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Contents

- 5** JUNIOR SEMINAR
“Why the Yale Chaplain Rode: William Sloane Coffin Jr. and the 1961 Freedom Rides”
by Danielle Kehl
Liberalism and Conservatism in U.S. Politics
edited by Jessica Moldovan
- 19** AT-LARGE
“God the Sustainer/God the Redeemer: Emmanuel Levinas and the Heidegger Controversy”
by Eli Bildner
European Intellectual History Since Nietzsche
edited by Layne Johnson
- 28** OUTSIDE OF YALE
“Our Country’s Common Ground: The Gettysburg Battlefield as Historical Document”
by Amelia Spooner
Columbia University
edited by Joseph Geylin
- 56** DIRECTED STUDIES
“Tiberius, Germanicus, and Political Transition”
by Nick Venable
Directed Studies: Historical and Political Thought
edited by Thomas Meyerson
- 61** FRESHMAN SEMINAR
“The Continuity and Change in the Soviet Union’s Perception of United States Grand Strategy from 1941-1949”
by Bo Uuganbayar
The United States and the World, 1898-1963
edited by Jack Bisceglia
- 82** SENIOR ESSAY
“The Pitfalls of Rivalry: Foreign Policy Rivalry in the Carter Administration & Its Meaning for U.S. Policy in Iran”
by Margaret Goodlander,
edited by Ryan Lowe and Joshua Silverstein

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

First and foremost, I'd like to thank you for seizing the opportunity to experience the inaugural edition of the Yale Historical Review. If you're reading this, you've probably beaten the odds and developed an interest in history. Most of history taught to youth is mind-numbingly dull. "Some dead white guy did this on this date—please memorize the name and date for the quiz next week, children." You know the drill. Even we who love history apologize for that mnemonic torture.

I am proud to say that this edition openly defies this elementary pedagogy and explores the human element of our forefathers. Among other gems, this issue has a Roman general attempting to fall on his sword rather than disgrace the Empire, a brilliant intellectual made a pariah because of his ties to Nazism, a Yale chaplain defying menacing alumni to become the first prominent white Freedom Rider, and the Gettysburg battlefield turning from a divisive marker of Northern victory to a national ground of remembrance.

The goal of the Yale Historical Review is not for the reader to take away an arsenal of facts and figures. Rather, I hope the pieces included in this edition enable you to develop an intimate connection with your predecessors, one that allows you to realize you have more in common with yesterday's extraordinary figures than you thought. These characters lived, loved, struggled, and died, just as you have and will.

The only difference is that your biography is nowhere near complete. Armed with this journal, you can compare notes, and better plot your course of action. Author and renowned pacifist, Aldous Huxley understood this lesson and wrote, "The charm and enigmatic lesson of history consist in the fact that, from age to age, nothing changes and yet everything is completely different."

With this in mind, I humbly invite you to see what the Editorial Board has judged to be the best enigmatic lessons written by undergraduates.

V for victory,

Christopher Magoon
Editor-in-Chief

Junior Seminar

“Why the Yale Chaplain Rode” William Sloane Coffin Jr. and the 1961 Freedom Rides

Danielle Kehl

Liberalism and Conservatism in U.S. Politics

Professor Beverly Gage

2008

History majors are required to take two junior seminars in different geographical categories. Capped at around fifteen students, these classes allow students to engage topics at an in-depth level through conversation and debate and typically culminate in an original research paper of approximately twenty pages. Danielle Kehl, a current senior in Timothy Dwight College, wrote this essay for Professor Beverly Gage’s junior seminar “Liberalism and Conservatism in United States Politics.

Junior Seminar

MONTGOMERY, Ala. May 20 – Street fighting that left at least 20 persons beaten with clubs and fists raged for two hours here today after a white mob had attacked a busload of Freedom Riders.

The fighting broke out and subsided three times before the police, unable to restore order by other methods, tossed tear gas bombs into the crowds.

The mob, which at times numbered about 1,000, attacked the white and Negro bus riders within an instant after the Greyhound bus pulled into the downtown station from Birmingham at 10:15 AM.

– The New York Times¹

In the spring of 1961, searing images of an angry mob in Alabama beating a young, interracial group of so-called “freedom riders” spread across the country. Like many Americans, William Sloane Coffin Jr., the 36-year old chaplain of Yale University, heard news of the vicious attacks on May 21. Feelings brewing within the activist minister for quite some time came rushing to the surface. Imbued with a sense of compassion and a revolutionary streak, Coffin reacted strongly to the violence, recognizing that the underlying issues were not specific to Montgomery but part of a common problem facing the American people. “I doubt that I’d ever been angrier and certainly never more ashamed of the United States than I was looking at the pictures of the beatings,” Coffin later wrote in his memoir, *Once To Every Man*. “It was impossible to look at [the pictures] without realizing that segregation was more a problem for whites than for blacks, and that...segregation was a matter of national concern and conscience.”² Outraged, Coffin reached out to Wesleyan professor John Maguire, a friend with whom he had recently discussed the freedom ride strategy in an abstract context. He proposed that they organize their own trip. The two men, believing that it was “unthinkable” not to get involved, called Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., who spoke to them in simple terms. “Well, I don’t want to put any pressure on you,” he said, “but we need every bit of help we can get.”³ King’s words were enough to convince Coffin and Maguire, who almost instantly agreed to hurl themselves into the fray.

Although it may have seemed impulsive at the time, Coffin’s decision to join forces with the freedom ride movement had enormous implications both on the individual level and in the larger context of the civil rights movement. For Coffin, the freedom rides marked a critical turning point in his development as an advocate for social justice, profoundly shaping his personal ideology as he faced questions from the Yale community and the media about his role as both an outsider and a member of the clergy. Furthermore, it propelled Coffin into the national spotlight as his group of freedom riders, the first to include men of Coffin and Maguire’s stature, generated headlines and brought the debate about the merits of the strategy into the public discourse. Almost overnight, Coffin became an ally of the burgeoning non-violent non-cooperation movement and among the first of the white northern so-called “outsiders” to lend

¹ “Freedom Riders Attacked By Whites in Montgomery,” *The New York Times*, May 21, 1961.

² William Sloane Coffin Jr., *Once To Every Man: A Memoir* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), 151.

³ Warren Goldstein, *William Sloane Coffin, Jr: A Holy Impatience* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2004), 114.

Junior Seminar

his support and influence to the movement in the early 1960s. When he returned to Yale amidst a firestorm of controversy because of his participation in the freedom rides, the newly-dubbed “bus-riding chaplain” found himself a figure with a much louder and more powerful voice—a voice that would be integral to the success of the civil rights movement and the other causes that he chose to champion throughout his career.

On the Road to Jackson, Mississippi

Once Coffin and Maguire agreed to embark upon the trip, their plan ambled forward in much the same way as the journey itself, stopping and starting when they encountered obstacles that threatened to keep them from their goal. From the outset, they found themselves in a unique position. They were northern white intellectuals joining a movement that previously had consisted almost entirely of students and southern blacks, and both had little or no past experience using non-violent non-cooperation tactics.⁴ Their first task was to recruit other riders, and although they failed to convince any southern professors to participate, the two found fellow travelers in Yale Divinity School professor Gaylord Noyce and Maguire’s department chair at Wesleyan, David Swift. They chose George Smith, a black Yale Law student who had gone to Guinea with Coffin the previous year, to integrate their group. In Atlanta, two other African Americans from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) would join them. On Tuesday, May 23, however, they hit their first bump in the road when Coffin received a phone call from Burke Marshall, the head of the Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice. Marshall, on behalf of the United States government, expressed concern about the plan. Between the divisive and controversial issue of civil rights at the time, President John F. Kennedy’s dependence on the support of the southern Dixiecrats to win the 1960 election and in Congress, and the President’s upcoming meetings with Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in the increasingly “hot” Cold War, the proposed freedom ride could do severe damage to an incredibly delicate political climate, he told Coffin. He urged the riders to postpone or cancel their trip.⁵

The phone call left Coffin shaken and confused. He was torn between the America that he had grown up in as a privileged and well-educated member of society, which Burke Marshall represented, and the America that he hoped to represent on the freedom ride, which included the poor, disenfranchised blacks on behalf of whom activists like King had been fighting since the Montgomery bus boycotts.⁶ After a rally on the New Haven Green in support of the freedom riders—at which Coffin, Maguire, and Noyce spoke but did not mention their own budding plans—Coffin sought out Yale Law School Dean Gene Rostow. Rostow encouraged him to do what he believed was right, despite the administration’s objections. “It was a case of the right

⁴ Goldstein, 114.

⁵ Goldstein, 115.

⁶ Goldstein, 115.

Junior Seminar

man saying the right thing at the right time,” Coffin later wrote. “No sooner was the rally over than we left for New York to fly to Atlanta.”⁷ Upon arriving in Georgia, the group was met by members of the SCLC and taken to a press conference, at which Coffin and the other white riders were struck by the hostility of the questions they were asked. From Coffin’s perspective, the crowd seemed to expect the participation of the black members of the group while dismissing himself, Noyce, and Maguire as “outside agitators.”⁸ Nonetheless, the riders boarded the bus. They proceeded through Georgia without incident, but when they arrived at the Alabama border, their police escort disappeared. Alabama Governor John Patterson had publicly stated that he would not guarantee the safety of the freedom riders if they got on the bus to Jackson, Mississippi. Staring down the angry mob waiting in the depot at Lanett, the first stop in the state, the driver made the decision to keep moving for fear of what might happen to the riders if they went into the angry crowd.⁹

In Montgomery, SCLC members Ralph Abernathy and Wyatt Walker met Coffin and the other riders, who had to decide if they wanted to continue their journey. One reporter asked if they were concerned about embarrassing President Kennedy as he prepared to meet with Nikita Khrushchev, a question that Burke Marshall reiterated when he phoned them at Abernathy’s house after dinner that night. Marshall referred to Attorney General Robert Kennedy’s call for a “cooling off period” and a “return to normalcy,” imploring Coffin and the others to put their trip on hold until domestic and international tension had been diffused. Coffin did not know how to respond. As he read editorials in both Northern and Southern newspapers in support of the Attorney General’s position, he appeared to doubt the future of their endeavor. In the end, however, he listened to Abernathy, who, like Rostow, had the right words for the moment. “[T]he Attorney General’s statement does not specify the causes of the danger and confusion,” Abernathy told him. “A return to what he calls ‘normalcy’ would mean a return to injustice.”¹⁰

The next morning, the group gathered to decide if they should continue on to Jackson. After a prayer with Dr. King, they cast secret ballots, knowing that a vote to ignore Bobby Kennedy’s request was a vote to go to jail in Mississippi. Coffin later recalled that, “After collecting and counting the votes, [Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth] said: ‘Well, it didn’t hurt Peter and Paul to go to jail; so I guess it won’t hurt any of us. I’m delighted to announce that Bobby didn’t get a single vote.’”¹¹ As they returned to the bus station, however, the riders had no idea that they would not even make it as far as a Mississippi jail. Shortly after they were escorted through the mob of angry Alabamans to the ticket counter, Sheriff Mac Sim Butler arrived to arrest the seven riders for breaking the agreement with Governor Patterson and going against the

⁷ Coffin, 152.

⁸ Coffin, 154.

⁹ Goldstein, 115-16.

¹⁰ Coffin, 157.

¹¹ Coffin, 160.

Junior Seminar

wishes of the Attorney General. Butler took them to a segregated jail in Montgomery. And so, their journey ended unceremoniously with Coffin doing calisthenics in his underwear in a prison cell. Supporters soon raised enough money to post bail for the group and Coffin and the others returned to the North unharmed. He had made it safely back to Yale and to his family, but in the span of just a few short days, a great deal had changed.

An Insider or an Outsider? The Making of the “Bus-Riding Chaplain”

At first glance, William Sloane Coffin Jr. would not be a likely figure for such an endeavor. Born to a wealthy family in 1924, Coffin attended the prestigious Phillips Academy before enrolling in the Yale School of Music, where his uncle, the minister Henry Sloane Coffin, served as a member of the Yale Corporation. Like many young men at the time, Coffin enlisted in the army in 1943, returning to the university after his four-year stint to finish his bachelor’s degree in 1949. Coffin then went on to Union Theological Seminary, but left soon after to join the newly-formed Central Intelligence Agency, where he did government work during the early stages of the Cold War. He returned to academia in 1956, acting as the chaplain of Phillips Academy and Williams College for one year each. Finally, in 1958, he was appointed to the chaplaincy of his alma mater under Yale President A. Whitney Griswold. A product of wealth and privilege, Coffin could have been swept up in the burgeoning conservative movement, which was flourishing under the leadership of fellow Yalies like William F. Buckley Jr. Instead, Coffin was drawn to liberal anti-communism and eventually to activism, parlaying his religious beliefs into a series of protests that would cement his legacy not only in the history of the university itself but also on the national stage throughout the turbulent 1960s.

Just 34 years old when he accepted the position at Yale, Coffin brought with him a desire to revive the chaplain’s position and encourage students to become active and engaged with political issues of the time—a theme that he had already begun to emphasize before he moved back to New Haven. At Williams, he sought to bring religion into the public dialogue and constantly worked to find ways to apply liberal Protestantism to current problems in society.¹² Coffin criticized education for increasingly placing less and less emphasis on ethics and values and for losing its ability to transcend the intellectual realm into other facets of life. “Everywhere scholars were moving toward the peripheries of life, indifferent to the crisis shaping up at the center,” he lamented in 1957. “The result was blandness. I looked everywhere for academics with convictions.”¹³ Coffin, in what he saw as a direct contrast to many of his colleagues, wanted to jolt the middle and upper classes out of their complacency, to promote change, and to make God and Christianity relevant once again, and not just a “quaint anachronism and an extracurricular activity.”¹⁴ He chose not to shroud his Christian messages in secular rhetoric, but

¹² Goldstein, 104.

¹³ Coffin, 136.

¹⁴ Goldstein, 105.

Junior Seminar

rather to identify the biblical origins of the themes and values he preached. More than anything else, he encouraged his students to engage in the world around them and be concerned with authenticity.

In his early years as chaplain, Coffin took up the social justice causes of several minority groups at Yale. He fought to increase the number of Jewish students and students from poorer nations of the world in the university population. A major breakthrough came in the summer of 1959, when Dr. James Robinson of Crossroads Africa approached him. Robinson recruited interracial students and work group leaders to travel to newly independent African countries, and Coffin gladly accepted his offer to lead fifteen students to Guinea, where civil rights issues permeated many of the group's experiences. Coffin was surprised to find that Guineans seemed to know almost as much about Little Rock, Arkansas—a location relevant to the desegregation conflict but famous for little else—as big cities like New York and Washington DC. Later Coffin recalled that “Many Guineans had extensive knowledge of the Ku Klux Klan, had heard of the recent beatings of the students in North Carolina... I could never again view American wealth without wishing it could be more widely shared; nor could I harbor illusions about American racism being a purely domestic affair.”¹⁵ The trip to Guinea had a profound effect on his perspective of racial issues, particularly as he realized how even those who seemed to be a world away from the conflict were heavily interested in it. This shift became crucial as Coffin sought to heed his own advice and become more actively engaged in the civil rights movement.

Before 1960, Coffin had preached about civil rights on occasion. As the non-violent non-cooperation movement spread across the South in the early part of the decade, however, he became much more willing to challenge and offend those he spoke with. He admired the bravery of those who defied authority in the lunch counter “sit-ins.” Almost immediately, Coffin began to address the issue in his correspondence, counseling friends and colleagues on how to bring about equality in housing and other issues. Together with Smith College Chaplain Richard Unsworth, Coffin drafted a letter to prep school chaplains and religious advisors expressing concern over racial segregation in many New England prep schools. “As Christian Ministers, we have to speak out on the business of segregation in our society, but we are very uneasy about criticizing people in the South... when we cannot help being aware that there are segregated schools in our own backyard,” the letter stated, expressing Coffin's belief that the members of the clergy had an obligation to advocate for equality and social justice. Furthermore, Coffin and Unsworth recognized that they had to do so without hypocrisy, which meant heeding the call in their own lives and spheres of influences as well. They asserted that “we have no right to criticize the Southern pattern unless we are ready to do something about the problem right here.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Coffin, 143.

¹⁶ “Letter to Prep School Chaplains and Religious Advisors,” from the William Sloane Coffin Papers, Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Box 26, Folder 169-177.

To that end, Coffin soon began to consider refusing to accept speaking engagements at schools that were not integrated. He raised the issue in a talk with students at the Masters School, a private girls school in Westchester, New York, much to the chagrin of the headmaster. When the headmaster accused him of using shock tactics and trying to create feelings of guilt among students, who at their age could not do anything personally to address the problem of integration, Coffin was surprised but not apologetic. He responded: "After all, racial discrimination is not only a religious issue but also the number one social problem of the United States...Perhaps you are right that I used shock tactics. But how else do you get at the well-shielded?"¹⁷ Continuing what he had begun when he came to Yale in 1958, Coffin harped on the theme of attacking the complacency of those who had been raised in comfort, much like himself. He began to question how people could go on with life and business as usual while the civil rights movement flourished elsewhere in the country.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1961, the non-violent non-cooperation movement took on another dimension. Two separate Supreme Court decisions mandated the desegregation of interstate buses, but, as was often the case, the law was hardly enforced in the Jim Crow South. The freedom ride movement sought to test these laws through direct confrontation, sending interracial groups of riders across state lines in open defiance of the segregated policies and often in the face of violent backlash. Building on the success of boycotts and sit-ins, the strategy was designed to shock America and spark a popular outcry for change. One of its goals was to challenge Kennedy's New Frontier agenda, by exposing the hypocrisy of Cold War policies abroad in contrast with the lack of civil rights legislation enforcement at home.¹⁸ The strategy resonated with the Yale chaplain. In some of his own notes on civil rights, Coffin had written, "[I]f prejudice is to be contained courage is needed... But courage needs to be learned, and one can learn it only by risking, by daring to step out, abandoning the safe for the exciting, the useful for the more creative."¹⁹ For Coffin, it seems as though the freedom rides offered him his moment to be courageous, to confront the violence and injustice the first group of riders met as they endured beatings and racial slurs. Rather than being deterred by his perceived status as an "outsider" and the pleas of Bobby Kennedy and Burke Marshall to postpone the trip, he embraced his moral and religious convictions and chose to take the risk.

Public Spotlight and Private Correspondence

Although he recognized his unique position, there is no indication that Coffin fully understood how much controversy the trip would create when he called Maguire and proposed it. Yet no sooner had they arrived in Atlanta than they began to generate national headlines.

¹⁷ Goldstein, 110.

¹⁸ Raymond Arsenault, *The Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

¹⁹ Notes on Civil Rights, n.d., from the William Sloane Coffin Papers, Box 42, Folder 88.

Junior Seminar

Coffin found himself in the spotlight, emerging as the group's spokesperson and garnering attention for his privileged background and ties to prestigious institutions like Yale. On May 25, the *New York Times* ran an article called "Bus-Riding Chaplain," portraying Coffin as a man who left the comfort of a good job and a safe home to put his words into actions. "In his sermon last Sunday the Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr. said a Christian must expect adversity and not seek the easy path. Yesterday he went more than half-way to meet adversity himself," the article stated, quoting friends and colleagues of Coffin's who said that they were not surprised that the brash young chaplain had taken up the cause and was willing to "take hard knocks...to do a Christian's work in the world."²⁰ The *New York Herald Tribune* ran a similar article that day entitled "Yale Chaplain Freedom Rider."²¹ The press demonstrated how significant it was that a figure like Coffin had been inspired to act by what had transpired in Alabama in the weeks before.

In fact, the coverage of the freedom rides spilled over onto the editorial pages of many of these newspapers, and Coffin and his companions received both vigorous praise and vehement criticism as they made their way farther below the Mason-Dixon line. Coffin read a number of these pieces when the group stopped at Abernathy's house in Montgomery the first night, finding many who disagreed with their tactics, timing, or both. One editorial called, "The Choice for the Riders," questioned whether they were helping or hurting the civil rights cause. If men like Martin Luther King really believed in non-violence as a central tenet of the movement, the editorial asked, then why did they reject Kennedy's plea for a cooling off period to help stave off the violence?²² The *Boston Herald*, on the other hand, sided with the riders, arguing that Kennedy's actions were prudent but that it was unrealistic to expect his calls to be heeded. The *Herald* editorial questioned the meaning of the word 'incitement' and suggested that the riders were achieving the goals of the movement by dramatizing the problem and forcing it into the public consciousness. "If 'reason and normalcy' prevailed in the South on the race question, there would be no point in their making the trip," the editorial said. "Their purpose is to dramatize that insisting upon one's constitutional rights in Alabama and Mississippi does produce 'danger and confusion.'"²³

As the debate about the riders' timing and tactics continued, Coffin's name continually appeared in newspaper headlines covering the controversial ride. When he was released from jail a few days later, Coffin had to face the questions that others had begun debating while he and his companions remained relatively isolated on the bus and in their prison cells. Was he simply a Northern agitator who had no place getting involved in the movement or an attention-seeker

²⁰ "Bus Riding Chaplain," *The New York Times*, May 25, 1961.

²¹ "Yale Chaplain Freedom Rider," *The New York Herald Tribune*, May 25, 1961.

²² "The Choice for the Riders," n.d., from the William Sloane Coffin Papers, Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Accession 2004-M-09, Box 9, Folder 113.

²³ "What Is Incitement?", *The Boston Herald*, May 26, 1961.

looking to generate headlines? What compelled him to participate in such a highly-contentious campaign, particularly in defiance of the pleas for a cooling off period? Did he see his role as the chaplain of a prestigious northern university as somehow in conflict with the political statement that the freedom riders were making? The very day he was released from prison, he had his first opportunity to answer these questions publicly. While Coffin was on his way to Abernathy's house, *Life* magazine correspondent Ronald Bailey approached him. In two hours, Coffin dictated a story to the reporter explaining his ideology and his motivation for joining the movement—a piece aptly entitled “Why the Yale Chaplain Rode: Christians Can't Be Outside,” which ran as part of the “Story of the Week” on the Freedom Rides.

In the article, Coffin challenged the assertion that the riders were “outsiders” who intended to stir up trouble, arguing that “if you're an American and a Christian you can't be an outsider on racial discrimination, whether practiced in the North or in the South. Discrimination has always been immoral and now, as it undermines U.S. foreign policy, it is a matter of national concern, not of local mores.” In the same terms in which he described how he felt when he read about the violence committed against the first freedom riders, Coffin articulated his belief that the issue was relevant to all Americans, not just blacks or southerners. Turning the argument that the freedom ride was ill-timed from an international affairs standpoint (because it coincided with President Kennedy's visit with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev) on its head, Coffin suggested that it was segregation and racial discrimination—not the protests aimed at bringing them to an end—that threatened the strength of US foreign policy initiatives. Furthermore, he argued that the plea for a cooling off period was simply unfair to African-Americans who had been forced to make concessions for long enough. And finally, he addressed his own role as an educator, stressing that he believed it was important to show that this was not simply an idealistic student movement but one that concerned everyone. He recalled his own failed attempt to recruit southern professors to go on the trip, criticizing them for worrying about destroying long-range working relationships with the South. “We realize southern whites have special problems,” Coffin said, “but we don't think time is going to cure everything. Time is neutral. What counts is how you use it.”²⁴

Within a matter of days, Coffin had taken on a very public role as a vigorous defender of the freedom riders' actions. In an interview with *The Stanford Daily* that was published on May 29, Coffin made similar assertions to those in the *Life* article. He suggested that the “role of the Northerner is to dramatize the fact that racial discrimination is...a matter of national interest,” creating a unique role for men like himself in the movement. He was a white northern intellectual who had the courage and conviction to get involved; he believed his situation was an example that made a powerful statement that segregation could no longer be ignored those

²⁴ “Why the Yale Chaplain Rode: Christians Can't Be Outside,” *Life Magazine*, May 1961, from the William Sloane Coffin Papers, Accession 2004-M-09, Box 9, Folder 113.

Junior Seminar

whom it did not directly affect. That same week, he delivered a sermon on Yale's campus in which he asked, "Why should the Negroes be asked for a return to normalcy? Why shouldn't Governor [John] Patterson be asked? Why should Negroes have to be the ones to make concessions?"²⁵ In essence, he was using his position as a newly-public and controversial figure to champion the cause of those who had been kept silent for so long.

As a result of his outspokenness, the controversy did not evaporate after Coffin returned to Yale's campus. He had become a contentious figure within the university as well. Men like Gene Rostow, who had counseled Coffin to undertake the journey in the first place, and Yale President A. Whitney Griswold, rallied in support of Coffin's actions along with the majority of students; but many others in the Yale community did not. Provost Norman Buck, for example, wrote Coffin a confidential letter a few days after he returned. Buck criticized his actions and the fact that he had involved Yale in the issue, despite the fact that Coffin repeatedly emphasized that he was not acting on behalf of the university and that Griswold had no advanced knowledge of his plans. Nonetheless, Buck argued that Coffin could not behave simply as a private individual, as evidenced by the fact that he was referred to as the Yale chaplain in nearly every single newspaper article that discussed the ride. If he was to continue to behave in such a way, Buck suggested, he should resign.²⁶

Buck was not alone in chastising Coffin for bringing the Yale name into the controversy. The *Yale Alumni Magazine* was flooded with responses to the ride and the perceived effect of Coffin's actions on the university as a whole. In his private correspondence, Coffin received hundreds of letters that ranged from lofty praise to racist threats, with everything in between. Some of the notes attacked Coffin in a vicious manner. "You may, perhaps, have mulatto blood in your veins," wrote one anonymous individual, identified only as a Yale Alum. "...[I]t is certainly true that you have lowered yourself beneath the level of a 'nigger' to disgrace the University which hires you to preach the Christian religion." The author of this letter brashly compared the chaplain's tactics to those of the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.²⁷ A number of other critics asked Coffin how he would feel if his daughter were to marry a black man and challenged him on Christian terms, telling him to "stay at home" and "read the Bible." Just as Coffin attributed the values he was preaching to Christianity, he began to find that many of his detractors did the same. For example, Col. Calvin Kephart, who wrote Coffin a critical letter in late May 1961, had also written a pamphlet warning of the dangers of racial intermarriage called "True Christianity." In it, he argued that "all men were created equal perhaps a million years ago, but for known reasons branches have evolved at vastly different rates of progress since then. The intermarriage of advanced and retarded races caused the decadence of such nations as Egypt,

²⁵ "Chaplain at Yale Tells of U.S. Plea," *The New York Times*, May 29, 1961.

²⁶ Goldstein, 125.

²⁷ Letter from Yale Alum to William Sloane Coffin, n.d., from the William Sloane Coffin Papers, Box 13, Folder 266-269.

Ethiopia... and other Countries.”²⁸ Kephart and other critics showed Coffin an alternative Christian perspective on the civil rights movements—those that would use Christianity as an argument in favor of segregation and maintaining the status quo, not against it.

While Coffin did not respond to those who wrote to him in such harsh and racist terms, he did engage those who challenged him on reasonable moral and religious grounds, many of whom were Yale alumni sharing the sentiments of Provost Buck. To former Yalies who wrote to Coffin simply out of concern that he was tarnishing the university’s image, Coffin invariably emphasized two themes in his reply. He would discuss how the university was comprised of many voices, not a singular one, and then ask each individual if he would prefer that there be less freedom of speech at Yale than in the nation as a whole. Many, like E.H. Chapman, threatened to stop contributing to the university if its faculty continued to behave in such a way. “I believe that Northerners such as yourself who have limited experience or knowledge of the racial problems down South should mind their own business at home, and not contribute to further unrest and violence,” Chapman wrote.²⁹ In his response, Coffin questioned whether it was “fair to accuse those striving to assert their constitutionally guaranteed rights of ‘inciting local riots.’”³⁰ Just as he did not see his lack of training in non-violent protest tactics as a problem before leaving for the freedom ride, Coffin did not consider the fact that he had been born and raised in the North as reason to stop him from taking up the cause of blacks in the Jim Crow South. If anything, he was a man who embraced the label of an outsider and saw his role as unique and valuable both for the civil rights movement and for the university.

He constantly found himself arguing with the characterization of the freedom riders as rabble-rousers. “[T]o call law abiding...citizens who refuse to fight back against brick-throwing mobs determined not to obey the Federal law ‘provokers of violence’ seems a little farfetched,” he wrote to Myrta Beall of Savannah, Georgia.³¹ In the way that he framed his responses, he often compared himself, indirectly, to Jesus Christ, whom he viewed as the ultimate activist and described as a “great disturber of the peace.” Challenging Beall in Christian terms, he wrote to her, “When Jesus got crucified He attracted a mob. It could have turned into an angry one. Would you say that he was a ‘provoker of violence’?” In the face of such criticism, he was able to flesh out his belief system as one that directly contrasted the views of men and women like Kephart and Beall. In Coffin’s mind, Christianity was grounded in principles similar to those espoused by the civil rights movement and its de facto leader, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. It took the courage of those willing to put themselves in harm’s way for the well-being of others for both to succeed.

²⁸ Col. Calvin Kephart, “True Christianity,” 1960, from the William Sloane Coffin Papers, Box 21, Folder 88.

²⁹ Letter from E.H. Chapman, May 30, 1961, from the William Sloane Coffin papers, Box 13, Folder 266-269.

³⁰ Response to E.H. Chapman, June 22, 1961, from the William Sloane Coffin papers, Box 13, Folder 266-269.

³¹ Response to Myrta Beall, June 22, 1961, from the William Sloane Coffin papers, Box 13, Folder 266-269.

Coffin also faced criticism for the ways in which his actions affected American Cold War policy. John Doeringer, a lawyer who had attended Yale as both an undergraduate and as a law student in the 1950s, wrote to Coffin with concerns about how the domestic unrest would be perceived abroad. Embarrassed that a faculty member of his alma mater would engage “in causing public disorders, inciting riots, and generally using the tactics of street fighting also used by the Nazis and the communists,” Doeringer likened the Yale chaplain and the members of the non-violent non-cooperation movement to a hate group. His primary concern was that in provoking such incidents, the freedom riders were damaging American prestige in the Cold War and undermining US influence in the third world, giving fodder to the Communist propaganda machine.³² Coffin responded to Doeringer’s criticisms, confronting him with personal questions and attempting to force him to see the hypocrisy in the Cold War argument. “As a lawyer have you not more concern for Federal law and Constitutionally guaranteed rights of American citizens?” he asked at one point. And later, “Wouldn’t you agree that it is really segregation that embarrasses the United States rather than those who are fighting to hasten its end?”³³ In doing so, Coffin returned to the paradox the freedom right movement sought to expose—the conflict between the American foreign policy agenda in the Cold War and the domestic issues created by desegregation. Beginning in 1961 and throughout the decade, Coffin confronted the pivotal question: at what point were Americans simply unable to put their own interests aside for the sake of national unity in the face of the cold war?

Furthermore, Coffin’s response to Harry King—a friend who wrote to applaud him for his convictions but disagreed with his willingness to mix the Church with politics—demonstrated how he felt about the intersection between the religious argument and the Cold War argument. King suggested that there was a reason for the separation of Church and State and that the logic behind the division should apply not only to the government but also to religious leaders like Coffin. King warned that mixing religion and politics could lead to socialist tendencies, playing upon the powerful fears of Communism that pervaded American society in the early years of the Cold War. “[T]he Church and the Clergy should teach the gospel and guide the people to higher standards of morality and ethics, and keep out of politics,” he asserted. “Too many ministers...preach the ‘gospel’ of socialism. It is bad for the Church and our country.” Coffin, however, viewed the situation very differently. He revealed that what “kept me away from the Church for so long was the refusal of so many of its ministers to speak out clearly and to pay up personally on issues of social justice.”³⁴ As he had many times before, Coffin likened purely personal religion to “practical atheism” and used the Soviet Union as a counterexample to King’s, pointing out that in the USSR personal religion was encouraged by the government while ministers who spoke out against Communism were quickly silenced. In moments like this, Coffin had the devastating ability to operate within the framework of an opponent’s argument to

³² Letter from John Doeringer, May 26, 1961, from the William Sloane Coffin papers, Box 13, Folder 266-269.

³³ Response to John Doeringer, June 13, 1961, from the William Sloane Coffin papers, Box 13, Folder 266-269.

³⁴ Response to Harry King, June 2, 1961, from the William Sloane Coffin papers, Box 13, Folder 266-269.

Junior Seminar

make the case that the opposite was true. This was a skill that Coffin would employ frequently as his political beliefs and tactics become more and more radical throughout the 1960s.

Beyond the Headlines

Of course, it is impossible to study William Sloane Coffin as a freedom rider without recognizing that the group's actions in the South did more than just generate headlines and carve a role for Coffin as a national figure and a social justice advocate. In June, Coffin received a letter from James Goff from the Colegio Americano in Colombia, in which Goff included a clipping from the Bogota newspaper, *El Espectador*. "Hard upon the events in Alabama last week... there appeared persons typical of the best which the US produces," the newspaper wrote. "For example, there was a young man, scion of a rich Manhattan family... His name is William Sloane Coffin; he is white and wealthy, cultured and being from a good family, he had no need to take part in Negro matters." In his letter, Goff explained just how monumental this article was in praising the Protestant minister, for Colombia was a country in which Protestants had been violently persecuted for over a decade. He suggested that their affection for Coffin, therefore, reflected "the deep concern which Latin Americans have over the racial problem in the United States."³⁵ One old friend of Coffin's, Louis Fontaine, wrote to him from Italy saying that he believed the courageous image of the freedom riders was being eclipsed abroad by those who sought to use the violence as propaganda against the United States. News coverage at the time, however, suggested that in many places the reaction was quite different, and that a great deal of foreigners celebrated the bravery of the freedom riders as a sign of progress in America.

At home, the impact of the ride was unmistakable. Coffin was an inspiration to many who had been aware of the civil rights movement but remained on the periphery; in essence, he raised the question of complacency versus activism, boldly dragging the issue into the popular discourse at many American universities. Reverend Charles Scott of Middlebury College, for example, congratulated Coffin on succeeding in what he said he had come to Yale to do, which was to encourage students to become personally engaged in the world around them, particularly through Christian means. "You certainly stirred things up in 'this fool's paradise,'" Scott wrote. "As a result of your visit and subsequent incarceration, there have been meetings, bull sessions, and heated arguments galore."³⁶ He explained that, in the aftermath of May's freedom rides, several students had made plans to apply for the Peace Corps or Crossroads Africa and one had even gone to Nashville to train with CORE for a week before boarding his own bus. By bringing attention to the movement, Coffin and the students that he inspired helped guarantee that the freedom rides would go on.

³⁵ Letter from James E. Goff, June 9, 1961, from the William Sloane Coffin papers, Box 13, Folder 266-269.

³⁶ Letter from Rev. Charles Scott, June 9, 1961, from the William Sloane Coffin Papers, Box 13, Folder 266-269.

While Coffin's personal involvement with the freedom rides ended when he returned to New Haven, the movement flourished throughout the summer of 1961. As Coffin flew back to Yale after his release from jail, Dr. King announced that he and other members of the SCLC were creating a structure through which the freedom rides would continue.³⁷ Although they would never again earn front-page headlines, the hundreds of riders that flocked to the South that spring and summer could no longer be categorically ignored by policymakers and other influential Americans, even though many still disagreed with their tactics. Men like Coffin and Maguire had lent the movement a powerful public voice, insisting that their actions were not to be taken as coming from rabble-rousing outsiders but from concerned American citizens. As members of prominent universities, their support of the non-violent non-cooperation strategies bestowed legitimacy upon the movement that it might not otherwise have had. Furthermore, the fact that a former soldier and CIA man like Coffin would openly defy the pleas of the Attorney General and the head of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice indicated just how deep-rooted and significant the problem really was.

Coffin's involvement may also have been a sign that certain aspects of the political and social landscape were going to change. By 1962, in part as a result of the freedom rides, the civil rights movement looked vastly different than it had in the late 1950s; and as the decade wore on, it continued to pick up momentum, drawing in supporters from numerous different walks of life and constantly evolving to fit new strategies of non-violent non-cooperation.³⁸ Coffin, like the movement as a whole, came into his own in the wake of the events of that spring, establishing himself both as a public figure and an individual willing to do whatever it took to translate his convictions into real change. By the end of the decade, he had expanded his activism to include not only civil rights but also anti-Vietnam protests, and the controversy over his involvement in a conspiracy to aid draft resisters in the late 1960s far eclipsed the notoriety he had gained as a freedom rider. It began, however, with Coffin articulating the vision that there were no outsiders with regard to issues that threatened the fabric of American society. His message appealed to the thousands of young Americans who emerged from World War II and the fiercely anti-Communist 1950s who demanded a questioning of the status quo. Together, students, educators, and others like Coffin joined forces to confront the many problems that they faced, knowing that change would not come quickly or easily but through incremental steps and a variety of tactics, some more extreme than others. And, thanks in large part to the efforts of those bold enough to act first, it did.

³⁷ "Dr. King Refuses to End Bus Test," *The New York Times*, May 26, 1961.

³⁸ Arsenault, 477.

At-Large

**God the Sustainer/God the
Redeemer: Emmanuel Levinas and
the Heidegger Controversy**

Eli Bildner

European Intellectual History Since Nietzsche

Professor Marci Shore

2009

At-Large

Beginning in post-World War II France, a polarizing debate emerged around the renowned philosopher Martin Heidegger and his relationship with Nazism. Heidegger, widely recognized as one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century, first gained widespread prominence with his publication of Being and Time in 1927. In Being and Time Heidegger openly challenged the legacy of the Western philosophical tradition, asserting that philosophers since the time of Socrates had failed to answer the critical question of: "What is being?" At the center of Heidegger's ontology is his concept of Dasein, or the being for whom being is at issue. Heidegger's Dasein is characterized by a search for authenticity, which is the ability of Dasein to understand its own being. For Heidegger, Dasein's struggle for authenticity is by necessity a historical one: no individual can escape temporal context and therefore must create a unique historical character.

In 1933, Heidegger became a member of the National Socialist Party and ascended to the position of Rector of the University of Freiburg. At that time, he cut off relationships with many of his Jewish students and mentors, famously removing the name of his mentor Edmund Husserl from his dedication in Being and Time. Heidegger's initial address as university Rector, the Rektoratsrede, included three "Heil Hitlers!" and a later article in the Freiburg student newspaper claimed that the "future of Germany is bound to the Fuhrer." Heidegger remained in his post as Rector until 1934 and a member of the Nazi Party throughout the war. With regard to the post-war controversy on Heidegger's Nazism, the debate centers on whether Heidegger's philosophy was instrumental to the rise of National Socialism, a thought system that deeply affected his society, or contingent, a mere passing moment with no relation to the political events of the time.

The following paper was authored by Eli Bildner, a senior in Davenport College, for Marci Shore's "European Intellectual History since Nietzsche." Eli does not provide a comprehensive review of the debate over Heidegger's Nazism; rather, he seeks to analyze this controversy from a third perspective, that of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas.

At the end of World War II, as details of Martin Heidegger's engagement with National Socialism began to circulate in Europe, the continent's greatest thinkers struggled to confront the duplicity of their philosophical patriarch. Clearly, Heidegger's politics dissolved the expected categories of Nazism. The earnest historian could dismiss Hitler as a lunatic, Eichmann as a bureaucratic cog, the flag-waving ranks of Nazi Youth as "the masses" or "the mob." But what to make of one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century? What kind of a Nazi was he?

A number of intellectuals, among them Herbert Marcuse, Jurgen Habermas, and Karl Löwith, saw in Heideggerian existentialism the seeds of Nazism. For them, National Socialism represented the political realization of his existentialism: the triumph of individual will over an impotent collective. Alternatively, thinkers like Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt and Heidegger himself identified in Nazism the antithesis of existentialism: the minimization and regimentation of the individual, the masses of Germans who flocked to mass rallies and the ranks of the Hitler Youth to abdicate their own will to their Fuhrer. And yet, for Emmanuel Levinas – like Arendt and Marcuse a former student of Heidegger – these two responses failed to capture the essence of Heidegger's error. For Levinas, Heidegger's Nazism exceeded philosophical fallacy; it was a transgression not of logic but of morality. Heidegger's delusion, rather, was his hubristic belief in the primacy of being, his failure to recognize subject and object, individual and collective, man and God as emanations of a single voice.

In the aftermath of World War II, the "Heidegger Controversy" soon emerged as a trial of existentialism. Marcuse, Löwith, Habermas and others were eager to trace a direct line leading from existentialist ontology to fascism. These thinkers refused to decouple Heidegger's philosophy from Heidegger the man (and thus Heidegger the Nazi). Heidegger himself, as Löwith adduces, would never have supported such a separation. From the onset of his philosophical career, Heidegger is consumed by "historicity," the idea that being is not merely situated in time, but *is* time.¹ Like Nietzsche, Heidegger believes that each being bears the responsibility to create a unique historical ethos. Fact forges thought; narrative molds being.

As Löwith writes in his essay, "My Last Meeting with Heidegger," Heidegger claims that "his concept of 'historicity' is the basis of his political 'engagement.'"² Like Nietzsche, Heidegger worries that Western modernity was failing its summons to define its historical ethos, that valueless, the Western world was suffering from the advent of nihilism and the retreat of individual will. The values of Western modernity had, to use Nietzsche's language, "drawn their final consequence" and awaited new reformulation.³

¹ Karl Löwith, "My Last Meeting with Heidegger in Rome, 1936," in *The Heidegger Controversy*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993), 142.

² Löwith, "Last Meeting," in Wolin, 142.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, "From *The Will to Power*," in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Meridian, 1975), 131.

For Löwith, Marcuse and others, the problem is that Heidegger seems to care more about the formation of “new values” than about the content of those values. To Heidegger, the fundamental responsibility is that of the individual in relation to its own being. For many European thinkers, this philosophy of being constitutes a “methodical solipsism”; to quote Habermas, it is a dogma that trivializes “normative validity claims and the meaning of moral obligations.”⁴ In this light, Heidegger’s “Dasein” – the being for whom being is at issue – springs from the same mold as Nietzsche’s “*Übermensch*.” As Heidegger argues, Dasein is alone in its path towards authenticity, which is nothingness. In an essay on Heidegger’s politics, Löwith invokes the witticism of an anonymous student of existentialism: “I am resolve, only towards what I don’t know.”⁵

Thinkers like Löwith and Marcuse see existentialism not only as key to Heidegger’s political engagement, but also in its own right a pathway to Nazism. Spurning inter-subjectivity and normative values, existentialism “collapses in the moment when its political theory is realized.”⁶ Marcuse, in fact, presages existentialism’s political insolvency in a 1934 essay on totalitarianism. Existentialism, Marcuse writes, “begins philosophically in order to redeem the historical concretion of individual existences....and ends philosophically with the radical denial of its own origins; the struggle against reason drives it blindly into the arms of the reigning powers.”⁷ As Marcuse suggests, existentialism risks perversion in its wholesale rejection of metaphysics and epistemology. Will trumps reason; subjectivity extends its domain. “Questioning,” Heidegger writes in his inaugural rectoral address, “itself becomes the highest form of knowledge.”⁸

In abandoning reason, existentialism is left without the language to deal with the evils of a holocaust. Existentialism sees the barbarity of Nazism not as a failure of values, but a failure of will. It is his rejection of the entire realm of metaphysics that allows Heidegger to view motorized agriculture as “in essence, the same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps.”⁹ The atrocity of the concentration camps, to Heidegger, is technology, the force of aimlessness that acts to suppress the individual subject. The gas chamber is thus no different from mechanized agriculture, modern industry, or advanced weaponry. For Heidegger, Nazi Germany failed not because it suppressed and murdered millions of innocent victims, but because it lost its will. Perhaps it is for this reason that Heidegger, even after the revelations of

⁴ Jürgen Habermas, “Work and Weltanschauung: The Heidegger Controversy from a German Perspective,” *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (1989): 439.

⁵ Karl Löwith, “The Political Implications of Heidegger’s Existentialism,” in Wolin, 172.

⁶ Herbert Marcuse, “The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian State,” quoted in Wolin, 152.

⁷ Marcuse, in Wolin, 152.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, “The Self-Assertion of the German University,” in Wolin, 33.

⁹ Heidegger, “The Conflagration,” quoted in Wolin, 13.

At-Large

Auschwitz, can defend his belief in National Socialism's "spiritual renewal of life in its entirety."¹⁰

Ultimately, for Löwith, Habermas, Marcuse and others, Nazism's rise and fall demonstrated that political existentialism is a doomed project. Existentialism's lone actor, protagonist, monologist is the "I," Heidegger's Dasein. And Dasein cannot survive generalization. Being is a characteristic of the individual; to speak of the "life" or "inner essence" of a people is perversion. Dasein in its move to the plural is left will-less, incapable of cognition or judgment. "You the philosopher," Marcuse rebukes Heidegger, "have confused the liquidation of occidental Dasein with its renewal?"¹¹

On the other side of the debate, Heidegger responds to these detractors by claiming that Nazism's barbarity stemmed not the failure of existentialism but from the excesses of Western rationalism and utilitarianism. This claim, ironically, resembles that made by Adorno and Horkheimer (A/H), both critics of Heideggerian existentialism, in their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. A/H's response to Nazism represents a broader movement to understand totalitarianism as a perceived consequence not of existentialism, but of the Enlightenment.

Like Heidegger, A/H see a reign of technology as the inevitable outcome of the Enlightenment's search for truth: In its drive towards meaning, the Enlightenment "[substitutes] formula for concept, rule and probability for motive and cause."¹² The process of Enlightenment is thus the process of demystification, the substitution of "computation and utility" for magic and ritual.¹³ The Enlightenment necessarily diminishes the power of the individual; in formula there is no room for the voice of the singular being. The Enlightenment also obliterates the possibility of dissent: "Whatever myths the resistance may appeal to, by virtue of the fact that they become arguments in the process of opposition, they acknowledge the principle of dissolvent rationality for which they reproach the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment is totalitarian."¹⁴ The Enlightenment's effacement of individual will is thus total and immune to protest. Abstraction becomes the precondition for dominance; "the manipulated collective consists in the negation of each individual."¹⁵

Hannah Arendt transfers A/H's argument to the political realm. In her study on *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argues that total domination requires universal interchangeability. As such, totalitarian regimes necessarily work to destroy individual will and

¹⁰ Herbert Marcuse, letter to Martin Heidegger, in Wolin, 162.

¹¹ Marcuse, letter, in Wolin, 163.

¹² Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1996), 5.

¹³ Adorno and Horkheimer, 6.

¹⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer, 6

¹⁵ Adorno and Horkheimer, 13

At-Large

spontaneity. Arendt identifies three steps as integral to the process of dehumanization: 1) destruction of the juridical man, manifested in the establishment of “extra-legal” categories, 2) destruction of the moral man, exhibited in totalitarianism’s erasure of moral categories and 3) destruction of individual identity, evinced most viscerally through the creation of physical uniformity, the shaved heads and animal barracks of the concentration camps.¹⁶ Thus for Arendt, as for A/H, Nazism lives not in the triumph of the individual subject, but in its negation. Like Heidegger, Arendt inculcates utilitarianism and scientism as currents leading to totalitarianism: “The danger of corpse factories and the holes of oblivion is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms.”¹⁷

Emmanuel Levinas conceives of Heidegger’s involvement with the Nazi party through a very different lens. Unlike Arendt, Levinas attempts no explication of the totalitarian subject; unlike A/H and Heidegger, Levinas does not seek in the Enlightenment or in Romanticism the strands of modern political reality. One might say that Levinas’ response to Heidegger is shadowed by its own language, which speaks in the vocabulary not of existentialism, ontology, utilitarianism, or Romanticism, but of morality.

In “Toward the Other,” an essay later published with his *Nine Talmudic Readings*, Levinas presents an exegesis of a Mishnaic text (the book of commentary on the Jewish Torah) on forgiveness. It is an essay originally delivered as a lecture in 1963, part of a symposium on post-World War II French-German relations. The Mishnaic text relates the story of Rab, a great Jewish sage, who once unthinkingly insults his teacher, Rav Hanina, by refusing to restart his lesson when Hanina tardily enters the study house. For thirteen years, the text goes, Rab approaches Hanina to plead his forgiveness, and although Jewish tradition teaches that a person need not plead more than three times for his fellow man’s forgiveness, each year Hanina refuses Rab’s entreaties. Why is this? Why should Hanina, the wise and compassionate sage, deny his pupil’s earnest apology? The commentators of the Gemara (the book of interpretation of the Mishna) respond by telling a story in which Hanina dreams that only by denying Rab’s pleas can he ensure that his star disciple will move to Babylon to supplant him as head of the academy.

Levinas, however, is unsatisfied with this exegesis. Forgiveness, Levinas explains, requires two factors, “the good will of the offended party and the full awareness of the offender.”¹⁸ Though Rab knows that he has insulted his master, Hanina’s dream reveals that Rab also holds a subconscious ambition, the desire to supplant his teacher. Perhaps, Levinas explains,

¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, “Total Domination,” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 128.

¹⁷ Arendt, 140

¹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 25.

Hanina cannot forgive Rab because Rab does not know the extent of his transgression. To conclude, Levinas offers a final reading:

But perhaps there is something altogether different in all this. One can, if pressed to the limit, forgive the one who has spoken unconsciously. But it is very difficult to forgive Rab, who was fully aware and destined for a great fate, which was prophetically revealed to his master. One can forgive many Germans, but there are some Germans it is difficult to forgive. It is difficult to forgive Heidegger.¹⁹

In this conference on post-war French-Germans relations, Levinas proffers only three sentences on Heidegger. But embedded in these few words is an important claim of Heidegger's ultimate culpability. Perhaps Heidegger, like Rab, simply lacked awareness. Perhaps Heidegger could not have predicted the political outcome of his philosophy simply because politics, values, the life of the collective, all these lay in a provenance beyond his worldview. Or perhaps Heidegger could and did understand, and it was merely pride that prevented him from admitting his transgressions. As Levinas suggests, both readings of Rab (and Heidegger) contain a seed of truth.

For Levinas, Heidegger's philosophy, which at its nascence announced itself as a philosophy of being, turns out to be the philosophy of *a* being. How can it be that Heidegger's *mitsein*, his "being-with," politicizes so easily into the *Volk*, the thoughtless aggregation of individual subjects? So, Levinas asks, how to "be-with"? How to maintain the sanctity of aloneness – what Heidegger recognized is "being" and not "beings" – and yet create a pathway for social living? These are Levinas' questions, and he roots his answer in the idea of "the Other."

For Levinas, being is not "always-already," as Heidegger suggests. Being, rather, is derivative, called forth by the voice of the Other. For Levinas, we become aware of our being only in the face of "the Stranger," as "over him I have no power."²⁰ And yet, we recognize that this infinitely other belongs to a shared homeland: "We are the same and the other."²¹ For Levinas, this "face-to-face," this sameness and otherness, points to the existence of a common origin. The existence of the other, Levinas argues, "is possible only if the other is other with respect to a term whose essence is to remain at the point of departure."²² The "I" and the "You," subject and object, being and episteme, man and God all emerge at the call of a primary force. It is the same voice that calls the "I" and "the Other," and because it is not "my" voice, "He and I do not form a number."²³ The Other resists this move to the plural; "Infinity does not permit itself to be integrated."²⁴ This vision of "alterity" fundamentally undermines Heidegger's ontology. It acknowledges that "being," the object of Heidegger's study, is only secondary. For Levinas, what

¹⁹ Levinas, 25.

²⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2007), 39.

²¹ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 39.

²² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 36.

²³ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 39.

²⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 80.

is primary is that which calls “being” into being, it is “religion, where relationship subsists between the same and the other despite the impossibility of the Whole.”²⁵

In a 1966 interview with the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, Heidegger attempts to clarify the circumstances surrounding his engagement with National Socialism. The interview’s ambit, however, extends well beyond Heidegger’s politics. In response to a question about the role of philosophy in the modern world, Heidegger claims that philosophy is impotent to alter the present condition. “This is not only true of philosophy,” Heidegger argues, “but of all merely human thought and endeavor. Only a god can save us.”²⁶

Perhaps it is ironic that both Levinas and Heidegger behold at philosophy’s end the realm of the divine. But the truth is that Levinas and Heidegger invoke two very different gods. Heidegger’s god is the redeemer, a messiah who arrives to reveal to man where he has gone wrong, to lend new purpose to a will-less society, to the capricious collective. Philosophy is capable of nothing more than the “preparation of the readiness, of keeping oneself open for the arrival of or the absence of the god.”²⁷ Heidegger’s god exists not because he must, but because he is needed. To be alone, to be resolute towards nothing – this is unbearable.

The god of Levinas is not a redeemer but a creator and a sustainer. Levinas’ god does not arrive as the owl of Minerva, to pass its wisdom as a sentence on humanity. Levinas’ god is already here, has always been here as the unseen voice that calls the “I” and the “You” into existence. It is hard for Levinas to forgive Heidegger because Levinas understands that a god *cannot* save us. Levinas understands the words of Arendt, who writes, “The idea of humanity, when purged of all sentimentality, has the very serious consequence that in one form or another, men must assume responsibility for all crimes committed by men....”²⁸ Stubborn, arrogant, or ignorant, Heidegger cannot admit to human responsibility. It is hard for Levinas to forgive Heidegger because Heidegger addresses his appeals not to his fellow man but to the chimerical god he awaits.

²⁵ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 80.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, “‘Only a God Can Save Us’: *Der Spiegel*’s Interview with Martin Heidegger,” in Wolin, 107.

²⁷ Heidegger, *Der Spiegel*, in Wolin, 108.

²⁸ Hannah Arendt, “Organized Guilt and Collective Responsibility,” in Baehr, 154.

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Outside of Yale

**“Our Country’s Common Ground”
The Gettysburg Battlefield as
Historical Document**

Amelia J. Spooner

Thesis in American History

Professors Eric Foner and William Leach

2009

The Outside Essay category provides one non-Yale student the opportunity to publish an essay in the Yale Historical Review. Amelia Spooner, a senior at Columbia University, wrote this essay for Professor Eric Foner’s history thesis seminar class. Her piece was selected from almost one hundred submitted essays.

Outside of Yale

Gettysburg was the greatest battle of the Civil War; not for the number of casualties, nor for its strategic import, but for its enduring symbolic power. The story of Gettysburg is a narrative of national progress, but the meanings of progress and the nation changed over time. The varied efforts to preserve the Gettysburg battlefield over the course of the last 146 years reflect those shifts in meaning. Since July 1863, Gettysburg townspeople, private organizations, and government institutions have led the charge to preserve, and later interpret, the battlefield. This paper discusses the significance of three key moments in the battlefield's history as a preserved landscape: the dedication ceremony of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863; the Supreme Court decision, *United States vs. Gettysburg Railway Company*, handed down January 24, 1896; the publication of the latest *General Management Plan and Environmental Statement*, issued by the National Park Service administration at Gettysburg in June 1999.

Early preservation efforts commenced almost immediately after the fighting stopped. The physical remnants of that singular Union victory were to be the material manifestation of hope, a kind of prophecy, for ultimate victory and a united nation. In 1880s and 90s, the battlefield landscape provided the most meaningful space for soldiers of the formerly divided nation to signify, on the ground itself, the nation's reconciliation, and the federal government soon acknowledged and financially supported those efforts. The National Park Service's arrival in 1933 marked the beginning of a new era of 'objectivity' that considered the first two moments as historical documents in their own right. The current Gettysburg administration is highly self-conscious of its role as the primary source of historical interpretation of the site, a self-consciousness that owes much to the ideological underpinnings of the Park Service itself. In short, this is the story of how a single battle came to symbolize the necessity of a war that led to the reunion of the nation, the continuation and renewal of democracy, and the end of slavery.

Chapter I: Theatre of War

Confederate General Robert E. Lee launched his last offensive campaign in the late summer of 1862. His forces subsequently defeated Union forces at the Second Battle of Bull Run, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville, near the Virginia-Maryland border, the year before Gettysburg. Rumors of the Confederate advance filled northern newspapers for months leading up to the battle. By mid-June 1863, two weeks before the armies converged on Gettysburg, the *Philadelphia North American* declared the situation in Pennsylvania a "crisis."¹ The author pleaded with bickering Unionists to declare a "political armistice," because "so grave an emergency" had to be confronted by a "harmonious, united and zealous action of the people, rising in their strength to defend the soil of the free States against invasion by the rebel hordes from Virginia."²

¹ "The Crisis," *North American and United States Gazette*, June 18, 1863, Col. A.

² Thomas W. Knox, "The Battlefield at Gettysburg. Scenes after the Fight. Appearance of the Ground, July 6, 1863," published in the *New York Herald*, July 9th, 1863.

Outside of Yale

An important victory on northern soil might have crushed Union morale and turned the war in Lee's favor. The defeat at Gettysburg, however, halted his army's large-scale advance into northern territory, and effectively drove the Confederate forces "back into 'Old Virginia' again," in the words of army surgeon Spencer Welch.³ The Confederate retreat was as much symbolic as it was tactical.

From the first days after the battle, Union supporters characterized Gettysburg as the beginning of the end of the Confederacy. Some went so far as to claim Gettysburg as the Confederacy's "mortal wound," its "death blow," the herald of ultimate Union victory.⁴ *The New York Herald's* first lengthy article on the battle compared Gettysburg to the Napoleonic battles at Waterloo, Wagram and Jena. Other reports drew comparisons to famous battles of classical antiquity such as Thermopylae and Marathon.⁵ The reference to Waterloo was especially fitting: that battle was both a physical and a symbolic defeat. Napoleon would never again rule as emperor, and Lee would never again advance so far into northern territory. Though the war dragged on for nearly two more years, the Battle of Gettysburg began to earn its place in American – at this time only Yankee – mythology. Gettysburg was a victory to which the North could lay claim, and the battlefield physically marked that place where Lee had been repulsed. As early preservations would soon claim, the act of preserving the battlefield documented, fixed in place, the record of that symbolic Union victory. The simple act of setting apart pieces of the battlefield, even as the war continued, supposed the site's continued preservation. The battlefield awaited a united nation.

On July 4th, 1863, a heavy rain fell over the Gettysburg battlefield and over the retreating army. The Pennsylvania landscape had been transformed from one marked by the signs of rural life to one indelibly marked by the event that had occurred there. The farmhouses and outbuildings were riddled with shrapnel. The wheatfields and the cornfields were destroyed: their stocks were flattened and their zigzag fences lay in shattered bits. The modest town cemetery, set on an elevated ridge, had been the site of some of the most intense fighting. A reporter for the *New York Herald* who visited the scene on July 6 noted overturned monuments and headstones, "graves once carefully tended by some loving hand, [...] trampled by horses' feet until the vestiges of verdure [had] disappeared."⁶ The material landscape of devastation spread out before the *Herald* reporter included not only the fractured tombstones, pockmarked

³ Spencer Glasgow Welch, 1834-1916. "Letter from Spencer Glasgow Welch to Cordelia Strother Welch, July 17, 1863." *A Confederate Surgeon's Letters to his Wife*, (Washington, DC: Neale Publishing Company, 1911), p. 59.

⁴ See for instance: "The Victory Undoubtedly Ours," *The New York Herald*, July 4, 1863; "Brilliant Victory Won," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 4, 1863; "The Victory at Gettysburg," *Albany Journal*, July 6, 1863; "Vicksburg and Victory—Peace Conquered and the Union Restored," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 8, 1863; "Victory!", *The Independent*, July 9, 1863, p. 4.

⁵ "Consecration of the National Sepulchre," *New York Herald*, November 20, 1863.

⁶ Thomas W. Knox, "The Battlefield at Gettysburg. Scenes after the Fight. Appearance of the Ground, July 6, 1863," *The New York Herald*, July 9, 1863.

Outside of Yale

trees and scarred barns, but human and animal carnage as well. The corpses of soldiers and horses lay thick over the nearly 20,000-acre site and the ground was visibly soaked with blood even after the torrential rains of the two previous days.⁷ In the space of three days, the town's wheatfields and orchards, the patches of woodland and the town cemetery, were now simply a "battlefield."

The first newspaper reports of the battle emphasized the openness and visibility of the landscape. "Were it not for [...] the occasional sprinkling of trees over its surface," a typical article ran, "it could be compared to a patch of rolling prairie in miniature."⁸ The battle was fought primarily over control of the high ground, and both sides endured massive losses as they ventured out into the no man's land of cultivated fields and ascending slopes. Other Civil War battlefields possessed barren fields and elevated ridges,⁹ but the Gettysburg topography was "unlike every previous battle of the war" because "the movements of the two armies [...] were visible from every part of the field."¹⁰ No landscape could be more appropriate as the theatre of bloody drama, epitomized by what has become known as Pickett's Charge. On the third and last day of fighting, the combined forces of Pettigrew, Trimble, and Pickett attempted to break the center of the Union line on Cemetery Hill by marching across hay fields already devastated by the fighting. At Gettysburg, a Southern reporter noted, "The game of battle [was] played on a clear board."¹¹ Men became actors in the drama of war, pawns moving across a board, "wave[s] of living valor" rolling up the slopes of Gettysburg "only to roll back again under the deadly fire."¹² The topographical features of Gettysburg and their bloody consequences lent themselves to journalistic dramatization immediately after the fight. In the years following the battle, the battlefield's visibility was serendipitous for those who would preserve and memorialize it: if men are visible, so are monuments.

Before preservation of the battlefield could begin in earnest, however, the dead had to be buried. The question was where. More than 7,000 men had been killed during the battle, and roughly 26,000, many of whom subsequently died, lay wounded after the fighting ceased.¹³ The scale of the casualties overwhelmed the town of roughly 2,400. Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin traveled to Gettysburg soon after the battle to determine the best course of action. He visited field hospitals, conferred with local leaders, and walked over the battlefield. Upon his departure for the capital, he appointed David Wills, a Gettysburg resident and lawyer, as his

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Knox, "The Battlefield at Gettysburg," July 9, 1863.

⁹ Union forces encountered a long open plain at Fredericksburg; at Antietam, the two armies clashed along the uneven western slope of the Antietam River.

¹⁰ "The Campaign in Pennsylvania – Further Accounts of the Battles of Gettysburg," *The Charleston Mercury*, July 17, 1863.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Knox, "The Battlefield at Gettysburg," July 9, 1863.

¹³ Mark Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2008), pp. 244, 507, and 509.

Outside of Yale

representative. Wills was to communicate with the governor as to how the state could best meet the needs of the devastated town, through financial or other assistance. On July 24th, 1863, Wills wrote to Governor Curtin, emphasizing the urgent need for Pennsylvania to purchase land for a cemetery.¹⁴ While the cemetery was founded in part for practical reasons, the proposed burial ground was to be explicitly “national” in character. Only Union soldiers, the true defenders of the “nation,” were to be buried there. The Soldiers’ National Cemetery at Gettysburg, then, accomplished a dual purpose: it did something about the dead bodies hastily buried on the Pennsylvania terrain, and it addressed the question of how best to honor the nation’s dead.

As soon as Wills received approval from the governor to go forward with the purchase of land on Cemetery Hill – so named for the old Gettysburg town cemetery that occupied a part of the slope – he discovered that another Gettysburg resident and attorney, David McConaughy, had already purchased the desired spot. Indeed, McConaughy had written to Governor Curtin soon after Wills to request that Pennsylvania citizens purchase battlefield land so that they could “participate in the tenure of the sacred grounds of the Battlefield, by contributing to its actual cost.”¹⁵ As president of the town cemetery association, David McConaughy arguably had another aim: to found a soldier’s cemetery of his own that could later be incorporated into the civilian cemetery, which would alleviate his association’s mounting debt.¹⁶ Governor Curtin and Wills, however, insisted that the soldier’s cemetery be separate and distinct from the local cemetery – a truly national cemetery whose very name, the Soldiers’ National Cemetery at Gettysburg, spoke of a reunited nation. In the late summer of 1863, McConaughy did finally agree to sell seventeen acres of land to Wills, and a design for the cemetery was quickly chosen.¹⁷ Ever-widening semi-circular rows were to be laid out, and no state, no matter the number of sons lost, was to be given preferential placement. The tombstones were to be nearly flush with the ground, symbolizing the dead soldiers’ identical commitment to the Union.¹⁸ The new cemetery’s location had been carefully selected as well: it had been the center of the Union line. As David Wills successfully

¹⁴ Wills to Curtin, July 24 1863, printed in John Russell Barlett, *The Soldier’s National Cemetery at Gettysburg* (Providence: Providence Press Company, 1874), pp. 1-2.

¹⁵ Richard West Sellars, “Pilgrim Places: Civil War Battlefields, Historic Preservation, and America’s First national Military Parks, 1863-1900,” *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* 2, no. 1 (Winter 2005), http://crmjournal.cr.nps.gov/04_article_sub.cfm?issue=Volume%202%20Number%201%20Winter%202005&page=1&seq=1 (accessed fall 2008).

¹⁶ Kathleen Georg Harrison, “Gettysburg: A Happy and Patriotic Conception,” unpublished manuscript, 1979, in Folder 11-28, Vertical Files, GNMP Library, p. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁸ The cemetery’s proprietors had even considered identifying and burying the dead not by state, but simply by their Union affiliation, a physical symbol of their unity even in death. The Union over state identity. David Wills to Edward Everett, September 23, 1863. For a lengthier description of the development of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery, see John S. Patterson, “A Patriotic Landscape: Gettysburg, 1863-1913,” unpublished manuscript, date not given, in Folder 11-27, Vertical Files, GNMP Library.

Outside of Yale

argued, Cemetery Hill was “the spot above all others for the honorable burial of the dead who have fallen on those fields.”¹⁹ In this early period of the battlefield’s preservation, those who deserved to be buried in this decidedly “national” cemetery were Union men.

In the late morning of November 19, 1863, four months after the battle, President Lincoln’s party reached the modest stage set up for the day’s occasion, the dedication of the Soldier’s National Cemetery at Gettysburg. Sometime after noon, the Honorable Edward Everett began a lengthy oration, which ended around 3 p.m. A hymn was sung, and Lincoln rose to speak. The President suggested that if the Union were to have a “new birth of freedom” – the renewal of democracy and the end of slavery – it would be Gettysburg that had acted as midwife. Lincoln insisted, however, that the work was not yet accomplished. It required the continued sacrifice and dedication of Unionists to carry on the work begun at Gettysburg. The prescient words of 1863 assumed new potency in 1865. The nation remembered Gettysburg as the site of freedom’s new birth. If Lincoln had never come to Pennsylvania, the battle would have remained an important strategic and symbolic victory for the North. However, his words, in addition to mere accidents of history – the topography of the landscape, the eagerness of certain Gettysburg citizens to preserve battlefield land – set the site apart. Lincoln confirmed Gettysburg’s importance, militarily and symbolically, and provided a usable set of terms, a vocabulary, to which Gettysburg could always lay claim: from death, life; from division, union; from slavery, freedom.

While David Wills and Governor Curtin turned their attention to the administration of the new Soldiers’ National Cemetery, David McConaughy continued to acquire tracts of battlefield land that he considered to be “the most striking and interesting portions of the Battle ground” in order to preserve them.²⁰ There could be “no more fitting and expressive memorial of the heroic valor and signal triumphs of our army,” he wrote in an August 1863 letter, “than the battlefield itself, with its natural and artificial defences, preserved and perpetuated in the exact form and condition they presented during the battle.”²¹ For McConaughy, preserving the battlefield was the best way for Pennsylvanians to honor the fallen Union men, but he did not have the financial resources to purchase land indefinitely. Thus in the fall of 1863, McConaughy co-founded the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association (GBMA), a private association charged with soliciting funds from Pennsylvania and other states in order to acquire battlefield land.²² The GBMA achieved official sanction in the spring of 1864 when the Pennsylvania

¹⁹ Wills to Curtin, July 24 1863, printed in John Russell Barlett, *The Soldier’s National Cemetery at Gettysburg* (Providence, 1874), pp. 1-2.

²⁰ David McConaughy to Hon. Jos. R. Ingersoll and others, August 19th, 1863, in Folder 11-29b, “David McConaughy Correspondence,” Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park archives.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² John M. Vanderslice, *Gettysburg Then and Now*, (Dayton: Morningside House, Inc.: 2000; first publication, 1897), p. I.

Outside of Yale

legislature issued a charter to the fledgling association, endowing it with the rights of a corporation, to:

hold and preserve, the battle-grounds of Gettysburg [...] and by such perpetuation, and such memorial structures as a generous and patriotic people may aid to erect, to commemorate the heroic deeds, the struggles, and the triumphs of their brave defenders.²³

The “patriotic people” meant northerners, and specifically, Pennsylvanians. It bears mentioning once again that Gettysburg ended Lee’s large-scale offensive campaign into the north. Pennsylvanians considered the Union soldiers who fought at Gettysburg to be, literally, their “brave defenders.” The Pennsylvania legislature gave the GBMA the exclusive right to build roadways, ornament the grounds, and oversee the erection of “structures and works or art [...] adapted to designate the spots of special interest, to commemorate the great deeds of valor, endurance, and noble self-sacrifice, and to perpetuate the memory of the heroes, and the signal events, which render [those] battle-grounds illustrious.”²⁴ The language of the Act links four important concepts: valorous deeds, memory, heroes, and battle-grounds. The Act states that in preserving the battle-grounds, the memory of the heroes who fought there would likewise endure. And ‘heroes’, at that time, belonged only to the Union.

Three years later, in 1867-1868, the state of Pennsylvania appropriated funds to achieve the goals outlined in the Act. The state reimbursed McConaughy for the land he had purchased and allocated six thousand additional dollars to purchase three distinctive landscape features, Culp’s Hill, East Cemetery Hill, and the slope and summit of Little Round Top.²⁵ Such state involvement in the preservation of a historic landscape was highly unusual at the time. Before the Civil War, Congress had debated whether the government’s involvement in historic preservation was even constitutional.²⁶ While ornamenting and caring for the new national cemetery took priority over purchasing and preserving other battlefield land in this early period, the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association made the first efforts to memorialize the field. By the early 1880s, an increasing number of veterans began to participate in reunions and other commemorative activities at battlefield sites including Gettysburg, and these activities led directly to the federal government’s total commitment to preserving and marking battlefield land outside the cemetery.

This process was not immediate at Gettysburg, for the victory held such symbolic significance for Pennsylvanians and northerners at large. Early battlefield administrators resisted the national character the site was taking. David McConaughy, for instance, the major advocate

²³ “An Act to Incorporate the Gettysburg Battle-Field Memorial Association,” April 30, 1864, printed in Unrau, *Administrative History: GNMP and GNC*, p. 41.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²⁵ Vanderslice, *Gettysburg Then and Now*, p. 360.

²⁶ Sellars, “Pilgrim Places,” p. 15.

Outside of Yale

of battlefield preservation from the beginning, found himself displaced from the Board of Directors in June 1880. His personal letters reveal a man committed to keeping the site in the hands of Pennsylvanians. Again and again, he emphasized the need to select local-born directors who could continue the work that he, a Gettysburg citizen, had begun.²⁷ Two years before his removal, in the summer of 1878, the largest and most powerful Union veteran organization, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), encamped for a week on East Cemetery Hill. One of the campers was John M. Vanderslice, adjutant-general of the Philadelphia chapter of the GAR. Upon viewing the condition of the battlefield, Vanderslice resolved that the Grand Army should assume control of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association. He had been disappointed by what he perceived as “the apparent apathy or inactivity of those controlling it.”²⁸ Circulars were issued to GAR Posts urging members to purchase stock in the Association, which would give them leverage in selecting GBMA directors. By 1880, the Grand Army controlled the Board, but the great majority of members were still from Pennsylvania. By the following year, GAR members all over the northern states began to express interest in the Association. After 1883 the local nature of the Association was lost and the directors hailed from all over the North.²⁹ Former Confederate soldiers began to take part in the association; soon it became truly national in character.

Chapter II: Monuments, Reunions, & the Invention of American Valor

Gettysburg is but a small example of what historian David Blight had called “a fated and tragic struggle still only in its formative years,” the struggle to haphazardly reconcile the former enemies under the banner of reunion, to the grave detriment of African Americans’ newly gained civil and political liberties.³⁰ On battlefields across the country, veterans would reenact, by way of reunions and monuments, their former battles. Battlefields provided the most meaningful space for the working out of sectional reconciliation. Starting in the 1880s, Gettysburg began the slow transition from a site dedicated exclusively to northern soldiers to one both sides could claim.

²⁷ In a November 1863 letter to the Honorable Jordan Jr., McConaughy praises Jordan’s selection of a “Chairman of Localborn”; on May 3rd, 1864, four days after the GBMA received its charter from the state of Pennsylvania, McConaughy described the ideal composition of the Association: “a President and 2 Directors [...] from Philadelphia, 2 from Pittsburg and 3 from Gettysburg, and one each from Harrisburg, Chambersburg, York, Lancaster, Reading, Erie, and Williamsport”; in another May 1864 letter, McConaughy suggests that the president of the Association be someone of “acknowledged distinction and public reputation, whose name would in itself be an element of strength and influence, and to that end should be from a City and especially from Philadelphia.” These letters are to be found in Folder 11-29b, “David McConaughy Correspondence,” Vertical Files, GNMP Library.

²⁸ Vanderslice, *Gettysburg Then and Now*, p. 364.

²⁹ Vanderslice, *Gettysburg Then and Now*, p. 368, and NPS pamphlet, *History of the Gettysburg National Military Park*, “Organization of the Association,” in Folder 11-33a, GNMP Library, p. 1.

³⁰ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 139.

Outside of Yale

The marking of Union battle lines became meaningless without their mirror images: Americans, dressed in grey, lining the opposite side of a once bloody field.

The first significant overtures to include Confederate veterans in the preservation of the battlefield came in 1882, when the GBMA invited a number of officers to visit the field in order to ascertain former troop positions. The Executive Committee reported in June that the men had contributed “a great deal of valuable information” that the Committee hoped would lead to the erection of memorials and further land acquisitions.³¹ The report concluded with a plea for monetary assistance from “the States whose troops were engaged in the battle here, [...] who will doubtless desire that their achievements shall be kept in perpetual memory by monumental structures upon this field.”³² Though Union veterans still administered the battlefield, for the first time the GBMA solicited the financial support of any state desiring to erect memorials in honor of their troops. No longer was Gettysburg a site dedicated only to Pennsylvania’s “brave defenders.” Former Confederate states would not immediately jump at the chance, however. Nonetheless, the participation of Confederate veterans in marking the field, and the GBMA’s explicit assertion that the battlefield served to memorialize the achievements of *all* states, marked a break with the early period of preservation characterized by local control of the Association. The growing insistence on marking Confederate battle lines at Gettysburg in the mid-1880s symbolized the greater inclusion of the former enemies in the life of the antebellum nation. Private organizations like the GBMA took the first steps to accomplish the purpose of reconciliation.

The GBMA’s often strained financial resources, however, necessitated the intervention of the federal government. By late 1882, the GBMA declared their funds “exhausted.” The Association had recently bought thirty-two acres of land, bringing their total acreage to 280 acres. The Executive Committee reported that the work of restoring the defenses, constructing monuments, and purchasing land would have to be put on hold until more funds could be secured. The following summer, the committee stated that members had been obliged to use their personal funds to purchase further battlefield land.³³ Fortunately for the GBMA, the state of Massachusetts soon appropriated \$5,000 for land purchases and a smaller amount for the erection of monuments. In 1884-1885, the 3d Pennsylvania Cavalry and the 2d Maryland Confederate Infantry donated funds.³⁴ The GBMA continued in like manner, soliciting appropriations from states and veterans’ organizations, until 1893. In that year, as part of the Sundry Civil Appropriation Act, Congress set aside \$25,000 for preserving and marking “the

³¹ *Report of the Executive Committee of the Gettysburg Battle-Field Memorial Association*, June 26, 1882, in Folder 11-30, GNMP Library, p. 1.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³³ *Report of the GBMA*, 1882, p. 1; *Report of the Executive Committee of the Gettysburg Battle-Field Memorial Association*, July 2, 1883, in Folder 11-30, GNMP Library, pp. 1-2.

³⁴ Vanderslice, *Gettysburg Then and Now*, pp. 371-72.

Outside of Yale

positions occupied by the various commands of the armies of the Potomac and of Northern Virginia,” and for the opening of avenues. The Secretary of War promptly appointed a three-man commission to oversee the expenditure of the congressional appropriation. Confederate veteran William Forney, Union veteran John Nicholson, and self-styled historian John Bachelder, a former landscape painter who had come to Gettysburg shortly after the battle to interview soldiers and draw topographical maps, were selected. A brief but significant phrase at the end of the appropriation bill required each tablet to bear a “historical legend compiled without praise and without censure.”³⁵ The language was neutral and inclusive. The markers would neither glorify nor rebuke; they would simply tell the story of two American armies who met each other in July 1863.

By 1893 the federal government was intimately involved in the preservation and marking of the battlefield. In the fall of that year, the three-man War Department Commission conducted an initial survey of the battlefield and found to their dismay that the Gettysburg Electric Railway sought to lay out tracks over significant portions of the battlefield, most notably, close to Devil’s Den, where intense fighting had taken place on the second day. The commissioners implored the company to divert the line away from battlefield terrain, but their efforts failed. The commission appealed to the Attorney General for assistance, and in 1894 condemnation proceedings began. The trial wound its way through various appellate courts until it reached the Supreme Court in January 1896. The case hinged on whether or not preservation of the battlefield was an appropriate “public use.” The court decided that the preservation and marking of battle lines at Gettysburg had a higher purpose than even “public use”: indeed, preserving the battlefield was “so closely connected with the welfare of the republic itself” that through such action the “whole country” could be “protect[ed] and preserv[ed].”³⁶ To condemn a railroad’s advance was to condemn progress, but the preservation of the Gettysburg battlefield trumped progress. The decision came only one year after the War Department assumed control of the site’s administration. Gettysburg no longer belonged to the North. It was a national sacred space that both sides could memorialize. What had once been a celebration of only Union victory and courage became a tribute to American valor. Gettysburg embodied on a smaller scale nationwide sectional reconciliation.

From the 1890s onward, veterans from the northern states would no longer dominate Gettysburg’s administration. The War Department years also saw a renewed effort to preserve and mark Confederate battle lines. With the influx of new monetary resources, the Park Commission under the War Department replaced the rutted drives of the GBMA era with paved grand avenues. Post and pipe fences came to line the new roadways, whose shoulders were

³⁵ U.S. Senate, *Appropriations, new offices, etc.* Serial Set Vol. No. 3071, Session Vol. No. 8 (December 5, 1892-March 3, 1893), 52nd Congress, 2nd Session, S.Misc.Doc. 70, p. 189.

³⁶ *United States vs. Gettysburg Electric Railway Company*, Vol. 160 U.S. 668, Supreme Court of the United States, January 24, 1896.

Outside of Yale

protected by drainage gutters and guard chains. The Commission erected four steel observation towers for the use of military students and posted regulatory signs. As the veterans of the battle passed away, such markers and monuments became increasingly important to tell the story of “American heroism” at Gettysburg.³⁷ For the veterans of the 1880s and 90s, the war had been a testing ground for American courage, and in that respect both sides had come out victorious. Both sides had monuments, tangible records of their movements, eulogized in perpetuity. Veteran reunions served a similar purpose. They too recounted the story of the battle – who fought where when. Monuments stood where regiments had marched, and the men of Pickett’s Division walked over the same ground they had crossed years earlier. But these reenactments, in flesh or stone, accomplished another purpose. They wrote a new story into the ground, that of reconciliation.

Though sectional animosities had not faded entirely, the end of the 19th century was characterized by an effort to define and celebrate values to which both sides could lay claim: American valor and dedication to a cause. On the former fields of death, Union and Confederate veterans reenacted significant battle moments and conducted joint reunion ceremonies. These symbolic acts had as their end result the clasping of hands, in stark contrast to the last time these men had met on fields like Gettysburg. Again, new life from death and unity from division. “A new birth of freedom,” however, would have to wait. The rough cobbling together of the former enemy soldiers, overwhelmingly white, came at the expense of black Americans. Though free of slavery, they would be subjected to Jim Crow legislation beginning in the late 1870s.

Union and Confederate veterans fraternized publicly for the first time in 1875, at the centennial observance of the Battle of Bunker Hill.³⁸ The celebration of a common history brought the men together in Boston. Such gatherings increasingly took place on Civil War battlefields, and Gettysburg played host to some of the most significant. The same year as the Bunker Hill celebration, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which promised “full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement” to all citizens regardless of race and color. The Supreme Court declared the Act unconstitutional less than ten years later, around the same time that joint reunions were becoming increasingly popular.

Gettysburg’s 25th anniversary in 1888, for instance, drew enough veterans to reenact Pickett’s Charge. The former Confederate soldiers rode across the field in carriages until they

³⁷ By way of an example, in 1887 the monument marking where Confederate General Armistead fell was named “a monument to American Heroism,” instead of the initially proposed “Armistead-fell-here marker.” From the *Gettysburg Star and Sentinel*, in Folder 17-1, Vertical Files, GNMP Library.

³⁸ Ronald Lee, “National Military Parks Line, 1781-1933,” *Family Tree of the National Park System*, (Philadelphia: Eastern National Park & Monument Association, 1972), http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/lee2/leec.htm (accessed spring 2009).

reached the “enemy” at their position behind the famed stone wall, where the men joined in a long, loud cheer, and shook hands repeatedly.³⁹ “The man who lives on sectional bitterness,” a southern reporter wrote, “would have been out of place there. The Gettysburg reunion will, in my opinion, do immeasurable good in bringing about thoroughly national and unprejudiced thinking among the people of the great United States.”⁴⁰ “Unprejudiced” here referred only to reconciliation between the former enemies, not to any national trend in combating racial prejudice. Indeed, eight years after the reunion, the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case declared racial segregation constitutional. While Gettysburg had begun as a memorial to northern victory, joint reunions and their permanent counterparts, monuments, embodied sectional reconciliation on the ground.

In 1913, on the 50th anniversary of the battle, Gettysburg played host to the most widely celebrated reunion in American history. Fifty-four thousand Union and Confederate veterans traveled to Gettysburg for the festivities. The grand finale took place on the third day with another reenactment of Pickett’s Charge. As President Wilson, the first southern-born president to be elected since the Civil War, looked out over the gathered crowd, he mused:

How wholesome and healing the peace has been! We have found one another again as brothers and comrades, in arms, enemies no longer, generous friends rather, our battles long past, the quarrel forgotten—except that we shall not forget the splendid valor, the manly devotion of the men then arrayed against one another, now grasping hand and smiling into each other’s eyes.⁴¹

Gettysburg, then, belonged to the reunited nation; the battlefield was a record of American – not Union or Confederate – valor.

Chapter III: “As Developed ‘For the use and enjoyment of the people’”: The National Park Service at Gettysburg

In 1915, Stephen Mather and Horace Albright, two employees of the Department of the Interior, took an official trip to the Hot Springs Reservation in Arkansas. On their return trip to Washington, D.C., Albright parted from Mather and made a detour through Tennessee. He wanted to look over the battlefields of Chattanooga and Chickamauga, administered by the War Department. Albright was disheartened by the lack of clearly marked park boundaries and the absence of park employees, but he could do nothing but grumble at the time: the site was outside

³⁹ Frederick Tilberg, “A Century of Reunions,” Gettysburg National Military Park, July 1968, in Folder 11-60, GNMP Library, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰ E.W.B., “Getting Tired of It,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 5, 1888, p. 1. Accessed through ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁴¹ “Address at the Gettysburg Battlefield,” July 4, 1913, printed in Blight, *Race and Reunion*, p. 11.

Outside of Yale

of his and Mather's jurisdiction.⁴² In a traincar on the way back to the nation's capital, Albright wrote a fervent letter to Mather: "Why should a military department be in charge of lands which are predominantly an attraction for all the people?" he asked. "It seems to me that our new bureau ought to be concerned with all areas the Federal Government wishes to preserve and protect for the education, interest and enjoyment of the population."⁴³ With the founding of the National Park Service a year later, Albright believed a system that included both natural and historical parks was within reach. In his first annual report as acting director of the new agency (Mather had suffered a nervous breakdown and could not resume his duties until the following year), Albright discussed the future of national military parks like Gettysburg. "The question," he wrote, "is whether these parks should not also be placed under this Department in order that they may be administered as a part of the national park system. The interesting features of each of these parks are their historic associations although several of them possess important scenic qualities."⁴⁴ The National Park Service was still a very young agency and already had its hands full learning how to administer the enormous scenic parks of the West. Nonetheless, as early as 1923, an attempt was made to transfer War Department-administered historic sites to the Interior, but it failed.⁴⁵ Three years later, in 1926, Albright and Mather took another official trip that included a stop at Gettysburg. The men "were astonished at the small acreage of these lands" and "unhappy about the quality of the guide service."⁴⁶ Another bill to transfer the War Department sites was introduced in 1928. The bill passed the Senate but died in the House Committee of Military Affairs in 1929.⁴⁷ Under the Hoover administration, 1929-1933, Albright tried again. But just as the reorganization bill was ready to be passed in March 1933, Congress adjourned. The Hoover administration had come to an end. Finally, in June 1933, Albright finally engineered the transfer under Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Though the National Park Service did not gain control over the War Department sites until 1933, by the time of the transfer the NPS had already taken steps to acquire other historic sites and commence a program of historical interpretation. In July of 1930, President Hoover approved legislation for the establishment of the Colonial National Monument (encompassing Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown) and authorized the acquisition of the Yorktown

⁴² Horace Marden Albright, *Origins of National Park Service Administration of Historic Sites*, (Philadelphia: Eastern National Parks & Monument Association, 1971), p. 4, http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/albright/index.htm (accessed spring 2009).

⁴³ Horace Albright, *Creating the National Park Service: The Missing Years*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), p. 117.

⁴⁴ Horace Albright, *Annual Report of the National Park Service, 1917*, printed in Albright, *Origins of National Park Service Administration of Historic Sites*, p. 5.

⁴⁵ *Reorganization of the Executive Departments. Letter from the President of the United States to Walter F. Brown, Chairman of the Joint Committee on the Reorganization of Government Departments*. Serial Set Vol. No. 8171, Session Vol. No.12, 67th Congress, 4th Session, S.Doc. 302.

⁴⁶ Albright, *Origins of National Park Service Administration of Historic Sites*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Outside of Yale

Battlefield and Jamestown Island. The newly appointed Director Albright established a new branch of research and education in Washington, D.C. In 1931, he appointed Verne E. Chatelain as the bureau's first chief historian. When the young Chatelain took up his duties in the capitol, he was instantly disappointed. He felt that "the personnel of the Service, as then constituted, was not ready for what was happening and had [...] not the foggiest notions of how to handle them."⁴⁸ Verne Chatelain would clear things up.

During his first few years at the Park Service, Chatelain focused on creating a dedicated and efficient army of historians and administrative personnel that could easily adapt to a larger, truly national system when funding and manpower became available. Soon after taking up his post, Chatelain organized a history conference in Washington, where he advocated for an overarching "philosophy" to guide the new historical division. Historical activity in the parks should have a strictly "educational" aim, he said, striving always for "accurate, scientific knowledge."⁴⁹ His long-term goal, however, was to develop a system of national historic sites that would reflect what he called "the American story." Sites should capitalize on their "uniquely graphic qualities [...] where stirring and significant events have taken place," which would "drive home to the visitor the meaning of those events showing not only their importance in themselves but their integral relationship to the whole history of American development."⁵⁰ In 1935, the moment Chatelain had been waiting for arrived. Congress passed the Historic Sites Act, hailed as the Magna Carta in the program for the preservation of historic sites by many in the historic preservation community. A "new cultural nationalism," they effused, now had official approval. The act stated "that it is national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the *inspiration and benefit* of the United States" (emphasis added). History could uplift and improve Americans, and historic sites were their tangible connection to the grand meanings of a heroic past. The act passed alongside the National Park Trust Fund Board Act, which allowed private donations to be held in trust for the Service's use in the acquisition, preservation, and restoration of historic sites.⁵¹ For the first time, the Park Service had the money and the legislative support to implement a national program of historic preservation, development, and interpretation. From the beginning of the National Park Service's historical interpretation program in the early 1930s, preservation and interpretation were inextricably linked.

⁴⁸ Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., "Verne E. Chatelain and the Development of the Branch of History of the National Park Service," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter, 1994), p. 29.

⁴⁹ "Historical Conference," November 27, 1931, printed in Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*, (Denver: Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1983), pp. 163-164.

⁵⁰ Verne Chatelain, "History and Our National Parks," 1935, printed in Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*, p. 166.

⁵¹ Chatelain, "History and Our National Parks," printed in Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*, pp. 194-196.

Outside of Yale

In 1933, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 6166, which transferred the national cemeteries and battlefield parks from the War Department to the National Park Service. The takeover came only five years after the death of Emmor B. Cope, Gettysburg's chief topographical engineer since the 1890s and himself a veteran of the battle. Beginning in the 1930s, historical interpreters employed by the Park Service explained the major events of the battle using a large topographical map and a few cases of artifacts in an office above the downtown post office. A self-guided brochure was developed in the 1940s. In 1962, the Park Service opened its first freestanding visitor center, built explicitly for the purpose of welcoming tourists and interpreting the battle. Before the arrival of the National Park Service, preservation and historical interpretation were one and the same. Visions of the battle's meaning – and what it signified to the nation – were written into the ground by various individuals: local citizens, veterans, and War Department officials among them. The Park Service inaugurated a new era in which preservation served the needs of historical interpretation. Preservation aided in telling the landscape's story, because the men who had lived through the Civil War era had all passed away.

In the early years of the NPS at Gettysburg, “interpretation” meant detailing military history, tactics, and strategy. As time went on, Gettysburg's administrators began to add supplementary contextual information to their displays and interpretive programs. The NPS annual reports from the 1970s in particular boast of the expansion and “improvement” of historical interpretation at the site. For instance, 1972 saw the introduction of a program entitled “Women in the Crisis,” planned and presented by the female staff. In 1973, Superintendent Schober was glad to note that the “old fashioned interpretive program at Gettysburg changed markedly th[at] year.” He proceeds to describe five special live programs that had been developed the previous spring, which included a “Women in the War” presentation and a Civil War Soldier living history program.⁵² The current historical interpretive strategy presented at Gettysburg traces its roots back to these “new history” programs.

At a conference for NPS historical interpreters in 1999, participants discussed the changes in historical methodology that had taken place in the 1970s. The “new history,” they said, had been “adopted by American historians and historical institutions,” and the NPS had followed suit, marking a radical departure from early NPS historical interpretation that had assigned “narrow definitions of historical meaning to NPS sites.” By contrast, they wrote, the new curriculum “encouraged interpreters to re-examine the ‘meanings of the resource,’ to present multiple perspectives, and to present universal historical concepts, so that all visitors could find meanings in national parks.” These changes, they concluded, were “not necessary because it was ‘politically correct,’ but because it was ‘historically correct.’” In summary, it was the

⁵² Annual Report, Superintendent, Gettysburg National Military Park, January 22, 1973, Park Administrative Files, GNMP; Annual Report, Superintendent, Gettysburg National Military Park, January 25, 1974, Park Administrative Files, GNMP, printed in Unrau, *Administrative History: GNMP and GNC*, p. 326.

Outside of Yale

right thing to do.”⁵³ Contextualizing the battle, therefore, was nothing short of a moral obligation. By 1981, Gettysburg’s superintendent reported that participation in NPS interpretive programs was up 200%. Subjects included *Women and the War*, the *Civil War Soldier*, *Noncombatants in the War*, and *Civil War Medicine*.⁵⁴ In 1992, Gettysburg park historian Scott Hartwig distributed an audiotape tour with an accompanying survey. In answer to the question, “Is there anything that you did not hear on the tape program that you would like to hear?”, a visitor remarked, “More individualized battle accounts.” Another reviewer suggested that the experiences of women be represented on the tape.⁵⁵ The two reviews highlight the most common “new” interpretive themes during the first 30 years of “new history” at the Park Service: women in the war and the experiences of individual soldiers. But while costumed young men strolled the fields of Gettysburg as part of “living history programs,” and female rangers spoke of women in the war, the word “slavery” was nowhere to be found. In a 1974 article, historian John Patterson hotly criticized the old visitor center’s exhibits for their contextual shortcomings. The exhibits painted sectional reconciliation in glorious colors, he said, but gave no explanation for why they fought in the first place.⁵⁶ Elaboration of the “causes and consequences of the Civil War” appeared for the first time at the new visitor center, opened in 2008.

Gettysburg’s current superintendent, John Latschar, came to Gettysburg in August of 1994. Almost immediately after his arrival, the administration began work on a new general management plan. The document published in 1999 contains the most explicit acknowledgment and elaboration to date of a process that began in the 1930s, the historicizing of memory. Those who directed battlefield preservation before the National Park Service era took the process of history-writing for granted. Their memories became the facts of history, written onto the land in the form of a memorial landscape. As the self-conscious purveyor of historical information, the current Park Service has an entirely new relationship to the telling of Gettysburg’s story than did the local citizens and veterans who preserved the site in earlier periods. The NPS cannot lay claim to the ‘expertise’ of experience, and the next best thing is a kind of historical objectivity. Gettysburg no longer belongs only to the North, a permanent record of Union victory. It is no longer a site of Civil War veterans’ reunions, a site that speaks of sectional reconciliation without detailing the cost of that reconciliation. The interpretive materials at today’s Gettysburg describe the earlier eras of preservation as compelling, honorable, yet incomplete versions of the

⁵³ Sarah Blodgett, ed., *1999 Interpretive Sourcebook*, National Interpreters Workshop, Syracuse, NY, 1999.

⁵⁴ Annual Report, Superintendent, Gettysburg National Military Park, April 6, 1983, Park Administrative Files, GNMP, printed in Unrau, *Administrative History: GNMP and GNC*, p. 327.

⁵⁵ “Battlefield Tape Tour,” Public Comments, GNMP Library, in Box B-21.

⁵⁶ For example, during the old center’s main film, a bird symbolizing sectional reconciliation soared over the battlefield; a prominent display case depicted a Confederate general giving water to a Union commander, noting that the men became friends after the war, from John Patterson, “Zapped at the Map: The Battlefield at Gettysburg,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 7 (1974), pp. 827-828.

Outside of Yale

Gettysburg story. According to the main brochure handed out at today's Gettysburg, "The big picture of what happened at Gettysburg" – a recounting of the battle and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, from whose words "a nation was inspired to heal and unite" – is no longer sufficient. "There were thousands of stories that emerged, countless lives that were affected, and a multitude of underlying details about the Battle of Gettysburg, its causes and consequences," and the new Museum and Visitor Center was founded to "tell that entire, amazing story."⁵⁷ The attempt to expand the Gettysburg story to include a discussion of the battle's "causes and consequences" leads necessarily to a discussion of slavery, an issue that earlier NPS administrations had only barely touched upon. Today the Battle of Gettysburg is the vehicle of yet another telling of the Civil War's meaning. The narrative goes that the war was a terrible yet necessary event in the life of the nation that reinvigorated American democracy and ended slavery.

The reconsideration of Gettysburg's interpretive materials starting in 1995 anticipated a Park Service-wide transformation that would begin three years later. In August 1998, a group of NPS battlefield managers met in Nashville, Tennessee, to discuss the future of historical interpretation. They expressed concern that interpretive efforts at battlefields often fell short of "convey[ing] the full range and context of the stories [their] sites [could] tell."⁵⁸ Before returning home, the managers drafted a new "guiding principle" for historical interpretation at Park Service-administered battlefields: "Battlefield interpretation," they wrote, "must establish the site's particular place in the continuum of war, illuminate the social, economic, and cultural issues that caused or were affected by the war, illustrate the breadth of human experience during the period, and establish the relevance of the war to people today."⁵⁹ Relevance was the key word. The National Park lands, they insisted, had been "set aside to be here for as long as there is an America. These sites [were] supposed to be as meaningful and evocative to Americans 500 years from now as they are today."⁶⁰ The managers' professed goal in updating historical interpretation was to reach a "diversified audience and promote the preservation of a broader range of resources." The new interpretive materials would bring the assumptions of the past – for instance, the idea that interpretation should accommodate only military history – into conversation with contemporary debates about the war's legacy and its "unresolved issues."⁶¹

⁵⁷ The Gettysburg Foundation, brochure entitled, "It Takes 6,000 Acres to tell a Story this Big," (Gettysburg: The Gettysburg Foundation, 2008).

⁵⁸ *Holding the High Ground: Principles and Strategies for Managing and Interpreting Civil War Battlefield Landscapes*, Proceedings from a Conference of Battlefield Managers, Nashville, TN, August 24-27, 1998, pp. 9-10, property of the author.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶¹ In regard to the discussion of race at battlefield sites, the managers wrote, "The potential for controversy and backlash is high." *Ibid.*, p. 10. The prophecy would certainly come true for Gettysburg. For example, after a speech by Superintendent Latschar's about historical interpretation was published in *Civil War News*, he received hundreds

Outside of Yale

The conference participants emphasized both the difficulty and the necessity of the task before them, but they expressed hope that the newly elaborated guiding principles would be taken up by partner organizations.⁶² Two years later, Congress itself championed their cause.

In the year 2000, Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr. inserted a few brief sentences into the Department of the Interior Appropriations Bill that had significant repercussions for historical interpretation across the Park Service. Echoing the language of the 1998 conference, Jackson said that Civil War battle sites were often “not placed in their proper historical context”; specifically, they failed to mention slavery as a central cause of the Civil War. Congress first directed the NPS to compile a report discussing the present state of historical interpretation at battlefields throughout the system. The mandate went even further: it strongly encouraged Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt “to recognize and include in *all* of their public displays and multimedia educational presentations the unique role that the institution of slavery played in causing the Civil War” (emphasis added).⁶³ The congressional mandate was the first system-wide directive of its kind; never before had Congress specifically requested a change in the historical interpretation of Civil War sites. Gettysburg’s administration had already taken steps to expand and diversify its interpretive materials before the congressional directive came into effect. Nonetheless, it is important to note that in the year 2000, the federal government intervened to promote a new policy that discussed the causes of the war, especially slavery.

Despite Congress’ apparent interest in developing new interpretive materials at Civil War battlefields, no money was set aside to realize that goal – in keeping with a longstanding tradition of miniscule congressional appropriations to the Park Service. Superintendent Latschar explained in an interview last spring that when he arrived at the battlefield in 1995, “it was just plain as day that the Park Service wasn’t ever going to have enough money to solve the problems here at Gettysburg.”⁶⁴ The director of the National Park Service at the time, Roger Kennedy, had come to the NPS from the Smithsonian Institution, where he had been director of the Museum of American History. The Smithsonian was founded by Congress in 1835 and is in part financed by the federal government, but a large portion of its proceeds also come from private sources. Kennedy’s experience at an institution that depends on both private and public funding led him to encourage private-public partnerships at Park Service sites around the nation, specifically at Gettysburg. The Gettysburg Foundation, a private organization, was founded in 1998 to work “hand-in-hand with the National Park Service [...] to raise the funds needed for the Campaign

of postcards from the Southern Heritage Coalition claiming that the NPS’s new interpretive materials scandalously “rewrote history.”

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 3.

⁶³ Bruce Babbitt, “Foreword,” *Rally on the High Ground: The National Park Service Symposium on the Civil War*, (Washington D.C.: Eastern National, 2001), p. v., http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/rthg/index.htm (accessed spring 2009).

⁶⁴ John Latschar, Interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, March 2, 2009.

Outside of Yale

to Preserve Gettysburg.”⁶⁵ The “campaign” has involved two main projects: building a new, \$125-million museum and visitor center (christened in 2008), and carrying out a program of “battlefield rehabilitation,” which seeks to return the land to its 1863 appearance.

The new museum and visitor center, designed to look like a 19th-century barn, occupies an inconspicuous place off battlefield land. The old visitor center, located squarely on the battlefield, has been torn down. The new center deals with themes that previous NPS administrations had rarely or superficially discussed: most notably, slavery as the central cause of the Civil War. During the process of developing the new visitor center, the administration made a concerted and sustained effort to solicit the advice of professional Civil War historians who reported on what they perceived as shortcomings in the NPS’s presentation of the battle and its historical context.⁶⁶ The transcripts of the museum’s films contain pages of footnotes, the *General Management Plan* is extensively researched, and the visitor center showcases a multiplicity of voices, facts, figures, and conflicting opinions.⁶⁷ Most importantly, the current administration places slavery front and center as the central cause of the Civil War, a decision that extends the scope beyond those three days in July 1863.

The battlefield, nonetheless, remains the centerpiece. “We are going to consider this museum a failure,” Latschar told a reporter on the eve of the building’s opening, “if it does not induce people to get out on the battlefield and put their feet in the place all this actually happened.”⁶⁸ To that end, the current Gettysburg administration commenced the battlefield rehabilitation project about ten years ago. At that time, thick undergrowth crowded former woodlots, period orchards no longer existed, and Civil War era fences had been replaced with newer styles. Most noticeably, modern contour farming had supplanted the 19th-century pattern of rough, rectangular, 10-12 acre fields over much of the battlefield.⁶⁹ Today, telephone poles and utility lines that once criss-crossed the battlefield are now underground. Non-historic trees have been removed. Civil War-era orchards are in the process of being reinstated. Last March, the administration tore down the old visitor center, which had stood in Zeigler’s Grove, a key location on the second and third days of the battle. The Park Service has not yet reached its goal

⁶⁵ The Gettysburg Foundation, “The Gettysburg Foundation: Helping to Preserve the Battlefield and its Stories,” http://www.gettysburgfoundation.org/about.htm#epm1_2 (accessed spring 2009).

⁶⁶ Historians Eric Foner of Columbia University, Nina Silber of Boston University, and James McPherson of Princeton University submitted reports. From a memorandum by John R. Dichtl regarding the Organization of American Historians’ site visits to Gettysburg National Military Park, August 18-19, 1998, property of the author.

⁶⁷ The experiences of women, free black Pennsylvanians, and Gettysburg townspeople, are discussed at length at the visitor center.

⁶⁸ John Latschar, interview with Tim Lambert, “New Visitor Center Opens at Gettysburg,” *All Things Considered*, NPR, April 13, 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89598500> (accessed spring 2009).

⁶⁹ *Statement for Management Outline of Planning Requirements for Gettysburg National Military Park*, May 1991, GNMP Library, pp. 31-32.

Outside of Yale

of complete battlefield rehabilitation, but with the new visitor center up and running, the administration can focus on shaping the landscape itself.

According to Superintendent Latschar, the germ of the battlefield rehabilitation idea was planted one day in 1994 when he toured the battlefield with a licensed guide. As the two men set out to view the field, Latschar explained, he noticed that the guide carried a stack of period photographs nearly an inch thick. He soon discovered that the photographs were necessary to “explain the course of the battle,” because the landscape had been so radically transformed since 1863. “So much of what the commanders could see in 1863,” Latschar explained, “was obscured.”⁷⁰ Battlefield rehabilitation, therefore, was intended to provide physical context, in much the same way that the visitor center provides historical context for the battle. The history presented by the Park Service – the multiplicity of voices represented in the visitor center, the “accurate” restoration of 6,000 acres of Pennsylvania terrain – seems transparent, even objective. But contextualization is not equivalent to ideological neutrality, neither at the visitor center nor on the battlefield.

For all the talk of the devastation and hardship of the Civil War, the NPS portrays the war as a necessary event in the life of the United States – a terrible yet necessary event that can now be studied as a “classroom for democracy.”⁷¹ Superintendent Latschar has echoed similar language on multiple occasions during his time as chief administrator. At the 2007 Civil War Symposium in Illinois, Latschar asserted that “understanding what they lived through does help – I think – put the issues and struggles of today into perspective.” He gave the example of the 2004 Presidential election: “Whether we were encouraged or discouraged by the results of that election, we did not have to wake up with the prospect of our nation dividing asunder. The people of the Civil War generation gave us that assurance.”⁷² On the occasion of the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new visitor center, Latschar used the same words to describe the 2008 presidential election: “The issues facing us today are rather inconsequential as compared to the Presidential election of 1860,” he said. “On November 5, we will all get up in the morning and go about our daily lives. Whether we are encouraged or discouraged by the results of November’s election, we do not have to wake up with the prospect of our nation dividing asunder. The people of the Civil War generation gave us that assurance.” Then he added:

This nation, created at Philadelphia, saved at Gettysburg, forged by the fire of the Civil War is more powerful, and more enduring than any single Presidential

⁷⁰ “*The Gettysburg Magazine* Interview – John A. Latschar,” *The Gettysburg Magazine* 39 (July 2008), in Folder 16-15, Vertical Files, GNMP Library, p. 127.

⁷¹ “What Gettysburg Means Today: Our Country’s Common Ground,” The Gettysburg Foundation, <http://www.gettysburgfoundation.org/learn/relevance.html> (accessed spring 2009).

⁷² John Latschar, “Reinterpreting the Battlefield of Gettysburg,” speech given at the 10th Civil War Symposium in Wheaton, Illinois, October 20, 2007, unpublished manuscript, property of the author.

election. That is, ladies and gentlemen, the strength of our democracy [...] bequeathed to us by the Civil War generation.⁷³

Thus Gettysburg is perpetually relevant. Its story can be repurposed to comment on any presidential election, no matter how contentious, because our nation lived through the trauma of war against itself. Gettysburg has become central to the narrative of national progress that sees war as both tragic and necessary for the preservation of democracy. What better way to tell that story than to preserve the very ground upon which democracy was supposedly won?

In 1998, the Gettysburg Foundation chose the motto, “Our Country’s Common Ground.” The language speaks of a collective history, an American history, but it does not identify to whom that history belongs. In contrast, during Gettysburg’s first years of preservation, the site belonged, literally and symbolically, to northerners. Beginning in the 1880s, the former enemies met on the Pennsylvania fields and erected monuments there, and Gettysburg took on an increasingly “national” character. The nation, however, still excluded African Americans from the full exercise of their civil and political liberties. The current Gettysburg administration attempts to expand the Gettysburg story to include a deep discussion of how the battle came to be, its causes and consequences. Some say the site finally belongs to the nation. But while battlefield rehabilitation and the new visitor center provide physical and historical context for the battle of Gettysburg, they do not offer objective truth. These efforts too are acts of historical inscription, written onto the land of Gettysburg by an agency that has taken upon itself the telling of history.

A singular event, the Battle of Gettysburg, has taken on multiple meanings according to historical context. The movers and shakers of each moment of battlefield preservation considered their actions to be historically truthful and honorable to the memory of those who died. What is so striking, however, is that their actions so radically differed from one another’s. A Gettysburg citizen living in 1864 could scarcely have imagined that twenty-four years later the town would welcome Confederate veterans for reenactment ceremonies. Likewise, we must acknowledge that the stories presented at the new visitor center are not ones the veterans would have told. History is the strangest of disciplines, for at some level it lays claim to truth. As we know, though, the truth constantly changes, as does the land.

⁷³ John Latschar, “Last Full Measure of Devotion,” Speech on the occasion of the new visitor center’s ribbon-cutting ceremony, September 26, 2008, printed in *Friends of Gettysburg: The Quarterly Publication of the Gettysburg Foundation*, Fall 2008, pp. 4-5.

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Directed Studies

Tiberius, Germanicus, and Political Transition

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History and Politics

Professor Norma Thompson

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Nick Venable, a sophomore in Branford College, wrote this essay for Norma Thompson's History and Politics section as part of Directed Studies, a program for freshman by competitive application that consists of three year-long courses in the foundational texts of Western civilization.

Tacitus (A.D. 56-117) was a historian of the Roman Empire. His Annals, completed around the time of his death, record the lives and times of the first four emperors to succeed Augustus after A.D. 14.

Directed Studies

Augustus' acquisition of imperial power in 31 B.C. marked the culmination of a series of events that produced a drastic change in the politics of the Roman Empire. His intent to perpetuate an imperial dynasty became clear when he adopted Tiberius as his successor in 4 B.C. and requested that Tiberius in turn adopt Germanicus in that same year. Tiberius became emperor in A.D. 14. Since imperial government was new in Rome, Tiberius had to appeal to traditions set by Augustus to preserve his rule, and he had to adopt the same superficial concern for the structure and offices of the Roman Republic. While the consuls and the senate continued to function in form, the emperor and his officials held the true power over the state. One official, Germanicus, received command of eight legions in Germany from Augustus and quickly rose in prominence through his military expertise and personal qualities until he eclipsed Tiberius in popularity. However, any hope that Germanicus might have replaced Tiberius dissipated when Germanicus was poisoned by Piso, the ousted governor of Syria. While Germanicus' limited ambition and moderation helped to preserve the imperial rule in the face of popular clamor for him to take control of the government, the relationship between Tiberius and Germanicus illustrates a shift in the nature of the Roman executive, as imperial legacy replaced populism as the driving force in Roman politics.

While the altered nature of imperial politics shaped the political interactions between Germanicus and Tiberius, Tacitus seems to suggest that Germanicus' personal qualities also played a role in preventing him from seeking the principate. In his first personal description of Germanicus, Tacitus writes, "At all events Germanicus' proximity to the summit of ambition only made him work more enthusiastically on behalf of Tiberius."¹ Germanicus accepted the political order into which he was adopted and strove to advance himself within this political order. In this way, Tacitus presents Germanicus as a man of republican virtue in an imperial time. Germanicus behaves as if the rules and practices for political advancement were as clearly defined and meritocratic as they were during the republic. In fact, political success had already been created through extra-legal means by Julius Caesar and Augustus; soon Tiberius would join their ranks. In short, Germanicus, due to some aspect of his personality, was still playing by the political rules unlike anyone else of comparable influence and ambition. This was evident in his actions when the German legions mutinied. His rebelling legions told him that, "if he wanted the throne, they showed they were for him. At this point he leapt off the dais as if their criminal intentions were polluting him, and moved away."² Shortly after this, Germanicus attempted to impale himself on his own sword rather than assume command of the mutiny. This reaction shows a strong respect for the imperial order, even when this respect was not in his best interest. One might allege that this gesture was insincere and Germanicus was biding his time for a better opportunity to assume power. However, this was one of the most vulnerable times for the new regime as Tiberius was still trying to establish his authority as emperor and the army was

¹ Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, trans. Michael Grant. (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996): p. 52.

² *Ibid.* p. 53.

Directed Studies

plagued by mutiny. Germanicus would have had a better chance at this point of taking the principate through extra-legal means than at any other time in the future.

While Germanicus' character may have checked his ambition at critical junctures, in other instances his respect for the imperial legacy also contributed to his limited ambition. When Germanicus explained why he moved his wife and child away from the rebellious troops he said, "My wife and son are not more dear to me than my father and my country...Do not make your guilt worse by murdering the great-grandson of Augustus, the daughter-in-law of Tiberius."³ Here Germanicus again affirmed his obedience to the imperial government, even valuing it more than his wife and child. In fact, Germanicus referred to his wife and child in terms of their relationship to Tiberius and Augustus rather than their more intimate relationship to him. This would be counterintuitive if Germanicus' only goal was saving his family as the soldiers would be much more likely to respect his relationship to his wife and son since they wanted to nominate him as commander. They were much less likely to not kill Germanicus' wife and child for the sake of the emperor, against whom they are rebelling. Thus Germanicus is even willing to risk the safety of his own family in hopes to reinforcing the ties of the legion to the emperor. Tiberius says as much when he declares, "I would willingly see my wife and children die for your [the legion's] greater glory."⁴ Thus he emphasizes that he is willing to make great personal sacrifices of himself and his own in the interest of the government and the principate in particular. This emphasis of the emperor over himself appeared again when he refers to Tiberius as the "old commander" of the legions and calls him "my father."⁵ He downplayed his own importance in favor of the emperor when Germanicus is clearly more popular with the troops. Additionally, through his imperial adoption, Tiberius had replaced Nero Drusus, a famous republican, as his father. Finally, when Germanicus commissioned an inscription honoring his victories in Germany, he omitted any mention of his own name, yet he honored Augustus and Tiberius. Tacitus speculates that "he may have feared jealousy; or perhaps he felt that the knowledge of what he had done was enough."⁶ Germanicus revealed through his words and actions his sense of the importance of preserving the imperial legacy, and this respect for the institutions of Augustus and Tiberius further restrained his ambitions towards seizing the principate for himself.

The relationship between Tiberius and Germanicus illustrates how imperial legacy and control was replacing popular support and military skill as the driving force in Roman politics. From its beginning, this relationship emerged artificially, shaped by imperial influence, rather than organically. Tacitus reports that "Augustus had considered awarding the empire to his universally loved grand-nephew Germanicus. But his wife had induced him to adopt Tiberius

³ *Ibid.* p. 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 57.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 87.

Directed Studies

instead (though Tiberius was made to adopt Germanicus).⁷ The relationship between these two men was set up on the basis of imperial favoritism, even though by this point it was clear that Germanicus was more popular and probably a better ruler. This unnatural hierarchy was only made possible through the force of imperial engineering, and Tacitus even mentions how Augustus saw the adoption of Germanicus as a policy that would ensure that his imperial line would be continued. He remarks that Augustus gave Germanicus control of legions in order to “have another iron in the fire.”⁸

As soon as Tiberius assumed the throne, his relationship with Germanicus illustrated how imperial leaders differed from republican leaders. While in the Republic the consul, the highest official, was by definition a military man who controlled the legions, Tiberius used very different means to cement his political power. Tiberius was very careful to control his image in public to make himself appear traditional and republican. Tacitus remarks wryly that this was in part because “...Tiberius wanted to seem the person chosen and called by the State- instead of one who had wormed his way in by an old man’s adoption, and the intrigues of the old man’s wife.”⁹ In order for Tiberius to continue to hold his power, he needed to shape how the people and Senate perceived him. Nevertheless, Tiberius was not completely removed from military matters; Tacitus describes how he took control of the Praetorian Guard and used these soldiers to enforce his will in Rome. However, this too was a departure from republican practice, which forbade armies in the city. As news of the rebellion of the legions reached Rome, some people condemned Tiberius for not travelling to Germany where his dignity and experience could have restored order to the rebelling legions better than the influence of Germanicus and his fellow commander Drusus. Tacitus concludes “such talk made no impression on Tiberius. He was determined not to jeopardize the nation and himself by leaving the capital.”¹⁰ Tiberius preferred to control the situation through his sons rather than to risk his prestige by attending to the situation personally. Additionally, he could not be sure that he would maintain his control of Rome while absent because he maintained his rule through fear and the forced subservience of the leading men and senators. The political situation had so developed in Rome that the executive now needed to maintain his power personally because he could not trust the rule of law to maintain his power. This trend had developed over the past century. An emergency dictator like Fabius during the Second Punic War still could trust that he would not lose his power as a result of his absence from Rome on a military expedition. Julius Caesar and Augustus were occasionally absent on military expeditions, though they had to spend more and more time in Rome in order to check their rivals. By contrast, Tiberius never left Rome until his retirement to the coast at the end of his life.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 186.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 59.

Directed Studies

Furthermore, the relationship between Tiberius and Augustus at the end of Germanicus' life illustrates how political power had so changed with the advent of the principate that popularity was a liability rather than an asset in public service. Tacitus tells us that when Germanicus won a great victory over the Germans, "the troops hailed Tiberius as victor on the battlefield."¹¹ Tiberius was able to gain credit for the successes of his generals because the imperial hierarchy placed the legions under his supreme command. While subordinate officers might have been denied recognition under the republic, the role of Germanicus is clearly similar to that of a consul, to whom the Senate would give appropriate praise for a great victory. A consul was not a rival to the senate in the way that a general was a threat to the emperor, since the consul had a fixed term of office and duration of power. When Germanicus returned to Rome in A.D. 17 and celebrated his triumph, there was a clear perception that this popularity and glory would have signified his moment of greatest glory in republican Rome, but in imperial Rome this display of popularity became his death sentence. In fact, after Tiberius tried to take advantage of Germanicus' popularity by distributing handouts and making him a consul, "the people did not believe his [Tiberius'] affection was sincere. Next he decided to find honorable excuses for the young man's elimination."¹² This trend in politics went beyond Tiberius' personal dislike of Germanicus: any emperor in this line who was fortunate to reach power by imperial legacy only kept alive those relatives who he was sure would not threaten his power. For example, the emperor Claudius was able to become emperor and survive the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, and Caligula only because he appeared to be incompetent and was chronically ill. Tiberius and Germanicus show how the Roman executive had radically changed as the Republic became a Principate.

Tacitus writes that when Germanicus was poisoned in Egypt, his eulogists compared him to Alexander the Great: "If he had been in sole control, with royal power and title, he would have equaled Alexander in military renown."¹³ This comparison likened Rome to the hereditary monarchy of Macedonia. The people were asking to be subjected to a king. So far had the imperial transition gone that the people preferred an autocratic ruler with supreme power over a public servant obedient to and restrained by the *Populi Romani*.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 85.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 97.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 113.

Freshman Seminar

Continuity and Change in the Soviet Union's Perception of United States Grand Strategy from 1941-1949

Bo Uuganbayar

The United States and the World, 1898-1963

Professor Patrick Cohrs

2009

*Freshmen Seminars at Yale allow students to collaborate with some of the university's top professors in an intimate setting during their first year at college. These courses provide guidance on independent research and, for many students, serve as the starting point for their careers as history scholars. For our first issue, the Yale Historical Review has selected Bo Uuganbayar's final term paper in the Spring of 2009 for Professor Patrick Cohrs' *The United States and the World, 1898-1963*.*

Introduction: Background to Historical US-Russian Relations

The contentious relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union can be traced back to the birth of the Bolshevik regime and Lenin's insistence on the irreversible clash between capitalist and communist systems. This fractious relationship began building when Lenin's Bolsheviks and the Red Army faced off against the Western-supported White Army during the three-year Russian Civil War.¹ Despite the inherent mistrust of US actions toward the Eastern hemisphere, which was further exacerbated by the deployment of Western troops to suppress Bolshevization, Lenin utilized some key ingredients of capitalism to successfully implement his New Economic Policy.^{2,3} Even as Lenin argued for ideological purity, he allowed some market forces to work their way back into the economic system. Thus, although the economic systems of the two powers might have functioned together successfully, the clash between pertinent security interests and competing spheres of influence severely impacted US-Soviet relations and eventually contributed to the deterioration of the Grand Alliance. The Soviet perception of the United States was rooted in both ideological and pragmatically opportunistic doctrines.

The Soviet understanding of international capitalism was tied to the Marxist-Leninist war theory. This concept highlighted the irreconcilable differences between capitalist states and reinforced their eventual path to self-destruction, which, in turn, would pave the way for a global proletariat revolution.⁴ Despite the Soviet's "visceral mistrust of capitalist alliances," Joseph Stalin sought a collective security system in the 1930's that pushed for promoting and manipulating the strategy of "bloc-building." By pitting one group of capitalist states against another, Stalin attempted to safeguard Soviet security in an international arena where its influence was severely limited.⁵ Stalin's nonaggression pact with Germany, a failed example of such bloc-building, was designed to reduce diplomatically the threat of the Axis powers. Stalin's opportunistic foreign policy during World War II even prior to his entrance into the Grand Alliance played an important role in his dealings with both Franklin Roosevelt and Harry

¹ July 1918, Wilson granted the participation of 5,00 US Army soldiers in the Allied military intervention campaign that attempted, in Churchill's words, to "strangle the baby in the cradle". "American North Russian Expeditionary Force." Even after the allied forces withdrew its own troops, it continued to give significant military aid to White armies.

² Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 37.

³ The New Economic Policy of the 1920s' permitted the relaxation of strict socialism toward free trade, privatization and capitalism. The NEP opened Soviet Russia to limited international trade. Stalin abandoned it in favor of Collectivization in 1928.

⁴ NATO in The Beholder's Eye: Soviet Perceptions and Policies, 1949-56. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Cold War International History Project, p. 4

⁵ Vojtech Mastny, *NATO in the Beholder's Eye* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2002), 3-6.

Truman on the question of postwar settlements.⁶ An assessment of Stalin's ambitions during the early peace settlements from both an ideological and pragmatic perspective reveals whether his perception of US strategic aims and his faith in the survival of the Grand Alliance influenced his defensive security strategy toward Germany and Eastern Europe. Another important question lies in whether Stalin's vision of postwar Europe and his preemptive calculations toward ensuring Eastern European dominance caused the Truman administration to "tighten" its policy concerning Soviet "expansionism," or whether early "containment" strategies first dismantled the fragile balance of the Grand Alliance.

In order to examine post-war negotiations, we must investigate Stalin's interpretation of US intentions before 1945 as well as Soviet concerns and ambitions within the Tehran and Yalta conference. Additionally, Stalin's relationship with the Truman administration and the deterioration of the Grand Alliance deserve further examination. Truman's decision to deploy the atomic bomb and carry out the Marshall Plan made an impact on the Soviet Union's perception of US intentions in Western Europe, providing a political and economic challenge to the preservation of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe. On a secondary level, we must determine if the end of WWII and the start of the Truman administration drastically altered US and Russian grand strategy in the 1940s, or whether the theory of realism provided a backdrop for an inevitable collision between the two systems after their brief "marriage of convenience" to defeat a common enemy. Finally, by examining Soviet responses to containment, we can determine whether Stalin's perception, and thus reaction to, US foreign policy changed dramatically during the Truman administration. Here we must place special focus on Stalin's treatment of atomic diplomacy and the impact of European policies on geopolitical questions in the Far East.

The interwoven threads of perception, tangible concerns, and unilateral visions for the postwar world all contributed to the clashes of the early Cold War period.

Inter-War Period: Roosevelt Administration and Rising Tensions

World War II produced a major change in the distribution of global power. Soviet territorial stronghold in war-ridden Europe jeopardized the unipolar vision of American strategic aims.⁷ On the other hand, Soviet leaders miscalculated US intentions in the postwar order in the early stages of the Grand Alliance. In the early 1940s, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov naively expected an eventual American retreat toward isolationism and envisioned an optimal European balance of power with, "only one great land power, USSR, and one great sea

⁶ Frederic J. Floron, Erik P. Hoffmann, and Robbin F. Laird, *Classic Issues in Soviet Foreign Policy*, "Soviet Foreign Policy Aims and Accomplishments from Lenin to Brezhnev" (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), 54-58.

⁷ Christopher Layne, *Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 81.

power, England.”^{8,9} Many leaders in Moscow assumed that the US would tacitly approve of Soviet interests in Eastern Europe and even held the grossly exaggerated notion that it would be in the West’s economic interest to assist post-war reconstruction in the Soviet Union.¹⁰

In order to reap the benefits from an extremely bloody and economically costly war,¹¹ the Soviets sought stability¹² but also saw the need to foster “friendly areas of interest” in order to amend Russian strategic vulnerabilities and limit American interference. In line with the doctrines of the official ideology of the Soviet Communist Party, and even during the allied struggle against Germany, the Soviets regarded the US as the citadel of world capitalism, dominated by an exploitative, oppressive and crisis ridden bourgeois and its socio-economic political system.¹³ Stalin interpreted Roosevelt and Winston Churchill’s delay in setting up a second front as an intentional capitalist ploy to weaken Soviet military power.¹⁴ By the time a second front was opened in 1944, with the help of the Lend-Lease program, Stalin had a commanding military position, with the Red Army occupying most of Eastern Europe and advancing to the periphery of the Berlin stronghold.¹⁵ And while the wartime allies were willing to limit their geopolitical and ideological motivations to defeat a common enemy, the impending problems of Germany, national security, and war reparations lay at the heart of the unraveling Grand Alliance.¹⁶

Stalin denied any predatory Soviet war aims early in the war. In his November 1941 speech celebrating the anniversary of the October Revolution, he stated, “We have not, and cannot have, such war aims as the seizure of foreign territories and the subjugation of foreign peoples... Our aim is to help these nations in their struggle for liberation... and to leave them

⁸ “Some Soviet Techniques of Negotiations” by Philip E. Mosely, 1951.

⁹ Statement from Maisky’s Report detailing the predominant Moscow view towards the post-war security question.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution, and Cold War, 1945-1991* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 83-85.

¹¹ Stalin pointed out in 1945 that the Soviet share of total allied war efforts was no less than 75 percent (Pechatnov).

¹² After suffering through War Communism, Collectivization and political purges, the Russian people desperately sought stability. One Soviet statement captures the overall attitude after the war: “The war is over now, why should we work as hard as before? During the war, we sacrificed everything for the sake of victory, now we want to be taken better care of.” (Pechatnov)

¹³ John Lenczowski, *Soviet Perceptions of U.S. Foreign Policy: A Study of Ideology, Power, and Consensus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 98.

¹⁴ Molotov issued a statement in June 1942, “In the course of the conversations full understanding was reached with regard to the task of creating a Second Front in Europe in 1942.” In the Tehran conference of 1943, the second front was again promised to Stalin in the immediate future.

¹⁵ Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power. A History of U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1897* (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 2001), 213.

¹⁶ Frederic J. Flernon, Erik P. Hoffmann, and Robbin F. Laird, *Classic Issues in Soviet Foreign Policy, “Soviet Foreign Policy Aims and Accomplishments from Lenin to Brezhnev”* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), 62.

Freshman Seminar

quite freely to organize their life in their lands as they think fit.”¹⁷ While Stalin was unwilling to risk the threat of capitalist-influenced ‘anti-communism’ along Russia’s borders and would attempt to create a sphere of influence over Eastern Europe, following the Moscow Conference of October 1943, Soviet propaganda was increasingly dominated by “talk of a long, durable and stable peace” put into place and guaranteed by the Big Three.¹⁸ Stalin’s advocacy for an interventionist post-war security organization based on the mutual consent of the Big Three is an example of his early willingness to work toward a tripartite peace under the Grand Alliance.

At Tehran later in 1943, Stalin was preoccupied with the question of permanent German disarmament.¹⁹ He made clear to Oscar Lange, a Polish American socialist, the need for a harsh and punitive peace against Germany that would not repeat Versailles’ downfall on the problem of concessions. “I hate the Germans... It is impossible to destroy the Germans for good, we are fighting the Germans and we will finish the job. But we must bear in mind that our allies will try to save the Germans and conspire with them. We will be merciless towards them but our allies will seek to threaten them more leniently.” The problem of Germany was central to Stalin’s vision of a stable future.^{20, 21}

At Yalta the next year, Moscow achieved its aims of continuing tripartite unity and exclusion of Western influence in Eastern Europe. Yet one of the pitfalls in early peace settlements between Anglo-American negotiations with the Soviet Union was reliance on “agreement in principle” without strong incentives to carry them out in practice. The atmosphere of mistrust prevented cohesive discussion regarding the enforcement of agreed settlements through tangible repercussions in the event of divergence. Roosevelt had foreseen Stalin’s post-war security clauses and expected the Soviets to assert “predominant interest in the whole area between Russia and Germany” early on in the war.²² Fearful that Soviet influence in Eastern Europe could become “so dominant as to affect international stability,” Washington accepted great power spheres of influence in 1944 as a means of quarantining Soviet influence and thus preventing the Soviet Union’s jeopardizing of the stability of Western Europe.²³ In late 1944,

¹⁷ Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution, and Cold War, 1945-1991* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 21.

¹⁸ Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution, and Cold War, 1945-1991* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 58.

¹⁹ Walter LaFeber, *The American Age : United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750* (New York: Norton, 1989), 410.

²⁰ In March 1945, he reportedly expressed the quote to a Czechoslovakian delegation his mistrust of the Allies on the fulfillment of disarmament.

²¹ Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 31.

²² Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin’s Cold War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 232.

²³ Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution, and Cold War, 1945-1991* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 143.

the State Department and the Office of Strategic Services compiled a comprehensive assessment of postwar Soviet foreign policy. To prevent the “domination of the resources and manpower of Europe and Asia by the rising power in Russia,” the Anglo-American alliance “accepted the division of postwar Europe into spheres of Soviet and non-Soviet predominance with a neutral zone [Germany and Austria].”²⁴

Roosevelt understood Soviet military predominance and cooperated passively with Stalin on many key Soviet security concerns during the Tehran and Yalta conferences. Roosevelt's failing health at the Yalta Conference gave Stalin the upper hand in negotiations. With the Soviet Army within 65 miles of Berlin, FDR's main concern was to convince Stalin to support the Allied cause in Japan once the Germans were defeated. Churchill's main concern was free elections in Poland. Due to Stalin's excellent position to begin long term Soviet control in Eastern Europe, FDR was willing to accept a peace under spheres of influence because he saw it as the only way to curb Russian aggression. Were Soviet postwar aims largely defensive and opportunistic or aggressive and outlined years in advance? Neither seems to have been the case since security and control were intertwined in Stalin's actions and the distinction between Stalin's perceived security needs and his approval of overtly expansionist activities were blurred.²⁵ Stalin viewed Eastern Europe as a “military buffer but also as constituting the outer lines of defense against various forms of ideological and psychological challenge that emanated from the capitalist world.”²⁶ In this light, American passivity did not imply Roosevelt's weakness nor diminish US prestige. Charles Bohlen, the US Ambassador to the USSR under Roosevelt, stated in his biography *Witness to History*, “Whether or not our relations with the Soviet Union would have been better under Roosevelt than they were under Truman is an open question. Certainly the Kremlin had considerable respect for Roosevelt ... because they understood what a powerful figure he was in the entire Western world. Since the Russians always respect power, this might have made Stalin more careful with Roosevelt than he was with Truman.”²⁷

If US-Soviet interests were as mutually exclusive as their set of ideologies, it could be assumed that both states followed a zero-sum approach to world politics in the immediate aftermath of their alliance. However, regarding the issues of war and peace, a gain for one side does not necessarily imply a loss for the other.²⁸ Thus, the burden and chaos of war allowed both

²⁴ Christopher Layne, *Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 68.

²⁵ Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution, and Cold War, 1945-1991* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 43.

²⁶ Helmut Sonnenfeldt and William Hyland, “Soviet Perspectives on Security,” in Frederic J. Fleron, Erik P. Hoffmann, and Robbin F. Laird, *Classic Issues in Soviet Foreign Policy, “Soviet Foreign Policy Aims and Accomplishments from Lenin to Brezhnev”* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), 228.

²⁷ Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* (New York: Norton, 1973), 211.

²⁸ The passage is summarized from a quotation from the SShA editorial board in Shwartz's *Soviet Perception of the US*

sides to put aside take out(both) ideological and historically prevalent suspicions to defeat the larger obstacle of Axis aggression.

The Truman Administration: Potsdam, Atomic Diplomacy and the Seeds of Containment

Stalin sought cooperation with the United States and Britain but distrusted his wartime allies. He was primarily concerned about security in the postwar world, but his fears were rooted in ideological presumptions and past Russian encounters with capitalist nations. Stalin was suspicious that Truman would abandon Roosevelt's design for a tripartite post-war world of "[consolidating] Soviet territorial gains, [establishing] a Soviet sphere of influence in eastern Europe and [having] a voice in the political fate of Germany and –if possible- of Japan."²⁹ Stalin had seen Roosevelt as his most reliable Western partner; a man who seemed to recognize and even support Soviet security needs. He feared that Roosevelt's death would immediately prompt anti-Soviet policies in Washington, jeopardizing his grand vision of a Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe.³⁰ Stalin's fears arose from Truman's anti-Soviet rhetoric, such as his statement in 1941 regarding US involvement in WWII. Truman characterized the Soviets as "untrustworthy as Hitler," and later when Germany broke its non-aggression pact with the Soviets, Truman reported that the "US should help whichever side was losing and that way let them kill as many of each other as possible."³¹

The Soviet fear that the new administration would diverge from Roosevelt's grand strategy increased further as a result of Truman's behavior during his infamous meeting with Molotov³² less than two weeks after his inauguration, where he verbally chastised the Soviets for breaking their agreements. Yet Ambassador Bohlen points out that Truman was "merely saying what Roosevelt would have said had he been alive... Given great prestige and his reputation for dealing fairly with Stalin, Roosevelt would have been in a position to have adopted a much firmer line with the Soviet Union with much greater degree of public acceptance... He was in no mood ... to take further Soviet violations of the Yalta accord lying down."³³

While Roosevelt seemed better equipped to deal with Stalin's ambitions for ideological or military expansion, his behavior was becoming more obstinate to Soviet demands by 1945. As the war was drawing to a close in 1944, Stalin privately stated, "The crisis of capitalism has

²⁹ Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 51. Originally quoted from David Holloway's thesis regarding Soviet atomic diplomacy.

³⁰ Kennedy-Pipe, 78.

³¹ Ralph B. Levering, *Debating the Origins of the Cold War : American and Russian Perspectives* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 110.

³² Truman chastised Molotov for Russian infractions of the Yalta agreements concerning Poland. The foreign minister had reportedly stated, "I have never been talked to like that in my lie."

³³ Bohlen, 213.

Freshman Seminar

manifested itself in the division of the capitalists into two factions- one fascists, the other democratic... We are currently allied with one faction against the other, but in the future we will be against the first faction of capitalists too.”³⁴ Stalin was opportunistic, and potentially hostile, in his dealings with both American leaders, and while Roosevelt possessed diplomatic finesse and understood Soviet security concerns, his political charisma never convinced Stalin to trust capitalist intentions. If anything, Stalin’s perception of US policy was continuous throughout the Roosevelt and early Truman presidencies.

With regard to Truman, the new president was influenced heavily by White house advisors who pushed for a stronger stance against Soviet aggression in order to guarantee the successful implementation of US aims in Europe and the Far East. In the bipolar world that existed after 1945, the Truman administration found it pertinent to put forth a more aggressive policy toward Russia. At Potsdam, Truman sought to use the successful developments of the “Manhattan Project” and American economic leverage over the Soviets to secure the Atlantic Charter and US aims of European economic rehabilitation.³⁵ However, the principle of self-determination described in the Atlantic Charter was irreconcilable with the Soviets’ drive for national security. Truman’s attempt to use atomic diplomacy at Potsdam neither surprised the Soviets nor affected the final settlements, and the negotiations ended with reparations from the western occupied zones to the Soviet Union halted and the German disarmament plan accepted.

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Atomic Diplomacy

Stalin considered Truman’s decision to end WWII with the atomic bomb on August 6th, 1945, two days before Soviet entry into Japan, a calculated attempt to gain sole control over Japan.^{37,38} Truman hoped to gain a stronger negotiating position in the postwar world with the bomb, but the new weapon only incited further Russian resentment and pushed Stalin to accelerate the development of his own atomic arsenal.³⁹ Was Stalin’s vision for peace through the Grand Alliance devastated by Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb? Was he more willing to concede to US demands at the negotiating table due to the American atomic monopoly? In reality Stalin had known about the “Manhattan Project” since 1941, and it was not the atomic monopoly that changed Stalin’s perception of US policy under the Truman

³⁴ Leffler, 51.

³⁵ Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power. A History of U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1897* (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 2001), 216.

³⁶ LaFeber, 446.

³⁷ He dropped a second bomb on Nagasaki on August 8th. Historian Martin Sherwin concluded: “Neither bomb may have been necessary and ...certainly the second one was not.”

³⁸ *Origins of the Cold War*, p. 45

³⁹ LaFeber, 423.

administration. Truman's decision to illustrate the power of the bomb threatened Stalin because it blatantly illustrated the new administration's provocative deviation from Roosevelt's passive approach to war settlements.

The American monopoly of the atomic bomb threatened Stalin, but it did not necessarily make him conciliatory.⁴⁰ In fact a month after Japanese surrender, Stalin assured the Polish party chief that he was "completely certain... there would be no war... They are not capable of waging war against us. Their armies have been disarmed by agitation for peace and will not raise their weapons against us."⁴¹ According to the historian David Holloway, the bomb was both a restraining and a constraining factor for Stalin that made him less cooperative and more suspicious of US intentions.⁴² While Stalin concealed any intimidation caused by the potential of US atomic aggression and the effects of the bomb in Japan, his paranoia against capitalist encirclement, some historians argue, was sharpened by America's use of the atomic bomb. While this may have been the case, there is only a very limited amount of archival information concerning his view on the atomic bomb. Stalin seemed more concerned about the loss of supremacy in the Far East region than the potential for a hot war between the two superpowers.⁴³ He concluded that Hiroshima illustrated the US's refusal to involve Russia in the final defeat of Japan and feared that Truman might use Russia's lack of military support as grounds for an annulment of the Yalta agreements.⁴⁴

Russian foreign official Dmitri Malenkov stated that the US was not in a position to start a war but was conducting a cold war with the aim of blackmail.⁴⁵ Molotov in 1947 claimed that the "US, having no faith in their own internal forces, put their faith in the secret of the atomic bomb, although this secret has long ceased to be a secret."⁴⁶ Stalin thus perceived the threat of the atomic bomb as US political rather than military aggression. When the Soviets acquired the bomb themselves in 1949, the US monopoly on nuclear power disappeared and new age of nuclear build-up emerged.

⁴⁰ Wilson D. Miscamble, *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 311.

⁴¹ Gomulka's memorandum of a conversation with Stalin, [fourth quarter of 1945], *Cold War International Project Bulletin* 11 (1998): 135-38, at p. 136.

⁴² Roberts, 59-61.

⁴³ Everette E. Dennis, George Gerbner, and Yassen N. Zassoursky, *Beyond the Cold War : Soviet and American Media Images* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1991), 35.

⁴⁴ Jones, 212.

⁴⁵ Roberts, 81.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 78.

The “Open Door” in Eastern Europe

Following WWII, America’s European grand strategy was driven by Open Door ambitions and a desire for access to both Western and Eastern European markets.⁴⁷ The Soviet Union's refusal to allow free elections and open trade in Eastern Europe suggested to the US that the Kremlin was bound by an ideologically driven, expansionist postwar policy. Washington hoped that opening up Eastern Europe would slowly cause a de-Bolshevization in Moscow.⁴⁸ Stalin perceived the socio-political US policy as an outwardly offensive strategy targeting the security of the Soviet Union and jeopardizing the stability of its satellite states. The Kremlin consequently cracked down on its remaining vulnerabilities – in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and German occupation zones- as a defensive strategy.⁴⁹

The breakup of the Grand Alliance in Europe did not occur immediately in 1945 but instead developed gradually as unrealistic assumptions and uncompromising policies ran rampant in the five-year period after Roosevelt’s death. As the Soviet officials revealed their antipathy towards capitalism, the US and Britain assumed that Soviet ambitions pointed to world revolution. Both sides lost hope for peaceful coexistence.⁵⁰ The force of events and changing perceptions drove US into action, especially over the problems of the spread of communism and Germany.⁵¹ At what point Stalin moved from changed perception to changed policies is unclear, but the implementation of the Marshall Plan in 1947 clearly caused Stalin to perceive a new threat to his security program in Eastern Europe and subsequently defend his sphere of influence.

Even though Truman attempted to tighten US policy toward the Russians, some historians argue that the diplomatic and political agenda of Soviet-Western relations was still collaborative and that both the US and Soviet Union believed the benefits of a unified Grand Alliance outweighed a two-camp system of strict capitalist and communist states. However, if Stalin saw the benefits of a Grand Alliance tripartite system under Roosevelt, Truman’s aggressive actions as early as 1945 shifted Stalin's focus towards securing Eastern European stability. The Soviet leader's evolving views regarding the Grand Alliance had little do with the change of administration but instead revolved around the increasingly obvious conflict generated by a bipolar world order.

⁴⁷ Layne, 82.

⁴⁸ Layne, 54.

⁴⁹ Vojtech Mastny, *NATO in the Beholder's Eye: Soviet Perceptions and Policies, 1949 – 56* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2002), 6.

⁵⁰ Ralph B. Levering, *Debating the Origins of the Cold War : American and Russian Perspectives* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 102.

⁵¹ Roberts, 75.

In his famous “Iron Curtain” speech of 1946, Churchill renounced communist tyranny and complained about the exclusion of Western influence in Eastern Europe.⁵² Stalin defended the Soviet Union’s position in Eastern Europe with a pragmatic explanation: “The increased influence of Communists cannot be considered fortuitous. It is a perfectly logical thing.” He saw it as vital for Eastern regimes to be loyal and subservient to Moscow and instructed these nations to follow the model pioneered by the Soviet Union in the new era of socialism. “What can be surprising,” Stalin questioned, “about the fact that the Soviet Union, anxious for its future safety, is trying to see to it that governments loyal in their attitude to the Soviet Union should exist in these countries?”⁵³ The extended concept of security involved both territorial integrity as well as ideological and structural conformity for all the newly forming satellite states of Eastern Europe.⁵⁴

Ideology and the “Sources of Soviet Conduct”

The role that Marxism-Leninism played in Soviet international conduct under Stalin has been a debated topic. In light of the opening of new Soviet archives with the fall of the Soviet Union, John Lewis Gaddis claimed that the new evidence gave credibility to the traditionalist interpretation of postwar history. He stated that the Cold War “was Stalin’s project, resulting from his paranoid personality, his revolutionary zeal, and his ideological fervor.”⁵⁵ While the archival material reiterates Stalin’s importance and his involvement in the growing tensions, public statements and private memoranda between top Moscow officials in the decade following World War II do not depict a clear picture of Stalin’s private motivations and decision making. While Stalin may have pushed for increased tensions in order to call a bluff towards Western military advancements, he was opportunistic in his dealings with the United States since the onset of WWII and careful in his attempt to avoid sparking a military conflict with the Truman administration.⁵⁶ Soviet official Andrei Zhdanov’s report to Russian military officials in 1947 also discussed the Soviet take on the possibility of war. “People of the world do not want war,” he asserted, claiming that the main danger to the proletariat world class was underestimating their own power and giving too much exaggerated strength to the enemy.⁵⁷ Because Stalin saw the use of the atomic bomb in 1945 and the economic relief program for non-communist countries in 1947 as an American tactic to intimidate and limit Soviet influence, many historians argue that Stalin purposefully sparked tensions in the international arena to mask his military

⁵² Roberts, 21.

⁵³ Leffler, 51.

⁵⁴ Fleron, Hoffman, and Laird, 82.

⁵⁵ Roberts, 42.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 57.

⁵⁷ Lenczowski, 129.

Freshman Seminar

weakness as well as reverted to traditionalist ideological doctrines to further propel his expansionist motives.⁵⁸

In 1946, George Kennan's Long Telegram to White House officials stressed that ideology was vital to Soviet leadership. Kennan emphasized that Stalin needed to portray the West as evil to justify his own domestic control over the Russian people.⁵⁹ The Soviets, according to Kennan, would have to be "contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points."⁶⁰ Kennan's telegram immediately followed the infamous "election speech" of February 1946, in which Stalin resurrected the old themes of "capitalist encirclement" and "inevitable conflict" between capitalism and socialism.⁶¹ Although he spoke in ideological terms, his pronouncement was received in Washington as a military statement that foreshadowed a dooming war. His speech was similar to the statement he made in 1924 when he pointed to the organs of capitalist suppression and stated, "As long as there is a capitalist encirclement there will be danger of intervention with all the consequences that flow from that danger."⁶² Stalin's ideologically tinted election speech and "X's" suggestion that the USSR could no longer be negotiated or compromised with gave Truman further justification for his evolving Soviet policy.⁶³ The call for "containment" eased the American transition from diplomacy to economic and military centered power struggle.

The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan: The Ploy for American Unipolarity

The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan of 1947 that evolved from Kennan's call for visceral containment attempted to curb Soviet power through political and economic leverage. From Stalin's perspective, they were part of an expansive US policy aimed at bringing Western European states under American control and "restoring the power of imperialism" in those countries, forcing them to reject close political and economic collaboration with the Soviet Union.

Stalin believed the Truman doctrine to be an aggressive policy tactically devised to intimidate the newly forming or communist-influenced countries of Eastern Europe. He claimed that the Marshall Plan acted as bait to lure those countries into the "trap of assistance." Even so, the initial Soviet response to the Truman doctrine was shockingly subdued, with no official

⁵⁸ Dennis, Gerbner, and Zassoursky, 131.

⁵⁹ LaFeber, 475.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 427.

⁶¹ Mastny, 11.

⁶² *Ibid*, 11.

⁶³ LaFeber, 475.

Freshman Seminar

immediate counterblast.⁶⁴ It was in light of the Marshall Plan that Moscow began to analyze the plausible threat of the Truman Doctrine more seriously, in the perception that Americans were constructing an anti-Soviet western bloc in Europe.⁶⁵

If Stalin had indeed believed in the possibility of détente towards the US, the Marshall Plan “radically changed Stalin’s calculus and led him to shift away from this moderate line and to adopt a strategy of confrontational unilateral action to secure Soviet interests.”⁶⁶ However, Stalin’s top officials did not immediately come to the same conclusion regarding the economic recovery program. His foreign minister, Molotov, had stated, “I had agreed [to the plan] in the beginning and sent a suggestion to the central committee that we should participate.” Yet, when it was made clear by the Kremlin’s intricate spy network that the plan indeed confirmed Stalin’s suspicions, Molotov and Stalin were at an impasse. On one hand they wanted to dismantle the American plan, but they also sensed the risk in losing loyalty from the satellite states. They feared that the Eastern European “fifth column” might suddenly defect to the west, lured by economic gains and a prospect of national self-determination.⁶⁷

The creation of the Cominform and the call for a communist coalition of power was a reactionary move by Stalin to counter the threat of economic encirclement posed by the dual policies of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. It served to maintain the security balance in Eastern Europe but did not, contrary to traditionalist western interpretations, prepare the Soviet Union for military aggression. The Marshall Plan was a watershed in Soviet-Western relations because Stalin saw it as a “large scale attempt by the US to gain lasting and preeminent influence in Europe.” The plan was perceived as a triple threat to the Soviet balance of power: it created anti-Soviet blocs surrounding Russia’s periphery by incorporating a resurgent Germany into the US system; it structured a program intent on limiting Soviet involvement in the plan’s implementation and benefits; and it instated a US policy focused on forcibly creating an Open Door in Eastern Europe.

The Soviets reacted defensively to a plan that they perceived as an “attempt to penetrate the economies of eastern Europe, dilute the Soviet Sphere, and reorient them westward.” In fact, Stalin stated in late 1949 under the code name Comrade Filippov in a private memorandum to Moscow, “War is not advantageous to the imperialists. Their crisis has begun; they are not ready to fight. They frighten us with the atomic bomb, we are not afraid of it. The material conditions for an attack, for unleashing war, do not exist. The way matters stand now, America is less ready to attack than the USSR to repulse an attack.”

⁶⁴ Roberts, 23.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 23.

⁶⁶ Layne, 57.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 57, 68.

Whether or not he believed the US would avoid another war, Stalin was forcing the Truman administration to enter into precisely the military conflict he himself wanted to avoid. Some historians have looked at Stalin's actions even during the Roosevelt administration as forcefully undiplomatic, ideologically motivated, and aggressively premeditated. The Soviet Union's unwillingness to follow the Yalta accords, its repression of Eastern states, and its uncompromising nature all point to a Soviet-induced destruction of the Grand Alliance. Stalin, from such an interpretation, seemed to foresee the failure of tripartite unity and was preparing to exert an aggressive postwar policy toward the US even as early as 1941. Truman's reaction to this Soviet expansionism was therefore natural because Stalin not only threatened US interests but also a peaceful postwar order. Stalin's actions toward Poland, Czechoslovakia, Tito's Yugoslavia, and the Berlin Blockade all seem to support the US perception of Soviet aggression and to reiterate Kennan's analysis of Soviet behavior.

While such an argument is solid, Stalin's fundamentally different approach to statecraft must be noted. G. Roberts had defined Stalin's foreign policy to be, "messianic in its world view, limited in its geographical and functional scope, pessimistic in its evaluation of situations, parsimonious in its acceptance of cost and risks."⁶⁸ He saw the best defensive strategy as an offensive one. The Soviet weakness necessitated its adoption of Realpolitik to curb the US's economic and political encirclement of the Eastern European camp. Even if Stalin was an ideologue, his actions combined zeal and caution, and his policy, though seemingly radical, was also conservatively calculated.

Stalin's response to Containment: NATO, NSC-68, and the Resulting Berlin Blockade

Stalin was not ready for war with the US; the Soviet economy had suffered tremendously during the war and the country's resources were depleted. While standing from a position of weakness, Stalin was still able to feign strength and engage in power politics through the Berlin Blockade bluff and the creation of the Cominform take out (in order to keep his stronghold in Eastern Europe). The Berlin Blockade backfired, as did many of Stalin's reactionary policies toward US containment, because it only escalated Western European fears against the Soviet stereotype and confirmed the need for US-initiated policies of containment. The Berlin Blockade gave Western Europe a vivid example of a tangible Communist threat and consequently inspired the Brussels pact that would later become the system of collective security known as the North American Treaty Organization.

On a different note, significant evidence suggests the US inability to use the bomb for propelling favorable Soviet action. Stalin's policy on the bomb was guided by the principle of the war of nerves and the idea of limits, as shown by the deterrent effect of the bomb during the

⁶⁸ Roberts, 23.

Freshman Seminar

Berlin Blockade. Atomic diplomacy did present an immediate danger to the Soviet image and thus caused the Soviet Union to adopt a hard-line policy towards the Americans. The desire to appear tough created the need for Stalin to raise international tensions through the Berlin Blockade and to continue applying pressure on the West as he routinely did even at the onset of the peace settlements, as early as Tehran and Yalta. His pursuit of a defensive yet tough policy further exasperated traditional western perception of the Soviets as an aggressive, expansionary power and led US policymakers to rationalize the need for a defensive NATO initiative and the build up of military forces through NSC-68.

The US policy toward Eastern Europe heightened Stalin's insecurity and thus widened the gap of mistrust regarding American intentions. The question of how sensible Stalin's suspicions were of the Truman administration can be analyzed by the US strategy discussed in the National Security Council 20/4 in November, 1948. Historians argue that US grand strategy had aimed at triggering the collapse of the Soviet Union: the NSC stated that US peacetime goals were to "reduce the power and influence of the USSR to a limit which no longer constitutes a threat to peace... bring about change in conduct of international relations by the government in power in Russia." The objectives of NSC 20/4 were reiterated in NSC-68 in April 1950. The final draft of Paper 68 argued in 1950 that, because the Soviets depended on military power to carry out their fundamental design, they could only be stopped by US military power.⁶⁹ Once the US showed that it could contain and drive back Communist power, it would also "foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system."⁷⁰ US strategic aims had evolved towards not just containing the Soviet system but annihilating it altogether.

Action and Reaction in the Origins of the Cold War: Flexibility of Soviet Policy

US attempts to gain an open sphere of influence in Europe were evident in Washington's aim of eliminating the Soviet rival by "rolling back" its Eastern empire. The US decision to divide Germany rather than seeking agreement with Moscow toward German unification and punitive reprimands was proof that the US would not retreat to its traditional noninterventionist foreign policy. While many historians study containment through the lens of US reaction towards Soviet provocative actions, they do not take into account how Stalin's strategy was influenced by Washington's policy decisions. LaFeber comments on Soviet actions in his statement, "However Stalin acted inside Russia where he had total control, in his foreign policy during 1941-1946 he displayed realism, careful calculation of forces and a diplomatic finesse that undercut any attempt to explain away his actions as a paranoid."⁷¹

⁶⁹ LaFeber, 506.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 506.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 506.

Even with the ongoing history of conflict, Soviet tactics and techniques under Stalin were not inflexible. In his assessment of Soviet negotiation techniques, Professor Mosely of Columbia University lectured in 1951: "Soviet diplomacy is monolithic in its method of operation... Bolshevik mythology is full of chain reaction concepts of causality. Outward pressure on Soviet power seared post-1945 relations."⁷² The United States followed the policy of "building a position of strength," which only propelled the Soviet drive for security and escalated what some historians define to be Stalin's "paranoia."

Even though the Soviets adopted a policy of both cooperation and competition, seeking security in Eastern Europe and raising tensions in Iran, the Soviets still demobilized their armies and withdrew from important areas in the course of 1945-7. "They allowed for free elections in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, discouraged revolutionary action in France, Italy, and Greece, and endeavored to maintain acceptable relations with the Chinese nationalists and evacuated forces from Manchuria."⁷³ Yet Stalin had also commented privately to the British foreign secretary in late 1945, "The U.K. has India and the possession of the Indian Ocean in her sphere of interest; the U.S. has China and Japan, but the Soviet Union has nothing. Could not the interests of the Soviet government be taken into account?"⁷⁴

Roosevelt downplayed the role of Soviet ideology and saw the USSR's behavior as a participant rather than an obstacle to the international system. However, Truman repudiated Secretary of States Byrnes's attempt to establish a cooperative relationship with the Soviets in December 1945, and the Clifford/ Elsey report that incorporated Kennan's Long telegram portrayed Moscow as a rapacious power bent on world domination.⁷⁵ The late 1940's featured a US dedicated to meeting the Soviet threat by flexing its military and economic might and "making it unmistakably clear that action contrary to our conception of decent world order will redound to the disadvantage" of the Soviet Union. The US had the aim of bringing Western Europe, Germany, and Japan into its global hegemony and thus preventing their possible challenge to US dominated world order. Stalin saw an American desire for unilateral hegemony and reacted purposefully in both the European and Pacific theatre to limit American dominance in the post-war geopolitical atmosphere; in a note to himself in 1948, Stalin wrote, "We do not conduct any cold war, the Cold War is being waged by the U.S.A and its Allies."⁷⁶

The analysis that Russia was merely *reacting* towards Western threats to its security discounts Soviet involvement in the Korean War and the imminent nuclear collision known as

⁷² Roberts, 24.

⁷³ Melvin Lehner

⁷⁴ Roberts, 92.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 20.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 20.

the Cuban Missile Crisis. The procession of history, capturing US aggression and self-interest in its post-war relations, also depicts Soviet involvement in the movement towards brinksmanship. Many historians look back on the origins of the first hot war in US-Soviet relations as evidence of Stalin's aggressive desire for communist expansion.⁷⁷ The west perceived the war in Korea as part of a pattern of Soviet sponsored communist aggression which threatened further encroachments on the "free world." They viewed Kim Il Sung as a puppet to Stalin's preemptive design for conquest. And when Stalin covertly provided sustained military support to North Korea when it attempted to forcibly annex South Korea, he viewed the dispatch of military support as a low risk and low cost program to assist an aggressive and anti-Western ally and an opportunity to strengthen Russia's position in occupied Japan.⁷⁸ Stalin wanted a friendly government in Korea to better protect the Soviet Union against potential US controlled Japanese aggression. Thus while historians depict Stalin's involvement in the Korean War as evidence of his calculating and expansionist motives, Stalin's action in the late 1940s show how far the US's containment policy pushed him towards attempting to secure a coalition of communist states in Eastern Europe through the Cominform as well as strengthening his grasp in the Far East. An in-depth analysis of the origins of the Korean War would give yet another perspective on how the Soviets reacted towards Truman's "tight" policies and to what extent Soviet initiatives in the Far East developed from the deterioration of the Grand Alliance and the socio-economic threat in Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, the evolution of Stalin's views on the wartime coalition with the allied powers shaped the Kremlin's relationship with the US and oriented Soviet foreign policy in the early Cold War period. According to Geoffrey Roberts and his interpretation of Soviet policy, four phases emerged during the evolution of Stalin's views on the Grand Alliance:

- 1) *The phase of liberation and spheres of influence in which the primary goal was the annihilation of Axis power and liberation of Europe from Nazi hegemony.*
- 2) *A tripartite phase from 1943 onward in which Stalin envisioned his ability to dominate the trilateral policy-making of post-war security order.*
- 3) *With the end of the War, a more clear-cut ideological concept of peace within Eastern Europe arose, a peace of the people's democratic Europe in which "Soviet security and interest would be guaranteed by communist and left wing hegemony in Eastern Europe."*
- 4) *In the early post war years, Stalin reverted to a more traditional and limited concept of relations with the Western powers, one in which continuing grand alliance was seen as merely a framework for a stressful but peaceful coexistence and co-operation. The western opposition to Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe and the growing perception in Moscow of the rising*

⁷⁷ Richard C. Thornton, *Odd Man Out: Truman, Stalin, Mao, and the Origins of the Korean War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2001), 162.

⁷⁸ Mastny, 13.

Freshman Seminar

*anti-Soviet and anti-Communist forces in Western Europe all contributed to the shift in Stalinist thinking regarding the Grand Alliance.*⁷⁹

The introduction of atomic weaponry, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, and the formation of NATO and NSC-68 were all clear examples of a change in US strategic aims toward Europe and a tightening of its foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. Truman's containment policies further aggravated Soviet security oriented initiatives in Eastern Europe and thus contributed to the deterioration of the tripartite unity on both US and Russian sides. However, these policies did not completely reorient Soviet perception of US foreign policy as Stalin maintained the same suspicious and opportunistic approach towards the West that he held more subduedly during the Roosevelt Administration. From both an ideological and military perspective, the American and Russian aims in post-war Europe were inevitably contradictory, and while both tried to follow a unified tripartite approach from 1943-1945, each power attempted to implement its strategic aims in their designated "area of interest," causing a domino effect of action and reaction that would serve as the catalyst in the early development of the Cold War.

⁷⁹ Roberts, 55.

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Freshman Seminar

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Senior Essay

THE PITFALLS OF RIVALRY

Foreign Policy Rivalry in the Carter Administration & Its Meaning for U.S. Policy in Iran

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For the Senior Essay section of this inaugural issue of the Yale Historical Review, the Editorial Board has chosen to publish an excerpt from Margaret Goodlander's Senior Essay, The Pitfalls of Rivalry: Foreign Policy Rivalry in the Carter Administration and Its Meaning for U.S. Policy in Iran, which was submitted to the Yale History Department upon her graduation as part of the Yale Class of 2009. We have also chosen to include a statement by the author through which we hope to highlight the unique, arduous, and emotional process involved with writing the Senior History Essay at Yale. The excerpt presented in this publication includes the introduction and first two parts of Ms. Goodlander's work. In these sections, Ms. Goodlander provides an unprecedented and compelling analysis of the 'system of rivalry' that President Carter constructed within his administration between National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Her work is an important contribution to scholarship on the Carter Administration and a definitive example of the highest quality Yale Senior History Essay.

Senior Statement: Deconstructing Rivalry

Two history seminars in particular shaped my decision to write on foreign policy rivalry in the Carter Administration and its impact on U.S. policy in Iran: the *Art of Biography* and *Studies in Grand Strategy*. In Professor Gaddis' biography seminar, I became interested in understanding how the life experiences of individuals shape worldviews and beliefs. I chose to write on Bernard Gwertzman, a journalist and former foreign editor for the *New York Times* who covered all the major foreign policy figures and events of the late twentieth century, including seven Secretaries of State. Of the thousands of front page news stories that Gwertzman wrote for the *New York Times*, only one hangs on the wall of his office: his story marking the end of the 444 terrifying days of the Iran Hostage Crisis.¹ Researching Gwertzman's news pieces on the period of crisis in U.S. Iranian relations from 1977 until 1980 provided a strong foundation for my interest in the period.

Through the grand strategy course, I developed a deep interest in understanding, through historical examples, how leaders define goals and develop rigorous yet flexible means to achieve them. My conversations with Professor Charles Hill got me interested in the "intellectual circle," or policy communities that contribute to decision-making. These two courses offered me a strong background in thinking about biography and foreign policy, which led me to look into the personal papers of statesmen here at Yale.

When I learned that Cyrus Roberts Vance was one of the few secretaries of state to resign on a matter of principle, I was intrigued. Two of Vance's books planted the early seeds of my research design: first, *Education and the World View* and second, Vance's account of his time as secretary of state (which, interestingly, he refused to call a memoir), *Hard Choices: Critical Years in American Foreign Policy*.

I began my research in Vance's personal papers in the Manuscripts and Archives Library at Yale. The Vance papers offered a solid foundation of primary material from which I felt I could contribute to the scholarship of the Carter Administration by exploring how Vance's life and worldview shaped the principles that led him to resign abruptly and amidst such turmoil. I discovered that David McLellan is the only historian to have written extensively on Vance; in 1985 he published a short biography for the "American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy" series. This text offers a sympathetic account of Vance's three years as secretary of state under Carter, but does not significantly investigate Vance's worldview or philosophy of foreign affairs.

¹ Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Takes Oath As 40th President; Promises an 'Era of National Renewal' – Minutes Later, 52 U.S. Hostages in Iran Fly To Freedom After 444 Day Ordeal," *New York Times*, January 21, 1981.

Senior Essay

The deep and dynamic differences in background, philosophy, and personality between Vance and Brzezinski fascinated me. I returned to many of Bernie Gwertzman's news pieces on the period and found that contemporary journalists had seized on the differences vigorously. *New York Times* pieces by Gwertzman and Dr. Leslie Gelb, formerly Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs and a journalist for the *New York Times* as well, offered a fascinating view on the differences between Vance and Brzezinski.

I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Gelb for the Gwertzman biography; we spoke about the Vance-Brzezinski clash and he suggested that their differences were most pronounced during the Carter Administration's crisis in Iran. Like Vance, Gelb resigned from the Carter Administration and though he did not wish to speak about his decision at length, I became more interested in understanding the broader policy implications of the deep difference between Vance and Brzezinski.

Though historians have considered the Carter Administration's policy in Iran extensively, and have certainly acknowledged the Vance-Brzezinski conflict as a disruptive force, my reading of the secondary material did not discuss extensively the full implications of this acrimony in dealing with two major foreign policy crises, the fall of the Shah and the hostage crisis. I felt that I could build upon the scholarship of how the worldviews of the participants and the flaws in Carter's system of foreign policy decision-making contributed to policy failures.

With a firm grasp of the secondary material on the Carter Administration and its policy in Iran, I continued my primary source research. The Cyrus Vance papers at Yale offered a rich collection of letters between Vance and journalists and policy-makers in the aftermath of his resignation. The papers also included several unpublished speeches that helped me piece together Vance's worldview more completely, as well as several notebooks from the late 1970s that offered insights into how Vance approached diplomacy. His writing from his time at Yale confirmed the trends that I saw later in his life: he was, above all, a legal-minded and deeply humble individual. By the end of the fall, I had amassed far more information about Vance's life and worldview than Brzezinski's.

A biography on Dr. Brzezinski has not yet been written, so I gleaned an understanding his worldview and philosophy from brief portraits of his life contained in secondary material, from his memoir, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of a National Security Adviser*, and from a fascinating personal interview that I was able to conduct with Dr. Brzezinski. Brzezinski's account of his experience in the Carter Administration and his relationships to Vance and Carter was essential to understanding how Brzezinski approached problems as national security adviser and the ways that his views departed from Vance's.

Senior Essay

With a massive collection of notes from secondary sources, contemporary news pieces, memoirs, and a vast collection of primary documents from the Vance papers, National Security Archive, and Carter Library, I began to map out a logic chain for my essay. At first, I struggled to organize my research around this subject that had so captured my interest and imagination: the portraits of two adversarial advisors and the impact of their rivalry had on American policy in Iran.

Researching President Jimmy Carter's foreign policy team deepened my understanding of how foreign policy decisions – both good and bad – are actually made. It also broadened my understanding of the long and tragic history of U.S.-Iranian relations. Studying the lives and worldviews of Carter's central and adversarial foreign policy advisers, Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski, heightened my appreciation for effective intellectual communities, particularly in the realm of government. I traveled for the first time to a presidential library; had fascinating conversations with former administration officials, historians, and journalists that I will remember for the rest of my life; and read books that I will treasure for years to come.

THE PITFALLS OF RIVALRY

Foreign Policy Rivalry in the Carter Administration & Its Meaning for U.S. Policy in Iran

“At times the creative imagination seems to work in isolation, when an individual, impelled by some uninstructed spark of originality, glimpses relationships or possibilities never seen before, or devises forms of expression never heard before. But most often the creative imagination does not flare in isolation. Creative minds stimulate each other, interaction and competition have a generative effect, sparks fly from disagreement and rivalry, and entire groups becomes creative.”²

Introduction: Rivalry and Foreign Policy

The resignation of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance amidst the Iran hostage crisis made international headlines on April 28, 1980. Vance’s departure marked the finale of one of the more intriguing foreign policy rivalries of the twentieth century. The *New York Times* described Vance, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, and President Jimmy Carter “as different in background, personality, and foreign policy experience as any President and his two senior foreign policy advisers could be.”³ A front-page story announced Vance’s resignation with the headline: “Vance Resigns: End of Rivalry.”⁴

While a collection of like-minded advisers who had worked for Carter throughout his tenure as Governor of Georgia comprised his domestic team, Carter’s main foreign policy advisers – Vance and Brzezinski – had clear philosophical and personal differences from the start. Vance was a self-effacing Wall Street lawyer; Brzezinski, an activist scholar with political ambition. Vance was a diplomatist who refused to think of the Russians in terms of a grand design to encircle the West; Brzezinski, a realist, believed the very existence of Soviet power as an insurmountable obstacle to American power and global stability.

Carter wrote that he welcomed “natural competition”⁵ between the State Department and the national security adviser, believing it would improve the quality of his administration’s policies. Vance also saw the advantages of rivalry; he wrote to Carter in October 1976 that he envisioned a team with “the ability to criticize shortcomings openly, and in a constructive spirit,

² Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founding Fathers*, (New York: Random House, 2003).

³ Bernard Gwertzman, “Foreign Policy Trio Learns to Play in Tune – Mostly,” *New York Times*, The Week in Review, December 31, 1978.

⁴ Richard Burt, “Departure of Vance: End of Rivalry,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1980.

⁵ *Ibid*, 25.

Senior Essay

so as to better correct them.”⁶ As a former peanut farmer and engineer with little political experience outside of Georgia, the President-elect himself knew that he had much to learn about foreign affairs and hoped that a healthy philosophical tension between his advisors would provide him with a full spectrum of interpretations and policy prescriptions.⁷ Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson had also advocated a rivalry system; he wrote: “To decide one must know the real issues. These have to be found and flushed like birds from a field. The adversary process is the best bird dog.”⁸ In effect, Carter hoped Vance and Brzezinski would work together as his “bird dog.” Carter believed that disagreement and rivalry would inspire the creativity his administration would need to meet the great foreign policy challenges his administration faced.

Carter’s system of rivalry did not accomplish what it set out to achieve. Carter severely underestimated the scope and depth of his advisers’ philosophical and personal disagreements. With radically different backgrounds and philosophies of foreign affairs, these men were destined to clash; their differences and mutual distrust would eventually cripple the administration’s foreign policy, particularly in Iran.

This essay will demonstrate the many pitfalls of foreign policy rivalry in the Carter Administration. With particular focus on U.S. policy in Iran, it will explore why amidst a major foreign policy crisis, a Secretary of State resigned over a difference of opinion. Vance was only the second secretary of state in the twentieth-century to resign on a matter of principle; his departure represents the breaking point of Carter’s adversarial system. As the example of the Carter administration shows, unchecked rivalries can lead to a total collapse of statecraft.

Historians of twentieth-century American foreign policy have documented the failures in the Carter Administration’s foreign policy, particularly with regard to Iran; these accounts tend to emphasize Carter’s shortcomings as the cause of policy failures, often understating the fierce clashes between his advisers. Though the historian Gaddis Smith has suggested that the Vance-Brzezinski rivalry was “both a cause and a result of the President’s and the nation’s inability to find a stable balance among morality, power and reason,”⁹ ultimately he argues that Carter’s lack of political experience and limited historical perspective were the root causes of his administration’s foreign policy failures.¹⁰

⁶ Letter, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 10/3/76, Carter Presidential Papers, “Handwriting File,” Box 33, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷ Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982) 51-54.

⁸ Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: Norton, 1969), 733.

⁹ See Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986) 35. As Smith points out, William Jennings Bryan, President Wilson’s secretary of state, was the first to resign on a matter of principle: that Wilson’s policy toward Germany’s use of submarines would lead to war.

¹⁰ See Michael Leeden and William Lewis, *Debate: The American Failure in Iran* (New York: Knopf, 1981).

Senior Essay

This essay will expand beyond the existing literature of the period by focusing less on Carter's limitations and more on the extent to which the Vance Brzezinski rivalry had an impact on the Carter Administration's policy in Iran. John Lewis Gaddis confirms the "internal disarray"¹¹ of Carter's foreign policy team, a theme that James Bill expands upon in his sweeping account of American-Iranian relations from the 1940s through the Iran-Contra affair.¹² Due to the scope of his work, however, Bill's book does not capture the nuances of the Carter Administration's central foreign policy decision-makers, the flaws in Carter's system, and the failed methodology of their decisions.

Many of the key players in this drama have written their own interpretations of the Carter Administration and its policy in Iran. Though these accounts offer valuable insights into the mind of the policymaker, it is also true that consciously or not, memoirists rewrite historical decisions to rationalize and defend their roles in them.

This essay begins by arguing that there were fundamental flaws in Carter's rivalry system that doomed it from the start. In Part One, I analyze the ways in which Carter failed to comprehend fully the differing personalities and worldviews of Vance and Brzezinski. It becomes clear that the absence of a chief of staff and Carter's tendency to micromanage foreign policy decisions severely weakened his administration from the start.

Next, this essay will consider U.S. policy in Iran during two major foreign policy crises – the Iranian Revolution and hostage crisis – as a case study to illuminate the shortcomings of the Carter administration's foreign policy decision-making system. Part Three will explain that in the months leading up to the Iranian Revolution, an inherited policy of unquestioning allegiance to the Shah, as well as intelligence failures, contributed to the administration's frustrations in Iran. Complicating this situation, the rivalry between Vance and Brzezinski caused an internal stalemate in decision-making and prevented the United States from formulating coherent policies to respond to changing conditions on the ground in Iran. As Part Four will demonstrate, secrecy and distrust ultimately compromised the quality of the administration and led to the collapse of the Vance-Brzezinski rivalry.

Why, then, did a team that Carter believed would stimulate creativity and sound policy-making result in such dysfunction? The answer begins in the President's misconceptions about the philosophies and personalities of his foreign policy advisers.

I.

¹¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 347.

¹² See James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

Misconceived Rivals: Vance and Brzezinski

In December 1978, nearly halfway through Carter's first term, the difference in background, personality, and foreign policy experience between Vance and Brzezinski were not entirely apparent to the public.¹³ From the outside, the advisers seemed to be playing a tune: a peace accord between Egypt and Israel seemed likely and the follow-on Strategic Arms Limitation Talks promised to ease tension with Moscow. Gradually, however, Vance and Brzezinski's highly conflicting philosophies soon emerged and the pair's mutual distrust paralyzed policy debates. Eventually, the administration and the public alike saw that, based on their personalities, both Vance and Brzezinski were poorly suited to fulfill the roles Carter had envisioned for them.

Adversarial Philosophies

Vance and Brzezinski emerged onto the national scene from two very different backgrounds. Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Polish immigrant who came to government from academia, deeply resented Vance's ties to the "foreign policy establishment."¹⁴ Furthermore, Brzezinski opposed Vance's legal-minded approach to diplomacy, believing it would weaken American in the ongoing competition with the Soviet Union.

Cyrus Vance's background qualified him as a member of the "foreign policy establishment." A graduate of Yale College and Yale Law School, he served in the Navy during the Second World War and went on to join the prestigious Wall Street law firm Simpson, Thatcher & Bartlett. The firm encouraged associates to participate in politics, and soon after Vance became a partner he received a call from the administration of John F. Kennedy to join the Department of Defense.¹⁵

Brzezinski was highly critical of Vance's breeding. He deemed Vance a "quintessential product of his own background," who operated according to the rule of "both the legal

¹³ See Bernard Gwertzman, "Foreign Policy Trio Learn to Play in Tune – Mostly," *The New York Times*, December 31, 1978.

¹⁴ Despite his distaste for the "Establishment," Brzezinski did serve briefly on Secretary of State Dean Rusk's Policy Planning Council in the Johnson administration.

¹⁵ David S. McLellan, *Cyrus Vance*, (Totowa, New Jersey: 1985) 5. Vance began his career in the Department of Defense in 1962 as Secretary of the Army. He quickly rose the ranks without any opposition. In 1964, Vance was appointed Deputy Secretary of Defense under Robert McNamara. Under Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Vance was primarily used as a peacemaker and troubleshooter; he was sent to Panama after anti-American riots in 1964 as well as the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and Detroit following racial violence in 1967. He made national headlines for his work in Cyprus in 1967 and in Korea in 1968 after North Korea's seizure of the U.S. naval vessel, *Pueblo*.

Senior Essay

profession and Wasp elite...but those values and rules were of declining relevance.”¹⁶ Vance reflected a class that “was no longer dominant either in the world or in America.”¹⁷ For Brzezinski, Vance’s world was “not easy for [me] to relate to.”¹⁸

Brzezinski could be classified as one of the “new professional elite,”¹⁹ a group of foreign policy experts who derived power not from business or government training but from concept-driven thinking and ideas. Like former Secretary of State and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, Brzezinski was an intellectual who emerged into public service from academia.²⁰ After graduating from McGill University in Canada, he went on to earn his Ph.D. from Harvard University where he adopted a tough-minded approach to world politics that clashed dramatically with Vance’s “liberal internationalist” outlook. Brzezinski says of his time in Cambridge, “Harvard encouraged me to approach international problems dispassionately and analytically. While not ignoring moral concerns, my studies there made me conscious of the fact that in international politics, one has to be prudent and realistic even if pursuing ambitions objectives.”²¹

Brzezinski focused his studies on the Soviet Union, a nation he lived in as a young boy and came to loathe as a statesman. He was born in Warsaw during the interwar period, and his father, Tadeusz Brzezinski, served as a Polish diplomat. Brzezinski grew up following his father’s career around Europe and says that “the collective experience of that particular time in history” most shaped his worldview and approach to foreign affairs.²² He spent his youth living in both Germany and the Soviet Union; he experienced first-hand Hitler’s and Stalin’s totalitarian regimes, and adopted a realist worldview that he further cultivated as a graduate student and junior professor at Harvard University. Harvard in the 1950s was described by one historian as a sort of “Cold War University”²³ that operated more as an “extension of government”²⁴ than an independent institution. Brzezinski strongly believed that the United States must view its own power and global standing in relation to the Soviet threat.

¹⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of a National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), 43.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 43.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 43.

¹⁹ See Jeremi Suri *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) 92.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 92. George Ball described Brzezinski as possessing “the same facility as Walt Rostow for inventing abstractions that sounded deceptively global and profound – at least, to Presidents not inoculated by early exposure to the practice. As Scotty Reston had said of another academic diplomat, he ‘delighted in flinging continents about.’ My father once described that facility as ‘a flair for making little fishes talk like whales.’” (Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, 458).

²¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview by author, New York, NY, March 10, 2009.

²² *Ibid*.

²³ Jeremi Suri *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) 92.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 93.

Vance, on the other hand, as a legal-minded diplomat, was looking for productive avenues of dialogue with the Soviet Union. He rejected Brzezinski's notion that the Soviets possessed a master plan for world domination.²⁵ In this way, Vance helped to "usher in the new era"²⁶ of beliefs by refusing to accept the assumption that America was operating in a bi-polar dominated by competition between the United States and Soviet Union.

Brzezinski was skeptical of Vance's viewpoint and his "legalistic" approach to diplomacy with the Soviets. He found it dangerous to American national interests and security, explaining in his memoirs:

Vance fueled the President's desire to speedily conclude an arms control agreement by reinforcing Carter's view that Brzezinski and he, in Vance's word, 'have similar dreams and aspirations about the most fundamental issues.' I recall irritating Carter by disputing that view and arguing that it ignored the cumulative influence of history and ideology in shaping a leader's outlook.²⁷

Vance's uncle John W. Davis, a distinguished Wall Street lawyer and leading scholar on the U.S. Constitution, influenced Vance's interest in law and public service.²⁸ Vance's father died of pneumonia when he was five years old and Davis became like a father to Vance, inspiring in his nephew a love for the law. Vance remembers, "I used to browse in Mr. Davis' law firm library...I remember the smell of bound leather and those wonderfully big shelves of law books."²⁹ Leslie Gelb, who worked in the State Department under Vance, writes that "Mr. Davis took young Cyrus under his wing, and friends say, nurtured in him an interest in the law and a lawyer's approach to problems."³⁰

Vance negotiated foreign policy questions like a lawyer, believing that any complicated issue could be litigated and resolved.³¹ Characterizing the SALT negotiations as "litigation between two opposing legal teams,"³² the *The New York Times* captured Vance's legalistic approach to diplomacy:

²⁵ See Vance, *Hard Choices: Four Critical Years in Managing America's Foreign Policy*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

²⁶ I.M. Destler, Leslie Gelb, and Anthony Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy: The Unmaking of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984) 95.

²⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 518.

²⁸ Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. said of John Davis: "Of all the persons who appeared before the Court in my time, there was never anybody more elegant, more concise or more logical than John W. Davis." (McLellan, 2).

²⁹ Bernard Gwertzman, "Cyrus Vance Plays Cool," *New York Times*, 28 March 1979.

³⁰ Leslie Gelb, "A Skilled and Realist Negotiator: Cyrus Roberts Vance," *New York Times Biographical Service*, December 1976, pp. 1811-1812.

³¹ Secretary of State John Foster Dulles also had, according to President Eisenhower, "a lawyer's mind," but this inclined Dulles to become "a sort of international prosecuting attorney" with a tactical and not strategic focus. (President Eisenhower quoted in Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 158).

³² Bernard Gwertzman, "Cyrus Vance Plays Cool," *New York Times*, 28 March 1979.

Senior Essay

Negotiating with the Russians on strategic arms, Kissinger would try to involve his protagonists in the grand sweep of history, while dealing out American proposals like a magician flipping cards. To Vance, each negotiation is just another lawyer's case. He has the latest American position typed out, double-spaced, and he goes over it many time before he presents it to Foreign Minister Gromyko.³³

Brzezinski was, again, highly critical of this approach. He argued that in viewing the world through the eyes of a lawyer, where all problems were negotiable and resolvable, the State Department tended to "equate foreign policy with endless litigation and to confuse détente with acquiescence."³⁴ Brzezinski once complained, "The basic problem remains that our foreign policy is being conducted essentially on a contractual-legal bases, as if we were negotiating some legal contract. Unless we bring some situations to a head...even occasionally through a confrontation, we will not resolve the outstanding issues."³⁵ Brzezinski and Vance's mutual criticisms ultimately failed to enrich policy debates in the administration because President Carter found it difficult to make a clear choice between the competing interpretations and prescriptions for American-Soviet relations, due to his own lack of experience and convictions on the issue. Carter compounded these challenges by failing to assign the roles of his advisers properly. Vance and Brzezinski were not well suited for the roles Carter assigned them. While Carter envisioned Vance as an adviser and public spokesman for the administration's foreign policy, he did not inhabit this role naturally. Though Carter needed his national security adviser to operate as an impartial policy coordinator, Brzezinski opted to play a more dominant, policy-making role.

Vance: An Objective Spokesman

Impressed by the "quiet but sound"³⁶ style with which Vance presented his ideas, Carter believed that Vance would respect the President's primacy and serve well as an adviser. Indeed, Carter was right about this aspect of Vance. During the Camp David Accords, as William Quandt reports, the "Israelis viewed Carter and Brzezinski as somewhat suspect. Vance was seen as objective."³⁷ Vance had "little interest in getting credit,"³⁸ and thus inspired trust in his superiors.

Though Carter wanted to remain the primary arbiter of foreign policy questions, he expected Vance to operate the central spokesman for the administration's foreign policy. Ultimately, Vance was not well suited for his role. Carter wrote: "My own preference was that one of the roles of the Secretary of State be the education of the American public about foreign

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 520.

³⁵ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, 6/29/78, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, "Memos 6/1/78 - 7/14/78," Box 2, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁶ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 51.

³⁷ William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1986) 218.

³⁸ Strobe Talbot, "America Abroad," *Time Magazine*, March 9, 1992.

policy.”³⁹ While Vance agreed in theory, in practice he had neither a knack nor a taste for public relations. Early in his career as Deputy Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara hired a speech coach to analyze Vance’s public speaking skills. The coach’s comments were telling: “I would suggest that he work toward a more conversational, dynamic, and engaging style of delivery. This is in keeping with language intended for the ear rather than for the eye.”⁴⁰ Vance wrote in the margin of the memo: “I am not sure that is my style.”⁴¹

Vance was consistently reluctant to speak publicly or engage with the media. He bypassed countless opportunities to serve as the Carter Administration’s public face for foreign policy; he often left public appearances to his Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher.⁴² Indeed, Strobe Talbott, who covered Vance for *Time Magazine*, maintains:

He was the most unquotable public figure I have ever encountered. He still is. He is allergic to the first person singular and prone to wooden understatement. He has little knack for explaining what he is up to in terms of grand theories of history, strategy, or geopolitics. After a breakthrough in the nuclear arms talks, all Vance could muster for the press was that diplomatic progress was achieved “brick by brick, inch by inch.”⁴³

Nevertheless, Vance recognized his role as the administration’s policy spokesman, writing, “Only the President and his Secretary of State were to have the responsibility for defining the administration’s foreign policy publicly.” Vance maintained that, “despite Brzezinski’s state acceptance of this principle,”⁴⁴ his rival fought for the role of policy spokesman.

Brzezinski: An Outspoken National Security Adviser

When Vance failed to fulfill or delegate his speaking opportunities, Brzezinski would take them up without consulting Vance. Through Brzezinski’s outspoken nature was simply a source of confusion at first, Vance argued months after leaving office that Brzezinski’s relationship with the media became “a serious impediment to the conduct of our foreign

³⁹ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 54.

⁴⁰ Memorandum, Dr. David A. Smith to Secretary Vance, “Speech Delivery of Deputy Secretary Vance,” undated, Cyrus Vance Papers, Series I, Book 7, Folder 82, Yale University Manuscripts and Archives Library.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² In an article entitled, “Cyrus Vance Plays Cool,” (*New York Times* 28 March 1979), Bernard Gwertzman explains that Vance willingly ceded the opportunity to speak publically about China – a vital opportunity – to Warren Christopher.

⁴³ Strobe Talbot, “America Abroad,” *Time Magazine*, March 9, 1992.

⁴⁴ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 35-36. See also Leslie Gelb, “Brzezinski Says He’ll Give Advice to Carter Only When He Asks For It.” *New York Times*, December 17, 1976. Despite his seeming suitability to play a policymaking role, Brzezinski initially agreed that the focus of his role would be operational. “I don’t envisage my job as a policymaking job,” he told the *New York Times* on the day his appointment was announced. “I see my job essentially as heading the operational staff of the President, helping him to integrate policy, but above all helping him facilitate the process of decision-making in which he will consult closely with his principal Cabinet members” (Gelb, 1976).

policy.”⁴⁵ Vance spoke with regret of Brzezinski’s emergence as a public figure. “I think it is of fundamental importance that there be only two spokesmen for the government on matters relating to foreign policy: the President of the United States and the Secretary of State,” he said. “Any other arrangement leads to confusion the United States, Congress and abroad.”⁴⁶

Brzezinski successfully expanded his role early on, creating an imbalance in the Carter system. Paul Warnke, Carter’s chief SALT negotiator and Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, wrote that “Zbig was not appointed national security adviser to keep his mouth shut on policy positions.”⁴⁷ Brzezinski’s role as a public spokesman became so pronounced that Averell Harriman, “the dean of the foreign policy establishment,”⁴⁸ felt compelled to say: “the national security adviser should be like a child at a formal dinner table – seen but not heard.”⁴⁹ But according to Carter, Brzezinski, “because of his attitude and demeanor, was a natural center of public attention.”⁵⁰

In Brzezinski’s view, Vance’s failures as a spokesman necessitated his own usurpation of that role. He writes that Vance’s inability “to provide a broad conceptual explanation for what our administration was trying to do, and Carter’s lack of preparation for doing it himself, pushed me to the forefront. (I will not claim I resisted strongly).”⁵¹ Bernard Gwertzman, who covered seven secretaries of state the *New York Times*’ diplomatic correspondent, explained that in the eyes of the media, “Vance had a hard act to follow in forging a relationship with the press. Kissinger had been very accessible; he had a live mind and love articulating policy. Vance struggled to communicate the bigger ideas to the public.”⁵² Thus, Vance’s natural reluctance to engage publically reflected Carter’s deep misunderstanding of his secretary of state’s strengths as a member of his team.

Brzezinski also capitalized on his ability to communicate well with Carter directly and became a close mentor the President. This close relationship began well before Carter took office. During Carter’s presidential campaign, Brzezinski served as chief foreign policy adviser and quickly developed a deep personal bond with Carter that would endure throughout his presidency. Brzezinski speaks of a deep – almost cosmic – bond between him and Jimmy Carter:

⁴⁵ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 35-36.

⁴⁶ Cyrus Vance quoted in Bernard Gwertzman, “Vance, Looking Back, Lauds Pact on Arms and Retorts to Brzezinski.” *New York Times*, December 3, 1980.

⁴⁷ Letter, Paul Warnke to Jody Powell, 5/3/79, “Memoranda – 1/278/79 – 6/24/79” folder 1, Box 51, Jody Powell Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁸ Jordan, *Crisis*, 48.

⁴⁹ Averll Harriman quoted in Jordan, *Crisis*, 49.

⁵⁰ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 54.

⁵¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 37.

⁵² Bernard Gwertzman, interview with author, February 1, 2009.

Senior Essay

In part, it was doubtless that mysterious interpersonal quality called ‘chemistry’; it might also have been a curious cultural affinity. We were both outsiders, not just to Washington but in a larger sense to contemporary America.⁵³

Carter was “an eager student,” of his national security adviser, and took full advantage of what Brzezinski could offer him as a mentor in foreign affairs. The President had great faith in Brzezinski’s grasp of foreign affairs, characterizing him as a “first-rate thinker.”⁵⁴ “As a college professor and an author,” Carter wrote, “[Brzezinski] was able to express complicated ideas simply.”⁵⁵

Brzezinski’s inappropriateness for the role of a passive operational manager was clear from the outset. His personality and ambition motivated him to influence policy debates aggressively. According to Carter, Brzezinski was the “most controversial member of my team.”⁵⁶ Indeed, Carter suspected from the start that Brzezinski “might not be adequately deferential to a Secretary of State.”⁵⁷ This was, in Carter’s words, “in accord with what [he] wanted: the final decisions on basic foreign policy would be made by men the Oval Office, and not in the State Department.”⁵⁸ Ultimately, Carter’s system of rivalry was unchecked from the start. His system, it soon became clear, was inherently biased towards Brzezinski.

II.

UNCHECKED RIVALS: STRUCTURAL FLAWS

Though major personal differences between Vance and Brzezinski challenged the effectiveness of Carter’s foreign policy team, major structural flaws in Carter’s foreign policy decision-making system compromised the adversarial system he hoped to establish. Carter had envisioned a seamless competition, with Vance and Brzezinski presenting their own independent analyses and conclusions to the president, leaving him to set and conduct foreign policy; instead, the rivalry consumed the policy mechanism itself and undermined the administration’s grand strategy.

Carter desired a system that included adversarial perspectives, yet he emphasized from the start that he would be the ultimate arbiter on questions of foreign policy. Brzezinski explains,

⁵³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 20. Brzezinski also recounts reading aloud to Carter a passage from *Sophie’s Choice* by William Styron that describes a “surprising affinity between Poland and the South, two peoples bred on history that overcame defeat, on a code of chivalry and honor that proudly compensated for backwardness.” Brzezinski admits to reading the passage to Carter because he felt “that in a strange way it conveyed something about the relationship between the two of us” (Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 20-21).

⁵⁴ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 53.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 51.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 51.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 52.

⁵⁸ *Ibid* 52.

“I knew full well that Carter would not wish me to be another Kissinger. At the same time, I also felt confident that he would not let Vance become another Dulles. He wanted to be the decision maker, and even more importantly, to be perceived as one.”⁵⁹ As he began his push for re-election, Carter reminded voters at a Town Hall appearance in Nashville: “There have been Presidents in the past, maybe no too distant past, that let their Secretaries of State make foreign policy. I don’t.”⁶⁰ Though Carter wanted to move away from the Nixon-Kissinger model of foreign-policy decision-making, according to historian Gaddis Smith, “Brzezinski...sought to perpetuate the Kissinger tradition, although less blatant in form.”⁶¹ Ironically, Carter’s system allowed Brzezinski to perpetuate the very tradition the President hope to end.

A Biased System

Effective rivalry requires structural balance. Due to structural inequities, Carter’s system favored Zbigniew Brzezinski’s influence. A few of these structural flaws were unavoidable: Vance’s office was in the State Department, located several blocks from the White House, while Brzezinski’s office was just a few feet from Carter’s in the White House. Hamilton Jordan remarked that Brzezinski spent far more time in Carter’s office than any other adviser.⁶² In the words of George Ball, former Deputy Secretary of State: Brzezinski has the advantage of briefing the President every morning and can thus exploit the time-tested bureaucratic principle that ‘nothing propinks like propinquity.’⁶³

In addition to seeing Carter frequently, Brzezinski controlled the flow of memos to Carter’s office. In particular, Carter encouraged lively debate within his two central foreign policy committees – the Policy Review Committee (chaired by Vance) and the Special Coordinating Committee (chaired by Brzezinski). If two committee members could not agree on a policy direction, Brzezinski would compose and submit Presidential Directives (PDs) or Presidential Review Memorandum (PRMs) to Carter.⁶⁴ Thus, under Carter’s system, Brzezinski had the final authority to judge the outcome of policy debates through Presidential Directives.

Vance opposed Brzezinski’s ability to author such documents, believing it offered the NSC adviser undue authority to interpret particular views and collective consensus after heated

⁵⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 63.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Rodman, *Presidential Command: Power, Leadership and the Making of Foreign Policy from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* (New York: Knopf, 2009) 117.

⁶¹ Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power*, 39.

⁶² Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1982) 48.

⁶³ George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Patter: Memoirs* (New York: W.W. Norton 1982) 457.

⁶⁴ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, 12/76, “Foreign Policy Decision-Making,” Zbigniew Brzezinski Files, Box 34, Jimmy Carter Library. This four-page memo outlines the structure of Carter’s foreign policy decision-making system, the responsibilities of each participant, and five key foreign policy objectives.

committee debates.⁶⁵ Initially, Carter granted the authority to Brzezinski because he believed it was the best method of preventing press leaks.⁶⁶ Vance did not insist on reviewing PDs or PRMs in draft form before they were submitted to the president, but when he did take the time to review them, he reports that he consistently found severe discrepancies between what Brzezinski produced for Carter and what Vance believed was said, agreed upon, or recommended during meetings.⁶⁷ In editorializing PDs and PRMs, Brzezinski manipulated this seemingly menial duty to gain policy influence in the administration.⁶⁸ These inequities were compounded by the absence of a genuine policy coordinator, or chief of staff, and Carter's misguided leadership within his system.

The Dangers of Micromanagement

Carter's system suffered structurally from the absence of a chief of staff and from Carter's propensity to micromanage foreign policy decisions. From January 1977 until July 1979, the Carter Administration operated without a chief of staff, a position that could have assisted in balancing Carter's team of rivals. James Fallows, formerly Carter's chief speechwriters, explains that at the start of the Carter Administration no one in the president's inner circle of domestic advisers "would have made a good chief of staff, so that function simply did not enter into the organization chart."⁶⁹

By September 1978, White House Director of Communications, Gerald Rafshoon, recognized the problem of coordination and communication between members of Carter's team and hired McKinsey and Company to assess the "competence issue" in the White House. McKinsey determined that: "The issue of competence is a major perception problem that must be addressed if we are to build positive, enthusiastic support for this administration. Too many people think Jimmy Carter has done a marginal to poor job...A chief of staff will bring order to this system."⁷⁰ This perception of marginality emanated from a distinct disorganization among Carter's foreign policy team due, in part, to the absence of a chief of staff.

⁶⁵ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 37.

⁶⁶ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 53.

⁶⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 37. See also, Jean A. Garrison, *Games Advisors Play: Foreign Policy in the Nixon and Carter Administrations* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1999) 13.

⁶⁸ Vance notes that when his successor, Senator Edmond Muskie, asked for advice on what changes to seek, Vance told him "the utmost important" was that "he must insist on the right to review NSC-prepared summaries and presidential directives in draft form before they went to the president" (Vance, *Hard Choices*, 37-38).

⁶⁹ James Fallows, "The Passionless Presidency: The Trouble with the Carter Administration," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1979,

⁷⁰ Memo, A. McDonald to President Carter, 8/29/80, Staff Office Papers, Folder '8/29/80,' Box 203, Jimmy Carter Library.

Senior Essay

The President's shortcomings as a leader of his own team of rivals further contributed to his team's dysfunction. Carter micromanaged most aspects of his administration. Though Carter wrote in his diary just three days before the inauguration, "I would like to delegate much more authority as President than I ever tried to do as governor. It's just not within the bounds of human capability to go into so much detail as I did in Georgia."⁷¹ Carter never learned to successfully delegate authority. He believed in a "clean-desk philosophy"⁷² which required that he would read and act upon every memo that crossed his desk each day. During his first month of his presidency, he told his staff, "Unless there's a holocaust, I'll take care of everything the same day it comes in."⁷³ Brzezinski described Carter as "a sculptor who did not know when to throw away his chisel."⁷⁴

Carter's micro-managerial tendencies compromised his ability to be a decisive leader. His indecision was first reflected in his inability to communicate clearly with his foreign policy team. Carter's advisers often had difficulty deciphering whether or when the President had settled on a policy. Brzezinski explains: "when he said 'I understand,' he was saying, 'I don't want to argue the subject with you anymore, and I don't want you to go away feeling that I have disagreed with you, but I am not going to say anything which you can later use to the effect that I had agreed with you.'"⁷⁵ Brzezinski claims that he and Carter would "often communicate just by looking at each other. Sometimes at meetings I could tell how he felt about something and he could tell how I felt through eye contact."⁷⁶ Brzezinski soon turned Carter's inability to communicate into a source of influence: he was often the only adviser able to interpret Carter's views.

Though Carter wanted to be the ultimate arbiter on foreign policy questions, his inability to communicate and act decisively undermined the very system he created. The system of adversaries therefore threatened to be an ineffective bird dog from the start due to its bias toward Brzezinski. Though Vance and Brzezinski's divergent philosophies of foreign policy contributed to their rivalry, personality played an important role as well in determining how the Carter Administration's foreign policy was shaped. This became acute when the Carter Administration faced two immensely challenging foreign policy crises in Iran: the Iranian Revolution and hostage crisis.

⁷¹ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 35.

⁷² Fallows, *The Passionless Presidency*, 5.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 6.

⁷⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 522.

⁷⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview by author, New York, NY, March 10, 2009. See also Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 22.

⁷⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview by author, New York, NY, March 10, 2009.