

Book review on timothy henderson: a glorious defeat

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Henderson, Timothy J. *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*. 2008.

The text finds its basis in the Mexican-American War of 1846. While Henderson attempts to explain the war from the views of Mexico, he gives his views regarding the United States as well. Written over a period of one year, “*A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*” is derived from a series of secondary resources from which the author draws information. Henderson combines said information in a meticulous way leaving no doubt to his readers on the main goal of the text and in turn, his view of war is an outcome of pure miscalculations by the Mexicans. It is important to note that while there are no major details on the war and the tactics employed by both sides, Henderson attempts to give his readers a new view of the war. This he does in such a way that despite the lack of depth, a new understanding of the aforementioned war develops especially with regard to the Mexican forces.

Consequently, Henderson Timothy’s major theme lies in the reasons behind Mexico's decision to go to war with America who even at the time was a world super power with better weapons and more military prowess (35). In addition, while recognizing the works of other historical researchers, as evidenced by the citations made in his book, he still expresses the need to explain the Mexican’s position to the benefit of Americans and to some extent Mexicans. As stated before, Henderson’s ideas suggest that the

Mexican government opted for war out of recognition to its weakness and not the stipulated arrogance. In fact, he goes further to inform his readers that the forces in power were aware of their weakness (35) but out of a need to prove they strong saw the only response to the idea of colonization by the United States was war.

The war lasted for a period of two years (1846-1848) but had a number of consequences on the two countries. For instance, while Mexico lost half of its territory to the United States, the latter gained access to the western area of North America. As a result, civil wars broke out in both countries a good example is the American Civil War (1861-1865). In “ A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States” Henderson manages to bring forth a new perspective to the war and Mexico’s history. In the first three chapters (3-74), Henderson gives an account of the gradual rise of Mexico's problems especially in the Northern border. For instance, chapter three that is dubbed “ The Problem of Texas” gives the accounts of Mexican law enforcers who admit to the loss of Mexico’s power in the region. This is evidenced by Henderson’s argument that Mexico saw the loss of Texas as a conspiracy of the American forces (153) in the final chapters.

Finally yet importantly, the last two chapters (133-157) give a narration of the acquisition of Texas by American forces and the politics that overtook the feuding countries. He gives an account of American and Mexican political stands with Mexico's sense of honor having the having the most effect on the peoples’ stand (148). In addition, the president, Jose Joaquin de Herrera, was proven powerless in light of Santa Anna making Mexico follow the latter to war (154). According to Henderson, “ the desperate glory of death on the

battlefield seemed preferable to the ignominy of compromise and surrender” (191).

Henderson’s book sets the background of Mexico's history in relation to the Mexican-American war. While utilizing available literature on the event, he embarks on a chronological assessment of the provided information by the various theorists and historians. In turn, the book covers the years following the war while ensuring readers understand the position of the Mexican people and citizens. This he does by adding the evolving arguments and tactics employed by the Mexican government and its people in protecting Texas as a Mexican territory. While doing all this, Henderson includes his judgment regarding Mexico’s position in the war and his judgment on the reasons behind Mexico's decision to engage the Americans in warfare. His conclusions dictate a stand in Mexico's decision being heroic rather than stupid as in his eyes the country still emerged glorious.

While “ A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States” answers the question behind Mexico’s decision to go to war, Henderson include many andantes encompassing recent material that can be used by readers to further their research on the War. This allows any interested persons to read further on the information while maintaining a firm grip on the author’s arguments and in turn offer further proof to his ideologies. His thorough analysis of Mexico’s history using secondary literature also gives a new view of Mexico’s leaders and its peoples’ perception of the years that led to the War. This proves to be important as readers are for the first time made aware of the disunity that Mexico was faced with as evidenced by the contrasting leadership strategies and in turn the weakness that plagued the

country. The analysis served its aim in convincing readers that, Mexico went to war due to its limitations at the time.

Work Cited

Henderson, Timothy J. *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. Print.