

they planned, travel by the roads they built, and abide by the boundaries they set. Wherever the framework they laid down over the natural landscape did not quite fit, we still struggle with the dilemmas. The Red River Valley even more than most watersheds is a natural unit, but it is sliced into three political divisions — Minnesota, North Dakota, and Manitoba. One has only to listen to the jurisdictional squabbles which arise every time the river floods to know that this division creates a quandary. Yet because our predecessors had an affinity for running boundaries down rivers instead of along divides, we are inheritors of the dilemma.

The history of a landscape is a many-layered thing. When American pioneers first unfolded the map of the Red River Valley they were unaware of the lines already sketched upon the land by those who had come before

them, whether Indian or métis. In what they took for blank spaces upon the map they boldly wrote their own names and drew their own lines. From our vantage point of a century later we can tell that they were mistaken when they called it a new land. The landscape has always been a palimpsest of perceptions, and under the bold, black strokes of our predecessors' pens we may still strain to see a fainter, older writing before it disappears forever.

COPIES of all of the photographs used with this article may be found in the audio-visual library of the Minnesota Historical Society. The photo on p. 116 is used through the courtesy of the Blue Earth County Historical Society; that on p. 117 through the courtesy of the Minneapolis Historical Collection, Minneapolis Public Library. The maps on p. 119 were drawn by Al Ominsky.

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

Historians and the Conflict Theory

David W. Noble

IN HIS EDITORIAL, "History as Confrontation," in the Winter, 1977, issue of *Minnesota History*, Philip D. Jordan makes the point that "Life is an eternal conflict and that, say some, is what history is all about." The major thrust of his argument, however, is that historians tend to avoid the centrality of conflict in the narratives they write and that this is especially true among those who write local history.

There is much truth in this accusation. But Professor Jordan's statement does not call attention to the growing interest historians have shown in conflict theory since the 1960s. American historical writing in the 1940s and 1950s was dominated by the "Consensus School" which had rejected the concept of conflict put forward by "Progressive" historians such as Frederick Jackson Turner in the 1890s and continued by Charles Beard through the 1930s. For the "Progressive" historians, conflict existed between the values and institutions of Europe and the United States, between un-Americans and Americans. The "Consensus" historians rejected these "Progressive" dualisms as simplistic and misleading and insisted that American society had been and still remained so

homogeneous that no significant patterns of conflict could be found in our national history. "Consensus" historians, who denied the importance of conflict between opposites, could not imagine conflict within a society.

But in 1962, the historian of science, Thomas Kuhn, published his seminal book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn was concerned with the conflict which develops within a scientific community. He argued that there is a regular pattern to that conflict and its resolution in the formation of a new scientific community. And he proposed that historians of science should organize their narratives around this consistent revolutionary structure which is repeated over time. Political, economic, and cultural historians who were dissatisfied with both the "Progressive" and "Consensus" approaches to conflict began to borrow from Kuhn to find regular patterns of conflict and transformation within these other areas of history.

We are fortunate that one of the first fruitful applications of Kuhn has been done in a book which largely uses Minnesota historical materials. James Youngdale, in his study, *Populism: A Psychohistorical Perspective* (1975), places Minnesota history within a national context. He assumes that there is a national crisis in the late nineteenth century as the system of small-scale capital-

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ism is replaced by that of corporate capitalism. During this period of internal conflict within capitalism, part of the population looked backward to a marketplace of small producers and to Jacksonian democracy, and others looked forward to large-scale production and to "Progressive" democracy. But there were those within Populism who had a vision of a co-operative commonwealth as an alternative to either kind of capitalism. Using midwestern materials, but focusing on those from Minnesota, Youngdale has developed a very sophisticated model of overlapping paradigms (cultural perspectives) to explain the unstable ideology of so many

Populists. Populism, for Youngdale, contained aspects of Jacksonian and Progressive democracy as well as its central co-operative vision. An individual Populist could move quickly and unpredictably from one viewpoint to another. By 1915, the options of 1895 were largely foreclosed, however, as Progressivism and corporate capitalism became the dominant cultural paradigm.

Happily, then, it is no longer true that local historians are ignoring conflict, and we seem to be moving into a period of deep concern with conflict theory which can link local and national history in illuminating and productive ways.

BOOK REVIEWS

Autobiography of Values. By Charles A. Lindbergh.
Edited by William Jovanovich and Judith A. Schiff.
(New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978. Illustrations. xxii, 423 p. \$12.95.)

THIS BOOK, published four years after Charles A. Lindbergh's death, is a "summing up" of his provocative views on the mystery and quality of life. It is informed by the man's perspective forged from fifty years of flying around the globe and travel and observation in all parts of the world. Lindbergh begins: "The age of seventy gives one a vantage point from which to look back on the values of a lifetime. . . . I find myself at a vantage point in human evolution as well as my personal life. Born at the beginning of the exponentially advancing twentieth century A.D., I have experienced more change in the environment of man than took place during all previous centuries since civilization began — as though the impact of thousands of years had been upon a single individual."

Lindbergh recounts his extraordinary career as farmer, aviator, inventor, advocate of rocketry, pioneer in laying out commercial air routes, opponent of American entry into World War II, and champion of wildlife conservation. His preoccupation with the evolution of human life permeates most pages. How does he fit into the endless stream of life? As an individual, according to Lindbergh, one is defined by and gathers meaning through family, race, country, locality, and travel. Much of the autobiographical turf has been covered in *The Spirit of St. Louis* and *The Wartime Journals* — his boyhood in Minnesota, visits to Washington, D.C., with his congressman father, the magic world of science first experienced in his Grandfather Land's laboratory in Detroit, his attraction to aviation, barnstorming, flying airmail, the 1927 flight, mapping air routes, observing air power in Europe during the 1930s, his exile to Europe, breaking with Franklin Roosevelt, and opposi-

tion to the United States entry into World War II. However, new material of significance appears: His own account of his first son's kidnapping and murder, the inside story of the controversial German medal presented by Hermann Goering, discovery of the Tasady tribe in the Philippines, and candid comments on luminaries his fame brought him into contact with, including Carl Jung, Henry Ford, Lady Astor, Alexis Carrel, Joseph P. Kennedy, John F. Kennedy, Ferdinand Marcos, and a host of others. He tells how William Randolph Hearst offered him a movie contract for \$500,000, which he declined. Fresh glimpses of life with his wife and children add interest and humor, including his precise set of specifications for a wife.

The major thrust of the book is Lindbergh's distillation of life's values. Five Lindberghian judgments and speculations stand out. First, sustaining a quality of life requires a sturdy heredity and a healthy natural environment. Problems are ahead as the natural environment is destroyed and modern medicine interrupts natural selection and introduces genetic defects. Second, the quality of life ultimately can only be measured by the quality of the natural environment and heredity. Third, human life is a paradox. "Here," writes Lindbergh, "one encounters again the juxtaposition of apparently opposed principles of nature — the importance and unimportance of the individual. He is the ultimate goal of life's evolution, yet his life is of such trivial value that it is snuffed out for the slightest cause. He is at once the ocean of mortality and a molecule within it. His presence is essential; his absence is unmissed." Fourth, human life's creations and technological achievements are most visible in urban civilization, but its deepest meanings are to be found in the sensate environment of the jungle. Man, to remain human, needs to renew contact with the "wisdom of wildness." Fifth, the adventures of the future lie beyond time and space in raising human consciousness about the mysteries of human life. "To venture beyond the fantastic accomplishments of this physically fantastic age, sensory perception must combine with the extrasensory, and I suspect the two will prove to be different faces of each other."

Many will take issue with Lindbergh that World War II

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