

Una tribuna para los godos: El periodismo contrarrevolucionario de Miguel José Sanz y José Domingo Díaz. By JULIO BARROETA LARA. Caracas: Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1987. Bibliography. General Index. Pp. 140. Paper.

This essay deals with two controversial figures of the independence period in Caracas: Miguel José Sanz and José Domingo Díaz, founders of the short-lived *Semanario de Caracas* (1810), Venezuela's first independent newspaper. Sanz, a wealthy *mantuano* and a bureaucrat, supported the independence movement and participated in the government of the First Republic.

Díaz, a respected physician and a journalist of obscure social origins, remained an embittered monarchist. From his later exile, Díaz missed few opportunities to slur the independence movement and the patriots, Bolívar in particular. Not surprisingly, Venezuelan historiography, favorable to Sanz, has dealt unkindly with Díaz. His *Recuerdos de la rebelión de Caracas*, published in Spain in 1829 and reprinted by the Academia Nacional de la Historia in 1961, was heavily footnoted for the purpose of discrediting the accusations that Díaz so freely leveled against the patriots. Barroeta Lara advances a different interpretation, using as his sources the *Semanario de Caracas*, reprinted by the Academia Nacional de la Historia in 1959, as well as other primary and secondary material. He argues that, despite their political differences, Sanz the republican and Díaz the monarchist shared a common fear of the masses and social unrest. The *Semanario* thus allowed them to voice their conservative social views and influence public opinion with different aims in mind.

This is not a novel interpretation of the independence movement in Caracas. Yet events in the lives of Sanz, Díaz, and other contemporaries allow Barroeta Lara to highlight some of the passions and contradictions of the time: e.g., Díaz, the royalist, was slighted for his lowly social origins by his political opponents, the revolutionaries. Barroeta Lara's style is at times impressionistic, and certain assumptions are made for which there is no clear proof. Yet the book remains of value for those interested in the independence period.

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CARMEN ANHALZER

Las Venezuelas del siglo veinte. By MANUEL CABALLERO. Caracas: Grijalbo/Testimonios, 1988. Index. Pp. 304. Paper.

This volume by a prominent Venezuelan intellectual and historian consists mainly of three chapters on three milestone events: the mass protests in Caracas in 1936, which, although harshly dealt with, induced the López Contreras government to quickly announce far-reaching reforms; the 1945 coup d'état which brought Acción Democrática (AD) and its leading figure, Rómulo Betancourt,

to power; and the 1958 overthrow of Pérez Jiménez. Several shorter essays are included. One analyzes the evolution of the social Christian COPEI party, and another, the positions of the various politicians who aspired to nomination in the 1988 presidential elections. Caballero takes broad liberty to make frequent comparisons with myriad events throughout Venezuelan and world history.

Caballero makes some interesting points. For instance, he traces the career of López Contreras as a trusted officer in the army of dictator Juan Vicente Gómez, to show that when he came to power on the latter's death in 1935 he had the military's unconditional loyalty. The existence of an undivided military disproves the thesis—defended by a handful of historians—that, had the left been more audacious and aggressive in 1936, it might have challenged the government.

If there is a recurrent theme in this work, it is that the institution of political parties constitutes the essence of the Venezuelan democratic system. Caballero opposes the widespread view that parties have deformed the nation's democracy by blocking the development of autonomous organizations in civil society. He maintains that the antiparty position is often a smoke screen which disguises attempts to discredit democracy. Caballero, who has a flair for dramatic statements, calls Rómulo Betancourt a "Leninist" (p. 63) due to his insistence on the need to construct a tight-knit, centralized political party. This statement is misleading, of course, in that it greatly reduces the scope of Leninist doctrine. In spite of the author's discussion of political parties, he fails to present an underlying theme. A synthesizing introductory or concluding section would have been a corrective to the disjointedness of these essays.

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STEVE ELLNER

United States Economic Penetration of Venezuela and its Effects on Diplomacy: 1895–1906. By CHARLES CARRERAS. New York: Garland, 1987. Map. Notes. Chart. Bibliography. Pp. 252. Cloth. \$44.00.

Carreras examines the relative success of five U.S. companies operating in Venezuela at the turn of the century and their impact on U.S.-Venezuelan diplomatic relations. Using extensive archival material, Carreras painstakingly documents the fortunes of the New York and Bermúdez Company, the Orinoco Corporation, the United States and Venezuelan Company, the Orinoco Steamship Company, and the English-language newspaper, the *Venezuelan Herald*. The exploits of the New York and Bermúdez Company receive particular attention, as Carreras explores the confusion over its asphalt concession, its appeals to the U.S. government for assistance, and its involvement in the Matos rebellion.

Though this study provides insights into U.S. economic ventures, it is often unclear exactly what Carreras is attempting to achieve. He suggests, for example,