

his days. During this period Rodríguez becomes to his biographer the hero who stormed the Castle of Ignorance only to be overwhelmed by the forces of evil. Señor Guevara paints the scene in shades of black, buttressed by four long quotations from Juan and Ulloa's *Noticias Secretas* and by two letters written by President Sucre of Bolivia. In addition, the author classifies Rodríguez as a socialist reformer. In the absence of a definition of "socialist" as used by the author, the reviewer accepts only that Rodríguez was a social reformer, an egalitarian and humanitarian liberal who insisted on respect for life, property, and one's fellowman. The analysis of the thought of Rodríguez is episodic, largely dependent on long quotation. One feels that the author has not achieved a synthesis which forcefully and clearly sets forth the contribution of Rodríguez to the intellectual history of Spanish America.

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*José Rafael Revenga. La hacienda pública de Venezuela en 1828-1830.* Edited by PEDRO GRASES and MANUEL PÉREZ VILA. Introduction by AUGUSTO MIJARES. Caracas, 1953. Banco Central de Venezuela. Indexes. Pp. xxxi, 401.

The appearance of this well edited, fully indexed volume of hitherto unpublished letters and reports is a major event for anyone interested in the social, political, and economic history of Venezuela during the years the new Republic of Gran Colombia was struggling to keep alive. The attraction of these documents to the scholar is enhanced by the fact that they are part of a manuscript collection only recently arranged and made available for research, the Archivo de José Rafael Revenga, now housed in the Casa Natal del Libertador in Caracas. The 230 documents fill 359 pages. They were written by Revenga from Mérida, Barinas, San Fernando de Apure, Caracas, Curaçao, and La Guaira between Dec. 13, 1828 and Aug. 7, 1830, during which time, on instructions from Simón Bolívar, he was charged with the heavy responsibility of raising the government's revenue from stamped paper, customs, the *diezmo*, and the tobacco and aguardiente monopolies in the Departments of Zulia, Orinoco, Maturín, and Venezuela until it reached a sum sufficient to reestablish the national credit.

While Revenga formulated plans for the better arrangement of all major sources of income and even made suggestions to José Antonio Páez as to how he might reduce the cost of executive operations, his letters to officials in all parts of Venezuela, as well as his reports

to the *Liberator*, make it abundantly clear that the main object of his mission was to increase the income from the tobacco monopoly. The importance of this agency both locally and to the metropolis during the late colonial and early republican years has been overlooked by scholars, who, if they are institutionally minded have concentrated on the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, or if their interests have been in the Bourbon reforms, they have shown a decided preference for searching out intimations of the enlightenment in the colonies. The tobacco monopoly was the greatest single source of crown revenue in the viceroalties of New Granada and New Spain at the outbreak of the Wars for Independence and the republican leaders in Gran Colombia relied heavily upon it to support the cost of government. Nearly all banking houses and individuals in England and the United States when approached for financial aid by agents of the revolting colonies in northern South America demanded that their investments in political liberty be secured by income from the tobacco monopoly.

Perhaps better than any monograph could do, this volume illustrates the importance that responsible contemporaries attached to a productive tobacco monopoly. Bolívar had to have foreign loans to maintain himself. Revenga remarked that the discredit of Colombia was growing daily because the amortization of and the interest on the foreign debt was not being paid, and since the ordinary sources of income were not sufficient to meet this obligation "the *Liberator* has placed all of his hopes of meeting these debts (*este empeño nacional*) in the tobacco monopoly." According to Bolívar's calculations Revenga's task in specific terms was to raise the annual exports of tobacco to six million pounds, the amount needed to satisfy the £472,500 due in London each year. The desperateness of the situation is spelled out in these letters and its hopelessness is inherent in the reports on local conditions in the tobacco producing regions of Venezuela, especially Barinas—one time "*Reina de Occidente*"—where cattle grazing was already well on its way to replacing intensive agriculture. While Revenga failed in his impossible mission, his descriptions of the economy and society and his analysis of their relation to the political situation should be read by everyone who pretends to an understanding of the disintegration of Gran Colombia. The scope of Revenga's observations may be illustrated by listing the subheadings of his report on a trip from Barinas to Caracas: public tranquility (he describes all local factions), industry (he bemoans the consumption of Kentucky flour around Angostura), roads and canals, condition of agriculture, diezmos, public education, manumission,

and administration of justice. The letters to Bolívar of August 22 and 31, 1829 in which he summarizes the results of his mission are especially recommended for those who do not have time for the whole volume.

Students of Hispanic America are indebted to the Central Bank of Venezuela for publishing this volume and to the editors for the reliable and imaginative index that makes this important collection of letters so easy to use.

National Archives.

JOHN P. HARRISON.

SINCE 1830

*Caracas Diary 1835-1840*. By JOHN G. A. WILLIAMSON. Edited by JANE LUCAS DE GRUMMOND. Baton Rouge, 1954. Camellia Publishing Co. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xxxiv, 444. \$10.

En este volumen la historiadora norteamericana Jane Lucas de Grummond ha suscitado la curiosidad de los investigadores acerca de la vida y murmuraciones de John G. A. Williamson, primer representante diplomático de los Estados Unidos en Venezuela durante las presidencias de Páez, Vargas y Soubllette. Diplomático aburrido y de mediocres luces en una ciudad pequeña, profundamente ajena a su tradición, bastante arruinada por la desoladora Guerra de Independencia —la más cruenta que viera la historia americana de aquellos días—, el buen Mr. Williamson invierte las horas muertas de su permanencia en Caracas hace ciento veinticinco años, recogiendo en un diario los menudos chismes de la capital venezolana. Un cáncer al estómago que acabaría con su vida en 1840; la ausencia de su bella mujer Fanny Travis, de Philadelphia, quien apenas pasa una breve temporada en Caracas y regresa a los Estados Unidos, hastiada de la ciudad y de su marida, corroe el alma del memorialista, y la amargura, rencor y desesperanza vierten su ácido color en el libro, escrito más como desahogo que como historia.

Numerosos complejos, que todavía no se llamaban de este modo en su tiempo, parecen obturarle el sereno juicio. Primero casi nos duele al par de su débil salud, el destino de marido un poco burlado cuya mujer no quiere vivir en la Caracas de 1830 y tantos aunque sea en casa tan ancha y blasonada como la de la esquina de Llaguno, reciente Museo Colonial y entonces sede de la misión americana. Después, él considera que la única forma posible de civilización es la de aquellos presbiterianos escoceses, antecesores suyos que se establecieron en North Carolina, y por cuyas costumbres, lecturas bíblicas y reprimida moral suspira en la diversa Caracas. Ni la bella