

railroads, commerce, and banking, as well as in agriculture, industry, and mining, is well documented and logically thought out. Ordinarily, when a certain stage in capitalist development has been reached, agricultural and industrial capital is applied to further production. However, in Venezuela, although agriculture acts as a kind of conveyor belt between the nation and the outside world, capital from it accumulates in the hands of urban businessmen who are more interested in distributive functions than in productive processes. (This is true also of the capital accumulated from the oil industry.) Thus in the final analysis underdevelopment is simply a subversion of the historical process.

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The Agricultural Development of Venezuela. By LOUIS E. HEATON. Foreword by LOWELL S. HARDIN. New York, 1969. Praeger Publishers. Praeger Special Studies in International Economics and Development. Tables. Figures. Notes. Appendices. Glossary. Pp. xxvii, 320. \$15.00.

This book is not intended for enjoyment but for use. Perhaps that is enough. Crammed with statistics, technical data, tables, and charts, it is designed as a handbook for the planner or agricultural specialist to help him develop Venezuela. The historian may find it tough going, mainly because it lacks synthesis and analytical narrative. He should not ignore it, however, particularly if he is engaged in serious research touching upon Venezuelan economic development or agrarian reform.

The strength of the book lies in the raw data compiled in over one hundred tables and figures. These give impressive evidence about the nature and complexity of the obstacles to increased agricultural production and to the improvement of rural life. The book is weak in its narrative portions, however, because Heaton is content to lead the reader from one table to the next without explaining the significance of each. The author would be more helpful if he presented his data as reference material or supporting evidence for a discussion or summary of important points. Moreover, the book lacks an index, which one might use to find answers for specific questions. For example, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the success or failure of agrarian reform in Venezuela. Nonetheless, while the casual or less-expert reader may have trouble, there is a great deal of profit in

this study for all those with the time and interest to do their own interpreting.

Having said this, I wish to make a few general observations. First, despite all the detail and technical data, the book might as well be about another planet, except for the fact that the statistics are Venezuelan. That is, Heaton hardly touches upon the politics of economic development or the nature and policies of recent Venezuelan governments. *Acción Democrática* is not mentioned anywhere. But Venezuelan agricultural development does not take place in a vacuum, and to cite economic obstacles without reference to political and social factors leads to unrealistic conclusions.

A second difficulty, relates to the first. Heaton makes certain assumptions and recommendations concerning agricultural development without taking into account ideological factors. For example, although he is sympathetic to agrarian reform, in discussing land distribution he recommends larger farm sizes (units) and more careful selection of farm operators, with the assumption that the holdings will be private. This overlooks the revolutionary or reform aspects or social goals which may be part of a program of land distribution. Can the agricultural economist ignore the ideological question? Third, Heaton raises some very interesting questions concerning a current topic: ecology. He has a great deal to say about land use, conservation, and the rational use of natural resources, but when he writes about specific aspects of agricultural development, such as fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides, one begins to wonder about the so-called process of modernization. It is clear that Venezuela is almost a virgin country; must or will the agricultural planners ravage the land? "Unfortunately," says Heaton, "some animal species and some picturesque natural wonders will probably be destroyed before the public conscience demands their protection for future generations" (pp. 172-173). Heaton's warnings on this score may prove to be the most significant aspect of the book.

Although obviously aimed at only a few readers, this book may turn out to be a sleeper. But to be on the safe side, Heaton could perform a service if he were to abstract the ecological message and public several articles for wider distribution. This seems all the more advisable, because, unfortunately, the book is overpriced.

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