

land that was expropriated by the Mexican government from the large plantations of the area that had been devoted largely to the growing of cotton. In view of the importance of the problem of land reform in the world today, the author organized his work around three major questions: (1) How are those who want reform going to secure the power to carry it into effect? (2) Does democracy grow spontaneously after land is distributed or must it be deliberately sought and planned for during and after agrarian reform; (3) what technical problems must be solved?

The first question is often neglected by persons advocating land reform. The latter is usually considered to be largely a matter of technology, solvable by persons with proper technical training and experience. In the Laguna region, however, the question "involved eleven years of civil war, some decades of the spread of new ideas and the nation-wide organization of those who wanted social change." (p. 66)

Most of the book is devoted to the second topic of trying to achieve democracy. The 30,000 peasants were organized into about 300 ejidos (agrarian communities). Most of these are of the collective variety operated on a cooperative basis. General authority in each ejido resides in a general assembly of members who may elect an executive committee to have charge of the general affairs of the community. The assembly also elects a "work chief," a vigilance committee, and other persons to have charge of the various activities. The suddenly acquired democracy confronted the ejidos with many problems with which they were ill-equipped to deal. These are discussed in detail.

In conclusion, the author lists 17 generalizations which he feels are lessons that may be derived from the Laguna experience and which should be of value to anyone considering problems of land reform. The work is exceedingly well documented.

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*Political Change in Latin America. The Emergence of the Middle Sectors*, by JOHN J. JOHNSON. Stanford, 1958. Stanford University Press. Pp. x, 272. \$5.00.

That the middle classes have become the rich cream in Latin America's coffee is by now pretty much understood by those who see and study modern Latin America. Some parts of the interpretation, however, are not clearly registered. The ethno-sociologist wants to keep his eye upon the mestizo and what used to be called the free

colored; Johnson looks to the urban complex of income, wealth, status, ambition, immigration and political geography in the big city. He has found his men in what he calls vividly "the urban middle sectors." He has really found his group in history: the sectors through whom he glimpses the significant factor in Latin American politics and through whom he vigorously challenges "traditional scholarship."

This is a very good book, really readable, clear and pointed as a polemic. It contains creative interpretation, but by now the author does not have to fight so hard for his point of view. I may be wrong and too appreciative of the progress in our end of the historical profession but I get the impression, across the decade from 1945, that many historians, here and in Latin America, have written their history without holding that "individuals hold the center of the stage." Social groups, regional rivalry, intellectual nationalism, industrialism and unionism are recognized forces in the making of history and of change. But there is still room for individualism.

Three interpretive chapters precede the country chapters on Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Mexico and Brazil. An excellent, briefly annotated bibliography ends the work. In the descriptive chapters and the bibliography there is frequent use—a la Lasswell—of the straw group called the "elite" and the European-derived political entity called the State. Without regard to the formation of psychic image around these terms, and with no interest in the psychologic force of the individual leader of such power concepts, Johnson has nothing to do with the psychologic-power sense of those terms, and invests them only with a materialist, socio-economic sense. I question the use of the term State for Latin American social change; I also think there is a convenient simplification of the term elite.

Actually, as it appears, elite suggests static, traditional, maybe backward, and the middle sectors are dynamic, progressive and march forward. But these are reservations in the area of political interpretation; in the area of Latin American history, I do not think events go so simply except for writers. No serious attention is given to regional-sectional forces; not enough credit is given to enlightened elite (i.e. intelligent conservatives) as in Argentina; the city-country complex bothers even the author in a footnote. Nothing is said or written about the rival spectacular movement in the Americas: the peasant.

Much of what is presented has a history, from the *cabildo* and *comunero* tradition to the *ciudad—ano*. This frame of reference as a secular-civilian background is treated as secondary to the primary role of military and elite. Johnson likewise feels that the other part

of Latin American history—the Church—is coming around to offer a moral assist to the urban middle classes. All of the factors combine to support a political theory of recent history, which needs no political parties. Socio-economic change is enough. In spite of these generalizations, however, which spread over Johnson's interpretation of a continent, he makes it very clear that the historical process and specific steps of change vary from one country to another. The military-elite versus the middle class theme is similar but not the same.

If these reservations are from the point of view of an overall doctrine for history, the book has, on the other hand, a valuable and stimulating point of departure for current affairs. This is undoubtedly a major intention of the author, and here he succeeds very well, if we hold back a bit on his further advance from retrospect to prospect. This is always tricky for historians and social scientists. The solid value is chiefly in understanding the present and the contemporary. Not only does he provoke interest by the manner of thinking about things in Latin America, but he points the way to either more knowledge to answer the writer, strong argument to refute him, or still wider acceptance of the point of view. At all events the writing and teaching of modern Latin American history gains immeasurably from Johnson's book.

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*Rails, Mines and Progress: Seven American Promoters in Mexico. 1867-1911.* By DAVID M. PLETCHER. Ithaca, New York, 1958. Cornell University Press. Maps. Notes. Index. pp. x, 321.

Professor Pletcher in this study, which deservedly received the recognition of the Beveridge Prize, examines the activities of seven American promoters in Mexico during the period 1867-1911. He modestly states that his work is not intended to be a comprehensive history of American economic activities in Mexico, but his book does represent an introduction to that field through the conclusions drawn from the careers of the selected cases.

In a series of well-written and interesting chapters he studies the writings and careers of William S. Rosecrans, Edward Lee Plumb, Albert Kimsey Owen, U. S. Grant, Alexander R. Shepherd, William C. Green, and Arthur E. Stillwell. The selection of these personalities, chosen from the two fields of promotion-railroads and mining—which represented 85% of American capital invested in Mexico, is justified by the author in terms of the availability of source materials