

There is a lack of photos, except on the dust jacket, and the two maps are inadequate, leaving out key rail towns which are described in the text. These are disturbing in a study that relies so strongly on space.

*The Redemptive Work* opens up a discussion of railroads in Latin America as machines that had the power to reorganize social space. Clark offers some interesting speculative comments on the railroad as a circulator of ideas, a creator of tourist locales, and a controller of public space. For the most part, these connections are circumstantial. Perhaps they could serve as the launching points for a new historiography of the railroad, one which begins with the workers' perspective of the enterprise as part of the national patrimony.

Anton Rosenthal

University of Kansas

JONATHAN C. BROWN (ed.): *Workers' Control in Latin America, 1930-1979*. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

This is a useful collection of articles for undergraduate and graduate courses on Latin American history in general and Latin American labor history in particular. Most of the articles are written clearly and present their arguments didactically. Each article is arranged in the same way: a brief introduction reviewing the role played by workers in their nation's history is followed by an analysis of a specific episode of importance in the history of their struggle. Each piece ends with a brief post-script of a few paragraphs describing the subsequent evolution of the workers' role in that particular country.

Jonathan C. Brown has written an excellent, if slightly pretentious, introduction to this volume ("What Is Workers' Control?," pp. 1-15). "Until recently," he begins, "Latin American history had been written principally from the top down." Then he goes on to say: "The authors of this volume protest." He promises that this book will be different, that it will let us into the world of those who are "voiceless in history, the laborers and peasants who, even if literate, had been so busy making a precarious living that they had little time to edit newspapers or leave written records of their lives." A worthy ambition indeed.

Revealing "the struggle of workers on the shop floor to gain sufficient command of the work process to bring dignity to their proletarian lives" is no easy task, however. Reading through the book, one cannot help feeling that not all the essays deliver what the introduction promises. Although most of

the contributions are good and present new information on the different forms of resistance adopted by workers, they do not represent any methodological innovation, and they use the same sources as "traditional" history in this field.

Brown's own article ("Acting for Themselves: Workers and the Mexican Oil Nationalization," pp. 45-71) and, especially, Joel Wolfe's "There Should Be Dignity: São Paulo's Women Textile Workers and the 'Strike of 300,000'" (pp. 189-216) do fulfill the expectations raised by the introduction. In his well-documented essay, Brown shows convincingly how oil workers' continued resistance since the mid-1930s threatened the oil-dependent national economy and pushed the Cárdenas government to expropriate the Mexican oil industry. The central issue for the workers was not so much wages — oil-industry workers were among the better-paid members of the Mexican working class — but job security. "Workers wished to control who was hired and who was fired [They] negotiated with employers and politicians and among themselves to achieve greater control of their workplace" (p. 46). The insecurity they had suffered during the Depression (the number of oil workers had dropped from 50,000 in 1920 to 15,000 in 1935) had left them grimly resolved to persist in their struggle — they exerted pressure not only on the government, but also on their own union leaders when the latter seemed willing to compromise.

Ultimately, however, the workers' joy over the nationalization of the industry proved to have been premature. Like the foreign petroleum companies, the new state company that replaced them, Pemex, did not let the workers control the administration. Cárdenas preferred to appoint seasoned bureaucrats and technicians to run the company.

Joel Wolfe skillfully analyzes the São Paulo strikes of March and April, 1953, through which some 300,000 industrial workers managed to force their employers to give them better wages and working conditions. One of Brazil's largest and most effective strike actions, this joint struggle by textile, metal, furniture, and glass workers became a symbol of cross-union solidarity. Wolfe traces the workers' organizing and protest activities in the early 1950s, emphasizing women workers' struggle in the textile industry, where they represented a clear majority. These women, faced with the installation of automated spinning and weaving equipment, not only achieved improvements in wages and working conditions, but also succeeded in "taking control of the closed state-run unions out of the hands of unrepresentative labor bureaucrats and giving it to male and female activists with close ties to the rank and file" (p. 191). In addition, the workers exerted heavy pressure on President Getúlio Vargas, forcing him to go beyond populist promises and adopt concrete pro-worker policies. Wolfe, it should be noted, is one of the

only three contributors to this book who supplemented their written sources with worker interviews in order to gain insights into the thinking of the grassroots.

The two chapters devoted to Peronism and the Argentine working class (María Celina Tuozzo's "As You Sow, So Shall You Reap: Argentine Labor and the Railway Nationalization," pp. 128-158, and Michael Snodgrass's "Topics Not Suitable for Propaganda: Working-Class Resistance under Peronism," pp. 159-188) are less successful. Although well-written, they are not essentially different from other studies on the Argentine labor movement published in recent years. Moreover, they contain some questionable generalizations (concerning Argentina's position in World War II and church-state relations during the Peronist regime, for example) and a number of inaccuracies (Juan B. Justo was neither a general nor a president, and the name of the CGT secretary-general was not Juan Espejo, to cite only two such mistakes).

Tuozzo sets out to challenge "the stereotype of the [Argentine] workers as irrational actors, uncritically obeying the commands of their populist leader [Perón]" (p. 128), even though this stereotype has already disappeared from scholarly work. Her essay does give us additional insights into management-labor relations and what it was like to work for the British railway companies, but fails to support her claim that labor's long-standing opposition to management-imposed changes in work rules was one of the main factors in the British companies' decision to sell out to the Argentine government, or in Perón's decision to nationalize the railways.

Michael Snodgrass provides a detailed analysis of "how and why the workers' vision of the Peronist movement came into conflict with the official Peronism espoused by the government" (p. 160). The populist leader was committed to both industrial growth and the distribution of social benefits to the working class. The achievement of these goals became increasingly difficult from 1949 on, as Argentina faced a barrage of economic problems that led to economic austerity and the repression of rank-and-file dissent. To what extent this "weaken[ed] the hegemonic link between Perón and the Argentine workers," however, is debatable. Although the masses did not turn out to demonstrate in support of Perón in September, 1955, the way they had in October, 1945, the military regime that deposed him had to contend from the very beginning with strong working-class resistance and a deep-seated loyalty to Peronism.

Other articles in the book deal with the sugar-mill workers and the 1933 Cuban revolution; the US railway mission to Mexico; railway workers and the Guatemalan revolution; tungsten miners and the Bolivian revolution; union militancy among Peruvian miners; and Chilean miners and the

nationalization of the copper industry. All in all, they present a fascinating panorama of Latin American labor history in the twentieth century.

Raanan Rein

Tel Aviv University

ADRIAN A. BANTJES: *As if Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1998.

Adrian A. Bantjes has written an important book. It is a study of the many sides of Cardenismo in Sonora in the 1930s. The great strength of the volume is that it examines the impact of Lázaro Cárdenas's reforms from a number of perspectives: the president's political project, the relationship between the local political factions and the central government, the tradition of anti-clericalism and the defence of the Church.

The study informs broader issues relating to the impact of the Mexican Revolution in the 1930s and, beyond that, to a number of bodies of theory. The great strength is that, like several other recent studies, it examines the links between culture and politics. The long tradition of Jacobinism that linked the Bourbon reforms and the *reforma* to the revolution also generated local opposition to Cárdenas's projects. The willingness of a central government to force changes, in the name of reason and education, upon what it saw as a backward and superstitious peasantry moved to centre stage.

As with events in Puebla, Michoacán, Veracruz, Hidalgo, Tabasco, Nuevo León and Sinaloa, strange alliances emerged as the clash between Calles and Cárdenas nationally, forced local Cardenistas into league with pro-clerical anti-Callistas at the level of state politics—all the while local beneficiaries of land reform faced the hostility of peasant culture, in which the Church played an integral role. Certainly, this study shows how local politics and culture make facile generalisations based exclusively on national political agendas seem shallow. It also goes a long way toward enriching our understanding of regional variations in the era of Cardenismo.

The study is also important in that it explores the clash between top-down and bottom-up forces. Bantjes concludes that Cardenismo in Sonora was as much the former as the latter, although not where labour was involved. The heaviest hand of centralism was reserved for the battle between the CTM and CROM. Local Byzantine political factionalism persevered in the face of Cárdenas's most ardent reforms, and political pragmatism tempered revolutionary passion more often than not. Even the era of intense Cardenista