

The Road to OPEC: United States Relations with Venezuela, 1919–1976.

By STEPHEN G. RABE. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982. Map. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. ix, 262. Cloth. \$25.00.

This traditional diplomatic history contains a great deal of heretofore unpublished useful information, including some recent State Department correspondence located in National Security Council files and obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. Rabe skillfully uses primary materials to show how Venezuela's petroleum wealth came under foreign control and to trace the development of United States economic and political influence in the South American republic.

The author challenges Bryce Wood's study of the Good Neighbor Policy, which indicated that the State Department sacrificed the interests of United States businesses in order to attain foreign policy objectives. Rabe corroborates the thesis of this reviewer's *Diplomacy & Dependency* and of David Green's *The Containment of Latin America*, which demonstrate that Washington's protection of United States business has led to extraordinary interference in Venezuela's affairs and erosion of that nation's political and economic autonomy.

The book illustrates the willingness of United States business to support government venality in Venezuela in order to obtain petroleum. It explains how the anticommunism of the transnational companies is frequently a subterfuge, masking their efforts to curtail social reforms that might reduce corporate profits.

Critical analysis leads Rabe to depict big-business practices as greedy and uncaring and the oil industry as a sovereign power. He evaluates State Department actions with less discernment. At times he appears to be in awe of United States government officials whose pronouncements he too often accepts at close to face value and supports with interpretations from secondary works and oral histories compiled by those who have been on the State Department's payroll.

Rabe's liberal inclinations, coupled with occasional hesitance to question the United States establishment line, create interesting contradictions. For example, he notes that elected president Rómulo Betancourt suspended constitutional guarantees for 778 out of the 1,847 days of his administration; nevertheless, Rabe tends to adhere to the position that equates elections, and therefore the Betancourt regime, with equal opportunity for all sectors of society and democracy. He does not separate rhetoric from reality when he claims that the Acción Democrática administrations of 1959–69 worked for the poor. The facts prove that Acción Democrática's programs enriched the middle class. He calls the Alliance for Progress a success, but admits that its social and economic goals were

not met. He states that Acción Democrática pacified the countryside by carrying out land reforms when, in reality, the left was defeated principally by its inability to attract the support of the peasantry (which was deceived by the government's largely unfulfilled promises of reforms and frightened by its extreme use of firepower against dissenters). Rabe notes correctly that the CIA and AID trained Venezuelan police to resist urban terrorism, but does not mention that the terrorism that they were taught and equipped to conduct was a major contributor to the destruction of Venezuela's social revolutionary movements of the 1960s.

Rabe tells us that OPEC and petroleum seem to have assured financial security for Venezuela for the balance of the twentieth century. Does he refer to all Venezuelans or members of particular sectors of society? We are told that since the nationalization of oil in 1976, and as a result of petroleum wealth, Venezuela has dispensed considerable foreign aid. In light of that fact, readers are left wondering why the country cannot adequately feed or house more than one-third of its citizens.

Although this reviewer differs with Rabe on a number of issues, he nonetheless strongly recommends this well-researched book for those who seek a deeper understanding of the politics of oil in Venezuela.

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RELATED TOPICS

Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism. By REGINALD HORSMAN. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981. Notes. Index. Pp. 367. Cloth. \$22.50.

Reginald Horsman exposes a darker side of the United States past when he concludes in this provocative study that by 1850, rather than after the Civil War, the great majority of white North Americans saw themselves as a separate, innately superior Anglo-Saxon people, successors to the Roman Empire, who were destined to bring good government, commercial prosperity, and Christianity to the Western Hemisphere and the world.

North Americans inherited the English tradition of ethnocentrism based on Anglo-Saxon superiority in the art of government. They also borrowed heavily from nineteenth-century European, especially Ger-