

Blood Over Texas. The Truth about Mexico's War with the United States, by Sanford H. Montaigne. New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1976.

Sanford H. Montaigne has written a brief, chauvanistic account of the struggle for Texas independence and the ensuing war between Mexico and the United States. The author describes his work as a "response to a distortion of this country's history, which together with other misinterpretations has tarnished our image and misled millions of young Americans into believing that America is among the most venal of nations." (p. 12) Montaigne's views echo those of Justin Harvey Smith, whose pioneering studies, *The Annexation of Texas* (1911) and *The War with Mexico*, 2 volumes (1919), presented a soundly researched indictment of Mexican officials for their irresponsible handling of the Texas question which precipitated a conflict with the United States. Unfortunately, Montaigne generates more heat than light in this historiographical controversy; he has merely raked over the bloody ground instead of working it deeply, offering little evidence that he has read widely in the literature or conducted multi-archival research. On the contrary, he has launched a polemical counterattack against the "Wisconsin School" of revisionists who have been critical of American expansionism for its imperialistic tendencies.

Blood Over Texas delivers a sensationalized narrative of a frontier conflict between sturdy democratic pioneers and their mendacious, blood-thirsty Hispanic antagonists. Montaigne underscores the culpability of Mexican military leaders in the outbreak of hostilities with the United States. The author's rhetoric is hyperbolic, dogmatic and condescending towards the Mexicans. The latter are represented as treacherously inept, and the admittedly unstable nature of their new government is treated disparagingly. Montaigne employs an analytical style which repeatedly utilizes legalistic arguments to defend America's actions. Few would argue with the author that Texas had the right to secede from Mexico and petition for admission into the Union; yet Montaigne uses precious time and space to argue these very points. Less convincing is the author's assertion that the Rio Grande was the legitimate southwestern boundary of Texas and his claim that war hawks in Mexico City were chiefly responsible for starting the war in 1846.

Montaigne neglects to place the Texas question in the historical context of Manifest Destiny and its impact on American expansion into Oregon and California as well as Texas. The reader will receive little sense of the zeitgeist and how it contributed to a better understanding of American policy, even when it acquiesced in the extra-legal migration of men and supplies into Texas before 1846, or when it continually exploited the internal political differences of the Mexican authorities. Is there no connection between Polk's covetous attitude towards California and his willingness to risk war on the Rio Grande, especially after the favorable diplomatic settlement of the Oregon boundary in 1846? Montaigne places the reader in a small shady grove,

unaware of the forest, its size or location. One must conclude that this work adds little to our historical understanding of this period.

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The Plains Apache, by John Upton Terrell. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975. pp. vii, 244. \$7.95.

John Upton Terrell has produced a very readable popular history of the twenty-two Indian tribes known collectively as the Plains Apache, a people of the Athapascan culture who at one time roamed the area from western Nebraska southward into Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas. The author presents the history of the Plains Apache from the earliest Spanish contacts in 1535 through their defeat by the Comanche, armed with muskets supplied by French traders, in the eighteenth century. Their final destruction under American rule is treated only briefly.

Unfortunately, the picture of the Plains Apache which Terrell provides is almost always that of a distant enemy glimpsed briefly over the shoulders of Spanish troops on the sporadic probing expeditions which pushed deeply but narrowly into the Apache lands. The expeditions were poorly financed and usually disastrous in their execution. Nor were the priests who accompanied them ever very successful in converting the Plains Apache to Christianity. As a result, the Spanish apparently gained little knowledge of the Apache culture, and a book like Terrell's which depends so heavily on Spanish sources can transmit only a limited understanding of the Apache way of life to the general reader.

There are, certainly, several brief but informative chapters which describe their life and their historical evolution in some detail, and the author's account of the Apache retreat before the better-armed Comanche is unusually clear. But the bulk of the narrative is about the Spanish themselves, their attempts to maintain or to reconquer a line of settlements along the very southernmost boundaries of the lands controlled by the Plains Apache or to send expeditions wandering through the Apache territory as far north as Kansas in search of the ever-mythical gold. Terrell does present a good, informal narrative of the events of each succeeding expedition, and he treats the motives of Spanish commanders and clergy in a refreshingly non-ideological manner. But the Apache are almost always on the periphery of the narrative. Perhaps it would be best to conclude that this work is not really a very good book on the Plains Apache, but that it is also not a very bad

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