The Institute for Historical Study

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

First, an update on the implementation of the grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Members and friends will soon be receiving phone calls as part of the self-study survey that will help us to gain new members and decide future directions for the Institute. The names of prospective members will be requested, as will your thoughts on activities and projects. Your suggestions will be incorporated into a report to the Board of Directors, and will be greatly appreciated. Members who plan to attend professional conferences this year should know that part of the grant money has been allocated for a small travel fund, to defray the expenses of members who are giving papers or participating in panels. To be eligible, applicants must register at the conference as Institute members and be willing to distribute brochures and membership information. For further information, write to me at the Institute address or phone me: (415) 454-6499.

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Institute members and friends who plan to attend the AHA meeting in Los Angeles are cordially invited to attend the session, "Independent Research Institutes: Scholarly Entrepreneurs," to be held on Tuesday, December 29 from 2:30 to 4:30 PM in the San Gabriel-A Room of the Bonaventure Hotel. I will be giving a talk on "Self-Help, Public Service and Entrepreneurship: An Emerging Synthesis." The panel will be chaired by Carol Groneman of John Jay College/ CUNY and the Institute for Research in History. Other panelists include Robert Varady of the University of Arizona and the Organization of Asian Research Scholars, and Bruce Fraser of the Connecticut Council for the Humanities and the Connecticut Center for Independent Historians. Institute members and all conference participants interested in learning more about the Institute are cordially invited to a reception at 5:00 PM, immediately after the conclusion of the panel, in the San Gabriel-A Room. There will be a no-host bar. Institute activities at the conference will be coordinated by Bogna Lorence-Kot. If you plan to attend and can help, please phone Bogna: (415) 285-4829. I look forward to seeing many of you in Los Angeles.

Paula Gillett

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The third annual membership meeting of the Institute will be held on Saturday, February 27, 1982, from 9:30-3:30 at the Sutro Library, on the University of San Francisco campus. All members will get an announcement with complete details sometime in January.

LECTURE ON DOCUMENTARY FILMS AT MILLS COLLEGE

At a time in which, increasingly, we find information disseminated through film and television, Richard Raack believes that historians should study documentary film not only as a record of events but as a medium used for persuasion. Much of his time in the last few years has been spent in tracking down films made as historical records and for propaganda purposes during World War II. The vicissitudes of the films themselves, one of which was smuggled out of -- and later into -- Poland, make a fascinating account. But their value and significance as documents was the chief subject of his lecture at Mills College on October 29, co-sponsored by the Institute and the History Department of Mills College.

Raack's presentation began and ended with excerpts from two German propaganda films -- one on the siege of Warsaw in September 1939, and the other on Theresienstadt, portrayed as a model city "given" to the Jews by Hitler -- which demonstrated a highly sophisticated use of the persuasive potential of the medium, as well, perhaps, as the Germans' need to convince themselves of the justness and nobility of their cause. The first film, borrowing motifs from Leni Riefenstahl's famous Triumph of the Will, portrayed the German bombers as modern avenging dieties emerging from portentous cloud formations to wreak desctruction on a remote landscape. The existence of a human population in that landscape was indicated only in shots of the departure of foreign diplomats from the city. For the rest, as Raack pointed out, one had only a sense of the godlike distance of the German attackers, with the resulting destruction appearing as tiny white puffs below. In contrast to this Wagnerian view of the siege of Warsaw, unedited footage shot by Polish cameramen on the ground and smuggled out to the West was shown. This, too, was selective; no film, we were reminded, whatever its purpose, can be wholly objective or comprehensive. But it provided both a sense of life in Warsaw at the time -- our attention was called to the relatively large number of horse-drawn vehicles -- and an intimate experience of the destruction of that life. (One oddly disturbing image was that of the carcass of a horse, stripped to the very bones.)

With a series of excerpts depicting Jewish life before and during the German occupation of Poland, Raack demonstrated the variety of insights to be gained from the study of documentary film. Following a clip from a film on ghetto life in pre-war Krakow, interesting as a piece of social history, we were shown some clearly propagandistic footage shot during the occupation, depicting the isolation and degredation of Jews preparatory to the implementation of the "final solution." In Jews, Lice, Bedbugs there were scenes of Jewish tenements being fumigated, after which the camera lingered unlovingly over the naked bodies of Jewish men in a community shower and the partially-clad body of a Jewish woman in a hospital ward. Though it was probably not the intention of the film-makers, these scenes also offer evidence of the process of self-degredation of the Jewish subjects, whose privacy and dignity were violated by the camera eye. For a viewer who had only seen newsreels of the end-product of dehumanization, these propaganda films were unexpectedly illuminating.

Last shown were scenes from The Fuehrer Gives the Jews a City, a film made to showcase the condititions in Theresienstadt, for the edification of international relief agencies. Purposeful, if not necessarily joyful, inmates were shown making furniture, watching a soccer game and attending a concert. Since the object of the film was to allay concerns about maltreatment of Jews rather than to convince a German, or German-occupied, population of the necessity of exterminating them, the residents of Theresienstadt were portrayed as indus-

trious and highly civilized. But, as Raack reminds us, their fate was much the same as that of the morally and physically "degenerate" subjects of Jews, Lice, Bedbugs, and they seemed to be equally dehumanized by the propaganda process.

Much of what we saw was, by its very nature, emotionally charged. This underscored an essential point of the lecture: that scholars and students of modern history should use film sources with the same thoroughness and rigor employed with more traditional materials.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND MEMBERSHIP NEWS

BARBARA (PENNY) KANNER has accepted an appointment for 1981-82 as Visiting Scholar in the UCLA History Department where she will complete her book, Victorian Women in English Social History: a Critical Essay and Bibliography. During the same period she will be the new president of the Conference on Women in History (an arm of CCWHP) and will concentrate on establishing a Scholars' Exchange of information on manuscript materials and primary source archives in the United States for all fields of women's history.

JOAN LEOPOLD announces the recent publication of her book, Culture in Comparative and Evolutionary Perspective: E.B. Taylor and the Making of "Primitive Culture", by Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin. An examination of the development of anthropology as a science of culture in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly through the work of Edward B. Taylor, whose Primitive Culture was published in 1871, the book treats such subjects as the interpretation of evolution, the explanation of similarities by psychological and environmental unity, the analysis of "survivals," methodology, and the concept of culture.

In a recent address before the Western Association of Women Historians, Association President, FRANCES RICHARDSON KELLER, raised the issue of the role of the historian -- and in particular the woman historian -- in a time of uncertainty, of concern over the abridgement of personal freedoms, and of increasing hostility to the women's movement. "Particularly we practitioners of the historical arts must set the records straight: There never existed a fundamental antagonism between feminists of both sexes and the institution of the family, in whatever form that institution is manifest. There never was an immutable law that sexual inequalities have to characterize society either within or beyond the family. There never was a denial of the right to bear and nuture children. . . . American women historians have a vital role to play in making these truths evident and in relating them to the foundations of our society."

KAREN REEDS and her associate, Henry Lowood, have received an individual grant from the National Library of Medicine to prepare an inventory of books on medicine, biology, and Aristotelian natural science listed in medieval library catalogues dating from the seventh century to 1520. To make the inventory as complete and useful as possible, they seek references to any published medieval book lists, even if they contain no medical or scientific works. If you would like a fuller description of the project, or have references to contribute, please write to Karen Reeds, 1732 Grant Street, Berkeley, CA 94703, or telephone (415) 848-5670 or 642-8430.

RICHARD RAACK has been collecting film material -- including much of the footage shown at Mills College -- for the Jewish Film Archive at Brandeis University. After giving a lecture-demonstration at Brandeis this spring, he will teach a course on the Holocaust at CSU Hayward.

GRANTS WORKSHOP IN BERKELEY

On November 14, the grants committee of the Institute held an all-day workshop on the UC Berkeley campus, attended by more than fifty participants. Panelists in the morning session, devoted to foundation and corporate sources of funding, included Carolyn McGilvrey of the Foundation Center, Judith Robinson of the San Francisco Foundation, Harriet Rose of the Vanguard Foundation, Mitch Postel of the Fort Point Army Museum, and Karen Reeds of UC Press. They discussed the general situation for grants in the humanities, the kinds of projects that have been funded by various agencies, the legal differences between private and corporate foundations, and the enormous range of granting agencies, from small family or special-interest foundations to such giants as the Rockefeller Foundation and the San Francisco Foundation. Carolyn McGilvray described the kinds of research materials available to grant-seekers at the Foundation Center, 312 Sutter Street, San Francisco, which is open weekdays from 10:00 AM to 4:45 PM (and until 7:45 PM on Wednesdays).

Since many people who attended the workshop were seeking funding for specific research projects, panelists also discussed such practical subjects as the importance of finding the appropriate funding agency and making an initial contact, and answered questions about the review procedures of their respective agencies. Severaal speakers stressed the importance of credibility. A grant-seeker should either have a good "track record" or should be associated with an institution that has standing in the scholarly community. Indeed, the point was repeatedly made that only rarely will foundations make a grant to an individual; affiliation with a non-profit, tax-exempt institution is essential. Finally, there was some solace for the unsuccessful but still hopeful grant-seeker: one may request a post-mortum on a rejected application, and such information may be very helpful in reshaping it.

Panelists for the afternoon session, on public sources of funding, included Bruce Sievers of the California Council for the Humanities, Carroll Purcell of the Public History Program at UC Santa Barbara, Marion Mitchell-Wilson of the Office of Historic Preservation, and Eleanor Ramsey of the Institute for the Study of Social Change. The California Council for the Humanities, a local affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, spends about $1,000,000 a year for a wide range of projects in the humanities, attaching particular importance to the public interest and value of the proposal.

Quite a different source of public funding was discussed by the next three speakers: contract work for a variety of federal and state agencies, including the Department of Energy, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the State Historical Preservation Office. (The National Park Service employs about 600 in-house "writers of history" -- not necessarily historians.) Contract work can range from histories of government agencies to surveys of historical sites under federal jurisdiction. Much of the latter has been done by historical archeologists, a situation lamented by public historians. The panelists provided an enormous amount of practical information, adding that, as with other kinds of work, it is important to become part of the "network."

It was encouraging to hear that there are jobs in the public sector for historians. Indeed, the tenor of the workshop as a whole was optimistic, and nowadays scholars need encouragement fully as much as practical advice.

NEW MEMBERS

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the members who have joined the Institute since August:

JACK BOAS is a modern European historian with a special interest in the history of the Holocaust. At present, he is writing a book on Transit Camp Westerbork for which his fluency in Dutch, as well as French, German, Russian and Spanish, is undoubtedly useful.

ANN SIMONSON FUCHS is an art historian. Her background, as well as current interest, is in fifteenth century Netherlandish, French and Spanish art.

LESLY GLATT became an Institute member as a result of her involvement in the "Work in Society" study group. She is interested in the study of work and labor, work places, and alternative business management.

IRENE PENZIK NARELL is the author of Our City: The Jews of San Francisco. Her interests are wide-ranging -- from the history of Poland between the World Wars to the history of California and the Incas.

MITCHELL POSTEL, who is affiliated with the Fort Point Army Museum in San Francisco, is, logically enough, interested in military and local history. At present he is writing a history of the Burlingame Country Club.

KEVIN S. TIKKER cites interests in automotive history, military history (especially armor and arms), and Japanese history and art.

DENISE J. YOUNGBLOOD's background and interests are chiefly contemporary: Soviet history; the 1920's; centralization and 'industrialization' of the arts; eastern European history; and contemporary history through the arts.

INSTITUTE MEMBERS

The University of California Press, publishers of The Public Historian, an innovative journal that focuses on the topics and issues of the professional application of history and the historical method of research outside the academic environment, has offered a 20% discount on journal subscriptions to members of the Institute for Historical Study. The normal subscription rate of $15.00 a year for four issues would be reduced to $12.00. If you wish to take advantage of this offer, please fill out the form below and return it with your check for $12.00 to the Institute address.

Please enroll me for a one year's subscription to The Public Historian.

Name: _____

Address: _____

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WORK-IN-PROGRESS

A pleasant Sunday afternoon was spent on September 20th at the home of Institute member John Brunn when the study group on "Work in Society" presented an informal progress report. Oscar Berland, Deborah Frangquist, Lesly Glatt, Ellen Huppert, and Lorrie O'Dell focused their presentation on various definitions of work, starting with work as the bare minimum activity necessary for human survival and progressing through ideas of work as function, calling, and oppression to work as an activity of social organization. The panel also discussed the dynamics of their study group, how it got started, and what has motivated its continuance (discussion sessions well lubricated by wine seemed to play an inportant part in the latter). Afterwards, the participants agreed that having a work-in-progress session for which to prepare helped in focusing their discussions and their ideas.

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION NEWS

The seventh annual California Historical Preservation Conference is scheduled for April 29-May2, 1982, in Oakland. Sponsored by the California Preservation Foundation, and hosted locally by the Oakland Heritage Alliance, the conference will be held in the Oakland Museum and the Municipal Auditorium, adjacent to the museum. Its theme is "Reinvesting in America." Institute members interested in finding out more about the program, which is now being planned, may write to the conference coordinator, Dana M. Cordeiro, Oakland Heritage Alliance, P.O. Box 12081, Oakland, CA 94604, or phone her at (415) 839-2121.

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Pamela Morton, guide-training coordinator for the Camron-Stanford House Preservation Association, in Oakland, announces a twelve-week training program for volunteer guides at the historic Camron-Stanford House, beginning next February. The course, which covers Oakland history, the Victorian era, local architecture, and decorative arts, may be of interest to Oakland members or their friends who wish to participate in or learn more about a local history project. Day and evening classes will be available. For further information, please call: (415) 836-1976.

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The Institute newsletter is published four times a year. Contributions of general interest, announcements, and requests for research materials are solicited from all members and should be addressed to Joanne Lafler, Editor, at the Institute address. Institute membership information can be obtained from the secretary at the same address. Membership dues are $30.00 a year and may be paid quarterly, semi-annually, or annually. Dues assistance is available for members unable to pay the full amount.