

mate arbiters of the region's development. Still, local attempts to create a "laboratory of radicalism" (p. 17) made a difficult situation worse, as Liberals dismantled their colonial legacy, but failed to provide an effective alternative. They attacked the primitive but existing bureaucracy, refused to subsidize road-building and schools, and legislated a "single tax" (p. 85) they proved unable to collect. The Liberals waited passively for "natural processes" (p. 99) to create a civic and entrepreneurial spirit which would make Santander prosper. Symbolic of their overall failure was the local road system, which became so neglected and overgrown that it eventually had to be reclaimed with machetes.

Johnson uses documentary sources from numerous local, regional, and national archives; contemporary newspapers; memoirs; and secondary materials to provide a solid narrative useful to students of Colombian and regional history. Missing, however, is much linkage between Liberals as ideologues and as regional men of economic and social import, for the author concentrates on Liberal notables and does not provide prosopographical insight into the collective portraits, local political careers, investment interests, or marriage patterns of those Santandereanos who composed the regional Liberal elite. Nor do the Conservatives receive much attention, although the intraregional conflicts which do appear are provocative, given the patterned structure of civil conflict in Colombia. A final impression which emerges is that the passivity and fatalism of Santander's Liberal politicians may have reflected—even if for the wrong reasons—a tragic pragmatism. The odds for long-term development, given their regional geography and potential export products, were certainly against them. As their standard bearer Manuel Murillo Toro once noted: "A road open before its time, is a road quickly closed" (p. 99).

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*Las ideas de Laureano Gómez.* By JAMES D. HENDERSON. Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1985. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 279. Paper.

It is a courageous endeavor to offer an objective treatment to the man who was the ill-fated president of Colombia from 1950 to 1952. It is also one that is long overdue. For Laureano (as he was familiarly known) was the uncompromising, dogmatic figure of his Conservative party's intransigent right wing, and, arguably, responsible for inciting more deaths in *La Violencia* than any other public man. It is therefore perhaps understandable that James Henderson has begun with Laureano's ideas, leaving what he actually did to a projected second volume.

Henderson succeeds in demonstrating that his subject consistently held high ideals. Laureano was a deeply spiritual man, a fervent Catholic with a divinely inspired belief in human progress, a romantic, and a nationalist. We are offered a compelling view of a man who perceived himself as being above politics, one who

sought the *bien común* in the face of the corrosive modern influences of liberalism, materialism, and secularism. We also receive intimations that Laureano acted erratically, even obsessively, and that like many other conservative thinkers of the past two centuries, he was deeply pessimistic, even paranoid.

The author gives us his subject's words in many long and usually enlightening quotations. The first part offers the main themes of Laureano's world view, while in the latter third Henderson seeks to place Laureano's thoughts in the mainstream of Western conservatism. While this treatment offers a rare view of the man, it is also often repetitive and cumbersome. But Henderson obviously feels that Laureano has been so misunderstood and maligned that his ideals need pointing to more than once.

This volume has a sense of completeness to it. Henderson states that a history of ideas with ample quotes from the subject offers a better understanding than would a "sociological" (i.e., Marxist) or a "psychological" (i.e., Freudian) interpretation, both of which presumably treat ideas as epiphenomenal (pp. 19–20). His methodology is a *término medio* between compilations of selected works and full-fledged analytical biographies. Herein lies the author's claim to objectivity (p. 15). Finally, Henderson believes that Laureano was motivated by his ideals—to which he *nunca fue infiel* (p. 28)—rather than by practical considerations (p. 217). It would appear that Henderson feels he has reached for the real man, thus leaving little for the second volume.

Laureano's tragedy is rooted in his daily struggle against the forces of the twentieth century. It became a battle of one against all, good versus evil. The compromises of party politics that held Colombian society together in the 1940s were, in Laureano's own words, mere "*lentejas, si las quieres las tomas, y si no las dejas.*" Perhaps Laureano's ideals were so high that reality could be dispensed with. Now that we have a good sense of Laureano's ideals, we can only hope that Henderson will have the courage to lead us through his daily life. So many defiantly discarded lentils will require a strong stomach.

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*La diplomacia de José María Rojas, 1873–1883.* By WILLIAM LANE HARRIS. Translated by RODOLFO KAMMANN WILLSON. Caracas: Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de Historia, 1984. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 279. Paper.

Harris has solidly researched and pleasingly presented a small slice of nineteenth-century Venezuelan diplomatic endeavors, those undertaken by that man of letters, businessman, and "reluctant diplomat" (p. 41), José María Rojas. Harris's intentions are modest: to trace the diplomatic efforts of Rojas in Europe and to present to the reading public a "very human *caraqueño*" (p. 14). He succeeds in this clearly written monograph.