

**Michael Monteon, CHILE AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION: THE POLITICS OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT, 1927-1948.** (Tempe, Arizona, Center for Latin American Studies Press, 1998. pp xiii, 408).

WILLIAM F. SATER \*

This book is many things but it is most certainly not a history of Chile from 1927 to 1948. Professor Michael Monteon devotes most of his efforts analyzing the pre-1941 decades; his attempts to discuss the post-Aguirre period occupy but twenty pages.

Not only is the title misleading, but the author tries to write a history of Chile fundamentally without reading Chilean sources. Regardless of what the author's bibliography indicates, a study of the footnotes indicates that this monograph depends mainly upon the diplomatic correspondence of British or American diplomats. Chilean contemporary materials, particularly contributions of the press, are conspicuous by their absence. Chilean public or private archival materials are also rarely used. When the author does cite Chilean sources, one has the feeling that he obtained them from copying from the reports of foreign diplomats, not by reading them in the original. Chilean scholars, like Joaquín Ferrandois, have used these materials to great effect; unfortunately Dr. Monteon did not. Instead, he has allowed his limited number of foreign materials to provide the foundation for this book. This tendency would not have been crucial if he was trying to convey Anglo-American relations with Chile. It is fatal, however, to argue that these documents provide a penetrating insight into Chile and its government.

Precisely, because he has consulted so few Chilean sources, the book lacks the substance which characterized the Ferrandois monograph. Professor Monteon, for example, attempts to resurrect the by now hoary tale of Chile's dependence. Santiago, he claims, became the plaything of foreign capitalists. While he reports what the American and British diplomats said, he did not fairly convey the attitudes of the Chilean government, its politicians, or its intellectual. Had he studied these materials, he would see that Gustavo Ross Santa María was many things, but he was not a *vende patria*. On the contrary, the man who would be excoriated as the Minister of Hunger, successfully renegotiated the payment of Chile's foreign debt. The Moneda, as his urgings, also repudiated the agreement made with the Guggenheims, replacing COSACH with CONVENSA. Santiago, despite Washington's protests, also entered into various barter agreements with numerous European powers, agreements which hurt both U.S. and British economic interests. Indeed, the situation became so one sided that a British official noted: "no concessions Chile can make to us, will balance the concessions we are asked to make".

\*Emeritus Professor, California State University, Long Beach.

("Minutes", D.B., 22 December 1936, A 9969/10/9, FO 371-19772) Chile's independence did not end with Alessandri. Pedro Aguirre Cerda, for example, successfully negotiated numerous favorable trade agreements in which the United States purchased Chile's raw materials even though it sometimes did not need them. Despite pressure from the White House, the Moneda managed to remain neutral until almost the end of the Second World War. Thus Chile, despite Professor Monteon's tedious prose, was not subservient to the United States.

Professor Monteon's book which includes numerous mistakes, including the absurd statement that Santiago was 70 kilometers from the Pacific Ocean, is flawed because it is essentially based on foreign sources. Consequently the reader does not find a balanced view of these critical years. Rather than seeing things from a Chilean perspective, we receive an essentially narrower view gleaned from foreign diplomats. This situation, of course, makes it easier for Monteon to argue that London or Washington dominated Chile. We have no idea whatsoever if the Moneda was not manipulating the foreign diplomats.

This book, in short, is grounded on a limited number of one sided sources. To give his opus more theoretical importance, Professor Monteon attaches materials, drawn from social scientists, which seem to confuse more than enlighten. The author would have been better advised to emulate Fernando's more scholarly efforts and concentrate or at least, consult more Chilean materials. The result would have been a study which had substance. As it presently stands, those historians or students who cannot read English have no cause to lament: they have avoided a tortuous and singularly unrewarding experience.