TRUE TALES FROM ANOTHER MEXICO:
The Lynch Mob, the Popsicle Kings, Chalino, and the Bronx.
By Sam Quinones. Univ. of New Mexico Press. 336 pp. $29.95

"Poor Mexico," lamented the dictator Porfirio Díaz, "so far from God and so close to the United States." Echoing Porfirio, most Americans writing on Mexico portray it as a pitiable place, impoverished, corrupt, and hopeless. And so this beautifully written collection of essays is a wonder and a delight.

Quinones, a journalist who has covered Mexico since 1994, opens with the tale of Chalino Sánchez, the smoldering-eyed Sinoloan who created a new genre of popular music. In the late 1980s, having done time for petty crimes in a Tijuana prison, Chalino was in Los Angeles washing cars when he began to write his *corridos prohibidos*, or narco ballads—songs recounting the lives of the drug smugglers from Mexico's tiny northern villages. He sang them with his own bark of a voice and sold the cassettes at car washes, butcher shops, bakeries, and swap meets. Though no radio station would play them, "Chalino's rough sound ignited immigrant Los Angeles." Shortsightedly, Chalino sold the rights to his music for some $115,000 in the early 1990s. Today, the songs are worth millions.

Millions of dollars also changed hands when Televisa, Mexico's entertainment conglomerate, sold its soap opera *Los Ricos También Lloran* (The rich also cry) to Spain, Italy, Yugoslavia, Russia, and other countries. When the show's star, Verónica Castro, visited Moscow, so many people came to greet her that the airport had to be closed. Her presence at the Bolshoi Ballet caused a stampede. Muscovites who spotted her on the street, she told Quinones, would "cry and cry and cry."

Equally remarkable is the chapter called "The Popsicle Kings of Tocumbo," about the thousands of ice cream shops that dot the republic from Tijuana down to Tapachula, hard by the border with Guatemala. These little shops have proved so prosperous that the entrepreneurs' tiny hometown, Tocumbo, Michoacán, is filled with lavish houses, forests of satellite dishes, a beautiful park with a swimming pool, a church designed by a world-renowned architect, and a statue, "big as a three-story house," of an ice cream cone.

Not all of the stories end happily. "Lynching in Huehutla" was so gruesome I found it difficult to read. The author also takes an unblinking look at glue-sniffing gang wannabes, the unsolved murders of young women in Juárez, and a cult-run town where, on the day Quinones was finally admitted, he found the adults all wearing halos fashioned from wire and tinfoil.

Quinones has succeeded in finding "another Mexico." Intimately tied to the United States, it is at times far from God, but, as this splendid book shows, it is also in the midst of a transformation. In the next decade, Quinones predicts, we will see "a country evolve from a dusty political/economic joke to one that is robust and part of the world."

—C. M. Mayo

History

TROUBLEMAKER:
The Life and History of A.J.P. Taylor.
By Kathleen Burk. Yale Univ. Press. 491 pp. $35

In a biography of a celebrated Oxford University historian, one doesn't expect to find a table charting the scholar's annual income or a chapter titled "The Business History of the History Business." In the case of A. J. P. Taylor, however, the accountancy is more than apposite, for it measures the distinction of the popular historian who invented a profession. The son of wealthy radicals, Taylor (1906-90) was the first of what Britain dubbed the "telly-dons," an intellectual whose TV shows and radio talks and articles in the popular press made him a public institution.

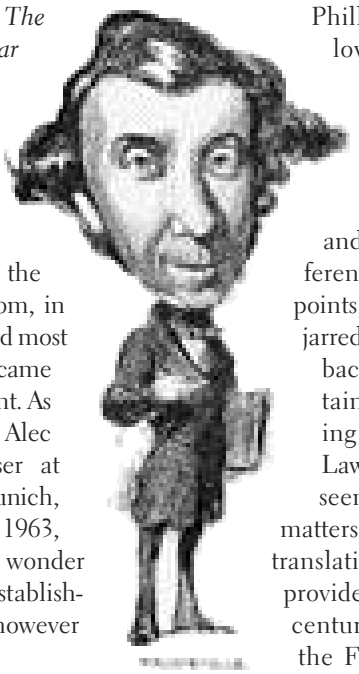
His Oxford colleagues, naturally, hated his eminence almost as much as they envied it. Lesser men, but better placed, conspired to

deny him the promotions he deserved. There were excuses enough. In the 1930s, he had briefly dallied with communism. In the late 1940s, he had argued that Britain could neither trust nor rely on the United States, and should seek national security through an alliance with Stalin's Soviet Union. In the 1950s, he helped found the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Burk, an American who was Taylor's last graduate student, has mastered the vicious subtleties of the British class system and managed to produce a biography that is fair and well judged. She comprehends both Taylor's resentments and the attitudes of his enemies, including the unholy glee they took in his wife's infidelities (with, among others, Dylan Thomas). Above all, she conveys Taylor's distinction as a historian, a career to which he came late, after a false start in law.

His *Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (1954) remains the outstanding diplomatic history of the decades leading up to the First World War. It was the first study in English to take account of the diplomatic documents in German (which he learned in Vienna in the late 1920s), French (which he learned at school), and Russian (which he taught himself). British historians had done superb work in the British archives; Taylor was perhaps the first to take these forensic skills to archives abroad.

His most infamous book, *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961), argued that Hitler, though indisputably wicked, acted as a rational statesman in European affairs, pursuing logical and traditional German goals and then pushing his luck when he realized the feebleness of the French and British responses. From, in Taylor's words, "all that was best and most enlightened in British public life" came the disastrous policy of appeasement. As controversy raged over the book, Alec Douglas-Home, a loyal appeaser at Neville Chamberlain's side in Munich, was Britain's foreign secretary; in 1963, he became prime minister. No wonder Taylor sneered that the British establishment always won in the end, however grievous its mistakes.



Well sustained by the documentary record, his argument was formidable, and "all that was best and most enlightened" never forgave him. His students saw nothing to forgive and much to admire in the only Oxford lecturer who could fill a hall at 9 a.m. and still have standing room only at the end of term. His TV audience marveled at a man who could deliver, without a note or a pause, 30 polished minutes of witty, anecdotal, and informed scholarship and end, with a perfect epigram, on the dot of time. He was a performer who made history fun, and, as this admirable biography shows, history gave him a great deal of pleasure in return. Moreover, the money was good. From teaching, books, broadcasting, and freelance journalism, he earned the equivalent in today's values of well over $250,000 a year from the late 1950s into the 1980s. No wonder he always looked forward to the day he would spend making out his income tax returns.

—Martin Walker

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA. By Alexis de Tocqueville; transl. by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. Univ. of Chicago Press. 722 pp. $35

I first encountered *Democracy in America* in the 1835–40 Henry Reeve translation (revised by Francis Bowen, edited by Phillips Bradley), and fell in love with its rolling sentences and flowing turns of phrase. The more highly praised 1966 translation by George Lawrence and J. P. Mayer, with its different phrasing and, at certain points, different interpretations, jarred me; I found myself going back to Reeve to make certain my memory wasn't playing tricks. Though the Lawrence-Mayer volume seemed more lucid on some matters, the fluidity of the earlier translation and its older usages provided an appropriately 19th-century feel. A few days with the French original persuad-