
A majority of the articles appearing in this book by the Hungarian historian Tibor Wittman were published in the Acta Historica Universitatis Szegediensis (Studia Latinoamericana) between 1964 and 1971. Since works by Eastern European scholars interested in Latin America are generally unknown by North American hispanists and Soviet researchers have tended to focus on a narrow spectrum of themes (see the review article by Stanley Stein in HAHR, August 1979), this somewhat dated anthology nonetheless deserves attention.

Wittman addresses a wide range of subjects from a relatively sophisticated Marxist perspective. The first section of the anthology includes essays discussing the so-called Turkish character of the Spanish monarchy of the sixteenth century, the causes for the decline of Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the ideas of Francisco de Vitoria on the economic rights of Spaniards in the Americas, and exegetical articles on the texts dealing with the New World of the Italian Tommaso Campanella and the Czech Johannes Comenius. A second section deals with the beginnings of a world economy during the late sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. A final section based on archival research in South America treats mining and regional economics in colonial Bolivia, focusing on the economic decadence of Potosí.

Wittman offers some interesting, indeed at times provocative, points of view. He argues, for example, that the role of Eastern Europe has been overlooked in explaining the development of capitalism in Western Europe. Although he admits that the quantification of interchanges between Western and Eastern Europe remains to be done, Wittman asserts that the grains of the East made possible the low cost of production in western industrial centers and should be included within the scheme of the putative triangular economy (Western Europe, Africa, and the Americas).

The final section on colonial Bolivia is based on records of the Archivo de la Casa de Moneda (Potosí). These articles demonstrate the breakdown of the financial system of the colony and the importance of the mercury traders. Wittman would have benefited greatly by the works of Peter Bakewell, David Brading, John Fisher, and others published during the decade of the 1970s. Nevertheless, this rather expensive book should find its way into libraries with major collections on Latin America.

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