

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Conquerors: A Narrative* by Allan W. Eckert

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THE SECRET ARMY: THE IRA, 1916-1970 by J. Bowyer Bell. 404 pages. The John Day Company. \$8.95.

The Irish Republican Army has been a controversial part of the struggle for a free, united Gaelic republic since the time of the Uprising in Dublin in April, 1916. This book by J. Bowyer Bell, a Research Associate at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard, begins with the "glorious years" of the IRA from 1916 to 1927. The next decade of its history was less glorious. Torn by schism, its leaders jailed, exiled or executed, its members harried by the English and by fellow Irishmen, the IRA was outlawed by the government of Eamon de Valera in the early 1930's. In 1938 under the leadership of Sean Russell the desperate remnants of the IRA began a campaign of violence and terror in England. Several times during World War II its leaders attempted to obtain arms, explosives and other support from Nazi Germany. At the end of the war the IRA was not exactly dead, but signs of life were few and fragile. However, as Bell's book (and the daily news, for that matter) tells us, the fight for civil rights and a united Ireland revived the IRA in two outlawed parts, one in Ulster and the other in Eire.

Written records of an underground, revolutionary organization such as the IRA are necessarily fragmentary, so the author has depended heavily upon a series of interviews, conversations, and recollections supplied by well over a hundred individuals. This method curses the book with such a plethora of names, details, and minor incidents that it often becomes confusing, especially for a reader with only a little knowledge of the ins-and-outs of Irish politics. On the other hand, this method of relying on oral sources has blessed the book with a number of anecdotes that add color, drama and human meaning to the tangled tale.

J. Bowyer Bell believes that, on the whole, the IRA was a failure but that national liberation groups in other lands have imitated the guerrilla tactics it developed. Consequently, he concludes, "In that mysterious brotherhood of revolutionaries, the IRA volunteer, futile or no, has a reserved seat, perhaps not in the front row but in a prominent position."

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THE CONQUERORS: A NARRATIVE by Allan W. Eckert. 720 pages. Little, Brown and Co. \$8.95.

The Conquerors is the third volume in the author's projected Winning of America series which is to show "clearly and in the most fundamentally human terms, how the land was won—through encroachment, warfare, trickery, grant, treachery, alliance, deceit, fraud, theft and treaty." This volume recounts in detail the events of Pontiac's Rebellion. Two previous volumes, *The Frontiersman* (1967) and *Wilderness Empire* (1969), cover events from 1730 to the War of 1812.

The author's concept of narrative history is a wedding of the literary forms of written history and the historical novel. The difficulty is that one can not always distinguish fact from plausible literary invention. Amplification notes are inconveniently placed at the back of the book, but documentary evidence is rarely cited. In this regard, it is only fair to note that Eckert's series has not been written for the professional historian. The works of Francis Parkman and, more recently, Howard Peckham on Pontiac's Rebellion serve that group very well.

The Conquerors tells its exciting and tragic story in strictly chronological order emphasizing the effects of events on individuals such as Jeffrey Amherst, the British Commander-in-Chief in New York, George Croughan, the Indian agent in Western Pennsylvania, Henry Gladwin, the commander at Detroit, Pontiac, war chief of the Ottawas, and many others both Red and White. The chronological, episodic organization provides a sense of the wide area and complex problems involved in this Indian Rebellion. The distance of 1763 New York from the frontier in terms of both communication and condition are clearly apparent. Eckert gives the reader a taste of life in prerevolutionary frontier America, and his story is usually both exciting and historically accurate. Also worthy of praise

are the seventeen maps and diagrams in the text and an impressive bibliography. This is a good book for the nonprofessional; professional historians should not begrudge them that.

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POVERTY IN NEW YORK, 1783-1825 by Raymond A. Mohl. 318 pages. Oxford University Press. \$8.50.

In this study of poverty in New York, Raymond Mohl has shown that the attitudes of state and local government officials and of the general public have not varied greatly in the last 250 years. The reasons given for poverty have remained remarkably the same: indolence, alcohol, moral depravity and lack of religious faith. Even today the political verbiage about poverty and welfare reform is likely to contain frequent references to these same alleged causes. These alleged causes enable society to gloss over those basic weaknesses in social organization which foster inequality.

During the post-Colonial period widespread concern among the social elite about the spread of poverty was centered upon their fear of a breakdown of social control. Mohl shows how such a breakdown of control did occur despite the active involvement of the social elite in philanthropic organizations designed to combat the alleged causes of poverty. Notably lacking in this attack by the social elite was a frontal assault on the real economic and social causes of poverty. Such a frontal assault is still lacking, although the current battle is generally upon more realistic grounds than that of the post-Colonial period. Even so, present cures for poverty are frequently lost in the miasma of middle-class moralizing about the decline of the "work ethic" among the lower class.

While the Mohl thesis that urbanization and a rapidly expanding lower class posed a threat to the established order is a tenable one, his documentation of that thesis is limited by a lack of continuity between chapters and sections of the book. Despite this shortcoming the book makes an important contribution to the study of poverty in the post-Colonial period, the factors which spawned it, and the reactions to it. It is especially valuable for the indirect, yet penetrating, light it sheds on our present responses to poverty.

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TAMMANY: THE EVOLUTION OF A POLITICAL MACHINE 1789-1865 by Jerome Mushkat. 476 pages. Syracuse University Press. \$15.00.

Its past replete with conspirators, dandies, and thieves such as Aaron Burr, Fernando Wood, and William Tweed, Tammany has been represented as one of the more bizarre side-shows in the carnival of American political history. Equating Tammany with urban corruption, historians have helped to perpetuate the Nastian vision of bosses and cronies exploiting the masses through manipulation, sharp practice, graft, and fraud. More impressed with Tammany's longevity as a viable political institution than with its scandals, Jerome Mushkat has written a detailed and important analysis of the formative years of the Tammany Society, and its political arm, Tammany Hall, from incorporation in 1789 to the eve of Tweed's hegemony.

Rather than an aberration in the political development of the United States, Mr. Mushkat finds Tammany to be "eminently a product of American civilization." Originally a social club for middle-class New Yorkers with patriotic and humanitarian proclivities, Tammany's transformation into a political machine is really but one of the more important results of the shock effects that nineteenth-century urbanism had upon the American nation, and more particularly, paradigmatic centers such as New York City.

For Mushkat, Tammany's successful transition from social club to political machine was made possible by the acumen of the Society's early sachems who perceived and exploited the political leverage they enjoyed through their direction