

LATIN AMERICAN MOVEMENTS FOR INDEPENDENCE

THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION, 1789–1804. By THOMAS O. OTT. (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1973. Pp. 232. \$8.50.)

GÉNESIS DEL GOBIERNO CONSTITUCIONAL EN MÉXICO: 1808–1820. By ANNA MACÍAS. (México: Sep/Setentas, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1973. Pp. 189. \$10.00.)

COUNTERREVOLUTION: THE ROLE OF THE SPANIARDS IN THE INDEPENDENCE OF MEXICO, 1808–1838. By ROMEO FLORES CABALLERO. (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1974. Pp. 186. \$10.95.)

THE AFTERMATH OF REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA. By TULLIO HALPERIN-DONGHI. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973. Pp. 150. \$2.95.)

THE SPANISH-AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT. By JAY KINSBRUNER. (Hinsdale, Ill.: The Dryden Press, 1973. Pp. 144.)

The Haitian Revolution is a solid narrative of political and military developments in Saint-Domingue between 1789 and 1804, when independence was achieved. The author examines the impact of the French Revolution in creating the multifaceted struggle among French bureaucrats, *grands blancs*, *petits blancs*, and mulattoes that paved the way for a slave rebellion in August 1791. Complex domestic and international events thereafter, which included the formal abolition of slavery in 1794, permitted the rise to preeminence of a former slave, Toussaint Louverture, who became lieutenant governor of a semi-independent Saint-Domingue in 1796 and governor-general in 1797. In treating the semimythical figure of Toussaint, Ott notes simply that the black leader was committed to emancipation, to a multiracial society, and to the Machiavellian pursuit of personal power as ruler of a semiautonomous colony. The final unraveling of the more than a decade of civil and international war began with Napoleon's attempt in 1802 to restore effective control over the colony and reinstate slavery. Toussaint surrendered, but the Leclerc expedition was soon destroyed and the white caste liquidated in the process.

Within the limits he has set for himself, Ott has produced a well researched and carefully considered study. He is particularly desirous of demonstrating that Marxist interpretations do not fit the empirical data. The failure of the *grands blancs* to cement a class alliance with the wealthy mulattoes against *petits blancs* and slaves is evidence of the importance of noneconomic determinants of behavior. The exact nature of the interplay of race and economic status is not, unfortunately, elucidated by this study. Ott analyzes developments in terms of the interrelationship among five groups which he treats sometimes as monoliths and other times not. He mentions the divisions in the ranks of the French bureaucrats when these clearly influenced the course of the revolution. He is careful to point out, in order to attack the thesis of class warfare, that the actions of the slaves were

characterized by much diversity. He does little, however, to indicate with precision the divisions within each of the other three groups. We are told that some grands blancs supported the English and Spanish invasions, that many grands blancs émigrés were lured back to the colony by Toussaint and apparently were willing to accept the new status quo, and that the grands blancs, or some of them, supported the Napoleonic attempt to restore slavery.

The situation with regard to the other groups is equally hazy. We are told little about the effects of events on those whites who made up the big merchants, the petty merchants, the artisans, or the city rabble. Nor do we get a clear picture of the group classified as mulatto and free black. Ott explains that some mulattoes were wealthy slaveowners, but most of them occupied less exalted positions. Consequently, when the author mentions the activities of any single group, we cannot be certain that that group acted as monolithically as he sometimes implies.

These observations should be viewed simply as questions for further research. Ott cannot be expected to do everything in a single book and the problems I am posing would require much investigation. In short, the Haitian Revolution is still a fertile field for research, especially for those interested in socioracial and economic problems. But Ott's study is now mandatory reading for investigators in this area.

Using R. R. Palmer's thesis concerning the "Age of the Democratic Revolutions" as a framework, *Génesis del gobierno constitucional en México*, by Anna Macías, seeks to trace the development of political liberal ideas among Mexican revolutionary leaders from 1808 to the promulgation of the Constitution of Apatzingán in 1814. In attempting to clarify this hitherto obscure aspect of Mexican historiography, Macías has probably determined with reasonable accuracy the true authors of the constitution and which documents and constitutions were most important as models for the Charter of Apatzingán. A further objective of her study was to explain why the constitution fell into obscurity after 1814 and has received so little attention since.

The author's conclusions in each of the abovementioned areas can be quickly summarized. The probable authors of the Constitution of Apatzingán were Andrés Quintana Roo, José Manuel de Herrera, José María Sotero Castañeda, Manuel de Alderete y Soria, José María Ponce de León, and Cornelio Ortiz de Zárate. Though Macías finds a few original ideas in the charter, it was based primarily on the French Constitutions of 1791, 1793, and 1795, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the Spanish Constitution of 1812, the writings of the Spanish publicist Alberto Lista, and, in the case of a few articles, on the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780. According to the author, the most striking aspects of the projected system were a weak plural executive, a small but omnipotent legislature, and a special tribunal for conducting *residencias* in imitation of old regime practice. After a military coup dissolved the short-lived civilian government in late 1815, the constitution was ignored. When independence was achieved, the charter had nothing to offer either Iturbide, a monarchist, or the republicans who succeeded him, for whom the U.S. had now become the model.

Macías defends the worth of her study by saying: "Although the Constitution of Apatzingán never became the fundamental law of the country, its liberal

principles are the basis of the political life of modern Mexico, and in this lies its significance." The author's scholarship and clear expository style cannot be faulted, though her book has little to offer the scholar interested in matters other than politics and political theory. It is as a contribution to Mexican patriotic history that the study has significance.

In *Counterrevolution*, Romeo Flores Caballero argues that the expulsion of Spaniards from Mexico in 1827 and 1829 was not the reason for the ruin of the economy and its subsequent penetration by foreigners. He says, rather, that the fortunes of peninsulars had been declining steadily since early in the century, that the economic difficulties of the 1820s were owing to numerous factors, and that the expulsions themselves were halfhearted political moves that exempted wealthy Spaniards.

Flores's thesis, as stated, is only partially convincing. Certain aspects of his study are self-contradictory and some do not square with other research in the area. For example, real wealth, he says, was in agriculture and mining, areas dominated by creoles. These conclusions are at variance with those of D. A. Brading, who found creoles confined primarily to mortgaged estates, the church, and lesser bureaucratic posts. Flores also states that the Royal Law of Consolidation of 1804 had a particularly baneful effect on peninsulars. This thesis does not correlate well even with the material presented by the author. He quotes contemporary documents complaining that landowning and mining would be hard hit by implementation of the law but that commerce would not. Another document cited estimated that 90 percent of the landowners, but only two-thirds of the merchants, would be adversely affected by the immediate calling in of loans. Flores's data, then, seem to support Brading's view that creole landowners were nearly all heavily mortgaged, whereas peninsular merchants controlled the big money in Mexico.

In his discussion of the evolution of the Spanish problem in the 1820s, Flores is more convincing in demonstrating that the expulsion laws themselves, which wealthy Spaniards generally managed to avoid, were largely political responses to partisan strife between *yorkinos* and *escoceses* and to popular agitation. However, in arguing that the loss of Spanish capital was not the sole reason for Mexico's economic difficulties, and that the formal expulsions were not the source of such losses as did occur, the author is perhaps attacking a straw man. Most scholars are aware that numerous factors converged to weaken the economy; they argue only that the withdrawal of peninsular capital and expertise had considerable impact. Flores's own sources bear out this viewpoint. He cites contemporary documents decrying the voluntary emigration of Spaniards with their capital. H. G. Ward, according to the author, realized the serious damage being wrought by disinvestment and observed that new foreign capital was entering too slowly to compensate. The major drawback of Flores's study is not the valuable data he has collected with laborious research. Rather, he has defined his thesis in the wrong terms and then distorted the interpretation of some of his data to make them fit.

Halperin-Donghi's *The Aftermath of Revolution*, a work of synthesis based mainly on secondary sources and memoirs, seeks to define the extent of the

changes wrought by the independence period and to explain why, in retrospect, so little did change. One of the most obvious answers to the latter problem was that the immediate postwar elites were so preoccupied with what seemed to them to be imminent cataclysm that they clung to every cohesive institution and idea at their disposition.

Most of the author's conclusions as he surveys postindependence Latin America are far from surprising. The new governments, based on recently developed structures and forced to contend with politicized military men, were obligated to compromise with a more extensive political clientele than had existed under the old regime. Though the degree of civilian control over the military varied from country to country, the armed forces could generally be relied on to act as bulwarks against social upset. Most officers were drawn at least from marginal or local elites, and the few who had come up from the masses were quickly socialized. Halperin notes also that some dark-skinned marginal elites from the old regime now intruded themselves into the picture and that the urban masses of the artisan type had become a political factor. Indians and blacks remained fairly quiescent in spite of much publicized fears of the latter. Thus, the author concludes, though the caste hierarchy remained substantially intact, racial lines had become somewhat more blurred.

In the area of economics, Halperin contends that foreign merchants, especially the English, quickly took control of overseas trade and domestic wholesaling, flooded the market with consumer goods, and set in motion the well known demonstration effect with all its implications. Consumption patterns altered dramatically, a chronic imbalance of trade developed, and capital stock was rapidly depleted. The results were high interest rates and a severe shortage of capital for heavy investment such as that needed to revive the mining industry. Only enterprises requiring little capital were able to expand. Though foreign capital, chiefly in the form of loans, entered optimistically at first, the crash of 1825 created a generation of caution.

The most interesting of the author's observations concerns political theory. He argues that postindependence Latin America, unlike contemporary Europe, was unable to develop a consistent conservative ideology. Neither the throne, which had been repudiated, nor the altar, which could not even procure papal recognition, could serve as a pillar of legitimacy. Latin American conservatives found themselves unable to repudiate fully a revolutionary past that still weighed heavily upon them and that prevented their full acceptance by much of Europe.

Halperin's study is tightly written, presumes an acquaintance with the area, and is somewhat slow reading. It is useful as a summary of conditions in Latin America circa 1830, but, as in most surveys, the generalizations may not be uniformly applicable to the entire region. The author knows the Argentine and Chilean areas well, but his treatment of other countries is sometimes spotty depending on the topic.

The Spanish-American Independence Movement is an attempt to place the independence period within a broad theory of development. The author is influenced by the dependency theory of such writers as André Gunder Frank, though he disclaims unqualified acceptance of Frank's ideas. Kinsbruner argues that

Spanish America was from the outset essentially capitalist rather than feudal, that its colonial history was an example of capitalist dependence through mercantilism, and that the commercial-agrarian-mining elites who initiated and achieved independence qualified in every way as classical liberal bourgeois. They were, he generalizes, committed to stable government, the rule of law, technological innovation, and an open society. Kinsbruner states further that the new leaders represented "a dominant and triumphant active citizenry, afraid of neither capitalism nor foreigners." This being so, neocolonialism under the control of metropolises other than Spain was not inevitable in 1825. It only emerged gradually because the persistence of neofeudal elements ill-prepared the region to compete with other liberal bourgeois economies.

Kinsbruner's approach to the independence period is so broad and theoretical that a major critique is impossible within the limitations imposed by this review. In the narrowest sense, it can be argued that he does a great deal of generalizing with a paucity of hard data; that some of his information is erroneous; that he relies too much on the rather unique case of Chile, which he knows well; and that his use of such terms as "feudalism," "neo-feudal capitalism," "profit-maximizing mentality," "bourgeoisie," and "capitalism" presents many problems of definition. In a broader sense, it would be proper to ask why, if the Latin American elites were dedicated to stable government, the rule of law, technological innovation, and an open society, they have been so uniformly unsuccessful in attaining these objectives. To assign the blame, as Kinsbruner does, to the persistence of feudal survivals is to beg the question. Had the Latin American elites been truly modernizing, as the European and Japanese were, they would have moved quickly to liquidate the remnants of feudalism.

And yet, Kinsbruner is striving to come to grips with what has been the key problem not only of the independence period but of all Latin American history—modernization, or, as most writers prefer, development. Only a few independent nations managed to modernize in the nineteenth century under the private enterprise system then prevailing, namely, the Western European and Anglo-Saxon nations and Japan. The Latin American countries, though politically independent, failed to modernize. Why? The most immediate answer is that they had no sooner destroyed their dependent relationship with Spain than they replaced it with similar ties to other metropolises. Kinsbruner rejects this idea because his studies of Chile do not bear out the thesis of immediate foreign penetration. This may be true, and if so it makes the next question all the more compelling. Regardless of the lapse of time involved in the process, why did Latin American leaders permit their nations to become economic dependencies of Europe? The Japanese revolutionaries of 1868, by comparison, did not.

Having progressed this far, it seems to me that we must admit that the Latin American elites were not equipped to modernize their nations. They did not destroy the remnants of feudalism; they did not expand education in an effort to incorporate their populations into genuine nation-states; they did not strive to bring about racial and cultural integration; they did not emphasize engineering, science, and technical studies; they did not use tariff policy and export subsidies as a means to develop national industry; they did not modernize agriculture; they

did not have the self-confidence to do other than to imitate whatever ideas were fashionable in London or Paris; and they did not have enough of that intangible element called nationalism to perceive foreigners as a threat. In short, I see little evidence to indicate that the Latin American elites compared favorably as modernizers to those of Western Europe or Japan. This being so, studies of the independence period must seek to determine why the Latin American revolutionaries were so traditionalistic.

What I am arguing is that certain powerful and strategically situated groups in a society, which I have referred to collectively as the elites, set the social tone for the majority. If, therefore, the value system of the Latin American masses remained largely unchanged as a result of the wars for independence, it can only be because the postwar leadership was far from committed to the supposed liberal ideals which intellectuals and constitution-makers were expounding. Many empirical studies are yet needed to determine which specific groups were patriots, royalists, constitutionalists, or absolutists, and why. Studies of early post-independence political alignments would also be of capital importance. It has been generalized, for instance, that independence came easily after 1820 because absolutists, both creole and peninsular, abandoned liberal Spain for the patriot cause. What political role did these people play in the new governments? How influential were they socially and economically?

Kinsbruner has tended to ignore the large number of confirmed absolutists in America who stuck it out for a long time with little help from Spain and who must have had some influence after independence. At the same time, he has imputed a certain ideological uniformity to the patriots which, I believe, investigation will prove to be groundless. Only many careful studies of factional alignments based on race, region, and socioeconomic position before, during, and after independence will help to place Latin American emancipation in broad perspective. I think that such studies will reveal that well-situated creole rebels were motivated far more by the desire for wealth and power than by ideology.

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