

important epochs and movements. This approach to popular history has its advantages, of which the greatest is the natural interest of the average reader in human personality, but it also has its practical difficulties. Especially, when highly compressed, as in the present case, both geographical and historical background become vague and occasionally inaccurate. Further, the focus on an individual career, however important, tends to distort reality. This book contains a skillful and judicious sketch of the character and significance of Bolívar, whose genius is emphasized without any lapse into mere hero worship. On the other hand, it is less adequate as an introduction to the movement for Spanish-American independence as a whole. Aspects not directly related to the Liberator are hardly touched upon, with the exception of a summary treatment of the activities of San Martín.

The author writes as a liberal European, sympathetic to the Hispanic culture of which he is a distinguished student. He is well versed in the basic Bolivarian sources and makes excellent use of the writings of Bolívar's foreign associates. The bibliographical appendix is intelligently selective. Students of Hispanic-American history will not find this volume particularly useful, but it fills a real need for those whose interest in this area is marginal and who will be attracted by the brevity, attractive style, and thoughtful treatment of certain major themes in this agitated revolutionary era.

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*Morelos y Bolívar.* By VICENTE SÁENZ. (Mexico City: Sociedad Bolivariana, Departamento Editorial, 1947. Pp. 125. Paper.)

Costa Rican by birth, Mexican by choice, Vicente Sáenz has written extensively on Central American topics and problems. He further enjoys the distinction of having had one of his works translated into Russian. His purpose in writing of Bolívar and José María Morelos y Pavón, the Mexican curate who succeeded Hidalgo, is to make known to the average man the true place in history of the lives of his subjects. Nothing new, either in fact or in basic interpretation is to be found in the work. But by stressing certain facts both Bolívar and Morelos appear as protectors of the common man. They are also depicted as having devoted their lives to the welfare of the Indian and Negro.

Interwoven in a chronological account of their careers are certain assumptions designed to establish this theme. Simón Rodríguez,

Bolívar's tutor, is assumed to have instructed the Liberator in the evils of racial discrimination, which Sáenz terms the *bomba atómica* of that day. Bolívar's war-to-the-death proclamation is considered to be a blow for the freeing of humanity, while his Jamaica letter reveals a distinct *sentido indigenista*. The attacks of Morelos on the rich and the nobles and his desire to divide the land among the Indians constitute his major social and political contributions. The fanaticism of the Mexican clergy in condemning the curate is also deplored.

Both Bolívar and Morelos, Sáenz states in his concluding chapter, sought the same end—land for the Indian and the abolition of slavery. Power, in their hands, was but a means to better the lot of the common people. Those who followed them in power were the true tyrants and dictators. “¡Volver a ellos,” Sáenz pleads, “a su pensamiento y a su acción, en esta hora trágica del mundo! ¡Volver a ellos, para que la América española pueda cumplir su destino!” (p. 125.)

This work first appeared in a volume entitled *Culto a nuestros héroes*, which was published by the Sociedad Bolivariana de México of which Vicente Sáenz is secretary-general. Its membership includes numerous distinguished scholars of Mexico and the principal statesmen of that country serve in honorary posts. This society and its counterparts in other Hispanic-American countries serve to enlighten and, at times, confuse the student of Bolívar. The activities of these groups appear to mark a modern trend in the development of a true Bolivarian cult.

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*IV centenario del descubrimiento del Lago de Valencia: 12 de diciembre de 1947.* (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1948. Pp. 87. Paper.)

On Christmas Eve, 1547, Juan de Villegas discovered the Lake of Valencia, which the Indians called Tacarigua. In commemoration of the event the State of Carabobo published, on its four-hundredth anniversary, this collection of documents and articles about the geology and geography of the lake and the history of the city of Valencia. There is a brief biography of Villegas by Armando Zuloaga Blanco. This notable conquistador, founder of Barquisimeto, was a sort of grandfather of Venezuela: in the veins of Bolívars, Pontes, Blancos, Guevaras, and other *próceres* of the republic ran his blood. Among the longer pieces included in the collection is an article on the geography of the lake by Alfredo Jahn in which he deals particularly