

but those who seek to explain America's widespread involvement at the turn of the century will find much to mull over in this work.

Central Washington State College, Ellensburg Gordon H. Warren

America's Outward Thrust: Approaches to Foreign Affairs, 1865-1890. By Milton Plesur. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971. Pp. vii, 276. Notes, bibliography, index. \$12.50.)

Diplomatic historians have generally assumed that during the Gilded Age America's preoccupation with industrialization and western settlement preempted a vigorous interest in foreign policy. Milton Plesur, professor of history at the State University of New York at Buffalo, believes such a view "needs serious qualification" (p. 13). He contends that concern for domestic matters only veiled developments in foreign affairs and that America's emergence as a world power did not catch the "national psyche off guard" (p. 10). Rather there was a natural sequence of preparation for world involvement and outward thrust that resulted from a "persistent commercial impulse" (p. 230).

To substantiate this thesis Plesur explores the contemporary public attitude toward foreign affairs as expressed in newspapers, periodicals, manuscripts, and official government publications. The subjects selected highlight America's growing involvement overseas. Six chapters consider trade and the need for markets, expansion of the State Department, literary cosmopolitanism, protection of United States citizens abroad, refurbishing of the navy and merchant marine, and travelers. Five chapters deal with mounting American interest in Europe, Africa, Latin America, Canada, and the Pacific. This organization by topic and geographic area produces less repetition than might be expected. That which exists deserves only minor criticism.

Plesur obviously believes the preparation for "America's outward thrust" was economically motivated: "Business expansion and a maturing economy led to the quickening of interest in America's overseas economic destiny" (p. 229); "the commercial possibilities the Hawaiian Islands offered American businessmen continued to pull the United States deeper into diplomatic involvement in the Pacific in the postwar decades" (p. 205); "Shippers needed naval protection on the high seas, and real improvement in the condition of the navy came only when it was successfully linked with commercial expansion" (p. 95). This emphasis on commercial motivation is similar to that of Walter LaFeber's *The New Empire* (1963) and

William A. Williams' *The Roots of the Modern American Empire* (1969).

Contemporary attitudes lead the author to conclude that the Gilded Age was a period of transition between noninvolvement and involvement in world affairs. He admits America's preoccupation with internal developments and its neglect of external affairs but maintains that a dynamic foreign policy began to appear. The public's ambivalent attitudes reflected in his book warrant this conclusion. Ideas do not change suddenly; instead old and new overlap during an intermediate period. Thus, Plesur has thoughtfully, although not substantially, qualified the traditional view of foreign affairs during the Gilded Age.

Purdue University, West Lafayette

Lesta Turchen

US Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s. By David Healy. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970. Pp. ix, 315. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$10.95.)

David Healy has produced a reasonable, believable account of American foreign policy in the 1890s, a task so difficult that few historians have come close to accomplishing it. The remarkably strident language and ruffian behavior of the period has sometimes embarrassed its students or inspired them excessively. Now and then the historian feels the need to apologize, calling the imperialistic age an aberration, a single wayward step off the high road of American history. For those preferring another sort of generalization, the period is described as a treasure trove of proofs and precedents. Numerous special causes have been advanced, then ardently defended against other, equally narrow interpretations. Some authors say that economic greed controls history, perfect examples being the war with Spain and the conquest of the Philippines. These same events are also said to illustrate the destructive energy of America's moralistic tradition, the power of the press, or the ever volatile condition of democratic life. According to other writers the true cause of American imperialism was racism, or Social Darwinism, or assorted psychic phenomena left over from the Civil War or produced by the internal discontents of the 1890s.

Healy argues with none of these interpretations. For him all have some validity; for history is complex, and seven volunteers, converging on a recruiting office, might be propelled by an equal number of reasons. Chapter length studies of James Harrison Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, Elihu Root, Charles Denby, Charles A. Conant, and others show how a common policy—in this case a war of