

*Reestructuración histórica de Yucatán.* 3 vols. By BERNARDINO MENA BRITO. México, 1965-1969. Editores Mexicanos Unidos. Pp. 388, 368, 495. Paper. \$120.00 (Mex.).

As a Mexican region Yucatán is unique in geography, Mayan heritage, and politics which seek autonomy. One of its prolific writers, Mena Brito, here presents a polemic subtitled "Negative Influence of Campechan Politicians in the Destinies of Mexico and Yucatán." His thesis is that Campechan demagogues and Mexican opportunists have caused Yucatán's legion of tragedies. His object is to reconstruct history, exposing the "lies" of standard texts in order to provide a balanced account of the peninsula's virtues. He says many Yucatecans believe the libels which portray their land as aiding Texas against Mexico, supporting neutrality during the Mexican War, seeking foreign annexation, and approving reaction. He contends that these acts originated with Campechans, and the genocidal War of Castes was instigated by a Campechan, Santiago Méndez, who hoped to crush and dominate Yucatán.

In Volume I (1821-55) Mena depicts Campechans and their Yucatecan neighbors as diametrically opposed and differently-oriented, the former racists and Hispanicists, the latter liberal and proud of their mestizism. In 1821, Yucatán joined Mexico, believing the new nation would guarantee democracy, federal autonomy, and republicanism, but, says Mena, Mexico often failed to do so while it exploited Yucatán. The latter, despite its undeserved national reputation for tropical barbarism manned by cowards and separatists, has contributed much to the Republic.

Mena details the gloomy facts of Indian debt slavery in Yucatán's henequen fields to 1911, and believes later bureaucracy merely produced a new form of serfdom. The War of Castes' massacres, military ventures, and foreign involvement are explained as an episode in the Campeche vs Yucatán struggle rather than as the complicated sociological event others have labeled it. Mena explains his many clearly delineated villains as products of a "regional mind."

Mena's critic, Leopoldo Peniche Vallado, is given space in which he praises the author as upright and tireless, but contends that his obsession slants his methodology. Peniche argues that subtle forces controlled events, implicating both factions in Yucatán's disasters. While part of Mena's account may be discounted as oversimplification, his exposition of sectional animosities cannot be dismissed any more than can those of our antebellum era.

Volume II (1856-1913) covers the dismemberment of Yucatán, a

tragedy that Mena also ascribes to Campechan hatred leagued with federal reaction. Pablo García, father of the State of Campeche that was carved from Yucatán in 1862, is described as an amoral opportunist. Under Díaz, Yucatán suffered its greatest reduction; Guatemala's claim to Petén was recognized; Britain was ceded Belice; and Quintana Roo Territory was separated. Meanwhile, *Científicos* and foreigners enriched themselves from the impoverished peninsula.

Volume III (1915-69), in covering a vital period for Mexico, records Mena's roles as colonel in Carranza's Constitutionalist army, as a Mexican consul, and as a leader of Yucatán's liberal party. He gives insights into his state's socialist and liberal regimes and the careers of Salvador Alvarado and Felipe Carrillo Puerto. Mena's high character and profound courage shine through word and deed. He sacrificed much under great peril to oppose bureaucracy, corruption, Yucatán's exploitation, and Communism. After 1924, Mena Brito retired from politics, but emerged briefly to oppose Cárdenas' radical ejido experiment which Mena felt ruined the agrarian economy, and to attack Governor Tomás Marentes, who allegedly attempted to legalize vice. At 82, he was still calling for regional self-respect, self-analysis, and self-determination.

The author practices the debatable dogma that historians must write passionately. He uses strong, moralistic, often sarcastic language, bolstered by extensive documentation to defend the honor of his land. Indeed, Yucatán's integrity is more easily demonstrated than the pervasiveness of Campeche's culpability. Although not objective, this work reveals much of the emotional climate of a proud and troubled peninsula, little understood even in Mexico.

San Fernando Valley State College

JOHN E. BAUR

*Nacionalismo y educación en México.* By JOSEFINA VÁZQUEZ DE KNAUTH. México, 1970. El Colegio de México. Centro de Estudios Históricos. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Pp. vii, 291. Paper.

This work is an excellent compendium of the debates, laws, textbooks, and policies concerning education and the teaching of history in Mexico from 1821 to the present. Most valuable is the author's description of primary-school textbooks from different historical periods. Sra. Knauth's chronological ordering of these texts around the timeless issue in Mexican pedagogy of the relative merits of Cortés and Cuauhtémoc is logical and illuminating. Recognition of the enduring tension between Hispanists and Indianists in the evolution of Mexican