

External Constraints on Economic Policy in Brazil, 1889–1930. By WINSTON FRITSCH. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988. Tables. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xvi, 265. Cloth. \$49.95.

Over the past decade, economic historians have begun to take a long hard look at much of the conventional wisdom about the nature of the pre-1930 Brazilian economy. As is usually the case when scholars look at the empirical data, the conventional wisdom has proved to be neither wise nor accurate. It is in this revisionist vein that Winston Fritsch gives us his study of economic policy making in Brazil.

Fritsch's basic argument is that political historians have long overestimated the strength of the São Paulo oligarchy in setting the nation's economic policies. While he does not dispute their hegemonic position within their state, he argues that the coffee elite of São Paulo could not always get their way when it came to federal support for price-control schemes and low exchange rates. Other forces or interest groups often held sway, producing policies inimical to the São Paulo interests. Indeed, Fritsch argues that even when the federal government did pursue policies helpful to the interests of São Paulo, it often did so because it was pursuing a general economic stabilization policy, not because it favored a particular sectoral interest at the expense of others.

Fritsch's textual organization is a familiar one: a chronological narrative of institutional and political developments. Readers without a strong background in economic history or international economics, however, will find the book heavy going. The author takes it for granted that his audience understands the ins and outs of the gold standard, the mechanisms for coffee valorization, and the effects of an orthodox monetary policy in the face of a balance-of-payments crisis. The prose is heavily laden with both the jargon and tortured syntax of economists, and this will further discourage many. For those who work in this field, however, this is a book well worth reading.

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Conservative Thought in Twentieth-Century Latin America: The Ideas of Laureano Gómez. By JAMES D. HENDERSON. Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 1988. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xi, 217. Paper. \$11.00.

This study of Laureano Gómez (1889–1965) is useful but troublesome. As editor, author, orator, congressman, and diplomat, Gómez became leader of the Conservative party and president of Colombia, 1950–53. Nevertheless, there have been few scholarly attempts to evaluate his career (virtually none in English). Insofar as this book fills the void, it is a pioneer effort and probably an important one.

Based on the author's *Las ideas de Laureano Gómez* (Bogotá, 1985), the

book emphasizes the conservative thought underlying what often appeared to be extreme, unpredictable—even opportunistic—actions. Gómez believed in an organic, hierarchically structured, corporatively organized society with a representative, but antimajoritarian, government run by an elite in accordance with Roman Catholic beliefs. Nothing could be tolerated that did not advance this vision. Liberals, Masons, Jews, Marxists, fascists, even fellow Conservatives, suffered his scathing attack for not sharing his viewpoint.

In stressing his ideology, Henderson compares Gómez with other conservative thinkers in Latin America. The intention is to dispel the confusion surrounding Gómez and to suggest that he was not “the monster” that he was reputed to be. A central argument is that Gómez was faithful to his principles regardless of his conduct at any given moment. Drawing heavily on Gómez’s own writings, the work successfully shows how he could rationalize his actions—at least to himself.

Paradoxically, the very strength of this work may be its chief weakness. It is largely a one-dimensional portrait, Gómez explaining Gómez, that does not make him any less controversial. Rather, what emerges here is a man so convinced of his righteousness that he brooked no opposition. For him, extremism in defense of virtue was no vice; indeed, it was often his normal course of action.

The work has great heuristic value. By focusing mainly on ideas, it separates thought from action. In so doing, it raises as many questions as it answers and whets the appetite for further research.

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The Politics of External Influence in the Dominican Republic. By MICHAEL J. KRZYANEK and HOWARD J. WIARDA. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1988. Map. Tables. Notes. Selected Readings. Index. Pp. xiii, 186. Cloth. \$39.95.

Kryzanek and Wiarda “aim to demonstrate both Dominican dependence on and interdependence with the external forces that wash over [the Dominican Republic’s] shores” (p. xi). Their demonstration draws on extensive prior research and recent study. History is surveyed in two chapters, followed by treatment of contemporary politics, economy, society, and international relations. Most welcome is discussion of the administrations of Antonio Guzmán (1978–82) and Salvador Jorge Blanco (1982–86). The deepening national crisis under their ineffective moderate reformism helps explain the election of conservative octogenarian Juan Balaguer in 1986 and the resurgence of aging leftist Juan Bosch.

The rhetoric and limited reality of “democracy” should be central to the authors, but their use of the term is confused. Sometimes they seem unaware that elites often use “democracy” to manipulate and coopt the middle and lower classes. Kryzanek and Wiarda also fail to utilize John Peeler’s persuasive argument, in