Message From the Chair-Elect

David Segal, University of Maryland

The events of 1990-91 serve as a dramatic reminder of the importance of developing a firm understanding of war as a social process and of the social institutions associated with it. Analysts who saw the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and hints of democratization in the Soviet Union leading to a warless society were premature in their projections, and those who applauded the role of the United States and other western nations in reducing the level of overt hostility between Iran and Iraq were left wondering whether peace is in every instance necessarily preferable to war.

The United States and the nations of Western Europe did begin to reduce the size of their military establishments and to talk about decreases in military spending. However, in August 1990, the attention of a previously Eurocentric western world shifted to the Middle East and one of the largest military confrontations in history. At the same time, military responses to demands for regional autonomy within the Soviet Union reminded us all that armed conflict has not been banned from the European continent.

The war in Kuwait and Iraq opened up new vistas for the sociological analysis of world conflict, military organization, and peace movements. Indeed, I can recall no other event in recent history that caused the communications media to call upon sociologists for their expertise more frequently than occurred during the Gulf War. Most of the sociologists whose names I saw in the newspapers or whose faces I saw on television were members of our Section. Charles Moskos, who spent time with American soldiers in Saudi Arabia prior to Operation Desert Storm, probably set a record for media visibility among sociologists.

The cooperation of the Soviet Union with United States initiatives in the Persian Gulf

Join Section Activities in Cincinnati!

Our Section meetings, paper sessions, and other activities will be held on Sunday, August 25, at the ASA meetings in Cincinnati. The following is a schedule of events that you should plan to attend.

8:30 a.m. Council Meeting
9:30 a.m. Business Meeting
10:30 a.m. Paper Session #153: Explaining the Transformation of International Conflicts
Organizers: Louis Kriesberg, Syracuse University; David R. Segal, University of Maryland
President: Louis Kriesberg, Syracuse University
What Theories Predicted the State Breakdowns and Revolutions of the Soviet Bloc? Randall Collins and David Waller, University of California-Riverside
How the Peace Movement Contributed to the End of the Cold War. Sam Marullo, Georgetown University; David Meyer, Tufts University
The End of the Cold War as a Social Process. Greg McLaughlin, University of Oregon

Seville Statement Receives ASA Council Endorsement

In January, the ASA Council voted to endorse the Seville Statement of Violence, an action spearheaded by the Peace and War Section. The March Issue of "Footnotes" carried an extensive article on the subject, as well as the full text of the Statement. The ASA plans to not only publicize the endorsement of the Seville Statement but also to disseminate this information to authors and publishers of sociology texts and to include it in appropriate "Teaching Sociology" workshops.

In addition to the endorsement of the Seville Statement, the ASA Council has asked

We encourage our members to submit articles on any subject that you feel is pertinent to Section members.

Deadline for submission to the next edition of the Newsletter is October 1, 1991
Member News

Alfred McClench Lee received the 1990 Distinguished Career Award for the Practice of Sociology, which is awarded to sociologists whose careers have served as a model for others outside the university setting, whose work has elevated the status of sociology outside academia, and whose contributions especially may be seen to advance human welfare.

On January 6, David Segal was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Towson State University, where he delivered the commencement address.

Charles Moskos received a medal from the government of the Netherlands for his fundamental work in military sociology which has contributed to international understanding of armed forces and society.


Section Activities (Continued From Page 1)

4:30 p.m. Session #197, Refereed Roundtables. Organizer: Louis Kriesberg, Syracuse University.
1. Civil and Regional Wars
   Civil War in Liberia, Moustapha Diouf, University of Vermont.
2. Domestic Opposition to War
   You Don't Always Hit What You Aim At: Evaluating the Peace Movement of the 80s. Richard Kendrick, Syracuse University.
   Peace Strategies in the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Metta Spencer, University of Toronto.
3. Military Personnel
   The Air Force Recruit of the 1990s and Beyond. Theodore A. Lamb, Air Force Human Resources Laboratory.
   Labor Market Dynamics and the Representation of Women in Military Forces. David R. Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal, University of Maryland.
4. Veterans
   Long Term Sequelae of War Injuries: The Human Cost of War. Sai Linn, University of British Columbia Medical School; David R. Segal, University of Maryland.
5. Sociologists and the War in the Gulf
   The Gulf War and a Possible Paradigm Shift. Gordon Fellman, Brandeis University.
6:30 p.m. Reception

Message

(Continued From Page 1)

region presages a new era of collective action in a search for world security and order and a stronger role for the UN and other international bodies. The differences between this war and previous wars in terms of technology, the role of reserve forces, and the presence of large numbers of military women in a combat zone—the latter two highlighting the complexity of the interface between military organization and the families of military personnel—are grist for the sociologists’ mill. Equally important is the peace movement as it emerged in response to the deployment of Western military forces to the Arabian peninsula. In recognition of the potential contributions of sociologists to understanding events associated with this war, I intend to devote one of the Section’s sessions at the 1992 annual American Sociological Association meetings to the Gulf War.

At the same time, it would be short-sighted to focus all of our attention on one region of the world. A second session will deal with transformations in Europe, Asia, and the Americas as a function of the decline in bipolar confrontation in Central Europe. This will extend a programmatic initiative that Lou Kriesberg is starting in 1991.

The refereed roundtables have proven to be effective vehicles for widening participation in the Annual Meetings and for getting colleagues who work on related topics to speak to each other. I intend to retain this format. In order to fit these three activities into our program, I will follow Mary Anna Colwell’s sage advice and hold the 1992 Section Council Meeting concurrently with the Section Business Meeting. We are a sufficiently small Section, with sufficiently strongly institutionalized norms of participatory governance, that we can afford the luxury of reducing duplicate presentations of committee reports in favor of devoting more program time to substantive matters.

Program time is of course a function of Section size, and our Section has consistently been one of the smallest in the ASA. Our membership is still largely a reflection of the Vietnam War era mobilization, and we have been slow to bring younger members of the discipline into the fold. The increased visibility of peace, war, and military related issues reflected in sociology journals during the past two years suggests that there is a new generation of sociologists interested in these issues, and special efforts should be made to make them feel that our Section is their appropriate organizational home within the ASA.

I was pleased to see significant participation by Section members at the meetings of the Research Committee on Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution during the World Congress of Sociology in Madrid last summer, and I understand that several of our members will be participating in the meetings of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society in Baltimore in October. I regard networks of participation that transcend organizational boundaries to be a sign of health of our field, and I shall continue to urge members of those organizations to participate in our activities as well.

As I assume the chair of the Section in August, I will complete my tenure as chair of our ad hoc committee on awards. Our committee will recommend the establishment of a Section Award for contributions to the sociological study of peace and war. I would be pleased if during my term as chair of the Section we acted affirmatively on this recommendation and granted the first award. Members of our Section have made significant contributions, and we should not be bashful about recognizing them.
Meetings, Calls For Papers

(Continued From Page 2)

Co-editors are Curtis Gilroy, Army Research Institute; Peter Karsten, University of Pittsburgh; Aline Quester, Center for Naval Analyses; David Segal, University of Maryland; and James Thomas, Seaside, California. Manuscripts will be considered for this issue until March 1, 1991, and should be submitted to:

Social Science Quarterly
Will C. Hogg Building
University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX 78712

The Sociological Forum is planning a special issue on the study of peace and war. For information, contact Allen Grimshaw, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405; Phone 812-855-3633.

Deadline is May 1, 1990.

Funding & Employment Opportunities

The Department of Sociology at University of Southern California announces an expansion of its faculty search for Fall, 1990. (1) the position of Chair is open to senior applicants with established stature in such core areas as social organization, social psychology, and theory, as well as strengths in such areas as family, demography, medical sociology, aging, and deviance. (2) Up to three additional positions are open at the assistant and associate professor levels for clearly outstanding applicants in the above core and specialty areas. Both quantitative and qualitative research skills are being sought. Screening will begin on January 31 and continue until the positions are filled. Vitae and three letters of reference should be sent immediately to Malcolm W. Klein, Chair, Search Committee, Department of Sociology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-2539. We are an Affirmative Action/Employer.

OPTIONS, A University Outreach Project on Nuclear Policy, awards grants to colleges and universities to organize a faculty speakers bureau for off-campus, community education on international security issues. For more information, write Marta Daniels Troy, Executive Director, OPTIONS, Box 875, Juanita College, Hunting Point, PA 16652. Phone 814-643-6293.

New Publications

Vietnam Generation is a new academic journal devoted to publishing articles about the Vietnam war and the effect of the war upon American culture, politics, and society. It is an interdisciplinary journal encompassing both the humanities and the social sciences.

The new double-issue for summer and fall of 1989 (just released) is devoted to "Gender and the War: Men, Women and Vietnam." Jacqueline Lawson edited this issue and quotes Jean Bethke Elshtain to frame the journal: "Wars are not men’s property, rather, wars destroy and bring into being men and women as particular identities by canalizing energy and giving permission to narrate." Lawson proudly contends that the nineteen articles in this issue "represent the most current, vital, and sophisticated discourse on the subject to date. The range of opinion in the essays collected here attests to the remarkable dedication of scholars working in the related fields of Feminism, masculinism, gender studies, and Vietnam war studies." In addition to the articles, there is also a special "Bibliography of Unusual Sources on Women and the Vietnam War."

Personal subscriptions (four issues) cost $40 while institutional subscriptions cost $75. Single issues are available at a reduced rate. In 1990 Vietnam Generation will feature special issues on "The GI Movement and After," "The Kent State Killings," "Teaching the War," and "Southeast Asian American communities." Please write or call Kali Tal, Editor, Vietnam Generation, 10301 Proctor Street, Silver Spring, Maryland 20901; Phone 301-681-9541.

Increase Section Membership
Recruit at least one new member!

Member News

JEROME RABOW, University of California, Los Angeles and colleagues have completed cross-cultural research on college students' attitudes on nuclear issues. Some articles that have come out of this research are "Nuclear Fears and Concerns Among College Students: A Cross-National Study of Attitudes" and "Cross-National Research on Nuclear Attitudes, Normative Support, and Activist Behavior: Additive and Interactive Effects."

PAUL WEHR, University of Colorado, is currently on sabbatical working on several interesting projects. One is involving the establishment of a faculty position at the University of Central America in Managua, Nicaragua, to teach the concepts of civilian based defense. Another project named "Disarming Conflict in Central America" involves studying the conflict management process of the "Arias" peace plan with special emphasis on how it is operating in Nicaragua. If this was not enough, Paul is also studying local peace movement organizations in the United States and Europe to determine what conditions exist that allow some to survive and others to disintegrate. From this analysis, he hopes to build a preliminary model of collective action useful for peace activities at the local level.


JAMES SKELLY, New York University, is now Associate Director for International Projects at the Center for War, Peace and the News Media.
The Cold War

Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East and Chair of the Joint Economics Committee. He has already held a number of hearings (which, when properly conducted are Congress's equivalent to graduate-level seminars) on changes in the Soviet Union, changes in Eastern Europe, the meaning of U.S. national security in a global economy, and the peace dividend. I will not bore you with trying to summarize the conclusions of these dozens of hours of testimony from expert witnesses, but instead will point out a few of their highlights. Before making any substantive observations, I offer some comments about the process of introducing new ideas into the policy arena. In the next issue, I will offer a more substantive critique of conventional explanations of why the Cold War is coming to an end and what research topics we sociologists should be examining.

The Process

My first observations relate to the hearings themselves. One of the purposes of a hearing is to educate the Members on recent developments on an issue. Expert witnesses, often academics or think-tank residents who specialize in foreign affairs or defense issues, are brought in to give background information, update recent developments, and provide policy analysis and recommendations. Executive branch officials, in our case State Department and Pentagon officials, are also brought in to explain policy and provide a rationale for it. The information conveyed in the hearings process becomes one of the inputs influencing Members when they vote on relevant legislation.

During my Congressional Fellow's orientation program, one of the required readings contained a tongue-in-cheek list of Parkinson's laws on how the Hill operates. One of the laws states that the prominence of a hearing is inversely related to the importance of the issue being discussed. Taking this "law" with a grain of salt, I was somewhat pleased to see only a moderate turnout for these hearings and limited press interest. I thought I might be onto something important! However, the very poor attendance of Members at most of these hearings led me to believe that the process has only limited input at best. From my discussions with staff, I believe that this pattern of attendance is the norm. Members learn about what happened at the hearing after the fact from their staffs who usually condense the testimony into a single page summary.

What is more discouraging, however, is the nature of the "experts" who are invited as witnesses. They are usually academics and beltway bandits, primarily from the D.C. area, New York, occasionally Boston, or others who are known to be passing through Washington. Obviously they present only a limited view of reality, but a lack of funding to bring in experts is a real constraint. (The lesson here is obvious, even for grassroots peace groups who want to influence policy, that they must have a presence in Washington.) Furthermore, the experts sought as witnesses are those that have name recognition (even celebrities), so that attendance is greater and the media more likely to show up. Former government officials, executives of large corporations, and analysts who popularize their work, (most of whom share the characteristics of being successful, older, white men) are most likely to be called on to testify. Other popular witnesses are former bosses and professors of staff members (who do much of the organizing for the hearings), and those whose work has impressed the staffers.

In all of this, the role of the media is powerful. Some of the mechanisms through which the media wields influence are: topics and witnesses are selected so as to try to attract the media; topics that the staff or Members perceive to be important to the media are those they (the media) are currently covering; the important questions are "framed" by the media and the range of analysis is limited to what the mainstream media provides; and Members, staffers, and the experts rely on the media for the most recent "factual" information. After the fact, if the media does not report on a hearing, the evaluation of its importance is lowered. One of my first observations on the Hill was the enormous role of the media (especially print) on informing staffers and Members as to what is reality and what are appropriate topics for political debate and even routine conversation. Essential reading materials include the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, National Journal, Congressional Quarterly, and for Hill gossip, Roll Call. Two corollaries about the media are quickly deduced: 1) if it is in the papers, it is real; and its converse, 2) if it is not in the papers, it is not worth talking about. A related corollary is that authoritative information is that which is printed in the media or what an expert says. Obviously, being well-read and well-connected are important assets.

Although hearings are just one influence, others operate in much the same way. Lobbyists are less well respected as sources of information than experts but typically come from the same kinds of vested interests as do experts. Constituents lobbying on foreign and military policy has been virtually nonexistent on East-West relations for the past several years. Public opinion polls are an interesting topic of conversation, but unless they are from the Member's district or state, they are not taken very seriously. And, in the three months I have been here, less than a handful of peace lobbyists have met with Mr. Hamilton.

Given the nature of who the experts are, how the Members and staffers are so heavily influenced by the media, and the other constraints on the process, it is no surprise that the sources of input are quite conventional. What little analysis exists is presented within a narrow confine of the political spectrum, ranging from moderate liberal to New Right conservative. Critical analysis, unconventional perspectives, progressive policy options, and women and minorities, are rarely heard. My boss often quips after hearings that most of the analysis presented is not new and that the recommendations about alternative policies are not particularly well-developed. It is not surprising that mainstream experts, many of whom regularly spin through the revolving door among Executive, Congressional, Pentagon, and think-tank positions, who are heavily influenced by mainstream media, and who operate within narrow institutional constraints rarely promote visionary alternatives to current policy. It is only when a Robert McNamara or William Crowe make calls for deep cuts in U.S. military forces, which they have done within the last month, that Members take note.

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