

*Peace by Revolution: An Interpretation of Mexico.* By FRANK TANNENBAUM. Drawings by MIGUEL COVARRUBIAS. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933. Pp. xii, 315. \$3.50.)

Whoever reads this volume with even moderate understanding will be wiser about Mexico than he was before. Not all books upon that country have this effect. Since mechanized transport has channeled tourist routes through backward lands, leaving the great remainder of their area as it has been for centuries, facile writers have bombarded us with snap shots and snap judgments about them that have largely extended the boundaries of human error. Doctor Tannenbaum has not sinned in this direction. He has smoked pouches of tobacco over questions that some authors would dispose of with a whiff of a cigarette.

Mexico is the unfinished product of an evolution which began before Columbus and Cortes. Its development has been coerced by alien rule and culture which it never fully assimilated. It has been interpreted and judged by alien standards. The present work tries to get away from the latter attitude and to trace the deeper forces which, after persisting for centuries beneath the surface of society, have now manifested themselves in revolution.

Several years ago, Frederick Starr published a book called *Indian Mexico*. It was a picturesque description of people in out-of-the-way parts of the country and gave many Americans their first hint that all Mexicans were not like either Porfirio Díaz or Río Grande cowboys. That was some service. But its author never suggested that this major fraction of the population was its prepotent element and might eventually impose its features upon the whole nation.

Now Doctor Tannenbaum, with recent history to enlighten him, has interpreted Mexico in terms which make this Indian element not a rear-stage decoration but a leading part of the caste. He describes the Indian's slow absorption of the Spaniard, the racial tensions which retarded progress, the subterranean struggle between exotic and native forces in the Church, and the persistence of the tactics of conquest in government, in the land system, and in the treatment of labor. He shows how resistance to the imported—even though long established—institutions that incorporated the traditions and practices of the conquest slowly strengthened. At length the retreat of the Indian ended. With Zapata and Villa and the ideologists of the post-Madero revolu-

tion he took the offensive. He began to recover his land and to restore his communal society. This started the battle between the village and the hacienda which is still in progress. He tried by means of labor unions and advanced social legislation to wrest control of industry from the foreigners who monopolized it. Here also he has partially succeeded. Most important of all in longer perspective, he has narrowed the ancient rift between the conquering and the conquered race until he has awakened in all classes a new consciousness of national community. This manifests itself among other things in intellectual and art movements and above all in an educational program which dispenses to the utmost with exotic influences, tries to reach all the people, and aims to enrich the formal national culture with indigenous elements.

Only the thesis and not the incidents of such a book can be summarized in a review. Indeed, for the sake of stressing what he believes are fundamentals, the author dismisses with scant attention the pagantry and personalities of the tumultuous and dramatic quarter of a century since Madero succeeded Díaz. He sees a historical necessity rather than a series of historical accidents in Mexico's violent transformations. But he does not float over the country in a cloud of theory. He has seen the land from the saddle and the foot trail and cites places and persons for his facts. In the chapters on country schools he uses native records to paint an appealing picture of a people painfully groping from age-old shadows toward the light.

No book known to the reviewer seems to get as near to the heart of the Mexican problem as this one. It may idealize the Indian, but why not give him the benefit of the doubt? Miguel Covarrubias's illustrations are not snap shots but an expression of the people themselves. It is cause for congratulation that such a work has been written and has been written by an American.

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*The Background of the Revolution for Mexican Independence.* By LILLIAN ESTELLE FISHER. (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1934. Pp. 512; Index and Bibliography. \$4.00.)

Slowly but steadily monographic treatments of the outstanding phases of the history of the Hispanic American nations are being published in English. The present work is one of these. Dr. Fisher has