

## Liberalismo, Destino de la Patria

Morales Benítez, Otto

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This work is a collection of speeches, dedications, tributes, introductions, and essays written at widely varying times (1942-1982). The unifying theme is Liberalism as an historical entity in Colombia, its missions, and its contributions to Colombian society. Approximately three-fourths of the work is presented in a series of biographical sketches of Liberal Party leaders. Rafael Uribe Uribe, Enrique Olaya Herrera, Eduardo Santos, Alberto Lleras Camargo, Carlos Lleras Restrepo, Gabriel Turbay, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Plinio Mendoza Neira, Juan Lozano y Lozano, Jorge Gartner de la Cuesta, Gustavo Jiménez, Hernando Agudelo Villa, and Darío Echandía all have individual chapters, although the they do not all receive equal treatment. Perhaps because of their greater depth, those on Gartner de la Cuesta and Echandía seem to have greater transcendence than the others. References to the career of Carlos Lleras Restrepo are prominent throughout the work. The remaining one-fourth of the work is a series of essays, including commentaries on the importance of the parliamentary/congressional form of government and the "moral crisis" in contemporary Colombia. Overall the narrative is surprisingly coherent, much more so than might be expected from a work constructed by assembling a number of individually conceived pieces.

These fragments from the opening essay may suffice to convey the general tone of the work.

"Predico la tesis de que la historia no se conforma sino con movimientos comunes... Pp. 17)".

"Y esa participación popular es lo que debemos buscar afanosamente. Esta, además, predica que su empeño a través del ejercicio del poder, es crear una nueva sociedad. Al no existir orga-

nización de base, las decisiones quedan concentradas en muy pocas personas. Este hecho favorece la falta de conciencia política. Queda claro, entonces, por qué estamos pidiendo al pueblo que actúe; por qué no aceptamos que las gentes —pasivamente— se queden sin acción ante los problemas colombianos.

"La falta de conciencia política, conduce a otra aberración: a que los intereses privados tengan más influencia determinante que los colectivos. Una minoría voraz principia a manejar todos los hilos de la política, de los negocios. Ella suplanta a la comunidad" (Pp. 19).

Morales Benítez (b. 1920 in Riosucio, Caldas) describes Liberalism as an innovative, popular (and probably populist) movement. It is the Liberal Party, as shown here through the lives of its leaders, that advances the cause of social justice, promotes the development of the socioeconomic welfare of the masses, and defends democratic government in Colombia. The destiny of Liberalism is to be the *avantgarde*, that force that continually propels the nation one step beyond where it has arrived at any given moment. To the extent that the author demonstrate this, he has provided an erudite interpretative look at the Liberal Party.

A word of caution is in order, however. This work makes no pretense to being either chronologically or a thematically comprehensive. The material presented is selective, and the selection tends to gloss over divisions or distinctions within Liberalism. For example, where many authorities would suggest at least a difference in emphasis between the presidential administrations of Alfonso López Pumarejo and Eduardo Santos, that would be hard to discern from this work. In addition, this is a work largely without scholarly documentation except for some bibliographical addenda to selected essays.

Finally, it should be noted in passing that the work contains a four-page bio-bibliographical study of the author and two essays entitled "Inaceptables condiciones para ser precandidato presidencial," and "no estoy en retirada, ni me asustan los problemas". In addition to its historical overview, then, this work is also valuable as an ideological "confession of faith" from a prominent contemporary political leader.