

## Recommended Reading in Revisionist History

### America's Roots

*Conceived in Liberty* (4 volumes)  
Murray N. Rothbard  
*Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*  
Charles A. Beard

### U.S. Civil War

*The Real Lincoln*  
Thomas J. DiLorenzo

### World War I

*Wilson's War*  
Jim Powell

### World War II

*Blasting the Historical Blackout*  
Harry Elmer Barnes  
*Revisionist Viewpoints*  
James J. Martin  
*President Roosevelt and the Coming of War*  
Charles Beard

### Economic History Revisionism

*America's Great Depression*  
*History of Economic Thought* (2 volumes)  
Murray N. Rothbard  
*In Restraint of Trade*  
Butler Shaffer  
*FDR's Folly*  
Jim Powell

### Power Elite/Ruling Class/Conspiracy

*The Power Elite*  
C. Wright Mills  
*Who Rules America Now?*  
*The Higher Circles*  
*Bohemian Grove*  
G. William Domhoff  
*The Yankee & Cowboy War*  
Carl Oglesby

### War, Empire, the Imperial Presidency

*Crisis and Leviathan*  
Robert Higgs  
*The Costs of War*  
John V. Denson (editor)  
*Reassessing the Presidency*  
John V. Denson (editor)

### The History of Liberty

*History: The Struggle for Liberty* (lectures on CD)  
Ralph Raico

For more information  
about the Movement of  
the Libertarian Left,  
contact:



# MOVEMENT OF THE LIBERTARIAN LEFT

**Agora • Anarchy • Action!**

# Libertarian Revisionist History



## Basics

History is an account of past events by a necessarily subjective recorder. Interpretation is inextricably bound up with the recording and presentation of events if only by the selection of which finite few moments to exalt by recording them and which infinite many others to neglect.

The world view of the historian further affects the history presented to the student or interested reader. Where one perceives meaning in human relations is where one will look for events worthy of historical note. Objective History is a myth, long recognized as such and now mainly discarded.

Thus, there are *schools* of history. Many of the differences in these schools are relatively minor in terms of fundamental ideological questions, but some differences run deep, creating schools of *historiography* (the writing of history). One school, associated with Charles Beard, focused on economic reasons behind political decisions; another well-known school is based on the worldview of Karl Marx and interprets history as grand economic-determinist cycles of class warfare. Still another, now out of vogue, saw history as the rise and fall of empires in overlapping cycles and was most strongly associated with Oswald Spengler.

## Revisionism

World War I had profound effects on many ideologies and the intellectuals who held them. Many libertarians revolted against the propaganda and censorship and challenged the official versions of the victorious states as to the causes and conduct of the war. The consensus was severely sundered, for this time it was not merely the losers trying to overturn the imposed academic-establishment line of the winners but a group of relatively respectable historians from the *winners* (as well as from the losing countries) who attempted to revise the historical record.

These were the Revisionists. Their opponents were the defenders of the Establishment view, derisively labeled (in return) Court Historians..

Inspired by the revelations of the revisionist historians concerning the origins and conduct of the First World War, an entire new methodology of digging into accounts and seeking and reinterpreting first-hand evidence of critical events — that is, a Revisionist Historiography — sprang up. Soon, official histories of all wars throughout history, and other events such as economic depressions, revolutions, colonial formation and administration, and even the prevalent view on the manners and customs of “lesser cultures” fell into Revision.

World War II found fewer Revisionists as more historians were co-opted into the Establishment, but a few brave souls withstood wartime repressions and post-war academic, social, and economic pressures to challenge the Allied view of unrelieved Axis provocation and aggression with blameless Allies.

The Cold War brought Marxist historians (outside the Marxist states) back to the Revisionist camp, and others followed with the Korean War and the Vietnam War, at which time Western Revisionism reached new heights of popularity.

Today, “instant Revisionists” challenge every move of the United States and its Empire in Central America and the Middle East and others everywhere.

## Libertarian Revisionism

One historiographical school, begun by James J. Martin during World War II, remained consistently Revisionist. Martin was heavily influenced by Max Stirner philosophically and the World War I Revisionists historically, such as Charles Beard and Harry Elmer Barnes. Others followed, especially the pivotal libertarian economist Murray Rothbard, and with the explosive growth of the libertarian movement in the 1970s, a libertarian school of history developed — almost entirely Revisionist. Such names as Justus Doenecke, Arthur Ekirch, Leonard Liggio, Roy Childs, Ralph Raico, Wendy McElroy, George H. Smith, Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, Thomas DiLorenzo, and Thomas Woods have become well-known, at least to libertarians.

Libertarian Revisionists oppose the Court Historian view on nearly *all* issues. Where Marxists oppose “capitalist history” but may embrace the old Court of Moscow or the Court of Beijing, and liberal historians oppose conservative interpretations, and neo-fascists focus solely on rehabilitating the collapsed European Axis, Libertarian Revisionists challenge views by historians of all establishments and often embrace revisionist accounts by decidedly non-Libertarian — but Revisionist — historiographical outcasts.

One obvious reason for this is that Libertarians have no establishment State for whom to become Court Historians. But there is another, deeper reason: *pure* libertarians who oppose all possible states — that is, *the* (concept of the) State — must necessarily be Revisionist as long as there is a State which maintains an Establishment which controls scholarship and academic activities and hence creates an “official” Court history.

Considerably more can be said about this radical libertarian outlook applied to history and even more about the applications to historical events already made. Much work in Revisionist History is being made today by the Ludwig von Mises Institute (Mises.org), which publishes books and journals on economic and political history and offers seminars regularly on historical subjects. Likewise, many libertarian websites and blogs contain “instant revisionism” on the issues of the day.

On the next leaf of this brochure, you’ll find a list of books to get you started in your study of Revisionist History.

*This brochure was originally written and published for MLL by the late Samuel Edward Konkin III. This new edition has been minimally updated and edited by Wally Conger*