

sons of façade and, even then, only as long as they represented no real threat to the system. When Duarte apparently won the presidential election of 1972, the results were immediately overturned and traditional repressive measures were adopted.

Webre's approach is uniquely balanced and objective. Like many of us who studied individual Christian Democratic movements in their heyday in the 1960s, Webre was originally captivated by the honesty, sincerity, and dedication of the Christian Democrats. A decade later, however, writing the final version for publication, he clearly reflects an awareness shared by many social scientists today that there are basic structural problems in El Salvador (and Latin America, in general) that make the Christian Democratic alternative quite utopian and naïve. Therefore, Webre manages to treat Duarte and the Christian Democrats with genuine sensitivity. Yet at the same time he is also capable of astutely observing that:

While the goal of a revolution accomplished solely through Christian suasion and moral education is an attractive one to those who abhor bloodshed, one must be skeptical about its chances for success in any society, much less one such as El Salvador's, where the privileged have routinely demonstrated their willingness to employ any means whatsoever to preserve intact their advantages . . . (p. 68).

In sum, this is a timely, balanced, and well-researched book. It should be of interest not only to historians and social scientists but also to anyone who would like to have more background information about the recent United States-sponsored Christian Democratic revival in El Salvador and a better understanding of why it inevitably failed.

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Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela. By ROBERT J. ALEXANDER. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1981. Afterword. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 737. Cloth. \$39.95.

While reading the page proofs for this book, the subject of this biography was stricken and subsequently died in September 1981. The author, "a personal and political friend" (p. 1) of Rómulo Betancourt, will be charged by some readers of writing a traditional "marble statue" biography, of presenting an unabashed panegyric designed to encase his hero's immaculate reputation in the march of history—"the most impor-

tant Venezuelan of the twentieth century” (p. 672), “the greatest Venezuelan since Simón Bolívar” (p. 675), we are told.

And yet, despite the author’s obvious ideological affinities with, and awe of, his subject, this is by no means “official” biography, for Alexander has given fair treatment to opposition views, has criticized Betancourt for errors of judgment, and has striven for objective truths. This will not become the definitive biography of Betancourt—this must await the opening of his extensive personal archives to which Alexander did not have access—but it is the best we have to date. What is more, it is the best detailed narrative history of Venezuelan politics in English in the past half century.

Much of the ground covered is familiar: the Juan Vicente Gómez tyranny of 1908–35, the “generation of 1928” student resistance movement, the 1936–45 transitional regimes of Generals Eleazar López Contreras and Isaías Medina Angarita, the founding and development of Democratic Action (AD) during these years, the AD–young officer October 1945 revolution, the 1945–48 rule of the Betancourt junta, the November 1948 counterrevolution, the 1950–58 dictatorship of General Marcos Pérez Jiménez, and the return of Betancourt to power from 1959 to 1964 following his election to the presidency. Much new information deals with Betancourt’s boyhood and character formation in the years 1908–28, his 1929–36 exile activity in Costa Rica, his 1937–39 underground work in Venezuela, his 1949–58 opposition leadership from abroad, and, finally, his elder-statesman posture from the time of his retirement from the presidency to the time of his death seventeen years later.

Somewhat unorthodox for a historian is Alexander’s research technique. Though comfortably familiar with available primary and secondary printed sources, he bases this work primarily upon interviews with the 125 most important *dramatis personae* in the subject’s political life. More than 200 interviews, including 40 with Betancourt himself, were conducted between 1949 and 1981—most of them in 1978 and 1979 when the author intensively researched this biography. Interviews make up over six hundred references for the text. In addition, thirty years of correspondence between author and subject are cited.

Alexander’s conclusions concerning Betancourt the man, his ideas, and his historical role are that he was “a man of almost unlimited energy and vitality” (p. 644), “a man of great personal bravery” (p. 645), and “a man with great ambition for power” (p. 645). Though unswervingly loyal to his friends, personal intimacies were rare. Of his relations with the three women in his life—first wife Carmen Valverde (the Costa Rican), daughter Virginia, and second wife Renée Hartmann—the biographer was able to find out very little.

Betancourt was a master politician, blending a shrewd pragmatism with an unstinting idealism. His expertise and effectiveness are explained as by-products of “his strong self control, his ability for maneuver, his capacity as an organizer, his ability to arouse strong feelings of loyalty in others . . . his willingness to work hard, his oratorical ability, his willingness to make difficult decisions” (p. 654). His life-long political ideals were oil nationalism, anticommunism, multiclass politics, mixed economy, social justice, and inter-Americanism.

As for his historical role, Alexander views Betancourt as “the principal figure responsible for the . . . transformation of Venezuela from a country dominated by . . . dictators to one of political democracy” (p. 672). Combined with this was his fundamental role in implementing economic growth and social justice. “In a world in the process of revolutionary change, Rómulo Betancourt’s career provides proof that it is possible to bring about economic development and rising living standards within the framework of political democracy and human freedom” (p. 674). This reviewer would only add that oil also had something to do with it.

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Luis E. Valcárcel: Memorias. Edited by JOSÉ MATOS MAR, JOSÉ DEUSTUA C., JOSÉ LUIS RÉNIQUE. Lima: IEP Ediciones, 1981. Illustrations. Bibliography. Indexes. Pp. 478. Paper.

Luis Valcárcel’s life is a microcosm of Peru’s twentieth-century intellectual history. From his participation in the 1909 university-reform movement in Cuzco and the “Cuzco School” of *indigenismo*, through his political work during the Billinghurst regime in the 1910s, to his archaeological, ethnological, and academic work in Lima from the 1930s, Valcárcel has stood at the forefront of his generation. As director of Lima’s Archaeological Museum, founder of the Museum of Peruvian Culture, and professor at San Marcos, he gave form to archaeological and ethnological investigation and trained generations of students in research methodology. Indeed, most of the prominent social scientists in Peru today were either trained by him or by people who have worked with him. Collaborator and colleague to national and foreign scholars alike, friend to José Carlos Mariátegui and César Vallejo, friend and mentor to José Sabogal and José María Argüedas, Valcárcel has experienced and participated in the best, most innovative, and most creative of Peruvian intellectual life.