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PERSPECTIVES

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**PERSPECTIVES
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CONTENTS

Perspectives In History Vol. I No. I Winter 1986

ARTICLES

- 1 *The Day Goes Well For England*
The Battle of the Somme.....Andrew O. Lutes
- 7 *An American's Point of View of*
India's Foreign Policy by an Indian
Immigrant to the U.S.A......Tripta Desai

ESSAYS

- 13 *Pilgrimage*.....Jeffrey Williams

REVIEWS

- 17 *Baseball's Great Experiment:*
Jackie Robinson and His Legacy.....Elaine M. Richardson
- 19 *Peter the Great and*
the Emergence of Russia.....Kenneth E. Hughes

BIANNUAL REPORT

- 21 *Letter from the President*
- 23 *The Historian's Report*
- 25 *Officers*
- 27 *Membership*

Articles

“The Day Goes Well for England:” A Sampling of What the British Public Read and Felt about the Somme Offensive During World War I.

by Andrew O. Lutes

The military operations conducted by the British Army in the Picardy region of the northeast France from July 1, 1916 to November 14, 1916 known collectively as the Battle of the Somme, were the worst bloodlettings ever suffered by the British nation. More casualties were taken, both proportionately and numerically, in a shorter period of time for a lesser amount of gain than ever before in the history of British military activities.

Accordingly, a student living in the 1980s would expect that this had a substantial impact on British public opinion, in the direction of spurring committed pacifists to redouble their efforts, and of leading other formerly militant people into taking a more pacific viewpoint regarding the war. But when the student researcher looks into what was said and felt about it during the war, quite a different view emerges — for the most part, one of exultation and self-congratulation, or stoic acceptance and patriotic sacrifice, or near total silence.

This paper considers a sampling of what the British public read and felt about the Somme offensive during World War I and explores why more pacifist expression and feeling did not result.

The British Library is an excellent source of primary information on any period of British history. There the researcher found four books, published during the war, that dealt with the Somme. Two of them were by poets, in the tradition of Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon.

Ivor Gurney was a private in a Gloucester Battalion. His poetry book, *Severn and Somme*, was published in the spring of 1917. All the verses were written in France under the sound of guns. It was dedicated to his comrades in two platoons.

His poem, “To Certain Comrades,” written in the trenches in July 1916, says in the final four stanzas:

*Glad in their sorrow; hoping
that if they must
Come to dust*

*An ending such as yours may
be their portion
And great good fortune*

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*That if we may not live to
serve in peace
England, watched increase
Then death with you, honoured,
and swift and high,
And so — not die. —¹*

Captain H. Rippon-Seymour's book of poems, *Songs From The Somme*, was published in 1918. In the preface, he says (paraphrased quote), "...these songs from, not of, the Somme....All were penned in the Somme, most during battles. They don't tell of glorious deeds, but what occupied my mind. Experience shows the soldier doesn't think much about war, or the sailor of the sea. His thoughts are on meals, leave, and home — home, mostly, except when he is thinking of Duty. War is more on the minds of people at home."²

A typical excerpt is this one from the poem, "The Days Before The War:"

*Yes! war has altered many
things
Most men have proved quite
brave
Though some have found their
consciences.
Their precious skins to save
And many chaps have learned
to shoot
Who never shot before;
Let's hope they'll kill old
Kaiser Bill
And finish off the war.³*

Published in 1916, the book *Somme Battle Stories* was composed from oral accounts recorded by Captain A. J. Dawson, from veterans of the fighting. In appearance, it looked as if it was a book for young people, middle school level, with its large type and illustrations. It seems to be typical of the publicity of that moment. It speaks of the strong, courageous spirit of the soldiers, and of their virtues, victories, and achievements. Nowhere is there any mention of appalling losses of men getting mowed down as they stuck to uncut barbed wire. A sample quote:

There was no real parapet left in that Boche front line. Their trenches was just a sort of gash, a ragged crack....Where I was there was quite a bit of their wire left; but, do you know, one didn't feel it a bit...We went at it like fellows in a race charge the tape; and it didn't hurt us anymore...I made out a line of faces in the Boche ditch; and I know I gave a devil of a yell as we jumped for those faces...

The Battle of the Somme was a two-volume account by John Buchan, a civilian author, published in 1917. This is a detailed description of military movements and operations during 1916. It tells of German losses, equipment captured, positions taken, the disillu-

sionment of the Germans, and the success of the British continuous pressure. No mention of massive British losses is made. A quote from near the end of the book sums up its message:

The young men who died almost before they had looked on the world, the makers and doers who left their tasks unfinished, were greater in their deaths than in their lives. To look back upon the gallant procession of those who offered their all, and had their gift accepted, is to know exaltation as well as sorrow. On the Somme fell the flower, the keenest brains, the most eager spirits. But out of loss they won for their country mankind's enduring gratitude.⁵

While movies, newsreels, and books all had their audiences, it was newspapers that were the chief and most immediate source of information for the British public. Under censorship, they were far from accurate; lies might be printed and truths covered up. The press gave opinions, moods, and gossip of the day. It circulated wild rumors, such as huge enemy losses and surrenders, with no corresponding mention of British losses⁶.

The Sunday Times was typical of the independent mass circulation British newspapers in its coverage during the battle. Historian Corelli Barnett states that the first day on the Somme was a failure. Lodgements were made only in the southern sector, and losses were unprecedented for a single day's fighting: 60,000 casualties — 19,000 of them killed.⁷

You wouldn't know it from reading *The Sunday Times* for July 2, 1916. Headlines of this sort blared over the stories of the battle:

"The Day Goes Well For England,"

"German First Line Broken On A Front of Sixteen Miles,"

"German Lines Penetrated,"

"Villages Stormed and Many Prisoners Taken,"

"Over 2,000 Prisoners."⁸

No mention is made of British losses.

As the offensive continued, one is struck by the unfailingly optimistic tone of the news coverage. Typical of the accounts is this section of a column, from July 30, 1916.

"Progress On The Somme"

On the Somme the process of attrition continues remorselessly.
In the German counter-attacks the gain is to us and the more men
they send forward the more disastrous the results for them.⁹

Human interest accounts about how well the common British soldier was bearing up were popular. The following is from a story in the October 8, 1916 issue:

"British Soldier's Top Dog Feeling"

"Moving Up"

"Tommy's Unconquerable Soul"

We are top dogs now and we know it ...previous to this campaign our job has mainly consisted of having to stick it, with the Boche feeling the utmost confidenceNow he has got the other sort of feeling altogether and we know he has got it.¹⁰

Yet, despite a continual supply of good news, a perceptive reader, looking closely at maps and casualty lists, could not help but notice a disparity between the positive pronouncements and the actual gains and costs. Journalistic apologists for the war finally felt compelled to explain this. In an October 29, 1916 article, "The Somme and Salonika", this was stated:

The progress on the Somme front continues steadily and surely despite climatic obstacles. It is a progress of the most momentous consequence, not to be judged by reference to the map alone, only to be appreciated fully by experts in military strategy.¹¹

(Translation: if you grasp the obvious, it shows how shallow you are!)

Our croakers and pessimists make play with the small amount of ground taken and cost involved in what to them seems a limited achievement. The one thing the Kaiser's advisers are most anxious that the Huns should not grasp is that the positions taken on the Somme are such as they themselves declared to be impregnable.¹¹

(Translation: only bad characters and Huns don't want to see it as a great success.)

Here is the answer to critics who estimate our men's success by miles and mere arithmetic. It is to the far-reaching importance of "these few miles on advance that the more desperate defence of the Germans during the past week is due."¹¹

(Translation: our small-sized achievements are great ones anyway!)

But to find these critics, "croakers and pessimists" one must look very hard indeed. *The Friend*, the official publication of the British Quakers, who constituted fully half of the war opposition (the other half being the pacifist socialists), is where one might expect to find Jeremiah-like lamentations over the losses of the Somme. Not so. The only reference is in the last issue of 1916, where a review of the year mentions it, along with Verdun, as being "the greatest and most terrific battle in the world's history."¹²

It is in *The Labour Leader* that one discovers a critical view of the Somme offensive. In the September 21, 1916 issue of "a weekly journal of socialism, trade unionism, and politics", the "Review of the Week" column by Philip Snowden, MP, stated:

The great offensive on the Western front, so long and so carefully prepared, has now been in operation for nearly three months. Taking the results of this offensive at the newspaper reports' face value, no reasonable person can derive the least encouragement for the view that military force is going to get the enemy out of France and Belgium in two years' time.

He pointed out that if one looked carefully at reports of enemy losses and Britain's own casualty lists, one saw that, rather than winning, Britain was gradually grinding itself to its knees.¹³

The most tragic and dramatic source of information the British public had on the Battle of Albert and subsequent operations was the grief brought to a myriad set of new homes by the terse official telegram telling that a male relation had died for his country.¹⁴ Despite the individual grief, the country as a whole was content to read the optimistic reports and think that a series of victories were being won.¹⁵

The appalling losses on the Somme did not at first shock and horrify the public, as it was not aware of them.¹⁶ Comprehensive totals were not published.¹⁷

Yet, eventually, the fact that a tremendous number of deaths were occurring could not be concealed. The Army's practice, born of Cardwell and Kitchener, of creating and maintaining regiments of distinctive local personnel rebounded when certain regiments took heavy losses. For example, in parts of Bradford, every single house in every street mourned at least one casualty.¹⁸ Local newspapers began printing pages of pictures of dead local boys and lists of now-dead familiar names, and sad stories of a family losing several brothers and cousins in a single attack. Members of Parliament representing particularly hard-hit constituencies began asking embarrassing questions during debate. For this reason the Army began to dilute the local character of regiments with recruits from Britain as a whole, the reason given being that it wished to create a "one-nation Army spirit".¹⁹

Through it all, the nation bravely accepted the mass bereavement.²⁰ It was felt by the public that victory was certain, but in view of the Somme offensive's failure to break the deadlock and bring a climactic victory, the questions in the public's mind were: when, how much longer would it take, and at what cost?²¹

The researcher entered this project to find the Somme's effect on pacifist opinion during the war, but discovered that it had no specific effect. Why?

First, the news of the losses and slow progress were very slow to get out. As this was before the day of instantaneous radio and television coverage, only the much slower mediums of newspapers, books, and newsreels were available. When reports from the front did go out, they were censored or slanted by a pro-war press to tell of German losses, and local gains were magnified to great victories.

Secondly, if someone had wanted to greatly publicize the losses and slow progress, there was the Defence of the Realm Act to act as a deterrent. It threatened fines and imprisonment to anyone who said or printed anything that could be construed as hindering the war effort.

But even if immediate news of mass losses and slow progress could have been gotten to the British public, would there necessarily have been a massive outbreak of anti-war feeling? After all, the public maintained sufficient chauvinistic feeling to carry it through the war, and came out of the post-war disillusionment to see World War II through to victory. On this question, a quote from a Somme survivor, fifty years after the event, bears repeating:

I might add that five minutes after the attack started, if the British public could have seen the wounded struggling to get out of the line, the war would have possibly been stopped by public opinion.²²



Endnotes

- ¹Ivor Gurney, *Severn and Somme* (London, Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1917), p. 14.
- ²Captain H. Rippon-Seymour, *Songs From the Somme* (London, John Long, Ltd., 1918), p. ii.
- ³*Ibid*, p. 44.
- ⁴Captain A. J. Dawson, recorder, *Somme Battle Stories* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), p. 20.
- ⁵John Buchan, *The Battle of the Somme* (London, Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1917), p. 108.
- ⁶John Williams, *The Home Fronts, 1914-1918* (London, Constable, 1972), pp. 126-7.
- ⁷Corelli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970: A Military, Political, and Social Survey* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1970), pp. 394, 396.
- ⁸*The Sunday Times*, 2JUL16.
- ⁹*Ibid*, 30JUL16.
- ¹⁰*Ibid*, 8OCT16.
- ¹¹*Ibid*, 29OCT16.
- ¹²*The Friend*, Vol. LVI, No. 52, 29DEC16.
- ¹³*The Labor Leader*, Vol. 13, No. 38, 21SEP16.
- ¹⁴Williams, p. 126.
- ¹⁵Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day On The Somme* (New York; W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), p. 276.
- ¹⁶James Cameron, *1916: Year of Decision* (London: Oldbourne, 1962), p. 124.
- ¹⁷Middlebrook, p. 276.
- ¹⁸Cameron, p. 115.
- ¹⁹Lyn MacDonald, *Somme* (London, MacMillan Publishers, Ltd., 1983), p. 181.
- ²⁰*Ibid*, p. 181.
- ²¹Williams, p. 132.
- ²²Middlebrook, p. 297.

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An American's Point of View of India's Foreign Policy by an Indian Immigrant to the U.S.A.

by Tripta Desai

Indian Independence in 1947 coincided with the intensification of the Cold War between the two superpowers — the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union. According to the U.S., Russia had backed out on her promises made at the two War conferences in 1945. The Soviet Union had promised to hold democratic elections in all the European countries under her occupation which she had liberated from Hitler's control. Instead, Communist-controlled governments were set-up in central and southeast Europe, and democratic parties in those countries were soon eliminated. The Soviet Union also interfered in Iran, Greece and Turkey to set up similar communist-controlled regimes. In the Far-East, the Soviet Union turned over to the Chinese Communists the war material she had acquired as a result of the Japanese surrender in China in 1945.

All these developments alienated the West, which decided to contain any further Soviet expansion. The Marshall plan was announced by the U.S., providing economic aid to Europe in order to stop the spread of communism which feeds itself on economic misery. The formation of the NATO alliance was done by the U.S. whose basic principle is that an attack on one member is an attack on all. The Cold War came to represent not merely a containment of further Soviet expansion but also a roll-back of her domination from Central and South-East Europe by demonstrating to the people that full enterprise and free democracy were superior to socialism and controlled society of the Communistic rule. Since the Soviet threat of expansion was feared not just in Europe but also in the rest of the world, the U.S. made military pacts in Asia, called the SEATO, with various countries including Pakistan. The fear of Communism became a phobia in the U.S.

It was amidst such world tensions that India became independent and embarked on her nation-building career. Since economic development was number one priority, it became inevitable that India must stay out of any military show-downs. However, she could not avoid a war with Pakistan over Kashmir, though India decided not to join in the military pacts sponsored by either Super Power. The Soviet Union did not officially raise any disapproval of Indian foreign policy, though the U.S. press and officials condemned strongly the Indian stance of non-alignment in the Cold War. Secretary of State Dulles followed a simplistic axiom that if a country was not militarily allied with the U.S., she was against her. Thus, the Indian policy of non-alignment, which in the West was considered synonymous with neutrality, became anathema to the U.S. It was commonly believed in the U.S. in the 1950s that just as all the countries acting together had destroyed Hitlerism and Fascism, the same process had to be continued to stop and destroy Communism. The democratic system was in jeopardy; the whole core of the American tradition was in danger, Human Rights. The U.S. could also point out to World War I which became an ideological war after the entry of the U.S. in 1918. As a matter of fact, her very birth as a nation in 1783 was derived from an ideological concept that men have fundamental rights and no government can violate them. Throughout their history, the Americans had looked down upon the Europeans as too

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deeply involved in the demeaning game of territorial expansion and ruthless colonization in Asia and Africa through violent wars, which the U.S., on her part, duly abstained from. The Soviet Union now was engaged in the same scramble for domination all over the world. Before 1945, Great Britain had been the World leader and she had played the role of arbiter in international competitions. Now the U.S. had to assume the role as England had been too much weakened by the second World War. The U.S. expected the support of all non-communist countries in this moral crusade against the Soviet Union. India, by refusing to join the U.S. in a definite pact against communism mortified the American ego, thus initiating Indo-American relations on a sour note.

India, on her part, felt misunderstood and misrepresented by the U.S. media and politicians. She issued a disclaimer that she was a communist country. She defended her foreign policy of non-alignment, based upon morality and good common-sense. It was moral as, by refusing to condemn one party as eternally guilty, she could greatly help in healing internal tensions by judging each issue on its merit as it arose. As is true with each country, there was an element of national self-interest in the Indian foreign policy. As the country was deeply committed to rapid industrialization and agricultural growth, her leaders decided to keep the nation out of entangling alliances which could lead to frequent wars. India's leaders desired to devote resources to economic growth to catch up with the West industrially.

In addition to morality and national self-interest, past experience under the British also impacted the formulation of Indian foreign policy. The British had justified colonization of Asia and Africa on the basis of "White man's burden," i.e., the white people had a moral and divine responsibility to impose their superior institutions and ideas on the brown and black people of Asia and Africa. Racial discrimination had been practiced during the long British rule. Since the U.S. was a white country and also in the West, she became identified with the European whites and European imperialism. The series of military alliances proposed by the U.S. to combat communism were suspiciously viewed as a cover-up for American imperialism.

The initial misunderstanding between India and the U.S. was further intensified by the U.S. stand on the Kashmir issue. The conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan was not merely a simple territorial conflict. On the other hand, the conflict had become charged with high passions over morality and legality involved in it. The U.S. supported Pakistan in the Security Council of the U.N.O. The Soviet Union came to the rescue of India. Thus from her very birth as an independent nation, India was made to lean heavily on the Soviet Union, and in doing so, viewed the U.S. as her antagonist who supported India's number one enemy at that time, Pakistan.

A number of other developments took place in quick succession which tended to solidify the Indian hostile attitude, the most important being the heavy military armament of Pakistan with American weapons. The U.S. issued repeated assurances that the American arms were only to be used against communist threat, but these failed to satisfy India. The latter proved to be right as in consequent wars with Pakistan, India seized many American weapons which Pakistan had deployed. The reader must understand the emotional aspect of the Kashmir issue to understand the build-up of Indian dissatisfaction with the U.S. Politicians on both sides of the Kashmir border kept alive and fed the public passion, and Kashmir became synonymous with national honor and deep patriotism. The Soviet Union fully exploited Indian resentment and emerged as her protagonist. She also began to supply economic and military aid to India.

Certain other international developments of the time built the prestige of the Soviet

Union in the Third World e.g., the colonial wars of independence in Africa, Asia and in the Far-East received full backing from the Soviet Union. Thus the Soviet Union emerged as a compassionate super-power which sympathized with the oppressed colonial people against white imperialism. The wars in Indo-China particularly discredited the West as the French attempted to regain control over the region after the Japanese surrender. Since France was a member of NATO, all the members, particularly the U.S., came under great censure in the Third World. The colonial people in Asia and Africa were angry, having suffered psychologically and physically from a long imperial domination. An angry nation is maddened further when its national pride is degraded any further, as France was doing in Indo-China. India also belonged to the same group of colonial countries whose national ego had been outraged over centuries. She was still suffering from the hurt and the disgrace and any bullying threats from a super-power like the U.S. were bound to infuriate her further and drive her more into the warm embrace of the Soviet Union. On her part, the U.S. could not understand the contradictory action of the Indian government. While professing to be a secular democracy as enshrined in her constitution, how could India befriend an atheist, communist country like the Soviet Union?

Relations between India and the U.S. were further marred by the decision of Indian leaders to achieve social and economic justice, long due in that country, by a heavy reliance on a socialistic economy. Major industries were classified as public sector, to be established and managed by the government, and only small industries were left to the private sector. To the American mind, the socialistic economy was a rejection of American free enterprise, a very important component of the cold war. By conjecture, India was depicted as riding the bandwagon of Soviet socialism, and, by irrational extension, socialism was equated with communism in the American popular mind.

In the 1960s, the American foreign policy underwent a "revision." Toward the Soviet Union, it led to "peaceful co-existence" which declared that there was no need for a military confrontation. Communism was such a reprehensible system that it would collapse soon where it had been established, once the people came to suffer long enough from its repression. One may also remember that a concrete development had brought about a shift in American foreign policy, that is, the Soviet Union now possessed the atomic bomb and had sped ahead in satellite research.

Toward the Third World, "revisionism" meant the U.S. was prepared to understand the national traditions and unique problems which had influenced the foreign policies of countries like India. These new formulators of the American policy could look back to the 1950s and find assurances in the safe progress made by democracy. Freedom of speech, freedom of press and the British-style Parliamentary system were in full swing. The Indian attack upon social injustices like the caste-system and the abuse of women, and protection of minorities won recognition in educated circles of the U.S. The fear that socialism is inevitably communism began to corrode. The example of Great Britain since 1945 must have also played a significant role in changing the American attitude toward socialism. The Labour Party came to power in England in 1945 and set out on the tasks of socializing the major industries. India seemed to be doing the same within a Parliamentary structure. The new American attitude expressed itself in the vast student-aid program given to India. Economic aid to India increased and various other cultural and educational programs were set up. However, the one dark cloud on the Silver Screen was the military flare-up between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, and, once again, the deployment of American weapons which were intended for use only against a communist threat. The other international problem which sent a chilling effect on the U.S.-India relations was the war in Vietnam. The American intervention was

resented as a re-echo of western imperialism of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The fault of the U.S. was that she was white, lay in the western hemisphere and was closely tied with England and France in the NATO alliance. The American public and officials got irritated with the Indian statesmen who could not distinguish between the British and French imperialism of an earlier century and the American selfless moral aid to the people of the world, like Indo-China, to fight communism.

Despite these frequent irritations, we may say that in the 1960s American officials began to appreciate the unique nature of Indian foreign policy. American self-interest also dictated that it was more to the advantage of the U.S. to have a neutral, democratic India, than have a hostile, communist India, because the latter has such vast resources and a huge population that she is the arbiter in that region of the world.

Moving into the 1970s relations suffered a dip under Richard Nixon and the Republican Party, which had earlier followed a policy of open favoritism toward Pakistan in the 1950s. (In the 1960s, the Democratic party under John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson had revised their outlook on India). In 1971, the crisis in Bangladesh took place which led to an open war between India and Pakistan. The war was preceded by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to the U.S., explaining the grave nature of the Bangladesh crisis and seeking U.S. pressure upon Pakistan to do something about it. As no such promises could be obtained from President Nixon, Gandhi returned and decided to resolve the issue with the Indian military intervention in Bangladesh. It was denounced in the U.S. as naked aggression on the part of India, and interfering in Pakistan's civil matters (Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan at that time). Economic aid to India was cut off by President Nixon and a temporary halt in the military shipment to Pakistan was ordered. Relations between the U.S. and India remained embittered even after the war, as Indian statesmen felt that their's was the just cause, and to treat her the same way as Pakistan, who was the culprit in Bangladesh, was unfair. India could build up her position as, after the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan, the imprisoned leaders of Bangladesh told the world a lot about their suffering. Since President Nixon did not resume the economic aid to India right away, resentment increased and the U.S. was accused of being partial to Pakistan.

An internal development in India, the Emergency rule imposed by Prime Minister Gandhi in 1975, led to a denunciation in the U.S. The lawlessness in India had increased so much that private lives of people were in constant danger. The opposition parties were exploiting the growing confusion to condemn the ruling party of Gandhi. To control the unbridled situation, Gandhi's government had imprisoned a number of opponents and suspended some of the general civil liberties of the people. A great uproar was raised in the U.S. that human rights were being flagrantly violated and Indian democracy was on its way to decline. The limited economic aid which had been resumed earlier, was again suspended. To make the situation even more irksome to India, supply of military parts to Pakistan was resumed. Here, we may say that both the U.S. and India failed to understand the compunctions in each other's situation. Lawlessness had increased so much and the Indian opposition parties were exploiting it ruthlessly for their selfish political reasons that the Indian people were losing credibility in a democratic system, and in the power of Indira Gandhi's government to give security to the people. The hooligans had to be put away. Of course, some innocent people did suffer, as always happens in a complex situation like this. On the other hand, India failed to understand that the American President has to obtain funds from Congress for any kind of foreign aid, and the American Congress has to account to its constituents and the mass-media to justify its appropriation policies. The American people are very sensitive about human rights.

Emergency rule was finally lifted in 1977 under a strong foreign pressure and internal opposition. But, in the late 1970s, the U.S. was going through her own economic recession; she could ill-afford extensive aid to any country. Inflation was running high, unemployment was increasing with the decline in the auto-industry and other allied enterprises. Moreover, the center of drama in foreign affairs had shifted much closer to home to Central America, where the communist threat was looming large, e.g., in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The American government was faced with a dilemma. The cost of economic recovery demanded a cut-back in the defense budget which revived the need for a serious dialogue with the Soviet Union on arms control. Amidst all these problems, India seemed to have faded away from the American foreign policy.

India did not re-emerge in American focus until the storming of the Golden Temple of the Sikhs in June, 1984 by the Indian army and the subsequent assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in October, 1984. Let us look at those events of 1984, changes to be expected in 1985 from the new Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and possible American reactions to them. The events of 1984 are emotional and complex, with some of the Sikhs projecting their people as an oppressed minority. The Indian government has repeatedly refuted the allegation by pointing out the various concessions made to the Sikhs. The assassination of Indira Gandhi sparked riots for a few days which led to reckless killing. The present Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, has announced a new set of policies to deal with the variegated problems of India. The government is taking various steps to assuage the Sikh sentiments at home, though pledging at the same time that no concession would be made to undermine the territorial integrity of the country. Abroad, the Prime Minister has promised to establish friendly relations with the neighbors, Pakistan and China, and otherwise, seek international understanding and cooperation with other countries.

Gandhi is 40 years old; so he can identify himself with the young generation. He has received his schooling in western-style institutions. He is flexible and has shown great courage in breaking away from the past, if necessary, and launching new policies. One such new policy is in the economic area — a break from too much state control over industries which had been suffocating in nature, and had also become a cause of bureaucratic and political corruption. For different kinds of imports and exports, one does not need a state license. The tax structure has been revised. By lowering taxes, those in the high income group, particularly business people will be enticed to pay their share of taxation, instead of seeking evasion by using loop-holes. The middle class, on fixed government incomes, will receive a great reduction in tax percentage. The ceiling over minimum tax-exempt income has been raised to help the less fortunate. This kind of economic liberalization sits well with the American thinking of free enterprise as the U.S. had always eschewed the earlier socialistic economy of India. Since the economic structure has been liberalized and made more predictable, already American businessmen are exploring the possibility of heavy investment, particularly in high-technology like computers. More trade relations can certainly lead the American Congress to be more benign toward India, with the political lobbying employed by the American business. (A recent example is the American reaction to the Japanese imports which has caused a huge trade deficit. As we know, the business lobby is the prompter behind the American reaction. This shows the political influence of American business which can be employed, if needed, in the case of India).

The political structure of India is also undergoing changes as the present Indian government has made floor-crossing (where-by, members of the Parliament desert a party on whose ticket they have been elected and join the opposition in return for a

political patronage) difficult. A member of Parliament who indulges in floor-crossing, must resign his seat and seek re-election on the ticket of the new party he joins. Political stability is essential in a Parliament for it to function effectively and formulate long-range policies for the country. As history has shown, too frequent changes in coalition governments paralyse the political process. People get frustrated and abandon democracy and turn to other political alternatives for national growth. We may say, since Rajiv Gandhi has a good majority in parliament, with political stability insured, new politics will be legislated. This development should also sit well with the Americans as the democratic process to make decisions is an ingrained part of American life. Next to America, India is the largest living democracy — a factor that should bind the two together despite their differences over international issues. If the U.S. can adopt an understanding attitude toward Communist China, it will be easier to adopt the same toward India. However, the mass-media and politicians have to bear the major responsibility in educating the general public as the common person relies upon them for political information. The media must provide correct, balanced, impassioned, and historical perspectives on foreign issues, which they alone can study and analyze.

In the end, we may tie together the preceding discussion of the Indian foreign policy and the American response to it, by considering a major international issue that is engaging the attention of the Congress and the public in general. That is Central America. With Communist-controlled governments in Nicaragua and Cuba, the American response to India has to be friendly. India has been working hard to retain and reinforce democracy. She is a big vanguard of freedom in that far part of the world called Southeast Asia. The Indian policies would never be exactly like the American policies, as India's present has evolved from a past which was very different from the American past. The introduction of westernization and modernization under the British changed the ancient past. But the new present and the distant future would always have a solid foundation of the ancient culture. This is what needs to be grasped in America. Despite being a democratic country India would always be different from the West because she had a different cultural heritage.



Pilgrimage

by Jeffrey C. Williams

Visiting the battlefield of the Little Big Horn this past summer acquired the character of a pilgrimage for me since the site of Custer's Last Stand had had for me when very young a compelling fascination which first steered me in the direction of history teaching as a career. Although I had travelled fairly close to it on previous transcontinental car journeys, circumstances had prevented a visit to this icon of my youth. Finally though, at the age of forty, after sixteen years of college teaching, I was able to do what I had so often fantasized: an inspection of the site of a fabled event made sacred by my callow veneration for the heroism and tragedy that occurred there. As it turned out, the visit was an encounter with not just the American past, but with my own past, and an opportunity to re-examine why I wanted to study history in my youth and why I still teach history in my maturity.

After driving over the majestic eastern plains of Montana and traversing the river valleys where the descendants of the northern Cheyenne who fought Custer now live on a fairly prosperous-looking reservation, I approached the battleground towards the middle of a golden afternoon. The hot July sun bore down relentlessly on the long ridges of yellow dried grass that slope gracefully down to the green valley of the Little Big Horn River. I knew I had arrived when I saw a hillside dotted with RVs, the modern day counterpart to the buffalo, nomadic herds of tourists moving north and south with the passing seasons. Then, unmistakably interspersed among the vehicles and the humans — scattered groups of bleached white headstones marking the exact spots where the corpses of the 7th Cavalry were found two days after the debacle. A special excitement swept over me: after all the re-creations I had seen on film and read in books, at last I could experience the site itself directly, on my own terms. Like the first handling of an important manuscript, visiting an historical site can bring an incomparable elation to a historian for whom it has so long held an attraction.

For the next three hours, I "did" Custer's Last Stand. I hiked the supposedly rattlesnake-infested trail which links the site of the Indian camp, into which Custer and his men barged, with the ridge over which the Indians pursued, surrounded and slaughtered them. I drove along the crest of the ridge the four miles to the hilltop where Reno and Benteen's units were besieged for two terrifying nights and a day, unable to assist Custer whose fate was unknown until after the Indians had withdrawn at the approach of General Terry's larger forces from the north. All the while, I was experiencing the battlefield on three levels. At the level of the guidebook, I was reading and looking with the purpose of reconstruction in order to comprehend everything I could about the battle and the site. At the level of my ten-year-old self, I was reveling in the pure emotional sensations that clamored for recognition and expression. And at the level of consciousness I have as an adult professional historian, I was observing myself

Dr. Jeffrey C. Williams, associate professor of history at Northern Kentucky University, is a charter member of Alpha Beta Phi Chapter. He recently created "Nineteenth Century American Women: Myth and Reality," funded by the Kentucky Humanities Council.

reacting to this historical site which has such significance for me and my love of history.

For Custer was my hero, once upon a time! From the perspective of the safe suburbs of the 1950s, that glamorously handsome, spectacularly courageous calvaryman fired my imagination as the tragic hero whose exploits I could only worship and never hope to emulate. But perhaps someday, it gradually occurred to me, I could at least recount the epic of his life, experiencing vicariously his triumphs and and tragedies, while converting others to the cult by teaching them about it. If I couldn't be a romantic hero, I might perhaps be a romantic narrator, offering to others the rich pageant of American history, moving them as it moved me. My fascination with teaching history began at that point.

Since then, my fascination has remained, but how the history has changed. By 1985, my naive image of Custer and his cavalrymen as pure crusaders for civilization has been replaced by an image of them as often tormented misfits for whom frontier duty offered the only outlet of varieties of alcoholism, egocentricity and incompetency not tolerated by civilized white society. By 1985, my youthful indifference to the Indians (monosyllabic savages) has been replaced with a deep regard for the legitimacy of Indian culture and an almost total sympathy for their resistance to the white man's depredations. By 1985, my simple-minded understanding of American history in 1955 as a series of grand conquests for the purest of motives has deepened into a troubling uncertainty about the complexity of good and evil motives that complicate the sometimes glorious and often squalid story of our nation's development. And my role in this process has changed too, from that of romantic fan to that of cautious interpreter of analytical problems undreamt of as a child.

I was not alone in this change. Evidence surrounded me of the shift in how we perceive our history. The historical signposts of the 1950s still stand beside the long, dusty roads of Wyoming and Montana, with their implicit assumption that history begins only with the arrival of the first white scouts and that Indians' only relevance to the story is their role as an impediment, like a particularly difficult mountain range or desert which temporarily delayed the rise of civilization and the progress of mankind. But now there are other signposts, albeit mostly found on reservation land, which recount aspects of Indian history both before, during and after the first white invasion. And at the battlefield, the guidebooks earnestly remind readers of the Indians' plight in the 1870s which drove them to rebellion and of their bravery and sacrifice in defense of their culture and way of life. There are as many postcards of Indian chiefs as of white calvarymen in the battlefield gift shop, and recent books on traditional Indian society and history are readily available there.

Subtle distinctions still remain however. For instance, I suddenly noticed while reading the official guidebook that Custer's men were invariably referred to as troopers, calvarymen or soldiers while Indian fighters were usually referred to as warriors. Weren't the calvarymen just as dedicated to warfare as the Sioux and Cheyenne? Do we prefer though to downplay their violent role as conquerors of an indigenous people fighting for their survival by using the more neutral term, such as trooper, reserving for the Indians the term warrior with its undertones of savagery and barbarism? And while the battlefield is suffused with a reverential atmosphere of regard for the slain calvarymen, I could find no monument commemorating the Indian dead for whom this must have been just a significant site. the tribes removed their dead after the battle for traditional burial rites, so logically only the white headstones of the fallen white men have a place on the battlefield. But surely alongside the obelisk celebrating

Custer's sacrifice, we might by 1985 have made room for a monument of equal stature commemorating the leadership (just as doomed, it turned out) of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. For the National Park Service and the majority of white Americans, it appears the Indian chiefs remain not yet worthy of a place among the pantheon of American heroes.

As the long, brilliant afternoon wore on, I tired of comparing my sense of history today with the history I grew up with and found myself slipping into a simpler mood of wondering sadness. It is my customary reaction to battlefields. I remembered past visits to Gettysburg, the Somme, Bosworth Field — all of them like this one taking place on summer days of sparkling sunshine which always forces me to absorb the wrenching contrast, between nature's restorative beauty and the ancient anger and agony that once erupted in these places. Touching incongruities abound at such sites: the climbing rose sinuously coiling through the tangle of plowed up World War One barbed wire; the haunting calls of curlews on Bosworth Field, warning their young of approaching humans; the quiet beauty of the Little Big Horn below the slopes of Reno's hill which in 1876 ran red with the blood of absolutely terrified white men plunging across the shallow stream and scrabbling up the cliffs while Sioux arrows thudded into bodies and bullets danced along the surfaces. Out of such contrasts a brooding melancholy comes, almost a despair over humankind's violent propensities in the midst of such positive natural beauty.

Matching my mood, a vast canopy of dense overcast that had been gradually overtaking the northwestern sky seemed to advance more rapidly towards the battlefield. I could hardly believe the weather was proving so cooperatively romantic, but such was truly the case. (I swear it on my Rankel!). With the sun abruptly shrouded, the golden slopes turned gray and a fitful wind, heralding a later gale, rippled the grass into writhing waves. But farther up the valley, the sunshine still flooded the groves of cottonwood trees which in their statuesque beauty I like to think of as living memorials to the integrity of the Indian culture that once flourished among them. And I could just discern in the farthest distance, many miles to the south, still glinting in the early evening sunshine, the snow-topped peaks of the Big Horn Mountains to which the victorious Indians retreated to evade temporarily the implacable pursuit of Custer's avengers.

Suddenly, My ten-year-old self asserted itself unexpectedly and I became obsessed with the feeling that the distant mountains, once refuge for the Indians, now for me symbolized the residual faith I have in the promise of America. In spite of the disasters that humankind creates for itself, in spite of all the evidence of our suicidal destructiveness (some of which I had spent the afternoon reviewing), there are always somewhere on the horizon sunny peaks, representing a hope that we are not as a species doomed to be as savage to each other as we were on the Little Big Horn in 1876. And I felt the familiar need to express the faith by telling the story. By repeating the story for a new generation, perhaps I could help free them from some of the stupidities and insensitivities that had culminated in the tragic collision of whites and Indians a century ago but which threaten us still. Faith in the civilization, faith in the revelance of history in preserving the civilization, faith in my personal role as an interpreter and communicator of that civilization-sustaining historical story all came flooding through me as I gazed out from that shadowed, fated hilltop towards the beckoning, sun-drenched mountains. The cynicism and weariness of forty years of living and working in the mid-twentieth century fell briefly away, and I was in touch once more, for a magical moment, with the spirit that first prompted me to love and study and teach history.

Rumbles of thunder and flickers of lightning ended my reverie, and as I drove down off the ridge, even the river bottom trees were swaying wildly before the oncoming tempest. But the pilgrimage had yielded up its truths and inspiration. I had reviewed how I had discovered my vocation as an historian and how far I had come since then. I had felt again the fascination of history, the overwhelming urge to tell the story over again, now that I had been there and walked among the ghosts, concentrating with all my being into trying to feel the feelings and see what was seen by those desperate men so long ago. I had confirmed my vocation by renewal of that natural compulsion to explain and paint with words how the past happened and why we must remember it. And finally, I had felt again what it was like to be ten years old and madly in love with history for the first time. With my last look back before the storm obscured it all, those mountains were still gleaming, far away to the south...far away in my past...



Book Reviews

Tygiel, Jules. *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York, 1983)

Baseball's Great Experiment is a factual account of desegregation in America's favorite pastime. Jules Tygiel, a history professor at San Francisco State University, points out that after World War II attitudes were shifting. Black Americans had sacrificed equally on the battlefield, but what about on the homefront? In America it seemed as if racial prejudice was to remain a tradition, that is, until two men with a will to conquer challenged the system.

The author enlightens us to the persona of Jackie Robinson, a man unable to be himself so that he may be an accepted equal in major league baseball. Although Robinson was embittered and hardened by racial prejudice, he suppressed his anger and resentment for a cause. He desperately wanted a chance to prove that he, as an individual, was equal to other individuals regardless of skin; thus, his willingness to bite the tongue.

Behind the hero stood Branch Rickey without whom this story could not be told. His determination to break the color line combined with a tactful approach that fostered social acceptance, provided baseball with its first black talent. This is a point on which the author and I disagree. Tygiel's opinion is that Rickey's search for excellence was unnecessary and largely exhausting. I, on the other hand, found Rickey's subtle and gradual approach to be less threatening to an existing social structure defined as white superiority.

From World War II to the demise of the black league, and from America's plagued tradition of prejudice to the Supreme Court, Tygiel traces the history of humane evolution. He focuses on America's battleground, the baseball stadium, where a man's ability speaks for itself.

What transpires from this account of the initial break in the color line to the present, is the belief that morality cannot be forced or legislated. It begins with courageous souls like Robinson and Rickey who assume the leader's roles so that others may follow.

George Juergens, a historian from Indiana University, viewed this biography as Jackie Robinson's triumph in shattering baseball's color line. His opinion, however, does not end there. To Juergens, this is a story of human beings who were battling an attitude which was more significant than the arena in which it took place.¹

Gene Lyons, on the other hand, feels the book contains flaws. He believes it is repetitious with a tendency to belabor the obvious and above all, humorless. He does, however, credit Tygiel for intensive research. Lyons' perception is that the social and demographic changes wrought by World War II made the integration of baseball inevitable. Because America was not transformed overnight, he views this not as a giant breakthrough toward human equality, but instead as a minute step in an inevitable progression.²

Unlike Lyons, I feel that Robinson's triumph unleashed national hostility and resentment which, in turn, provoked change. Tygiel purposely places Robinson in historical context to stress this very point. Expecting to be entertained, Lyons became disenchanted with the book's humorlessness. I fail to find the fight for equality a laughing matter.

Juergens states correctly that it is “a story of human beings.” However, he finds the “arena” insignificant. I disagree. A baseball player is an entertainer. Blacks were more readily accepted in the entertainment field for example, jazz, ragtime, and boxing. Therefore Robinson’s success could have depended on his sphere of interest.

The Acknowledgements reveal the author’s enthusiasm about Robinson’s social relevance. Reading the book I discovered his enthusiasm was not illusive. The book discloses a piece of social history. It examines a nation’s changing attitudes, how they came to be, and the impact they had on previous societal values. We see a man’s crusade to prove his individual worth, not as a black but as a human being. We come to know the courage he gave others in their pursuit for these same unalienable rights.

I recommend this book to anyone who enjoys walking through history. It is helpful to one’s comprehension of how integration began.

Elaine Richardson

Elaine Richardson is Treasurer and a charter member of Alpha Beta Phi Chapter. She is a junior history major at Northern Kentucky University.

Endnotes

¹See review in *Journal of American History* (1984) 70, 923 (by George Juergens).

²See review in *Newsweek*, August 15, 1983 (by Gene Lyons).



Sumner, B.H. *Peter the Great and the Emergence of Russia* (New York, 1951).

Many biographies have been written on this extraordinary man and his Russia, but none more scholarly, complete, and readable than this. The author presents a comprehensive summary of Peter's reign beginning with his military campaigns in the North and South, and continuing with his administrative reforms, the transformation of the orthodox church, the social and economic changes, and an overall evaluation of the first Russian Emperor who was instrumental in setting Muscovite Russia on the road to Imperial Russia. These topics are covered with great interpretive skill, giving the reader not only a historical lesson but also a keen insight into the workings of the modern Soviet state.

The initial emphasis of the book is on Peter's own inheritance. Here Sumner moves dramatically, showing how Peter took account of his own boyhood needs and aspirations to transform a sometimes barbaric (yet growing) Muscovite society in the late 17th century into a civilized class designed to dwell in a progressing state. Through his venture to the West he found the means to accomplish his dream — western knowledge. Peter imported skilled artisans and educators primarily from Holland and Germany for the advancement of an underdeveloped Russia. With this newly acquired technology many internal civic improvements were made, the most impressive being the city of St. Petersburg, but more importantly a modern army and navy were formed. Peter used this force continuously against the nations of Sweden and Turkey throughout his reign from 1698 to 1723. Early engagements provided the military with little success. This was primarily due to inexperience of both the army and its leadership. Yet, in the later years of the period, the army proved to be quite effective, bringing defeat to both Turkey and Sweden. According to the author, Peter was the sole creator of Russia as a great power in arms. He constructed a formidable army, built out of the need for security through expansion. As a result, Russia changed the balance of power in Europe. Moreover, this Russian activity opened western eyes to the importance of the Asia Minor — a traditional Soviet policy which continues today.

It is refreshing to read a version of Russian history portraying Peter not as a wild barbarian but as an ambitious man of his time. Sumner uses an intellectual approach contending that without Peter's will power, ruthlessness, and energy, it would have been impossible to enact the enlightening reforms necessary to begin Russian modernization. Peter reorganized the entire Russian administration to make war resources more readily available. Sumner appraises Peter's reforms and their residual traces in Russian law and administration. What Peter attempted to do was to centralize the Russian domain under one force. The church was moved from that of a separate entity to a position of service of the Tsar and a part of the state. The land class was forced to increase serfdom which eventually contributed to a mass state of serfdom. These measures accomplished a system of compulsory service which marked the introduction of the interior passport system and the table of ranks, a principle of hierarchy. All these elements, or characteristics of them, contends Sumner, are still found in the Soviet Union today.

The book concentrates on the parallels between Peter's and Stalin's regimes; they are brought clearly into focus and can serve as an indication of the direction in which the Russian people have been pushed for the goal of modernization. The most evident similarity is the personalities of the two leaders — both were ruthless and had a keen instinct for grasping power and maintaining it with their iron will. The author seems to

emphasize a comparison of the methods used by these regimes to fasten their grip upon the people, thereby forcing them to accept and to work for the goals established by the two despots. Yet, more outstanding are the similarities of national aims and policies. There are many acknowledgements in the book that the debate between the West and Soviet Union originated with the emergence of Peter the Great and that the same themes continued with Stalin's Soviet Union.

Clearly what Sumner has accomplished in this thin volume in the "Teach Yourself History" series is superb. The wealth of knowledge which pours from each page enlightens and stimulates. The clear, easily read material, moreover, will not overcome the reader. The material presented is inviting and challenging. It will hold one's attention without causing great strain on the mind. The book is a concrete and very useful survey for learning about some of the most important developments in Tsarist Russia, and eventually in the Soviet Union. One learns a great deal from it. Yet it seems to this reviewer to suffer from being too near the events in time at present and yet too removed from the past. The motivations may be alike but the scenarios are drastically different. In all, the knowledge and pleasure gained from this book will be surprising.

Kenneth Eric Hughes

Kenneth Eric Hughes is Historian of Alpha Beta Phi Chapter, editor of Perspectives in History, and a charter member of the chapter. He is a senior history major at Northern Kentucky University.



Letter From The President

Alpha Beta Phi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta was instituted on April 16, 1985. In the 7 months of its beginning this chapter has completed a great deal. It has been on three field trips ranging from the Civil War to the history of steamboats and railroads in Northern Kentucky. We have been welcomed and recognized by historical societies and have even joined them in local presentations and field trips.

And now we have completed the first issue of the chapter journal. Very few chapters produce journals; therefore Dr. Donald B. Hoffman, International Secretary-Treasurer, has commended the chapter for this outstanding achievement.

Our plans for the future are to make the journal a biannual event. We are planning a field trip in the Spring, 1986, either in southern Kentucky or Virginia. The Alpha Beta Phi chapter was developed to promote the study of history and I commend the members for a successful beginning.

Scott K. Fowler
President
Alpha Beta Phi Chapter

Historian's Report

In the spring of 1985 a new tradition began on the Northern Kentucky University campus with the initiation of **Phi Alpha Theta** (Alpha Beta Phi Chapter). The first two semesters have been an exciting beginning for the chapter. One of our contributions is publication of the journal. With the assistance of a grant from the university, the chapter will engage in printing and distributing the journal, intended to provide a means for scholarly expression within the university community. This along with other activities, it is hoped, will convey a more lively image of history, thereby making it a more desirable subject of interest.

Although Alpha Beta Phi was only installed on April 16, 1985, many activities have been endeavored, the first being the honors banquet where 22 students and 15 faculty members were installed. Dr. Chester R. Young, Professor of History at Cumberland College and member of the International Council of Phi Alpha Theta, presided over the initiation ceremony in the University Center of Northern Kentucky University. Scott K. Fowler, newly elected President of the chapter, presided at the first annual banquet which followed immediately in the ballroom. Dr. James C. Klotter, General Editor of the Kentucky Historical Society, spoke on "Three Kentucky Presidents."

Between May 17th and October 5, 1985, the Chapter participated in three informative and interesting events. On April 20, several members of the chapter served as judges at History Day, a regional competition for students in history classes in middle and secondary schools in the Northern Kentucky area. History Day is sponsored by the History and Geography Department and is held annually on the Northern Kentucky campus. Other events included: on May 17, John B. Jett's "War Between the States" presentation, on May 26, the Sharon Woods Village "Civil War Muster and Battle Re-enactment," and the Kenton County Historical Society's "River and Rails Seminar" on October 5, 1985.

JANUARY

- 14 Monthly meeting of Phi Alpha Theta -- Tuesday -- 3:00 in Landrum 415 at Northern Kentucky University

FEBRUARY

- 11 Monthly meeting of Phi Alpha Theta --Monday -- 3:00 in Landrum 415 at Northern Kentucky University
- 19, 20 Book Sale -- Wednesday, Thursday and Friday -- 8:00-3:00 in Landrum Third Floor Lobby at Northern Kentucky University.

MARCH

- 24 Monthly meeting of Phi Alpha Theta -- Monday -- 3:00 in Landrum 415 at Northern Kentucky University.

APRIL

- 15 Annual Initiation and Banquet. The initiation will be at 5:30 p.m. in the Faculty Dining Room and the Banquet will follow in the Northern Kentucky Ballroom. The guest speaker is Dr. John D. Wright, Professor of History at Transylvania University.
- 21 Monthly meeting of Phi Alpha Theta -- Monday -- 3:00 in Landrum 415 at Northern Kentucky University.
- 25 A tour of Central Kentucky's civil war sites: Van departs, Saturday 8:30 a.m. from Northern Kentucky University.

MAY

- 12 Monthly meeting of Phi Alpha Theta -- Monday -- 3:00 in Landrum 415 at Northern Kentucky University.



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1985**

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