

*To Conquer a Peace: The War Between the United States and Mexico.*

By JOHN EDWARD WEEMS. Garden City, New York, 1974. Doubleday & Company. Maps. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xxv, 500. Cloth. \$12.50.

John Edward Weems writes with a fluency and facility that borders on the slickness of fiction. Under his pen, a Texas mockingbird becomes the "avian friend" of Sam French (p. xxii), while Secretary of State James Buchanan is described as a man "whose pink plumpness seemed to indicate some lack of self-discipline" (p. 39). All through this large book of almost 500 pages of text, the words glide along so smoothly the reader can almost believe the blurb on the dust jacket that this is "The Human Drama of a Bitter Chapter in American History."

Weems is particularly good in describing battle scenes. In a subchapter entitled "Shouts and Screams," which proves to be the Battle of Resaca de la Palma, the fighting occurs during the "sultriness and stillness of sweltering midafternoon" (p. 139). This South Texas landscape becomes a land of "prickly brush," "thorny jungle," and "an underbrush maze" (pp. 139, 140). Guns roar, cannon reply, men hack their way into the enemy, and grapeshot showers around. Both sides fight gallantly, but, asks Weems, "Why did God desert the Mexican soldier?" He answers that Mexican enemies "always seemed to be blessed with better fortune" (p. 142).

Weems's chapter titles alone make exciting reading: "Here They Come!" "Miserable Men and Suffering Animals," "A Christmas Frolic," "Fighting—But No Fighting," "Hard-won Position of Precariousness," and "Rough, Ragged, and Ready." These are but a few, giving the scholar an indication of what lies within.

Once into the book, students of the war between the United States and Mexico will find that Weems apparently put more energy into researching the personalities and battles than into studying the causes of the conflict. "Polk wanted more new territory" (p. 26) summarizes Weems's belief in Manifest Destiny, as does his statements about the "self-righteous aggressiveness of land-seeking North Americans" (p. 3). Mexico he characterizes as a land of "illiteracy, bureaucracy, corruption, and a rigid caste system" (p. 6). His view of the causes of the war apparently is that American believers in Manifest Destiny, greedy for more, and yet more, land over which to extend their democratic, republican form of government, aroused Latin pride "beyond any possibility of peaceful discussion of problems" (p. 3). He concludes that the results of the war were the "stir of genuine

Mexican nationalism," the "flexing of American muscles," and the "inexorable advancement of the Civil War" (pp. 452–455).

A chronology of important events, a few brief notes on the sources for each chapter, and an abbreviated bibliography, along with four maps and sixteen pages of poorly reproduced pictures and line drawings complete this text. The book obviously was written for public consumption rather than for the student or scholar. If its silken prose leads anyone to read more mature accounts of the war, then it will have served a useful purpose.

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*Población y sociedad en México, 1900–1970.* Volumes I and II. By MOISÉS GONZÁLEZ NAVARRO. México, 1974. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales; Serie, Estudios, 42. Illustrations. Tables. Bibliography. Pp. 424; 389. Paper.

These two volumes continue the author's earlier work on the social conditions under the porfiriato. Also, they are planned as a part of a broad survey of twentieth-century Mexico, which will eventually include similar books on the economic and political life of this Latin American nation. The first volume covers the population problem and some social aspects related to it, such as housing, water supply, health and nutrition. The second one deals only with international migration to and from this country, including discussions on Mexican xenophobia, assimilation of foreigners, and the status of Mexican workers within the United States. The documents scrutinized are primarily the nine national censuses, the statistical yearbooks, several newspapers, and an impressive list of reports issued by the federal government as well as by the individual states. Secondary sources are by comparison scanty and, on occasion, relevant studies have not been consulted (e.g., those by Unikel, Cordero, Arriaga, and Browning). The author's approach lies between a narrative social history and an analytical and quantitative one. Figures are given lavishly in tables or within the text, though not always in a sophisticated fashion. Newspaper clippings and official reports fill the book with copious and often juicy data. This descriptive information illustrates the questions or at least helps to identify contemporary attitudes and policies concerning the population issues. Judiciously, the discussion is broken down by regions, a sheer necessity since