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Jeffrey S. Prushankin. *A Crisis in Confederate Command: Edmund Kirby Smith, Richard Taylor, and the Army of the Trans-Mississippi.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005. xx + 308 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-3088-9.

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A Clash of Personalities in the Trans-Mississippi

Jeffrey S. Prushankin, a lecturer in military history at Penn State University, Abington, adds to both the fertile arena of leadership studies and to the growing body of literature on the Trans-Mississippi Theater during the American Civil War in *A Crisis in Confederate Command.* This theater contained the areas west of the Mississippi River and, as Prushankin discusses in his introduction, this was a region with far fewer troops, memorable battles, and documentation when compared to the theaters east of the Mississippi River. For these reasons, the Trans-Mississippi was pushed to the back of history's closest for quite some time. In the last twenty years, a steadily increasing body of work has been published on the military and political situation for this region.

The author's focus for this work is on the stormy relationship between Lt. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith, commander of the Department and the Army of the Trans-Mississippi, and his subordinate, Maj. Gen. Richard S. Taylor. This examination of their relationship serves as the backdrop for a more general view of Confederate military activities in Louisiana and Arkansas. The author believes that this tandem deserves to be placed among the other important tandems of generals in the Civil War, such as Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson or Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. Prushankin argues that "Smith and Taylor worked together to achieve one of the Confederacy's greatest military accomplishments of the war. Unfortunately, they tarnished their own reputations in the process" (p. xx).

A concise and informative prologue lays out the history of each man before they came to serve with each other in 1862. The author adeptly shows how the experiences of Smith and Taylor, in war and peace, influenced their military thought and led to a relationship that was bitter with recriminations long after the war. Smith developed a dislike of strategic turning movement and the frontal assault, both mainstays of the Mexican War, due to the high casualties those movements incurred. He preferred a strong defensive stance based on a cautious approach to war. The idea of glory was of a great importance to Smith and he sought to have the spotlight shine on his military exploits, preferably without any companions on the stage. Taylor was a temperamental man who was often ill. A politician with little military experience, he became a student of the art of war under "Stonewall" Jackson. Taylor came to believe in concentrating all possible troops, striking quickly at the enemy while using the land's topography to his full advantage, and then pursuing the broken enemy army.

This book is organized in a narrative format. Chapters 1 through 4 deal with military events in Louisiana and Arkansas in 1862 and 1863. Covering the details of the campaign, the author highlights the growing discord between Smith and Taylor due to their different strategic ideologies. Smith, a disciple of Gen. Joseph Johnston, wanted to trade space for time and the ability to concentrate his military forces and to choose when to fight. Taylor advocated taking the offensive in an effort to strike a numerically superior enemy in fast hard marches, in an attempt to seize the initiative as Jackson had in the Shenandoah Valley. Smith also owed his appointment to Missouri and Arkansas politicians, which led him to focus more on defending those two states. Taylor was a native Louisianan determined to protect his state before others. One of the most contentious issues between Smith and Taylor was over where Maj. Gen. John G. Walker's Texas Division should serve, as both commanders believed his soldiers were necessary for their operations. As time passed, the relationship and the communication between the generals slowly soured.

The remainder of the book analyzes the Red River Campaign and its aftermath, as the relationship between Smith and Taylor deteriorated even further to become a bitter and cantankerous personal feud. Prushankin

adeptly covers the Red River Campaign, while bringing the relationship between Smith and Taylor to the forefront of his narrative. Their differing strategic viewpoints came to head as two Union armies converged on Shreveport, Louisiana from different directions: one via the Red River from the southeast and the other from Arkansas. Taylor disobeyed orders to avoid combat, which led to a Confederate victory in the campaign, though both Union armies escaped destruction. Taylor then attacked Smith's strategy and management of the army in a directly insubordinate way. Ironically, Taylor would soon after be promoted to Lieutenant General and assigned to command the Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana. Smith had advocated this promotion due to Taylor's performance during the Red River Campaign. The end of this campaign marked the start of a war of words between Smith, Taylor, and their respective defenders.

This book is a delight to read. It is well written, well organized, and it contains many useful maps for referencing events covered in the text. The author draws on a wide variety of primary and secondary sources and the twenty-three page bibliography is an excellent asset for any student of the Trans-Mississippi region during the American Civil War. The author's final chapter is probably the best portion of the book. Prushankin discusses the postwar debate over the leadership and strategy of Taylor and Smith, and he analyzes the issue of leadership in military organizations and the effects of differing strategic ideologies between superiors and subordinates. The strengths and weaknesses of both Smith and Taylor are discussed in detail.

In his conclusion, Prushankin argues that Taylor's desire to destroy the Red River invasion force would have been the much more strategically influential than Smith's chase after the Union Army coming from Arkansas. "Smith's pride, poor judgment, and lack of military skill prevented Taylor" from potentially winning a victory that could have greatly effected the military and political situation east of the Mississippi River (p. 233). Prushankin's book is an excellent addition to the scholarly literature on the Trans-Mississippi and to leadership studies.

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