

BOOK REVIEWS

Juarez and His Mexico. By RALPH ROEDER. (New York: The Viking Press, 1947. 2 vols. Pp. 763. Illustrations. \$10.00.)

In view of the fact that Benito Juárez is one of the most outstanding figures in Mexican history, it seems strange that we have not had before this a judicious interpretation of the man and his times. Mr. Roeder's two volumes, even if they do not fill that gap entirely, do much to aid in understanding an important era of Mexican history. Volume I covers the period from Juárez' birth to the French intervention; the second volume, the intervention to the president's death.

The first volume is undoubtedly the more important, for it contains material not elsewhere available in English and the story is woven together to form a detailed and integrated picture. One watches Juárez rise very gradually in politics and at the same time sees that his basic principles and ideas had not by 1853 been completely formulated. Roeder analyzes him as a moderate with few revolutionary tendencies. For the author the turning point in the future president's career was his exile to New Orleans where he met Melchor Ocampo, another moderate, and other Mexicans with more radical ideas. This experience turned both Ocampo and Juárez into nineteenth-century Mexican liberals. By this it is meant that they were ready to fight against certain clerical elements and that they wanted a more advanced form of capitalism, suppression of the power of the military cliques, and establishment of law as a basis for good government.

Interspersed throughout Volume I are good short descriptions, many for the first time in English, of such men as Melchor Ocampo, Ponciano Arriaga, José María Luis Mora, and Ignacio Ramírez. In dealing with the fall of Comonfort, the War of the Reform, and the triumph of Juárez, Roeder adds no new light to what is already known. But the importance of now having this material available in English must be considered. The final chapter of Volume I depicts conditions in Mexico on the eve of intervention and tells how that egotistical Frenchman, Saligny, took advantage of the internal strife which was raging in 1861.

In Volume II the intervention is discussed, but probably Roeder relies heavily on Corti's two-volume work on this subject. Little time is spent on Juárez except for a brief description of retreats and some discussion of the questions of presidential succession. The period after the fall of Maximilian to the death of Juárez, approximately five years, is covered in sixty pages.

The bibliography is helpful, but from the viewpoint of scholarship

it is extremely unfortunate that the author has made no citations. It is quite frequently possible to deduce from checking the bibliography what source Roeder is using, but on some of the points which most arouse interest it is difficult to judge. For example, what is the basis for the point that Juárez' stay in New Orleans was crucial to his later thinking? Some omissions might be noted in the bibliography, for example, McBride and Phipps. The omission is reflected in the study, where too little effort is made to delve into the problem of the result of land distribution after clerical estates were broken up.

Roeder criticizes the members of the constitutional convention of 1856-1857 for not taking into consideration the economic needs of the masses. Certainly the criticism is valid, but in reading the records of the sessions it soon becomes apparent that the delegates felt that until the matter of church-state relations was settled the solution of other major problems would have no validity.

As has been indicated there is relatively scant attention paid to the Juárez government after 1861. During the intervention Mexico's hopes were carried by Juárez and therefore his activities during this period are important. Taking the reader to France to witness the defeat of Napoleon and citing the views of Marx on the intervention are interesting but of doubtful value for the matter at hand. One regrets that the space was not devoted instead to the changes in education during Juárez' last years in office.

In addition this reviewer feels that Roeder does not really grasp the internal situation in Mexico after 1861. He used a tremendous amount of material in writing these two volumes, including the Juárez collection in Mexico, but it is regrettable that he did not consult the valuable collection at the University of Texas. Such sources as the González Ortega and Manuel Doblado papers would have enabled him to see, to a large extent, internal Mexico as it was. The attacks of Manuel Doblado, Guillermo Prieto, González Ortega, and others against Juárez nowhere receive the stress that their importance deserves.

Yet in spite of all criticism the fact remains that Roeder does have a grasp of many of the real issues at stake during the Juárez period. These two volumes are a definite step toward the understanding of Mexico and should be a great aid to those working in the field.

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The United States and the Caribbean. By DEXTER PERKINS. [The American Foreign Policy Library.] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947. Pp. xii, 253. \$3.00.)

This is not an historical work so much as a study of political and economic relations between the United States and the West Indian and