

Reviews

How Andrew Jackson Saved the Cherokees

ROBERT V. REMINI
ANDREW JACKSON AND HIS INDIAN WARS
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BECAUSE AMERICANS so often claim to be the democratic conscience of the world, American Indian policy has cast a long international shadow. One of the darkest parts of that shadow has been Indian removal: the coerced migration in the 1830s and 1840s of tens of thousands of Indians to open up lands for American settlers east of the Mississippi River. When criticized by Americans for dispossessing, killing, or exiling a minority population, modern tyrants and their supporters reflexively point to the treatment of Indians by the United States as a precedent and to their critics as hypocrites. From Adolph Hitler justifying the Nazi campaign for lebensraum to supporters of Slobodan Milosevic's policy against Bosnians and Kosovars, proponents of what is now called ethnic cleansing have cited American Indian policy to justify their own actions and to stymie their American critics. Why should they listen to a people whose own prosperity is built on land and resources plundered from

Indians? American troops are now in the Balkans to prevent the displacement of entire peoples; they once marched into the Southeastern United States to displace entire peoples.

Given these claimed parallels between ethnic cleansing and Indian removal, any examination of Indian removal will inevitably involve discussions of ethnic cleansing, Indian removal is an intellectual minefield, and historians trying to traverse it had better carry a good map, otherwise they can end up where they would rather not go. Robert Remini in his discussion of Andrew Jackson's Indian wars carries half a map. He probably knows more about Andrew Jackson than any person alive. Unfortunately he appears to know as little about Indian peoples as most American historians. His knowledge and ignorance fuse to make *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* a disturbingly obtuse book about a man who probably inflicted more pain, suffering, loss, and death upon Indian peoples than any

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American of the nineteenth century.

This obtuseness does not arise from Remini's refusal to acknowledge the suffering Jackson caused. He places Indian removal at the heart of the horrors Indians experienced. Remini never diminishes the death and destruction that Jackson brought and never denies Jackson's moral culpability. Remini condemns Jackson and his contemporaries for their corruption, their racism, their greed, and their refusal to accept responsibility for the suffering they inflicted. What is obtuse is Remini's own conclusion. Out of this circus of horrors, Remini contends, there came great good: Andrew Jackson "saved the Five Civilized Nations from probable extinction." It is not hard to imagine the outcry if a German historian offered a similar assessment of the results of the German search for lebensraum or if the survival of the Kosovars and Bosnians as coherent groups were credited to Slobodan Milešević's ethnic cleansing.

Although proclamations of the beneficent results of Indian removal have not been much heard since the nineteenth century, Remini's point of departure for his surprising destination is quite conventional. Like many American historians, Remini denies that American Indian policy was genocidal. No matter what the results of its actions, the United States claimed that it was trying to save the lives of Indian peoples and eventually to assimilate them, one by one, into the American population. But having dismissed genocide, Remini never explicitly confronts the tougher question of whether Indian removal constituted a form of what we now call ethnic cleansing. Although genocide accomplishes ethnic cleansing – the forced removal of a population from its native land – not all ethnic cleansing is genocidal. Ethnic cleansers want to get rid of minority populations, and are hardly solicitous of their welfare, but they do not necessarily want to kill them.

Remini's assertion that removal saved the Southeastern Indians is audacious and disturbing, but that is no reason to dismiss it. If Remini is right and removal did secure the survival of the so-called "Five Civilized Tribes" of the Southeast – the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Creeks, and Seminoles – who certainly have survived, then he should say so no matter how offensive it may be and no matter how many unpalatable historical parallels it reveals. The claim, however, gives him the burden of examining Indian lives closely to demonstrate that the peoples in question owe their survival to removal. He needs to write about Indians as carefully and knowledgeably as he does about Jackson.

There are Indians galore in Remini's book, but they are clearly the supporting cast. They are the stock Indians of American history – sometimes noble, sometimes murderous, usually tragic, and always simple. They are not people who will get to evaluate the results of their own dispossession and exile. They will not even get the benefit of any detailed evaluation of their fate. Jackson's opinions matter much more than theirs, and Jackson gets the vast majority of Remini's attention.

To explain Jackson, Remini needs to explain Jackson's initial Indian hating, and so he begins his narrative with what are really a set of generic stories in which Jackson is, like the Indians he hates, less an historical figure than a type. Herman Melville captured and dissected the Indian hater in *The Confidence Man*. Indian haters thirsted for revenge for Indian atrocities; they existed only to kill Indians; they became white Indians more skilled in woodlore and violence than their adversaries. They were relentless and merciless.

Remini makes Jackson's hatred of Indians seem nearly inevitable, the shared mark of all backcountry settlers. There was, however, nothing inevitable about Indian hating in the South Carolina backcountry of Jackson's youth. James Merrell's *The Indians' New World*

gives a far more nuanced account of the world in which Jackson came of age. The Catawbas were an Indian people who lived near the Jacksons. They were allies of whites, first the British and then Americans, against other Indians. There was plenty of violence, conflict, and hatred between Indians and whites in the South Carolina backcountry but also enough cooperation to indicate possibilities of a grudging accommodation. This was not a

world in which Indian hating was the sole possible outcome of contact between the races.

In Remini's narrative the early mythic Jackson gradually yields to the historic Jackson, a young man on the make in Tennessee who did hate and distrust Indians. In a 1792 letter to John McKee, a commissioner sent to make peace with the Chickamauga branch of the Cherokees, Jackson condemned peace talks as "Delusions." Experience "teaches us that Tre-

aties answer No other Purpose than opening an Easy door for the Indian to pass through to Butcher our Citizens." Citizens were innocent victims of barbarous murderers, and the Creeks and Cherokees had failed to abide by existing treaties and surrender the "butchers who kill our people." "If they [the murderers] are not given up it is an infringement of the Treaty and a cause of war and the whole Nation ought to be Scourged for the infringement of the Treaty for as the Nation will not give murderers up when demanded it is a[n] acknowledgement of their Consent to the Commission of the Crime therefore all are Equally guilty." Jackson was not blind. He recognized that invasion of Indian lands and the murder of Indians by whites precipitated the chronic violence along the borders, but this would over time become yet another argument to dispossess Indians. Since whites desired their land – and it never occurred to that they didn't deserve it – then the only lasting solution was the removal of Indians.



Osceola was the most effective opponent of Jackson's Indian removal program, leading the Seminoles during the first years of the Second Seminole War until, as Remini reports, he was "tricked into attending a meeting under a flag of truce to negotiate the release of three captured chiefs. The great chief was seized and interned at Fort Marion in St. Augustine. After a few months he died on January 31, 1838."

What Jackson believed as a young man did not always accurately reflect or have much influence on actual American Indian policy, but as he rose in the world, what he believed became more important. It still might not always conform to official policy, but, as Remini notes: "On more than one occasion ... he would simply ignore government orders regarding the Indians and act according to his own perception of what was the proper course of action."

To act on his own authority, however, Jackson had to be in a position of authority, and he quickly discovered that by temperament he was happier as a soldier than as a politician. When elected to the U.S. Senate, he was out of his depth, and he resigned to become a judge. His real ambition was to be elected major general of the Tennessee militia. He achieved this in 1802 at the age of 35 and held the rank until he became a major general in the United States Army.

As a military officer Jackson would often disobey orders, but he would not brook insubordination in his inferiors. What Remini gives as examples of Jackson's fairness toward Indians – his insistence that militia officers not act on their own and that whites respect the boundaries of Indian cessions – seems more his insistence on being obeyed than any sense of obligation to Indians. White settlers, after all, continued quite routinely to invade Indian lands and Jackson, although he might evict American squatters, always insisted that their invasion was proof of the need for yet another cession.

Where Jackson's beliefs and actual American policy converged was on the issue of national security. Jackson did not invent the policy of Indian removal. Voluntary removal had been a goal of American policy since Jefferson, but Jackson gave the policy a military cast. Remini stresses Jackson's conviction that Indians were a threat to American security in case of foreign invasion. In the Southeast, the

United States feared both the Spanish, who retained Florida, and the British, who while no longer perched on the American border maintained ties with various Indian peoples that persisted from the days when West Florida was a British colony. The threat of a European-Indian alliance against the southern United States was both real and potent. It was the national security argument that made Jackson an early convert to Jefferson's idea of removing the Indians west of the Mississippi.

Remini's emphasis on national security as the heart of Jackson's conviction that removal was necessary is both convincing and original, and it strengthens the parallels between Indian removal and modern ethnic cleansing. The appeal to the right of the nation state to homogenize its population in the name of national security has been, according to Norman Naimark's *Fires of Hatred*, the justification used by virtually all those who support ethnic cleansing. In appealing to national security and the necessity of a loyal and homogeneous population to justify removing Indians, Jackson thus anticipated the justification for modern ethnic cleansings.

Jackson cultivated the image of the furious Indian hater, outraged at Indian depredations and utterly devoted to the security of the frontier. He would fight Indians in a cold-blooded fury, and the fury was usually triggered by a murder. In 1812, some Creeks led by Little Warrior killed two of Martha Crawley's children and took her captive. "My heart bleeds within me," Jackson thundered, "on the receipt [sic] of the news of the horrid cruelty and murders committed by a party of Creeks, on our innocent, wives and little babes. ... *They must be punished* – and our frontier protected."

Jackson's rage was sincere, but Remini slights the ways that it was also strategic. Little Warrior's murders did not lead to war because the Creek chief Big Warrior attacked Little Warrior's band, killing eight of them, and negotiations led to the release of Mrs. Crawley.

In *Sacred Revolt* Joel Martin has put Jackson's rhetoric of revenge within the context of land-hungry Tennessee planters and speculators who welcomed border hostilities that, in the words of the *Nashville Clarion*, "have supplied us with a pretext for dismemberment of their country." These planters were considerably more bloodthirsty than many of the actual border settlers who hoped for negotiations in the wake of the Crawley murders.

In 1812 the Creeks were on the verge of civil war. On one side were the Red Sticks, the prophetic faction of the Creeks, angry over, among other things, the continual loss of land to Americans. On the other side were their wealthier countrymen, many of whom were of mixed Indian/white descent, and their allies such as Big Warrior. Those Americans who desired Indian lands feared that the brewing civil war would remain strictly a Creek affair, and that the Red Sticks would not attack Americans, thus denying the United States a pretext for war. The Red Sticks were quite strategic in their threats. They were more than willing to attack Americans but only under certain conditions: if they invaded Indian country, or if the Red Sticks received British aid, or if Tecumseh, the great Shawnee leader of a pan-Indian alliance, succeeded in his war against the Americans in the north. Failing these conditions, they were not about to launch a suicidal war against the United States.

War between the Americans and the Creeks began at Burnt Corn when the Mississippi militia joined the Creek métis to attack a Red Stick caravan bringing in Spanish arms. Spanish arms going to Red Sticks certainly buttressed Jackson's fears about American security, and when the Creek War blended into the War of 1812, such fears became even more credible. Unfortunately for the Creeks, British aid did not materialize until they had suffered catastrophic losses at the hands of Jackson. Jackson, in alliance with the Creek

métis, the northern Creek chiefs, and the Cherokees, ravaged the Red Stick towns. "We shot them like dogs," Davy Crockett boasted of the destruction of Tallushatchee, and it was dogs that ate the mangled and burnt bodies of the dead Creeks. One hundred and eighty-six Creeks and five Americans died. Jackson adopted a baby boy found in the arms of the child's dead mother.

Most of the war was equally lopsided. The taking of the Red Stick stronghold of Horseshoe Bend resulted in more than 800 Red Stick deaths. The Americans counted their victims within the fort by cutting off their noses. They could only estimate those who died seeking to escape across the river that surrounded the fort on three sides. Even towns that surrendered to Jackson were not spared. The Hillbees came to terms with Jackson, but Jackson did not protest when he learned that his subordinates had sacked and burned their towns and killed more than 60 warriors. In all, about 15% of the Creek Nation died in the struggle. Jackson defeated the main body of the Red Sticks just as a British army appeared along the Gulf Coast. Jackson would, of course, defeat this army of Wellington's veterans at New Orleans and become a national hero.

Jackson, whom the Creeks named Sharp Knife, won the war and then helped negotiate the peace. In negotiations he proved as relentless an opponent of his Indian allies as of his Indian enemies. He demanded land cessions from his Creek and Cherokee allies as well as from his Creek enemies.

There were certain obstacles in international and national law to the specifics of Jackson's treaties, but he cavalierly brushed them aside. The treaty with the Creeks at Fort Jackson, for example, which ceded lands claimed by the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, presented problems for a nation pledged by law to "utmost good faith" in negotiations with Indians. When the United

States restored to the Cherokees part of the Creek cession and compensated them for property seized by Jackson's troops during the war, Jackson exploded. The Tennessee militia, he declared, would not enforce the new treaty. It was the work of "designing half-breeds and renegade white men." The "real Indians" did not care about this land. The United States backed down and delegated Jackson to negotiate a new treaty invalidating the agreement with the Cherokees. The general employed what would be his standard tools of treaty making: bribery and threats of overwhelming violence by the United States. When the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812, mandated that boundaries with the Indians go back to status quo ante, Jackson ignored it, enforced his own treaty, and neither the United States nor Great Britain did anything to stop him.

By 1816 Jackson had contempt for the whole treaty making process. Indians, he said, were subjects of the United States and the United States could dictate to them and take their land with compensation decided by the United States at its pleasure. Such dictation was, he argued, also best for the Indians. Unless restricted, supervised, and forced to become "civilized," they would become extinct. Their civilization and survival, he had already concluded, demanded their removal across the Mississippi, where portions of the Choctaws and Cherokees had already settled.

The treaties Jackson and other representatives of the United States negotiated in 1816 extended American settlements toward Mobile and Florida and the new president, James Monroe, rejoiced that soon "Florida, will hardly be considered by Spain, as a part of her dominions." Jackson, according to Remini, understood this quite literally – Florida was to become part of the United States – and he acted accordingly.

Florida became the symbol to Jackson and his supporters of the dangers that the combi-

nation of Indians and foreign powers posed to the United States. The defeated Red Sticks had fled to Florida, which was already home to the Seminoles. The Seminoles were Creeks who had been migrating into the region for years and were becoming a distinct people. Florida was a haven for runaway slaves as well, some of whom became Seminoles living in tributary villages. All of these groups were supplied by British traders and had the sympathetic attention of some British officials who resented the American flouting of the Treaty of Ghent.

The destruction of the so-called Negro Fort in 1816 by General Gaines was the opening volley in a rapidly escalating series of conflicts: first the attack on the runaway slaves, then war with the refugee Red Sticks, and, finally, the First Seminole War. In 1818 Jackson invaded Florida, largely on his own authority. Jackson, who thought the root of the problem was Spanish possession of Florida, initially pretended that the United States and Spain were allies against the Seminoles, but as the war went on he dropped this charade. He seized Pensacola and the Spanish Fort Carlos de Barrancas. He did all of this without the benefit of a declaration of war and amidst legitimate confusion, according to Remini, over what exactly the president had authorized him to do. His actions became more and more arbitrary. Without consulting Monroe, he hanged British citizens for inciting Indians to war against the United States. Congressional leaders began to fear that the United States had produced a man on horseback, its own Napoleon, who was a graver danger to the republic than the enemies whom he defeated. And like Napoleon, Jackson was immensely popular.

In the face of Jackson's popularity, Congress refused, albeit narrowly, to censure him for his actions. Spain, seeing the writing on the wall, ceded Florida to the United States in 1821. As for Jackson, he negotiated new treaties with

the Choctaws and Chickasaws with more large cessions of land. His threats became more blunt. If the Chickasaws refused to make a cession, he told them, the Americans would take the land anyway. These treaties allowed Jackson to make considerable money through land speculation, but his speculative profits were secondary to his desire for security and his continuing push for removal.

A quest for secure borders may very well explain Jackson's actions up until 1821, when Spain ceded Florida to the United States, but it doesn't seem to explain the geography of actual Indian removal in the 1830s and 1840s. With foreign powers eliminated from American borders in the Southeast, it is hard to see how security concerns could have motivated the final push to remove the so-called "Five Civilized Tribes" during the 1830s and 1840s. It was with Canada in the north that the United States still shared a border with territory controlled by a European power – Great Britain, which was then the greatest imperial power in the world. And yet it was the tribes closest to that border, among them most of the Iroquois and the Ojibwa, who would be most successful in resisting removal.

To explain this geography – to understand why some tribes removed and others did not – demands a knowledge not just of American policy but of Indians. But like Jackson, Remini has little interest in Indians per se. He sometimes displays a glaring ignorance about them. Remini writes of the Seminoles speaking *the* Creek tongue, Muskogean. Many, perhaps most, Creeks, however, were not native Muskogee speakers; the Creeks were a multilingual confederacy whose languages included Hitchiti and Yuchi. And although Indian/white negotiations are

central to Remini's argument, he is naively astonished at the kinship language of fathers and children that was basic to European and American negotiations with Indian peoples. He doesn't bother to explore why such language was used even though there is now a considerable literature on this diplomatic language, including an incisive article by Patricia Galloway that explains why the matrilineal tribes of the Southeast were more than willing to treat the whites as "fathers."¹ In their matrilineal families uncles had authority; fathers were expected to be generous, but they lacked the ability to command.

In an odd way, Remini mimics part of Jackson's own world view even as he criticizes its moral poverty. In Jackson's view only a small elite of mixed descent who manipulated the majority of their tribespeople desired to live like white people. "Real" Indians were hunters and would willingly remove to the West. Remini largely concurs: "most Indians at that time had no burning desire to become cultural white men." Framing the question as a choice between, for example, living as Choctaws and becoming "cultural white men" is, however, misleading. These nations were changing and changing rapidly: they were becoming Christian, men were turning to farming and stock-raising, matrilineal descent was giving way to patrilineal descent, and tribal governments were becoming centralized. As William McGloughlin has noted, the Cherokees were in the midst of their own process of evolving from an ethnic nation – defined by shared language and similar culture – to a nation state.² Christian revivals swept the Choctaw nation. Missionaries established schools. Indians made all these changes and more not to become "cultural white men" but to remain in their

1 Patricia Galloway, "The Chief Who Is Your Father': Choctaw and French Views of the Diplomatic Relation," in Peter Wood et al., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 254-78.

2 William G. McGloughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

homelands.

Such sweeping changes divided the Indian nations of the Southeast, and these divisions were critical to the complex tribal politics of Indian removal. Successful resistance to removal and land cessions bolstered the prestige of Christian, educated leaders of mixed descent – reformers such as David Folsom and Peter Pitchlynn among the Choctaws. It also gave them the authority to push far reaching political, cultural, and economic changes. Remini gives no indication of how the failure of the Americans to wring all the land they wanted from the Choctaws at the Treaty of Doak's Stand buttressed the standing of emerging Choctaw leaders of mixed descent. These "sons of white men" gained followers within the nation by reassuring other Choctaws of their patriotism. On the other hand, Choctaws who opposed the erosion of older practices that the reformers demanded were sometimes willing to make cessions in exchange for treaty provisions that weakened the reformers and the reformers' missionary allies. The old chiefs, men such as Mushulatubbee, smarting from their loss of power and their revulsion at the new policies, became more willing to cooperate with removal.

Remini is also sloppy in his account of the legal relations of these Indian nations to the United States. American recognition of Indian sovereignty is one of the elements marking a difference between American Indian policy and ethnic removal. Remini elides that difference. Cherokee efforts to oppose removal led them into the Supreme Court and resulted in the famous Cherokee decisions written by John Marshall, which resonate down to this day. Remini, however, equates Marshall's decision that the Indians were semi-sovereign, domestic, dependent nations with Jackson's views, which were very nearly the opposite. In 1818, while negotiating with the Chickasaws, Jackson had reacted angrily to Chief James Colbert's insistence

that the Chickasaws would sell their lands for the same price that the United States got for theirs. "These are high toned sentiment for an Indian," Jackson wrote, "and they must be taught to know that they do not Possess sovereignty, with the right of domain." Remini's claim that the Supreme Court confirmed Jackson's view is wrong. When the Court ruled that Indian nations were semi-sovereign, it decided that although they could not have independent relations with foreign nations, they could have treaty relations with the United States. They controlled their own tribal domains. What semi-sovereignty looks like in practice has been a legal question for the last 170 years. It is certainly, however, something far different from Jackson's view of Indians as subjects. American recognition of a limited Indian sovereignty remains one of the differences between, let's say, the United States relation with Indian peoples and the relations Serbia desired with the Kosovars.

This simplification of the legal relation of Indian peoples to the United States and of the internal political and social workings of their societies are examples of the lopsidedness of this book. When writing about Jackson and American society, Remini is alert to complexity and change. He would never write of the Jacksonian era without noting the market revolution, the rise of democracy, and Christian evangelism, but he ignores these things or their equivalents when he writes about Indians. He instead makes the choice a simple one: cultural preservation and independence in the West or extinction in the East. Having simplified Indians, he can simplify their choices.

In Remini's narrative, Jackson shed his Indian hating as he aged. Remini isn't all that clear why this happens, but by the time Jackson assumed the presidency he was supposedly a man with the best interests of Indians, as well as whites, at heart. He was forced to act because of his countrymen who maintained

their old Indian hating ways: “the worst in white culture seemed to be destroying what was left of Indian life and civilization.” He had to save the tribes from extinction.

There was, however, no national consensus that Indians and whites could not live in proximity to each other – albeit unequally – as tribes like the Catawbias and their South Carolina neighbors had been doing for years. Nor, as Remini himself realizes, was there anything inevitable about Indian removal as a policy. Remini asserts that if Jackson had not been elected president, then the Southeastern nations would not have been removed. As it was, the policy sparked bitter opposition in Congress, among Protestant evangelicals, and among large sections of the public.

Removal may not have been inevitable, but it was, Remini insists, necessary. If removal had not taken place, he asserts, the so-called “Five Civilized Tribes” would have vanished. Claiming to know what would have happened if an action had not taken place usually gives historians pause. And one would expect that having made the claim, Remini would offer a systematic defense of his position. He does nothing of the sort. His evidence of what would have happened in the absence of removal is largely contained in his litany of tribes destroyed by the advance of whites: “the Yamasees and Delawares,” “the Yamasees, Mohegans, Pequots, Delawares and Naragansetts.” These are his examples of extinction.

Having offered them as evidence of what the ultimate fate of the Cherokees and the rest would have been without removal, it would have been prudent to make sure that these peoples had actually disappeared. The Yamasees, victims of colonial wars and disease, certainly did – their remnants were assimilated into other peoples. The Mohegans, Pequots, Delawares and Naragansetts, on the other hand, remained stubbornly present. They existed as coherent, if much diminished and besieged, communities during Jackson’s lifetime. All

exist today as organized entities, as New England gamblers can attest. The last two centuries have not been pleasant for these peoples, but they have not disappeared.

It would have been equally prudent for Remini to discuss the obvious counterexamples to his thesis: those tribes who resisted removal in the 1830s and 1840s and remained in their homelands. Remini gives them only a couple of sentences. They deserve more attention. To the north along the border with Canada from Maine to Wisconsin, Indian peoples resisted removal and they continue to exist as organized groups today. In the Southeast, groups of Cherokees, Choctaws, and Seminoles – among others – managed to escape removal and maintain their identity as a people with language and cultural knowledge intact. The Mississippi Choctaws and the North Carolina Cherokees and the Florida Seminoles are all federally recognized tribes today.

Finally, Remini’s claim that removal contributed to the Indians’ survival is asserted but never explored. The tribes that removed to Indian Territory did not find American protection. They were swept up in the Civil War, subjected to further land cessions after the war, and then forced to allot their lands, dismantle most of their governments, and submit to the state of Oklahoma beginning in the late nineteenth-century. How these catastrophes contributed to their survival is not revealed.

American beneficence in Remini’s account is the beneficence of the United States in protecting Indians from the American people. The American left hand was, in effect, trying to protect Indians from the right hand. “Westerners,” Remini writes, “knew only one thing: Indians were a threat to their lives, and that danger must be eliminated – permanently.” Up to a point his is a legitimate argument. American citizens did repeatedly disregard American laws and murder and dispossess Indians, but

Remini carries the argument too far.

The American government was not only complicit in what happened to Southeastern Indians, but it was the primary agent of the horrors of removal. Indians could not counter the organized force of the states and the federal government. What secured Indian land cessions to the United States was not the violence of frontiersman versus warrior. Indians could often muster a counter force sufficient to cow intruders. Indian retaliation is, after all, what often outraged Jackson. And when Indians retaliated, American settlers usually howled for troops to protect them. These troops were the organized violence of the state and by the 1820s Southeastern Indians could no longer counter that violence. Removal was nothing less than a modern state enforcing its will, often over heated internal opposition, against weaker peoples.

In arguing that removal was beneficent not only in intent but also in outcome, Remini leans heavily on the scholarship of Francis Paul Prucha. Prucha, in a magisterial series of studies of American Indian policy, has argued convincingly that American policy has historically been in the hands not of Indian haters but of people who denoted themselves the "Friends of the Indian." Their intentions were benevolent even if their means were often autocratic and arbitrary.

Prucha, however, has not contended that the outcome of this policy was good for the Indians. Instead, his books drive home a chilling conclusion that should inform all efforts to help Indian peoples without their consent: many of the horrors inflicted on Indian peoples have come from their "friends" and not their enemies.³

"To his dying day ...," Remini concludes, "Andrew Jackson genuinely believed that what he had accomplished rescued these people from inevitable annihilation. And although that statement sounds monstrous, and although no one in the modern world wishes to accept or believe it, that is exactly what he did. He saved the Five Civilized Nations from probable extinction."

Remini is wrong on nearly all counts. He is wrong because there is no evidence that it was removal that insured the survival of the "Five Civilized Tribes." It is an assertion that he doesn't even bother to support in any systematic way. He is wrong that no one wishes to believe this. There are, unfortunately, plenty of people in the modern world who would be more than happy to believe that removal insured the ultimate survival of the Indians of the Southeast. And it is a comforting lesson for those contemplating similar policies elsewhere. His statement not only sounds monstrous, it is monstrous. *gb*

3 Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).