

T. Lynn Smith's book is a rather curious collection of nineteen articles by fifteen different authors or committees, ranging in time of original publication from 1847 to 1964 and representing Brazil (7), Bolivia (3), Colombia (2), Mexico (2), Chile, Cuba, and Venezuela (1 each), and two general articles. Despite the pretensions of the title Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Puerto Rico, and the Central American countries are not represented.

The principal uniting feature is that with the exception of the editor all the contributors are Latin Americans. Through them we are given a selective view of what some Latins, past and present, thought about agrarian problems. The opinions and materials set forth, however, are neither new nor unique at the present time and this is especially true of the editor's lengthy Introduction. Here Smith champions the "family farm" and reviews problems of taxation, expropriation, confiscation, levels of living, minifundia, and social stratification. The book may prove useful in providing occasional readings for seminar work, and Smith's translations of some of the older Brazilian materials may be of use to novice historians. The long but spotty bibliography also reflects the omissions noted above.

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*Quatro séculos de latifúndio.* By ALBERTO PASSOS GUIMARÃES. São Paulo, 1964. Editôra Fulgor. Pp. 197. Paper.

For Latin America's largest nation Alberto Passos Guimarães has written a study of a much discussed but frequently misunderstood institution, the latifúndia. In Brazil before Cabral private ownership of the soil did not exist, for Indian property was communal. Martim Afonso de Sousa transplanted the Portuguese system of landholding in 1532, when he began to grant land by *sesmaria* to his followers. Thereafter, the traditional *sesmaria* was used to distribute the land, first along the coast for sugar, then in the interior for cattle raising, and finally in the south for coffee. Small- and medium-sized farms did not appear until the nineteenth century, and they resulted primarily from attempts to encourage European immigration.

According to the author, those small- and medium-sized farms constitute one threat to the latifundistas, but the major blows to the system have come from emancipation, overproduction, World War I, and the Depression. However, agriculture in Brazil is still in a predominately feudal or "pre-capitalist" stage. The author concludes: "In spite of rude shocks suffered throughout its four centuries of

existence, the Brazilian latifundia system survives in our own time with sufficient powers to firmly maintain control over our agrarian economy.”

The author enters the hoary historical debate as to whether the colonial regime was essentially capitalistic or feudal. Refuting the statements of Roberto C. Simonsen, his answer is that it was emphatically feudal in nature. Few owned land in Brazil. Because of their wealth and property, landowners dominated the majority. “The monopoly of the land . . . assures the latifundia class . . . the extra-economic power. The extra-economic power is a characteristic and a residue of feudalism.” Millions of Brazilians today live, he points out, under feudal or semi-feudal conditions.

Passos Guimarães takes primarily a Marxian point of view, but he presents a much sounder and saner case than most books bearing the Editôra Fulgor imprint. The book makes good reading, and in his many charts and statistics, the author amply displays for his reader the sources for his interpretations.

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*The Political Economy of Latin America.* By WENDELL C. GORDON. New York, 1965. Columbia University Press. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 401. \$8.75.

A more accurate title for this book might be *Latin American Economic and Commercial Lore*. It provides the reader with a miscellaneous assortment of economic facts, ideas, and opinions helpful only to a limited degree in understanding the field. A basic defect is the absence of an adequate or consistent analytical base, and this curtails the book's usefulness and significance. An illuminating example of the book's lack of integration appears in the topic headings of chapter 11 dealing with institutional barriers—landowners, dictators, army, Catholicism, bureaucracy, lack of entrepreneurship, decentralization and delegation of responsibility, and the Spanish language. In the important area of Latin American economics, which calls for a thoroughgoing and analytically oriented treatment, this book must be regarded as little more than a tentative step. It is far from being the definitive work which its title suggests.

The author's stated analytical framework is that of the Veblen-Ayres model. Yet his book fails to adhere to the author's own expression of this model (Chapter 11). He presents a pastiche of professed institutionalism bearing Veblen's label and such fragments of