

NATIONAL PERIOD

Modern Latin America. By THOMAS E. SKIDMORE and PETER H. SMITH. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. Illustrations. Figures. Tables. Map. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xii, 419. Paper.

One thing I must get off my chest at the outset: is it not something of a travesty to offer a text on "Latin America" in which there are separate chapters for Chile and Peru and Central America but nothing for Latin America's most affluent nation, Venezuela, or what is very likely today the third most populous, Colombia; with an index that lists references to the Liberal party of Honduras but not that of Alfonso López Pumarejo and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán; to Petroperú, but not Petrovén? In other respects, however, the plan of the work is commendable. It makes explicit its conceptual framework, built around a "modified dependency approach." In practice this means that the position of the Latin American nations in the world economy leads to a particular pattern of social forces, which in turn produces the political configuration. The "modified" in the authors' profession of dependency faith gives them leeway for treating exceptions, but they do not have to take account of many, because their effective starting point is the watershed of the 1880s, marked by sharp upturns in foreign trade and investment. There is also an emphasis on comparative analysis. Comparison, as the authors point out, is always implicit in historical writing, but they deserve praise for making this, too, explicit and for conducting their comparisons in a quite systematic manner.

The book begins with a prolog that recognizes the existence of alternative "cultural" interpretations of Latin American history and also seeks to answer the question: "Why Latin America"? That is, why bother to study the region at all? This prolog is superb. The chapter that follows gives a general and not always accurate overview of Latin America from dim beginnings to about 1880 under the heading, "The Colonial Foundations." Next comes an overview from 1880 to the present in which the dependency theme is developed in some detail and rather convincingly. Other chapters dealing with Latin America generally come at the end: one on relations with the rest of the world, especially the United States, and the other an epilog provocatively titled "What Future for Latin America?", in which different national case studies are summed up and compared with the help of a series of figures, and the trends discerned in the book are projected in relatively somber tones. In between are separate chapters dealing with each of the "major" countries and with Central America. All are at least adequate, some are excellent; but for a history asserting the primacy of international economic relations, the treatment of individual countries bears a surprising resemblance to traditional political history. It too often breaks down into recitation of presidential administrations. This impression is heightened by the inclusion at the back of the

volume of appendixes featuring four “selected social indicators” and then an interminable listing of “heads of state” over the last century.

Despite the dependency interpretation, the text’s treatment of controversial issues is sufficiently balanced to annoy both Ronald Reagan and partisans of the revolutionary left. Salvador Allende receives sympathetic treatment, for example, while the role of the CIA in his overthrow is minimized. There is lack of passion even in the treatment of El Salvador and Nicaragua. This trait no doubt favors the use of the work as a class text, since the instructor has *carte blanche* to insert whatever passion he wants the course to have. Whether the plan of organization is a favorable factor for course adoption will depend on other considerations. At the very least, the book will stand as a good introduction for anyone, including non-students, to the history of modern (i.e., post-1880) Latin (minus Colombia and Venezuela) America.

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Venustiano Carranza’s Nationalist Struggle, 1893–1920. By DOUGLAS W. RICHMOND. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. Tables. Maps. Notes. Illustrations. Bibliographical Essay. Index. Pp. xxi, 317. Cloth. \$26.95.

Douglas Richmond gives us the first synoptic study of Carrancismo based on an extensive investigation of archival and printed primary sources. Particularly noteworthy is the use made of the Carranza Archive. The account is pleasantly and clearly written, and the book benefits from the author’s empathetic understanding of the personality and policies of Mexico’s first Constitutionalist president.

The main thesis is controversial and, in the opinion of this reviewer, only partially sustained by the evidence marshalled in the study. Historians, Richmond argues, have failed to note the extraordinarily nationalist, reformist, and populist character of the Carrancista regime. Instead, they have preferred to portray Carranza as an authoritarian patriarch out of touch with the drift of change in the labor, agrarian, and economic arenas.

This seems a little unfair. Students of Mexican foreign policy, for example, have long emphasized the nationalist and even antiimperialist content of the Carrancista period. Nevertheless, Richmond does us a valuable favor by describing in great detail the changing course of Carranza’s reformism with useful discussions of policy on foreign investment, taxation, social reform, agriculture, and relations with organized labor. The only theme that is inadequately treated is the evolution of state ideology. But reformism combined with nationalism does not automatically create populism. Lacking a sustained treatment of the large and heterodox literature on Latin American populism, the book tends to see “populism” every place that there is evidence of economic nationalism, growing state interventionism, and ideas of multiclass state ideology. What is striking in this period,