage, could continue to exist in a system of social freedom, but they would not be required. While social freedom would allow people to practice free love, if they so chose, it was not, in itself, free love because it did not require the elimination of certain institutions. In essence, social freedom is the principle of individual sovereignty transposed onto the sphere of social and sexual relationships.

Individual sovereignty necessitated the right of individuals to make their own uninhibited choices; outlawing certain social arrangements, like marriage, or even designating others as preferable, like free love, would infringe upon the individual’s right to decide. According to Severance, social freedom would allow people to live by the dictates of their own consciences, especially in respect to marriage relations, without the interference of the government. In essence, social freedom would extend toleration to all modes of living in much the same way that religious freedom ideally tolerates all varieties of religion. Individuals would be equally entitled to live as monogamists, polygamists, celibates, or free lovers, but not required to submit to any

* Victoria C. Woodhull, “A Speech on The Principles of Social Freedom...” in *The Victoria Woodhull Reader* ed. Madeleine B. Stern (Weston, MA: M & S Press, 1974), 4.

† Ibid., 4 (Italics original).

‡ David Jones, in *The Olive Branch*, equates social freedom with free love, but this association persists even later. The biographical sketch “Famous Woman once White-water resident” *Whitewater Register* October 16, 1919 reads, “Dr. Severance lectured on social freedom – which is to say free love in 1862.”

§ Severance, *A Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*, While “social freedom” first appears on page 10, “free love” is not discussed until page 15.

of these lifestyle choices.* Removed from its capacity to sanction and enforce a single form of social relationship, namely Christian marriage, the government would assume a new role in protecting the rights of individuals against coercion and ensuring that all relationships were based solely on mutual consent.†

Although Severance identified herself as a believer in free love, she also firmly believed that monogamy was the “highest condition of love” when based on affection, equality, and consent.‡ This belief, which initially seems paradoxical, was actually fairly common among free love advocates. To many of these radicals, the attempts to dismantle marriage’s legal framework was intended to enhance the experience of monogamous love by removing the element of coercion. Only when “marriage” became truly based on affection, equality, and consent without the force of law behind it could it attain its highest potential. Despite these assertions, which Severance had hoped would allay the fears of marriage supporters, conservative reformers continued to dread the loosening of legal bonds and perceived free love as the legitimization of licentiousness. By 1883, Severance had been dealing with the public’s misconceptions about free love and social freedom for at least two decades.§ Her assertion that the opponents of social freedom either misunderstood it or were hypocrites may have been justified as people generally treated “social freedom” and “free love” as interchangeable terms and ignored the fundamental distinction.¶ Despite misunderstanding and controversy, Severance persisted in advancing her radical ideas of freedom through a myriad of reform causes. Like Victoria Woodhull and the Nicholsons, Juliet Severance subscribed to the notion of individual sovereignty to justify her reform movements and sought to empower individuals with religious and political, as well as social rights. Severance possessed her own convictions as to the best specific lifestyle choices for each of these three spheres, but did not allow these convictions to prevent her from championing the rights of all individuals to decide for themselves.

In matters religious, Severance was both a devout Spiritualist and a devotee of free thinking philosophy. A religious movement that developed in the mid to late nineteenth century, Spiritualism advanced the belief that human souls survived the death of the physical body and could communicate universal truths to the living through mediums and physical manifestations of their spirit presence.** By rejecting Christian notions of a perfect and removed afterlife, Spiritualists were able to create a new religion, compatible with the recent scientific

developments of the nineteenth century, most notably, Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution.* Spiritualism was distinctly individualistic; without any canonical doctrines, texts, hierarchies, or causes, the religion emphasized a personal, individual religious experience that lent itself well to radicals’ ideas of freedom, particularly in regard to the supremacy of the individual. In 1858, Spiritualists at the Rutland Free Convention echoed Josiah Warren when they took their religion’s emphasis on individuality to the extreme conclusion that “the authority of each individual soul is absolute and final” and then condemned “the individual, the Church, or the State that attempts to control the opinions or practices of any man or woman by an authority or power outside of his or her own soul.” † Because each individual person possessed an immortal and incorporeal soul, every human being was of equal worth regardless of his or her physical traits or appearance. This egalitarian tendency, which elevated marginalized groups such as women, led to a strong connection between Spiritualists and feminists.

Women enjoyed a prominent role in Spiritualism and were perceived as particularly adept mediums. In this capacity, women attained a public voice that had previously been denied them and, for this reason, many of the most radical female reformers and lecturers began their speaking careers “channeling” the voices of the dead.‡ This spirit communication served as “scientific proof” of the human soul’s immortality, further cementing women’s spiritual equality with men. Anne Braude concluded that, because women’s equality was so entrenched in the Spiritualist religion, all Spiritualists were advocates of women’s rights.§ Although they shared a common commitment to elevating the status of women, Spiritualists and feminist reformers were sharply divided over the means to achieve this end. As one of the most fundamental relationships between women and men, the institution of marriage became a focal point of reformers’ efforts. While the majority of Spiritualists recognized that the existing form of marriage perpetuated sexual inequality, many remained leery of accepting radicals’ calls for social freedom, because they believed that association with the scandalous image of free love would be injurious to their religious cause.¶

Despite her radical social freedom views, Juliet Severance was elected president of the Wisconsin State Spiritualists Association in 1878, and later also the president of Minnesota’s and Illinois’ Spiritualist Associations, and emerged as an fervent leader in this minority religious group.** As a strong advocate of free thought and the separation of church and state, she rejected the existing degree of religious freedom as inadequate by asserting that it was inhibited by a strong Christian presence in the government that sought to dominate

* Juliet H. Severance, M.D., *A Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*. (Milwaukee: Godfrey & Crandall Printers, 1881), 12.

† Severance, *A Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*, 16-17.

‡ Juliet H. Severance, M.D., *A Discussion of the Social Question between Juliet H. Severance, M.D. and David Jones* Editor of the “Olive Branch,” (Milwaukee: National Advance Print, 1891), 14.

§ Willard, 643.

¶ Severance, *A Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*, 17.

** For a general overview of Spiritualism see Molly McGarry *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), Introduction, 1-12; also Anne Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 1-9.

* Juliet H. Severance, *Lecture on the Evolution of Life in Earth and Spirit Conditions*, (Milwaukee: Godfrey & Crandall Printers, 1882), 3-5.

† The resolutions passed by the Rutland Free Convention, as quoted in Anne Braude. *Radical Spirits*, 70.

‡ McGarry, esp. 41-9.

§ Braude, 58.

¶ Spiritualists’ hesitancy to yield to Severance is seen in R.’s Special Correspondence of The Chicago Tribune, “Dubuque,” Chicago Daily Tribune. Jul. 10, 1875 and in David Jones’ responses to the lecture that were published in *A Discussion of the Social Question*.

** “Famous Woman Once Whitewater Resident,” *Whitewater Register*, 16 Oct. 1919.

freedoms of speech and the press. Not only did this Christian influence prevent the full expression of religious freedom, but it also imposed and reinforced negative ideas of women's roles in society.

The supreme example of the Christian church's influence over the state in Severance's day was the massive censorship campaign directed by Anthony Comstock. The Comstock Law, passed by Congress in 1873, was intended to prevent the dispersion of pornography through the United States' mail system; difficulties arose as Anthony Comstock's personal definition of "pornography" rapidly expanded, initiating a crusade against sex radicals, marriage reformists, and proponents of birth control.* The war on obscenity quickly transformed into an attack on anyone who questioned the authority of the God-ordained, Christian institution of marriage. Ironically perhaps, the primary objective of many sex radicals and marriage reformers was not the destruction of marriage, but the preservation of monogamous relationships by setting partners on equal terms that did not exist in contemporary statutes. They believed that women should be elevated, through education and the positive assertion of feminine sexuality, to an equal, and therefore more loving, status in their relationships with men. Equality and freedom would serve to create stronger, more lasting ties, especially in monogamous relationships, in which legally enforced inequality held sway. In their eyes, Comstock's efforts to legislate purity through censorship served more to maintain women's subordination than to protect their virtue.

One of the victims of this censorship campaign was Chicago sex radical Ida Craddock, who was driven to suicide in 1902 after she was sentenced to imprisonment under Comstock's laws. Severance, then residing in Chicago, spoke at a rally, extolling Craddock as a martyr to the free speech and sex radical cause and further criticizing Comstock's savage methods.† Censorship of the mail allowed the government and religious crusaders like Comstock a means of invading the private social realm, a region that was supposedly beyond their reach, in the name of protecting Americans. Christianity's virtual monopoly on the religious sphere reinforced the marriage relationship's monopoly on the social sphere, as the government's "moral" agents sought to suppress critics' cries for marriage reform.

Far worse in Severance's evaluation than Christian partisanship in government were Christian beliefs that justified and reinforced women's subservient role in society, leading her to declare that "woman has ever found in the church her worst enemy and oppressor."‡ She continued by citing examples in both the Old and New Testaments of entrenched patriarchal ideas that degraded women, diminished their importance as human

* For an excellent account of Comstock's crusade see Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Rereading Sex: Battles over Sexual Knowledge and Suppression in Nineteenth-Century America*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), chapters 15-17.

† "Memorial for Ida C. Craddock" *Lucifer The Light Bearer*, Topeka, KS. Nov. 6, 1902. Other notable casualties of the Comstock laws included sex radical Ezra Heywood, who died shortly after serving his sentence of hard labor, and Victoria Woodhull, who eventually went into exile in England. Moses Harman, publisher of the sex radical periodical, *Lucifer the Light Bearer*, was tried and acquitted, relying on contributions from subscribers to pay the legal fees. Juliet Severance donated copies of *A Discussion of the Social Question* to help raise funds for the defense.

‡ Severance, Thomas Paine, 10.

beings, and attempted to justify their subordination. In this same lecture, Severance argued that, through this ideology and specifically through marriage, the Church had propagated and enforced women's subjugation. She equated Christian marriage with slavery as it granted the husband legal ownership of the wife in both body and labor.* The combined force of Christianity's ideological sexism and its powerful influence over the government of the United States led many radicals to protest this encroachment on freedom of religion. To this end, Severance served as first acting Vice President of the National Liberal League, later known as the Secular Union, an organization solely dedicated to the complete separation of church and state.†

Yet even as a vocal critic of Christianity and its political presence, Severance firmly supported religious freedom, desiring equal opportunities for all individuals to practice religion as they saw fit. Her devotion to individual sovereignty, inherent in religious freedom, overcame her personal distaste for Christian theology. Severance did recognize the positive influence Christian churches could have on the populace, especially by deterring evil acts through the fear of eternal punishment. Because of this preserving influence and her personal devotion to the principle of religious freedom, Severance did not want to eliminate the churches. Rather, she hoped that, through moral instruction and greater education, people would advance to a point at which churches would become obsolete.‡ She was convinced that humanity would eventually outgrow the restrictive dictates of Christianity and progress towards an enlightened state of perfection, which she believed would come through the teachings of Spiritualism, but efforts to speed this progress should involve education and discussion rather than legislation or restriction.§

While women's equality may have been increasing in the spiritual realm, attaining political equality proved to be far more difficult. Like many other female reformers who had agitated for emancipation, Severance was disappointed when the franchise was offered to freedmen but not to women.¶ Most reformers had assumed that expanding the voting population would naturally lead to universal suffrage, but were disillusioned when these changes failed to materialize. Both male and female radicals decried the fact that only the male half of the population had any voice in government at all. Instead of expanding liberty, Severance perceived a tightening of control over women. The law already recognized the married woman's body as the property of her husband, and, without a legally recognized voice, it seemed unlikely that women would be able to change this reality.**

* Though this passage refers to the contents of Severance's 1906 Thomas Paine lecture, the analogy of marriage to slavery occurs in Severance's other lectures, including *A Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom and Marriage*.

† Passet, 128.

‡ Severance, *A Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*, 7.

§ *Ibid.*, 7.

¶ *Ibid.*, 9.

** *Ibid.*, 13.

The emphasis on women as property drew a parallel between women's roles and the recently abolished system of chattel slavery. Many feminists believed that suffrage would allow women to achieve gender equality with men, putting a premium on legislative power and the government's ability to protect female rights through laws. Though Severance identified with the women's suffrage movement, she accorded it a lower priority than social freedom. Perhaps she recognized that enfranchisement could not guarantee rights, as enfranchisement had not been sufficient to secure liberty for emancipated slaves. Women had no formal representation in the government, and thus no legal way to assert their rights, but gaining representation alone would not be enough to generate change.

Juliet Severance and other sex radicals emphasized a different approach to achieving women's political equality, believing that the only way to secure liberty for women would be to change the perceptions of society at large by first reforming social institutions like marriage that reinforced the domestic, subservient role of women. Though they still voiced support for women's suffrage, they were convinced that, without changing popular conceptions of women's value, equality, and competence, voting rights would be a hollow victory because they could not guarantee change. In order to promote women's ability to participate in the political realm, many feminists endeavored to increase women's social rights by reexamining the laws governing marriage. While moderates sought to redefine marriage as a true contract, similar to the rights of contract that freedmen had inherited with emancipation, the radicals, which included a wide range of differing opinions, generally desired to remove marriage's legal trappings entirely, creating a libertarian social realm devoid of government interference, what Juliet Severance called "social freedom."

Nineteenth century law described marriage as a contract, but in definition and practice, it was unlike any kind of true contract. While it contained similar elements to contracts, such as an origin in consent, it denied the necessary elements of formal equality of the partners, and the mutual right to break the contract. In her analysis of issues of contract in the social sphere, Amy Dru Stanley identified how marriage was unique in that, unlike true contracts, it established a relation of status: recognizing the husband as superior and the wife as inferior partners with corresponding degrees of power in the relationship.*

By removing these legal distinctions and applying the true definition of contract, marriage could presumably become based in equality, without the status relation, and entail the self-ownership of both partners to their bodies and their labor. Joel Bishop, a law writer, noted another difference between the marriage arrangement and contracts: the state held sovereignty over the marriage relationship, but contracts were created by

* Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 180.

by individuals as private transactions.* More moderate feminists sought women's equality by applying the true definition of "contract" to marriage and sought to do so through the legal authority of the government. Yet, in their conservatism, they still avoided the full implications of a contract definition: the right of either party to leave the contract at will. Loosening divorce laws presented a threat to the American family that conservative reformers were reluctant, if not entirely unwilling, to discuss, preferring instead to emphasize equalizing the partners within the relation.†

In striking contrast to these efforts to establish gender equality through contract definitions, radicals promoted free love as a solution that would remove the legally binding elements entirely. Perceiving the imposition of status inherent in the marriage "contract" as synonymous with slavery, free love promised equality without the trappings of contracts. In particular, this philosophy addressed the issue of the indefinite duration of the marriage agreement and the difficulty in escaping from abusive relationships. In this vein, Victoria Woodhull criticized the attempts of feminists to incorporate some but not all the implications of contract, arguing "least of all does the government require that any of these contracts shall be entered into for life. Why should the social relations of the sexes be made subject to a different theory?"‡ As Woodhull and Severance would have agreed, the marriage relation could never be safe for women unless they had some way of escaping it.

In a free love society, love, or mutual affection, would replace the marriage contract as the legitimizing bond between two individuals in a sexual relationship. Relationships would be based on consent and could be ended when ties of love and mutual affection were broken. Free lovers criticized the contractual element in marriage, asserting that contracts rightly belonged to labor, not social relations. Applying contractual definitions of goods exchange to marriage equated it with prostitution; just as a prostitute sells her body to a man for monetary consideration, a woman entering a marriage sells her body and labor to her husband in return for a house, food, and protection.§ In the eyes of free lovers, marriage was the worse of these two exchanges because even prostitutes retained a degree of choice in their sexual liaisons; marriage was binding for life and sexual consent became irrelevant. As Severance noted, "marital rights" had allowed husbands to sexually abuse their wives without any fear of legal repercussions as the female body became merely a piece of property owned by the male.¶ The legal sanction of marriage had generated a system that permitted and accepted domestic and sexual abuse; the concept of "marital rape" was almost a contradiction in terms and certainly did not exist in

* Stanley, 181.

† Ibid., 178-179.

‡ Woodhull, 11.

§ Juliet H. Severance, M.D., *Marriage*, (Chicago: M. Harman Publisher, 1901), 19-20.

¶ Severance, *A Discussion of the Social Question*, 39.

statutes.* For radicals “free love” literally meant freeing love from coercion, giving every man and woman ownership of him or herself and basing all relationships on mutual consent rather than legal bonds or force. Above all else, free love was intended to elevate the position of women, making them men’s social equals by endowing them with the same degree of self-ownership and individual choice that men possessed.

The radicals recognized that free love was not an acceptable lifestyle for everybody, giving rise to the notion of social freedom. Juliet Severance asserted that the social freedom approach would allow all people the right to live as they chose, according to the dictates of their own consciences, whether it be celibacy, polygamy, varietism (multiple sexual partners), or monogamy. The emphasis was not on what one chose, but the acceptance of all individuals’ fundamental *right to choose*. Severance sought to reassure conservatives that social freedom would not destroy their beloved institution of marriage; “the Catholic would marry according to the doctrines of his church, and believing in no divorce, ‘would fight it out on that line;’ and every sect would live as they believed to be right.”†

Presumably, the model on which Severance based this toleration is religious freedom, wherein, ideally, all people tolerate the religious convictions of others in the same way that they expect their own beliefs to be tolerated. Similarly, free love is just one of many equally accepted social relationships permissible under the overarching ideal of social freedom. Social freedom, Severance claimed, “does not mean any special form, but says live your highest life and allow others to live theirs.”‡ In advocating the all-encompassing perspective of social freedom, Severance did not commit herself solely to defending the one, specific institution she supported, namely free love. This is crucial because it reflects her dedication to upholding individual sovereignty. Recognizing only one social institution, whether free love or Christian marriage, would be despotic, but allowing them all to coexist empowers the individual with the right to choose whatever mode of living he or she prefers. Many scholars have identified the influence of individualist anarchism on the formation of free love ideology, but few have examined the issue of social freedom as separate from free love. Because it acknowledged all species of social relationships as equally legitimate, social freedom was more accurately adapted to the principle of individual sovereignty than free love, which sought to eliminate all social relationships that contained ties other than affection.

Despite the attempts to assuage the anxiety of critics and skeptics, social freedom and free love evoked an enormous amount of controversy. The idea of social freedom alone may not have seemed so offensive had it not entailed the legitimacy of “immoral” lifestyles like polygamy or free love.

* Passet, 144-5.

† Ibid., 14-15.

‡ Severance, *A Discussion of the Social Question*, 15.

Social conservatives and moderate reformers alike perceived free love as a vindication of adultery and free license to promiscuity and vice, yet Severance rejected the idea that social freedom would create vice.

“We are told wives would desert their husbands, husbands wives, our daughters would be debauched, and general promiscuousness and prostitution would result. This, my friends, is only a picture of what actually does exist now, under our most stringent monogamic marriage laws.”*

By drawing attention to the fact that vice and prostitution were already widespread, despite the best efforts of marriage and laws to control it, Severance demonstrated that social freedom could not exacerbate existing conditions, but was actually remedial to this vice.

Severance viewed free love as a solution because the essential factor of mutual affection in a free love relationship necessarily precluded the exchange of sex for any consideration, monetary or otherwise.† Necessity often drove working women to prostitution as other sources of employment provided insufficient wages.‡

Reformers believed that if women could be elevated to equal status with men, prostitution would be weakened, if not eliminated. Severance believed that in implementing free love, all enticements, coercions, monetary considerations, or other binding elements other than mutual affection would be removed from sexual relations, and prostitution would disappear.

The radicals refused to believe that removing legal restrictions would elicit a sudden increase in immorality. The claim that under social freedom everyone would immediately devolve into lechery assumed human nature was inherently depraved and could only be restrained through law. Victoria Woodhull had addressed this tired claim by asserting, “if there is no virtue, no honesty, no purity, no trust among women except as created by the law, I say heaven help our morality, for nothing human can help it.”§

Many reformers tried to ignore the social freedom issue as the ravings of a disenchanted “immoral” minority, but some perceived it as a far more insidious threat than mere moral degeneracy. The hostile reception of Severance’s speech in 1883 by fellow Spiritualist and reform advocate David Jones, editor of the New York Spiritualist periodical *The Olive Branch*, reflects the intense controversy that “social freedom” evoked even within the ranks of the reform-minded. Jones viciously derided her lecture a month later in the September issue of *The Olive Branch*, claiming that “as a destroying element in society, free love as taught by Mrs. Dr. Severance has no equal ... the few advocates of free love, who have still enough of brazen impudence left to

* Severance, *A Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*, 12.

† Severance, *A Discussion of the Social Question*, 16.

‡ Stanley, 229-230.

§ Woodhull, 20.

force themselves upon the attention of law abiding citizens.”* Never one to back down from such an affront, which constituted not only libel but also a damaging misrepresentation of her cause, Severance quickly opened a correspondence with Jones. Hoping to avoid a libel suit, he agreed to publish a portion of her lecture in *The Olive Branch*, provided he could also publish his criticisms of the position. Despite this attempt to reconcile, the tone of the two reformers’ correspondence rapidly devolved into bitter hostility. When Jones refused to publish her rebuttal to his criticism, leaving his readers with the impression that she had no response to make, she wrote to him, accusing him of slandering not only her, but the principles of personal liberty as well. She tenaciously vowed to fight back against his efforts to suppress and misrepresent her ideas.† With the intention of vindicating her principles, Severance later published the correspondence with Jones and a portion of the original address (the afore-mentioned *Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*) in a pamphlet entitled *A Discussion of the Social Question*. In her own words, Severance advocated not just liberty, but “personal liberty” and “self-ownership,” without qualifying them for a specific group.

Ironically, while Severance sought to defend free love by distancing it from immorality, Jones defended Spiritualism by distancing it from free love. Though Jones initially posed the standard moral objections to social freedom, his language reveals a fundamentally different fear: that of political anarchy. Jones frequently employed words that carry tones of legality; he accused free love advocates of forcing “themselves upon the attention of law abiding citizens,” implying that these radicals operated outside the established realm of law and order and sought to drag others into their lawless world.‡ Though their discussion allegedly centered on the so-called “social question,” the argument really is a matter of deeper political and philosophical issues, namely the extent of individual freedom and the role of the government.

Allegedly from practicality, Jones feared radicals’ assertions that “individuality must assume gigantic proportions, making the person feel that they are above all law save what they enact for themselves.”§ Here, the direct connection is made, though Jones may not have been aware of it, between sex radicals and anarchism, as the language resembles Josiah Warren’s claim that “RAISING EVERY INDIVIDUAL ABOVE THE STATE, ABOVE INSTITUTIONS, ABOVE SYSTEMS, ABOVE MAN-MADE LAWS, will enable society to take the first successful step toward its harmonious adjustment.”¶ Instead of refuting Jones’ accusations of operating outside the boundaries of the law, Severance actually affirmed and advocated extralegal action when the law infringed on individual’s rights. Severance’s conviction that legality did not define morality was likely rooted

* David Jones, “Lake Pleasant Camp Meeting,” in *The Olive Branch*, Vol. viii., No. 9, (September 1883): 170.

† Severance, *A Discussion of the Social Question*, 34. (italics mine)

‡ Jones, “Lake Pleasant Camp Meeting,” (September 1883): 170

§ Jones, “Lake Pleasant Camp Meeting,” (September 1883): 170.

¶ Warren, 27.

in her involvement in the antislavery movement; she had joined the Underground Railroad in DeWitt, Iowa, and Whitewater, Wisconsin, assisting slave refugees in defying the law and escaping from their legal owners.* The issue of slavery presented a clear-cut example of a legal institution of dubious morality and, as such, it had inspired many reformers to defy the law in favor of the moral right.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, one particular breed of abolitionism, so-called Garrisonian non-resistance, had justified illegal actions like rescuing slaves by rejecting human law in favor of a higher authority: God’s laws. The Garrisonians refused to accept human laws and institutions because they were the products of imperfect beings; Severance went further by rejecting the slavery of marriage through a similar recognition of the artificial standard of laws. Garrisonians embraced the promise of a millennial future ruled by the “government of God,” tying their convictions into Christian theology.† Though Severance was not a Christian, she shared similar convictions, derived from Spiritualism, of an impending millennium that would usher in an enlightened age of harmony.‡ Both Spiritualism and many sects of nineteenth century Christianity embraced this notion of religious perfectionism, the belief that a state of perfection was not only attainable in mortal life, but that religious individuals should actively pursue this perfection.§ Like Garrisonian abolitionists, Severance ultimately rejected the authority of the laws and institutions of man, instead appealing to higher “laws.” She criticized marriage because

“the marriage institution . . . substantially ignores the essential element of conjugal union – love, which alone warrants and which sanctifies such unions – and sets up instead an artificial standard of morality, the law. It assumes that outside the law all sex unions are lewd, lascivious, impure and wrong, while inside its pale it is all right and virtuous. It asserts, in effect, that the legislator has power to make what was before impure, pure; that which was wrong, right. This is blasphemy if there be such a thing.”¶

She effectively refuted the idea that laws can dictate morality because morality is a higher conception that exists beyond the power of man-made legislation.

In rejecting the restrictions of law, Severance attacked what Jones believed gave structure and order to human life. Without the structure created by laws, Jones claimed that the free love advocates are “ever to be found hand in hand with every disorganizing element which may spring up.”**

* Passet, 125.

† Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 32-34.

‡ See Severance, *A Lecture on Religious, Political, and Social Freedom*, esp. 17-18.

§ Perspectives on Christian Perfectionism may be found in Perry, 63-70 and on Spiritualist Perfectionism in McGarry, 41-42.

¶ Severance, *Marriage*, 18-19.

** Jones, “Lake Pleasant Camp Meeting,” (September 1883): 170.

Unlike the individualist anarchists, Jones perceived individual sovereignty as tantamount to chaos. He championed the cause of the law for establishing order, and repudiated Severance's accusations about infringement of free speech, by vindicating censorship as a defense of the common good.

"The laws under which we are living today do not in any sense, abridge the rights of any individual in the exercise of free speech, so long as the welfare of society is not imperiled by it; and hence this loud appeal for free speech is [proof] that the person ... desires to say something they know they have no legal right to say... this appeal is equivalent to a demand for the repeal of statute laws."*

The implicit assumption that the government should be able to decide what is right and wrong and have the authority to enforce their definition for the protection of society was exactly what Warren, Woodhull, and Severance saw as despotism. Jones questioned, "is there anything wrong or arbitrary in a law which demands all people live pure lives?"† But if the government had the authority to legislate morality, as Jones proposed, whose standards of morality would it uphold, and if this morality was a religious morality, how could it be compatible with freedom of religion or of expression?

Jones refused to recognize social freedom as a legitimate reform because he perceived it as a threat to both morality and state authority. A supporter of women's rights, Jones frequently featured articles advocating women's equality in *The Olive Branch*, but here he clearly identified with efforts to gain women's equality through contractual definitions and the legal workings of government.

"Instead of abrogating one of these laws now in force, let us enact more stringent laws, seeing that only by law can woman be elevated and man held accountable for his violation of law. We say give us more law, and less social freedom, such as is demanded by these social reformers."‡

Jones expressed serious misgivings over social freedom and excessive freedom in general; his discourse emphasized state authority over individual sovereignty because he doubted there could be any order without the threat of government force. He claimed that the government had the right to determine and enforce morality and feared the chaos he believed would result from individuals who were not subject to the law. It seems Jones was not nearly as afraid of the moral implications of social freedom as he was preoccupied with the threat against the authority of law and the state. Too much freedom, without the constraining force of law and the strong arm of the government behind it, would force all remnants of government and order to collapse entirely.

Despite their hostile disagreement, David Jones conceded in his published criticism that "any subject,

* Severance, *A Discussion of the Social Question*, 19.

† Ibid., 24.

‡ Severance, *A Discussion of the Social Question*, 24.

no matter how unsavory it may be, can by a skillful artist be made to appear beautiful. Mrs. Severance is a very fair word painter."* Praise of Severance's rhetorical skills was common to both her supporters and her opponents. The author of a special correspondence to the *Chicago Tribune* praised her skills as an orator at a Spiritualist camp meeting, describing her as "sharp and well posted on the social questions now agitating the country; can talk like a whirlwind; and can face the most frantic-yelling crowd without the quiver of a muscle. When she opens her mouth, she does not do it to utter ambiguous platitudes."† This author also describes how Severance's address on free love was "rewarded with frequent bursts of applause" from her appreciative audience of Spiritualists.‡ Clearly sex radicals like Severance had an audience that longed to hear their ideas.

Dr. Juliet Severance never explicitly claimed to be an individualist anarchist, yet her convictions regarding religious, political, and especially social freedom reveal her adherence to the tenets of individual sovereignty. An outspoken critic of the government's role in suppressing the freedoms it claimed to protect, she denied the state's ability to determine morality through legislation. Her definitions of individual freedom put her at odds with the establishment, ruled by laws enacted by the federal government, but also with fellow reformers who supported women's liberation through the definitions of "contract" and pursued change through legislation. Regardless of whether she saw herself as an individualist anarchist, she sympathized with their cause to the same degree that she identified with all groups of people whose beliefs were suppressed by the government. In an address delivered in honor of Thomas Paine in 1888, Severance eulogized the seven anarchists who were tried and hanged, through a dubious conviction, for allegedly inciting the chaos of Chicago's Haymarket Massacre of 1886.

"But never martyrs went to their fates with more sublime heroism. The iniquitous persecution of these seven men for opinion's sake - for such it truly was - is a dark spot on our national honor as well as that of your state. And this under a government whose constitution declares that free speech, a free press and the right of a peaceable assemblage shall not be abridged and that no act of congress shall have power to make laws interfering therewith. Yet ignorant policemen, Pinkerton thugs and private detectives arrogate to themselves these powers and authority denied to the congress of the United States and the people submit to such usurpation of power. So long as such laws and usages exist, the Declaration of Independence is an empty lie, and your shouts of liberty but the roarings of fools."§

This powerful indictment, which she was forced to remove from the address, were later published in an anarchist periodical. While it seems unlikely that she subscribed to these anarchists' political beliefs, Severance clearly believed that any attempts to silence or suppress their viewpoints violated the founding principles of American democracy.

* Ibid., 15.

† R., Special Correspondence of The Chicago Tribune, "Dubuque," *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Jul. 10, 1875.

‡ Ibid.

§ "Juliet Severance's Ideas. Her Sympathy with the Anarchists Who Were Hanged for Murder" *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, February 11, 1888.

The crucial concept of individual sovereignty flows through all of Severance's reform movements, especially her efforts to support social freedom. As a Spiritualist and freethinker, she criticized the Christian church for its hierarchy, infringement on the separation of church and state, and enforcement of marriage, all notions that served to subjugate the individual. As a political activist, she supported universal suffrage, which would allow all people the right to be heard in the government. Though she believed in suffrage and was committed to its cause, Severance was more concerned with changing the public's underlying beliefs about women, as she believed it would be impossible to protect women's legal equality without establishing their social equality. To this end, she assumed her most controversial stance, as a social freedom and free love advocate defending the rights of women to control their own bodies and decrying the institution of marriage for making women into property. Social freedom has generally been obscured by the more common phrase "free love," but, as defined by Juliet Severance, it reveals far stronger ties to the individualist anarchist tradition and a thread of consistency throughout her worldview. Severance herself has also been obscured due to her residence in the Midwest and the far larger shadows of her contemporaries like Victoria Woodhull, yet her beliefs and actions were significant and progressive for achieving women's equality. Recognizing the patterns and influence of individual sovereignty in Severance's work and lectures provides a different perspective for interpreting her as a radical reformer, not simply as rejecting the oppressive force of the government in action, but rejecting the notion of a government with the power to oppress at all.

THE VOIT FARM: AN EVOLVING RELIC

BY CLAIRE LYNCH

Not more than a decade ago, the drive to the Woodman's supermarket on Milwaukee Street took Madison residents past a 68-acre stretch of farmland – fields planted with crops, dairy cattle milling about, red barn and silo stalwartly facing the residential grid extending on the opposite side of the street. Now the crops and cattle have vanished, but the farm remains like a blip in space or time, the transplanted vestige of some physically or temporally distant rural landscape. This impression of the farm as an island, entirely distinct and disconnected from its surroundings, fosters romanticized notions about the place. In the minds of passerby, it easily becomes a relic of pastoral beauty and a brave affirmation of an undervalued and disappearing way of life. But with a closer look, a much more complicated picture emerges. While the farm remains emblematic of dying agricultural traditions and unbridled suburban encroachment, it is also a symbol of industrial transformation and tenacious urban-rural linkages.

The lasting power of the farm to capture the attention and imagination of the community is undoubtedly a product of the fact that it appears so utterly out of place. But although the farm once belonged to an expansive rural mosaic, this sense of incongruity and unrealized transition is deeply embedded in its history. A part of Blooming Grove Township, the property was subject to initial patterns of land acquisition that foreshadowed the urban pressures of later decades. When the federal government opened the area of Blooming Grove for sale in 1835, east coast speculators bought up huge tracts of land along the shores of Lake Monona and northeast of Madison's isthmus. The land that would later become the farm consisted of just a small fraction of an approximately 2000-acre parcel purchased by Charles Walker, who hailed from distant Otsego, New York. In light of recently announced plans to build the future state capitol on the isthmus, Walker and his fellow speculators had hedged their bets on the assumption that Blooming Grove would soon be targeted as a prime area for urban development. Thus, despite its subsequent evolution into a predominantly agricultural community, the first land purchases in Blooming Grove were dictated largely by proximity to Madison rather than soil quality or vegetation cover.* From the very beginning, the farm defied intentions and expectations.

Lingering fascination with the place is also rooted in a profound sense of nostalgia, and the seeds of these feelings are contained in early prideful testaments to the agricultural vitality of the area. Notwithstanding the speculation schemes of Charles Walker, Civil War veteran Christian Wessel established the property as a permanent farm circa 1870†

* Michael P. Conzen, *Frontier Farming in an Urban Shadow* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1971), 8-15.

† *History of Dane County: Biographical and Genealogical* (Madison: Western Historical Association, 1906), 954-955.

and envisioned possibilities for his land beyond what price it would fetch from urban developers. An 1877 history of Blooming Grove captures the mentality of early settlers like Wessel, illuminating the ways in which agriculture became intertwined with and symbolic of the more abstract values of improvement and progress: “By economy, patience and perseverance, the forests were subdued and cleared, and the richest productions of the soil soon produced an abundance... and the people became happy and hopeful.”* According to this account, hard-working farmers like Wessel had transformed the “wild, unimproved” landscape into an exemplar of modern productive civilization.† The most prominent members of the early Blooming Grove community – those whose lives were deemed worthy of chronicling and remembering – included men who tilled some of the “best improved farms in the county.”‡

Probing this sheen of bygone pastoralism uncovers evidence of a more complex and multifaceted relationship to the land. Rounding the corner from Fair Oaks Avenue onto Milwaukee Street, there is a corrugated steel outbuilding emblazoned with a sign reading “E.C. Voit and Sons: Ready-Mix Concrete Plant.” A cylindrical tower rises behind it, presumably the structure where the concrete ingredients are loaded and combined. Metal gates open onto a wide driveway, which then narrows into a dirt road that disappears into the trees. Where does it lead? Obscured by the rolling topography, the road and the mixing plant represent the entryway to a spectacle of extractive industry and fundamentally altered terrain.

Near the turn of the century, Carrie Louisa Mary, daughter of Christian Wessel, married George Voit and the land came under ownership of the family that holds it to this day. Whether responding to the urban-industrial demands emanating from Madison, or coming to terms with the difficulties of carving out a livelihood from agricultural endeavors alone, Voit soon began to diversify his income base. He traded in raw construction materials, hauling sand and gravel in a horse-drawn wagon from excavation sites on the property. When his son Earhardt established an official sand and gravel business in the 1920s, and with its subsequent conversion to the read-mix company in 1948,§ the ensuing escalation in excavation activity was etched onto the landscape. Between 1937 and 1949, the quarry almost quadrupled in area, growing from a minor aberration within an expanse of fields to the dominant feature of the northeast corner of the property.¶ After the ready-mix plant had been in operation for twenty years, water had filled this original pit and the Voits had broken ground immediately to the east at a second digging site that already rivaled the dimensions of the first.**

* James Kavanaugh, “Blooming Grove,” *History of Madison and Dane County* (Madison: W.J. Park & Co., 1877), 536.

† *Ibid.*, 532-537.

‡ “Daniel Tompkins,” “Judson Francis,” and “Albert Lansing,” *Biographical Review of Dane County, Wisconsin: Containing Biographical Sketches of Pioneers and Leading Citizens* (Chicago: Biographical Review Publishing Co., 1893), 234, 238, 586.

§ Pamela Cotant, “E.C. Voit: A Little Bit Country,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, 1 November 2006.

¶ US Department of Agriculture, “Dane County 1937, WU-5-393” and “Dane County 1949, WU-4F-186” [aerial photographs].

** US Department of Agriculture, “Dane County 1968, WU-2JJ-27” [aerial photograph].

By 1976, it too had turned into a reservoir. Mining now moved south of the first quarry, where it remained localized even as the perimeters of the two reservoirs continued to morph and spread outward (Figure 1).* Clearly, the idyllic pastoral vision that imbued its early history was an ephemeral reality if it ever accurately characterized the place.

The agricultural activities that predominated on the Voit farm provide further confirmation that it never existed in the context of a pristine, isolated countryside. Following Milwaukee Street east past the ready-mix plant, another cluster of buildings comes into view: a silo, an A-frame red barn with shingles missing in broad patches, a two-car garage, and a round-roofed barn farther back from the road, the gray color of exposed, weathered wood now covering far more surface area than the peeling white paint. Assumptions about the Voit land hinge on the impression of these worn structures as icons of a receding rural landscape and way of life. However, further investigation debunks these mythic notions, revealing that the barns symbolize a close connection to urban commerce. Up until the 1950s, the farm was primarily a dairy operation. It had twenty-two milk cows at its peak, housed first in the red barn and then the white.† Before the elaboration of expeditious transportation networks and the advent of refrigeration, production of highly perishable goods like milk could only be undertaken in the immediate environs of the market where those goods would be sold.‡ The Voits’ concentration on dairying thus signified an inextricable relationship between the farm and the neighboring city of Madison.

Despite these revelations about the urban and industrial characteristics lying just below its veneer of pastoralism, the Voit farm nevertheless strikes an undeniable contrast with the surrounding panorama of suburban America. One moment beholding the farmhouse and fields, you turn to look across Milwaukee Street and are confronted by a linear matrix of single-family homes with well-tended lawns and cars parked in the driveways. This juxtaposition testifies to the fact that, for many years, the Voit family stubbornly resisted suburbanizing forces that threatened to engulf their land. Its exceptionality attests to an era when farmland, far from its earlier connotations with progress and improvement, represented nothing but the raw material for a new conception of modernity. In the years after World War II, new housing displaced the Micke and Lansing family farms on the other side of Milwaukee Street. The suburban tide next subsumed the Sellick farm to the east, where developers leveled a hill and erected an enormous Arlens discount store with a correspondingly vast parking lot (Figure 2).§

* US Department of Agriculture, “Dane County 1976, 376-23” and “Dane County 1990, 26-41” and “Dane County 2000, 13-13” [aerial photographs].

† John Oncken, “A Little Bit of Country Right Here in Town,”

, 24 January 2002.

‡ William Cronon, “The Machine in the Garden: Agricultural Revolutions,” History 460 Lecture, 4 October 2010.

§ John Oncken, “A Little Bit of Country Right Here in Town,” *The Capital Times*, 24 January 2002.

US Department of Agriculture, “Dane County 1949, WU-4F-186” and “Dane County 1968, WU-2JJ-27” [aerial photographs].

The pride and prosperity that early Blooming Grove farmers associated with agriculture had all but dissipated, replaced with the harsh realization that forging ahead made little economic sense. For most farmers on the outskirts of a growing city, relinquishing their land came down to a simple calculation: the high prices offered by developers far exceed the profits to be earned through continued agricultural utilization.* With economic incentives stacked in favor of development, it is no surprise that the Voit farm stands as a lone survivor of suburbanization.

The devaluation of agriculture in favor of urban development was eventually called into question, a shift that might partly explain how and why the Voit farm endured. Extensive urban sprawl and suburbanization became a source of concern during the late 1970s, inspiring leaders at the highest levels of government to revive Progressive conservation rhetoric in their conception of farmland as a vital and dwindling natural resource. In his 1979 environmental message to Congress, President Jimmy Carter himself suggested the urgency of the situation by invoking the enduring quandary of abundance and waste: “America’s land and natural resources have nourished our civilization. Because our natural heritage was so abundant, we sometimes take these natural resources for granted. We can no longer do so.” He then cited the “conversion [of farmland] to other uses” as a contemporary symptom of this long-standing tendency to treat natural resources as if they were inexhaustible.† While past decades had seen the devaluation of agricultural pursuits throughout an ever-expanding urban fringe, leaders now sought to restore farmland to its rightful place at the crux of national economic livelihood.

This thinking gained a foothold in Dane County when, in the final months of 1981, the Board of Supervisors and the Regional Planning Commission adopted a comprehensive farmland preservation plan. At that time, Dane County was the leading agricultural producer in the state of Wisconsin. The authors of the plan warned that this status was in jeopardy, citing statistics that indicated “rural lands in Dane County are in greater threat of alteration than in any other county in the state.”‡ With this grave prognostication as their underlying rationale, the planners mapped out land use recommendations for all the towns and cities in the county. The plan for Blooming Grove classified most of the Voit property as suitable for urban development, with a small strip corresponding to Starkweather Creek and the bordering marshland designated as a resource protection area. Although this seemed to reinforce the suburbanizing thrust of past decades, it simply reflected the planners’ prudent restriction of development to areas within the existing ambit of municipal services. Moreover, even development of “urban service areas” came with a key qualification. The plan stipulated that

* Robert Sinclair, “Von Thunen and Urban Sprawl,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 57 (1967): 78-81.

† Jimmy Carter, “Environmental Priorities and Programs, Message to Congress, 2 August 1979,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 1979, Book II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1980), 1353-1573.

‡ Dane County Regional Planning Commission, “Preface,” *Farmland Preservation Plan, Dane County, Wisconsin: A Part of the Master Plan for Dane County* (Madison, Wisconsin: The Commission, 1981).

“natural features and conditions... shall be respected and the disturbance to those resources in new development shall be minimized.”* With farmland increasingly defined as one such natural resource, this plan offered more protection to the Voit farm than it might seem. The individual motivations and eccentricities of the Voits themselves probably had much to do with the persistence of the Voit farm, but these changing attitudes about the importance of farmland preservation also surely played a role. In this way, the survival of the Voit farm can be interpreted as part of a broader national return to a greater appreciation of agriculture.

It is easy to judge the Voit farm as a complete anomaly, a presumption that frees the imagination to fabricate its own mythic pastoral history of the place. A deeper inquiry confirms that the Voit farm represented an exception to many of the trends that came to define the surrounding landscape. The property became a farm in spite of speculation schemes that anticipated urban development, and it remained a tenuous outpost of agricultural life in face of the powerful suburbanizing forces of the post-World War II era. However, I also discovered that the exceptional nature of the Voit farm does run as deeply as one might assume. The urban-industrial character of nearby Madison found expression in the Voits’ mining and dairying operations, a reality that invalidates impressions of the farm as an idyllic pastoral island. The messages of the farmland preservation movement might one day dispel any lingering sense of anomaly, as the Voit farm comes to symbolize a widespread recognition of the importance of agriculture, even in urban spaces.

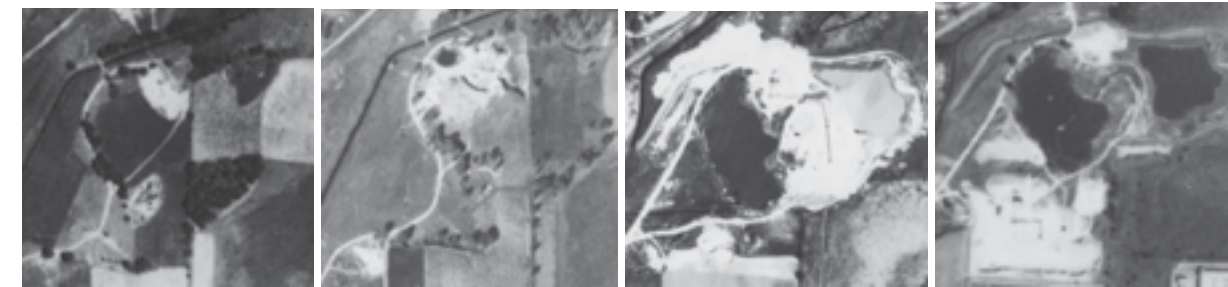


Figure 1. The Voit quarry in 1937 (top left), 1949, 1968, 1976, 1990, and 2000 (bottom right). Cropped from United States Department of Agriculture aerial photographs.

* Dane County Regional Planning Commission, “Town of Blooming Grove Area” [map], *Farmland Preservation Plan, Dane County, Wisconsin: A Part of the Master Plan for Dane County* (Madison, Wisconsin: The Commission, 1981).

Figure 1. Ctd. The Voit quarry in 1937 (top left), 1949, 1968, 1976, 1990, and 2000 (bottom right). Cropped from United States Department of Agriculture aerial photographs.



Figure 2. The Voit farm (upper left) in the context of the suburbanization that took place after World War II. Cropped from US Department of Agriculture aerial photographs, 1949 and 1968.

THE ACHILLES HEEL OF A GIANT: THE FAILINGS OF AMERICAN ARMORED WARFARE DOCTRINE IN WORLD WAR II

BY THOMAS THORSEN

On the night of February 20, 1943, men of the American armored forces retreated from the German forces through the Kasserine Pass. American soldiers simply left their equipment on the field and ran. They ran from a battle in which they held a 3:2 manpower advantage. They ran from a position in which the terrain offered them a vast advantage. One army historian described the pass the U.S. forces defended as offering “such an advantage to defense that a sufficient could exact an exorbitant price” How could it have come to be that the men of the United States armored forces could be dealt such a horrifying defeat with the odds clearly stacked in their favor? The doctrine. This battle showcased the first instances of U.S. armored forces taking on German armor on a large scale, and the battle shed light on the glaring weakness and ineffectiveness of the American armored doctrine. The morning before the retreat, German General Erwin Rommel led the German-Italian Panzer Army against the U.S. forces and broke their lines within minutes. German heavy armor simply out-gunned and out-performed the inexperienced American tanks. Axis forces advanced with such incredible swiftness that when Americans called for artillery support, a response was not given until the front line had been moved much further back. This rendered the advantage of the American artillery moot. The eventual retreat on February 20, 1943, left the pass wide open and ripe for the German army to advance unopposed. Once through the pass, the Germans stalled due to more experienced British infantry holding the line with exceptional support from American and British artillery. Eventually, due to consistent heavy bombardment by Allied artillery, Rommel was forced to withdraw from the pass. However, the aftermath of this battle led to vast changes among American armored forces, resulting in a new military doctrine enforced by a revamped officer corps.

American armored doctrine was in its infancy at the end of World War I and was refined during the inter-war period. However, put into actual combat scenarios in World War II, the old doctrine failed miserably. This “trial by fire” started a revolution at the tactical level as low-ranking commanders improvised the original doctrine and eventually replaced it. To fully understand the roots of the original armored doctrine, one must look at the limited use of armor during World War I. Mildred Hansen Gillie discusses the expansion of armored forces during the final months of the war in her book *Forging the Thunderbolt: A History of the U.S. Army's Armored Force*; the goal was to “overrun machine gun nests and help infantry forward for decisive attacks.”*

* Gillie, Mildred Hansen, *Forging the Thunderbolt, a History of the U.S. Army's Armored Force* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books 2006), 9-10

According to Gillie, failure of the armored forces during World War II can be explained by the lack of funding – resulting in a need to develop tactics theoretically – and the issue of a horse-dominated cavalry fighting for its very existence.* Appeasement of old-guard cavalrymen led to the hybridization of armored mechanized units.

In their book *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, Murray and Millet show the German influence on American armored doctrine, most importantly the emphasis on appropriate logistical capabilities to sustain long incursions past enemy lines.† Robert Citino has also displayed the German influence on Americans; a large portion of the armored strategy depended on tank destroyers to fight against German armor but in combat they proved ineffective and over-matched.‡ The Americans also took cues from the British, who during World War I combined two foreign innovations into an original armored vehicle: the German gasoline engine and the American Caterpillar treads together formed the tank.§ At the Battle of the Somme in 1916, 49 tanks, divided into four groups and assigned to different army corps within the British and French armies, were to arrive five minutes before the infantry in order to demolish strong points of resistance. However, of these 49 tanks, 17 broke down or got stuck, nine broke down at the line, another nine could not get their engines started when the infantry were leaving, and five more became bogged down during the attack. Only nine tanks of the original 49 finished their mission, but this still did not constitute a total failure. The new machines greatly demoralized German troops, who, according to Gillie, were “startled” at their use.¶

The development of an American armored force was plagued by bureaucratic in-fighting as Congress debated the necessity of these tanks due to a lack of materials; only 26 were produced but did not even see combat during the war. American soldiers used British and French tanks, and did so under the command and doctrine of those respected war departments.** In 1917, The War Department approved a U.S. Army Tank Corps of twenty-five battalions. The armored corps surged to over 18,000 enlisted men and over 1,200 officers by the time the Armistice was signed. By 1919, many of these men had been disbanded, and in 1920, the National Defense Act dissolved the Tank Corps and put its future in a constant state of limbo.††

Not only did a lack of funds hamper this growth, but a debate about tank structure also slowed its progress considerably.‡‡ The old military guard of the cavalry branch, in contrast to the needs of infantry officers, favored the speed offered by a light tank and sought to maintain independence within the military.

* Ibid, *An Army At Dawn*, 43-47

† Murray, Williamson and Millett, Allen R, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998) 40-44

‡ Citino, Robert, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare* (Lawrence : University Press of Kansas 2004)

§ Gillie, *Forging the Thunderbolt*, 3-4

¶ Ibid, 9-10

** Jarymowycz, *Tank Tactics*, 23-24

†† Congress included the disestablishment of the Armored Corps in response to the testimony of General Pershing. General Pershing put forth the argument that tanks should remain a supporting arm of the infantry and Congress listened.

‡‡ Gillie, *Forging the Thunderbolt*, 29-31

This rivalry and tension between the infantry tank officers and mechanized cavalrymen led to not only an incomplete armored force, but more importantly to an ineffective doctrine that would fail when placed in a combat scenario. In 1920, the American armored doctrine still functioned as a primary support role for infantry. A captain in the U.S. Army summed the doctrine up best when he said, “The tank should be recognized as an infantry supporting and accompanying weapon, incapable of independent, decisive, strategic and generally tactical action”. This thought bolstered the assumption held by those in the infantry that tanks could neither consolidate nor hold ground for any length of time. Former cavalrymen contended this theory, threatened by the possible replacement of traditional cavalry by mechanized units controlled by the infantry. The 1936 budget forced the U.S. Army to make a choice: more light tanks for the cavalry or new medium tanks for the infantry. The new policy dictated that infantry divisions would acquire tanks for the main battle while mechanized cavalry divisions would continue reconnaissance and security. However, there was still a widespread belief that the anti-tank gun and not the tank was the proper way of dealing with enemy armor. Because of all these factors, the United States found itself in 1939 with no tank force and no effective main battle tank.*

In the years leading up to World War II, the U.S. was aware of the effectiveness of German tanks, but experienced shortcomings after following the teachings and examples of the British and French. The British were the first to tinker with developing a true form of armored doctrine; this is peculiar, considering their historical concentration on sea power dominance instead of land-based armed forces. In fact, British experiments with armored warfare between the years of 1926 and 1934 contributed a considerable amount to the creation of the German Panzer forces under Hitler.† The ground work laid by the British would be instrumental in showcasing many of the difficulties that a mechanized armored force would face. Although some of these problems would not be solved by the British themselves, bringing them to light allowed others to study them more in depth. As early as 1926, the British had discovered how to gain a twenty-five mile march beyond enemy lines using a light mechanized scouting group. The growing problem for the British lay in the logistical and communication support nightmare that such a large undertaking would develop. Not until 1931 did the mainstream use of radios help make the communications problem manageable. Unfortunately for the British, maneuvers in 1934 were confined to a tightly structured framework and the exercise was far from flawless. Much of the British command felt that the tank had not lived up to the hype created by armor advocates, and British armor was put on the shelf until after the German successes of 1940.‡

France did not look to other countries in the creation of both their military goals for the future and for the armored doctrine designed to fit these goals. Their view of warfare had had been greatly distorted

* Jarymowycz, *Tank Tactics*, 24-31

† Murray, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, 24-25

‡ Ibid, 25-28

following World War I. France began the war with an offensive mindset but the disaster of Neville's offensive in the spring of 1917 left a sour taste in the mouth of many French commanders. A defensive ideology carried into the interwar period and molded the armored doctrine. This doctrine was in a proverbial straightjacket from the beginning as the French did not grasp the tank's true potential. They viewed armored vehicles as weapons that only supported a "methodical battle."^{*} It's true the French were disciples of massed firepower, but they were still wary of their armored force advancing without the support of infantry. French historian Marc Bloch summed up the French army as follows: "Our leaders, or those who acted for them, were incapable of thinking in terms of a new war... We did our thinking in terms of yesterday or the day before."[†] Despite the shortcomings of French armored doctrine in terms of offensive capabilities, American infantry tank officers promoted French doctrine because it suited their needs perfectly: the French used tanks as a close support vehicle for infantry to gain an advantage.[‡] By studying the French doctrine that resulted from the carnage of World War I, the American doctrine did not reach the full potential it could have.

The Germans were in a unique position compared to other nations of the time. The 1918 Treaty of Versailles had limited the German Army to 100,000 men and denied the possession of tanks, aircraft and other weaponry.[§] This should have hampered the Germans substantially but it did little to curtail their development of an astounding armored warfare doctrine suited to their strengths and beliefs. During the end of World War I, the Germans developed the precursors of modern warfare; they realized the importance of breaking into and through enemy defenses and then exploiting those openings. However, during World War I this proved to be difficult to accomplish. Simply put, once their infantry outran their artillery support, the enemy quickly cut them down. During the interwar period, the Germans examined these cases in detail and developed a combined arms doctrine to solve this problem.[¶] The armored warfare doctrine was not only a piece of the puzzle, but the latchkey that took the failed offenses of World War I and turned them into victories in World War II. The Germans emphasized five concepts in stark difference to the British and French: 1) Belief in maneuver, 2) An offensive mindset, 3) Decentralization of operations to the lowest level possible, 4) Reliance on officer judgment on the battlefield, and 5) Leader initiative at all levels.^{**}

* In 1937 a German officer commenting on infantry-tank cooperation during a French exercise noted that a tank force pushing forward in one of the tightly controlled "bounds" had found itself in an action that involved "seven minutes of attack and seventy minutes of waiting for the arrival of the infantry" Quoted in Robert A Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919-1939* (North Haven: Archon Books 1986) 156

† Bloch, Marc, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 1968) 36-37, 45

‡ Jarymowycz, *Tank Tactics*, 24-25

§ Murray, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, 16

¶ The combined arms doctrine talked about here relied heavily upon armored units being used in conjunction with air power, and more explicitly the control of airspace above the intended target area. However, seeing as this essay is dealing primarily with armored doctrine that will be the only portion of the overall doctrine of all nations that will be discussed in detail. Only relevant portions of other doctrines will be brought up

** Murray, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, 37-38

These five emphases, coupled with the small size of the German army, trained officers to an extremely high level (the Americans had less success when they attempted to incorporate some of these tactics). The thesis of German armored doctrine developed around armored vehicles working in harmony with other units and none being more dependent any other. The new German *Bewegungskrieg* or "war of movement" refined an old school of thought in which new technologies made the central goal of a maneuverable force possible.

In the months leading up to American entry into the war, the country's armored forces were little more than a paper tiger, and one with substantial holes in it at that.^{*} It was not until June 1940 that an independent armored force came to existence within the American army. However, the rivalry between infantry and cavalry continued to affect the development of the force, and two distinct styles emerged: fast, lightly armored mechanized cavalry composed mainly of light tanks based on cavalry doctrine, and medium tanks with motorized anti-tank weapons that relied on infantry support.[†] Decision-makers combined these two schools of thought into one armored force and thus set the stage for failure.

Commanders, however, thought the new doctrine to be complete; the use of medium tanks with greater numbers and higher top speed – to break through enemy formations and push deeply into their ranks – sat at the core of this doctrine. Americans borrowed this practice from the Germans and it suited the needs of former cavalrymen in the U.S. army. Along with this main objective, the armored forces also directly supported the infantry, a practice borrowed from the British and French, which suited the needs of the infantry. To accomplish all of this, the Americans used M-3 Lee and M-3 Grant tanks. Later in the war effort, M-4 Sherman tanks supplanted both of the M-3s.[‡] It was perfect for neither job, pursuit or support, but capable to do both. Tank-to-tank warfare fell to specialized tank destroyer units, as the design of the medium tank was not suited to this kind of action. Tank destroyers hunted and destroyed enemy tanks while operating independently of the main groups. These tanks sacrificed armor to increase both the speed of the vehicle and the size of its gun. Support of these armored groups fell to the maintenance divisions that followed them, and they had a strict doctrine of their own: No damaged tanks could be used for parts, but instead repairs must be made through new parts sent directly from American factories and storehouses. Reconnaissance elements of the armored force were under limitations to remain relatively close to the main groups. Officers stationed at headquarters had direct command of the leaders of these screens and gave them only a small degree of independence. American commanders considered the main ideas of this new doctrine strong and adequate for the task ahead. The tanks designed by the Americans, and the doctrine developed by their commanders, were about to begin their trial by fire. It would

* The term "paper tiger" is a translation of a Chinese phrase meaning something seems as fierce as a tiger and yet is harmless. It is debated as to when it entered into English but it seems its earliest was 1836, in a work by John Francis Davis in his book, *The Chinese: A General Description of the Empire of China and Its Inhabitants*

† Gille, *Forging The Thunderbolt*, 100-101

‡ Gille, *Forging the Thunderbolt*, 194-196

be gruesome.

North Africa and the Mediterranean provided the very first instances of combat maneuvers undertaken by the American armored force during World War II; it is not surprising that there were a few snags. Shortcomings became apparent as the Americans landed in North Africa. They did not have adequate reconnaissance armored cars and they made poor use of the ones they had, leading to the problem of American tanks being tricked into advancing against heavy German counter-tank measures.* The Germans made exceptional use of common feints; German infantry, along with a few tanks, would move forward, attack, and then retreat. As American troops followed in pursuit, the trap would be sprung and a combination of heavier German tanks and anti-tank weaponry opened up on the lightly-armored Americans. † Another problem the Americans ran into concerned tank-to-tank combat; the armored doctrine only discussed using anti-tank weaponry in the destruction of enemy armor. In fact, it was not until the Allies entered Western Europe that the armored doctrine changed to allow tank versus tank combat.

The Battle of Kasserine Pass in Tunisia in February 1943 proved to be a nightmare that exposed the failings of American armored doctrine. The Americans had deployed tank destroyers and medium tanks in preparation for the defense of the pass, but German armor over-powered the American tank destroyers. The guns of German tanks ripped apart the lightly armored American tanks. Although the penetration power of the American tank destroyers could theoretically break through Panzer armor, it was not as successful as expected. The task of slowing the German armored advance fell to the American medium tanks, which could not have been further from their proposed purpose. The Americans had sacrificed armor and weapon size in favor of speed and maneuverability when developing the medium tanks, and facing the German tanks one-on-one was a suicide mission. Tactical level officers began to devise a solution to this problem; if the Americans found themselves in a battle against German armor, and strength in numbers was evident, Sherman tanks (and Lees and Grants) could use numbers to defeat Panzers.‡

Not even the upgraded Sherman tanks using armor piercing rounds could penetrate the thick armor on the front of German tanks, but if one American tank could distract the enemy tank, another could shoot at it from its relatively unprotected side and destroy it. The tactical-level doctrine did not immediately incorporate this tactic, but the commanders noted it on the ground in North Africa. In general, the Battle of Kasserine Pass showed the unpreparedness of the American armored troops. The disarray caused by the German advance was a direct reflection of the American training in the pre-war era. It is hard to blame the soldiers that fought

* Atkinson, *An Army At Dawn*, 76-80

† Atkinson, Rick, *An Army At Dawn*, 309-311

‡ Ibid, 341-343

here however, as the doctrine and materials they received were not up to the task of defending against the Germans.

During the invasion of Sicily in the summer of 1943, tank destroyers proved again to be no match for the Panzer tanks of Germany. The heavier tanks cut through the light armor that covered the destroyers like butter. Patton wrote in his memoirs that tank destroyers were only really effective in Sicily when used in a defensive position against German advances.* Command problems also arose in Sicily; the American doctrine had incorporated Germany's reliance on radio transmissions to communicate and auxiliary units to fuel both engines and weapons.† The entire network of logistics, and almost all facets of American armored maneuvers, also relied on the radio. During the Sicily landings, breakdowns and faulty equipment cost the Allies precious time. Sherman tanks had some of the most difficult times. Broken radios hampered communication, a vital lifeline in any common army, and caused general disarray in unloading. Pontoon bridges, pathways up sandy beaches, and the general grade of the dunes wreaked havoc on the invasion process.‡ During the Allied push north into mountainous Italy, where none of the advantages of the medium tank came into play, officers at the tactical level had to continually adapt and change the doctrine in order to survive. The problems encountered and solutions learned in Sicily and Italy would prove to be a vital experience for the Allies during their Normandy campaign later in the war.

In the western European theater, American armored doctrine began to stray away indefinitely from the incomplete, rushed, and overall ineffective plan composed in the pre-World War II days. Tactical-level commanders developed a completely new doctrine. The first major change to be inducted took place before armored vehicles even touched the mainland. The landings at Normandy took the lessons learned in North Africa and Sicily and introduced specialized “swimming” DD amphibious tanks to assault the beachhead in the front lines.§ Practice maneuvers determined that roughly 7,000 feet was the ideal and safest distance for the launching of DD tanks. However, the morning of D-Day dawned with very rough seas and changes had to be made on the fly. Although these tanks had secondary motors and specialized design to allow them to float, they were still tanks. Rough seas wreaked havoc on these makeshift tank-boats. Landing craft commanders could tell that following the strict landing doctrine for these armored vehicles would result in needless losses, so the decision to alter the plan was made at the tactical level. The landing craft would go much closer than recommended, sometimes even directly onto the beach to ensure that as many tanks as possible made it to shore where they could assist in the

* Patton, George S, *War As I Knew It*, (Boston: Mariner Books 1995)

† Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm*, 21-26

‡ Atkinson, Rick, *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944, Volume Two of The Liberation Trilogy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company 2007)

§ DD stood for duplex drive tanks, which was a tank that had an outboard motor and propeller and could get to shore independently. They were popularly known as “Donald Duck” tanks.

landing. Tanks unloaded according to the original plan never made it to the beach; the rough seas proved to be too much and the tanks capsized or sank outright.* This instance provided clear evidence that a doctrine created at the tactical level to fit the situation properly – and then developed upward to fit the overall course of military goals – is the more efficient way to develop a doctrine. This example also sheds light on the importance of independent thinking among low-level American officers. The original doctrine was much more rigid in this sense, encouraging only a small amount of independent thought from these officers. As the war continued, and due to the gains in North African and the Mediterranean, officers began to exhibit more instances of independent thought. This was not a planned emulation of the German emphasis on free-thinking officers, but the parallel is an interesting note.

The importance of building a doctrine from the tactical level up was continually proven by later events in Western Europe. The solution to the problem of “hedgerows” provides one of the most famous examples of a sweeping change of tactics due to soldiers on the ground. When the Allies landed in Normandy and began advancing through France, German hedgerows became a major source of delay. The Germans had set up a defensive grid throughout these walls of plant growth and turned them into defensible fortresses. The Americans first used bulldozers to clear an opening through the hedgerow, through which tanks could pass one at a time.† The Americans thus lost any element of surprise, and the Germans could concentrate their anti-tank measures, leading to high American casualties. The solution came from a young soldier who had experience clearing hedgerows back on the farm. He invented a device of fabricated steel with ten- to twelve-inch-long pointed spikes welded perpendicular to the base of the tank. The spikes prevented the tank from rearing up and at the same time cut some of the roots supporting the hedgerows. Commanders recognized the appeal of this device immediately. Now a succession of tanks could break through simultaneously and be ready to fight at once.‡ This completely revolutionized how the armored force of the United States waged war in the hedgerow country of western France. The doctrine for armored warfare changed drastically due to this device and showed how changes at the lower levels influenced the entire armored branch of the U.S. military. Specialized versions of tanks engineered to deal with different obstacles became more prevalent after this incident.

Another change in the armored doctrine due to gains at the tactical level came out of the failure of Sherman tanks to combat German Panzer and Tiger tanks. Priority still called to engage them in a mobile battle where the Sherman made up ground due to its speed and ability to fire accurately while moving, but when they were employed in infantry support, changes had to be made. An incident on June 25, 1944,

* Hills, Stuart, *By Tank Into Normandy* (London: Cassel & Co. 2000) 73-76

† This task could also be done by a tank with a bulldozer blade attached to its front to offer more protection for the soldier who was driving the vehicle.

‡ Cooper, Beltran Y, *Death Traps* (Novato : Presidio Press 2000)

displayed how ineffective a Sherman could be if it did not attack heavier tanks in a group: “They loosed about ten rounds into the smoke...although the range had been only sixty yards, not one Sherman shell had penetrated that armor.”* This quote showcased a single Sherman facing off against a Tiger. Although the Sherman destroyed the Tiger tank, it did so with a lucky shot that showered sparks and started an internal fire. It had become standard procedure for Sherman tanks to fight against the German armor while outnumbering them, getting shots into the relatively unprotected sides. This gave the under-equipped Americans a chance to survive against the larger German tanks.

The advancing American armored divisions had other options available as well, with a combined air-armored force effort as the primary back-up. The Allied advance had a great deal of aircraft supporting it, and in some instances, armored divisions on the ground could radio in for targeted air attacks to help them deal with opposing German armor. The armored force used this option much more frequently in Europe than in previous theaters, due to its apparent effectiveness in protecting small units and also due to the massive amounts of Allied air power in the region. If Sherman tanks ran into fortified German armor, standard procedure called for smoke rounds to be fired between them and the enemy, and then to radio in air strikes from small fighter-bombers.† This allowed for the engagement of German armor while keeping American armor relatively safe.‡ One of the last main doctrinal changes to stray from the original planned doctrine was how tank destroyers would be used. The old doctrine called for tank destroyers to hunt enemy tanks independently of other groups. Under the new doctrine, these destroyers now worked in conjunction with Sherman tanks, in both cavalry and infantry settings. The frequency of run-ins with German armor necessitated the assistance of tank destroyers to travel with the Sherman tanks, which no longer cut through or behind enemy lines.

Auxiliary armored units – specifically maintenance and reconnaissance groups – underwent tactical changes independently of the main branch. The maintenance and engineering groups solved many of the problems that plagued American armor throughout the war, although issues regarding speed and stability could have been solved pre-war. In the early 1930’s, a young tank designer named J. Walter Christy developed a suspension system that provided a much easier ride than the helicoil system used on the M-4 Sherman.§

* Hills, *By Tank Into Normandy*, 108

† Sherman tanks carried a variety of ammunition types while in the field. They were a mixture of high-explosive, armor-piercing and smoke rounds. In total, about one hundred shells were carried at a time and they were stored on the turret floor, under it and in racks in the turret shelf. Twenty five boxes of belted ammunition for the Browning machine guns were also stored within the tank.

‡ Hills, *By Tank Into Normandy*, 120-122

§ Christy’s idea involved a torsion bar suspension system for the bogey wheels that supported the tracks. This provided an easier ride and also helped in the quickness of the tread removal.

The design also allowed for quick removal of the tank treads, which enabled a wheeled vehicle to increased top speed on roads, as well as expansion of the treads, which allowed easier navigation over muddy terrain. American ordinance engineers, however, chose not to rock the boat, and did not implement Christy's system. The Russians and Germans both adopted versions of Christy's work, and the Germans' ability to navigate treacherous terrain would come back to haunt the Americans in several battles. It was not until the end of the war that the Christy system was implemented on both the M-24 and M-26 tanks, and all other new tanks to follow.*

One of the most controversial stipulations of the pre-war doctrine called for all repairs be made with spare parts. This meant that broken down or shot up tanks could not be cannibalized in order to fix others. According to Belton Cooper, a junior officer attached to the 3rd Armored, it was obvious to everyone in the field that it would be a complete disaster if this portion of the doctrine were followed. Maintenance men disregarded the pre-war doctrine in this sense, and their commanding officers accepted that repairing the most vehicles in the least possible time took top priority.† This change was in direct response to the inability of sufficient resources reaching the maintenance groups. The armored forces sustained higher losses than expected, and the flow of parts coming to the front was always less than required. The change at the tactical level not only made more sense, but also allowed more troops to continue fighting.

Reform of reconnaissance units, on the other hand, focused on the amount of freedom given to the individual leaders of reconnaissance screens in the field. As noted before, commanders used reconnaissance screens both improperly and poorly after the landings in North Africa, but during the push through Western Europe, commanders used screens much more effectively. A screen consisted of five tanks with five men to a tank. While in the field, the leader of the screen had two responsibilities: 1) to be in contact with the platoon leader and 2) to be responsible for making decisions on his own.‡ The amount of faith put into soldiers at the tactical level, and the increased responsibility given to them, is a perfect corollary to what was happening with the armored doctrine overall.

The American armored doctrine was incomplete when the United States entered World War II. It did not seem this way at the time, but looking back it is clear that it was. American commanders in the pre-war era were too busy trying to appease the different areas of the military that would be affected by a newly created armor branch.

Because of this, the doctrine that developed turned out to be a hodge-podge that was successful in only very limited regards. Once this doctrine was exposed to real combat in North Africa, Italy, and, finally, Western Europe, the holes were quickly spotted. Luckily for the United States, these holes were patched by men at the tactical level of the military, and a working doctrine was established by the end of the war because of them.

* Cooper, *Death Traps*, 20-22

† Ibid, 32-34

‡ Persinger, Robert, email correspondences to the author, fall semester at UW-Madison 2010.

GET BACK: RECOVERING THE LOST HISTORY OF THE EARLY REVOLUTIONARY BEATLES

BY LINDSAY SHAW

Before the Beatles performed in the United States for the first time, a British reporter asked John Lennon, “so far all British pop stars have not made a tremendous impact on the States, how do you think you’ll fair?”* Lennon nodded his head, thought for a moment, and responded. “Well, I can’t really say can I... I just hope we go all right.”† The way in which the States welcomed the Beatles was more than all right; it was unprecedented. Before the band touched down in New York, radio stations had flooded the public with their music, creating an enormous buzz around their first performance in the States. The mass hysteria surrounding the band, nicknamed “Beatlemania,” was evident as thousands of American fans waited to greet the Beatles at JFK airport.

From the band’s initial stages through their career together, the Beatles attained extreme commercial success and popularity as rock ‘n’ roll musicians. However, their position as entertainers transitioned into a position of cultural authority. In Liverpool, the Beatles used music as the voice of an oppressed youth culture and to declare the new morals and interests of a generation. As their popularity spread across Britain and eventually to the United States, the music of the Beatles was also used for the expression of American youth rebellion. The Beatles were icons through which personal fantasies were gratified, whether it was political beliefs, physical appearance, sexual expression or drug experimentation. As universal icons for a generation, the Beatles inevitably became the face of social and cultural change throughout the 1960s. Even though they started as unknown rebellious hipsters in post-war Liverpool, they were able to make a lasting impact on the world as leaders of a cultural movement. The Beatles became the embodiment for the youth rebellion during the 1960s, however, looking retrospectively at their time together, most individuals would classify the radical Beatle years as those late in their career. Compared to the overt drug use, sexuality, and political radicalism in the music of the Beatles in the late 60s, their earlier years of mop-tops and matching outfits may seem extremely tame. However, the early years of the Beatles are, in fact, radical and rebellious. Despite being overshadowed by their persona and music late in their career, the Beatles were rebels and going against what was socially acceptable in the early 1960s. The band’s history growing up in Liverpool and maturing as artists in Hamburg shows how they were rebels and socially radical for their time period.

* The Ed Sullivan Show, “Beatlemania- 4 Complete Ed Sullivan Shows Starring the Beatles.” Youtube video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=speHYfjPimk&feature=related> (accessed 3 Dec. 2010).

† Ibid.

In this essay, I will recover the early history of the Beatles and explain how the band was redefining youth rebellion early in their career, and how they evolved into cultural icons of a youth rebellion through the 60s.

LIVERPOOL, SCOUSERS, AND TEDDY BOYS

“There are places I remember
All my life, though some have changed
Some forever not for better
Some have gone and some remain”

Lennon/McCartney (“In My Life” Rubber Soul, 1965)

“No one in London cared about a place so far to the northwest, so gray and sooty and old-fashioned and, above all, so utterly without glamour as Liverpool.”* Home to the “Scousers,”† the city was made up of a rough and tough population with a devil-may-care attitude and biting humor.

This harbor city was home to the English proletariat, and even though it was not highly regarded by other Brits, Liverpool was at the forefront of the popular music scene. Through the ports, Liverpool would import music from different areas of the world, often America, which was producing genres such as soul, R&B, and blues. This influx of music created a distinct art culture in the area, which offered relief from the tough life of the working class. Despite its reputation as “unglamorous,” Liverpool was a cultural authority for the music trends and was at the vanguard for the next popular fad.

One of the musical trends that would make its way to Liverpool was rock ‘n’ roll. Rock ‘n’ roll artists, such as Elvis, embodied a soul-pop sound, with the infusion of sexualized performance, which nearly irresistible to the Liverpoolian‡ youth culture. Aided by the unearthing of rock ‘n’ roll music, the generation born after 1941 started to create a counterculture to the traditional English morals and values. This generation of teenagers started to personify counterculture, typically in their dress. They dressed differently than their parents had, usually in garish velvet jackets and stovepipe pants with an inappropriate haircut. “Amid the drab uniformity of postwar Britain, they seemed utterly freakish. Their socks were luminous pink or orange. Their shoes had soles three inches thick. Their other, scarcely less-threatening predilection, was for coffee

* P. Norman, *Shout! The Beatles in Their Generation*. (New York, New York: Simon And Schuster, 198), 19.

† Nickname for individuals born in Liverpool. Refers to their working-class roots, as well as their traditional biting humor that is attributed to this area of England.

‡ Other nickname for individuals from Liverpool.

bars and rock and roll.”* The men that dressed in this fashion were nicknamed “Teddy Boys,” a name that became synonymous with the rebellious youth during this time period. The Teddy Boys latched onto rock ‘n’ roll music and other youth rebels in Britain, subsequently creating the first counterculture in the 1950s in England. From their Liverpoolian roots, members of the Beatles would grow up in this generation of the Teddy Boys, and it would help them give a voice to this counterculture through music that would not only be heard in Britain, but across the Atlantic.

John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison embodied the rebellious Teddy Boy culture and were desperate to express themselves through music. Their roots in Liverpool and their connection to the British counterculture would be extremely important in their evolution into the Beatles later in their career. They experienced their first taste of the power of music through the creation of their first band, The Quarry Men, however, it was proving to be more difficult to break into the mainstream music business.

After an initial burst of success and wave of gigs for the Quarry Men, by 1958 the group wasn’t booking any shows. Lennon had moved onto the Liverpool College of Art, however he spent more time in jam sessions than class sessions. At college, he made an extremely important connection that would turn out to be the fourth member of their band. Stuart Sutcliffe, despite only being a member for less than a year, made significant contributions to the formation of the Beatles and subsequently introduced the three other members to the aspects of the culture they would come to epitomize in the ensuing decades.

GOTTA BE ROCK N’ ROLL: THE FORMATION OF THE BEATLES

“Just let me hear some more that rock and roll music
Any old way you choose it
It’s got a backbeat, you can blues it,
Any old time you use it
‘Gotta be rock roll music”

Lennon (“Rock N’ Roll Music” Beatles For Sale, 1964)

Stuart Sutcliffe didn’t have the skills to make it as a successful musician in the band, but he did give them the first step toward their fame: the band name. Sutcliffe suggested the ‘Beatals,’ a mix between a joke about Buddy Holly’s band, The Crickets, and a play on words. Later, the band name was changed to the Beatles,

* Norman, *Shout!*, 32.

and in 1960, the band debuted their new name in a series of shows in Hamburg, Germany.

Germany gave the Beatles an outlet for their music, but the location and Sutcliffe’s influence continued to shape the band’s image. The group embraced the local style, which included a brushed forward hairstyle and an exaggerated version of their Teddy Boy fashion. The three and a half months the group spent in Hamburg gave them their unique style, increased confidence during performance, and their ambition to pursue music as a profession. “Musically, the Beatles were far better than they had been when they left Liverpool, and the combination of beer, amphetamines and the encouragement of boisterous German audiences had led them to develop a kinetic, electrifying stage show.”* Lennon explained “it was Hamburg that had done it. That’s where we’d really developed. To get the Germans going and keep it up for twelve hours at a time, we’d really had to hammer. We would have never developed as much if we’d stayed at home.”† He had also said “what [they] generated [in Hamburg] was fantastic.”‡ Even though the band was successful in Germany, the group was unable to stay there. After an incident at a club where McCartney lit a condom on fire, the group was convicted of arson and deported. Despite being deported, the group returned to Liverpool and took over the clubs.

The Beatles had laid the groundwork in Liverpool and were soon gaining popularity in the rest of England. By 1963, the Beatles were dominant force on the charts in their home country. In one interview, the band explained that, “The British newspapers were saying, well, what’s left to do, you’ve conquered everything, and we’d say ‘America.’”§ And in 1964 the Beatles proved that they could conquer America with their wildly successful stint on the *Ed Sullivan Show*.

During their infamous performance on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, Lennon, McCartney, Harrison and Starr sang their rock ‘n’ roll, pop infused melodies, and it seemed as if the audience was hooked. Their multi-genre American interests were fused with their English Teddy Boy style and their previously acquired German attitude. Their appearance, along with their music wasn’t going unnoticed by the youth in America. “The Beatles were something of their own, and the puddling-basin haircuts in particular, though pixieish by today’s standards, seemed scandalous in 1964 and made for comparatively harmless intergenerational friction.”¶ Their disregard for the older generation was appealing to the youth that was grasping for an icon of their rebellion.

* Kozinn, *The Beatles* 22.

† M. Hertzgaard, *A Day In The Life. The Music and Artistry of the Beatles*. (New York, New York: Delacorte Press, 1995), 40.

‡ Anthology 1, Disk 1 Speech: John

§ Kozinn, *The Beatles*, 77.

¶ Kozinn, *The Beatles*, 81.

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE: COUNTERCULTURE IN THE STATES

“Nobody can deny that there’s something there...
To be there and everywhere
Here, there and everywhere”

Lennon/McCartney (“Here, There and Everywhere” Revolver, 1966)

With money back in the American economy after World War II, many people struggling in the pre-war years found themselves in the prosperous middle class when the soldiers returned home. Money garnered from government stimuli, such as the GI Bill, and other savings allowed many of these families to move out of the city and into the suburbs in a quest to achieve the “good life.” With money to burn, consumer goods widely available, and leisure time, the middle class began purchasing and procreating.

The generation of youth born out of the prosperity after WWII was determined not to conform to traditional cultural standards as their parents had. They began to listen to different types of music, such as rock ‘n’ roll, and to dress in a more extravagant and non-uniform style than the prior generation. Rock ‘n’ roll appealed to this generation not only because it bothered their parents, but because the style allowed them to express repressed feelings and connect with others in their generation.

Through music, the baby boomers attempted to challenge the ideas of the older generation regarding social norms. This rebellion became a counterculture, which author, Steven Stark, explains as a “fluid set of assumption and beliefs”^{*} regarding many aspects of society, including politics, sex, and drug use. This was the foundation to the idea of counterculture in the States, to which the music of the Beatles represented.

When the Beatles arrived in America, their music was a breath of fresh air for the rock ‘n’ roll community, and the youth counterculture was drawn to their persona. “There is no denying the Beatles’ extramusical appeal to teenagers of the time, who saw in their musical, sartorial and tonsorial style a clear break from the expectations of their parents and teachers.[†] It seemed that the counterculture was craving a group like the Beatles to be the icon of their dreams for cultural change. Unhappy with the world they were living in, the youth in America clung to the group to help them change the status quo.

* S. D. Stark, *Meet the Beatles: A Cultural History of the Band That Shook Youth, Gender, and the World*. (New York: Harper Entertainment, 2005), 195.

† Kozinn, *The Beatles*, 81.

COME TOGETHER: THE LOVE AFFAIR BETWEEN AMERICA AND THE BEATLES

“One thing I can tell you
Is you’ve got to be free
Come together, right now
Over me”

Lennon/McCartney (“Come Together” Abbey Road, 1969)

Sociologists have tried to explain the extreme popularity of the Beatles when they arrived in the United States in 1964. One theory is based in the psychological-need hypothesis, in which the American public was craving something that the Beatles fulfilled. The prosperous years after the war were followed by social tensions surrounding war, racial inequality, corrupt politics and sexual expression. The United States saw a glimmer of hope when the young John F. Kennedy was elected President, hoping he would help to revitalize the status of the country. However, these hopes were shattered when JFK was assassinated in 1963. Scholars believe that after the immense sadness and despair that followed his death that the public was searching for a source of “lightweight, happy obsession,” which it found in the Beatles the following year.*

The Beatles could satisfy the individual need for an uplifting sound, but they also had many things in common with the youth in America that allowed them to be widely accepted. Lennon, McCartney, and Harrison were rebels in Liverpool and wanted to have their voice heard by the rest of the country that represented prim and proper England. They were revolutionary and used their music and outward appearance to express their individual feelings about the status quo. Similarly, the counterculture in the States was using music and other media, along with their style to rebel against the conformist culture of their parents. At first, the music that the Beatles performed seemed like it wouldn’t last, however, the band’s ever changing style and personal opinions allowed them to become more than a fad.

The Beatles were no longer a teenage fad: they had become a national obsession. Their sudden fame... somehow fed on its own freakishness, growing vaster still, passing more and still more limits of known celebrity. Four Liverpool boys with busby hair and high-buttoned jackets, singing brisk, cheerful songs that went ‘Yeah yeah.’ were somehow coincidental in the huge emotion that blanketed Britain, and even more remarkably, blanketed America.[†]

* Kozinn, *The Beatles*, 81.

† Norman, *Shout!*, 235-6

Bob Dylan, a counterculture musical comrade and influencer, had similar feelings about the band. He explained, “everybody else thought they were for the teenyboppers, and they were gonna pass right away. But it was obvious to me that they had staying power. I knew they were pointing music in the direction it had to go.”*

The Beatles took music in a different direction as Dylan had explained; instead of crooning tunes, the Beatles shook up the way the public listened to music, and not just through the technical aspects of their craft. People began to interpret their lyrics and the thoughts behind them, making the music more than just a song, but an expression of the Beatles’ feelings about the world around them.

With the exception of Lennon’s 1968 song “Revolution,” the Beatles were never as outspokenly topical as, say, Dylan in his early years. Nevertheless, their music was by no means without political implications and effect. Precisely because the messages of their songs were stated less explicitly, the Beatles were able to reach people who would not have responded to more overt forms of address.

They did not sing about racism, war, and injustice directly, but there was no doubt how they felt.†

The Beatles were using their music to discuss what they thought was wrong in the world, and one of their fans, Lynne Harris, explains that the mass hysteria surrounding the Beatles was because “it was a kick against anything old-fashioned. They represented what we could do with our lives.”‡ The Beatles were at the forefront of cultural change, and prompted others to follow their lead. “Their music was always the basis of the Beatles’ mass appeal, what made them larger than life figures... went beyond lyric and melody.”§ Allen Ginsberg had said of the group that “they had, and conveyed, a realization that the world and human consciousness had to change,”¶ and they set out to do just that by giving their audience the idea that the Beatles had done it, so you could as well. Their idea for creating change was perfectly summed up in Lennon’s lyrics, “there’s nothing you can do that can’t be done.”

Even though the younger generation appreciated the music of the Beatles, the older generation soon caught on that their music wasn’t just innocent pop. Parade magazine wrote in 1965 that, “parents who believe the Beatles are a quartet of fine, wholesome, uplifting musicians who hold womanhood in highlight and respect, might do well to peruse Lennon’s second work for an insight into at least one literate Beatles’ morality and mentality.”**

* Hertsgaard, *A Day In The Life*, 59.

† Hertsgaard, *A Day In The Life*, 199.

‡ Stark, *Meet the Beatles*, 9.

§ Hertsgaard, *A Day In The Life*, 191.

¶ Ibid., 199.

** *Parade*, Sunday supplement, June 27, 1965

Of course, the magazine meant that they would find that Lennon’s morality was corrupt and depraved, an attribute that was directly affecting the youth through the music of the Beatles. Another magazine wrote that the music of the Beatles was “giving the rebelling teen-ager his first victory in the initial revolutionary struggle for independence and detachment from an increasingly restricting bourgeoisie.”* Rock ‘n’ roll and the Beatles were the catalyst for the increase of cultural involvement in the younger generation despite the attempts from the older generation to stop them.

The older generation went to great lengths to stop the younger generation from getting involved in the counterculture scene, and especially deter them from anything related to rock ‘n’ roll. From the rational to the insane, they attempted to stop their sons and daughters from following the doctrine of the Beatles.

The hidden dangers of rock ‘n’ roll should be apparent to all who take a second look. There are emotional, psychological, spiritual, moral and last but not least, national dangers. The idea of rock ‘n’ roll serving as a conditioner of violence and revolution cannot be hastily set aside. One has only to observe what rock has done to cause our young people to riot and participate in social rebellion, chaos and bedlam, to understand how significantly music fits into any revolutionary era.†

In other attempts, some parents explained that listening to rock n’ roll music could lead to kids to “faint, gyrate and go into ecstatic convulsions.”‡ Another said that listening to this type of music was “downright dangerous for cases of hypertension (since it can raise blood pressure to a danger point)” and that the lights at concerts could “freak out the iris and optic nerve centers.”§ Parents were alarmed at how popular rock ‘n’ roll had become and were afraid of the consequences.

The younger generation ignored the warnings of their parents because they understood how this music fit into their revolutionary era. Rock ‘n’ roll was an example of the possibilities of cultural change, and the Beatles’ music acted as the doctrine for the counterculture generation. The group’s feelings about appearance, drugs, sex and politics were drastically different than the older generations, and their music promoted their stance on these issues.

REVOLUTION: EXPRESSION OF COUNTERCULTURE THROUGH THE BEATLES

* *Cavalier*, February, 1969, p. 37

† D.A. Noebel, *The Beatles: A Study in Drugs, Sex and Revolution*. (Tulsa: Christian Crusade Publications, 1969), 55-56.

‡ Noebel, *The Beatles*, 57.

§ Ibid., 6.

“You say you want a revolution,
Well, you know
We all want to change the world.”

Lennon/McCartney (“Revolution”, White Album 1968)

One of the first aspects of the Beatles that the public noticed was their personal style, or rather, their group style. As previously discussed, the group performed for the first time in the States in matching outfits, and even though their style had been watered down by their manager, it was still considered to be radical and irreverent. In addition to their clothing, the Beatles’ hair was very different than what was popular in the 1950s. Much like other elements of their personal style, their “moptop” hairstyle had been adopted while they were living in Germany. Sutcliffe’s girlfriend at the time, Astrid Kercherr, is credited with telling the Beatles to wear their hair like that because it was popular for German men at the time. Their style didn’t cause problems in Britain, it was only when they arrived in the States that it garnered attention. Comedians would often poke fun at their matching moptops, stores started selling Beatles wigs, and boys started to grow out their hair to match the group. Often press conferences would focus solely on their hairstyle, with many asking when they were getting a haircut or when they were planning to take their wigs off. The moptop style didn’t last long, and the band let their hair grow longer with each passing year. As their hair continued to grow, so did their obvious cultural involvement in controversial affairs.

One of these controversial topics was sex, which seemed to go hand in hand with the rock n’ roll music of the Beatles. “Many have insisted that rock ‘n’ roll is a necessary ingredient of the sex revolution,”* but others argue that basic ingredients of rock ‘n’ roll music are directly connected to sexual promiscuity. Bob Larson and a physician explain that:

The low frequency vibrations of the bass guitar, coupled with the driving beat of the drum, have a decided effect upon the cerebrospinal fluid. The fluid in turn affects the pituitary gland, which directs the secretion of hormones, resulting in an abnormal balance of primarily the sex and adrenalin hormones. Instead of their normal regulatory function in the body, these hormones secreted under such conditions produce radical changes in the blood sugar and calcium of the body. Since the brain is nourished exclusively by blood sugar, it ceases to function properly, causing moral inhibitions to either drop to a dangerous low or be wiped out altogether. †

The idea that rock ‘n’ roll and sex were inherently coupled was a fear of the American society, but the Beatles also did not refrain from alluding to sex in their lyrics. The conservative magazine, *Commonweal*,

* Noebel, *The Beatles*, 27.

† B. Larson, *Rock and Roll* (McCook, Nebraska: Bob Larson, 1968), 48-58.

explained that many of their songs, such as “I’m Only Sleeping,” and “Baby You Can Drive My Car” both have “overtly sexual overtones.”* Although these songs were outrageous to religious groups, the more obvious sexual lyrics would be presented in later songs, such as “Why Don’t We Do It In The Road” and “Norwegian Wood.”

The group presented sex in a very casual manner, and often explained that their fame allowed them to have sex with many different women. The older generation felt that this was extremely inappropriate; they had conformed to the idea that sex outside of marriage and homosexuality were considered to be immoral. The Beatles were promoters of a sexual revolution, in which young people were free to have sex with partners outside of marriage or with an individual of the same sex. The Beatles’ manager, Brian Epstein, was a homosexual, a lifestyle that the group wholeheartedly accepted. In one instance, a friend of the group was excommunicated because he had quipped to Epstein, “which one of the four do you fancy?” Although Lennon often joked with Epstein in private, the group fiercely protected his right to his freedom of sexual preference.

Very close to the problem of sexual freedom in the youth was their experimentation with drugs. Along with rock ‘n’ roll lowering the youth’s inhibitions about sexual encounters, it also contributed in the acceptance of drug use in the youth culture. One music industry spokesman attempted to explain the connection between rock ‘n’ roll and drug use. He claimed that “drug-taking is nothing new in the music business, but it has always been a secretive thing. No one went around boasting about it, but now it is really getting out of hand.”† The Beatles were not strangers to drugs by the time they came to America. In Germany, they used amphetamines to be able to play incredibly long hours. “We learned from the Germans that you could stay awake by eating slimming pills, so we did that.’ Although the pills were supposed to be pretty harmless, they moved on to other like Black Bombers and Purple Hearts.”‡ Bob Dylan introduced the group to marijuana, which they were quite fond of. Starr admitted that the best part of their tours were “the hotel in the evening, smoking pot.”§ and they later experimented with harder drugs, such as LSD. Although the music industry had covered up drug use in prior years, the Beatles put their habits in the forefront of their lyrics. Songs like “A Little Help From My Friends,” “Glass Onion,” “Strawberry Fields Forever,” and “Penny Lane” had obvious allusions to drug use in their lyrics.

Like their hairstyles that had evolved with each passing year, the Beatles’ drug use evolved with each album. When the Beatles released *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts’ Club Band* *Time* Magazine reported that it was “drenched in drugs.”¶

* Noebel, *The Beatles*, 27.

† *Central California Register*, July 6, 1967, p. 7.

‡ Noebel, *The Beatles*, 18.

§ *Ibid.*, 19.

¶ *Time*, September 22, 1967, p. 62.

The Beatle's lyrics were full of allusions such as, "Turn off your mind, relax and float down stream,"* and only a naïve listener would miss these hints to drug use. The Beatles used drug lingo so often that the University of Wisconsin student newspaper, *The Daily Cardinal*, reported that the Beatles "proselytized the use of drugs...that words and conceptions once only common to drug users are found in sentences of teenyboppers and statesmen alike."† Not only did the group sing about drug use, they openly promoted it as a "universal cure-all."‡ McCartney recollects: "when I took it, it opened my eyes. We only use 1/10 of our brain. Just think of what we could accomplish if we could only tap that hidden part! It would mean a whole new world. If politicians would take LSD, there wouldn't be any more war or poverty or famine."§

Not only was rock 'n' roll glorifying sexual promiscuity and drug use, but now the Beatles were getting involved in socio-political issues, and "all the time claiming to do so under the guise or disguise of art!"¶ Despite being British, the Beatles were involved and highly vocal in U.S. policies, namely, the Vietnam War. In recent years, McCartney has claimed to be the political Beatle, despite popular belief that Lennon influenced the Beatles to become involved in politics. He explained that first learned about the Vietnam War during a conversation with philosopher Bertrand Russell in the mid 1960s.** "He told me about the Vietnam war - most of us didn't know about it, it wasn't yet in the papers - and also that it was a very bad war. I remember going back to the studio either that evening or the next day and telling the guys, particularly John, about this meeting and saying what a bad war it was."†† Lennon became fascinated with the war after McCartney's meeting, and was put in the international spotlight as the politically active Beatle. As the designated political Beatle, Lennon often spoke out against the war and supported peaceful student protests.

'Revolution' was raw Lennon, back in form as a rock screamer and supported by aggressive, distorted guitars and a rollicking piano. Cosmic imagery and evocations of universal love are sidelines for the moment. Here Lennon expresses his uneasiness with the exhortations to revolution by militant student movement, both in the USA and in Europe. Lennon felt he had common cause with these groups. He agreed with their opposition to the Vietnam War, and he was all for the empowerment of what he considered to be his audience. But in singing that 'we all want to change the world,' he added a caveat. 'But when you talk about destruction, don't you know that you can count me out.'‡‡

* "Tomorrow Never Knows." *Revolver*: Lennon/McCartney. EMI Records, 1966.

† *The Daily Cardinal*, December 3, 1968, p. 5.

‡ Noebel, *The Beatles*, 18.

§ Noebel, *The Beatles*, 18.

¶ *Ibid.*, 26.

** Daily Mail. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1094578/I-turned-The-Beatles-politics-claims-Sir-Paul.html> (Accessed 17 December 2010).

†† Daily Mail. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1094578/I-turned-The-Beatles-politics-claims-Sir-Paul.html> (Accessed 17 December 2010).

‡‡ Kozinn, *The Beatles*, 177.

The FBI in the States heavily monitored Lennon's interest in the Vietnam War. The height of Lennon's activism came when Nixon was running for re-election. Lennon and Yoko Ono were singing "Give Peace A Chance" at anti-war rallies and warning the public that their vote for Nixon would mean the continuation of the Vietnam War. The U.S. government didn't appreciate a non-citizen influencing the public, and Lennon was ordered to be deported.* However, "the fact remains that when the Beatles talk –about drugs, the war in Vietnam, religion – millions listen."† The government didn't want Lennon to be involved in politics, but many in the youth counterculture looked to him, and the Beatles, for their stance on political issues.

These examples of the Beatles feelings about casual sex, drug use and political opposition were cultivated throughout the career of the band. As previously discussed, their radical nature began as teens growing up in Liverpool, and later became more pronounced in the time they spent in Hamburg. The Beatles' persona and the ideals they represented were refined over time, eventually becoming more radical with each record they released. Despite people seeing the Beatles as radical in their later years, the early years of the band also embodied these principles. Unfortunately, the public remembers the revolutionary Beatles as the later Beatles. Their drug use is put in the forefront in albums like the multi-genre *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band* and the psychedelic *Magical Mystery Tour*. Later albums, such as *Abbey Road* and the *White Album*, showcase their sexuality and political involvement, with songs such as "I Want You (I Want You So Bad)", and "Revolution". This viewpoint promotes the idea that the early Beatles and the later Beatles is a juxtaposition of innocent pop and radical rock 'n' roll. However, through the tradition of the Teddy Boys in Liverpool, the radical scene in Hamburg, the Beatles were already revolutionary when they stepped foot in the U.S. for the first time in 1964. Their personalities, dress, music and message were all very controversial for this period, however, all of these elements evolved over time to what we know today as the avant-garde movement of the Beatles. Through their early history up until their eventual breakup, the Beatles were the icons for this movement and a cultural group, which would have not been possible without first mastering their own group synergy.

ALL TOGETHER NOW: COLLECTIVISM AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE BEATLES

"And when the broken hearted people
Living in the world agree
There will be an answer, let it be."

Lennon/McCartney (Let It Be, Let It Be 1970)

* Weiner. *The Nation*. <http://www.thenation.com/blog/155298/bob-dylans-defense-john-lennon> (Accessed 17 December 2010).

† *Time*, September 22, 1967, 105.

Perhaps the Beatles' greatest contribution to the youth counterculture was the idea of collectivism and group synergy. The Beatles exemplified collectivism and group mentality with their distinct personalities coming together to form the perfect group. "It is absolutely true that the sum of the four of them was much, much greater than the sum of the individual parts...indeed, the Beatles themselves sometimes said they felt like four aspects of the same person."^{*} Their feelings that the group was better than the individual cast a light on their involvement in youth counterculture during the 1960s. They were the leaders of this cultural revolution, however, they were on the same level as others that were involved. They wanted change, and with the unifying ideas of sex, drugs and rock n' roll, the counterculture with the Beatles created a united front to create the transformation they wanted. One fan explains that she was "submerging all [her] problems in the Beatles...their songs are the things I think about-the world, love, drugs, the way things are."[†] The band allowed individuals to put their feelings into words, to get involved, and to be part of a socio-cultural revolution, all through their music. "They had become, like cartoon characters, an elemental silhouette in which all desires and fantasies could be lived and gratified. To most people, the faces under the fringes were barely distinguishable,"[‡] the most important aspect about the Beatles was their ability to bring people together for a common cause.

The Beatles had defined a generation of outsiders and aided in the socio-cultural revolution in a country they didn't even call home. They led the transformation of self-expression, sexual freedom, drug experimentation and political activism, all of which are attributed to the culture of the 1960s. Lennon explained, "there is nothing particularly original about thinking that things *should* be different. The truly radical step is believing that it can actually happen."[§] The Beatles believed in change, and as Harrison perfectly explained, "the great thing about the Beatles is they were of their time. Their timing was right. They didn't choose it, but their timing was right and they left their mark in history because of that...they expressed the mood of the people in their own generation."[¶]

The Beatles might have been at the right place at the right time, as Harrison explained, but their journey towards becoming these cultural icons began started before their fame. Many remember the Beatles from their later work, but forget just how radical the Beatles were when they stepped off the plane at JFK in 1964. They were Teddy Boys, Scousers, and rebels from Liverpool. They engaged in drug-use, promiscuous sex and scandalous dress before they were singing about it on their hit records. The extreme nature of their popularity wasn't just because they were musically talented, it was because they represented something bigger

* Hertsgaard, *A Day In The Life*, 135.

† *Time*, September 22, 1967, 105.

‡ Norman, *Shout!*, 236.

§ Hertsgaard, *A Day In The Life*, 200.

¶ Ibid.

than themselves. As Harrison explained, "the mood of the people in their own generation," a culture of Teddy Boys and Girls that merely wanted to change the world. As McCartney would sing in later years, this youth generation and the Beatles were, simply put, "all together now, all together now."^{*}

ACTIVE CONSIDERATION:

TRUMAN'S VIEW OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THE EARLY COLD WAR

BY SEAN MADDEN

With the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945, Harry S. Truman was propelled into the presidency. When it was Truman's time to leave office in 1953, he sought a more seamless transition to his successor Dwight D. Eisenhower. This was especially important considering the new responsibility associated with nuclear weapons and the U.S. involvement in Korea. In August of 1952, Truman reached out to Eisenhower when he was still a presidential candidate to brief him on foreign policy. However, Eisenhower rebuffed his offer and believed that as a candidate of "Americans who want to bring about a change in the National Government, it is my duty to remain free to analyze publicly the policies and acts of the present administration." Truman then responded, "I'm extremely sorry that you have allowed a bunch of screwballs to come between us." In his own assessment, Truman believed that Eisenhower "may have failed to grasp the true picture of what the administration had been doing because in the heat of partisan politics he had gotten a badly distorted version of the true facts."[†]

Once Eisenhower became the President-elect, Truman had the opportunity to brief him on matters such as nuclear weapons. Still, Eisenhower's election was seen as a rejection of the Truman Administration's approach to foreign policy. However, Truman and Eisenhower may have shared similarities in their view of nuclear weapons.

In Truman's almost eight years as commander-in-chief, some points in time are most salient in terms of how Truman considered using nuclear weapons to protect national interests. This first period was characterized by an American nuclear monopoly, in which the United States could share its knowledge of the bomb or

* "All Together Now." *Yellow Submarine*. Lennon/McCartney. Apple Records, 1967.

† Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 512-513, 521.

maintain its nuclear advantage. In this instance, Truman opted not to share nuclear information because he felt he could not trust the Soviets. When the Soviets actively blockaded Berlin in 1948, Truman took steps toward nuclear deterrence to combat what he viewed as an overwhelming Soviet conventional ground force. By 1949, the discussion about whether to share nuclear information became moot when the Soviets developed their own atomic capability. The United States was gravely unprepared to respond to Soviet nuclear capability and was astonished to see its nuclear monopoly evaporate within five years. To respond to the fact that U.S. weaponry had been matched, Truman sought to proliferate the American arsenal by developing the hydrogen bomb.

Meanwhile, despite the totality of World War II, the United States found itself in another conflict in Korea by 1950. Truman kept this a limited war with the primary goal of deploying troops to push back North Korean advances. Soon, however, the United States found itself in danger of provoking larger scale war with the Soviet Union and China. Because of the danger of these powers and their proximity to the North Korean forces, the United States strongly considered using nuclear weapons in combat. U.S. forces eventually became entangled in Korea without being able to produce a decisive, favorable result. It was at this time of stalemate that the Truman Administration again considered nuclear weapons as the only way to defeat the enemy. While he had America's best interests in mind, Truman guided the United States closer to a situation in which using nuclear weapons would be necessary.

Certainly, the United States never resorted to using nuclear weapons tactically to combat the threat of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, debate continues about whether the United States seriously contemplated using nuclear weapons in the early Cold War period from 1945-1953. Truman sought to protect the United States against the worst-case scenario of total nuclear warfare, yet he may have missed opportunities for reconciliation with the Soviet Union. Ultimately, decisions made by President Truman increased the possibility that the United States would use nuclear weapons against its enemies.

Despite Truman's consideration of using nuclear weapons, many historians have portrayed him as much more reluctant than Eisenhower to use them diplomatically or tactically. David Alan Rosenberg argues that Eisenhower entered the presidency with more knowledge of nuclear weapons than any other president prior or since. He makes a clear-cut distinction between Truman, who viewed nuclear weapons as a last resort, and Eisenhower, who saw them as integral and as a first resort.* This distinction is especially apparent with regard to discussions about the Korean War. John Lewis Gaddis writes that the strategy of the Truman administration was to avoid using nuclear weapons in Korea unless absolutely necessary. On the other hand, the Eisenhower administration was willing to openly disclose that they were considering using nuclear weapons.

* David Alan Rosenberg. "The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-1960." *International Security* 7, no. 4 (Spring 1983): 27-28.

Gaddis explains that this threat was decisive in bringing about the armistice in Korea in July 1953, something Truman was unable to accomplish.* Russell Weigley contrasts Truman's desire to keep the conflict in Korea a strictly limited war with Gen. Douglas MacArthur's desire to expand the war into China. MacArthur was a powerful figure who went from being a key general in the Pacific theater of World War II to the Commander-in-Chief of U.N. forces in the Korean campaign. Weigley argues that MacArthur's plans could be characterized as a strategy of annihilation, as they sought the use of nuclear weapons to achieve a decisive victory. Truman, meanwhile, viewed the use of nuclear bombs as too risky and was willing to settle for a stalemate.† Upon further examination, it seems that Truman was not that different from Eisenhower in that he was willing to employ nuclear deterrence and was willing to consider using these weapons.

For about four years, the United States was the sole possessor of nuclear weapon technology, which made for a challenging dilemma for Truman. The United States could share atomic information with the world and move toward preventing the use of nuclear weapons or it could try to control the technology and knowledge of how to make the bomb. A major influence on Truman's decision-making was the expertise of atomic scientists and other atomic policy makers. However, they guided their atomic policy on the false assumption that the United States could retain their atomic monopoly for as long as a generation.‡ Ultimately, Truman decided to have the United States maintain its monopoly rather than have an international control of atomic energy. This monopoly on war weaponry was certainly unprecedented in the country's history, so there was not a consensus on how to handle this newfound power. Still, Truman's decision prevented the United States from making advances toward cooperation with the Soviet Union.

While Truman held the ultimate authority to make the decision regarding atomic energy, there was still debate within his administration about which course was right. One opinion came from outgoing Secretary of War Henry Stimson, a holdover from the Franklin Roosevelt Administration who helped oversee the development of the bomb. Stimson argued for a direct approach with the Soviets to establish international accord on atomic weapons. He also believed the United States should stop producing these weapons and relinquish its weapons in its reserve.§ Stimson strongly believed that the Soviet Union would only trust the United States when the United States made an effort to trust the Soviets. This would be the way to emphasize peace over nuclear war. Stimson had strong foresight because if the United States was intent on keeping atomic

* John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War. Revised and Expanded ed.* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2005), 166-167.

† Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy.* Indiana University Press paperback ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 390-391.

‡ Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945-1950* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 7.

§ Ronald E. Powaski, *March to Armageddon: The United States and the Nuclear Arms Race, 1939 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1987), 29.

energy to itself, this would push the Soviets to develop weapons of their own to counter the nuclear power of a perceived enemy. In discussions with other members of the administration, Stimson also agreed that the United States would not be able to keep the technology behind the bomb secret for very long.*

Stimson presented his proposal to the rest of Truman's cabinet on September 21, 1945, his last day as acting Secretary of War. Those who believed that the United States would have a long nuclear monopoly strongly opposed his position.† Curiously, in his memoirs, Truman wrote that “Stimson did not propose that we ‘turn the bomb over’ to Russia. As far as I was concerned, this was not a matter of discussion.” He added that in this meeting “we were not discussing the question of giving the secret of the bomb itself to the Russians or to anyone else, but the best methods of controlling bomb warfare and the exchange only of scientific information.”‡ Truman seems to undercut the support within his cabinet for a *quid pro quo* arrangement with the Soviets through which the United States would supply atomic information in hopes of trust and cooperation in the future.§ This illustrates Truman's favor for a less direct discussion with the Soviets about nuclear weapons.

While members of the Truman Administration debated in Washington D.C. regarding what to do with the bomb, Secretary of State James Byrnes sought to use the bomb strategically to pressure the Soviet Union to make diplomatic concessions. This ended up being a poor strategy that yielded little to no results. Even before the United States deployed the bomb at the end of World War II, Byrnes first used atomic diplomacy with the Soviets at the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945 in an attempt to prevent them from occupying Manchuria. This had no effect, yet Byrnes was not discouraged and employed a similar strategy after the war at a conference in London in September 1945.¶ Although Byrnes sought to avoid explicit mention of the bomb, he wanted it to have an underlying presence so that it could influence the Soviets into making concessions. Instead, Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov brought up the subject of the bomb and made a mockery of the U.S. atomic advantage to show that the Soviets were not going to be intimidated by it.** As a result, the United States was not able to reach agreements with the Soviets and the conference ended largely as a failure. Part of this failure could be attributed to a lack of clear direction from Truman, who did not seem to put much importance on the diplomatic meetings. In addition, Byrnes's dealings with the Soviet Union were criticized within the United States and eventually by Truman himself.

* Barton J. Bernstein, “The Quest for Security: American Foreign Policy and International Control of Atomic Energy, 1942-1946.” *The Journal of American History* 60, no. 4 (Mar. 1974): 1017-1018.

† Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, 30-31.

‡ Harry S. Truman *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume One: Year of Decisions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 525-526.

§ Barton Bernstein argues that there is evidence from Stimson and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal that contradicts Truman's interpretation of the meeting, where in fact there was significant consideration of sharing the bomb within members of Truman's cabinet. Bernstein, “The Quest for Security,” 1018.

¶ Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, 43-45.

** Ibid., 48.

within the United States and eventually by Truman himself.*

After these initial discussions with the Soviet Union, the American stance on the sharing of atomic information seemed ambiguous. Truman publicly declared his position on October 3, 1945, when he attempted to lay forth his policy on atomic weapons. He admitted that “the hope of civilization lies in international arrangements looking, if possible, to the renunciation of the use and development of the atomic bomb.” However, Truman was clear in saying that “discussion will not be concerned with disclosures relating to the manufacturing processes leading to the production of the atomic bomb itself.”† With these statements, Truman played to both sides of the atomic monopoly debate by appearing to consider international control of atomic energy but, in reality, preferring to keep the knowledge of the bomb solely in American hands.

Despite the failures in London and Truman's subsequent statements, Byrnes was not altogether discouraged and set up another meeting in Moscow in December 1945. Here, Byrnes decided to be more open in discussing the bomb and using it to try to move toward atomic energy cooperation—a move that was contrary to the desires of Truman.‡ The result was that the Soviet Union agreed to participate in a United Nations commission on atomic energy, which would gradually proceed toward international control of atomic energy. However, the U.N. Security Council would have oversight over the commission, meaning the Soviets were allowed to protect their interests with veto power.§ Despite the appearance of Soviet-American cooperation, it was clear that Truman was upset with the result of the conference, saying that “Byrnes... had taken it upon himself to move the foreign policy of the United States in a direction to which I could not, and would not, agree.”¶ It was this meeting at which it seemed that the United States could make real progress in direct negotiation with the Soviets. However, Truman dismissed the promise made at the conference, and with Byrnes's resignation a few months later, the policy of direct atomic diplomacy with the Soviets ended.** This signaled a shift in the U.S. policy toward an atomic monopoly and using the bomb as a means of threat instead of a means of cooperation.

A major outcome of this shift resulted in Truman's decision to appoint Bernard Baruch to the U.N. Atomic Energy Commission. This was seen as a poor choice, because Baruch possessed no real expertise

* Herken suggests that Byrnes had political enemies in the Truman Administration like Admiral William Leahy who were critical of his diplomacy even before the London Conference. Also, Herken mentions that Truman and Byrnes disagreed about issues in eastern Europe and Japan relative to the Soviet Union. Ibid., 53-54, 56.

† Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on Atomic Energy” October 3, 1945. John T. Woolley, and Gerhard Peters. “Public Papers of the Presidents.” *The American Presidency Project*. University of California, Santa Barbara. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws>. (Hereafter referred to as “Public Papers of the Presidents”).

‡ Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, 70.

§ Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, 34-36.

¶ Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 550.

** Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, 92.

in atomic energy and Truman's appointment of him was simply to show that the United States had no intention of giving away any atomic information.* Baruch's inexperience and overconfidence with the bomb was embodied in his attitude: "I knew all I wanted to know... It went boom and it killed millions of people and I thought it was an ethical and political problem."[†] At the U.N. meeting of June 1946, Baruch took liberties in interpreting the plan outlined by an American atomic commission led by future Secretary of State Dean Acheson. This contributed to another diplomatic failure—the Soviets rejected Baruch's proposal because the proposal forced the Soviet Union to put too much trust in the United States. On the other hand, the Soviet counter-proposal called for the United States to destroy its weapons before international controls were fully established, meaning there were no guarantees that other powers would abstain from developing weapons.[‡] During the U.N. meetings, Truman also undermined American efforts to gain Soviet trust by approving nuclear bomb testing in July.[§] After the fact, Truman remarked that "the possibility that Russia would not co-operate in an international control scheme had been anticipated by us. We were prepared, in any event, to safeguard our own national interest."[¶]

Although the United States maintained sole possession of the bomb for three years, Truman did not clarify what situations would warrant the use of atomic weapons until he signed NSC-30 in September 1948. In this document, Truman approved the idea that the United States should be sufficiently prepared to use atomic weapons and that the decision to use these weapons would only be made by the President. Still, there was no specification for when and how to use atomic weapons.** Therefore, the United States had no clear atomic weapon strategy when the Soviets decided to blockade West Berlin.

This policy of a U.S. atomic monopoly was truly tested when the Soviet Union blockaded West Berlin from June to July 1948 in an effort to gain full control of the city, which lay within the Soviet-controlled eastern part of Germany. Because of the blockade, Truman established the practice of nuclear deterrence, essentially informing the Soviets that the United States would use nuclear weapons if necessary. Upon hearing about the blockade, one of the first actions the United States took was to have the National Security Council order sixty B-29s sent to England as "atomic bombers." Curiously, it appears that these planes had not actually been equipped to carry atomic weapons. Still, the United States made it clear that these weapons would be used as a threat against the Soviets.^{††}

* Powaski, *The March to Armageddon*, 42.

[†] Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War*. Revised and updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 238.

[‡] Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, 42-45; Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, 238-240.

[§] Bernstein, "The Quest for Security", 1038.

[¶] Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 11.

** Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill", 13-14.

^{††} Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, 378-379.

This showed for the first time that the United States was willing to use the atomic bomb to directly pressure its enemies in a conflict. Instead of responding to the outbreak of war, Truman's embrace of nuclear deterrence meant the United States would have to prepare for the prevention of war. Since U.S. strategy was unclear about exactly what was required to prevent conflict, this fostered a proliferation of nuclear weapons.* Truman's actions during the Berlin Crisis also showed that he may approve the use of atomic weapons in certain circumstances. This ensured that atomic strategy would be employed in war plans, and many people in the Truman Administration planned with the assumption that atomic weapons would be used in war.[†] Truman's response was successful in keeping the Soviets out of West Berlin and set the tone for the role of nuclear weapons in future crises.

The Berlin Crisis confirmed American suspicions that the Soviet Union was interested in expanding its influence around the world.[‡] In response, in late 1948 the United States developed a policy under NSC-20 that sought to reduce the power and influence of the Soviets on the international scene and alter the Soviet view of the theory and practice of international relations. The United States now believed that "communist ideology and Soviet behavior clearly demonstrate that the ultimate objective of the leaders of the USSR is the domination of the world."[§] In addition, NSC-20 declared that the United States needed to prepare for a war with the Soviet Union, which was seen as a distinct possibility.[§]

NSC-30 helped the Truman Administration clarify the role of atomic weapons in a potential war with the Soviet Union. This policy document drafted by the National Security Council underscored the importance of nuclear deterrence by declaring that "the atomic bomb, under American trusteeship, offers the present major counter-balance to the ever-present threat of the Soviet military power." The document also emphasized that the Soviets "should in fact never be given the slightest reason to believe that the U.S. would even consider not to use atomic weapons against them if necessary."[¶] This sharply contrasts to discussions only a few years prior in which the United States debated the sharing of atomic information with the Soviet Union. Now, the U.S. perceived a need to escalate its nuclear production and accelerate its plans because the administration saw war with the Soviet Union as a real possibility. Still, there were details lacking within NSC-30, including when and how atomic weapons should actually be used. This may have contributed to competition among the armed

* Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, 51.

[†] Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford Nuclear Age Series) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 226.

[‡] Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, 50.

[§] Thomas H. Etzold, and John Lewis Gaddis. *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 173, 208.

[¶] *Ibid.*, 341.

services about which branch of the military would play the largest role in atomic warfare.*

As the National Security Council made plans for combating the Soviets, the Truman Administration's Joint Chiefs of Staff developed plans for a war with the Soviets that they estimated would occur by the end of the 1940s. One of these plans was originally titled Fleetwood and advocated an atomic airstrike against major Soviet cities to avoid a longer, more conventional ground war.† This plan required a larger supply of bombs, which meant the United States had increased confidence in their stockpile of nuclear weapons. Also, the United States seemed more willing to use nuclear weapons because they were under the impression that the Soviets did not yet possess nuclear capability. The air force component of the plan made this clear, as it proposed that nearly the entire U.S. atomic arsenal be used against the Soviet Union within the first month of a possible war or even in a massive single attack.‡ Surely, the United States would not even consider a nuclear attack of this scale if they thought the Soviets had the ability to retaliate. This assumption quickly became invalid once it seemed the Soviets could match the American nuclear capability.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also had detailed plans for utilizing nuclear weapons in war against the Soviet Union. These plans suggest that a significant amount of consideration was given to potential strategies. In general, Truman appeared to be against preventive war; however, he may not have opposed a preemptive strike against the Soviet Union.§ This left room for the Joint Chiefs of Staff to interpret the role atomic weapons would play in a future war. A document written in late 1947 highlights that “an aggressor, striking suddenly and unexpectedly with a number of atomic bombs might... achieve such an order of advantage as would insure the ultimate defeat of an initially stronger adversary.” Therefore, the United States saw it necessary to use fissionable material to stockpile nuclear weapons in case a war of this kind occurred in the near future.¶ This buildup of weapons was meant to protect U.S. security, but it could only increase the probability that the United States would employ nuclear weapons, as it would have more incentive to use weapons while possessing a larger arsenal.

U.S. strategy had to reconcile these perceived advantages with the brutal realities of atomic warfare, which was sometimes difficult. In its recommendations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff acknowledged that “a peace enforced through fear is a poor substitute for a peace maintained through international cooperation based

* Herken also argues that critiques of NSC-30 showed that the document did not reconcile strategic considerations with moral and political ones. Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, 269-270.

† Ibid., 266.

‡ Ibid., 271.

§ Rosenberg cites a conversation in which Truman dodges a question relating to whether he would rule out a preemptive strike on the Soviets under imminent threat of Soviet attack. Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill”, 25-26.

¶ JCS 1691/10, 29 February 1947, 110. Steven T. Ross, and David Alan Rosenberg. *The Atomic Bomb and War Planning* (America's Plans for War Against the Soviet Union, 1945-50). Vol. 9. New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1990.

upon agreement and understanding.” However, because of a lack of international accord, they advise that “it is necessary that, while adhering in the future to our historic policy of non-aggression, we revise past definitions of what constitutes aggression calling for military action.”** Because of the nature of nuclear weapons, the United States saw a need to reconsider its readiness to engage in war. This suggests that Truman and the United States might use nuclear weapons even if they only perceived a threat from the Soviet Union.

Despite the prevalence of nuclear weapons in war planning, Truman insisted that the United States was not considering the use of nuclear weapons. In a public address in October 1948, Truman asserted that “the world knows that the United States will never use the atomic bomb to wage aggressive war,” but clarified that “until the right kind of international control is assured, we have no choice but to proceed with the development of atomic weapons.”† These comments by Truman may seem disingenuous in light of his decisions once the Soviet Union developed weapons of their own.

However, Truman's comments on September 23, 1949 had even greater significance. His announcement to the country stated, “we have evidence that within recent weeks an atomic explosion occurred in the U.S.S.R.”‡ It was not just the fact that the Soviets possessed the bomb that was surprising—it was how soon the American atomic monopoly ended.§ This development by the Soviets required the United States to essentially reexamine its entire view of how nuclear weapons could be used. From a diplomatic standpoint, however, the United States was more concerned about the impression that the Soviet bomb had on other nations than about Soviet tactical use of nuclear weapons.¶ Militarily, the Joint Chiefs of Staff analyzed the implications of the Soviets possessing atomic weapons. They concluded that while both the Americans and the Soviets could inflict devastating damage on each other, “a tremendous military advantage would be gained by the power that struck first and succeeded in carrying through an effective surprise attack.”** This admission is surprising because it implies that U.S. attitudes toward actually using nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union did not change that dramatically. The only difference was that Soviet capability for nuclear retaliation would be taken into account.

In 1949, once it was clear that the Soviet had nuclear weapon capability, discussion began about developing more powerful hydrogen bombs or superbombs. Like most initiatives within the Truman

* Ibid., 113, 129.

† Harry S. Truman, “Address in Milwaukee, Wisconsin” October 14, 1948. “Public Papers of the Presidents.”

‡ Harry S. Truman, “Statement by the President on Announcing the First Atomic Explosion in the U.S.S.R.” September 23, 1949. “Public Papers of the Presidents.”

§ Powaski cites one estimate that considered January 1, 1953 the earliest date that the Soviets could launch a nuclear attack. Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, 53; Leffler mentions how Secretary of State Dean Acheson thought the Soviets would get the bomb in mid-1950 or 1951. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 326.

¶ Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 332.

** JCS 2081/1, 21 February 1950, 12. Steven T. Ross, and David Alan Rosenberg. *The Limits of Nuclear Strategy* (America's Plans for War Against the Soviet Union, 1945-50). Vol. 11. New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1990.

of the Soviet Union's nuclear capability and emphasized the potential advantages of first-strike capability and thermonuclear weapons. With regard to using nuclear weapons, NSC-68 is somewhat ambiguous except in saying that the United States should not declare that nuclear weapons would only be used in retaliation.* Therefore, NSC-68 proposed that the United States not rule out unprompted nuclear strikes.

There is evidence that Truman took this advice to heart, as he considered the use of nuclear weapons as an option throughout the Korean War. Much of Truman's consideration was expressed privately, but one of his few public explanations of his attitude toward using nuclear weapons was on November 30, 1950. In a press conference, Truman stated that U.S. forces in Korea would "take whatever steps are necessary to meet the military situation...that includes every weapon that we have." When pressed to reveal if this included active consideration of the use of the atomic bomb, Truman remarked, "there has always been active consideration of its use" and added later that there "always had been. It is one of our weapons."† Truman did not mean this as a ringing endorsement of the tactical use of nuclear weapons, but it certainly received attention and may have provided an insight into Truman's real opinions. Truman was concerned enough with the perception of his words to issue a press release later in the day that clarified "consideration of the use of any weapon is always implicit in the very possession of that weapon...only the President can authorize the use of the atom bomb, and no such authorization has been given."‡ Despite this, Truman noticed that news of his supposed approval of using atomic weapons persisted.§ British Prime Minister Clement Attlee also took Truman's statement quite literally and days later asked for assurance from Truman that the United States was not giving more consideration to using the bomb.¶

Beyond Truman, there were mixed responses on whether using atomic weapons in Korea was appropriate. Some military analysts saw this theater of war as inappropriate for nuclear weapons because of a lack of suitable targets.¶ On the other hand, NSC-100, proposed by the National Security Council in 1951, focused on having the United States utilize its atomic advantage. One of its suggestions was that the United States should warn the Soviets that "further Soviet aggression...would result in the atomic bombardment of Soviet Russia itself." This, the document assured, would allow the United States more flexibility in using nuclear weapons in situations other than simply retaliation.**

* Etzold and Gaddis, *Containment*, 415-421.

† Truman, "The President's News Conference" November 30, 1950.

‡ Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 325-326.

§ *Ibid.*, 410.

¶ Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, 332.

** Vincent Ferraro, "NSC 100, 'Recommended Policies and Actions in Light of the Grave World Situation' 11 January 1951." *Mount Holyoke College International Relations*. <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/korea/nsc100.htm>.

Administration, the decision to go forward with the hydrogen bomb was debated. Eventually, Truman approved the hydrogen bomb development to gain an advantage in destructive capability. In escalating the nuclear arms race, Truman seemed to upset a balance of nuclear deterrence between the Americans and Soviets that discouraged actually using nuclear weapons. Still, Truman viewed the development of more powerful bombs as necessary.

The discussion about a hydrogen bomb or superbomb began within scientific circles while the United States still had a nuclear monopoly, but at first its development did not seem necessary in a world where U.S. nuclear supremacy was unquestioned. By 1949, it reemerged as a salient issue that gained political support of those who thought that the hydrogen bomb could more effectively counteract the massive Soviet ground forces. In the fall of 1949, J. Robert Oppenheimer, who was scientific director of the Manhattan Project, led a General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission that opposed the development of the hydrogen bomb, mainly because its destructive force made it seem morally irresponsible. Also, the committee believed that the United States had a sufficient nuclear deterrent with its arsenal at the time.*

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also recognized the importance of the hydrogen bomb decision but ignored some concerns, including those expressed by Oppenheimer. A Joint Chiefs of Staff report in January of 1950 concluded the hydrogen bomb was important as a deterrent, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not "accept as a premise that either the super bomb or the atomic bomb is valuable only as a weapon of retaliation."† Therefore, the bomb would be considered for a first strike against the Soviet Union, despite the potential repercussions of nuclear retaliation. The report also detailed the bomb's diplomatic and psychological value, but the moral value argument is most interesting. The Joint Chiefs of Staff claimed not only that the military value of the bomb outweighed the moral objections, but also that "in war it is folly to argue whether one weapon is more immoral than another...it is war itself which is immoral, and the stigma of such immorality must rest upon the nation which initiates hostilities."‡ The Joint Chiefs of Staff seemed to believe that there was no distinction between using nuclear and non-nuclear bombs on an enemy, a view Truman did not share. Less than two months after his decision to use atomic bombs against Japan, Truman recognized that "the discovery of the means of releasing atomic energy began a new era in the history of civilization. The scientific and industrial knowledge on which this discovery rests does not relate merely to another weapon."§ In the context of the Korean War in 1950, Truman further explained that a nuclear weapon "should not be used on innocent men, women, and

* Powaski argues the Joint Chiefs of Staff ignored that the hydrogen bomb would make limited nuclear warfare strategy meaningless and had major uncertainties in terms of cost, destructive capability and moral grounding. Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, 54-57.

† Etzold and Gaddis, *Containment*, 370.

‡ *Ibid.*, 369-373.

§ Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Atomic Energy."

children who have nothing whatever to do with this military aggression. That happens when it is used.”^{*} Still, this apparent aversion to using these bombs did not convince Truman to completely forgo plans for building the more powerful hydrogen bomb.

Unable to come to a decision on the hydrogen bomb by early 1950, Truman decided to seek counsel with a special committee made up of members of his National Security Council. They recommended that the United States advance in the production of hydrogen bombs but gave no recommendation about any limit to using these weapons. By the time this committee presented its work to Truman, it seemed that Soviet nuclear capability was the foremost factor in helping Truman to decide that the hydrogen bomb should be developed.[†] The lack of real opposition to the hydrogen bomb underscores the fact that the decision was indeed secretive. It is possible that an open debate would have produced more consideration for not expanding the nuclear arsenal.

Truman cannot be faulted for ignoring the advice of members of his administration, but he was responsible for the ultimate decision. Truman’s general thinking on the hydrogen bomb was that “anything that would assure us the lead in the field of atomic energy development for defense had to be tried out.” However, it seems that, to some extent, the decision to make the hydrogen bomb rested on psychological grounds. The United States wanted to avoid the appearance of allowing the Soviets to catch up technologically, and developing the hydrogen bomb would give the Soviets the impression that the United States was intent on strengthening its capabilities for making war.[‡] His official public statement on the hydrogen bomb was brief, but in it Truman stressed that it was his responsibility to see that the United States “is able to defend itself against any possible aggressor” and added that the development of the bomb would be “consistent with the overall objectives of our program for peace and security.”[§] The idea that the development of the hydrogen bomb moved the country toward peace is highly debatable, because it only symbolized the perpetuation of a growing nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union.

By 1950, the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union manifested itself in a conflict on neither power’s own soil but instead on the Korean Peninsula. Truman’s commitment of U.S. forces to a proxy war in Korea seemed like a just cause, but it forced the United States to consider using nuclear weapons against both China and the Soviet Union. The main foundation of Truman Administration’s policy in Korea was found within a National Security Council report titled NSC-68. Among other analyses, NSC-68 examined the nuclear weapon capabilities of the United States and the Soviet Union. It predicted a relative increase

* Harry S. Truman, “The President’s News Conference” November 30, 1950. “Public Papers of the Presidents.”

† Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, 56.

‡ Michael Sherry believes that morale and impressions were the chief motivations for developing the hydrogen bomb and even doubts whether hydrogen bombs would do much more than atomic bombs were already capable of doing. Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States since the 1930s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 135.

§ Truman, “Statement by the President on the Hydrogen Bomb” January 31, 1950. “Public Papers of the Presidents.”

NSC-100 recognized the potential danger of a declining American nuclear advantage, but the Truman Administration ultimately rejected it.^{*}

The most prominent advocate of deploying nuclear weapons during the Korean War was Gen. Douglas MacArthur. After China became involved in the Korean War and forced U.S. forces to retreat, MacArthur believed it was necessary to widen the war into China and use nuclear weapons against it. Truman believed this was too risky, besides the fact that Korea seemed to lack sufficient targets for nuclear strikes, and the atomic bomb was in short supply at the time.[†] Eventually, Truman removed MacArthur from his command, but Truman may not have completely rejected the idea, so espoused by MacArthur, of using tactical nuclear weapons in Korea.

Compared to his public statements, Truman may have privately given different indications of his preference for using nuclear weapons to achieve desired ends in Korea. In April 1951, Truman signed off on an order that prepared the United States to retaliate against Chinese troops with atomic bombs. Later, in September and October, Air Force B-29 bombers practiced simulated atomic bomb drops on the North Korean capital of Pyongyang.[‡] This evidence gives credence to the idea that Truman was not completely averse to using nuclear weapons, as he is often portrayed. After two years of troop commitments had resulted in a stalemate on the ground in Korea, Truman also reflected in his private journal that the United States could give an ultimatum, which would threaten to eliminate major cities and manufacturing plants in China and the Soviet Union.[§] Undoubtedly, these were comments made in frustration, but they show the increasing pressure that Truman felt to produce decisive action, an end nuclear weapons would help achieve. Though within a larger policy of avoiding the use of nuclear weapons, these incidents still stand out in illustrating that the United States made some preparations with nuclear weapons and an appropriate situation could have led to their actual use in warfare.

In his farewell address as president, Truman remarked, “we have averted World War III up to now, and we may have already succeeded in establishing conditions which can keep that war from happening as far ahead as man can see.”[¶] Still, U.S.-Soviet relations from 1945 to 1953 could hardly be considered simply an unstable peace. Instead, this it was a period of conflict between the two powers. Despite Truman’s optimism in preventing war of large magnitude, the U.S. found itself in many dangerous situations of limited conflict for much of the Cold War—not to mention that Truman left his successor Dwight Eisenhower with a difficult,

* Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, 335.

† Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 390-391.

‡ Charles J. Hanley, and Randy Herschaft, “US often weighed North Korea ‘nuke option’,” Associated Press, October 9, 2010.

§ Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 182.

¶ Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, xi.

unresolved conflict in Korea. It was the establishment of tensions in this period that led to the continuation of a Cold War for another four decades. A major contributor to this tension was Truman himself, although the Soviet Union was definitely reluctant to make concessions of any sort. Still, Truman's nuclear policy strengthened the possibility that nuclear weapons would be used against the enemy.

After World War II, the first bomb-related dilemma was the discussion about international control of atomic energy. This seemingly idealistic proposition was not out of the realm of possibility and had sufficient backing by intelligent, experienced individuals within the Truman Administration. Truman's decision to keep exclusive hold of nuclear weapons prevented any possibility of early American-Soviet cooperation. The Berlin Crisis was a treacherous time for the United States, which was staring at the prospect of losing all control of Berlin. The move to nuclear deterrence here was critical and set the tone for future interaction with the Soviets. Thinking was forced to change when the Soviets could effectively bring nuclear war upon the United States. This led to a push for a bigger and better weapon in the form of the hydrogen bomb. All of these developments proceeded in relative peace, but this peace ended with the U.S. involvement in Korea. Despite the fact that the dropping of the atomic bomb in World War II appeared to reduce the prospects of war, the U.S. found itself embroiled in a conflict within five years. In addition, the use of nuclear weapons was not ruled out, even though it seemed improbable that they would be put to use.

Although Eisenhower tends to be associated with making threats with nuclear weapons, Truman's actions demonstrate that nuclear weapons were a key part of his strategy also. The difference, it seems, rests on how each wanted his strategy on nuclear weapons to be perceived. Truman was mostly unwilling to admit that he would use these powerful bombs. In contrast, Eisenhower was not afraid to make nuclear threats. Still, there does not seem to be a pronounced shift between the two administrations to the extent that the United States would actually resort to using nuclear weapons.

Immediately after World War II, the United States had a strong feeling that in the future its rival would be the Soviet Union. However, by the time of the Korean War, the United States was fighting North Korean forces and Chinese Communist forces all while trying to avoid provoking a larger scale war with China and the Soviet Union. It seems that the United States and the Soviet Union were inclined to be at odds in a dual superpower world, but it is easy to forget that both nations balked at points of negotiations. Today, it is often assumed that certain developments in the Cold War were plotted and charted along a natural progression of history. In reality, leaders of both the United States and the Soviet Union guided their nations through an unclear and ambiguous period that was the early Cold War.

KARL BARTH: THE "SILENT" VOICE OF REASON BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

BY RYAN PANZER

Introduction

When the "Iron Curtain" fell over Europe, Christians under Communism feared persecution similar to what the Confessing Church—Germany's Protestant, anti-Nazi wing—had faced during WWII. Prominent theologians from both Catholic and Protestant churches responded to these fears by speaking out against the ideology and hegemony of the Soviet Union. Given the overwhelming theological criticism of the Soviet Union, it was shocking that Europe's most prominent Protestant theologian, Karl Barth, refused to denounce communism. The intellectual leader of international Christian opposition to Hitler, Barth remained silent on the Cold War because of his theological opposition to participation in ideologically charged power struggles. Barth viewed both the Capitalist West and the Communist East as imperialist, idolatrous, and ideologically-enslaved rivals ensnared in a conflict that could in no way reflect the word of God.

Many historians and theologians have labeled Barth's neutral stance as "silence." However, this is a misleading characterization. In reality, Barth was a courageous activist whose neutrality was frequently justified and defended in his postwar essays, lectures, and books. At the core of his attitudes towards Communism was an interest in how the Christian church could survive and even thrive under Communism. Barth's neutrality did not come from a personal interest in Karl Marx, a disdain for American politics, or ignorance regarding the plight faced by Christians living in communist societies. Rather, it stemmed from his conviction that God transcends ideological divides. Subsequently, he believed that God empowers the church to fulfill its mission of witness to the Gospel in even the most repressive political regimes. Barth truly believed that the church had a unique opportunity for growth and spiritual rebirth in communist societies.

By remaining true to the objective truths of the Christian faith, Barth believed that the church could liberate Communist societies from the paralysis of ideology. With proper spiritual guidance, the reenergized church could influence the oppressive state to be more aware of the true needs of the people. His neutral position on the Cold War was grounded in hopes for the church's spiritual renewal as well as a more influential political role for Christianity. Rather than focusing on how the church could criticize Communism, Barth focused on how the church could serve God under a Communist regime in ways that would better the church and the state.

Barth's unique opinions were quite controversial. However, many of his critics simply lacked a true understanding of what his christocentric, Word-driven theology meant in regard to politics. Though it is easy to get caught up in the contradictions and inconsistencies in Barth's political views, his theology provides

strong justifications for neutrality in this specific instance.

One of the main criticisms of Barth has been that his distinction between totalitarianism (Nazism) and dictatorship (Communism) was inconsistent. Though Hitler's Germany and Stalinist Russia were both oppressive, genocidal, and undemocratic, Barth somehow viewed the Soviet Union as less of a threat to Christian practice than Nazi Germany. However, this distinction is actually in line with his postwar writings, which subtly legitimize Nazism and Communism as two very different forms of government.

According to Barth, Nazism differed from Communism because Communism, in its ideal form, did not result in the deification of the state. A Totalitarian state, like that of Hitler's Germany, would deny a Christian the ability to witness his or her faith by replacing faith in God with faith in the state. Though Barth viewed Stalinist Russia as dictatorial, he did not believe that the state would try to usurp the faith of the people from the church. While his theological opposition to totalitarian regimes legitimately moved him to oppose the Nazis during WWII, his precise definition of totalitarianism also legitimized his "silence" on Communism. Therefore, it would be impossible to interpret Barth's views on communism without a thorough understanding of his political thought.

Karl Barth: A Biographical Sketch

Karl Barth is widely considered to be the most influential Protestant theologian of the 20th century. A fervent critic of the individual and subjective emphasis of 19th century liberal protestant theology, Barth sought to ground all action in objective, christocentric truth. Barth believed that theological thought could never lead to absolute judgments on political forms, but that theology could lead to relevant truths (i.e. a Christian's duty during a war) in the political sphere. The application of theological truths to the political sphere guided Barth's political beliefs as his writings refrained from speaking in generalizations and absolutisms.

Barth first became interested in political thought during his work as a Calvinist pastor in the industrial town of Safenwil, Switzerland. Specifically, he was drawn to the hope that Marxism gave his parishioners. Through this congregation, which consisted primarily of miners and their families, Barth came to appreciate Marx's views of class struggle and the harsh lives of working people.* Inspired by Marx, Barth used his position as pastor to organize labor unions for the workers in his congregation; however, he was never hesitant to criticize Marxism. His primary dispute was the ideology's emphasis on absolute pacifism. Barth believed that the church could justify war in instances of defense against a tyrannical power.† Though he officially labeled himself as a Socialist, Barth made it clear that he did not agree with many of the party's formative principles.

* Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His life from letters and autobiographical texts*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 69.

† William Werpehowski, "Karl Barth and politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), 239.

Barth's career as a theologian underwent a substantial transformation during WWI. Though he disagreed with Marx's teachings on pacifism, he was also highly critical of theologians who explicitly supported a war of such unparalleled destruction. Specifically, Barth blamed liberal Protestantism's emphasis on individualism for a breakdown in communications and diplomacy between nations.* He did not believe that the diplomacy leading up to WWI went as far as it should have to prevent a global conflict. Throughout the war, Barth's theology grew increasingly political in tone, and he steadily earned a reputation for rejecting popular trends in European religion and politics.

Other contemporary political movements significantly influenced Barth's early development. He opposed Lenin's 1917 revolution for promoting working class hegemony on the grounds that minority rule is antithetical to Christian teachings. At the same time, Barth was among the first theologians to actively oppose the rise of Fascism. He saw Fascism as a "civil religion" fueled by an ideology of state violence and preserved through state deification.† These events influenced Barth in the publication of his commentary on the *Epistle to the Romans*, the theological treatise first written in 1919, in which Barth rejected liberal Protestantism in favor of an emphasis on Christ and the concrete revelation of a living, active God.‡ The rise of Soviet Communism as well as Fascism in Italy and Germany influenced Barth to begin thinking about the ways in which God's word could be applied within dictatorial regimes.

Perhaps the most significant development in Barth's theological career was his experience combating Nazism. In his many responses to the Nazi regime, Barth solidified his understanding of the relationship between theological thought and political action. His resistance to Nazism began shortly after the regime entrenched itself at the center of German politics. Disturbed by Christian complicity with the rise of the Nazi regime, Barth authored the Barmen Declaration on May 16th, 1934. The declaration simply rejected all authority that attempted to replace the authority of Jesus Christ.§ Barth saw Nazism as an "anti-Christian counter church" determined to replace Christian theology and dogmatics with Nazi ideology. This document would be the blueprint for Germany's Confessing Church, the coalition of Protestant congregations and pastors that banded together to oppose state intrusion in the religious sphere. Though the Confessing Church was not established to protect the Jews, many of its prominent members—most famously Dietrich Bonhoeffer—actively resisted the violent racial policies of the Third Reich.

The Barmen Declaration was a significant development in Barth's theological thought due to its radical departure from orthodox Lutheran views on church and state.

* John Webster, "Introducing Barth," *Ibid.*, 3.

† Busch, 223.

‡ Busch, 100.

§ Busch, 236.

Instead of adhering to Luther's teachings of loyalty to the state and independence of the church, the declaration demanded that Christians must work with the government to ensure the freedom to teach the true Gospel.*

This meant that the church would need to forswear its loyalty to "the powers that be" in order to ensure that the Christian faith could continue to fulfill its role as a healer, a comforter, and an agent of God's grace. A product of his views in the Barmen Declaration, Barth refused to swear a loyalty oath to Hitler in 1935. This oath, administered to all academics, was required to retain University faculty positions. As a result of his defiance, Barth was exiled from Germany back to his native Switzerland. From then on, Barth's resistance to Nazism began to take several forms, the most influential of which manifested as theological writings. This included the publication of 22 widely read volumes of *Theological Existence Today!*, a journal that Barth both wrote and edited to encourage the Confessing Church to remain true to Christ during their struggle with the Nazi ideology of the "German Christians."[†]

Barth's writings after WWII were the product of his theological development during the War. Many of his theological contemporaries lacked a nuanced understanding of Barth's ideologies, and in turn expected him to oppose Communism and support the Capitalist West on the same grounds that he had supported the Allies against the Nazi regime. Much to their surprise, Barth argued for a third way between allying with the Communist East and the Capitalist West.

He argued that though the Allies had fought on behalf of democracy and human rights during WWII, the divisions of the Cold War reflected an ideological struggle between two deeply flawed and hypocritical sparring partners—the USA and the USSR. While he believed that the divisions of WWII were clear-cut enough to justify an active theological response, Cold War divisions lacked a succinct definition of ethical right and wrong, and were therefore antithetical to Christian objectives.[‡]

In the aftermath of the bloody Hungarian Communist Revolution of 1956, Barth's contemporaries seemed to unanimously agree that Communism had developed into an evil akin to Nazism. At approximately the same time, Barth's neutrality came under heavy criticism. Instead of using this act of Communist brutality to justify the policies of the West, Barth continued to focus on how Christians under Communism could still witness the Christian faith. While his contemporaries focused on foreign policy, Barth focused on creating interpretations of the Christian message that would be useful to those in Communist countries.

Specifically in his essay 1959 "How to Serve God in a Marxist Land" as well as his postwar volumes of *Church Dogmatics*, Barth argued that the Christian witness could be accomplished as faithfully in the East

* Busch, 288.

[†] Georges Casalis, *Portrait of Karl Barth* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1963), 53.

[‡] Busch, 417.

as in the West.* He believed that a reordering of the church in Communist nations could lead to a spiritual reawakening, as the conditions for Christians under Stalin were quite similar to the conditions for the earliest Christians living in Rome. For Barth, the church could serve more effectively with peace and solidarity than with ideological fixation and political pressure.

The pinnacle of Barth's theological development would be his explicit statement that there is no distinction between practical (or political and social) issues and theological ones. As described in his 1960 retrospective theological reflection essay entitled *The Humanity of God*, Barth's belief was that God's revelation is relevant to all human action.[†]

Though his theology underwent fundamental transformations throughout his career, the majority of his work emphasized that Christ can provide an objective grounding to all human interaction. Christ is so vital to humanity that one cannot speak of man without speaking first of God. [‡] While there is no clear path for man to understand God, there is an absolutely clear path for God to reveal Himself to humanity.[§] Therefore, God has something to say about absolutely everything—sent in message form through revelation in the form of Christ, in ways that will inevitably be understood differently over time. Since Barth believed his political views were grounded in Christ, it would be impossible to understand Barth's views on communism without first understanding the basic concepts of his theology.

The Theology of Karl Barth

Indicative of a synthesis of theological thought and political action, Barth's theology was intended for use in the church community, not an academic setting. This was a marked departure from the academically driven thought of his predecessors and mentors, who, like the famous Adolf von Harnack, were purely systematic theologians.[¶] Though Barth began his career as a systematic theologian, his postwar writings were undeniably practical in tone. Barth firmly believed that theology should create "sober, self-critical, pragmatic cooperation with fellow men for the best possible service of the general welfare, keeping a strong guard against every sacrifice of concrete men to an idea, a system, or one social group's interest."^{**} This statement solidifies the relationship between Barth's theology and political thought. At the same time, it demands that the church community remain a place of open discourse and debate, capable of promoting a politics free from absolutes and ideologies.

* Busch, 450.

[†] Casalis, 18.

[‡] Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 52.

[§] Casalis, 18.

[¶] Webster, 10.

** Charles C. West, *Communism and the Theologians: Study of an Encounter* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1958), 246.

Some of Barth's critics, including Reinhold Niebuhr, criticized him for neglecting to cover certain crucial political issues, primarily the heightening of Cold War tensions, in his major theological writings.* While it is true that Barth's theological writings rarely mention Lenin, Marx, or the Soviet Union, it would be misleading to view this as a disconnect between Barth's theology and his political thought, or as a disinterest in Communism.

Instead, the lack of specific political content in Barth's theology stems from two primary convictions: first, that there are no absolutes in politics. A theological system can lead to political truths, but political truths must not be allowed to shape a theological system, lest the system should be tainted with ideology.† Second, Barth's theology is exclusively "object-centered." This means that the focus of Barth's theological system is God, not humanity.‡ He believed that it would have been foolish to make the Soviet Union the focus of his theological writings when the Soviet Union was small, limited, and temporal compared to the eternal power that is in God.

The primacy of God's Word to Barth's thought created a distinction between what he labeled the "object" and the "subject." These are theological terms used to express how God's Word applies to all aspects of human life. Barth emphasized the "object," or God, as opposed to the "subject," or humanity. This coincided with an attempt to restore the authority of the Bible as a critical norm in human action. § 19th century liberal Protestants viewed scripture as something that could be used by individuals to understand God, but not as a critical norm.¶ Thus, liberal Protestantism emphasized God in relation to man, but Barth emphasized man in relation to God.

However, Barth stipulated that scripture cannot be read literally. Rather, he maintained that the Bible must be interpreted within the Christian community with respect to historical context. Though the Bible is the absolute authority, it would inevitably reveal different things at different times. Thus, the church has the duty to interpret scripture.**

As one of the main themes in *Church Dogmatics*, Barth held that God's grace allows scripture to be used to provide a sense of objectivity in the world—a view that marked a substantial shift in his thinking. When Barth authored the first edition of his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* in 1919, he argued that the wholly otherness of God prevents scripture from providing a grounding to social interactions.

Barth's theology changed after the destruction of WWI and WWII; as a result, he came to

* West, 234.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

§ Francis Watson, "The Bible," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), 59.

¶ Casalis, 41.

** Bromiley, 44.

understand that God's grace is present in even the most severe chaos. Needing a theological basis upon which to rebuild the German church after WWII, Barth turned to scripture and a renewed emphasis on grace.* This concept of God's grace transcending the chaos of society to create a new, spiritual grounding that would be highly influential in his requests that the church transcend the divisions of the Cold War.

Barth's later theological ideas are perhaps best exemplified in *The Humanity of God*, a collection of three shorter essays from the late 1950s.† In this collection, Barth reiterates that theology must be a dialogue between God, man, and the modern world.‡ Barth is clear that there is no isolation of man from God or God from man, and that one cannot speak of them independently.§ These essays reemphasized Barth's belief that Christianity can never be private, but that faith can only exist in community. Subsequently, theology must continue to serve that community with accessible language and with directly relevant subjects.¶

Barth concludes this work with a reiteration that there are no ethical norms. Essentially, though God's Word takes the same form for the church across time and circumstances, the meaning and directives underlying the Word changes over time. This "ethical flexibility" has been viewed as the reason for Barth's neutrality on communism. However, Barth's understanding of community must also be emphasized in discerning his views on Communism. Barth believed that Christian community would continue to exist and even thrive under Communism, though it would have to undergo certain transformations. Conversely, taking sides in the Cold War would only divide the community of faith. By remaining silent on communism, Barth hoped to foster an increased sense of solidarity in the church community.

The Social and Political Barth

Barth's political conceptualization divides church and state into two separate spheres with highly interrelated tasks and a mutual duty to police each other's ethical violations. If the state would fail to meet the obligations of its own sphere, the church would have a greater responsibility to protect basic human rights. Barth expanded upon this idea in a 1946 essay entitled "The Christian Community and the Civil Community." This essay was addressed to the church in Germany as it struggled to rebuild and define its relationship with a government run by occupying forces. It encouraged the church to be a bastion of rights and freedom, regardless of political circumstances.

* William Herberg, "The Social Philosophy of Karl Barth," in *Community, State, and Church, Karl Barth*, (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960), 18.

† Busch, 423.

‡ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1960), 37.

§ Ibid., 58.

¶ Ibid., 94.

Meanwhile, the essay defined the role of the state as an institution that protects mankind from its sinful nature by applying reasonable, coercive power to ensure rights of life and freedom.* In other words, the essay asked German churches to respect the authority of the occupational state while helping the Allies to restore basic democratic principles and human rights. In the same essay, Barth stated that the church can establish its own community under truly repressive regimes, ensuring that rights are respected in the most restrictive political conditions.† Concurrently, this meant that the church had a duty not to advocate revolution, but to protect the persecuted from tyranny. This was a more tempered approach than that of Barth’s work during the War, which inspired Christians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer to openly revolt against the Nazi regime. Nevertheless, this essay directed the church to protect and provide basic human rights, turning inward, not outward, even under Soviet Communism.

Also in “The Christian Community and the Civil Community,” Barth set clear limits for Christian engagement in the political sphere.‡ He argued that the church must have the humility to realize that the Kingdom of God can never be duplicated in a political form.§ Barth admitted that over time, the church had struggled with a tendency to push for political forms that would deliberately conform to Christian ideals. However, he urged the church to act with caution when judging states. For if all men are sinners, the kingdom of God can never be fully realized in any political form, no matter how democratic that form may be.¶ Barth was hesitant to condemn political regimes if they are unreligious.** He believed that the most seemingly atheistic state were capable of unknowingly serving God. Barth cited the relationship of Christ and Pilate as evidence that an unjust state can witness the message of salvation and redemption.†† Pilate crucified Jesus with the intention to squash his following; instead, the Christian faith expanded further than Pilate likely would have imagined. Thus, the church has a responsibility to act within unjust states with rational discourse, not ideological judgments.

This concept of an unjust state acting as an inadvertent witness to the Gospel was part of the political grounds for Barth’s neutrality on communism. Barth believed that God could act through any state. Conversely, he believed that God’s witness could be easily distorted in a totalitarian society wherein the state attempts to replace God as the object of worship.‡‡

* Karl Barth, “The Christian Community and the Civil Community” in *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-war Writings, 1945-1962* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 18.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid., 25.

§ Ibid.

¶ Ibid., 37.

** Karl Barth, “Church and State” in *Community, Church, and State*, 113.

†† Ibid., 136.

‡‡ “The Christian Community and the Civil Community,” 37.

The church must oppose totalitarian regimes only if they are “anti-Christian” as opposed to just “unreligious.”

Communist Russia was an inherently atheistic society that sought to eradicate Christianity. Nazi Germany was an inherently anti-Christian society that wanted to use the church as a vehicle for political ideology. For Barth, political opposition to Christianity was to be expected; God will steer the church through brutality and repression, but totalitarian societies can corrupt the church with state-deification to the point where revelation and ideology are easily confused. Though the distinction between dictatorship and totalitarianism is subtle, Barth reduces it to a simple principle: Dictatorships either ignore or attempt to collapse the sphere of the church, whereas totalitarianism attempts to expand the sphere of the state so that it overtakes the sphere of the church, using religious beliefs as a vehicle for state ideology.

Another reason for Barth’s neutrality can be found in his writings on the Christian church in the midst of political upheavals. In a 1948 lecture delivered in Budapest entitled “The Christian Community in the Midst of Political Change,” Barth argued that the church must be supremely interested in political changes, and must realize that such change provides an opportunity to “reorder life in a better way.”* All means of political change provide an opportunity to improve rights, living conditions, and political efficiency. Yet, at the same time, there is an opportunity for chaos, anarchy, or tyranny to emerge. The church must be motivated by its task of witnessing the Gospel to work for the former of the two possibilities, ensuring that their rights are ensured in political change, and that the state will work for the rights of all.† While Barth admitted in this same lecture that Christianity has the best chance for success in democratic governments, he was once again adamant that the church can function under any state. Ultimately, the church must solidify its sphere while the sphere of the state is reforming.‡

Barth concluded the lecture by stating that there will never be an absolutely good state or an absolutely bad state, but instead, all states will provide opportunities for the church to fulfill its witness in unique ways. Rather than join the West in immediately condemning the Soviet Union as “evil”, Barth affirms that a resilient, honest, and open church has the ability and a duty to make the Soviet Union a more free and open place.

In the same lecture, Barth outlined how his lack of opposition to Communism stemmed from his refusal to label any of the nations of the Capitalist West as the “ideal” state. Barth was explicit that a state can never truly be ideal. This idea was expressed during a discussion in Budapest on April 1st, 1948, which followed his lecture.§ Because of this, the church must act for certain attainable elements of an ideal state in existing political forms. Barth’s primary interests in an ideal state include a balance of order and freedom, an emphasis on community, and a balance between political power and social responsibility.

* Karl Barth, “The Christian Community in the Midst of Political Change,” *Against the Stream*, 80.

† Ibid., 84.

‡ Ibid., 89.

§ Karl Barth, “From the Discussion in Budapest,” *Against the Stream*, 95.

Specifically, this means that the state should seek to limit economic inequalities and should function with a strong system of checks and balances.*

Despite the concerns many theologians had with Stalin's dictatorial powers, Barth held out hope that the Communist state would reaffirm its Marxist origins and thus return to its ideals of eradicating class struggle.† At the very least, Barth was hopeful that the communist state would always strive to reduce economic inequalities. His silence on Communism can be viewed as a hopeful optimism that communism would one day transcend its tyrannical leanings and serve as a truly inadvertent witness to the Gospel.

The Theologians Respond to Karl Barth

Karl Barth's collection of shorter postwar writings bore the title *Against the Stream*—a reference to Barth's disagreements with mainstream theology in the postwar period. Most contemporary theologians were quick to condemn communism for the same reasons that they condemned Nazism. Criticisms from prominent theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr, Emil Brunner, and even the Marxist Paul Tillich meant that Barth's opinions on communism truly were "against the stream."

One of the first theologians to actively condemn communism was Emil Brunner, a Swiss Protestant. Theologically, Barth and Brunner were very similar; both rejected liberal Protestantism in favor of a Christocentric approach. However, unlike Barth, Brunner operated on absolutes and principles, and thus he saw communism as an absolute evil political force. For Brunner, communism was the "most complete form of totalitarianism" of the 20th century.‡ Brunner went so far as to say that Nazism was hardly totalitarian compared to communist Russia.

The disagreement between Brunner and Barth exploded in the wake of the Hungarian Revolt in 1956. Brunner used the brutality of Soviet forces to argue that Christians had a duty to support the west in the Cold War. Though Brunner accepted that the West was not perfect, he believed democracy was the only way to promote healthy, Christian societies.§ This argument represented the synthesis of western power politics and theology. Yet, Brunner did not offer any suggestions or encouragement to Christians living under Communism. Barth, on the other hand, wrote several letters, essays, and lectures that provided concrete advice on how to witness the Christian faith under a communist regime.¶ Barth's neutrality on Communism was not so much silence as it was a refusal to join in the political polarization condoned by theologians like Emil Brunner.

* William Herberg, "The Social Philosophy of Karl Barth," in *Community, State, and Church, Karl Barth*, (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960), 31.

† West, 303.

‡ West, 28.

§ West, 36.

¶ West, 40. Also see: *Karl Barth, How to Serve God in a Marxist Land* (New York: Associated Press, 1959).

Though most of Barth's contemporaries were explicitly anti-Communist, some took an active interest in the study of Marxist thought. Paul Tillich, a German theologian and socialist philosopher, shared Barth's optimism for Marxism as well as his criticism of Soviet Communism. Tillich argued that communism's heteronomy and ideology prevented it from fulfilling the Marxist mission of combating the social ills of bourgeois society. For Tillich, Marxism's tragic flaw was its tendency to be used as an ideology rather than a guide to remedying the abuses of bourgeois society. Subsequently, Tillich was critical of Soviet Communism's singular focus on economics.* The primary difference between Tillich and Barth was that Tillich thought of communism as an unquestionably totalitarian, and therefore demonic, political form.

Of the prolific postwar theologians, none took a more actively combative stance towards Communism than the American thinker Reinhold Niebuhr. Unlike Barth, Niebuhr believed that God "elected America to play a leading role in the realization of God's kingdom."† He believed in the unambiguous presence of ethical good and ethical evil. He subsequently accepted that the existence of human sin meant that evil would always need to be reckoned with, often through immoral, sinful methods including war, nuclear arms build ups, and power politics.‡ Thus, according to Niebuhr, violence was not an intrinsically immoral expression of political power, but rather, violence could be used to create a just social order.§ For Niebuhr, the purest expression of evil was imperialism and tyranny, as specifically manifested in Soviet communism.¶ Niebuhr believed that democratic Christian societies had a duty to fight against the evils of tyranny with sufficient force to ensure that sin would not become the norm of human existence.** This aligned with a justification of America's strategy of containment. Niebuhr ultimately concluded that Soviet Communism would lead to the outbreak of a third world war if not actively contained. In line with American political strategies, he believed that God had ordained the United States to lead a new world order capable of containing Soviet aggression.††

Given Niebuhr's alignment of American foreign policy with Christian virtues, it is not surprising that many European thinkers labeled him "the official establishment theologian."‡‡ Niebuhr shared George F. Kennan's assessment that Soviet hegemony would only disintegrate by maintaining an active balance of power that would prevent Communism from spreading to strategic areas. Theologically, Niebuhr believed that Soviet Communism was a pure expression of totalitarian evil. Thus, his disdain for communism is similar to that of Emil Brunner. However, Niebuhr also believed that Soviet totalitarianism was the absolute fulfillment

* West, 103.

† Kenneth Durkin, Reinhold Niebuhr (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing), 3.

‡ Reinhold Niebuhr, "Why the Christian Church is Not a Pacifist" in *Christianity and Power Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 2.

§ Durkin, 51.

¶ Ibid., 25.

** Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Christian Church in a Secular Age" in *Christianity and Power Politics*, 47.

†† West, 155.

‡‡ West, 165.

of Marxist thought.* This led to Niebuhr to fiercely criticize theologians like Tillich, and especially Barth, who believed that Marxism could be used in varying degrees to remedy the problems of modern bourgeois society.

Karl Barth: The Third Way Warrior

Barth understood that the Cold War was far more complex than a bipolar power struggle. With the ever-present risks of nuclear strikes and a third world war came complex theological issues regarding the applicability of God's Word to all people. For Barth, the stakes were simply too high for the church to take a polarized position, as this would have inferred that God was inherently in opposition to the people behind the Iron Curtain. Instead, Barth argued that it was the church's duty to transcend the bitter divisions between the USSR and the USA to create a third way between East and West. This third way was gradually revealed throughout Barth's shorter postwar writings.

Barth's proposal for a third way began with a subtle confession: that communism includes certain abuses and violations of human rights that are generally not present in western democratic society.† However, Barth was explicit in his contention that these abuses cannot be remedied by joining in the East versus West hysteria. If the church attached to the politics of the West, Barth feared that the church would only feed the Soviet propaganda machine and increase abuses.‡ Instead, Barth believed, the church needed to develop a sense of international solidarity with Christians living under communist rule. By doing so, the Christian community could promote human rights reforms from within. By constantly seeking to make religion more relevant and accessible to people living under communism, Christianity could prevent communism from gaining validity as its own religion. It was Barth's opinion that whether or not Communism turned to totalitarianism depended upon the strength of religious belief in religious communities living under communism.§

Barth's ideas on the role of Christianity under communism were clearly explained in a 1959 letter to a pastor in East Germany, later published under the title "How to Serve God in a Marxist Land." The letter was meant to provide encouragement and concrete suggestions to persecuted Christians in the East while reminding Christians in the West that the Gospel could still be proclaimed under communist regimes.¶ In it, Barth clearly explained the reasons why Communism is not a totalitarian regime with its own religious motivations, and why, as a result, a Christian does not have to choose between revolt and submission. Instead, a Christian must seek to

* West, 123.

† Casalis, 70.

‡ Ibid.

§ West, 59.

¶ Karl Barth, "Letter to a Pastor in the German Democratic Republic," in *How to Serve God in a Marxist Land* (New York: Associated Press, 1959), 12.

serve God by open and honest discourse with the state regarding human rights.* Barth argued that as long as communism does not present itself as a form of salvation, it will remain non-Christian, not anti-Christian.†

In the same letter, Barth reminded Christians in the West that God will always transcend communist ideology, as revelation is too powerful to be overcome by any political theory. He also encouraged Christians in the East to remember that God is working in ways that the West cannot explain and that the East may not yet be able to comprehend.‡ Barth explained that the experience of Christians living under Communism has closer parallels to the early church, wherein believers were forced underground to avoid persecution by Roman authorities. Perhaps, Barth argued, God is creating a spiritual reawakening by redefining the relationship between Christianity and modernity.§

Barth also spoke on the Cold War earlier in the conflict, with an article published in 1949 entitled "The Church Between East and West."¶ This article accused the United States and the Soviet Union of imperialist ambitions motivated exclusively by a mutual fear of each other. As Barth found imperialism to be truly antithetical to Christian teachings, he believed that the church community must not take sides in the power struggle.** His belief was that the neutrality of the churches would be a sign of enormous courage and obedience to the true Gospel.

In another article from 1949 entitled "The Reformed Church Behind the 'Iron Curtain'" Barth argued that while church silence and neutrality regarding Cold War politics might be conceived as timidity, the ability to stand as an objective observer and faithful witness to both sides would, in fact, be an incredibly bold and courageous action by the church.††

Barth's pleas for church neutrality were combined with harsh criticisms of American hypocrisy. In his work, he argued that "the essence of sin is to stand in a position of superiority to one's neighbors, taking the superior stance of the divine judge over against him."‡‡ Barth particularly criticized America for its reliance on an anti-communist propaganda machine, disguised in American culture as mainstream media.§§ Barth was adamant that "all propaganda is an invention of the devil!"¶¶ Though he conceded that the rebuilding of Europe required American investment and technical skill, he demanded that Europe resist America's imperialist ethics,

* Ibid., 31.

† Ibid., 49.

‡ Ibid., 73.

§ Ibid.

¶ Karl Barth, "The Church Between East and West" in *Against the Stream*, 129.

** Ibid., 131.

†† Karl Barth, "The Reformed Church Behind the 'Iron Curtain'" in *Against the Stream*, 117.

‡‡ Colin Gunton, "Salvation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, 147.

§§ Barth, "Letter to a German Pastor..." 52.

¶¶ Karl Barth, "Modern Youth: Its Inheritance and Responsibility" in *Against the Stream*, 56.

capitalist driven culture, and ideologically enslaved religion.*

Barth further applied his beliefs of church neutrality in a vigorous condemnation of the nuclear arms build up. With the devastation experienced by Nagasaki and Hiroshima fresh in his mind, Barth argued that nuclear warfare was by definition the most inhumane method of war ever conceived.† Once again, this argument demonstrates tremendous continuity between Barth's politics and his theology, as his condemnation of nuclear arms can be found in a discussion on the doctrine of creation in volume three, section four of *Church Dogmatics*.‡ Barth argued that nuclear warfare could never defeat evil, but spread evil and legitimize its use among the masses. The church needed to remain neutral in order to explicitly condemn the arms race between the USA and the USSR. It was the church's mission to remind both sides that evil is not defeated with nuclear warheads, but through obedience to the word of God.§ Ultimately, Barth believed the church should be neutral in the politics of the Cold War- but his criticisms of American ideology, propaganda, and the nuclear arms race show that neutrality was far different from silence. Barth truly saw the church as the bridge capable of transcending bitter Cold War conflicts, creating a third way between imperialism and ideology that emphasized neutrality, humanity, and God's revelation.

Conclusion: The West Responds to Barth

Many Western theologians have criticized Barth's neutrality on the Cold War—certainly, Barth must not be approached without a critical perspective. Among the most significant questions left unresolved by Barth include the question as to why the Soviet Union differed from Nazism in its persecution of targeted groups. While Barth thought that the Soviets were not anti-Semites, there was clear evidence that Stalin was indirectly responsible for the murder of thousands of Russian Jews.¶ Then there is the question of totalitarianism. How does communism, with its fixation on ideology, not qualify as a civil religion? Truly, communism has explicit elements of a totalitarian state: a prophetic lineage, a unique view of history, and a strict demand for obedience.** How is it that communism remains a dictatorship, but does not cross over into an anti-Christian totalitarianism? All of these questions are valid criticisms.

* Barth, "The Christian Message in Europe Today" in *Against the Stream*, 170.

† Werpehowski, 237.

‡ Ibid.

§ Gunton, 147.

¶ Herberg, 62.

** West, 19.

Nevertheless, Barth's neutrality in the Cold War was always guided by Gospel-based revelation, not ideological principles, and his opinions were derived from an extensive corpus of theological and social thought. These writings display substantial continuity with Barth's opinions on the USA and the USSR. Though he will remain a controversial figure, the continuity in Barth's thought legitimizes the differences between his views on Nazism and his views on communism. Perhaps the question that should be asked is not whether Barth's neutrality made sense in regards to his past, but whether Barth's voice of neutrality and reason, and his vision of a conflict-transcending church, truly resonated among his followers. Perhaps, the legacy of Karl Barth is a legacy that can save us all from hostilities, bitterness, and divisions that may lie ahead.



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