



SHORTCUT

More “Brave New History” from Steve Lehto

A Review by Gerry Mantel

In *Brave New World Revisited*, author Aldous Huxley soberly reminds us that

... children are nowhere taught, in any systematic way, to distinguish true from false, or meaningful from meaningless, statements. Why is this so? Because their elders, even in the democratic countries, do not want them to be given this kind of education. In this context the brief, sad history of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis is highly significant. The Institute was founded in 1937, when Nazi propaganda was at its noisiest and most effective, by Mr. Filene, the New England philanthropist. Under its auspices analyses of non-rational propaganda were made and several texts for the instruction of high school and university students were prepared. Then came the war—a total war on all the fronts, the mental no less than the physical. With all the Allied governments engaging in “psychological warfare,” an insistence upon the desirability of analyzing propaganda seemed a bit tactless. The Institute was closed in 1941. But even before the outbreak of hostilities, there were many persons to whom its activities seemed profoundly objectionable.

Huxley goes on to define these “many persons” as educators, military authorities, clergyman, and advertisers.

So it goes—often quite pathetically—with History, especially in the current realm of Information Overload (also predicted by Mr. Huxley, by the way). As someone who has delved into red-hot topics like the JFK assassination and American prehistory (e.g., the Moundbuilders), I can say with utter certainty that many interpretations spewed from those we should trust (mainstream scholars, historians, policymakers and other professionals, including those in the tremendously overblown entertainment industry) rate as “suspect” (at best), or (at worst) “real whoppers” of All Time, Hall-of-Shame proportions.

Nor is the copper industry of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula exempt: from the earliest days of mining activity (ca. 3000 B.C.) to the intense labor strife of the early 20th century, and right on through to the “final” closing of the Keweenaw mines around 1970, it’s a tale littered with controversies that seem endless.

For instance, Woody Guthrie claimed via his *1913 Massacre* song lyrics that the doors at the Italian Hall were “held shut” on Christmas Eve, 1913. However, when I met the late Mayme Sevander in Duluth some years back, she admitted that what had circulated over the years amongst “her folks” (the radical Finnish immigrant community) was the story of panic and tragedy caused by the tossing of smoldering rags into the building from outside, through its windows.

More recently, word from yet others has it that there likely was no actual cry of “Fire” at the Calumet venue and that the barbaric, partying Finns only had themselves to blame.

With regards to the labor strike in progress at that time, we learn from some about the innocence (and sometimes, heroism) of various “deputies” hired by mine management to tame violence, whilst others claim that these lawless “hired thugs” were, in fact, major instigators.

Who or what are we to believe, then?

Fortunately, Steve Lehto burst upon the scene about five years ago in an attempt to settle some of these interpretive scores—and he certainly appeared like a proverbial Knight in Shining Armor with his impressive, eclectic mix of credentials including long-time legal experience, a history degree, and family roots tracking straight back through the Copper Country.

Lehto’s bilingual-like familiarity with legalese has since proven particularly useful—after all, much of what remains of the past is unquestionably (like it or not) tied up in court records, testimonies, and whatnot. Therefore, it almost goes without saying that any accurate analysis of these historical events emphatically *begs* for a meticulously critical assessment of the pertinent documents they precipitated. And in more ways than one, I might add, given that we all surely *want* to believe in our legal system, don’t we?

Well, that’s exactly what we get in *Shortcut*, by golly!

This time, Lehto takes us from the start to finish of the infamous Seeberville Murders of August 1913 and subsequent trial, ingeniously weaving in relevant updates to his earlier work on the Italian Hall incident (including the naming of He Who Cried Fire).

The Seeberville incident was one of the first of many major outbreaks of violence following the decision to strike by the region's miners; two broken-English Croatian workers were gunned down by "agents" of mine management after apparently trespassing on Copper Range property in Painesdale, Michigan. In his analysis, Lehto remains faithfully mindful to the larger context (the strike itself) as he skillfully picks his way through the paperwork, thankfully not stopping until he's taken time to discuss the significant "History of History" effects upon this case.

The author's *Shortcut* prose is, as always, pleasingly plain-and-simple, straight-to-the-point, and smugly confident that the story will speak well for itself and that its dramatics needn't be "saved" by way of silly, sensational embellishments.

I won't evaluate the author's conclusions, here, as I'd rather y'all read *Shortcut* for yourselves and decide accordingly. However, concerning the question of "Can we trust him?" I'll say this—having struck up a personal relationship of sorts with this author, one based solely upon my increasingly high regard for his integrity, I can attest unequivocally to Steve's resolve to find The Truth. This guy actually *sweats* over accuracy, and in turn has proven more than once his ability to admit to his mistakes and misinterpretations, and take the appropriate corrective action. And while having a drive in him quite unlike anybody I've ever known, he at the same time is as emotionally even-keeled as they come.

Most importantly, Lehto doesn't have a historical or political career to protect, or for that matter, any professional society or organization to answer to. And that's a good thing, based largely on what I learned during my own researching into the aforementioned JFK and Ancient America sagas, just to name two.

Thus, Lehto has proven himself as the quintessential Credible Source.

While that's just my opinion, only one thing's really for sure: that the control of history, whether it be for political, economical, social, or personal gain, is mighty important. Perhaps even *paramount*, I would say, considering that "we are what we eat" and therefore history is indeed prone to repeating itself—especially the utterly ugly, confusing stuff that we should gladly delegate the interpretation of to experts like Steve Lehto.

For though it's often said "to the victors go the spoils" (such that the "winners" take control of history), at what point in time do we finally declare those winners, and quit seeking the truth?

©2011 Gerald E. Mantel. All Rights Reserved.

gemantel[AT]yahoo.com

www.superiorreading.com