

*Vida e história.* By JOSÉ HONÓRIO RODRIGUES. Rio de Janeiro, 1966. Editôra Civilização Brasileira. Notes. Index. Pp. 278. Paper.

With these collected academic papers, speeches, and journalistic pieces a historian of international repute invites the domestic Brazilian audience to reflect seriously upon contemporary history. Reprinted here in translation is the fine critique of Walter P. Webb's "Great Frontier" thesis. Two essays in the spirit of Rio's *quatrocentenário* extol that city's role as melting pot, cultural center, and molder of a national political culture. Included also are short appreciations of distinguished foreign scholarship by Charles R. Boxer, Pierre Monbeig, and Clarence H. Haring and brief essays on Brazilian historiography and historical theory. But the main purpose of the book is set forth in Part I, where Rodrigues calls Brazilian historians to the battle for development.

History, as the author's title suggests, is linked to living issues such as education, health, and a wider popular participation in the national society. Because he feels that these goals are not being achieved rapidly, Rodrigues has recently been searching the Brazilian past for ways to break out of an undesirable present into a better future. Oriented thus toward the future, Brazilian history reveals a process of reformist pressure, mass protest, and social movements which conservative historians had obscured or ignored in their concern for consensus, order, and elite politics. These themes of conflict and movement over agreement and stability were elaborated further in his recent *Conciliação e reforma no Brasil*.

Will Professor Rodrigues find what must be called the illusive liberal tradition in Brazil? Perhaps. Clearly he has raised new questions, and he has broken with the spirit of an earlier nationalism which, spearheaded forty years ago by Gilberto Freyre, found a satisfactory past in regionalism and the easygoing plantation society of the Big House.

Historians are rightly asked to focus their attention on development. But just how the professional historian distinguishes objectivity in contemporary history from a deeply felt personal commitment to an ideal is a problem which needs more analysis. It may be true, as Rodrigues states, that disinterested history is a luxury which an underdeveloped region like Latin America cannot afford. Nevertheless, one feels uncomfortable with the implication that scholarship will therefore reflect national interests, methods, and techniques.

Commitment is a premise of the modern social science literature on development, but so are objectivity and an analytical style which transcend national borders.

Stanford University

JOHN D. WIRTH