

*The Republican Synthesis Revisited:
Essays in Honor of George Athan Billias*

Preface

THE ESSAYS in this volume, with one exception, originated in a symposium held at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, on November 4, 1989, to honor George A. Billias, who retired from Clark University in June of that year after twenty-seven years of service in its history department. The symposium was sponsored jointly by the American Antiquarian Society and Clark University and was supported with the help of grants from the Higgins School of Humanities at Clark University, the Bland-Lee Fund of the Department of History, and the Graduate School of Clark University.

Primary credit for organizing the symposium belongs to Daniel Borg of the Department of History at Clark University, Gerald Grob of the Rutgers University Department of History and a long-time associate of Billias at Clark, and John B. Hench, Director of Research and Publication at the American Antiquarian Society. The Bland-Lee Fund of the Clark University history department also provided a subvention for this publication.

The moderator of the symposium was Richard D. Brown of the University of Connecticut Department of History. All the participants in the symposium except John Diggins of the University of California, Irvine, are represented in this volume. The Introduction by Drew McCoy was graciously provided by him afterwards, at the invitation of the editors. Gordon Wood's Afterword is a revision of the remarks he offered at the symposium.

George Billias's moving autobiographical contribution was an address delivered after the banquet that concluded the symposium.

At the time of his retirement, Billias held the Jacob and Frances Hiatt Chair, a position to which he was appointed in 1983. A native which he edited and which appeared in 1964 and 1969, and numerous articles in professional journals. Billias became, as well, a fre- in the European Theater with the Army Medical Corps as an administrative officer, being engaged in three campaigns, including the famous seizure of the Remagen Bridge in March 1945. After leaving the military service in 1946, Billias entered Bates College, where he secured his B.A. degree in 1948 and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. He embarked on his graduate studies in history at Columbia University immediately thereafter, securing his M.A. degree in 1948 and his Ph.D. in 1958.

After a brief career as a military historian with the U.S. Air Force in Newburgh, New York, and in Colorado Springs, Billias began his teaching career at the University of Maine, where he was on the faculty from 1954 to 1962. In the latter year, he joined the history department at Clark, where he remained until his retirement. At Clark, he earned the affection and admiration of undergraduates for the enthusiasm, intensity, imagination, and energy which he injected into his teaching; the regard and esteem of his graduate students for the personal attention he devoted to their education and the thoroughness of the guidance he provided in their studies; and the respect and appreciation of his colleagues for his high standards and unimpeachable integrity in his role as faculty participant in the governance of the university.

Neither teaching nor administrative activities distracted George Billias from his devotion to scholarly research and writing. His master's thesis on the Massachusetts land bankers of 1740 earned publication in the University of Maine Studies series in 1959 and continues to be cited as the standard work on the subject. His doctoral research at Columbia University, where he studied under Richard B. Morris, brought him into the field of the military history of the American Revolution, and this remained a major focus of his scholarship for some time to come. From it stemmed his doctoral dissertation on General John Glover, which was pub-

lished as a book in 1960, two collections of original essays on American and British generals in the War for Independence, of Lynn, Massachusetts, Billias was educated there and entered the armed forces in September 1941. He served with distinction as a frequent participant in conferences and symposia on the military and naval aspects of the Revolution, a reviewer of books in that field, and a recognized national authority on the subject.

Billias has always enjoyed bringing his knowledge to an audience beyond the academy, a precept advocated and practiced by his mentor, Richard B. Morris. Billias's articles in popular journals like *American Heritage*, *American Neptune*, and *Constitution* have informed and stimulated lay as well as scholarly readers. Two collections of essays edited by Billias have become minor classics for undergraduate and graduate history students: *The American Revolution: How Revolutionary Was It?*, now in its fourth edition, and *Interpretations of American History* (co-edited with Gerald Grob), now in its sixth edition.

Some years ago, Billias turned his attention to early American legal and constitutional history. An early product of this interest was a collection of original essays by several scholars titled *Law and Authority in Colonial America* (1965), which Billias edited. His focus was narrowed to the era of constitution-making following the Revolution, and out of this interest came an edited collection of essays and primary source readings on the Federalists and also a full-length biography of one of the framers of the Constitution, Elbridge Gerry. The celebration of the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution in 1987 led Billias to his current interest, the effect of American constitutional ideas abroad. A collection of original essays on this subject by Billias and five other authors, edited by Billias, titled *American Constitutionalism Abroad: Selected Essays in Comparative Constitutional History* (1990), has already appeared, and a major book on the subject is in the offing.

Apart from the recognition he has received from his own students and colleagues, Billias has reaped honors from national professional organizations. He has held grants from the Guggenheim

Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Philosophical Society, and the Huntington Library. He has been elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Colonial Society of Massachusetts. From 1969 to 1972, he served as an elected member of the Council of the Institute of Early American History and Culture.

While George Billias has enjoyed the approbation of students, colleagues, and friends, his principal satisfaction has come from the personal friendships he has made over the years—in academe and without—and the loving relationship he has maintained with his family—his wife Margaret, his late wife Joyce, his brother, his sisters, his sons, his daughter, his daughter-in-law, and now his grandchildren. The editors and contributors to this volume offer it to George Billias as a mark of their own affection and admiration for one who has shown so much affection and contributed so generously to those whose lives he has touched.

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