

of the inclusion of President Trujillo's letter of November 1, 1943, to former President Lescot. This communication is of far more significance as an indication of the close personal relations once prevailing between the two men and their subsequent antipathy for one another, than as a document bearing on the frontier problem. It reveals the extent to which Lescot had put himself in Trujillo's debt in his effort to become president of Haiti, as well as his subsequent efforts to sever the connection. It is perhaps not without significance that the anti-Lescot revolution of January, 1946, followed shortly after the circulation in Haiti of numerous copies of a French translation of this letter.

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*Casa León y su tiempo. (Aventura de un anti-héroe.)* By MARIO BRICEÑO-IRAGORRY. (Caracas: Editorial Elite, 1946. Pp. xxiii, 242. Paper.)

A work constituting an indictment of a *prócer* and a friend of Bolívar by a competent Venezuelan scholar is intriguing. In contrast to the self-sacrificing patriot type, Spanish-born Antonio Fernández de León is depicted as an unpatriotic, greedy landowner and office seeker. During his time, *circa* 1770-1823, De León endeavored to preserve his status by machinations that would do credit to a Fouché.

The León brothers, Lorenzo, Esteban and Antonio, held, respectively, in colonial Venezuela, the positions of secretary to the bishop, *racionero* of the ecclesiastical *cabildo*, and chancellor of the University of Caracas; intendent and head of the *real consulado*; and lawyer and administrator of the tobacco monopoly and *regidor* of the *audiencia* of Caracas. Don Antonio acquired large landholdings to which he added those of his wife. He marketed his produce through his own commercial firm. Ever gracious, he won the respect of other *peninsulares* and befriended the leading creoles. He made gifts to the church and government and entertained lavishly, developing a sense of proprietorship which he valued above honor, friendship, and duty in the turbulent period following the French invasion of Spain.

Don Antonio's initial effort to keep abreast of his time—the establishment of an independent junta in 1808—failed. He then went to Spain, where brother Esteban was now a member of the Council of the Indies; and with his aid Don Antonio, instead of being punished, was rewarded for distinguished services. He returned to Caracas as the Marqués de Casa León to take part in the creation of the 1810 junta which appointed him president of the *tribunal del apelaciones*. Re-

luctant to accept the exuberant spirit of the followers of Miranda, he gave up his post and did not support the constitution of 1811, for it granted privileges to the lower classes. As royalist resistance increased, the *mantuanos* contacted the royalist leader, Monteverde. Wily Don Antonio, in fact, reached him first, for he represented Miranda in arranging the capitulation of 1812. With the change in tide, the *anti-héroe* became an uncompromising royalist. He accepted the post of intendent and became a member of the *junta de proscripciones* wherein he acted as informer and judged his former patriot associates. Yet with the coming of Bolívar in 1813, he resigned, mended his patriot fences, and became director of the treasury under Bolívar, who valued his worth as an administrator and his hold over the *godo* population. With equal ease he transferred his allegiance to Boves and was rewarded by appointments to major positions, in which he served with distinction, sequestering Bolívar's estates and donating ten thousand pesos to a forced loan ordered by Morillo.

With the final return of the patriots Casa León found himself without friends. His last official act was to represent the Spanish general La Torre in arranging a truce with Páez in 1821, following which he retreated to Curaçao and then to Puerto Rico where he labored unsuccessfully to regain his property, only to receive a small sum from Bolívar as a personal gift.

Throughout the work there is a trenchant note of censure. The vivid foreword of Mariano Picón-Salas constitutes a castigation of the opulent landowner-politician—past and present—in South America. Briceño-Iragorry repeatedly kindles this flame as he sees in Casa León a type which has too frequently been on the Venezuelan scene. In particular he abhors the preference of order to justice which Casa León and others of his type find so desirable.

The author has made the most of the meager evidence relating to his hero. The listing in a brief appendix, in the absence of footnotes, of works used affords the reader few particulars of the sources studied. It is evident, however, that considerable labor was done in the Archivo General de la Nación in Caracas. Many justifiable liberties in the use of evidence have been taken by the author. Repeatedly, and to effect, the thoughts of Casa León, his motives, his desires, are those of Briceño-Iragorry. The times, better known through the research of others, are colorfully depicted. Typographically near perfect, this bitter account of a colonial landlord and his struggle against the forces of his time will be useful and will be enjoyed by those having a better than average knowledge of the Venezuelan independence period.

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