

NOTES ON CURRENT BOOKS

their own lives was the very city that would become the capital of the Confederacy.

Virginia \$37.50

Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II, by John W. Dower.

Japan underwent an unprecedented transformation in the seven years of American occupation and control that followed the end of the Second World War. How the country was "democratized," and how in the process many Japanese still found it possible to deny the atrocities their armies had committed during the war, is a subject well worthy of attention. Dower's ambitious attempt to answer these and other questions draws on a tremendous amount of fascinating source material drawn from evidently scrupulous research into the Japanese urban and popular culture of the period. It is clear that Dower knows his subject extremely well; unfortunately, however, his approach lacks the detachment necessary for a truly timeless piece of cultural history. Dower's eloquent words of praise and contempt, sometimes merited and sometimes not, become irritating in a book of this length; and his open bias, however much it may recommend itself to many readers today, will inevitably establish this work as a dated think-piece rather than as a source of reference tool of use to future generations of students and historians.

Norton \$29.95

The Color of the Law: Race, Violence, and Justice in the Post-World War II South, by Gail Williams O'Brian.

O'Brian approaches this gigantic topic through a small window. Looking at a race riot growing out of an averted lynching in Columbia, Tennessee in 1946, the author explores how the changes brought by World War II altered race relations in the South. By examining various strands of Southern history, including the heritage of extra-legal violence against blacks, the economic changes for whites and blacks after World War II, and the relationship between politics and criminal justice, O'Brian unearths a complex history of African-American empowerment. Avoiding an overly rosy prognosis for

modern race relations, the author makes a case for the demise of racial violence in the postwar era, and provides a model for future historical study, using discrete incidents to illuminate numerous larger social forces. Though her book does not fully fulfill the claims of its title, it still is an important contribution.

North Carolina \$45 cloth, \$18.95 paper

In Search of the True West: Culture, Economics, and Problems of Russian Development, by Esther Kingston-Mann.

Kingston-Mann, who has written before about the "peasant question" in late Imperial Russia, gives a stimulating account of the passionate contemporary debate over this crucial issue. She decries the bias against rural Russians not only of Tsarist policymakers since at least the time of Peter the Great but also of prophets of revolution such as Marx and Lenin. Criticizing as "peasantophobic" most blueprints for Russia's future, the author instead believes the peasant commune was often flexible and innovative as well as being a needed force for social justice in the countryside. A plea that would-be reformers of others' societies take into account the historical and cultural differences between peoples and be wary of seeking to impose universal solutions makes this a book that will be satisfying to the historian and thought provoking for the more general reader.

Princeton \$59.50 cloth, \$27.95 paper

Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades 1000-1300, by John France.

France packs an impressive array of information into this authoritative study. Starting from the premise that geography, technology, and the interests of the landed gentry shaped Western warfare, he moves to analyze warfare in the medieval Middle East. Though not for beginners, France provides enough detail (including examples of battles with maps) to make his book accessible to an educated audience.

Cornell \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper

