

*Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848, Accounts of Eyewitnesses & Combatants.* Edited by George Winston Smith and Charles Judah. (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1968. Pp. xviii, 523. Illustrations, notes, index. \$12.00.)

The war between the United States and Mexico, 1846-1848, carelessly called "The Mexican War" in the United States, has a great deal of fascination about it and has prompted a growing number of publications. *Chronicles of the Gringos* is the latest, the bulkiest for a long time, and clearly one of the most enthralling accounts from the standpoint of human interest. It is not, to quote the editors, "a general history, a textbook account, or a tractarian commentary on the immorality" of the conflict. It is, rather, an attempt "to recreate it in several dimensions by assembling the eyewitness accounts of the Gringo soldiers and those close to them . . ." (p. xviii).

Smith and Judah have gone far toward achieving their aim, insofar as it may be possible to recreate the experiences of thousands of men in three years of war between the boards of one book. Their industry is impressive, for they publish excerpts from letters, diaries, journals, public documents, reminiscences, books, and articles collected in a very extensive search of repositories, chiefly in the East and Midwest. Five long chapters (271 pages) are devoted to the making up of the wartime army and to following its major campaigns and battles—under Zachary Taylor, Winfield Scott, Stephen W. Kearny, Alexander W. Doniphan, *et al.* The remaining five chapters deal with subjects of more or less general concern to all "gringo" soldiers in the war: camp life, discipline, problems of transportation, supply, equipment, food, etc. One of the best of these chapters, supported by considerable material previously unknown to this reviewer, is on the health problems of the army. Parallels have been drawn by other historians (not in this volume by Smith and Judah) between the wars in Mexico, 1840s, and in Vietnam, 1960s, but, gratefully for the present generation, the magnificent medical services now available have destroyed the parallel in one regard. They have reversed the ancient rule that more army lives are lost by germ action than by enemy fire. The figures cited in this book, as good as any no doubt, are that 1,192 "gringos" died in action plus 529 of wounds, while 11,155 died of disease.

This reviewer believes that the "average" reader—the layman or college undergraduate—who picks up this book, cannot fail to get a considerable understanding of what life was like in the United States Army during the war with Mexico. This is good, and the editors are to be commended. The book embodies certain shortcomings, chiefly of a conceptual and editorial nature, for the reader with more serious purposes.

*Chronicles of the Gringos* is based on scholarly research and has many scholarly trappings—inconstant though erratic use of square brackets, for

instance, and fifty pages of backnotes. Because of the editors' concept of the book, however, it does not offer the benefit of analysis or balanced appraisal for most aspects of the military experience. Such of this as is present may be hard to reach because the index is inadequate and there is no bibliography. There are eighty-six "plates" and "figures," including maps; but many are ill chosen and insufficiently identified, and several of the maps are faulty. The editors' view of the war is completely one sided—the American army from the American side. The few Mexican writings included were taken in translation from American publications. The name Monterrey is misspelled deliberately throughout the book because "gringos" of the 1840s commonly misspelled it!

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*August Belmont: A Political Biography.* By Irving Katz. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968. Pp. xiv, 296. Notes, illustrations, selected bibliography, index. \$10.00.)

For obvious reasons the history of the Democratic party and its leadership in the Civil War period, and just afterward, has attracted nothing like as much attention or interest as has been given to the more lustrous record of the Republican party. Professor Katz does much to close some of the more glaring gaps in this attractively written biography of one of the cleverest and most conspicuous of all the party managers in American history.

He finds that August Belmont, who for a dozens years was head of the Democratic National Committee, and who then for eighteen years longer (he died in 1890) remained one of the guiding, if aging, leaders of party councils, was a victim of tragic frustrations. He had every qualification of training in the adept and cosmopolitan world of finance—in which the Rothschild family had risen to prominence—to hold a place as one of the eminent financiers of the long period from 1850 to the final rise of the House of Morgan nearly three generations later. He was gifted not only with great natural quickness and astuteness in dealing with intricate business and financial affairs, but with a striking skill in organizing men and corporations to conquer the difficulties of a nation engaged in headlong industrial development. Belmont also possessed marked qualities of geniality and tact which, combined with his social vision and unfailing cordiality, enabled him to overcome the chill suspicions and hostilities that, as a foreign born Jew, he encountered in a period of political and economic turmoil, civil war, and reconstruction.

He became a social favorite, a Titan of the financial sphere, and one of the few Americans known both for his wide international relations in finance and politics and for his sustained influence in the administration of national affairs. He had a handsomely impressive stature and dress, with keen snapping eyes above his thick sideburns and firm chin. He had a