

## BOOK REVIEWS

### GENERAL

*Cambio social en América Latina. Crítica de algunas interpretaciones dominantes en las ciencias sociales.* By JUAN F. MARSAL. Foreword by WILBERT E. MOORE. Buenos Aires, 1967. Librería Hachette. Biblioteca "Dimensión Americana." Notes. Bibliography. Pp. 255. Paper.

The author of this work undertakes the difficult task of contrasting some of the well-known theoretical models used by Latin American "thinkers" and sociologists with those of North American sociologists and anthropologists, as they study culture change in Latin America. The book is primarily a *crítica* of selected interpretations which have been prominent in the framework of the social sciences. As Wilbert E. Moore states in the foreword, the work is the result of an "encounter between an intelligent and highly cultured representative of the Latin American universities and the typical, almost positivistic, North American orientation of the social sciences" (p. 10).

Juan F. Marsal presents his material in two major parts. In the first he reviews models of North American social scientists, discussing in particular the folk-urban continuum, acculturation, the community study approach, the feudal-democratic dichotomy and the "middle-class." The second part reviews the Latin American style of approaching the problem of social change. Parts I and II are preceded by an introduction and followed by conclusions and an appendix.

To review this work properly requires more space than is allotted here. A consideration of the author's basic assumptions, his methodology, and the historical aspects of cultural dynamics would be necessary before evaluating his generalizations. The work has ethnographic value in that it portrays the basic understanding of a Latin American social scientist. It is unique in that the author's sensitivity and subjectivity are clearly exposed, adding an interesting dimension useful to both Latin and North American students in the process of becoming Latin Americanists. In this work the man who found the problem for research and saw the need to investigate it also decided on a methodology, selected the data, and interpreted them with a very personal style which cannot be separated from the work. Indirectly, it also provides much insight into the frequent breakdowns in the

communication of ideas and research objectives between scholars from the United States and Latin America.

Some of the author's premises, however, are indeed questionable. For instance, the proposition that "the general trend of historical events and the subtle trend of intellectual evolution are necessarily related" (p. 10) constitutes a complex relationship of variables. As Moore states in the foreword, one is not totally convinced of the causality. The author, nevertheless, presents a large amount of suggestive material to support this thesis.

One of the basic problems in this sort of contrast is the implicit assumption that Latin American scholars manifest a single orientation. The author questions this assumption when he reviews the generalizations made by anthropologists a few decades ago as they attempted to bring out basic cultural themes common to all of Latin America. There is no doubt that social scientists from Argentina to Mexico and from Brazil to Peru diverge in their views to the extent that a homogenization into a single intellectual position is not very realistic.

The reading of the book is interrupted with hundreds of quotations from outstanding works used to support or illustrate the author's viewpoint. Unfortunately, after years of research some of the authors have changed their position on basic issues. A large portion of the book reads like an inventory of viewpoints combined with general reviews of models and evaluations of their success or failure in research. Nevertheless, the author should be commended for his effort to disentangle a complex set of variables concerning North American and Latin American scholarship.

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*Latin America. Reform or Revolution? A Reader.* Edited by JAMES PETRAS and MAURICE ZEITLIN. New York, 1968. Fawcett World Library. Political Perspective Series. Tables. Notes. Index. Pp. 511. Paper. \$.95

This group of over twenty essays was written mainly by Latin Americans but compiled by two North Americans, a political scientist and a sociologist. It seems to be bound together by the authors' awareness of Marxian analysis as a tool for interpreting Latin America's problems, although they are not all equally dependent on this analysis. Politics and questions of government policy are underlying themes in virtually every article, but the dialectician's concern with economic determinism and with the class struggle emphasizes these factors at