

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### DAVID HARRIS (1900 – 1975)

David Harris was born in Texas November 27, 1900. He received his Baccalaureate degree from Stanford with great distinction in 1924 and his A.M. in 1925. En route to his Stanford Ph.D. in History in 1928, he studied in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. The results of this research appeared in his doctoral dissertation which dealt with Balkan diplomacy during the mid-1870s. Following conferral of the doctorate, he taught for two years at the University of South Carolina and then joined the Stanford History Faculty in 1930. Except for a visiting professorship at Cornell University in 1940-41 and for membership on the staff of the Department of State during 1942-41, he continued as an active member of the Stanford faculty until 1966 when he became Professor Emeritus. David Harris died following a short illness on August 18, 1975.

His special field of study was modern European history. His earliest research and first publication dealt with the international diplomacy of the initial phases of the Balkan crisis of 1875-1878. Of this volume, a reviewer observed that "he has produced a more skillfully organized, better written, and more detailed account of the first year of the crisis than has yet appeared, so far as the reviewer knows, in any language." His second book, *Britain and the Bulgarian Horrors of 1876*, published in 1939, described the Bulgarian insurrection of 1876, its cruel suppression by Turkish power, and the attitudes these events generated in the British government, press, and population. The reviewer for the *American Historical Review* commended Professor Harris for his ability "effectively, sometimes ironically, to expose the shams which politicians and even journalists perpetrated" in dealing with the problems created by the Turkish government in its effort to arrest the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan peninsula. *The Bulgarian Horrors* appeared on the eve of World War II, and for David Harris, as for others, the war brought an interruption of scholarly pursuits.

After the war, busy as always with students and solicitous of their welfare; busy, too, with service on University committees, he still found time to write articles and book reviews for professional journals. He directed his major attention, however, to the writing of a general history of Europe since 1750. He thought of this as an interpretive history, embracing not only political and diplomatic developments, but also the impact of technological and economic change, and of new concepts of social evolution such as those which emanated from Voltaire, Rousseau, Marx, Darwin, and others. For those who knew his intellectual range and grasp, his undertaking of such an enterprise would come as no surprise. Unhappily for him and for all of us, he was unable to complete it. One of the outcomes of this study for which the scholarly world is indebted to him was his brilliant essay, "European Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century," published in the *American Historical Review* (1955). This piece preeminently reflects his strong faith in the humane, rational approach to society's problems. Also after the war, David Harris became briefly involved in an investigation of a particular historical problem involving Napoleon. This led him in later years to spend many hours of research and study of the entire Napoleonic period. Unfortunately, he was not able to finish this work either.

David planned to return to Stanford at war's end in 1945; but the State Department urgently requested that his leave from the University be extended, as indeed it was. The request resulted from his involvement with highly important and sensitive work related to post-war German problems. We now know that his labors had to do with defining our national policy toward the political resettlement of Europe. He shared much of the burden of designing postwar national boundaries and he vigorously opposed with persistent courage proposals for the dismemberment of Germany. His views did not prevail; nevertheless, when Germany was partitioned, David, as political adviser to principal officials, loyally spent two years endeavoring to preserve and advance both German and American interests in the divided nation. Given the course of subsequent events, the question might well be asked how postwar developments would have differed had David's views, based on his knowledge and perceptiveness, become policy.

It is not enough to sketch the record of assiduous and distinguished scholarship, of generous service to his profession and reaching, to his alma mater, and to his country. It remains to say something of David Harris himself. His seriousness as a scholar and teacher could not conceal or eclipse his sense of whimsy or his ready capacity to evoke and enjoy laughter. He had the gift of a light touch which was evident in his conversation, in his professional writing, and certainly in his personal correspondence. His letters were a delight to receive and to read. His hospitality extended to friends and guests reflected the characteristics and manners we commonly associate with Southern gentlemen of the old school. Gatherings at the Harrises' were marked by geniality, sparkling conversation, and displays of wit and repartee. David enjoyed being host to his colleagues and other friends.

David Harris was, moreover, a man of quiet, genuine courage. He was not one to push for personal advantage, but when confronted with what he regarded as an injustice to someone else, he fought to correct the injustice. He manifested this same courage and conviction on a broader front in his efforts to prevent the dismemberment of a defeated Germany.

His scholarship, his courage, his selflessness, his devotion to students, his gift of wit and whimsy - all these we remember. But of all our treasured memories of David Harris, none will abide more vividly than the warmth and constancy of his friendship. He himself had known personal grief and sorrow; but those experiences, far from defeating him, served to enhance his strength and those other attributes of character which were native to him.

George H. Knoles  
J.E. Wallace Sterling  
Wayne S. Vucinich, Chairman