

LEGACY

A Journal of Student Scholarship

Volume 14

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A Publication of the Sigma Kappa Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta
& the Southern Illinois University Carbondale History Department

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Jazma Sutton

Non-Partisan or Not Interested: The Carbondale League of Women Voters' Response to Civil Rights during the 1960s

Introduction

"I think we have to accept the fact that we are a primarily white, middle-class group," stated Mrs. Mary Grace Smith, former president of the Boston branch of the League of Women Voters—a nationwide organization formed in 1920 that continues to advocate for women's political engagement. "Some people can't afford to be volunteers of [the league] sort. It's more important for them to use what leisure time they have to work on matters of immediate community interest—such as upgrading the ghetto school rather than trying to abolish the Electoral College." Mrs. Mary Grace Smith's implied views on class and race, spoken before Congress in 1970, seem to reflect a popular understanding within the League of Women Voters: an understanding that helps to explain the League's actions and inactions during the previous decade.

Not too long after its founding, the League of Women Voters [hereafter, the LWV] decided to become a "nonpartisan" organization. It did so by refusing to express publicly any alignment with any political party or candidate. As with many organizations claiming to be nonpartisan, the League seemed to be superficially nonpartisan yet, in action and sentiment, it often found sympathies with the Right. This sympathy can be seen from the LWV's earliest days. For example, on January 27, 1921, LWV founder Carrie Chapman Catt delivered a speech in which she stated, "In view of the fact that many thousands of members of the League of Women Voters are Republican by tradition, this challenge [of non-partisanship] takes on a peculiar significance."¹ Catt seemed to be foreshadowing some of the future peculiarities that would define the League and its purpose: Republican sympathies mixed with nonpartisan impulses.

Nowhere were these seemingly paradoxical drives more apparent than in the LWV's policies toward African Americans. Through their claims to "non-partisanship" and their expressed abhorrence of "controversy," these women strategically chose the issues they felt worthy of addressing. And, with regards to African-American concerns, the LWV's record is striking. It

is one marked by silence, tardiness, and misplaced attention. Yet as much as the archival record reveals this apathy, it also shows moments of intense anxiety over black issues. This was particularly true during the Civil Rights Movement. For instance, during the early 1970s, the LWV worked hard to desegregate southern Illinois schools. In Carbondale, Illinois, in particular, the organization conducted numerous interviews and drew up surveys to ensure a comfortable adjustment for black students who were entering the predominantly white schools. Yet, even these actions spark questions. Had not *Brown v. Board of Education* declared separate public schools for black and white students unconstitutional as early as 1954? Why, then, did it take the LWV so long to advocate for following the law? These delayed responses run counter to the League's claim that it stood to "take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest."

This paper focuses on the policies and actions of the Carbondale branch of the LWV. In particular, it focuses on the confusions surrounding the LWV's engagement with African-American civil rights. Drawing on organizational papers, internal memoranda, and regional newspaper clippings, this paper analyzes the ambiguities of the LWV's racial politics. It finds that at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, these women doubtlessly spent a great deal of time discussing the issues. Yet it is also true that a great deal of time was dedicated to finding ways to protect the LWV's "image." This often translated into overlooking the unfortunate situations of African Americans. The League's bylaws stated that the organization's purpose was "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government" and to "take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest."² That being said, whether or not the League of Women Voters in Carbondale made good on these promises during the civil rights era remains debatable.

Literature Review

It was not until the 1970s, in the wake of the women's movement, that scholars gave the history of women's voting serious attention and it would not be until the last two decades of twentieth century that they began to focus on the women's suffrage movement and the politics surrounding it. Despite the significant array of literature on women's rights and women's suffrage, there remains a lack of scholarship relating to League of Women Voters (LWV). The League functioned—and continues to function—on national, state, and local levels. This complexity is something that many scholars tend to overlook. What has been written on the League is often from the agency itself, and very little of it is critical. There have only been two books published on the history of the League; and a handful of articles also exist.

The first scholar to take up the League of Women Voters as a topic of study was Louise Young in her 1989 publication, *In the Public Interest: The League of Women Voters 1920-1970*. Young's text is a comprehensive account of the League of Women Voters. It also provides an overview of the nation during those years. Yet, in addition to her scholarly aims, Young also seems committed to educating the LWV members of their own history. Of particular note is the fact that former League of Women Voters' president, Percy M. Lee, provided the forward to Young's study. In it, Lee asserts:

The hope is that this book will be widely read and will supply some valuable perspective on the times it covers. It is a remarkable review of the major political issues that mark the first half of the twentieth century. It is also a testimony to the dedication and effectiveness of the political women.³

Given these circumstances, it is difficult to know how invested Young was in dismantling the LWF's rhetoric of "non-partisanship."

It was not until 2000, eleven years later, that another scholar attempted to engage the League's history. Barbara Stuhler's book, *For the Public Record: A Documentary History of the League of Women Voters*, is in explicit conversation with Young's text. As Young describes, "With fifty years of selected documents, [this book] is intended to serve as a useful complement to *In the Public Interest: The League of Women Voters, 1920-1970*, Louise M. Young's narrative history of the League's first half century of achievement."⁴ The sources in *For the Public Interest* help to elucidate the history provided by Young. Stuhler states that "speeches made by league presidents at national conventions or council meetings were the most helpful [in reconstructing the League's history] because they summarized the activities, accomplishments, problems, and shortcomings of the League in a given period."⁵ Yet these public utterances speak largely to the façade of the LWF—less to its internal dynamics. Nevertheless, *For the Public Record* stands as the last scholarly book to address the LWV.

Between Young and Stuhler's publications, a handful of scholarly articles dealing with some of the nuances of the League of Women Voters also emerged. In her article, "First League of Women Voters in Florida: Its Troubled History," Joan S. Carver, former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Jacksonville, focused on the Floridian branches of the LWV and their difficulties in adjusting to the South. By focusing on the tensions between the national and state branches, Carver exposed the diversity and complexity within the LWF. Moving from regional matters, in 2002, historian Marisa Chappell looked upon the LWV to read for class

concerns. Through her comparison of the League of Women Voters and the National Organization for Women (NOW), and how each organization confronted the issue of poverty in the 1970s, Chappell challenges the assumption that “all middle-class white women ignored the problems of poor women . . . highlight[ing] a critical turning point in American liberalism.”⁶ Yet, despite these efforts, no scholar has yet critically analyzed the League’s ambiguous stance on issues relating to African Americans, in general, and the Civil Rights Movement, in particular.

The current scholarship on the League of Women Voters implies that scholars have skimmed the surface of the League’s history, but a more evaluative and analytical discussion of League’s stances and activities, at a local level, demands consideration. Moreover, as an organization formed to increase women’s roles in public affairs, it is surprising that the scholarship devoted to the LWV has overlooked race as a topic. This paper, therefore, serves to correct this trend. Following the adage that “all politics is local,” this paper examines the League of Women Voters in Carbondale. In so doing, it explores Carbondale’s League and suggests that—whether consciously or subconsciously—in the 1960s, at the peak of the Civil Rights Movement, League members largely ignored the plight and position of their African-American neighbors. This paper further argues that this strategic ignoring was made possible by the League’s “nonpartisan” stance. Such an inquiry not only serves to contribute to the League of Women Voters’ scholarship, it also works to question the nature and motives of neutrality.

League of Women Voters: Early History

After seventy-two years of struggle, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified on August 18, 1920, guaranteeing all women the right to vote. In the midst of the fight stood the courageous Carrie Chapman Catt, founder of the League of Women Voters. Since 1919, she had been challenging women to finish the battle “for the changes in customs, laws, and education so imperatively needed.”⁷ Catt had three immediate goals: “to complete the enfranchisement of American women, to remove legal discriminations against them, and to reach out a helping hand to their sisters in other lands.”⁸ During this heightened atmosphere, the National American Woman Suffrage Association [hereafter: NAWSA] declared its dissolution at its Jubilee Convention. Almost immediately, Catt was prepared with ideas to make a new auxiliary organization, the League of Women Voters. In 1920, at the Victory Convention, NAWSA formally agreed to transform itself into Catt’s League. There, bylaws and a constitution were adopted and a four-member executive board, comprising a chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer, was established.⁹

A clear picture of the League's purpose and commitment is best illustrated by its 1921 brochure, published to encourage women to join the organization. It reads:

BECAUSE it is the only organization in existence for the political education of women.

BECAUSE it develops the intelligence of the individual voter through forums, discussions and the spread of information on public affairs.

BECAUSE it gives disinterested unpartisan information on parties, candidates and measures.

BECAUSE it offers programs for practical civil work in your state, your city, your town.

BECAUSE it works for better law enforcement.

BECAUSE it works for better legislation on matters which women should be primarily responsible.

BECAUSE it provides meeting grounds for all parties and groups. . . .

BECAUSE it encourages women to enroll in political parties and work through them to improve the machinery of government.

BECAUSE it is organized in every state and you can accomplish more through a great National organization than by working alone.

BECAUSE it unites the country's woman power into a new force for the humanizing of government.¹⁰

In the beginning, many women voters feared that the League's efforts to educate women on political parties would mostly benefit Republicans. Eventually, though, both Democrats and Republicans came to regard the League's efforts as relatively even-handed.

Over the years, the League grew to be a collection of activist, grassroots organizations, interested in playing a critical role in advocacy.¹¹ Its purported commitment to nonpartisan organization and to the education of female voters endures to this day. Nonetheless, League members—both yesterday and today's—have been encouraged to get involved by

educating citizens about, and lobbying for, governmental and social reform legislation.¹² This tension between non-partisanship and social activism rests at the heart of the movement. It is around this tension that a number of anxieties seem to circulate. And, the activists of Carbondale were not immune to this tension.

Carbondale League of Women Voters

The Carbondale League of Women Voters, known as the Jackson County League of Women Voters until 1952, held its first organizational tea on March 18, 1926. With fifty women present, the meeting took place at the home of Mrs. H. G. Easterly, who was elected president, while Mrs. John F. Daniel was elected vice president. The meeting was supposed to have taken place in 1925. The delay was explained in a telegram to the State League reading, "Murphysboro almost wiped out by tornado and fire. Meeting postponed."¹³ The League would attract many prominent women in the area, such as Miss Woody, who served as dean of women and headed the Economic Department from 1911 to 1948 at Southern Illinois Normal University [hereafter SINU]. Later, she would also be honored by having a campus building bear her name at Southern Illinois University Carbondale [hereafter SIUC].¹⁴

The Jackson County League did not waste much time getting down to work. "Immediately the League was educating its members and interested non-members, showing them how to take an active role in promoting good government and political responsibility through informed and constant examination of government affairs."¹⁵ On May 19, 1928, the League cooperated with the State Organization Department by holding a one-day conference in Carbondale at the Hotel Roberts for everyone who wished to attend.¹⁶ Within the next year, the League along with SINU held a "School of Citizenship" at the campus library. Those events, along with many others, worked to give the League a title they would be proud of, the title of an action group. Because the League hoped to avoid stereotypical views of women's organizations of that time—views that painted women as overly emotional or inert—this was a significant step in the right direction. The League prided itself in its study and in its action. Before taking a position on any issue, the League claimed to conduct research, attend public meetings, talk with officials, and analyze community needs.

The League first began experiencing troubles in the Depression years with a decline in its membership. Much of the organization's survival is largely credited to Hilda Stein, Associate Professor of Zoology at SINU-SIUC. Her efforts are made evident by the bulk of letters she contributed to the League's archival materials. On October 15, 1935, she assured

the state organization that the “Jackson County League is by no means dead,” and again in 1938 she guaranteed that the “League was still on the map.”¹⁷ Stein’s efforts, however, were not enough to convince the state branch that Stein’s organization was still active. Membership rested at fifteen souls; twelve of whom had yet to pay their dues. It was not until the 1950s that the League was brought back to life. By the early 1960s, the Carbondale League was strong and vibrant, and as the tumult of the era came to settle on Southern Illinois, the LWV continued to hold firm to its nonpartisan stance.

Nonpartisan

Still, for the LWV of Carbondale, the 1960s was a time of internal self-scrutiny and uncertainty. With unceasing requests for a clear statement of the League’s policy on nonpartisan activities, the League found itself in a position to constantly clarify its stance. On July 23, 1962, League president Marian Ridgeway attempted to make clear their stance by quoting by-laws from the local league handbook. She explained:

The By-Laws of the League of Women Voters of the United States (and of Carbondale’s League) state that the League shall not support or oppose any political party or candidate. This policy of nonpartisanship . . . must be jealously guarded . . . because only to the extent that the community is convinced of the League’s genuine nonpartisanship . . . will the League be able to render effective service.¹⁸

The letter also referenced two other points in the handbook relating to the League’s nonpartisan policy. According to the National League’s by-laws, the Local Leagues’ purposes were to “promote the purpose of the League and to take action on local and governmental matters.”¹⁹ Further, resting on the by-laws, Ridgeway clarified what the League was and what the League was not. As Ridgeway saw it, the League was not:

- a. A vehicle for individual or private purpose or advancement, political or otherwise.
- b. A “society” women’s organization, for “society” ends.
- c. An instrument for the use of and support of any special interest group, political party, or candidate party.
- d. A local organization, solely, operating autonomously in a local environment, without restraints, obligations, and duties in a broader organizational, geographic, and political context.
- e. A profit-seeking organization, or one to be used indirectly for anyone’s personal profit or benefit.²⁰

The League's stance was ambiguous. What the League defined as a "special interest group" was never clarified, for example. Nevertheless, the LWV's actions speak to what the boundaries of this definition might have been. As the question of civil rights began to appear, "special interest groups" seemed to become increasingly synonymous with certain ethnic and racial groups, specifically African Americans.

Vigorous attempts were made by the League to stress the roles of its individual members. Individual members were encouraged to be as partisan as they wished so long as the League's image was not compromised. In this way, the LWV artificially separated the political tendencies of its members from the political stances of the organization. This stance also calls into question how the LWV sought to "take action on local and governmental matters," while not supporting any party, group, or person. The LWV was, therefore, riddled with contradiction. In an open letter to the board members of the Carbondale League of Women Voters, Esther Kovarsky wrote: "It is sometimes possible that a desired image and a basic principle will not conflict, but when they do they produce an ambiguous and frozen stance, such as the posture of the League on civil rights."²¹ This letter strongly indicates that the members of the League were aware of the ambiguity in its nonpartisan and noncontroversial positions.

Faced by the challenges of the 1960s, Kovarsky was concerned for the League. As her writings suggest, Kovarsky wondered how an organization, such as the League of Women Voters, functioning as a democratic model and training ground for effective citizenship, could place limitations on the freedoms of its members. Such limitations, she implied, should be examined carefully, especially those limitations placed on members in active service on the League's boards. When a vital issue presented itself, demanding constant attention and, sometimes, immediate choice and action, the absence of a League position was "not a directive," but a "vacuum," Kovarsky feared.²² If board members had to ask for clearance to take stances on matters such as civil rights, the League was covertly exerting force on which partisan politics it would allow, if not openly support.

Taking a nonpartisan stance tended to regulate organizational procedures more than the actual results of those procedures. This gave room for the League to tinker with the meaning of compliance. The LWV was able to act in accordance with its by-laws, yet preserve its own interests. If the League felt it had to be non-controversial as well as nonpartisan in the face of a particularly threatening matter, its seeming commitment to neutrality heightened. This neutrality, then, was often and regularly expressed by the LWV in the early days of the Civil Rights

Movement. In such a way, being expressly “noncontroversial” was often extremely partisan.

Until *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the LWV could take refuge in the law to avoid taking a stand on African-American civil rights. The logic went: the law was an expression of state, not a party; the LWV followed the law of the land. Yet, as the laws enshrining racial segregation and inequality were toppled, the LWV’s expressed commitment to “law” and “legality” was at a crossroads. By its own standards, African-American civil rights should no longer have been labeled “partisan” or “controversial” or of “special interest,” for after 1964, it was a legal fact. The controversy of civil rights, then, did not stem from lack of state support. For the League, civil rights was controversial because it caused discomfort to its members and constituents. To have taken action in support of civil rights would have only been to support existing law. Yet, the League’s support of these laws was markedly tepid.

Civil Rights

Carbondale’s League of Women Voters could not avoid the topic of civil rights forever, though, especially when activities related to the Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC) began to pop up in Southern Illinois. SNCC was a prominent organization involved with the Civil Rights Movement around the United States. Founded in 1960, its young members, made famous for their sit-in movements, sparked a wave of other SNCCs throughout colleges in the South. After much discussion during the 1950s, students throughout the nation were ready to discard traditional values and confront discrimination by the 1960s. On April 6, 1965, League member, Mrs. Trimble, stated that Mrs. Pickett, representing SNCC, had asked her to announce at the annual meeting the upcoming SNCC rummage sale scheduled for April 24. In response to Mrs. Trimble’s presentation of SNCC’s request, fellow LWV member Mrs. Keene commented that such an announcement would be inappropriate and that there would be no further discussion of the suggestion.²³ There are two straightforward readings of this interaction between Mrs. Trimble and Mrs. Keene. On the one hand, Mrs. Keene could have simply meant that a rummage event would be “inappropriate” for the LWV to support, or, on the other, Mrs. Keene was asserting that the LWV was, implicitly, not in support of SNCC and its cause. To understand the implications of Mrs. Keene’s utterances, we must first look at the history of civil rights in Carbondale.

After the Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in in 1960, a branch of SNCC was set up at SIU. Immediately, Carbondale students began implementing ways to integrate the restaurants in the area into the movement. However,

they could not do this alone, and soon a few local ministers joined them. "Mover and shaker," Reverend Lenus Turley, was a positive face in the community and served as the president of the Carbondale Human Relations Commission, the go-to organization in the black community.²⁴ SSNCC approached the Carbondale Human Relations Commission to recruit more black members. This devoted group of students, professors, ministers, and community leaders soon became the Carbondale Civil Rights Council.

Carbondale's citizens made substantial protests in the 1960s. SNCC picketed Carbondale's Family Fun restaurant because they did not hire blacks as servers, cooks, or carhops.²⁵ Whites, too, were involved in the movement. Police arrested white as well as black students for their participation in sit-ins. Thereafter, civil rights workers organized a fifty-man march on the community streets in honor of a white minister killed in a voters' registration drive in Alabama.²⁶ Students continued to take a firm stance on racial discrimination in Carbondale. They urged the Student Council to take action on discrimination, joined the Mississippi Summer Project, and strategized over Head Start Programs.

By 1963, civil rights was on the LWV's radar. If anything they saw it as something that required their attention, if not concerted effort. In the wake of SNCC activism at SIU, a discussion ensued concerning the place of the League of Women Voters within the unfolding Civil Rights crisis. Mrs. Jacobini read a lengthy comment from the national president, Mrs. Robert Phillips, relaying her comments on the League's position. It was at this meeting that the Carbondale League chose to appoint a civil rights chairperson. However, the League mentioned nothing pertaining to the civil rights movement at the next meeting. A few months after the appointment of the civil rights chair, the League's civil rights committee met and planned to study issues such as housing, freedom of residence, and the problem of capital.

Yet between 1962 and 1963, the major concern of the League seemed to be the publication of its "Know Your County" study. Other potential research projects, such as a study of the city and a revision of "Know Your Town" also consumed the LWV's attention. Practical matters, such as proper garbage disposal, also were pressing causes of the day for the League.²⁷ In December 1963, the Civil Rights committee reconvened, but it had yet to embark upon any definite program. Housing and a survey of open occupancy seemed to remain the committee's main interests. At the December board meeting, Mrs. Wieman asked whether the League could co-sponsor an Institute on Freedom and Democracy but was turned down.

The civil rights committee ultimately proposed that its local agenda should be to explore the question of equal rights and opportunities for

minority groups in Carbondale, with action as indicated. By this point, Carbondale community activists had been taking action for years. Nevertheless, the committee published this new commitment in the LWV's October bulletin and presented this information at the general meeting. Surprisingly, when the bulletin went to press, the LWV declared that it could not take a position on the Civil Rights Bill. "Since we have not studied this as a league," they claimed, "we cannot take a league position on the Civil Rights Bill."²⁸ They then went on to ask individual citizens to let congressmen know how she felt.

By February 1964, the League decided to take action on the "Exploration of the Question of Equal Rights." On May 5, 1964, the civil rights committee sought approval to conduct a survey on attitudes toward open housing in a section of southwest Carbondale. On the topic of housing, the League was in agreement with civil rights workers who were also focusing on issues of housing in the area. At the same time the Human Relations Committee welcomed a survey of local attitudes towards acceptance of neighbors of other races, creeds, and nationalities. Thus, it would be unfair to say that the League put no efforts into the question of civil rights. Nonetheless, when compared to the action taken by other local citizens, the League's response to civil rights seems paltry.

With the exception of Mrs. Trimble's suggestion to appoint Mrs. Randall to the board and to chair the civil rights committee on November 29, 1965, there was no mention of the committee's report until late 1966. The League held board meetings in May, June, July, August, September, October, and December of 1965, and during that time, the issue of civil rights never once made the agenda. And, even on December 29, 1966 when the League revealed its immediate concerns at the board meeting, the question of civil rights remained absent. Considering the events of the day, this silence is astounding.

In the midst of the local chapter's evasion of civil rights, Carbondale students, along with thousands of other students across the country, organized Freedom Summer. Freedom Summer was a voter registration effort in rural Mississippi organized by black civil rights workers in 1964. They targeted the various disenfranchisement tactics used to prevent blacks from voting in the South. With the increase in white hostility, President Lyndon B. Johnson demanded action on voting rights. The League's final mention of civil rights for quite some time happens five months after Johnson's plea. Yet, the LWV had little to say regarding the passage of the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965. The fact that the League ignored civil rights for months after this decision suggests that it was again trying to avoid its very own duties as it defined them, "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of

citizens in government . . . [and to] take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest." If the League wanted to continue to toy with its meaning of "nonpartisan" so that it could avoid "controversial" matters to protect its "image," that is understandable. However, no such logic can adequately explain the League's lack of effort toward civil rights when the disenfranchisement of fellow citizens was on the line.

The League of Women Voters in Carbondale did not address the matter of civil rights again until September 15, 1967, and in this context, it was to simply announce its new civil rights committee chair. On April 4, 1968, leader and crusader of the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated. Yet, there was still be no mention of civil rights at the League's board meeting in April before his death or at the board meeting fifteen days after his death.

The assassination of King took a heavy toll on African Americans. Yet America achieved its last major civil rights legislation, the Equal Housing Bill, due to the national mourning and widespread anger of blacks, not due to the indifference of organizations like the LWV. College students across the nation understood that this was not the end to their fight. In 1969, a National Student Strike manifested. Students had been performing non-violent protest throughout the 1960s. One year later, a similar strike took place at SIUC. It resulted in the arrest and immediate suspension of 306 students and the closing of the school for the remainder of the year. What the local League thought of these events remains a mystery, for the internal files made available to SIUC's Special Collections does not contain any Meeting Minutes from April 7, 1968 to April 17, 1970. For an organization that so carefully recorded its history, this omission is puzzling, if not telling.

Conclusion

From the beginning, the League of Women Voters in Carbondale wasted no time promoting good government and political responsibility. During the 1960s, the organization devoted ample time to issues regarding voting and the safety and conservation of Carbondale and nearby areas. Unfortunately, at a time when many blacks and whites were coming together to fight for giving African Americans the basic privileges and rights of U.S citizenship, the League's enthusiasm subsided. On the surface, the greatest obstacle to action was the League's nonpartisan stance. Yet, still, if we look at the LWV's founding principles, we can safely say the members of the 1920s had been more enthusiastic in seeing white women vote than their counterparts in the 1960s were in protecting the voting rights of black women. Women had been fighting alongside African Americans for centuries, trying to achieve acknowledgement of their basic

rights. It is evident that the LWV did not draw on this same tradition. The League of Women Voters failed to realize that African-American problems were society's problems, not "special interests" or "partisan politics." This impulse to treat American concerns as "particular" and white concerns as "universal" is part of the LWV's legacy. It speaks to a problem endemic in many women's organizations in America, and it also hints at some of the ways that the rhetoric of neutrality can be used as a weapon.

Notes

- 1 Barbara Stuhler, *For the Public Record: A Documentary History of the League of Women Voters* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000), 39.
- 2 Louise M. Young, *In the Public Interest: The League of Women Voters 1920-1970* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 4.
- 3 *Ibid.*, ix.
- 4 Stuhler, *For the Public Record*, xi.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Marissa Chappel, "Rethinking Women's Politics in the 1970s: The League of Women Voters and the National Organization of Women Confront Poverty," *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 4 (2002): 159-79.
- 7 Louise M. Young, *In the Public Interest: The League of Women Voters 1920-1970* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 33.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*, 37.
- 10 Reprinted in Young, *In the Public Interest*, 38.
- 11 "About the League," League of Women Voters, accessed December 11, 2013, <http://www.lwv.org/content/about-league>.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Carbondale Special Collections Research Center Archives, League of Women Voters of Jackson County Records, Box 8, Folder 2.
- 14 Southern Illinois Normal University would later change its name to Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
- 15 Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Carbondale Special Collections Research Center Archives, League of Women Voters of Jackson County Records, Box 8, Folder 2.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Ibid.*, Box 1, Folder 10.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*, Box 1, Folder 1.
- 22 *Ibid.*

23 Ibid., Box 1, Folder 5.

24 Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Carbondale Special Collections Research Center Archives, Beatrice Stegeman Collection on Civil Rights in Southern Illinois, Box 1, Folder 1.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Carbondale Special Collections Research Center Archives, League of Women Voters of Jackson County Records, Box 1, Folder 19.

28 Ibid., Box 1, Folder 5.

Calvin Kolar

Beyond the Wall: Jewish Escape in the Ghettos of Warsaw and Minsk, 1941-1945

Introduction

We went on a little bit and stepped inside a pastry shop, horribly shaken by the triple blackmail. We were convinced that we were in for more, that someone else was waiting to pounce on us. We felt as though every passerby was eyeing us suspiciously. It took us hours to calm down, and for a long time afterward we were haunted by memories of being blackmailed.¹

—Adolf Berman describing a common experience of blackmail for those attempting escape in Warsaw.

The Third Reich's method of quartering off the Jewish population, known as ghettoization, was an intricate and essential part of the Final Solution. Warsaw was the largest of these ghettos, containing over 400,000 people, and it served as a blueprint for those ghettos that were later established further to the east. With its enormous population, there was undoubtedly a number of Jews who managed to escape to the Aryan side. Sources have estimated this number at around 28,000. To examine the varying factors that affected this number a comparison must be made. The ghetto established in Minsk, Belarus, serves as a good comparison. Though a quarter of Warsaw's size, 10,000 of Minsk's 100,000 occupants managed to escape. Proportionally, the amount of Jews who managed escape from the Minsk ghetto was much higher than from that of Warsaw. What factors might account for these numbers?

Scholars attribute this disparity to a variety of factors, primarily those associated with the structure of each ghetto. However, the racial environment in which each ghetto existed cannot be overlooked. Race relations played a major contributor in differences of Jewish life in pre-war Poland and pre-war Soviet Belarus. Moreover, the relationship of those on the Jewish and Aryan sides of the cities affected this divide. Poland has a history of anti-Semitic violence that manifested itself with over 100 acts of well-documented violence against Jews between November 1918

and January 1919, alone.² While Soviet Belarus was not immune to anti-Semitism, Jewish deaths due to anti-Semitic outbreaks were much lower.³ Moreover, after the Bolshevik revolution, the Soviet Union outlawed anti-Semitism. As a result, Interwar Soviet Belarus saw an improvement in Jewish relations.

Solidarity (or lack thereof) evolved from the governmental policies and ideologies of the Polish and Soviet states during the interwar period. The Soviet ideology of internationalism was embraced by the Belarussian population. This effectively dampened any sense of nascent nationalism.⁴ On the other hand, Polish policy during the 1930s worked against the Jewish population and created a rift between the communities. These relationships and policies carried over into the wartime era; and the structures, organizations, and goals of Warsaw and Minsk's undergrounds differed—reflecting many interwar continuities. Ultimately, the structure of each ghetto, from its incarnation to its liquidation, rested in German hands. Yet, while acknowledging differing Nazi regulations, this paper argues that the Communist policies and ideology that enabled Jewish-Gentile solidarity in Minsk prior to 1941, allowed for, proportionally, the rescue of a larger number of Jews than those from the Warsaw ghetto.

Literature Review

Until recently, relatively little was known about the Minsk ghetto. This can be attributed to a few reasons, most predominantly the Cold War. Stalin and his Soviet successors were not particularly keen on Western academics learning of the regime's own atrocities. Even those of the Nazis were kept quiet, for the Soviet Union did not want to expose the demographic disaster that World War II had brought to the region. Although Stalin's death in 1953 began to clear up some of the red tape that plagued Soviet bureaucracy, it was not until after 1989 that academics began to gain access to most of the archives located in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, Communist resistance groups, like those associated with the Minsk Ghetto, were not of particular interest to American or Israeli researchers during the Cold War or in its immediate aftermath.

In the around Belarus, there are a few sources dating back to 1943 in the books *V tylu vraga* (Behind the Enemy Lines) and *Partyzansky rukh u Vialikai Aichinnai vainie* (Partisan Movement in the Great Patriotic War) detailing resistance to the Nazis. Both, however, tell little of the Jewish contributions to the partisan movement, especially that in Belarus.

It took a book from one of the leaders of the movement itself, Hersh Smolar, to detail ghetto life and resistance within Minsk. *The Minsk Ghetto: Soviet-Jewish Partisans Against The Nazis* was published in 1989, and stands one of the few first-hand accounts that survive.⁵ More importantly, it

focuses on Jewish involvement and collaboration with the Belarussian Communist Party. In so doing, Smolar's text stands as one of the most valuable primary sources available concerning the Minsk Ghetto. Likewise, it is one of the only sources that discusses Jewish-Gentile relations in this region during the Holocaust.

Based on recent archival research as well as on the few Belarussian texts that exist, both Barbara Epstein and Timothy Snyder have recently been able to provide English readers with more information about the Holocaust in Belarus. In her book *The Minsk Ghetto, 1941-1943: Jewish Resistance and Soviet Internationalism*,⁶ Epstein draws from mostly primary sources, including twenty-six interviews, to bring new information to light about the ghetto. Making use of English, Hebrew, and Russian-language scholarship, Epstein extensively investigates the racism and politics of the area before the war. She also looks into how these trends influenced interactions between the ghetto and surrounding city during the war. Meanwhile, Snyder maintains in *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* that Hitler's crimes in the East were facilitated in some fashion by the violent framework Stalin had already set up.⁷ More research is needed in order to determine the motivators for collaboration during the Holocaust in the Nazi East.

If Minsk is noted for the paucity of its literature, Warsaw might suffer from the opposite problem: its ghetto is the most researched of the Nazi ghettos. Famed for its 1943 Jewish Uprising and thanks to the vast archives preserved by its victims, a rich trove of stories and sources regarding the Warsaw Ghetto are available. This availability has allowed for a complex and nuanced historiography to flourish. It has also allowed for a great deal of controversy.

One of the earliest controversies to arise concerning the Warsaw Ghetto was the nature of its victims. In particular, what were scholars to make of those who resisted Nazism by escaping the ghetto and, hence, almost inevitable death? In 1961, Raul Hilberg in his epic *The Destruction of the European Jews* took the view that such escape was a form of passivity.⁸ This concept held sway for some time. Nevertheless, in countering Hilberg, Yehuda Bauer, in *Rethinking the Holocaust*, writes that resistance to the Nazis took many forms. He maintains that it is disingenuous to overlook other forms of heroism such as escape.⁹ Nechama Tec, a scholar who has wrote extensively on Polish-aided-escape, agrees.¹⁰

When dealing with matters of escape and the Warsaw Ghetto, few scholars command the conversation like Gunnar Paulsson. In 2002, he published *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940-1945*.¹¹ In this text, Paulsson forwarded the claim that many more Varsovian Jews escaped from the ghetto than previously thought. He further argues that local help did play a role, albeit a small one, in success rates.

More recently, Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to the Holocaust, has made important contributions to the history of Warsaw's ghetto. This research tends to focus on the Western ghettos in Poland and contains little information about other partisan movements. However, their work is slowly shifting toward the East as new documents become available. In 2009, Yad Vashem published *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust*, which gave a thorough description of the Warsaw ghetto, its inhabitants, and the locations therein.¹² Unfortunately, its treatment falls short in its descriptions of Minsk. And any comparison between Warsaw and Minsk has yet to be pursued.

Background

Anti-Semitism in Poland was prevalent well before and after the Nazi invasion. By the time the Second Polish Republic was created in 1918, Poland had the greatest number of Jews in Europe. Emigration from Poland did increase throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Nevertheless, by 1939 there were roughly 3,474,000 Jews in Poland and 375,000 in Warsaw.¹³ Most of these Jews never fully assimilated into the surrounding culture, and many readily identified their nationality as Jewish first and Polish second. Only 10% of Jewish males were considered assimilated—a fact evidenced by the predominance of young Jews who spoke Yiddish or Hebrew, the primary languages taught in many of the schools they attended.¹⁴ The few who spoke Polish did so with an accent, which made assimilation even more difficult.

Throughout the 1930s, official Polish policy had been growing increasingly discriminatory. The numerus clausus was a quota system was introduced in 1935. This system was used to restrict Jews from higher education.¹⁵ The percentage of Jews in college dropped to 7.5% by 1937, from a high of 25% in the 1920s.¹⁶ This, along with the racial policies at the time, led Jews to create their own social and governmental organizations. Excluded from much of Polish life, many Jews felt disillusioned with the political system of Poland, particularly with the nationalist party, the Endecja. This party grew in popularity in the late 1930s, and its platform of ultra-nationalism coupled with intense anti-Semitism was no help to the already marginalized Jewish community.

In Warsaw, not all Jews were united under one political ideology like Communism in Minsk. Unlike Soviet policy, the Poles were not inclusive with all ethnicities. This division continued into the 1940s and molded itself into the politics of the ghetto. Anti-Jewish violence became increasingly common in the new republic. With an increasing number of anti-Jewish riots and pressured emigration, mid-1930s Poland was an unwelcoming place for Jews. Boycotts of Jewish businesses were not uncommon, and

in August 1936 all shops in Poland were required to include the name of the owner as appeared on their birth certificate on the store sign.¹⁷ Jewish storeowners were now readily identifiable and the slogans like "Don't buy at Jewish shops," and "Jews out" were seen in the town of Piotrków.¹⁸ This type of racism facilitated the Nazi's racial policies after 1939, enabling the ghetto system to work with little interference from the local population.

Contrary to the nationalism that fostered racism in Poland, the cosmopolitan nature of Soviet Belarus did just the opposite. The territory has Polish roots, dating back to 1596 when Union of Lublin established a joint kingdom between Poland and Lithuania. Belarussians adopted Polish customs and Roman Catholicism, which worked to subvert Russian influence in the region. Nevertheless, Russia did exert its control over Belarus and the Tsarist regime seized power in 1772.¹⁹ The next few decades saw a resurgence of Belarussian nationalism, spurred by Polish allies in the region. Through all this, the Jews constituted over half of the population in the major cities and towns, making the urban populations a cosmopolitan group and impeding the rise of nationalism outside of the rural areas.²⁰ This growing nationalist tide later came to replace religion as the main proponent of anti-Semitism.

The Bolshevik revolution and its aftermath gave nationalists new targets for their anti-Semitism. Communism had strongly opposed anti-Semitism, and largely because of this, the Jewish population in the region was attracted to the party. Now, in Poland, Communists and Jews could be degraded in the same breath. In the wake of the revolution, the building of the socialist republic done by minority locals was encouraged by the State. This initiative attracted more Jews to the Communist Party, as evidenced by the 1941 party numbers of 72,177 members, which were further broken down into 39,573 Belarussians, 12,606 Russians, and 15,572 Jews. Representatives of fifty-two nations were included.²¹ The Soviet regime understood that to hold such an ethnically diverse empire together support from the local populations was required. In an effort to prove their backing, a literary campaign was started in the countryside, and a university and factories were built in Minsk. Instead of being marginalized as in Poland, Jews in Soviet society were legally empowered. Common with the time, identifying as a Soviet internationalist, a Belarussian patriot, and a Jew were not considered to be contradictions. This cosmopolitanism extended into much of the population and into daily life in Minsk.

The erosion of ethnic lines provided the basis for much of the interaction between the ghetto inhabitants and non-Jewish Belarussians during the Holocaust. As opposed to Polish nationalism, Soviet patriotism was inclusive of all ethnic groups. Many resistance members saw it as their duty to defend all those in the Soviet territories, including Jews.

Smolar describes such a partisan unit, "In the most difficult time, suffering one loss after another inside the ghetto, the possibility of sending groups of Jews to this partisan base helped us immeasurably in keeping our underground organization alive."²² The internationalism embraced by the Soviet regime in the 1920s and 1930s had its effects in the Minsk of the 1940s. Incorporating the Jews into the power structure gave them legitimacy as a group and actively worked against anti-Semitism in the region. This fostered a racial culture radically different from that found in Warsaw. Sovietization, therefore, fundamentally changed how resistance movements operated, ultimately giving the Minsk Jews a greater chance at survival.

Warsaw was the largest of all the ghettos created during the Nazi occupation of the East. The Jewish population in the city and its surrounding suburbs, totaling about 400,000, was rounded up and sent to an area only about 2.4% of area. The ghetto was created on October 12, 1940, but the walls were not sealed until November 16, 1940. This allowed for about 5,000 to escape.²³ It was not until liquidation began in the summer of 1942 that the population within the Warsaw Ghetto began to change drastically.²⁴ The German's goal was twofold: To seal off the Jewish population from outside contact and eventually to deport the imprisoned population. This type of structure made escape incredibly difficult and dangerous.

Interaction with the Poles outside the walls was rare and limited to those with work permits. Racism worked within this system to isolate victims and to prohibit escape. Unlike in Minsk, those who aided in Jewish escape had to work in spite of Polish anti-Semitism.²⁵ Denunciation was encouraged and common. "A woman was walking down the street with a four or five year old girl; someone pointed her out as being Jewish. A gendarme took out his revolver. That child fell first, then the mother."²⁶ There was never much, if any, solidarity between the Polish and Jewish communities because the Poles never saw themselves in true danger. Fostered by Nazi propaganda and Polish nationalism, some viewed the ghetto as a necessary institution to keep control of the Jewish problem. Emmanuel Ringleblum, a Polish-Jewish archivist living in the ghetto, writes about words he overheard during the Ghetto Uprising: "A pious old granny. . . 'In Holy Week, the Jews tormented Christ. In Holy Week, the Germans are tormenting the Jews.' "A seventy-year old priest. . . 'It's very good that this happened. The Jews had a great military force in the ghetto. If they hadn't turned it on the Germans, they would have turned it on us.'"²⁷

Warsaw's structure—extending from its location to the underground movement—made Jewish escape from the ghetto rare and difficult. Blackmailers, known as szmalcowniks, lined the gates and threatened

to turn any Jew over to the Germans if he or she did not receive payment. Often times those who escaped were tracked and checked upon weekly by their blackmailers. News of the challenges associated with escapes filtered back inside the ghetto and deterred others from attempting escape. Prior to the April 1943 Ghetto Uprising, on the eve of the first Aktion to liquidate the Ghetto, only about 5,000 Jews had escaped, and only when the harsh reality of liquidation became clear did escape become a priority. Before this, some Jews saw the ghetto as necessary protection from the Polish community.²⁸ News from other ghetto deportations was slow to filter through the populace and was often dismissed as sensationalism. Mass killings, common further in the conquered Soviet territories, never took place in Warsaw, so the threat of death by Nazis seemed less immediate.

This structure imposed by the Nazis meant there was no meaningful alliance between the Jewish resistance movement and the Polish underground. Whereas in Minsk, this partisan alliance involved the rescue of thousands of Jews, those in Warsaw saw armed rebellion as the only meaningful fight against the Nazis. The Polish underground had little interest in saving Jews. The resistance movement in Warsaw was fundamentally different than that in Minsk. The Judenrat, the Jewish ghetto governing council, was not incorporated into the underground structure. Neither were the Jewish ghetto police. These police were those that came in the most contact with the Gentile population most often, and if they had assisted the resistance movement, they were in the position to do the greatest good. Unfortunately, the Jewish structures present in pre-war Warsaw gave the Nazis options for whom to pick and enabled them to choose those who would be submissive and follow orders.

This structure lulled the ghetto population into an oppressive situation in which they saw no immediate escape. Many still did not believe their ultimate fate would end in an extermination camp. Escape, then, was never a priority within the Warsaw Ghetto, and instead, work papers were seen as the primary way of survival. Furthermore, the Aryan side was feared by many inside the ghetto. As a Ghetto diary details: "The panic grows greater. Fear of the 'Aryan side' is as great as fear of the selections: denunciations and blackmail by the Poles are a matter of course. Many people return to the ghetto. Hundreds of others die on the Aryan side."²⁹ This quote encapsulates all the many problems the Jews of Warsaw had when contemplating escape. Either one dared to face the blackmailing, anti-Semitic Aryan outside, or one stayed inside the walls and risked a chance at deportation to an unknown location. Both situations promised death in most cases. A picture therefore emerges that explains why so many more Jews were doomed inside this ghetto.

The insular Jewish community that formed as a result of prewar, Polish alienation made the ghetto their only home. Not until the liquidation was their fate known, and by then, it was too late. Even then, faced with an inevitable death from inside and outside the ghetto, escape was a risk few took. Armed resistance was what the last few thousand now turned to, and it helped contribute to the 16,500 deaths of the remaining 28,000.³⁰

Much smaller than Warsaw, Minsk was the capital of the BSSR (Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic). Its pre-war Jewish population stood at 75,000. This is an important difference because Minsk was to become a center for Belarussian Jews after the invasion of the USSR. The total population of the Jews in Minsk, before the major pogroms, was estimated at over 100,000.³¹ The ghetto was created from displaced Jews in the surrounding areas, most of whom had no connection to Minsk or its original Jewish population. Thousands of Jews from Germany and central Europe were shipped to the city. German plans for the structure of the Minsk ghetto closely resembled that of Warsaw. The difference rested on the Communist influence in the area. Stalin had taken much of the gold and silver from the population, and with social distinctions no longer in existence, the Nazis were met with several problems.

Alfred Rosenburg, a key Nazi member, proposed a plan for the occupied territories. In this plan, much like that of Warsaw, ghettos were run by the Jews themselves.³² Most of the leg work was delegated to the inhabitants while all organizational decisions were made by members of the SS. This meant that certain Jews with powerful pre-war standings were to be chosen for such positions. Pre-war Soviet policy, though, meant that no Jews could rise to such power. Furthermore, the Stalinist Purges of 1937 eliminated any Soviet Jewish institutions. In contrast, 1930s Warsaw had over 250 Jewish institutions and voluntary organizations making stratification of Warsaw's Jews similar to other populations.³³ In Minsk, selection for the most important lynchpin in German occupation, the Judenrat, was no easy task.

The Judenrat were essential for Nazi administration of the Jewish ghettos. Their duties included worker roundups, valuables confiscation, tribute collection, clearing residences, and, most importantly, the weakening of resistance potential. Judenrat cooperation with SS officials led to a much more effective administration of the Final Solution. In Minsk, Nazi officials had no choice but to select the Judenrat at random. A German speaking Jew, Ilya Mushkin, was instructed to come up with a list of Judenrat members who would act on behalf of the Jews in the ghetto. For the first eight months, all of the Judenrat's members were members of the underground.³⁴ Very quickly a subversion of the German

occupation was stirring, a subversion not only by the Jewish council and by the Jewish police, but also by the local Belarussian and the Communist resistance.

The Judenrat quickly established connections with the Communist resistance. Soviet internationalism gave the ghetto Jews a powerful ally in the resistance movement. Many of these fighters saw defending Jews as an extension of their Soviet patriotism. Furthermore, they were in desperate need of supplies and volunteers. Escapees were able to bring civilian clothes and could work in a variety of ways to support the group. There were two groups that escaped: those with the help of the underground and those that went alone. Those traveling on their own faced a much more difficult and dangerous journey, but they were aided by local Belarussians. It is estimated that only about one in three of those who escaped went on to survive.³⁵ Much of the help came from the belief that Belarussians and Jews shared the same struggle. Unlike in Warsaw, there was solidarity among the people that encouraged collaboration. Also in contrast with Warsaw, the locals saw what was happening to the Jews and thought the Germans could extend such barbarity to them too, and they did. Internationalism in the region forged a bond between the two populations; the Belarussians saw the Jews' struggles as their own. Tamara Gershakovich describes this relationship, "And in spite of all the German threats, many Russians and Belarussians, risking not only their own lives but the lives of their families, hid Jewish children in their homes."³⁶

By April 1942, escapes had accelerated because of a crackdown by the Germans on the underground. The Judenrat were purged by the Nazis when its leader Ilya Mushkin was sent into a building and never seen again. Despite this setback, the other members worked to warn the ghetto population that escape was essential. After a major pogrom in March, the Germans were alerted to the subversion of the Judenrat, and several loyal Polish Jews replaced the locals.³⁷ The new leader, Moishe Yoffe, was still an underground collaborator but his actions were kept secret to prevent detection from the other members. On July 28, 1942, the worst pogrom in Minsk's history began. Yoffe was ordered to keep the peace and ensure the crowd that they were only there to work, but instead, he told them to flee. He was then shot along with 18,000-30,000 others. Only 12,000 Jews now remained in the ghetto.³⁸

Conclusion

It is difficult to ascribe any amount of success to either ghetto when so much life was lost. Twenty-eight thousand were able to escape from a population of 400,000 in Warsaw, and only 11,500 survived. Minsk saw only 10,000 escape of the over 100,000 Jews living in the pre-war city, and

an unknown number survived. The brutality that the Nazis inflicted upon them ensured the death of a majority of the population and made any escape a rare event. Warsaw and Minsk's histories played pivotal roles in how each underground operated. The internationalism present in Minsk gave it a distinct advantage over the nationalistic anti-Semitism that brewed in Warsaw. Although Stalin's policies after the war shifted dramatically, his pre-war inclusion of all ethnicities became vital to the Communist partisan philosophy. Stalin assimilated all people into his cultural and political systems, effectively destroying the rich history of the Belarussian Jewish community. Ethnic nationalism was stamped out in favor of Soviet patriotism, uniting people under Communism and its ideals. This political atmosphere then influenced the political structure of the Minsk ghetto so a cohesion could be made within the resistance movements. The partisans believed that to protect the Motherland meant protecting all of her people, stamping out much of the anti-Semitism that ruined Polish-Jewish relations in Poland.

Polish laws, by contrast, worked to marginalize the Jewish population in Polish society. They developed their own organizations and schools, some of which had Yiddish or Hebrew as their primary languages. With the rise of nationalism, anti-Semitism rose to new heights in Poland, and the Jewish population became alienated from the Polish state. During World War II, this legacy had a disastrous effect on the political structure of the ghetto. The Judenrat could not be trusted, and no effective alliance between the Polish underground could be established. This made escape almost impossible. With liquidation came the knowledge that death was the inevitable fate for those who remained in the ghetto. This is when escape or resistance became the dilemma for the surviving Jews in Warsaw. More often than not, both choices ended in death. The product of a society steeped in anti-Semitism, the damning words of Ringelblum rang true for many Warsaw Jews, "The guilt is theirs [Poles] for not saving of tens of thousands of Jewish children. . . ." ³⁹ The greater proportion of Jews saved in Minsk exhibited how important local collaboration was to the underground effort. Faced with a reality devoid of any semblance of humanity, only through solidarity did one have hope of escape.

Notes:

- 1 Michał Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us: Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 326.
- 2 Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 14.
- 3 Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Minsk Ghetto, 1941-1943: Jewish Resistance and Soviet Internationalism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 61.

- 4 Ibid., 74.
- 5 Hersh Smolar, *The Minsk Ghetto: Soviet-Jewish Partisans Against the Nazis* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989).
- 6 Epstein, *Minsk Ghetto*.
- 7 Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
- 8 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961).
- 9 Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
- 10 Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*.
- 11 Gunnar Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
- 12 Gai Miron and Shulhani Shlomit, *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009).
- 13 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak. *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 30.
- 14 Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*. 37.
- 15 Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 30.
- 16 Epstein, *Minsk Ghetto*, 61.
- 17 Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1986), 53.
- 18 Ibid., 54.
- 19 Epstein, *Minsk Ghetto*, 61.
- 20 Ibid., 62.
- 21 Leonid Smilotizky, "Minsk Ghetto: An Issue of Jewish Resistance," *Shvut* 1-2, nos. 17-18 (1995): 161-81.
- 22 Smolar, *Minsk Ghetto*, 59.
- 23 Paulsson, *Secret City*, 110.
- 24 Miron and Shlomit, *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust*.
- 25 Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*, 55.
- 26 Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us*, 320-21.
- 27 Emanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*. (New York: ibooks. 2006), 50.
- 28 Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*, 60.
- 29 In Engelking, and Leociak, *Warsaw Ghetto*, 35.
- 30 Paulsson, *Secret City*, 90.
- 31 Ibid., 110.
- 32 Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 120.
- 33 Engelking and Leociak, *Warsaw Ghetto*, 50.

34 Epstein, *Minsk Ghetto*, 80.

35 Ibid., 85.

36 Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 425.

37 Epstein, *Minsk Ghetto*, 90.

38 Ibid., 93.

39 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 50.

Melanie Bilbrey

“They have taken the campus, we can’t let them take the town”: How SIU Became a Leading Protest-Prone Campus, 1968-1970

Introduction

“A lot of SIU students found out what the violence thing is about. Violence is getting a lead-filled 3 ½ foot club in your face, for demanding your legal and human rights. Violence is seeing a fellow student getting dragged by his hair. Violence is seeing six cops beat an unprotected person on the ground, while trying to make an arrest. Violence is a silly game, but we won’t get rid of it until we get rid of the people who promote it. We recognize that cops are just pawns in the game, but it’s necessary to make it so unbearable for them that eventually the real pigs like Nixon and Morris come down and face us.”¹

This quote was published in the *Big Muddy Gazette*, Southern Illinois University [hereafter: SIU] Carbondale’s underground student newspaper, the day after a student protest over the school’s involvement with the Vietnam War. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, student activists on campuses throughout the United States, especially SIU, came to understand the meaning of violence. Many protests turned to riots. Police often responded with tear gas and clubs, and on two campuses, students were killed by National Guards. If students wanted their voices to be heard, often they had a violent price to pay.

While many campuses were protesting America’s involvement in Vietnam, SIU had one of the largest peace movements in the United States. This is surprising because most scholars maintain that large peace movements tended to occur on larger, more prestigious campuses. These campuses also tended to possess liberal surrounding cultures. At the time and subsequently, SIU has resisted such categorization. With a relatively smaller and lesser-known campus in a typically conservative area, SIU’s peace movement thrived, despite the schema set down by scholars.

Why, then, was the peace movement at SIU so robust? This paper argues that a combination of local and national factors helped make SIU an activist-prone campus. The main reason had to do with the establishment of the Center for Vietnamese Studies on campus, which first sparked resentment. Next, police brutality against student activists amplified the protest culture at SIU. Finally, Nixon's invasion of Cambodia in 1970 worked to solidify the oppositional sentiment present on campus. By paying particular attention to the archival evidence housed at Morris Library, this paper tracks the evolving protest culture that took root at SIU during the Vietnam era. In so doing, it explains why SIU was an outlier in the student protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Literature Review

During the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, college campuses across America became involved in the movement for peace in Indochina. Students on these campuses started protests and riots in order to get their voices heard. They were not only protesting the Vietnam War, but also the paternalism posed by the university system. While many scholars have focused on the large university protests, such as those seen at Kent State and at the University of California, Berkeley, the peace movement at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, has largely been overlooked. This is particularly perplexing given the fact that SIU boasted one of the larger campus movements.

Nevertheless, a handful of writers and scholars have acknowledged Carbondale's contributions to the peace movement. Among them are Robbie Lieberman, Chair of Interdisciplinary Studies at Kennesaw State, and David Cochran, Professor of History at John A. Logan College. Both have noted that the Vietnam War, combined with a newfound push for students' rights, helped raise student dialogue and activism at SIU during this critical period. Alumnus H.B. Koplowitz agrees with these assessments, citing the student underground newspaper, *The Big Muddy Gazette*, as the key propaganda force that stood in opposition to SIU President Delyte Morris. He also points to the bombing of the Agriculture building in 1968 and the burning of Old Main on June 8, 1969 as incidents that fuelled the peace movement.² Allan Keith, also an alumnus who experienced the demonstrations, agrees with Lieberman that the establishment of the new Center for Vietnamese Studies, located in Woody Hall, amplified the anti-war movement. This center caused a great deal of consternation among the students because they "were convinced it was a training center . . . and its purpose was counterinsurgency."³ Keith believes that because of this center, Woody Hall became a hot spot of activism. Consequently, Woody

Hall became the meeting place for most protests as well as many arrests and incidents of police brutality.

The largest and final demonstration to take place at SIU was the “Seven Days in May” in 1970. This consisted of student-organized strikes that turned into large riots. Eventually, 1,200 members of the National Guard had to be called into Carbondale to break up the constant riots.⁴ The riots also caused the school to be shut down on May 12, 1970.⁵ While Lieberman, Cochran, and Koplowitz agree the closing of the school was seen as a victory for most student activists, only Lieberman and Cochran point out the alternate view that some activists now saw the movement’s strength destroyed. Betty Mitchell analyzes the controversy of how SIU President Delyte Morris handled the protests and riots. Originally, he was seen as a fatherly figure, caring deeply about the school and supporting the students’ right to free speech in the early 1960s. As the movement grew, however, he became stricter. Despite all his contributions to SIU, his actions during the later 1960s came under extreme scrutiny, prompting him eventually to resign.

Historical Background

During the 1960s and 1970s, college campuses across the United States were awash with student protests. Contrary to popular belief, these protests were not solely against the war in Vietnam. At the time, college students were demanding curricular reform and a greater role in the university government, abolition of women’s dormitory curfews, and of *in loco parentis*. They were also looking for the right to organize and demonstrate on campus. They sought racial equality, and they longed for an end to university ties to the military.⁶ College campuses had seen large student movements before, particularly in the 1910s, 1930s, and 1950s, but none of these compared to those of the Vietnam Era. By the 1970s, students had seized university buildings and set fire to infrastructure on campuses. Police responded to these actions with tear gas and clubs.⁷ It was not uncommon for the National Guard to be called in for backup. During two of the most infamous protests, those held at Kent State and Jackson State, the National Guard killed six students.

Despite the violence that occurred in the latter part of the movement, student protests were typically nonviolent. Those fighting for civil rights in the South influenced many tactics used by students in the 1960s. Sit-ins became popular, as did boycotting and picketing certain stores and campus buildings.⁸ According to Keniston and Lerner, a 1968-69 study of college campuses showed that over three-fourths of America’s 2,500 colleges and universities experienced either no protests or peaceful protests. Likewise, violent protests that involved damage to property

or personal injury only made up less than seven percent of all campus actions.⁹ While violent protests more often made the headlines, it is clear that they were the exception, not the rule.

While the military action in Vietnam was not the only issue students were protesting, it was a large part of almost every campus movement. Most college students at the time found the war unnecessary. They also opposed the draft. While the draft originally included student deferments, meaning that eligible men who were enrolled in college could postpone service until after completion of their degrees, the government began ending student deferments for those with low grades. In the mid-1960s, the government began asking colleges and universities for lists of student ranks.¹⁰ This made the future problem of being drafted suddenly seem less distant.

Moreover, after President Nixon ordered the expansion of the war in Indochina with the invasion of Cambodia in late April 1970, student protests grew even larger. Not only was America in a seemingly unnecessary war, but it was now also escalating. "This is not an invasion of Cambodia," President Nixon announced the day American ground troops attacked a Communist base in Cambodia.¹¹ He went on to explain that all areas subject to attack in Cambodia were occupied and controlled by North Vietnamese forces. This new development in the war would not, according to President Nixon, affect the announcement he made only ten days earlier that at least 150,000 American troops would be withdrawn from South Vietnam by May 1971. The decision to expand the war into Cambodia was made by President Nixon and carried out around 7 p.m. on April 30, 1970; he announced this development to the American people around 8 p.m., and then, he discussed the matter with Congress around 9 p.m.¹² Many Americans were outraged at this new development, and student protests erupted throughout the country and at SIU.

"Seven Days in May": A Reconstruction

In 1969, SIU became the first major university to develop a Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs.¹³ This program was seen by many to be sponsored covertly by the C.I.A. Consequently, students and professors protested it. To them, SIU was connected with the war in a way no other university was. The *Big Muddy Gazette* ran an issue criticizing the Vietnamese Center and making fun of the University's president Delyte Morris.¹⁴ This issue caused the paper to be banned on campus, but such sanctions did not stop its publication.

Later in 1969, seemingly in reaction to the establishment of the Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs, one of SIU's most admired buildings, Old Main, was burnt to the ground. The cause was ruled

as arson. However, there were found to be several slogans and obscenities written on a third floor chalkboard, including, "Old Main is burning."¹⁵ This was only the beginning of the violence to come at SIU. In reaction, dormitory curfews were put into effect in 1970. This caused multiple student riots that eventually led to the National Guard's intervention. Students were not allowed to be out of their dormitories between the hours of 7:30 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.¹⁶ Reports of students violating this curfew and being misled into violating this curfew by the police are common, and the protests that followed typically led to tear gas, police brutality, arrest, and for some, suspension from the university.

However, it was not until May 1, 1970, the day after President Nixon announced the invasion of Cambodia that SIU students escalated their violence. The protests and riots on campus and around the city of Carbondale are remembered as the "Seven Days in May." These days of protest began on May 6 and lasted until May 13. Yet, even before the "Seven Days in May," student activism had already started to become increasingly more violent. On May 1, at 10:30 p.m., one hundred and fifty students met at Moo and Cackle, a local fast food restaurant, to protest America's involvement in Cambodia. The protest quickly turned violent with bricks being thrown at police and fires being started on the streets. Sixteen protesters were arrested.¹⁷ After this, the campus was relatively calm until the incident at Kent State on May 4.

The evening of May 4, four hundred SIU students gathered for a meeting of the student senate. The meeting generated a unanimous vote to support the students' boycott of the university to show opposition to U.S. intervention in Cambodia and the brutality at Kent State. This boycott was to begin at noon the next day and last indefinitely.¹⁸ On May 5, the administration at SIU called for a three-day mourning period, and they suspended classes on Thursday, May 7. They also planned a memorial service for the victims of Kent State. Crowds of over 2,000 gathered at Morris Library on May 5 and 6.¹⁹ They protested the expansion of the war and SIU's direct ties with it through the Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs.

On May 6, the first official date of the "Seven Days in May," the crowds began moving toward Woody Hall, the location of the Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs.²⁰ While some students broke into Woody Hall, others turned toward Wheeler Hall. Wheeler Hall housed the ROTC, or the Reserve Officer Training Corps. To the protesters, having a branch of the ROTC on campus was another direct military connection to the war in Indochina. Both buildings were severely vandalized. The protesters caused \$5,000 worth of damage to Wheeler Hall and \$7,000 to Woody Hall.²¹ Yet this was still just the beginning.

The largest student protest SIU had ever seen began on May 7, 1970. Classes were cancelled in mourning of Kent State. The day began with a memorial service at the arena. After the service, over 2,000 students gathered in front of Morris Library to listen to speakers and to debate the best way to protest: Violence or non-violence. After some of the students began vandalizing the library, the crowd began to march downtown. They proceeded down Main Street and Illinois Avenue, blocking traffic. Then around 9:00 p.m., the protesters stopped on the corner of Main and Illinois and sat down, preparing to wait together until the plan of a student strike was executed the next morning at 8 a.m.²² It seems that the activists had chosen nonviolence, until a group broke away and changed the course of the night.



Students gather in front of Morris Library to discuss a plan of action.²³

About an hour after the demonstration at the corner of Main and Illinois began, a group of about 150 protesters broke away from the crowd. They began blocking the railroad tracks on Main Street, despite a previous police order.²⁴ After several attempts to make them move, the police decided to use tear gas, which dispersed among the entire protest. Since most of the original activists had no idea that this small group had been on the tracks, they were surprised and angry when the tear gas hit. The 2,000 protesters quickly turned into an angry mob, retreating down Illinois Avenue away from the tear gas. Over the next half hour an estimated \$100,000 in damages was done to 78 businesses downtown by demonstrators throwing rocks and looting.²⁵ The police and the National Guard fired more tear gas, and protesters threw anything they could and burnt down a few abandoned buildings, and at one point, someone lit fireworks and everyone assumed they were hearing gunshots.²⁶ Eventually, the National Guard and the perceived gunshots intimidated the protesters enough to retreat. However, seventy

students had been arrested, and there were fifty-nine injuries filed, only three being severe.²⁷ At 2 a.m. the mayor of Carbondale called for a state of emergency.

In comparison to the events of May 7, the following day was relatively calm. There were a few non-violent student gatherings. Liquor sales were prohibited in Carbondale and in the neighboring towns. More National Guards were called in, making the total number of guardsmen in Carbondale around 850.²⁸ While a rally was attempted, it failed to come together. Nevertheless, the attempt still led to 25 student arrests, a few minor fires, and damage to nearby buildings.²⁹

May 9 was quiet as well, but it now appeared as if the police were looking for trouble. Reports exist of tear gas being used to break up two small demonstrations. Additionally, eight to ten canisters of tear gas were reportedly used to search two apartment buildings without a warrant.³⁰ This night led to 58 arrests on curfew violation, 33 arrests on unlawful assembly, and 19 arrests for other charges.³¹ The students ended up rioting in jail and breaking a water pipe.

Like Saturday, Sunday May 10 was peaceful as well. About 250 of the National Guardsmen were called off duty.³² And, classes were supposed to resume on Monday, May 11. Violence broke out yet again, however, as students met at the Newman Center to discuss a continuation of the strike. Tear gas was used to disperse the crowd. It was also used on Grinnell Hall, a dormitory on campus. Many dormitories were locked so students could not flee from the scene after taunting the police.³³ Multiple fires were started throughout the area in abandoned buildings, keeping firemen busy throughout the night and into the early morning. According to the *Daily Egyptian*, SIU's student newspaper, there were 70 arrests made and 150 students suspended.³⁴ When asked for a comment, President Morris responded he did not know enough about the situation. This comment enraged students even more.

Tuesday, May 12, was one of the last "Seven Days in May." On this day, about 1,000 students gathered at Morris Library to demand the immediate closing of SIU. Within an hour, the crowd had grown to 2,500.³⁵ The crowd decided to march to University Park, the dormitory area on campus, then up Wall Street, across Main, back down Illinois, and back to the campus. William "Anteater" George led this march on his motorcycle. As they went, the protesters collected more students. By the time they reached President Morris's home and office on campus, there were an estimated 5,000 people involved.³⁶ While President Morris did not appear after demonstrators smashed multiple windows and broke into his office, Chancellor Robert MacVicar did. After an emergency meeting with the Board of Trustees, he announced at 11:30 p.m. that

SIU was to close indefinitely.³⁷ The crowd cheered, and all 5,000 walked downtown to celebrate.



Students cheer as Chancellor MacVicar announces the closing of SIU³⁸

While the students successfully shut down the school, David Keane, mayor of Carbondale, felt it was still necessary to call the National Guard back in on Wednesday, May 13. His reasoning being that, “[the protesters] have taken the campus, we can’t just let them take the town.”³⁹ However, by the time the guards arrived, the majority of the students had already packed and gone home. By May 15, over one third of the textbooks had been returned. According to A.A. Logue, manager of textbook services in 1970, most textbooks were returned Wednesday morning, the day after the closure was announced. One student was waiting outside at 5 a.m.⁴⁰ Still believing the protesters were the minority, however, President Morris offered to keep the university open if the majority of the students wanted it to remain open. A referendum was held on May 14 for students, faculty, and staff. The remaining students voted 8,224 to 3,675 to keep it closed, while the total vote of students, faculty, and staff was 9,022 to 4,409 in favor of remaining closed.⁴¹ While the university was closed and the violence was over, the protests lived on as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* covered them for several days.

Analysis: Why SIU?

Center for Vietnamese Studies

While it is clear that SIU had a strong campus peace movement, it still doesn’t match the attributes of a typical protest-prone campus. One of the main reasons the movement was so large was because of SIU’s Center for Vietnamese Studies. In early 1969, SIU received a one million dollar grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development funding the creation of a Vietnamese center for teaching, learning, and service.⁴² This was the first of its kind in higher education. Illinois Senator Everett McKinley

Dirksen believed it was essential that the nation begin to consider reconstruction of Vietnam, and SIU was going to be the first university to assist in that reconstruction. "There has been no major university in the country carrying forward a specialized program dealing specifically with Vietnam even though we have spent more than \$100 billion and lost more than 35,000 lives in that country."⁴³ The Center was established to provide courses about Vietnam for undergraduates and graduates, with an emphasis on veterans.

While the idea for the Center seemed harmless, the administrators knew it would be controversial. Before the implementation of the Center for Vietnamese Studies, SIU Chancellor MacVicar announced, "It is obvious that such a program as we are embarking upon will bring criticism from both ends of the spectrum of opinion on the Vietnamese conflict. This was anticipated at the outset and it will be surprising if it does not occur."⁴⁴ Chancellor MacVicar insisted that the Center would focus entirely on scholarly study and reconstruction of Vietnam. The students of SIU, however, did not agree with his assessment.

During this time of division over the war, most students at SIU did not want to be involved with Vietnam in any way. These feelings multiplied when Wesley Fishel joined the faculty at the Center for Vietnamese Studies. Fishel had previously headed a group project in Vietnam through Michigan State University from 1956 to 1958. An article in the *Big Muddy Gazette* alleged that Fishel's project involved training South Vietnamese police in counter-insurgency tactics. In 1966, *Ramparts* magazine claimed that the Michigan State project had been used as a cover for the CIA. Likewise, John F. Kelly published a book in 1971 stating that at least five former CIA agents were employed on the Michigan State project.⁴⁵ Because of Fishel's past, students were highly distrustful of the Center. Jim Hanson, a student during the movement, recalls, "We were convinced . . . that it was a training center and its purpose was counterinsurgency with CIA funds."⁴⁶

As a way to protest the Vietnamese Center, many students gathered together to hold a mock trial for Fishel. On January 29, 1970, the students of SIU found him guilty and sentenced him to a pie in the face.⁴⁷ This type of guerilla theater was used to create student awareness of the Center for Vietnamese Studies. After the trial, a small fight erupted between a few of the plain-clothes police officers who were attending and the participants. This led to six students being arrested.⁴⁸ The next day, the largest police-student confrontation SIU had seen up to that time occurred outside Woody Hall, home of the Center for Vietnamese Studies. A crowd of students gathered around Woody Hall around noon to protest the previous night's arrests and to demand information on the Center. While

officials were refusing to give out any information, a fire alarm was pulled. As the building was evacuated, protesters flooded inside. They took over three of the six rooms used by the Vietnamese Center and refused to leave. Around that time, fighting was breaking out on the courtyard between the remaining protesters, the police, and the evacuated officials.

Police reinforcements arrived at the same time as classes changed at 2:50 p.m., and the numbers of demonstrators grew to well over 500. By 3:00 p.m., the administration decided to quell the demonstration by providing the activists with the information that they had originally demanded. After copies were made and distributed, the protesters did not leave. Students began letting air out of the tires of police cars. Demonstrators were throwing mud, fruit, and anything else they could find. Finally at 5:30 p.m., the assistant dean of students told the protesters that they had fifteen minutes to leave. He was answered by a chorus of, "Hell no, we won't go."⁴⁹ Eventually, someone suggested that the police leave first since they were the ones with the clubs. Reluctantly they did so, and within five minutes, the protest was over, and the area was clear.



Police attempting to break up the demonstration outside the Center for Vietnamese Studies⁵⁰

This demonstration was the first of many outside the Center for Vietnamese Studies at Woody Hall. Woody Hall became the main site for demonstrations since almost every protest could be linked back to the Vietnamese Center. Regarding the January protest of the Center, one student later stated, "The only difference between what happened here at Woody Hall and what happened at Kent State is a matter of degree."⁵¹ The students of SIU despised their university having such a close tie with the Vietnam War, and SIU being the only university to do so only made it all the more controversial.

Police Brutality

While the Center for Vietnamese Studies was a large contributor to the expansion of the peace movement on SIU's campus, other factors played a role as well. The police brutality inflicted on the demonstrators and bystanders not only failed to stop the protests, they also fueled anger, and they contributed sympathy to the activists' position. By the time the student demonstrations reached their high point in May 1970, the campus police, the Carbondale police, and the National Guard were all patrolling SIU's campus. This massive influx of law enforcement only increased the brutality. Many of the National Guardsmen have later expressed they did not see a need to be in Carbondale. Multiple Guardsmen, as well as the majority of the students, have blamed the police for inciting riots and turning peaceful protests into violent uprisings.

As an explanation to the brutality, one Guardsman stationed with a company from Saint Louis implied, "some of these [policemen] were unable to attend college. . . and are a little envious of the students and resentful of the students not taking advantage of the school."⁵² Gregory J. Smith, a member of the 1244th Transportation Company of Carbondale, Illinois, was stationed with part of the West Frankfort infantry unit located in Carbondale in early May 1970. Smith believes the West Frankfort unit and the Carbondale police discriminated against "hippies," labeling anyone with long hair a "hippie." He testified to hearing numerous remarks such as, "I don't mind [beating heads] except they are so god-damn dirty." In regards to one of the students who was shot while innocently walking to class during the Kent State protests, one of the infantrymen referred to the girl as a "fucking whore who deserved to be killed."⁵³

Smith estimates that before his company was on duty with the West Frankfort unit and the Carbondale police, about five per cent were on the students' side. After the first night of duty in Carbondale, about seventy per cent of Smith's men believed the police and guard leaders were the cause of the riots, not the students.⁵⁴ Jacob Wiles, another National Guardsmen, also testified that he would classify the confrontation his unit was involved with as a "campus police riot."⁵⁵ He attested to seeing the police beat up a lone rock-throwing protester, and then, the policeman wondered out loud why the National Guards did not beat up the protester when they caught him.

One of the main crimes students were charged with was curfew violation. After a curfew of 7:30 p.m. was enacted in the dormitories, the Carbondale police saw this as an opportunity to arrest and tear gas students breaking curfew as well as students who were following the

rules, but who got in their way. In one instance, Kenneth Foote, a student visiting an off-campus couple, started home so he could arrive before the 7:30 p.m. curfew, but he could not see through the tear gas that had accumulated over S. Illinois Avenue. The police had gassed the street earlier to break up a congregation of students. The couple he was visiting offered to drive him home, but by the time they got to their car and he had been dropped off, it was exactly 7:30. Two police officers stopped Foote as he got out of the car at his dormitory and informed him he was under arrest. When he asked for an explanation, one police officer sprayed mace in his face and shoved him up against a car. As Foote tried to wipe his face to stop the burning, he was hit in the back of the head with a revolver, knocked unconscious, and woke up in jail.⁵⁶

This incident happened on May 9, 1970. The *Daily Egyptian* reports that on that night, before Foote arrived at his dormitory, there were National Guards, city police, and university police lined up shoulder to shoulder from Washington to Wall Street. These guards arrived at 6:50 p.m. to enforce the 7:30 curfew.⁵⁷ The *Daily Egyptian* also reported that the massive amounts of tear gas on South Illinois Avenue came from a house the police gassed earlier that evening. Because of all the tear gas, the house caught fire.⁵⁸ There were numerous reports of random tear gassings of dormitories and apartments, arrests for little or no reason, and violence without provocation. Many incidents involved all three, with the police gassing a building, clubbing the students after they evacuated, then arresting them for being out of the dormitory past curfew. One SIU student, Charles Brown, even reports that he was once clubbed and arrested on his way to the Student Health Center during an epileptic seizure.⁵⁹ Police brutality was nothing out of the ordinary for students at SIU.

Foote's incident with the police was only one of many in which the police abused their power. During the peace movement on SIU's campus, police brutality was all too common.

Lyman Baker, a member of the American Civil Liberties Union in Carbondale, went so far as to compare the police brutality to the Holocaust. In a letter to the Justice Department, he stated, "The strategy is to cause [the students] all so much trouble as to persuade them to leave town. . . . At least the Mayor hasn't yet started talking about Cyclon B [sic.] and ovens yet."⁶⁰ The ACLU even sent out pamphlets advising students about how to act when encountering police or if arrested in an attempt to prevent brutality and excess charges upon the student.⁶¹ The students may have started the protests, but the police unnecessarily escalated many into riots.

Invasion of Cambodia

The Center for Vietnamese Studies and the extensive police brutality may have been distinctive to SIU, but the students' response to President Nixon expanding the Vietnam War into Cambodia was shared with campuses throughout the country. On April 30, 1970, President Nixon announced the US invasion of Cambodia. The next day, campuses across the country erupted in protests and riots and SIU was not exempt. In fact, that night a small crowd started multiple fires around the city of Carbondale and threw a firebomb into the Center for Vietnamese Studies.⁶² The next few days entailed protests on campuses throughout the United States until Kent State. The nation reacted to the tragedy with more riots. Most student activists saw the four Kent State students as their brothers and sisters in this continuing struggle to speak out against the war.⁶³ As the students of SIU were mourning Kent State, the infamous "Seven Days in May" began.

The students of SIU had already spent a few years protesting the war in Vietnam. After spending all that time trying to get their voices heard, President Nixon expanded the war rather than ending it. The students were enraged. Protests turned to riots more quickly than ever, National Guards were called on to campus, and police resorted to brutality as a way to subdue the campus unrest. In the end, the students were successful in closing the school. In a public vote put forth by President Morris, even the staff found it necessary to close the school. President Morris issued a statement saying the school's campus was shut down "in order to avoid inevitable bloodshed by an uncontrollable mob."⁶⁴ Campus was to reopen at the end of spring term on June 13. "School closing proves a point," Larry Maduri, a sophomore at SIU in 1970 explained. "I am a veteran and I'm out of the draft. These kids' lives are in jeopardy; they want to be heard. They see the war as an evil thing. I think closing school makes people stop and think."⁶⁵ This closing was the students' way of showing SIU's President Morris and President Nixon that the students' opinions matter, their voices should be heard, and the United States should leave Cambodia and Vietnam.

While the closing of SIU was seen as a victory for most activists at the time, a few of the major student leaders saw it for what it really was: an end to the peace movement.⁶⁶ When students returned in the summer or fall, the movement had significantly shrunk despite the continuation of the war. Closing the school had brought a relative sense of peace, as President Morris and the school board had hoped. After the movement died down, SIU fell back into most scholar's interpretation of what the campus should be, reasonably calm. The intense demonstrations of the late 1960s and 1970s were over, leaving only the legacy of one of the largest campus peace movements at that time.

Conclusion

While Southern Illinois University does not fit the characteristics of a peace movement prone campus as demonstrated by previous scholars, several factors allowed SIU's campus movement to thrive. The establishment of the Center for Vietnamese Studies on campus gave the students an unwanted connection with the war that no other university at the time had. The extensive police brutality against the activists created a more hostile environment, which allowed average demonstrations to grow and turn violent. And President Nixon's decision to expand the already controversial Vietnam War into Cambodia caused outrage on campuses throughout the nation and led to SIU's "Seven Days of May," the school's largest demonstrations. SIU demonstrates the need for individualized research in regards to activism on college campuses. Current research on protest-prone campuses is limited by the focus on broad factors and future research should focus more on local variables rather than generalized assumptions.

Notes:

- 1 Allan Keith, *SIUC's Days of Dissent: A Memoir of Student Protest* (Mattoon: 2007), 64.
- 2 H.B. Koplowitz, *Carbondale After Dark* (Hollywood: Dome Publications, 1982), 19.
- 3 Robbie Lieberman and David Cochran, "We Closed Down the Damn School: The Party Culture and Student Protest at Southern Illinois University During the Vietnam War Era," *Peace & Change*, no. 3 (2001): 324.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 325.
- 5 Koplowitz, *Carbondale After Dark*, 22.
- 6 Lieberman, *Prairie Power* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 1.
- 7 Helen Horowitz, "The 1960s and the Transformation of Campus Cultures," *History of Education Quarterly*, no. 1 (1986): 12.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 9 Kenneth Keniston and Michael Lerner, "Campus Characteristics and Campus Unrest," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1971): 41.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 11 Associated Press, "Cambodia Attack by U.S. Troops Ordered by Nixon." *Daily Egyptian*, May 1, 1970.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 1, News Release Folder, 1969.
- 14 Koplowitz, *Carbondale After Dark*, 18.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 19.

- 16 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 2, Chancellor Notice Folder, 1970.
- 17 Ibid., Box 3, Student Activism Folder, 1970.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid., Box 1, Seven Days in May Folder, 1970.
- 24 Koplowitz, *Carbondale After Dark*, 57.
- 25 Ibid., 58.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 3, Student Activism Folder, 1970.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Keith, *SIUC's Days of Dissent*, 82.
- 31 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 3, Student Activism Folder, 1970.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Keith, *SIUC's Days of Dissent*, 82.
- 35 Koplowitz, *Carbondale After Dark*, 61.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 1, Seven Days in May Folder, 1970.
- 39 Koplowitz, *Carbondale After Dark*, 61.
- 40 John Towns. "1/3 of Texts Already Returned." *The Daily Egyptian*, May 15, 1970.
- 41 Keith, *SIUC's Days of Dissent*, 83.
- 42 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 1, Vietnamese Studies Folder, 1969.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Keith, *SIUC's Days of Dissent*, 64.
- 46 Lieberman and Cochran, "We Closed Down the Damn School," 324.
- 47 Koplowitz, *Carbondale After Dark*, 20.
- 48 Keith, *SIUC's Days of Dissent*, 63.

- 49 Koplowitz, *Carbondale After Dark*, 21.
- 50 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 1, Seven Days in May Folder, 1970.
- 51 Lieberman and Cochran, "We Closed Down the Damn School," 316.
- 52 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 3, National Guard Testimonies Folder, 1970.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 2, Police Brutality Folder, 1970.
- 57 "Calm Returns to Carbondale; Curfew Still On." *Daily Egyptian*, May 9, 1970.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 3, May 11 Folder, 1970.
- 60 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 2, Police Brutality Folder, 1970.
- 61 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 1, Information About Arrests Folder, 1970.
- 62 Lieberman, *Prairie Power*, 125.
- 63 Christopher Broadhurst, "We Didn't Fire a Shot, We Didn't Burn a Building: The Student Reaction at North Carolina State University to the Kent State Shootings," *North Carolina Historical Review*, no. 3 (2010): 283
- 64 Carbondale, Morris Library Special Collections, C. Thomas Busch Papers, Box 1, Newspaper Clippings: Campus Unrest Folder, 1970.
- 65 Towns, "1/3 of Texts Already Returned."
- 66 Lieberman and Cochran, "We Closed Down the Damn School," 326.

Kyle Quigley

One Nation Under God, Underground: The American Culture of Fallout and Civil Defense

With the conclusion of World War II in 1945, the American people began to prepare for a time of relative peace. But the dropping of the atomic bomb in August 1945 also helped produce an arms race and four years later in August 1949, the Soviet Union successfully tested its new atomic bomb. That announcement led the United States to begin preparation for resisting an altogether different type of war: a nuclear strike. The United States had been isolated with its ocean borders, but with the advancement in airplane technology and later with intercontinental ballistic missiles, that barrier had been eliminated. The United States dramatically increased its nuclear arsenal and, in response to public pressure, also turned its attention to domestic safety—the promise of civil defense on a national scale. But the efforts fell short of meeting the need. Even after millions of dollars were spent in educating the public on fallout shelter safety and providing options for public and private shelters, the American public as well as state and federal governments did not follow through in providing for the self-defense of the country.

After the Soviet Union's successful atomic test in 1949, the United States government began to prepare plans in the case of a nuclear strike. The first idea that was tested were mass evacuations. The Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) issued a pamphlet entitled *4 Wheels to Survive*, which instructed citizens to pick up evacuees who were on foot, explaining that the car could double as a small moveable house.¹ Such cases like this illustrated the serious limits to government planning at the time. One of the government's earliest evacuation plans was Operation Alert, which, in 1955, tested how expeditiously the nation's largest cities could be evacuated when given a fifteen-minute warning before a nuclear strike. The results were less than effective. According to John Garrett Underhill, a Washington civil defense official, the Operation Alert test was "so inadequate it couldn't cope with a brush fire threatening a doghouse in the backyard."² Later tests saw similar results; in the 1957 test in Chicago, the majority of those in the evacuation confronted the same problem of clogged exit ways and ineffective organization. The problems of mass evacuation also affected smaller cities. Operation Kids, tasked

with the evacuation of school children in Mobile, Alabama, witnessed the same problems. The local radio stations did not broadcast the required information and traffic jams clogged the streets. If an evacuation of school children in a city of about 120,000 caused major logistical problems, there would be almost no chance that a mass evacuation of the nation's largest cities could be carried out successfully. Not only were the logistics of moving that many people a problem, the costs associated with a massive evacuation were also prohibitive. The Bureau of Public Roads explained that roads and bridges would require major improvements, placing the figure at \$23 billion of additional expenditures. Meanwhile, Congress reduced the budget of the FCDA by almost \$90 million.³

Despite these problems, the introduction of CONELRAD, short for Control of Electromagnetic Radiation, represented an early and important step for nationwide civil defense.⁴ CONELRAD was the first emergency broadcasting system in America, beginning in 1951 under President Harry Truman. The system used two radio settings, 640 AM or 1240 AM. Using AM radio would reach the most people during the time period and AM radio signals traveled farther than FM signals. A recorded message would be played over the two stations, informing listeners that the station was now being operated under orders of the United States government and to remain on this station for any new information. While the system was never used in its intended form, it would serve as the basis of the Emergency Broadcast System for weather alerts.⁵

Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, civil defense officials adopted new policies to provide for the safety of the American people. The new direction represented a two-pronged idea: Greater access and awareness of proper civil defense information and federally-operated shelters. To calm fears about underground shelters, the government used whimsical images and cartoons that were especially directed at school-aged children. The live action short films, also created by the government, reassured the adults everything would be fine, whether they were underground or under an object. This time period produced some of the best propaganda pieces of all time. But even as early as 1951, the government found effective the use of short films, when it produced the well-known film, *Duck and Cover*. Just over nine minutes long, *Duck and Cover* offered advice for school children in case of an attack and instructed them to get under their desks and cover their heads with their arms. The film also informed citizens on the streets to take cover if they saw the flash of a bomb. Civil defense officials believed it was unnecessary to frighten people about a nuclear attack. While the production style and characters were a bit too light-hearted, the film had its merits. With mother and father already worried about the threat of the bomb, parents did not want

their sons and daughters coming home scared for the same reasons. In addition, the advice to duck and cover was not new. School children in the Midwest had been taught to duck and cover during threat of tornados, and many cases had shown this to be an effective method of reducing serious injury. Moreover, military officials claimed that the covering of a body with a table cloth had offered some protection during the bombing of Hiroshima.⁶ While those caught outside and closest to ground zero would most likely die from the blast and heat, officials noted those farther away had a higher chance of survival with the duck and cover method.

The live action films appeared to lessen the dangers of what could occur after a nuclear attack. Films such as *Warning Red*, *About Fallout*, and *Medical Aspects of Nuclear Radiation* either deemphasized the dangers of radiation or simply ignored them. In *Medical Aspects*, the narrator suggested to wearing a toupee if radiation caused a loss of hair.⁷ This was an attempt to convince the public that the side effects of radiation were not as deadly as scientists indicated. The narrator also noted that washing under the fingernails would be sufficient to eliminate any radiation under them, adding that radiation poisoning could be treated or even prevented as if it were a common cold. In *Warning Red*, the local civil defense official offered instructions to those in his precinct about precautions that needed to be taken after an attack, advising residents only to drink water that had been shut off from the inside tap and to only eat food that had been covered prior to the blast.⁸ Still, this film did provide several basic guidelines that made sense, such as remaining inside a building during and after an attack.

The film *About Fallout* (1963) was one of the longest running fallout safety films as well being the film that most deemphasized the effects of radioactive fallout. Some of the suggestions from *Warning Red* also appeared in *About Fallout*, including washing food to remove radioactive material. In the opening segment, the film explained that everyone had already been exposed to radiation from the sun as well as from radiation that had been produced on earth from decaying matter. The narrator also invited people to go outside two weeks after a nuclear attack, adding that radiation would be sufficiently low enough to not pose a health concern.⁹ The film further stated that the rivers would naturally cleanse water contaminated with radiation, as fast currents, sedimentation, and filtration would clean the water supply. For those Americans with backyard underground shelters, the film advised using a u-shaped pipe to keep out airborne fallout particles, noting that settled fallout could be removed easily by a street sweeper or a fire hose. *About Fallout* was reissued in 1967 in a shorter version, but the primary message remained the same as in the original. An attack would represent only a minor inconvenience,

lasting only a few weeks, and afterwards everyone could return to living a normal life.

The pamphlets and booklets that were distributed took a more serious approach to civil defense. Available at local civil defense offices, post offices, and other locations, the pamphlets and booklets gave more in depth coverage to the supplies needed for survival in shelters and detailed the specifics for civil defense procedures among states and cities. The FCDA issued scores of pamphlets, ranging from *Grandma's Pantry* on what foods to stock in a shelter to *Handbook for Emergencies*, co-produced with the Boy Scouts of America, on a variety of ways to prepare one's family in case of nuclear attack. One of the booklets produced targeted kids. In 1958, the FCDA published a comic book entitled *Operation Survival*. The comic book covered a variety of situations, including flooding, severe weather, and a nuclear attack. While maintaining a light-hearted touch for children, the comic was more informative than other publications of the time. It listed such important information as how long food could last in a refrigerator without power, the importance of being Red Cross trained in first aid in case of injury, and tools needed to check for radiation. The comic also highlighted the importance of the government having a course of action for each instance of disaster, attempting to reassure its readers that the government was prepared to aid all citizens when faced with disaster. The back of the comic contained a glossary of words and a crossword puzzle with such words and definitions as "Evacuation: Organized, timed, and supervised dispersal of civilians from dangerous and potentially dangerous areas, their reception and care in safer areas, and their return to their own home communities."¹⁰

In addition to the production of films and pamphlets, civil defense officials called for the installation of government fallout shelters in cities. The idea of providing federally-operated fallout shelters was more of an evolutionary step; in a sense, it built upon the failed idea of mass evacuations. President John F. Kennedy was one of the strongest proponents of the shelter program, asking for over \$207 million for a national fallout shelter program in July of 1961.¹¹ Instead of having citizens leave the cities in droves and clogging exits, they would head for the nearest fallout shelter. Even earlier, Vice President Richard Nixon had also called for an increase in shelters. During a meeting with the National Security Council in 1958, for example, he stated that the government had to invest in these shelters simply "because the country demands it."¹² In theory, it would be easier for the federal government to locate shelters in the cities than it would be for citizens to have their own private shelters. At the peak of the civil defense era, Stuart Pittman, the head of President John F. Kennedy's civil defense program, testified that there were enough

government shelters for roughly two-thirds of the American population.¹³ Many of these shelters were located in the hearts of the major cities, as their locations provided easy access for evacuating citizens. But these same central locations were also the ground zero targets for Soviet Union attacks.¹⁴

The overall efforts of the federal government, though, were mixed. In terms of providing actual safety for the population, the government failed. From the start, the officials who were actually in charge of the different civil defense programs believed that they were wasting their time on such plans. President Eisenhower's Secretary of Defense, John Foster Dulles, was one of them. When Dulles was informed that one such plan would cost over \$22 million, he grew furious, claiming "For our security, we have been relying above all on our capacity for retaliation. From this policy we should not deviate now. To do so would imply we are turning into a 'fortress America' concept."¹⁵

With increasing appropriations in the 1950's and early 1960's for the designation and supply of shelters, some officials became more vocal in their challenges to the effectiveness of the idea. One of the leading figures against the expansion of shelters was Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. McNamara had been a supporter of federally-funded shelters in the earlier days of the program, but ultimately changed his position. He argued, much like Dulles, that the millions of dollars spent on defense shelters should instead be spent on antiballistic missile systems to destroy nuclear missiles before they reached American cities. McNamara had simply changed his mind as the nuclear technology expanded from bombs to ICBMs. Whereas a fleet of Soviet Union bombers could take hours to get to a city, ICBMs could arrive in minutes. Congress was beginning to have little use for the shelter program as well. During a 1962 congressional hearing of the Independent Offices Subcommittee, one congressman announced his disapproval of continuing the program because "no one has been able to convince me that his fallout shelter program is worth a damn"; another asserted "we're not building any fallout shelters, period."¹⁶ Moreover, the shelters that were open were either ill-stocked or not stocked at all. In 1961, the New York state capitol building was stocked with seven tons of crackers, which with water would be all the nutrients the some 1,100 shelter-goers would receive for their time underground.¹⁷ Other shelters such as the ones in the Los Angeles area were simply not stocked. At the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, only two designated shelters were stocked while the warehouses containing the supplies were full and other designated shelters were bare.¹⁸ The government provided neither accurate information about the dangers of radiation nor the precautions to take after an attack. Indeed, pamphlets and films reassured American that they could survive a nuclear blast.

Moreover, the government made the public believe that fallout shelters were not necessary by reducing the impact and restricting—if not distorting—the information provided. Of course, the government provided fully-stocked fallout shelters for its own members.

Although the federal government took responsibility for national civil defense, individual states began to draft their own civil defense plans, requesting federal funds to support their plans. But Congress viewed states with smaller populations or that lacked military installations as less important than those with major cities or military installations. And the beginning state civil defense programs were even shakier than that at the federal level. Only sixteen states had put into place a civil defense plan or had appointed a civil defense director before the Korean War started; by 1951 all forty-eight states would have a director.¹⁹ Funding of state plans represented the most significant hurdle for state officials. Federal funds required matching state dollars, forcing the mayors in such cities as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles to pressure state lawmakers to increase taxes as a way to come up with the matching funds. This was not a very popular approach with Milwaukee Mayor Frank Zeidler complaining “The state legislatures which must provide the matching funds will be loath to tax the smaller communities or rural areas for these funds.”²⁰ State lawmakers knew it would be difficult to sell a tax increase to people who would not benefit from it and state lawmakers argued that the cities should take care of the problem themselves. If the city wanted to attract federal funds, then the city should tax its residents; to burden the rest of the citizens of the state was simply a selfish act.

Drafting its first plans in 1950, North Carolina argued that it was important to have its own system of civil defense. The North Carolina Council of Civil Defense was designed from the start for both nuclear threats as well as such natural threats as storms. The NCCD’s main goal was to set up a system that allowed for a well-organized chain of command from the state director down to the town level. With this in place, the planning could begin. North Carolina followed the federal government’s plan of a two-pronged approach, providing information and shelters for citizens. However, the implementation process proceeded slowly. By 1960, just twenty-seven shelters were documented by the state, with twenty-five of those being home shelters.²¹ Also like the federal government, North Carolina was caught off-guard by the Cuban Missile Crisis. During and in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, hundreds of shelters were designated for public use. Even then, the shelters that were marked were because of a federal government recommendation to lower the fallout protection factor requirement from one hundred to forty, and the number of shelters still did not cover the entire population. Raleigh

was the most prepared city in North Carolina, but even it only had enough stocked shelters for four per cent of the city's population.²²

Even after the Kennedy announcement to the nation of the missiles stationed on Cuba, the NCCD assured the citizens that the years of planning had prepared the members in charge of the civil defense and to not panic.²³ The ability to keep the citizens of North Carolina calm was a highlight of the work state officials had put in place. The calmness was also attributed to the citizens themselves. They had taken in the information and decided that whatever happened would happen, and no amount of planning would stop a nuclear attack. The public did not blame administrators or public officials for the lack of shelters. North Carolinians understood the enormous efforts it took to find and stock all the shelters across the state. The lack of public outcry over the low number of shelters may also point out the lack of faith they had in such shelters as well.²⁴

The public interest in self-defense and protection in the event of a nuclear attack fluctuated during the time period between 1950 and 1963. From the onset, the public believed that the civil defense of the country would entirely be controlled by the federal government. Early polls from the era had pollsters comparing concerns about an atomic attack to that of an earthquake, with one asking, "If you live in a country where there were earthquakes . . . what good would it do you to go to bed every night worrying about whether there would be an earthquake or not?"²⁵ One of the sources of nongovernmental information came from the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. In each publication, experts examined the risks of nuclear war to international relations as well as educating the public about the dangers that stemmed from a nuclear explosion. Even when the Doomsday Clock reached two minutes before midnight, which was to represent an imminent nuclear strike, the public seemed unfazed. Echoing the North Carolina Civil Defense, it seemed as if the public simply tuned out the bad news and went about life as normal. One area of the public civil defense that was given more awareness was the role of women. Civil defense officials placed a special responsibility on housewives for keeping and maintaining the checklist of things to do when the warning sirens went off. Grandma's Pantry was the most publicized campaign targeted at housewives. It paid homage to the fact that no matter the occasion or event, Grandma was prepared to tackle anything because the pantry and cupboards were always stocked.²⁶

The backyard fallout shelters seemingly defined the era of civil defense. Scores of magazines published articles on the topic, from *Popular Mechanics* to *Better Homes and Gardens*. Corporations like IBM offered loans to its employees to build fallout shelters at home.²⁷ At backyard barbeques and local parent teacher meetings, the topic of conversation

always seemed to turn to civil defense at home and to fallout shelters. More than 300 people would walk through an exhibition fallout shelter at the Texas State Fair in 1961 to see what all the commotion was about.²⁸ The shelters on display were furnished with televisions, couches, and carpeting. Some went beyond the basics and looked more like complete underground homes. Jay Swayze built two complete underground homes that resembled upper-class homes. One shelter built for Girard Henderson in Las Vegas was twenty-five feet underground and spread over 6,000 square feet. Swayze had built a ranch-styled house with a pool, grill, and guest house. Adding to the realism was the lighting that changed based upon the time, so that it could be a sunny day or a clear night sky.²⁹ The Swayze house was made as a great conversation piece, but by March of 1960, only 1,565 backyard shelters had been built across thirty-five states and this grew to only 60,000 by June of 1962.³⁰ Most Americans could not afford backyard shelters. Although initial reports placed the costs well within that of the average salary of the time, as fear escalated so did the price of shelters. The mean household income in 1961 was about \$5,500 and a substantial shelter would cost at least half of a year's income. This caused the Federal Housing Authority to make loans available for the purchasing or building of a fallout shelter.³¹ This did not spur the boom of fallout shelters, however. The public saw little use to get a loan to build what some believed could essentially become a tomb.

The money that was not spent on fallout shelters was instead spent on fallout-themed entertainment. Hollywood saw the profitability of fear and cranked out many movies on the topic. One of the early movies that had patrons coming in droves was *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* In a reproduced version of the original 1954 version, *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* was unique in displaying the Japanese in a positive light, the first time following World War II, as well as representing the possible side effects of nuclear fallout, although on an exaggerated scale. After the multi-million dollar success of the initial movie, *King Kong vs. Godzilla* was produced in 1962, bringing together two popular fictional characters from two countries with experience of nuclear war. The 1950 films focused more on genetic mutation rather than nuclear war, featuring such B-movies as *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, *The Atomic Kid*, and *The Man With the X-ray Eyes*.³² Not all of the movies were, however, low budget. *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb and Fail Safe*, released in 1964, had a central theme of a rogue aircraft headed to drop a nuclear bomb on Moscow. Where the films differed was in the style of delivery. *Dr. Strangelove* took a more comical approach, with the memorable quote of "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room!" along with the iconic scene of Major Kong riding a nuclear weapon.³³ *Fail-Safe* was a much more somber film, focusing

more on the consequences of relying too heavily on technology instead the actions of humans. The movie also focused on the addition of having the benefit of a direct line between the Soviet Union and the United States with the leaders trying to fix the problem. *Fail-Safe* ended with a rogue United States bomber destroying Moscow, and in return the president of the United States ordered a bomber to drop an atomic bomb on New York City, in order to show this was an accident and to make amends.³⁴ *Dr. Strangelove* went on to be a commercial success, whereas *Fail-Safe* did not enjoy that success. Both films were, however, important movies on the topic of a rogue bomb and the damages it could do.³⁵

Fears of nuclear attacks also attracted the attention of social scientists, who studied the psychological effects of preparing for living in the fear of a nuclear strike as well as surviving one. Studies found that one of the largest concerns was how the fallout culture affected children. A child born at the time of the first Soviet Union nuclear test in 1949 would have been 14 by the time the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed in 1963. Until this point in history, no child had experienced a semi-perpetual state of war in the United States. The constant bombardment of civil defense was not the only problem he or she faced. He or she also faced a strident patriotism often summed up by the phrase "Better Dead than Red." The new fear was that this generation would become more violent and less sensible in working out problems.³⁶ Early reports suggested this fear was indeed accurate. In a 1947 poll conducted by Purdue, twenty-two per cent of high school students believed that the United States should go to war with the Soviet Union if it were in the process of creating its own atomic bomb; in the same poll only eight per cent of those same students thought that 1947 would be a prime year for a preemptive war.³⁷ As the years passed, the optimism for war gave way to fear of nuclear destruction and fallout. When above-ground testing resumed after a voluntary moratorium, studies found that the videos of the testing and the reminder of nuclear fallout made the school-aged children even afraid of rain and snow.³⁸ Soon the students were changing from being pro-war to being opposed to war. It was not for a lack for nationalism; it was for wanting to live without the constant fear of a nuclear strike.³⁹

The adult population also faced psychological difficulties with civil defense actions and recommendations. With the emphasis on fallout shelters, families had to decide if it was moral to live safely underground while the neighbors and friends died. One civil defense official went as far as to tell citizens to keep a pistol in their survival kits to deal with such an issue.⁴⁰ The question of morality was played out on television as well. In a 1961 episode of *The Twilight Zone*, the question of morality was raised when a flock of geese was mistaken for Soviet Union bombers. When the

main actor in the show refuses to let his neighbors in the shelter, they try to break down the door of his shelter. In the process, each person involved finds out what the others think of them. Even though the scare was false, the feelings were not. Rod Serling, the writer of the episode, later said "If we survive, what do we survive for? What kind of a world do we go into? If it's rubble. . . . I'm not sure I want to survive."⁴¹ This loss of reality of facing the consequences after a nuclear strike spread across the country. One reason that could represent this trend was the fact that, for the first time, America was able to be attacked, and also a refusal to believe the government propaganda that minimized damages from such an attack. The United States was defined by wide-open plans and skyscrapers, not 10x10 fallout shelters underground. One nation under God did not necessarily mean one nation underground.⁴²

Despite the efforts of civil defense at the state and federal level, most Americas remained unsafe in the event of a nuclear attack. The federal government abandoned protection of its citizens in favor of more militaristic solutions, such as anti-ballistic systems. Funding remained the problem at both the state and national level. Even the American public adopted an almost fatalistic attitude toward nuclear attacks, perhaps suggesting that they did not find credible the government propaganda that promised they could survive the bombs. The public had simply become complacent that death was going to come sooner or later, and that living in fear was not part of the American dream.⁴³

In the years following the Test Ban Treaty of 1963, American interest in civil defense subsided. U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War moved public attention away to a far region of the world, while increased dialogue and nuclear treaties ushered in a relative relaxation of Cold War tensions. But the case for civil defense should not fall by the wayside. With the spread of nuclear weapons, especially to anti-American countries, the threat remains real. Indeed, the possibility of rouge bombs and terrorists attacks has become major concerns for U.S. policy makers. The communication failures after 9/11 only reinforce the need for planning and coordination. And the failures of the past present possible solutions in the future, as long as a different plan is put into place.

Notes:

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Erriel Wolters

British Women Travelers in the Victorian Era

Throughout the nineteenth century, British women traveled the world extensively. They ventured to such places as close as France and to places as far away as South America. These female British travelers left behind rich records of their traveling experiences. These records exist in the form of women's letters to family and friends, journals, memoirs, diaries, and travel guides. Such personal accounts reveal the awe, fascination, and zeal adventurous Victorian women experienced throughout their journeys. Not only that, but the written legacies left behind by Victorian women travelers reveal much about the women themselves. To have the courage, fortitude, and ambition to traipse across countries, continents, and oceans for whatever reason, provides immense insight into the lives of these intrepid women. Through such detailed and personal accounts as these women's memoirs, Victorian women carved a niche for themselves in society that allowed for their opinions, thoughts, and ideas to be heard and valued.

Women traveling in the nineteenth century were not necessarily new phenomena. Women had always traveled. However, the extent to which women now traveled, where they could go respectably, and the reasons for their traveling underwent a massive change during the nineteenth century. Women traveled to the Middle East to countries such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, including the Holy Land in what is today Israel, and to Constantinople in present-day Turkey.¹ Victorian women also traveled to both North and South America.² In addition, Africa and India served as travel destinations for adventurous Victorian woman.³ Besides these far-flung and exotic travel destinations, women also traveled much closer to home. Such places included France, Germany, and Italy and to some extent, Siberia.⁴

As mentioned previously, women had always traveled. This was in large part due to religious and immigration purposes. However, beginning in the nineteenth century, women had other reasons for traveling. Barbara Hodgson suggests in her book, *No Place for a Lady; Tales of Adventurous Women Travelers*, that women traveled abroad for a variety of reasons. Hodgson argues that women traveled abroad to mourn the loss of loved ones, for religious and health purposes, and simply for reasons known

only to the women themselves.⁵ Jane Robinson, author of *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers*, offers a contrasting and much more in-depth analysis of why Victorian women traveled. Robinson argues that women traveled to pioneer, to pursue such exploits as big game hunting, to discover new worlds apart from those at home, as a means to an end, as professional travel writers, as ornaments of empire, as the dutiful diplomat's wife, and for health reasons as well.⁶ Whatever women's reasons for traveling abroad, it can be inferred that these women sought something beyond which they experienced in their daily routines of life.

In *Across Patagonia*, Lady Florence Dixie provided her readers with a very explicit explanation as to why she chose southern South America as her ultimate travel destination. Her friends were completely astonished as to why Dixie would want to travel somewhere so far away from England, so far from everything that was familiar. Many of the women who traveled during the Victorian Era were just like Dixie. They were searching for something other than the monotonous routine of daily living.⁷ In response to her friends' exclamations of surprise as well as for readers, Dixie states,

Precisely because it was an outlandish place and so far away, I chose it. Palled for the moment with civilisation and its surroundings, I wanted to escape somewhere, where I might be as far removed from them as possible. Many of my readers have doubtless felt dissatisfaction with oneself, and everybody else, that comes over one at times in the midst of the pleasures of life; when one wearies of the shallow artificiality of modern existence; when what was once excitement has become so no longer, and a longing grows up within one to taste a more vigorous emotion than that afforded by the monotonous round of society's so-called "pleasures."⁸

Clearly, Dixie was tired of the way she was living in England and wanted more out of life. Many women just like her traveled across countries, continents, and oceans with such a means in mind.

Visiting a physical location was not the only reason for women of the Victorian Era to leave hearth and home. Certainly a specific destination, such as Dixie's Patagonia, was an incredible determinant of women's travels. However, as noted previously, historians like Barbara Hodgson and Jane Robinson have argued that women had various other very individualized reasons for traveling. For example, in her early twenties, Isabella Bird embarked on a journey to Canada with cousins who were reuniting with their parents.⁹ In the early 1870s, Isabel Burton journeyed from England through France and Egypt to Damascus. Her husband

served as the British Consul in Syria, and Burton determined to reside in Damascus with her husband during his service.¹⁰ The Honorable Emily Eden and her sister Fanny traveled through India en route to Calcutta where their brother served as governor-general.¹¹ Likewise, Emma Roberts was a single woman who had nothing to keep her in England. Her sister and her sister's husband were filling a political position in India, and so Roberts accompanied her family to Bombay.¹²

Regardless of where women traveled and why they chose such destinations, every woman traveler of the Victorian Era had to take into consideration the planning of their overseas voyages. At a time in history when more people had the ability to travel for leisure, especially the middle to upper classes, there was no lack of resources to consult.¹³ Once a woman settled on a destination, this venturesome woman had to make plans regarding the best time of year to visit the proposed destination, clothing to pack, appropriate methods of transportation to secure, availability of monetary funds, and even the number of maids to bring along. There was an abundance of travel guides women could consult on such matters as many travelers throughout the nineteenth century were writing and publishing accounts of their traveling experiences.¹⁴ For beneficial advice regarding all the details of travel, ambitious travelers would have had only to consult the many works of Karl Baedeker.¹⁵ Doing so would have provided prospective travelers with all the information they would have needed no matter where they desired to go.

While Baedeker's information was not specifically aimed at female travelers, his works proved immensely helpful in assisting women with the important aspects of traveling abroad. Karl Baedeker wrote and published many travel guides. Some of the subjects of his works included Egypt, Palestine and Syria, Canada, and the many countries and regions of Europe.¹⁶ Baedeker's works consisted mainly of information regarding the art, culture, history, and politics of the countries about which he wrote.¹⁷ However, Baedeker did provide practical advice for travelers such as the most appropriate time to visit a certain locale. For example, women traveling to Italy were advised to do so in the spring. Adventurous women traveling to Palestine and Syria were also advised to do so in the early spring or autumn.¹⁸ Besides seasonal advice, Baedeker's works provided information about planning, money, hotels, passports and custom houses, consulates, public safety, modes of transportation, fees, letters of credit, weapons, dogs, cafes, and a variety of other items that would interest travelers.¹⁹ This information would prove invaluable to the many women who ventured away from home.

Nevertheless, Karl Baedeker's travel guides were not the only resources available with which women could consult. If Victorian women

travelers desired information specifically aimed at assisting female travelers, they need only consult Lillias Campbell Davidson's little book of helpful hints. In *Hints to Lady Travellers: At Home and Abroad*, Davidson provided the first practical women's manual on the pleasures and trials of travel.²⁰ Davidson's book of helpful hints was written for women from an exclusively female perspective concerning the world of travel that lay wide open before Victorian women in the nineteenth century.²¹ Davidson's advice to lady travelers included information about cab fares, dress, traveling etiquette, fellow travelers, hotels, lady's maids, packing, sandwich boxes, soiled linen bags, night journeys, medicine chests, and unpacking.²² She even advised women never to eat a railway ham sandwich as it caused too much thirst and was inferior to chicken or mutton sandwiches.²³ Davidson's advice for female travelers made the prospect of traveling abroad, perhaps for the first time, a little less daunting, even for the most daring woman. Women now had something tangible to aid them in the finer details of travel. In fact, many of Davidson's hints regarding the elements of travel are still relevant today.

Despite women's destination choices and the resources they consulted before beginning their journeys, traveling in the style typical of the nineteenth century required a substantial amount of money. Money was essential in securing a pleasant and successful voyage abroad. Women quite obviously needed money to secure transportation, but they also needed substantial finances to secure other accommodations. Hotel and eating arrangements, food stores, guides, horses, and luggage were some of the various necessities women had to procure for their travels.²⁴ Often these items were obtained before women began their voyages. Depending upon the women's length of stay somewhere or their purposes in traveling, however, the necessities women required could be obtained while en route to final destinations.²⁵ Although women travelers varied in economic status, they were not all that different. Women travelers of the nineteenth century were middle- to upper-class, white women.²⁶ Such women could afford the basic necessities required for their travels as well as various luxury items. As there were a great many items women both needed and wanted for their voyages abroad, they were clearly not paupers. They had the resources that enabled them to travel in comfort.

Although women travelers of the nineteenth century had the means to acquire what they needed for their journeys, many of these women still experienced difficulty in obtaining and transporting these goods. One area of difficulty for women travelers was that of border formalities. Custom agents and their questionable practices were the bane of travelers.²⁷ Many of these custom agents were given to bribery, and quite often, personal

possessions would be confiscated by these custom agents.²⁸ Another source of difficulty for women existed in finding and obtaining horses, if horses were the means by which women were to travel.²⁹ However, traveling horseback was not necessarily a common means of transportation for women. More often women traveled aboard ships, trains, river barges, or by diligence. (A diligence is a type of carriage with six to eight seats atop four wheels).³⁰ Generally, these methods of transportation were relatively easy to obtain as long as one had the money with which to secure such accommodations. The women who traveled abroad during the Victorian Era had the necessary funds to obtain passage aboard the myriad transportation vehicles as well as to obtain the other necessities required for comfortable travel.

The procurement of the aforementioned necessities required of overseas travel was a major accomplishment for women travelers. Even though women such as Lady Florence Dixie, Isabel Burton, and Emily Eden had the money needed to purchase supplies, there were still other vital items women needed for their journeys. In addition to hotel, food, transportation, and luggage accommodations, travelers often brought along letters of introduction and recommendation. These items permitted women access to some of the nicer establishments and accommodations en route.³¹ Such items were provided for women travelers by their family members, friends, and even other travelers they met during their journeys. Letters of introduction were also very important for women traveling in the nineteenth century as they provided women with a means by which to gain access to places in foreign lands. Letters of introduction enabled women to pass through hostile or inhospitable areas, gain access to places usually barred to foreigners, or they simply enabled women to attain the comforts of home without actually being at home.³²

Knowing where Victorian women traveled, why they went where they did, and with what means they procured the necessities of overseas travel provides a glimpse into who exactly these women were. As previously mentioned, they were white, middle to upper-class women. However, there is so much more to learn about these adventurous Victorian women than just their racial and economic status. Perhaps more important than knowing where and why women traveled and what they needed for their travels is understanding why women wrote about their experiences in the first place. However, before delving into the reasons behind why so many women kept written records of their traveling experiences, it is important to first examine who these women were and what they wrote about. Doing so enables one to understand the intricate relationship between where women traveled, what they wrote in their memoirs, and their reasons for documenting such information.

One crucial component in understanding lady travelers of Britain's Victorian Era is their relationship status. Some of the women, whose travel narratives provide much personal information, were spinsters. They were not married, and in not marrying, they had the freedom to travel unencumbered by the domestic duties of other women travelers. Notable traveling spinsters included Isabella Bird, Mary Kingsley, and Emma Roberts.³³ Although Bird was married for five years in the latter part of her life, much of her traveling was done during her single years. After her husband passed away, she resumed the traveling so characteristic of her earlier, spinster days.³⁴ Roberts, who was also a single miss, accompanied a sister and brother-in-law to India.³⁵ Her travels throughout India were those of a single woman uninhibited by domestic duties. In addition to the single woman, married women also traveled. These included women like Florence Dixie, Isabel Burton, Anne Blunt, and Anna Jameson.³⁶ Blunt and Jameson, however, eventually separated from their husbands, and when Mary Shelley wrote her travel account, *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, her husband had long since passed away.³⁷

Women's relationship status was influential in their lives for more than just defining who they were as single or married ladies. A woman's relationship status determined her options for suitable traveling companions. Such a seemingly minute detail was actually very critical to women's travel plans. To be a respectable lady and a lady traveler was not always regarded as the most proper role to occupy. The nineteenth century was a time in which a woman's place was considered to be in the home, not in gallivanting across continents.³⁸ However, to occupy both roles simultaneously required one to have some sort of traveling companion.³⁹ Traveling with a companion not only preserved a woman's reputation as a lady, but also provided protection should the need arise.⁴⁰ Some women, like Florence Dixie, embarked on their overseas voyages with their husbands serving as traveling companions. Dixie was also accompanied by her brother and another friend.⁴¹ Some women, though married, did not travel with their husbands, but nevertheless, they did travel with servants or other family and friends.⁴² Isabel Burton, en route to Damascus to meet her husband, traveled with her servants and a pet dog.⁴³ Traveling with a companion helped preserve a woman's reputation, but a traveling companion also provided protection and company on long voyages.

Some women, however, traveled completely alone. They had no desire for an escort nor did they feel the need for the protection an escort could have provided. Anna Jameson was married during the time of her travels as described in *Summer Rambles in Canada*. Although she was married at this time, her husband did not accompany her. She insisted on traveling and

sightseeing on her own.⁴⁴ Another woman who insisted, and even thrived, on traveling unchaperoned was Emily Lowe.⁴⁵ Emily Lowe was just one of many women who traveled throughout Europe during the Victorian Era. However, unlike many women, Lowe challenged the status quo in that she traveled unescorted and unprotected.⁴⁶ In a time when a woman's reputation was most valuable, Lowe disregarded society's constraints on female behavior. Thus, illustrative in Jameson's independence and Lowe's lack of regard for society's boundaries is the fact that some lady travelers cared not for what society dictated as the proper role for women. While perhaps not interested in changing the way in which society viewed women, women like Jameson and Lowe do provide insight into Victorian women. Even though it was widely believed that a woman's place was to be in the home, not all women conformed to this belief. Knowing and understanding these women is crucial to understanding just how important women travelers were in the nineteenth century.

The accompaniment of traveling companions is not the only detail recorded within women's travel accounts. The women who traveled throughout the nineteenth century filled their diaries, journals, and letters with a plethora of information. As one would expect, women's diaries, letters, and journals contain the typical information found in such personal accounts. These personal accounts are just that. They are personal records and descriptions of what women saw and did while on their journeys. They include descriptions of the people they met and the problems they encountered. They even include minute details regarding hotel room decorations, tea settings, architecture, treatment of animals, and historic sites.⁴⁷ More importantly, women wrote about things that other women would want to read.⁴⁸ They were not interested in explaining the specific historical, geographical, and political nuances of each place they visited. While they did include some of this information, women travelers were more interested in the everyday aspects of life. They recorded the information that they thought would be most interesting to their readers.⁴⁹

Isabel Burton's personal journal, *The Inner Life of Syria, Palestine, and the Holy Land*, is an apt example of writing to interest the female readership. Burton wrote about her journey to and life in Syria expressly for other Englishwomen.⁵⁰ She desired to convey what she had learned about the Middle East to her countrywomen. Even though Burton was writing in a personal journal, she clearly had consideration for her readers. Like many women of the time, she knew her journal would be published and read by other women. Therefore, she wanted to write that which would most interest that audience. Burton was not the only female traveler of the nineteenth century to cater her writing to the interest of readers. Most women employed such strategies in their writing.⁵¹ Burton's

journal writing is just one example among many others. Ultimately, the goal of Victorian women in recording their traveling experiences was to convey the meaning of those experiences to readers, whether those readers were family and friends or complete strangers. However, upon further examination, each individual woman's account was written with a specific purpose. That specific purpose provides great insight into the lives of such women.

In addition to Burton, some women wrote about their experiences in order to serve as future travel guides to other venturesome women. Mary Shelley does so in her book *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*. Shelley acknowledges that she consulted the works of those who traveled before her. Such help served as the basis for her own travel writing. The writings she had consulted before embarking on her own journey proved to be immensely helpful. They aided in the overall enjoyment and success of Shelley's travels through Europe.⁵² Similar to Shelley's purpose for writing is that of Frances Elliot. She states,

It seemed to me in visiting Constantinople that some revival of Greek-Byzantine and Turkish history, on the very sites where such thrilling scenes were enacted, might interest the general reader, and be serviceable to the traveller. I found little of the kind in any of the current works which serve to guide the stranger. I trust that I may, therefore, in a slight degree have supplied the want I myself felt, by grouping about the localities of the principal monuments some pictures of the chief historic events with which they are connected. At least such has been my endeavor.⁵³

Like Shelley, Elliot was interested in providing information to her readers that would one day help them on their voyages. Shelley wrote because she found the travel guides she consulted incredibly useful. Elliot, on the other hand, kept an account of her travel records because the works she had consulted proved not to be helpful.

In contrast to Burton, Shelley, and Elliot's purposes for writing about their travel experiences, some women wrote to satisfy the requests of family and friends. Isabella Bird is a prime example of such action. Bird indicates in her writings that prior to her voyage across the Atlantic some of her friends desired that she keep a written account of her experiences in Canada.⁵⁴ With such a request guiding her pen, Bird's travelogue, *An Englishwoman in America*, is quite the personal narrative. Some women also wrote about the details of their travels to satisfy what may be called a scientific desire. Mary Kingsley's travel memoir is a testament to this fact.

She openly admits that her writings about West Africa were to expand Europe's knowledge of West Africa.⁵⁵ She states that true knowledge concerning the natives of West Africa would save ethnology students from believing fantastic theories and would further the cause of justice for West African natives.⁵⁶ Her wish in writing of her travel experiences was to further the knowledge of others. These are only a few examples of the myriad reasons why women of the Victorian Era kept detailed written records of their travels. While generalizations can be made regarding women's writings, most women had a very specific purpose for their writing.

Just as important as why women like Isabella Bird, Isabel Burton, Mary Shelley, Frances Elliot, and Mary Kingsley chronicled their journeys is the information actually contained within the many pages of such women's travel memoirs, diaries, and journals. The information not only served to guide future travelers and inform friends and family, but Victorian women's travel accounts have far greater implications. They serve as windows into the lives of these women. They reveal women's attitudes towards traveling, foreign countries, and native peoples and customs. Women's travel accounts also reveal much about what the women thought of themselves and their capabilities. Readers of such fascinating works gain a glimpse into the extraordinary strength and curiosity these women possessed that enabled them to travel abroad never knowing what they would encounter.

In general, women's travel memoirs include information about their experiences en route to their final destinations as well their experiences upon arrival at those final destinations. A common theme throughout many women's records is the information that pertains to the modes of transportation women utilized. Travel could be achieved by train, ship, coach, or diligence, as stated already, or by private carriages. Some women, like Emily Beaufort, traveled by way of riverboats and barges.⁵⁷ In some instances, women traveled by horseback.⁵⁸ Before the arrival of passenger trains, most travelers rode in a diligence, otherwise known as a stagecoach.⁵⁹ Diligences were not known for their comfort. Passengers would often be uncomfortably crammed into these coaches. Many women lamented the discomfort of such traveling.⁶⁰ However, if a woman had enough money, she could hire a private carriage and team of horses. Such accommodations proved to be much more desirable and comfortable.⁶¹

Besides including descriptions of the modes of transportation available to travelers, women also included in their travel records descriptions of the accommodations served them whether on board ship, train, or diligence. In addition, women travelers also felt the need to record the

arrangements provided for by hotels. Some of these descriptions are quite benevolent while others are scathing critiques of the subpar conditions of such establishments as frequented by travelers. On her journey to Damascus, Isabel Burton made a stop in Alexandria, Egypt. In her opinion, the hotel where she stayed was far from adequate. In Burton's estimation, the Hotel d' Europe, a supposedly nice establishment, was only second-rate.⁶² Burton's negative appraisal of the hotel continued to include such negative comments as those regarding the rooms, beds, food, attendance, and wine. Apparently the wine was overpriced and of poor quality.⁶³ Whether Burton made such criticisms to entertain readers or because she really abhorred the conditions of the hotel requires further analysis. However, Burton was obviously unimpressed by what she experienced in her stay in Alexandria. With such an experience in her repertoire, Burton wrote explicitly on the topic.

Specific information about women's travel experiences regarding transportation and hotels is endless in their travel narratives. As noted, women wrote extensively on the details associated with modes of transportation and the accommodations provided for by hotels. Without such information, women's travel accounts would not have been in so popular a demand as is now evident. Women's descriptions of their experiences represent the whole of the travel writing industry. The details and descriptions so thoroughly recorded by female travelers include information about the types of food available, quality of food, sleeping arrangements, room size and decoration, attendance, presence of bugs and other vermin, and the presence of fellow travelers. One of many women travelers' accounts of the conditions of hotels abroad includes those of Kate Marsden. Marsden recounts how she and her traveling companion had to sleep on dirty sheepskin rugs on the floor of what she called a "primitive" hotel.⁶⁴ Not only that, but the sheepskin was shared by several other people.⁶⁵

Burton and Marsden were among a multitude of women who criticized hotel accommodations and hotel availability throughout their traveling.⁶⁶ Such criticism is a common theme throughout women's travel narratives. What is rather interesting in view of women's criticism is the fact that women had enough money to procure rooms wherever they wished. Women travelers also almost always possessed letters of introduction and recommendation that permitted them access to finer establishments. Thus, the practice of heavily critiquing one's surroundings puts forward a problematic situation. Clearly, women had the resources to procure better hotel arrangements, even if they were in more remote areas. This practice then becomes telling of the ways in which women wrote and why. The practice of negatively criticizing

not only hotel accommodations, but also the food and transportation available reveal much about lady travelers and their writing. As their writing was meant to in some way aid other travelers, such criticism takes on a whole new meaning. Women were writing to aid their fellow lady travelers, but they were also writing with an audience in consideration. Women had to provide some excitement in their writings. Doing so allowed women travelers not only to increase one's knowledge about such details, but to also captivate one's audience.

In addition to descriptions of modes of transportation and hotel accommodations, women also kept detailed records about the scenery, cities, natives, need for bodyguards, and bazaars.⁶⁷ Women quite literally recorded any information they thought would interest their readers. Other information found in nineteenth century British women's travel accounts include details about assistance from local governments and royalty, hunting excursions, problems encountered, the treatment of dogs and horses, and even tourist attractions and shopping.⁶⁸ As mentioned previously, women travelers of the nineteenth century wrote about information they thought would be most interesting to their readers. These women's accounts would later aid other women in traveling abroad. As with Baedeker's travel guides and Davidson's advice manual, the women who kept records of their traveling experiences did so to help others. Their accounts included all the information other travelers would want to know that would make traveling overseas a more pleasant and enchanting experience. Such detailed accounts also allow one to gain insight into the lives of these women. More importantly, their detailed records allow one to gain insight into Victorian culture more broadly.

Perhaps more revealing than the multitude of exhaustive pages filled with scores of detailed information is what women travelers of the Victorian Era had to write about their traveling companions and other travelers with whom they were not familiar. Such accounts of women's descriptions and perceptions of the people around them are rather insightful windows into the women themselves. The presence or lack thereof of traveling companions, as has been noted, is reflected in female travelers' personal narratives. While en route to continental Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North America, or South America, nineteenth-century women quite often lamented the lack of stimulating company.⁶⁹ Good society, the source of entertainment, was not to be found. The absence of individuals representative of one's station in life proved to be enormously vexing for women. They would not deem to reduce themselves to such inferior status as to associate themselves with people of the lower classes.⁷⁰ The result of which was that these women often lacked engagements while on board a ship, train, or coach. Their self-

proclaimed sense of superiority prevented them from getting to know people. Therefore, if they were traveling alone, they would obviously not share in the camaraderie of fellow travelers.

Knowing why women of the Victorian Era traveled, why they chose to travel where they did, with what means they obtained their traveling necessities, and who exactly these women were allows one to understand the overwhelming importance of nineteenth-century female travelers. More importantly, however, is understanding the reasons why women recorded their traveling experiences. As is evident through the study of women's travel accounts, women had their own personal reasons for writing about what they saw and did while traveling. Some women did so to appease the requests of family and friends, some to share their knowledge with others, and some to provide helpful traveling advice. By first understanding these factors related to women's writing about their travels, one can then begin to develop insight into the societal factors that dictated how women wrote about their experiences as well as the broader effects and implications such attitudes had on the roles female travelers occupied during the Victorian Era.

As has been studied by such historians as Barbara Hodgson, Jane Robinson, and Maria H. Frawley, women's participation in certain activities was heavily influenced by the attitudes of society. A woman's sphere was considered to be in the home. Such a cult of domesticity that intruded upon the lives of women had great implications for the women who traveled outside England to places as far away as South America. In fact, England's very own *Punch Magazine* heralded such a belief. In 1856, *Punch Magazine* stated,

We have had *The Englishwoman in Russia*, *The Englishwoman in Tibet*, *The Englishwoman in America*, and the Englishwoman in almost every hole and corner of the globe. If our beautiful countrywomen carry out this mania for travelling much further, the greatest novelty our publishers could give us will be,—*The Englishwomen in England*.⁷¹

At this point in English society, women travelers, and subsequently women travel writers, had become quite a common feature. However, the practice of women traveling and writing about their experiences was still viewed negatively by society.⁷² This attitude toward women spilled over into the arena of women's travel writing.

Societal attitudes towards women dictated how women were supposed to write about their traveling experiences as well as what they should write.⁷³ In fact, Frawley has argued that Victorian women

writers became by association and almost by definition novelists, poets, and, to some extent, dramatists.⁷⁴ The association of women writers with the genres of novels and poems is rather indicative of a larger cultural perspective of women. The tendency to view women writers with the genres of novels and poems stems from the idea that women had only the potential for creative writing, not analytical writing.⁷⁵ Because of the idea that women writers were only capable of producing material that was creative rather than analytical, it was assumed that women were “naturally” more suited to novel writing.⁷⁶ This belief regarding women’s potential permeated the domain of women’s travel writing. Contrary to what was acceptable regarding the work of female writers, male writers were associated with that which was analytical. Nonfiction, which seemed to demand more analytical skill on the author’s part, was male territory.⁷⁷ Unlike women, men were the real thinkers. They were the ones capable of producing work that required more intelligent thought, or so was commonly believed.

The notion that women’s writing talents only extended to works of creative thought went far beyond just that. This idea encompassed all elements of how women wrote about their traveling experiences and even dictated what kinds of information women would include in their travel narratives. There were conventions of travel writing that women had to follow. Such conventions included standards regarding opposition between males and females and a designation of femininity that associated women with weakness, frailty, and the flow of emotions.⁷⁸ In addition, Victorian society had certain expectations regarding the work of female writers. As has been previously noted, women writers were synonymous with novelists, poets, and dramatists. Society thus expected women writers to fill their pages with material that fit such a description. Women were also expected to write in the form of letters and journals so that self-revelation and the eruption of feeling could be illustrated more effectively.⁷⁹ This was all considered appropriate female subject-matter.

In addition to the writing that met with society’s expectations of self-revelation and an eruption of emotions, women were also quite commonly writers of popular geographies.⁸⁰ Much like with the expectations of self-reflective and emotional content, there was also the expectation that women’s travel narratives were disseminators of information and interest. Popular geographies, as used to describe women’s travel writing, refer to the images and people of other regions that women depicted. Such descriptions again existed outside the realm of authentic scientific subject-matter.⁸¹ They were available for mass consumption. Popular geographies, as evidenced by women’s travel accounts, represented what society

deemed appropriate in regards to women's travel writing. Women were incapable of writing material that required any level of critical thinking. Therefore, society naturally placed upon women the designation of creative, emotional, and purely descriptive writing.

Besides dictating what women could write, society also dictated what women could not write. Society limited women's writing abilities by determining the language women could and could not use in their material. One arena of the written word in which such a designation manifested itself was in the difference between men and women's writing. Women could not at that time employ innuendos, or insinuations, in their works. However, such conventions were commonly found throughout the travel accounts written by men.⁸² Such restrictions illustrate that women's travel writing had only one function, to be observation and description. Women's writing was not meant to do battle with their surroundings while traveling, unlike with men's writing.⁸³ Quite literally, women's travel accounts were supposed to be as docile as women were supposed to be. Women's writing was not meant to reflect a critical analysis of women's experiences and the implications of such experiences. Women's writing was meant to be purely descriptive, as is evident throughout many women's works.

Due in large part to the broader societal attitudes in the Victorian Era, women were greatly limited in how and what they could write. A widely held belief during the nineteenth century was that a woman's place was in the home taking care of her husband and children. Traveling women, then, could not sufficiently adhere to their domestic duties. However, women at this time did travel, and they did so in great numbers. The nineteenth century was a time of leisure travel as well as a time of expansion in various forms of transportation, tourist attractions, and availability of accommodations. These developments helped contribute to the multitudes of women leaving hearth and home to explore a world outside of Britain. In conjunction with the practice of traveling abroad, women of the nineteenth century kept written accounts of their experiences overseas. These accounts exist in women's letters, diaries, journals, and memoirs. However, women were not free to write whatever they wished. Society held women's writing capabilities captive. Society dictated what women could write.

As has been noted, women's travel writing was reduced to conventions based on characteristics commonly associated with women. Such characteristics included weakness, frailty, and displays of emotion. In addition, women were expected to fill their pages with observations and descriptions of all that they saw and did. This was the result of society's assumption that women were only capable of producing work that was

purely creative rather than analytical. Women were not able to think analytically about what they experienced overseas. Likewise, women, by society's standards, were not able to transmit any deep reflection into their writings.

Such societal attitudes are quite evident in women's travel accounts and narratives. Many of the works produced by women in the Victorian Era reflect the bonds that society held on women and their writing. The pages of women's accounts are filled with descriptions about methods of transportation, the conditions of such modes of transportation, hotels and their accommodations, scenery, cities and architecture, and natives and local customs. These descriptions, however, reveal much about the women who wrote them as well as the ideology of society at the time. Women did write such things to interest their readers. There was a consideration women had to take if they wanted to gain the interest of readers. Just as society dictated what women wrote in their travel narratives, however, society also dictated what women desired to read in other women's travel accounts. Women had to follow certain conventions regarding what was acceptable for women to write, and they had to consider what their readers expected of them.

Despite the conventions society placed on women's travel writing and despite society's larger ideology concerning women, nineteenth-century women's travel writing is an invaluable resource when studying the extraordinary women who traveled abroad during this time in history. The diaries, letters, memoirs, and journals of women like Lady Florence Dixie, Lady Ann Blunt, Amelia Edwards, and Emma Roberts reveal so much about British Victorian society, the women themselves, and even the places these women visited. Readers are not only provided with the dominant society's beliefs about women and descriptions of exotic destinations, but readers are also provided with a look into the strong, determined, and unflagging spirit of Victorian women. Their activities and writings were restricted by society. However, women travelers did not allow such restrictions to squelch their insatiable desire to explore the world.

As a consequence of their traveling and travel writing, Victorian women had an opportunity to carve a niche for themselves in the rapidly changing and expanding nineteenth century. The experiences and traveling accounts published by women travelers opened opportunities for these women to solidify their own place within society. No matter that society regarded women as only capable of writing creatively, nineteenth-century women seized the opportunity to travel and write about their experiences in order to voice their thoughts, values, and perspectives. Armed with the rich and rewarding experience of traveling abroad women let their

voices be heard through their writings. In a day and age when women were thought to be most effective in the home, the women who traveled abroad challenged such notions. They left their domestic bonds to pursue personal ambitions regardless of society's limitations on women. And whether these women chose to travel of their own freewill or not, the fact that they did travel challenged the status quo. These women left behind records that are testaments to their bravery, adventurous spirits, curiosity, and insatiable need to discover something more than just what was offered them in England.

Notes:

- 1 Emily Beaufort, *Egyptian Sepulchres and Syrian Shrines, Including a Visit to Palmyra* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1874), iii; Emma Roberts, *Notes of an Overland Journey through France and Egypt to Bombay* (London: Wm. H. Allen and Co., 1841), i; Lady Ann Blunt, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates* (London: John Murray, 1879), iii; Isabel Burton, *The Inner Life of Syria, Palestine, and the Holy Land* (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1875), iii; Lady Lucie Duff Gordon, *Letters from Egypt, 1863-65* (London: MacMillan, 1866), v; Frances Elliot, *Diary of an Idle Woman in Constantinople* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1893), 1.
- 2 Isabella Bird, *The Englishwoman in America* (London: John Murray, 1856), i; Lady Florence Dixie, *Across Patagonia* (Chicago: Belford, Clarke, and Co., 1881), v.; Anna Jameson, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), v.
- 3 Emily Eden, *Up the Country: Letters Written to Her Sister from the Upper Provinces of India* (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), iii; Roberts, *Notes of an Overland Journey*, i; Mary Kingsley, *West African Studies* (London: MacMillan, 1899), iii.
- 4 Roberts, *Notes of an Overland Journey*, i; Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (London: Edward Moxon, 1844), iii; Amelia Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys: A Midsummer Ramble in the Dolomites* (London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, 1890), iii; Frances Power Cobbe, *Italics: Brief Notes on Politics, People, and Places in Italy in 1864* (London: Trubner and Co., 1864), i; Kate Marsden, *On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1892), i.
- 5 Barbara Hodgson, *No Place for a Lady: Tales of Adventurous Women Travelers* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2002), 2-3.
- 6 Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford: University Press, 2001), 1.
- 7 Dixie, *Across Patagonia*, 2.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 9 Bird, *Englishwoman in America*, 1.
- 10 Burton, *Inner Life of Syria*, 3.
- 11 Robinson, *Wayward Women*, 210.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 190.
- 13 Lynne Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours: A History of Leisure Travel, 1750 to 1915* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997), x.

- 14 Maria H. Frawley, *A Wider Range: Travel Writing by Women in Victorian England* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994), 13.
- 15 Karl Baedeker, *Egypt: Handbook for Travellers* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1892), iii, *Italy: Handbook for Travellers* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1896), iii, *Palestine and Syria: Handbook for Travellers* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1876), iii, *The Dominion of Canada with Newfoundland and an Excursion to Alaska* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1891), iii; Lillias Campbell Davidson, *Hints to Lady Travellers: At Home and Abroad* (London: Iliffe and Son, 1889), 9.
- 16 Baedeker, *Egypt*, iii, *Italy*, iii, *Palestine and Syria*, iii, *The Dominion of Canada*, iii.
- 17 Davidson, *Hints to Lady Travellers*, 9.
- 18 Baedeker, *Italy*, x-xi.
- 19 *Ibid.*, *Palestine and Syria*, ix.
- 20 Davidson, *Hints to Lady Travellers*, 9.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 5-6.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 76.
- 24 Dixie, *Across Patagonia*, 3; Burton, *Inner Life of Syria*, 7; Bird, *Englishwoman in America*, 10; Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 32.
- 25 Marsden, *On Sledge and Horseback*, 16; Dixie, *Across Pantagonia*, 36; Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 39; Bird, *Englishwoman in America*, 56.
- 26 Frawley, *A Wider Range*, 21.
- 27 Hodgson, *No Place for a Lady*, 15.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 29 Dixie, *Across Pantagonia*, 36; Marsden, *On Sledge and Horseback*, 15.
- 30 Hodgson, *No Place for a Lady*, 13.
- 31 Roberts, *Notes of an Overland Journey*, 61; Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 32.
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