

## BOOK NOTICES

Initialed notices were written by Vicente Cantarino, David M. Fletcher, Robert E. Quirk, James R. Scobie, Otis P. Starkey, and Thomas G. Powell, all of Indiana University.

*Latin America. A Geographical Commentary.* By IRMGARD POHL and JOSEPH ZEPF. Edited by KEMPTON E. WEBB. London, 1966. John Murray. Illustrations. Maps. Figures. Bibliography. Index. Pp. ix, 315. 30s.

Fewer than three hundred pages of text and fifty-three well selected photographs tipped in on coated paper are little enough to describe one-fifth of the earth's land area; obviously this survey must be concise. The approach is also systematic, considering most countries first as to physical structure, climate, and vegetation and then by population and economic characteristics. The larger countries are also treated regionally. There are introductory chapters on South America, the Lands of the Andes, Central America and Mexico, and Islands of the Caribbean. A statistical summary terminates the book.

The style, in part to be credited to the unidentified translator from the German, varies from encyclopedic to very interesting. Some details—for example, on the howling habits of Amazonian monkeys—seem out of place in such a compact volume. On the other hand numerous quotations from travel books give excellent word pictures of the countryside and its peoples.

To sum up, this is a good book for the Latin American student lacking in geographic background; however, it will add little or nothing to the knowledge of the expert. It is apparently designed for a rapid survey, and its commentary contains few novel ideas.

O. P. S.

*Los Subamericanos.* By VÍCTOR ALBA. México, 1964. B. Costa-Amic, Editor. Notes. Pp. 324. Paper.

Víctor Alba's activities as a journalist and scholar place him in the tradition of the *pensador*—facile, fluent, more notable for eloquence than solidity. The present volume, a collection of eighteen essays (most of which have been published before), gives us once again his analysis of the Communist threat, the menace of "a new oligarchy of impatient technicians," the need for cooperation between labor unions and peasant communities, the proper role of the United States in fostering Latin American development, and the urgent necessity for creating "a continental conscience." Like most such gatherings of fugitives, the book is repetitious and poorly organized. Alba's style leans heavily on rhetorical questions in the manner of the Stalinists he detests, and, like them, he answers with lists: fifteen characteristics of the middle classes, four myths about Latin American economic growth, four tendencies of "negative nationalism." Despite frequent felicitous phrases, the book seems remote from reality and far too long.

Readers who have sampled the sizable literature dealing with contemporary Latin America will find nothing that is new and a great deal that is trite or outdated. The chapter on communism adds little but obscure rhetoric to Robert J. Alexander's survey of that topic. Alba's views on the middle class as the decisive force for social change have been expressed more forcefully, and with some positive evidence, by John J. Johnson and others. The author's economic ideas are secondhand and second-rate. The book has some symptomatic interest, however, as an example of the almost complete loss of support for *fidelismo* among Latin American liberals, and the consequent willingness to forget or forgive past American sins of omission or commission there. And the Latin Americans to whom these essays were primarily addressed may learn something from the author's discussion of the ignorance of "Marxists