instead of specific documentation, an excellent bibliographic essay which enhances the book's value for those who wish to further their understanding of the Eisenhower years.

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Diener's book is within the tradition of historical debunking, more recently described as demythologizing. He prefers the simpler term, "reinterpreting." Whatever description is applied, the purpose of the historian is to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the historical past, so that students of history will be delivered from illusion and ignorance.

On page 10 Diener writes: "One purpose of this book is to demythologize United States history, to shed light on America's blunders and immoral deeds so that a more realistic chronicle of America may emerge. Here are recounted the mistakes, trickery and hatred which at times have directed America's destiny. While frankly debunking, I also attempt to shed new light on modern problems by tracing their development through U.S. history: racism, cruel exploitation of the Indian, violence and war, American imperialism and American poverty. The reader is no longer allowed the illusion that these are new problems but is confronted by the fact that America has always been possessed by these devils."

Diener's book is "offered as a remedy to such ignorance." The ignorance he addresses himself to includes many aspects of American history, but especially the history of America in regard to poverty, racism, and violence (p. 10).

Diener defines his audience on page 11: "This book is aimed at a broad readership. The book was written primarily for interested laymen, for those who, adult and young adult, want a fuller knowledge of the American heritage than the traditional education affords. Yet at the same time it is compact enough to allow a person to familiarize himself with revised interpretations of American history without delving into voluminous and difficult scholarly works. Ideally, *Reinterpreting American History* will also be used by college and high
school teachers who use a selected materials approach or as supplementary reading to a more traditional textbook. It has become only too obvious that conventional survey courses of American history relying on traditional texts are frequently antiquated and obsolete. Racism, poverty and Vietnam have outmoded an uncritical review of the American story."

The author acknowledges that "revised" interpretations of historical events are becoming commonplace, and that he hopes "to bring together revised interpretations of the entire American pageant, directed not at the scholars of history, but at the great majority whose knowledge has been shaped by traditional texts. The knowledgeable lay person will hopefully encounter many new facts and interpretations in these pages" (p. 12).

Thus Diener has freed himself from the net of the scholars, most of whom would dismiss his efforts, because they are clearly wanting in the demands of the historical method. There are only three footnotes in the book. Two are in the introduction and the third is in the text. This is not an issue of pedantry. Rather, if Diener's purpose is to deliver Americans from illusion and ignorance, he should, at least modestly, introduce Americans to the rules of historical evidence.

In the author's reinterpretation of American history from the period of prehistory and colonization to the tragedy of Vietnam, he demonstrates that America has mistreated the Indians (pp. 13-28, and p. 113), the blacks (p. 80), has often ignored the problem of poverty (p. 66 and chapter 10), and has had a persistent tradition of violence. Diener notes that "the fact most [historians] were reticent to acknowledge was that violence has been almost traditional throughout the course of American history. It has loomed continuously, sometimes in greater, more fiery magnitude than at present" (p. 114).

In surveying these issues Diener presents too many generalizations which tend to simplify the issues instead of analyzing them in depth. Thus, in my judgment, Diener defeats his own purpose, which is to deliver the American people from illusion and ignorance.

Furthermore, there is a fundamental contradiction in Diener's book. On pages 9-10 he writes: "America is not and never was Camelot. America is a powerful country plagued with uncountable problems. She was not always powerful, but her problems and mistakes have always been with her. Unfortunately most of us have been 'brainwashed' to believe in America's pristine past by standard histories which offer a rose-colored version of the American past which has little correspondence to fact. The truth is the first casualty here."
And on pages 213-214 he argues: "Americans are dissatisfied. Disillusioning events come too frequently. The nation on the eve of its 200th anniversary faces a tremendous challenge. Will Americans sink into despair, too demoralized and cynical to 'keep the faith'? Or will they carry on the spirit which, recognizing America's faults past and present, seeks nevertheless to make her the perfect land.'"

This book is devoted to a study of imperfections that have disillusioned and made Americans ignorant of the history of America. Yet, the author asks Americans to seek "to make her the perfect land" (p. 214). To be harsh, yet realistic, Diener's book is an exercise in imperfection in the study of history. In the suggested "Additional Readings," there are only a few primary sources. The majority of secondary sources are speculative efforts, whose credibility remains to be established.

In conclusion, Dr. Diener has not achieved his objective because he has attempted too much, and he has not helped Americans understand their history, and therefore, themselves. He has, rather, given them an account of American history, in many parts of which there are generalizations that are not supported with evidence. For example, he writes, "Prostitution was also common in the colonies" (p. 24). He describes the American Revolution: "In truth America was a bastard, an illegitimate offspring conceived in sin, born in violence, and suckled on the pap of protest" (p. 29). The War of 1812 was "a senseless event which most were glad to resolve and many to forget" (p. 62). The Civil War is judged as the result of "the clear lack of foresight and statesmanship among the national leaders of the preceding decade" (p. 85). From the Monroe Doctrine, he concludes, America has been an imperialistic nation (chapter 7). World War II has been misrepresented because "world historians have largely neglected to note the key role of England's ambitions in triggering the war" (p. 179). These generalizations are speculative. They are not supported by historical evidence, with the result that truth is the casualty.

Admittedly, many textbooks on American history are written for school boards. It is necessary to deliver the students from what is misrepresented and what is left out of the textbooks. However, in my judgment, Diener's book does not solve the problem. He intensifies it because he does not allow his audience the opportunity to examine the evidence and make its judgment on that basis.

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