

*El Libertador en la historia italiana: Ilustración, "Risorgimento", fascismo.* By ALBERTO FILIPPI. Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia. 1987. Pp. 241. Appendix. Bibliography. Index.

In this slim volume—roughly a quarter devoted to an appendix of representative texts—the Italian-Venezuelan historian Alberto Filippi considers both Bolívar's visit to Italy in 1805 and subsequent Italian interpretations of his life and works. It adds little to the former, although Filippi gives an intriguing discussion of the normally tiresome debate about which hill of Rome was the site of the future Liberator's oath to free his homeland. Here the author notes the efforts of Italian fascists to steer historians away from the correct answer because of its democratic connotations in Italian internal affairs.

In dealing with later treatments of Bolívar, Filippi presents some subtle (perhaps occasionally too subtle) theoretical discussions of ideological/historiographical questions, but at the same time he grounds his analysis in a detailed review of European, especially Italian, intellectual currents. He shows understandable satisfaction that the first European biography of Bolívar appeared in Milan in 1818, but the fact that Italians dreaming of a free and united homeland should laud the name of Bolívar, along with that of Washington, is hardly surprising. Less predictable is the discovery of Bolívar by the early socialist Luigi Musini, who saw in the former's example an inspiration for social revolutionary struggle.

The most interesting section is the last, which treats the fascist era and its antecedents. Here Filippi notes both the attempt of fascist spokesmen to manipulate the image of Bolívar in support of their pan-Latinist overtures to Latin America and the adoption of a "Caesarist" interpretation which made Bolívar, retroactively, a kindred spirit of Mussolini. Filippi properly emphasizes the convergence of Italian fascist and Venezuelan Gomecista propaganda, though his suggestions of the influence of the former on the latter are probably overstated. After all, Vallénilla Lanz published his *Cesarismo democrático* before Mussolini's rise to power. Filippi may also protest too much when he insists that Bolívar's admiration for Roman antiquity was centered exclusively on the Roman republic, a view which ignores the remarkable similarities between Bolívar's constitution for Bolivia and the governmental system devised not by Julius but by Augustus Caesar.

The main theses of this volume had already appeared in articles by Filippi and in his own contribution to the massive *Bolívar y Europa en las crónicas, el pensamiento político y la historiografía* (vol. I, 1986) that he directed. Even so, it is good to have them brought together, in fuller detail, in one place. The literature on the Bolívar "cult" in its larger context is thereby significantly enriched.