

society well into the 1950s. Collectivization and industrialization only partly broke this rural nexus but helped in the short run to establish a "quicksand society" in the 1930s. Both the working class and bureaucratic professional groups were in constant turmoil without completely losing all possibility of resisting those above. For Lewin, however, "Stalinism turned out to be a passing phenomenon." He argued that the main theme of post-1945 Soviet history was the re-emergence of civil society. In *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates* (1974) he looked at the coded debates about economic reform in the 1960s revealing their concern with alternative pasts, presents, and futures as well as showing how they had spilled over into a wider concern with law, culture, and democratization. He later argued that the reformers of the 1960s, although defeated in the short run, prefigured perestroika under Gorbachev. In 1988 he published *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: An Historical Interpretation*, one of the first attempts to explore the social preconditions of the rise of perestroika and glasnost'.

Like growing numbers on the left from the 1960s, Lewin rejected the view that the USSR was socialist but he never offered a clear analysis of an alternative categorization. He was an optimistic supporter of Gorbachev's reforms and therefore disappointed with their eventual outcome. Ironically, with hindsight, he could be criticized for failing to extend his own analysis to an appreciation of the social contours of power and the way that these might condition eventual political and economic choices. But his rejection of "one-dimensional analysis" of Russia's past continues to be a powerful inspiration for those following in the footsteps of his pioneering analysis of Russian social history.

MICHAEL HAYNES

See also Davies, N.; Russia: Modern

### Biography

Born Wilno, Poland, 6 November 1921. Grew up in Poland, but fled to Russia in 1941, working and eventually joining the Red Army. Returned to Poland after the war, but left, first for France, then for Israel. Received BA, Tel Aviv University, 1961; PhD, the Sorbonne, 1964. Taught at Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Paris, 1965-66; Columbia University, 1967-68; University of Birmingham, England, 1968-78; and University of Pennsylvania, from 1978.

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## Lewis, Bernard 1916-

US (British-born) historian of Islam, the Ottoman Empire, and the modern Middle East

Over a 60-year career, Bernard Lewis emerged as the most influential postwar historian of Islam and the Middle East. His elegant syntheses made Islamic history accessible to a broad public in Europe and America. In his more specialized studies, he pioneered social and economic history and the use of the vast Ottoman archives. His work on the premodern Muslim world conveyed both its splendid richness and its smug self-satisfaction. His studies in modern history rendered intelligible the inner dialogues of Muslim peoples in their encounter with the values and power of the West. While Lewis' work demonstrated a remarkable capacity for empathy across time and place, he stood firm against the Third Worldism that came to exercise a broad influence over the historiography of the Middle East. In Lewis' work, the liberal tradition in Islamic historical studies reached its apex.

Lewis drew upon the reservoir of Orientalism, with its emphasis on philology, culture, and religion. But while Lewis possessed all the tools of Orientalist scholarship - his work displayed an astonishing mastery of languages - he was a historian by training and discipline, intimately familiar with new trends in historical writing. He was one of the very first historians (along with the Frenchman Claude Cahen) to apply new approaches in economic and social history to the Islamic world. While a student in Paris, Lewis had a brief encounter with the Annales school, which inspired an early and influential article on guilds in Islamic history. A youthful Marxism colored his first book, *The Origins of Isma'ilism* (1940: his doctorate for the University of London, where he taught for thirty years). He subsequently jettisoned this approach, refusing the strait-jacket of any overarching theory. But his studies of dissident Muslim sects, slaves, and Jews in Muslim societies broke new ground by expanding the scope of history beyond the palace and the mosque.

Lewis' early work centered on medieval Arab-Islamic history, especially in what is now Syria. However, after the creation of Israel, it became impossible for scholars of Jewish origin to conduct archival and field research in most Arab countries. Lewis turned his efforts to the study of Arab lands through Ottoman archives available in Istanbul, and to the study of the Ottoman empire itself. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961) examined the history of modernizing reform not through the European lens of the "Eastern Question," but through the eyes of the Ottoman reformers themselves. Lewis relied almost entirely on Turkish sources, and his history from

within became a model for many other studies of 19th-century reform in the Middle East. It also signaled his own deepening interest in the history of ideas and attitudes in Islam's relationship to the West.

Lewis regarded the "challenge" or "impact" of the West as the watershed between the premodern and modern Middle East. Over the last two decades, some historians have sought to establish that the Ottoman empire remained vital through the 18th century and even began to regenerate – a process nipped in the bud by Europe's economic and military expansion. Lewis, however, insisted that Ottoman decline was both real and self-inflicted. It resulted not only from the West's material superiority, but from a Muslim attitude of cultural superiority, which impeded borrowing. The importance of creative borrowing, and the costs of Muslim insularity, were major themes in *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (1982).

Twentieth-century Turkey's eagerness to belong to the West accorded it a privileged place in Lewis's vision of the Middle East. From the early 1950s, Lewis became alarmed by the expansion of Soviet influence in the region, and he consistently advocated close Western ties with Turkey. Soviet support for the Arabs from the 1960s likewise led him to emphasize the importance of Western relations with Israel. In 1974, Lewis relocated from London to Princeton, where he became a public intellectual. His long-standing critique of the Soviet Union was reinforced by his revulsion at the combined Soviet and Arab effort to delegitimize Israel as racist. He expressed his views in several articles, and later in a book, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (1986).

His engagement in these controversies set the scene for his confrontation with the Palestinian-American literary critic Edward Said. In 1978, Said published *Orientalism*, which argued that the modern study of Islam in the West had evolved as a tool of imperialist domination, and that the West's pursuit of knowledge had conspired with its pursuit of power. Orientalism, effectively a form of racism, had misrepresented Islam as static, irrational, and in permanent opposition to the West.

Lewis maintained that the development of Orientalism was a facet of Europe's humanism, which arose independently of, and sometimes in opposition to, imperial interests. Islamic studies, after neutralizing the medieval religious prejudice against Islam, had been an important arena of discovery and achievement. Lewis rejected the view that only Muslims, Arabs, or their political sympathizers could write the region's history: he called this "intellectual protectionism." A combination of curiosity, empathy, competence, and self-awareness was the only prerequisite for the writing of "other people's history."

The Said-Lewis exchange prompted a charged debate about the representation of Islam and the Arabs in Western academe. It created a new awareness among Western historians that their readers included Arabs and Muslims. It also exposed ethnic and political differences among historians in their rawest form.

Lewis's influence extended far beyond academe. He wrote three major syntheses for general audiences: *The Arabs in History* (1950), *The Middle East and the West* (1964), and *The Middle East* (1995). These books were translated into more than 20 languages, and made his name synonymous with Islamic history for educated publics in the West. Leading newspapers often interviewed him on past and present issues. (One such interview, granted to *Le Monde* in 1993, resulted in a

controversial suit against him by opponents of his interpretation of the Armenian tragedy of 1915–16.) Lewis has had an active retirement and his views carry weight in Western capitals, and are sought by prime ministers, presidents, and monarchs in Israel, Turkey, and Jordan.

MARTIN KRAMER

See also Islamic; Middle East; Orientalism; Ottoman

### Biography

Born London, 31 May 1916. Attended Wilson College and The Polytechnic; received BA, University of London, 1936; Diplôme des Etudes Sémitiques, University of Paris, 1937; PhD, University of London, 1939. Served in Royal Armoured Corps and Intelligence Corps, 1940–41; attached to Foreign Office, 1941–45. Taught (rising to professor), School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1938–39, 1945–74; Princeton University, 1974–86 (also member, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton); and Cornell University, 1986–90. Naturalized US citizen, 1982. Married Ruth Hélène Oppenheim, 1947 (marriage dissolved 1974; 1 daughter, 1 son).

### Principal Writings

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## Lewis, David Levering 1936–

US intellectual historian

Currently the holder of the Martin Luther King, Jr. chair in history at Rutgers University, David Levering Lewis has made