

Simón Bolívar: Educator. By LUIS B. PRIETO. Translated by JAMES D. PARSONS. Garden City, 1970. Doubleday and Company. Notes. Appendix. Pp. vii, 159. \$4.95.

This reviewer is a great admirer of that unbelievably versatile genius Simón Bolívar. His exploits as a military leader, as a statesman, as a virile man stagger the imagination. It was a great loss to Latin America and to the history of human enlightenment that his career was short-lived, and that he was so far above the intellectual and moral stature of his lieutenants that his ideas were doomed to failure.

It was this reviewer's privilege to be called in as *Asesor Técnico General* (Chief Technical Consultant) to the Venezuelan Ministry of Education shortly after the death in 1935 of the iron-handed long-time brutish dictator, Juan Vicente Gómez. Dictatorships, particularly that of Gómez, had had a devastating effect on the ideals of Bolívar—ideals as to popular welfare, education, political freedom and progress. The name of Simón Bolívar had been mouthed in hero worship—a virtually obscene exercise of hypocrisy. The name of Andrés Bello, one of Bolívar's mentors—in whose former home, then a *pensión*, this reviewer lived for a brief period—was voiced with pride, though Bello had found that Chile offered a better climate for intellectual freedom and progress than his homeland.

This reviewer's privilege was spiced at that time by knowing, in passing, an educator and consummate, progressive politician, Luis B. Prieto. Dr. Prieto is originally and basically an educator. He has paid dearly for his out-spoken progressive ideals—jailed even when he was a Senator in the National Congress. As founder, and first President of the Venezuelan Federation of Teachers, he has symbolized liberty and freedom in the tradition of Simón Bolívar.

These remarks should dispel any doubts that this reviewer may not appreciate fully the genius of Bolívar or the competence of Prieto to write on the subject of the book under review. But I am compelled to find fault on grounds that may be purely academic (if this is translated in to Spanish, please tread carefully on this word!). First, I think that Dr. Prieto overdoes the description of almost every act of Bolívar as that of an *educator*, as we understand the word in English. We could just as well label Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and other great statesmen as "educators." Prieto equates "leader" with "educator." This may be a fault of the translator. We could with some justice, following this style, say: "Richard Nixon, Educator."

Second, the "Bolivarian Cult" is monotonously evident in Prieto's

work. Bolívar was the "Liberator of America," conveniently forgetting Jefferson, Juárez, José Martí, Lincoln, and so on.

Finally, Prieto first plays down the influence of Rousseau on Bolívar (through his tutor Simón Rodríguez), and then later acknowledges the impact of Rousseau and the Enlightenment of Bolívar. Throughout the book, Bolívar is portrayed as *the creator* of ideas and programs that, in reality, he had culled from others and, through sheer genius, expressed in functional terms for "the Americas."

Dr. Prieto has written a fine book. My criticisms above are simply for the purpose of warning the reader that there is a Bolivarian cult, and that it is reflected in this work. I strongly recommend the book. I congratulate Dr. Prieto on a fine job of historical writing.

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Santander ante la historia. Ensayo histórico-biográfico. Vol. I. By JULIO HOENIGSBERG. Barranquilla, 1969. Imprenta Departamental. Centro de Historia de Barranquilla. Illustrations. Chart. Appendix. Pp. 396, 28. Paper.

Julio Hoenigsberg, one of several modern Colombianists trying to enhance the historical stature of Francisco de Paula Santander, has aptly titled his second study on the Granadino hero of Colombian independence, *Santander ante la historia*. The Hero is indeed presented before the bar of history; testimony is taken from many historians and contemporaries; unfortunately, the role taken by Hoenigsberg is not that of impartial judge, but that defense attorney. The tone of the volume is set in a lengthy historiographical introduction in which Hoenigsberg professes to see a near conspiracy to neglect Santander's role in Colombian history.

In four extended chapters Hoenigsberg treats several controversial aspects of Santander's career up to about 1824 with the intention of vindicating the Hero. The major substantive weakness of the volume is not the thesis that Santander has been underrated and perhaps even maligned, but the author's willingness to refight old fights and refute old and sometimes outdated allegations against Santander. A more positive approach stressing Santander's substantial accomplishments could be more persuasive. Even more, what is needed is a good analysis of Santander as a skilled politician, a characteristic which Hoenigsberg recognizes but does not fully develop. Hopefully, the next volume will deal with this and other important topics which are not covered in this first volume. We are promised a discussion