

initial period, leaving a scant seventy pages for four succeeding decades.

However, criticism relative to nature of sources, balance, and selectivity may seem inappropriate in the evaluation of a work presented as an "essay." Scattered throughout the volume are the writer's comments and observations. Almost without exception his viewpoint is a revolutionary one and within that framework he tends to side with the revolutionary element which emerged triumphant in any given situation.

The author's comments are usually in accord with generally accepted interpretations, although at times his explanations are overly simplified. His view of the historical revolution is quite traditional. His view of the recent past is couched in the lexicon of the "official party" and reduces to an abbreviated catalogue of achievements. Neither provides much new insight for the informed reader.

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Venustiano Carranza. By ALFONSO TARACENA. México, 1963. Editorial Jus. Colección México Heróico. No. 22. Pp. 318.

For a long time, students of Mexican history have been in need of a good biographical study of Venustiano Carranza. Next to Madero the most important central leader of the Mexican Revolution, Carranza achieved fame as First Chief in organizing resistance to the Huerta usurpation and served as constitutional president from 1917 until his own overthrow and death in 1920. Heretofore scholars have had to rely almost entirely for first-hand accounts of Carranza on contemporary commentators whose observations suffer from lack of perspective or excessive partisanship. Now Alfonso Taracena, the Mexican journalist and historian well known for his studies of Madero and for *Mi vida en el vértigo de la Revolución Mexicana*, has written a biography of the revolutionary leader. In the absence of a comparable work, his *Venustiano Carranza* will be helpful. At the same time, the author did not succeed in realizing the potential that his subject contains.

Given the controversial and even the contradictory aspects of Carranza's political career, a biographer logically could take one of three tacks: depict Carranza very unfavorably as a self-serving and vindictive mediocrity who used a revolutionary movement to advance his own inflated political ambitions; or the opposite, show the First

Chief to be an indomitable civilian stabilizer of a revolutionary cause, finally beaten by the military; or, best of all, present a thoroughgoing study that would emphasize balanced documentation and character analysis in preference to partisanship. The shortcoming of Taracena's book is that it is not tailored to any of these specifications, and thus lacks a clear focus.

For his evidence, Taracena has relied chiefly on recollections, especially of *carrancistas*, or documents made public while events were unfolding. Writing a semi-popular biography for the "México heroico" series, published by Jus, the author properly felt no obligation to uncover quantities of new source materials on which to base his study. Some day it will be enlightening to read a biography of the First Chief based especially on a thorough examination of the Mexican army and foreign relations archives.

The first half of Taracena's biography is successful, but it loses clarity and impact in discussing the important last six years of his subject's life. The author recounts perceptively the First Chief's *porfirista* and *reyista* years, his uneasy relationship with Madero, and his actions in every facet of the 1913 crisis. He is much less effective, however, in analyzing the split with Villa, the differences with Obregón, the assassination of Zapata, Carranza's social thought and his attitude toward the constitution-making of 1917, and the merits and demerits of his policies during the three years of his presidency. The works of such American scholars as Quirk and Clendenen are preferable for information about the Veracruz occupation, the Aguascaliente Convention, and the movements of Villa. In conclusion, scholars are advised to utilize this study while awaiting for a definitive biography of Carranza to appear.

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La reforma agraria en México. By EMILIO ROMERO ESPINOSA. México, 1963. Cuadernos Americanos, Av. Coyoacán No. 1035. Bibliography. Index. Tables. Notes. Pp. 161.

This book is primarily an indictment of the shortcomings of Mexican agrarian reform, together with a series of recommendations designed to correct them. Romero Espinosa sketches the historical background of reform only as an introduction to his analysis of the national agencies charged with the problems of landholding, land distribution, and availability of rural credit. The author advocates reorganization of the bureaucracy of reform and improvement of