

The collection will reward the general reader and the historical scholar.

Paul F. McKenna

4063 Dickason, Olive Patricia. **The Myth of the Savage: And the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas.** Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984. 372p. illus. bibliog. index. \$50.00. ISBN 0-88864-036-6.

This interesting and wide-ranging study offers an object lesson in the mutual incomprehension resulting from the confrontation of two alien civilizations. The participants in this intended dialogue spoke; rarely did they comprehend. Through 150 years after 1500, the attitudes of French explorers, traders, missionaries, and the reading public at home, and those of the Amerindians of Brazil, Florida, and New France, remained frozen in pre-contact modes. This was true even of men, like the Jesuit missionaries to the Huron, who came closest to appreciating the viability of native culture. By evangelizing in favour of an alien language, economy, and religion, they worked ultimately to destroy American civilization. It is a sobering and persuasive thesis, presented in an attractively designed and handsomely illustrated volume.

Naïveté and false hopes marked Frenchmen's attitudes to the New World. Measuring Amerindian societies against European norms (a state structure and institutions, literacy, advanced technology, and a "refined" social life), they mistook Amerindian differences for inferiority. It was easy then to claim that European ways were best, even divinely ordained. That New World societies might have developed values and customs appropriate to their needs was ignored, for Amerindians fell conveniently into a stereotype which Europe had readily to hand: that of *l'homme sauvage*, a *pot-pourri* of popular folklore about savages, monsters, cannibals, satyrs, fawns, apes, and wild men of the woods (*homo sylvestris*). Amerindians, it was held, were lately and not far removed from the animal kingdom. In them *homo sapiens* was not yet realized; he would emerge only as he adopted European ways and followed the cross.

What Amerindians thought of all of this can only be inferred from their actions. Among the youths kidnapped and transported to France to be educated in French ways and as future interpreters between the two solitudes along the St. Lawrence, many died of disease, compounded by culture shock and loneliness. Some of the girls may have graduated from convent to homemaking, but here the record is blank. In any case, the boys who

returned home often seized the first opportunity to disappear into the woods. Despite the lessons of experience, Euro-centred attitudes were confirmed, then sustained, in the New World.

Such attitudes, of course, said more about those who held them than they did about the realities of Amerindian life. Drawing upon a variety of original sources in Canada and France and published work in history, anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and folklore, the author offers an ethnographic description of Amerindian cultures, especially those of New France. Here readers may have some difficulty in following her, as technical terms are not always defined ("taiga economy," "fictive kinship," "moiety," "exogamous and agamous," and the musings of Claude Levi-Strauss in French without translation or explanation). Since "it simply never occurred to the French...to question the appropriateness of the cultural model they were seeking to establish under New World conditions" (p.173), one may query the decision to spend much time and to offer detailed documentation (an average of 160 footnotes per chapter) in correcting contemporary views in the light of modern scholarship. However, much of interest is offered and the context of the study is undoubtedly enriched.

On its own account, and for the questions it raises, this study deserves a wide readership. It has much to tell us about our willingness and ability to understand an alien culture, about the impact of a technologically advanced civilization on a weaker one, and about the roots of European attitudes toward Amerindians which are still current in our own day.

Christopher English

4064 Dwinger, Carl-Friedrich. **Warning Time and Forward Defence.** Kingston, Ont.: Centre for International Relations, Queen's University, 1984. 113p. illus. bibliog. National Security Series, No. 2/84. \$15.00pa. ISBN 0-919827-53-5pa. ISSN 0228-9202.

The author, a West German Air Force major, wrote this book while he was a visiting Defence Fellow at the Queen's University Centre for International Relations. His well-organised and -argued study is based on two premises: that a real danger of surprise attack in Central Europe exists and that Forward Defence (defence that meets the attack head-on at the border) is still the best NATO response. The second chapter supports the first premise by describing the Soviet military buildup in Central Europe and by chronicling the development of Soviet military doctrine to support the

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