

wrote "The Report" with the expressed hope to focus attention on the South and produce a favorable federal response to what they saw as the basic causes and effects of the South's poverty. Carlton and Coclanis explore this and other critical themes linked to the study (over a half a million copies had been distributed by the end of 1938), including the complex relationship involving race, the "distinctiveness" of southern poverty, and white southern liberals; debate over "The Report's" explanation of the historical causes for the poverty in the region (purchasing power and colonialism); and, the conflicting reactions within the South and the nation to "The Report." Following their perceptive introduction that outlines these and other issues, the editors provide a complete text of "The Report," photographs depicting poverty conditions, three "Life Stories" from white and black tenant farmers and a cotton mill worker in the 1930s, statistical data on farm income, soil erosion, illiteracy rates, and other information from Howard Odum's 1936 study, *Southern Regions*, which strongly influenced the writers of "The Report," and, finally, primary sources such as Roosevelt's 1938 "purge" speech, southern editorial commentary on the South as the "nation's problem," and the "resolutions" of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, an organization created out of the 1938 debates concerning southern poverty and race relations and involved in combating those issues during the next two decades.

With a basic introduction to the history of the South and the New Deal era, *Confronting Southern Poverty in the Great Depression* should be a solid source for the teaching of twentieth-century America as well as courses on the American south and African-American history. As with the other Bedford books, this volume includes a helpful bibliography.

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John B. Kirby

Brian Holden Reid. *The Origins of the American Civil War.* London & New York: Longman, 1996. Pp. xv, 440. Paper, \$19.76; ISBN 0-582-49178-9.

This is the fifteenth volume in Longman's "Origin of Modern War Series." Its author is a Senior Lecturer in War Studies at King's College, London, and Resident Historian at the British Army Staff College in Camberley. Developing his thesis that wars in general, and the American Civil War specifically, are the result of a series of ironically well-intentioned acts, Reid maintains that "whatever the strength of public opinion, and electoral shifts of opinion, it is the *action*--the decisions taken by politicians--which determine the chain of circumstances that result in war or peace." Tragically, for America in 1861 these decisions led to the "decisive event in American history." Both Unionists and Confederates believed the conflict would be brief and all combatants would return home by Christmas; such optimism was reflected in the length of the first enlistments. Such naiveté is understandable, Reid explains, because

none of the political leaders of 1861 had any precedent to gauge the size or length of a "great civil war." Was the war inevitable? Reid spends much of the book considering this point and is ecumenical in presenting varied and opposing interpretations.

The book does not strive to be an encyclopedic history of America during the antebellum period, but focuses on tracing the incidents and enactments that combined to attain critical mass that produced armed conflict. This search for "origins" reaches into America's moment of creation, the Revolutionary War, and continues through the growth of the nation via western expansion. The Nullification Crisis of 1831-32 is examined in detail and compared and contrasted with events, similar, yet dramatically different, in 1860-61.

Reid acknowledges the work of previous scholars, especially Allan Nevins, throughout the text, in the bibliography, and in footnotes. The latter are most helpful to the reader because they appear at the bottom of the text and not in a "works cited" section at the book's end. Almost all of the bibliography, sixteen pages in length, is secondary monographs or published primary sources. Discovery and presentation of formerly unknown information is not an intent of this study.

The chapter arrangement is traditional and the author generally follows a chronological presentation of events that dominated national politics from the 1840s through the first combat in spring 1861. The apparent resolution of sectional tensions (1840-1850) is explored, while the following chapter delineates the increasing sectional suspicion and animosity that characterizes the period from the Compromise (truce?) of 1850 through the panic of 1857. The Presidential campaign of 1860 is minutely dissected. Efforts at compromise, all of which were doomed, are presented and their failure analyzed. The South's "peculiar institution" is deemed worthy of chapter-length discussion. Of special interest is the development of a two chapter-length "model" to explain the increasing acceptance of violence that made war the obvious "solution." The book concludes with an external view of the war by discussing various reasons for its containment as purely an American national conflict; British, French, and Russian official policies and national "attitudes" toward both Confederate and Union governments are seen to be driven largely by financial practicality.

A detailed index facilitates specific information location; four monochromatic maps aid the reader in visualizing the nation's sections, waves of secession, Charleston Harbor, and Fort Sumter. In both content and format, this is a worthy addition to the field of "why the war" study.

Logically organized with a text that is easily comprehended, this book is well suited to college-level American Middle Period courses or advanced high school (AP or honors) students. The constant inclusion of both "standard" and less orthodox interpretations is most helpful to students and instructors who wish to look beyond "what happened" to "why it happened" and "who said it happened this way." Reid has

done an admirable job expanding the "causes" (origins) of the Civil War from the traditional political explanations to include social, intellectual, economic, cultural, and even geographic factors. Such breadth of interpretation enables the book to interest a wider audience than more monofaceted "political" studies. The reader is presented myriad points throughout the text and footnotes that virtually demand further research. The book, therefore, is not only an excellent source of information but also a platform to launch further inquiry.

Piedmont College

Ralph B. Singer, Jr.

Lee Kennett. *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. Pp. xiii, 265. Paper, \$16.95; ISBN 0-8061-2925-5.

Lee Kennett's book is a new paperback edition of a book originally published in 1987. With information from new sources, the author has produced a first rate social history of the American G.I. during World War II. He has detailed the "collective portrait" and the "collective experience" of the G.I. from his draft and induction to his return to civilian life. In doing so, Kennett based his story primarily on the noncombatant experiences of the G.I., the letters and memoirs of the G.I.s themselves, the thoughts of their commanding officers, the statements of fellow Allies and enemies, those who were liberated and conquered, and the historical literature of the Second World War.

According to Kennett, the 1940 peacetime draft created an Army that represented the ethnic and racial diversity of America despite the racial and ethnic problems associated with, for example, draft evasion and those who managed to get deferred. Most inductees, however, accepted their draft status and participated in the processing aspect of induction and service without much complaint. For black inductees Army adjustments were made more difficult and complicated than for their white counterparts because Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, some politicians, and other top military brass felt that their usefulness was limited due to their lack of education and their inferior intelligence level.

Based on statements from both the Allies and the enemy, both the black and white G.I. was nevertheless the best trained in the war. As Kennett suggested, the American G.I. was a "complete soldier," second to none in Europe and in the Pacific.

In terms of location, Kennett showed that the American G.I. preferred the European theater of war. There the climate and the conduct of war matched the training and experiences of the G.I. The G.I. in the Pacific arena dreaded the jungle climate and diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. He also suffered greatly there because the Japanese refused to observe the Geneva rules of war.