

IDEAS AND OPINIONS

AMÉRICA EN EUROPA. By GERMÁN ARCINIEGAS. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1975.)

LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT AND IDEOLOGY. By MIGUEL JORRÍN AND JOHN D. MARTZ. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1970. Pp. 453. \$12.50.)

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA. By FRANK TANNENBAUM. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974. Pp. 250. \$10.00.)

HISPANOAMÉRICA, SUS RAZAS Y CIVILICACIONES. By EDMUND STEPHEN URBANSKI. (New York: Eliseo Torres and Sons, 1973. Pp. 325.)

The political scientist interested in Latin America has become accustomed to books focusing on the current or recent holders of governmental power, emphasizing economic causality and laying emphasis on class struggle and foreign intervention. But, like a peaceful stream hidden in a corner of an otherwise rugged and dramatic landscape, an older tradition of writing carries serenely on. Also purporting to be descriptive in some sense of the social reality of Latin America, this more belletristic tradition moves in a realm of ideas, not of GNP statistics; of Greek and Roman precedents, not of shantytowns; of word derivations, not of prison cells. The books by Urbanski and Arciniegas—not the other two reviewed here—are in this tradition.

A classic example of the genre is the book by Urbanski. Taking as his subject matter “mentality . . . cultural life, thoughts, daily practices, ambitions and disillusion” (p. 14), he writes gracefully and discursively, dealing with topics as they occur to him at whatever length or depth takes his fancy. Stress is laid on the colonial period; there are extended discussions of terminological questions; impressionistic contrasts are drawn between Hispanic America and Anglo-America; and where references are made to other works, they are likely to be works of literature or essays in the same tradition. The book may have some value for beginning students in a course on Latin American civilization taught with a literary emphasis.

Germán Arciniegas has a more specific theme for his book: the idea of America in Europe. Ranging widely indeed, from Plato’s myth of the lost Atlantis to the impression made on Darwin by the fauna of the Galápagos, the book is unsystematic but instructive and entertaining, containing obscure but sometimes fascinating items of arcane information. Not only the obvious characters like Columbus and Vespucci are introduced, but also Thomas More, Garibaldi, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Josephine Beauharnais. At times of course the play with ideas gets further- and further-fetched—for example, the extended comparison between Marco Polo and Columbus—but that is part of the game.

The collection of essays by the late Frank Tannenbaum draws together six unpublished papers and seven essays already published. There is more piety

than good judgment in the inclusion of some of the former pieces; there are sometimes good reasons why papers remain unpublished, and I hope my literary executors will be less devoted. At his best, however, Tannenbaum is superlative. The first piece, which bears the same title as the book and touches on most of the key ideas that characterize Tannenbaum's view of Latin America, reminds the reader of how much the contemporary study of Latin America owes to his insights. In the later chapters, however, some of his characteristic weak spots emerge: the generalizations about Latin America that are really only statements about Mexico; the inaccuracy of his attempts to project future trends; an excessive faith in North American goodness; his emphasis on persistent elements in the life of a region at the expense of appreciating the fundamental changes that have occurred. Nevertheless, the stock of ideas we owe to Frank Tannenbaum is impressive: the contrast between the instability of national governments and the tenacity of local authority centered in the hacienda; the character of the Hispanic tradition as authoritarian, bureaucratic, and centralized; the crucial importance of the rupture of legitimate authority at the time of independence; the treatment of the Negro as a person, not a chattel; the crucial role of the president in national politics and his control over the succession; the critical importance of rural education for development. The style is familiar Tannenbaum: authoritative, creative, synthesizing.

The collection is introduced by a remarkably fine biographical essay by the editors, which details Tannenbaum's progress from Austrian immigrant to farm boy to waiter to organizer with the IWW to prison inmate to Columbia undergraduate, soldier, journalist, and university professor. It comes as a surprise to the Latin Americanist to learn that only six of Tannenbaum's fifteen books dealt with Latin America; he seemed to think and write about each of the experiences and environments through which he passed: the labor union, the prison, the university, the army, the U.S. South. Yet his interests and approach were all of a piece. In a sort of neo-Hegelian fashion, he tried to penetrate to the organizing principle, or idea, that animated each institution or region. While this approach emphasizes some elements of the picture at the expense of others, it also casts light on areas that were obscure. The book is a reminder of how much we have lost with Frank Tannenbaum's death.

The Jorin-Martz book is a curious hybrid. At his death, Miguel Jorin had left a manuscript on nineteenth-century political thought. His widow gave this to John Martz, who completed the book by writing a section on twentieth-century thought, rather longer than the original Jorin manuscript. The result is likely to be of considerable value for reference purposes, but might be confusing to the student. The Jorin section is clearly and concisely written, at an elementary level. Dealing with the lives of the figures as well as their work, it is easy to read but absolutely conventional. No new ground is broken, no surprises sprung.

Although he has attempted to parallel the organization of the first half of the book, Martz's treatment of the twentieth century is written for a rather more sophisticated audience and reflects a different concept of what political thought

is. Dealing not only with the well-known leading figures conventionally considered formal political thinkers, but with concrete political movements and sequences of events, Martz discerns political thought worthy of analysis where another might see only pamphleteering and opportunism. Perhaps because the period with which he deals is more accessible to us, Martz's treatment is denser and more detailed than that of his collaborator. Thus his contribution represents a substantial achievement but the material presented is less digestible. The contrast with the premasticated certainties of Jorrín's treatment of the nineteenth century is striking, and the reader can only wish that there had been a way to blend the two halves of the book and strike a balance in the range of material covered, the clarity of the presentation, and the intellectual level at which it was pitched.

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